

# Judges 07 - God's Severe Defense Cutbacks; Gideon Attacks Midian With 300 Soldiers

II. Failure in rescue of Israel through the seven cycles (Judges 3:7—16:31)

(5) Gideon defeats Zebah and Zalmunna and the Midianites and the Amalekites  
(Judges 6:1—8:28)

(D) Salvation (Judges 6:8—8:27)

(c) Gideon pairs back his troops at Jezreal from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300 (7:1-8)

(d) Encouraged by the Midianite dream Gideon attacks and God brings the victory (7:9-23)

(e) Gideon pursues and destroys the remnant across the Jordan and destroys the hosts of Midian Amalek (7:24—8:21)

## Judges 7

(D) Salvation (Judges 6:8—8:27)

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**1** Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him got up early, and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh **in the valley**.

**1** Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

**1** Then Jerubbaal, also known as Gideon, got up early along with all of his soldiers. They encamped near the Harod Spring. The Midian encampment lay in the valley to their north, near the hill of Moreh.

**1** Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

- The Spring of Harod winds from the foot of Mt. Gilboa eastward to the Jordan River through the Harod Valley

- Troop levels: 32,000 (v3) for the Israelites, against 135,000 (8:10) for the Midianites

— Even so, God didn't want Israel to be able to take personal credit for the victory  
- "...in the valley" - refers to the Jezreel Valley, which had been won for Israel by Barak  
2 And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to hand Midian over to them, otherwise Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has saved me.'

2 The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'

2 The LORD told Gideon, "You have too many soldiers with you for me to drop Midian into their hands, because Israel would become arrogant and say, 'It was my own abilities that delivered me.'

2 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

- Gideon twice tested God with the fleece; now, God will test Gideon twice

- Once Israel won the battle with the Midianites, they would credit their troop levels and military strength, rather than God

- It is no problem for God to save many or few (1 Sam 14:6)

3 Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and worried, is to return and leave **MountGilead.'**" So twenty-two thousand from the people returned, but ten thousand remained.

3 Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.

3 That's why you're to ask in full view of the soldiers, "Whoever is afraid or is trembling may go back from Mount Gilead and return home." So 22,000 soldiers left and 10,000 remained.

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

- In keeping with the Law (Deut 20:8), 22,000 fearful recruits were summarily dismissed and allowed to go home (at least for a brief leave of absence)

— They apparently will join in the subsequent rout...

- "...Mount Gilead" - this reference is puzzling since the presently known Mt. Gilead is east of the Jordan

— Some scholars view "Gilead" as a copyist's error for "Gilboa," or perhaps there was another Mt. Gilead nearby, since some of Gilead's descendants lived on the western side of

the Jordan

4 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. So it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

4 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

4 "There are still too many soldiers," the LORD told Gideon. "Bring them down to the water and I'll refine them for you there. Therefore when I say to you, 'This one will be going with you,' he'll go with you, but no one may go about whom I tell you, 'This one won't be going with you.'"

4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

- 10,000 against 135,000 trained warriors were still too many, in God's eyes

— This is a comment on God's view of Israel's audacity: would they still take credit for a victory against 14:1 odds? Evidently so.

5 So he brought the people down to the water. Then the LORD said to Gideon, "You shall put everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps in one group, and everyone who kneels down to drink *in another*."

5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink."

5 So he brought his soldiers down to the water, and the LORD told Gideon, "You are to cull out everyone who laps up water with his tongue like a dog from everyone who kneels to drink."

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

- The issue was not who kneels and who stands to drink, but who would cup his hands and bring water to his mouth, and who would not

— Those who kneeled to drink directly from the river, and did not cup their hands to bring the water into their mouth, were sent home

— Those who cupped their hands and brought water to their mouth, then lapped with their tongues like a dog, stayed

- Those who lifted the water to their mouths with their hands represented the good soldiers who, upon reaching a brook before the battle, did not allow themselves time to fall down and satisfy their thirst in the most convenient manner.

— These good soldiers simply knelt, took up some water with their hands as they remained upright in their military armor to strengthen themselves for the battle, and then proceeded without delay against the foe. They remained watchful and prepared for any emergency.

6 Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people kneeled down to drink water.

6 Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water.

6 The contingent of soldiers who lapped water with their hands to their mouths numbered 300 men, but everyone else kneeled to drink water.

6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

- 9,700 apparently less-watchful men failed a simple test and were also discharged—at least for a brief leave of absence (v23)

— The odds went from 4:1, to 14:1, and now God seems to prefer 450:1 odds! (these were the same odds in 1 Kings 18 where Elijah alone was victorious over 450 priests of Baal!)

