

**Judges 6:1 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.**

**Judges 6:2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.**

Once again evil held sway throughout Israel, and the LORD gave them over to Midian for seven years. Their rule was so harsh that the people resorted to building hideouts in the mountains and hiding in caves and any other place from which they thought they could escape from them.

I think it is important to note that the LORD often uses the forces of evil to accomplish His purposes in judging His people for sin and seeking to bring them to a place of repentance and restored fellowship. This is a truth that permeates scripture. It is just another example of His sovereignty over the affairs of men and never causing them to go against their own choices. The Midianites were acting in accordance with their own desires, and the LORD took away His hedge of protection around His people because they had once again broken covenant.

I think there is another important truth to remember throughout the study of this book. If God didn't care, He wouldn't bother. God was committed not only to His covenant to Abraham, but to His plan of redemption for mankind. His actions are rooted in His love for us.

*1 John 4:9–10 “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*

**Judges 6:3 And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;**

**Judges 6:4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.**

**Judges 6:5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.**

**Judges 6:6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.**

The Midianites and Amalekites descended on Israel riding on their camels and completely destroying their crops. They also stole all their livestock. The enemy invaded in such large numbers that the writer compares them to a plague of locusts or grasshoppers. They left the people of Israel with nothing to sustain them. Finally, the people cried out to the LORD for deliverance.

The New Bible Commentary informs us: “Barak’s victory over the Canaanite chariot forces had opened the broad, fertile Jezreel Valley to Israelite settlement

and the cultivation of crops.”

The NIV Commentary adds the following information: “The main areas affected had borne the brunt of the preceding Canaanite oppression. Manasseh suffered most, along with other tribes adjacent to the Jezreel Valley: Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali.”

**Judges 6:7 ¶** And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,

**Judges 6:8** That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

**Judges 6:9** And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

**Judges 6:10** And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

In response to the cries of His people, the LORD sent an unnamed prophet to remind them of how He had delivered them from Egypt and given them the land of Canaan. He reminded them that they had nothing to fear from the false gods of the Amorites, the former occupants of the land. The fact that they were suffering at the hands of the enemy was a direct consequence of choosing not to obey the LORD, of breaking covenant with them.

The LORD’s answer was a message of accusation with no words of encouragement or expectation of His deliverance.

**Judges 6:11 ¶** And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites.

**Judges 6:12** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

**Judges 6:13** And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

**Judges 6:14** And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

**Judges 6:15** And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father’s house.

**Judges 6:16** And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

**Judges 6:17** And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

**Judges 6:18** Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set *it* before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

“an angel of the LORD” (v11) – This angel identifies Himself as “the LORD” in verses 14 and 16. This is another preincarnate appearance of the LORD Jesus, the bodily representation of Almighty God.

It’s interesting to note that the LORD sits down under an oak tree that was on land belonging to Joash the Abiezrite, the father of Gideon. The tree hid a winepress that Gideon used to thresh some wheat hidden from the view of the Midianites.

The LORD appeared to Gideon there and addressed him as a man of strength and virtue who was in fellowship with the LORD.

Interestingly, Gideon did not seem surprised by the presence of the man and entered into conversation with Him. He questioned the man with an observation seeming not to note that the man had addressed him personally. He questioned how the man could think that the LORD was with “us” in light of all his people were suffering. Why wasn’t He delivering them with miracles now as He had their ancestors when He delivered them from Egypt? He concluded that the LORD had abandoned them and given them over to Midian.

“The LORD looked at him” and told Gideon that he was going to deliver Israel from the enemy because He was sending him. In other words, you will go in the strength and power of the LORD.

As Gideon responds to the LORD, I don’t think he realizes it is the LORD, but he is wondering at the possibility in light of verse 17. Like Moses, he first answers with excuses. He makes the point that his family is the poorest of the tribe of Manasseh, and he is the youngest son in the family; in other words, not the right one to expect to deliver Israel.

The LORD tells him that because He will be with Gideon (empowering him supernaturally), he will destroy Midian as easily as if their whole army was a single man.

At this point Gideon wants to believe, but he wants proof that it is the LORD that is commissioning him. He respectfully asks the LORD for a sign, a miracle to prove that He is the LORD. He also asks Him to wait while he goes to get a gift he wants to give Him. The LORD promised to wait until Gideon returned.

