

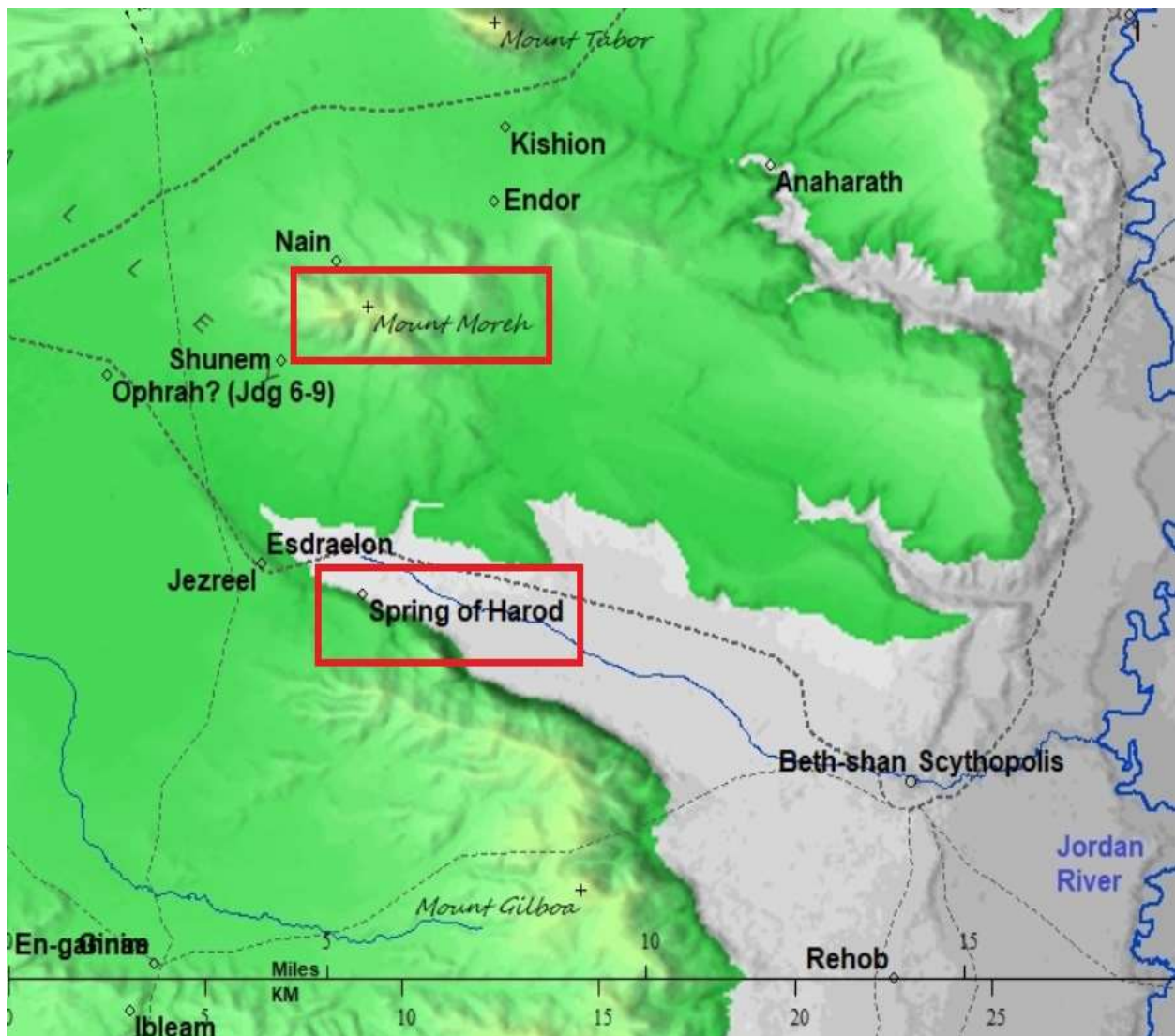
Judges 7

Verse 1

Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him got up early, and camped 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.

Israel and Midian were camped on the eastern side of the Jezreel Valley about 5 miles apart from each other.

See map 705



Israel was south of the Midianites.

