

Judges 20:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days,

Analysis

The children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days) (וְשָׁם אַרְוֹן בְּרִית־יְהָוָה יְמִינֵי קָהָם)—parenthetical note explaining why Bethel: the ark was stationed there. The ark represented God's presence, His throne (1 Samuel 4:4), and the place where He met with Israel (Exodus 25:22). Its mention emphasizes that this inquiry occurs in God's manifest presence, unlike earlier perfunctory consultations.

The reference to the ark underscores the theological significance: Israel finally approaches God at the proper place, with proper attitude, seeking genuine guidance rather than procedural approval. Earlier inquiries may have been conducted without the ark present or without approaching it properly. Now, broken by defeat, they come to the very throne of God. This illustrates that location matters—not because God is confined to places, but because designated places of His presence require approaching Him on His terms, not ours. The chapter's structure moves from casual consultation → weeping → weeping with fasting and sacrifice at the ark. Progressive brokenness leads to progressively proper worship.

Historical Context

The ark's presence at Bethel rather than Shiloh (where the tabernacle stood, Joshua 18:1) is unusual and unexplained. It was possibly brought for this national emergency. The ark represented Yahweh's throne and contained the tablets of the

covenant (Deuteronomy 10:1-5). Its presence made Bethel the legitimate place for national inquiry, similar to how Israel later carried the ark into battle (1 Samuel 4:3-11—with disastrous results when done presumptuously).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does approaching God 'where He is' rather than on your terms change your seeking?
2. What does it mean to come before God's manifest presence with proper humility?
3. How has progressive brokenness led you to progressively proper worship?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשְׁאַל	וְ	בְּנֵי	יִשְׁבָּא	לְ	בַּיּוֹתְהָ	וְ	מִשְׁמָרָה	אַרְוֹן
enquired	And the children	of Israel	of the LORD				for the ark	
H7592	H1121	H3478	H3068				H727	
בְּרִית	בְּאָלֹהִים	בְּרִית	בְּמִתְּהֻרְּבָה				בְּרִית	:
of the covenant	of God	was there in those days					H1992	
H1285	H430	H3117						

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 18:1 (References Israel): And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.

Judges 20:18 (References God): And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up first.

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