

UNIT 2A: OLD TESTAMENT

(All quotations from the Septuagint available free at: www.ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition)

34: Conquest and Judges

The conquest and settlement of the Promised Land, Canaan, by the Hebrew tribes was uneven, protracted and difficult, and was only accomplished after many years of nomadic existence in the deserts of the south. This transition of the Hebrew tribes to a settled agrarian life as the People of Israel presented its own challenges to the Yahwist faith, because the Baal fertility cults were an integral part of the political economy of an existing sophisticated culture which could not simply be removed by military action.

Conflict and Achievement in Canaan: The Hebrews vs. Baal

For many of the early Hebrews, Baal was an important local god—known as “the Lord of Israel” just as he was the Lord of Lebanon or of Ugarit—a fertility god who was believed to control not only human birth but the weather, crops and livestock.¹ Throughout the book of Judges, as one modern Biblical commentary has noted, “the fundamental issue is the lordship of God in Israel . . . [as] established by the covenant at Sinai. . . . [because as Israel] settled down . . . [she] turned to the gods of Canaan to secure the blessings of family, flocks and fields.” For example, when Gideon is called by an angel to free his people from the influence of the Midianites, he is told to “pull down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father” (Judges 6:25). He obeys, despite the fact that he is so terrified of both his father, Joash, and his neighbours that he acts at night. When “the men of the city” find out and come to kill Gideon, his father protects him demanding, “Are you now acting as judges on Baal’s behalf?” Then his father gives Gideon a new name, Jerubbaal, meaning “Let Baal contend against him” (Judges 6:28-33).

¹ See the articles about Baal in Encyclopædia Britannica (at: www.britannica.com/topic/Baal-ancient-deity) and Encyclopedia Mythica (at: pantheon.org/articles/b/baal.html).

Eventually, the tribal confederacy founded by Joshua at Shechem (Joshua 24) and ruled by Judges established its historical and spiritual legacy primarily because of the emergence of the monarchy under Saul and the centralization of a more cohesive national identity under David and Solomon at Jerusalem. The prophets were to remain, however, as indispensable witnesses to the enduring power and purity of Israel's original faith which, together with the Torah, would indelibly mark her national and religious consciousness, even though times of apostasy and national decline. Appreciating this wider perspective, we must now consider how the Promised Land became the possessed land and the spiritual and political ramifications of this transition.

From Promise to Possession

An important principle of biblical research, restated here, is that the date of writing and reception of a text as sacred scripture is to be distinguished as an issue from the origin of both the events and their interpretation as described.² So, for example, the book of Deuteronomy, which purports to be a sermon given by Moses on the eve of the invasion of Canaan just before his death, was actually written down in its present form some 600 years later before the fall of Judah to Babylon in 587 BC. The Deuteronomist has taken oral traditions from different parts of the Pentateuch, doubtless for the most part extending back to Moses himself, and has reworked them (editorially speaking) from within his theological tradition. We know this more or less reliably from a literary and theological analysis of the differing contributions and layers within the final text. Understanding what happened in the invasion and settlement of Canaan requires that we acknowledge the distinctive contributions of the Yahwist Epic material, Priestly writings and Deuteronomist history both separately and together, and all in the context of the prevailing geo-political conditions of the time. On the other hand, this so-called "Documentary Hypothesis" has received a lot of scholarly criticism in recent times and may now just be one of

² See Father Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), p.3 ff. Note that for both the Old and New Testaments, "three aspects of biblical study, the theological, literary, and historical, are closely interconnected."

many different ways of understanding of how the diverse material of the Pentateuch was compiled after the Deuteronomic reforms. Reconstructing the editorial process now seems impossibly complex and problematic.

Israel spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness south of Beersheba, but it should be recognized that “40 years” simply means “a long time.” None of the adults who left Egypt entered the Promised Land, including Moses himself. It was Joshua, a second generation leader, who led them into the Promised Land. In the wilderness, they seemed to have been based in Kadesh. Numbers 11-29 attests to the difficulties experienced during this long period: tribal rivalries, murmurings and even open revolt against Moses’ leadership. The Deuteronomist presented an eloquent theology from hindsight but a theology which was entirely based on the original Mosaic covenant theology. The desert was a necessary time of testing and humility (Deuteronomy: 8:2-3):

“And you shall remember all the way that the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness so that he might distress you and test you and discern the things in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And he distressed you and let you hunger, and fed you with manna with which your fathers were not acquainted in order to announce to you, that man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that goes out through the mouth of God man shall live.”

