

Gideon The Hebrew Warrior

'The hand of the Midianites prevailed against Israel and because of the Midianites the Children of Israel made themselves dens, caves and strongholds which are in the mountains. When Israel had sown, the Midianites, the Amalekites and the people of the east came up against Israel. They encamped against the Israelites and destroyed the increase of the earth up to Gaza and left no sustenance in Israel. No sheep, no ox or donkey, for they stole their livestock and their tents. They came in as locusts for multitude, both they and their camels were without number and they came into the land to destroy it. Israel was brought very low and the Children of Israel cried to the Lord' (Judges 6:2 to 6).

At this time, Israel was being attacked by their surrounding enemies from the north, south and east. Their situation was intolerable so they asked the Lord for help. The Angel of the Lord came to visit Gideon who was bravely trying to secure some grain for the Israelites by threshing it while hiding in the winepress. The enemies were so numerous, if Gideon had been discovered he would certainly have been killed and the grain stolen. When the holy Angel appeared to Gideon, he was not in the least frightened by the Angel but asked why the hard times had come. Gideon really was a humble but brave young man. In this narrative, the Angel of the Lord was in fact God, an incarnate of Jesus before He came to earth. Notice how relaxed the Angel of the Lord was as He sat under the tree.

Judges 6:11. The Angel of the Lord (Adonai) came and sat under the oak tree in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

(12) The Angel of Adonai appeared to him and said, "God is with you, you mighty man of valour."

(13) Gideon asked him, "Oh my Lord, if God is with us, why then has all this happened to us? Where are all his wondrous works our fathers told us about saying, 'God brought us up from Egypt.' But now God has cast us off and delivered us into the hand of the Midianites."

(14) Adonai looked at him and said, "Go in this your might and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Have not I sent you?"

(15) Gideon said to Him, "Oh Lord, with what can I save Israel? Behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh and I am the youngest in my father's house."

(16) Adonai said to him, "Be assured, I will be with you and you will strike the Midianites as easily as if they were just one man."

(17 & 18) Gideon said to Him, "If I have found favour in Your sight, please show me a sign it is You Who talks with me. Please do not go away until I come to You and bring my gift and lay it before You."

Adonai said, "I will wait until you come again."

(19 to 22) Gideon went and cooked a kid and unleavened cakes of an ephah of meal. The flesh he put in a basket. He put the broth in a pot and brought it out to Adonai under the oak and presented it. The Angel of God said to him, "Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." Gideon did so. Then the Angel of Adonai put forth the end of the staff in His hand and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes. A fire went up and out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. The Angel of Adonai departed out of his sight. Gideon saw he was the Angel of Adonai and Gideon said, "Alas, Lord God! Because I have seen the Angel of God face to face."

(23 & 24) Adonai said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not be afraid. You will not die." Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it 'Adonai Shalom' or The Lord is Peace.

After this face-to-face encounter with the Lord, Gideon waited until night had come then with ten young men destroyed the altars dedicated to Baal and his goddess wife Ashtoreth and cut down the wooden idols. He then built an altar to the Lord and used the wood taken from the idols to make the burnt offering to God. The next day the men of the city wanted to kill Gideon but his father Joash stood up for him (Judges 6:25 to 30).

(31) Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal? Will you save him? He who will contend for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning. If he be a god let him contend for himself because one has broken down his altar."

(33 to 37) The Midianites, the Amalekites and the people of the east assembled themselves together and they encamped in the valley of Jezreel. The Spirit of Adonai came on Gideon and he blew a trumpet and Abiezerites gathered together after him. Gideon sent messengers throughout all Manasseh and they also gathered together after him. Gideon sent messengers to (the tribes of) Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali and they came up to meet them. Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have spoken, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there be dew on the fleece only and it be dry on all the ground then I will know You will save Israel by my hand as you have spoken."

(38 to 40) It was so, for he rose up early the next day and pressed the fleece together and wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. Gideon said to God, "Do not let your anger be kindled against me and I will speak but this once. Please let me make a trial just this once with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece and on all the ground let there be dew." God did so that night for it was dry on the fleece only and there was dew on all the ground.

Judges 7:1 to 3. Gideon and all the people who were with him rose up early and encamped beside the spring of Harod. The camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. Adonai said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hand lest Israel boast against Me and say, "We saved ourselves by our own strength." Proclaim in the ears of the people, "Whoever is fearful and trembling let him return and depart from Mount Gilead." Twenty-two thousand men left and there remained ten thousand.

(4) Adonai said to Gideon, "The people are still too many. Bring them down to the water and I will try them for you there. It will be of whom I tell you, this one will go with you, or this one will not go with you."

(5) Gideon brought the Israelites down to the water and Adonai said to him, "Everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, you will set by himself. Likewise everyone who bows down on his knees to drink." (6 & 7) The number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth was three hundred men, but all the rest of the people bowed down on their knees to drink water. Adonai said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped will I save you and deliver the Midianites into your hand and let all the people go every man to his place."

