

Judges Chapter 7

Verses 1-3

Gideon's forces were assembled at the foot of Mount Gilboa; the "Midianites" were encamped about five miles northwest across the valley of Jezreel by the "hill of Moreh".

Accordingly, "mount Gilead" cannot be the well-known Mount Gilead, which was located east of the Jordan River.

Judges 7:1 "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."

That being the name his father had lately given him (Judges 6:32).

"And all the people that were with him, rose up early":

Encouraged by the signs and miracles wrought, by which he was assured of success.

He was eager to be about his work, and therefore rose early in the morning, and got his army together, and marched to engage the enemy.

"And pitched beside the well of Harod":

Which he might choose for the refreshment of his army on occasion.

Or, however, so he was directed in Providence here, where a trial was to be made of them by water.

This well, or fountain, seems to be the same with that in (1 Sam. 29:1).

It signifies fear and trembling, and might have its name either from the fear and trembling of the 22,000 Israelites, whose hearts were dismayed at the Midianites, and they were ordered to return home.

Or from the fear and trembling of the Midianites, who were discomfited here.

The former seems to be the true reason (see Judges 7:3).

So that the Midianites were on the north side of them; which Gideon, no doubt, judged to be an advantageous position to him.

"By the hill of Moreh, in the valley":

The valley of Jezreel, one of the mountains of Gilboa, as is supposed.

The Targum is, "by the hill which looks to the plain;" from whence he could have a view of the Midianites army, and the disposition of it.

Some think this hill had its name from the Midianites archers.

But, according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, from there being a watch here to direct the ways, or to give notice to the inhabitants of the valley when an army came against them.

God sees Gideon as a mighty warrior against evil.

That is why he is spoken of as Jerubbaal here.

We remember, there are thousands of Israelites with Gideon at this point.

We remember from the last lesson that the Midianites had gathered in the valley of Jezreel.

Verses 2-8

God seldom undertakes a battle with excess human strength.

Thus, God reduced Israel's army to a point where defeating the Midianites on their own would be impossible.

Gideon was about to discover that 300 with God is far more than 32,000 without Him.

Human limitations always point to His unlimited power (1 Sam. 14:6).

Judges 7:2 "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."

God would not use Gideon as a leader until Gideon recognized that he was insufficient for the task.

God wants His leaders to depend completely on Him.

And He wants the glory.

If victories make God's people self-reliant, those victories are more disastrous than defeat would be.

People can never be too small for God to use, but they can be too big in their own minds (See John 3:30).

God did not want the Israelites to think they could win the war with their own strength.

He wanted them to know that it was by His power that the Midianites would be destroyed.

He was trying to teach them to trust Him.

This whole activity is to turn their hearts back to God and away from the false gods.

Verses 3-8

Gideon's strange mobilization strategy had both scriptural precedent and a practical principle:

- (1) The fears of some can infect the rest (compare Deut. 20:8;
- (2) The practical wisdom to be alert to battle conditions must take precedence over the gratification of personal needs.

The selection of the "three hundred men" who lapped the "water" may also have eliminated those who were still "fearful".

Judges 7:3 "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."

Such a proclamation as follows, was, according to the law of God, to be made when Israel went out to battle against their enemies (Deut. 20:8).

Though it looks as if Gideon would not have made such proclamation, had he not been directed to it by the LORD.

His army being so small in comparison of the enemy.

And perhaps Gideon might understand that law to have respect only to war made for the enlargement of their country, and not for defense against invaders.

"Saying, whosoever is fearful and afraid":

To, engage in battle, because of the number of the enemy.

"Let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead":

Now the fearful and faint hearted had leave given them by this proclamation to return home directly; and as both armies lay so near, and it might reasonably be expected the battle would be the next day.

"And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand": So that they were in all 32,000.

Now though these of their own accord came and joined Gideon with an intention and resolution to stand by him, and fight the enemy.

Yet when they came and saw what a large host they had to engage with, and how small the army was with Gideon, their hearts failed them.

And they were glad to take the advantage of the proclamation.

Those who follow God must have faith.

The opposite of fear is faith.

There were 32,000 Israelites who had followed Gideon to this place.

