

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES 8

In this chapter we are told how Gideon pacified the Ephraimites, who complained because they were not sent unto to fight the Midianites, (~~OR81~~Judges 8:1-3) how he pursued the Midianites, until he took their two kings, and on his return chastised the men of Succoth and Penuel, because they refused to relieve his men with food as they were pursuing, (~~OR84~~Judges 8:4-17) how he slew the two kings of Midian, (~~OR85~~Judges 8:18-21) and after this conquest refused to take the government of Israel when offered him, (~~OR82~~Judges 8:22,23) how he requested of the Israelites the earrings they had taken from the Midianites, with which he in weakness made an ephod, which proved a snare to his house, (~~OR84~~Judges 8:24-27) how that the people were in peace forty years during his life, and that he had a numerous issue, and died in a good old age, (~~OR85~~Judges 8:28-32) but that after his death the Israelites fell into idolatry, and were ungrateful to his family, (~~OR83~~Judges 8:33-35).

Ver. 1. *And the men of Ephraim said unto him,* etc.] To Gideon, when they brought him the heads of Oreb and Zeeb; taking this to be a proper opportunity to expostulate and chide with him, when they had done so much service:

why hast thou served us thus; neglected them, overlooked them, which they took as a reproach to them, and as if he had bore them ill will:

that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? that he did not call them first, when he called other tribes, as Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, when they were as near or nearer, and more nearly allied, being both the descendants of Joseph; and were the tribe that Jacob had given the preference to; and being of proud spirits they envied the glory that Gideon, who was of the tribe of Manasseh, had got; and by which they were jealous he would advance that tribe above theirs:

and they did chide with him sharply; used rough words and ill language, and threw out many keen and biting expressions, which discovered great anger and wrath, envy and ill will.

Ver. 2. *And he said unto them,* etc.] In a very mild and gentle manner, giving soft words, which turn away wrath:

what have I done in comparison of you? he and his men, he signifies, had only blew trumpets, broke pitchers, and held torches; it was the Lord that did all, and set the Midianites one against another to slay each other; and in the pursuit as yet he had only picked up and slain some common soldiers, they had taken two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and had brought their heads in triumph to him:

is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? the family of Abiezer, of which Gideon was; the meaning is, that whereas he began the fight, which may be called the vintage, and they had finished it, which was like gleaning; yet what they did last was much preferable to what was done by him at first; or the princes of Midian, which they had taken in the pursuit, and was like gleaning after a vintage, were equal, yea, superior to all the camp of Midian, or that part of it that had fallen into his hands. The Targum is,

“are not the weak of the house of Ephraim better than the strong of the house of Abiezer?”

Ver. 3. *God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb,* etc.] A high honour this conferred upon you, and with which you may be well contented:

and what was I able to do in comparison of you? what he had done in defeating and pursuing the army of Midian, in slaying and taking any of them prisoners, was nothing in comparison of what they had done; nay, he signifies that he was not capable of doing anything worth mentioning without them; the glory of finishing this conquest was reserved for them:

then their anger was abated towards him when he had said that; it being what gratified their pride and was pleasing to them; and this conduct of Gideon showed him to be a wise and humble man.

Ver. 4. *And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over.* etc.] That river; (see Gill on “^{Q0725}Judges 7:25”) he and three hundred men that were with him, at the defeat of the Midianites in the valley of Jezreel; so that neither at that nor in the pursuit of them hitherto, had he lost one man:

faint, yet pursuing [them]: they were faint with being up all night, and continually blowing their trumpets; and had been upon the pursuit of their enemies ever since the defeat; and yet, though they were so faint, they did not leave off the pursuit, but were eager at it.

