
Judges 8

Judges 8:1–35

Gideon Completes his Mission

Outline of Chapter 8:

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- Vv. 4–9 **Neither Succoth nor Penuel provide rations for Gideon's men**
- Vv. 10–12 **Gideon captures enemy leaders, Zebah and Zalmunna**
- Vv. 13–17 **Gideon executes judgment against the cities of Succoth and Penuel**
- Vv. 18–21 **Gideon executes Zebah and Zalmunna**
- Vv. 22–28 **Gideon refuses to rule over Israel/Gideon and Israel fall into idolatry**
- Vv. 29–32 **The final days of Gideon (40 years of peace for Israel)**
- Vv. 33–35 **Israel falls into apostasy again**

Introduction: In my examination of Judges 6–8, it appears as though Gideon wrote them, as there are events which are personally Gideon's. For instance, when the Angel of Jehovah came and spoke with Gideon, the only persons present were Gideon and the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, it is possible that someone else recorded this occurrence, but it is most likely that Gideon recorded it himself. Most believers do not fully grasp what is going on with Scripture and why it was written in the first place. God's Word is a recording, for the most part, of God's direct contact with man on this earth; and, throughout most of what we have studied, God's direct contact with the Jewish race. Regardless of how a person feels about writing or how difficult it might be; a person who speaks with God would record that event with the greatest care possible. The Israelites after this recognized that these books chronicled God's direct intervention in their lives and sought to preserve them. Many Israelites, in fact, even recognized the divine nature of the books themselves, fully understanding that when Moses told them not to mess with what he wrote, that he was not concerned with artistic integrity but with the accurate recording of God's involvement with Israel and the faithful preservation of the recording. In fact, speaking of authorship, the only portion of Judges 6–8 which may not have been written by the hand of Gideon are the final few verses of this chapter, vv. 28–35; these appear to summarize his life and to record his passing into the next life.

In chapter 8, we get a marvelous insight into the character (actually, the lack of character) of some of the Israelites, which helps to explain how Israel can be delivered, thankful to God on the surface, and then fall back into idolatry by the next generation. Gideon and his men are pursuing the last of the Midianites and they ask some of their brothers for some basic food. They are refused on the grounds that they had not completed their mission yet. Personally, I wanted to see Gideon and his band strike this city down right then and there. However, even Gideon recognized that he had a higher purpose and mission that he was required to complete before dealing with this group of degenerates.

We will see in this chapter, both Gideon's greatness and his fall in his later years. We all have feet of clay and this is revealed to us throughout the Bible. So there is no confusion about this, this in no way excuses us or our actions. That is, I don't want you committing some act of carnality and then flippantly saying, *that just must be my feet of clay*. When you choose to act out your life apart from the Spirit of God, you must take with that the consequences, which is divine punishment.

One of the things which I noticed is that Gideon appeared to be almost a composite of the spiritual heroes of the past, his end will be somewhat of a foreshadowing of King David and the strife that will occur in his own family. Throughout his life, we see many similarities to previous heroes of the faith—his reluctance to serve God, his great battle courage against unimaginable odds, and his fall into idolatry and polygamy at the end of his life.

At the beginning of this chapter, the tribe of Ephraim will complain to Gideon that he did not contact them and that they were not a part of this liberation of Israel from the occupation of Midian. Although Gideon could have said a

lot of things, he was gracious and polite. He pointed out that it was Ephraim that put the final kibosh on Oreb and Zeeb, the two leaders of Midian. Then Gideon pursues the last remnant of Midian, which a lesser man might have allowed to escape. After all, the army which remained was just a shadow of its former self and it would have been easy to rationalize that Midian would not rise against Israel for a long time. Gideon did not do that; he pursued them to the end. In the midst of this pursuit, Gideon stopped at Succoth and Penuel and asked that his 300 men be given bread, as they were worn out and hungry. The elders of those two towns refused and Gideon made note of that. Once he had captured Zebah and Zalmunna, he returned to those cities and disciplined them.

Then Gideon interrogates Zebah and Zalmunna, and, finding out that they had killed his family, had them executed. Although nothing is said directly, you can tell that Gideon had more respect for these Midianite leaders than he did for the elders of Succoth and Penuel. This essentially closes the chapter on the life of Gideon, although some closing remarks are added, several of which indicate that Gideon retrogressed in his spiritual life after this point in time. At the end of this chapter, we will segue into the life of Abimelech, Gideon's son by a mistress, and the first ruler over all of Israel. He will be mentioned once, and the next chapter will deal with his life in detail.

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Ephraim Has a Bone to Pick with Gideon

Slavishly literal:

And so said unto him men of Ephraim, “What the word the this you have done to us to not call to us when you went to [begin to] war against Midian?” And so they disputed with him with violence.

Moderately literal:

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Then the men of Ephraim said to him, “What [is] this thing you have done to us to not call for us when you [began to] war against Midian?” And they disputed with him with violence.

At that time, the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, “Why did you not call for our help when you went to war against Midian?” They severely castigated him for this supposed oversight.

The only difficult portion of this verse is the Niphal infinitive construct of *lâcham* (לָחַם) [pronounced *law-KHAHM*], which means *to fight to do battle, to war*. This is in the Niphal and the Niphal is not always simply the passive stem, but it can also refer to an action in a state of progress or development. Strong's #3898 BDB #535.

The last verb is the most interesting Qal imperfect of *rîyâv* (רִיב) [pronounced *ree^bv*], which means *to debate, to contend, to dispute*. This word properly means *to toss, to grapple*. Strong's #7378 BDB #936.

The very last noun in this verse is the feminine singular of *châz^eqâh* (חַזַּקָה) [pronounced *khawz^e-KAW*], which means *strength, might, violence*. With *bêyth*, this means *by force* or *with violence*. Even though it reads that they disputed with Gideon violently, the meaning refers more to great vigor and passion. Strong's #2394 BDB #306. Recall that Gideon is traveling with only 300 men; many cities in Israel have a larger fighting force; so, what likely happened is that the men of Ephraim essentially surrounded Gideon and his men and one or more burly spokesmen for Ephraim stepped right up and got in Gideon's face with their complaint. The imagined problem here was that Gideon did something which was great—he defeated Midian with 300 men, something that all of Israel had not the nerve to do for seven years. His success made them feel second-rate, although there was no need for that. They felt as though their participation was purely as a subordinate, and they felt slighted. Now this is downright stupid. Gideon called several tribes to help him out and then God sent most of them home. So even if Gideon had called upon Ephraim, it would have made no difference anyway, as 99% of them would have been sent back home. Their intention is to completely intimidate Gideon, which will actually occur several times in this chapter. And it is these several lame moves by groups of people in Israel that make it clear that, even though God has delivered Israel, they not only do not deserve this deliverance, but that they will rebel against God in a heartbeat.

Joseph was a great and honorable man. However, the tribe Ephraim which came from him had one of the sorriest attitudes a tribe could have. Whereas Joseph endured hardship with a marvelous attitude and outlook, the tribe of Midian continually found minor details in their lives to dispute about. Gideon did not specifically send a messenger to them and call them to war, and they pout like children. They will do this when dealing with Jephthah in Judges 12:1 (and even threaten to burn his house down); and when given a large portion of land back Joshua 16, they and the half tribe of Manasseh complain that their territory is too small (Joshua 16:14–18). This lousy mental attitude, also found in I Kings 12:16–17, will eventuate in a civil war and the splitting of the kingdom. Now, you may point out that Gideon is from the tribe of Manasseh and that Ephraim is south of there; however, the key is not the reasons behind the mental attitude but the mental attitude itself. We can all find a long list of reasons in our life why we should be pissed off at various people and institutions. This doesn't mean that we should carry with us a smarmy mental attitude. We reside in the devil's world and part of that world includes injustices, both real and imagined. The tribe of Ephraim has made it clear that they are complainers and that they have a lousy mental attitude in general. From the greatest of Jacob's sons came one of the lamest tribes.

And so he said unto them, “What [have] I done now as you [all]? [or, “What should I do now with the likes of you?] [Is it] not better a gleanings [of the grapes] of Ephraim from a vintage of Abiezer?

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So he said to them, “What should I do with the likes of you? Isn't the gleanings of [the grapes in] Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?

Gideon answered them, “I really don't have time for your petty complaints. I only put the Midianites on the run; it was your tribe which actually defeated most of them.

Since this is somewhat of an idiom, let's see what others have done with it first:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the grape-gleaning of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?
NASB	But he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleanings of <i>the grapes</i> of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and he saith unto them, 'What have I done now like you? are not the gleanings of Ephraim better than the harvest of Abi-Ezer?

Prior to *you all*, we have the prefixed kaph preposition , which means *like, as, according to*. It can also mean *as many as, the like of, about, in comparison to*. No Strong's # BDB #453.

In Gideon's second question to these men, he begins with an interrogative, a negative and then the masculine singular adjective תֹּעֲבָב (טוּב) [pronounced *toe^bv*], which means *pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good*. This adjective is apparently used in a comparative sense here. Strong's #2896 BDB #373. What is *better* is the feminine plural construct of עֹלְלוֹת (עוֹלְלוֹת) [pronounced *goh-lay-LOHTH*], which means *gleaning, second harvesting of, the gathering [of grapes] after the harvesters*. Strong's #5955 BDB #760. What we are talking about is the grapes that the harvesters left on their thorough harvesting of a field of grapes. God's people were to leave some *gleanings* in all of their fields.¹ So, what is better is the gathering of the grapes after harvesters have gone through) in Ephraim. What it is better than is the masculine singular construct of בָּאֲצִיִר (בָּאֲצִיִר) [pronounced *baw-TSEER*], which means *vintage, annual produce [of grapes]*. Strong's #1208 BDB #131. What is being said is that a picking of the grapes which remain in Ephraim after they have been harvested is a greater production than the entire annual harvest of the vineyards of Abiezer, which is Gideon's family. Here the Ephraimites are coming to Gideon with bitter complaints and it is just like Bill Gates personally showed up at my front door saying that I cheated him \$100 with regards to his software. Ephraim has done more in this war, even though they joined in late in the day, than Gideon had done in the entire campaign. If one was to take a head-count, Ephraim, even though they were called to arms after the others, has killed more of the enemy which was on the run (which Gideon likens to the gleanings of the grapes), than Gideon has with his own band, although they have been in this war since the beginning (this is the

¹ Compare Lev. 19:9–10 with Ruth 2:1–3.

entire harvest of Gideon). *Ephraim has accomplished more than he and all the other forces involved in the initial attack.*²

One thing that you will notice about Gideon is that he is ever the tactful one. He is in the middle of pursuing the Midianites and he is approached by the Ephraimites who have some lame idea that they have been slighted in some way. Gideon and his men are tired and hungry and anyone else might have sweat these Ephraimite shadows into the wall. Gideon speaks to them with tact, intelligence and logic. He is reasonable and he does not talk down to them. Most people would have said, “You lame, stupid asses; we’re in the middle of a war against Midian and you’re concerned that you feel slighted?” I should point out that Gideon is not a brave man either—he is not the kind of person who goes looking for a conflict to resolve. What he does not need is a very large allied tribe acting inconsonant with him.

“In your hand has given God princes of Midian—Oreb and Zeeb. And what am I able to do as you [all]?” Then relaxed their anger from upon him in his saying the word the this.

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“God has given the princes of Midian—Oreb and Zeeb—into your hand. What am I able to do in comparison to you?” Then their anger against him relaxed when he said this thing.

“God has given the princes of Midian, both Oreb and Zeeb, into your hand. I have not accomplished that much.” Midian then backed down from their initial huffiness because of what Gideon said.

