Judges #2

Gideon as the Transitional Figure in the Book of Judges

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Judges chapter 8

⁴Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed it. The three hundred men with him were famished, but still in pursuit. ⁵He said to the people of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to the men who are following me, for they are famished, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." ⁶But the officials of Succoth replied, "Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your troops?" ⁷"I swear," declared Gideon, "when the LORD delivers Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, I'll thresh your bodies upon desert thorns and briers!" ⁸From there he went up to Penuel and made the same request of them; but the people of Penuel gave him the same reply as the people of Succoth. ⁹So he also threatened the people of Penuel: "When I come back safe, I'll tear down this tower!"...

¹⁵Then he came to the people of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you mocked me, saying, 'Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give your famished men bread?" ¹⁶And he took the elders of the city and, [bringing] desert thorns and briers, he punished the people of Succoth with them. ¹⁷As for Penuel, he tore down its tower and killed the townspeople.

¹⁸Then he asked Zebah and Zalmunna, "Those men you killed at Tabor, what were they like?" "They looked just like you," they replied, "like sons of a king." ¹⁹"They were my brothers," he declared, "the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if you had spared them, I would not kill you." ²⁰And he commanded his oldest son Jether, "Go kill them!" But the boy did not draw his sword, for he was timid, being still a boy. ²¹Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Come, you slay us; for strength comes with manhood." So Gideon went over and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescents that were on the necks of their camels.

²²Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us—you, your son, and your grandson as well; for you have saved us from the Midianites." ²³But Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you myself, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD alone shall rule over you."

²⁴And Gideon said to them, "I have a request to make of you: Each of you give me the earring he received as booty." ...²⁷Gideon made an ephod of this gold and set it up in his own town of Ophrah. There all Israel went astray after it, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

²⁸Thus Midian submitted to the Israelites and did not raise its head again; and the land was tranquil for forty years in Gideon's time. ²⁹So Jerubbaal son of Joash retired to his own house. ³⁰Gideon had seventy sons of his own issue, for he had many wives. ³¹A son was also born to him by his concubine in Shechem, and he named him Abimelech. ³²Gideon son of Joash died at a ripe old age, and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash at Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

³³After Gideon died, the Israelites again went astray after the Baalim, and they adopted Baal-berith as a god. ³⁴The Israelites gave no thought to the LORD their God, who saved them from all the enemies around them. ³⁵Nor did they show loyalty to the house of Jerubbaal-Gideon in return for all the good that he had done for Israel.

שופטים פרק ח

(ד) וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן הַיַּרְדֵּנָה עֹבֵר הוּא וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ עֲיֵפִים וְרֹדְפִים : (ה) וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַנְשֵׁי קְבֹּוֹת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ עֲיֵפִים וְרִדְפִים : (ה) וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַנְשֵׁי סְכּוֹת הְנוּ נָא כִּכְּרוֹת לֶחֶם לָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלָי כִּי עֲיֵפִים הֵם וְאָנֹכִי רֹדֵף אַחֲרֵי זֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן : (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁרֵי סֻכּּוֹת הַכַּף זֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע עַתָּה בְּיֻדֶּךְ כִּי נָתֵּן לִצְּבָאֲךְ לָחֶם : (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן לְבַּתְ בְּעָת הִי אֶת זֶבַח וְאֶת צַלְמֻנָּע בְּיָדִי וְדַשְׁתִּי אֶת בְּשַׁרְכֶם אֶת קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת הַבּּרְקְנִים : (ח) וַיִּאמֶר מְשִׁם פְּנוּאֵל וַיְדַבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶם כָּזֹאת וַיַּצְנִוּ אוֹתוֹ אַנְשֵׁי פְנוּאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר עָנוּ אַנְשִׁי סְכּּוֹת : (ט) וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם לְאַנְשִׁי פְנוּאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּשׁוֹבִי בְשָׁלוֹם אֶתֹּץ אֶת הַמִּגְדָּל הַיָּה : פ

...(טו) וַיָּבֹא אֶל אַנְשֵׁי סֻכּּוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה זֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע אֲשֶׁר חֵרַפְתֶּם אוֹתִי לֵאמֹר הַכַּף זֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע עַתָּה בְּיָדֶךְ כִּי נִתֵּן לַאֲנָשֶׁיךְּ הַיְּעֵפִים לָחֶם: (טז) וַיִּקַח אֶת זְקְנֵי הָעִיר וְאֶת קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת הַבַּרְקַנִים וַיִּדַע בָּהֶם אֵת אַנִשֵּׁי סָכּוֹת: (יז) וְאֶת מִגְדַּל פִּנוּאֵל נָתַץ וַיַּהַרג אֶת אַנִשֵּי הָעִיר:

(יח) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל זֶבַח וְאֶל צַלְמֻנָּע אֵיפֹה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הֲרַגְתֶּם בְּתָבוֹר וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּמוֹךּ כְמוֹהֶם אֶחָד כְּתֹאֵר הָנִי הַמֶּלֶך: (יט) וַיֹּאמֵר אַחַי בְּנִי אִמִּי הֵם חַי ה׳ לוּ הַחֲיִתֶּם אוֹתָם לֹא הָרַגְתִּי אֶתְכֶם: (כ) נַלֹּאמֶר לְיֶתֶר בְּכוֹרוֹ קוּם הֲרֹג אוֹתָם וְלֹא שָׁלַף הַנַּעַר חַרְבּוֹ כִּי יָרֵא כִּי עוֹדֶנוּ נָעַר: (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר זֶבַח וְצִלְמֵנָע קוּם אַתָּה וּפְגַע בָּנוּ כִּי כָאִישׁ גְּבוּרְתוֹ וַיִּקָם גִּדְעוֹן וַיַּהֲרֹג אֶת זֶבַח וְאֶת צַלְמֻנְּע וַיִּקַּח אֶת הַשְּׁהֵריִי גַּמַלִּיהֶם:

(כב) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל גִּדְעוֹן מְשָׁל בָּנוּ גַּם אַתָּה גַּם בִּנְךְ גַּם בֶּן בְּנֶךְ כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִיַּד מִדְיָן : (כג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעוֹן לֹא אֶמְשֹׁל אֲנִי בָּכֶם וְלֹא יִמְשֹׁל בְּנִי בָּכֶם ה׳ יִמְשֹׁל בָּכֶם :

(כד) וַיּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעוֹן אֶשְׁאֲלֶה מִכֶּם שְׁאֵלֶה וּתְנוּ לִי אִישׁ נֶזֶם שְׁלָלוֹ...(כז) וַיַּעֵשׂ אוֹתוֹ גִּדְעוֹן לָאֲפוֹד וַיַּצֵג אוֹתוֹ בִעִירוֹ בִּעָפָרָה וַיִּזְנוּ כַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲחַרִיו שַׁם וַיְהִי לְגִּדְעוֹן וּלְבֵיתוֹ לִמוֹקֵשׁ :

(כח) וַיִּפָּנַע מִדְיָן לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָסְפוּ לָשֵׁאת רֹאשָׁם וַתִּשְׁלְט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בִּימֵי גִדְעוֹן : פ (כט) וַיֵּלֶדְ יְרָבַּעַל בֶּן יוֹאָשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּבֵיתוֹ : (ל) וּלְגִדְעוֹן הָיוּ שִׁבְעִים בָּנִים יִּצְאֵי יְרֵכוֹ כִּי נָשִׁים רַבּוֹת הָיוּ לוֹ : (לֹא) וּפִילַגְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁכֶם יָלְדָה לּוֹ גֵם הִיא בֵּן וַיָּשֶׁם אֶת שְׁמוֹ אֲבִימֶלֶדְּ : (לב) וַיָּמָת גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹאָשׁ בְּשֵׂיבָה טוֹבָה וַיִּקְבֵר בְּקֶבֶר יוֹאָשׁ אָבִיוֹ בְּעָבְרָה אֲבִי הָעֶזְרִי : פ

(לג) וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר מֵת גִּדְעוֹן וַיָּשׁוּבוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּיְנוּ אַחֲרֵי הַבְּעָלִים וַיָּשִּׂימוּ לֶהֶם בַּעַל בְּרִית לֵאלֹהִים: (לד) וְלֹא זָכְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת ה׳ אֱ-לֹקֵיהֶם הַפַּצִיל אוֹתָם מִיַּד כָּל אֹיְבֵיהֶם מִסְּבִיב: (לה) וְלֹא עָשׂוּ חֵסֶד עִם בֵּית יִרָבַּעַל גִּדְעוֹן כִּכָל הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

1. <u>I Samuel 12:12</u>

But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was advancing against you, you said to me, 'No, we must have a king reigning over us'—though the Lord your God is your King.

שמואל אי יב:יב

ַתּרְאוּ כִּי נָחָשׁ מֶּלֶדְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן בָּא עֲלֵיכֶם וַתּּאמְרוּ לִי לֹא כִּי מֶלֶדְ יִמְלֹדְ עָלֵינוּ וַה׳ אֱ-לֹקֵיכֶם מַלָכָּכֶם :

2. Judges 7:18

When I and all those with me blow our horns, you too, all around the camp, will blow your horns and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

שופטים ז:יח

ְוָתֶקַעְתִּי בַּשׁוֹפָר אָנֹכִי וְכָל אֲשֶׁר אִתִּי וּתְקַעְתֶּם בַּשׁוֹפָרוֹת גַּם אַתֶּם סְבִיבוֹת כָּל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַאֲמַרְתֶּם לַה׳ וּלִגִּדְעוֹן:

3. <u>Judges 21:25</u>

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did as he pleased.

שופטים כא:כה

: בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה

SUMMARY CHART

	Positive-Idealistic Motives	Negative-Personal Motives
Reason for punishing Succoth and Penuel	National Security	They mocked Gideon
Reason for killing Midianite kings	They were enemies of Israel	They killed Gideon's brothers
Reason for appointing Jether to kill kings		Possibly to train his eldest son as his successor
Reason for declining monarchy	The Lord is your King	
Reasons for ephod	Commemorate God's role in the victory Possibly a divining agent	To establish Gideon's hometown as a shrine, and to bolster his sons' claim as future leaders
Name of Abimelech	God is King	My father (= Gideon) is king