Ver. 5. *And he said to the men of Succoth*, etc.] The inhabitants of that place, the principal men of it, which lay in his way as he was pursuing the Midianites in their flight to their own country; for this was a city on the other side Jordan, and in the tribe of Gad and was inhabited by Israelites, (⁴⁶¹³⁷Joshua 13:27) it had its name from the booths or tents which Jacob erected here, (⁴⁰¹³¹⁷Genesis 33:17)

give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; he did not desire them to leave their habitations and families, and join him in pursuing his and their enemies, or to furnish him and his men with arms; only to give them some provisions and that not dainties, but loaves of bread; or “morsels of bread”^{f169}, and broken pieces; and these he did not demand in an authoritative manner, as he might have done as a general, but in a way of entreaty; and the arguments he uses are,

for they be faint; for want of food, through the long fatigue from midnight hitherto, in the pursuit of the enemy, and which was not over:

and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian; who had fled with 15,000 men, and were now, as Jarchi conjectures, destroying the countries of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh; and now Gideon and his men were closely pursuing them, in hopes of taking them, and so complete the conquest, and thoroughly deliver Israel from their bondage on both sides Jordan, the benefits of which these men of Succoth would share with others; these were the arguments, and cogent ones they were, to persuade them to give his weary troops some refreshment.

Ver. 6. *And the princes of Succoth said*, etc.] The chief magistrates of the place made answer, one in the name of the rest; for the word said is in the singular number:

are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hands; that is, are they taken prisoners, and handcuffed, or their hands bound behind them, and put into the hands of Gideon, to do with them as he pleased? no, they were not; and they suggest they never would, deriding him and his small number of men as not a match for these kings, whom, perhaps a little before, they had seen pass by with 15,000 men; with whom his little army would not be

able to encounter, should they turn and fall upon them, which they supposed would be the case; and therefore, say they, when these are in thine hands, which they thought would never be, it will be time enough

that we should give bread to thine army? for they feared, should they do that, these kings would hear of it, and they should suffer for it, and their bondage be harder than it was before; so selfish and diffident in themselves, so cruel and uncompassionate to their brethren, and so ungrateful to their deliverers, which stirred up the spirit of this humble and good man to great resentment.

Ver. 7. *And Gideon said,* etc.] In answer to the princes of Succoth:

therefore when the Lord hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand; of which he made no doubt, having the promise of God that he would deliver the host of Midian into his hand, on which his faith rested; and having it in great part performed already, most firmly believed the full performance of it, (see ^{<OR>}Judges 7:7,9)

then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness, and with briers; which grew in a wilderness near this city, and from whence as Kimchi thinks, it had its name; the word “Succoth” being used for thorns in (^{<SH>}Job 41:7) and the sense is, either that he would scourge them with thorns and briers; or, as the Targum thrust their flesh upon them; which Kimchi interprets of casting their naked bodies upon thorns and briers, and then treading on them with the feet; or draw a cart over them as they thus lay, in like manner as it was usual to do when corn was threshed out; (see ^{<SH>}Isaiah 28:27).

Ver. 8. *And he went up thence to Penuel,* etc.] A place not far from Succoth, and to which also Jacob gave name, from the Lord’s appearing to him there face to face, (^{<SH>}Genesis 32:30) but here was nothing of God in this place now:

and spoke unto them likewise; desired bread for his men, as he had of the inhabitants of Succoth:

and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him; denied him his request in the same jeering manner.

Ver. 9 *And he spoke also unto the men of Penuel,* etc.] In a threatening way, as he had spoken to the men of Succoth: saying, when I come again

in peace: having conquered all his enemies, and delivered Israel from their bondage, and restored peace and prosperity to them, of which he had no doubt:

I will break down this tower; pointing to it and which stood in their city, and in which they placed their confidence; and when he threatened them, boasted of it as their security.

Ver. 10. *Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor.* etc.] Jerom ^{f170} under this word says, there was in his time a castle called Carcuria, a day's journey from Petra, which was the metropolis of Idumea; but whether the same with this is not clear:

and their host with them, about fifteen thousand men; to which number Gideon and his three hundred men were very unequal; and yet, faint and weary as they were, closely pursued them, attacked and conquered them. Josephus ^{f171} very wrongly makes this number to be about 18,000:

all that were left of the hosts of the children of the east; the Arabians, who with the Amalekites joined the Midianites in this expedition; and perhaps the remainder of the army chiefly consisted of Arabians, the others having mostly suffered in the valley of Jezreel, and at the fords of Jordan:

for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword; besides infirm men, women, and children, which may reasonably be supposed; so that this host consisted of 135,000 fighting men.

