



A Study of the Book of Judges

Lesson 8: Gideon...Whips of Nettles and Thorns Judges 8:4-8:35

Now the last time we met, we looked together at the marvelous victory the Lord gave Gideon and his chosen three hundred against the marauding Midianites. We saw together how Gideon came at last to take the Lord at His word...to believe the promises of his great, covenantal God, YHWH to deliver him and his people from the hands of the Midianites.

And we saw that as Gideon came to believe the Lord's promises that he openly worshipped Him and that he did so not in the obscurity of some secret cave or hiding place but in plain sight in the camp...in the very presence of his enemies.

Then we saw Gideon go back to his camp and roust his 300 men and we saw he and his men blow their trumpets and break the clay jars concealing their torches. We saw them yell at the Midianites with one united voice.

We noted together that their strategy was unusual. As far as I know, their attack was about the most unusual attack in the history of warfare. Now I am sure that Gideon and his men had weapons and that they probably even used their

weapons but the text chooses not to mention that and the reason it chose not to mention it is not doubt because it wants to emphasize the point that their victory was a victory given them by God and not obtained through their own strength or cunning.¹

Anyway, when Gideon and his men blew their trumpets and flashed their torches and yelled out, **“The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon”** the Midianites were thrown into confusion and began to slaughter each other even as they were frantically trying to retreat to the safety of their homeland on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

But Gideon had no intention of letting them get away. He intended in the words of Stonewall Jackson to, **“Kill them...kill them all.”**

Apparently, after the rout started Gideon called up the men he had sent home earlier and they must have quickly responded to his call. Apparently, they tracked and killed the Midianites all the way to the Jordan and especially at the fords or crossing of the Jordan. One tribe in particular, the tribe of Ephraim, the brother tribe of Manasseh...Gideon’s own tribe, was especially successful in killing the Midianites.

After their great victory, the Ephraimites complained to Gideon about his not having called them to battle earlier.

But you will remember, I hope, the gentleness of Gideon’s response to them. You will remember, I hope, how he diplomatically downplayed his own success and

played up their victory and you will remember, I hope, how his conciliatory manner softened their anger.

I want you to remember that because this morning we are going to see a different side of Gideon. We are going to see a Gideon who is no longer concerned about being conciliatory. We are going to see a Gideon that is rather harsh and unforgiving. Now in pointing that out, I have to say that I am not altogether sure that Gideon's harshness was wrong or unwarranted.

In fact, most of the older commentaries say that his harshness was appropriate and that his austere punishment of his fellow Israelites was completely justified. Most of the newer commentaries, however, go the other way. They argue that he was much too harsh and that his actions were steeped in sinful vindictiveness. I am not sure which group is right. I have struggled to decide for myself whether the older commentators were too naïve regarding the justice he meted out or whether the newer commentators are just feminized by our modern culture and an uncrucified lust to be politically correct.

You will have to decide some of those kinds of things for yourself.

But in the end we are going to see Gideon make a terrible mistake. We are not even going to have to guess about whether what he did was wrong or not. The text is going to tell us what he did was wrong and it is going to do so in the plainest manner possible.

But I am getting ahead of myself...first things first.

First let's look to the text to see Gideon striving with all his strength to put an end to the Midianites once and for all.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:4**...Gideon and his three hundred men, exhausted yet keeping up the pursuit, came to the Jordan and crossed it.

Now the context tells us that fighting was going on all over the western side of the Jordan. It tells us that some, if not all, of the thirty-two thousand men that had originally been with Gideon had come back and were helping him to mop things up. It also tells us that additional tribes like the tribe of Ephraim.

But here's the main thing it tells us. It tells us that Gideon never stopped. He never quit and apparently he never rested. He was still pursuing either the main body of the Midianites or what he thought to be the main body of the Midianites. The text is very clear about that. Apparently Gideon intended to follow them until he had killed them all. In fact, what we are going to see as the story unfolds is that he is going to follow the Midianites all the way back to their homeland.

Now because he has not stopped and not rested from fighting he and his men are very near to exhaustion. His men were exhausted and hungry and yet pursuing with all their remaining strength. That is what led him to Succoth in verse 5.

