

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 26, Judges 6-9 – Gideon and the Aftermath Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 26, Judges 6-9 – Gideon and the Aftermath, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. David Howard **analyzes** Judges 6-9, focusing on **Gideon's story** and its aftermath. It **examines** Gideon's encounters with the angel of the Lord, his actions against Baal worship, and his subsequent military victories. The lecture also **discusses** the complex question of the angel of the Lord's identity, **explores** Gideon's flawed acceptance of kingship, and **concludes** with an account of Gideon's son Abimelech's violent reign and its tragic end. The narrative highlights the **themes** of faith, leadership, and the dangers of human ambition in the context of Israel's history.

**2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 26 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Joshua-Ruth).**



**Howard_Josh_Ruth
_Session26.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 26, Judges 6-9 – Gideon and the Aftermath

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Howard_Josh_Ruth_EN_Session26_Judg6_9.pdf":

Briefing Document: Judges 6-9 - Gideon and the Aftermath

Source: Excerpts from Dr. David Howard's lecture, "Joshua-Ruth, Session 26, Judges 6-9 Gideon and the Aftermath"

Date: 2024

Overview: This lecture by Dr. David Howard covers the story of Gideon and his son Abimelech in Judges 6-9. It analyzes Gideon's rise as a judge, his interactions with God, and the mixed legacy he leaves behind. The lecture also examines the power grab by Gideon's son, Abimelech, and the consequences of that decision. Dr. Howard also uses this section of scripture as a jumping-off point for examining the nature of the "Angel of the Lord", what the ideal Israelite king should be, and how the book of Judges illustrates that Israel often failed to follow God's clear direction.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Cycle of Sin and Deliverance:

- The narrative begins with Israel once again falling into sin, leading to oppression by the Midianites for seven years. This sets up the pattern of Israel's repeated cycle of sin, oppression, crying out to God, and deliverance by a judge. "And chapter 6, verse 1, begins by telling us that again, Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. God gave them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years..."
- This reiterates the central theme of Judges: Israel's infidelity to God resulting in their subjugation by other nations.

2. The Angel of the Lord:

- The lecture examines the identity of the "Angel of the Lord," exploring three main interpretations: 1) a regular angel, a messenger of God; 2) a temporary appearance of God himself; 3) a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ.
- Dr. Howard notes that in Exodus 23:20-23, the Angel of the Lord seems to have God's authority, stating, "for my name is in it", while in Exodus 32-33 the angel is presented as more separate from God.

- Dr. Howard states that although many evangelicals believe the Angel to be a pre-incarnate Christ, he is more inclined to believe that this is not the case, and it could just be a separate messenger. He states "if these appearances were actually Jesus in pre-incarnate form, it seems very strange that the New Testament would not have made something of that. It appears to me that it would have been very easy for Matthew or others to say, that was Jesus, and Jesus is now fulfilling those things. So, to me, the silence in the New Testament is an important piece in the puzzle."
- Ultimately, Dr. Howard suggests the "angel of the Lord" may represent different things in different situations, ranging from a separate messenger of God to a close representative of him. He notes that in Gideon's day, the angel seems to be closely bound to the nature of God.

3. Gideon's Hesitancy and God's Grace:

- Gideon is initially hesitant to accept his calling, asking for multiple signs from God. "In verse 15, he says, I'm the least of people, but God says, in verse 16, I will be with you."
- Gideon's repeated requests for signs using the fleece (wet then dry and then the reverse) are presented as a lack of faith on his part, especially considering that God had already clearly given him instructions.
- Dr. Howard suggests that while God graciously responds to Gideon's requests, this story should not serve as a model for seeking God's will, especially in cases where God's will is clear. He contrasts Gideon's actions with figures like Isaiah, who readily volunteered to serve God, or the disciples who immediately followed Christ.

4. The Importance of God in Deliverance:

- God reduces Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 to demonstrate that victory comes from God, not military might. "God says to Gideon that you have too many men. Here, verse 2. And so, Gideon says whoever is afraid and wants to go home, feel free to go home. Turns out 22,000 left and there's 10,000 left. So, the number that he has appears to have been 32,000 at the beginning."
- The victory against the Midianites is achieved through unconventional means - trumpets, torches, and empty jars - emphasizing God's intervention. "And he tells them in verse 19 when I blow the trumpet, I and everybody with me, then blow

your trumpets on every side of the camp and shout out for the Lord and for Gideon."

