

# Threshing Floors

F. A. Hughes.

SEPT/OCT 1956

An enquiry as to Araunah's threshing-floor furnishes opportunity of looking into the subject more generally.

It is clear from the New Testament reference to the matter that there is to be a yield from the exercise. "He that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1 Cor. 9: 10). The Scriptural references to sifting show that in every case that which is positive is in mind. In Isaiah 30 the nations are sifted and judged, but joy accrues to God's people. In Amos the people of God themselves are sifted "yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (Amos 9: 9). Again in Luke 22 the Lord Jesus indicates that recovery and restoration will follow the sifting. We should have thought that Satan would have had in mind the "chaff" for he would destroy the wheat if he could; but the Lord speaks of "wheat" and shews that HE has in view the preservation of faith, and the testimony and service of one from whom the chaff has been removed.

Hence the first reference to "threshing-floors" in Genesis 50 suggests an important lesson to be learned. Atad means "a thorn-bush," and the place was reached as they journeyed from Egypt to Hebron. As we move in our affections along the path from man's world to the sphere of divine purpose, do we not need to face the exercise of Atad's threshing-floor? to realise the frailty and unsuitability of the flesh for the presence of God; as one has said "as unsuited naturally to the presence of God as a thorn-bush (or, bramble) would be to abide uninjured in a flame of fire." This is a deep lesson to learn, but as the exercise is faced with God what chaff would be removed, and what features to His glory would ensue. There would be less "returning to Egypt" either in mind or in ways, and a deeper appreciation of what Hebron stands for, the circle where the thoughts and purposes of God are enjoyed; a circle in mind before Egypt was thought of, (see, Numbers 13: 22).

In Judges 6, "Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress" (v.11 N.T.). It is obvious the winepress was empty; Midian (which means "strife") had impoverished the people of God, both as to their homes and as to their produce (vv. 2, 4), "Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites," v.8. Nevertheless Gideon, whose name means "a great warrior" (an overcomer), seeks to preserve the wheat from the enemy. His history, both in private and in public, is full of deep lessons. His desires are truly to see his brethren established in relationship with their God; thus in Judges 6: 13 after the Angel of the Lord had said, "The LORD is with thee," he replied "Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?" The exercises of the threshing floor are in evidence; self-importance, self-confidence, self-seeking, have gone; his faith in what God has done and can do is apparent. His "might" (v.14) is not connected with what he is in himself, but in his faith in God, and in his obedience to God's command. The element of strife is near to us, dear brethren; Midian was a son of Abraham. Paul has to speak of it in relation to the Corinthians; how often it has weakened and impoverished the saints of God, and emptied the winepress of joy. The facing of the matter in the threshing-floor would develop features of true strength, available for the practical salvation of the saints, and would then actuate us to refuse any place of prominence, desiring only that "the LORD shall rule over you" (Judges 8: 23).

A further important lesson is to be learned at the threshing-floor of Nachon (2 Sam. 6). Fleshly desires and human arrangement can have no place in relation to the movements of the Ark; its place and setting amongst the people of God must be determined according to the "due order" (see 1 Chron. 15: 2-15). The lesson was a severe one; the stroke of God was serious, but the lesson once learned

produced the atmosphere of joy, substance and praise, so fully and blessedly portrayed in 1 Chron. 15 and 16. The truly magnificent Psalm of 1 Chron. 16, with its glorious backward and forward views, its present outpourings of praise, and the securing of a response from ALL the people in praise to God, is the precious result of the experience passed through and the lesson learned at this threshing-floor. The movements of the testimony are known to, and are precious to God. Let us therefore not be afraid of the exercises raised in these chapters; God's choosing; God's preparation; God's due order; God's commandment according to His own word; the need for sanctification and for seeking the Lord. Such lessons as these, learned in the winnowing process of the threshing-floor, will give us to eschew all human intrusions into the service of God, and will result in much being secured for His glory and the joy of the saints.

If we have touched in our spirits the deep meaning of these several threshing-floors, the frailty and uselessness of the flesh; the judgment of every element of strife and self-importance; the complete and absolute reliance upon God's own order in His testimony; we shall be ready, like Ornan, to go out of sight ourselves. Then the blessedness of God's great redeeming grace will flood our souls; then, too, the majesty and wonder of His counsels of glory will bow our spirits in adoration and worship to Himself. From the fruit of such exercises we shall have power and affection to "adorn" (as the word in Deuteronomy 15 really is) any who may be held in bondage spiritually, furnishing them liberally out of the flock, and out of the floor, and out of the winepress. Thus we secure their love abidingly, (Deut. 15: 17); then, too, will there be a potential increase of "firstlings" for the service of God (v. 19). Please read all Deut. 15.

What precious results thus accrue from the lessons of the threshing-floors. Ourselves "hidden;" God's ways in sovereignty and glory magnified, and the saints held together in the bonds of abiding affection.