

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 8

The Pursuit of Midian

1-3 Ephraim's complaint against Gideon

The men of Ephraim were not called at the beginning of this struggle. Gideon called Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali in 6:35

- Since their tribe was more important than those called, the glory would be theirs
 - but that was exactly what God didn't want: see 7:26
- Their Pride was strong so Gideon soothed them by giving them the recognition they craved.
- Since they were only interested in their own glory, it is no surprise that God only wanted a very small number who would rely on His Power and give Him the glory!

4-9 The sins of Succoth and Penuel

- Gideon asked the People of Succoth and Penuel to support the brave 300 who had conquered Midian. The soldiers were now tired and hungry –
 - he did not ask them TO FIGHT – but merely to feed the hungry
- Both cities made the same excuse. The battle isn't over – we will wait and see who the victors are and side with them!
 - so they were merely self-serving – not God-oriented.
- The shock for Gideon is that this resistance is from “friends”.

Lesson When we give our lives to serve God and His Kingdom, the resistance we experience is also from family and friends – or from people who claim to be working for God themselves.

10-12 Gideon pursued Zebah and Zalmunna in another surprise attack. 120,000 of their men had fallen, so their army was very weak. The two kings fled with Gideon in hot pursuit. The kings were captured and the army routed.

13-17 Gideon Repays Succoth and Penuel

vs 16 It seems that Gideon had the leaders of these cities publicly whipped (with the thorns of the wilderness). We are not told why the punishment was so severe – perhaps they were in league with the Midianites – at least in commerce?

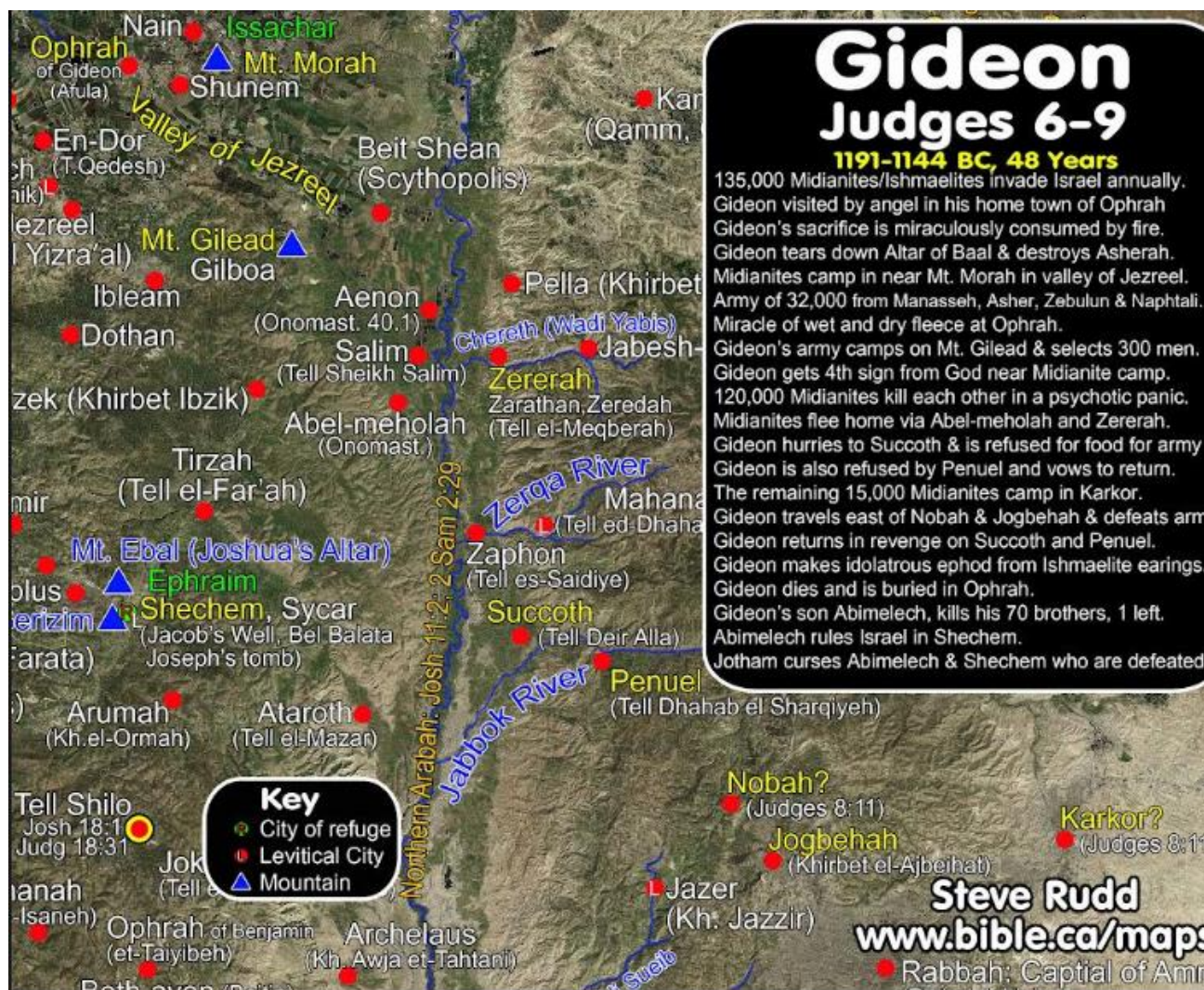
18-21 Gideon Repays the two Midianites kings

