

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES 7

In this chapter we have an account of the army under Gideon gathered out of several tribes, which from 32,000 were reduced to three hundred, and we are told by what means this was done, (^{<000>}Judges 7:1-8) and how he was directed to go into the host of the Midianites, where he heard one of them telling his dream to his fellow, which greatly encouraged him to believe he should succeed, (^{<000>}Judges 7:9-15) also we are told the form and manner in which he disposed of his little army to attack the Midianites, and the orders he gave them to observe, which had the desired effect, and issued in the total rout of that large body of people, (^{<0006>}Judges 7:16-22) and those that were not destroyed were pursued by persons gathered out of several tribes, and the passages of Jordan were taken by the Ephraimites, so that those that attempted their escape into their own country, there fell into their hands, (^{<0002>}Judges 7:23-25).

Ver. 1. *Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon*, etc.] That being the name his father had lately given him, (^{<0006>}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 (^{<0001>}1 Samuel 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 ^{<0003>}Judges 7:3) so that the Midianites were on the north side of them; which Gideon, no doubt, judged to be an advantageous post 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 Midianitish army, and the disposition of it. Some think this hill had its name from the Midianitish 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; though some take it to be a school of some eminent teacher in those days ^{f143}.

Ver. 2. *And the Lord said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee are too many*, etc.] It appears, by what follows, that there were 32,000 of them, which was but a small army to engage with one of 100,000 more than they; for such was the army of the Midianites and their associates, (see 1780 Judges 8:10) but the people were too many, says the Lord,

for me to give the Midianites into their hands; who would be apt to ascribe the victory to themselves, and not to the Lord; to their number, strength, and valour, and not to the hand of the Lord:

lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath saved me; or glory over me, take the glory from me, and ascribe it to themselves, boasting that by their power and prowess they had obtained the victory.

Ver. 3. *Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people*, etc.] Such a proclamation as follows, was, according to the law of God, to be made when Israel went out to battle against their enemies, (1780 Deuteronomy 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 defence 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; where it seems they now were, being the same with the hill of Moreh, or adjoining to it; a mountain in the tribe of Manasseh, so called either from its likeness to Mount Gilead on the other side Jordan; or rather in memory of Gilead, the

son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from whence the half tribe sprung, which was on this side, as well as that on the other; and perhaps this name might be given to the mount, to show that they were of the same tribe, though separated by Jordan: 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, they are directed to get away in the morning, as early as they could, that they might not be seen, and so be filled with shame themselves, and discourage others. Though some think Mount Gilead, on the other side Jordan, is meant, from whence it is supposed many came to Gideon, (^{<0765>}Judges 6:35) and now are ordered to return back, as many as were fearful; and instead of “from”, they render the word “to”, or “towards”, or “beyond” Gilead. Kimchi thinks the word we render “depart early” has the signification of surrounding, a diadem being expressed by a word from hence, which encompasses the head, (^{<2885>}Isaiah 28:5) and so the sense is, that they were ordered to go round about Mount Gilead, and so return home; but it rather may signify their hasty departure and speedy flight, like that of a bird, (^{<9101>}Psalms 11:1) and there returned of the people 22,000, and there remained 10,000; 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.

Ver. 4. *And the Lord said to Gideon, the people are yet too many*, etc.] 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 valour 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, (^{<0701>}Judges 7:1)

and I will try them for thee there, or “purge them” ^{f144}, as silver is purged from dross, so the word signifies, as Kimchi observes, the righteous from the wicked, as he thinks; who, with others, suppose that by those who bowed on their knees to drink, were such as had been used to bow the

knee to Baal, and the rest not, and so one were discerned from the other; but this trial was only for the sake of Gideon, to direct him whom he should take with him, and whom not:

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 not who should go 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 whom not:

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, after related, Gideon knew not who should go 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.