These Israelites are like people who proclaim Christianity.

There are a multitude who profess Christianity (spiritual Israelites), but many of them would turn and leave at the first problem that comes along.

There were only 10,000 left who were not afraid.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Verses 4-7

It could be said that the men who "lappeth" water from their hands were more vigilant, while the men who bowed to drink made refreshment their object and placed themselves in a vulnerable position.

Those who go down on their knees would have been unaware of enemy movement while they drank and would have been more susceptible to leeches.

Once the kneelers were dismissed, Gideon had a group of men who were different in their discipline: They were devoted to God and to him, and diligent to keep their eyes on the ultimate goal (Heb. 12:2).

Judges 7:4 "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."

Though they were but just the number that Barak had with him, when he attacked Sisera's army and got the victory.

Which yet was ascribed to God, whose hand was manifestly seen in it.

But as these might be supposed to be able men of valor that remained, they were too many for God to have that glory he intended to display in this victory.

"Bring them down unto the water":

From the hill on which they were, to a brook that ran at the bottom of it.

Perhaps a stream from the fountain or well of Harod (Judges 7:1).

"And I will try them for thee there":

Or "purge them", as silver is purged from dross, so the word signifies.

But this trial was only for the sake of Gideon.

"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":

By the different manner of his men drinking at the water, later related, Gideon knew who to take with him, and who not.

Whether they that bowed down to drink, or only lapped the water.

This was determined by the mouth of the LORD, as follows but this trial was only for the sake of Gideon, to direct him whom he should take with him, and who not.

It is not Gideon who is separating them out, it is the LORD.

The LORD will choose His army.

God chooses from the multitude of those proclaiming belief as well.

The next test is to see if they will lay their weapons (Bibles), down.

Judges 7:5 "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."

His whole army of 10,000 men.

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shall thou set by himself":

As they first took the water in the hollow of their hands out of the stream, and then lapped it (as in Judges 7:6).

Whereas a dog does not and cannot take water that way.

And this lapping was standing upright.

And by this these men were distinguished from those that bowed on their knees to drink.

For had they not taken up water in their hands, they must have bowed down on their knees to have lapped, as well as those did.

Now all those that thus lapped were to be set apart by themselves; but whether they were to go with Gideon or not, as yet he knew not.

"Likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink":

Were to be set by themselves also, but which of those were to go with him is after related.

We see that those who lapped like a dog, did not lay their weapons down to drink.

Their first thought was being ready to fight the good fight.

Their own personal needs were not that important to them.

A good soldier of the cross never lays his weapon (Bible), down.

Judges 7:6 "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."

That is, that took up water in the hollow of their hands, which they lifted up to their mouths, and so lapped it.

As the Egyptians about the Nile are said to do, who drank not out of pots and cups, but used their hands to drink with.

"Were three hundred men":

Only such a number out of 10,000: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water (even 9,700).

This is saying, that only 300 of the original 32,000 were ready to go to war.

Those who bowed down on their knees to drink, used both hands to drink.

They were also not ready to instantly take up the fight.

Judges 7:7 "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."

"The Lord said ... By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you.

It is scarcely possible to conceive a more severe trial than the command to attack the overwhelming forces of the enemy with such a handful of followers.

But Gideon's faith in the divine assurance of victory was steadfast, and it is for this he is so highly commended (Heb. 11:32).

We know that the LORD told Gideon earlier that the enemy would be like one man to fight, it would be so easy to defeat them.

Everyone was sent home except these 300 chosen men of the LORD.

They were not chosen because of their great physical strength. They were chosen because of their readiness to do what had to be done.

Judges 7:8 "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."

Those who do only what they can to do in their strength get human-sized results.

God wants men and women who, like Gideon, are willing to be used to subdue kingdoms through faith (Heb. 11:33).

Every Christian should be working toward some godly goal that is so outrageous, it can only be accomplished through God's strength.

It appears these 300 each had his provisions to take with him to battle.

They might have received much of it from those who were sent home.

It seems each man had a trumpet.

Judges 7:9 "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."

The night after there had been so great a reduction of his army, from 32,000 to three hundred.

"Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand":

That is, go down from the hill where he and his little army were, to the valley of Jezreel, where lay the numerous host of Midian.

Assuring him, that though the disproportion was so very great, the army of Midian should be delivered into his hands.

And it was enough that the LORD had said it, for him to believe it.

But in such circumstances that he was, it is no wonder that he had his fears and misgivings of heart, wherefore it follows.

They are to descend to very near the camp and be ready to attack.

This would be better to do at night so they would not be seen.

Verses 10-11

God understood Gideon's fear ("But if thou fear") and compassionately offered an opportunity to build up his courage.

He did not, however, dismiss Gideon from his task.

Judges 7:10 "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:"

With his little army, to attack a numerous host in the night, then he is directed to take this step first.

"Go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host":

In a private manner.

Perhaps this man was his confidential assistant, or however a trusty servant in whom he could confide, as well as valiant.

More it was not proper to take in such a secret expedition, and the fewer the better to trust, and less liable to the observation of the enemy.

And yet it was proper to have one with him, being company and animating, and who would be a witness with him of what should be heard.

In like manner, and for like reasons, as Diomedes and Ulysses went into the Trojan army.

Judges 7:11 "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."

The Midianites, or what shall be said by any of them.

For though it was the night, and so not a time for much conversation, as it may be supposed to be the dead of the night.

Yet something would be said and heard, which is a clear proof of the prescience of God respecting future contingent events.

"And afterward shall thine hands be strengthened":

And his heart encouraged by what he should hear.

"To go down into the host":

In a hostile manner, with his three hundred men, after his return to them.

"Then went he down with Phurah his servant":

First privately, only the two, leaving his little army on the hill.

And came unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.

The sentinels, who were outside the camp, and stood complete in armor to guard it.

And they came as near to them, in as still and private manner as they could, without being discovered.

The Septuagint version is, "to the beginning of the fifty that were in the host;".

And the Syriac and Arabic versions, "to the captain of the fifty".

These might be a party of the outer guards, consisting of fifty men, with one at the head of them.

Placed for the safety of the army in the night watch, and to give notice of any approach to them, or attempt on them.

God will allow them to go down quietly, and see and hear what is going on in the enemy camp. God is doing this to encourage Gideon to go on.

Verses 12-15

In Gideon's day, barley was animal fodder, and "barley bread" was a staple of the poor.

Gideon, like the bread, was rather unimpressive; nevertheless, he would win an impressive victory against the Midianites.

By instilling a fear of Gideon and his "God", Yahweh laid the foundation for Israel's triumph and Gideons' confidence.

Judges 7:12 "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."

"Grasshoppers" (or locusts), and armies are often compared in the literature of the ancient Near East (see the note on 1 Kings 8:22-53).

This is speaking of an extremely large army of the Amalekites, Midianites, and the Children of the east.

This is speaking of tens of thousands of soldiers.

This will be one of the great battles in this valley.

Judges 7:13 "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."

The dream seemed to have little meaning in it.

But the interpretation evidently proved the whole to be from the LORD, and discovered that the name of Gideon had filled the Midianites with terror.

Gideon took this as a sure pledge of success.

Without delay he worshipped and praised God, and returned with confidence to his three hundred men.

Wherever we are, we may speak to God, and worship him.

God must have the praise of that which encourages our faith.

And his providence must be acknowledged in events, though small and seemingly accidental.

A single man coming into camp would not have been noticed.

He stops, and overhears a dream one man is telling. Barley bread was eaten by the very poorest of people.

The people eating the barley bread, obviously, are speaking of Gideon's army.

It is obvious from this dream, that Gideon's army will destroy the army of the Midianites.

Judges 7:14 "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."

As the dream was no doubt from God, so the interpretation of it was; it was he that put into the mind of the soldier's comrade to whom he told it to interpret it as follows; or otherwise in all likelihood he would never have thought of it:

“This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel.

That is, this signifies nothing else, and is a fit sign it was of him and his little army.

A cake is but a small thing, and let it come tumbling as it will, can have no force or strength in it equal to overturn a tent. And a cake of barley is mean and contemptible.

And a cake baked under ashes, or on coals, is what is soon and hastily done.

