

Judges 8:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

Analysis

And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

Gideon's tactical approach demonstrates military wisdom combined with faith. The phrase **by the way of them that dwelt in tents** (derekh hashshokenim ba-ohalim, **דֶּרֶךְ הַשְׁׁכָנִים בְּאֹהֶלִים**) indicates he approached from the nomadic regions—unexpected direction from deeper desert rather than from Israel's settled territory. This route paralleled how the "children of the east" themselves operated, using their own tactical preferences against them. Nobah and Jogbehah were towns in Transjordan (Numbers 32:35, 42), marking the campaign's easternmost extent.

The success hinged on the enemy's false security: **for the host was secure** (vehamachaneh hayah betach, **וְהַמָּחָנֶה הָיָה בְּטַח**, "security, safety, carelessness") often appears in prophetic warnings against false confidence (Jeremiah 49:31, Ezekiel 38:8, 11, 14). The Midianite remnant, having fled far from Israel's territory, believed themselves safe. They didn't expect Gideon's exhausted 300 to pursue so far into the wilderness. This complacency enabled the surprise attack.

Theologically, this passage warns against presumptuous security. The Midianites' false confidence mirrors the spiritual complacency Jesus warned against: "Therefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians

10:12). Satan prowls seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), particularly targeting those who feel secure in partial victories or comfortable circumstances. Paul urged: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). Victory requires vigilance, not complacency.

Historical Context

Nobah was named after the Manassite who conquered Kenath and renamed it (Numbers 32:42). Jogbehah was assigned to Gad (Numbers 32:35). These locations in Transjordan's eastern frontier placed them near the desert margins where nomadic and settled cultures met. Gideon's approach from this direction exploited terrain knowledge—the Midianites expected pursuit from the west (across the Jordan from Israel) but not from deeper in the east where their own allies dwelt.

The element of surprise was crucial in ancient warfare. Armies camped "securely" relaxed vigilance, posted fewer guards, and might even scatter for foraging. The Midianite assumption that they had outrun pursuit created vulnerability. Gideon's willingness to venture deep into unfamiliar territory with only 300 exhausted men required extraordinary faith and courage—trusting God's promise over human prudence. This mirrors Joshua's long pursuit after the Gibeon battle (Joshua 10:9-10) where unexpected arrival created panic in enemy ranks.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Gideon's unexpected approach from the east illustrate wisdom in spiritual warfare—attacking the enemy where he feels most secure?
2. What does the Midianite host's false security teach about the danger of complacency after initial spiritual victories?

3. In what areas of your life might you be 'secure' in a false sense, vulnerable to spiritual attack because you've relaxed vigilance?

Interlinear Text

מִקְדָּם	בְּאָבֶל יִם	פְּשָׁכִים	וְיַעֲלֵה	גִּדְעֹן	וְיַעֲשֵׂה	וְיַעֲשֵׂה
went up	And Gideon	by the way	of them that dwelt		in tents	on the east
H5927	H1439	H1870	H7931		H168	H6924
לִנְבָּחָה	וְיַגְבְּהָה	תַּלְמִיד	אֵת	הַמְּפַתֵּח	וְמַחְנֵה	בְּיַהְוָה
of Nobah	and Jogbehah	and smote	H853	for the host	for the host	H1961
H5025	H3011	H5221		H4264	H4264	
בָּטַחַן						
was secure						
H983						

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 32:35 (Parallel theme): And Atroth, Shophan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah,

Numbers 32:42 (Parallel theme): And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

Judges 18:27 (Parallel theme): And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.