The verb which goes with anger is the Qal perfect of *râphâh* (רָפָה) [pronounced *raw-FAW*], a verb which means *to sink, to relax, to loosen and let drop, to let down, to cast down, to let fall* in the Qal. Strong’s #7503 BDB #951. Then we have the *mîn* prefixed preposition and the preposition *‘al*, which together mean *from upon, from over, from by*. *Mîn* = Strong’s #4480 BDB #577; *‘al* = Strong’s #5920, 5921 BDB #752. *This thing* is literally *this word*. The NIV Study Bible renders the last line as *At this, their resentment against him subsided*.

Ephraim was called into the war, but just not immediately. In a panic, when Gideon realized that he was really going to war against Midian, he sent out messengers to several tribes, but not to Ephraim. However, once Midian was on the run, Gideon did call upon Ephraim to *head Midian off at the pass*, and Ephraim was responsible for capturing and killing two of the leaders of Midian (Judges 7:24–25), an event that even Isaiah recalls centuries later (Isa. 10:26). Gideon’s argument is simple: Ephraim captured and killed the heads of Midian—the men who led Midian that had plagued Israel for all these seven years. Theirs is the greatest glory for what they had done; Gideon can’t match that for publicity. When they look at it in that light, they were satisfied. Prov. 15:1: *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*.

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Neither Succoth Nor Penuel Provide Rations for Gideon’s Men

And so came in Gideon [to] the Jordan, passing over he and three hundred the men who [were] with him; tired and pursuing.

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And so Gideon came to the Jordan, passing over—he and the three hundred men who [were] with him—exhausted and pursuing.

Then Gideon and his 300 men proceeded to the Jordan, which they crossed over, at that point, both exhausted and hungry and still in pursuit.

The verb is the Qal imperfect of *bôw’* (בּוֹא) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. Strong’s #935 BDB #97. The description of Gideon and his men is the adjective *‘âyêph* (אָיֵף) [pronounced *aw-YAYF* or *gaw-YAYF*], which means *tired, weary, faint, worn out, exhausted*. Strong’s #5889 BDB #746. According to the NRSV, in the Greek this reads *exhausted and hungry*; however, while this sounds good, the Greek word in the Septuagint is actually *diôkô* (διώκω) [pronounced *Dee-OH-koh*], which means *to hasten, to run, to pursue*.

² *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 339.

Gideon and his men have been battling for several days; they have not had any additional food. They are not being treated as the national war heroes that they are, but they are first abused by Ephraim. Notice what happens in the next few verses.

And so he said to men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who [are] at my feet, for they [are] tired and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.”

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Then he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give [some] loaves of bread to the people who [are] at my feet, for they [are] tired and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

Then Gideon made a request to the men of Succoth: “Please supply my men with some bread, for we are exhausted and are in the midst of pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

Recall that Succoth is northeast of where the Jordan and the Jabbok rivers meet; there is also a Succoth in Egypt. Jacob, several centuries previous, after he and Esau had met for the last time and reconciled, moved to Succoth (Gen. 33:1–17). Who would have thought that after their reconciling that 600 years later, their children would be at war with one another.³ This places us in Gad, east of the Jordan. Gideon asks the men there for some loaves of bread for his men. Where his men are is, literally, *at my feet*. Gideon’s request is more than reasonable. He is fighting for the freedom of Israel, which includes these men of Gad. At this time, this was probably one of the more prosperous cities; and it had an outstanding location, being situated so closely to these two rivers. This is further confirmed by the fact that there were 77 elders (v. 14).

And so said princes of Succoth “Is a palm of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands that we will give to your army bread?”

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So the princes of Succoth said, “Is the palm of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands that we could give bread to your army?”

The leaders of Succoth responded to Gideon, “Have you already captured Zebah and Zalmunna that we should reward your army with bread?”

In v. 5, Gideon speaks to the first men in Succoth that he runs into. Apparently, they immediately fetch their superiors. The word we find here is the masculine plural of *sar* (סַר) [pronounced *sar*], and it means *chieftain, chief, ruler, official, captain, prince, commander, leader*. Strong’s #8269 BDB #978.

We have a pair of synonyms in this verse; the first is the feminine singular construct of *kaph* (כַּף) [pronounced *kaf*] and it is generally translated *palm, hollow or flat of the hand, sole of the foot* and even *bowl*.⁴ Strong’s #3709 BDB #496. The second word is the very common feminine plural noun *yâd* (יָד) [pronounced *yawd*], which is the Hebrew word for *hand*. The implication is being under the control of Gideon. Strong’s #3027 BDB #388. Keil and Delitzsch give the rendering: “**Is the fist of Zebah and Zalmunna already in thy hand [power], that we should give thine army bread?**”⁵ It communicates probably better than even my translations; however, it is not altogether accurate.

The reaction of the men of Succoth is unbelievable. Keep in mind that the people have been in somewhat of a famine; that is, whenever they went to harvest their crops, the Midianites took it from them; in fact, Midian even destroyed some of their crops rather than let them eat them. Therefore, there is a shortage of food. However, Gideon is leading the men who are rescuing the men of Succoth and every effort should be made to honor and respect those men. Asking for food, even though it is scarce, is not that great of a demand.

³ The descendants of Esau are not the Midianites; however, the descendants of Esau would have made up the sons of the east who joined Midian against Israel.

⁴ For those who follow along in Rotherham’s *The Emphasized Bible*, he offers the alternative rendering *soles [of the feet]*. This word is used for the *foot* of a bear, as that resembles a man’s hand (Lev. 11:27). However, that is not the common meaning of the word. When followed by the Hebrew word for *foot*, it does refer to the soles of the feet.

⁵ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 255.

Now, I want you to notice who Gideon asks. It is well-known that Israel in general is going through hard times. Gideon does not go to a large farm and ask them for this as even the largest farm in Israel would not be able to provide enough grain for the bread that Gideon needs for sustenance for his men. He is essentially approaching the heads of the city and they will go to the farmers in general and all of the farmers together will put together enough loaves of bread for 300 men. What Gideon is requesting is reasonable and the people he is requesting this from would be the proper channels for him to go through. Also note: just because you go through the proper channels and make a reasonable request, does not mean that you will get a reasonable response (I do want you to live in the real world).

You may wonder why the men of Succoth did not readily ascent to Gideon's request—Barnes provides a reasonable explanation: *The number of followers of Zebah and Zalmunna was still so formidable and Gideon's enterprise still so doubtful, that the men of Succoth (being on the same side of the Jordan) would not risk the vengeance of the Midianites by giving supplies to Gideon's men.*⁶ Keil and Delitzsch: *In these words there is not only an expression of cowardice, or fear of the vengeance which the Midianites might take when they returned upon those who had supported Gideon and his host, but contempt of the small force which Gideon had, as if it were impossible for him to accomplish anything at all against the foe; and in this contempt they manifested their utter want of confidence in God.*⁷ Obviously, they did not have the same faith in Jehovah their Deliverer as Gideon did.

You might be wondering why Gideon did not ask for provisions from the men of Ephraim. That's simple—Gideon and his men were in hot pursuit of the enemy and the men of Ephraim were assholes. Gideon may have placated them temporarily but that does not mean that they would suddenly become gracious people. In fact, one would have expected Ephraim to offer Gideon and his men provisions—that is, if they were gracious.

And so said Gideon “Therefore, in a giving of Y^ehowah [of] Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand and I will beat your flesh with thorns of the wilderness and with the briars.”

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Then Gideon said, “Therefore, when Y^ehowah gives Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will beat your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with the briars.”

Gideon left with, “After Jehovah gives Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will come back here and beat you with thorns and briars.”

The first thing that Gideon says is lâmed plus the adverb kên (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*]; together, they mean *according to such conditions, that being so, therefore*. L^e = Strong's #none BDB #510 Kên = Strong's #3651 BDB #485.

What Gideon will do to these men is the Qal perfect of dûwsh (דוּשׁ) [pronounced *doosh*], which means *to beat, to pound, to trample upon, to tread, to thresh*. Strong's #1758 BDB #190. The first thing that Gideon promises to beat them with is the masculine plural of the noun qôwts (קוֹטְסִים) [pronounced *kohts*], which means *thorns, thorn bushes*. Strong's #6975 BDB #881. He also plans to use the masculine plural of a word found only here and in Judges 8:16; according to Gesenius, it means *threshing wains*, including the instruments used to tread out corn. Gesenius goes into great detail, saying that they are made of thick timber and have the lower side armed and jagged with iron or fire-stones in order to rub out the corn. BDB offers that it means *briars*. There is one word in the Hebrew dictionary nearby which gives some credence to the view of Gesenius; but passage context seems to favor BDB. Young goes with *threshing instruments*; Rotherham with *nettles*; and Owen, the NIV and the NASB go with *briars (briers)*. Strong's #1303 BDB #140.

Gideon shows great restraint here. He is with an army of the toughest men in Israel. He could easily come back and take out this village. In fact, he wouldn't even need to come back; he could do it right there and take everything

⁶ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 426. The NIV Study Bible says substantially the same thing, that Succoth feared the reprisal of the Midianites.

⁷ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 255.

that he wanted. Furthermore, such an action would keep him from getting back to his primary mission, which was to completely defeat the Midianites. However, his plan is to come back and simply punish these men.

And so he went up from there [to] Penuel and so he said unto them as this and so answered him men of Penuel as how answered men of Succoth.

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Then he went up from there to Penuel and he said to them as this and the men of Penuel answered him as how the men of Succoth answered.

So Gideon and his men went up from there to Penuel and asked them for some bread; and they refused him in the same manner.

Penuel is obviously close to Succoth. If you recall that Jacob, in his negative volition, wrestled with the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate form at the end of Gen. 32, this place Jacob named Penuel (you will need to see the exegesis on Gen. 32:30–31 to get the complete story on the name). It was after this time that Jacob then went to meet his estranged brother Esau near Succoth. Apparently, Succoth, Penuel, and Shechem, which is west of the Jordan, are all fairly close to one another (Gen. 32:24–33:18 | Kings 12:25). Barnes places Succoth in the valley of Ghor of the Jordan and suggests that Penuel is in the mountain. Jacob was obviously moving north and northeast, so he went from Penuel to Succoth; and Gideon, going in the opposite direction, went from Succoth to Penuel.

In this verse we have the kaph prefixed preposition and demonstrative feminine singular adjective zeh (הַזֶּה) [pronounced *zeh*], which means *here, this*. According to BDB, together, they mean *the like of this, as follows, things such as this*. Here, it is actually easier to go with *as this*. Kaph = Strong's #none BDB #453 zeh = Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260.

And so he said also unto men of Penuel, to say, "In my returning in peace, I will break down the tower the this."

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So he said also to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I return in peace I will break down this tower."

So he spoke similarly to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I return in peace, I will break down this tower."

After the word *said* (or, *spoke*), we have the adverb gam (גַּם) [pronounced *gahm*], which means *in addition to, moreover, also, furthermore*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. One can only imagine the frustration and disillusionment that Gideon and his men must have felt; here they were fighting for the freedom of their country and they could not even get a few provisions. I'm certain that we have veterans here which feel the same way; they put their lives on the line for their country and very few people appreciated fully their sacrifices, dedication and honor. I have seen even one person who alleges that he is a *Christian* and he claims that no Christian should have anything to do with war (he apparently missed most of the Old Testament and New Testament teaching on this). He also believes that baptism is required for salvation, so for those who take offense, he will probably spend eternity in the lake of fire.

Gideon managed to stay focused in all of this, which is exactly what we believers need to do. He had 300 men who supported him and he ran into two cities where they essentially rejected him and had no faith in Jesus Christ. A lesser man would have been derailed by all of this, but Gideon knew what God had commissioned him to do and he kept with it. God has a plan for our lives and there will be times when we do not have the full support of those around us. That is never an issue. When we have a compass given us by God, then we follow it. In saying this, I realize that there is going to be some cultist who takes this and runs with it, which is the unfortunate aspect of teaching God's Word—due to the hardness of our hearts, we listen and hear what we want to hear, and then do what we want to do. Gideon's objective was clearly outlined by God—there was no confusion as to what God had commissioned him to do. Throughout these few chapters, once Gideon got started, he allowed nothing to stand between him and what God planned for him.

