

## Judges Chapter 6 Continued

Verses 22-24: Seeing the Lord “face to face” filled Gideon with a sense of his own unworthiness (Gen. 16:13; Exodus 3:6). Only a realization of utter inadequacy and insufficiency can ever prepare mere humans to be God’s warriors. When Gideon confessed his weakness, God promised, and delivered, His strength and peace.

**Judges 6:22 And when Gideon perceived that he [was] an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.**

Gideon” feared immediate death for having “seen an angel of the Lord face to face” (compare Exodus 20:19; 33:20; Judges 13:22 with Gen. 32:30; Exodus 24:10-11; Isa. 6:1-5; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12; Rev. 22:4). Although mortal man has not looked on the essential being of God, God has often appeared to men, especially in Jesus Christ, His Son (John 1:8; 14:8-9).

In the last lesson, Gideon asked for a sign from God that the message was from Him. God miraculously burned the offering on the rock. Now Gideon no longer is in doubt. He knows this message is from God. It was indeed, a message from God sent to Gideon by the angel of the LORD. Alas, here is a statement of fear and disbelief that he, a common man, had seen the angel of the LORD face to face. He is afraid that the LORD will kill him for this.

**Judges 6:23 "And the LORD said unto him, Peace [be] unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die."**

Either by a secret impulse upon his spirit, or by a voice from heaven. And even, as Kimchi observes, the angel, after he ascended, might cause this voice to be heard. Seeing him in great fear, because he knew he was an angel. And which is another proof of this angel being Jehovah himself, the eternal Word.

"Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shall not die": Let not thy mind be ruffled and disturbed, but serene and calm. Fear not that any evil shall befall thee, and particularly death. Thou shall be safe from any danger whatever. And especially from death, which he expected in his flight would immediately follow.

It is a natural thing to fear the LORD. The LORD tells Gideon not to fear, but be at peace. He will not die for seeing the angel of the LORD.

**Judges 6:24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it [is] yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.**

On the top of the rock where he had laid his provisions. And which had been consumed by fire issuing out of it, as a token of divine acceptance. And as an assurance of his destroying the Midianites as easily and quickly as the fire had consumed them. And therefore, had great encouragement to erect an altar here for God.

"And called it Jehovah-shalom": The Lord is peace, the author and giver of peace, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. So Jarchi, "the Lord is our peace". A fit name for the angel that appeared to him, who was no other than the man of peace. Who is our peace, the author of peace between God and man. This name he gave the altar, with respect to the words of comfort said to him in his fright.

"Peace be to thee": And by way of prophecy, that peace would be wrought for Israel by the Lord, and prosperity given them. Or by way of prayer, the Lord grant or send peace.

"Unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites": That is, the altar Gideon built remained to the times of Samuel, the writer of this book. And was then to be seen in the city of Ophrah, which belonged to the family of the Abiezrites, who were of the tribe of Manasseh.

"Jehovah-shalom" means Jehovah sends peace, or the LORD of peace. Most true followers of God make some sort of altar to commemorate their encounter with the LORD. This is no exception.

Verses 25-27: Before striking down the Midianites, Gideon had to strike down the cause of the Midianite oppression: Israel's idol worship. Gideon's own father had an "altar of Baal" with a fertility pole (the grove), next to it, indications of the degraded spiritual condition of Israel. Since the village worshiped at this pagan shrine, it was a political and social center as well as a religious one. Gideon was to use materials from the instruments of idolatry, his "father's young bullock" and the wood from the Asherah pole, to make a sacrifice to God.

**Judges 6:25 "And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that [is] by it:"**

The Midianites had probably reduced the family herd. Or, as Gideon's father was addicted to idolatry, the best may have been fattened for the service of Baal. So that the second was the only remaining one fit for sacrifice to God.

"Throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath": Standing upon his ground, though kept for the common use of the townsmen.

"Cut down the grove that is by it": Dedicated to Ashtaroth. With the aid of ten confidential servants he demolished the one altar and raised on the appointed spot the altar of the Lord. But, for fear of opposition, the work had to be done under cover of night. A violent commotion took place the next day, and vengeance vowed against Gideon as the perpetrator. "Joash, his father, quieted the mob in a manner similar to that of the town clerk of Ephesus. It was not for them to take the matter into their own hands. The one, however, made an appeal to the magistrate; the other to the idolatrous god himself".

For "grove" (see the note on 3:6-7).

It is not clear whether there are two bullocks here or one. That really does not matter. The important thing is that Gideon's father worshipped Baal. For a son to destroy a father's altar, would be a serious offence. Grove worship was associated with the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. God wants this altar destroyed, and asks Gideon to do this the very night they are talking. It is interesting also, that it is the father's bullock to be thrown down the altar of Baal.

