

God had a big job for Gideon. God wanted him to save his people from the cruel Midianites. But Gideon was afraid. He wanted proof. So God showed him miracles!

(The following story is found in Judges 6 and 7.)

GIDEON, BAAL AND THE CURSE OF THE MIDIANITES PART 2

by Karen Meeker

Gideon did not like how the Midianites were treating his people. But what could he do? Nothing by himself, he knew. He was about to learn that amazing things can be done when God takes command. All he had to do was trust and believe.

FLASHBACK ...

“Surely I will be with you, and you will defeat the Midianites.” The LORD’s words that day at the winepress echoed in Gideon’s mind (see part 1).

Volunteers from four of the tribes of Israel had answered his call. He watched as they set up camp on the slopes of Mount Gilead. Their cook fires reminded him of the miracle that followed his first meeting with the LORD. Fire sprang from the rock and burned up the meat and unleavened bread!

So Gideon had done what God told him to do. He and his servants had angered local Baal-worshippers by tearing down their pagan altar with its despicable image. The Canaanite god-that-is-no-god was powerless before God.

Gideon’s people viewed him with newfound respect. He was no longer the outsider who refused to worship Baal. Now he was their courageous leader. He was the one who would put an end to the relentless Midianite oppression.

So 32,000 men from the four tribes had responded to his call.

Now Gideon and his small army would have to prepare to face the enemy.

QUIZ TIME

How many men responded to Gideon’s call?

YOU WILL BE THERE, WON’T YOU?

Facing the Midianite horde called for incredible courage—and faith. Gideon needed some reassurance that he would not go into battle without God’s help. So he hatched a plan.

QUIZ TIME

What did Gideon ask to be wet with dew in the morning? The fleece or the ground?

His heart pounding, Gideon said to God, “Please, if You will save Israel by my hand, I need to know for certain that You are with me.” He continued, “I’ll put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor tonight. In the morning if the dew is only on it, and the ground is dry all around, then I’ll believe You.”

WET FLEECE BUT ...

Early the next morning he hurried to the threshing floor. To his relief, the fleece was dripping wet! He wrung out a bowlful of water from it! And the surrounding ground was bone dry, just as he asked.

At first, his confidence soared. But then he began thinking. What if this just happened by chance? What if God had nothing to do with it? Could he trust that God meant what He said? Gideon wanted to make sure.

DRY FLEECE

Drawing a deep breath, Gideon approached God a second time. “Please, do not be angry, but could You do this for me? I’ll put a fleece in the same place tonight. If in the morning it is dry, and the ground is wet with dew, I’ll surely know You are with me.”

God was patient and granted Gideon’s request. The next morning, the fleece was dry! But the ground was soaked with dew. Gideon, his faith strengthened by both miracles from God, got ready to meet the enemy.

ASSEMBLING THE TROOPS

Gideon looked at his small army. There should have been many more.

God looked at the army too. But He said, “The people who are with you are too many.” He didn’t want Israel to think, “My own hand has saved me.” God said that those who were afraid could leave (Judges 7:2-3).

So Gideon sent runners throughout the camp. “Any who are afraid or fearful, pick up your gear and leave!” Hundreds, no *thousands*, folded their tents and headed for home! Only 10,000 men stayed to face an army of 135,000.

STILL TOO MANY

Gideon was in for another shock. God said, “The people are still too many.” He would tell Gideon who would go with him and who should not go (verse 4).

So Gideon did what God said. He ordered the remaining men to a nearby spring. He watched as his soldiers rushed to drink. Some got on their knees with their faces in the water. Others scooped up water in their hands, lapping it like dogs.

Then God told Gideon to separate the two groups (verse 5).

KNEELERS, GO HOME

Gideon dutifully separated the lappers from the kneelers. Only 300 lapped from their hands. What now? Gideon wondered.

The LORD’s next words were shocking. “By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go” (verse 7).

The kneelers, all 9,700 of them, started for home. They were relieved to be excused from what surely appeared to be a no-win battle.

The 300 regrouped and waited for orders.

THINGS DON’T LOOK SO GOOD

Gideon could only shake his head. Three hundred men against all of the Midianites! The enemy looked like a plague of locusts, ready to devour everything in sight. Their war camels were galloping battle machines. They would make short work of his puny army.

God knew Gideon’s weaknesses. Gideon was more troubled by what he *saw* than strengthened by *hearing* and *believing* God’s words: “By these 300 I will save you and defeat the Midianites” (verse 7).

That night God gave Gideon another sign.

QUIZ TIME

On the second night, what did Gideon ask to be wet with dew in the morning? The fleece or the ground?

QUIZ TIME

How many men were left to fight the Midianites?

INTO THE ENEMY CAMP

The LORD's directions rang in his ears. "Go into the enemy camp, for I have delivered it into your hands. If you are afraid, take Purah, your armor bearer, with you. When you hear what they are saying, your faith will be strengthened to launch the attack" (verses 9-11).

Gideon and Purah slipped into the Midianite outpost unseen. They paused beside one of the tents. What they heard told them all they needed to know about the outcome of the battle.

ONE BAD DREAM

"There was this miserable loaf of barley bread, and it came tumbling into our camp," an agitated voice said. "It hit a tent so hard that the tent tilted sideways and then collapsed! Can you believe it—knocked down by a loaf of bread? It was so real!"

His companion replied, "It's the sword of Gideon! God has delivered Midian and this whole camp into his hand. We are sure to be defeated!"

Gideon, greatly encouraged by what he heard, worshipped God. He returned to camp to assemble his valiant 300.

QUIZ TIME

Did the Midianites think they could win the battle?

TAKE YOUR WEAPONS

"The time has come," Gideon told his waiting troops. "The LORD has delivered the enemy into our hands. I need three companies of 100 men each. You will be given a trumpet and an empty pitcher with a torch inside. Then watch me and do what I do when we come to the Midianite camp."

Gideon and his army waited until the middle of the night. Then they approached the sleeping enemy. The hundred men with Gideon blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers. The other companies followed suit, and Israel surrounded the camp. Their trumpets blared and their torches burned and they shouted, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"

Midianite soldiers spilled from their tents. They were disoriented by a sea of torches surrounding them and terrified by the resounding battle cry. In their confusion they began attacking anything that moved. The LORD caused the enemy soldiers to kill each other! Those who survived fled with Israel in hot pursuit.

True to His word, the LORD had delivered the camp of the Midianites into the hands of Gideon and his army of 300. They didn't have to lift a sword.

AFTERWARDS

It took some time, but eventually the Midianite oppression of Israel was broken for good. That part of the story is found in Judges 8. After that, the Bible says, "The country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon" (Judges 8:28).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Was it a good thing or a bad thing for Gideon to ask for signs from God? What are the reasons for your answer?
2. How many times did God perform signs to strengthen Gideon's faith? What did He do?
3. What lessons can we learn from the story of Gideon?
4. Did Gideon ever learn to have faith? (Hint: Read Hebrews 11:32.)

To learn more about faith, see "[What Is Faith?](#)"

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