

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. What specifically is meant by the phrase, "And the people of Israel did evil in the eyes of the L-rd"?
2. Describe the attraction of idolatry during the period of the Judges.
3. How was the occupation by Midian different from previous occupations by foreign troops?
4. Describe the method which Gideon used to choose the most suitable troops for his campaign.
5. What became of Gideon's children?

This and much more will be addressed in the first lecture of this series:
"Gideon and His Victories".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the lecture and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book were designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it, as well, as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

**This lecture is dedicated to the honor and merit of
Dr. and Professor Hillman and their Family**

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE

Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series XVI Lecture #1

GIDEON AND HIS VICTORIES

I. Idolatry During the Period of the Judges

(1) וְגַם כָּל הַדּוֹר הַהוּא נֶאֱסָפוּ אֶל אֲבוֹתָיו וַיִּקְמוּ דוֹר אַחַר אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ אֵת ד' וְגַם אֵת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי ד' וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת הַבַּעַלִּים: וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֵת ד' | א-להי אבותם המוציא אותם מארץ מצרים וילכו אחרי | אלהים אחרים מאלהי העמים אשר סביבותיהם וישתחוו להם ויכעסו את ד': וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֵת ד' וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ לְבַעַל וְלַעֲשָׂתוֹת: וַיִּחַר-אַף ד' בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתְּנֵם בְּיַד שָׂסִים וַיִּשְׁפוּ אוֹתָם וַיִּמְכְּרֵם בְּיַד אוֹיְבֵיהֶם מִסָּבִיב וְלֹא יָכְלוּ עוֹד לַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי אוֹיְבֵיהֶם: כָּל | אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ יַד ד' הִיטָה בָּם לְרָעָה כְּאֲשֶׁר דָּבַר ד' וְכֹאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ד' לָהֶם וַיַּצֵּר לָהֶם מָאֹד: וַיִּקְמוּ ד' שְׁפָטִים וַיּוֹשִׁיעוּם מִיַּד שֹׁסֵיהֶם: וְגַם אֶל שְׁפָטֵיהֶם לֹא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי זָנוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרֵים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם סָרוּ מֵהָרַץ מִן הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הָלְכוּ אֲבוֹתָם לְשִׁמְעַת מִצְוֹת ד' לֹא עָשׂוּ כֵן: וְכִי הָקִים ד' | לָהֶם שְׁפָטִים וְהָיָה ד' עִם הַשֹּׁפֵט וְהוֹשִׁיעֵם מִיַּד אוֹיְבֵיהֶם כֹּל יְמֵי הַשֹּׁפֵט כִּי יִנָּחֵם ד' מִנְּאֻקָתָם מִפְּנֵי לְחֻצֵיהֶם וְדַחְקֵיהֶם: וְהָיָה | בְּמוֹת הַשֹּׁפֵט יָשׁוּבוּ וְהִשְׁחִיתוּ מֵאֲבוֹתָם לְלַקֵּת אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרֵים לַעֲבֹדָם וְלִהְיוֹת לָהֶם לֹא הִפִּילוּ מִמַּעַלְלֵיהֶם וּמִדַּרְכֵּם הַקָּשָׁה: שׁוֹפְטִים בִּי-יֵט

And also all of that generation (of Joshua and the elders) were gathered unto their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, who knew not the L-rd, nor the works which He had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did evil in the sight of the L-rd, and served Baalim; And they forsook the L-rd G-d of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people who were around them, and prostrated themselves to them, and provoked the L-rd to anger. And they forsook the L-rd, and served Baal and the Ashtarot. And the anger of the L-rd burned against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of destroyers who destroyed them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the Hand of the L-rd was against them for evil, as the L-rd had said, and as the L-rd had sworn to them; and they were greatly distressed. And the L-rd raised up Judges, who saved them from the hand of those who oppressed them. And yet (in addition) they would not listen to their Judges, but they went astray after other gods, and prostrated themselves before them; they turned aside quickly from the way on which their fathers had walked, obeying the commandments of the L-rd; but they did not do so. And [there were times] when the L-rd raised them up Judges, then (when) the L-rd was with the Judge, and saved them from the hand of their enemies *all* the days of the Judge; for the L-rd relented because of their groaning, caused by those who oppressed them and troubled them. And it came to pass, when the Judge was dead, that they returned, *and became more corrupt than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them*, and to prostrate themselves to them; they did not cease any of their practices, nor their stubborn way. **Judges 2:10-19**

(2) וְאִם בְּחַקְתִּי תִמְאָסוּ וְאִם אֵת מִשְׁפָּטֵי תִגְעַל נִפְשְׁכֶם לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל מִצְוֹתֵי לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֵת בְּרִיתִי: אֵף אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה זֹאת לָכֶם וְהַפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה אֵת הַשְׁחָפֶת וְאֵת הַקְּדֻחַת מְכַלּוֹת עֵינַיִם וּמְדִיבַת נֶפֶשׁ וּזְרַעְתָּם לְרִיק זְרַעְכֶם וְאֶכְלְהוּ אוֹיְבֵיכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי פָנַי בָּכֶם וְנִגְפַתְּם לִפְנֵי אוֹיְבֵיכֶם וְרָדוּ בָכֶם שְׁנֹאֵיכֶם וְנִסְתָּם וְאִין רָדָף אֶתְכֶם. וַיִּקְרָא כו: טו-יז

And if you shall despise My statutes, or if your soul loathes My judgments, so that you will not do all My commandments, but that you break My covenant; I also will do this to you; I will appoint over you terror, consumption, and fever, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set My face against you, and you shall be slain before your enemies; they who hate you shall reign over you; and you shall flee when none pursues you. **Leviticus 26:15-17**

II Gideon

A.