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Gideon Captures Enemy Leaders, Zebah and Zalmunna

And Zebah and Zalmunna [were] in the Karkor probably and their camps with them about 15,000 all the remaining ones from all [the] camp of sons of [the] East and the fallen ones 120,000 drawing sword.

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And Zebah and Zalmunna [were] in Karkor and with them [were] their camps of about 15,000 who remained from all the camp of the sons of the East; the fallen ones [numbered] 120,000 [of those] drawing the sword.

Now Zebah and Zalmunna had retreated to Karkor and all that remained with them were 15,000 out of the entire army of the east. The ones who had died in battle numbered 120,000.

There is a lot going on in this verse in terms of the original language, so I want to give you a couple of other translations of it:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand, all that were left out of all the host of the sons of the east,—and the fallen were a hundred and twenty thousand men who had drawn the sword.
NASB	Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies [or, camps] with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army [or, camp] of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen [lit., men who drew sword].
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And Zebah and Zalmunna are in Karkor, and their camps with them, about fifteen thousand, all who are left of all the camp of the sons of the east; and those falling are a hundred and twenty thousand men, drawing sword.

The city of Karkor (more correctly, qar^oqôr (קַרְקֹר) [pronounced *kahr-KOHR*], does not sound like an Israelite city and my guess is that we are dealing with troops on the run who return to their own city east of the Jordan. Strong's #7174 BDB #903. I would further guess that this is how the name sounded to the Israelites (if you have noticed that the words in most languages that you don't understand sound very similar to one another). This place may not have had this name precisely, but this was the way it sounded to the average Israelite. Barnes suggests that this was not exactly a city but a walled enclosure—perhaps a walled sheepfold.

Who was with these men is first the masculine plural of machăneh (מַחֲנֶה) [pronounced *mah-khuh-NEH*], which means *camp, encampment*. It can refer to the *camp* or to those in the camp, who are often *soldiers* or *troops* (Ex. 14:24 Judges 4:16). Strong's #4264 BDB #334. It is first found in the plural and then in the singular.

The description of the men who died is done with the Qal active participle of the verb nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. In the masculine plural, Qal active participle, this verb refers to *the fallen ones*. Strong's #5307 BDB #656.

They are also described with the Qal active participle of shâlah (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHF*], which means *to draw out, to draw out*. They are ones *drawing out* the sword; in other words, the warriors from the east. Strong's #8025 BDB #1025.

It is obviously from this verse where we know just how many combatants that were that remained on the side of the enemy. Also, this is not completely clear; that is, it appears as though the enemy went in two different directions; it is possible that part of their troops are not even counted in this. It appears as though most of the Midianites escaped to the east side of the Dead Sea, thinking that Gideon would not pursue them there. However, Gideon will approach them from the east, taking somewhat of a circuitous route, and surprise them.

And so Gideon went up a route of the ones dwelling in the tents out from east of Nobah and Jogbehah and so struck the camp and the camp was secure.

Judges
8:11

So Gideon went up the route of the tent-dwellers from the east of Nobah and Jogbehah and he struck the camp—the camp was [thought to be secure and therefore] without caution.

Gideon took a circuitous route and approached the enemy camp from the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and then attacked the camp which they thought was secure.

We had better look at some other translations here:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So Gideon went up by the way of the tent-dwellers, on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host, when the host had become secure.
NASB	And Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked [lit., smote] the camp, when the camp was unsuspecting [or, secure].
Owen's Translation	And Gideon went up the route of "Shecun" with the tents east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the army for the army was secure.
The Septuagint	And Gedeon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents, eastward of Nabai and Jegebal; and he smote the host, and the host was secure.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And Gideon goeth up the way of those who tabernacled in tents, on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smiteth the camp, and the camp was confident;

What Gideon went up was the masculine singular construct of the very common word *derek*⁸ (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced *DEH-rek*⁹] and it means *way, distance, road, journey, manner, course*. Strong's #1870 BDB #202. This *route* that Gideon took was further modified by the definite article and the masculine plural construct, Qal passive participle of *shâkan* (שָׁכַן) [pronounced *shaw-KAHN*], which means *to tabernacle, to pitch a tent*. By application, it means *to dwell, to reside, to live in, to domicile at, to settle, to settle down, to dwell, to encamp, to tabernacle*. Strong's #7931 BDB #1014. So Gideon went by way of *the ones dwelling or tabernacling*. Owen here calls for a proper noun (which would not be out of the question); however, this is followed by the prepositional phrase *in the tents*, which does make some sense. What this simply means is that Gideon did not take a route going by any more cities, but he took the country route.

We have the cities Nobah and Jogbehah mentioned. Nobah was settled by one of the sons of Manasseh (those who settled on the east side), which therefore places it east of the Jordan, but not too far south (Num. 32:42). It's previous name was Kenath. It appears as though it essentially kept its original name and was re-captured by Geshur and Aram (1 Chron. 2:23). It eventually became *one of the cities of the Decapolis under the name of Kanatha. The Arabians defeated Herod the Great there (Jos. War I. xix. 2). It is usually associated with Qanawat...where there are many impressive ruins from Græco-Roman times.*⁸ The city Jogbehah is mentioned only here in Scripture. However, the person Jogbehah is mentioned in Num. 32:35 as a son of Gad. What this tells us is that we probably have *twin* cities here, one in Manasseh and the other in Gad, right across the border from one another. We also know that this is where Zebah and Zalmunna felt safe, meaning that they had made considerable inroads in east Israel as well.

After the word *tents*, we have the *mîn* preposition and the masculine singular construct of *qedem* (קֵדֶם) [pronounced *KEH-dem*] and it means *eastward, east, ancient, antiquity, front, aforeside*. Strong's #6924 BDB #869. *Mîn* means *out from, away from, out of, from*. Although this is a bit difficult, my thinking is that he came up on the east side of an Arabic city, which would be the direction from whence the people would least suspect an attack. Also, knowing Gideon, he is a man of intelligence and tactics, so you would expect him to do the most prudent thing. Gideon and his men, even though they have the support and direction of God, do not run blindfolded and naked into the camp of the enemies. You may think that is stupid, but believers do that all the time. In fact, this

⁸ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, pp. 781–782.

is the basis for many marriages between believers. They are attracted to someone so they run naked and blindfolded into the camp of the enemy, and think, because they are believers, that everything is going to be alright. We are not called upon by God to run around like idiots. God did not call upon us to try to act as stupid as humanly possible. When God confounds the wisdom of this world with the foolish, this does not mean that we are being encouraged to be mentally lame in all that we do. Gideon gets a bad rap from a lot of superficial theologians, but he acts with discretion, intelligence and, in looking back at those two Israelite cities who refused his men food, he acts with self-control. If I were in his place, fighting for the freedom of Israel, and I was starved and exhausted and I had asked to be fed by those whose freedom I was fighting for, I might think it reasonable under those circumstances to take a moment and level those towns right then and there. Or, at least kick some butt until someone brought my men some food. Gideon shows great self-control and in this verse, he reveals again that he is a man who understands warfare, tactics, objectives and strategies.

The last phrase of this verse begins with the wâw conjunction, the definite article and the word for *camp* (referring to the Arabic soldiers); and this is followed by the absolute status quo verb *to be* and the singular masculine noun *beṭach* (בֶּטַח) [pronounced *BEH-tahkh*], which means, as a noun, *security, safety, confidence*. As an adverb, *beṭach* means *safely, without fear, securely, confidently*. It can also refer to someone who acts without caution, as he believes himself to be safe and secure, which is the usage we find here. Strong's #983 BDB #105. By the normal construction of an Hebrew sentence, *the camp* is the predicate nominative and the subject is the word *security*. In any case, the camp of the enemies was assumed to be secure, being out of Israel and not seeing their Israelite enemy approach from the west.

And so fled Zebah and Zalmunna and so he pursued after them and so he captured [the] two of kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and all the camp he caused to become terrified.

Judges
8:12

Then Zebah and Zalmunna fled and he pursued after them and he captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and he caused all the camp to become terrified.

Then Zebah and Zalmunna fled and Gideon pursued them. He took the two kings of Midian and caused panic throughout the entire enemy camp.

The final verb is the Hiphil perfect of *chârad* (חָרַד) [pronounced *chaw-rahd*], which means *to tremble, to be terrified*. In the Hiphil, this means that Gideon and his soldiers caused the opposition to become terrified. Strong's #2729 BDB #353 the impression given by this verse is that the leaders of the Midianites, Zebah and Zalmunna, deserted their own army and made a run for it. Gideon quickly captured them, throwing the remainder of the camp into a panic.

Other than the execution of Zebah and Zalmunna, which will follow in vv. 18–21, this verse concludes the defeat of the Midianites, which is a great moment in the history of Israel. Although there were times that the Midianites were not at enmity with Israel—e.g., when Moses left Egypt for forty years, he lived in Midian—however, since the book of Numbers, they and Israel have been at odds with one another. In these chapters, this has come to a head and here, Israel soundly defeats Midian forever. This victory will be celebrated throughout the literature of Israel for centuries to come. **Deal with them as with Midian, as with Sisera and Jabin at the torrent of Kishon** (Psalm 83:9). **For You will break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian** (Isa. 9:4). **And Jehovah of the armies will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the sea, and He will lift it up the way He did in Egypt** (Isa. 10:26). **I saw the tents of Cushan under distress. The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling** (Hab. 3:7).

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Gideon Executes Judgment Against the Cities of Succoth and Peniel

And so returned Gideon ben Joash from the battle from the ascent of the Heres [or, before the ascent of the sun].

Judges
8:13

So Gideon ben Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres [or, before the ascent of the sun],

Finally, Gideon ben Joash returned along the ascent of Heres...

Prior to *the ascent of Heres*, we have the *mîn* and *lâmed* prepositions. *mîn* + *lâmed*; I don't recall seeing these used together, so I will give you what others have done with them in Judges 8:13: *by* (Owen, NASB, which clarifies in a footnote, *lit., from*), *at* (Young), *from* (Rotherham). In fact, there is some question as to what is happening after the battle. Rotherham has it *...by the ascent of Heres*; the NASB and Rotherham both have: *...from the ascent of Heres*; the KJV has: *before the sun [was up]*; and Young has *...at the going up of the sun*. What we have is the masculine singular construct of *ma'âlêh* (מַעְלֵה) [pronounced *mah-ûh-LEH*], which means *ascent*. Strong's #4608 BDB #751. This ascent is of *cheres* (חֶרֶס) [pronounced *KHEH-res*], which means *sun*. It is unclear whether this is a particular place or whether the KJV is the most reasonable. If the *ascent of Heres* is a particular place, this is the only time we hear of it in the Bible. Such a thing would not be unheard of since we are in the land controlled by the Midianites (although this is on the border between Gad and east Manasseh) and this will be the last showdown between Israel and Midian. Barnes suggests that it is probably a mountain pass. We have a mountain named Mount Heres in Judges 1:35 where the Amorites lived, having been too strong for the house of Joseph, but this is apparently in the territory of Dan where Dan, west Manasseh and Ephraim all meet (compare Joshua 19:41–42 and Judges 1:34–36). Since *Heres* means *sun*, it is not unlikely that two different mountain regions could be called *Heres*. In Isa. 19:18, we will come across the *city of the sun* (i.e., Heliopolis). Strong's #2775 & 2776 BDB #357. To be honest with you, I don't know which way I lean on this one—whether we are speaking of coming prior to sun up or whether this is a reference to a particular place (see v. 14).

And so he captured a young man from [the] men of Succoth and so he questioned him and so he wrote regarding him officials of Succoth and their elders, seventy-seven men.

Judges
8:14

...and he captured a young man from the men of Succoth and he questioned him and he wrote for him the officials of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

...and he captured one of the young men of Succoth and he interrogated him until he gave up the names and a description of the seventy-seven city officials of Succoth.

