

Judges 8 Commentary

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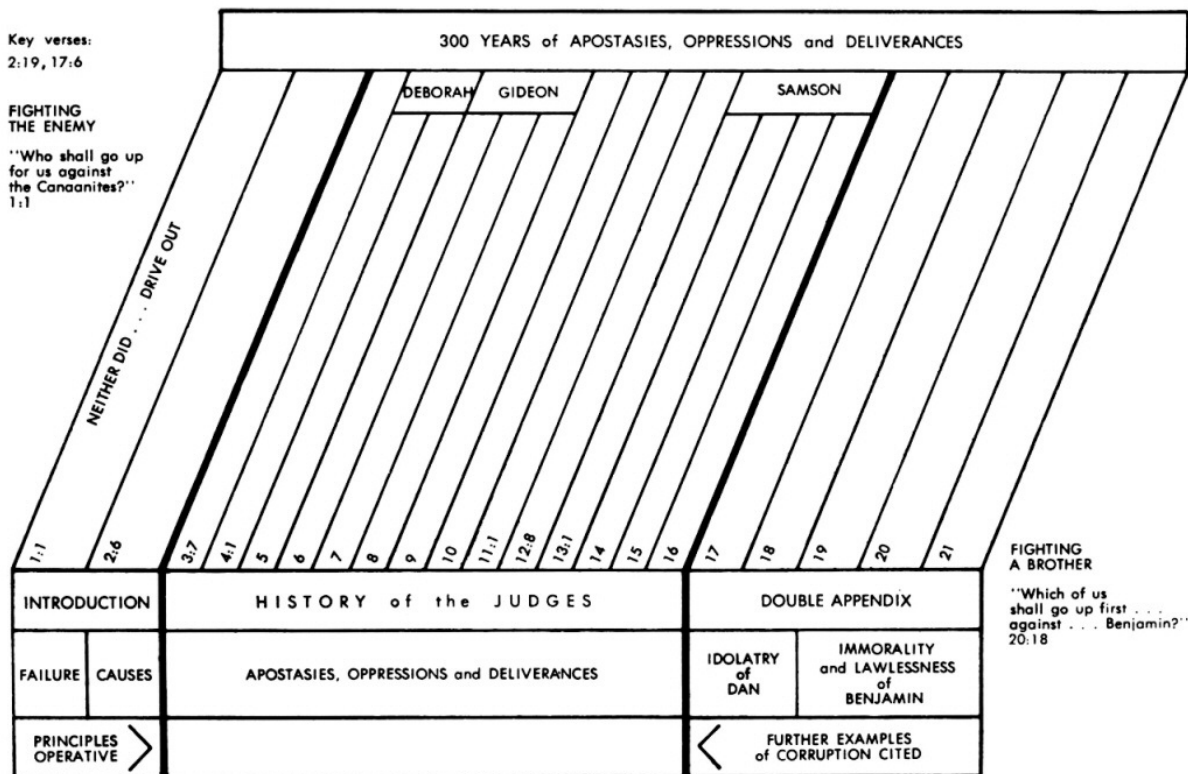


Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[Chart on Judges](#) - Charles Swindoll
[Another Overview Chart of Judges](#)

Hannah's Bible Outline

- B. Gideon (Judges 6:1-8:32)
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- C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech (Judges 8:33-16:31)
 1. Israel's idolatry (Judges 8:33-35)
 2. Shechem's submission to Abimelech (Judges 9:1-5)

Judges 8:1 Then the men of Ephraim said to him, "What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?" And they contended with him vigorously.

- the men (KJV): Jdg 12:1-6 2Sa 19:41 Job 5:2 Ec 4:4 Jas 4:5,6
- Why (KJV): etc. Heb. What thing is this thou hast done unto us, sharply. Heb. strongly.
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

The Strengths and Weaknesses of an Inconsistent Life, Judges 8:1-35

Introduction: many people live inconsistent lives. And inconsistency causes all kinds of problems, problems both for the inconsistent person and for those who observe his inconsistency. All kinds of guilt and problems arise for the person who lives an up and down, contradictory life. If a person is up one day and down the next day, achieving one week and failing the next week, feeling pleased one moment and displeased the next moment—the person faces a miserable life and causes misery for others. The sense of failure and guilt, of coming short, is always within the heart of an inconsistent person. And tragically, while the inconsistent person is living in failure or sin and evil, he is influencing others to fail or commit sin and evil. Inconsistency—a life of strengths and weaknesses—was one of the major traits of Gideon. A picture of his fluctuating life, of both his strengths and weaknesses, is painted in the present passage of Scripture. This passage stands as a warning to us against living an inconsistent life. - Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary

1. Gideon was a man who sought peace—to avoid controversy—among God's people (Judges 8:1-3).

2. Gideon was a man who warned scoffers and unbelievers (Judges 8:4-9).
3. Gideon was a man who endured, persevered until he conquered the enemy (Judges 8:10-12).
4. Gideon was a man who executed justice (Judges 8:13-21).
5. Gideon was a man who acknowledged the Lord and His right to rule over His people (Judges 8:22-23).
6. Gideon was a man who had an inconsistent testimony and witness (Judges 8:24-32).
7. Gideon was a man who had a tragic, inconsistent legacy: his rule was soon followed by apostasy and rebellion against God (Judges 8:33-35).

THEN: The chronology in chapter 8 seems to be as follows: Gideon's pursuit of the two kings (Jdg 8:4-12); his disciplining of the defiant Jews on his journey home (Jdg 8:13, 14, 15, 16, 17); the protest of the Ephraimites after he arrived home (Jdg 8:1, 2, 3); the slaying of the kings (Jdg 8:18, 19, 20, 21); and Gideon's "retirement" (Jdg 8:22-35). Each of these events presented a new challenge to Gideon, and he responded differently to each one.

THE MEN OF EPHRAIM: [See location of the Tribe of Ephaim on this color map.](#) The tribe of Ephraim had a proud heritage (Jdg 1:22) and felt snubbed and insulted by Gideon's failure to call on them earlier (Jdg 8:1). They had cooperated honorably with Ehud (Jdg 3:26, 27, 28, 29-note) and Barak (Jdg 5:13, 14-note) and may have wondered why they were left out this time or perhaps they were eager for some of the rich Midianite plunder that went to the victor.

Spurgeon - We have some friends, like these men of Ephraim, who do not like being left out of the battle for the Lord. They say, "Why are we not asked for our help? Why are we not allowed to take our share?" These are very good people; but we have known some of them who have made these enquiries rather late in the day. These Ephraimites knew all about the war, and they might have volunteered to help Gideon, and we should have been glad of the earlier help of some who tarried till the victory was won.

SAID TO HIM, "WHAT IS THIS THING YOU HAVE DONE TO US, NOT CALLING US WHEN YOU WENT TO FIGHT AGAINST MIDIAN: Note this story is an excellent illustration of the truth found in (Pr 15:1) instructing us that a gentle or soft answer is always in order when we sense thunderclouds of wrath rising in the other person.

Ephraim, however, missed out on acquiring some valuable spoils of war from over 100,000 soldiers, and this may have been what irritated them. (Usually when people criticize something you've done, there's a personal reason behind their criticism; and you may never find out what the real reason was.) Since David's unselfish law governing the dividing of the spoils of war hadn't been established yet (1Sa 30:21, 22, 23, 24, 25), those who didn't participate in the battle didn't share in the loot. When the men of Ephraim

should have been thanking Gideon for delivering the nation, they were criticizing him and adding to his burdens.

Gary Inrig - Suddenly, with the reaction of the Ephraimites, the entire tone of the passage changes. God had given His people an astounding victory that should have produced a festival of praise. Instead, they allow petty tribal disputes to rob God of His rightful glory and the people of their joy. At this time in history, **Ephraim** was the largest, the most important, and apparently the most arrogant of the tribes. They would be the first to tell you how important they were. After all, the **tabernacle** was located in their territory at Shiloh, and they could claim the great **Joshua** as an Ephraimite. They had been allowed a part in God's great deliverance. But rather than rejoicing, they came to Gideon with a smoldering complaint: "Why have you treated us like this? Why didn't you call us when you went to fight Midian?" On the surface, it may seem like a valid, albeit petty, question. Ephraim had not been one of the tribes summoned by Gideon in Jdg 6:34-35; he had gone to the tribes more directly affected by the Midianite invasion. The bad attitude they show here may also have contributed to his decision!

AND THEY CONTENTED WITH HIM VIGOROUSLY: interesting they contended with he was name "let Baal CONTEND". Gideon called Ephraim to capture the two famous princes, which they did. But they were provoked! How easy it is for the flesh to act even when God has given a great victory. Gideon could have "told them off" but instead he practiced Pr15:1 ("A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."). It is better to control our feelings than to conquer a city (Pr16:32 "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city."); and if Gideon had offended his brethren, he might never win them back (Pr18:19 "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle."). Godly leaders must know how to control their own feelings.

Contrast Gideon, who placates the wrath of this tribe (Jdg 8:2-3), with Jephthah, who brings humiliation and defeat to it (Jdg 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-note).

Gary Inrig on Ephraim's complaint and the practical application - Their complaint was petty and self-serving, motivated almost entirely by personal jealousy and injured pride. Gideon had won an astonishing victory, one from which Ephraim would greatly profit. But there was no joy at what God had done through Gideon, no enthusiasm for the wonderful victory God had given His people, no gladness and thanksgiving before God, no spontaneous hymns of praise to their good and gracious God. **There was only bitterness of heart and petty jealousy**. There may also have been greed, with Ephraim wanting to make their claim on the war booty. To put it bluntly, Ephraim was totally selfish. They put a priority on their own perceived problems, and they wanted Gideon to stop the battle until their little need was met. I wish this were a strange and unique response. It isn't. It is sadly true that in a time of victory the greatest danger often comes from within the circle of God's professing people. They don't see what God is doing; all they can see is their own cause or convenience, and they view everything from how it impacts their own interests. Gideon had every right to be absolutely furious with those

people. After all, it is easy to sit back and criticize after the battle has been fought, to be brave when the victory is won, to be a spectator who points out all the mistakes of others. **There is nothing Satan loves more than to see Christians fighting with one another.** In the book of Acts, after Satan had completely failed with various attacks on the church from the outside, what did he do? He tried to destroy the unity of believers over the actions of Ananias and Sapphira. When that did not work, he stirred up a fuss over the language tensions between Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking Christians and the way widows were being looked after. **If we are fighting with each other, we are not pursuing the enemy. Satan can cause us to be so confused that we believe fellow believers are our enemies.** This is not a tired tactic from the past. Satan uses it time and again. **When people are trusting Christ, young Christians are being disciplined, and established believers are growing and maturing, Satan will bend every effort to sow disunity.** He does not care why we are divided, he just cares that we are. It may be division because of pride or hurt feelings or over our differences economically, socially, or educationally. It could be over personalities or differences in minor doctrines. But Satan loves to see us divided. (Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay)

Warren Wiersbe provides an interesting analysis of Judges 8:

It takes all kinds to make a nation (or a church), and a leader must know how to handle each one, especially after a great victory.

The critical (Jdg 8:1-3)

They were angry with Gideon because they were left out and did not share in the glory. Gideon tactfully gave them the “soft answer” that healed the wounds and prevented division (Pr 15:1; Ep 4:1, 2, 3-note, Ep 4:29-note). Better to do that than to start another war.

The cynical (Jdg 8:4-9)

They said, “You have not yet won the battle, so why should we help you?” The men of Succoth had no faith in God or appreciation for Gideon and his men, and their lack of love cost them dearly.

The cowardly (Jdg 8:10-21)

Executing two famous kings would be a great way to start a military career, but the lad was too immature to carry it out. We wonder if Gideon remembered his own fears and God’s patience with him.

The compromising (Jdg 8:22-35)

Unlike Abraham, Gideon became covetous and asked for a generous share of the loot (Ge14:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24). This led to idolatry and apostasy because the heart of man is ever ready to indulge in sin.

Judges 8:2 But he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you?"

Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?

- What (KJV): 1Co 13:4-7 Ga 5:14,15 Php 2:2,3 Jas 1:19,20 3:13-18
- Is not the (KJV): That is, the Ephraimites have performed more important services than Gideon and his men had achieved.
- Abiezer (KJV): Jdg 6:11,34
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

BUT HE SAID TO THEM, WHAT HAVE I DONE NOW IN COMPARISON WITH YOU:

Perhaps Gideon's immediate feelings to Ephraim being "in his face" weren't that cordial, but he controlled himself and treated his brothers with kindness and his reply (Pr 15:1, 16:32) stands in marked contrast to that of Jephthah (Jdg 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-note). Gideon might have questioned the Ephraimites' motives by asking them why they had not taken action on their own during the long seven-year oppression.

Spurgeon - Gideon answered them very kindly and very wisely. He flattered them he attached great importance to what they had done, and took little credit to himself for his valiant service. In this he showed his self-command and his discretion. When persons chide sharply, it is a pity to chide back again; the best way of dealing with them is with a soft answer to turn away their wrath.

IS NOT THE GLEANING OF THE GRAPES OF EPHRAIM BETTER THAN THE VINTAGE OF ABIEZER: "Gleaning" is used here figuratively by Gideon of Ephraim's military achievements. Notice that the phrase "of the grapes" has been added by NASB translators but is not in original Hebrew.

NET Note - Ephraim's leftover grapes are better quality than Abiezer's harvest. Gideon employs an agricultural metaphor. He argues that Ephraim's mopping up operations, though seemingly like the inferior grapes which are missed initially by the harvesters or left for the poor, are actually more noteworthy than the military efforts of Gideon's family.

In a sense Ephraim received the "leftovers" (NIV, "gleanings"). These, however, were more substantial than the initial victory ("harvest") won by his little Abiezrite clan. Gideon calmed their anger and avoided the civil war that later flared up between Ephraim and Manasseh (Jdg 12:4-6-note).

Judges 8:3 "God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

- God (KJV): Jdg 7:24,25 Ps 44:3 115:1 118:14-16 Jn 4:37 Ro 12:3,6 15:18,19 Php 2:3
- Then (KJV): Pr 15:1 16:32 25:11,15
- anger (KJV): Heb. spirit
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

GOD HAS GIVEN: Note that Gideon (like the verses below) has a proper perspective of Who this victory belongs to and Who it is Who is to receive the glory.

"Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Thy name give glory because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth." (Ps 115:1-[note](#))

"The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. (Psalms 118:14, 15, 16-[note](#))

"For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Romans 12:3-note

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:3-note)

THE LEADERS OF MIDIAN, OREB (raven) AND ZEEB (wolf) INTO YOUR HANDS AND WHAT WAS I ABLE TO DO IN COMPARISON WITH YOU: Jealousy is a hindrance to the work of God, fostering disunity and distracting attention from the main task of the people of God. With Gideon's gentle answer (Pr 15:1), he averted conflict and set a noble example for every Christian leader.

THEN THEIR ANGER TOWARD HIM SUBSIDED WHEN HE SAID THAT: Literally "Then their spirits relaxed from against him, when he spoke this word." This suggest that Gideon was one who at this stage of his spiritual pilgrimage was in control of his spirit.

It's sad when brothers declare war on each other after they've stood together to defeat the enemy.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps 133:1-[note](#))

It didn't cost Gideon much to swallow his pride and compliment the men of Ephraim. He told them that their capturing Oreb and Zeeb was a greater feat than anything the men had done from his hometown of Abiezer. Peace was restored and Gideon returned to the more important tasks at hand.

In Poor Richard's Almanack (1734), **Benjamin Franklin** wrote:

Take this remark from Richard, poor and lame,
Whate'er's begun in anger ends in shame.

And **King Solomon** wrote, "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop

contention before a quarrel starts” (Pr 17:14, NKJV).