Ver. 5. *So he brought them down to the water,* etc.]] 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; this has led some, as particularly Grotius, to think of the Egyptian dogs; of whom Aelianus relates ^{f145}, that they do not drink at once freely, and to satiety, being afraid of the crocodiles in the river; but run about the bank, and by stealth snatch a little here and a little there, and so satisfy themselves: but the allusion here is to dogs in common, whose usual way it is not to sup in, and drink a draught, but by putting out their tongues to lick and lap water with them, as Aristotle ^{f146} says all creatures do that have teeth like saws; and the likeness between the drinking of these men, to be observed lay not in anything else but in the single action of lapping; for they first took the water in the hollow of their hands, out of the stream, and then lapped it, as in (~~4006~~Judges 7:6) whereas a dog does not and cannot take water that way; and this lapping was standing upright, whereas dogs in common, as Aelianus in the same place suggests, bow themselves, and lap as much water as will satisfy their thirst; 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, to sup it, or take in a large draught of it; 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 everyone that boweth down on his knee to drink; were to be set by themselves also, but which of those were to go with him is after related.

Ver. 6. *And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth,* etc.] 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 ^{f147} 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; and it was the custom of some nations, as the Ichthyophagy, or fish eaters, to cast themselves with their face to the ground, and drink after the manner of oxen ^{f148}.

Ver. 7. *And the Lord said unto Gideon, by the three hundred men that lapped I will save and deliver the Midianites into thine hand,* etc.] It is hard to say what character this action of the three hundred is expressive of, whether of weakness or of courage. Some think that those who drank upon their knees were faint and weary, and men of intemperance, and indulged themselves, and were unfit for war, while those that only lapped a little water to refresh themselves appeared to be eager, and in haste and readiness to engage in it; and so Ben Gersom takes those that bowed to be slothful persons, and those that lapped courageous and mighty men, and so were ordered to be taken and go along with Gideon; and this agrees with the method before taken, to dismiss the fearful, and only take those that were men of courage; but Josephus ^{f149} is of opinion that they that drank upon their knees were the men of spirit and courage, and those that lapped, such who drank hastily, with trembling, and through fear of the enemy, and these were ordered to go with Gideon, and not the other: and indeed this most displays the glory of God to save Israel, and deliver them from the Midianites by a handful of such poor dispirited creatures. Though it seems that all the 10,000 men were men of courage; and this method was taken not to distinguish those that were the most courageous from those that were the least so, but only to reduce the number that should be engaged in this battle; for it being the summer season, it may reasonably be supposed that the greater part of the army was very thirsty, and would kneel down to

take a large draught of water, when those that were not so thirsty would be the fewer number, and so taken:

and let all the other people go every man to his place; all the rest, who bowed on their knees to drink, which were 9,700, these were ordered to march homewards; though perhaps before they got home, hearing of the victory, they returned and joined in the pursuit, (~~10072~~ Judges 7:23).

Ver. 8. *So the people took victuals in their hands and their trumpets*, etc.] That is, the three hundred took victuals of those that departed, as much as was necessary for them, and also their trumpets, being directed thereunto by Gideon, no doubt; perhaps they took all the trumpets they had; however, as many as would furnish every man with one. And from hence it appears, that these three hundred that were ordered to stay and go with Gideon were unarmed men, at least could carry no arms in their hands; for in one hand they carried their victuals, and in the other hand their trumpets, so that the salvation wrought by them would most clearly appear to be of the Lord:

and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent; not to his tent in the army, but to his own house, in the tribe and city to which he belonged: and retained these three hundred men; that had lapped water, to engage with the Midianites and their associates:

and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley; in the valley of Jezreel; for it seems as if Gideon, after he had brought down his men to the water to be tried, went up to the hill again with his three hundred men only, to wait the divine orders, when he should attack the army of Midian below him.

Ver. 9. *And it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him*, etc.] 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 hands; 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;

Ver. 10. *But if thou fear to go down*, etc.] 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 aid-de-camp, 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^{f150}.

Ver. 11. *And thou shalt hear what they shall say*, etc.] The Midianites, or what shall be said by any of them; for though it was the night season, 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 afterwards shall thine hands be strengthened; and his heart encouraged by what he should hear:

to go down into the camp; in an hostile manner, with his three hundred men, after his return to them:

then went he down with Phurah his servant; first privately, only they 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 without side the camp, and stood complete in armour 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 season, and to give notice of any approach to them, or attempt on them.