7 And the LORD said to Gideon, "I will save you with the three hundred men who lapped, and will hand the Midianites over to you; so have all the *other* people go, each man **to his home.**"

7 The LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the *other* people go, each man to his home."

7 Then the LORD told Gideon, "I'm going to deliver you with the 300 soldiers who lapped by giving the Midianites into your control. Send everyone else back to their own homes."

7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

- "...to his home" - back to base camp

— They will later be called to participate in the fighting, just not during the initial attack

8 So the three hundred men took the people's provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And Gideon dismissed all the *other* men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the three hundred men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

8 So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the *other* men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

8 So the soldiers took provisions with them, along with their trumpets, and Gideon sent all the rest of the soldiers of Israel back to their own tents, but he retained the 300 men. And the Midian encampment was below him in the valley.

8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

(d) Encouraged by the Midianite dream Gideon attacks and God brings the victory (7:9-23)

9 Now on the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have handed it over to you.

9 Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands.

9 Later that same night, the LORD directed Gideon, "Get up and go down to the Midianite encampment, because I've given it into your control.

9 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

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

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

10 But if you're afraid to go down there, you may take your servant Purah with you to their encampment,

10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

11 so that you will hear what they say; and afterward you will have the courage to go down against the camp." So he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.

11 and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp." So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.

11 where you will hear what they're talking about. That way, you'll be encouraged to attack the encampment." So he and his servant Purah went down to the perimeter outposts of the encamped army.

11 And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the

armed men that were in the host.

- This is the sign that finally convinces Gideon that he will defeat the Midianites...

12 Now the Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the people of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

12 Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

12 The Midianites, the Amalekites, and certain groups from the east lay encamped in the valley, as thick as locusts. The number of their camels couldn't be calculated—they seemed as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

- Two reasons why Gideon may have been discouraged: the sheer number of the enemy, and the resources and provisions they had

13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent collapsed."

13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat."

13 Gideon arrived just as a soldier was talking to a friend about a dream. "Look!" he was saying. "I had a dream that went like this: A loaf of barley bread rolled into the Midianite encampment, came to a tent, and collided with it. The loaf of bread fell down, turned upside down, and the tent collapsed!"

**13** And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

- Generally, when God communicated with pagans, He did so in a dream (i.e. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Abimelech)

- The barley loaf (poor man's bread) was an apt symbol of the Israelites; the tent, the nomadic Midianites

— The barley loaf rolling into the Midianite tent and knocking it over symbolized the defeat of the Midianites by Israel

14 And his friend replied, "This is nothing other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has handed over to him Midian and all the camp."

14 His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."

14 Then his friend replied, "Can this be anything else than the sword of Joash's son Gideon, that man from Israel? God must have given Midian and the entire encampment into his control!"

**14** And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

- This interpretation may have been an evidence of fear; perhaps Gideon's reputation had spread throughout the region

— Or, more probably, the response was simply intended as a disparaging, cynical jest; but, in any case, it was an encouraging sign to Gideon

- God will sometimes use even an adversary's off-hand comment as a prophecy: Cf. Caiaphas' remark that "It is expedient for one man to die for the people..." (John 11:50; 18:14)

**15** When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its **interpretation**, he bowed in worship. Then he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has handed over to you the camp of Midian!"

**15** When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hands."

**15** When Gideon heard the tale of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down in worship and then returned to the Israeli encampment.

There he announced, "Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite army into your control!"

**15** And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

- This verse describes the change in Gideon brought about after hearing the dream of the Midianite

— He was now fully convinced that he would have victory over the Midianites

— It is here, now, that Gideon becomes the mighty man of valor

- "...interpretation" - *sheber*, breaking, like that of a code

Gideon was a new man as he and his servant returned to the Israelite camp: his fears and doubts were gone as he mobilized his small army and infused courage into their hearts in his announcement. Faith "sees the invisible" (victory in a battle not yet fought), and "does the impossible" (wins the battle with few men and strange weapons).

16 And he divided the three hundred men into three units, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with **torches** inside the pitchers.

16 He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.

16 Then he separated the 300 men into three companies, gave them each trumpets to carry, along with jars into which he placed lit torches.

16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

- "...torches" - *lappiyd*, kindling torches (from an unused root probably meaning to shine); firebrands or torches

17 Then he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.

17 He said to them, "Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.

17 He instructed them, "Watch me, and do what I do. When we come to the outer perimeter of the encampment, do what I do.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I and **all who are with me** blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets around the entire camp and say, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

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

18 When I sound my trumpet, accompanied by everyone who is with me, you must blow your trumpets all around the entire encampment. Then shout out, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

- "...all who are with me" - the 100 men with Gideon (v19)

- They would encircle the enemy camp with the torches inside the jars and with trumpets (*shofars* like Joshua used at Jericho), and at Gideon's command the men would blow the

trumpets, break the jars revealing the torches, and then shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and God would do the rest.

