



Whenever Israel departed from following God, He would allow their enemies to rule over them. If they called on the Lord, He had mercy and sent ones who were called judges to deliver them.

One particular time, the Israelites had been oppressed by the Midianites for seven years. This is what happened. The Israelites would plant their crops, then the Midianites and other people of the land would come in with their animals and tents. There were so many, they were like grasshoppers: they ate and destroyed almost all the Israelites' crops! Israel was left with very little to eat!

The Israelites were so afraid of the Midianites that they would hide in caves and in strongholds in the mountains. They took what little food they could save with them.

Then the Israelites cried to God, and God sent a prophet to them. He reminded them of their disobedience to God. The people turned back to God. Once more, God sent a man to deliver them. This man was Gideon.

One day Gideon was hiding by a winepress, threshing wheat. He did not want the Midianites to see him (was Gideon afraid or wise in hiding?). God sent an angel to him. The angel said, "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." The angel meant that Gideon was a brave man. Was he brave, when he was hiding? God thought he was. He knew Gideon would do what he was told. God was going to call Gideon to do a mighty work.

Gideon replied to the angel, "Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? . . . but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

The Lord said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

Gideon replied, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor . . . and I am the least in my father's house."

God said, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Gideon wanted a sign that this angel was really the Lord's messenger. He asked the angel to wait while he went to prepare an offering of a baby goat, some unleav-

Church of God Sunday School

GIDEON DESTROYS BAAL: THE CALL OF GIDEON

Judges 6:1-35

ened cakes, and some broth. The angel waited. When Gideon returned, the angel told Gideon to put the meat and cakes on a rock and pour the broth out. Gideon did. The angel touched the food with the end of his staff. Fire came out of the rock and burned up the food! Then the angel disappeared!

Gideon realized that he had really seen God's servant. He was scared! The Lord told Gideon not to be afraid; he would not die. Right then, Gideon built an altar to God. He called it *Jehovah-shalom*, meaning "the Lord send peace."

God told Gideon to take his father's young bullock and tear down the altar to Baal that his father had built. God also wanted Gideon to cut down the grove (sacred trees or tree that they worshiped). It was by the altar. Next, Gideon had to build a proper altar to the Lord and offer the young bullock as a sacrifice to the Lord, with the wood of the grove.

Gideon wanted to obey God. He got ten men to help him. That very night Gideon began tearing down the altar of Baal and the grove. When everything had been torn down, Gideon built an altar to the Lord and offered the young bullock on the altar.

In the morning, the men of the city saw that Baal's altar was gone. In its place was the new altar. The men saw that the young bullock had been offered on the altar. They said to one another, "Who hath done this thing?" The men soon found out that Gideon had done it, and they wanted to kill him.

But Gideon's father, Joash, also had seen all that had been done. No doubt, he had done some thinking, like this: if Baal is so powerful, shouldn't he be able to fight for himself? Joash spoke up and said, "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 [Baal] be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar."



Because Gideon had torn down the altar of Baal, Joash changed Gideon's name to Jerubbaal. It means "contender with Baal" or "let Baal plead." In other words, Baal ought to be the one to contend with Gideon for tearing down his altar, if he really was a god. Well, Baal did not fight for himself. He was not the true God.

After that, the Midianites and the Amalakites, with other people from the East, came together to fight the Israelites in the valley of Jezreel.

God's Spirit came upon Gideon, or Jerubbaal. He blew a trumpet, a call for war. Gideon sent for men from the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to come up to him, and they did. He gathered an army of 32,000 men to fight the Midianites and others. Then, Gideon went about getting ready for the battle.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid."

—Isaiah 12:2



Connect the dots to see what animal Gideon prepared as an offering.

A BABY _____



The Angel Speaks to Gideon

QUESTIONS FROM THE STORY



Grasshoppers

The Midianites were so many, they were like _____.



Mountains

The Midianites ate and destroyed the Israelites' _____.



Baal

The Israelites were so afraid that they hid in caves and _____.



Trumpet

Gideon was hiding by a winepress, threshing _____.

The angel told Gideon to put the meat and cakes on a _____.



Bullock

Gideon offered a young _____

as a sacrifice to the Lord.



Wheat

Gideon tore down the altar of _____.



Crops

Gideon blew a _____, a call for war.



Rock