It seems that these kings had killed Gideon's brothers at Mount Tabor. So Gideon does the work of the Avenger of Blood here.

Lesson We live under a different Covenant, And under a different Redeemer.

Rom 12:19-21 **dearly beloved do not avenge yourselves...
for it is written Vengeance is mine;
I will repay, saith the Lord.
Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him...**

Mt 18:21-22 **Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother...
Jesus said “I tell you not 7 times but 77 times
(or 7 x 70 = 490 which is not an upper limit, forgiveness must be continuous)**



22-23 Israel under Gideon

- The people ask Gideon to be **King** over them, but he refused.
 - we can see that the desire for Kingship came long before the days of Samuel when they received their first King (Saul)
 - they are tired of serving the **INVISIBLE** King and Lord of Israel
 - they want a **WARRIOR KING** – and this idea persisted to the time of **Christ**
- Gideon's refusal shows that – like Joshua before him – he was aware that The Warrior King was God Himself – the Lord of Battles cf Joshua ch 5
- (NB)** • Even though Gideon's words were humble here, he actually **ACTS** like a king for the rest of chapter 8 – so the flattery 'got to him'!
 - Praise and Blame are the two great imposters in life.

24-26 Gideon requested the man to give him the **EARRINGS** from the plunder

- it seemed a small request but it turned out to be 22 kilograms of pure **gold**
- he was now suddenly very rich.

vs 27 Gideon used his new-found wealth to make **an EPHOD**

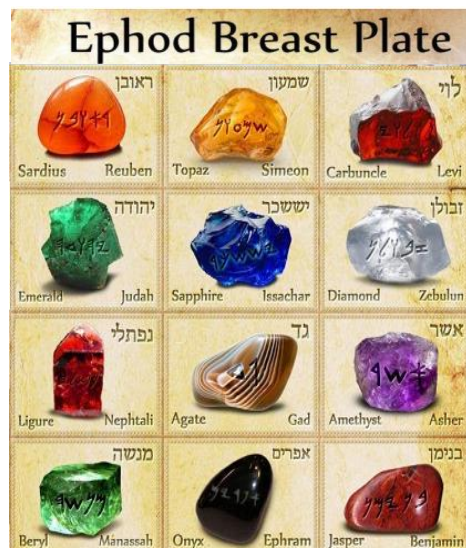
- this was a very serious error which led to his own downfall and the downfall of his people.