Reading of this testing in the wilderness, we immediately think of Christ’s temptations in the desert before the beginning of his ministry, one of which precisely concerned the basic tenet of covenant theology—that life comes from obedience to the words God speaks (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Therefore, for both the People of Israel and for Christ, learning humility concerned issues of idolatry and true worship, the passions and transformation of the heart. Those issues remain with each of us today.

Why Did the Journey from Egypt to Canaan Take So Long?

In the desert, the Hebrews had God's Presence continually with them in the Tent of Meeting and his Laws in the Ark of the Covenant. All of this was laid down in the Torah itself and the Priestly tradition preoccupied itself with these Levitical ordinances. The Deuteronomist clarified and emphasized an essential point—exclusive faithfulness to Yahweh achieved victory, disobedience brought defeat. An early failure in this regard was the first abortive attempt to enter Canaan. Numbers 13 and 14 recounts how scouts returned from a reconnaissance north in Hebron with both encouraging and discouraging words. Truly this was a land “flowing with milk and honey” but it was also populated by giants and heavily fortified (Numbers 13:32-33). Most of the people wanted to return to Egypt but eventually a force was dispatched to Canaan; however, Moses and the Ark remained in Kadesh. Defeat swiftly followed. Israel had acted without divine sanction and paid the price.

The Hebrews then turned to a long detour first south to the Transjordan and then north to attack from the east. Moses asked permission from the king of Edom to use the “King's Highway” a direct caravan route for trade from Syria to Eziongeber at the head of the gulf of Aqabah on the Red Sea. This was refused twice, but with the second refusal the Hebrews crushed the King's enforcement task force and even took possession of the Amorite kingdom. This was the first major victory (Numbers 21:21-32); and Balaam's prophecy (Numbers 13:8-10) was uttered in his frustration that he could not curse Israel, because the momentum is now building for an invasion that even Balaam sees as blessed by God. The Deuteronomist, albeit from a much later perspective, portrays Moses, just before his death on the eve of the major push into Canaan, recounting the mighty acts of God that have brought Israel to this point of victory. The Deuteronomist has a tendency to make the invasion appear a decisive rout albeit only when linked to obedience within the Covenant. However, in the book of Joshua the Bible has retained the earlier accounts which show that possession of the land of Canaan was difficult militarily,

protracted and full of temptations for Israel in maintaining her covenant faith in Yahweh both before and after the invasion.

Changing the Historical Record for Theological Purposes

In the Deuteronomist's account of the conquest of Canaan in Joshua Chapters 1 to 12, three decisive military victories are described. First, there is the central push to Gilgal across a dry section of the Jordan valley to lay to siege to Jericho and from thence to Ai which fell by subterfuge. Joshua pushed on to Shechem where he built an altar on a mountain overlooking the city. The second victory occurred at Gibeon defending the locals with whom the Israelites had made a treaty against the reprisals of a Canaanite king at Jerusalem, to be followed by further successes in the hill country to the south. The third campaign captured territory toward Lake Galilee finally moving on to the siege and destruction of Hazor to the north. In the Deuteronomist's account, this took just five years and was a classic instance of God fighting for his People—a complete and utter rout, (Joshua 11:16-23 in summary form).

Elsewhere in the book of Joshua and in the first chapter of the book of Judges the victory is less complete and even replete with historical discrepancies. For example, in Joshua 10:36-37 (Deuteronomist) Joshua destroyed Hebron, but in Judges 1:10 the city is taken by the tribe of Judah. In Joshua 10:38-39 (Deuteronomist) Joshua takes the city of Debir, whereas in Joshua 15:13-19 and Judges 1:11-15 credit is given to a Calebite judge, Othniel. In the Deuteronomist's account, Joshua is the all-conquering hero of God and everything is just about complete by his death. In Judges 1:1 after Joshua's death, the first question posed is: "Who shall be first to go up for us to fight against the Canaanites?" If the Jahwist account, being the early oral tradition, is the more reliable historically, then we need to see multiple incursions into Canaan over a longer period of time by different tribes. The relative impotency of Egypt at this time (whose suzerainty prevailed over Canaan) makes this a plausible idea. The Deuteronomist, writing and editing some six centuries later has a more strictly theological purpose in emphasizing the

decisive and immediate importance of covenant faithfulness for an overwhelming result by the hand of Joshua.