Inrig - Gideon’s response is both admirable and sad. He could have chosen to put those Ephraimites in their place with a few choice words or to defend himself by a blistering attack on their sinful, selfish attitudes. But he utterly refused to do that. Instead, he shrewdly minimizes his role and maximizes theirs: “What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren’t the gleanings of Ephraim’s grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer? God gave Oreb and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?” Do you think that really makes sense? Was it really greater for Ephraim to capture and kill two military commanders than for Gideon to attack 135,000 men with only 300, to bring about a massive slaughter of the enemy and to cause the invaders to flee the land? Of course not. Gideon is obviously trying to keep this smoldering resentment from exploding into full fire, and so his words display a careful and shrewd diplomacy. But we learn two great lessons from Gideon.

1. The unity of God’s people is more important than personal pride. So what if he was wronged, mistreated, and criticized? It was more important for God’s people to be one than for Gideon to be vindicated. What a great lesson for us to learn. None of us likes to be wronged or misrepresented the way Gideon was. But how much better is it to take that hurt to the Lord and let Him deal with it than to insist on my rights at the expense of dividing God’s people?

2. We must not take our eyes off the enemy. Quite frankly, Gideon did not have time to fight with Ephraim. He had his eyes on the Midianites. Gideon refused to be deflected from God’s call for his life. That really was Ephraim’s problem. They had a lot of time to discuss their feelings because they had no burden to do God’s work. They had no sense of God’s purpose for them, so naturally they were out of step with Gideon. Often those who find much to criticize in the lives of other people are those who have no sense of urgency about God’s call for their lives.

Someone once told of a conversation he had with Dr. Charles Fuller, a man greatly used by God in radio evangelism. During the conversation, a man who had been publicly attacking Dr. Fuller was mentioned. Fuller said, “Yes, God bless him.” Another man said, “You don’t seem too upset, Dr. Fuller.” And Fuller replied, “Why should I let someone else decide how I’m going to act?” What a great attitude for every believer to cultivate! Yet that is not all that must be said. Gideon’s diplomacy was successful, but in the process, he focused entirely on the horizontal. He doesn’t insist on the credit for himself, but neither does he give it to the Lord, where it truly belonged. He doesn’t direct the Ephraimites to God as the source of victory, nor does he make it clear that he had been acting under a divine commission. This is not nitpicking. Disunity will always occur when our perspective is horizontal, not vertical. **The major task of a leader is to make sure God is appropriately honored for all that He has done. Gideon’s failure to do that here**

reflects an issue that will grow far more serious. With that attack met, Gideon crossed the Jordan and continued his pursuit of Midian. Satan had not given up yet. He often tries to draw us into division where there ought to be unity; he also loves to draw us into misplaced priorities, where we subtly substitute our cause for God's cause and pursue the wrong objectives or do the right thing for the wrong reasons.

Judges 8:4 Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, weary yet pursuing.

- faint (KJV): 1Sa 14:28,29,31,32 30:10 2Co 4:8,9,16 Ga 6:9 Heb 12:1-4
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

THEN GIDEON AND THE 300 MEN WHO WERE WITH HIM: God had said, By these 300 men will I deliver you (Judges 7:7).

CAME TO THE JORDAN AND CROSSED OVER - Literally "And Gideon arrived at the Jordan, crossing over, he and the three hundred men who were with him, exhausted and chasing." The English past perfect ("had crossed") is used because this verse flashes back chronologically to an event that preceded the hostile encounter described in Jdg 8:1-3. (Note that Jdg 7:25 assumes Gideon had already crossed the Jordan.) (NET Note)

WEARY YET PURSUING The tiny army was now some 40 miles from the hill of Moreh when they came to Succoth, just north of the Jabbok River. Worn out from the long chase, Gideon asked these residents of Gad for some provisions. The men of Succoth surely must have reasoned that the fleeing Midianites would soon regroup and easily defeat the makeshift army of only 300 thrown together by Gideon. Any assistance given to Gideon would implicate Succoth and bring certain retaliation from the feared nomads. And so fear of man brought a snare to Succoth (and Penuel) for which they paid dearly. Compare Angel of the Lord cursing Meroz (Jdg 5:23-note) because they did not come to the help of the LORD. In a sense Succoth & Penuel are not coming to the "help of the LORD" because Gideon is the LORD's emissary and deliverer to accomplish the LORD's work (Jdg 6:14,16). So even as Saul persecution of believers was tantamount to persecution of Jesus (Acts 9:4,5), Succoth & Penuel's refusal to help and taunting was an affront to the Most High God of Israel. Having said all this it seems that there is therefore some justification for Gideon's subsequent seemingly harsh punishment of these "traitors".

Inrig observes that "Midian had been completely removed as a threat. They had lost more than one hundred thousand warriors. Their fighting capacity had been destroyed. In the light of what follows, **it seems that Gideon has begun to pursue a personal vendetta. It is notable that the Lord plays no part in these events, and on the east side of the Jordan a very different Gideon begins to emerge.**" (Ibid)

Judges 8:5 And he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to

the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

- Succoth (KJV): Ge 33:17 Ps 60:6
- loaves (KJV): Ge 14:18 Dt 23:4 1Sa 25:18 2Sa 17:28,29 3Jn 1:6-8
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND HE SAID TO THE MEN OF SUCCOTH: East of the Jordan and North of the Jabbok River. Succoth is in the territory of the tribe of Gad so these were Gideon's "brethren" not enemies. Their response shows how sin had begun to corrode the tribal unity so that every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Inrig - The people of Succoth should have been delighted by Gideon's achievements. Even though they had not fallen under the direct control of the enemy, the Midianites had been removed as a threat from the region, and at least the people of Succoth could have delighted to support the band that had brought freedom to their fellow Israelites. Although these were people who claimed to belong to a larger family, they had no loyalty to the larger community of faith at all. They should have been excited about what God had done through Gideon. Instead, there was no thankfulness to God, no trust in God, no mention of God. Even the lowest level of human kindness required that they help Gideon, their fellow Israelite. (Ibid)

PLEASE (I beg you = marker of emphasis) **GIVE LOAVES OF BREAD TO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE FOLLOWING ME:** The Ammonites and Moabites, relatives of the Jews through Lot, failed to help Israel with food; and God declared war on them (Dt 23:3, 4, 5, 6). Hospitality is one of the basic laws of the East, and custom demands that the people meet the needs of strangers as well as relatives. Hospitality was also an important ministry in the early church, for there were no hotels where guests might stay; and in times of persecution, many visitors were fleeing. (Ro12:13-note; 1Ti 5:10; Heb13:2-note; 1Pe 4:9-note.)

Spurgeon - This was a very natural and a very reasonable request. Gideon did not ask the men of Succoth to come with him, nor even to give a lodging to his soldiers. The fear of Midian was upon Israel, and the people were afraid to do anything against their oppressor, but surely they might have relieved the hunger of their fellow countrymen. Instead of doing so, they answered Gideon with arrogant and cruel words.

FOR THEY ARE WEARY: They had been up all night & yet weary, they pressed on. "Weary & pursuing" could describe many of God's saints over the centuries striving according to His power which mightily works within them. Gideon had been delivered from the depths of a winepress and was a man on mission to accomplish the will of God to utterly destroy the enemy. He kept his eyes on the real enemy and we believers today need to do the same.

Judges 8:6 And the leaders of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?"

- Jdg 5:23 Ge 25:13 37:25,28 1Sa 25:10,11 1Ki 20:11 2Ki 14:9 Pr 18:23 Php 2:21
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

MEN OF SUCCOTH MOCK GIDEON

AND THE LEADERS OF SUCCOTH SAID "ARE THE HANDS OF ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA ALREADY IN YOUR HANDS?": This reference to **HANDS** may allude to the practice (although not apparently condoned or commanded by God) at that time of the victor cutting off the hands of the dead victims as a convenient body count. Saul required David to produce one hundred Philistine foreskins to prove he had killed that number (1 Sa 18:25; cf. "Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes." = Jdg 1:6-note).

NET Note - Heb "Are the palms of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give to your army bread?" Perhaps the reference to the kings' "palms" should be taken literally. The officials of Succoth may be alluding to the practice of mutilating prisoners or enemy corpses

Spurgeon - As much as to say, "What have you done, after all? There are fifteen thousand men with Zebah and Zalmunna, and there are only three hundred of you. You have not even captured the leaders yet." They forgot that Gideon's band had slain a hundred and twenty thousand already; they underrated and mocked him, and would not give him the help he asked.

ALREADY IN YOUR HANDS: These were Gadite brethren and should have been helpers not hindrances. How often are good soldier's of Christ Jesus (2Ti 2:4,5-note) jeered and taunted and derided and not supported in their quest for that word & work which they indubitably have heard from God. The goal He has promised to believers may to doubters seem impossible and so they refuse to throw in their lot with us. But we must set our faces like flint toward Jerusalem and press on toward the goal. In eternity future, the shallow tauntings will be long forgotten as we bask in the presence of the Captain of the hosts and hear "Well done, My weary warrior". So be not detracted good soldier but fight on in His strength and for His glory. And so Gideon pressed onward in the face of "discouraging words" and "obstacles". If God had called him to defeat the Midianites as if they were one man (Jdg 8:7) then God would provide the necessary strength to complete the task.

THAT WE SHOULD GIVE BREAD TO YOUR ARMY: Their lack of faith in Gideon and especially in Gideon's God (after all surely they must have been told that 300 defeated 135,000... what more proof would they need?) meant that they lived in deep fear of reprisal from the Midianites.

NET Note - The officials of Succoth are hesitant to give (or sell) food to Gideon's forces because they are not sure of the outcome of the battle. Perhaps they had made an alliance with the Midianites which demanded their loyalty.

Inrig - Whatever the reason—whether selfishness, regionalism, or self-protection— these people were utterly disloyal to the larger cause. This is incredibly discouraging—to pour yourself out into God's work, to do something that really matters, to take a huge risk, only to be treated with contempt or apathy from those who profess what you profess and who should rally to your side. This kind of disloyalty cuts deeply, and Gideon does not respond well. The diplomacy and tact he showed with the Ephraimites is notably absent, as he declares his intention to return and take his revenge upon these people by publicly scourging them with thorns. To make things worse, a few miles down the road, the same pattern is repeated in another Israelite town in Transjordan, the city of Peniel. (Ibid)

Judges 8:7 And Gideon said, "All right, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers."

- tear (KJV): Heb. thresh, Jdg 8:16
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND GIDEON SAID, "ALL RIGHT, WHEN (not "if") THE LORD HAS GIVEN ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA INTO MY HAND: Perhaps the tribes of Transjordan could be excused for failing to aid Deborah and Barak (Jdg 5:17-note), but neutrality was impossible when the conflict was on their soil (cp Jdg 5:23-note).

THEN I WILL THRASH (thresh, trample) YOUR BODIES WITH THE THORNS OF THE WILDERNESS AND WITH BRIERS: "**Thrash**" (duwsh) usually means "thresh," and it may indicate that the victims were dragged over thorns or laid on thorns. The word means to tread as one treads wheat and it could have a figurative meaning. Either way it sounds gruesome. In Amos 1:3, Damascus is condemned for threshing Gilead with iron instruments.

Spurgeon - Some have said that this showed resentment and harshness, but when a man is at war, he is not in the habit of sprinkling his adversaries with rosewater. War is in itself so great an evil that there are many other evils necessarily connected with it. It seems to me that if, when Gideon was trying to deliver his own countrymen, they scoffed at him, and refused him bread for his soldiers in the day of their hunger, they deserved to be punished with great severity.

Judges 8:8 And he went up from there to Penuel, and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

- Ge 32:30,31 1Ki 12:25
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND HE WENT UP FROM THERE TO PENUEL: Moving 6 miles East Gideon received the same response from the people of Peniel. In the very place (Penuel or Peniel = "face of God") where Jacob had wrestled with God and God had his name changed to Israel (Ge 32:28, 29, 30), these descendants of his refused to believe that God could give victory over the Midianites. Gideon vowed that he would soon demolish the fortified tower that had made Peniel an important city (Jdg 8:9).

ISBE Penuel or Peniel (Face of God) - This is the form of the name in Genesis 32:30 . In the next verse and elsewhere it appears as "Penuel." The name is said to have been given to the place by Jacob after his night of wrestling by the Jabbok, because, as he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." It was a height evidently close by the stream over which Jacob passed in the morning. Some have thought it might be a prominent cliff, the contour of which resembled a human face. Such a cliff on the seashore to the South of Tripoli was called *theoú prósōpon* , "face of God" (Strabo xvi. 2, 15 f). In later times a city with a strong tower stood upon it. This lay in the line of Gideon's pursuit of the Midianites. When he returned victorious, he beat down the place because of the churlishness of the inhabitants (Judges 8:8 , Judges 8:9 , Judges 8:17). It was one of the towns "built" or fortified by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:25).

AND SPOKE SIMILARLY TO THEM; AND THE MEN OF PENUEL ANSWERED HIM JUST AS THE MEN OF SUCCOTH HAD ANSWERED.- Spurgeon comments that "They took liberty to speak rudely because theirs was a fortified city, guarded by a strong tower, and Gideon, nothing doubting that he would come back that way, God having given him the victory, said, "When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower."

Judges 8:9 So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I return safely, I will tear down this tower."

- I come (KJV): 1Ki 22:27,28
- I will break (KJV): Jdg 8:17
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

SO HE SPOKE ALSO TO THE MEN OF PENUEL, SAYING, "WHEN I RETURN SAFELY: KJV = when I come again in peace" (shalom). But it would not be the case as he predicts destruction when he returns. The disloyalty of Penuel (and Succoth) was inexcusable, but that did not justify Gideon's reaction out of anger (although it may seem just at first glance). James reminds of the problem of anger that is not controlled writing that "the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." (James 1:20-[note](#)). Gideon is beginning to decline spiritually!

I WILL TEAR DOWN THIS TOWER: To tear down their city's watchtower, thus taking

away a critical part of their self-defense. Therefore similar to the earlier curse on the city of Meroz in Deborah's time (cf. Judges 5:23-note), Gideon threatened to punish them in retribution for their virtual hostility. Gideon was to win a complete victory over Midian, but it meant anything but "peace" for Peniel!

Tower (04026)(**migdal**) is a masculine noun that refers to a tower such as watchtower (as in a vineyard = Isa 5:2) or a strong place ("Tower of Babel" = Ge 11:4, tower for defense = Jdg 9:51). **Erdman's Dictionary** defines "**tower**" as "A defensive structure either built into a city wall or located on a hill as a watchtower. Towers (Heb. migdāl) were built into city walls at strategic positions such as corners, city gates, and vulnerable locations. Massive towers built as part of the city gate structure (e.g., Megiddo, Samaria, Hazor, Dan, Beer-sheba, Timnah) increased defense capabilities at a city's most vulnerable location. Towers, built into the walls at intervals to increase defense capabilities, usually jutted out beyond the city wall giving defenders a clear view of the wall's foundation and anyone attempting to breach the wall. This type of tower is typically taller than the adjoining city wall."

Judges 8:10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

- Karkor (KJV): If this were the name of a place, it is no where else mentioned. Some contend that {karkor} signifies rest; and the Vulgate renders it {requiescebant,} "rested". This seems the most likely; for it is said (ver. 11) that Gideon "smote the host: for the host was secure."
- children (KJV): Jdg 7:12
- fell an hundred (KJV): etc. or, an hundred and twenty thousand every one drawing a sword, Jdg 7:22 20:2,15,17,25,35,46 2Ki 3:26 2Ch 13:17 28:6,8 Isa 37:36
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

The **Disciple's Study Bible** has an interesting note writing that...

Today's readers are often surprised how many murders are described in the Old Testament. Accounts such as this one are more descriptive than prescriptive in nature. They major on the "what" and "how" of an incident but do not develop the "why" of an incident beyond the matter of revenge. In a world dominated by cause and effect values, little time was given to reconciliation or rehabilitation. Thus, often the murders associated with political intrigue, war, and interpersonal conflict do not reflect normative, timeless principles for dealing with injustice. Caution must be applied before making quick jumps of application to contemporary time based on such incidents. Such caution asks from where the initiative comes for any acts of killing. For example, to say even "but God is on our side" must bear the proof when matters of life

and death are raised. In Gideon's case the biblical emphasis is on punishment of murderers rather than justifying Gideon's attitude of vengeance. A helpful consideration is to read these passages through the light of Jesus' actions, words, and attitudes." (Disciple's Study Bible)

Judges 8:11 And Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp, when the camp was unsuspecting.