And fitly represented the smallness and weakness of Gideon's army, their meanness and contemptibleness.

The Israelites being, as Josephus represents the soldier saying, the vilest of all the people of Asia. And those that were with Gideon were suddenly and hastily got together.

Raw and undisciplined, and very unfit to engage the veteran troops of the united forces of Midian, Amalek, and Arabia.

It appears from hence that Gideon's name was well known in the camp of Midian. What was his descent, and his character as a valiant man, which is meant by a man of Israel.

Namely, a courageous mighty man, and the very name of him might strike with terror.

"For into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host":

Which the man concluded from this dream, and the interpretation of it suggested to him from God, and impressed upon his mind.

Which he speaks of with the greatest assurance and confidence, which he was inspired to do.

For the strengthening of Gideon, and the encouragement of him to come down with his army, and fall on the host of Midian.

This dream was so obvious, that even the Midianite soldier knew exactly what it meant.

I am sure that fear gripped these Midianites on hearing this dream.

They are afraid of the God of Gideon.

They know from past experience that they are already defeated, if God has given Midian into the hands of Gideon.

Judges 7:15 "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."

Or, "the breaking of it"; the dream itself being like something closed up and sealed.

And the interpretation of it was like the breaking of a seal, and discovering what is hid under it.

Or like a nut, the kernel of which cannot gotten to until the shell is broken.

"That he worshipped":

Bowed his head with an awesome reverence of God and a sense of his divine Majesty. And worshipped him by sending an ejaculatory prayer and praise to him.

And so the Targum, "and he praised".

Praised God for this gracious encouragement he had given.

The assurance of victory he now had; for he saw clearly the hand of God in all this.

Both in causing one of the soldiers to dream as he did, and giving the other the interpretation of it.

And himself the hearing of both.

"And returned into the host of Israel":

Such a one as it was, consisting only of three hundred unarmed men.

And said, arise from their sleep and beds, it being the night season; and from their tents, and descend the hill with him.

"For the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian":

He now has no doubt of it, it was as sure to him as if it had been actually done.

Hence Gideon is renowned for his faith, though he sometimes was not without his fits of lack of self-confidence (see Heb. 11:32).

This dream and interpretation is a further encouragement from God that this is the will of God.

God will be with Gideon and his 300 soldiers.

He stops and thanks God before going back to his own camp.

Now with his assurance even stronger, Gideon calls his men to alert.

Verses 16-22:

Gideon's strange battle strategy counted on the elements of surprise, confusion, and the enemy's mistaken assumption that they had fallen prey to an innumerable attacking force.

The divinely conceived plan worked better than any man could have dared to hope (compare 2 Chron. 20:22-23).

Judges 7:16 "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."

One hundred in a company, partly to make the better figure, a show of an army, with a right and left wing.

And partly that they might fall upon the camp of Midian in different parts.

"And he put a trumpet in every man's hand":

They that returned of the trumpeters having left their trumpets behind them.

Whereby there was a sufficient number for three hundred men.

And these were put into their hands, that when they blew them together, the, noise would be very great.

And it would seem as if they were an exceeding great army, and so very much terrify their enemies.

"With empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers":

The pitchers were of earth, and so easily broken, and would make a great noise when clashed against each other.

And these were empty of water, or otherwise would not have been fit to put lamps into.

And the lamps put in them were not of oil; for then, when the pitchers were broken, the oil would have run out.

But were a kind of torches, made of rosin, wax, pitch, and such like things.

And these were put into the pitcher, partly to preserve them from the wind, and chiefly to conceal them from the enemy, till just they came upon them, and then held them out.

Which in a dark night would make a terrible blaze, as before they served to give them light down the hill into the camp.

The pitchers were earthen-ware, so the heat of the torches would not destroy them.

They could easily be broken at the right moment.

This army is marching with very strange weapons.

In one hand, they have a trumpet, and in the other, a pitcher with a lit torch.

The torch is in the pitcher, so it cannot be seen, until the moment of the signal to break the pitchers. These 100's separated out was, so it would appear they were large companies of men.

Judges 7:17 "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."

