

Week #:	179	Series:	God's Judgment	Title:	Gideon – Valiant Hero
Scriptures:	Judges 6:1-10				
Songs:	Days of Elijah – Twila Paris (4:13)				
	Victor's Crown – Darlene Zschech (7:25)				
	PRAYER:	Too Good to Not Believe – Brandon Lake (9:59)			
Videos:	Judges Song – What's in the Bible #4 (Time- 31:31-33:25)				
	Threshing Sledge (2:41)				
	Cave Wine Press (6:37)				

Judge #5 - Gideon: Valiant Hero

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.

Judges 6:11-12

¹¹ Then the angel of *ADONAI* came and sat under the pistachio tree in 'Ofrah that belonged to Yo'ash [Joash] the Avi'ezri [Abiezrite]. His son Gid'on was threshing wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from Midyan. ¹² The angel of *ADONAI* appeared to him and said to him: "You valiant hero! *ADONAI* is with you!"

Gideon is hiding from the Midianites by threshing wheat in the wine press. The two processes are as opposite as any two things can be. One is done on the top of the mountain, while the other is done in the valley or preferably in a cave.

(Play videos)

Judges 6:13-16

¹³ "Excuse me, sir," answered Gid'on, "but if *ADONAI* is with us, then why is all this happening to us? And where are all his miracles our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Didn't *ADONAI* bring us up from Egypt?' For now *ADONAI* has abandoned us and handed us over to Midyan." ¹⁴ *ADONAI* turned to him and said, "Go in this strength of yours and save Isra'el from the hands of Midyan. Haven't I sent you?" ¹⁵ But Gid'on answered him, "Forgive me, my Lord, but with what am I to save Isra'el? Why, my family is the poorest in M'nasheh, and I'm the youngest person in my father's house!" ¹⁶ *ADONAI* said to him, "Because I will be with you, you will strike down Midyan as easily as if they were just one man."

Gideon points out that he is the lowest of the low. He is poor. He is the youngest. He is not worth God putting this call upon him. Yet God is calling him none the less.

Gideon is hesitant to believe in the divine presence of Yahweh. He is at a disadvantage because he had not been raised to know Yahweh by a faithful Israelite family. His father and the people of his village were apostates who had built an altar to Baal upon which they offered

sacrifice. Most Biblical scholars believe that Gideon's name is from the Hebrew verbal root which means to "to tear down" or "to cut off." It is a name that will be fulfilled in his first act as God's agent (verse 25). Gideon does know something of the history of his people since he refers to the Exodus liberation. The seven annual festivals the people were commanded to keep were intended to allow every generation to relive the Exodus experience (Exodus 13:3-10; Leviticus 23). His family apparently kept these feasts and it was from them that Gideon knew about the miracles of the Exodus liberation through the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread.

He accused God of abandoning the Israelites; however, the truth is God has not abandoned Israel; the Israelites, like Gideon's father, have abandoned God.

Judges 6:17-24

¹⁷ Gid'on replied, "If indeed you favor me, would you mind giving me a sign that it is really you talking with me? ¹⁸ Please don't leave until I go and return with a gift and present it to you." He replied, "I'll wait till you come back."

¹⁹ Gid'on went in, cooked a young goat and made *matzot* from a bushel of flour. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, brought them out to him under the pistachio tree and presented them. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and *matzot*, lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." Gid'on did so. ²¹ Then the angel of *ADONAI* reached out with the stick he was holding, touched the meat and *matzot*, and fire shot up out of the rock and burned up the meat and *matzot*. Then the angel of *ADONAI* disappeared before his eyes. ²² Gid'on realized that he was the angel of *ADONAI* and said, "Oh no! My Lord! *ADONAI*! Because I've seen the angel of *ADONAI* face-to-face!" ²³ But *ADONAI* reassured him, "*Shalom* to you, don't be afraid, you won't die!" ²⁴ Then Gid'on built an altar there to *ADONAI* and called it "*ADONAI-Shalom*"; to this day it remains in 'Ofrah of the Avi'ezri.

Gideon is beginning to believe that it is indeed Yahweh or His messenger who has called him, but he must be sure so he speaks respectfully of how privileged he is to have found favor with God (like the heroes Noah, Abraham and Moses before him in Genesis 6:8; 18:3 and Exodus 33:12), and he requests a divine "sign" so he can be certain. He asks Yahweh to wait until he returns with an offering and God graciously agrees. The food offering Gideon brings is disproportionately large. The flour to make the bread alone was the equivalent to about 22 liters. The food was probably intended to be eaten in a communal meal as a sign of friendship. This was a common custom as in Isaac's meal with Abimelech (Genesis 26:29-30) or Jacob's meal with Laban (Genesis 31:53-54), but Gideon knows that the way the offering is received will be the "sign" he is looking for.

