
JUDGES 7:1 Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people who were with him, rose up early, and encamped beside the spring of Harod: and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

The Lord commands Gideon to make a selection of a small number of his men to go against the Midianites. Three hundred only are selected; and into the hands of these God promises to deliver the whole Midianitish host, Jdg 7:1-8. Gideon is directed to go down unto the host in the night, that he may be encouraged on hearing what they say, Jdg 7:9-12. He obeys, and hears a Midianite tell a remarkable dream unto his fellow, which predicted the success of his attack, Jdg 7:13-15. He takes encouragement, divides his men into three companies, and gives each a trumpet with a lighted lamp concealed in a pitcher, with directions how to use them, Jdg 7:16-18. They come to the Midianitish camp at night, when all suddenly blowing their trumpets and exposing their lamps, the Midianites are thrown into confusion, fly, and are stopped by the Ephraimites at the passage of Jordan, and slain, Jdg 7:19-24. Oreb and Zeeb, two Midianitish princes, are slain, Jdg 7:25.

Verse 1

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon - It appears that Jerubbaal was now a surname of Gideon, from the circumstance mentioned Jdg 6:32. See Jdg 8:35.

The well of Harod - If this was a town or village, it is nowhere else mentioned. Probably, as חרד charad signifies to shake or tremble through fear, the fountain in question may have had its name from the terror and panic with which the Midianitish host was seized at this place.

JUDGES 7:2 The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

Verse 2

The people that are with thee are too many - Had he led up a numerous host against his enemies, the excellence of the power by which they were discomfited might have appeared to be of man and not of God. By the manner in which this whole transaction was conducted, both the Israelites and Midianites must see that the thing was of God. This would inspire the Israelites with confidence, and the Midianites with fear.

JUDGES 7:3 Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" Twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

Verse 3

Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return - from Mount Gilead - Gideon was certainly not at Mount Gilead at this time, but rather near Mount Gilboa. Gilead was on the other side of Jordan. Calmet thinks there must either have been two Gileads, which does not from the Scripture appear to be the case, or that the Hebrew text is here corrupted, and that for Gilead we should read Gilboa. This reading, though adopted by Houbigant, is not countenanced by any MS., nor by any of the versions. Dr. Hales endeavors to reconcile the whole, by the supposition that there were in Gideon's army many of the eastern Manassites, who came from Mount Gilead; and that these probably were more afraid of their neighbors, the Midianites, than the western tribes were; and therefore proposes to read the text thus: Whosoever from Mount Gilead is fearful and afraid, let him return (home) and depart early. So there returned (home) twenty-two thousand of the people. Perhaps this is on the whole the best method of solving this difficulty.

There returned of the people twenty and two thousand - Gideon's army was at this time thirty-two thousand strong, and after the above address twenty-two thousand went away. How astonishing, that in thirty-two thousand men there should be found not less than twenty-two thousand poltroons, who would neither fight for God nor their oppressed country! A state of slavery debases the mind of man, and renders it incapable of being influenced by the pure principles of patriotism or religion. In behalf of the army of Gideon we may say, if the best appointed armies in Europe had the same address, bona fide, from their generals as the Israelites had, at least an equal proportion would return home.

JUDGES 7:4 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. It shall be, that of whom I tell you, 'This shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whoever I tell you, 'This shall not go with you,' the same shall not go."

JUDGES 7:5 So he brought down the people to the water; and the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps of the water with his tongue, like a dog laps, you shall set him by himself; likewise everyone who bows down on his knees to drink."

Verse 5

Every one that lappeth of the water - as a dog - The original word קלל yalok is precisely the sound which a dog makes when he is drinking.

JUDGES 7:6 The number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down on their knees to drink water.

Verse 6

The number of them that lapped - From this account it appears that some of the people went down on their knees, and putting their mouths to the water, sucked up what they needed; the others stooped down, and taking up water in the hollow of their hands, applied it to their mouth.

JUDGES 7:7 The LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, each to his own place."

JUDGES 7:8 So the people took food in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the three hundred men: and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

Verse 8

So the people took victuals - The three hundred men that he reserved took the victuals necessary for the day's expenditure, while the others were dismissed to their tents and their houses as they thought proper.