After Gideon captured the young man, he interrogated him. The verb is the Qal imperfect of *shâ'al* (שָׁאַל) [pronounced *shaw-AHL*], which means *to ask, to petition, to inquire, to question, to interrogate*. Strong's #7592 BDB #981. The response of the young man is given by the next verb, the Qal imperfect of *kâthav* (כָּתַב) [pronounced *kaw-THAH^{PV}*], which means *to write, to write down, to chronicle, to record, to document*. For this context, probably the best rendering would be *to describe in writing*. Strong's #3789 BDB #507. Gideon was going to make good on his promise to the men of Succoth. He just cannot storm into town and thrash anyone. He is methodical, getting the names, addresses and perhaps a description of the men who made this decision. Now, the men who made that decision were the heads of Succoth; we do not know how the people felt about this and some people, had they known, might have brought Gideon bread. However, since no one in Israel was doing well economically, this had to be something ordered from the top down. Now Gideon is taking names and kicking butt. As a point of interest, we get an idea as to the level of education which existed at that time. Apparently in that rural area, even a young man taken at random had the ability to write.⁹

What most translators did with these vv. 13–14 is to keep them separate. Young saw them as one sentence, which helps a great deal in the understanding of the last phrase of v. 13. Young translates this: **And Gideon son of Joash turneth back from the battle at the going up of the sun, and captureth a young man of the men of Succoth, and asketh him, and he describeth unto him the heads of Succoth, and its elders—seventy and seven men.** Young gives us probably the most precise picture of what happened here. Gideon returned from the battle and, perhaps

⁹ Actually, it is unlikely that this was just any young man and it is unlikely that he was taken at random. But this does indicate that some did have the ability write and that some did have a complete knowledge of the political structure of their area.

while it was still dark, captured a young man of Succoth and made him describe the men who were the heads of Succoth. When Gideon spoke to the men of Succoth, he was not making idle threats. Barnes points out why Gideon went to this trouble: to punish the guilty and to spare the innocent. With power and authority comes great responsibility; some people focus on the former and have no concept of the latter. The worst person to work under is a person who desires power and authority, but fails to recognize their responsibility to those under them. As a worker, it is not our responsibility to clue them in to their failures in this regard (unless we are so asked); it is our responsibility to bow to their authority, despite its flawed character.

And so he came unto men of Succoth and so he said, “Behold Zebah and Zalmunna whom you all scorned me, to say, ‘Are Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands that we will give to your men, the faint, bread?’ ”

Judges
8:15

Then he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Observe Zebah and Zalmunna [concerning] whom you [all] scornfully defied me, saying, ‘Are Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands that we will give to your exhausted men bread?’ ”

Then he came to the men of Succoth and he said, “Look at Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you all defied me, saying, ‘Are Zebah and Zalmunna in your hand that we should give bread to your exhausted me?’ ”

The first verb we need to examine is the Piel perfect of *châraph* (חָרַף) [pronounced *khah-RAHF*], which means *to defy, to reproach*. In the Piel, it means *to scorn, to reproach, to scornfully defy*. Strong's #2778 BDB #357 and #358.

The men of Gideon are described by the adjective *yâ'êph* (יָאֵף) [pronounced *yaw-ĀF*], which means *faint, weary, tired, worn-out, exhausted*. Surprisingly enough, this word is found only four times in Scripture: Judges 8:15 II Sam. 16:2 Isa. 40:29 50:4. Strong's #3287 BDB #419.

Gideon first states the charges against these men. In this regard, adults and children should be treated the same way—their transgressions should be read prior to their punishment.

And so he took elders of the city and thorns of the wilderness and the briars; and so he taught with [or, by] them men of Succoth.

Judges
8:16

Then he took the elders of the city and thorns of the wilderness and briars; and he taught the men of Succoth with them [the briars and thorns].

Then he took the elders of the city of Succoth and beat them with the thorns and briars of the wilderness.

What he did with the briars and thorns is given with the Hiphil imperfect of the verb *yâda'* (יָדַעַ) [pronounced *yaw-DAHG*], which means *to know*. In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to know, to instruct, to teach*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. People learn in a lot of different ways; these men understood force and discipline. When I was young, that was about the only way that I learned anything. I realize that these are grown men, but what Gideon asked of them was a no-brainer; he asked for his fighting men to receive basic sustenance and these elders refused, so Gideon had to teach them. We also require teaching and for some of us, it is with thorns and briars, and for others of us, it is through God's Word.¹⁰

¹⁰ Some sources allege that the word *to teach* is a false reading and suggest *he threshed* instead. Although that is not impossible, it is not necessary that this was a mistake. In fact, I found myself to be in good company, as Keil and Delitzsch adamantly hold to the correctness of this rendering in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, pp. 256–257. Apparently some doubted the Hebrew of this verse because of the rather free renderings given it by both the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate; however, Keil and Delitzsch call those renderings *destitute of critical worth*. Op. cit.

And a tower of Penuel he broke down and so he killed men of the city. Judges 8:17 **And he broke down the tower of Penuel and he killed the men of the city.**

He also broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

The first verb of this verse is the Qal perfect of *nâthaq* (נָתַק) [pronounced *naw-THAHK*], which means *to pull, to draw, to tear away, to tear apart, to tear off*. Strong's #5423 BDB #683. The second verb is the Qal imperfect of *hârag* (הָרַג) [pronounced *haw-RAHG*] means *to kill, to slay, and, occasionally, to execute*. Strong's #2026 BDB #246. You might think that is a bit extreme, but Gideon executed these men for treason. There was apparently somewhat of a difference between the cities of Succoth and Penuel. Succoth seemed to have a very structured government and Penuel did not as there is not mentioned here a word for authority figure. Things were apparently more chaotic in Penuel, but their response to Gideon was the same; therefore, they were subject to an even more severe discipline. What appears to be the case is that the rulers in charge of the city of Succoth spoke on behalf of the people, but not necessarily on behalf of themselves. That is, they may or may not have been concerned about their own produce. In Penuel, it was more personal; the men of the city were protecting their own fields and were not about to share with Gideon, even though Gideon was providing them their freedom. Therefore, their transgression was the greater and Gideon executed them as the traitors that they were.

Barnes suggests that these were the men in charge of the tower, who had built that in part to take over the authority of the city. Their intention was to tyrannize the city; that is, have all the power without assuming any responsibility. Gideon removed those people from this life. We do not have any details, so it is difficult to choose one theory over the other. In any case, Gideon's action was reasonable and justified. Keil and Delitzsch write: *the punishment inflicted by Gideon upon both the cities was well deserve in all respects, and was righteously executed. The inhabitants of these cities had not only acted treacherously to Israel as far as they could, from the most selfish interests, in a holy conflict for the glory of the Lord and the freedom of His people, but in their contemptuous treatment of Gideon and his host they had poured contempt upon the Lord, who had shown them to be His own soldiers before the eyes of the whole nation by the victory which He had given them over the innumerable army of the foe. Having been called by the Lord to be the deliverer and judge of Israel, it was Gideon's duty to punish the faithless cities.*¹¹

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Gideon Executes Zebah and Zalmunna

And so he said unto Zebah and unto Zalmunna, "Where, the men you killed in Tabor?" And so they said, "As you, as they—one, as a striking figure, sons of the king." Judges 8:18 **Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "Where [are] the men you killed in Tabor?" They then said, "As you are, so they were—one; as the striking form of sons of the king."**

Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "Tell me about the men that you killed in Tabor?" They replied, "They were very similar to you—a unity; and they appeared to be figures of great authority and prominence."

This verse, although most people get the idea of what is being said, it is difficult to render, so let's see what others have done:

The Emphasized Bible Then said he unto Zebah and unto Zalmunna, What manner of men were they, whom ye slew at Tabor? And they said, As thou art, so were they, each one as handsome as the sons of a king.

¹¹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 257.

NASB	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 sons [lit., like the form of the sons] of a king.”
The Septuagint	And he said to Zebee and Salmana, Where are the men whom ye slew in Thabor? and they said, As thou, so were they, according to the likeness of the son of a king.
Young's Lit. Translation	And he saith unto Zebah and unto Zalmunna, 'How—the men whom ye slew in Tabor?' and they say, 'As thou—so they, one—as the form of the king's sons.'

The first word that Gideon uses is the *ʿêyphôh* (ה'פ'יח) [pronounced *ā-FOH*], which means *where?* BDB allows for it to mean *what manner* or *what kind* in Judges 8:18. The fact that it is probably a combination of the words *where* and *here* is not a lot of help to us. Strong's #375 BDB #33. To take this literally, Gideon might have been asking to see the *heads* of the men they slaughtered or wanted to know where their bodies were; his actual intent was to know whether or not his family had been killed by Zebah and Zalmunna. Now, Mount Tabor is close to Manasseh, but it is not in Manasseh; it is north of them situated (insofar as we know) between Zebulun, Naphtali and Issachar slightly southwest of the Sea of Chinnereth. Tabor is only mentioned here in this portion of Scripture (Judges 6–9), but recall that Gideon gathered his troops originally at Mount Gilboa (or so we theorized; see Judges 7:3), which is just south of Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor would have been a good rallying point for the troops to cut off the Midianites and it would make sense for Gideon's brothers to be commanders of the offensive units situated there. This would mean that these Midianites went in somewhat of the circle, going first northwest, being cut off, and then going northeast, and then heading south east (in a clockwise direction). Since we have no other Tabor mentioned in Scripture, this would make the most sense. Since Gideon's brothers are not at home in Ophrah, this means that their lives were taken in battle.

Their answer began with, literally, *as you [singular], so they*. The repeated kaph accounts for the *as...so*. Strong's #none BDB #453. In between are the pronouns, which often imply the verb *to be*. This would give us, *as you are, so they were*. Then we have the numeral *ʿechâd* (אחד) [pronounced *eh-KHAWD*] and it means *one, first*, but it can also mean a *composite unity*. Strong's #259 BDB #25. These two Midianites saw the men they killed and Gideon as *one*; that is, there was a familial unity.

They go into more of a description, using kaph and then the masculine singular construct of *tô'ar* (תֹּאֵר) [pronounced *TOE-ahr*], which alludes to a *striking figure, an eye-catching form* or, simply, a *form*. Generally speaking, it is *a form which stands out, which catches your eye, which gets your attention*. Strong's #8389 BDB #1061. They follow this with *of sons of the king*. We are told more about Gideon's looks here than anywhere else. Gideon looks like a leader; he is a striking figure; he commands attention and respect; and so it was with his entire family. These were obviously the men who were killed by Zebah and Zalmunna—you kill off the leaders first. If all you have left are followers, then they have no choice but to follow you.

The language that they are struggling over might be because Gideon is trying to speak their language and they are trying to speak his. Or, Gideon may be struggling with the language as it is his brothers' deaths he is inquiring about. He has already killed several of his own people in front of them and now he interrogates them. They decided to go with honesty here. Gideon recognizes the description as those of his own family. Barnes has an interesting comment here, which I offer more out of deference to Mr. Barnes than as a record of what really occurred: *Zebah and Zalmunna, in their answer, did not give evidence against themselves. Their hope was by a flattering answer to soothe Gideon's wrath.*¹² Edersheim suggests that these two Midianite leaders did more than simply confess to killing Gideon's brothers—he maintains that they actually bragged about it, which would give Gideon good reason to have them die at the hand of an inexperienced youth.¹³ From the short verse, it is difficult to ascertain just what exactly is occurring on the psychological level.

¹² Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 437.

¹³ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 367.

And so he said, “My brothers, sons of my mother they [were]. A living one of Y^ehowah, if only you [all] let them live, I would not execute you.”

Judges
8:19

Then he said, “My brothers, the sons of my mother, they were. A life of Y^ehowah, if only you let them live, I would not execute you.”

Gideon replied, “Those men were my brothers—the sons of my mother. By the life of Jehovah, if you had allowed them to live, I would not execute you.”

