

Week #:	178	Series:	God's Judgment	Title:	Introduction to Gideon
Scriptures:	Judges 6:1-10				
Songs:	Kadosh – Paul Wilbur (5:54)				
	Worthy Is The Lamb – Hillsong (6:21)				
PRAYER:	Another In the Fire				
Video:	Judges Song – What's in the Bible #4 (Time- 31:31-33:25)				

Introduction to Judge #5 - Gideon:

The first four judges in our study have been:

1. Othniel: He was Caleb's nephew. Israel lived in peace after him for 40 years
2. Ehud: He was known for the physical feature of being left-handed. Israel lived in peace after him for 80 years.
3. Shamgar: He was known for killing 600 Philistines with a farm tool, an oxgoad.
4. Deborah: She was a female prophetess, whom God used to free the people from Jabin [Yavin], King of Hazor, and his commander Sisera.

Historically, we are in the period c. 13th - 12th centuries BC. As the era of the Judges continues, the spiritual and social condition of the Israelites grew worse. In fact, the entire region is in chaos. In the 1200s BC, groups of migrating peoples from across the Aegean, driven out of their homelands by natural disasters and political upheaval, invaded in ships from across the Mediterranean to attack Egypt, Canaan and Assyria. When they arrived in Egypt, in what proved to be one last burst of glory for a fading empire, Pharaoh Ramesses III (reigned c. 1186-1155 BC) was able to hold them off and drive them out of northern Egypt. The Egyptians gave these migrating groups of peoples the name "Sea Peoples," and Ramesses III was so proud of their defeat that he recorded his victory in both documents and in inscriptions on temple wall reliefs.

Some of the Sea Peoples died in the war with the Egyptians; some were captured and became mercenaries in the Egyptian army, but most invaded Canaan's coastal plain. The Sea Peoples arrived in Canaan about the time Deborah and Shamgar were judging and defending Israel. The various groups of Sea Peoples united and came to be identified as the Philistines. Shamgar fought the Philistines and killed six hundred of the invaders who were threatening Israelite settlements (Judges 4:31). The Philistines settled along the coast of Canaan in the five main cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath, intermarrying with the Canaanites. Of the five city-states founded by the Philistines, all have been positively identified by archaeologists with the exception of Gath.

As the Israelites were farther and farther removed from the generation of the elders of the holy warrior generation born during the 40 years of the wilderness experience, they grew farther and farther from God despite God's repeated gracious deliverance of them from the periods of oppression which are followed by years of peace. This distancing of the Israelites relationship with God and His covenant is reflected in the character of the judges, each of whom is a product of his own generation and the violent conditions of the times in spite of a divine calling. Gideon, the fifth judge, is an example. He is the son of an apostate family living in an Israelite town that worships Baal. Despite his initial hesitation, Gideon serves God faithfully and refuses to take on the role of king over Israel (Judges 8:22-23). However, that noble act is tarnished by his action in which he erected a cult object which became an object of worship in defiance of the first commandment (Judges 8:27). After his death, a son of his will usurp power, cause disunity among the tribes, and will push the tribes of Israel

into a civil war. Notice that the careers of the judges continue to follow the same movement from south to north as the summary of the continuing conquest in chapter 1.

Israel is oppressed by the Midianites and their Allies:

Judges 6:1-6

¹ But the people of Isra'el did what was evil from *ADONAI's* perspective, so *ADONAI* handed them over to Midyan [Midianites] for seven years. ² Midyan [Midianites] exercised its power harshly against Isra'el, and because of Midyan [Midianites] the people of Isra'el hid themselves in mountains, in caves and in other safe places. ³ One time, after Isra'el's sowing season, Midyan [Midianites], with 'Amalek [Amalekites] and others from the east, attacked them. ⁴ They set up camp by them and destroyed the produce of the country all the way to 'Azah [Gaza]; they left nothing for people to live on, no sheep, no oxen, no donkeys. ⁵ For they came up with their cattle and tents, and they came in as thick as locusts; both they and their camels were beyond numbering, and they came into the land to destroy it. ⁶ Isra'el became very discouraged because of Midyan [Midianites], and the people of Isra'el cried out to *ADONAI*.