JUDGES 7:9 That same night, the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down into the camp; for I have delivered it into your hand."

Verse 9

I have delivered it into thine hand - I have determined to do it, and it is as sure as if it were done.

JUDGES 7:10 But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp:

JUDGES 7:11 and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened to go down into the camp." Then went he down with Purah his servant to the outermost part of the armed men who were in the camp.

Verse 11

Unto the outside of the armed men - No doubt the vast multitudes of Midianites, etc., which came merely for plunder, were wholly unarmed; but they had a guard of armed men, as all the caravans have, and those guards were on the outside of the multitudes; it was to these that Gideon and his servant came.

JUDGES 7:12 The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand which is on the seashore for multitude.

JUDGES 7:13 When Gideon had come, behold, there was a man telling a dream to his fellow; and he said, "Behold, I dreamed a dream; and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat."

Verse 13

Told a dream - Both the dream and the interpretation were inspired by God for the purpose of increasing the confidence of Gideon, and appalling his enemies.

JUDGES 7:14 His fellow answered, "This is nothing other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has delivered Midian into his hand, with all the army."

Verse 14

Into his hand hath God delivered Midian - This is a full proof that God had inspired both the dream and its interpretation.

JUDGES 7:15 It was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and its interpretation, that he worshipped; and he returned into the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise; for the LORD has delivered the army of Midian into your hand!"

JUDGES 7:16 He divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches within the pitchers.

Verse 16

He divided the three hundred men - Though the victory was to be from the Lord, yet he knew that he ought to use prudential means; and those which he employed on this occasion were the best calculated to answer the end. If he had not used these means, it is not likely that God would have delivered the Midianites into his hands. Sometimes, even in working a miracle, God will have natural means used: Go, dip thyself seven times in Jordan. Go, wash in the pool Siloam.

JUDGES 7:17 He said to them, "Watch me, and do likewise. Behold, when I come to the outermost part of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so you shall do.

JUDGES 7:18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

Verse 18

The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon - The word **חֶרֶב** chereb, "sword," is not found in this verse, though it is necessarily implied, and is found in Jdg 7:20. But it is found in this place in the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, and in eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. The reading appears to be genuine.

JUDGES 7:19 So Gideon, and the hundred men who were with him, came to the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and broke in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands.

JUDGES 7:20 The three companies blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands with which to blow; and they shouted, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"

Verse 20

Blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers - How astonishing must the effect be, in a dark night, of the sudden glare of three hundred torches, darting their splendor, in the same instant, on the half-awakened eyes of the terrified Midianites, accompanied with the clangour of three hundred trumpets, alternately mingled with the thundering shout of *חֶרֶב לַיהוָה וְלִגְדֵעוֹן* chereb layhovah ulegidon, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" Origen, in his ninth homily on this book, makes these three hundred men types of the preachers of the Gospel; their trumpets of the preaching of Christ crucified; and their lights or torches, of the holy conduct of righteous men. In some verses of an ancient author, attributed to Tertullian, and written against the heretic Marcion, Gideon's three hundred men are represented as horsemen; and in this number he finds the mystery of the cross; because the Greek letter T, tau, which is the numeral for 300, is itself the sign of the cross. The verses, which may be found in vol. v. of the Pisaurian Collection of the Latin heathen and Christian poets, Advers, Marcion., lib. 3, ver. 18, as being very curious, and not often to be met with, I shall here subjoin: -

Ex quibus ut Gideon dux agminis, acer in hostem,

Non virtute sua tutelam acquirere genti

Firmatusque fide signum petit excita menti,

Quo vel non posset, vel posset vincere bellum,

Vellus ut in noctem positum de rore maderet,

Et tellus omnis circum siccata jaceret,

Hoc inimicorum palmam coalescere mundo;

Atque iterum solo remanenti vellere sicco,

Hoc eadem tellus roraret nocte liquore,

Hoc etenim signo praedonum stravit acervos.

Congressus populo Christi, sine milite multo:

Tercenteno equite (numerus Tau littera Graeca)

Armatis facibusque et cornibus ore canentum.

