

GIDEON.

[Return to Samson.](#)

When the Israelites entered Canaan they found that each piece of land had its own "god", usually the name given to these god's was 'Baal'. Later the name 'Baal' was used to refer to the fertility god of the Canaanites.

The People of Israel had turned away from the worship of God, instead they were now worshipping these idols that had the name of Baal.

"Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years."

[Judges 6:1.](#)

Israel was often being attack by the Midianites, a Bedouin people who would come just as the Israelites were bringing in their harvests, they were then stealing the crops and grain of the people.

When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of the Midianites, "the Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, 'I brought you But you have not obeyed My voice.'"

[Judges 6:8-10.](#)

The message to the people came via a prophet but God acted through a man called Gideon.

Gideon was the son of Joash of the family of Abiezer which were part of the tribe of Manasseh.

[Judges 6:11,15.](#)

We are told that Joash worshipped the idols of Baal, so Gideon came from a family which did not worship God.

Because of the risk that the Midianites would steal his crops we find that Gideon was threshing his wheat, (separating the seed from the plant) in a secret place. Gideon was hiding, he was a coward in many respects. While he was doing this the angel of God appeared and told him that God had chosen him to deliver his people from the Midianites.

Gideon's response was "why me, I'm from the weakest tribe?" a spirit of humility before God. "The Lord is with you," replies the Angel, yet Gideon knew that God was not with the people of Israel, because they had been told by the prophet. Was the angel mocking, laughing at him? Gideon wants the angel to prove that he really was an angel by supplying a supernatural proof and so show that his message was from God.

Gideon creates an offering and brings it to the angel. The angel then tells Gideon to pour out the offering onto a rock. The angel then touches the rock with his staff and fire, from the rock itself, consumes the offering, so proving that his message was from God by the miraculous act,

[Judges 6:11-24.](#)

Gideon then builds an altar, and it became his place of worship to God.

Gideon's first act was to destroy, secretly during the night, the Baal-alter and the associated grove of trees.

The people were very angry but the situation was calmed by the quick thinking of Gideon's father, he pointed out that the idol had not defended itself so could not be a real god,

[Judges 6:25-32.](#)

The Midianites and the Fleece Miracle.

[Judges 6:33 - Judges 7:25](#)

The Midianites and Amalekites from the East decided to attack Israel, they assemble and then camped in the Valley of Jezreel.

This valley extends from Mount Carmel to the Jordan valley, this valley leads into the heart of Palestine and has been involved in a number of battles in history.

The Holy Spirit comes upon Gideon, literally, "clothed Gideon," So Gideon now becomes the instrument God will use to carry out His plan.

Gideon starts by calling for the local tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to come to him.

The Abiezrites, part of the family of Gideon respond first. Gideon asks for a proof by God that he was the chosen leader, Gideon leaves a fleece, a large piece of sheep skin with its wool, on the ground over night.

Gideon then request that God makes the fleece wet with the surrounding ground dry on the first night. The next night Gideon requests God makes the fleece dry but the ground wet, so proving it was not natural, being due to the dew which comes down at night,

[Judges 6:33- 7:25.](#)

Gideon called for volunteers from the people to come and fight, The Bible records that 32,000 people come forward and they camp across the valley from the Midianites, about 4 miles away. However, God wanted to show that He was the source of the power behind the coming battle. The people needed to be taught to trust in Him. So He commands Gideon to reduce the number by various methods.

1) *"Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead."* Each person has to decide how brave they are, about two-thirds depart. But this is still too many for God.

2) The next test involves "bring them down to the water, "and I will test them for you there." said God. He gives specific instructions on who to chose, The choice was how they drank the water. The men were told to go and drink, any who bowed down on their knees to drink were rejected, only those who take the water in their hands and lap like a dog were chosen.

Anyone drinking this way, standing, would probably be prepared for a sudden attack. However, another interpretation is that because of the nearness of the enemy only the cowards would be ready to flee by drinking this way. This would mean that God wanted to use the worst men to fulfil His task. The Bible does not tell us why God specified the chosen group, God knew that He wanted a small group of men to carry out His plan and only 300 men lapped like dogs. God told Gideon to use these 300 men to carry out His plans, to show his power and grace and save Israel.

This was a big test for Gideon's faith, so God, knowing this, tells Gideon *"to secretly go down into the Midianites camp, for I have given it to you. Listen to the people talking."*

"Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude."

[Judge 7:9-14.](#)

Gideon hears a man telling of a dream to his companion. *"a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed."* His soldier companion replies *"This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp."*

Gideon is greatly encourage by what he heard. He returns to the camp of Israel, "God has given us the battle, get ready."

It would have been unusual for an army to attack at night in the times of the Old Testament, but it was all part of God's plan. Gideon divided the 300 men into groups of 100, each man was given a trumpet, a torch and a jar (pitcher) big enough to hide the light of the torch until the right moment. The men then spread around the Midian camp.

Gideon was about to use a psychological warfare. In the middle of the night the trumpets sounded, the jars were smashed, revealing the lights, the men shouting. With God's help the camp was in confusion, in turmoil. Panic filled the camp, in the dark they did not know who was who and began to attack and fight each other and then run.

The men who had not been chosen by God to attack now join in and drive the Midianites out. Gideon sends messages for other tribes to join in and capture them, this results in two of the Midianites leaders being killed. [Judges 7:23-25.](#)

Gideon finds objections.

The men of Ephraim question Gideon why he had not called for their help,

[Judges 8:1.](#)

It was normal in battles for the winning soldiers to get the spoils of war, the Ephraimites thought Gideon was out to gain all the spoil for himself. Gideon replied that Gideon's clan, the Abiezrites, had only initiated the battle, it was the men of Ephraim who had captured and destroyed the Midianites leaders.

As Gideon and the 300 men pursue the Midianites they are exhausted and Gideon ask for food and water for his men from the people of Succoth. The leaders of the city chose to ignore Gideon's request for help, not concerned about their brothers in Canaan, "You've not won the battle yet" was their response. Gideon tells them that they will be punished once the Lord has given him the battle and defeated the Midianites kings. He then moved onto the town of Penuel and received the same response. The people of Penuel were very proud of the tower in the town. Gideon says he will destroy the tower after the battle.

The Midianites thought that they were far enough from Gideon's army to be safe, they had set up camp in the desert. Gideon attacks and captures the two Midian Kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole Midian army.

On Gideon's return journey he meets a youth who gave him the names of the Succoth leaders. On return to the town Gideon carries out his promise of punishment and the same for the town of Penuel.

[Judges 8:6-17.](#)

Later events in Gideon's life.

Gideon had shown his faith in God and that God was with him so the people offer Gideon the leadership of the people, but Gideon replied that only the Lord should rule the people.

[Judges 8:22-23.](#)

Gideon collects the earrings from the people and then makes an ephod. The priests had an ephod as part of their dress when carrying out religious duties,

[Exodus 28:4.](#)

We are not told what the object Gideon made looked like, just that it was an ephod. After Gideon set it up in his city, Ophrah. It unfortunately ends up as a point of idol worship,

[Judges 8:17.](#)

Gideon brought peace to the Israel for 40 years,

[Judges 8:28.](#)

then died of a good age, [Judges 8:32.](#)

After Gideon's death the people of Israel returned to the worship of Baal.

[Judges 8:33-35.](#)