In verse 1 we have another of the repeated statements announcing Israel's covenant failures: *The Israelites did what is evil in Yahweh's eyes...* (2:11; 3:7, 12 [twice]; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6 and 13:1); this time their oppressors are the Midianites and other nomads who lived east of the Jordan River.

Who are the Midianites, how are they related to the children of Israel, and why do they inhabit the lands to the east of the Jordan River [called the *Transjordan*]?

After Sarah's death, Abraham married a woman named Keturah by whom he had five sons. The fourth son by Keturah was Midian. When these sons reached adulthood, Abraham sent them away to "the lands to the east" (Gen 25:6) so they could not present a danger to his one heir and inheritor of the covenant with Yahweh who was Isaac, Abraham's son with Sarah.

The confederation of Midianite tribes was counted among the "peoples of the east" (Judges 6:3, 33; 7:12). They were nomadic tribes that mostly occupied the desert lands in the Arabian Peninsula but their clans and settlements extended as far north as Syria. They formed alliances with the peoples of the Negev and the Transjordan like the Kenites, Amalekites, Moabites, Ammonites and Ishmaelites (Numbers 10:29; 25:6, 15, 16-18; Judges 1:16; 6:3, 33; 8:24). The Biblical designation "the land of Midian" (Exodus 2:15; Habakkuk 3:7) probably refers to the center of Midianite territory in northwestern Arabia along the Gulf of Aqabah's eastern shore to the east of the Sinai Peninsula (1 Kings 11:18).

Gaza, a Philistine city mentioned in verse 4, was located in southwest Canaan about three miles from the Mediterranean coast. The implication is that the entire land was devastated by the Midianite camel raiders and their allies from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean coast.

In this passage we learn of several ways in which the Israelites suffered under the continued attacks by the Midianites and their allies:

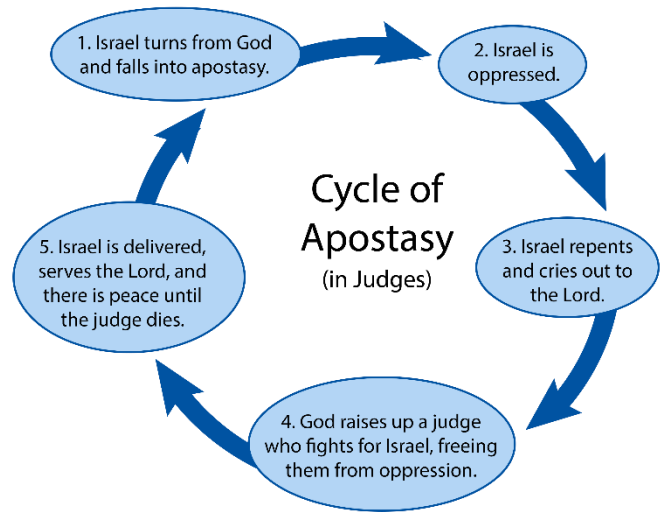
- To escape, the people were forced to hide in the mountains and in caves like animals.
- In the planting season their enemies would camp within Israelite territory and constantly raid their villages, destroying their agricultural crops. (They could not live – eat.)
- They confiscated the Israelite livestock and pillaged the villages. (They could not sacrifice.)

It's curious that they would destroy the crops instead of waiting until the harvest and just take the harvested crops instead. We can't know for certain, but it is thought that they were probably raiding at seed time and at harvest. The intention wasn't just to steal from the Israelites; the intention was probably to starve out the Israelites and force them to leave the land. This is a common wartime tactic used by armies of that time.

The scripture compares the Midianites and their allies to locusts. This metaphor describes the way the enemy destroyed everything in their path like a plague of locusts. The same comparison will be made in 7:12 to describe the huge numbers of the enemy.

We see in this passage the first steps on our Cycle of Apostasy chart:

1. Announcement of Israel's wrongdoing (6:1).
2. Statement of Yahweh's response (6:2). Notice of how long Israel was oppressed by the enemy (6:1a)
3. Reference to Israel's repentance in "crying out" to God (6:6-7).



The other parts of the cycle will be fulfilled in:

4. Announcement of God "raising up" a deliverer (6:11-14).
5. Description of how deliverance was achieved (6:33-35; 7:1-25; 8:4-21). Concluding statement of how long peace lasted (8:28).