**Judges 6:19** And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*.

**Judges 6:20** And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay *them* upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

**Judges 6:21** Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then

**the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.**

Gideon went home and cooked a young goat and made some unleavened bread. He put the meat in a basket (with the bread I presume) and carried the broth in a pot to take to the LORD—implying that the meat had been boiled. The LORD told him to take the meat and bread and put them on a certain rock; he was then to pour out the broth (over the meat and bread? I tend to think so.). Gideon did as he was told. The LORD used the end of His staff to touch the meat and bread, and fire came out of the rock to consume them. Then the LORD disappeared.

**Judges 6:22** And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

**Judges 6:23** And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

**Judges 6:24** Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Finally, Gideon realized that he had seen the LORD, and he was afraid because he knew that no man could see God and live.

*Exodus 33:17–20 “And the LORD said unto Moses....Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”*

In some way, the LORD spoke to him and told him not to be afraid because he was not going to die.

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD at that spot and called it Jehovahshalom, “The LORD is peace.” It was still standing at the time the book of Judges was written.

**Judges 6:25 ¶** And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it:

**Judges 6:26** And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

That same night the LORD spoke to Gideon again, though we aren’t told how. He told him to get his father’s young bull, the second one that was seven years old. (I guess this is implying that he owned two bulls of different ages, and he wanted the one that was seven years old. Maybe because seven is connected with that which is complete or perfect.) He was to tear down the altar of Baal that his father used and cut down the Asherah pole (from the Hebrew for “grove”) that was beside it. He was then to build an altar to the LORD “thy God” in its place and offer the bull on it as a sacrifice using the wood of the Asherah pole.

I think this was to typify the fact that God was going to use Gideon to get the

people to replace the worship of false gods with worship of the one true God, the God of Israel. It was a picture of taking what is unholy and redeeming it and making it holy.

**Judges 6:27** Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

**Judges 6:28** And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built.

**Judges 6:29** And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

**Judges 6:30** Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

It seems that Gideon did not live with his father directly, but probably lived on his father's land. He took ten of his servants with him to do what God had told him to do. He did this at night because of fear of how his father's household and the men of the city might respond. He knew that they would try to stop him by any means necessary.

Principle: To follow the LORD in obedience will often cause friends and/or family to turn against you. That accords with the words of Jesus.

*Matthew 10:34–37* "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

When the men of the city got up the next morning and saw that the altar to Baal had been destroyed and the Asherah pole cut down and saw evidence of the sacrifice of the bull on a different altar, they wondered who had done it. When they started questioning people, someone identified Gideon the son of Joash as the one; one of his servants must have turned against him.

The men came to Joash and demanded that he hand over Gideon because he deserved to die for tearing down the altar to Baal and cutting down the Asherah pole.

**Judges 6:31** And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet* morning: if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

**Judges 6:32** Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

Joash gave a wise reply. He basically said, If Baal is god, he doesn't need you to save him. Let him defend himself. On that day he gave Gideon another name- Jerubbaal, "let Baal defend his cause."

**Judges 6:33 ¶ Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.**

**Judges 6:34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.**

**Judges 6:35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.**

It was at this time that the armies of the Midianites and Amalekites once again gathered together and made camp in the valley of Jezreel. The "Spirit of the LORD," the Holy Spirit, came upon Gideon. He blew a trumpet to sound a call to battle, and the men of Abiezer responded. They must have had a change of heart when Baal failed to defend himself. Gideon also sent messengers throughout the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali seeking reinforcements; they too responded and came to join them.

**Judges 6:36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,**

**Judges 6:37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.**

**Judges 6:38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.**

Once again, Gideon sought a sign from the LORD that he was doing the right thing. He intended to put a fleece of wool on the ground; and if the dew fell only on the fleece leaving the ground dry, he would know that the LORD was going to use him to save Israel. When he got up the next morning, he wrung a bowl full of water out of the fleece (and the ground was dry is implied).

**Judges 6:39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.**

**Judges 6:40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.**

Gideon really wanted to be sure and respectfully asked the LORD for one more sign. This time he intended to put a fleece on the ground and asked that the fleece remain dry and the ground be wet with dew. Again, the LORD did as he asked; the fleece was dry the next morning and the ground was wet.

It is from this passage that we get the phrase and idea of “putting out a fleece.” Frankly, I think that God will only honor such a request for affirmation of His leading when it is for something out of the ordinary that is not already identified as His will in His word and/or is for a special commissioning to serve Him in a specific way. It should be noted that Gideon approached God very carefully and admitted that he feared making God angry in light of his weak faith. I believe God’s response is guided by His knowledge of the motives and heart of the person making the request.

Like Barak, though Gideon evidenced weak faith at the beginning, he finished strong and was recognized in the great “hall of faith” chapter in Hebrews.

*Hebrews 11:32 “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:”*