

## AN UNUSUAL BATTLE PLAN

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### Review

God has allowed The Midianites to oppress the Israelites for seven years because of their sin. The Israelites have been crying out to the LORD for help, but have still been clinging to the sins that brought judgment in the first place. God has called Gideon, he has torn down the altar to Baal and the Asherah Pole in his father’s front yard, and his father has persuaded the men of town to not kill Gideon for that, saying, “If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.”

Gideon raises an army of 32,000 men, but God trims it down to 300, lest Israel should boast, “My own strength has saved me.” God tells Gideon that if he is afraid to attack, he should go down to the Midianite camp and listen to what they are saying. He goes down and hears a Midianite say in response to hearing a dream, “God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his (Gideon’s) hands.”

### An Unusual Battle Plan

Judges 7: 15&16 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands.” Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

Judges 7:17&18 “Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”

Judges 7:19&20 Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in the left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon.”

Judges 7:21&22a While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords.

Judges 6:3 the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country.

I Samuel 14:20 Then Saul and his men assembled and went to the battle. They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords.

2 Chronicles 20:22-24 As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped destroy one another. When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped.

Ezekiel 38:21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother.

Even today most of the countries most hostile to Israel are so busy fighting each other they have no time to attack Israel.

#### Finishing the Battle

Judges 7:22c-24a The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Sereah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah."

Judges 7:24b-25 So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.

Judges 8:1-3 Now the Ephraimites asked Gideon, "Why have you treated us like this? Why didn't you call us when you went to fight Midian?" And they

challenged him vigorously. But he answered them, “What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren’t the gleanings of Ephraim’s grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer? God gave Oredb and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?” At this, their resentment against him subsided.

Judges 8:4&5 Gideon and his three hundred men, exhausted yet keeping up the pursuit, came to the Jordan and crossed it. He said to the men of Sukkoth, “Give my troops some bread; they are worn out, and I am still pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

Judges 8:6&7 But the officials of Sukkoth said, “Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your troops?”

Then Gideon replied, “Just for that, when the LORD has given Zeba and Zalmunna into my hand, I will tear your flesh with desert thorns and briars.”

Judges 8:8&9 From there he went up to Peniel and made the same request of them, but they answered as the men of Sukkoth had. So he said to the men of Peniel, “When I return in triumph, I will tear down this tower.”

Judges 8:10-12 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with a force of about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of the armies of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand swordsmen had fallen. Gideon went up by the route of the nomads east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the unsuspecting army. Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian fled, but he pursued them and captured them, routing their entire army.

#### Punishing Those Who Refused to Help

Judges 8:15-17 Then Gideon came and said to the men of Sukkoth, “here are Zeba and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me by saying, ‘Do you already have the hands of Zeba and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your exhausted men?’” He took the elders of the town and taught the men of Sukkoth a lesson by punishing them with desert thorns and briars. He also pulled down the tower of Peniel and killed the men of the town.

Judges 5:23 “ ‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the LORD. ‘Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty.’”

### A Wise Decision

Judges 8:22&23 The Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us – you, your son and your grandson – because you have saved us from the hand of Midian.” But Gideon told them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you.”

### Two Foolish Decisions

Judges 8:24-26 And he said, “I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder.” (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.) They answered, “We’ll be glad to give them.” So they spread out a garment, and each of them threw a ring from his plunder onto it. The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels, not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels’ necks. Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

Judges 8:29&30 Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live. He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelek.

### Lessons to Be Learned

(Remember, we are talking about a spiritual battle fought with spiritual weapons, not a physical battle fought with the weapons of this world.)

God is eager to help His people when their hearts are right with Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9

God’s battle plan was meant to not give glory to a man or men.

God gave them victory by terrifying their enemies and turning them against each other.

Once the closest tribes saw what God was doing they were eager to participate.

The tribe of Ephraim almost stopped the final victory by arguing about who should get the credit and who was the most important.

Some were not willing to help in the fight until the victory was won, and they suffered the consequences.

The final victory was won by Gideon's 300 God-picked faithful men.

Gideon wisely refused the offer to become a king, but made an ephod that caused Israel to sin and took many wives and a concubine and that led to the death of all but one of his 70 sons by his wives.

We are part of a nation plunging farther and farther away from God, and the church is largely immobilized either by complacency or fear or both.

God is more than willing to deal with the situation, but it will be in a way that does not give glory to a man or men.

Many, if not most believers, will join in the battle if victory seems to be certain. (But you will notice only Gideon and his 300 men crossed the Jordan to finish the battle. The others chose not to be involved beyond their immediate surroundings.)

God will not be happy with those who choose to sit out the battle until it is over.