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי ד' וַיִּתְּנֵם ד' בְּיַד מִדְיָן שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים: וַתַּעַז יַד מִדְיָן עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן עָשׂוּ לָהֶם | בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַמְּנַהֲרוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּהָרִים וְאֶת הַמְּעָרוֹת וְאֶת הַמְּצֻדוֹת: וְהָיָה אִם זָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעָלָה מִדְיָן וְעַמְלָק וּבְנֵי קָדָם וְעָלוּ עֲלֵיו: וַיַּחֲנוּ עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ אֶת יְבוֹל הָאָרֶץ עַד בּוֹאֵךְ עֶזְרָה וְלֹא יִשְׁאִירוּ מַחֲיָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְשֹׁהַ וְשׁוֹר וְחֲמֹר: כִּי הֵם וּמִקְנֵיהֶם יַעֲלוּ וְאֶהְלִיחֶם וּבָאוּ כְּדִי אֲרַבָּה לָרֶב וְלָהֶם וְלִגְמָלֵיהֶם אֵין מִסְפָּר וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ לְשַׁחֲתָהּ: וַיִּדַּל יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֹד מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן וַיִּזְעַקוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ד': וַיְהִי כִּי זָעַקוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ד' עַל אֲדוֹת מִדְיָן: וַיִּשְׁלַח ד' אִישׁ נָבִיא אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כֹּה אָמַר יְד' | א-לֵהי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנֹכִי הָעֲלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאֶצִּיא אֶתְכֶם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים: וְאֶצֶּל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד כָּל לַחֲצִיכֶם וְאֶגְרַשׁ אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְאֶתְּנָה לְכֶם אֶת אֲרָצָם: וְאִמְרָה לְכֶם אֲנִי ד' א-לֵהיכֶם לֹא תִירָאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הָאֻמִּי אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יוֹשְׁבִים בְּאֲרָצָם וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי: שׁוֹפְטִים וַיֹּא-י

And the people of Israel did evil in the sight of the L-rd; and the L-rd delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel; and because of the Midianites, the people of Israel made for themselves the tunnels which are in the mountains, and caves, and fortresses. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the people of the east, they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor donkeys. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as locusts for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the people of Israel cried to the L-rd. And it came to pass, when the people of Israel cried to the L-rd because of the Midianites, That the L-rd sent a prophet to the people of Israel, who said to them, Thus said the L-rd G-d of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of slavery; And I saved you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said to you, I am the L-rd your G-d; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live; but you have not obeyed My voice. **Judges 6:1-10**

B.

(1) וַיָּבֹא מַלְאָךְ ד' וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּעַפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאֵשׁ אָבִי הָעֶזְרִי וַגְּדֵעוֹן בְּנוֹ חֵבֶט חֲטִים בְּגַת הַהַנִּים מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן: וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהֵי מַלְאָךְ ד' וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו ד' עֲמֹךְ גִּבּוֹר הַחֵיל: שׁוֹפְטִים וַיֹּא-יב

And there came an angel of the L-rd, and sat under a terebinth which was in Ophrah, that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite; and his son Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress, to hide it (ready to escape) from the Midianites. And the angel of the L-rd appeared to him, and said to him, The L-rd is with you, you mighty man of valor. **Judges 6:11-12**

(2) וַיָּבֹא מַלְאָךְ ד' – אַחַר שֶׁהוֹכִיחַם הַנְּבִיא בֵּא מַלְאָךְ ד' לְהוֹשִׁיעֵם כַּמ"ש בְּכָל צָרָתָם לוֹ צָר וּמַלְאָךְ פָּנִיו הוֹשִׁיעֵם. . . . וַגְּדֵעוֹן בְּנוֹ – הַשְּׁפַע הָא-לֵהִית לֹא תַחֲוֹל רַק עַל הַמְּזוּמָנִים לֵה, וְהַמְּזוּמָן לֵה

במקצת תחול עליו ברכת ד' בשיעור רב. והנה היה צריך פה, א) זכות קצת, שע"י יסייעו לו לזכותו הרבה כענין הבא לטהר, ב) גבורה, בענין שתחול עליו רוח ד' כח וגבורה למלחמה, וגדעון נמצא לו זכות כבוד אב, שעז"א וגדעון בנו חבט – גם גבורה בשהיה מכין א"ע להניס מפני מדין – שלפ"ז הרגיש בעצמו גבורה למלחמה: וירא אליו – בכח הזה התראה המלאך אליו והודיעו כי ד' עמו ושהוא גבור החיל כי ישפיע עליו זכות וקדושה וגם גבורה בשפע רב: מלבי"ם, שופטים ו:יא-יב

And there came an angel of the L-rd: After the prophet rebuked them, an angel of G-d came to save them, as it says (Isaiah 63:9), “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them.” . . . **and his son Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress:** The outpouring of the Divine spirit rests only upon one who is prepared for it. For someone who is at least partially prepared, an abundant Divine blessing can rest upon him. Behold, there needs to be present **1)** [at least] some small merit in order that He would help the person to achieve great merit, as it says (Yoma 38b), “He who comes to purify himself will receive Divine help,” and **2)** Courage or strength, so that the spirit of G-d, the spirit of strength and courage in war will rest upon him. Gideon possessed the merit of having honored his father, as it says (Judges 6:11), “. . . and his son Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress,” as well as strength, as he was prepared, “to escape from the Midianites.” Accordingly he felt himself ready for the discipline (strength) of war. **And the angel of the L-rd appeared to him:** The angel appeared to him through this strength and informed him that G-d was with him and that he was a mighty warrior, as He would grant him an outpouring of merit, sanctity, and also courage and strength with great abundance. **Malbim, Judges 6:11-12**

3) ויאמר אליו גדעון בי אדני ויש ד' עמנו ולמה מצאתנו כל זאת ואיה כל נפלאותיו אשר ספרו לנו אבותינו לאמר הלא ממצרים העלנו ד' ועתה נטשנו ד' ויתנונו בכף מדין: ויפן אליו ד' ויאמר לך בכחך זה והושעת את ישראל מכף מדין הלא שלחתיד: שופטים ו:יג-יד

And Gideon said to him, Oh my L-rd, if the L-rd is with us, why then has all this befallen us? and where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the L-rd bring us up from Egypt? but now the L-rd has forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the L-rd looked upon him, and said, Go in this your might, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent you? **Judges 6:13-14**

4) אתה למד מגדעון בן יואש שבימיו היו ישראל בצרה והיה הקב"ה מבקש אדם שילמד עליהם זכות ולא היה מוצא שהיה הדור דל במצות ובמעשים כיון שנמצא זכות בגדעון שלמד עליהם זכות מיד נגלה עליו המלאך שנאמר (שופטים ו) ויבא אליו מלאך ד' . . . ויאמר לו לך בכחך זה בכח זכות שלמדת על בני הוי ושפטו את העם משפט צדק שיהיו מלמדין זכות על הדור: מדרש תנחומא פרשת שופטים ד'

