

Judges 8:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

Analysis

And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

Gideon's request to Succoth was reasonable and urgent. The phrase **Give, I pray you, loaves of bread** (תנו-נָא כְּרָתִלְחָם tenu-na kikkrot-lechem, כְּרָתִלְחָם kikkrot, "loaves, round cakes") uses the particle na (נא, "please, I pray") indicating courteous request, not demand. The term kikkrot (כְּרָתִלְחָם, "loaves, round cakes") refers to basic bread rations for soldiers. Gideon explicitly stated his men **be faint** (ayefim, עַיִפִים)—physically exhausted and requiring sustenance to continue. The pursuit of **Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian** justified the urgency; capturing these kings would decisively end the Midianite threat.

Succoth's location east of the Jordan placed it in Israelite territory (given to Gad, Joshua 13:27), making its inhabitants covenant brothers obligated to support Gideon's divinely appointed mission. Deuteronomy 23:3-4 condemned Moab and Ammon for refusing Israel bread and water during the Exodus. Similarly, Succoth's refusal (verse 6) violated covenant solidarity. The city's name (meaning "booths" or "tabernacles") ironically evoked Israel's wilderness wandering when God provided manna—a provision Succoth now refused to emulate.

Theologically, Succoth's refusal illustrates the tragedy of God's people refusing to

support His work. Jesus warned: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me... And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:40, 42). Conversely, refusing support for God's servants brings judgment.

Historical Context

Succoth (modern Tell Deir Alla) was located in the Jordan Valley north of the Jabbok River, approximately 20-25 miles east of the Jordan. The city controlled agricultural lowlands and trade routes, making it relatively prosperous. Its Gadite inhabitants should have recognized Gideon's authority and supported Israel's campaign against the oppressors who had ravaged their lands for seven years (Judges 6:1).

The request for bread was standard in ancient Near Eastern hospitality and military cooperation. Allies provided food, water, and supplies for armies passing through their territory. David later received such support from Barzillai during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 17:27-29). Refusing such requests indicated either hostility or fear—Succoth evidently doubted Gideon's ability to defeat the Midianite kings and feared reprisal if they supported him.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Succoth's refusal to support God's work despite being covenant people mirror modern believers who withhold resources from kingdom advance?
2. What fears or doubts cause Christians to refuse supporting God's servants or ministries?
3. How should the church balance wisdom in stewardship with generosity toward those serving in God's mission?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	לְאַנְשֵׁי	סְכָנָה	תִּתְּבֹּנְא	תִּתְּבֹּנְא	כְּכָרְתִּים	לְחֵם	וְתִּתְּבֹּנְא
And he said	unto the men	of Succoth	Give	H4994	I pray you loaves	of bread	
H559	H582	H5523	H5414		H3603		H3899
לְעַם	בְּרַגְלֵי	אֲשֶׁר	בַּיּוֹם	עִירֵי יְמִינָה	הַמִּן	וְאַנְכִּי	
unto the people	H834	that follow	H3588	me for they be faint	H1992	H595	
H5971		H7272		H5889			
רַדְךָ	אַחֲרֵי	זֶבָה	וְצַלְמָנָה	מֶלֶךְ	מַדִּין		
and I am pursuing	after	Zebah	and Zalmunna	kings	of Midian		
H7291	H310	H2078	H6759	H4428	H4080		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 33:17 (Parallel theme): And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Psalms 60:6 (Parallel theme): God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.