Ver. 11. *And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwell in tents,* etc.] That is of the Arabians and Kedarenes, who dwelt in tents for the sake of feeding their flocks, as the Targum and Jarchi; he did not pursue them in the direct road, but went a roundabout way, where these people dwelt, that he might surprise the host of the kings of Midian at an unawares: and he came upon them,

on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; the first was in the tribe of Manasseh, and the latter in the tribe of Gad, and both it seems were on the confines of those tribes; (see ⁴⁸²⁵Numbers 32:35,42) the Targum calls the latter Ramatha; both words have the signification of height in them, this city very probably being built on an eminence. According to Bunting ^{f172} Penuel was two miles from Succoth, Nobah two miles from Penuel, and Jogbehah four miles from Nobah and Karkor four miles from Jogbehah, whither he pursued the kings, and took them, after he had discomfited the army:

and smote the host, for the host was secure: having got over Jordan, and at night very probably, they thought themselves safe from Gideon's army, who they could have no thought that they would come up with them so soon, on foot, weary, and fatigued.

Ver. 12. *And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled,* etc.] Their host being smitten and thrown into confusion by the sudden approach of Gideon's army; and who probably attacked them in somewhat like manner as before, blowing their trumpets, and calling out the sword of the Lord and of Gideon; which were such terrifying sounds to them, that they fled at once:

he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host; or terrified them, so that they fled some one way and some another, and the kings being left alone were easily taken.

Ver. 13. *And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle,* etc.] To Penuel and Succoth, to chastise them for their ill treatment of him and his men:

before the sun was up; by which it appears that it was in the night that he fell upon the host at Karkor, which must be the night following; it could not be the same night in which he had defeated them in the valley of Jezreel; though Vatablus thinks this battle was begun and finished in one night; but there were, according to this history, so many things done after the first defeat, as sending messengers to Mount Ephraim and the Ephraimites, upon the taking the fords of Jordan, and bringing the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, expostulating with him, and his answer to them, and his stay at Succoth and Penuel; which make it more probable that the day following was spent in the pursuit, and that it was the night after that that the whole affair was finished; and before sunrise Gideon returned to Penuel and Succoth again; so Ben Gersom and Abarbinel; but according to the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, this phrase is to be rendered, "before the sunset", while it yet appeared, and was above the horizon; and so it must be in the daytime that he pursued the two kings and took them, and returned before sunset. Abendana observes the word for "sun" may be the name of a place, and so the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions call it the ascent of Ares or Heres; as if it was the name of the place from whence Gideon returned, so called in like manner as the ascent of Akrabbim, and the like.

Ver. 14. *And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him*, etc.] Just before he came to the city, he spied a young man which belonged to it, and laid hold on him, and inquired of him about the chief magistrates of the city, who they were, what their names, and their places of abode:

and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even seventy seven men; by which it appears that this was no inconsiderable city to have so many princes and elders in it; these the young man described to Gideon, what sort of men they were, what their names, and where they dwelt: or “he wrote unto him”^{f173}; wrote down their names, and what part of the city they dwelt in; or Gideon took down in writing for himself their names and places of abode from the young man, that he might not forget: and in this Gideon showed great wisdom, and strict justice; being desirous to punish only the delinquents, and not the innocent with the wicked, the people with their rulers; for though he asked bread of the men of Succoth, the answer was returned in the ill natured manner it was by the princes.

Ver. 15. *And he came unto the men of Succoth*, etc.] Entered the city, and bespoke the inhabitants of it in the following manner:

and said, behold, Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me; as not in his hands, and never would be, he being with his three hundred men an unequal match to them with 15,000; but he had taken them, and brought them with him, and perhaps spared them for this very reason, to let them see they were in his hands, and now calls upon them to behold them with their own eyes, concerning whom they had flouted and jeered him:

saying, are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thy hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary? he delivers their own express words, which he had carefully observed and laid up in his memory, for their greater conviction and confusion; only adds the character of his men, that they were “weary”, to expose their vile ingratitude the more, that they should refuse them a few loaves of bread, who were faint and weary in the service of them.

