

## Midianite Oppression (c. 1219 – c. 1212 BC)

Judges 6:1–10

### The Midianite Invasion

- 1 The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD turned them over to Midian for seven years.
- 2 The Midianites overwhelmed Israel. Because of Midian the Israelites made shelters for themselves in the hills, as well as caves and strongholds.
- 3 Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east would attack them.
- 4 They invaded the land and devoured its crops all the way to Gaza. They left nothing for the Israelites to eat, and they took away the sheep, oxen, and donkeys.
- 5 When they invaded with their cattle and tents, they were as thick as locusts. Neither they nor their camels could be counted. They came to devour the land.
- 6 Israel was so severely weakened by Midian that the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

### God Sends a Prophet to Urge the People to Repent

- 7 When the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help because of Midian,
- 8 he sent a prophet to the Israelites. He said to them, "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I brought you up from Egypt and took you out of that place of slavery.'
- 9 I rescued you from Egypt's power and from the power of all who oppressed you. I drove them out before you and gave their land to you.
- 10 I said to you, "I am the LORD your God! Do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are now living!" But you have disobeyed me."

## Rest Under Gideon (c. 1212 – c. 1172 BC)

Judges 6:11–8:28

### God Calls Gideon (West Manasseh)

- 6:11 The LORD's angelic messenger came and sat down under the oak tree in Ophrah owned by Joash the Abiezrite. He arrived while Joash's son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress so he could hide it from the Midianites.
- 12 The LORD's messenger appeared and said to him, "The LORD is with you, courageous warrior!"
- 13 Gideon said to him, "Pardon me, but if the LORD is with us, why has such disaster overtaken us? Where are all his miraculous deeds our ancestors told us about? They said, 'Did the LORD not bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian."
- 14 Then the LORD himself turned to him and said, "You have the strength. Deliver Israel from the power of the Midianites! Have I not sent you?"
- 15 Gideon said to him, "But Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Just look! My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my family."
- 16 The LORD said to him, "Ah, but I will be with you! You will strike down the whole Midianite army."
- 17 Gideon said to him, "If you really are pleased with me, then give me a sign as proof that it is really you speaking with me.
- 18 Do not leave this place until I come back with a gift and present it to you." The LORD said, "I will stay here until you come back."
- 19 Gideon went and prepared a young goat, along with unleavened bread made from an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. He brought the food to him under the oak tree and presented it to him.
- 20 God's messenger said to him, "Put the meat and unleavened bread on this rock, and pour out the broth." Gideon did as instructed.
- 21 The LORD's messenger touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of his staff. Fire flared up from the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened bread. The LORD's messenger then disappeared.
- 22 When Gideon realized that it was the LORD's messenger, he said, "Oh no! Master, LORD! I have seen the LORD's messenger face to face!"
- 23 The LORD said to him, "You are safe! Do not be afraid! You are not going to die!"
- 24 Gideon built an altar for the LORD there, and named it "The LORD is on friendly terms with me." To this day it is still there in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

### Gideon Tears Down His Father's Altar to Baal

- 25 That night the LORD said to him, "Take the bull from your father's herd, as well as a second bull, one that is seven years old. Pull down your father's Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole.
- 26 Then build an altar for the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold according to the proper pattern. Take the second bull and offer it as a burnt sacrifice on the wood from the Asherah pole that you cut down."
- 27 So Gideon took ten of his servants and did just as the LORD had told him. He was too afraid of his father's family and the men of

the city to do it in broad daylight, so he waited until nighttime.

28 When the men of the city got up the next morning, they saw the Baal altar pulled down, the nearby Asherah pole cut down, and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar.

29 They said to one another, “Who did this?” They investigated the matter thoroughly and concluded that Gideon son of Joash had done it.

30 The men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, so we can execute him! He pulled down the Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole.”

31 But Joash said to all those who confronted him, “Must you fight Baal’s battles? Must you rescue him? Whoever takes up his cause will die by morning! If he really is a god, let him fight his own battles! After all, it was his altar that was pulled down.”

32 That very day Gideon’s father named him Jerub-Baal, because he had said, “Let Baal fight with him, for it was his altar that was pulled down.”