- Nobah (KJV): Nobah took its name from an Israelite who conquered it; and is said by Eusebius to have been, in his time, a forsaken place eight miles south from Heshbon. Jogbehah was probably near it. Nu 32:35,42
- secure (KJV): Jdg 18:27 1Sa 15:32 30:16 1Th 5:3
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND GIDEON WENT UP BY THE WAY OF THOSE WHO LIVED IN TENTS ON THE EAST OF NOBAH AND JOGBEHAH: Gideon pressed farther into Transjordan, following the caravan trail taken by the Midianites. By this time the remnants of the Midianite army were in Karkor (v10), located perhaps in the Wadi Sirhan, east of the Dead Sea. Gideon passed Jogbehah, about fifteen miles southeast of Peniel and seven miles northwest of modern Amman.

Spurgeon - He went by an unusual route, and took them at night again unawares when they felt perfectly safe, and were sound asleep: "for the host was secure." As I read these words, I think, what a pity it is ever to fancy ourselves secure while we are really in peril! Carnal security is a great danger. To be "safe in the arms of Jesus," is a most blessed condition; but to be secure in self-confidence, is a thing that hath a curse upon it.

AND ATTACKED THE CAMP, WHEN THE CAMP WAS UNSUSPECTING: "**Unsuspecting**" (betach) conveys the thought that the Midianite army was dwelling in safety, with a sense of carelessness, in a place of refuge and with a feeling of trust! Little did they know that the LORD's army would soon demolish them! Sinners may think they are safe but in due time their foot will slip (Deut 32:35 the verse Jonathan Edwards used for his sermon "[Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God](#)").

Judges 8:12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

- took (KJV): Jos 10:16-18,22-25 Job 12:16-21 34:19 Ps 83:11 Am 2:14 Rev 6:15,16 19:19-21
- discomfited (KJV): Heb. terrified
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

WHEN ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA FLED, HE PURSUED THEM AND CAPTURED THE TWO KINGS OF MIDIAN, ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA: Gideon's main goal was the capture of Midian's two kings, for without leadership the eastern hordes were not likely to resume their raids to the west. The two kings probably belonged to different tribal groups. Multiple rule in Midian was also the practice earlier, for Moses killed five Midianite kings (Num 31:7, 8).

AND RUTED (caused to tremble) **THE WHOLE ARMY: "Routed"** (charad) means to tremble, to quake, to be terrified which describes the effect that Gideon's surprise attack had on the Midianite forces.

Spurgeon - There was an end of the tyranny of the Midianites. Gideon slew great numbers of them, and drove away such as yet remained alive.

This conflict began at "the spring of Harod" (Judges 7:1- note), where Gideon's 22,000 men "trembled with fear" (related Hebrew word charad in Judges 7:3-note) at the spring of Harod (which means "Trembling!"). How fitting that this battle should end with terror-stricken, trembling (charad) Midianites!

Judges 8:13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.

- before (KJV): The words {milmaaleh haichaires} should, most probably be rendered "from the ascent of Chares;" which is the reading of the LXX. Syriac, Arabic, and Houbigant. Jdg 8:13
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

Judges 8:14 And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

- aught (KJV): Jdg 1:24,25 1Sa 30:11-15
- described (KJV): Heb. writ
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND HE CAPTURED A YOUTH FROM SUCCOTH AND QUESTIONED HIM: Demsky and M. Kochavi argue that the "young man" was probably a local official familiar with the names of the taxpayers (cf. "An Alphabet From the Days of the Judges," Biblical Archaeology Review 4, 3 [Sept--Oct 1978]: 28).

THEN THE YOUTH WROTE DOWN FOR HIM: Writing was widely known by the time of the Judges. Our first written documents antedate 3000 B.C. Documents from Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) in Canaan date from the fifteenth century B.C. 16.

Judges 8:15 And he came to the men of Succoth and said, "Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?'"

- upbraid (KJV): Jdg 8:6,7
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND HE CAME TO THE MEN OF SUCCOTH AND SAID, "BEHOLD ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA, CONCERNING WHOM YOU TAUNTED ME: Taunt (harap) means to reproach or to agitate someone about something. It refers to sarcastic challenge in a mocking or insulting manner. It suggests a jeeringly provoking insult or challenge.

SAYING, 'ARE THE HANDS OF ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA ALREADY IN YOUR HAND, THAT WE SHOULD GIVE BREAD TO YOUR MEN WHO ARE WEARY: The seventy-seven men who were registered on this death list heard Gideon repeat their earlier taunt before carrying out the punishment (v15). It is quite probably that just like their neighbors in Peniel, the men of Succoth also died for their guilt (Jdg 8:16, 17).

"**Weary**" (yaep) means faint or exhausted. Gideon adds this detail ("weary") to the men of Succoth's earlier taunting when they had refused to help him, asking: "Why should we give bread to your troops?" (Jdg 8:6). They showed no sympathy for Gideon's exhausted, worn-out troops (Jdg 8:4, 5). By altering their words he highlighted the extreme situation of his men at the time of his request, as well as the gross insensitivity of the men of Succoth and thus made a solid case for punishing them.

Judges 8:16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them.

- the elders (KJV): Jdg 8:7 Pr 10:13 19:29 Eze 2:6
- thorns (KJV): Mic 7:4
- taught (KJV): Heb. made to know, Instead of {wyyoda,} Houbigant, Lev Clerc, and others read {wyyadosh,} "and he tore or threshed;" and this is not only agreeable to what Gideon threatened (ver. 7), but is supported by the LXX. Vulgate, Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic. The Hebrew text might easily have been corrupted simply by the change of [Shiyn,] {shin,} into ['Ayin,] {ayin,} letters very similar to each other.
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND HE TOOK THE ELDERS OF THE CITY, AND THORNS OF THE WILDERNESS AND BRIERS AND HE DISCIPLINED THE MEN OF SUCCOTH WITH THEM: The form yada`, translated "disciplined" (NASB) or "taught... a lesson" (NIV) is disputed. Some ancient

versions favor yadhash (yadash) which means "thresh" and which would agree with the earlier description [v7]. In either event Gideon had the leaders of Succoth dragged over thorns, which may have taught them a lesson if indeed they lived! This was a cruel torture to which ancient captives were often subjected. Gideon's made good on his threatened discipline of Succoth's leaders for refusing to help their brothers.

Judges 8:17 And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

- Jdg 8:9 1Ki 12:25
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND HE TORE DOWN: The word nathats is same one used when Gideon "broke down" the altar of Baal (Jdg 6:31, 32-note).

THE TOWER OF PENUEL AND KILLED THE MEN OF THE CITY:

Spurgeon - He probably slew the most public revilers, the leading men of Penuel, even as he had chastised the princes and elders of Succoth with thorns and briars. I have often observed that you and I have been taught a great many things "with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars." If we refuse to help God's weary and tried people, it is highly probable that, one of these days, we may have to learn a great deal from the thorns of the wilderness and from the briars. Do we ever learn much apart from the thorns of the wilderness? Surely, trials and troubles have been our great instructors from the first day even until now.

Warren Wiersbe: "Why didn't Gideon show to the people of Succoth and Peniel the same kindness that he showed to the Ephraimites and simply forgive them their offenses? For one thing, their offenses were not alike. The pride of Ephraim was nothing compared to the rebellion of Succoth and Peniel. Ephraim was protecting their tribal pride, a sin but not a costly one; but Succoth and Peniel were rebelling against God's chosen leader and assisting the enemy at the same time. Theirs was the sin of hardness of heart toward their brethren and treason against the God of heaven. Of what good was it for Gideon and his men to risk their lives to deliver Israel if they had traitors right in their own nation? Leaders must have discernment or they will make wrong decisions as they deal with different situations. Personal insults are one thing, but rebellion against the Lord and His people is quite something else."

Judges 8:18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?" And they said, "They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king."

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- Tabor (KJV): Jdg 4:6 Ps 89:12
 - As thou art (KJV): Ps 12:2 Jude 1:16
 - resembled (KJV): Heb. according to the form of, etc
 - [Judges 8 Resources](#)

THEN: When Gideon arrived back home at Ophrah, leading Zebah and Zalmunna captive, the procession must have been as exciting as a ticker-tape parade. Gideon was a true hero. With only 300 men, he had routed the enemy camp and then pursued the fleeing soldiers across the Jordan and as far south as Karkor. He had brought his royal prisoners back, plus whatever spoils the men had gathered along the way.

HE SAID TO ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA, "WHAT KIND OF MEN WERE THEY WHOM YOU KILLED AT TABOR: The question implies that Gideon knew that Zebah and Zalmunna had killed his brothers. The reply was in the form of arrogant flattery: "They were just such men as you, men of kingly figure" Someone has said that flattery is a good thing to taste but a bad thing to swallow, and Gideon didn't swallow it!

AND THEY SAID, "THEY WERE LIKE YOU, EACH ONE RESEMBLING THE SON OF A KING: As discussed under the note above after "**Then**", the scene by now had probably shifted back eastward across the Jordan River into the homeland of the tribe of Manasseh, so that Gideon could display his captives to the main body of Israelites. The presence of his young son, Jether, who likely did not accompany his father in the rigorous pursuit, also points to a location nearer home. After viewing the vengeance taken by Gideon on fellow Israelites, the Midianite kings did not hold out much hope for their own survival. In fact, they seemed to prefer death by admitting they had killed Gideon's full brothers, who shared his impressive appearance.

"Resembling the son of a king" (NIV renders it "the bearing of a prince") is a description which sets the stage for Gideon's subsequent actions. These enemies acknowledge, he was beginning to look like a king and the grateful people were ready to enthrone him as their ruler (Jdg 8:22).

Judges 8:18

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

As thou art, do were they; each one resembled the children of a king.

It was a magnificent tribute to the royal bearing of this illustrious family. All the children had the stamp of kingliness on them, which had impressed even these barbaric princes. Would that a similar confession could be extorted from those who behold the members of the royal house of Jesus!

The children of a king! It is within the reach of any who aspire to it. By the second birth we become the children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and the Spirit witnesses to our sonship,

teaching us to cry, Abba, Father. As children of the great King we should bear the sign of our high lineage in our bearing and walk.

Royalty of Demeanor. — There is an aristocratic bearing in the scions of noble houses among men. The head is lifted high, the mien is proud, the manner distant and reserved. But in the family of God, meekness and lowliness, humility and contriteness, are marks of family likeness. We walk as Jesus walked, of whom the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Royalty of Dress. — The king is marked by the brilliant orders glittering on his breast. Purple and ermine become those who date their descent from a line of kings. But the emblem of our family is the cross; our color is scarlet; our insignia is the towel and basin that speak of lowly service.

Royalty of Occupation. — The earthly king does nothing servile. He is waited on with lowly obeisance. But they who are of the same family as Jesus are found performing the lowliest acts of service, in jails, hospitals, and slums. In this they follow closely on the steps of Him who went about doing good.

Judges 8:19 And he said, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you."

- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND HE SAID, "THEY WERE MY BROTHERS, THE SONS OF MY MOTHER: Gideon explained that they were his full brethren, i.e., not only of the same father but of the same mother as well. In an age when men often had several wives it was necessary to distinguish between full brothers and half brothers. Gideon had considered sparing the kings' lives, but the additional element of personal revenge made their death certain. Moreover, the death of enemy leaders almost always accompanied total military victory (Jdg 3:21, 22, 23, 24, 25-note; Jdg 4:21, 22-note, Jdg 9:55-note; Jos10:26).

Spurgeon - In the East, there is much greater affection between those who are the sons of one mother than between those who are only sons of one father.

AS THE LORD LIVES, IF ONLY YOU HAD LET THEM LIVE, I WOULD NOT KILL YOU: According to Mosaic Law, the family was to avenge crimes like this by killing those responsible for the murder. There was no police system in the land, and each family was expected to track down and punish those who had murdered their relatives, provided the culprit was guilty (Nu35:9-34). In the case of Zebah and Zalmunna, the culprits were not only murderers but also enemies of Israel.

Spurgeon - But now it devolved upon him to be an avenger of blood according to Oriental law, and to put to death those who had slain his brothers.

Gideon felt obligated to carry out the duty of the Blood Avenger (Dt 19:6,12). Thus Gideon persisted until he vanquished his enemy and slew their leaders.

Judges 8:20 So he said to Jether his first-born, "Rise, kill them." But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

- Jos 10:24 1Sa 15:33 Ps 149:9
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

SO HE SAID TO JETHER HIS FIRST-BORN, "RISE, KILL THEM: In those days, how a soldier died was important to his reputation. Abimelech didn't want to die at the hand of a woman (Jdg 9:53, 54-note), and King Saul didn't want to fall into the hands of the Philistines (1Sa 31:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). For a child to kill a king would be the ultimate in humiliation thus Gideon told his young son Jether to execute the two criminals. By doing so, Jether would not only uphold the law of the land and humiliate the two kings, but he would also bring honor to himself. For the rest of his life, he would be known as the boy who executed Zebah and Zalmunna.

Judges 8:21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise up yourself, and fall on us; for as the man, so is his strength." So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels' necks.

- Rise thou (KJV): It was disgraceful to fall by the hands of a child; and death by the blows of such a person must be much more lingering and tormenting. Some have employed children to dispatch captives. Jdg 9:54 1Sa 31:3,5 Rev 9:6
- slew (KJV): Ps 83:1
- ornaments (KJV): or, ornaments like the moon, Isa 3:18
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

GIDEON AROSE AND KILLED ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA: Gideon gave the honor of executing the kings to his firstborn son, Jether (v20). The lad shunned this gruesome task, and the kings quickly pointed out that this was a man's job (v21). For them it would be more honorable and less painful to be killed by a renowned warrior like Gideon. Death at the hands of a boy or a woman was considered a disgrace (Jdg 5:24, 25, 26, 27-note; Jdg 9:54-note). Gideon complied with their final request and slew the kings as Samuel slew Agag (1Sa 15:33).

AND TOOK THE CRESCENT (moon shaped) ORNAMENTS WHICH WERE ON THEIR CAMELS' NECKS: The Moon in its first quarter was a religious symbol from earliest times and figured, for example, in the worship of the Near Eastern goddess Astarte. Also take note of whose ornaments these were? The Kings' royal ornaments. So could this have

been a "leak" that began to erode Gideon's character. He would not be the first leader brought down by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.

Judges 8:22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian."

- Rule thou (KJV): Jdg 9:8-15 1Sa 8:5 12:12 Jn 6:15
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

THEN THE MEN OF ISRAEL SAID TO GIDEON, "RULE OVER US, BOTH YOU AND YOUR SON ALSO YOUR SON'S SON: After winning a great victory, we must always beware of the temptation to sin, for Satan attacks us subtly when we least expect it. The nation asked Gideon to become their Ruler and to establish a dynasty; but this he refused. This is the first recorded attempt to establish a hereditary monarchy in Israel. (see Deut 33:5)

Spurgeon - There was always an itching among the Israelites to have a king, an earthly monarch to rule over them; but God did not so design it. It was want of loyalty and love to God that led them to make this request.