You can derive from Gideon the son of Joash [the following principle]: In his time the people of Israel were in a difficult situation and the Holy One, blessed be He, was seeking someone who would speak up upon their behalf. He couldn't find such a person, however, as the generation was impoverished of those who fulfilled the commandments and were involved in good deeds. Now as soon as He found such a merit in Gideon, who would speak up upon their behalf, an angel immediately revealed himself to him, as it says (Judges 6:11,14), “And there came an angel of the L-rd . . . and said, Go in this your might . . .” This might refers to the might derived from the merit of speaking up for My children. [In this light we can interpret the verse (Deut. 16:18),] “. . . and they shall judge the people with just judgment,” to mean that they shall speak up on behalf of the merits of the generation. **Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Shoftim, Chapter 4**

5) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בִּי אֲ-דָנִי בְמָה אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲנֵה אֶלְפֵי הַדָּל בַּמְנַשֶּׁה וְאֲנֹכִי הַצָּעִיר בְּבֵית אָבִי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו ד' כִּי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ וְהָכִיתָ אֶת מִדְיָן כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ לִּי אוֹת שְׂאֵתָה מְדַבֵּר עִמִּי: אַל נָא תִמַּשׁ מִזֶּה עַד בֹּאִי אֵלַיךְ וְהִצַּאתִי אֶת מִנְחָתִי וְהִנַּחְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֲשִׁב עַד שׁוֹכֵךְ: וְגִדְעוֹן בָּא וַיַּעַשׂ גְּדִי עֲזִים וַאֲיִפַת קִמַּח מִצּוֹת הַבָּשָׂר שָׁם בְּסֹל וְהִמְרַק שָׁם בְּפָרוֹר וַיּוֹצֵא אֵלָיו אֶל תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּגַּשׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מִלֶּאֱךָ הֲאֵ-לֵהִים קַח אֶת הַבָּשָׂר וְאֶת הַמִּצּוֹת וְהִנַּח אֶל הַסֹּלַע הַלְזוּ וְאֶת הַמְרַק שְׂפוֹךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: וַיִּשְׁלַח מִלֶּאֱךָ ד' אֶת קֶצֶה הַמִּשְׁעָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּגַּע בַּבָּשָׂר וּבַמִּצּוֹת וַתַּעַל הָאֵשׁ מִן הַצּוֹר וַתֹּאכַל אֶת הַבָּשָׂר וְאֶת הַמִּצּוֹת וּמִלֶּאֱךָ ד' הִלָּךְ מֵעֵינָיו: וַיֵּרָא גִדְעוֹן כִּי מִלֶּאֱךָ ד' הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶהְיֶה אֲ-דָנִי ד' כִּי עַל כֵּן רָאִיתִי מִלֶּאֱךָ ד' פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ ד' שְׁלוֹ' לָךְ אֶל תִּירָא לֹא תָמוֹת: וַיִּבֶן שָׁם גִּדְעוֹן מִזְבֵּחַ לַד' וַיִּקְרָא לוֹ ד' שְׁלוֹ' עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עוֹדֵנוּ בְּעַפְרַת אָבִי הַעֲזָרִי: שׁוֹפְטִים וִטו-כד

And he said to him, Oh my L-rd, with what shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house. And the L-rd said to him, Surely I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man. And he said to him, If now I have found grace in Your sight, then show me a sign that You talk with me. Depart not from here, I beseech you, until I come to you, and bring forth my present, and set it before you. And he said, I will remain until you come again. And Gideon went in, and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out to him under the terebinth, and presented it. And the angel of G-d said to him, Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the L-rd put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire from the rock, and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the L-rd departed from his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the L-rd, Gideon said, Alas, O L-rd G-d! because I have surely seen an angel of the L-rd face to face. And the L-rd said to him, Peace be to you; fear not; you shall not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the L-rd, and called it Ad-onai-Shalom; till this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. **Judges 6:15-24**

III. The Struggle Against Idolatry

A.

1) וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ ד' קַח אֶת פֶּר הַשּׁוֹר אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִיךָ וּפֶר הַשְּׁנַי שְׁבַע שָׁנִים וְהִרְסֵתָ אֶת מִזְבֵּחַ הַבַּעַל אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִיךָ וְאֶת הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו תִּכְרֹת: וּבְנִיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ לַד' אֲ-לֵהֶיךָ עַל רֹאשׁ הַמַּעְזוֹז הַזֶּה בַּמַּעְרָכָה וְלִקְחֹתָ אֶת הַפֶּר הַשְּׁנַי וְהִעַלְתָּ עוֹלָה בַּעֲצֵי הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּכְרֹת: וַיִּקַּח גִּדְעוֹן עֲשָׂרָה אֲנָשִׁים מֵעַבְדָּיו וַיַּעַשׂ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו ד' וַיְהִי כְּאֲשֶׁר יָרָא אֶת בֵּית אָבִיו וְאֶת אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר מַעֲשׂוֹת יוֹמָם וַיַּעַשׂ לַיְלָה: וַיִּשְׁכִּימוּ אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה נִתָּן מִזְבֵּחַ הַבַּעַל וְהָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו כָּרְתָה וְאֶת הַפֶּר הַשְּׁנַי הִעֲלָה עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַבְּנוּי: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ מִי עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּדְרָשׁוּ וַיִּבְקָשׁוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ גִדְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹאֵשׁ עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר אֶל יוֹאֵשׁ הוֹצֵא אֶת בְּנֶךָ וַיְמַת כִּי נָתַן אֶת מִזְבֵּחַ הַבַּעַל וְכִי כָרַת הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו: וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹאֵשׁ לְכָל אֲשֶׁר עָמְדוּ עָלָיו הֵאֲתֵם | תִּרְיִכוֹן לְבַעַל אִם אַתֶּם תּוֹשִׁיעוֹן אוֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יָרִיב לוֹ יוֹמַת עַד הַבֹּקֶר אִם אֲ-לֵהִים הוּא יָרִב לוֹ כִּי נָתַן אֶת מִזְבְּחוֹ: וַיִּקְרָא לוֹ כִּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִרְבַּעַל לְאֹמֶר יָרִב בּוֹ הַבַּעַל כִּי נָתַן אֶת מִזְבְּחוֹ: שׁוֹפְטִים וִכַה-לב

And it came to pass the same night, that the L-rd said to him, Take your father's young bull, [and] the second bull of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Ashera that is by it; And build an altar to the L-rd your G-d upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place (the previously built altar), and take the second bull, and offer a

burnt sacrifice with the wood of the Ashera which you shall cut down. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the L-rd had said to him; and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the Ashera was cut down that was by it, and the second bull was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who has done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing. Then the men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son, that he may die; because he has cast down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the Ashera that was by it. And Joash said to all who stood against him, Will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? He who will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning; if he is a god, let him plead for himself, because one has cast down his altar. Therefore, on that day he called him (Gideon) Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he has thrown down his altar. **Judges 6:25-32**

B.