What is less in doubt is Joshua's crucial role in sealing the tribal confederacy at Shechem (Joshua 24). The mighty acts of God were acted out before the people, and they were challenged to put away all false gods and serve Yahweh alone. The ceremony ended with a renewal of the covenant and the erection of a memorial stone by a sacred tree. It was at Shechem that Israel's twelve tribe consciousness, united in one covenant before Yahweh was truly embedded for this and future generations, even after Judah's ascendancy and the establishment of the Davidic monarchy which rendered the tribes politically redundant.

Seeking Truth: Integrating Historical and Theological Perspectives

The twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C. in the history of Israel marks the time when warrior prophets and judges established and then guided the People of God in the Promised Land. Much of our information for this period comes from the Deuteronomist's history in the central portion of Judges, namely from Chapters 2:6 to 16. Immediately though, there is a recognition in Judges 2:10 that all is not well with the next generation: "And when all that generation were laid with their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord, nor the work He had done for Israel." As previously noted, having settled in Canaan the people began to adopt the religious as well as settled agrarian lifestyle of those whom they had subdued but continued to live alongside and with. Actually the former—the religious perspective—sustained the latter—the agrarian lifestyle—and the latter depended on the former. Farmers subject to seasonal flux, to surplus and famine, to inundation and drought but without a strong monotheistic distinction between Creator and creation tend to divinize natural cycles in myths. This was the natural religion of all agrarian economies at the time.

We have neither time nor space here to explore the myths of the subjection of Baal to Mot in winter and his resurrection again in the spring or of the imitative magic of sacred prostitution cajoling Baal and his consort to their own divine sexual renewal of the earth and its fruitfulness. Suffice to say that some Hebrews began yet again to revert to foreign gods whose tawdry affairs were such a vital part of how nature was seen to work. As previously noted, even such courageous and faithful heroes as Gideon bore alternative Baal-derived names, not as a sign of apostasy, but as a sign that not only the followers of Yahweh, but also the followers of Baal should acknowledge and respect them. Compromises were sought here and there between strict Yahwist monotheism and a pragmatic local animism.

Against this corruption of Israel's faith prophets railed in fury even as the warrior judges-rulers fought against new external threats. Gideon, for example, fought the Midianites, Samson and the Philistines, while Deborah Barak fought the Canaanites under Sisera at the battle of Megiddo (Judges 5). Overall leadership in and between the tribes within the confederacy lay in the hands of "Judges" who not only arbitrated in legal disputes but who were both rulers and, some of them at least, were also prophets. They led their tribes and together tried to keep the people faithful to the covenant reaffirmed to Yahweh at Shechem. This involved purging such internal threats as apostasy and injustice and repelling the external threats of new incursive enemies that from time immemorial had tried to lay claim to Canaan, (later "Palestine" in the Greek etymology "Philistia").

Deborah's defeat of Sisera, however, revealed a crucial defect in the confederacy tribal model, particularly as internal syncretism and external threats became more severe. Despite a rallying call to arms and an explicit linkage between covenant faithfulness and military service, all in the face of real and present dangers, only half of the tribes responded. This was not exceptional. Rarely could all the twelve tribes be mustered. There were difficulties of geography as well of course but the main lack was a central trans-tribal focus of authority and leadership.

Not unsurprisingly some tribes started to long for a king to hold Israel together and even one such as Abimelech tried to pre-empt the process by a disastrous and self-defeating bid for power. The tribal confederacy did not finally break until its central shrine at Shiloh fell with the loss of the Ark to the Philistines. The account of the fall of Shiloh and the rise of Samuel the Prophet—the last judge in Israel—is to be found in 1 Samuel Chapters 1 to 12. The leadership of Samuel, sometimes gladly anointing such a king as Saul, but at other times agreeing very reluctantly to the institution of a monarchy so that Israel could become “as other nations,” reveals the theological and political tensions at this crucial time of transition for Israel. Despite apostasy and ongoing external threats the covenant and people had just about remained intact, but would both survive under the monarchy as Israel achieved its nationhood?

Conclusion: Reading the Old Testament in Orthodox Christian Tradition

The books of Joshua and Judges are not often read by Orthodox Christians. However, these books and their stories of conquest and the subsequent problems of governance in accordance with God’s will, contain important messages that can influence our lives today. In an important recently published study, *The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Eugen J. Pentiuc, Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts USA begins with the words of Psalm 126 (127):1: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.” He then examines “the unity in diversity of the Christian Bible”—that is the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament—especially in the context of the writings of the Church Fathers.

