

## LESSON SEVEN 7:1-26

### 6. DEFENDING THE FAITH: NECESSITY OF THE HOLY WAR (7:1-26)

#### a. THE REASONS FOR THE HOLY WAR (7:1-15)

When Jehovah thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and shall cast out many nations before thee, the Hittite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; 2 and when Jehovah thy God shall deliver them up before thee, and thou shalt smite them; then thou shalt utterly destroy them: thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them; 3 neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4 For he will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of Jehovah be kindled against you, and he will destroy thee quickly. 5 But thus shall ye deal with them: ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

6 For thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God: Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. 7 Jehovah did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: 8 but because Jehovah loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he sware unto your fathers, hath Jehovah brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that Jehovah thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations, 10 and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. 11 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command thee this day, to do them.

12 And it shall come to pass, because ye harken to these ordinances, and keep and do them, that Jehovah thy God will keep with thee the covenant and the lovingkindness which he sware unto thy fathers: 13 and he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee; he will also bless the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy ground, thy grain and thy new wine and thine oil, the increase of thy cattle and the young of thy flock,

in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee. 14 Thou shalt be blessed above all peoples: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. 15 And Jehovah will take away from thee all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, will he put upon thee, but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. 16 And thou shalt consume all the peoples that Jehovah thy God shall deliver unto thee; thine eye shall not pity them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 7:1-16

152. Please refer to the map for a location of these various nations, memorize their locations.
153. In what sense were these seven nations "greater" than Israel? In what sense "mightier"?
154. Are we to understand the expression ". . . God shall deliver them up before thee," that God directed the military strategy of the enemy in such a manner as to insure their defeat?
155. List three things the Israelites were *not* to do with the enemy and three things they were *to do* with the enemy.
156. What is the meaning of "holy" as used in verse six? Surely this word is not to be equaled with our usual meaning of the term.
157. Please notice the areas of life into which the worship of Jehovah enters: marriage, vows, name two other areas.
158. Why not educate these people out of idolatry? Why all this cruelty and bloodshed?
160. Why did Jehovah love Israel? Read verses 7 and 8.
161. What is meant by the expression "keepeth covenant"?
162. Discuss the meaning of the phrase "to their face" and "to his face" in verse 10.
163. List the promises God made to Israel. (1) Keep with thee the covenant; (2) love thee. Name two or three more. Read verses 12 through 16.
164. Does God control man's health and the growth of grain? Read verse 13.
165. There is a startling statement and promise in verse 15—read it! How much sickness would be eliminated if we loved God with all our hearts? Give a percentage.
166. If God is a just and merciful heavenly Father, and we know He is, what are we to conclude from the command in verse 16 not to show pity?

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 7:1-16

When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to possess, and has plucked away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than yourselves.

2 And when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you smite them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, or show mercy to them.

3 You shall not make marriages with them; your daughter you shall not give to his son, nor shall you take his daughter for your son.

4 For they will turn away your sons from following Me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and He will destroy you quickly.

5 But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

6 For you are a holy *and* set apart people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people to Himself, out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.

7 The Lord did not set His love upon you and choose you, because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the fewest of all people;

8 But because the Lord love you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a might hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9 Know, recognize *and* understand therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, Who keeps covenant and steadfast love *and* mercy with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations;

10 And repays those who hate Him to their face, by destroying them; He will not be slack to him who hates Him, but will requite him to his face.

11 You shall therefore keep and do the instruction, laws, and precepts which I command you this day.

12 And if you hearken to those precepts and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love which He swore to your fathers;

13 And He will love you, bless you, and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your land, your grain, your new wine, and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you.

14 You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle,

15 And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will He put upon you, but will lay them upon all who hate you.

16 And you shall consume all the peoples whom the Lord your God will give over to you; your eye shall not pity them; neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

### COMMENT 7:1-16

Note that in these verses we have:

- (1) The danger of corruption for Israel (7:1-5, 12-16)
- (2) The wickedness of the Canaanites (7:5)
- (3) Israel must be a separate and holy people (7:6-11)

SEVEN NATIONS GREATER AND MIGHTIER THAN THOU (v. 1)—“greater in number and stronger than thou” (Rotherham). And they also had greater fortifications and equipment—1:28, etc. The word nation (*goi*) indicates a *people*, a confluence of men. The root idea of this word is given as *body, corpus*. Baumgartner has swarm, people . . . nation . . . the whole population of a territory.” Thus the more *formal* sense we now attach to “nation” does not necessarily hold, though it often does. It is sometimes in this book rendered “peoples” and sometimes “nations.” In 4:6-8, for example, we have this Hebrew word occurring four times—twice translated “peoples” and twice “nation.”