### **Gideon Prepares for Battle**

33 All the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east assembled. They crossed the Jordan River and camped in the Jezreel Valley.

34 The LORD’s spirit took control of Gideon. He blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.

35 He sent messengers throughout Manasseh and summoned them to follow him as well. He also sent messengers throughout Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet him.

### **Doubt Enters Gideon’s Mind**

36 Gideon said to God, “If you really intend to use me to deliver Israel, as you promised, then give me a sign as proof.

37 Look, I am putting a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece, and the ground around it is dry, then I will be sure that you will use me to deliver Israel, as you promised.”

38 The LORD did as he asked. When he got up the next morning, he squeezed the fleece, and enough dew dripped from it to fill a bowl.

39 Gideon said to God, “Please do not get angry at me, when I ask for just one more sign. Please allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make only the fleece dry, while the ground around it is covered with dew.”

40 That night God did as he asked. Only the fleece was dry and the ground around it was covered with dew.

### **Gideon’s Army is Reduced**

7:1 Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and his men got up the next morning and camped near the spring of Harod. The Midianites were camped north of them near the hill of Moreh in the valley.

2 The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to hand Midian over to you. Israel might brag, ‘Our own strength has delivered us.’

3 Now, announce to the men, ‘Whoever is shaking with fear may turn around and leave Mount Gilead.’” Twenty-two thousand men went home; ten thousand remained. [[Deut 20:8](#)]

4 The LORD spoke to Gideon again, “There are still too many men. Bring them down to the water and I will thin the ranks some more. When I say, ‘This one should go with you,’ pick him to go; when I say, ‘This one should not go with you,’ do not take him.”

5 So he brought the men down to the water. Then the LORD said to Gideon, “Separate those who lap the water as a dog laps from those who kneel to drink.”

6 Three hundred men lapped; the rest of the men kneeled to drink water.

7 The LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men who lapped I will deliver the whole army and I will hand Midian over to you. The rest of the men should go home.”

8 The men who were chosen took supplies and their trumpets. Gideon sent all the men of Israel back to their homes; he kept only three hundred men. Now the Midianites were camped down below in the valley.

### **Gideon is Afraid**

9 That night the LORD said to Gideon, “Get up! Attack the camp, for I am handing it over to you.

10 But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with Purah your servant

11 and listen to what they are saying. Then you will be brave and attack the camp.” So he went down with Purah his servant to where the sentries were guarding the camp.

12 Now the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east covered the valley like a swarm of locusts. Their camels could not be counted; they were as innumerable as the sand on the seashore.

13 When Gideon arrived, he heard a man telling another man about a dream he had. The man said, “Look! I had a dream. I saw a stale cake of barley bread rolling into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent so hard it knocked it over and turned it upside down. The tent just collapsed.”

14 The other man said, “Without a doubt this symbolizes the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God is handing Midian and all the army over to him.”

15 When Gideon heard the report of the dream and its interpretation, he praised God. Then he went back to the Israelite camp and said, "Get up, for the LORD is handing the Midianite army over to you!"

#### **God Gives Gideon and the 300 Men Victory**

16 He divided the three hundred men into three units. He gave them all trumpets and empty jars with torches inside them.

17 He said to them, "Watch me and do as I do. Watch closely! I am going to the edge of the camp. Do as I do!

18 When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, you also blow your trumpets all around the camp. Then say, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

19 Gideon took a hundred men to the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guards. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars they were carrying.

20 All three units blew their trumpets and broke their jars. They held the torches in their left hand and the trumpets in their right. Then they yelled, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

21 They stood in order all around the camp. The whole army ran away; they shouted as they scrambled away.

22a When the three hundred men blew their trumpets, the LORD caused the Midianites to attack one another with their swords throughout the camp.

#### **The Midianites Flee South Along the Jordan Toward Ephraimite Territory**

22b The army fled to Beth Shittah on the way to Zererah. They went to the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.

23 Israelites from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh answered the call and chased the Midianites.

#### **Ephraim Captures Oreb and Zeeb**

24 Now Gideon sent messengers throughout the Ephraimite hill country who announced, "Go down and head off the Midianites. Take control of the fords of the streams all the way to Beth Barah and the Jordan River." When all the Ephraimites had assembled, they took control of the fords all the way to Beth Barah and the Jordan River.