א"ר אבא בר כהנא ז' עבירות עבר גדעון באותה שעה שקירב והיה זר ובן כומרים והקריב בלילה ומעצי אשרה ושור מוקצה לעבודת כוכבים ושור נעבד ובאיסור במה שהרי המשכן היה בשילה אמר הא-להים אל יהרהר אדם אחריו לשמי עשה ואני הוא שאמרת לי ששנאמר (שופטים ו') ויהי בלילה ההוא ויאמר לו ד' קח את פר השור אשר לאביך וגו' והעלית עולה בעצי האשרה אשר תכרת ובנית מזבח לד' א-להיך על ראש המעון הזה במערכה וגו'. מדרש במדבר רבה יד:א

R. Abba bar Kahana said: Gideon violated seven prohibitions at that moment: 1) He was a *zar* (non-Kohen), 2) the son of idolatrous priests, 3) who sacrificed at night 4) using wood from an *Ashera* (an idolatrous tree), 5) sacrificing an ox that had been dedicated to be sacrificed for idolatry, 6) and had itself been worshipped, 7) on a *bama* (high place) while the Tabernacle was standing in Shiloh. G-d said, "Don't have second thoughts regarding him, for it was I who commanded him, as it says (Judges 6:25), 'And it came to pass the same night, that the L-rd said to him . . .'" **Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah 14:1**

IV. The Defeat of Midian

A.

וְכָל מִדְיָן וְעַמְלֵק וּבְנֵי קָדָם נֶאֱסָפוּ יַחְדָּו וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ בְעַמְקֵי יִזְרְעֵאל: וְרוּחַ ד' לָבְשָׁה אֶת גְּדֵעוֹן וַיִּתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר וַיִּזְעַק אַבְיֶעֶזֶר אַחֲרָיו: וּמַלְאָכִים שָׁלַח בְּכָל מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּזְעַק גַּם הוּא אַחֲרָיו וּמַלְאָכִים שָׁלַח בְּאֲשֶׁר וּבִזְבֻּלוֹן וּבְנַפְתָּלִי וַיַּעֲלוּ לְקִרְיַתְהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר גְּדֵעוֹן אֶל הָא-לֹהִים אִם יִשְׁפָּד מוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיָדִי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מְצִיג אֶת גִּזְתְּ הַצֹּמֵר בְּגֵרָן אִם טַל יִהְיֶה עַל הַגִּזָּה לְבִדָּה וְעַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ חֹרֵב וַיִּדְעֵתִי כִּי תוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיָדִי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: וַיְהִי כֵן וַיֵּשְׁבוּ מִמִּחְרַת וַיִּזְרְאוּ אֶת הַגִּזָּה וַיִּמְץ טַל מִן הַגִּזָּה מְלֹא הַסֶּפֶל מִיָּם: וַיֹּאמֶר גְּדֵעוֹן אֶל הָא-לֹהִים אֵל יִחַר אַפֶּךָ בִּי וְאִדְבַּרְהָ אֲךָ הַפְּעַם אֲנִסָּה נָא רַק הַפְּעַם בְּגִזָּה יְהִי נָא חֹרֵב אֶל הַגִּזָּה לְבִדָּה וְעַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה טַל: וַיַּעַשׂ א-לֹהִים כֵּן בְּלִילָה הַהוּא וַיְהִי חֹרֵב אֶל הַגִּזָּה לְבִדָּה וְעַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ הָיָה טַל: שׁוֹפְטִים וּלְג-מ

Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east were gathered together, and went over, and camped in the valley of Jezreel. But the spirit of the L-rd came upon Gideon, and he blew a shofar; and Abiezer mustered behind him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also mustered behind him; and he sent messengers to Asher, and to Zebulun, and to Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. And Gideon said to G-d, If You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; and if the

dew is on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground elsewhere, then shall I know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said. And it was so; for he rose up early on the next day, and squeezed the fleece together, and wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said to G-d, Let not Your anger burn against me, and I will speak but this once; let me try, I beg You, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And G-d did so that night; for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground. **Judges 6:33-40**

B.

וַיִּשְׁכֶּם יִרְבֵּעַל הוּא גִדְעוֹן וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ עַל עֵין חֶרֶד וּמַחֲנֵה מְדִין הָיָה לוֹ מִצְפּוֹן מִגְבְּעַת הַמּוֹרָה בְּעַמְקִי: וַיֹּאמֶר ד' אֶל גִּדְעוֹן רַב הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתְּךָ מִמְּתֵי אֶת מְדִין בְּיָדָם פֶּן יִתְפָּאֵר עָלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יָדִי הוֹשִׁיעָה לִּי: וְעַתָּה קְרָא נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם לֵאמֹר מִי יָרָא וַחֲרָד יֵשֶׁב וַיִּצְפֹּר מֵהָר הַגִּלְעָד וַיֵּשֶׁב מִן הָעָם עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֱלֹף וְעֶשְׂרֵת אֲלָפִים נִשְׁאָרוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר ד' אֶל גִּדְעוֹן עוֹד הָעָם רַב הוֹרֵד אוֹתָם אֶל הַמַּיִם וְאַצְרַפְנוּ לָךְ שֵׁם וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהֶיךָ זֶה | יִלְךְ אִתְּךָ הוּא יִלְךְ אִתְּךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהֶיךָ זֶה לֹא יִלְךְ עִמָּךְ הוּא לֹא יִלְךְ: וַיּוֹרֵד אֶת הָעָם אֶל הַמַּיִם וַיֹּאמֶר ד' אֶל גִּדְעוֹן כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִלֵּק בְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ מִן הַמַּיִם כְּאֲשֶׁר יִלֵּק הַכֶּלֶב תִּצְיֵג אוֹתוֹ לְבָד וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִכְרַע עַל בְּרַכְוֵי לְשֹׁתוֹת: וַיְהִי מִסְפַּר הַמְּלַקְקִים בְּיָדָם אֶל פִּיהֶם שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְכָל יֹתֵר הָעָם כָּרְעוּ עַל בְּרַכְוֵיהֶם לְשֹׁתוֹת מַיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר ד' אֶל גִּדְעוֹן בְּשֹׁלֶשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הַמְּלַקְקִים אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְנִתַּתִּי אֶת מְדִין בְּיָדְךָ וְכָל הָעָם יִלְכוּ אִישׁ לְמַקְמוֹ: וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת צִדָּה הָעָם בְּיָדָם וְאֶת שׁוֹפְרֵתֵיהֶם וְאֶת כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁלַּח אִישׁ לְאַהֲלָיו וּבְשֹׁלֶשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הִחְזִיק וּמַחֲנֵה מְדִין הָיָה לוֹ מִתַּחַת בְּעַמְקִי: שׁוֹפְטִים זֵא-ח

