

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 וְכָרֵד). 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 (ישׁוּב, '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

לֹאָמַר רַבָּע מִלְּאָמֵן וְעַתָּה הַזְּבָדָה אָמַר בְּאַזְנֵי
proclaim Now therefore go to in the ears of the people saying
H6258 H7121 H4994 H241 H5971 H4310
H559

מִן רֵאשֵׁי רָאשֵׁי מִלְּאָמֵן וְעַתָּה
Whosoever is fearful and afraid And there returned and depart early from mount
H3373 H2730 H7725 H6852 H2022

וְשָׁב יְמִינֵי מִלְּאָמֵן עָשָׂר יְמִינֵי מִלְּאָמֵן
Gilead And there returned twenty and two
H1568 H7725 H4480 H5971 H6242 H8147

וְשָׁאַרְוָה אֶלְף יְמִינֵי מִלְּאָמֵן
thousand ten thousand and there remained
H505 H6235 H505 H7604

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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