FOR YOU HAVE DELIVERED US FROM THE HAND OF MIDIAN: The Lord had reduced Gideon's army to a handful of men so that the people would not attribute victory to their own strength (Jdg 7:2, 3, 4-note). Despite the Lord's clear leading in the victory, the people maintained that their success was a result of Gideon's leadership! To Gideon's credit, he did correct them in the next verse (Jdg 8:23), but the point remains that the people's perspective on the source of their victory was proof of their spiritual insensitivity and their man-centered focus, which ultimately culminated in their request for a king in the days of Samuel (1Sa 8:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

Who had really delivered them? Does God use this opportunity to correct that error? God had used Gideon to deliver Israel but ultimately He was the deliverer and Gideon should have emphasized this great and mighty deed of Jehovah that Israel might come to fear Him and not the gods of the Amorites. But Gideon missed the golden opportunity. He then seems to realize that since you go through life only once that you had better grab for all the gusto you can... read the description in the remainder of Judges 8 to see the "gusto" Gideon grabbed and then Judges 9 for the legacy he left. O valiant warrior, you were running so well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? (Galatians 5:7).

Gideon's response seems to show his awareness that such an action would amount to refusing to trust the Lord (cf. Nu 14:9, 10, 11, 12; 1Sa 8:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; 12:12). Although the Book of Judges demonstrates Israel's need for a king to lead them in covenant faithfulness, they did not need the kind of military king familiar to them from the surrounding nations. As long as they were faithful to the Lord, they could rely on Him for

security.

As shown in the next verse Gideon refused. But this may have either it planted a seed or his refusal was shallow and weak for Gideon had what looks like a royal harem in Jdg 8:30 (cf. Dt17:17), and named his son "Abimelech" in Jdg 8:31 which means "my father is king." Gideon's actions set a bad example for his son Abimelech, who decided to grasp the royal position his father had turned down.

Judges 8:23 But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

- I will (KJV): Jdg 2:18 10:18 11:9-11 Lk 22:24-27 2Co 1:24 1Pe 5:3
- the Lord (KJV): 1Sa 8:6,7 10:19 12:12 Isa 33:22 63:19
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

BUT GIDEON SAID TO THEM, I WILL NOT RULE OVER YOU, NOR SHALL MY SON RULE OVER YOU: What Gideon said was commendable, but what he did later on was puzzling. After rejecting the throne, he lived like a king as [Jdg 8:29-32] attests! Nobody would deny that this courageous soldier-judge deserved honor and rewards, but his "retirement plan" seemed a bit extravagant.

THE LORD SHALL RULE OVER YOU At least Gideon's theology was accurate - Jehovah was their true king. Sadly as alluded to above, his actions did not reflect his theology! But that never happens in lives of believers today does it?!

In their song of praise after passing through the Red Sea at the Exodus, Israel acknowledged Jehovah's kingship when they sang, "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Ex 15:18). Moses warned that Israel would one day want a king like the other nations and forget that they were a unique nation, unlike the Gentiles (Dt 4:5, 6, 7, 8; 14:2; 17:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20; Ex.19:4, 5). What other nation had the Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth, as their King?

Gideon seems to acknowledge his awareness that he was only an instrument in God's hands and he knew God meant Israel to be a theocracy, a people and nation ruled by God Himself. They already had a King if only they would acknowledge Him. Their request however was later fulfilled when one of Gideon's sons, Abimelech would later set himself up as king and a subsequent generation of Israelites would again seek a king, wanting ultimately to be like all the surrounding nations (1Sa 8:6, 7, 10:19).

Unfortunately Gideon's insight, modesty and humility at this moment in history are in sharp contrast to the events that follow. Ponder the wisdom of (Pr27:21) for possible insights into his imminent demise, for here Solomon records that...

The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold,
And a man is tested by the praise accorded him.

Success is not always so easy to handle. **Thomas Carlyle** wrote that

“only one in a hundred passes the test of prosperity.”

Spurgeon’s spiritual presence of mind when he was approached by an over-effusive admirer, following a particularly brilliant sermon is reflected in the following response...

“Mr. Spurgeon, you were wonderful,” she crooned.

To which the reply came,

“Madam, the devil whispered those same words in my ear, as I left the pulpit.”

Judges 8.23

G Campbell Morgan

I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.
Judges 8.23

Here was clearly manifested the decline of the people from the high ideal and central glory of their national life. They were a Theocracy, needing (and so far having) no king other than Jehovah. Their creation as a nation by God was in order that this true conception of life should have its manifestation among other nations. Their peculiarity was their distinctive feature, and their secret of power among the nations surrounding them. All the recurring discipline through which they passed resulted from their rebellion against the rule of God, and constituted His method of restoring them to that rule. They found relief in the judges who were raised up of God, and began to hanker after some ruler, visible, and of their own number. They thought that, by securing this, they would preserve themselves from the recurrence of these troubles. So they proposed establishing an hereditary rulership, that is, kingship, and they asked Gideon to accept the position. He declined in these words, and by so doing revealed his clear understanding of the truth about the nation. That is the true attitude of all those whom God raised up to lead and deliver His people. Their leadership must ever stop short of sovereignty. Their business is never that of superseding the Divine rule; but of interpreting it, and of leading the people to recognition of it, and submission to it. This is true, not only of kings, but also of priests, prophets, and preachers. (Morgan, G. C. Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible).

Judges 8:24 Yet Gideon said to them, "I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil." (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

- give me (KJV): Ge 24:22,53 Ex 12:35 32:3 1Pe 3:3-5
- because (KJV): Ge 16:10,11 25:13 37:25,28 1Sa 25:11 1Ki 20:11

- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

YET (then) **GIDEON**:

Andrew Bonar's counsel would have been good for Gideon to have heard & heeded and it is good counsel for all believers today:

“Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle.”

Judges 8 gives some interesting insights into how Gideon handled some difficult situations (remember 1Cor 10:6,11)

SAID TO THEM: Note this strong contrast in this verse. It is like a great ocean separating two continents, one good and the other evil. The human heart is truly more deceitful than all else (Jer 17:9). The man who had just given such a magnificent lead to his fellow Israelites, now sets a deplorable example of self-indulgence. Perhaps this speaks to the fact that it is easier to honor God in some courageous action in the limelight of a time of national emergency than it is to honor Him consistently in the ordinary, everyday life, which requires a different kind of courage. Gideon who came thru the test of adversity with flying colors was not the first nor the last to be less successful in the test of prosperity!

I WOULD REQUEST OF YOU, THAT EACH OF YOU GIVE ME AN EARRING FROM HIS SPOIL: However, Gideon used this opportunity to ask for “a lesser thing”—all their earrings and ornaments. This was in essence a form of virtual taxation. And although this seemed like a fitting gift for a great deliverer, keep in mind that these golden trinkets were associated with idol worship. Crescents in [Jdg 8:21] were connected with moon-worship (goddess Astarte). See [Ge35:1, 2, 3, 4] for association between earrings and idolatry. (cp Ex 32:2, 3, 4,v4 = fashioned a molten calf). Beware of the "little foxes" (Song 2:15) because over time they can become a spiritual "Tyranosaurus Rex"!

Gideon ran the race with endurance for a time (that's why he is in Heb 11:32- note) but he did not finish his course, and he did not keep the faith as the apostle Paul did and as do all who have loved His appearing (2Ti 4:7,8-note). Lord, give us a holy fear of the ever present danger that we might stumble off Thy highway of holiness and not finish our race as Paul did. Amen.

FOR THEY HAD GOLD EARRINGS, BECAUSE THEY WERE ISHMAELITES: nomadic traders which the Midianites were. The term Ishmaelites originally referred to another nomadic tribe descended from Hagar (Ge 16:15) but the term apparently took on a broader usage so that it is here applied to the Midianites.

Judges 8:25 And they said, "We will surely give them." So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil.

- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND THEY SAID, "WE WILL SURELY GIVE THEM." SO THEY SPREAD OUT A GARMENT, AND EVERY ONE OF THEM THREW AN EARRING THERE FROM HIS SPOIL:

Most of the items given to Gideon often were worn by women in Israel.

The "earrings" (nezem) were sometimes rather "nose rings" for brides (Ge 24:47; Ezek 16:12).

The word for "chains" (`anaqoth) is rendered "necklace" in Song 4:9.

Judges 8:26 And the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that were on their camels' necks.

- a thousand (KJV): Taking the shekel at half an ounce, the sum of the gold ear-rings was 73 lbs. 4oz. and worth about #3,300 sterling.
- collars (KJV): or, sweet jewels
- purple (KJV): Es 8:15 Jer 10:9 Eze 27:7 Lk 16:19 Jn 19:2,5 Rev 17:4 Rev 18:12,16
- chains (KJV): Jdg 8:21
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND THE WEIGHT OF THE GOLD EARRINGS THAT HE REQUESTED WAS 1,700 SHEKELS OF GOLD: Assuming the reference is to "shekels", the weight would be 43 pounds, calculated at .4046 ounces (11.33 grams) per shekel; on the weight of a shekel see Y. Ronen, "The Enigma of the Shekel Weights of the Judean Kingdom," Biblical Arch 59/2 (1996) 122-126.

BESIDES THE CRESCENT ORNAMENTS AND THE PENDANTS AND THE PURPLE ROBES WHICH WERE ON THE KINGS OF MIDIAN, AND BESIDES THE NECK BANDS THAT WERE ON THEIR CAMELS' NECKS:

"**Pendants**" (netipoth) occurs in the same list of women's ornaments with regard to v. 21 (Is 3:19, "earrings").

So although Gideon refused to be king, Gideon retains the king's symbols of royalty: the crescent ornaments worn by the camels (8:21), the pendants, the purple robes formerly worn by the Midianite kings, the neckbands worn by the camels around their necks! Were his words earlier truly the "high point" of his spiritual life as some interpret? Or were his words a sham humility and external bowing to the Lordship of Jehovah? Or did the coveting virus infect him about this time and spread so rapidly that he quickly forgot his noble defense of the Most High God? We probably won't know until glory but obviously somewhere along here, in the midst of the "applause" and "adoration" (cp Pr 27:21), Gideon began to get a glimmer in his eye for the finer things of life... and why not? After all

he had become a valiant warrior and valiant warriors were compensated royally. Food for thought as we all put our pants on the same way Gideon did (cp 1Co 10:12) and our flesh is just as vulnerable to the "viruses" of coveting and pride today as it was in Gideon's day. Jesus warned us to...

"Keep watching and praying, (present imperative = both verbs are commands to make this one's habitual practice. Why? Because we are continually at risk of falling into the snares of temptation!) that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt 26:41)

Judges 8:27 And Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

- an ephod (KJV): Jdg 17:5 18:14,17 Ex 28:6-12 1Sa 23:9,10 Isa 8:20
- Ophrah (KJV): Jdg 8:32 6:11,24 Dt 12:5
- a whoring (KJV): Ex 23:33 Ps 73:27 106:39 Ho 2:2 4:12-14
- a snare (KJV): Jdg 8:33 Dt 7:16
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

IDOLATRY LEADS TO SPIRITUAL IMMORALITY

AND GIDEON MADE IT INTO AN EPHOD AND PLACED IT IN HIS CITY OPHRAH:
What a contrast with (Jdg 6:24,27,28) where Gideon built 2 altars to Jehovah and destroyed one idolatrous altar to Baal!

Elsewhere in the OT "**ephod**" denotes the priest's special breast piece (cf. Ex 28:15-30). In Jdg 17:5; 18:14-20 the same word refers to the priestly vestments of Micah. But because this object is erected in Gideon's city and becomes an object of pagan worship the meaning uncertain here.

Gideon may have been well intended; perhaps he wanted to consult the Lord's will or to give the people something tangible to remind them of the Lord's intervention. However the idol-prone Israelites made the ephod into an object of worship. Gideon, who had boldly broken up his father's altar to Baal, was now setting a trap for his own family.

Spurgeon - He did not set up an idol, but he made an ephod, an imitation of that wonderful vestment worn by the high priest. Perhaps he made it of solid gold, not to be worn, but to be looked at, simply to remind the people of the worship of God, and not to be itself worshipped. But ah, dear friends, you see here that, if we go half an inch beyond what God's Word warrants we always get into mischief! You hear people say, "We have such and such symbols, not to worship, but to help us in worship." Ah, yes; but the

tendency of the symbol is to act as a dam to the stream of devotion, and to make it end there! God forbid that we should ever violate the rules that Christ has laid down for us! The slightest deviation from the simplicity of the gospel may lead us away into sheer apostasy? Whence have come all the errors of Rome but from little accretions and alterations? A little ornament here, a little symbol there, and a little variation of truth yonder and the gigantic system of Romanism has thus been created. Gideon probably meant well, and we may do wrong even though we mean well. May the Lord preserve us from the smallest departure from the way that he has marked out for us in his Holy Word! Amen.

AND ALL ISRAEL PLAYED THE HARLOT WITH IT THERE: Gideon may have made the ephod as a representation of Jehovah, to "help the people" in their worship, but a good motive can never compensate for a bad action. He knew (or should have known) that it was wrong to make an idol (Ex 20:4-6). And as we so often see in Scripture where there is **idolatry**, there is often **immorality**! (cp Eph 5:5-[note](#), Col 3:5-[note](#), Rev 2:14-[note](#), Rev 2:20-[note](#), Rev 21:8-[note](#), Rev 22:15-[note](#))

Played the harlot ([02181](#))(**zanah**) is a verb meaning to fornicate, to prostitute and refers to marital infidelity or unfaithfulness. It was word used elsewhere in the OT to describe prostitution (Lev 21:7, Pr 7:10). Many of the uses of **zanah** are figurative describing Israel 's (Jehovah's "wife") commission of "spiritual prostitution" by having "intercourse" so to speak with other gods (cp 1 Co 6:16). Indeed, idolatry is looked upon as prostitution (Isa 50:1, 2, 3; 54:6, 7, 8; Jer 2:1, 2, 3; 3:1ff; Hos 2:1ff; Jas 4:4-[note](#); Rev 2:4-[note](#)). In addition **zanah** describes Israel's improper relationships with other nations (Isa. 23:17; Ezek. 23:30; Nah. 3:4). "The thought seems to be of having relations with these nations for the sake of political and monetary benefit, although in the case of Nineveh the added element of alluring, deceitful tactics leading on to oppressive dominance is implied." (TWOT) "A third figurative meaning is found in Isa 1:21, where the Israelites' departure from God's approved moral standards is called harlotry." (TWOT)

In Exodus 34 God warns Israel using **zanah** as a metaphor describing Israel's breach of the Lord's covenant relationship ("make a covenant...play the harlot" in Ex 34:16) -

"But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim 14-for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God- 15 lest you **make a covenant** with the inhabitants of the land and they **play the harlot with** their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and someone invite you to eat of his sacrifice; 16 and you take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters **play the harlot with** their gods, and cause your sons also to **play the harlot** with their gods. (Ex 34:13-16)

Zanah is most often used for women and only twice in reference to men (Nu 25:1- note)

The [Septuagint](#) frequently translates **zanah** with the Greek verb [ekporneuo](#) used once in Jude 1:7 "**Indulged in gross immorality.**"

Swanson summarizes **zanah** -

1. (qal) prostitute, i.e., have sex with partner(sing.) to whom one is not married, for bribes, favors, or other kinds of payment (Ge 38:24); (hif) make a prostitute (Lev 19:29);
2. (qal) be unfaithful, formally, act. as a prostitute, i.e., not be faithful to a person or principle, and so be unreliable in behavior, as a figurative extension of sexual promiscuity on the part of a spouse that is in covenanted relationship (Hos 4:12); (hif) act. unfaithful (Ex 34:16; 2Ch 21:11, 13; Hos 4:10, 18, 18; 5:3+);
3. (pual) solicit a prostitute, i.e., give an offer to pay or give a “gift” for sexual favors (Eze 16:34+), (Dictionary of Semantic Domains: Hebrew)

Vine's discussion of **zanah** - TO GO A WHORING, BE A HARLOT

zanah (2181 ,זָנָה), “to go a whoring, commit fornication, be a harlot, serve other gods.” This is the regular term denoting prostitution throughout the history of Hebrew, with special nuances coming out of the religious experience of ancient Israel. The word occurs approximately 90 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. It is used for the first time in the text at the conclusion of the story of the rape of Dinah by Shechem, as her brothers excuse their revenge by asking: “Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?” (Gen. 34:31).

