

Judges 8

Verses 1 - 3

Then the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, “What is this thing *that* you have done to us, not calling upon us when you went to fight against Midian?” And they quarreled with him vehemently. ² But he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is the gleaning of *the grapes* of Ephraim not better than the vintage of Abiezer? ³ God has handed over to you the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

Then the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, “What is this thing *that* you have done to us, not calling upon us when you went to fight against Midian?” And they quarreled with him vehemently.

Joseph was the most prominent of the 12 sons of Jacob, and Ephraim (the younger son of Joseph) became the most powerful tribe of Israel.

Their inheritance in the mountains preserved them from the enemies of Israel and Shiloh (in Ephraim) became the home of the Tabernacle for over 300 years.

Ephraim was not accustomed to playing a subordinate role in Israel and leaving them out of this battle was taken as a slap in the face. Also there was a share in the plunder at stake.

² But he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is the gleaning of *the grapes* of Ephraim not better than the vintage of Abiezer?”

Vintage means the time when something was produced (first started).

So Gideon got the enemy to flee (he started it) but Ephraim defeated the fleeing Midianites and captured the princes (he finished it).

Gideon was quite a diplomate in his response.

See Proverbs 15:1

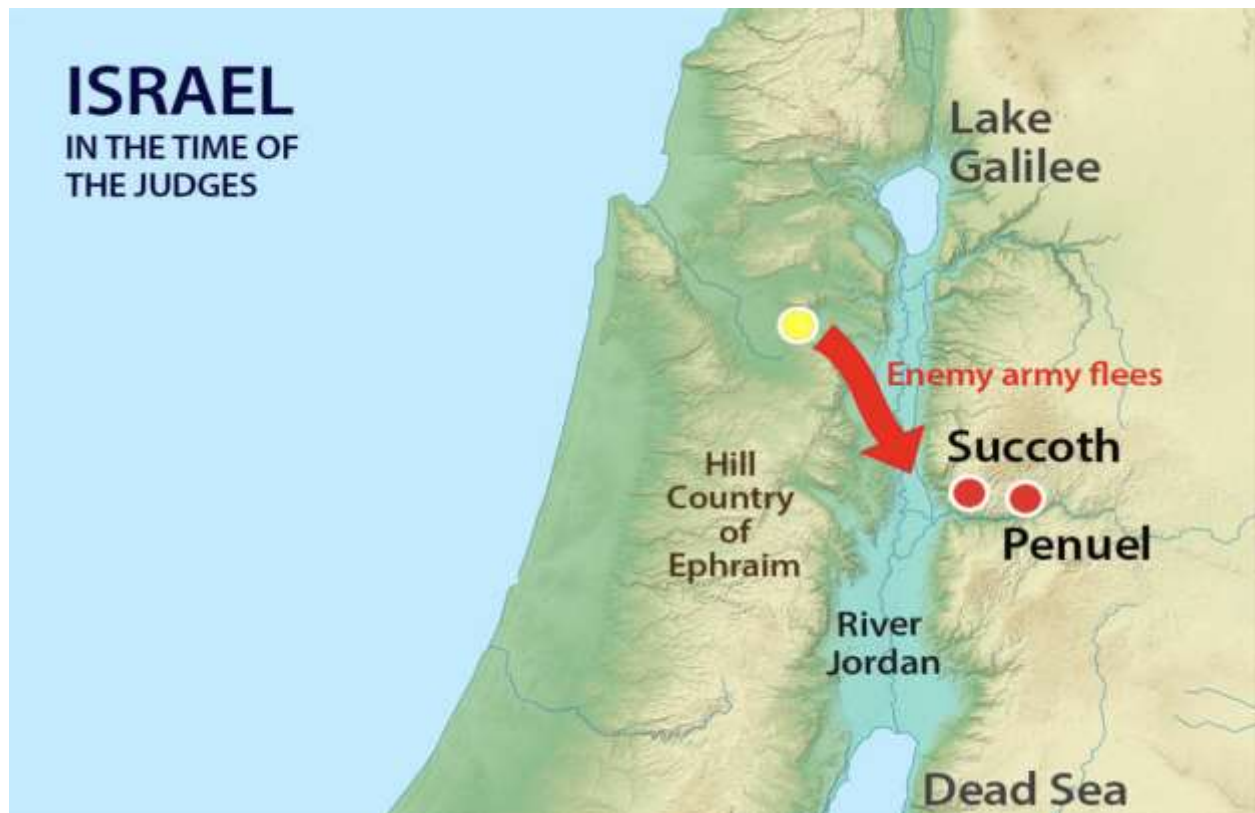
**A gentle answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.**