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people who were with him, rose up early, and camped beside the well of Harod; so that the army of the Midianites were on their north side, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the L-rd said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, My own hand has saved me. Now, therefore, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Who ever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early [the next morning] from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. And the L-rd said to Gideon, The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there; and it shall be, that of whom I say to you, This shall go with you, the same shall go with you; and of whom I say to you, This shall not go with you, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people to the water; and the L-rd said to Gideon, Every one who laps the water with his tongue, like a dog laps, him shall you set by himself; likewise every one who bows down upon his knees to drink. And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the L-rd said to Gideon, By the three hundred men who lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites to your hand; and let all the other people go every man to his place. So the people took provisions in their hand, and their shofarot; and he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men; and the army of Midian was below him in the valley. **Judges 7:1-8**

C.

וַיְהִי בַלִּילָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי ד' קוּם רַד בְּמַחֲנֵה כִּי נִתְּתִיו בְּיָדְךָ: וְאִם יָרָא אֶתְּךָ לָרֶדֶת רַד אֶתְּךָ וּפְרָה נִעְרָךְ אֶל הַמַּחֲנֵה: וְשִׁמְעֵת מִה יִדְבְּרוּ וְאַחַר תַּחְזֹקְנָה יְדִיךָ וַיִּרְדֹּת בְּמַחֲנֵה וַיִּרַד הוּא וּפְרָה נִעְרוּ אֶל קִצְהַ הַחֲמֻשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בְּמַחֲנֵה: וּמְדִין וְעַמְלֵק וְכָל בְּנֵי קָדָם נִפְלִים בְּעַמְקֵי כְּאַרְבֵּה לְרַב וּלְגַמְלֵיהֶם אֵין מִסְפָּר כַּחֲוֹל שֶׁעַל שְׁפֵת הַיָּם לְרַב: וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וְהִנֵּה אִישׁ מִסְפָּר לְרַעְהוּ חֲלוּם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלוּם חֲלַמְתִּי וְהִנֵּה צָלִיל לְחֵם שְׁעָרִים מִתְּהַפֵּךְ בְּמַחֲנֵה מְדִין וַיָּבֹא עַד הָאֶהָל וַיִּפְּחוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ וַיִּהְפְּכוּ לְמַעַלָּה וּנְפַל הָאֶהָל: וַיַּעַן

רעהו ויאמר אין זאת בלתי אם חרב גדעון בן יואש איש ישראל נתן האלהים בידו את מדין ואת כל המחנה: ויהי כשמע גדעון את מספר החלום ואת שברו וישתחו וישב אל מחנה ישראל ויאמר קומו כי נתן ד' בידכם את מחנה מדין: ויחץ את שלש מאות האיש שלשה ראשים ויתן שופרות ביד כלם וכדים רקים ולפדים בתוך הכדים: ויאמר אליהם ממני תראו וכן תעשו והנה אנכי בא בקצה המחנה והיה כאשר אעשה כן תעשו: ותקעתי בשופר אנכי וכל אשר אתי ותקעתם בשופרות גם אתם סביבות כל המחנה ואמרתם לד' ולגדעון: ויבא גדעון ומאה איש אשר אתו בקצה המחנה ראש האשמרת התיכונה אך הקם הקימו את השמרים ויתקעו בשופרות ונפוץ הכדים אשר בידם: ויתקעו שלשת הראשים בשופרות וישברו הכדים ויחזיקו ביד שמאולם בלפדים וכיד ימינם השופרות לתקוע ויקראו חרב לד' ולגדעון: ויעמדו איש תחתיו סביב למחנה וירץ כל המחנה ויריעו וינוסו: ויתקעו שלש מאות השופרות וישם ד' את חרב איש ברעהו ובכל המחנה וינס המחנה עד בית השטה צררתה עד שפת אבל מחולה על טבת: ויצעק איש ישראל מנפתלי ומן אשר ומן כל מנשה וירדפו אחרי מדין: ומלאכים שלח גדעון בכל הר אפרים לאמר רדו לקראת מדין ולכדו להם את המים עד בית ברה ואת הירדן ויצעק כל איש אפרים וילכדו את המים עד בית ברה ואת הירדן: וילכדו שני שרי מדין את ערב ואת זאב ויהרגו את עורב בצור עורב ואת זאב הרגו בקרב זאב וירדפו אל מדין וראש ערב וזאב הביאו אל גדעון מעבר לירדן: שופטים ז:ט-כה

And it came to pass the same night, that the L-rd said to him, Arise, get down to the camp; for I have delivered it into your hand. But if you fear to go down, go with Phurah your servant down to the camp; And you shall hear what they say; and afterwards shall your hands be strengthened to go down to the camp. - Then went he down with Phurah his servant to the outside of the armed men who were in the camp. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude. And when Gideon came, behold, there was a man who told a dream to his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a slice of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to a tent, and struck it so that it fell, and overturned it, so that the tent tumbled down. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for to his hand has G-d delivered Midian, and all the army. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and its interpretation, that he bowed down to the ground, and returned to the camp of Israel, and said, Arise; for the L-rd has delivered to your hand the army of Midian. - And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a shofar in every man's hand, with empty jars, and torches inside the jars. And he said to them, Look at me, and do likewise; and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall you do. When I blow the shofar, I and all who are with me, then blow you the shofarot also on every side of the camp, and say, The sword of the L-rd, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men who were with him, came to the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had just set the watch; and they blew the shofarot, and broke the jars that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the shofarot, and broke the jars, and held the torches in their left hands, and the shofarot in their right hands to blow with; and they cried, The sword of the L-rd, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place around the camp; and all the camp ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred men blew the shofarot, and the L-rd set every man's sword against his fellow, throughout all the camp; and the army fled to Beth-Shittah in Zererah, and to the border of Abel-Meholah, to Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together from Naphtali, and from Asher, and from all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites. - And Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters as far as Beth-Barah and the Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters as far as Beth-Barah and the

Jordan. . And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan. **Judges 7:9-25**

D.