Observe what I do, and do the same, in blowing a trumpet, breaking a pitcher, and shouting with the words expressed by him.

"And, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp":

Where the sentinels stood, and the watch was set.

"It shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do":

And not before.

A trumpet was not to be blown, nor a pitcher broken, nor a torch held out, nor a word spoken, till just they came to the outside of the camp.

And then they were to observe the motions of Gideon, and do as he did.

Gideon will give the signal.

What the men see him doing is what they are to do.

They are first going to ease up on the camp undetected.

Judges 7:18 "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."

He being at the head of one of the three companies (Judges 7:19).

Perhaps the middlemost, which might stand for the body of the army.

And the other two be one to the right and the other to the left of him, and so could more easily discover his motions.

"Then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp":

For it seems they were so disposed as to be around the camp, which when the trumpets were blown at once on every side, with such a blaze of light, and crashing of the pitchers, must be very terrifying.

As if there was no way for them to escape, and especially when they should hear the following dreadful sounds.

"And say, the sword of the LORD, and of Gideon":

Or "for the LORD, and for Gideon".

And which may be supplied, either the light is for the LORD, and for Gideon; or the victory is for the LORD, and for Gideon; we supply it from (Judges 7:20).

The name Jehovah, these Heathens had often heard, as the God of Israel, would now be dreadful to them.

And the name of Gideon also.

Whose name, as appears by the interpretation of the dream, was terrible among them.

For which reason Gideon added it, and not out of arrogance and vanity.

And puts it after the name of the LORD, as being only an instrument the LORD thought fit to make use of, otherwise all the glory belonged to him.

These 300 men will come at the camp of the Midian army from 3 different sides at once.

All of them will blow their trumpets at the signal of Gideon.

They shall all shout, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon".

Can you imagine waking to such a sound?

Verses 19-25

The "middle watch" began at midnight.

With all the noise and light created by the Israelites, the Midian soldiers thought they were surrounded by a vast army, and in the confusion, they began killing each other (Psalm 83:9).

The cry, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon", uses sword metaphorically to represent the battle.

It was a reminder that the victory was God's especially since the Israelite soldiers carried no swords!

Judges 7:19 "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."

I.e. of the second watch.

For though afterwards the night was divided into four watches by the Romans (Matt. 14:25), yet in more ancient times, and in the eastern parts, it was divided into three.

He chose the dark and dead of the night to increase their terror by the trumpets.

Whose sound would then be loudest and best heard.

And the lamps, whose light would then shine most brightly.

And it seemed most advantageous, to surprise them at a disadvantage, concealing the smallness of their numbers.

The middle watch was just what it said.

It was in the middle of the night, between 10 in the evening until 2 the next morning.

To be awakened in the middle of the night with 300 trumpets blowing on three sides of you, and see 300 torches coming from three directions, would frighten you beyond reason.

Judges 7:20 "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."

The other two, observing what Gideon and his company did.

Followed their example, and at the same time blew their trumpets, and broke their pitchers.

"And held the lamps in their left hands":

Which they took out of the pitchers when they broke them, and holding them up in their left hands, gave a great blaze of light.

Which must be very surprising to the host of Midian, just awoken out of their sleep.

"And the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal":

And which they continued blowing, the sound of which must be very dreadful, since it might be concluded, from such a number of trumpets, that there must be a vast army.

"The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon":

Of God and Jesus Christ, of Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb.

The wicked are often led to avenge the cause of God upon each other, under the power of their delusions, and the fury of their passions.

See also how God often makes the enemies of the church instruments to destroy one another.

It is a pity that the church's friends should ever act like them.

Each one of the hundred troops did the same.

The shout of the sword of the LORD and of Gideon must have rung through this valley, and seemed like thousands of voices.

Notice they came in the name of the LORD.

Judges 7:21 "And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled."

To see the salvation of God, and that it might most clearly appear to be his own doing.

And indeed, had they gone into it, they could have done nothing.

They had no weapons in their hands, a trumpet in one hand, and a lamp in the other.

Though this their position served to increase the terror of the enemy, who might suppose that they stood either to light and introduce a large army at the back of them.

Or to light the forces already in the midst of them, while they destroyed them.

