

Why A Hero  
Needs A Hero

## Judges 6:1

The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them.

They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in. And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.

## Leviticus 26:17

I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. **Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.**

## Psalm 83:4

They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; **let the name of Israel be remembered no more!**”

## Judges 6:7-10

When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, **the LORD sent a prophet** to the people of Israel. And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: **I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. And I delivered**

you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and **drove them out** before you and gave you their land. And I said to you, ‘I am the **LORD your God**; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.’ But **you have not obeyed my voice.**”

God's first response to the people's cry is not to send a savior or salvation, but to give them a sermon! Before they can appreciate the rescue that will come, the people need to understand why they need rescuing. The prophet comes and helps them to understand why they are in the trouble they are in. He wants them to understand where their idolatry—their sin—has led them.

- Tim Keller

## Judges 6:11-12

Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to **Joash the Abiezrite**, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, **O mighty man of valor.**”

It seems to be all wrong. The “mighty man of valor” is timid and inexperienced, is hiding from the enemy, and working for his father Joash, who is actually a priest of a pagan shrine. Again, the Bible is stressing the ingenuity and sublime resourcefulness of God.

- David Jackman

## Judges 6:13

And Gideon said to him, “Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, **why then has all this happened** to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now **the LORD has forsaken us** and given us into the hand of Midian.”

## Psalm 89:49

Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?

## Isaiah 63:15

Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might?

Gideon is an example of those who know what God has done in the past, who have memorized the creed, but find it belied by present reality. Stories of past deliverance are irrelevant in light of the Midianite crisis.

- Daniel Block

## Judges 6:4-16

And the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” And he said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” And the LORD said to him, “**But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.**”

The statement has a history. It seems to be Yahweh's trump card placed down in front of either unwilling or hesitant servants. In face of Moses' resistance, Yahweh had insisted, "But I will be with you". After Moses' death had apparently left a giant hole in Israel's leadership, Yahweh had reassured Joshua with "As I have been with Moses, I will be with you". In all their dilemmas, quandaries, and crises, this has ever been the word of the covenant God to his servants.

- Dale Ralph Davis

## Judges 6:17-21

And he said to him, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you.” And he said, “I will stay till you return.” So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them.

And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them.”

And he did so. Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

## Judges 6:22-24

“Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, **“Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.”** But the LORD said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.” Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The LORD Is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

We western Christians do not understand Gideon's agony. Such talk is strange to us. We long to reach our warm hand through the print of our Bible page, pat Gideon's shoulder, and soothe him with "Don't worry, brother Gideon, God's not really scary like that- if only you had a New Testament...." A pained, perplexed look would come over Gideon as if he had just heard a theological ignoramus. And so he did. This sort of talk is strange to us, because

we have no real sense of the terror and awesomeness of God, for we think intimacy with God is an inalienable right rather than an indescribable gift. There is nothing amazing about grace as long as there is nothing fearful about holiness. But, thankfully, Gideon knew better.

- Dale Ralph Davis

## Judges 6:25-27

That night the LORD said to him, “Take your father’s bull, and the second bull seven years old, and **pull down the altar of Baal** that your father has, and **cut down the Asherah** that is beside it and **build an altar to the LORD** your God on the top of the stronghold here... So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.

## Genesis 35:2

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.

## Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Some may blame Gideon for demolishing Baal's altar by night, fearing relatives and city fathers. I doubt that it matters. Did God tell him to do it by day? Did God tell him he couldn't be afraid? Or did God simply tell him to do it? Evidently, obedience was essential and heroism optional.

- Dale Ralph Davis

## Psalm 68:7

O God, when you went out before your people,  
when you marched through the wilderness

## Habakkuk 3:5

Before him went pestilence, and plague  
followed at his heels.

## Judges 6:28-32

When the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down...And they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” And after they had searched and inquired, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.” Then the men of the town said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it.”

But Joash said to all who stood against him,  
“Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save  
him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to  
death by morning. **If he is a god, let him  
contend for himself**, because his altar has been  
broken down.” Therefore on that day Gideon  
was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal  
contend against him,” because he broke down  
his altar.

## Psalm 115:4-8

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

## Judges 6:33-35

Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. But **the Spirit of the LORD** clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him...

Judges 6:36-38

“Then Gideon said to God, **“If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.”** And it was so.

When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water.

Judges 6:39-40

Then Gideon said to God, “Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew.” And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

Gideon was very specifically asking God to show him that he was not one of the forces of nature (like the other gods), but was sovereign over the forces of nature. Gideon, then, was not looking for “little signs” to help him make a decision. He was really seeking to understand the nature of God. We have to remember that he did not have the Bible like we now have. He was very specifically addressing the places where his faith was weak and uninformed.

- Tim Keller