וְזָבַח וְזַלְמֻנָּע בְּקָרְקֹר וּמַחְנֵיהֶם עִמָּם כַּחֲמֹשֶׁת עָשָׂר אֱלֹף כָּל הַנוֹתָרִים מִכָּל מַחְנֵה בְּנֵי קָדָם וְהַנִּפְלִים מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֱלֹף אִישׁ שְׁלֹף חָרָב: וַיַּעַל גִּדְעוֹן דֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂכֹנֵי בְּאֵהָלִים מִקָּדָם לְזָבַח וַיִּגְבְּהָה וַיִּךְ אֶת הַמַּחְנֵה וְהַמַּחְנֵה הָיָה בָּטָח: וַיִּנּוֹסוּ זָבַח וְזַלְמֻנָּע וַיִּרְדּוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת שְׁנֵי | מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן אֶת זָבַח וְאֶת זַלְמֻנָּע וְכָל הַמַּחְנֵה הִחְרִיד: שׁוֹפְטִים ח:י-יב

Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of all the armies of the people of the east; for there fell one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew sword. - And Gideon went up by the road of those who live in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and struck the camp; for the camp thought itself secure. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and the whole camp was panic stricken. **Judges 8:10-12**

V. Gideon, the Judge of Israel

A.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵל גִּדְעוֹן מְשָׁל בָּנוּ גַם אַתָּה גַם בְּנֶךְ גַם בֶּן בְּנֶךְ כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִיַּד מִדְיָן: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעוֹן לֹא אֲמַשֵּׁל אֲנִי בָכֶם וְלֹא יִמְשָׁל בְּנֵי בָכֶם ד' יִמְשָׁל בָכֶם: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעוֹן אֲשַׁאֲלֶה מִכֶּם שְׂאֵלָה וְתָנוּ לִי אִישׁ נֶזֶם שְׁלָלוּ כִּי נִזְמֵי זָהָב לָהֶם כִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֵלִים הֵם: וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָתַן נָתַן וַיִּפְרְשׂוּ אֶת הַשְּׂמָלָה וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ שָׂמָה אִישׁ נֶזֶם שְׁלָלוּ: וַיְהִי מִשְׁקַל נִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר שָׂאֵל אֱלֹף וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת זָהָב לְכַד מִן הַשְּׁהָרָנִים וְהַנְּטָפוֹת וּבִגְדֵי הָאֲרָגָמָן שֶׁעַל מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן וּלְכַד מִן הָעֵנְקוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּצוּאֵרֵי גְמְלֵיהֶם: וַיַּעַשׂ אוֹתוֹ גִּדְעוֹן לְאֶפֻּד וַיִּצַּג אוֹתוֹ בְּעִירוֹ בְּעַפְרָה וַיִּזְנוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרָיו שֵׁם וַיְהִי לְגִדְעוֹן וּלְבֵיתוֹ לְמוֹקֵשׁ: וַיִּכְנַע מִדְיָן לְפָנָיו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָסְפוּ לְשַׂאת רֹאשׁם וּתְשַׁקֵּט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבַּעִים שָׁנָה בְיָמָיו גִּדְעוֹן: שׁוֹפְטִים ח:כב-כח

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us, both you, and your son, and your grandson also; for you have saved us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said to them, I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the L-rd shall rule over you. And Gideon said to them, I would make a request of you, that you would give me every man the ear rings of his booty. For they had golden ear rings, because they were Ishmaelites. And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and threw in there every man the ear rings of his booty. And the weight of the golden ear rings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple garments that were on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were around their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod of it, and put it in his city, in Ophrah; and all Israel went there to play the harlot after it; and it became a snare to Gideon, and to his house. Thus was Midian subdued before the people of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country had rest forty years in the days of Gideon. **Judges 8:22-28**

B.

וַיִּלְךְ יִרְבֵּעַל בֶּן יוֹאֵשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּבֵיתוֹ: וַלְגִדְעוֹן הָיוּ שְׁבַעִים בָּנִים יִצְאֵי יִרְכּוּ כִּי נָשִׁים רַבּוֹת הָיוּ לוֹ: וּפְלִגְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁכְם יְלֵדָה לוֹ גַם הָיָא בֶן וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת שְׁמוֹ אֲבִימֶלֶךְ: וַיָּמַת גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹאֵשׁ בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּקָבֶר יוֹאֵשׁ אָבִיו בְּעַפְרָה אֲבִי הָעֶזְרִי: וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר מֵת גִּדְעוֹן וַיָּשׁוּבוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּזְנוּ אַחֲרֵי הַבַּעֲלִים וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ לָהֶם בַּעַל בְּרִית לְאֱלֹהִים: וְלֹא זָכְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת ד' א-לֹהֵיהֶם הַמַּצִּיל אוֹתָם מִיַּד כָּל

אִיבִיהֶם מִסְבִּיב: וְלֹא עָשׂוּ חֶסֶד עִם בֵּית יִרְבֵּעַל גְּדֵעוֹן כְּכֹל הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל: שׁוֹפְטִים
ה:כט-לה

And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. - And Gideon had fathered seventy sons; for he had many wives. And his concubine who was in Shechem, she also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulcher of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the people of Israel turned again, and played the harlot after Baalim, and made Baal-Berith their god. And the people of Israel remembered not the L-rd their G-d, who had saved them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; Nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, that is Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shown to Israel. **Judges 8:29-35**

C.

ויעשו בני ישראל הרע בעיני ד' וימכרום ד' ביד מדין ז' שנים. וארבעים שנה של גדעון וז' שני מדין לא עלו מתוכן. סדר עולם רבה פרק י"ב

And the people of Israel did evil before the eyes of G-d and He gave them over to the dominion of Midian for a period of seven years. The forty years of Gideon does not include the seven years of Midianite servitude. **Seder Olam, Chapter 12**

VI. The Fall of the House of Gideon

A.