**Judges 6:26 "And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down."**

Of which see (Judges 6:20-21). Hebrews: of this strong hold. For in that calamitous time the Israelites retreated to such rocks, and hid and fortified themselves in them.

"In the ordered place": I.e. in a plain and smooth part of the rock, where an altar may be conveniently built. Or, "In order, i.e. in such manner as I have appointed. For God had given rules about the building of altars.

"Offer a burnt-sacrifice": Gideon was no priest, nor was this the appointed place of sacrifice. But God can dispense with his own institutions, though we may not. And his call gave Gideon sufficient authority.

This is perhaps the second bullock mentioned before. At least, a bullock is to be sacrificed on the rock altar where God had given a sign to Gideon. The wood for the altar on the rock was to come from the grove that Gideon tore down near the altar of Baal.

**Judges 6:27 "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and [so] it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do [it] by day, that he did [it] by night."**

"Was ... he feared": Very real human fear and wise precaution interplays with trust in an all-sufficient God.

The Scripture above said do it that very night, and we would assume that is just what he did. The other reason he did it by night was because the LORD told him to. It would be safer to do at night.

Verses 28-32: "Gideon" means "Hacker". After hacking down the altar to Baal, Gideon was given the name "Jerubbaal", which means "Let Baal Conquer". This name would be a reminder of Gideon's victory over Baal because Baal could not conquer Gideon!

**Judges 6:28 "And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that [was] by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar [that was] built."**

And came to the place where the altar of Baal, his grove and image were, to pay their morning devotions to him: And behold;

"The altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it. And the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. Upon the new altar that Gideon built, and which very probably was burning when they came. And it is very likely that the place where the altar of Baal had stood, was not far from the rock where this new altar was erected.

Since they were Baal worshippers, it would have been natural that this would have been found quickly.

**Judges 6:29 "And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing."**

They were struck with amazement, and could not devise who could be as daring and wicked as to do such an action.

"And when they inquired and asked": Of one or another and to everyone that was present. Or everyone they could think of as proper to inquire of; they were very diligent and industrious to find it out. And perhaps they inquired of the family and servants of Joash and Gideon, in whose ground the altar stood.

"They said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing": When they had inquired of everybody they could, there was none appeared to them more likely to have done it, than Gideon. Partly because they knew he was no friend of Baal, and partly because he was a man of spirit and courage. And they concluded none but such a one would have ventured to have done it. And besides, they considered he was the son of Joash, who perhaps was their chief magistrate. And that he might presume on his father's protection, as they might surmise. And being near the premises, he was the most likely person they could think of. And it is not improbable, that upon inquiry they got it out of the servants concerned, or that had knowledge of it from them. Or from some that saw him that morning at the sacrifice or returning from it, and therefore peremptorily assert he was the man that did it.

Someone probably was afraid they would be accused of doing this, and told on Gideon. It had to be one of his ten servants since Gideon had done this secretly, and they had gone with him.

**Judges 6:30 "Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that [was] by it."**

The principal inhabitants of the place met together, and in a body went to Joash their chief magistrate, to have justice done in this case.

"Bring out thy son, that he may die": They do not ask to have the cause tried by him, to hear what proof they had of the fact. Or what Gideon had to say in his own defense. Nor do they wait for the sentence of Joash, but determine it themselves, and require the delinquent to be given up

to them, that they might put him to death. A strange request of Israelites, whose law judged no man before it heard him. And besides, according to that, the worshippers of Baal, and not the destroyers of him, and his altars, were to be put to death. Which shows how strangely mad and infatuated these people were.

"Because he hath cut down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it": They take no notice of the bullock which he had taken and offered, it being his father's property. And which seems to confirm the sense of our version, that there was but one (Judges 6:25). For had the second been a different one, and the people's property, they would have accused him of theft as well as sacrilege respecting that.

Gideon had not only declared Baal a false god by throwing the bullock in the altar, but had actually proclaimed the LORD as God with the offering on the altar of rock. The men of the city wanted to kill Gideon for the defamation of Baal.

**Judges 6:31 "And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst [it is yet] morning: if he [be] a god, let him plead for himself, because [one] hath cast down his altar."**

Against his son. That were his accusers and adversaries, and required him to be given up to them, that they might put him to death.

"Will ye plead for Baal?" What, Israelites, and plead for Baal! Or what need is there for this, cannot he plead for himself? Will ye save him? What, take upon you to save your god! Cannot he save himself? He ought to save both himself and you, if he is a god, and not you save him.

"He that will plead for him, let him be put to death, while it is yet morning": Immediately, before noon, for it was now morning when they came to him. This he said to terrify them, and to express the hatred he now had of idolatry. And the just sense of its being punishable with death by the law of God. This he may be supposed to say, to save his son from their present wrath and fury. Hoping by that time to find out some ways and means for his safety.