Gideon uses the phrase *sons of my mother they*; this may seem repetitious, but recall that it was not unusual for a man to have several mistresses or several wives; for these to be Gideon’s brothers (i.e., they had the same father) and to be sons of his mother (i.e., they had the same mother), indicates a much closer relationship. This is the only time that this slaughter is alluded to, so we do not know whether Gideon’s brothers were slaughtered prior to the outbreak of the war (Judges 6:33) or during *the retreat and flight of the Midianites* (Judges 7:22).¹⁴ However, given that this occurred at Tabor and not in Ophrah, this would most likely mean that their deaths occurred in the retreat of the Midianites and their allies.

Then Gideon uses the masculine singular adjective construct of chay (יָחַי) [pronounced *KHAH-ee*], which means *living, alive*. Strong’s #2416 BDB #311. Gideon then uses the proper name for God—Yehowah. This appears to be a vow of sorts. It could be rendered *a living one of Y^ehowah* (which is the most literal rendering); or, as *Yahweh lives* (Owen); *Jehovah liveth* (Young); or, *[As] the LORD lives* (NASB). Often an adjective used on its own, particularly in the construct, could be more used like a noun; *as Jehovah lives* would involve the kaph prefixed proposition and a verb, which is not what we have here. An alternative which would substantiate the other renderings would be sort of a broken Hebrew used to communicate to the two Midianite leaders.

Then we have the conjunction lû (לוּ) [also written lû’ (לוּ א)] [pronounced *lue*] and it means *O that, would that, if only, if*. Strong’s #3863 BDB #530. This is followed by the 2nd person masculine plural, Hiphil perfect of châyâh (חַיִּי) [pronounced *khaw-YAW*], which is the verbal cognate of the adjective just referred to. It means *to live, to have life*. In the Hiphil, it means *to keep alive, to deliver from death, to grant life*. Strong’s #2421 & 2425 BDB #310.

Gideon, although he is at war with the Midianites, recognizes that they are not really much better than the people whose freedom that he fought for. He admits that he would have allowed them to live had they not killed his brothers. Edersheim comments: *it is difficult to understand upon what principle, other than that of personal retaliation, [that] he [Gideon] had made the lives of Zebah and Zalmunna wholly dependent upon their conduct towards his own family*.¹⁵ What Gideon is herein experiencing is common in war. A warrior, particularly a general, might have more in common with the general of the opposing army than he does with his own citizenry. They both respond to the call of duty to country and they are responsible for the lives of many. Gideon had just finished dealing with two cities for whose freedom he and his men fought, who essentially blew him off in a time of need. So, Gideon’s momentary confession that he would not execute these two had they not executed his brothers is not out of character for any hero of war.

And so he said to Jether his first-born, “Rise up; kill them.” And did not draw the young man his sword for he was afraid for still he a youth.

Judges
8:20

Then he said to Jether, his first-born: “Rise up and kill them.” However, the young man did not draw his sword for he was afraid because of his youth.

Then Gideon said to Jether, his first-born, “Rise up and kill them.” However, the young man did not draw his sword as he was afraid because of his youthfulness.

¹⁴ Partially quoted and partially paraphrased from *Barnes’ Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 437.

¹⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 368.

Jether is described by the masculine singular noun *na'ar* (נער) [pronounced *NAH-ġahr*], which means *boy, youth, young man*. Strong's #5288 & 5289 BDB #654. This noun is used a second time after the adverb *'ôwd* (עד) [pronounced *ġohd*] (it is also written טע), which means *still, yet, again, besides, in addition to, even yet*. Strong's #5750 BDB #728.

We don't have any more of a background on this son of Gideon. It appears as though he accompanied the three hundred men who went with Gideon, but that is not a certainty. Gideon, by this act, attempts to initiate his son into the necessary act of warfare. As family members, either he or his son would rightfully stand as the avengers of blood. However, even with what his sons has seen, he is unable to execute these enemies of his.

And so said Zebah and Zalmunna, "Rise up yourself and fall in us, for as the man his strength." And so Gideon arose and executed Zebah and Zalmunna. And so he took the crescents which [were] upon [the] necks of their camels.

Judges
8:21

Then Zebah said, also Zalmunna, "Rise up yourself and fall upon us, because as [is] the man, [so is] his strength." So Gideon arose and executed Zebah and Zalmunna and then he took the crescents which [were] upon the necks of their camels.

Then Zebah and Zalmunna requested, "Rise up yourself and fall upon us, for you have great strength." So Gideon arose and executed Zebah and Zalmunna; then he took the crescent ornaments which were on the necks of their camels.

The second verb in what Zebah said is the Qal imperative of *pāga'* (פגא) [pronounced *paw-GAHĠ*], a word which Gesenius and BDB define rather differently. Gesenius gives its primary meanings as *to strike upon, to strike against, to rush against someone [in violence]*; BDB gives the meanings *to meet, to encounter, to reach, to light upon*. When dealing with boundaries, it can mean *reaches to* or *touches* (it can be followed by a *bêyth* or by *'el*—Joshua 19:11,22). What is surprising is that, even though the latter half of Joshua is filled with a list of boundaries, this verb is only used this way in Joshua 16:7 17:10 19:11, 22, 26, 27, 34. It is too many times to be a mistranslation, but it would indicate that the boundaries in the north may have been different than those in the south. That is, in the north, the parcels of land were adjacent, and there would be some cities and areas where a city belonging to one tribe would be a border city for another. This verb is used where people *meet* or *encounter* one another where violence is not the intention or the result (Gen. 23:8 Isa. 64:5). This verb is used *to meet, to encounter* when violence would be the result; however, the violence is given with a separate verb (Num. 35:19, 21). Throughout the rest of Scripture, we find this word being used *to strike* (Judges 8:21 15:12 I Sam. 22:18 II Sam. 1:15). It may or may not be followed by a preposition. Strong's #6293 BDB #803.

Zebah and Zalmunna recognized that they were going to be executed. If it was to be at the hand of a half-hearted child, they knew that the execution would take longer and be painful. The NIV Study Bible suggests that this would have been an insulting death, but I am thinking it would end up being a longer and excruciating death. At the hand of Gideon, they knew they would die quickly and, if it mattered, at the hands of a hero.

Barnes re: the crescent ornaments on the camels: *The custom of adorning the necks of their camels with gold chains and ornaments prevailed among the Arabs so late as the time of Mahomet.*¹⁶

<<return to outline>>

¹⁶ Whoever the hell he was; *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 438.

Gideon Refuses to Rule over Israel/Gideon and Israel Fall into Idolatry

And so said a man of Israel unto Gideon, “Rule within us, also you also your son also a son of your son; for you delivered us from a hand of Midian.”

Judges
8:22

And so a man of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule within us, both you and your son; even the son of your son; for you delivered us from the hand of Midian.”

Then a man of Israel suggested with enthusiasm to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son—even the son of your son—for you delivered us from the hand of Midian.”

To counter balance those who were not about to lift a finger on behalf of Gideon (the leaders of Succoth and Penuel), there were others who were very enthusiastic and desired for Gideon to rule over them. We find the adverb *gam* (גַּם) [pronounced *gahm*] used several times here. Recall, it means *also, furthermore, in addition to, moreover*. When it is used more than once, it can mean *also...also, both...and, that ...so*. It can be used also as an emphatic and translated *even*. Here, as in Gen. 24:44, it is used thrice. Strong’s #1571 BDB #168. Many of the early rulers, if not most, were war heroes—if they could be trusted to deliver the nation in such perilous times, then they could be trusted to deliver the nation in peace time. Furthermore, with a war hero at the helm, it would always give other, predatory nations second thoughts when it came to aggressive movements.

This is the first time that Israel expresses a desire to have a king over them, which is what they saw in the other nations around them. They had just come out of a period of time of being dominated by Midian, and their thinking was that they just needed a strong hand to guide them in situations like that. This is typical human viewpoint thinking. You think that there is something that you can do, some improvement that you can make, that will make everything all better. Some women are particularly prone to this; in fact, you could say it is their weakness. They have a list of changes or things that should be done, and by doing this, somehow, things will be better.

Unfortunately, a son of Gideon *would* rule over Israel—Abimelech, who was an evil, vicious and bloodthirsty (Judges 9). Although having a parent who is honorable, brave and tactful is important, it does not guarantee how the sons will turn out. Plus, what we have with Gideon is a man who, for a few months of his life, enters into greatness—however, he will fall from this greatness, having too many wives and too many children, at least one of whom he does not take the time to raise properly (and some kids, due to their negative volition, cannot be raised right).

And so said unto them Gideon, “I will not rule myself in you and will not rule my son in you; Y^ehowah will rule in you.”

Judges
8:23

But Gideon said to them, “I myself will not rule over you and my son will not rule over you; Y^ehowah will rule over you.”

Gideon then responded to them. “I will not rule over you, nor will my son. Jehovah will rule over you.”

The preposition found three times in this verse is the prefixed *bêyth*, which means *in, into, against, at* and *with*. Strong’s #none BDB #88.

Although a king is mentioned in the Pentateuch along with associated laws and regulations, no provision had been made for placing a king over Israel. In fact, that will come about after some intense debate and discussion early on in the book of I Samuel. Because God had not ordered such a thing, Gideon declines and declines for his son as well. Gideon shows great character in this respect. He could have been in a position of power and wealth and approbation, far greater than he was experiencing then, and he declined. When Samuel and God will discuss Israel’s desire to have a king rule over them, God will say, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have reject Me from being a king over them.” (I Sam. 8:7b). Samuel will later say to the people of Israel: “But you today rejected your God, Who delivers you from all your calamities and all of your distresses; yet you have said, ‘No, but set a king over us!’ Now therefore present yourselves before Jehovah by your tribes and by your clans.” (I Sam. 10:19; see also I Sam. 12:12). *Jehovah is King forever and ever; nations have perished from His land* (Psalm 10:16). The NIV Study Bible: *Gideon, like Samuel (1Sa 8:4–20) rejected the establishment of a monarchy because he regarded it as a replacement of the*

Lord's rule. God's rule over Israel (theocracy) is a central issue in Judges.¹⁷ Keil and Delitzsch write: *For Gideon did not decline the honour because Jehovah was King in Israel, i.e., because he regarded an earthly monarchy in Israel as irreconcilable with the heavenly monarchy of Jehovah, but simply because he thought the government of Jehovah in Israel amply sufficient, and did not consider either himself or his sons called to found an earthy monarchy.*¹⁸

And so said unto them Gideon, "I will request from you a request: and you [all] give to me a man rings of his spoil." (For golden rings to them for Ishmaelites they [were]).

Judges
8:24

So Gideon said to them, "I will request a request from you, that you give to me [each] man the rings of his spoil." (For they [had] golden rings, for they [the ones they defeated were] Ishmaelites).

Then Gideon said to them, "Let me request that each one of you give me the rings which he has taken in battle." For, you see, they all had golden rings as the ones they had just defeated were Ishmaelites.

We have first the voluntative Qal imperfect of *shâ'al* (שָׁאַל) [pronounced *shaw-AHL*], which means *to ask, to request, to petition, to inquire, to question, to interrogate*. Strong's #7592 BDB #981. What follows is the feminine singular noun cognate of that verb, *sh'êlâh* (שְׂאֵלָה) [pronounced *shay-LAW*], which means *request, a thing asked for*. Strong's #7596 (&7585) BDB #982.

What we have here is quite interesting; a man of Israel first suggests that Gideon rule over them; however, it at first might appear that the people that he stands before are primarily Ishmaelites. What had happened was the men that they had just slaughtered were Ishmaelites and they took their earrings. Recall that Ishmael was Abram's son by Hagar, the maid of his wife. Abraham sent Ishmael away to the other side of the Jordan after the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21), because the son of the slave will persecute the son of the freeman. They were some of the people of the east who allied themselves with Midian (Midian was a son of Abraham through Keturah, after the death of Sarah—Gen. 25:1–2). Ishmaelites were nomad traders who carried a lot of different wares (Gen. 37:25) who were occasionally associated with the Midianites (Gen. 37:26–28 Judges 8:1–24).