- The Midianite's interpretation of a dream regarding a cake of barley defeating their camp further highlights that they realize that they cannot win against Israel because of God's power. "This is no other than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, the man of Israel. God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp."

5. Gideon's Mixed Legacy:

- Despite his victory, Gideon fails to give God full credit. In chapter 8, the people offer Gideon the kingship over Israel. "In some ways it shouldn't be real surprising. But it's remarkable because the men of Israel came to Gideon, verse 22, and said, Rule over us, you, your son, your grandson also."
- While Gideon initially refuses to rule, stating "I will not rule over you. My son will not rule over you. The Lord, Yahweh, will rule over you.", he then takes spoils from the battle to make an ephod. This ephod becomes an object of idolatry for Israel. "Gideon made an ephod out of it and put it in his city in Ophrah...and all Israel whored after it. All of Israel prostituted themselves after it."
- Gideon's act of making an ephod out of the spoils, and the people's subsequent "whoring" after it, is presented as a failure, a deviation from the lesson that they should put their faith in God.
- Gideon's actions demonstrate a lack of understanding of the core issue: the people's reliance on human leadership rather than God. This is demonstrated by the fact that they have failed to learn the lesson from the winnowing down of the army that brought victory over the Midianites - that God is the one who brings victory, not the actions of humans.
- He names his son Abimelech, which means "my father is king," undermining his statement that God was their king. "And then the word for king is Melech. So, we notice that Gideon is naming his son, my father the king, or my father is king. So that's kind of ironic in light of his statement in verse 23 where it says, I will not rule over you, my son will not rule over you, the Lord will rule over you, and yet he names his son, my dad's king."
- Gideon's story is a reminder that even those chosen by God can fall short of living a life fully devoted to Him and that a life following God to the end is not always a guarantee, no matter the successes in the beginning.

6. Abimelech's Power Grab:

- Abimelech, one of Gideon's sons, seizes power by killing his brothers, except for Jotham, who escapes.
- This power grab is seen as a direct result of the people's desire for a king like the nations around them, "it appears to me that it kind of organically leads out of this request for the king in chapter 8."
- Dr. Howard contrasts this desire with the ideal Israelite king, as described in Deuteronomy 17, emphasizing that the king should not be a great warrior but should instead be rooted in God's word.
- Abimelech's reign is marked by violence, conflict, and ultimately, his own death, and he is not viewed as a true Israelite king because God never chose him. "One thing we might say is, well, technically, in one sense, Abimelech is Israel's first king, but the Bible never treats him that way because he was not chosen by God."

7. Jotham's Fable:

- Jotham's fable of the trees seeking a king serves as an indictment of the Shechemites for choosing Abimelech. It demonstrates that the people of Israel have chosen a king out of the "brambles" - or lowest of men - which contrasts strongly with the ideal king as a gift from God.
- The fable shows that the people's desire for a king based on military prowess leads to disastrous consequences.
- Jotham's curse upon the people, and upon Abimelech, comes true in the end.

8. The Ideal Israelite King vs. the Kings of the Ancient Near East:

- Dr. Howard contrasts the biblical picture of the ideal Israelite king with the kings in other ancient Near East nations. "So, prevailing throughout the eastern Near East is this idea that the king in the society is to be the greatest warrior."
- He describes how Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian rulers were often depicted as great warriors. Israel's ideal king, according to Deuteronomy 17, was to not rely on military strength but on God's word.
- He emphasizes that, in contrast, the Israelite king was to rely on keeping God's word as part of his life and rely on the Lord to fight the battles, a profound contrast from the picture of kings in other societies in the ancient Near East.

Conclusion: Judges 6-9 reveals a complex narrative of faith, failure, and the consequences of seeking human solutions rather than relying on God. Gideon's initial acts of faith are undercut by his later pride and idolatry, while Abimelech's violent reign demonstrates the dangers of seeking power outside of God's will. Ultimately, these chapters highlight the consequences of Israel's repeated cycles of infidelity and their persistent desire to conform to the world around them instead of God's explicit will.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 26, Judges 6-9 – Gideon and the Aftermath

Study Guide: Judges 6-9 - Gideon and the Aftermath

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the provided source material.