While the term means “to commit fornication,” whether by male or by female, it is to be noted that it is almost never used to describe sexual misconduct on the part of a male in the Old Testament. Part of the reason lies in the differing attitude in ancient Israel concerning sexual activity by men and women. The main reason, however, is the fact that this term is used most frequently to describe “spiritual prostitution” in which Israel turned from God to strange gods. Deut. 31:16 illustrates this meaning: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.”

Zanah became, then, the common term for spiritual backsliding. The act of harlotting after strange gods was more than changing gods, however. This was especially true when Israel went after the Canaanite gods, for the worship of these pagan deities involved actual prostitution with cult prostitutes connected with the Canaanite shrines. In the Old Testament sometimes the use of the phrase “go a whoring after” gods implies an individual’s involvement with cult prostitutes. An example might be in Exod. 34:15-16: “Lest thou make a covenant with the

inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods.... And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.”

The religious theory behind such activity at the Canaanite shrine was that such sexual activity with cult prostitutes, both male and female, who represented the gods and goddesses of the Canaanite fertility cult, would stimulate fertility in their crops and flocks. Such cult prostitutes were not designated as prostitutes but rather “holy ones” or “set-apart ones,” since the Semitic term for “holy” means, first of all, to be set apart for a special use. This is illustrated in Deut. 23:17: “There shall be no cult prostitute [set-apart one] of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a cult prostitute of the sons of Israel” (RSV; KJV, “whore of the daughters of Israel” and “sodomite of the sons of Israel”). This theme of religious harlotry looms large in the prophets who denounce this backsliding in no uncertain terms. Ezekiel minces no words as he openly calls both Judah and Israel “harlots” and vividly describes their backsliding in sexual terms (Ezek. 16:6-63; 23).

The Book of Hosea, in which Hosea’s wife Gomer became unfaithful and most likely was involved in such cult prostitution, again illustrates not only Hosea’s heartbreak but also God’s own heartbreak because of the unfaithfulness of his wife, Israel. Israel’s unfaithfulness appears in Hos. 9:1: “Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.”

([Online Reference](#))

Brown-Driver-Briggs Expanded Definition [זָנָה **verb commit fornication, be a harlot** (Arabic زنى *commit fornication*, Aramaic זָנָה, זָנָה; compare Ethiopic ዘንዥ; *effusio seminis virilis, seman effusum*, Di¹⁰⁵⁵; on this and **זָנָה**; (compare by Ges and others) see Prät^{BAS} i. 32, Anm.) —

Qal Perfect זָנָה Deuteronomy 31:16, זָנָה Genesis 38:34 3t., e t c . ; **Imperfect** יִזְנֶה (Kt) Ezekiel 23:43; יִזְנֶה Leviticus 19:29 4t.; יִזְנֶה Jeremiah 3:8; Ezekiel 23:5; יִזְנֶה Hosea 3:3; יִזְנֶה Jeremiah 3:6 (but read probably יִזְנֶה: יִזְנֶה is *not* Aramaic form of 3 feminine singular, see Kö i. 540 Kau^s 47^g b) Ezekiel 16:15 4t.; יִזְנֶה Ezekiel 16:28; יִזְנֶה (Qr) Ezekiel 23:43; יִזְנֶה Judges 8:27 4t.; יִזְנֶה Hosea 4:13,14; יִזְנֶה Ezekiel 23:3; **Infinitive absolute** זָנָה Hosea 1:2; **construct** לְזָנָה Leviticus 20:5 3t.; לְזָנָה Leviticus 20:6; **suffix** בְּזָנָה Ezekiel 23:30; **Participle** זָנָה Psalm 73:27; Ezekiel 6:9; זָנָה Hosea 4:15; plural זָנָה Leviticus 17:7 3t.; זָנָה Deuteronomy 23:19 25t.; זָנָה Leviticus 21:7 2t.; זָנָה Proverbs 29:3; זָנָה Hosea 4:14 4t. —

1 *be or act as a harlot*, absolute Genesis 38:24 (J), Deuteronomy 22:21 (D), Leviticus 21:9 (H), Hosea 4:13,14; Amos 7:17; אשה(ה) + זונה Joshua 2:1; Joshua 6:22 (J), Leviticus 21:7 (H), Judges 11:1; Judges 16:1; Proverbs 6:26; Jeremiah 3:3; Ezekiel 16:30; Ezekiel 23:44; זונה Genesis 34:31; Genesis 38:15; Joshua 6:17,25 (all J), Deuteronomy 23:19; Leviticus 21:14 (H), Proverbs 7:10; Proverbs 23:27; Isaiah 23:15,16; Joel 4:3; Micah 1:7 (twice in verse); Ezekiel 16:31; 1 זנות נָשִׁים Kings 3:16; 1 זנות(ו) Kings 22:38; Proverbs 29:3; Hosea 3:3; Hosea 4:14; Ezekiel 16:33; בית זונה Jeremiah 5:7; *commit fornication*, man's act אִלֵּז Numbers 25:1 (J); of woman's act Judges 19:2; of land given to harlotry Leviticus 19:29.

2 *figurative of improper intercourse with foreign nations* (religious reference sometimes involved) אִלֵּז Isaiah 23:17; אחרי Ezekiel 23:30; אל Ezekiel 16:26,28 (twice in verse); תְּזַנְוִתֶיהָ Ezekiel 23:43; Nahum 3:4; וַתִּזְנֶן אֶהֱלָה תְּהַתְּיָי *and Ohola committed fornication* (whilst) *under me* Ezekiel 23:5 (compare Numbers 5:19).

3 *of intercourse with other deities*, considered as harlotry, sometimes involving actual prostitution, אחריִז Exodus 34:15,16; Deuteronomy 31:16 (all J), Leviticus 17:7; Leviticus 20:5 (twice in verse) (all H), Judges 2:17; Judges 8:27,33; 1 Chronicles 5:25; Ezekiel 6:9; Ezekiel 20:30; after אֲבֹת, etc. Leviticus 20:6 (H), one's own heart & eyes Numbers 15:39 (H); especially of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem under figure of lewd woman Ezekiel 16:15 (absolute) Ezekiel 16:16 (על במית), Ezekiel 16:17 (בִּזָּז), Ezekiel 23:3 (twice in verse); Ezekiel 23:19 (absolute), Jeremiah 3:1 (with accusative); Jeremiah 3:6; Jeremiah 3:8 (absolute); absolute elsewhere Hosea 2:7; Hosea 4:15; Isaiah 57:3; Psalm 106:39; as leaving יָ, followed by מַעַל Hosea 9:1; מאחרי Hosea 1:2 (twice in verse); מתחת Hosea 4:12; followed by מן alone Psalm 73:27; ז(ו)נה Jeremiah 2:20; Ezekiel 16:35,41; בית זונה Jeremiah 5:7; לְבָם הַזֹּנָה *their whorish heart* Ezekiel 6:9.

4 *of moral defection* Isaiah 1:21.

Pu`al Perfect 3 masculine singular זֹנָה לא אֶהְרִיךְ *fornication was not done* (in going) *after thee* Ezekiel 16:34 (but strike out Co).

Hiph`il Perfect 2 masculine singular הִזְנִיתָ Hosea 5:3; 3 plural הִזְנוּ Hosea 4:10,18; Exodus 34:16; **Imperfect** 2 וַיִּזְנוּ Chronicles 21:11; 2 וַתִּזְנֶה Chronicles 21:13; **Infinitive absolute** הִזְנֶה Hosea 4:18; **construct** 2 הִזְנוֹתָ Chronicles 21:13; suffix לְהִזְנוֹתָ Leviticus 19:29.

1 *cause to commit fornication:*

a. sexual Leviticus 19:29 (H).

b. religious Exodus 34:16 (J), 2 Chronicles 21:11,13 (twice in verse).

2 *commit fornication:*

a. **sexual** Hosea 4:10.

b. **religious** Hosea 4:18 (twice in verse); Hosea 5:3.

Gesenius Definition - זָנָה fut. יִזְנֶה apoc. יִזְנֶן

(1) to commit fornication. (Arab. *زنى* coivit, to commit fornication; Syr. **ܙܢܐ** id.; Eth. **ገገገ**, although Nun is retained in **ገገገ** semen coitus.) Attributed properly and chiefly to a woman; whether married (when it may be rendered, to commit adultery) or unmarried, Genesis 38:24; Leviticus 19:29; Hosea 3:3 and it is construed with an accusative following of the fornicator or adulterer, Jeremiah 3:1; Ezekiel 16:28; Isaiah 23:17 (unless *אִתּוֹ* in this place is with); also followed by *בְּ* (to commit fornication with), Ezekiel 16:17 *אֶל* Ezekiel 16:26, 28 Ezekiel 16:28 very often followed by *אַחֲרַי*, prop. to go a whoring after, to follow a paramour, Ezekiel 16:34 Levit. 17:7 20:5, Leviticus 20:6; Deuteronomy 31:16, etc. On the other hand, *מִן* is put before the husband from whom the adulteress departs in committing whoredom, against whom she transgresses, Psalms 73:27 *מֵאַחֲרַי* Hosea 1:2 *מִתַּחַת* Hosea 4:12, and *תַּחַת* Ezekiel 23:5 (comp. Numbers 5:19, 29); *מֵעַל* Hosea 9:1, and *עַל* Judges 19:2 (where, however, the reading is doubtful); Ezekiel 16:15 (she committed adultery with a husband; i.e. whilst she had a husband, she thus transgressed against him). Part. *זֹנֶה* a harlot, whore, prostitute, Genesis 38:15; Deuteronomy 23:19, and more fully *זֹנֶה אִשָּׁה* Leviticus 21:7; Joshua 2:1; Judges 11:1 nor are those to be listened to, who, in some passages, for instance in that cited from Joshua, understand a hostess, a keeper of a house of entertainment, from *זָן* to feed. This word is rarely used of a male paramour, as Numbers 25:1, followed by *אֶל* (comp. Arab. *زَان* for *زَانِي* a whoremonger).

(2) It is very often used figuratively

(a) of idolatry, [to go a whoring after strange gods,] (the prophets shadowing forth the relation in which God stood to the people of Israel by the marriage union, see Hosea 1:2; Ezekiel 16:23 so that the people worshipping strange gods is compared to an adulterous woman). For the prepositions which follow, see above, No. 1. A very common expression is *זָנָה אַחֲרַי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַי* to go a whoring after strange gods, Leviticus 17:7, 20:5, Leviticus 20:6; Deuteronomy 31:16; Judges 2:17 also, *זָנָה מִתַּחַת אֱלֹהֵיו* to go a whoring, departing from one's own God, see above. The expression also is used *זָנָה אַחֲרַי הַגּוֹיִם* to go a whoring after (i.e. imitating) the gentiles, Ezekiel 23:30.

(b) of superstitions connected with idolatry: *זָנָה אַחֲרַי הָאֲבוֹת* to go a whoring after (following) necromancers, Levit. 20:6.

(c) of the commerce of gentile nations amongst themselves.

Spoken of Tyre, Isaiah 23:17, "she committed fornication with all the peoples of the earth;" compare Nahum 3:4 and אָתְּבַן.

Pual זוּנָה pass. Ezekiel 16:34.

Hiphil הִזְנָה fut. apoc. יִזְּן

(1) to seduce to fornication, Exodus 34:16 to cause to commit fornication, Leviticus 19:29.

(2) intrans. like Kal, properly to commit fornication, Hosea 4:10, 18 5:3.

Derivatives, זָנוּת, תְּזָנוּת, זָנוּת, זָנוּתִים.

Zanah - 83 verses in the OT - Usage: adulterous(1), become a harlot(1), commit adultery(1), commits flagrant harlotry(1), fall to harlotry(1), harlot(22), harlot continually(1), harlot's(2), harlot's*(2), harlot*(3), harlotry(3), harlots(5), making her a harlot(1), play the harlot(18), play the harlot continually(1), played the harlot(24), playing the harlot(3), plays the harlot(1), prostitute(1), unfaithful(1).

Genesis 34:31 But they said, "Should he treat our sister as a harlot?"

Genesis 38:15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face.

24 Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!"

Exodus 34:15 otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,

16 and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.

Leviticus 17:7 "They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations."

Leviticus 19:29 'Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, so that the land will not fall to harlotry and the land become full of lewdness.

Leviticus 20:5 then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech.

6 'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut

him off from among his people.

Leviticus 21:7 'They shall not take a woman who is profaned by harlotry, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God.

9 'Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.

14 'A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is profaned by harlotry, these he may not take; but rather he is to marry a virgin of his own people,

Numbers 15:39 "It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot,

Numbers 25:1 While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab.

Deuteronomy 22:21 then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 23:18 "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 31:16 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.

Joshua 2:1 Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there.

Joshua 6:17 "The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her."

25 However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Judges 2:17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers.

Judges 8:27 Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

33 Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god.

Judges 11:1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a harlot. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah.

Judges 16:1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.

Judges 19:2 But his concubine played the harlot against him, and she went away from him to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah, and was there for a period of four months.

1 Kings 3:16 Then two women who were harlots came to the king and stood before him.

1 Kings 22:38 They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood (now the harlots bathed themselves there), according to the word of the LORD which He spoke.

1 Chronicles 5:25 But they acted treacherously against the God of their fathers and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.

2 Chronicles 21:11 Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot and led Judah astray.

13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have caused Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot as the house of Ahab played the harlot, and you have also killed your brothers, your own family, who were better than you,

Psalms 73:27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.

Psalms 106:39 Thus they became unclean in their practices, And played the harlot in their deeds.

Proverbs 6:26 For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.

Proverbs 7:10 And behold, a woman comes to meet him, Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.

Proverbs 23:27 For a harlot is a deep pit And an adulterous woman is a narrow well.

Proverbs 29:3 A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad, But he who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth.

Isaiah 1:21 How the faithful city has become a harlot, She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, But now murderers.

Isaiah 23:15 Now in that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to

Tyre as in the song of the harlot:

16 Take your harp, walk about the city, O forgotten harlot; Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs, That you may be remembered.

17 It will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot's wages and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.

Isaiah 57:3 "But come here, you sons of a sorceress, Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.

Jeremiah 2:20 "For long ago I broke your yoke And tore off your bonds; But you said, 'I will not serve!' For on every high hill And under every green tree You have lain down as a harlot.

Jeremiah 3:1 God says, "If a husband divorces his wife And she goes from him And belongs to another man, Will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me," declares the LORD.

3 "Therefore the showers have been withheld, And there has been no spring rain. Yet you had a harlot's forehead; You refused to be ashamed.

6 Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.

8 "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.

Jeremiah 5:7 "Why should I pardon you? Your sons have forsaken Me And sworn by those who are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, They committed adultery And trooped to the harlot's house.

Ezekiel 6:9 "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations.

Ezekiel 16:15 "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing.

16 "You took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen.

17 "You also took your beautiful jewels made of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images that you might play the harlot with them.

26 "You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry.

28 "Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied.

30 "How languishing is your heart," declares the Lord GOD, "while you do all these things, the actions of a bold-faced harlot.

31 "When you built your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every square, in disdain of money, you were not like a harlot.

33 "Men give gifts to all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers to bribe them to come to you from every direction for your harlotries.

34 "Thus you are different from those women in your harlotries, in that no one plays the harlot as you do, because you give money and no money is given you; thus you are different."

35 Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD.

41 "They will burn your houses with fire and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women. Then I will stop you from playing the harlot, and you will also no longer pay your lovers.

Ezekiel 20:30 "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and play the harlot after their detestable things?"

Ezekiel 23:3 and they played the harlot in Egypt. They played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and there their virgin bosom was handled.

5 "Oholah played the harlot while she was Mine; and she lusted after her lovers, after the Assyrians, her neighbors,

19 "Yet she multiplied her harlotries, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the harlot in the land of Egypt.

30 'These things will be done to you because you have played the harlot with the nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols.