Verses 2 - 3

² And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to hand Midian over to them, otherwise Israel would become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has saved me.’ ³ Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is afraid and worried, is to return and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand from the people returned, but ten thousand remained.

² And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to hand Midian over to them, otherwise Israel would become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has saved me.’

The number of the Midianites and their allies were 135,000 men and Israel only had 32,000 men. Israel was already at a disadvantage but God wanted the number of men reduced even more so the Israelites would know that the victory came from Him.

³ Now proclaim to the people, ‘Whoever is afraid and worried, is to return and leave Mount Gilead. So 22,000 from the people returned, but 10,000 remained.

The Israelite force dropped from 32,000 to 10,000.

Verses 4 - 8

⁴ Then 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. So it shall be that he of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” ⁵ So he brought the people down to the water. Then the Lord said to Gideon, “You shall put everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps in one group, and everyone who kneels down to drink *in another*.” ⁶ Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people kneeled down to drink water. ⁷ And the Lord said to Gideon, “I will save you with the three hundred men who lapped, and will hand the Midianites over to you; so have all the *other* people go, each man to his home.” ⁸ So the three hundred men took the people’s provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And Gideon dismissed all the *other* men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the three hundred men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

⁴ Then 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.

God devised a test so only the most observant men were left. Yes ladies, it is an oxymoron to say observant men 😊

⁶ Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people kneeled down to drink water..

The three hundred men that drank by putting their hand to their mouth could get a drink and remain “on guard” not missing what was going on around them.

God choose these men to stay and all the others were sent home. So the Midianites had 135,000 men and Israel 300.

A ratio of 450 to 1 would be a disaster under normal circumstances but not when the Lord is controlling the battle.

⁸ So the three hundred men took the people’s provisions and their trumpets in their hands.

All of the three hundred men would need a trumpet.

Verses 9 -14

⁹ Now on the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have handed it over to you. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, ¹¹ so that you will hear what they say; and afterward you will have the courage to go down against the camp.” So he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the army that was in the camp. ¹² Now the Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the people of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. ¹³ When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, “Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent collapsed.” ¹⁴ And his friend replied, “This is nothing other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has handed over to him Midian and all the camp.”

The Lord said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have handed it over to you. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, ¹¹ so that you will hear what they say; and afterward you will have the courage to go down against the camp.”

God told Gideon to attack the camp because He had handed it over to him. But if Gideon was afraid to attack the camp then he should first go down to the camp with his servant. The shortcomings of biblical heroes are often revealed along with their achievements.

¹³ When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, “Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent collapsed.”

Barley bread was common during this time because it was cheaper than wheat. So the loaf of barley bread was a good representation of Gideon who said of himself “my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.

¹⁴ And his friend replied, “This is nothing other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has handed over to him Midian and all the camp.”

The Midian army was most likely aware of Gideon's identity having heard of his exploits in destroying the altar of Baal. They were also aware of the 1000's who had rallied behind Gideon.

God had caused the dream and its interpretation so Gideon and Purah would return from their mission being greatly encouraged.

Verses 15 - 18

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. Then he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the Lord has handed over to you the camp of Midian!” ¹⁶ And he divided the three hundred men into three units, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers. ¹⁷ Then he said to them, “Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. ¹⁸ When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets around the entire camp and say, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon!’”

15 When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship.

Gideon understood that God had orchestrated the dream and its interpretation for his benefit and bowed in worship to show his thanks.

16 And he divided the three hundred men into three units, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.

A trumpet sounding was the signal for the movement of a whole company. So when the three hundred trumpets sounded simultaneously from all sides of the Midianite encampment they would have believed they were completely surrounded.

18 When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets around the entire camp and say, 'For the Lord and for Gideon!

The 300 men were divided into 3 groups of 100 men. When Gideon and the 100 men with him blew their trumpets the other two groups would do the same.

The victory belonged to The Lord, but Gideon was given recognition for being the one that the Lord had chosen.

Verse 19 - 23

19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle night watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands. ²⁰ When the three units blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" ²¹ And each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled. ²² And when they blew the three hundred trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the entire army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. ²³ And the men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.