How Orthodox Christians today receive and interpret the Old Testament today is a matter of considerable significance. St. John Chrysostom is unquestionably correct in his assertion that: “It is not possible, I say not possible, ever to exhaust the mind of the Scriptures. It is a well that

has no bottom” (p. 321). The early Church “appropriated the Jewish Scriptures, such that gradually, between 150 and 250 AD, it became self-consciously the Church of the two testaments, old and new. This process of appropriation was a conscious move of the first Christians toward embracing their religious roots in Israel. At the centre of this embrace was Jesus, whose Jewishness was at this point fully acknowledged” (p. 17). Each of us are similarly challenged in this unit of the E-Quip course to embrace the Old Testament just as did the early Christians. With Tertullian, we too shall find that “The Church unites in one volume the Law and the Prophets with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith” (p. 3). That faith of the Church deeply grounded in the writings of the Old Testament can become our faith.

A Template for the Orthodox Interpretation of Biblical Texts

In accordance with the proposal of Fr. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos that Orthodox biblical interpretation ought to have a 3 level approach, the following template is offered for preachers, teachers, bible study leaders, catechists and students of the Scriptures generally: -¹

Judges 7:1-27

| Level | Process | In Tradition / Fathers (Theoria) | Applicable Now (Praxis) |
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| Exegetical | Historical / Contextual <i>(using the full range of critical tools)</i> | <p>The births of Samuel in approximately 1105 B.C. and of Saul in 1080 B.C. mark the closing years of the Judges. Because the date of the exodus from Egypt is debated, it is not clear how long a time period is covered by the books of Joshua and Judges. However, it is clear that this was a period of many trials and decisions for the fledging Israelites in spiritual and military conflict with many different tribes already living in Canaan. The central theme of both books is how the People of God responded to the challenges with which they were confronted. The firm conclusion is that the People of God must learn to rely on God, not their own strength.</p> | <p>The story in Judges 7 tells how God lead Gideon to reduce the number of men who would fight the Midianites from 32,000 to only 300, so that the people would know that it was the power of God, not their strength that had won the victory. The Lord often works that way with us today, teaching us that it is His power, not ours, that leads to victory in any challenge before us.</p> |
| | Allegorical / Typological <i>(as derived from Tradition)</i> | <p>The Church Fathers often reworked Greek myths to give them a firm religious foundation. See the discussion of allegories and typology in Father John Anthony McGuckin's: <i>The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology</i> (Westminster John Knox Press). For example, in Judges 7: 13-14, when Gideon heard the dream of the enemy soldier that the loaf of barley bread (a type for the Israelites) had struck down the tents of the Midianites, Gideon knew that this was a prophecy of his coming victory, because barley bread was considered an inferior grain</p> | <p>As Father McGuckin notes: "Post-modern literary theory in the late twentieth century once more challenged the supremacy of historicist readings of texts, and great interest is again being shown in the early Christian patterns of allegorical exegesis" (p. 7). In this passage, both an historical event and a theological truth—rely of God, especially in</p> |