Vellus erat populus ovium de semine sancto.

Nam tellus variae gentes fusaeque per orbem,

Verbum quod nutrit, sed nox est mortis imago.

Tau signum crucis et cornu praeconia vitae,

Lucentesque faces in lychno spiritus ardens. "Gideon, keen in arms, was captain of the host,

And acquired redemption for his people, but not by his own power.

Being strengthened in faith, his heart was influenced to ask a sign

By which he might know whether or not he should be successful in battle.

A fleece was so placed by night, that it might be wet with dew;

And all the surrounding earth remain dry.

By this he was to learn that he should gain the victory over his enemies.

The sign was reversed; the fleece remaining dry while all the ground was moist;

And by this sign he was to know that he should slaughter those troops of robbers.

The people of Christ conquer without any military force;

Three hundred horsemen, (for the Greek letter T, tau, is the emblem of the number),

Armed with torches, and blowing with trumpets.

The fleece of the sheep are the people sprung from the Messiah,

And the earth are the various nations dispersed over the world.

It is the word which nourishes; but might is the image of death.

Tau is the sign of the cross; and the trumpets, the emblems of the heralds of life;

And the burning torches in the pitchers, the emblems of the Holy Spirit."

We see here what abstruse meanings a strong imagination, assisted by a little piety, may extract from what was never intended to be understood as a mystery.

JUDGES 7:21 They each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran; and they shouted, and put them to flight.

Verse 21

They stood every man in his place - Each of the three companies kept its station, and continued to sound their trumpets. The Midianites seeing this, and believing that they were the trumpets of a numerous army which had then penetrated their camp, were thrown instantly into confusion; and supposing that their enemies were in the midst of them, they turned their swords against every man they met, while at the same time they endeavored to escape for their lives. No stratagem was ever better imagined, better executed, or more completely successful.

JUDGES 7:22 They blew the three hundred trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, and against all the army; and the army fled as far as Beth Shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath.

Verse 22

Fled to Beth-shittah - This is no where else mentioned in Scripture.

Zererath - This and Tabbath are nowhere else to be found.

Abel-meholah - This was the birth-place of the prophet Elisha, 1Kgs 19:16. It was beyond Jordan, in the tribe of Manasseh, 1Kgs 4:12. The Zartanah, mentioned in this last quoted verse, was probably the same as Zererath. Its situation corresponds well with Abel-meholah.

JUDGES 7:23 The men of Israel were gathered together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after Midian.

Verse 23

The men of Israel gathered - It is very likely that these were some persons whom Gideon had sent home the day before, who now hearing that the Midianites were routed, went immediately in pursuit.

JUDGES 7:24 Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against Midian, and take before them the waters, as far as Beth Barah, even the Jordan!" So all the men of Ephraim were gathered together, and took the waters as far as Beth Barah, even the Jordan.

Verse 24

Take before them the waters unto Beth-barah - This is probably the same place as that mentioned Joh 1:28, where the Hebrews forded Jordan under the direction of Joshua. To this place the Midianites directed their flight that they might escape into their own country; and here, being met by the Ephraimites, they appear to have been totally overthrown, and their two generals taken.

JUDGES 7:25 They took the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the wine press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian: and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan.

Verse 25

They slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb - These two generals had taken shelter, one in the cavern of the rock, the other in the vat of a winepress; both of which places were from this circumstance, afterwards called by their names.

Brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon - Oreb signifies a raven and Zeeb a wolf. In all ancient nations we find generals and princes taking their names from both birds and beasts; the Romans had their Gracchi, jackdaws; Corvini, crows; Aquilini, eagles, etc. We have the same in our

Crows, Wolfs, Lyons, Hawkes, Bulls, Kidds, etc. Among barbarous nations the head of the conquered chief was often brought to the conqueror. Pompey's head was brought to Caesar; Cicero's head, to Mark Antony; the heads of Ahab's children, to Jehu, etc. These barbarities are not often practiced now, except among the Mohammedans or the savages of Africa and America; and for the credit of human nature it is a pity that such barbarous atrocities had ever been committed.