Ver. 16. *And he took the elders of the city*, etc.] All of them, especially those of them who had been most guilty, and had them to a proper place, where they might be made public examples of:

and thorns of the wilderness, and briers; which were near at hand, and soon cut up, for which he gave orders to proper persons:

and with them he taught the men of Succoth; either the inhabitants of the place, as distinct from the elders, whose punishment he taught them to be cautious not to follow such examples, or to behave ill to their superiors; or the princes and elders of the city are meant by the men of it, whom Gideon taught or chastised with thorns and briers; and so it is usual with us for a parent or master to say to his child or servant that has offended, I will “teach” you to do so or so, or to do otherwise, when he threatens to chastise: or “with them he made them to know”^{f174}; that is, their sin and the heinousness of it, by the punishment he inflicted on them. Abarbinel thinks the word “know” has the signification of mercy in it, as in (⁽¹⁰²⁵⁾Exodus 2:25) in that he did not punish in general the men of that city, only the elders of it. The Targum is,

“he broke upon them, or by them, the men of Succoth;”

so Jarchi and others; that is, he broke the briers and thorns upon them, scourging them with them; or rather broke and tore their flesh by them: whether they died or no is not certain.

Ver. 17. *And he beat down the tower of Penuel*, etc.] As he threatened he would, (⁽¹⁰⁸⁹⁾Judges 8:9) whether this was before or after he had chastised the elders of Succoth, is not clear; one would think by the course he steered going from Succoth to Penuel, as he went, he should come to Penuel first at his return; however, he demolished their tower in which they trusted:

and slew the men of the city; perhaps they might, as Kimchi conjectures, resist when he went about to beat down their tower; on which a fray might ensue, in which they were slain; or they might upon his approach, sensible of the offence they had given him, fly to their tower for safety, and were killed in it when that was beaten down about them. In what manner this was done is not said; no doubt they had instruments in those days for demolishing such edifices.

Ver. 18. *Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna*, etc.] Not at Penuel or Succoth, but when he had brought them into the land of Canaan, and perhaps to his own city Ophrah:

what manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? Mount Tabor, to which these men had betaken and hid themselves, in some caves and dens there: (see ^(~~QRE~~)Judges 6:2) and these kings some little time before the battle had taken them, and slew them, of which it seems Gideon had notice; and some of his brethren being not to be found, he suspected they were the persons, and therefore asked this question:

and they answered, as thou art, so were they; very much like him in countenance and stature, stout, able bodied men, of a graceful and majestic appearance. Abarbinel takes it to be a curse on Gideon, be thou, or thou shalt be, as they are; as they died by the hand of the Midianites, so shalt thou; but the former sense seems best, and agrees with what follows:

each one resembled the children of a king; being brought up in a delicate manner, as these persons seemed to have been: according to Jarchi and Kimchi, the sense is, they were like him, and had all one and the same form and lovely aspect, resembling kings' children; but according to Ben Gersom they were in general very much like Gideon, and one of them was like his children, who were then present, particularly his eldest son, as appears from (^(~~QRE~~)Judges 8:20). It is said in the Misnah ^{f175} all the Israelites are the children of kings.

Ver. 19. *And he said, they were my brethren, even the sons of my mother,* etc.] His brethren by his mother's side, but not by his father's side; or the phrase

the sons of my mother is added, to show that he did not mean brethren in a large sense, as all the Israelites were, but in a strict sense, being so nearly related as his mother's children:

as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you; for not being Canaanites, he was not obliged by the law of God to put them to death, and by the law of nations, as they had surrendered themselves, and were made prisoners of war, they ought to have been saved; but as they appeared to be murderers, and had slain the Israelites in cold blood, they deserved to die; and the persons they had slain being Gideon's brethren, he was the avenger of blood, and it became him to put them to death.

Ver. 20. *And he said unto Jether, his firstborn, up, and slay them,* etc.] Being the near kinsman of his father's brethren, whom these kings had slain, was a proper person to avenge their blood on them; and the rather Gideon might order him to do it, for the greater mortification of the kings,

to die by the hand of a youth; and for the honour of his son, to be the slayer of two kings, and to inure him to draw his sword against the enemies of Israel, and embolden him to do such exploits:

but the youth drew not his sword, for he feared, because he was yet a youth; his not drawing his sword was not out of disobedience to his father, but through fear of the kings; not of their doing him any harm, being bound; but there was perhaps a ferocity, as well as majesty in their countenances, which made the young man timorous and fearful.