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| | | to wheat, which was a type for the Midianites. Like St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2, 23; 15:1-4, Gideon seeks to deliver to others what he himself has received from God (cf. McGuckin, p. 335). All allegory and typology is an attempt to move beyond time and historical meaning into universal principles (cf. McGuckin, p. 6). | difficult situations—sit side by side. Today we tend to think more of metaphors, than of allegories, but the principle is the same—use one situation to understand another. |
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| Interpretative | Spiritual / Ethical | Some Biblical commentators have tried to find a hidden meaning as to why those who lapped water with their hands were in some way morally superior to those who knelt to drink. However, this interpretation is not sound. The spiritual reality is simply that God intervened to indicate he was in charge, rather than the army with the most men. (Those who knelt to drink of course were not as combat aware as those who did not). | God often gives the victory in many situations to the group of people who are ethically right, not necessarily the strongest in military or economic terms. Gideon’s difficult situation is at times also our reality. |
| | Personal / Social | 22,000 of the 32,000 men assembled to fight the Midianites admitted they “were fearful and faint-hearted” and took advantage of the possibility of leaving the army (Judges 7:3). Even in the midst of divine intervention, personal free will and personal agency are still present. It is noteworthy that the emerging social response to the Midianites arises out of a myriad of personal choices. | Many of the 300 men in Gideon’s army must have been puzzled why they were being sent into battle armed with ram horns and empty pitchers filled with torches, but they were obedient to the details of Gideon’s orders. We too often need to be obedient to what we believe the Lord is calling us, even when we are at times puzzled by the details. |
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| Transformative | The Call to Holiness | <p>A note in <i>The Orthodox Study Bible</i> on Judges 7:24-25 suggests that by killing the leaders of the enemy armies, “Gideon makes sure the conquest is complete—a sure lesson for those who seek victory over sin.”</p> <p>In Judges 6, Gideon had already been called to holiness by an angel even though he was the youngest son in his father’s house. Gideon had then built an altar which he named “Peace of the Lord.” It was only then after Gideon had been transformed into holiness that he went out to destroy the altar to Baal.</p> | <p>It has been rightly noted that “anything that is ‘holy’ is set apart. It is removed from the realm of the common and moved to the sphere of the sacred.” Often in our own lives, like Gideon, we need to set ourselves apart from the world and seek what is sacred in our lives in order to find a transformative experience with God.</p> |
| | The Call to Witness | <p>When Gideon heard the dream of the Midianite soldier, with his servant Purah’s interpretation that victory would come to Israel (Judges 7:13-15), the Orthodox Study Bible points out: “Gideon worshiped before the promise had been fulfilled and prepared himself to act in obedience to the Lord without first needing a sign from Him.” He then told his 300 soldiers, “Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into our hand” (Judges 7:15). However, it should also be noted that Gideon had already received three signs from the Lord when his offering of meat and bread was consumed by fire (Judges 6:21) and when the fleece was first full of dew and then completely dry (Judges 6:36-40), just as he had requested of the Lord.</p> | <p>In <i>The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology</i> (Cambridge University Press), Mary R. Cunningham & Elizabeth Theokritoff point out: “The witness of contemplative prayer, and the ‘golden chain’ of spiritual fatherhood and motherhood exercised by people of holiness, would prove vital in preserving Christian faith [in Russia] when church structures were wiped out or rendered powerless” (p. 11). This was the situation of Gideon and is often the position of Orthodox Christians in many countries today.</p> |

¹ In “*The New Testament, An Orthodox Perspective, Volume 1: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics*,” (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997, Ch. 7), Fr. Theodore sets out three levels serving a sound Orthodox hermeneutical process. These are: 1. Exegetical - using all critical, contextual, textual and literary methods to determine “the level of understanding of the biblical text in its historical context of literary form and

conceptuality ...” (p. 190). 2. Interpretative – evaluating means derived from the exegetical stage as applicable contextually to the reader’s contemporary issues and concerns (p. 197). 3. Transformative – experiencing life changing practical applications of insights derived from the previous two stages. In ALL of these three levels, the Orthodox context must be the Church as the locus of divine revelation and inspiration.

Here the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth as manifested in the biblical text, the teachings of the Fathers and the liturgical context. In Ch. 4, p. 115f., Fr. Theodore explains the historical and spiritual exegetical approaches which, following the Fathers, must be applied throughout. Classically these have concerned the Antiochian emphasis on the “literal” or historical approach and the Alexandrian emphasis on the allegorical and typological interpretations that reveal the inter-connectedness of all Scripture in Tradition at deeper levels of understanding.

Judges 7

New King James Version (NKJV)

7 Then Jerubbaal (that *is*, Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

² And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

³ Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

⁴ But 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. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." ⁵ So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." ⁶ And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. ⁷ Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his place." ⁸ So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all *the rest of* Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

Septuagint (Brenton)