Now I ought to say a word about Succoth even before we read the text. Succoth was a city located on the eastern side of the Jordan. In fact, it was situated just north of one of the tributaries of the Jordan, a river called the Jabbock.

Succoth was the place where Jacob first camped after his wrestling with the Angel of YHWH and his subsequent reconciliation with Esau. The place where he wrestled with the Angel was actually named Peniel. It will come up later. Both cities were in the part of Palestine given to the tribe of Gad. The name Succoth means **"booths"** and it was given to the town because Jacob built **"booths"** or shelters, perhaps even pens, for his cattle there.

Anyway, Gideon approached the town of Succoth, hungry and exhausted and yet still pursuing the Midianites.

Verse 5 tells us what he asked of the men of Succoth.

Verse 6 tells us their response to Gideon. Follow along as I read.

^{NIV} Judges 8:5...He said to the men of Succoth, "Give my troops some bread; they are worn out, and I am still pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." ⁶ But the officials of Succoth said, "Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your troops?"

Now there is no doubt that they should have helped Gideon. First of all they were required to help their Israelite brothers in any pursuit against their enemies. They had made that promise before they even entered the land and the promise had a binding aspect to it I think.

^{NIV} Numbers 32:16...Then they (the Gadites) came up to him and said, "We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children. ¹⁷ But we are ready to arm ourselves and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of the

land. ¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance. ¹⁹ We will not receive any inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan, because our inheritance has come to us on the east side of the Jordan." ²⁰ Then Moses said to them, "If you will do this-- if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle, ²¹ and if all of you will go armed over the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him-- ²² then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free from your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the LORD. ²³ But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out."

So, I think it can be argued that they had an obligation to help their brothers either in terms of supplying their needs or even in terms of helping them fight. Besides that, since they were on the eastern side of the Jordan they were one of the two tribes most exposed to the forays and sudden attacks of the Midianites. They should have been anxious to supply Gideon in any way they could to help finish off the Midianites...if for no other reason than for their own security.

But they were not. Apparently, they had some real doubts about Gideon's ability to actually defeat the Midianites. Perhaps they feared that Gideon might only provoke the Midianites further. Perhaps they feared that if the Midianites found out they had helped Gideon they might have to pay dearly. Perhaps they felt that the arrangement that they had with the Midianites, whatever that was, was better than the unknown.

Perhaps that is the reason they responded the way they did.

Now the question they asked Gideon seems quite strange to modern ears. I am talking about the question they ask when they ask, "**Do you already have the**

hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your troops?"

Now most scholars think they may have meant one of two different things by what they said. They may have meant something like, **"Have you already captured Zebah and Zalmunna and if you have show them to us with their hands tied in front of them? That is, show us their hands bound in front of them."** Or it may have meant something like, **"If you have already killed them, then show us the trophies you have collected. That is, show us their severed hands...their hands cut off from their bodies."**

But neither one of those seems very likely to me. They knew Gideon had not captured or killed Zebah and Zalmunna or he would not have been asking for their aid. In fact, it seems likely to me that what they were saying was more or less proverbial. I think what they were really saying was something like this, **"Aren't you counting your chickens before they hatch, Gideon? Why should we believe you are going to defeat them in the first place?"**

Now it seems to me that if that was what they were asking, it was a pretty strange question. It seems to me that since Gideon and his men had already killed 120,000 men of a 135,000 man army that there shouldn't have been much reason to doubt that he was going to finish off the last 15,000.

Still, 15,000 Midianites must have seemed like an impossible number to overcome for the 300 men they saw in front of them.

Now it seems to me that they were filled with the same kind of fear and doubt Gideon has displayed some seven times in his response to the Word of the Lord. It seems to me that there is a sense in which one would expect Gideon to show to them something of the patience YHWH had shown him. But that is not what happened. Look at verse 7 and how Gideon responds to them.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:7...Then Gideon replied, "Just for that, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will tear your flesh with desert thorns and briars."**²

Now it is hard to know exactly what Gideon meant by what he said. He may have meant that he was going to drag them through thorns and briars or it may have meant that he was going to make whip or scourges of thorns and briars and beat them as if with a whip.³ Some commentators think that he was going to drag them over the sledges that were used to thresh grain.⁴ They think that because the word for "tear" is the Hebrew word דָּישׁ (dîsh) which means "to thresh." What Gideon basically says in Hebrew is that he is going to thresh their flesh. It sounds pretty terrible whatever it means.