SEVEN NATIONS (v. 1)—See Acts 13:16-20.

THOU SHALT UTTERLY DESTROY THEM (v. 2)—Israel was to be the sole occupant of the land. They were not only to utterly destroy the seven “ite” tribes, but also to make no covenants or intermarriages. The temptation, of course, would be for Israel to become lax, soft, and careless about carrying out this command. So the statement, “nor show mercy unto them.” Israel started to fulfill this command in good fashion, but, for the most part, treated it with indifference once the twelve tribes were settled in their respective territories. The seven nations were *destroyed* but not “utterly.”

Note that we have both a negative and positive command in these verses. They were to make no covenant, show no mercy, and make no marriages. But they were to *do* something, too!

1. Smite them, utterly destroy them (v. 2)
2. Break down their altars (v. 5)
3. Dash in pieces their obelisks or pillars (v. 5)
4. Hew down their Asherim (v. 5)
5. Burn their graven images (v. 5)

—all of which meant they were to rip out *idolatry* from the land. They were to be first-class iconoclasts! See Ex. 23:24, 34:12-17.

In verses 3 and 4 intermarriage is forbidden on the basis that the Israelite would be the loser, and turned away to "serve other gods." It was probably argued then (as it so often is now) by the young people: "But we will make Israelites out of these girls! We will never serve *their* gods!" But God knew better. His warning still stands to every young person in "the Israel of God," the church. His exhortation remains: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers . . ." See II Cor. 6: 14—7:1.

ALTARS . . . PILLARS . . . ASHERIM . . . GRAVEN IMAGES (v. 5)—all were to be destroyed. The pillars or obelisks were idolatrous monuments in Canaanitish and other heathen countries. See 16:22, Lev. 26:1. These were of different shapes—some being little more than a slab of rock turned upright, others being carefully squared stone pillars with a larger base and tapering toward a pointed top. It is apparently this latter form (obelisk) that is especially meant here. They were usually shrines to Baal.

The Asherim were probably the wooden symbols or shrines of the goddess Asherah—the goddess of fertility. (Not the same as Ashtoreth, the female counterpart of Baal). See 12:3, 16:21. Her worship was widely spread throughout Canaan and Syria. In Babylon her worship and that of Ashtoreth (Istar) seemed to have merged. "In the West, however, Asherah and Astoreth came to be distinguished from one another, Asherah being exclusively the goddess of fertility, whereas Ashtoreth passeth into a moon-goddess . . . The existence of numerous symbols in each of which the goddess was believed to be immanent led to the creation of numerous forms of the goddess herself, which, after the analogy of the Ashtarothe, were described collectively as the Asherim." (I.S.B.E.) See further under 16:21.

FOR YE WERE THE FEWEST OF ALL PEOPLES (v. 7)—In Gen. 46:27 we are told, "all the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt,

were threescore and ten." And yet, through this handful of people, God began to show his great power. Had a *large* nation accomplished that Israel did, *human* power might be credited. But God's *love* for Israel plus his eternal design in bringing the Messiah into the world, enabled Israel to accomplish great things. Great numbers are often not necessary for God to accomplish his purposes!

THOU SHALT BE BLESSED ABOVE ALL PEOPLES (v. 14)—Contrast v. 7 "ye were the fewest of all peoples." This promise was contingent upon their *obedience*. Note the sweeping, all-inclusive promises that follow, vv. 14-16.

"Such a pre-eminence has its ground not in anything external, as in the numerical importance and greatness of a people, in which case to be *above all* would imply that they were more numerous, if not than all taken together, still than any one of the all. That Israel was as the stars (i. 10; x. 22) was merely the fulfillment of the promise of God to the fathers, a promise according to grace, not implying any merit or pre-eminence on the part of the people."—Lange

NEITHER SHALT THOU SERVE THEIR GODS; FOR THAT WILL BE A SNARE UNTO THEE (v. 16)—The Hebrew word for "snare" (*moqesh*) Baumgartner's Lexicon defines as "*bait, lure (of fowler), bird-trap.*" "The snares were set in a favorable location and grain scattered to attract the attention of feathered creatures. They accepted the bribe of good feeding and walked into the snare, not suspecting danger. For this reason the snare became particularly applicable in describing a tempting bribe offered by men to lead their fellows into trouble . . ." (I.S.B.E.)