We are not actually certain whether these were earrings or nose rings in this passage. The word is the masculine plural construct of *nezem* (נֶזֶם) [pronounced *NEH-zem*], which means *ring*. It is always gold but not necessarily an earring. *Nezem* is definitely a nose ring in Gen. 24:47, a seal ring for Isa. 3:21 and possibly earrings or nose rings in most of the other passages. Strong's #5141 BDB #633. The NASB suggests that it might be a *nose rings* that this passage alludes to whereas Barnes is more emphatic: *The ear-ring here mentioned is properly a nose-ring (cp. Gen. xxiv. 22 note). The custom of wearing nose-rings prevails in Eastern countries to the present day. The circumstance of Job's friends each contributing a nose-ring of gold (Job xlii. 11 note) is a remarkable parallel to the incident in Gideon's history. Rings of gold were also used as money in Egypt, as appears on several early monuments, and by the Celts.*¹⁹ In other words, we really don't know anything for certain about these rings other than they were gold and that they Israelites grabbed a bunch of them.²⁰

Another thing to note is the earrings or nose rings: back in the Pentateuch (I believe it was in Exodus or Numbers), the young males wore earrings and here, the Ishmaelite males wear earrings or nose rings. This is a cultural thing; our culture, for over a century (I believe), associated earrings with females only. As of the past couple of decades (as I write this), young men began showing an interest in earrings as well. So, maybe you are a young guy who likes to wear earrings and this is your light at the end of the tunnel—after all, it is just a cultural thing and now our culture is choosing to wear them. Part and parcel with the choice of young men to wear earrings, particularly fancy ones, in our culture, is a move toward androgyny (the intentional blurring of the distinction between males and females). It is a move by some males to wear something feminine and, under the Mosaic Law, that is forbidden.

¹⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 340.

¹⁸ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 258.

¹⁹ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 438.

²⁰ We covered the **Doctrine of Rings** back in Gen. 24:22.

“A woman will not wear a man’s clothes, nor will a man put on women’s clothes; for whoever does these things is an abomination to Jehovah your God.” (Deut. 22:5). So, for the young person today, if earrings are forbidden by your school, then it is an easy decision—you do not wear earrings (or, nose rings). If your intention is the blur the distinction between men and women, then you do not wear earrings or nose rings. If your intention is rebellion against established authority, then you don’t get to wear them either. It boils down to more of what is in the heart rather than what is in the ear or the nose.

And so they answered, “A giving we will give.” And so they spread²¹ the garment and so they cast there a man rings of his spoil.

Judges
8:25

Then they answered, “We will willingly give [these things to you].” Then they spread out a garment and [each] man cast there the rings from his spoil.

They immediately answered, “We will willingly give these things to you.” Then they spread out a garment and each man cast there the rings from his spoil.

Now, Gideon used a verb and its noun cognate, so they responds with a doubling of the verb *nâthan* (נָתַן) [pronounced *naw-THAHN*], which means *give, grant, place, put, set*. Strong's #5414 BDB #678. It is first used in the Qal infinitive absolute and then in the Qal imperfect. Owen renders this: *we will willingly give*; Young: *We will certainly give*; NASB: *We will surely give*; and Rotherham, *We will freely give*. Not only did they promise to do this, they did it immediately. Now, Gideon has not told them why he wants the earrings; he just makes a simple request to be given them. His thinking is certainly that, if he turns down being king over them, he could certainly ask them for a little tribute. The men under him would certainly go with that (which they did).

And so was a weight of the rings of the gold which he requested, 1700 gold alone apart from the crescents and the pendants and garments of the purple which [were] from kings of Midian; and alone apart from the collars which [were] on necks of their camels.

Judges
8:26

The weight of the rings of gold that he requested was 1700 [shekels] of gold apart from the crescents and the pendants and the garments of purple which [belonged] to the kings of Midian; and [this was] apart from the collars that [were] on the necks of the camels.

The rings alone weighed 228 ounces (eight pounds) apart from the crescents and the pendants and the purple clothing (which had belonged to the kings of Midian) and the expensive, decorative camel collars.

This is one of the many sentences which is easy to understand, but the Hebrew is rather difficult, so we will examine a few other renderings as well:

The Emphasized Bible And so it was that the weight of the nose-rings of gold which he requested was a thousand and seven hundred [shekels] of gold,—besides the crescents, and the pendants, and the rainment of purple that were upon the kings of Midian, and besides the ornaments that were on the necks of their camels.

NASB 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.

Young's Lit. Translation ...and the weight of the rings of gold which he asked is a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold, apart from the round ornaments, and the drops, and the purple garments, which *are* drops, and the purple garments, which *are* on the kings of Midian, and apart from the chains which *are* on the necks of their camels,...

This is not one of those *and so it came to pass* passages, as the nearest noun is in agreement with the verb. What we are speaking about in general is the masculine plural of *nezem* (נֶזֶם) [pronounced *NEH-zem*], which means *ring*, as we have mentioned before. Strong's #5141 BDB #633. We do not have a unit of measure, although

²¹ In the Septuagint, it reads: *and he opened his garment*.

shekels are suggested. A shekel is approximately 3.8 grams or 0.134 ounces,²² which means that we are talking about 228 ounces or fourteen pounds of gold. While this is not unrealistic, the absence of the word *shekel* could mean that we are speaking of 1700 rings (which would therefore be about half that in weight—Gen. 24:22). If we are speaking of shekels here, then 1700 shekels would represent 3400 rings, meaning at least that many out of the 15,000 were wearing these rings. Given that there were 15,000 men remaining in the army of Zebah and Zalmunna, collecting that many rings would seem reasonable (the people of the ancient world did not have the material wealth that we have; although the average person in America might have several rings, many people of the ancient world (depending upon the race or culture) could not afford to own a ring.²³

After gold, we have the lamed preposition and the masculine singular noun *bad* (בַּד) [pronounced *bahd*] (Strong's #905 BDB #94) together mean *in a state of separation, by itself, alone, apart*. This is followed by the min preposition, which, when following *bad* means *apart from, besides*. Not only did he collect these rings but he also collected the masculine plural noun *sahārônîym* (שְׁהָרוֹנִים) [pronounced *sah-huh-roh-NEEM*], which means *crescent, moon*, which were ornaments for camels, kings and women. Strong's #7720 BDB #962.

The word translated *pendants* is found only here and in Isa. 3:19. It is closely related to the verb for *drop* or *drip* (Strong's #5197 BDB #642), and it means *drop*. They are always found in the plural, which doesn't mean much, given the context, but Gesenius insists they mean *earrings* made out of pearls (which looks like drops). This makes more sense than *pendant*. Barnes concurs. Strong's #5188 BDB #643.

And so made him Gideon to an ephod and so he put him in his city in Ophrah and so committed adultery all of Israel after him there and so he was to Gideon and to his house for a snare.

Judges
8:27

So Gideon made it into an ephod and he placed it in his city Ophrah. Then all of Israel [sexually] pursued after it there and it was a snare to Gideon and to his household.

So Gideon made an ephod which he placed in his home town Ophrah. Then all of Israel sexually pursued the ephod there and it became a trap to Gideon and his household.

What Gideon made was the masculine singular of *êphôwd* (אֶפְוֹד) [pronounced *ay-FOHD*], which means is transliterated *ephod*. In this case, it apparently was made into some sort of an idol or some kind of a statue or artifact which became an idol. It might have been originally constructed as an artistic object to represent Israel's defeat of Midian, but it soon took on a whole other meaning and it was taken as having a divine nature of sorts. After all, it was a symbol of God speaking directly to a man (Gideon), which is the only time that had happened in that generation. This symbol therefore took on a religious significance beyond that of a simple remembrance. If this seems far-fetched, recall some of the things which have been worshipped as of late in Mexico in quasi-connection to the Catholic Church. Food and stains which appear to have, because of their form, some religious significance, have drawn thousands of people, some curiosity seekers and some sincere religious types.²⁴ The Polychrome Bible renders this *an Ephod-idol*. Strong's #646 BDB #65. The original ephod was designed by God in Ex. 28:6–35. It fit on the shoulders of the high priest with a precious stone on each shoulder, each with six of the names of the tribes of Israel engraved on them. Then there was a breast plate to be made of the same material with twelve stones upon it, each stone being different and each representing a different tribe (Ex. 28:6–35). It is not 100% clear what the *ephod* was that Gideon constructed. My guess is that it resembled shoulder pads and was constructed out of pure gold (we have an ephod mentioned in Ex. 25:7 39:1–21 Lev. 8:7–8 Judges 17:5 18:14–20). In

²² *The Bible Almanac*, J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White, Jr.; ©1980 Thomas Nelson Publishers; p. 336. Edersheim and Keil and Delitzsch place the amount at 50 lbs. Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 369. According to the NIV Study Bible chart, it's 42.5 lbs. *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 1953.

²³ The notable exception to this would be the Egyptians, some of whom wore a ring on each finger.

²⁴ In fact, I would be quite appreciative of anyone who could point me toward some sources dealing with some of these specific incidents which I recall more because of the parodies which have been made than because of the individual incidents themselves. An Internet source would be great.

Ex. 29:5, we covered the **Doctrine of the Priest's Clothing**, which included the ephod.²⁵ This would make sense that Gideon, once a man totally afraid of his enemies, would construct something to do with the war, and a shoulder plating of gold would make sense (a soldier would wear some sort of shoulder plating so that a sword brought down on the shoulder could not inflict the damage that it could without the shoulder plating). Barnes suggests that this ephod became a source of income for Gideon and his family; i.e., people would pay to come and worship it (i.e., they would leave money behind as a gift honoring it). It is the nature of man to cling to that which is physical, whether it be beads, a statue, a crucifix or even a church building. Whereas, man has created some beautiful churches since the incarnation of our Lord, the disciples of our Lord met in people's homes in small groups. There is never an emphasis in God's Word about what man can create and when worship is directed toward any sort of an object or funneled away from God, then we have stepped into the realm of idolatry. **"God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth."** (John 4:24). The key is God's Word and God's Spirit, not anything from the physical realm.

There are several unanswered questions concerning this ephod which Gideon made. Despite the fact that we have an ephod as a part of the priest's clothing, that does not mean that this ephod was originally some sort of religious clothing; what Gideon made may have simply been a warrior's shoulder pads made out of gold (certainly not to be used in battle but to stand as a memorial). This would make the most sense. That it was worshipped or that tribute was paid to it says more about the nature of people than the nature of the ephod itself (or Gideon's original intentions, which may have been, at worst, to just have a lot of gold). Now, Barnes suggests a different scenario, that the ephod was designed by Gideon to be his own Urim and Thummim as a civil ruler, so that he would not have to travel down to Shiloh. Barnes reasons this as Gideon's relations with Ephraim were shaky at best.²⁶ Although this is possible, it is still conjecture on the part of Barnes (except for the part about Gideon's relationship with Ephraim); furthermore, Gideon rejected the job of king, as he rightly determined that Israel was a theocracy; so we do not even know that he had any sort of a civil rulership. He was probably regarded with great deference and considered an *elder* at an early age; but he did not rule over any large portion of Israel. Finally, the chief reason that I disagree with Barnes is that Gideon has made a lot of correct choices thus far. He rejected being made ruler over Israel; he defeated and destroyed all of his enemies; he exercised tact when dealing with his degenerate brothers. For him to suddenly construct something idolatrous just seems out of character. For him to construct something which later becomes an idol—that makes more sense.