Ver. 21. *Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, rise thou and fall upon us*, etc.] Since they must die, they chose rather to die by the hand of so great a man and valiant a commander as Gideon, which was more honourable than to die by the hand of a youth:

for as the man is, so is his strength; signifying, that as he was a stout able man, he had strength sufficient to dispatch them at once, which his son had not, and therefore they must have died a lingering and painful death: wherefore as they consulted their honour, so their ease, in desiring to die by the hand of Gideon:

and Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna; nor was it unusual in those early times for great personages, as judges and generals, to be executioners of others, as were Samuel and Benaiah, (^{<0153>}1 Samuel 15:33 ^{<1025>}1 Kings 2:25,34)

and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks; the Targum calls them chains, as in (^{<0035>}Judges 8:26) no doubt of gold; so the horses of King Latinus ^{f176} had golden poytrels or collars hanging down their breasts. They were, according to Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Gersom, in the form of the moon; (see ^{<2083>}Isaiah 3:18) some have thought that these were worn in honour of Astarte, or the moon, the goddess of the Phoenicians, from whom these people had borrowed that idolatry.

Ver. 22. *Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon*, etc.] Some time after his return, the chief men of Israel having met in a body, and consulted matters among themselves, sent a deputation to Gideon with an offer of the government of them:

rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also; by which they meant, that he would take the kingly government of them, and which they proposed to settle in his posterity for ages to come; for, as a judge in

Israel, he had a sort of rule and government of them under God already, but amounted not to regal power and authority; and this was what the people of Israel were fond of, that they might be like their neighbours; and this they tempted Gideon with, who had done such very wonderful and extraordinary things for them, which they allege as a reason:

for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian; from the bondage they were in to them, and therefore fit to be a king over them.

Ver. 23. *And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you*, etc.] Not that he declined the government of them as a judge, to which he was raised of God, but as a king, for which he had no authority and call from God; the choice of a king belonging to him, and not to the people:

neither shall my son rule over you; which Abarbinel thinks he spake as a prophet, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; for after his death neither Jether his eldest son, nor any of the rest of his legitimate sons, ruled over them; for they were all slain by Abimelech, the son of his concubine, who was made king:

the Lord shall rule over you; as he did; their government was a theocracy, which they would have changed, but Gideon would not agree to it.

Ver. 24. *And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you*, etc.] Which he thought they would scarcely deny, and it was now a fair opportunity to make it, since they had offered him a crown, or to be king over them: and the favour he asked was,

that you would give me every man the earrings of his prey; or, “an earring of his prey”; for it is in the singular number; every man one earring, as Abarbinel interprets it; for though they might have more, yet only one earring of every man is desired:

for they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites; so the Midianites and Ishmaelites are spoken of as the same, they being mixed and dwelling together, or very near each other, (^{<0375>}Genesis 37:25,28,36) and Kimchi accounts for it thus, why the Midianites are called Ishmaelites; because they were the sons of Keturah, and Keturah was Hagar the mother of Ishmael. The Targum calls them Arabians, and who it seems used to wear earrings, as men in the eastern countries did; (see ^{<0394>}Genesis 35:4 ^{<0392>}Exodus 32:2,3). So Pliny says ^{f177} in the east it was reckoned ornamental for men to wear gold in their ears.

Ver. 25. *And they answered, we will willingly give them,* etc.] Or, “in giving we will give”^{f178}; give them with all their hearts, most freely and cheerfully:

and they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey; every man one, which would amount to no more than three hundred; though perhaps those who joined in the pursuit might take many more, or otherwise the weight of them would not amount to what in the next verse they are said to weigh.

Ver. 26. *And the weight of the golden earrings he requested was one thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold,* etc.] Which, as Schuchzer^{f179} computes, was eight hundred and ten ounces, five drachms, one scruple, and ten grains, of the weight of physicians; but as reckoned by Moatanus^{f180} amounted to eight hundred and fifty ounces, and were of the value of 6800 crowns of gold; and, according to Waserus^{f181}, it amounted to 3400 Hungarian pieces of gold, and of their money at Zurich upwards of 15,413 pounds, and of our money 2,380 pounds:

besides ornaments; such as were upon the necks of the camels, (~~xxx~~Judges 8:21) for the same word is used here as there:

and collars; the Targum renders it a crown, and Ben Melech says in the Arabic language the word signifies clear crystal; but Kimchi and Ben Gersom take them to be golden vessels, in which they put “stacte”, or some odoriferous liquor, and so were properly smelling bottles:

and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian; which it seems was the colour that kings wore, as they now do; so Strabo^{f182} says of the kings of Arabia, that they are clothed in purple:

and besides the chains that were about their camels’ necks; which seem to be different from the other ornaments about them, since another word is here used; now all these seem to have been what fell to his share, as the general of the army, and not what were given him by the people.