43 "Then I said concerning her who was worn out by adulteries, 'Will they now commit adultery with her when she is thus?'

44 "But they went in to her as they would go in to a harlot. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women.

Hosea 1:2 When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD."

Hosea 2:5 "For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

Hosea 3:3 Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be

toward you."

Hosea 4:10 They will eat, but not have enough; They will play the harlot, but not increase, Because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD.

12 My people consult their wooden idol, and their diviner's wand informs them; For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray, And they have played the harlot, departing from their God.

13 They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains And burn incense on the hills, Under oak, poplar and terebinth, Because their shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters play the harlot And your brides commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot Or your brides when they commit adultery, For the men themselves go apart with harlots And offer sacrifices with temple prostitutes; So the people without understanding are ruined.

15 Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Do not let Judah become guilty; Also do not go to Gilgal, Or go up to Beth-aven And take the oath: "As the LORD lives!"

18 Their liquor gone, They play the harlot continually; Their rulers dearly love shame.

Hosea 5:3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; For now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot, Israel has defiled itself.

Hosea 9:1 Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations! For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God. You have loved harlots' earnings on every threshing floor.

Joel 3:3 "They have also cast lots for My people, Traded a boy for a harlot And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.

Amos 7:17 "Therefore, thus says the LORD, 'Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a measuring line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.'"

Micah 1:7 All of her idols will be smashed, All of her earnings will be burned with fire And all of her images I will make desolate, For she collected them from a harlot's earnings, And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.

Nahum 3:4 All because of the many harlotries of the harlot, The charming one, the mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations by her harlotries And families by her sorceries.

SO THAT IT BECAME A SNARE TO GIDEON: Snare is something (often something deceptively attractive) that catches you unawares. A snare is something that serves to entangle the unwary. Gideon was unwary and thus was deceived by the attractiveness of the ephod to which he basically became a slave!

be a **snare** to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?"

Exodus 23:33 "They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a **snare** to you."

Exodus 34:12 "Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a **snare** in your midst.

Deuteronomy 7:16 "You shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a **snare** to you.

Joshua 23:13 know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a **trap** to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

Judges 2:3 "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods (**IDOLS**) will be a **snare** to you.'"

Judges 8:27 Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a **snare** to Gideon and his household.

1 Samuel 18:21 Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she may become a **snare** to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today."

2 Samuel 22:6 The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The **snares** of death confronted me.

Job 34:30 So that godless men would not rule Nor be **snares** of the people.

Job 40:24 "Can anyone capture him when he is on watch, With **barbs** can anyone pierce his nose?"

Psalms 18:5 The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The **snares** of death confronted me.

Psalms 64:5 They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose; They talk of laying **snares** secretly; They say, "Who can see them?"

Psalms 69:22 May their table before them become a **snare**; And when they are in peace, may it become a trap.

Psalms 106:36 And served their idols, Which became a **snare** to them.

Psalms 140:5 The proud have hidden a trap for me, and cords; They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set snares for me. Selah.

Psalms 141:9 Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me, And from the snares of those who do iniquity.

Proverbs 12:13 An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips,

But the righteous will escape from trouble.

Proverbs 13:14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn aside from the snares of death.

Proverbs 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death.

Proverbs 18:7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, And his lips are the snare of his soul.

Proverbs 20:25 It is a trap for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!" And after the vows to make inquiry.

Proverbs 22:25 Or you will learn his ways And find a snare for yourself.

Proverbs 29:6 By transgression an evil man is ensnared, But the righteous sings and rejoices.

25 The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

Isaiah 8:14 "Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Amos 3:5 Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?

The danger of idolatry ensnaring one's heart was a repeated warning to Israel (and no less of a warning to us today!)

Judges 2:3 "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a **snare** to you.'"

Deuteronomy 7:16 "And you shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a **snare** to you.

Joshua 23:13 know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they shall be a **snare** and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

When we insist on having what God has not given us, we always are ensnared. God does not always frustrate our sinful longings. Sometimes he allows us to have what we have been determined to get, but with bitterness and vexation.

Whatever Gideon's purpose was, one thing appears certain -- it represented an intrusion into the divinely prescribed ministry of the high priest, probably relating to the proper use of the Urim and Thummin (Ex 28:30). Its use by Gideon (who was not a Levite) was contrary to God's Word. Furthermore at that time in Israel's history, the only divinely decreed worship center was Shiloh, not Ophrah. It is always a mistake to substitute a

man's plans for the commandments of God. And so the ephod would prove to be like bait that lures a bird into the fowler's net and it would be the beginning of a sad decline in Gideon's life. It is sad to see the man who overthrew Baal's altar now setting up an idol of his own. Unfortunately, the whole nation forsook God and worshiped the new god

And so beloved here is the question: **Do you have an ephod? What is your "ephod"? On what or whom do you set your heart? On God or on your "ephod"? Beware for the corrupting effect of the "ephod" can be most subtle and deceptive.**

AND HIS HOUSEHOLD: Gideon and his family suffered as a result of it. In [Jdg9:5] we read of the death of most of Gideon's sons because of the desire of one, Abimelech, to be king. This tragedy seems to be traceable to the idolatry that resulted from the construction of Gideon's ephod.

John Hunter writes: "In some ways we can be like this. Great men and women can be used of the Lord. They can then start organizations, societies, or denominations, to commemorate and extend the glory of God in their work. These can function wonderfully as planned -- to begin with. But then as the vision goes, so does the response of those who follow those leaders. (cp Pr 29:18) This can deteriorate until the purpose of the organization, society, or denomination becomes simply to maintain its own entity. So we find people dedicated to keep a certain movement in existence, regardless of whether the Lord is purposing to use it or not. Their "ephod" takes their allegiance and true effort away from the living Lord to a dead society."

Good Intentions - Have you ever had one of those "I was just trying to help" moments? Maybe you offered to carry the cake to the table and you dropped it. Or perhaps you offered to dog-sit your neighbor's pooch and the little guy ran away.

In Judges 8, it appears that Gideon tried to do a good thing. But the result was tragic. Impressed by his military exploits, the men of Israel asked Gideon to be their king. To his credit, he refused (Judges 8:22, 23). But then he asked them to donate gold earrings, which he made into an "ephod" (Jdg 8:27). This was either a sacred garment worn by the high priest or some type of image. Why did he do this? We don't know for sure, but Gideon may have been trying to provide spiritual leadership. Whatever his motive was, God hadn't told him to do this.

When Gideon set up the ephod in Ophrah, it drew the people's attention away from worship of the Lord and led them into idolatry (Jdg 8:27). And as soon as Gideon died, the people found it easy to go back to worshiping the Baals (Jdg 8:33).

Gideon may have had good intentions, but he made the mistake of acting without consulting the Lord. Let's be careful not to allow anything to take our eyes off our loving, holy God—or it will lead us and others astray. — Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Word of God provides the light
We need to see the way;

If we obey what God has said,
We'll not be led astray. —Sper

Good intentions are no substitute for obedience.

Judges 8:28 So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

- was Midian (KJV): Ps 83:9-12 Isa 9:4 10:26
- forty years (KJV): Jdg 3:11,30 5:31
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

SO MIDIAN WAS SUBDUED BEFORE THE SONS OF ISRAEL, AND THEY DID NOT LIFT UP THEIR HEADS ANYMORE: Like an animal no longer able to toss its horns and charge against the foe, Midian could not "raise its head"

AND THE LAND WAS UNDISTURBED FOR FORTY YEARS IN THE DAYS OF GIDEON: Why 40 years here and (Jdg 5:31-note)? Generally seems to equate with a "generation". Thus when the generation that knew God and His mighty deeds died out (Jdg 2:7, 8, 9, 10, 11-note), evil crept back in and took control of their hearts.

"**Undisturbed**" (saqat) means to be still, to be quiet, to be undisturbed thus describing the state or condition of tranquility. It is interesting but sad that this verse marks the last reference to **peace** in the book of Judges (3:11, 30; 5:31).

Ralph Davis adds that "after this the land will no longer recover its rest. Judges will show you. that Yahweh's mercy is deep but not easygoing; it is tender but will not be trampled. The word it preaches is not "though it makes him sad to see the way we live, he'll always say, 'I forgive' " (a la the sentimental song of the fifties) but "do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and long suffering, ignorant of the fact that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Ro 2:4-note). It is tough to end well. Any believer knows that. "He will keep you strong to the end" (1Cor. 1:8 NIV) — that is one's only assurance. (Ralph Davis, D. Focus on the Bible: Judges)

Judges 8:29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

- Jerubbaal (KJV): Jdg 6:32 1Sa 12:11
- in his own house (KJV): Ne 5:14,15

Judges 8:30 Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for

he had many wives.

- threescore (KJV): Jdg 9:2,5 10:4 12:9,14 Ge 46:26 Ex 1:5 2Ki 10:1
- of his body begotten (KJV): Heb. going out of his thigh
- many wives (KJV): Ge 2:24 7:7 Dt 17:17 2Sa 3:2-5 5:13-16 1Ki 11:3 Mal 2:15 Mt 19:5-8 Eph 5:31-33
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

NOW GIDEON HAD SEVENTY SONS WHO WERE HIS DIRECT DESCENDANTS FOR HE HAD MANY WIVES:

With his vast wealth and his great national reputation, Gideon probably thought that his children were well provided for, but just the opposite proved true. Sixty-nine of his seventy sons were killed by their half-brother who himself was slain by a woman dropping a stone on his head. There is no security apart from the will of God. Had Gideon practiced Mt 6:33-note, subsequent events might have been radically different.

"Many wives" is proof of Gideon's prosperity. As wealth and prestige increased, so did one's harem. King Ahab also had seventy sons (2Ki10:1), and even some of Gideon's successors had thirty (Jdg 10:4-note; Jdg 12:9-note) or forty (Jdg 12:14-note) sons each. The hatred and murder that plagued Gideon's family are characteristic of OT polygamous situations.

Though Gideon refused to take rulership as king (Jdg 8:22,23), his lifestyle was that of self-indulgent royalty, setting the stage for the next chapter of Israel's sordid, tragic apostasy and anarchy.

J. Vernon McGee - "Gideon had many wives and a concubine besides. He had a total of seventy-one sons. That is a real blot on this man's life. Now someone will say, as they did about Solomon, "How could God use a man like this and why did He use him?" Well, Gideon took these many wives and had all these children after the battle. And the fact of the matter is that God used him in spite of this. God did not approve of what he did. The record makes it clear that his actions brought tragedy to the nation of Israel. The next chapter brings that out. God had forbidden intermarriage outside the nation. He had forbidden the Israelites to have more than one wife. God did not create several Eves for Adam. He created only one. God did not remove all of Adam's ribs. God took out only one rib. Abraham, you remember, took a concubine, that little Egyptian maid named Hagar and, believe me, it caused trouble. God never sanctioned it." (Thru the Bible)

Judges 8:31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

- concubine (KJV): Jdg 9:1-5 Ge 16:15 22:24
- called (KJV): Heb. set
- Abimelech (KJV): Jdg 9:18 Ge 20:2

- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

Gideon fell severely into the sin of polygamy, an iniquity tolerated by many but which never was God's blueprint for marriage

Gary Inrig - In grace, the Holy Spirit does not dwell upon this part of Gideon's biography. However, enough is said for us to realize what happened. The man who refused the throne adopted a very kingly lifestyle.

1. His royal harem. Occasionally, an ordinary Israelite might have more than one wife, but large-scale polygamy was practiced only by rulers because they were the only ones who could afford it. Gideon adopted not only the Canaanite's idea of having a harem but apparently their moral standards as well, because he had a concubine in Shechem.

2. His royal luxury. Gideon lived in royal prosperity. He began his career by describing himself as "weakest in Manasseh" (6:15), but he ended his life enjoying great luxury. This is exactly what God warned against in Deuteronomy 17:17: "[A king] must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

3. His royal title. The final evidence of Gideon's backsliding is found in the name he gave his son. Gideon chose his name very deliberately. Abimelech—"My father is king." Every time that boy gave his name, he claimed for his father what Gideon had apparently renounced in Jdg 8:23. More than that, chapter 9 reveals that his family received the impression that the next king would come from among Gideon's sons. How far away his great victory was now! (Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay)

Judges 8:32 And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

- died in (KJV): Ge 15:15 25:8 Jos 24:29,30 Job 5:26 42:17
- Ophrah (KJV): Jdg 8:27 6:24
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

AND GIDEON THE SON OF JOASH DIED AT A RIPE OLD AGE (lit = "gray-headed"): The account of Gideon's life in one sense ends here but really does not end until with chap. 9, not chap. 8. This chapter provides us with the real legacy of Gideon. Gideon's death notice further attests his importance, for only he and Samson are said to have been buried in the **tomb of his father**.

To die "**at a ripe old age**" implies a long and full life. Elsewhere in the OT the expression is used only of Abraham (Ge 15:15; 25:8) and David (1Ch 29:28)!

AND WAS BURIED IN THE TOMB OF HIS FATHER JOASH, IN OPHRAH OF THE ABIEZRITES: Before the battle against Midian, Gideon humbly depended on the Lord. During the “mopping up” operations, however, he became authoritative and even vindictive. After his victory over Midian we don’t find Gideon honoring the Lord or calling the people together to make a new covenant to obey the Lord. Gideon started out as a servant, but now he was a celebrity. The result was decline for him, his family, and his nation.

It’s interesting and instructive to contrast Abraham and Gideon in the decisions they made after their respective victories (Ge14). Abraham took nothing for himself but made sure that others received their share of the spoils (Ge 14:22, 23, 24). He especially refused to take anything from the heathen king of Sodom (Ge 14:17, 21). Instead, Abraham fellowshiped with Melchizedek, King of Salem, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 7-8); and in all that he said and did, Abraham gave glory to the Lord of heaven and earth.

After winning a great victory, we must always beware of the temptation to sin, for Satan attacks us subtly when we least expect it.

Andrew Bonar warned regarding "mountain top" experiences “Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle.”

Judges 8:33 Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god.

- as soon (KJV): Jdg 2:7-10,17,19 Jos 24:31 2Ki 12:2 2Ch 24:17,18
- went (KJV): Jdg 8:27 2:17 Ex 34:15,16 Jer 3:9
- Baalberith (KJV): Literally, "the lord of the covenant." Jdg 9:4,46
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

ISRAEL'S IMMEDIATE APOSTASY!

THEN IT CAME ABOUT AS SOON AS GIDEON WAS DEAD: What an incredible time phrase (**then...as soon as**)... it is almost as if the people were waiting for Gideon to die so that they could carry on with business as usual.

“**As soon as Gideon was dead**” the spiritual and moral condition of the people reverted back to its previous state. It almost seems as though they were waiting impatiently for the old hero to go. Proverbs records that "Where there is **no vision** (divine revelation, oracle, vision or word from God), the people are unrestrained (run wild, are uncontrolled), but happy (blessed, spiritually prosperous) is he who keeps the law." (Proverbs 29:18-[commentary](#))

"BLACK

TUESDAY"

What happens when a "Gideon" dies, when they is no one to restrain the people. Well on October 7, 1969 the city of Montreal, Canada found out because on that day the police force went on strike. Because of what resulted, the day has been called Black Tuesday. A burglar and a policeman were slain. Forty-nine persons were wounded or injured in rioting. Nine bank holdups were committed, almost a tenth of the total number of holdups the previous year along with 17 robberies at gunpoint. Usually disciplined, peaceful citizens joined the ruffraff and went wild, smashing some 1,000 plate glass windows in a stretch of 21 business blocks in the heart of the city, hauling away stereo units, radios, TVs and wearing apparel. While looters stripped windows of valuable merchandise, professional burglars entered stores by doors and made off with truckloads of goods. A smartly dressed man scampered down a street with a fur coat over each arm with no police around. In short, with no "king" in Montreal, anarchy assumed the throne!

Dr. Harry Ironside in his final lectures at Dallas Seminary said he often prayed "O God, keep me from becoming a foolish old man!"

