

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 (חַלְלֵצוּ, arm/equip) comes from chalats, meaning to strengthen, equip, or draw out for battle. This is holy war (milchemet mitzvah, מִלְחֶמֶת מִצְוָה), not conquest for territory but **avenge the LORD of Midian** (niqmat-YHWH, נִקְמַת יְהוָה).

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

וַיִּדְבֹּר	וְ	מֹשֶׁה	אֶל	הָעָם	וְ	לֵאמֹר	וְ	הַחֲלֹצִי	אֶת	מִצְרָיִם
spake		And Moses	H413	unto the people		saying		Arm		H853
H1696		H4872		H5971		H559		H2502		
אֲנִי	וְ	לָצֵב	אֶת	וְ	יְהוָה	עַל				
H376		of yourselves	unto the war		H1961	H5921				
		H6635								
		בְּמִדְיָן:		לִתְ	נִקְמָת	יְהוָה				
		and let them go against the Midianites		and	avenge	the LORD				
		H4080		H5414	H5360	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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