1. What prompted God to send an angel to Gideon?
2. Describe the three interpretations of the "Angel of the Lord."
3. What did Gideon initially do when confronted with the angel of the Lord?
4. What specific task was Gideon instructed to complete concerning Baal and Asherah?
5. Why did Gideon request a series of signs from God using a fleece?
6. How was Gideon's army reduced from 32,000 men to only 300?
7. Describe the unusual battle tactics that Gideon employed against the Midianites.
8. What did the Israelites ask Gideon to do after their victory over the Midianites, and how did Gideon respond?
9. What was Gideon's mistake regarding the ephod, and what was the result?
10. How did Abimelech become king and what was the consequence of his rule?

Answer Key

1. The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord, and God delivered them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. This oppression led the Israelites to cry out to God for help, prompting God to send an angel to Gideon.
2. The three interpretations of the "Angel of the Lord" are: a messenger from the Lord, an inferior being with divine authority; a temporary descent of God himself in visible form; or a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ before his incarnation in the New Testament.
3. Initially, Gideon asked the angel of the Lord for a sign to prove his divine authority. He then prepared food, which was consumed by fire when the angel

touched it with his staff, proving to Gideon that this was truly a messenger from the Lord.

4. Gideon was instructed to tear down the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole. He was then told to build an altar to God on top of the remains of the altar of Baal.
5. Gideon requested signs from God using a fleece to confirm that God would do what God had already said he would do. He put out a fleece and asked for the dew to be on it and the ground dry. He then asked for the opposite to happen. Though God answered Gideon, this was due to a lack of faith.
6. Gideon's army was reduced by first asking those who were afraid to leave, which eliminated 22,000 men, leaving 10,000. Then, God instructed Gideon to further reduce the army by observing how they drank from a stream. Only the 300 who lapped the water like dogs were chosen for battle.
7. Gideon's battle tactic was unusual, using trumpets, torches, and empty jars to cause confusion in the Midianite camp. The noise and broken jars caused the Midianites to panic, and they began fighting and killing each other.
8. The Israelites asked Gideon to be their king, establishing a dynasty for him and his family. Gideon declined, saying that only the Lord should rule over them, but he then undermines that statement with his actions later in the chapter.
9. Gideon made an ephod from the spoils of war, placed it in his city, and it became a snare to the Israelites. The people whored after it, treating it as a talisman, and turning away from worshiping God.
10. Abimelech seized power by ruthlessly killing 70 of his brothers with the help of the Shechemites. Then the Shechemites made him their king, but his violent rule ultimately led to his downfall.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each of the following questions in a well-developed essay format, referencing the source material.

1. Analyze the interplay between divine intervention and human agency in the story of Gideon. How does the text portray the balance between God's power and Gideon's actions, and what does this suggest about the relationship between God and his chosen leaders?
2. Explore the significance of the "Angel of the Lord" in the narrative of Gideon. How does the identity of this angel impact the reader's understanding of God's presence and involvement in the story of Judges 6-9?
3. How does Gideon's journey demonstrate a transition from a hesitant leader to a flawed figure, and how does this transformation reflect on the broader themes in the book of Judges?
4. Consider the implications of Gideon's refusal to be king, juxtaposed with his later actions, such as making the ephod and naming his son Abimelech. In what ways do these actions subvert Gideon's earlier claim that "the Lord will rule over you?"
5. Evaluate the fable of the trees in Judges 9 as a criticism of leadership and kingship in ancient Israel. What does the fable reveal about the character and motivations of Abimelech and the people who made him king, and how does it relate to the themes of Judges 8?

Glossary of Key Terms

Angel of the Lord: A messenger of God, often appearing with divine authority, whose nature and identity is debated, with possible interpretations including a messenger angel, God's temporary presence, or a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ.

Asherah Pole: A sacred wooden pole representing the Canaanite goddess Asherah, often found alongside altars to Baal, and considered a symbol of pagan worship.

