

Judges 20:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

Analysis

Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword (כָּלָם שְׁלֵפִי קָרְבָּה, kullam sholefei charev, 'all of them drawers of sword')—another devastating defeat! Israel loses 18,000 more warriors, bringing total casualties to 40,000 from their 400,000-man force. Benjamin remains dominant despite 15-to-1 numerical disadvantage.

The second defeat is even more shocking than the first because it follows specific consultation where Israel wept before the LORD and received permission to 'go up.' This demonstrates that God sometimes allows repeated failure to break stubborn self-will and drive us to complete surrender. Israel's two defeats cost 40,000 lives—more casualties than Benjamin's entire army (26,700). This catastrophic loss finally drives them to proper seeking in verses 26-28: fasting, burnt offerings, peace offerings, direct inquiry through the high priest, and explicit question about victory. God's pedagogy uses painful consequences to teach that religious activity without heart humility accomplishes nothing. When shallow seeking persists despite initial failure, God may intensify discipline until we learn to seek Him properly.

Historical Context

The combined loss of 40,000 warriors represented 10% of Israel's force—devastating but not army-destroying. Such casualties would typically cause ancient armies to withdraw and negotiate. That Israel persisted shows extraordinary commitment to covenant justice, yet also reveals dangerous pride that wouldn't accept that their approach needed fundamental revision. Benjamin's continued success emboldened their defiance, making eventual reconciliation harder.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. When does God intensify discipline through repeated defeats to break your stubborn self-will?
2. How many painful lessons must you endure before you move from shallow seeking to complete surrender?
3. What does it take for you to recognize that your fundamental approach, not just your effort, needs correction?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּצֵא	וְיַעֲשֵׂה	בְּתִים	לִקְרָאת	מִן	בְּגִבְעָה	בַּיּוֹם
went forth	And Benjamin		against	H4480	them out of Gibeah	day
H3318	H1144		H7125		H1390	H3117
הַשְׁנִית	בְּבִנֵּי	בְּבִנֵּי	וְשִׁחְתֵּת	עַד	וְשָׁרָא	שָׁמְנָה
the second	and destroyed down	of the children	of Israel	H5750	again eighteen	
H8145	H7843	H1121	H3478		H8083	
רֵשֶׁת	אֶל	אֶל	כָּל	אֵלֶּה	שֶׁלְפִי	קָרְבָּן
thousand	men	to the ground	H3605	H428	all these drew	the sword
H6240	H505	H776			H8025	H2719

Additional Cross-References

Judges 20:21 (References Israel): And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

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