

Judges 8:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten:
for he had many wives.

Analysis

Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten—seventy sons, an extraordinary number indicating numerous wives. The phrase **of his body begotten** (יֵצְאֵי יָרֵכֹוֹ, yotze'ei yerecho, 'going forth from his thigh') is a Hebrew euphemism emphasizing biological paternity. **For he had many wives** (נָשִׁים רַבּוֹת, nashim rabot)—the explanation comes as an indictment, not justification.

This directly violates Deuteronomy 17:17's command that Israel's future king 'shall not multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away.' Though Gideon refused the title of king, he lived as one, accumulating the very things forbidden to kingship. Polygamy invariably produced rivalry, jealousy, and violence—as the subsequent Abimelech narrative demonstrates (chapter 9). When leaders ignore God's design for marriage and family, they sow seeds of destruction that germinate in the next generation. Sexual ethics and spiritual integrity cannot be separated.

Historical Context

Polygamy, while practiced by the patriarchs and later kings, was never God's ideal, which He established as monogamy in Genesis 2:24. Ancient Near Eastern kings commonly maintained large harems as displays of wealth, power, and diplomatic alliances. Gideon's seventy sons recall Gideon's seventy brothers murdered by Abimelech (9:5) and the seventy sons of Ahab later killed (2 Kings 10:1-7)—large families became targets in succession disputes.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do you rationalize behaviors that contradict biblical standards because of cultural acceptance?
2. In what ways do violations of God's design for sexuality and family affect future generations?
3. Where are you living like the world while claiming to follow Christ?

Interlinear Text

וְלִגְדֵּעַ וְ	הָיוּ	שְׁבַע יָם	בְּנֵי יָם	יִצְאָ י	יָרַח וְ	כִּי
And Gideon	H1961	had threescore and ten	sons	begotten	of his body	H3588
H1439		H7657	H1121	H3318	H3409	
נָשִׁים יָם	רַב וְ	הָיוּ	לֹ:			
wives	for he had many	H1961	H0			
H802	H7227					

Additional Cross-References

Judges 9:2 (Parallel theme): Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.

Judges 9:5 (Parallel theme): And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