(8 to 11) The people who were leaving took food in their hand and their trumpets and Gideon sent the men of Israel every man to his tent but retained the three hundred men. The camp of Midianites was below him in the valley. That same night Adonai said to Gideon, "Arise, get yourself down into the camp for I have delivered it into your hand, but if you fear to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp and you will hear what they say and afterward your will hands be strengthened to go down into the camp." Gideon went down with Purah his servant to the outermost part of the armed men who were in the camp.

(12 & 13) The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude and their camels were without number as the sand on the seashore for multitude. When Gideon had come, behold there was a man telling a dream to his fellow and he said, "Behold, I dreamed a dream. A cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down so the tent lay flat."

(14) His fellow answered, "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. Into his hand God has delivered Midian and all the army."

(15) When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation he worshiped God then returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise for Adonai has delivered into your hand the army of Midian."

(16 to 18) Gideon divided the three hundred men into three companies and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets and empty pitchers with torches within the pitchers. He said to them, "Watch at me and do likewise and when I come to the outermost part of the camp, so will you. When I blow the trumpet and all who are with me then blow your trumpets on every side of the camp and say, "For Adonai and for Gideon."

(19 & 20) Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch when they had newly set the watch and they blew the trumpets and broke in pieces the pitchers in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets, broke the pitchers and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands with which to blow and they cried out, "The sword of Adonai and of Gideon."

(21 to 24) The Israelites stood every man in his place around the camp and the army ran. They shouted and put the Midianites to flight. The Israelites blew the three hundred trumpets and Adonai set every Midianite man's sword against his fellow and against all the army and the army fled as far as Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah by Tabbath. The men of Israel were gathered together out of Naphtali, out of Asher, out of all Manasseh and pursued after Midian. Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim saying, "Come down against Midian and go before them to the waters as far as Beth Barah to the Jordan River."

(25) They took two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb and decapitated them.

Judges 8:12 & 13. The two kings of Midian Zebah and Zalmunna fled but Gideon pursued them. Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle from the ascent of Heres.

(18) Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What manner of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?" They answered, "As you are so were they, each one resembled the children of a king."

(19 to 21) He said, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As God lives, if you had saved them alive I would not kill you. Gideon said to Jether his firstborn son, "Up and kill them." But the youth did not draw his sword for he feared because he was just a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise you and fall on us for as the man is so is his strength." Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna and took the gold crescents that were on their camels' necks.

(22 & 23) Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son and your grandson for you have saved us out of the hand of Midian." Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. Adonai will rule over you."

(28 & 32) Midian was subdued before the Children of Israel ... The land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon. Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father.

The name Gideon means 'Tree Feller' so his original occupation was an arborist – he cut down trees. Although the Lord told the Israelites to drive all of their enemies out of the Land of Israel, they disobeyed and allowed the Canaanites to remain (Judges 1:28). When the Israelites had no strong leadership they worshipped idols like the Canaanites did (Judges 2:12). Each time the Israelites became involved in idolatry they had serious trouble then they cried out to God Who continually delivered them. Eventually, the Lord allowed the Children of Israel to be overcome by the Midianites (Judges 6:1). The Midianites were distant cousins of the Israelites, descendants of Abraham through his second wife Keturah (Genesis 25:2) and had at one time been God-fearing. Moses' father-in-law Jethro was a righteous Midian man (Exodus 18:12). The brother-in-law of Moses named Hobab was so righteous, Moses invited him to live in the land that would later become Israel (Numbers 10:29). By the time Gideon was born, the Midianites had turned away from God and had become enemies of Israel (Numbers 31:8; Judges 4:11).

Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites so they could not steal any more food. It was an act of courage and bravery to stand alone threshing the wheat when he could have been attacked at any time. The tribe of Manasseh was well known for its bravery. Even the Lord noticed Gideon's bravery. Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal immediately he was told to, that same night (Judges 6:25 to 27). It was an incredibly brave act, to destroy an altar to Baal. The following morning the people wanted Gideon put to death but his equally brave father Joash stood up for Gideon against the entire city. Joash and Gideon were not in the least timid or cowardly.

The scenario with the fleece Gideon put to the Lord went against the law of physics in nature. The fleece and the Lord graciously verified Gideon's mandate. The enemy had 135,000 soldiers and only 32,000 Israelite men answered Gideon's call to arms. God wanted to show people His power and asked Gideon to reduce the number of fighting men. Gideon dismissed 22,000 men who were too afraid to fight. The remaining 10,000 were tested. The 300 men who lay on their stomachs to drink water at the spring were selected because they were cautious and although they were thirsty, they did not lay down their weapons. The 9,700 men who knelt to drink were dismissed because they knelt down to drink the water with their hands, putting their weapons to one side to drink. That left just 300 men to fight against thousands, but the Lord knew what He was doing. He told Gideon to attack during the night, terrifying the Midianites and making them run off into the night. Gideon and his men pursued them and killed 120,000 Midianites in a single night. Gideon knew the Lord was their King and refused to accept the glory of kingship. Gideon is a true hero of faith, obedience and incredible bravery along with thousands of other men and women who are mentioned in the Bible as being 'mighty in valour' who fought 'valiantly'. 'Through God we shall do valiantly for it is He who will tread down our enemies' (Psalm 60:12).

Amen and God bless you.

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