Ver. 27. *And Gideon made an ephod thereof,* etc.] That is, of some of this gold; for such a quantity could never have been expanded on an ephod only, even taking it not for a linen ephod, but such an one as the high priest wore, made of gold, of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with curious work, together with a curious girdle of the same work; unless we suppose such a breastplate with it, of twelve precious stones, as Aaron

had; and with little images of teraphim or cherubim in it, as Dr. Spencer thinks^{f183}. The Jewish commentators generally understand this ephod to be made as a memorial of the great salvation God had wrought by his hands for Israel, and of the wonderful things done by him; so Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Gersom; but such a garment, whether worn by him, or hung up in some certain place, seems not so proper and pertinent to perpetuate the memory of his victories, as a monument or pillar would have been; it looks therefore more likely to be done with a religious view, which afterwards was perverted to superstitious uses; and whereas Gideon had built an altar already by the command of God, and had sacrificed upon it, he might think himself authorized as a priest, and therefore provided this ephod for himself; or however for a priest he might think of taking into his family, and so use it as an oracle to consult upon special occasions, without going to Shiloh, the Ephraimites having displeased him in their rough expostulations with him; and so R. Isaiah interprets it of a kind of divination or oracle which gave answers:

and put it in his city, even in Ophrah; hung it up in some proper place as a monument of his victories, as is generally thought; or in a structure built on purpose for it, to which he might resort as to an oracle:

and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: made an idol of it and worshipped it, and so committed spiritual fornication, which is idolatry. Some render it, “after him”^{f184}; not after the ephod, but after Gideon; that is, after his death, so Jarchi; no ill use was made of it in Gideon’s time, though he cannot be altogether excused from sin and weakness in making it; but after his death it was soon made an ill use of:

which thing proved a snare to Gideon and to his house; it was a snare to him if he consulted it as an oracle, which could not be without sin, since the only Urim and Thummim to be consulted were in the breastplate of the high priest at the tabernacle; and it was what led his family into idolatry, and was the ruin of it, as well as it reflected great discredit and disgrace upon so good and brave a man: some read the words^{f185}: “to Gideon, that is, to his house”; or family; he being so good a man himself, it is not thought that he could be ensnared into idolatry itself; though it is apparent that men as wise and as good have fallen into it, as particularly Solomon.

Ver. 28. *Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel,* etc.] By the hand of Gideon humbled and brought under, their power over Israel was broken, and they delivered out of their hands:

so that they lifted up their heads no more; in a proud and haughty manner to insult them, and in an hostile way to invade and oppress them; such a blow was given them that they could not recover themselves, nor do we read of any effort of theirs ever after, or of their giving or attempting to give any disturbance to Israel, or any other nation:

and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon; that is, the land of Canaan; it was free from wars with Midian, or any other people, and enjoyed undisturbed peace and tranquillity. According to Bishop Usher ^{f186}, this was the fortieth year from the rest restored by Deborah and Barak; and, according to Abarbinel and others, these forty years are to be reckoned from the beginning of the servitude; that is, the seven years' oppression under the Midianites are included in them; but I cannot see that in this instance, and in others before met with, years of bondage can be counted with years of peace and prosperity, and go under that general name. The true sense seems to be, that after the Israelites had been in subjection to the Midianites for seven years, and Gideon had delivered them, that from thenceforward they had rest and quietness forty years, which in all probability was the time Gideon lived after his victories.

Ver. 29. *And Jerubbaal the son of Joash*, etc.] That is, Gideon, Jerubbaal being another name of his; (see ^{<0182>}Judges 6:32 7:1) went and dwelt in his own house; which was at Ophrah, as appears from (^{<0182>}Judges 9:5) the war being ended, he disbanded his army, and retired to his own house; not that he lived altogether a private life there, but as a judge in Israel.