Ver. 12. *And the Midianites and the Amalekites, and the children of the east*, etc.] The Arabians, who with the Amalekites joined the Midianites in this expedition:

lay along in the valley in the valley of Jezreel, in their tents, which overspread the valley, or at least great part of it:

like grasshoppers for multitude; or locusts, which usually come in great numbers, and cover the air and the sun where they fly, and the earth where they light, as they did the land of Egypt; this army consisted at least of 135,000 men, as is clear from (~~ORIG~~Judges 8:10)

and their camels were without number; as the sand is by the sea side for multitude; an hyperbolic expression, setting forth the great number of them which the countries of Midian and Arabia abounded with; and were very proper to bring with them, to load and carry off the booty they came for, the fruits of the earth; (see ~~ORIG~~Judges 6:4,5).

Ver. 13. *And when Gideon was come*, etc.] With his servant, near and within hearing the talk and conversation of the outer guards or sentinels: there was

a man that told a dream unto his fellow; his comrade that stood next him, and was upon guard with him; perhaps it was a dream he had dreamed the night before or this selfsame night, being just called up to take his turn in the watch, and so it was fresh upon his mind:

and said, behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo; thus it was as I am going to relate; twice he uses the word “behold”, or “lo”, the dream having rely much struck and impressed his mind, and was what he thought worthy of the attention of his comrade:

a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian: barley bread, Pliny ^{f151} says, was the most ancient food; the word for “cake” ^{f152} signifies a “shadow”, and may design the appearance of a barley loaf; or something like one to him appeared in the dream: or a “noise”; the noise of it rolling and tumbling, so that it seemed to the soldier that he heard a noise, as well as saw something he took for a barley loaf. Jarchi observes, that it signifies a cake baked upon coals, and it seemed to this man as if it came smoking hot from the coals, tumbling down an hill, such an one where Gideon and his army were and rolling into the host of Midian, which lay in a valley:

and came unto a tent; or, “the tent ^{f153}” the largest and most magnificent in the host; and Josephus ^{f154} calls it expressly the king’s tent, and the Arabic version the tent of the generals:

and smote it that it fell; which might justly seem strange, that a barley loaf should come with such a force against a tent, perhaps the largest and strongest in the whole camp, which was fastened with cords to stakes and nails driven into the ground, so as to cause it to fall: yea, it is added,

and overturned it, that the tent lay along: turned it topsy-turvy, or turned it “upwards” ^{f155}, as the phrase in the Hebrew text is; it fell with the bottom upwards; it was entirely demolished, that there was no raising and setting of it up again.

Ver. 14. *And his fellow answered and said*, etc.] 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 a fit emblem 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 ^{f156} 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 hands hath God delivered Midian and all his 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.

Ver. 15. *And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof*, etc.] Or, “the breaking of it”¹⁵⁷; 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 be come at till the shell is broken:

that he worshipped; bowed his head with an awful 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 an 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 made now 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 diffidence; (see ⁸¹³²Hebrews 11:32).

Ver. 16. *And he divided the three hundred men into three companies*, etc.] 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 with 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.

Ver. 17. *And he said unto them, look on me, and do likewise,* etc.]

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.

Ver. 18. *When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me,* etc.] He being at the head of one of the three companies, (^{<0079>}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 (^{<0072>}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.

Ver. 19. *So Gideon, and the one hundred men that were with him,* etc.] Which was one of the three companies his army was divided into, and which company he had the command of particularly:

came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch; the second watch, for the night was divided into three watches; for though in later times there were four watches, among the Romans ^{f158}, and which the Jews received from them; hence in the New Testament we read of the fourth watch; yet in earlier times, with the Jews and other eastern nations, there were but three watches, as affirmed by Jarchi and Kimchi on the place: and very wisely did Gideon fix on this watch for the time of his coming; for had he come at the first watch, many as yet might not have been in bed, or at least not fallen asleep; and had he come in the third watch, many might have been awake out of their sleep, and others up; but he took this time, a little after midnight, in the dead of the night, when the whole army was fast asleep:

and they had but newly set the watch; the first watch were just gone off, and the second were placed in their room; but since such an observation seems in a good measure unnecessary, for as Gideon came in the beginning of the watch it must in course be newly set; rather the words may be rendered, “in raising they raised up the watch” ^{f159}; that is, Gideon and his men did it by their approach; and they might call to them on purpose to give the alarm to the army, who upon that would at once hear the sound of the trumpets, and the clattering of the pitchers, and see the torches burning, to their great surprise:

and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands; as soon as they came up to the watch and had raised them; this did Gideon and his hundred men.

Ver. 20. *And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers,* etc.] 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; for that there were four companies, three besides Gideon’s, as Kimchi and Ben Melech suggest, there is no reason to believe:

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 awaked 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:

and they cried, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon; signifying that was drawn against the Midianites, and they must expect to be cut in pieces by it, since the sword was Jehovah's, sent and commissioned by him, and was put into the hand of Gideon as an instrument, with which execution would be done, the Lord helping him. The Targum is, "the sword of the Lord, and victory by the hand of Gideon"

which victory was to be ascribed to the sword and power of God. This was an emblem of the efficacy of the word of God, accompanied with his power, to the destruction of the kingdom of Satan; the blowing of the trumpets may denote the ministration of the Gospel, the great trumpet to be blown by the apostles and ministers of the word; the holding forth the lamps may signify the same, the light of the divine word in the ministers of it, and the holding forth of it to others; and which is carried in earthen vessels, frail mortal men; and done that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God, and not of men; and the sword of the Lord is the word of God in the mouths of ministers, accompanied by the power of God; for it can only be through God that such weapons of warfare can become mighty to do the execution that is done by them; (see [1 Cor. 13:2](#) Corinthians 4:7 10:4,5) blowing of trumpets, and then a cry or shout of the soldiers to terrify the enemy, were used in later times ^{f160}.

Ver. 21. *And they stood every man in his place around the camp*, etc.] 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”^{f161}; 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 ^{<2773>}Isaiah 27:13 ^{<368>}Hebrews 6:18).

Ver. 22. *And the three hundred men blew the trumpets*, etc.] 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 throughout 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 were got into their camp; and the rather they might be led into this mistake, since there were people of different languages among them, as Josephus^{f162} 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 Bethshittah in Zererath; that is, which was left of it, which had not destroyed each other; the first of these places should be read Bethshittah; 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 Tzeredah; but where either of these places mentioned were cannot be particularly said; 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 Abelmeholah unto Tabbath; the former of these was the birth place of Elisha the prophet, (^{<1196>}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, (~~1042~~1 Kings 4:12). Jerome ^{f163} under this word says, there was in his time a village in Aulon, or the plain, ten miles from Scythopolis to the south, which was called Bethahula; and the Targum is,

“to the border of the plain of Abelmeholah;”

but of Tabbath we nowhere else read.

Ver. 23. *And the men of Israel gathered themselves together*, etc.] 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.

Ver. 24. *And Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim*, etc.] 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 Bethbarah and Jordan; namely, all the fords and passages over Jordan, reaching from the lake of Gennesaret to Bethbarah, the same with Bethabara, (~~8028~~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 Bethbarah, their passage over Jordan; and Jarchi thinks they were waters, which divided between Syria and the land

of Canaan, which is not likely; others think the waters are the same with Jordan, and render the words, “take the waters” --even Jordan ^{f164}; 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 Bethbarah and Jordan; took possession of all the passes, and guarded them, as Gideon directed.

Ver. 25. *And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb*, etc.] 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 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. So we read of the rock Corax in Homer ^{f165}, which was in Ithaca, and another high mountain of the same name in Aetolia, mentioned by Livy ^{f166} and which signifies the same as Oreb. 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 ^{f167}, and so by Milton ^{f168}, 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, (^{<OT&R>}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 ~~<01754>~~ 1 Samuel 17:54 ~~<100E>~~ 2 Samuel 4:2,8).