"If he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar": If he is a god, he knows who has done it, and is able to avenge himself on him. And put him to death himself that has done it. And therefore leave it with him to plead his own cause, and avenge his own injuries. This he said, deriding the deity. For though Joash had been a worshipper of Baal, yet he might be now convinced by his son of the sinfulness of it. And of the necessity of a reformation, in order to a deliverance from the Midianites. For which he had a commission, and had perhaps informed his father of it. Or however he was not so attached to Baal, but that he preferred the life of his son to the worship of him.

It appears that Gideon's father had decided that Baal was not God at all. If Baal was the true God, he would be able to kill Gideon himself. He would not need Joash or these men to do it for him. God does not need anyone to save Him. God saves people, not the other way around. Joash goes so far as to say, that those who plead for this false god should be put to death. Gideon's bold act has caused his father to find the true God.

**Judges 6:32 "Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar."**

Jerubbaal (literally "let Baal contend") became a fitting and honorable second name for Gideon (7:1; 8:29; 9:1-2). This was a bold rebuke to the non-existent deity, who was utterly unable to respond.

Gideon's name was changed to "Jerubbaal". The name means with whom Baal contends.

**Judges 6:33 "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel."**

The Arabians (Judges 6:3), were gathered together. Not as being alarmed with this fact of Gideon in destroying the altar of Baal, and so came to avenge it. But it was their usual time of gathering together to come into Canaan. Being harvest time, as appears by Gideon being employed in threshing. To fetch away the increase of the earth, as they had done for some years past.

"And went over": The River Jordan, which lay between the Midianites and the Israelites.

"And pitched in the valley of Jezreel": A very large, delightful, and fruitful plain of which (see notes on Hosea 1:5). A very proper place for such a large number to pitch on, and from whence they might receive much. And a suitable place to bring the increase of the land to, from the several parts of it, which was the business they came for. And as this lay on the borders of Issachar and Manasseh, it was not far from Gideon. And this gave him an opportunity of exerting himself, and executing his commission.

The valley of Jezreel is the valley where the battle of Armageddon will someday be fought. There have already been 20 major battles fought in that area. These oppressors of Israel have gathered their armies there.

**Judges 6:34 "But the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him."**

Not the spirit of prophecy, as Maimonides, who calls this spirit the first degree of prophecy. But a spirit of fortitude and courage. As the Targum; the Spirit of God filled him, or, as in the Hebrew text, "clothed" him with zeal, strength, and might. Moved and animated him to engage with this great body of people come into the land. To ravage and waste it, and to attempt the deliverance of Israel from their bondage.

"And he blew a trumpet": As an alarm of war, and as a token to as many as heard to resort to him, and join with him in the common cause against the enemy.

"And Abi-ezer was gathered after him": The Abiezrites, one of the families of the tribe of Manasseh, of which Gideon and his father's house were. And even it is probable the inhabitants of Ophrah, who were Abiezrites, being now convinced of their idolatry. And having entertained

a good opinion of Gideon as a man of valor. And who, in the present emergence, they looked upon as a hopeful instrument of their deliverance, and therefore joined him (see the note on 3:10).

The spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon is just saying that he was empowered with the Spirit of the LORD. The whole family of Abi-ezer, which numbered into the thousands, immediately answered the blowing of the trumpet and came to Gideon.

**Judges 6:35 "And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them."**

Of which tribe he was. Not only had he called by the trumpet that part of the tribe, the Abiezrites who were within the sound of it. But the rest of the tribe at a greater distance from him he sent messengers to. Acquainting them with his design, and inviting them to his assistance. Some think this refers both to the half tribe of Manasseh within Jordan, and the other half tribe on the other side Jordan. But that is not very probable, only the half tribe within it is meant.

"Who also was gathered after him": Obeying the summons and invitation he gave them by the messengers.

"And he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali": Which three tribes lay nearest to him on the north. But he sent not to the inhabitants of the tribe of Ephraim, which lay to the south, and which afterwards occasioned a quarrel (Judges 8:1).

"And they came up to meet them": That is, the inhabitants of the above three tribes, at least many of them. Came up from the places of their habitations to meet Gideon, and those that were associated with him, at their place of rendezvous.

These were the adjacent tribes. Gideon sent them word, and they came too. They wanted to come against their enemies, but they needed a leader. Now they have the leader in Gideon.

Verses 36-40: Gideon knew what God had said, he quoted God twice "save Israel by" Gideon's "hand". Still, he asked for proof. If the Word of God has spoken clearly, you need no further word. There is no higher appeal!

