

Judges 6

Verses 1 - 6

Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. ²The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. ³For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. ⁴So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. ⁵For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it. ⁶So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the Lord.

Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.

The land had been at rest for forty years after the defeat of the Canaanites. But a new generation of the Chosen People repeated the mistakes of their fathers.

They worshiped pagan gods and took part in their worship ceremonies and feasts which included ungodly behavior. See verse 10.

So God delivered the people into the hands of the Midianites. The genealogy of the Midianites reached all the way back to Abraham.

Abraham had a son named Midian by his second wife Keturah. So the Midianites were kinsmen of the Israelites.

²The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.

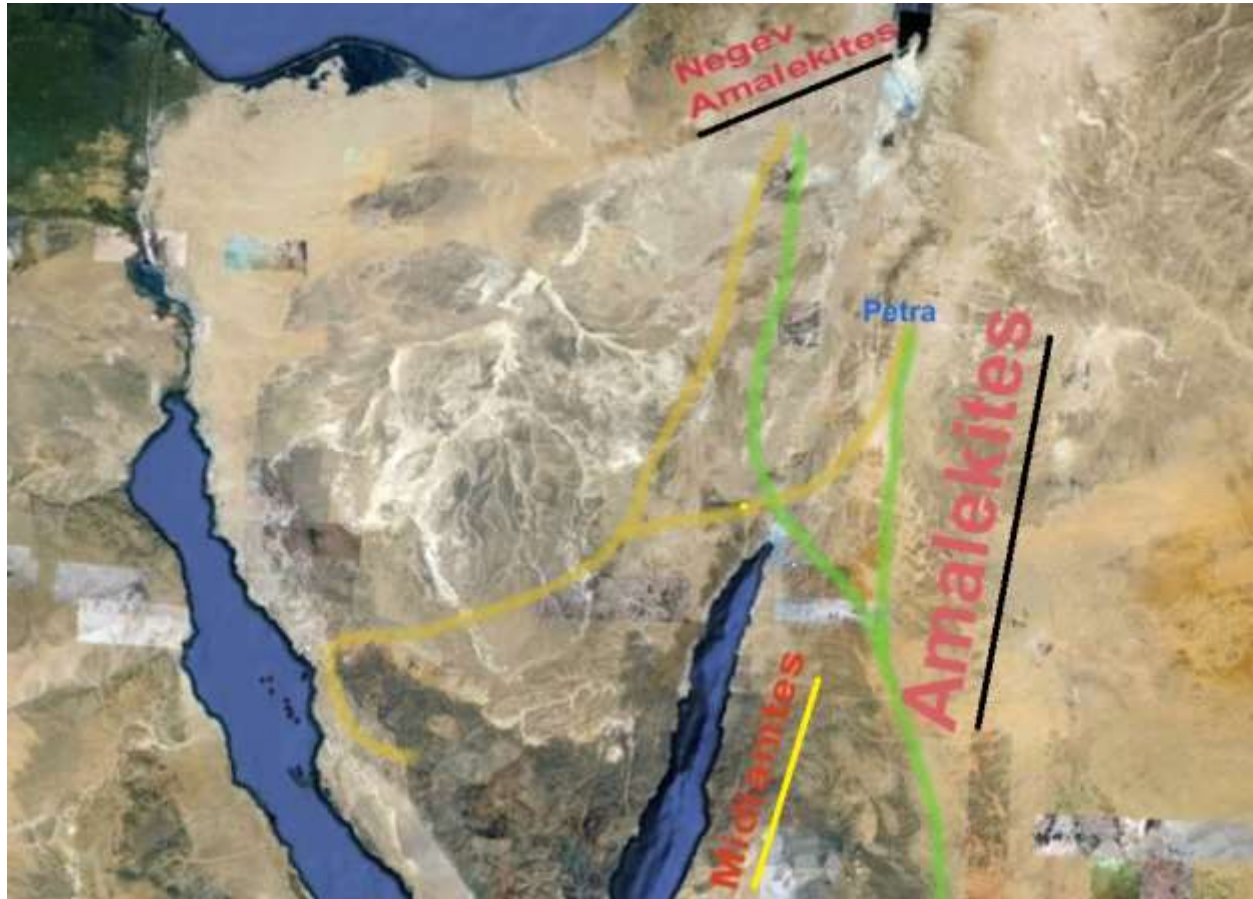
The Israelites resorted to hiding in dens and caves because their land in the plains and lowlands could not be defended.

The mountainous areas provided more cover and were easier to defend.

³ For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them.

The Midianites and the Amalekites were known to live in several areas.

