

Judges 20:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)

Analysis

The children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even (על...עַבְרָה לְפָנֵי יְהוָה עַד־בָּעֵרָב)—this time they weep before Yahweh until evening, showing deeper emotion. **And asked the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?** (הָאֹסֵף לְגַשְׁת לְמַלְתָּמָה עַמְּךָ) —note 'my brother,' acknowledging relationship. **And the LORD said, Go up against him** (עַל אֶלְיוֹן).

Israel's second inquiry shows progress—they add weeping and explicitly acknowledge Benjamin as 'brother,' questioning whether fraternal warfare should continue. Yet they still frame it as 'go up again' (הָאֹסֵף, continuing their plan) rather than asking 'What should we do?' God's terse response 'go up' permits their approach but doesn't elaborate. This demonstrates that God may allow us to continue flawed plans to teach through consequences. The question remains whether (v. 18) focused on procedure ('which tribe first?'), this one questions continuation but not method. Not until verse 28 will they receive explicit promise of victory. Partial seeking yields partial answers.

Historical Context

Weeping 'before the LORD' at Bethel where the ark was stationed (v. 27) represents increased spiritual engagement compared to verse 18's briefer consultation. The phrase 'until evening' suggests extended prayer and mourning. Ancient Israelite warfare typically involved morning battles followed by afternoon/evening assessment and religious observance.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you progress from shallow consultation to deeper seeking of God after experiencing defeat?
2. When do you question continuation of your plans without questioning the plans themselves?
3. What does God's terse permission teach about the difference between allowance and full blessing?

Interlinear Text

עַל	בָּנִים	יִשְׁרָאֵל	לְפָנָי	יָבֹכֶת	עַד	יְהוָה	לְפָנָי	יָבֹכֶת	עַד
Go up	And the children	of Israel	and wept	before	And the LORD				
H5927	H1121	H3478	H1058	H6440	H3068				H5704
לְפָנָי	יָבֹכֶת	עַד	יְהוָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	וְיָבֹא	שַׁת	נָאֹסֵף	לְפָנָי	לְפָנָי
לְפָנָי	יָבֹכֶת	עַד	יְהוָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	וְיָבֹא	שַׁת	נָאֹסֵף	לְפָנָי	לְפָנָי
until even	and asked	And the LORD	said	again	Shall I go up				
H6153	H7592	H3068	H559	H3254	H5066				
בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	אֶחָד	אֶחָד	וַיֹּאמֶר	לְפָנָי	לְפָנָי	לְפָנָי	לְפָנָי
לִמְלֹתָם	עַם	עַם	אֶחָד	אֶחָד	said				
to battle	H5973	And the children	of Benjamin	my brother					
H4421		H1121	H1144	H251	H559				
אֶלְיוֹן	עַל	יְהוָה							
And the LORD	Go up	H413							
H3068	H5927								

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 7:6 (References Lord): And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

Hosea 5:15 (Parallel theme): I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.