The verb applied to Israel is the Qal imperfect of *zânâh* (זָנָה) [pronounced *zaw-NAW*], which means *to commit adultery*. This verb is eventually followed by the preposition *after* and the KJV solved this by saying that Israel when *a-whoring after*, which is a good rendering in the Old English. However, we will need to be a little more up-to-date. We had a verb in the English, *chasing*, which was used colloquially for *skirt-chasing*; however, that would have a limited audience when it comes to understanding this verb and the preposition *after*. Therefore, we will go with the rendering *to [sexually] pursue*. Strong's #2181 BDB #275. Besides to Gideon, this ephod was a trap for the masculine singular of *bayîth* (בַּיִת) [pronounced *BAH-yith*]²⁷, which means *house, household, habitation*. Strong's #1004 BDB #108.

We already know that Israel was fairly degenerate; when Gideon and his men needed food, he was refused in two towns, so this indicates from the beginning that many of the people of Israel were fairly worthless. We don't have

²⁵ Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Gideon made an ephod just like the one found in the Law was essentially copied. Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 259. They add to this: *The large quantity of gold, therefore, does not warrant us in introducing arbitrarily into the text the establishment of a formal sanctuary...* In fact, it does warrant even the reproduction of the religious ephod either. Keil and Delitzsch also suggest that the idolatry involved was that Gideon put on the ephod and used it to determine God's will and that was the idolatry spoken of here. In other words, he drew the people away from God's established sanctuary and priesthood to establish his own. Whereas, I do not discount their theory completely, I think that, given the golden calf incident of Exodus, that this was more likely a simple object which end up getting an inordinate amount of attention.

²⁶ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 438. Barnes notes that Jeroboam did something like this in I Kings 12:28.

²⁷ Why not BAH-yeeth?

many details here as to what exactly happened nor who took the initiative, but it is probably the most negative thing said about Gideon in all of Scripture, and deservedly so.

In short, when offered a position of prominence (king over Israel), Gideon was wise enough to refuse, understanding that he lived under a theocracy. Unfortunately, when it came to monetary lust, he was not as strong or as wise and he fell with regard to this desire for gold. Furthermore, although it is certainly possible that he did not construct this ephod to worship himself, it is likely that he did not discourage others from coming and worshiping this ephod, and leaving some tribute behind. This is in stark contrast with Abram (see Gen. 14:21–23) and Elisha (II Kings 5:16, 26).²⁸ Finally, the end result was that there was some sort of a religious building or tent of some sort built in Shechem, probably as an outgrowth of this ephod. It will be mentioned in the next chapter in Judges 9:46: **When all the leaders of the tower of Shechem heard, they entered the inner chamber of the house of El-berith.** *El-berith* we may take as a synonym for *Baal-berith*. We can speculate that after a number of people showed up at Gideon's front door to look at the ephod, that he put it in a house or a tent of sorts and allowed people to see it there. This quickly escalated into a permanent structure (and it well might have begun as a permanent structure for security reasons). What was once a symbol to Gideon of victory in battle, freedom through military victory and God's direct involvement with the people of Israel, eventually became a house of Baal, a place of worship of that which is not-God.

Now this is an interesting verse by way of authorship. Most of the authors of Scripture seemed to have recorded their portion some time after everything took place. One would expect them to be in fellowship and spiritually mature. Gideon seemed to have slipped during the latter part of his life in this verse, which would also be when he recorded this information. This gives us a couple of possibilities—either Gideon recovered from his reversionism and wrote this or that this verse was added in later by another author. That an author would not cast himself in a bad light is not the issue, as we see that time and time again. My concern is Gideon's spiritual condition when he would have written this (assuming, of course, that he did).

And so was subdued Midian before faces of sons of Israel and they have not added to lift up their heads and so remained undisturbed the land forty years in days of Gideon.

Judges
8:28

So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel and they have not added to lift up their heads. Therefore, the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel and they have not, since then, ever again risen up against Israel. Therefore, the land rested for forty years during the remainder of the life of Gideon.

The first verb is the Niphal imperfect of *kâna* (כָּנָה) [pronounced *kaw-NAHÇ*], which means *to humble, to subdue*; in the Niphal, it means *to be subdued*. Strong's #3665 BDB #488. What Gideon did removed Midian as a threat and as a major power in the Mideast.

What they did not do was the Qal perfect of *yâçaph* (יָצַח) [pronounced *yaw-SAPPH*], which means *to add, to augment, to continue to do a thing*. It is very often followed by an infinitive to indicate what activity would be continued (or, in this case, discontinued). Strong's #3254 BDB #414. The activity which would not be continued is the Qal infinitive of *nâsâ* (נָסָא) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], which means *to lift up, to bear, to carry*. Strong's #5375 (and Strong's #4984) BDB #669. What they no longer continue to lift up is the masculine plural of *rô'sh* (רֹשׁ) [pronounced *roshe*], which means *head, top, chief, front, choicest*. Strong's #7218 BDB #910. A word picture is being painted here. The Midianites were nomads who lived throughout the Mideast. Now and again, they would lift up their heads and look out over the land and see an area which appeared to be much nicer than where they lived and they would choose to go into that land and conquer it. This is what they had done to Israel. Their defeat was so sound that they no longer continued to do such a thing.

What the land did is the Qal imperfect of *shâqaṭ* (שָׁקַט) [pronounced *shaw-KAWT*] and it means *to be quiet, to be undisturbed, inactive*. Strong's #8252 BDB #1052. This means that there were no additional invasions by outside

²⁸ Paraphrased from *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 438.

forces. We find the same verb used in Judges 3:11, 30 5:31. The forty years seems to be a reasonable amount of time remaining in Gideon's life. At this point, you will need to say goodbye to this particular phrase. This is the last time in the book of Judges that we will have the land remaining undisturbed for any amount of time. In Judges 9, Israel will get the ruler she deserves—the bastard gangster son of Gideon. From chapter 10 on, Israel will be under simultaneous attacks from Ammonites and Philistines—and the Land of Promise will no longer enjoy any period of peace-time until the time of Solomon (the Philistines will be overthrown in I Sam. 7).

Again, this verse is somewhat troublesome in terms of authorship and placement. Gideon obviously could not have written it, as he did not know the time that his land would be at peace; what appears to be the situation is that a later author inserted these previous two verses. When we pick up the next verse, it will seem like—what is this verse doing here? The reason is, is that you would expect this verse to be the end of the story about Gideon. However, v. 29 seems to pick up where v. 26 left off, with the other two verses inserted at a later time. The other possibility is that another author wrote all of this in hindsight, although I tend to shy away from the recording of Scripture by non-participants. It is my own personal prejudice that when Scripture is recorded, it is by the person who experienced the events recorded. This would make the most sense. The second most likely is someone closely associated with the person who experienced the events. In the realm of these personal prejudices, one of the things which I reject is the idea that these things were a part of oral tradition for a long period of time and someone several centuries later wrote these oral traditions down. That is goofy.

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The Final Days of Gideon (40 Years of Peace for Israel)

And so went Jerubbaal ben Joash and so he lived in own house. Judges 8:29 **Then Jerubbaal ben Joash went and lived in his own house.**

So Jerubbaal ben Joash returned to his own house and resided there.

The translation of this is quite simple. What appears to make the most sense is that Gideon finished writing either with this verse or the next and that the previous two verses and the remainder of this chapter were written by someone else. Another alternative is that his son wrote most of the end of this chapter, but I would reject that from the standpoint that it wouldn't make sense for Gideon to record most of what he did and leave out the last few days of his exploits. It makes more sense for his son to have picked up the pen after this verse and after inserting the previous two.

The point of this verse is that Gideon did not move to some palace or to a capital city to rule; he rejected rulership over all of Israel and there is no indication that he accepted some lesser position.

And to Gideon were seventy sons—a coming out of his loin—for wives many were to him. Judges 8:30 **And to Gideon were seventy sons—a coming out of his reproductive system—for [there] were many wives to him.**

And Gideon sired seventy sons, for he had many wives.

In the middle of this verse, we have the masculine plural, Qal active participle of the very common verb *yâtsâ'* (יצא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. Strong's #3318 BDB #422. What they came out of is the feminine singular noun *yârek*^e (רק) [pronounced *yaw-REK*^e], which means *thigh, loin, side, base*, according to BDB. Probably the best up-to-date and least offensive rendering of this verb is *reproductive system*. Strong's #3409 BDB #437.

We have the verb *to be* twice in this verse and this is where many translators take the easy way out and render this verb as *had*. With the absolute status quo verb *to be* and the prepositional phrase *to him* (or, *to Gideon*), the net result is the same.

When we come to verses like this, it is important that we look back and examine the **Doctrine of Polygamy**, which we covered back in Deut. 21:15. You will note that often together we have both forms of idolatry: spiritual adultery and polygamy (adultery in marriage).

McGee's comments would be apropos here: *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 of 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 inter-marriage 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. Through Abraham's son Isaac came the nation Israel. The Arabs are descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar. I talked to an Arab guide in Jericho who was very proud of the fact that he was a son of Abraham. He was also a Moslem. He said proudly, "I am a son of Abraham though Ishmael." That is true. That was the sin of Abraham, and God never blessed that, friends. God did not bless Solomon's actions in this connection, and He is not going to bless Gideon either. In fact, Gideon's actions split the kingdom and caused real tragedy. This is the blot in his life. God does not hide anything. God paints the picture of man as it is. Now if a friend of Gideon had been his biographer, he probably would have left this part of his life out of the story. God, however, did not. He paints mankind in all of his lurid, sinful color.*²⁹

One of the many blessings in the ancient world was having many children—particularly sons. Gideon just had a ton of them and, as we will see in the next chapter, all for nought. Scripture is fairly easy on Gideon and the end of his life. He apparently falls into some idolatry, or setting up the ephod causes others to fall into idolatry. He obviously has a ton of wives, which is also not the textbook way of doing things (although Old Testament believers are not faulted too terribly for that). The end result is that he appeared to be blessed, but all of his children will die in the next chapter. As Thieme used to say, *a right thing done in a wrong way is wrong*.

People who read their Bible superficially or just see what they want to see, combine their lust with a portion of this passage and determine that they should have multiple wives. Although this is not a tremendously prevailing mistake touted by too many faux-Christian religions, it is found with some shoots of Mormonism. It is pretty obvious to me that it will become legal in the United States for a man to have several wives future from the time I am writing this. After all, homosexuality, when I was in my teens and twenties (in the 60's and 70's), was clearly understood by all to be a sin and a deviation. At this point in time, there are a significant number of people, albeit, not a majority by any means, who believe that homosexuality should be taken as a valid, alternative lifestyle and, as of this writing, our society is moving in the direction of giving homosexuals the same rights and privileges which have been correctly extended to minorities, as though they are simply a minority. Give it some time, and there will come a time, if our nation continues on its present path, that polygamy will be sanctioned by the state as well, if there are enough people who lobby for it. This passage in no way supports or condones Gideon's behavior, it merely records it. In the next chapter, we will see that Gideon's Lothario-type behavior will be one of the factors in Israel falling into steep degeneracy.

And his mistress who [was] in Shechem, bore to him also she a son and so He set his name Abimelech.

Judges
8:31

And his mistress, who [lived] in Shechem, bore to him a son as well and He made his name Abimelech.

And his mistress who lived in Shechem bore him a son as well and He named him Abimelech.

What the verse says is easy; the Hebrew will require a few tweaks, however:

²⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 164.

The Emphasized Bible And his concubine who was in Shechem she also bare him a son—and he gave him the name of Abimelech.

Young's Lit. Translation ...and his concubine, who is in Shechem, hath born to him—even she—a son, and he appointeth his name Abimelech.

The noun is the feminine singular pīylegēsh (פִּילְגֶשׁ) [pronounced *pee-LEH-gesh*], which means *mistress, paramour, illicit lover, concubine*. Strong's #6370 BDB #811. This is the first time that we have seen this word since the book of Genesis.

The adverb in the midst of this verse is the oft used gam (גַּם) [pronounced *gahm*], which means *also, furthermore, in addition to, moreover*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168.