Apparently when **Dr. M. C. Culbertson**, retired president of Moody Bible Institute heard the trustees planned to name a building in his honor, he protested: "But you don't know how I will end."

THAT THE SONS OF ISRAEL AGAIN PLAYED THE HARLOT WITH THE BAALS AND MADE BAAL-BERITH ("Lord of the Covenant) THEIR GOD:

In light of Israel's refusal to God's lordship, **William Penn** words are relevant - "If we are not willing to be governed by God, we shall be ruled by tyrants." .

Judges 8:34 Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side;

- remembered (KJV): Ps 78:11,42 106:18,21 Ec 12:1 Jer 2:32
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

A SAD REFRAIN: "DID NOT... "

THUS THE SONS OF ISRAEL DID NOT REMEMBER THE LORD THEIR GOD, WHO HAD DELIVERED THEM FROM THE HANDS OF ALL THEIR ENEMIES ON EVERY SIDE: Did not - This is a sad refrain in the book of Judges (and I fear too often in our lives [including mine!] as believers!

Did not drive out = Jdg 1:21, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33-note

did not know the LORD = Jdg 2:10-note

did not listen to their judges = Jdg 2:17a-note

did not do *as their fathers* = Jdg 2:17b-note

did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways = Jdg 2:19-note

did not remember the LORD their God Jdg 8:34-note

did not serve Him = Jdg 10:6-note

Did not remember - This is just another way to say they **forgot**. Israel forgot Jehovah and so neglected His covenant demands, which was a reflection of ingratitude for His blessings, and a self-sufficient attitude, which in turn opened the door to idolatry.

Davis notes that...

When the text condemns Israel for not remembering Yahweh, it is not suggesting that Israel forgot the identity of Yahweh nor even that they could no longer list the enemies from whom Yahweh has rescued them. It means that what they knew of Yahweh exercised no control over them, held no grip on their loyalties. They could still answer catechism questions about Yahweh but that knowledge did not determine their commitment. Whatever factual, intellectual information about Yahweh they retained did not keep them from adopting Baal--berith as their god. In the latter months of 1947, sometime before the British mandate in Palestine expired, Jamil Mardam, the prime minister of Syria, joined other Arab leaders in planning a coordinated military attack on Israel as soon as the new Jewish state was born. Ironically, all that winter Mardam's wife made her regular visits to Jerusalem, where she received treatment from her Jewish doctor.¹ Apparently, the benefit Mardam's wife received from a Jewish source had no impact on how he himself planned to deal with the Jews. There was no connection; that is, he "did not remember" in the biblical sense of the phrase. (Ralph Davis, D. Focus on the Bible: Judges)

Israel deserved cursing for her disobedience but instead in Judges, God intervenes on Israel's behalf—and He does repeatedly—it is consistently in spite of rather than because of what the nation deserves. In this book we observe the mercy of God at work in as sharp relief as anywhere else in Scripture.

The greatest threats to Israel's existence do not come from outside enemies who may occasionally oppress them. Israel's most serious enemy is within. She is a nation that appears determined to destroy herself. Only the gracious intervention of God prevents this from happening. With hindsight we can recognize His motivation. He had made an eternal covenant (See **Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic**) with His people (Ge 12:1, 3). He could not let them destroy themselves or let others destroy them. The mission for which He had called them could not abort. If anything positive happens to Israel in the period of

the judges in general or through the agency of Gideon in particular, it has much less to do with the character of the human agents that God has at His disposal than with the character of Him who would say in another time and in another place,

“I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Judges 8:35 nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon), in accord with all the good that he had done to Israel.

- showed (KJV): Jdg 9:5,16-19 Ec 9:14,15
- Jerubbaal (KJV): Rather, Jerubbaal Gideon; as we say, Simon Peter; or call a person by his Christian and surname. Gideon was a mighty man of valour, a true patriot, evidently disinterested and void of ambition. He loved his country, and hazarded his life for it; but refused the kingdom, when offered to him and his heirs. The act of making the ephod was totally wrong; yet, probably it was done with no reprehensible design.
- [Judges 8 Resources](#)

NOR DID THEY SHOW KINDNESS TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF JERUBBAAL (THAT IS, GIDEON): "**Show kindness**" (hesed) means loyalty, devotion, commitment. In the present context hesed refers to fair and benevolent treatment as a reward for good deeds rendered, usually as an act of allegiance. How soon the sinful hearts of humans forget both the Lord and the people who have served them faithfully.

This is the last time the name "Gideon" is used in Judges. Judges 9 uses "Jerubbaal" 8x's. There must be a message.

Gary Inrig summarizes The Lessons of Gideon's Failure

The ending of Gideon's story is a sad one, but it has some important lessons that we must not overlook.

1. We cannot compromise our obedience to the Word of God.

The path of partial obedience is the pathway of spiritual defeat, and the path of compromise means that the Lord will not be able to use our lives to make a permanent impact for Jesus Christ. We cannot alter God's Word, and we cannot choose to obey what we deem appropriate. His Word must be supreme.

2. The most glorious profession of the lordship of Jesus Christ must be followed by the consistent practice of that lordship.

Over the story of Gideon we can write the words of 1 Corinthians 10:12, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" I am always delighted when people share how they have come to a new understanding of the lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives. Often,

following a camp or a conference or a stirring message, people will announce that they have dedicated their life in a new and deeper way to the Savior. The testimony is tremendous, but the evidence must be worked out in life over a course of time. Gideon professed the kingship of God in Israel in clear, unequivocal terms, but **then he felt free to alter the King's clear commands.** How has your dedication to the Lord altered your life? Is it only a glorious profession, or is it a habit of life? There is no substitute for hard-nosed, consistent obedience.

3. The only safe place to keep our spiritual eyes is on the Lord Jesus. Even Gideons may backslide. The most spiritual Christian may fail. Gideon's defection must have had a traumatic effect on sincere believers who were patterning their lives on his. So God the Holy Spirit calls us to run the race before us, looking away from all else to Jesus, the Source and Protector of faith (Hebrews 12:1, 2). He, and He alone, is our unfailing example.

Charles Simeon
Gideon Pacifies the Ephraimites
Jdg 8:1,2 3

WE are apt to admire great military exploits, and to account men honourable in proportion to the victories they have gained: but there is a victory over ourselves that far more dignifies a man, than the most extended conquests over others. We certainly regard Gideon as one highly renowned in the feats of war: but his defeat of all the Midianitish hosts with only three hundred men, armed with pitchers, lamps, and trumpets, is less worthy of admiration, than the self-possession he exercised towards the offended and obnoxious Ephraimites. Solomon has weighed as in a balance the different characters, and has decided in favour of him whose victory is over his own spirit: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." (Pr. 16:32)

In the transaction before us we see,

I. Whence it is that unreasonable men take offence—

There is scarcely a society or even a single family to be found, where the different members walk in perfect harmony together: in most circles there are frequent disagreements: one or other of the members is unreasonable in his expectations, and by the unquietness of his own dispositions spreads dissatisfaction and disquietude all around him. The inquiry, "Whence come wars and fightings among you?" St. James answers by an appeal to our own experience; "Come they not hence, even from the lusts that war in your members?" (Jas 4:1) The chief sources of offence are discernible in the

conduct of the Ephraimites. It arises,

1. From the pride of our own hearts—

[The Ephraimites had evidently a high conceit of their own dignity, and were offended that Gideon had not paid as much deference to them, as they supposed themselves entitled to. And from this root of bitterness it is that so many disputes arise. “Only by pride cometh contention,” is the testimony of God himself. See the proud man, swelling with a sense of his own importance: if you differ from him in judgment, or act contrary to his will, yea, if you do not comply with his humour in every thing, he is quite indignant, and bursts forth into a rage. Even the best-meant endeavours cannot always please him: as an inferior, he cannot brook the least restraint: as a superior, he never thinks that sufficient homage is paid him: and as an equal, he cannot endure that others should exercise the liberty which he arrogates to himself. To what an extent this domineering principle will prevail, we may see in the instance of Nebuchadnezzar; who, because of the conscientious refusal of the Hebrew youths to bow down to his idol, “was full of fury; and the form of his visage was changed against them; and he ordered the furnace to be made seven times hotter than usual,” in order to destroy them. Truly there is no principle in the heart more adverse to the peace and happiness of mankind than this.]

2. From envy at others—

[Great honour accrued to Gideon and the Abi-ezrites from the victory that had been gained: and the Ephraimites were grieved that others should possess a glory, in which themselves had no share. Hence they broke forth into revilings against Gideon. The same principle also prevails more or less in all: “The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy:” and how nearly it is allied with wrath, we see from those words of Eliphaz, “Wrath killeth the foolish man; and envy slayeth the silly one.” The examples of Cain, and Joseph’s brethren, and Saul, sufficiently mark the murderous tendency of this malignant passion. One evil peculiar to it is, that it makes excellence itself the object of its attack; as Solomon has observed, “For every right work a man is envied of his neighbour.” Hence that pointed question, “Who can stand before envy?” Not the benevolence of the Apostles, nor the blameless conduct of our Lord himself, could ward off its malignant shafts: and wherever it exists, it will be attended with “strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings.”]

3. From impetuosity of spirit—

[The Ephraimites would not give themselves any time for reflection or inquiry, but instantly began with violent invectives. It should seem that they were a hasty people, full of pride and wrath: and on another occasion precisely similar to this, they suffered for it in no slight degree; for no less than two and forty thousand of them were slain in consequence of it. Had they been at the pains of making inquiry, they would have found that Gideon had committed no offence at all: he had acted altogether by the direction of God: and so far was he from being at liberty to increase his army by the accession of the Ephraimites, that he was necessitated to reduce the thirty-two thousand troops which he had raised to three hundred. Thus it is that innumerable quarrels arise, when a

moment's inquiry would shew, that no reason for them exists, or at least no reason for such resentment as is felt by the offended person. Behold David, when Nabal had refused him the refreshments which he desired: nothing short of the death of Nabal and all his adherents was deemed a sufficient atonement for his offence. But when Abigail had brought David to reflection, he found that his vindictive purposes were highly criminal; and that, if his anger was not groundless, it far exceeded that which the occasion called for. In a word, this hastiness of temper prevents men from listening to the dictates of reason, and makes them deaf to every consideration of truth and equity.]

The readiness with which unreasonable men take offence, makes it important to inquire,

II. How judicious men may pacify it—

Truly admirable was the conduct of Gideon on this occasion: and his success may well recommend it to our imitation. Indeed the general rules deducible from it are as good as any that can be suggested. When a person is offended at us without a cause, we should endeavour, as far as circumstances will admit of it, to calm his mind,

1. By patience and forbearance—

[Not a word of recrimination dropped from the mouth of Gideon. He might perhaps have justly said, that when the Ephraimites knew his determination to oppose the Midianites, they had never offered their services, or come forward to assist him in the undertaking: but, when the danger was over, they were ready to impute evil to him for omissions which were chargeable only on themselves. But he did not so much as glance at any thing that might either betray irritation in his own mind, or strengthen it in theirs. Though "they did chide sharply with him," he bore it with a meekness that was truly amiable and praiseworthy. Now this was an excellent way to conciliate their minds, even if he had deserved all the blame that they imputed to him: Solomon justly observes, that "yielding pacifieth great offences." It is recrimination that fans the flame, and causes it to burst forth into destructive quarrels. The common progress of disputes may be seen in the case of Israel and Judah after the death of Absalom; where, each of them justifying his own cause, the result was, that the dispute on both sides grew, till the accused were more incensed than even the accusers; and "the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel." Silence therefore is the best remedy, at least till the offended person is so far calmed as to listen readily to the voice of reason: and though the advice of Solomon appears at first sight as paradoxical and absurd, yet it is the best that can be offered; "Leave off contention before it be meddled with:" for it will be difficult enough to leave it off when once it is begun.]

2. By humility and self-denial—

[Gideon might justly have said, "If God has been pleased to honour me, why should that give any umbrage to you?" But he forbore to take to himself the credit that was his due, or to claim from them the approbation he had merited at their hands. Thus he hid from them the light which had pained their eyes, and cast a veil over the actions which had provoked their jealousy. This was a striking instance of that "charity which vaunteth not

itself, and seeketh not her own." This is a disposition which tends no less to the preservation of our own happiness than it does to the conciliating of those who are offended at us: for when once we are willing to forego the honour to which we are entitled, it will appear a small thing to us to be censured without a cause; seeing that such censures only reduce us to the place which we were previously in our own minds prepared to occupy. And it will almost invariably be found true, that, as men are ready to hate those who arrogate honour to themselves, so will they be more easily reconciled to those who are humble and unassuming.]

3. By commendation and love—

[Gideon, instead of loading his adversaries with blame, was glad to search out causes for commending them. The Ephraimites, though they offered not themselves in the first instance, were of great service in pursuing and destroying the routed foe. They took the two hostile princes, Oreb and Zeeb: and though this was only the gleanings of Gideon's vintage, yet does Gideon speak of it as incomparably greater than any thing that had been done by him. And it is particularly deserving of notice, that this was the word which produced the desired effect; "Then their anger was abated, when he had said that." Thus it appears, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath;" and that, if we would blunt the edge of other men's displeasure, we should study to conform ourselves to that sublime precept; "Let nothing be done through strife and vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."]

On this subject we would find a word or two of advice—

1. Be cautious not too hastily to take offence—

[Innumerable circumstances may exist, which, if known to us, would, make us form a very different judgment of men and things, from that which at first sight we have entertained. To weigh, and consider, and inquire, is the part of true wisdom: but to be precipitate is a certain indication of folly — — —]

2. If offence be taken at you, labour to the uttermost to pacify it—

[This was a leading feature in the character of Jesus; and it must be so in that of all his followers — — — "To feed our enemies, and heap coals of fire on their heads," is the Christian's duty: therefore, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."]
(Simeon, C. 1832-63. *Horae Homileticae*)

Charles Simeon
Judges 8:4
Faint, Yet Pursuing

THERE are those who speak of Gideon as a type of Christ. But, excepting as a deliverer

raised up in an extraordinary manner to Israel, there is scarcely sufficient correspondence between him and our blessed Lord to justify such a representation of him. As an example to the Church in all ages, and especially as illustrating for our benefit the power and efficacy of faith, we can have no hesitation in commending him to your most particular attention: for he is not only set forth in Scripture under that character in common with many other eminent men, but, together with David and Samuel, he is proposed to us as a pattern which we are bound to follow: "Seeing that we are encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." I would notice him, therefore, under the two-fold character of A deliverer to Israel, and A model to us: or, rather, instead of separating the two, I will combine them; that so the whole subject may come before us in a more luminous and useful point of view.

Let us, then, notice respecting Gideon,

I. His ready obedience to the divine call—

When convinced that God had called him to fight for Israel, he delayed not to execute his commission—

[The Midianites had grievously oppressed Israel. By a kind of predatory warfare, they annually desolated the whole land. Gideon was threshing out some corn, in order to hide it from the Midianites: and God sent an angel to inform him, that, through his instrumentality, the country should be delivered from its invaders. This seemed to be an hopeless and almost impossible event: but when God had shewn him, by repeated signs, that the office of delivering Israel was committed to him, he cheerfully obeyed the call, and addressed himself to the work assigned him — — —]

The same promptitude, Brethren, is expected at your hands—

[You are called to war against the enemies of God and his people. Satan has exercised a most tyrannic sway over the whole world, "leading them captive at his will." But the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the trumpet to be sounded throughout all your coasts, that you may flock to his standard, and arm yourselves for the combat. Let none say, The enemy is too powerful for me; I cannot venture to oppose him. The command is absolute; and every one of you must gird on his armour, and prepare to "war a good warfare." Let there be no reluctance, Brethren, no timidity, no "conferring with flesh and blood." It is a disgraceful bondage to which you have been subjected: and the time is come for you to free yourselves from it. I call on all of you, therefore, to obey the summons, and in every possible way to approve yourselves "good soldiers of Jesus Christ."]