25 They captured the two Midianite generals, Oreb and Zeeb. They executed Oreb on the rock of Oreb and Zeeb in the winepress of Zeeb. They chased the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was now on the other side of the Jordan River.

#### **Ephraim Resents Being Excluded from Gideon's Battle Plans**

8:1 The Ephraimites said to him, "Why have you done such a thing to us? You did not summon us when you went to fight the Midianites!" They argued vehemently with him.

2 He said to them, "Now what have I accomplished compared to you? Even Ephraim's leftover grapes are better quality than Abiezer's harvest!

3 It was to you that God handed over the Midianite generals, Oreb and Zeeb! What did I accomplish to rival that?" When he said this, they calmed down.

#### **Gideon Continues His Pursuit of the Kings of Midian**

4 Now Gideon and his three hundred men had crossed over the Jordan River, and even though they were exhausted, they were still chasing the Midianites.

#### **Succoth and Penuel Refuse Aid (Cities in the Transjordan Tribe of Gad, cf. Josh 13:27)**

5 He said to the men of Succoth, "Give some loaves of bread to the men who are following me, because they are exhausted. I am chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

6 The officials of Succoth said, "You have not yet overpowered Zebah and Zalmunna. So why should we give bread to your army?"

7 Gideon said, "Since you will not help, after the LORD hands Zebah and Zalmunna over to me, I will thresh your skin with desert thorns and briers."

8 He went up from there to Penuel and made the same request. The men of Penuel responded the same way the men of Succoth had.

9 He also threatened the men of Penuel, warning, "When I return victoriously, I will tear down this tower."

#### **Gideon Captures the Kings of Midian**

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their armies. There were about fifteen thousand survivors from the army of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand sword-wielding soldiers had been killed.

11 Gideon went up the road of the nomads east of Nobah and Jogbehah and ambushed the surprised army.

12 When Zebah and Zalmunna ran away, Gideon chased them and captured the two Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. He had surprised their entire army.

**Gideon's Vengeance on Succoth and Penuel**

13 Gideon son of Joash returned from the battle by the pass of Heres.

14 He captured a young man from Succoth and interrogated him. The young man wrote down for him the names of Succoth's officials and city leaders—seventy-seven men in all.

15 He approached the men of Succoth and said, "Look what I have! Zebah and Zalmunna! You insulted me, saying, 'You have not yet overpowered Zebah and Zalmunna. So why should we give bread to your exhausted men?'"

16 He seized the leaders of the city, along with some desert thorns and briers; he then "threshed" the men of Succoth with them.

17 He also tore down the tower of Penuel and executed the city's men.

**Gideon Executes Zebah and Zalmunna**

18 He said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "Describe for me the men you killed at Tabor." They said, "They were like you. Each one looked like a king's son."

19 He said, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. I swear, as surely as the LORD is alive, if you had let them live, I would not kill you."

20 He ordered Jether his firstborn son, "Come on! Kill them!" But Jether was too afraid to draw his sword, because he was still young.

21 Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, "Come on, you strike us, for a man is judged by his strength." So Gideon killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent-shaped ornaments which were on the necks of their camels.

**Gideon Refuses to Rule Israel**

22 The men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us—you, your son, and your grandson. For you have delivered us from Midian's power."

23 Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you."

24 Gideon continued, "I would like to make one request. Each of you give me an earring from the plunder you have taken." (The Midianites had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites.)

25 They said, "We are happy to give you earrings." So they spread out a garment, and each one threw an earring from his plunder onto it.

26 The total weight of the gold earrings he requested came to seventeen hundred gold shekels. This was in addition to the crescent-shaped ornaments, jewelry, purple clothing worn by the Midianite kings, and the necklaces on the camels.

27 Gideon used all this to make an ephod, which he put in his hometown of Ophrah. All the Israelites prostituted themselves to it by worshiping it there. It became a snare to Gideon and his family.

28 The Israelites humiliated Midian; the Midianites' fighting spirit was broken. The land had rest for forty years during Gideon's time.

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