Baal: A Canaanite deity, often associated with fertility and storms. The Israelites sometimes turned away from God to worship Baal.

Ephod: A type of priestly garment, often used in divination to seek God's will. In Gideon's story, it becomes an object of idolatry.

Fleece: A sheep's wool fleece that Gideon uses to request signs from God to confirm his will. This method is sometimes used to seek God's will but may be a sign of doubt and lack of faith.

Jerubbaal: The name given to Gideon by his father, Joash, which means "Let Baal contend against him," and this new name is a play on words and an irony.

Mal'ak: The Hebrew word for "messenger," often used to refer to angels. The prophet Malachi's name means "my messenger."

Midianites: A nomadic people who oppressed the Israelites, prompting Gideon to lead a rebellion against them with divine help.

Pre-incarnate: Existing before taking on human form. This term is often used in discussions of whether the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament might be Jesus.

Shechemites: The people of the city of Shechem, who supported Abimelech's rise to power and later were brutally punished by him.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 26, Judges 6-9 – Gideon and the Aftermath, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Judges 6-9: Gideon and the Aftermath

1. **What was the primary sin of the Israelites that led to their oppression by the Midianites?**
2. The Israelites repeatedly "did evil in the sight of the Lord," which resulted in God giving them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. This involved the Midianites oppressing the Israelites, devouring their crops, and stealing their food, thus bringing Israel very low and causing them to cry out to God for help.
3. **Who is the "angel of the Lord" and what are the different interpretations of his identity in the Old Testament?**
4. The "angel of the Lord" is a messenger of God (mal'ak in Hebrew). There are three main interpretations: (1) A created angel, like Gabriel or Michael, with divine authority; (2) a temporary manifestation of God Himself; (3) a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. The text in Exodus 23 suggests a close connection between the angel and God's authority, even possessing the ability to pardon transgressions. The New Testament never refers to Jesus as the "angel of the Lord," leading some scholars to think it was a separate messenger or an angel closely aligned to God's nature.
5. **Why did Gideon initially hesitate to accept his calling as a judge?**
6. Gideon expressed his unworthiness by saying he was the least of his people, he was not from a prominent family. He also repeatedly sought signs from God to confirm his calling, including the famous fleece test, which showed a lack of faith as God had already made His will clear.
7. **What is the significance of Gideon's destruction of the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole, and what does his father's response reveal about the nature of true power and authority?**
8. Gideon's destruction of the pagan altars symbolized a direct challenge to the false gods worshipped by the Canaanites. His father, Joash, rebuked the people for trying to defend Baal, pointing out that if Baal were a true god, he should be able to defend himself. This highlights that true power and authority reside in God, not in idols or human-made entities.

9. How did God reduce Gideon's army and what was the main point behind this reduction?

10. God reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 men to 300 through a process of elimination based on who was afraid and who drank water in a particular way. The main point behind this drastic reduction was to emphasize that the victory would be a result of God's power, not Israel's military strength, ensuring that the glory would go to Him.

11. What does the story of Gideon's victory using trumpets, torches, and empty jars reveal about God's methods and power?

12. Gideon's unconventional tactics (trumpets, torches, and empty jars) reveal that God's power is not reliant on standard military strategies or weaponry. It underscores that God's strength and victory are achieved through faith and obedience, and that God's methods can be seen as foolish by worldly standards.

13. What was the significance of the Israelites' request for Gideon to become king, and why was it problematic?

14. The Israelites' request for Gideon to become their king, followed by a dynastic succession, reflects their desire to be like the nations around them, with a focus on a human leader as the source of their security. This was problematic because it was a rejection of God's role as their ultimate ruler and savior, and it reflected a misunderstanding of why they had won the victory - that it was the Lord who saved them.

15. How does the story of Abimelech illustrate the dangers of seeking power through worldly means?

16. Abimelech's rise to power through violence, his murder of 70 of his brothers, and his eventual demise demonstrate the dangers of seeking power through worldly means, like self-promotion and violence. His story acts as a cautionary tale against the pursuit of power without God's guidance and approval. This shows the dangers of seeking earthly king-like leadership as it deviates from God's ideal for the leaders of Israel.