Verses 4 - 9

⁴ Then Gideon and the three hundred men who were with him came to the Jordan *and* crossed over, exhausted yet *still* pursuing. ⁵ And he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.” ⁶ But the leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?” ⁷ So Gideon said, “For this *answer*, when the Lord has handed over to me Zebah and Zalmunna, I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars.” ⁸ Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered. ⁹ So he said also to the men of Penuel, “When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.”

⁴ Then Gideon and the three hundred men who were with him came to the Jordan *and* crossed over, exhausted yet *still* pursuing. ⁵ And he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

See Map 805



Reuben, Gad and ½ of Manasseh took their inheritance on the east side of Jordan.

They made a vow that they would support their brethren who went into Canaan.

But the leaders of Succoth and Penuel betrayed Gideon and his soldiers who were near exhaustion from pursuing the Midianites.

⁶ But the leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?”

The leaders of these two towns may have feared retaliation from the Midianites so they decided not to help Gideon.

⁷ So Gideon said, “For this *answer*, when the Lord has handed over to me Zebah and Zalmunna, I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

The elders made a big mistake by treating Gideon in this way and he promised to exact his punishment on them when he finished dealing with these two Midianite leaders.

⁸ Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered. ⁹ So he said also to the men of Penuel, “When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.”

Penuel was a little farther east of Succoth but they responded in a similar fashion so Gideon promised to tear down a tower in their town.

Verses 10 - 12

¹⁰ Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of the entire army of the people of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen. ¹¹ Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents to the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and he attacked the camp when the camp was unsuspecting. ¹² When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the entire army.

Verses 13 - 17

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

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

¹⁵ And he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, saying, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?’”

¹⁶ Then he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them. ¹⁷ And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

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

Heres is an ancient word for sun so this might mean before the sun was up.

Other translators think this is a place.

The Septuagint has,

And Gedeon the son of Joas returned from the battle, down from the battle of Ares.

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

We don't know the age of this youth but it is impressive that he would know the names of the 77 leaders and elders of the city.

A large number of Americans don't know the names of their state senators and/or congressmen. And even worse many Americans don't even know who the vice president is during most administrations.

¹⁶ Then he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them. ¹⁷ And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

In Succoth he just punished the officials and elders.

But in Penuel he tore down the tower and slew the men of the city.

Verses 18 - 21

¹⁸ Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “Where were the men whom you killed at Tabor?” But they said, “You and they were alike, each one resembling the son of a king.” ¹⁹ And he said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.” ²⁰ So he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise, kill them.” But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth. ²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself, and attack us; for as the man, so is his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent amulets which were on their camels’ necks.

¹⁸ Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “Where were the men whom you killed at Tabor?” But they said, “You and they were alike, each one resembling the son of a king.”

When one reads how the two kings responded to Gideon it seems pretty clear that the word “where” should read “who”.

The two kings respond by saying they looked like princes, meaning they were the sons of Gideon. They were probably afraid to say their names.

The place mentioned here is probably Mount Tabor

See Map 1815



The Midianites were camped at Mount Moreh while Gideon was to the south at the Spring of Harod. Gideon's sons at Mount Tabor would have been in danger being just north of the Midianite encampment.

²⁰ So he said to Jether his firstborn, "Rise, kill them." But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

It is likely that Gideon led these prisoners to his home because his young son would have stayed home during the war.

The young man had never killed anyone and was afraid to kill these two kings..

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

At this point the two kings knew they would be killed so they taunted Gideon hoping to anger him. They did this hoping their death would be quick rather than a long and gruesome affair.

An amulet is a piece of jewelry usually hung about the neck and thought to be a magical protection against evil or disease. In this case they were in a crescent shape.