Yahweh commands Gideon to place the pot of meat and unleavened bread rounds in the basket on a rock and to pour the broth over them. Then, touching the tip of His staff to the rock, God gave three signs of His divinity:

1. He does not consume the food as a human man would do.
2. He consumes the food offering in fire.
3. He miraculously vanishes.

Gideon freak out. It is understood that any sinful human who comes face to face with God cannot survive His awesome holiness that is so far removed from human unworthiness. Anyone who remains alive after seeing God is therefore astonished and overwhelmed with gratitude since it is a favor God rarely grants. Gideon is afraid because he fears he will not survive the experience.

In Gideon's accusation that God had abandoned Israel because He had not saved them from their enemies as He had in the Exodus liberation, Gideon was indirectly alluding to a deliverer from that time.

God reassures him, telling Gideon: *Peace be with you; have no fear; you will not die.* To commemorate the event, Gideon built a commemorative altar (not to be used in sacrifice), which the inspired writer testifies remained in place in his time. In honor of Yahweh's victory over Baal, Gideon names the altar "Yahweh Shalom," naming the altar after the life-giving word that has been revealed to him (verse 23). He has met God and God has given him peace. Gideon's town of Ophrah has never been identified.

Judges 6:25-32

²⁵ That very night *ADONAI* said to him, "Take your father's bull and the other bull, the seven-year-old. Destroy the altar to Ba'al that belongs to your father, cut down the sacred pole next to it, ²⁶ and build a proper altar to *ADONAI* your God on top of this strong-point. Then take the second bull; and offer it as a burnt offering, using the wood of the sacred pole you cut down." ²⁷ Gid'on took ten of his servants and did what *ADONAI* had told him to do. He didn't do it by day, because he was afraid of the men in his father's household and those from the city, so he did it at night. ²⁸ When the men of the city got up the next morning, there was the altar of Ba'al destroyed, the sacred pole cut down, and the second bull a burnt offering on the newly built altar. ²⁹ They asked each other, "Who could have done this?" But after investigating, they concluded that Gid'on the son of Yo'ash had done it. ³⁰ "Bring out your son," the men of the city demanded of Yo'ash [Joash], "so that he may die, because he destroyed the altar of Ba'al and cut down the sacred pole next to it!" ³¹ But Yo'ash [Joash] said to all those crowding around him, "You're defending Ba'al, are you? It's your job to save him? Anyone who defends Ba'al will be put to death before morning! If he's a god, let him defend himself! After all, somebody destroyed his altar!" ³² Therefore on that day Gid'on was given the name Yeruba'al [let Ba'al defend], because they said, "Let Ba'al defend himself against him, since he destroyed his altar."

Yahweh gives Gideon his first test of obedience. He is commanded to make war against the Canaanite cult of Baal by demolishing the town's altar to Baal and to cut down the cult object associated with it that are sponsored by his father. Then, he is to build an altar to Yahweh in its place and offer in sacrifice the seven-year-old-bull of his father which is to be burnt on the wood of the cult object. Gideon must choose pleasing his divine father over pleasing his physical father.

Gideon not only passes his test of obedience, but he fulfills the meaning of his name from the verb "to tear down." The "sacred pole," called an *asherah*, was the emblem of Asherah (Greek = Astarte), goddess of love and fertility and consort of Baal. Sacrifice and worship were restricted to take place at God's altar of sacrifice at His Sanctuary unless permission was expressly given by God to erect an altar and offer sacrifice at another location (prohibition: Leviticus 17:1-7; Deuteronomy 12:11-12; exception as in the covenant renewal ceremony in Joshua 8:30-35). That the sacrificed bull was seven years old is symbolically significant. Seven is the number of fullness, completion and perfection. The bull is not offered as a sin sacrifice for the people (see Leviticus 4:13-21), but as a "whole burnt offering" or holocaust in which the entire animal is offered up to Yahweh the great King as a tribute or "gift offering," acknowledging God's sovereignty and authority. That there were ten servants assisting Gideon may also be significant. The number "ten" is the number signifying divine order (as in the Ten Commandments and the ten Egyptian plagues).

As Gideon feared, the townspeople were angry when they discovered the Baal altar was destroyed. The people threaten to kill Gideon, but his father defends him by arguing that if Baal is a true god he will defend himself and if not, he is obviously false.

Gideon's father has to choose between the townspeople or his son, but fundamentally, he must choose between Baal and Yahweh. His son's courageous act has left him no middle ground. He cannot serve both Baal and Yahweh. He chooses his son and Yahweh and further declares his choice by threatening to execute anyone who attempts to defend Baal. This is a pivotal moment in salvation history for Joash and the people of Ophrah.

The real problem that the Israelites are facing is not their oppression by the Midianites but the lack of their relationship with Yahweh.

The townspeople do not challenge Joash and Gideon is reborn in their eyes as Jerubbaal, which means "let Baal contend", *yerubba'al*; it is a word play on the threefold use of the verb *riv/rib* "to contend/fight back." Gideon has lived up to his name and in tearing down the altar of Baal he has given Yahweh victory over the false god.