

In verse 23 of this chapter, Gideon commendably refuses to be named king over the Israelites. He tells them the Lord is their true King. While not doubting Gideon's sincerity, in reality we see that Gideon increasingly acts like a king without the official title.

He starts well, responding peaceably to the Ephraimites in verses 2 and 3. And the provocation of the cities of Succoth and Penuel is severe – they refuse to provide a few loaves of bread to Gideon's men, much less sharing their danger by joining the fight. But Gideon takes a royal vengeance by flogging the leading citizens of one city and executing those of the other.

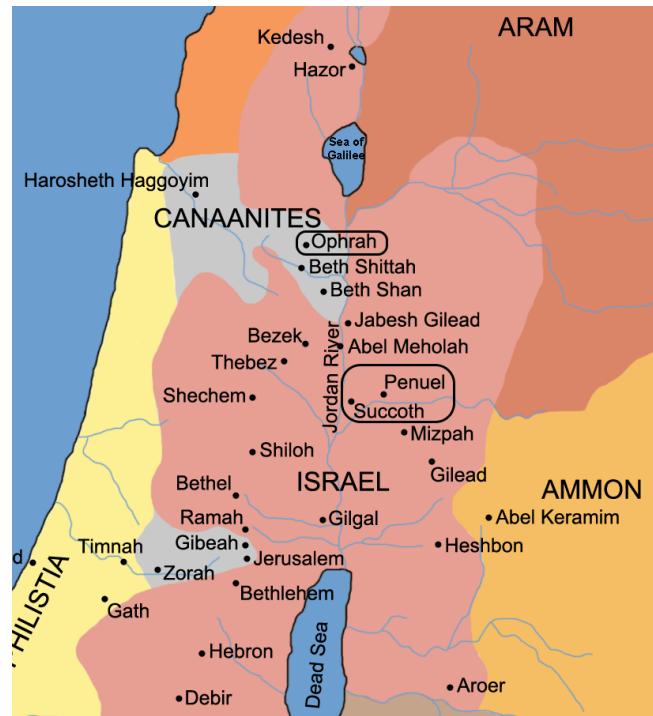
Then he goes so far as to imitate the high priest by making a golden ephod. We are not told that Gideon claims to be the priest or even that he has bad intentions. The ephod may be meant as a memorial of the nation's victories. But it ensnares Gideon and his family, as the creation of any image outside of God's instructions can do.

Finally, we read of Gideon accumulating wives and concubines. Far from the trembling youth hiding in the winepress, we now see a prototype of Solomon in his glory. As Kelly says of Gideon, "How often we see that the result of the victory of faith is too great for the faith that won it!"

Just as we must learn and practice Solomon's wisdom and not his excesses, let us emulate the Gideon who obeys the angel of the Lord, who leads not with his own courage but confidence in God, and who shakes off fatigue in the pursuit of God's purposes.

Questions:

1. What is different about the victories in this chapter, in comparison to Chapter 7?
2. Gideon faces taunts and criticism four times. What are his responses? Which should we imitate?



Notes

8:26 Seventeen hundred shekels would be about 43 pounds of gold.

8:27 An ephod was an elaborate garment worn by the high priest, with 12 stones representing the tribes of Israel and the Urim and the Thummim on the shoulders to render judgments (Ex. 28:15-30).

3. What does it say about Gideon that he asks his son to execute his enemies? Does God ever ask us to delegate discipline to other people?
4. What is the temptation that Gideon withstands?
5. What might be factors in Gideon's deciding to make an ephod?
6. What is a snare? Can we make snares for ourselves as Gideon did?
7. What actions by Gideon demonstrate moral decline?