

Judges 7:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

Analysis

God commands Gideon to dismiss anyone who is 'fearful and afraid' (yare vechared, יָרֵא וְחָרֵד). This echoes Deuteronomy 20:8's provision allowing fearful soldiers to return home lest they discourage others. The result: 22,000 depart, leaving only 10,000. This massive reduction (68% loss) demonstrates that many who initially responded lacked genuine faith for combat. The Hebrew yashuv (יָשׁוּב, 'return') suggests they went back to normal life rather than forward to battle. God doesn't want reluctant warriors whose fear spreads defeatism.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare required not just numerical superiority but morale and cohesion. Fearful soldiers could trigger panic and rout in pre-modern armies lacking disciplined formations. Moses' law recognized this psychology, permitting fearful men to leave before battle. That 22,000 chose to depart despite the Midianite threat shows the depth of their terror—presumably these men saw the overwhelming enemy numbers and lost courage.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's dismissal of the fearful demonstrate His priority on faith over mere numbers?
2. What modern Christian service accepts 'volunteers' who lack genuine commitment, weakening effectiveness?
3. Why is honest self-assessment and voluntary withdrawal from service sometimes more honoring to God than reluctant participation?

Interlinear Text

מִי	לֵאמֹר	הָעָם	בְּאָזְנוֹ י	נֵא	קֹרֵא	וְעַתָּה
						ה
H4310	saying	H5971	in the ears	H4994	proclaim	H6258
	H559		H241		H7121	
מִהַר	וְיִצְפּוּ	וַיָּשָׁבוּ	וְיִחַדּוּ	יִרְאֶה		
from mount	and depart early	And there returned	and afraid	Whosoever is fearful		
H2022	H6852	H7725	H2730	H3373		
וּשְׁנַיִם	עֶשְׂרִים	הָעָם	מִן	וַיָּשָׁבוּ	הַגִּלְעָד	ד
and two	twenty	of the people	H4480	And there returned	Gilead	
H8147	H6242	H5971		H7725	H1568	
וַיִּשְׁאַרְוּ	אֶלְפֵי יָם	אֶלְפֵי יָם	וְעֶשְׂרֵת	אֶלְפֵי יָם		
	and there remained	thousand	ten	thousand	thousand	
	H7604	H505	H6235	H505	H505	

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 20:8 (Parallel theme): And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

Revelation 17:14 (Parallel theme): These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

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