וַיֵּלֶךְ אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בֶּן יִרְבֵּעַל שְׂכֵמָה אֶל אַחֵי אִמּוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַאֲלֵ כָל מְשֻׁפָּחַת בֵּית אָבִי אִמּוֹ לֵאמֹר: דְּבַרוּ נָא בְּאָזְנֵי כָל בְּעָלֵי שְׂכָם מַה טוֹב לָכֶם הַמְשֻׁל בְּכֶם שְׁבַעִים אִישׁ כָּל בְּנֵי יִרְבֵּעַל אִם מְשֻׁל בְּכֶם אִישׁ אֶחָד וַזְכַּרְתֶּם כִּי עֲצַמְכֶם וּבְשָׂרְכֶם אָנִי: וַיְדַבְּרוּ אַחֵי אִמּוֹ עָלָיו בְּאָזְנֵי כָל בְּעָלֵי שְׂכָם אֵת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֵּט לָבָם אַחֲרֵי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ כִּי אָמְרוּ אַחֲיָנוּ הוּא: וַיִּתְּנוּ-לוֹ שְׁבַעִים כֶּסֶף מִבַּיִת בְּעַל בְּרִית וַיִּשְׁכַּר בָּהֶם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אַנְשִׁים רַיקִים וּפְחָזִים וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרָיו: וַיָּבֹא בֵית-אָבִיו עֲפְרָתָה וַיַּהַרְגֵה אֶת-אָחָיו בְּנֵי-יִרְבֵּעַל שְׁבַעִים אִישׁ עַל-אֶבֶן אַחַת וַיִּוֹתֵר יוֹתָם בֶּן-יִרְבֵּעַל הַקָּטָן כִּי נִחְבָּא: וַיֹּאסְפוּ כָל-בְּעָלֵי שְׂכָם וְכָל-בֵּית מְלֹא וַיִּלְכוּ וַיִּמְלִיכוּ אֶת-אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְמֶלֶךְ עִם-אֱלֹוֹן מִצָּב אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׂכָם: שׁוֹפְטִים ט:א-ו

And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's brothers, and talked with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, Speak, I beg you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether it is better for you, that all the sons of Jerubbaal, who are seventy persons, should reign over you, or that only one should reign over you? Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. And his mother's brothers spoke of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words; and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. And they gave him seventy pieces of silver from the house of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired vain and reckless persons, who followed him. And he went to his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy persons, upon one stone; however Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem. **Judges 9:1-6**

B.

וַיִּגְדּוּ לְיוֹתָם וַיִּלְךְ וַיַּעֲמֵד בְּרֹאשׁ הַר גְּרִזִים וַיִּשָּׂא קוֹלוֹ וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שְׁמְעוּ אֵלַי בְּעַלְי שְׁכֶם וַיִּשְׁמַע אֲלֵיכֶם אֲ-לֵהִים: הַלֹּחֵד הִלְכוּ הָעֵצִים לְמַשַּׁח עֲלֵיהֶם מֶלֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְזִית מְלַכָּה עָלֵינוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַזִּית הִחְדַּלְתִּי אֶת דְּשָׁנִי אֲשֶׁר בִּי יִכְבְּדוּ אֲ-לֵהִים וְאֲנָשִׁים וְהִלְכְתִּי לְנוּעַ עַל הָעֵצִים: וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעֵצִים לְתִאֲנָה לְכִי אֶת מְלָכִי עָלֵינוּ: וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַתִּאֲנָה הִחְדַּלְתִּי אֶת מְתָקִי וְאֶת תְּנוּבַתִּי הַטּוֹבָה וְהִלְכְתִּי לְנוּעַ עַל הָעֵצִים: וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעֵצִים לְגִפְנֹן לְכִי אֶת מְלָכִי עָלֵינוּ: וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַגִּפְנֹן הִחְדַּלְתִּי אֶת תִּירוּשֵׁי הַמַּשְׁמַח אֲ-לֵהִים וְאֲנָשִׁים וְהִלְכְתִּי לְנוּעַ עַל הָעֵצִים: וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל הָעֵצִים אֶל הָאֲטָד לֵךְ אִתָּה מֶלֶךְ עָלֵינוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֲטָד אֶל הָעֵצִים אִם בָּאֲמַת אַתֶּם מַשְׁחִים אִתִּי לְמֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיכֶם בְּאוֹ חֶסֶד בְּצַלִּי וְאִם אֵין תִּצָּא אִשׁ מִן הָאֲטָד וְתֹאכַל אֶת אַרְזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן: וַעֲתָה אִם בָּאֲמַת וּבְתַמִּים עֲשִׂיתֶם וּתְמַלִּיכוּ אֶת אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וְאִם טוֹבָה עֲשִׂיתֶם עִם יָרְבֶּעַל וְעִם בֵּיתוֹ וְאִם כְּגַמּוּל יָדְיוֹ עֲשִׂיתֶם לוֹ: אֲשֶׁר נִלְחַם אֲבִי עֲלֵיכֶם וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶת נַפְשׁוֹ מִנְּגֵד וַיִּצַּל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִדְיָן: וְאַתֶּם קָמַתֶם עַל בֵּית אָבִי הַיּוֹם וַתְּהַרְגוּ אֶת בְּנָיו שְׁבַעִים אִישׁ עַל אַבְנֵי אַחַת וַתְּמַלִּיכוּ אֶת אַבִּימֶלֶךְ בֶּן אֲמָתוֹ עַל בְּעַלְי שְׁכֶם כִּי אַחִיכֶם הוּא: וְאִם בָּאֲמַת וּבְתַמִּים עֲשִׂיתֶם עִם יָרְבֶּעַל וְעִם בֵּיתוֹ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שְׁמַחוּ בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁמַח גַּם הוּא בְכֶם: וְאִם אֵין תִּצָּא אִשׁ מֵאַבִּימֶלֶךְ וְתֹאכַל אֶת בְּעַלְי שְׁכֶם וְאֶת בֵּית מְלֹא וְתִצָּא אִשׁ מִבְּעַלְי שְׁכֶם וּמִבֵּית מְלֹא וְתֹאכַל אֶת אַבִּימֶלֶךְ: וַיָּנֶס יוֹתָם וַיִּבְרַח וַיִּלְךְ בְּאֶרֶז וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם מִפְּנֵי אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אַחִיו: שׁוֹפְטִים ט:כב-כד

And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said to them, Listen to me, you men of Shechem, that G-d may listen to you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, Reign over us. But the olive tree said to them, Should I leave my fatness, by which they honor G-d and man, and go to sway over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come, and reign over us. But the fig tree said to them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to sway over the trees? Then said the trees to the vine, Come, and reign over us. And the vine said to them, Should I leave my wine, which cheers G-d and man, and go to sway over the trees? Then said all the trees to the bramble, Come, and reign over us. And the bramble said to the trees, If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. Now therefore, if you have done truly and sincerely, in that you have made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him according to the deserving of his hands; For my father fought for you, and risked his life, and saved you from the hand of Midian; And you have risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, seventy persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother; If you then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you; But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and lived there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

Judges 9:7-21

C.