#### b. DIFFICULTIES OF THE HOLY WAR (7:17-26)

17 If thou shalt say in thy heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? 18 thou shalt not be afraid of them: thou shalt well remember what Jehovah thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; 19 the great trials which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, whereby Jehovah thy God brought thee out: so shall Jehovah thy God do unto all the peoples of whom thou art afraid. 20 Moreover Jehovah thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves, perish from before thee. 21 Thou shalt not be affrighted at them; for Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, a great God and a terrible. 22 And Jehovah thy God will cast out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beast of the field

increase upon thee. 23 But Jehovah thy God will deliver them up before thee, and will discomfit them with a great discomfiture, until they be destroyed. And he will deliver their kinds into thy hand, and thou shalt make their name to perish from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. 25 The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to Jehovah thy God. 26 And thou shalt not bring an abomination into thy house, and become a devoted thing like unto it: thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a devoted thing.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 7:17-26

167. The conquest of Canaan has no lesson for us if we have no "conquest" of self or sin or need to which we can make application. Please make application!
168. Memory has a great power when used right, how?
169. Are we to understand that God used literal "hornets" in aiding Israel? Discuss.
170. In what sense was God to be considered "terrible"?
171. Explain in your own words verse 22.
172. There can be no neutral ground. There can be no moderation with sin. "detest, utterly abhor," why is this true? What is "a snare"?

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 7:17-26

17 If you say in your [mind and] heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them?

18 You shall not be afraid of them, but remember (earnestly) what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh, and to all Egypt,

19 The great trials which your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm by which the Lord your God brought you out; so shall the Lord your God do to all the people of whom you are afraid.

20 Moreover the Lord your God will send the hornet among them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you are destroyed.

21 You shall not dread them; for the Lord your God is among you, a mighty and terrible God.

22 And the Lord your God will clear out those nations before you little by little; you may not consume them quickly, lest the beasts of the field increase among you.

23 But the Lord your God will give them over to you, and will confuse them with a mighty panic until they are destroyed.

24 And He will give their kings into your hand, and you shall make their name perish from under the heavens; there shall no man be able to stand before you, until you have destroyed them.

25 The graven images of their gods you shall burn with fire; you shall not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourself, lest you be ensnared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God

26 Neither shall you bring an abomination (an idol) into your house, lest you become an accursed thing like it; but you shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

### COMMENT 7:17-26

Note that we have here:

- (1) The apparent superiority of the foe (vv. 17-21)
- (2) The gradual nature of the conquest (v. 22)
- (3) The rewards and demands of faithfulness (vv. 20,21, 23-26)

The foe was *far* superior in both numbers and physical equipment. But Jehovah, "the Lord of hosts" was with Israel! And he demanded one great basic quality of his people—confidence in his ability—unbounded faith!

IF THOU SHALT SAY IN THY HEART, THESE NATIONS ARE MORE THAN I (v. 17)—The very attitude that had kept them *out* of the promised land before (1:26-33, Num. 13:32—14:4)

HOW CAN I DISPOSSESS THEM? (v. 17)—One cannot read these lines without thinking of the many "impossible" and *apparently* insurmountable difficulties that sometimes face the people of God today. And doubtfully the question is asked, "How can I do it? How can I overcome it? The answer is, YOU can't! "But God is able." This does not mean idly sitting back and supposing that "all will work out." But it *does* mean simply doing *what we can* in the Lord's work, with a child-like faith in our Master, *knowing* that we labor for "him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20).

THOU SHALT WELL REMEMBER WHAT JEHOVAH THY GOD DID UNTO PHAROAH, AND UNTO ALL EGYPT (v. 18)—Nothing is more helpful for the child of God, when anticipating the *future* with its difficulties and "impossibilities," than to reflect upon what God has done for his children in the *past*. *As he has done, so will he do!* See 4:32-39.