The operative verb here is the Qal imperfect of sîym (שׂוּם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set*. It also can mean *to render, to make* anyone so (Ex. 4:11 Psalm 39:9). Strong's #7760 BDB #962. What is rendered is the masculine singular noun shēm (שֵׁם) [pronounced *shame*], which means *name*. Strong's #8034 BDB #1027. This is different than simply *he named him Bob*. In fact, I can only find this use of the verb in two other places: Neh. 9:7, where God appoints for Abram the name *Abraham*; and then in II Kings 17:34, where God appoints the name *Israel* for Jacob. The point is that *Abimelech* was not his given name. We do not know what his given name was. What is humorous is what this name means, which, for some reason, none of the source books that I use pointed this out. In the Hebrew, it is ʾăbiymelek^e (אֲבִימֶלֶךְ) [pronounced *u^b-vee-MEH-lek*], which means *my father is king*. Abimelech should never have been the ruler of Israel; if anyone should have been in that time period, it was his father. So, every time you read his name in the next chapter, when he rules over Israel, keep in mind, it isn't him, but his father who should be king. Strong's #40 BDB #4. There is no indication that Gideon was anywhere around during the birth or raising of his bastard son yet this reads *and He appointed his name Abimelech*. God took away any enduring fame that Abimelech might have and covered up his name with the name *my father is king*. In other words, we never learn the given name of Abimelech. His name is a divine joke.³⁰

Now we have the person of Abimelech, Gideon's son by a mistress, introduced. Barnes suggests that the mother is a Canaanite, which is why she is not considered a wife of Gideon (or, she is not officially made a wife for that reason). However, in Judges 9:18, she is called a maid-servant, which indicates that she was either a slave of Gideon or of someone in Shechem. What seems to be the most likely is that she was a slave of Gideon's and that Gideon moved her to Shechem when it was clear that she was pregnant. This would fall into typical male behavior and we have precedence for removing a slave with child from a household with Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 16). In any case, it is well-known who she is—we are just not privy to the details as to what transpired, although it makes the most sense if she is Gideon's slave. It is noted several times that she is living in Shechem (Judges 8:31 9:1, 18). Shechem is in Manasseh, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, if you will recall. Gideon's home of Ophrah is probably a small settlement just outside of Shechem. Furthermore, Abimelech is treated separately from Gideon's seventy sons as well (see Judges 9:1–2). At first glance, the most logical person to write the end of this chapter and all of the next would be Abimelech. After all, he will become the first ruler over all of Israel. However, we will find him to be an evil, vicious, power-lusting man whose desire to rule overshadows all other considerations. Although we will get a fairly thorough treatment of his life and death, it is doubtful that he wrote any Scripture at all as it is highly unlikely that he was a believer in Jesus Christ. .

Recall how in Judges 6, I told you that both Gideon and his father knew the Bible and that this was because Joshua had the Bible engraved on some rocks near where they lived. The name of Abimelech is further evidence of that.

³⁰ I must certainly grant, in the alternative, that Gideon may have named this son Abimelech (since *Gideon* is the closest masculine noun which would fit). However, my thinking is that Gideon played very little part in the raising up of this child. After all, Gideon had 70 children. This makes it less likely that he will spend much time with any of these children; let alone, the ones that were born by a mistress. I should also mention that I am indebted to my sources, both Keil and Delitzsch and Edersheim; they all pointed out that this was not Abimelech's name at birth; however, none of them really captured the significance of his name. It won't mean much to us here, but in the next chapter, this tongue-in-cheek use of his name will become quite meaningful.

We find that name back in Gen. 20:2 26:1 Psalm 34. It is a title of a king rather than personal name and Gideon was familiar with it from the book of Genesis. It means *My Father is King*.³¹ It is somewhat of an ironic name for Gideon to give his son, the son of a slave woman. It is Gideon at his most clever. He was aware of the name from the book of Genesis; he is not the king of Israel, but was offered the job, so there is some irony in the name for that reason. Furthermore, if one takes *Father* as referring to God (as the NIV Study Bible does), then this name also acknowledges that God is king over Israel, which is what Gideon did when he refused to be king over Israel himself.

And so died Gideon ben Joash in an old age good and so he was buried in a tomb of Joash his father at Ophrah of [the] Abiezrite.

Judges
8:32

Finally, Gideon ben Joash died in a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, at Ophrah of the Abiezrite.

Finally, Gideon ben Joash died of old age and he was buried in the tomb of Joash, his father, at Ophrah of the Abiezrite.

In describing Gideon's death, we have the feminine noun *sêy^bvâh* (שֵׂיבָה) [pronounced *say^b-VAW*], which means *old age, gray hair*. Strong's #7872 BDB #966. This is modified by the adjective *ṭôw^bv* (טוֹב) [pronounced *toe^bv*], which means *pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good*. Strong's #2896 BDB #373. What this simply means is that Gideon died of old age (see also Gen. 15:15 25:8 1Chron. 29:28 Job 5:26). Surprisingly enough, this is a phrase used only of Abraham, David and Gideon.

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Israel Falls into Apostasy Again

And so he was as which a dying of Gideon and so returned sons of Israel and so committed adultery after the Baals and so constructed for themselves Baal-berith for gods.

Judges
8:33

And it was when Gideon died that [or, then] the sons of Israel returned and [sexually] pursued after the [various] Baals and they made for themselves Baal-berith for gods.

At the time of Gideon's death, the people of Israel returned to pursuing after the various heathen Baals and they made Baal-berith god.

Let's look at a couple of other translations:

The Emphasized Bible

And it came to pass that as soon as Gideon was dead the sons of Israel turned back, and went unchastely astray after the Baals, and appointed them Baal-berith, to be god:...

NASB

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.

Young's Lit. Translation

And it cometh to pass when Gideon *is* dead, that the sons of Israel turn back and go a-whoring after the Baalim, and set over them Baal-Berith for a god;...

We begin with the *wâw* consecutive and the Qal imperfect of the verb *to be*. Then we have the *kaph* preposition with the relative pronoun *ka`asher* (כַּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *kah-uh-SHER*], which is the compound of the preposition *kaph* (כ) (No Strong's # BDB #453), which, means *like, as*; and the relative pronoun *`asher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*] (Strong's #834 BDB #81), which means *which, when or who*. Together, literally, we have *as which*; however, it means *as which, as one who, as, like as, just as*. BDB classifies these two together as a separate word, and gives the meanings *according as, as, when*. Together they = Strong's #834 BDB #455.

This is followed by either the Qal perfect or the Qal participle of *to die*; structure-wise, the former sounds better. The subject would be *Gideon*. Then we have the for *return* and then the Qal imperfect of *zânâh* (זָנָה) [pronounced

³¹ The NIV Study Bible suggests that *father* refers to God and that Gideon is acknowledging that God is king over Israel.

zaw-NAW], again, which means *to commit adultery, to fornicate, to [sexually] pursue*. Strong's #2181 BDB #275. What they pursued after was the Baals, which were a pantheon of gods worshipped by the heathen.

What they did in sexually pursuing these Baals is the Qal imperfect of the verb *sîym* (ס׳ימ) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set*. It also can mean *to make, to render, to prepare*, particularly when followed by *lâmed* (used for a genitive) or *kaph* (used for an accusative). Strong's #7760 BDB #962. You may recall that we just had this verb two verses back where it meant, for all intents and purposes, *to name* Gideon's son. What they made for themselves was *Baal-berith*; *Baal-berith* means *lord of the covenant*. Jesus Christ is the God of Israel and He is the Lord of the Covenant—He made the only covenant with Israel. God delivered Israel—her deliverance was spectacular—and then Israel forsook God again and made idols into *lord of the covenant*. When Israel placed herself under Baal, she was ratifying a new covenant—a covenant with Baal. How sad that the center of this heathen worship was found in the great city of Shechem, where *Joshua had twice renewed the Lord's covenant with Israel after they had entered Canaan (Jos 8:30–35; 24:25–27)*.³²

This was typical behavior for Israel. It is noted in Judges 2:16–19: *Then Jehovah raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. And 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 Jehovah—they did not do as their fathers. And when Jehovah raised up judges for them, Jehovah was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of that judge; for Jehovah was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them. But it came to pass when the judge died that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers in following other gods to serve them and to bow down to them. They did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.*

And did not call to mind sons of Israel Y^ehowah their God, the One rescuing them from a hand of their enemies from round about.

Judges
8:34

And the sons of Israel did not call to mind Y^ehowah their God, the One rescuing them from a hand of their enemies from every side.

And the people of Israel did not remember Jehovah their God, the One who had rescued from the hand of their enemies which surrounded them.

The first verb is the Qal perfect of *zâkar* (זָכַר) [pronounced *zaw-KAHR*] means which means *remember, recall, call to mind*. Strong's #2142 BDB #269. I prefer the rendering *to call to mind*, the reason being that this is a matter of volition. It is not that they just plain forgot; they chose not to recall, they chose not to remember; they chose not to call Him to mind. Deut. 4:9: *“Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen, and so they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and to your grandsons.”* Instead, the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah and they forgot Jehovah their God and they served the Baals and the Asheroth (Judges 3:7).

God is spoken of with the definite article and the Hiphil participle of *nâtsal* (נָצַל) [pronounced *naw-TSAHL*], which means *to snatch away, to deliver, to rescue, to snatch out of danger, to preserve*. This should be rendered *the One rescuing*. Strong's #5337 BDB #664.

At the end of this verse we have the *mîn* preposition and the preposition *çâ^bvî^bv* (כָּבֹד) [pronounced *saw^b-VEE^BV*], which means *circuit, round about, encircle*. Together, they mean *from round about, from every side*. Strong's #5439 BDB #686. Recall that the Midianites infested Israel like locusts.

And they did not make grace with a house of Jerubbaal, Gideon, as all the good which he did with Israel.

Judges
8:35

Furthermore, they did not fashion grace toward the house of Jerubbaal (or, Gideon), according to all the good which he did to Israel.

³² *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 340.

Furthermore, they did not extend grace to the house of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon), in accordance with all the good that he did for Israel.

The verb is the Qal perfect of *ʿâsâh* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. With it is the negative and it is followed by the masculine singular noun *cheçed* (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], which means *grace*. Strong's #2617 BDB #338. This is followed by the preposition *ʿîm* (עִם) [pronounced *geem*], which is generally rendered *with*. This particular preposition is often found with the verb *ʿâsâh*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. When rendered literally, this is somewhat clumsy. Let me give you what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...neither dealt they in lovingkindness with the house of Jerubbaal [namely] Gideon,—according to all the goodness wherewith he had dealt with Israel.
NASB	...nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (<i>that is</i> Gideon), in accord with all the good that he had done to Israel.
NEB	They also failed to show kindness to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) for all the good things he had done for them.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...neither have they done kindness with the house of Jerubbaal—Gideon—according to all the good which he did with Israel.

This is just as you would expect; Israel turned away from God and they showed no concept of appreciation for what Gideon had done himself. Some people have no appreciation for what is done on their behalf and this was Israel. Gideon was a man of greatness and he delivered Israel as a savior should—he destroyed their enemy Midian completely. The next chapter will go into great detail how little respect Israel showed Gideon and his progeny. They will allow, and some will assist the assassination of all of Gideon's children. The depravity of man is often difficult to fathom.

Let me allow McGee to close out this chapter: *This is the same old story, is it not? The hoop of history continues to roll as it is rolling today. At first they were a nation who served God, then they did evil, forsook God, turned to Baal, and God sells them into slavery and servitude. Then they cry out to God. Then they repent, and God raises up a judge to deliver them. Here goes Israel again. As soon as Gideon was dead, the children of Israel turned from God and went a whoring after Baalim. That is the sad, sordid story of Israel, and also the story of His church today. This up and down business is the story of nations, churches, and individuals. Today many of us are just rolling a hoop through this world. One day we are up and the next day we are down. God never intended our spiritual lives to be that way.*³³

At this point, we will take a break from the book of the Judges and examine Psalm 83.

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³³ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 165.