The Ephod: was a garment worn by the High Priest at official ceremonies in **Tabernacle**

- the High Priest represented the **whole People** – so was Gideon assuming this role?
- The Ephod symbolised the Unity of God's People – its 12 precious stones had the names of the Twelve Tribes carved on them.
- It symbolised the High Priest's authority over the People under God's Covenant.



High Priest Ephod



Gideon's Ephod in Judges 8:27

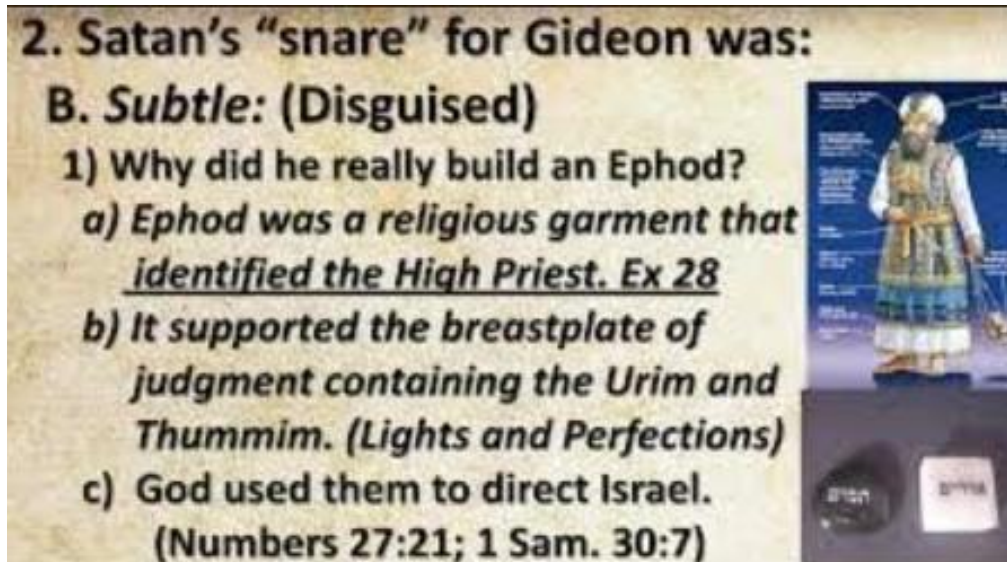
was made **without** consultation or authorization from High Priest.

- it was made from the plunder of war, so it was tainted gold.
- he set it up in his home city of **OPHRAH** to be venerated publicly.



GIDEON'S EPHOD

- (NB) This was the first break with the **AARONIC** Priesthood.
- This **idol** **became a snare to Gideon and to his house**
And all Israel played the harlot with it there.



Warning: Obviously Gideon's success in war has "gone to his head"
Also the desire to make him king seems to stimulate him **to act as he pleases.**

Lesson: Here we see the dangers of letting the human will rule our lives.

- We see the dangers of pride and Ego to ruin what was good...
Gideon had a genuine experience of God,
but he didn't give God the glory for **Victory in War** – he took that for himself.

Lesson: Today society and its leaders have abandoned **God's Chosen Priesthood**
to set up a ONE-WORLD system without God or Christ.

- they have abandoned the 10 Commandments for very low standards of living
- they refuse to give glory to God, or to recognise His authority
- money, power, status, possessions and sport have all become **idols** – which merely sets people up for disappointment and disillusionment.
- when Christians go outside the authority of the Church they are then vulnerable to Satanic attack from evil powers: Eph 6:12