- Gideon was the example for them to follow. No committees, no dialogues, no discussions. He had come a long way from the day God found him hiding in the winepress! He was no longer asking, "If—why—where?"

- He was "a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17); God took a doubter and made a general out of him

### **Attack on Midian**

Gideon led his small army from the Spring of Harod ("trembling") to the Valley of Jezreel where they took their places around the enemy camp.

**19** So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle night watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

**19** So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

**19** So Gideon and the 100 men with him arrived at the outer perimeter of the encampment at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had posted sentries. They blew their trumpets and smashed the jars that they were carrying in their hands.

**19** So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.

- In Gideon's day the first watch was from 6pm to 10pm; the middle watch was from 10pm to 2am; and the morning watch from 2am to 6am

— At the beginning of the middle watch (just after 10pm) the retiring guards would still be milling about their tents, and the new guards would have just come on duty

- The attack was launched: trumpets blared, and the smoldering embers burst into flame; the crescendo of declarations was deafening...

**20** When the three units blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

**20** When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

**20** When the three companies sounded their trumpets and broke the jars, they held the torches in their left hands and sounded their trumpets with their right hands. Then they

cried out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The **sword** of the LORD, and of Gideon.

- Finding themselves surrounded by sudden lights and noises, the Midianites assumed that they were being attacked by a large army and panic resulted

- "...sword" - used figuratively as the Israelites did not have swords at this point

— Only the Midianites had swords, which they would now use against themselves

21 And each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.

21 Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.

21 They stood up, each soldier in his assigned place surrounding the encampment, and the entire army ran away, sounding the alarm to retreat.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

- The Israelite army had the Midianite camp surrounded, but did not enter. The Midianites, in confusion, fled

22 And when they blew the three hundred trumpets, the LORD set the sword of one against another even throughout the entire army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

22 When they blew 300 trumpets, the LORD set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

22 As the 300 trumpets were being sounded, the LORD turned the swords of the Midianite soldiers against one another throughout the entire army, and the army ran away as far as Beth-shittah in the direction of Zererah. They got as far as the outskirts of Abel-meholah, near Tabbath.

22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-Shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-Meholah, unto Tabbath.

- The confusion and panic created by the surprise commotion from Gideon's men was divinely turned to massive infighting among the enemy. The self-destruction was followed by flight.

— They quickly realized the safest thing to do was to flee so they took off on the caravan route to the southeast, eventually crossed to the east side of the Jordan River, with the

Israelite army pursuing (Abel-Meholah was where Elisha was living when Elijah called him to be his protégé)

There is an interesting spiritual analogy here: We, as Christians, have the light of Jesus inside, but it is all bottled up. The Lord wants to release the light of Jesus He has placed in each of us. But it only comes after breaking (Cf. 2 Cor 4:6-12). The light is in the earthen vessel; but the light cannot shine forth from the vessel until there is a breaking of the vessel.

23 And the men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.

23 The men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.

23 Israeli soldiers were called out from the territories of Naphtali, Asher, and throughout Manasseh, and they chased after the Midianites.

**23** And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

- Obviously 300 were inadequate to pursue thousands, so Gideon put out a call for more volunteers

— In addition to the original 32,000 who had responded earlier, they were also joined by the proud tribe of Ephraim

(e) Gideon pursues and destroys the remnant across the Jordan and destroys the hosts of Midian Amalek (7:24—8:21)

**24** Then Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against Midian and take control of the waters ahead of them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were summoned, and they took control of the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

**24** Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against Midian and take the waters before them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were summoned and they took the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

**24** Gideon dispatched messengers throughout the mountainous region of Ephraim, notifying them, "Come down to fight Midian. Capture the water crossings as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan River before they can get to them."

**24** And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then

all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan.

- A second call went out to the tribe of Ephraim; they answered the call...

25 And they captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

25 They captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

25 They captured two Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. While they were pursuing the Midianites, they executed Oreb at Oreb's Rock and Zeeb at Zeeb's Winepress, and then they carried the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from the east bank of the Jordan River.

25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

- To Ephraim was given the honor of capturing and slaying Oreb ("raven") and Zeeb ("wolf"), the two Midianite princes

- Beth-Barah was the place that Joshua originally crossed the Jordan, and the place where John the Baptist would later be baptizing (John 1:28)

The story began with a man hiding in a winepress (6:11) and ended with the enemy prince slain at a winepress. Gideon's great victory over the Midianites became a landmark event in the history of Israel, not unlike the Battle of Waterloo for Great Britain, for it reminded the Jews of God's power to deliver them from their enemies. The day of Midian was a great day that Israel would never forget (Ps 83:11; Is 9:4; 10:26). God doesn't need big buildings, big crowds, or big budgets: faith then becomes misplaced. He looks for a Gideon: someone who He can use just as He sees fit.