Gideon's two requests for signs in the fleece should be viewed as weak faith; even Gideon recognized this when he said, "Let not thine anger be hot against me" (verse 39), since God had already specially promised His presence and victory (verses 12, 14, 16). But they were also legitimate requests for confirmation of victory against seemingly impossible odds (6:5; 7:2, 12). God nowhere reprimanded Gideon, but was very compassionate in giving what his inadequacy requested. God volunteered a sign to boost Gideon's faith (in 7:10-15). He should have believed God's promise (in 7:9), but needed bolstering, so God graciously gave it without chastisement.

**Judges 6:36 "And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,"**

Not to a prophet of God who was there, of whom he asked the following signs to be done, as Ben Gersom, but to God in prayer, as Abarbanel.

"If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said": Not that he doubted of it, but was willing to have a confirmation of his faith. And perhaps his view was more for the encouragement of those that were with him than himself, that he desired the following signs. And though he had had one before that was to show that he was truly an angel that spoke to him, and not to ascertain the salvation that should be wrought by him. Though that might be concluded from his being an angel that spoke to him, and assured him of it.

Gideon has now a large force to go against the Midianites. He wants to be absolutely sure this is what God wants him to do, before he leads them into battle. Gideon wants to do the will of God, but just wants to be sure what he is about to do, is God's will.

**Judges 6:37 "Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; [and] if the dew be on the fleece only, and [it be] dry upon all the earth [beside], then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said."**

On the floor where he was threshing, where the angel first appeared to him, and which lay exposed to the open air, so that the dew might easily fall upon it.

"And if the dew be on the fleece only": The dew that falls from heaven in the night, when he proposed it should lie on the floor till morning.

"And it be dry upon all the earth beside": Meaning not upon all the world, nor even upon all the land of Israel, but upon all the floor about the fleece.

"Then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said": For the dew being a token of divine favor (see Hosea 14:5). It would show that Gideon would partake of it, while his enemies would be dry and desolate. And ruin and destruction would be their portion.

This is the famous fleece that Gideon lay before the LORD. This is a way of proving to himself, he is in the will of God.

**Judges 6:38 "And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water."**

The Lord condescended to work this miracle for the confirmation of his faith, and for the encouragement of those that were with him. The fleece was wet with the dew of heaven, and all the ground about it dry.

"For he rose up early in the morning": Being eagerly desirous of knowing whether his request would be granted, and how it would be with the fleece.



"And thrust the fleece together": To satisfy himself whether the dew had fallen on it, and there was any moisture in it, which by being squeezed together he would more easily perceive.

"And wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water": So that it appeared it had not only fallen on it, but it had taken in a large quantity of it. The word here used is the same as in (Judges 5:25). The Targum calls it a flagon.

God did exactly as he had asked.

**Judges 6:39 "And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew."**

"Gideon" asks for a still greater miracle, for the "fleece" would more naturally retain a heavy dew. However one views Gideon's fleece, the tender and patient dealings of a gracious "God" are surely to be noted.

**Judges 6:40 "And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."**

The night following, the night being the season in which the dew falls.

"For it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground": And this might signify, that not Gideon only, as before, should partake of the divine favor. But all the Israelites, who would share in the salvation wrought by him. Many interpreters observe, that all this is an emblem of the different case and state of the Jews and Gentiles under the different dispensations. That whereas under the former dispensation the Jews partook of the divine favor only, and of the blessings of grace, and enjoyed the words and ordinances with which they were watered. When the Gentiles all around them were like a barren wilderness. So, under the Gospel dispensation, the Gentiles share the above benefits to a greater degree, while the Jews are entirely destitute of them.

Just in case that was an accident, Gideon asks him for the reverse to happen. God does just as he asks.

### **Judges Chapter 6 Continued Questions**

1. When did Gideon perceive that he was the angel of the LORD?
2. Why was Gideon fearful?
3. What did the LORD say to him?
4. What did Gideon do, to show his recognition of the LORD?

5. What did he name the altar?
6. What does the name mean?
7. What unusual thing did God tell Gideon to do to his father's altar to Baal?
8. What was he to do to the grove by the altar?
9. What was grove worship associated with?
10. Whose bullock was thrown down the altar?
11. Where was he to build an altar to the true God?
12. What was the burnt sacrifice for this altar?
13. What would the sacrifice be burned with?
14. Who did Gideon take with him?
15. Why did he do this by night?
16. What did the men of the city find, when they woke up the next morning?
17. How did they find out that Gideon did this?
18. Who was Gideon's father?
19. What was his answer to the men, who wanted to kill Gideon?
20. What good thing came of this?
21. What did he name Gideon on that day?
22. What does the new name mean?
23. Where did the Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the east gather?
24. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew the trumpet.
25. Who immediately came to Gideon, when he blew the trumpet?
26. Who were the adjacent tribes Gideon sent for?
27. Did they come?
28. What did Gideon ask God to do, to prove he had been called to lead the Israelites in battle?
29. What was the second thing he asked Him to do?

30. Did God do these things?