But there is a sense in which it is also quite ironic. At the start of the Gideon narrative he is timid and frightened and threshing grain in a winepress hidden away from the enemy. At the end of the Gideon section he is threatening to thresh the flesh of his own brothers out in the open because they fear to help him. Apparently Gideon desired God's patience and gentleness and was unwilling to give it himself.

Leaving Succoth, Gideon went on to Peniel and asked them to help him. They refused. The text says they answered the same way the men at Succoth had. Gideon's response to the men at Peniel at first seems very strange. Look at verse 8 and 9.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:8**...From there he went up to Peniel and made the same request of them, but they answered as the men of Succoth had. ⁹ So he said to the men of Peniel, "**When I return in triumph, I will tear down this tower.**"

Now apparently the city of Peniel had some sort of strong tower that caused them to think they were safe from Gideon's wrath. It may have been that they thought that they were safe from the Midianites as well. Gideon promises them that he will return and tear down their confidence.⁵

^{NIV} **Judges 8:10**...Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with a force of about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of the armies of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand swordsmen had fallen. ¹¹ Gideon went up by the route of the nomads east of Nobah and Jogbehah and fell upon the unsuspecting army. ¹² Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian, fled, but he pursued them and captured them, routing their entire army.

Now notice that Gideon does not kill the kings of Midian as you might expect.

Why is that do you think?

Yes, it is because he intends to lead them in captivity back to Succoth and Peniel to show the men of those two cities that God had delivered them into his hands.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:13**...Gideon son of Joash then returned from the battle by the Pass of Heres.

Now the way Gideon returns is different than the way Gideon went out. You will remember he went out by the Way of the Nomads and returned by the Pass of Heres or The Pass of the Sun. He did that, I think, to surprise the men of Succoth. I get that from the connection to verse 14 and from what follows.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:14**...He caught a young man of Succoth and questioned him, and the young man wrote down for him the names of the seventy-seven officials of Succoth, the elders of the town. ¹⁵ Then Gideon came and said to the men of Succoth, "**Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me by saying, 'Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your exhausted men?'**" ¹⁶ He took the elders of the town and taught the men of Succoth a lesson by punishing them with desert thorns and briers.

Verse 16 is chilling. In Hebrew, it says literally, "**He caused them to know by means of thorns and briers.**" Of course, the question is, "**Caused them to know what?**"⁶

Was it that he caused them to know that he was a man not to be trifled with or was it that he caused them to know that he was the servant of God on an errand from God and that they as the people of God should have rendered him aid?

It's hard to know which is intended. Maybe both things were intended.

Anyway, verse 17, rather quickly and concisely tells what happened at Peniel.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:17**...He also pulled down the tower of Peniel and killed the men of the town.

Now I mentioned earlier that the commentators fall into two very different kinds of groups when it comes to their evaluations of Gideon's actions at Succoth and Peniel. Most of the older commentators think what he did was just. Listen for example to Matthew Henry.

The active servants of the Lord meet with more dangerous opposition from false professors than from open enemies; but they must not care for the behavior of those who are Israelites in name, but Midianites in heart. They must pursue the enemies of their souls, and of the cause of God, though they are ready to faint through inward conflicts and outward hardships. And they shall be enabled to persevere. The less men help, and the more they seek to hinder, the more will the Lord assist. Gideon's warning being slighted, the punishment was just. Many are taught with the briers and thorns of affliction, who would not learn otherwise.⁷

The famous German commentators of the 19th century, Keil and Delitzsch, write:

The punishment inflicted by Gideon upon both the cities was well deserved 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...⁸

But most of the modern commentators think he was much too harsh, Listen to Clinton McCann.