But be sure to follow in this,

II. His simple dependence on divine aid—

Admirably did Gideon's faith display itself on this occasion—

[Most particularly is this noticed in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith Gideon and the others subdued kingdoms." There came, in obedience to his summons, two-and-thirty thousand men. But God directed him to dismiss from amongst them all who were timid: and instantly was his army reduced to ten thousand men. But even these were more than God chose to employ: and therefore Gideon was ordered to bring them down to a stream, and to separate those who lapped like a dog, from those who bowed down to drink like cattle; and to reserve the former only for his companions in arms. Of those who lapped, there were only three hundred; and these were all who were left him to go against the Midianites, who amounted in all to one hundred and thirty-five thousand men. But not even these were to be employed in one compact body: no: scarcely two of them were to be together: they were to occupy an immense tract of ground, surrounding the whole camp of Midian. Nor were they to make a simultaneous attack: but to take, every one of them, a pitcher and a lamp and a trumpet, and to break their pitchers and blow their trumpets, and to stand in their place, crying, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." What an armament, and what a disposal of the troops, according to the judgment of sense, was this! It was the direct way to have every soul amongst them slain in an instant: for not one of them could escape through darkness; since every one held his lamp, as it were, for the express purpose of making himself a mark for the spear or sword of his enemy. But Gideon presumed not to sit in judgment on the directions given him. It was sufficient for him to know what God's appointment was; and to that he submitted, without hesitation or delay.]

It is also the good fight of faith which you are now called to fight—

[There must be no dependence on an arm of flesh. You must "go forth in the strength of the Lord," and of him only. To overcome through the simple exercise of faith, may appear strange; but it is the way appointed by God himself, who will have all the honour of your success, and will suffer "no flesh to glory in his presence." "To stand still, and see the salvation of God" with you, may appear to savour of presumption: but it is infinitely greater presumption to invade the prerogative of God, and to take on ourselves the work that belongs to him alone. The proclamation of his name, and the exhibition of his light, are doubtless proper, as his appointed means for advancing his own glory; but of themselves they can effect no more for the subjugation of our enemies, than could the blowing of trumpets to destroy the walls of Jericho, or the breaking of pitchers to subdue the

armies of Midian and of Amalek. It is “by faith you are to walk, and not by sight:” and “according to your faith it shall be done unto you.”]

You must further imitate,

III. His full determination never to relax his efforts—

Gideon, “though faint” from the excess of his exertions, “yet pursued” his enemies—

[A panic having struck the Midianites, they, by mistake, slew one another, so that not less than one-hundred-and-twenty thousand of them fell that night. The remaining fifteen thousand fled. Now Gideon might well have said, The enemy is so weakened, that they cannot invade us any more: I will now, therefore, with my little band of soldiers, take my rest. But he would not on any account act thus. As long as there were any of his enemies remaining, he would pursue them. Though he was quite “faint” with fatigue, he would not cease from his exertions; but followed them, and fell upon them, and slew them, and took captive both their kings, both Zebah and Zalmunna.]

What a bright example is here for us!

[There must, of necessity, be times and seasons when we are ready to faint in our great warfare, and to wish, as it were, for some relaxation from our labour. Who has not experienced both weariness in duties, and dejection of mind, too, in the conflicts which he has had to sustain? But it must be time enough for us to rest when we get to heaven. St. Paul was “troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed:” “for which cause he fainted not.” So must it be with us: whatever progress we have made, we must “forget the things which are behind, and press forward to that which is before.” “We must never be weary in well-doing,” or, if weary in it, we must never be weary of it. Whoever sees us, must see us still “pursuing,” and determining never to rest, till every enemy be subdued, and “Satan himself be for ever bruised under our feet.”]

Above all, we must follow him in,

IV. His assured expectation of ultimate success—

This was very conspicuous—

[His own countrymen, both of Succoth and Penuel, refused even to administer food to his weary soldiers, lest the Midianites should visit it with signal judgments, after having recovered from their present panic. They even ridiculed the sanguine expectations of Gideon, saying, “Are Zebah and Zalmunna yet fallen into thy hands, that I should incense

them by giving relief to thee?" But, notwithstanding the Midianites were fifty times as numerous as he, he expresses no doubt of final victory over them, and declares to his ungrateful countrymen how he will punish their ingratitude on his return from the expedition.]

Thus should we also "hold fast our confidence firm unto the end"—

[Whatever victories we may have gained, our enemies would soon vanquish us, if we were left to ourselves. But we should never for a moment give way to unbelieving fears. We should neither consider our own weakness, nor the strength of our enemies; but should regard the mightiest foes merely "as bread for us;" as bread, which we shall devour, even "as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." We should "know in whom we have believed;" and "be confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun the good work in us will carry it on, and perfect it until the day of Christ." However powerful our adversaries may appear, we should say to them, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Has God said, "No weapon that is formed against us shall prosper?" We should go on in full anticipation of victory, and in a certain assurance, that, whatever conflicts we may have to maintain, we shall be "more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."]

Application—

[Are any of you faint, my beloved Brethren? I will not act the part of the men of Penuel or Succoth, but will most gladly set before you all the richest provisions which we possess. Here is bread of the finest quality, "the very bread that came down from heaven," that will not only strengthen and refresh your souls, but actually give life to the dead: and, if you eat to the full of that, you shall go on in the strength of it to the latest hour of your lives. Consider under whose banners you fight; even under the banners of the Lord Jesus Christ himself — — — Consider with whom you are contending: they are vanquished enemies; as our Lord himself has told us: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" — — — Consider where your strength lies: not in yourselves, but in the Captain of your salvation, who has said, that "his grace shall be sufficient for you," and "his strength be perfected in your weakness" — — — Consider, finally, what will be the fruits of victory; even glory and honour and immortality, in the presence, and in the bosom, of your God — — — Will you, then, draw back? God forbid! Let me rather urge you to proceed: for, faint as ye are, ye shall surely overcome. Of Gideon's army, so far as we know, there died not one; whilst the entire host of his enemies were slain. So shall all the powers of darkness fall before you, and not so much as a hair of your head shall perish. "It is not the will of your Father that one of his little ones should perish." In a word,

“Be not weary in well-doing: for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not.”]

Charles Simeon...
Gideon Chastises the Men of Succoth and Penuel
Jdg 8:15, 16, 17

CONSISTENCY is essential to the character of a child of God. But pious persons are very apt to err in judging of the consistency of others: they would have been ready to condemn the conduct of Paul in relation to many things which he did at one time and forbore to do at another. We do not in general make sufficient allowance for a change of circumstances, which may not only warrant, but demand, a change of conduct. All would admire the gentleness and forbearance of Gideon, when the Ephraimites blamed him so vehemently for not summoning them to the battle against the Midianites (Jdg 8:1, 2,3); but probably they would accuse him of severity and injustice towards the men of Succoth and of Penuel: whereas his firmness in chastising these was no less proper under his peculiar circumstances, than his kindness in forgiving them. The two cases were not at all parallel: the Ephraimites at least thought honourably of the cause in which Gideon was embarked; but the men of Succoth and of Penuel treated it with contempt. Now the cause was that of God himself: and for despising it, the men of Succoth and of Penuel deserved all that they suffered.

Let us consider,

I. The punishment inflicted on them—

The provocation they gave was exceeding great—

[Gideon had already destroyed one-hundred-and-twenty thousand of the Midianitish army; and was now pursuing with his three hundred men the remnant, who had escaped the general carnage. He had crossed over Jordan, and was following them with all possible ardour; but his men having been engaged all the preceding night and day without any intermission or any refreshment, were faint: Gideon therefore, in passing through Succoth, a city of the tribe of Gad, requested in the kindest manner some provisions for his men: but the elders of the city only insulted him, and endeavoured to weaken his hands by deriding the vanity of his attempts. Gideon would not lose any time in debating the matter with them, but warned them, that when God should have delivered the Midianites into his hand, he would scourge them all with briers and thorns. (Jdg 8:7) He then went forward to Penuel, a neighbouring city; but was insulted by its elders precisely as he had been by the men of Succoth. It should seem that the men of Penuel confided in a tower which they had, and thought themselves safer in that, than they could be by any efforts of Gideon, or of God himself in their behalf. Gideon therefore threatened them with heavier vengeance, when God should have delivered Zebah and

Zalmunna into his hands: for, though their ingratitude was the same with that of the men of Succoth, there was in their answer somewhat more of atheistical impiety, which was the ground of a severer sentence against them. (Jdg 8:9)]

The punishment he inflicted on them was just—

[Gideon pressed forward, weak and faint as he was, and came upon the Midianites, when they conceived themselves to be perfectly secure: and God blessed his efforts, so that the fifteen thousand Midianites were destroyed, and their two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, taken, without the loss of a man belonging to the host of Gideon. Instantly did Gideon return, with his royal captives, to the two ungrateful cities which had refused him sustenance; and executed on their elders the vengeance he had threatened: he punished those of Succoth with briars and thorns; and those of Penuel with death, and the destruction of their boasted tower.

Now we say that this was just. Had the injury which he had sustained been purely personal, it would have become him to pass it by, and to leave the punishment of it to a righteous God, who says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." But he acted as a magistrate who was authorized to punish the treason of which these persons had been guilty. Considered as an act of ingratitude only, it was exceeding sinful; for what could be more base than to refuse a meal to those who had at the peril of their own lives delivered the whole nation from the yoke of Midian; and were now, though only three hundred in number, following the remaining fugitives, fifty times as numerous as themselves, in order to extirpate them entirely? But it was treason, both against the state, and against God: it was the very way to prevent the execution of Gideon's designs against the enemies of God and his people: and, if God had not miraculously renewed the strength of the victors, this refusal of food to them would have done more to vanquish them than all the hosts of Midian had been able to effect. If Gideon had demanded that the men of Succoth and of Penuel should join in the pursuit, he would have required no more than he was authorized to do: and he might justly, considering whose cause he was engaged in, have punished them severely for a refusal (Jdg. 5:23-note): but when his request was so moderate, and his necessity so urgent, and the probable consequences of their refusal so injurious to the whole nation, he did right in making an example of such wicked traitors.]

Having vindicated this act of justice, let us proceed to notice,

II. The lessons it suggests to us—

It is very instructive to us both,

1. In a civil view—

[The men of Succoth and of Penuel well illustrate the character and conduct of many amongst ourselves. The burthens of war must of necessity be borne by all the nation: and methinks they should be cheerfully borne by every member of the community: for, to whom do we owe our security, but to those who are standing forth in our defence,

and, under God, are combating our enemies with success? It is true, we feel the pressure of the taxes as a burthen; and by means of them we are deprived of comforts which we might otherwise enjoy: but what are our privations in comparison of those which are experienced by our fleets and armies? Little do we think what they have to bear; or what obligations we owe to them for exposing themselves to so many fatigues and dangers in our defence. Shall we then grudge to the state whatever is necessary for their support? Is not the murmuring on account of our burthens, and the striving to elude them, highly criminal? The men of Succoth and of Penuel had some excuse for their ungenerous conduct: for they intimated, that, by contributing to aid Gideon in the pursuit, they should only bring on themselves the heavier vengeance from the Midianites, as soon as ever they should have recovered from their panic. But what excuse have we? Their interest seemed to lie on the side of neutrality; but ours is altogether on the side of energy and exertion. Let us only consider what our enemies would exact of us, if they were to reduce us under their power: truly "their little finger would be heavier than the loins" of our own governors: instead therefore of grudging what is necessary for the support of our government, we should rejoice and bless God for the security that we enjoy under their watchful care.]

2. In a religious view—

[The whole of that astonishing transaction tends to inspire us with confidence in God, and to encourage our exertions in his cause. But there are two lessons in particular which we shall do well to learn from it: the one is, To prosecute the spiritual warfare under all discouragements ourselves; and the other is, To put no discouragements in the way of others.

That we shall find discouragements in our warfare is certain; sometimes from the number and power of our enemies; sometimes from the fewness and weakness of our friends; sometimes from the inefficacy of our past exertions; and sometimes from the protracted continuance of a struggle which we had fondly hoped to have seen terminated long before. But we must go forth, like Gideon, in the strength of the Lord, and, though "faint, must yet be pursuing;" (Jdg 8:4) nor must we ever look for rest, till we have gotten the final victory over all our enemies. We must remember, Whose cause it is; Under whose banners we are enlisted; Whom we have for our Guide and Protector; and, Whose word is pledged for our final success. What though he reduce the number of our friends to ever so low an ebb? What though he send us forth with no better armour than a trumpet and a lamp? What though our enemies be so great and numerous, that, after having been vanquished by us a thousand times, they still appear, according to human apprehension, invincible by such an arm as ours? What though we be so feeble that we seem incapable of continuing the contest any longer? Shall we give over? No: we must still fight on, assured of victory; knowing, that "when we are weak, then are we strong;" that "God will perfect his own strength in our weakness;" and that, "if God be for us, none can" possibly succeed "against us."

At the same time that other lesson must be attended to, Not to put any discouragement in the way of others. Almost all people are ready to obstruct, rather than to aid, the

Christian in his spiritual progress. Those of the same family and kindred will discountenance his zeal; and even some who profess to be of the true Israel, will represent his duties as impracticable, and his efforts as hopeless. But God is indignant with those who would weaken the hands of his people. He would have us rather encourage one another to the utmost of our power. His command is, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; your God will come and help you." (Is. 35:3, 4 and He 12:13-note) It is said of our Lord, that "he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but will bring forth judgment unto victory:" let us, like him, "carry the lambs in our bosom, and gently lead those that are with young;" yea, let us so unite our efforts with theirs, that we may be sharers in their triumphs, and partakers of their glory.] (Simeon, C. 1832-63. Horae Homileticae)

F B Meyer

JUDGES 8

"RULE THOU OVER US"

Judges 8:1-3 The benefit of a soft answer is well illustrated in the opening verses. Those who are most reluctant to undertake difficult services are quickest to find fault with such as carry them through to success. When we are doing God's work, and especially if we are successful in doing it, there will always be plenty of critics. Answer them kindly, or do not answer them at all. Gideon ruled his spirit, and behaved with true magnanimity and meekness (Pr. 13:10; 15:1).

Judges 8:4-12 The pursuit of noble ends amid discouragement. --How little does the world understand the faintness which overtakes the Christian warrior, never losing sight of his high purpose, yet often sorely in need of sympathy and help, which is not always given. We, however, are not at liberty to imitate Gideon in his threats of vengeance, which he terribly realized (Judges 8:13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

Judges 8:18-21 The infliction of deserved punishment. – Gideon constituted himself the avenger of the blood of his brethren. Those were two striking sentences uttered by the captive kings, which we do well to ponder (Judges 8:18-21). We, who belong to the family of God, should see to it that we resemble the children of a king, that there is a royalty in our bearing worthy of our origin. A notable sentence is that which repeats an old proverb that a man's strength is the outcome of his inner self (Judges 8:21). Force proportioned to character!

Judges 8:22-23 The refusal of a generous request -- "Rule, because thou hast delivered:" As the men of Israel spake to Gideon, we should speak to our Lord: Rule Thou over us, for Thou hast saved us. "Thou art worthy to take the book, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us" My soul, thou hast been saved out of the hand of thy foes, now enthrone the Lord, who has saved thee. When shall the love of Jesus so inspire and melt

our hearts, that we shall gladly give to Him all the jewels of life?

Judges 8:24-27 The ephod was a rich priestly garment. Gideon's may have been made in good faith, but it was turned to very evil uses. Thus evil is often wrought for want of thought, as well as from want of heart. What we do innocently may become a terrible snare to others, and it behooves us to consider each act, not only as it is in itself, but as it may affect others (2Cor. 6:3).

The closing words of the chapter (Judges 8:33-35) are bitter. They remind us of the way in which the butler treated Joseph and our own treatment of the Lord. (F. B. Meyer. CHOICE NOTES ON JOSHUA THROUGH 2 KINGS)