See map 605



The Amalekites lived in the Negev (southern part of Israel) and northeast of the Midianites by the Gulf of Aquabah.

The Amalekites were first mentioned during the time of Abraham. See Genesis 14:7

It is not shown on this map but the Midianites also lived in two areas. Besides their initial home just west of Mount Sinai (pictured on the map above) they also lived in Israel near the Dead Sea. Heber, a Kenite, separated himself from the main tribe and was living farther north near Kedesh, in Naphtali.

See Judges 4:11

The children of the east may refer to the people who lived east of the Israelites that lived in Gilead.

⁴ So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. ⁵ For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it.

Israel was overwhelmed by the hordes of people against them. Nothing was left for them to live on. Their only option was to “head for the hill”.

It is interesting that the hordes stopped at Gaza. This shows the strength of the Philistine army and why Israel seldom had an advantage over them.

Israel was brought very low ... they cried unto Jehovah

When things became unbearable, they always called on Jehovah.

The Midianites had been defeated by the Israelites under Moses (Numbers 31).

But after an interval of 200 plus years, they had recovered their strength.

⁶ So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the Lord.

It's sad that Israel had to be crushed before they were willing to turn to God for help. The same could be said for all of humanity. Mankind often rejects God thinking they will be “free” but in fact they become enslaved to Satan. It's interesting that Microsoft word will always capitalize Satan but God is never capitalized unless it begins a sentence.

Verses 7 - 10

⁷ Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian, ⁸ that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. ⁹ I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, ¹⁰ and I said to you, “I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.””

⁷ Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian, ⁸ that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel

We are not given the name of the prophet but it seems obvious that it was not Gideon.

¹⁰ and I said to you, “I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.

They are receiving what God had promised to them at Shechem. He said they would be blessed or cursed depending on whether they kept the Law.

See Deut. 28

Verses 11 - 18

¹¹ Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save *it* from the Midianites. ¹² The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.” ¹³ Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.” ¹⁴ The Lord looked at him and said, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?” ¹⁵ He said to Him, “O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.” ¹⁶ But the Lord said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.” ¹⁷ So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. ¹⁸ Please do not depart from here, until I come *back* to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You.” And He said, “I will remain until you return.”

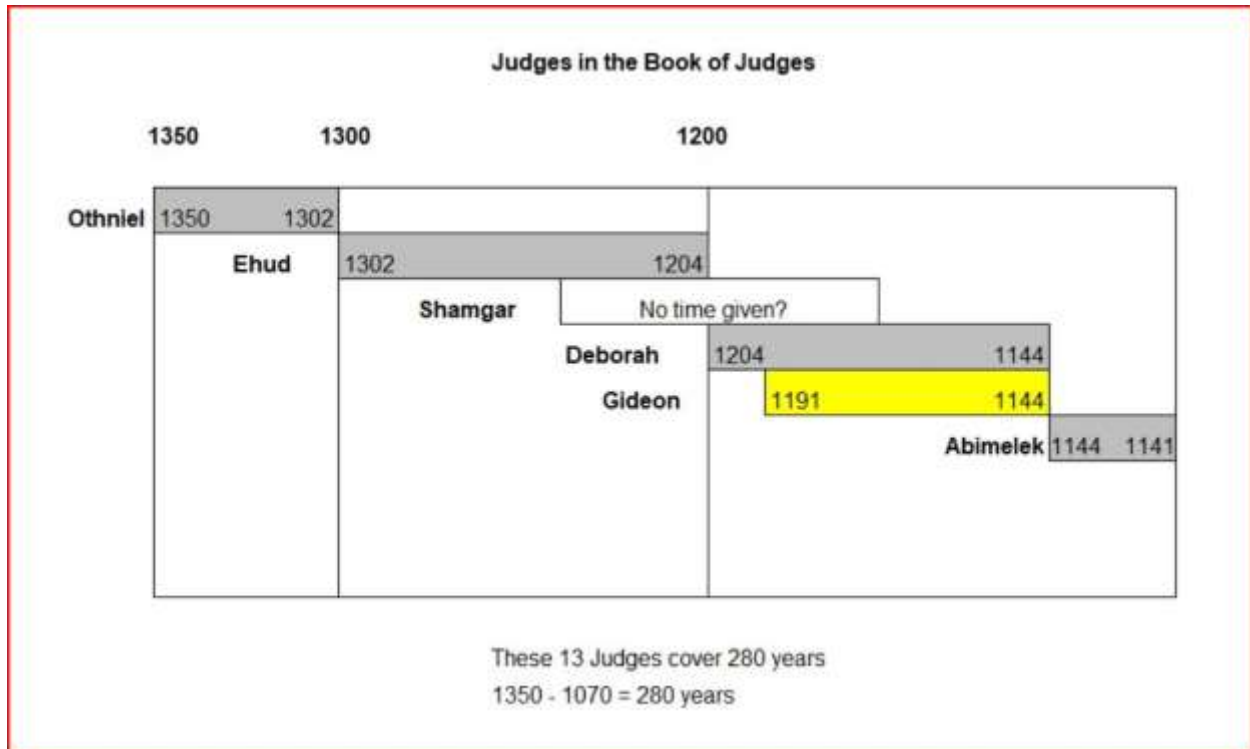
¹¹ Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save *it* from the Midianites.