If anyone should have understood the desire of the people of Succoth and Peniel for *proof* that "the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my (Gideon's] hand" (v. 7), it should have been Gideon! After all, Gideon had previously needed repeated and rather dramatic proofs of God's saving activity. But he has no sympathy for the people of Succoth and Peniel. The humility and the conflict management skills of 8:2–3 are sorely lacking While Gideon's killing of Zebah and Zalmunna (8:18–21) may be understood as part of the "holy war"

stipulation to annihilate the enemy (see Deut. 20:1—18), the same cannot be said of Gideon's treatment of the people of Succoth (v. 16) and his killing of the men of Peniel. There is absolutely no indication that his behavior is divinely directed. Rather, it has every appearance of selfishly motivated personal revenge.⁹

So which is right...did he do right or did he not?

It is easier to decide I think in verse 18. Apparently after dealing with the men of Succoth and Peniel, he no longer needed Zebah and Zalmunna as living breathing object lessons. Look at what it says.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:18...**Then he asked Zebah and Zalmunna, **"What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?" "Men like you,"** they answered, **"each one with the bearing of a prince."** ¹⁹ Gideon replied, **"Those were my brothers, the sons of my own mother. As surely as the LORD lives, if you had spared their lives, I would not kill you."**

We learn from this passage something that we could not have otherwise known and that is that some of Gideon's brothers had been killed in raids by the Midianites. Other than this passing reference, we would have known nothing of what had happened. Was that what stirred Gideon to action...was it a lust for revenge. That is hard to know...but it is clear by what happens in verse 20 that he wanted to humiliate Zebah and Zalmunna in death. Gideon asks his young son, probably only twelve or thirteen years of age, to step forward and kill them. That would have been a great shame in that day. Being killed by a boy or by a woman was a great humiliation. Remember that in two weeks when we study the life of Gideon's son Abimelech.

Look now at verse 20.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:20**...Turning to Jether, his oldest son, he said, "**Kill them!**" But Jether did not draw his sword, because he was only a boy and was afraid. ²¹ Zebah and Zalmunna said, "**Come, do it yourself. 'As is the man, so is his strength.'**" So Gideon stepped forward and killed them, and took the ornaments off their camels' necks.

Apparently, Gideon's son was shaken by Gideon's request and it is not Gideon that recognizes it and moves the action forward but Gideon's enemies. They tell Gideon to kill them and he does and he takes the ornaments off their camel's necks. Now the words for ornaments here is the word "**crescents**" as in "**crescent moons**". Apparently, the ornaments were related to their worship of the moon or of some moon goddess or they may have just been golden spangles. It is a symbol still very much in vogue in the Arab world.

Now verse 22 occurs sometime later after Israel had had a chance to assess all that had happened.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:22**...The Israelites said to Gideon, "**Rule over us-- you, your son and your grandson-- because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian.**" ²³ But Gideon told them, "**I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you.**" ²⁴ And he said, "**I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder.**" (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.) ²⁵ They answered, "**We'll be glad to give them.**" So they spread out a garment, and each man threw a ring from his plunder onto it.

Now some commentators say that Gideon's rejection of the kingship is his greatest triumph.¹⁰ The fact that he knew better than to take the throne apart from God's command shows that his heart was in the right place.

Other's say that his request for the gold shows that he had ulterior motives. They say that he request of tribute or reward show that he wanted the nation to recognize his place and station in their midst. They argue that Gideon wanted to be like Cromwell, a king without the heavy burden of being called a king.

What is clear is that his possession of the gold leads to a grievous act on his part.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:26**...The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels, (that would be somewhere between 50 and 70 pounds depending n the weight of a shekel) not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels' necks. ²⁷ Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

Now if the gold was relative pure, say 22 carat or so, and there is no reason to suppose that it was not, and if it were priced in terms of the value of gold today, I think we would have been talking of an amount about a quarter of a million dollars plus or minus perhaps \$100,000.

The value of the gold made Gideon a force to be reckoned with. Besides the gold, Gideon also received other valuables that had been the property of the two kings.

Now it was not the possession of the gold that was wrong. It was what Gideon did with the gold that was wrong.