JEHOVAH . . . WILL SEND THE HORNET AMONG THEM (v. 20)—The Hebrew word for hornet or wasp (*tsirab*) is used only two other times in the Old Testament. Young's literal translation has "locust." "And I will send the hornet before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before thee" (Ex. 23:28). And God could say through Joshua, about twenty-five years later, "And I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites [Sihon and Og? (Deut. 3:7, 4:47), or two of the Amorite kings mentioned in Josh 10?]; not with thy sword, nor with thy bow" (Josh. 24:12).

I take these verses all literally, believing that God actually *did* employ wasps or hornets to assist Israel in battle. Why couldn't he? I reject, then, such figurative renderings for hornet (*tsirab*) as "leprosy" (Smith-Goodspeed), "a plague" (The Torah), "raiders" (Lamsa), "depression, discouragement" (Baumgartner). Gesenius, while admitting that "hornet" is the rendering which accords with the ancient versions and the Hebrew, states that it "seems hardly capable of being literally understood" and says here it is to be understood metaphorically as "designating *ills and calamities of various kinds*." The common versions (A.V., A.S.V., R.S.V.) as well as Berkely, Rotherham, Moffatt, and The Amplified Old Testament, consistently translate "hornet" however, and the other renderings seems to be more *interpretation* than *translation*. (The non-literal idea is perhaps best explained in the note adapted from Lange in the Amplified O.T. "' . . . the hornet' with the article, meaning collective as a species or kind, is thus evidently to be understood, as 2:25, of the terrors of God which should go before Israel, with which also Josh. 24:12 and Ps. 44:2 fully agree.")

JEHOVAH . . . WILL CAST OUT THOSE NATIONS BEFORE THEE BY LITTLE AND LITTLE—In fact, they were forbidden to cast them all out at once, LEST THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD INCREASE UPON THEE (v. 22)—That is, they were not to be driven out "in one year, lest the land before desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee" (See Ex. 23:29,30). A *number* of years would be needed before the Israelites them-

selves were sufficiently numerous to fill the whole land occupied by the seven nations mentioned in v. 1 and especially the even broader borders outlined in the "promised land"—1:7, 1:24.

THOU SHALT NOT COVET THE SILVER OR THE GOLD THAT IS ON THEM [idols or images]) NOR TAKE IT UNTO THEE, LEST THOU BE SNARED THEREIN (v. 25)—"Some of the ancient idols were plated over with gold, and God saw that the value of the metal and the excellence of the workmanship might be an inducement for the Israelites to *preserve them*; and this might lead, remotely at least, to idolatry. As the idols were accursed, all those who had them, or any thing appertaining to them, were accursed also, ver. 26." (Clarke)

There are moral and spiritual implications here that are "for our learning." The very gold and silver on the idols was to be burned with fire. No *part* of the idol was to be *coveted*, let alone *taken*! There was always the temptation that they would "be snared therein" (Cf. also v. 16). Similarly the Lord would have every Christian destroy and obliterate every vestige of sin in his life. Jesus taught us to pray, "And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one*" (Matt. 6:13). Paul taught, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfill* the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14).

### QUESTIONS, LESSON SEVEN (7:1-26)

1. To what extent were the Israelites to show mercy to the surrounding nations?
2. How were these nations "greater and mightier" than Israel?
3. What did the Holy Spirit predict would happen if Israel intermarried with foreigners?
4. What were the "pillars" of the heathen?
5. What were the Asherim?
6. Where did Israel rank with other nations in the population census?
7. Specifically, what religious items of the heathen nations were to be destroyed?
8. List two great difficulties of the Holy War.
9. What was Israel to *remember* as an encouragement in this war?
10. What peculiar means did God use to rout the enemy (according to the standard versions)?
11. Why not cast out the enemies all at once?
12. What part of the heathen images could be kept by an Israelite? Why?

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SEVEN

*With the seven nations that God shall cast out, 1, they shall make no covenant, 2, nor form any matrimonial alliances, 3; lest they should be enticed into idolatry, 4. All monuments of idolatry to be destroyed, 5. The Israelites are to consider themselves a holy people, 6; and that the Lord had made them such, not for their merits, but for his own mercies, 7, 8. They shall therefore love him, and keep his commandments, 9-11. The great privileges of the obedient, 12-24. All idolatry to be avoided, 25, 26.*