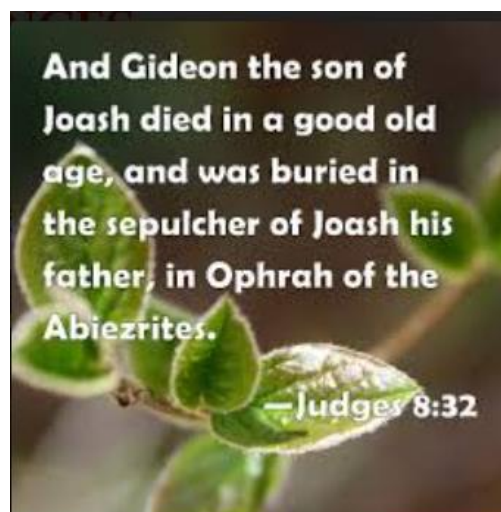
Solution: Jesus is our Great High Priest: Heb 4:14-15

- He has **all authority in heaven and on earth**: Mt 28:18-20, 1 Pet 3:18-22
- We must **clothe** ourselves with Christ: Gal 3:27
 - to be clothed with **His Righteousness**
- We must **put on Christ**: Gal 5:22-23, Eph 6:10-18

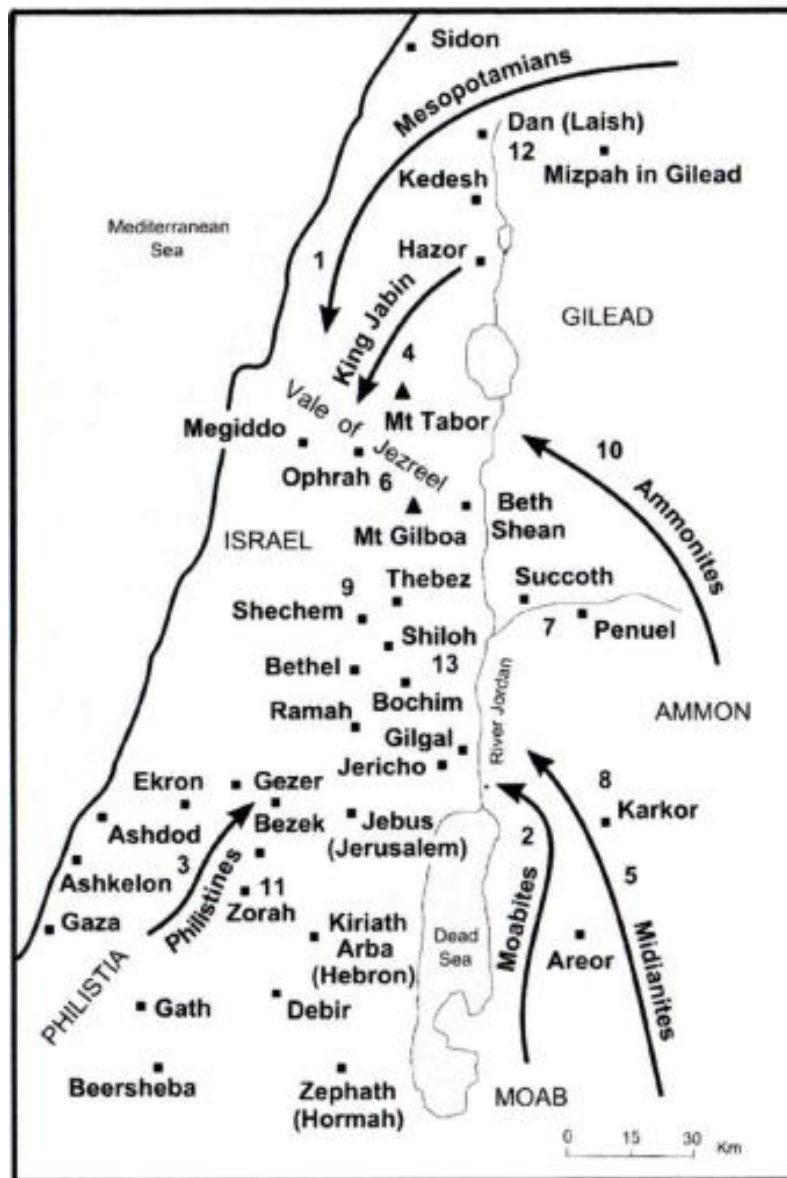
The Last Days of Gideon



- vs 28** Midian was subdued; Israel had 40 years of peace.
- vs 29** Gideon (Jerubbaal) had 70 sons from his many wives.
- vs 31** He had a concubine in Shechem who bore him Abimelech – who will be a major disaster for Israel –
- vs 32** Gideon died and was buried in Ophrah – his own city.
- vs 33** No sooner had Gideon died than Apostasy and Immorality reared their ugly heads again!
- of course this began during Gideon's life-time!
- a) The National shrine was at SHILOH in the territory of Ephraim
 - Gideon seems to have set up a rival shrine –
 - b) While refusing the title of king, Gideon ACTED like one...
 - he chose a kingly harem – which showed off his wealth
 - he had his own shrine – maybe to boast that he had met God?
 - his son by his concubine in Shechem was called Abimelech
 - Abimelech means “my father is a King”!!
 - In chap 9 he will murder Gideon's 70 sons and assume KINGSHIP which will result in civil war!
 - c) They worshipped Ba'al-Berith: this means “Ba'al of the Covenant”
So they have confused the God of Israel with a worthless idol. cf Psalm 115



Israel under the Judges



WHO ARE THE MIDIANITES

James F. Babcock

Midian, Midianite. Person, place or people, the latter living on the eastern edge of Gilead, Moab and Edom south into north-west Arabia. They had few, if any, permanent settlements.

Midian and his descendants figure prominently only in the early history of Israel, in connection with Abraham (Gn 25:1-6), Joseph (37:25-36), Moses (Ex 2:15-3:1), Balaam (Nm 22:1-6; 25; 31:1-20) and Gideon (Jgs 6:1-8:28)