Gideon made an ephod of gold. Now generally speaking, whenever the bible talks about an ephod, it is talking a bout a garment that the high priest wore. It is generally believed that an ephod was something like a breastplate only

ornamental. It was secured to the priest by means of shoulder straps and a girdle or belt that went around the middle. The ephod worn by the high priest also contained the mysterious Urim and Thummin that gave the priest answers and communications from God.

Anyway Gideon made one and he made it out of gold, out of Midianite gold and he placed it in his own hometown.

Now it is impossible to know what his intention was. It may have been that Gideon longed to continue to be the ears of Israel continuing to receive a word from God. It may be that Gideon wanted people to abandon the former place where they assembled to worship God and to make Ophrah their new place of worship. It may be that Gideon simply wanted to show his gratitude for God's deliverance. Whatever his reason, what he did was wrong. He wound up replacing the idol of his father which he had destroyed earlier with another idol made with his own hands. And this time, because of his great popularity, all of Israel came to prostrate themselves before the ephod.

Now some scholars think that the word ephod here is used in a different sense than it is elsewhere in the bible. They think that it is used in the sense of a **"graven image"** or **"idol"** and that may be right but I don't see any reason to make it mean other than what it usually means.

The ephod became a snare to Gideon and his family and I think it led to the judgment of God. It is particularly sad that Gideon starts off by destroying idolatry in hometown and ends up restoring idolatry in his hometown.

The rest of the chapter sets the stage for next week.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:28**...Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land enjoyed peace forty years. ²⁹ Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live. ³⁰ He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives.

Now verses 28 through 30, make it clear that even though Gideon turned down the kingship he lived in a manner that was very much in keeping with many of the ancient kings of that time. He possessed many wives and they bore him many sons.¹¹

Verse 31, introduces the character of Abimelech.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:31**...His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech.

There are only two things I want to say about Abimelech. He lived apart from his other brothers. They lived in Ophrah. He lived in Shechem. The other thing, and I think this is important, is Abimelech's name.

Abimelech's name is a composite name made of two very common words. The first word is "**abi**" and is a shortened form of the word "**abba**" which means "**father**." It was commonly used in names...the name Absalom for example uses the word "**abi**" and is formed of two words, "**abba**" and "**shalom**" meaning what...my father is peace. In Abimelech's case the second word is the word "**melech**" and his name means "**my father is king**."

Now it is hard to know the significance of Abimelech's name. Some scholars think that when Gideon named him, he was thinking of God as his father saying something to the effect that, **"My Father, that is YHWH is king."**¹²

Others think that Gideon was making a statement about his own standing and that by naming his son Abimelech he was making a statement that even though Abimelech was the son of a concubine, he was to be revered and exalted as Gideon's son...that he was, in essence, the son of a king.

I don't know which is right. It may be intentionally ambiguous. What is certain is that next time we meet. We will see Abimelech make a play for the crown. He will purposely try to kill off the rest of Gideon's sons so that he can become king. But we'll wait till we get there to talk about that.

The Gideon section ends on a sad note. Look at verse 32.

^{NIV} **Judges 8:32**...Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ³³ No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god and ³⁴ did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. ³⁵ 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.

It did not take the Israelites long to forget the deliverance of YHWH or of Gideon. In fact verse 33 mentions **"Baal-Berith"** and that fact is particularly sad. It is sad because the word **"Berith"** means **"covenant."** You see within a generation Israel was worshiping **"Baal of the Covenant"** instead of **"YHWH of**

the covenant.” Within a generation they had lost sight of Gideon and Gideon’s covenant keeping God.¹³

Now in concluding the Gideon section, we are compelled to ask, **“What lessons can we learn from his life?”**

I think there are at least two. First, we can see that a good start does not insure a good finish. Just because God has granted us a measure of faithfulness is no reason to rest on our past accomplishments and advancements. For the Christian, there is no rest this side of heaven. We must strive with all our being to be faithful.

Secondly, I think Gideon’s life teaches us that we must be diligent to remind ourselves that what God accomplishes through us is a matter of grace and that we are at best only instruments in His hands. We are not very much apart from Him but in Him and in faithfulness He can use even the most common vessels to glorify Himself and to advance His kingdom.

