

Numbers 25:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

Analysis

The ongoing command 'For they vex you with their wiles' (continuing from verse 16) explains the reason for warfare: Midian's strategic deception. The Hebrew *nekel* (wiles/craftiness) indicates cunning schemes. This wasn't random conflict but calculated spiritual warfare. Midian couldn't defeat Israel militarily (Balaam's failed curses proved that), so they used seduction. This reveals Satan's strategy—when frontal assault fails, use subtle corruption. Paul warns similarly: 'lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices' (2 Corinthians 2:11). Recognizing spiritual strategies is essential to resisting them.

Historical Context

The incident at Baal Peor (where Midianite women seduced Israelite men into idolatry and fornication) resulted in 24,000 Israelite deaths by plague (25:9). This devastating judgment showed God's zero tolerance for syncretism. The event became a proverbial warning throughout Scripture (Deuteronomy 4:3; Joshua 22:17; Psalm 106:28-29; Hosea 9:10) about the dangers of sexual and spiritual compromise.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do we recognize subtle spiritual strategies versus obvious attacks?
2. What modern 'wiles' seek to corrupt God's people through seduction rather than persecution?
3. How can we develop discernment to recognize and resist spiritual schemes?

Interlinear Text

אוֹתָם: וְהִכַּתְּ מִן־מִצְרַיִם בְּמִצְרַיִם אֶת־אֶרְרָן וְ

Vex H853 the Midianites and smite H853
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