See pic 820



Verses 22 - 27

²² Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, your son’s son as well, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian!” ²³ But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.” ²⁴ Yet Gideon said to them, “I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his plunder.” (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) ²⁵ And they said, “We will certainly give *them to you.*” So they spread out a garment, and every one of them tossed an earring there from his plunder. ²⁶ The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 *shekels* of gold, apart from the crescent amulets, the ear pendants, and the purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and apart from the neck chains that *were* on their camels’ necks. ²⁷ Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah; but all Israel committed infidelity with it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

²² Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, your son’s son as well, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian!” ²³ But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.”

The men of Israel asked Gideon to be their king but he had the wisdom to reject that offer in favor of doing God’s Will.

Gideon knew that God was the only true king of Israel.

²⁴ Yet Gideon said to them, “I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his plunder.” (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

Ishmael was the son of Abraham and Hagar but they were Midianites by their place of residence.

See Genesis 37:27-28

²⁷ Come, and let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our *own* flesh.” And his brothers listened to *him*. ²⁸ Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled *him* out and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. So they brought Joseph into Egypt.

These traders traveled from Midian to Canaan and then Egypt.

See pic 825



So they spread out a garment, and every one of them tossed an earring there from his plunder.²⁶ The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, apart from the crescent amulets, the ear pendants, and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and apart from the neck chains that were on their camels' necks.

Gideon's soldiers had made quite a haul and they gladly turned over to Gideon the earrings he requested. It was only a small fraction of the booty taken from the slain Midianites. This is why Ephraim was upset that they were not initially called to fight.

The 1700 shekels was about fifty pounds of gold.

The neck chains were the crescent amulets mentioned in the previous section.

It is amazing how quickly God had changed their status.

27 Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah; but all Israel committed infidelity with it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

The ephod was a robe to be worn exclusively by the High Priest. However, the Israelites saw it as something to be worshipped.

The mother of Forrest Gump has spoken elegantly about this kind of behavior.....
Stupid is as stupid does. ☺

Verse 28

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

Despite the fact that God had to punish Israel many times for their infidelity, the periods of rest were often much longer than the periods of punishment.

See chart 830

Chapter	Event/Leader	Time	Oppressed	Peace	As leader
1	Taking Canaan	1375			
2	A new generation	1375 - 1350			
17-21		1375 - 1350			
3	Othniel	1350 - 1302	8	40	
3	Ehud	1302 - 1204	18	80	
3	Shamgar				
4 - 5	Deborah	1204 - 1144	20	40	
6 - 8	Gideon	1191 - 1144	7	40	

The years of being oppressed were 53.

The years of rest totaled 200.

For those who can't see God's grace in the Old Testament these are just a few examples among many.

Verses 29 - 32

²⁹ Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. ³⁰ Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives. ³¹ And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech. ³² And Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

³⁰ Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.

Jacob had 12 sons with 4 wives. Gideon had 70 sons. Would anyone like to guess how many wives he had? Too many. 😊

The real answer may have been somewhere between 20 to 25 wives.

It's no wonder he wanted all those earrings from the Midianites. 😊

In chapters 10 & 12 we will come across other judges that also had a lot of sons.

1. Jair 30 sons. Judges 10:4
2. Ibzan 30 sons and 30 daughters. Judges 12:9
3. Abdon 40 sons. Judges 12:14

God has to look past a lot of weaknesses in mankind in order to save us.

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

Well, we can all understand why he needed a concubine.

Someone had to remind him of all his wedding anniversaries. 😊

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

God had blessed Gideon in many ways and living to a good old age was one of those blessings.

Verses 33 - 35

³³ Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again committed infidelity with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god. ³⁴ So the sons of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had saved them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; ³⁵ nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (*that is*, Gideon) in accordance with all the good that he had done for Israel.

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

Reading the book of Judges is like watching the movie Groundhog Day. The same mistakes being made over and over again.

However, one part of the movie was not at all like the Book of Judges. Bill Murray slowly learned from his mistakes and became a better person. We can't say that about Israel.

Baal-berith means the covenant Baal.

³⁴ So the sons of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had saved them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; ³⁵ nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (*that is*, Gideon) in accordance with all the good that he had done for Israel.

Israel continued to forget what God had done for them and Israel will not treat his son with respect.