

Judges 8:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

Analysis

And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

Gideon's response mingles prophetic certainty with severe threatened judgment. The phrase **when the LORD hath delivered** (betet Yahweh, בְּתַת יְהוָה) uses the infinitive construct, expressing absolute confidence—not "if" but "when" God grants victory. This echoes Gideon's earlier statement to Succoth (verse 5) identifying his mission as divine, not personal. His certainty rests on God's promise, contrasting sharply with Succoth's pragmatic doubt.

The threatened punishment—**I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers** (vedashti et-besarkhem et-qotsei hamidbar ve'et-habarqanim, וְדַשְׁתִּי אֶת-בָּשָׂרְכֶם אֶת-קֹצִי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת-בָּרְקָנִים)—is brutal and specific. The verb *dush* (דַשׁ, "thresh, trample") was used for threshing grain, separating wheat from chaff by dragging sledges over it. Applied to human flesh with thorny branches, this describes excruciating torture. The *qotsim* (קֹצִים, "thorns") and *barqanim* (בָּרְקָנִים, "briers") of the wilderness were the same obstacles that made desert travel painful—now weaponized for punishment.

This severity reflects Old Testament judicial standards where civil authorities executed God's justice. Succoth's refusal wasn't mere inhospitality but covenant

treason—refusing to support Israel's divinely appointed deliverer during a war of national survival. Deuteronomy 20:10-15 prescribed treatment of cities that refused peace terms. However, Gideon's personal execution of judgment (rather than judicial process) and the specific brutality suggest anger mixed with righteous zeal. The New Testament revelation of enemy love (Matthew 5:44, Romans 12:19-21) doesn't apply to Old Testament civil magistrates executing temporal judgment but does transform Christian response to personal offense.

Historical Context

Threshing sledges were common agricultural implements—wooden platforms with sharp stones or metal fragments on the underside, dragged over grain by oxen to separate kernels from husks. Using such tools or thorny branches on human flesh would cause severe lacerations, likely fatal if applied extensively. This threatened punishment falls within documented ancient Near Eastern judicial punishments, though its brutality shocks modern sensibilities.

The wilderness thorns Gideon referenced grew abundantly in the Jordan Valley and Transjordan regions. Species like the *Ziziphus spina-christi* (Christ-thorn) and various acacia species produced long, sharp thorns that could penetrate leather sandals. These plants symbolized cursed ground (Genesis 3:18) and divine judgment (Isaiah 34:13). Gideon's threat thus invoked both practical means (available materials) and symbolic significance (judgment for covenant violation).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Gideon's certainty 'when the LORD hath delivered' model confidence in God's promises versus Succoth's demand for proof?

2. What is the relationship between Old Testament civil justice (like Gideon's threatened punishment) and New Testament commands to love enemies?
3. How should Christians respond to those who refuse support for kingdom work—with confrontation or patient trust in God's vindication?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר	וַיֹּאמֶר	לְכָי	בַּתְּתִגְעַל	יְהִי הָרָא	אָתָּה
said	And Gideon	H3651	hath delivered	Therefore when the LORD	H853
H559	H1439		H5414	H3068	
בְּחַדְשָׁתִי	בַּיּוֹם	צָלָמָנָה	עַל	זֶבַח	בְּשֶׁרֶךְ מַעֲלָה
then I will tear	into mine hand	and Zalmunna	and	Zebah	your flesh
H853	H6759	H2078	H3027	H1758	H1320
אָתָּה	וְקַוְעַת	רַמְדָנָה	בְּרַקְעָנִים	אָתָּה	אָתָּה
with the thorns	of the wilderness	H4057	and with briers	H854	H1303
H854	H6975				

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