

Numbers 31:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.

Analysis

Moses' anger against the officers for sparing Midianite women reveals the seriousness of the seduction that had caused Israel's plague. These women had 'caused the children of Israel...to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor' (verse 16), making their preservation dangerous. Moses' rebuke demonstrates that mercy toward God's enemies can constitute disobedience when God has commanded judgment. This difficult passage teaches that sometimes love for God requires executing His judgments without sentimental compromise.

Historical Context

The Midianite women's role in seducing Israel to Baal worship (chapter 25) motivated this harsh treatment. The command to execute them seems severe by modern standards but represented holy war judgment on those who had deliberately attacked Israel spiritually. This parallels the later command to utterly destroy Canaanites who would lead Israel into idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:1-5). Such passages must be understood in their Old Testament context of God's direct theocratic governance, not as templates for church practice.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you reconcile God's love and mercy with passages describing divine judgment on His enemies?
2. What principles about spiritual warfare and resisting seduction apply today, even though the literal application differs?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי מֵשֶׁה וַיַּקְרַב
was wroth And Moses H5921 with the officers of the host and captains
H7107 H4872 H6485 H2428 H8269

בַּאלפִים וְאֶלְף וְאֶלְף
over thousands and captains over hundreds which came from the battle
H505 H8269 H3967 H935 H6635 H4421

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