Midian was Isaac's younger half-brother, the fourth of six sons born to Keturah, whom Abraham married as an old man (Gn 25:1,2; cf. 23:1,2; 24:67; 1 Chr 1:32). By calling Midian and his full brothers "the sons of Keturah" (Gn 25:4; 1 Chr 1:32, 33), the Bible carefully distinguishes them from Isaac, the son of Sarah, who was the one through whom God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled (Gn 12:1-3; 17:15-21). In fact, Abraham and the Israelites regarded these other sons as having no more inheritance rights than a concubine's sons (25:5,6; 1 Chr 1:31).

Expelled from Abraham's family, for Isaac's sake, they became (semi) nomadic peoples of the deserts east and south of Palestine (Gn 25:5,6).

The Land of Midian. Of uncertain location, Midian is placed far south of Edom on the eastern side of what is today called the Gulf of Aqaba. The Alexandrian geographer Ptolemy (2nd century AD) mentions a city Modiana on the coast and a Madiana 26 miles inland (modern el-Bed') in this region, an identification supported by the Jewish historian Josephus (1st century AD) and the Christian church historian Eusebius (early 4th century).

In early OT times Midian seems to have been the land on the edge of the deserts bordering Gilead, Moab and Edom south even into eastern Sinai.

In Joseph's day, some Midianite clans must have lived in the northern Transjordanian desert adjacent to Gilead or Bashan, as they were part of an Ishmaelite (cf. Jgs 8:24) caravan travelling the trade route from Damascus across Gilead past Dothan to Egypt (Gn 37:17, 25-28, 36).

When Moses fled from pharaoh, he settled in Midian and eventually married Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest (Ex 2:15-22). Moses asked his Midianite relative Hobab to act as a guide from Horeb (to Kadesh-barnea, Dt 1:19); Hobab was familiar with the wilderness of Paran (Nm 10:11, 12, 29-31), even though his own land and relatives were elsewhere (10:30).

