

Numbers 31:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian.

Analysis

Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites—The Hebrew hechalletsu (הַלְּצֹעַ, arm/equip) comes from chalats, meaning to strengthen, equip, or draw out for battle. This is holy war (milchemet mitzvah, מִלְחֵמָה מִצְוָה), not conquest for territory but **avenge the LORD of Midian** (niqmat-YHWH, נִקְמַת־יְהָוָה).

The offense being avenged is Midian's seduction of Israel into Baal-Peor worship (Numbers 25), which brought plague killing 24,000. This was spiritual warfare—judgment on those who sought Israel's destruction through idolatry. God's vengeance (not human revenge) executes justice through Israel as His covenant instrument (Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:19).

Historical Context

This military campaign, Moses' last recorded act before death (v. 2), occurred around 1406 BC at the end of forty years' wandering. Midianite leaders, including Balaam (v. 8), had conspired with Moab to curse Israel (Numbers 22-24) and then seduced them into sexual immorality and idolatry (Numbers 25:1-9, 31:16).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does framing this as "the LORD's vengeance" rather than human revenge shape your understanding of divine justice?
2. What does Israel's role as God's instrument of judgment teach about His sovereignty in using nations for His purposes?
3. How do you distinguish between righteous opposition to evil and personal vengeance in your own life?

Interlinear Text

מִאֱתָקָם הַפְּלָצָה וְלֹאָמָר רַבָּנִי
spake And Moses H413 unto the people saying H5971 H559
H1696 H4872 H5921 H2502 H853

עַל יְהִי לְאַבָּא אֶנְשֵׁים
of yourselves unto the war H1961 H5921
H376 H6635

בְּמִדְיָן: לְתִת תְּנִקְנָתָה נִקְנָתָה הַיְהִי הַיְהִי
and let them go against the Midianites and avenge H5360 the LORD
H4080 H5414 H3068

בְּמִדְיָן:
and let them go against the Midianites
H4080

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 26:25 (Parallel theme): And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

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