וַיִּשַׁר אַבִּימֶלֶךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים: וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲ-לֵהִים רוּחַ רָעָה בֵּין אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וּבֵין בְּעַלְי שְׁכֶם וַיִּבְגְּדוּ בְּעַלְי-שְׁכֶם בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: לְבוֹא חָמָס שְׁבַעִים בְּנֵי-יָרְבֶּעַל וּדְמָם לְשׁוּם עַל אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אַחִיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הָרַג אוֹתָם וְעַל בְּעַלְי שְׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר חִזְקוֹ אֶת יָדְיוֹ לְהָרַג אֶת אַחִיו. שׁוֹפְטִים ט:כב-כד

When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, Then G-d sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with

Abimelech; That the cruelty done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be upon Abimelech their brother, who slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers. **Judges 9:22-24**

D.

וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרַת וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם הַשְּׂדֵה וַיִּגְדּוּ לְאַבְיִמֶלֶךְ: וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָעָם וַיַּחֲצֵם לְשִׁלְשָׁה רֵאשִׁים וַיֵּאָרֵב בַּשְּׂדֵה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הָעָם יֹצֵא מִן הָעִיר וַיִּקָּם עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּכֹּם: וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְהָרָאשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ פָּשְׁטוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ פֶתַח שַׁעַר הָעִיר וּשְׁנֵי הָרָאשִׁים פָּשְׁטוּ עַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר בַּשְּׂדֵה וַיִּכּוּם: וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ נִלְחָם בְּעִיר כָּל הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּלְכֹּד אֶת הָעִיר וְאֶת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בָּהּ הָרַג וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הָעִיר וַיִּזְרַעָהּ מֶלֶח: וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָּל בְּעָלֵי מַגְדָּל שְׂכָם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל צָרִיחַ בֵּית אֵל בְּרִית: וַיִּגְדּוּ לְאַבְיִמֶלֶךְ כִּי הִתְקַבְּצוּ כָּל בְּעָלֵי מַגְדָּל שְׂכָם: וַיַּעַל אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ הַר צַלְמוֹן הוּא וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֶת הַקְּרָדְמוֹת בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּכְרַת שׁוֹכֵת עֵצִים וַיִּשְׁאַהֶּ וַיִּשֶׂם עַל שַׁכְמוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ מָה רְאִיתֶם עֲשִׂיתִי מִהֲרֹו עֲשׂוּ כְמוֹנִי: וַיִּכְרַתוּ גַם כָּל הָעָם אִישׁ שׁוֹכֵה וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַיִּשְׂמֹו עַל הַצָּרִיחַ וַיִּצִּיתוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הַצָּרִיחַ בָּאֵשׁ וַיָּמָתוּ גַם כָּל אַנְשֵׁי מַגְדָּל שְׂכָם כְּאֵלֶּף אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה: וַיִּלְךְ אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֶל תַּבְּיָן וַיַּחֲזֵן בְּתַבְּיָן וַיִּלְכְּדֶהָ: וּמַגְדָּל עֻז הָיְתָה בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּנְסוּ שָׁמָּה כָּל הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים וְכָל בְּעָלֵי הָעִיר וַיִּסְגְּרוּ בַּעֲדָם וַיַּעֲלוּ עַל גֵּג הַמַּגְדָּל: וַיָּבֹא אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ עַד הַמַּגְדָּל וַיִּלְחָם בּוֹ וַיִּגַּשׁ עַד פֶּתַח הַמַּגְדָּל לְשַׁרְפוֹ בָּאֵשׁ: וַתִּשְׁלַךְ אִשָּׁה אַחַת פֶּלַח רֹכֵב עַל רֹאשׁ אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַתִּרְץ אֶת גִּלְגָּלָתוֹ: וַיִּקְרָא מִהֲרָה אֶל הַנְּעַר | נִשְׂא כְלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ שְׁלַף חֶרֶבְךָ וּמוֹתֵתְנִי פֶן יֹאמְרוּ לִי אִשָּׁה הִרְגָתְהוּ וַיִּדְקָרְהוּ נִעְרוּ וַיָּמָתוּ: וַיִּרְאוּ אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי מֵת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַיִּלְכוּ אִישׁ לְמִקְמוֹ: וַיָּשֵׁב אֶל־לְהִים אֶת רַעַת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְאָבִיו לְהָרַג אֶת שְׁבַעִים אָחָיו: וְאֵת כָּל רַעַת אַנְשֵׁי שְׂכָם הַשֵּׁיב אֶל־לְהִים בְּרֹאשָׁם וַתָּבֹא אֲלֵיהֶם קָלְלַת יוֹתָם בֶּן יִרְבָּעֵל: שׁוֹפְטִים ט:מב-נז

And it came to pass on the next day, that the people went out to the field; and they told Abimelech. And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and waited in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people came out of the city; and he rose up against them, and struck them. And Abimelech, and the company who was with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city; and the two other companies ran upon all the people who were in the fields, and slew them. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people who were in there, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt. And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into the fortress of the house of the god El-Berith. And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. And Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him; and Abimelech took an ax in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said to the people who were with him, What you have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the fortress, and set the fortress on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women. Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. But there was a strong tower in the city, and there fled all the men and women, and all those of the city, and shut themselves in, and went up to the top of the tower. And Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and approached right up to the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman threw an upper millstone upon Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull. Then he called hastily to the young man his armor bearer, and said to him, Draw your sword, and slay me, that men should not say of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man to his place. Thus G-d requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did to his father, in slaying his seventy brothers; And all the evil of the men of Shechem G-d requited upon their heads; and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal. **Judges 9:42-57**