Oh that He might use us to do just that.

Let’s pray.

¹ J. Clinton McCann, *Judges* in the Interpretation Commentary Series (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), 68. McCann notes, “Verse 4 confirms what the reader has suspected and what 7:23–25 has actually indicated—namely, that God did not really do all the fighting. Or, as suggested above, the **“holy war”** pattern is a stylized accounting that is intended to affirm that all **“the credit”** (7:2) for Israel’s victories belongs to God alone. But, it is precisely this lesson about God’s sovereign claim that Gideon appears to be forgetting in 8:4–35.”

² George F. Moore, *Judges* in the ICC Series (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895...reprinted in 1976), 225. Moore notes that several ancient Greek writers mention the torture called carding. He connects

the concept to Gideon. I have quoted Herodotus at the appropriate place to show the idea. Herodotus 1.92...“XCII. There are many offerings of Croesus' in Hellas, and not only those of which I have spoken. There is a golden tripod at Thebes in Boeotia, which he dedicated to Apollo of Ismenus; at Ephesus¹ there are the oxen of gold and the greater part of the pillars; and in the temple of Proneia at Delphi, a golden shield.² All these survived to my lifetime; but other of the offerings were destroyed. [2] And the offerings of Croesus at Branchidae of the Milesians, as I learn by inquiry, are equal in weight and like those at Delphi. Those which he dedicated at Delphi and the shrine of Amphiaraus were his own, the first-fruits of the wealth inherited from his father; the rest came from the estate of an enemy who had headed a faction against Croesus before he became king, and conspired to win the throne of Lydia for Pantaleon. [3] This Pantaleon was a son of Alyattes, and half-brother of Croesus: Croesus was Alyattes' son by a Carian and Pantaleon by an Ionian mother. [4] So when Croesus gained the sovereignty by his father's gift, he put the man who had conspired against him to death by drawing him across a carding-comb, and first confiscated his estate, then dedicated it as and where I have said. This is all that I shall say of Croesus' offerings.”

³ Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary The Old Testament, Volume 2 Joshua Through Esther*, “Judges 8:7”...“What this punishment consisted in I cannot say; it must mean a severe punishment: as if he had said, I will thresh your flesh with briers and thorns, as corn is threshed out with threshing instruments; or, Ye shall be trodden down under the feet of my victorious army, as the corn is trodden out with the feet of the ox. Succoth was beyond Jordan, in the tribe of Gad. Penuel was also in the same tribe, and not far distant from Succoth.”

⁴ NIV **Amos 1:3**...This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not turn back *my wrath*. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth,

⁵ Robert G. Boling, *Judges in the Anchor Bible Commentary Series*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Publishers, 1981), 86. Boling writes, “Apparently the pride of Penuel was a fortress-temple carrying the same generic designation as the massive Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Age temples at Shechem and elsewhere in the same period. See *Shechem*, pp. 94–101.”

⁶ John Gill, *The John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible*, Gill writes: “Abarbinel thinks the word “know” has the signification of mercy in it, as in (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.”

⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary On The Whole Bible Condensed Version*, “Judges 8:13-17”

⁸ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume 2...Joshua-2 Samuel*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 354-5.

⁹ J. Clinton McCann, *Judges in the Interpretation Commentary Series* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002), 69.

¹⁰ Gry Inrig, *Hearts of Iron...Feet of Clay*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 147.

¹¹ See Dr. Constable's notes on 8: 29 at <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/judges.pdf>.

¹² Robert Boling, *Judges* in the Anchor Bible Commentary Series, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1975), 162-3. Boling gives an extensive discussion of Abimelech's name and why he believes it is referring to YHWH. But for an alternative explanation see Dr. Thomas Constable's notes on 8:29 at <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/judges.pdf>.

¹³ Constable quotes Dr. Merrill on Judges 8:33. His quote read, "In line with common practice, the covenant-making function of Yahweh was simply transferred to Baal so that he, not Yahweh, was viewed as the god who made Shechem a holy place."