Which latter seems rather to be the thing their imaginations were possessed with, since they fell to slaying their fellows.

Supposing them to be enemies, as in the following verse.

"And all the host ran, and cried, and fled":

Or "were broken"; as some render the first word, their lines were broken.

They could not put themselves in rank and file, but were thrown into the utmost confusion.

And cried as being in the utmost danger of their lives, and fled for their safety as fast, as they could (see Isa. 27:13).

This was such a shock they did not know what to do, so they ran the only direction there was not a fire.

Their hearts failed them with fear.

Judges 7:22 "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."

Kept blowing them to continue and increase the terror of the enemy.

And still held the lamps in their hands, and stood as torch bearers to light the Midianites and their associates to destroy one another, as follows.

"And the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host":

And so slew one another.

Either suspecting treachery, as Grotius, and so in revenge, wrath, and indignation, drew their swords on each other.

Or through the terror and amazement they were in at the sounds they heard, and the blazing torches dazzling their eyes, they knew not what they did.

Or who they fell upon, taking their friends for foes.

Supposing the Israelites had gotten into their camp; and the rather they might be led into this mistake.

Since there were people of different languages among them, as Josephus observes.

But the thing was of God, it was he that took away their reason and judgment from them, and infatuated them.

And filled their imaginations with such strange apprehensions of things.

And threw into their minds such terror and amazement, and directed them to point their swords at one another.

"And the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath":

That is, which was left of it, which had not destroyed each other.

The first of these places should be read Beth-hashittah; and perhaps had its name from the "shittah" or "shittim" trees which might grow near it in plenty.

Or the houses in it might be built of shittim wood.

Or it may be here stood a temple formerly dedicated to some deity of this name, and near it a grove of the above trees.

Zererath, Kimchi observes, is written with two "reshes", or R's, to distinguish it from another place called Terada.

But where either of these places mentioned were cannot be particularly say.

Though it is highly probable they were in the tribe of Manasseh, and in the way to Jordan.

Whither in all probability the Midianites would steer their course to escape to their own land.

"And to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath":

The former of these was the birth place of Elisha the prophet (1 Kings 19:16).

And it appears very plainly that it was in the tribe of Manasseh, being mentioned with other places in that tribe (1 Kings 4:12).

They were so frightened they fought everything that moved, and killed each other.

Those who did not die here, fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath and to the border of Abel-meholah.

The more Gideon and his men blew their trumpets, the more frightened they became.

The army of Gideon were not advancing on them, but they did not know that and ran.

Judges 7:23 "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."

Not out of all the tribes, but out of those which lay nearest, and which are particularly mentioned.

"Out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh":

And these seem to be the same persons out of those tribes who first joined Gideon, but were separated from his army.

Both those that were fearful, and those that bowed their knees to drink, and who perhaps had not gone far before they heard of the defeat and flight of the Midianites.

And therefore though they had not courage to face the enemy, at least most of them, yet had spirit enough to pursue a flying enemy.

Wherefore they returned, or however directed their course the nearest way, where they supposed they fled.

"And pursued after the Midianites":

And those that were with them.

These are the 31,700 Gideon had sent home.

Now that the LORD is winning the war, they jump in to help.

Their fear is gone.

They are confident of victory.

They want to be included in the victory. God had proven what He intended.

Verses 24-25

"Gideon" counted on the Ephraimites to cut off the remnants of the Midianite army.

Gideon's army was not designed for the mopping up phase of the battle or for the extended pursuit of the enemy army.

Judges 7:24 "And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan."

To raise the inhabitants of it, who lay nearer Jordan, to which the Midianites would make, in order to intercept them in their flight.

Or however get possession of the fords of Jordan before them, and hinder their passage over it.

"Saying, Come down against the Midianites":

For though he had routed them, and they were fled before him, yet he had not men enough with him to destroy them.

And besides, as they had their camels to ride on, and he and his men only on foot, they could not come up with them.

"And take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan":

Namely, all the fords and passages over Jordan, reaching from the lake of Gennesaret to Beth-barah, the same with Bethabara (John 1:28).

Which was a passage over Jordan.