In the Balaam episode and its bloody aftermath (Nm 22:31), a substantial group of Midianites appears to have been living on the eastern frontier of Moab. The Moabite king Balak, who was subject to the Amorite king named Sihon (21:26-30; Jer 48:45), discussed the Israelite threat with the elders of Midian (Nm 22:2-4) and a joint delegation was sent to Balaam (vv 5-7). At Acacia in the plains of Moab (22:1; 25:1), an Israelite met and married a Midianite princess (25:6-18; 31:8). The Midianite kings were considered puppet kings of King Sihon (Jos 13:21 NASB). All the indications are that Midianite clans lived nearby, on the borders of Moab. Since Moab is north of Edom, the reference to the Edomite victory over Midian (Gn 36:35) might indicate a northern encroachment by the Midianites on Edomite territory.

The Midianite invasion which Gideon repulsed has all the appearances of an invasion from the east. It would thus appear that while "the land of Midian" is a term that may refer to a territory south of Edom, Midianites were living over a much wider area – on marginal land – east of Moab and Edom and south of Edom into east Sinai and northwest Arabia.

Midianite Society. The Midianites lived more as scattered clans and as a nominally subject people than as an independent country. For instance, one leader, Zur, is called "head of a people of a father's household" (Nm 25:15 NASB) "chief" (Jos 13:21 NASB), and "king", but there were at least five such kings in Moses' time (Nm 31:8), and all five were "princes [vassal-kings] of Sihon" (Jos 13:21 NASB).

Though they are usually presumed to have been mostly nomadic shepherds (as Moses was on Jethro's behalf, Ex 2:16; 3:1) Midianites are also pictured as opportunistic traders (Gn 37:25-36), as camel-riding marauders with substantial livestock (Jgs 6:3-5; 8:21), as middle-men in the gold and frankincense trade north from Sheba in southern Arabia (Is 60:6), and sometimes, by some scholars, as miners, coppersmiths, or tinkers.

The religion and worship of individual Midianites varied considerably. Jethro (Reuel), Moses' father-in-law, was a "priest of Midian" (Ex 2:16; 3:1), but he later identified with the worship of the Lord the God of Israel (Ex 18:1-5; note his confession and priestly ministry, 18:9-12).

Although Jethro returned home to his own people (v 27), his son Hobab appears to have stayed for more than a year with the Israelites and became their guide (Nm 10:11; 29-32). On the other hand, the Midianites were so involved in the worship of Ba'al-peor that they (not the Moabites) were the ones who, at Balaam's counsel, enticed the Israelites into immorality and idolatry (25:1-18; 31:1-20, esp. v16; cf. 2 Pt 2:13-16; Rv 2:14). In the war that ensued, the Midianites were decimated (Nm 31:7-12). During the period of the judges the Midianites invaded Israel periodically (Jgs 6-8), but were defeated by Gideon and never again threatened Israel (8:11, 12, 28).

The Later History of Midian. In David's day (c. 1000 BC) an Edomite prince fled to Midian to escape Joab's forces (1 Kgs 11:15-18) and later became the Edomite King Hadad, one of Solomon's main foes (v 14).

Assyrian records from about 732 BC and about 715 BC mention a subject tribe by the name of Haiappu. This may be the same name as Ephah, Midian's eldest son, after whom a tribe would have been named (Gn 25:4). Isaiah confirms that there was a Midianite tribe named Ephah at this time. It would someday come bringing rich offerings from Arabia to Zion to worship the Lord (Is 60:6,7).

By Hellenistic times (c. 300 BC), the Nabataeans controlled Moab, Edom and Midian. Those Midianites who had survived to that point were probably pushed south into the area usually considered their homeland – the strip of land parallel to the Gulf of Aqaba. Eventually they lost their national identity, leaving only an occasional city name like Modiana (or Madiana) as a reminder that they had once been a great people.

Midian is mentioned one time in the NT (Acts 7:29), where it is spelled Madian in the KJV.