Ver. 30. *And Gideon had seventy sons of his body begotten*, etc.] Not after his victories, for it is plain he had children before; mention is made of Jether, his firstborn, as a youth able to draw a sword, and slay with it, (^{<0182>}Judges 8:20) but this was the number of all his sons, both before and after, and a large number it was; and the phrase "of his body begotten", or "that went out of his thigh" is used to show that they were his own sons, begotten in wedlock, and not sons that he had taken into his family by adoption, or that he was father-in-law to, having married a woman or women that had sons by a former husband; but these were all his own:

for he had many wives; which, though not agreeable to the original law of marriage, was customary in those times, and even with good men, and was connived at; and this is a reason accounting for his having so many sons.

Ver. 31. *And his concubine that was in Shechem*, etc.] Which was not an harlot, but a secondary or half wife; such were generally taken from handmaids, and of the meaner sort, and were not in such esteem as proper wives, had not the management of household affairs, only a share in the bed, and their children did not inherit. This concubine of Gideon's seems not to have been taken into his house at all, but lived at Shechem, perhaps in her father's house, and here Gideon met with her when he went to Shechem as a judge to try causes; her name, according to Josephus^{f187}, was Druma:

she also bare him a son; as his other wives did; perhaps all the children he had were sons, and this was one over and above the seventy, and not to be reckoned into that number:

whose name he called Abimelech: which signifies, "my father a king"; which he gave him either in memory of the offer made him to be king of Israel, or through foresight of what this son of his would be; or he might be moved to it by the mother from pride and vanity, and which name might afterwards inspire the young man to be made a king, as he was; and the account given of his name is because of the narrative of him in the following chapter.

Ver. 32. *And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age*, etc.] Having lived it seems forty years after his war with Midian, blessed with a large family, much wealth and riches, great credit and esteem among his people, and in favour with God and men:

and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites; a city which belonged to the family of the Abiezrites, who were of the tribe of Manasseh, in which Gideon lived, and his father before him; and where there was a family vault, in which he was interred. In the days of this judge it is supposed^{f188} was the famous expedition of the Argonauts to Colchis, to fetch from thence the golden fleece.

Ver. 33. *And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again*, etc.] from God, and the pure worship of him, to idolatry:

and went a whoring after Baalim; the gods of the Phoenicians and Canaanites, the several Baals of other nations, the lords many which they served; these they committed spiritual whoredom with; that is, idolatry: particularly

and made Baalberith their god; which was the idol of the Shechemites, as appears from a temple being built at Shechem for it, (~~000~~Judges 9:4) and had its name either from Berytus, a city of Phoenicia, of which Mela^{f189} and Pliny^{f190} make mention, and where this Baal might be first worshipped; it was fifty miles from Sidon, and was in later times a seat of learning^{f191}; of this city was Sanchoniatho, a Phoenician historian, who is said to receive many things he writes about the Jews from Jerombalus, supposed to be Jerubbaal, or Gideon; (see Gill on “~~000~~Judges 6:32”) and who tells^{f192} us, that Cronus or Ham gave this city to Neptune and the Cabiri, and who also relates^{f193} that Beruth is the name of a Phoenician deity. Though it may be rather this idol had its name from its supposed concern in covenants, the word “Berith” signifying a covenant; and so the Targum and Syriac version call him the lord of covenant; and the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions are,

“and they made a covenant with Baal, that he should be their god;”

as if he had his name from hence; though rather from his presiding over covenants, as Janus is said^{f194} to do, and from his avenging the breach of them, and rewarding those that kept them; the same with Jupiter Fidius Ultor, and Sponsor^{f195} with the Romans, and Horcius^{f196} with the Greeks.

Ver. 34. *And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God,* etc.] Or, as the Targum, the worship of the Lord their God; they forgot him, and forsook him, which showed base ingratitude:

who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies on every side; not only out of the hands of Midian, but all other nations round about them, as Edom, Moab, Ammon, etc. not one attempting to oppress them.

Ver. 35. *Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon,* etc.] But, on the contrary, great unkindness and cruelty, slaying his seventy sons, as related in the following chapter:

according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel; in exposing his life to danger for their sake, in delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, in administering justice to them, in protecting them in their civil and religious liberties, and leaving them in the quiet and peaceable possession of them.