

Judges 20:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house.

Analysis

All the people arose as one man (כָּל־עַם שָׁכָד, ke'ish echad, 'as one man')—a phrase emphasizing unprecedented unity. **We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house**—the assembled tribes vow to remain mobilized until justice is achieved. The parallelism between 'tent' (לִּהְיוֹת, ohel) and 'house' (בַּיִת, bayit) covers all domestic arrangements, emphasizing complete commitment.

Israel's instantaneous unity contrasts sharply with their typical tribal fragmentation throughout Judges. When Deborah needed help, several tribes refused (5:15-17). When Gideon fought Midian, Ephraim complained (8:1). Yet now, 400,000 warriors unite immediately for civil war against Benjamin. This reveals a disturbing truth: it's easier to unite against a common enemy than to unite for God. Outrage creates instant solidarity; sustained obedience requires continuous discipline. Israel's unity here, while appearing commendable, lacks the most crucial element—they haven't adequately sought God's wisdom. Unanimous consensus doesn't equal divine approval. Crowds can be unanimously wrong. The phrase 'as one man' will be repeated throughout chapter 20, but their unity in strategy doesn't compensate for their incomplete seeking of God's will.

Historical Context

The phrase 'as one man' appears seven times in Judges 20 (vv. 1, 8, 11), emphasizing the unprecedented nature of this tribal unity. Throughout the book, Israel's tribal confederation operated loosely, with each tribe maintaining autonomy. Only grave covenant violations—like this crime echoing Sodom's wickedness—could unite them so completely. However, this unity would exact a terrible price: nearly 40,000 Israelite casualties plus the near-extinction of Benjamin.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. When do you find it easier to unite against enemies than to unite in sustained obedience to God?
2. How does unanimous consensus sometimes substitute for genuine seeking of God's will?
3. What distinguishes godly unity from mob solidarity driven by outrage?

Interlinear Text

ל א יֵאמֶר אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶת כָּל יְיָקָם
arose H3605 **And all the people** H5971 **We will not any** H376 **as one** H259 **saying** H559 H3808

אִישׁ אֶת יָדָם וְלֹא הָיָה לָהֶם
H1980 **We will not any** H376 **to his tent** H168 H3808 **of us turn** H5493 **We will not any** H376

לְבֵיתוֹ:
into his house
H1004

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (Parallel theme): Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Judges 20:1 (Parallel theme): Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpeh.