

Judges 8:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

Analysis

Gideon made an ephod thereof—the ephod (עֶפֹד) was normally the high priest's sacred garment (Exodus 28:6-14), associated with seeking divine guidance. Gideon's creation of an ephod in Ophrah, outside the divinely appointed Tabernacle at Shiloh, constituted unauthorized worship—competing with the legitimate priesthood. He placed it **in his city, even in Ophrah**, establishing a rival worship center.

All Israel went thither a whoring after it (וַיֵּצְאוּ כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרָיו, vayiznu chol-yisra'el acharav)—the verb 'to go whoring' (זָנָה, zarah) is the consistent biblical metaphor for spiritual adultery. What Gideon intended as a memorial became an idol. **Which thing became a snare** (מִקְשָׁ, moqesh, 'trap' or 'bait-stick') **unto Gideon, and to his house**—the very object he created ensnared him. His son Abimelech's murderous reign (chapter 9) demonstrates this snare's deadly consequences. Good intentions cannot sanctify unauthorized worship; obedience to God's prescribed means is essential.

Historical Context

The Tabernacle and legitimate priesthood were at Shiloh during this period (Joshua 18:1; 1 Samuel 1:3). Gideon's establishment of an unauthorized worship site violated the centralization of worship commanded in Deuteronomy 12:5-14.

This foreshadows the later division when Jeroboam set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-30), using similar logic—convenience over obedience.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do well-intentioned religious innovations become snares when they depart from Scripture?
2. In what ways do you create 'unauthorized worship'—practices that feel spiritual but lack biblical warrant?
3. What does this reveal about why God prescribes specific means of worship rather than leaving it to human creativity?

Interlinear Text

בְּעִירוֹ	אוֹת וְ	וַיֵּצֵא	לְאֵפֹד וְ	לְגִדְעוֹ וְ	אוֹת וְ
it in his city	made	thereof and put	an ephod	And Gideon	it in his city
H5892	H853	H3322	H646	H1439	H853
שֵׁם	אַחֲרָיו	יִשְׂרָאֵל	כָּל	וַיֵּזֶן וְ	בְּעֶפְרָה
after	and all Israel	and all Israel	went thither a whoring	even in Ophrah	even in Ophrah
H310	H3478	H3605	H2181	H6084	H6084
לְמוֹקֵשׁ:	וּלְבֵיתוֹ	לְגִדְעוֹ וְ	וַיְהִי יְ		
it which thing became a snare	and to his house	And Gideon	and to his house		
H4170	H1004	H1439	H1961		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 106:39 (Parallel theme): Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

Judges 18:14 (Parallel theme): Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

Judges 17:5 (Creation): And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

Deuteronomy 7:16 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee.

Judges 18:17 (Parallel theme): And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war.

Exodus 23:33 (Parallel theme): They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

Judges 6:24 (Parallel theme): Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.