The summer threshing floors were in the open country on an elevated plain so the wind would plow the chaff away from the grain, while the vineyards were usually in the wooded hills which provided some concealment.

¹² The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.”

Judge # 5 GIDEON 1191 to 1144 BC

See time line 610



The judgeship of Gideon took place during the time of Deborah.

During that time the tribe of Judah and Simeon did not answer the call to help her but nothing derogatory was said about them. Most likely they were in a conflict with the Philistines at that time and could not help the other tribes.

The name Gideon means feller or hewer so his father was probably a lumberjack. He was the youngest son of Joash who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh and their home was in Ophrah.

¹³ Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

How did the people of Israel know their history but fail to see the bigger picture?

14 The Lord looked at him and said, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?”

As in previous cases we see that the angel of the Lord is in fact The Lord.

This was Gideon's commission from God to deliver Israel.

15 He said to Him, “O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.”

Gideon was not a prominent person in Israel and felt he was unqualified for the job.

Moses expressed a similar feeling of unworthiness.

See Exodus 3:11

11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”

17 So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me

Gideon wants to make sure this message is from God. That doesn't seem like an unfair ask considering the mission.

Verses 19 - 24

19 Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought *them* out to him under the oak and presented *them*.²⁰ The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so.²¹ Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.²² When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, “Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.”²³ The Lord said to him, “Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.”²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

²¹ Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight

After Gideon had prepared the meal The Lord touched it with the staff that was in His hand and it was immediately consumed by fire and then The Lord vanished from his sight.

²² When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, “Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.” ²³ The Lord said to him, “Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.”

When Gideon saw the miracle he realized that he had seen the Lord face to face.

The passage in Exodus 33:20 must have come to his mind.

²⁰ He further said, “You cannot see My face, for mankind shall not see Me and live!”

Gideon feared that he might die so The Lord quickly told Gideon that he would not die from seeing the Lord. Of course this was a manifestation of the Lord, not the glorified person of God.

²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Gideon responded by erecting an altar to The Lord and he called it The Lord is Peace.

Verses 25 - 27

²⁵ Now on the same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; ²⁶ and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.” ²⁷ Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father’s household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

Take your father's bull and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;

Since Gideon needed a bull to pull down the altar of Baal it must have been a fairly substantial altar. Only a wealthy family could afford such an expensive altar.

The Asherah was a mother-goddess, a consort of Baal in the O.T.

²⁶ and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down

An altar to The Lord may seem like an odd request since Israel was supposed to offer their sacrifices at the Tabernacle in Shiloh but God gave this command so we know it was a legitimate exception to the rule.

To use the wood from the fallen goddess as fuel on the Lord's Altar was a nice burn. 😊

²⁷ Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

We can see from this that Gideon was quite wealthy himself.

Verses 28 - 32

²⁸ When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built. ²⁹ They said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing." ³⁰ Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it." ³¹ But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar."

³² Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he had torn down his altar.

³⁰ Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it.

The men of the city demanded that Gideon be put to death for destroying the altar of Baal and the Asherah.

Did the men forget who owned the altar? See verse 25

²⁵ Now on the same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;

³¹ But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar.”

Joash confronted the men with two arguments.

1. Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning

Any Jew found worshipping a false god was to be stoned according to the law.

See Deut. 17:2-7

2. If he is a god, let him contend for himself

This answer was both logical and sarcastic.

If Baal is a god then he can punish his son as he wishes. Therefore you have no need to seek revenge for your god.

Verses 33 - 35

³³ Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him. ³⁵ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

³⁴ So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him. ³⁵ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

3 ½ tribes of Israel were sent messengers.

Not asking Ephraim to help will become a problem for Gideon in the near future.

Verses 36 - 40

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, “If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, ³⁷ behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken.” ³⁸ And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water. ³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground.” ⁴⁰ God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, “If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, ³⁷ behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor.

This is the second time that Gideon has asked for a miracle.

The first time was in verse 21.

Plus, this time Gideon asked for two miracles.