A Message from God's Prophet

Judges 6:7-10

⁷ When the people of Isra'el cried out to *ADONAI* because of Midyan [Midianites], ⁸ *ADONAI* sent a prophet to the people of Isra'el, who said to them: "*ADONAI* the God of Isra'el says, 'I brought you up from Egypt, out of a life of slavery. ⁹ I delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all your oppressors. I drove them out ahead of you and gave you their land. ¹⁰ And I said to you: "I am *ADONAI* your God; you are not to be afraid of the gods of the Emori [Amorites] in whose land you are living." But you paid no attention to what I said!"

That the Israelites "cried out" to Yahweh (verses 6-7) is the fourth part of the deliverer cycle. God's response is not to send a deliverer but that He "sent" a "man prophet." The Hebrew word for "sent" (slh) in verse 8 is a technical term for the commissioning of a prophet as God's messenger (see for example Is 6:8-9 and Jeremiah 23:21). The Hebrew text specifically records that this messenger of Yahweh is a "man prophet." *Nabi/navi* is the Hebrew word for male prophet and *nabia/navia* is the word for prophetess/woman prophet. In Exodus 15:20 Miriam is called *ha-nabia Miriam* (the prophetess Miriam). It is a curious redundancy in identifying the prophet as male when the word for male-prophet is used. This redundancy is unique to this passage and to Judges 4:4 where Deborah is called a "prophetess woman" (*nabia issa*). Nowhere else in Scripture is this redundancy used for a

prophet. Nothing in Scripture is accidental therefore this redundancy is meant to catch our attention for a reason.

The point is this prophet is a man as opposed to the last prophet mentioned in the Book of Judges, the *nabia issa* Deborah. The contrast is that this man prophet does not come to set in motion the process of deliverance like the prophetess Deborah. Instead, he comes as God's prosecuting attorney to deliver another covenant law-suit indictment in accusing the Israelites of covenant infidelity and in forgetting God's acts as Israel's Savior and divine King.

Judges 6:7-10 is the second direct intervention by God in announcing an indictment against the Israelites for their covenant failures in the Book of Judges:

1. The messenger (*mal'ak*) of Yahweh confronts Israel (Judges 2:1-5).
2. **A prophet (*nabi*) sent by Yahweh confronts Israel (Judges 6:7-10).**
3. Yahweh Himself confronts Israel (Judges 10:10-16).

What is the prophet's message from God? Notice the first-person pronouns in the Hebrew text and how many times "I" (referring to Yahweh) is repeated. It is a personal message given in seven first-person pronouns to remind the Israelites of the miracles God worked to liberate them in the Exodus and the gift of the Promised Land. The message ends in a concluding summary statement:

1. I brought you up from Egypt, and led you out of a life of slavery.
2. I delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all your oppressors.
3. I drove them out before you and
4. I drove them out ahead of you and gave you their land.
5. And I said to you:
6. I am *ADONAI* your God; you are not to be afraid of the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.
7. But you paid no attention to what I said!

Any time we see in scripture something written seven times, there is a purpose. Seven is one of the so-called "perfect numbers" in Scripture (3, 7, 10 and 12) indicating divine perfection in fulfillment or completion especially in God's plan (for example, seven days in a week and God rested on the seventh day and Jesus' seven sayings from the Cross, etc.). God is trying to tie it all up: He is the fulfillment here of His promise. It's all about Him, and yet they are making it all about themselves. Again.

The summary statement "***But you have not listened to my voice***" is repeated from Judges 2:2 and is a reminder of God's warnings that the Israelites must listen to God's voice and obey (for example see Deuteronomy 4:1; 7:12; 11:13; 15:5; 27:9, etc.) and their promise to be obedient to His commands (Exodus 24:3, 7 and Joshua 24:16-24). God is frustrated with Israel's cycles of sin, subjugation, supplication, and deliverance. The prophet is sent to caution the Israelites against presuming that every descent into apostasy that brings divine judgment can be remedied by an appeal to elicit deliverance.

Next week we will continue and find out about this next judge who God is going to bring to the forefront to bring on His will and purpose for Israel – Gideon.