¹⁹ So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle night watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

The night was divided into 3 watches of 4 hours each. The beginning of the middle watch would have been 4 hours after sunset (about 10:00 p.m.).

Most of the Midianite army would have been asleep by that time.

²⁰ When the three units blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

The trumpets were attached to the wearer so that both hands were free. This way each man could hold a pitcher and a torch until the pitcher was shattered. Then they could hold the torch in one hand and the trumpet in the other hand. Swords were not carried in the hand, but by the soldier's side.

²¹ And each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.

To the enemy it looked like their camp was completely surrounded and they panicked.

²² And when they blew the three hundred trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the entire army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

It's true that the enemy believed they were surrounded but that in itself would not create the confusion that ensued.

The Lord caused enough confusion among the enemy that the entire army lost their self-control; even the very experienced men of war.

²³ And the men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.

Originally (in chapter 6) 3.5 tribes of Israel were asked to come. 22,000 left when given the choice to do so. Then only 300 out of the remaining 10,000 were chosen. Zebulun was part of 3.5 tribes that initially came but they are not mentioned here.

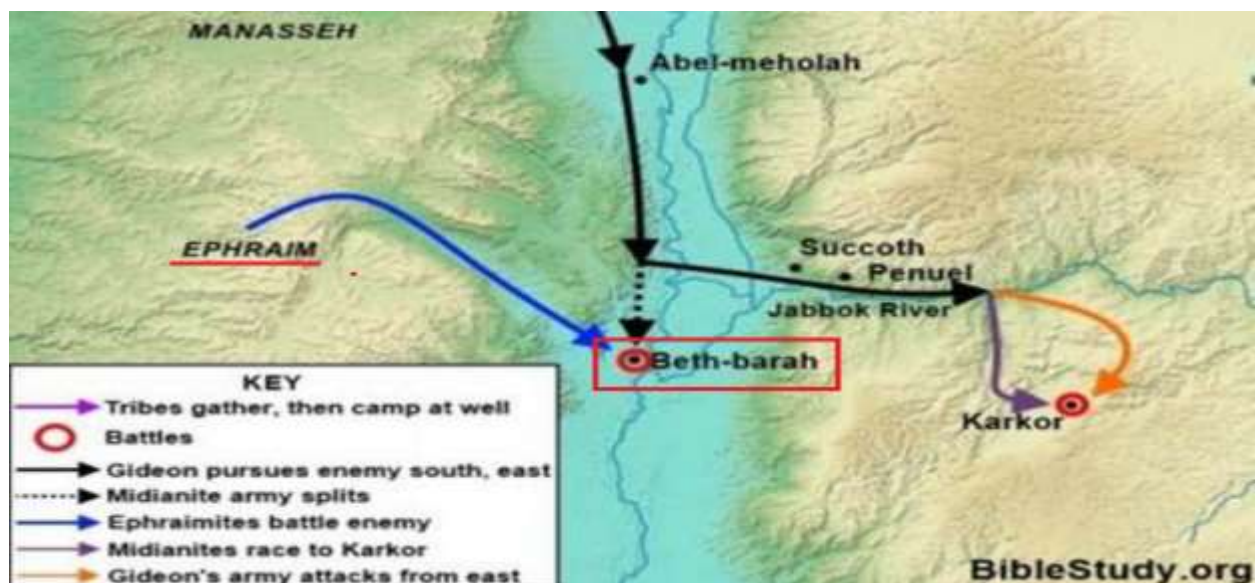
Evidently the men that were sent home were still somewhat nearby the battle area. When the rout of Midian occurred these men were able to join in the pursuit.

Verses 24 - 25

²⁴ Then Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against Midian and take control of the waters ahead of them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.” So all the men of Ephraim were summoned, and they took control of the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan. ²⁵ And they captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

So all the men of Ephraim were summoned, and they took control of the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

See map 710



Ephraim was south of the battle that had just taken place so Gideon called on them to join the battle and stop the Midianites from escaping across the Jordan River.

²⁵ And they captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

Some of the invaders had passed over the Jordan in their flight eastward.

They were intercepted at the Jordan by the men of Ephraim who slew the princes and took their heads to Gideon.