1 And Jerobaal rose early, the same is Gedeon, and all the people with him, and encamped at the fountain of Arad; and the camp of Madiam was to the north of him, reaching from Gabaathamorai, in the valley. 2 And the Lord said to Gedeon, The people with thee are many, so that I may not deliver Madiam into their hand, lest at any time Israel boast against me, saying, My hand has saved me. 3 And now speak in the ears of the people, saying, Who is afraid and fearful? let him turn and depart from mount Galaad: and there returned of the people twenty-two thousand, and ten thousand were left. 4 And the Lord said to Gedeon, The people is yet numerous; bring them down to the water, and I will purge them there for thee: and it shall come to pass that of whomsoever I shall say to thee, This one shall go with thee, even he shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I shall say to thee, This one shall not go with thee, even he shall not go with thee. 5 And he brought the people down to the water; and the Lord said to Gedeon, Whosoever shall lap of the water with his tongue as if a dog should lap, thou shalt set him apart, and also whosoever shall bow down upon his knees to drink. 6 And the number of those that lapped with their hand to their mouth was three hundred men; and all the rest of the people bowed upon their knees to drink water. 7 And the Lord said to Gedeon, I will save you by the three hundred men that lapped, and I will give Madiam into thy hand; and all the rest of the people shall go everyone to his place. 8 And they took the provision of the people in their hand, and their horns; and he sent away every man of Israel each to his tent, and he * strengthened the three hundred; and the army of Madiam were beneath him in the valley. 9 And it came to pass in that night that the Lord said to him, Arise, go down into the camp, for I have delivered it into thy hand. 10 And if thou art afraid to go down, go down thou and thy servant Phara into the camp. 11 And thou shalt hear what they shall say, and afterwards thy hands shall be strong, and thou shalt go down into the camp: and he went down and Phara his servant to the

⁹ It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, ¹¹ and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who *were* in the camp. ¹² Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.

¹³ And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: *To my surprise*, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed."

¹⁴ Then his companion answered and said, "This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp."

¹⁵ And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." ¹⁶ Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: ¹⁸ When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*'"

¹⁹ So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands. ²⁰ Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke

extremity of the companies of fifty, which were in the camp. ¹² And Madiam and Amalec and all the children of the east were scattered in the valley, as the locust for multitude; and there was no number to their camels, but they were as the sand on the seashore for multitude. ¹³ And Gideon came, and behold a man was relating to his neighbour a dream, and he said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread rolling into the camp of Madiam, and it came as far as a tent, and smote it, and it fell, and it turned it up, and the tent fell. ¹⁴ And his neighbour answered and said, This is none other than the sword of Gideon, son of Joas, a man of Israel: God has delivered Madiam and all the host into his hand. ¹⁵ And it came to pass when Gideon heard the account of the dream and the interpretation of it, that he worshipped the Lord, and returned to the camp of Israel, and said, Rise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Madiam into our hand. ¹⁶ And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put horns in the † hands of all, and empty pitchers, and torches in the pitchers: ¹⁷ and he said to them, Ye shall look ‡ at me, and so shall ye do; and behold, I will go into the § beginning of the host, and it shall come to pass that as I do, so shall ye do. ¹⁸ And I will sound with the horn, and all ye with me shall sound with the horn round about the whole camp, and ye shall say, For the Lord and Gideon. ¹⁹ And Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came to the extremity of the army in the beginning of the middle watch; and they completely roused the guards, and sounded with the horns, and they ** broke the pitchers that were in their hands, ²⁰ and the three companies sounded with the horns, and broke the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and in their right hands their horns to sound with; and they cried out, A sword for the Lord and for Gideon. ²¹ And every man stood in his place round about the host; and all the host ran, and sounded an alarm, and fled. ²² And they sounded with the three hundred horns; and the Lord set every man's sword in all the host against his neighbour. ²³ And the host fled as far as Bethseed Tagaragatha Abel-meula to Tabath; and the men of Israel from Nephthali, and from Aser, and from all Manasse, came to help, and followed after Madiam. ²⁴ And Gideon sent messengers †† into all mount Ephraim,

the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” ²¹ And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. ²² When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia,^[a] toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabboth.

²³ And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites.

²⁴ Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.” Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. ²⁵ And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

Footnotes:

- a. [Judges 7:22](#) Hebrew *Beth Shittah*

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saying, come down to meet Madiam, and take to yourselves the water as far as Baethera and Jordan: and every man of Ephraim cried out, and they took the water beforehand unto Baethera and Jordan. ²⁵ And they took the princess of Madiam, even Oreb and Zeb; and they slew Oreb in Sur Oreb, and they slew Zeb in Jakephzeph; and they pursued Madiam, and brought the †† heads of Oreb and Zeb to Gedeon from beyond Jordan.

*7:8 Or, encouraged.

†7:16 Gr. hand.

‡7:17 Gr. from. q.d. at the actions proceeding from me.

§7:17 Or, corner. See Acts 10. 11.

**7:19 Gr. shook off.

††7:24 Gr. in.

‡‡7:25 Gr. head.