Or these waters were, as Kimchi thinks, distinct from those of Jordan.

And were waters that lay in the way of the flight of the Midianites, before they came to Beth-barah, their passage over Jordan.

Others think the waters are the same with Jordan, and render the words, "take the waters", even Jordan.

Gain the passes over that before them, and so prevent their escape to their own land.

"Then all the men of Ephraim":

That is, great numbers of them, whose hearts were inclined to, and whose situation lay best for this service.

"Gathered themselves together":

In a body, at some place of rendezvous appointed.

"And took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan":

Took possession of all the passes, and guarded them, as Gideon directed.

Gideon had not invited the tribe of Ephraim to get involved in the war at first.

Now he does.

He gives them a specific task to do.

Ephraim is to block the escape of Midian.

They immediately joined in and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

They have now trapped the Midianites and their allies.

Judges 7:25 "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."

The one signifies a "raven", and the other a "wolf".

Which were either nicknames given them because of their voraciousness and cruelty.

Or which they took themselves, or their ancestors before them, to make themselves seem terrible to others.

So the Romans had the families of the Corvini, etc.

"And they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb":

Perhaps they found him in a cave of the rock, and dragging him out slew him, from whence the rock afterwards had its name.

This is a different rock or mountain from Horeb, the same with Sinai, from whence the law was given.

Which always ought to be written with an "H" or "Ch", to distinguish it from this.

Though that is written Oreb by Lactantius, and so by Milton, contrary to the propriety of the language.

"And Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb":

The Targum is, the plain of Zeeb, which, as Kimchi and Ben Gersom suppose, was in the form of a winepress.

Having high lips or hills around it, and which afterwards took its name from this prince being slain in it.

"And pursued Midian":

The rest of the Midianites, even beyond Jordan, those that got over it.

"And brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan":

That is, when he had passed over it the next morning.

As Jarchi remarks; for after this we read of Gideon's going over Jordan (Judges 8:4).

Unless this is said by way of anticipation; though the phrase will bear to be rendered, "on this side Jordan", for it signifies both.

It seems they cut off the heads of those two princes, and presented them to Gideon.

As it has been usual to bring the heads of enemies to kings and conquerors (see 1 Sam. 17:54).

"Oreb":

Means a raven.

"Zeeb":

Means a wolf.

It was the Ephraimites who captured them and slew them.

The rock was named Oreb later, because that was where he was killed.

The winepress was named Zeeb for the same reason.

Zeeb was killed there.

Ephraim took proof to Gideon of their killing Oreb and Zeeb.

They brought him their heads.

Chapter 7 Questions

1. Jerubbaal is the same as _____.

2. Where did Gideon's army pitch its tents?
3. What does God see Gideon as?
4. What unusual thing does God tell Gideon, about the people who have come to fight?
5. Why did God say this?
6. Who did he send home?
7. How are they like the multitude of Christians?
8. Without _____, it is impossible to please God.
9. How many people had offered to go to war?
10. How many were left, after the fearful went home?
11. What was the second way God reduced the number of soldiers?
12. How many lapped like a dog?
13. Who will God deliver into the hands of this 300 men?
14. What did the 300 take in their hands to go to war?
15. Where did God send Gideon, to strengthen his faith in the outcome of the battle?
16. Who went with Gideon?
17. Who was camped in this valley?
18. What did Gideon overhear?
19. What did one of the Midianites tell the others this dream meant?
20. What did Gideon do, even before he went back to his own camp?
21. How did Gideon divide his 300 men?
22. What was in the hands of each of the 300 fighters?
23. Why were the pitchers earthen?
24. _____ would give the signal, and the men would do what?
25. What were all 300 men to say, after they blew the trumpet?
26. When did Gideon come near the camp to attack?

27. What did Gideon's army do, besides blow the trumpet?
28. Did Gideon's army really attack?
29. When the enemy saw the flames and heard the trumpets blowing, what did they do?
30. Who actually were killing each other?
31. Where did the enemy flee to?
32. Who came to chase them and kill them with Gideon?
33. Who did Gideon ask to help, that was not part of the original army?
34. What were they to do?
35. What happened to Oreb and Zeeb?