

[Gideon \(The God of Patience Pt. III\)](#)

Posted on [March 12, 2014](#) by [Dan Haley](#)

The book of Judges is a really exciting read. Judges covers an interesting period in Israel's history and their relationship with God, their king. Israel was a self-governing group of tribes and families with elders assigned to keep the peace and organize relief and assistance when needed. The priests tended to the spiritual needs of the people as God had commanded in laws given many decades before. Sounds ideal does it not? As long as Israel remained in good standing with God, everything went well. When Israel fell out of God's favor they were not immediately chastised, in fact God let them go often.

Many will comment or stress their belief that God was overly harsh, uncaring, even that he was a murderer in the Old Testament. They will say that God could not be loving and possibly believe that their must have been a different God in the New Testament. I honestly believe these types of beliefs or statements stem from a complete misunderstanding of the character of God and his dealings with Israel. God's concern and plan was to bless *ALL* the families of the earth *THROUGH* Israel. Israel was to be the picture of God to every other nation. Often I hear that Israel was told to simply run through every other nation and wipe them out yet God instructed Israel to stretch out with the hand of peace and love. Today we cringe and cry out when we hear of the "barbarous" ways other cultures live; stoning, lashing, forced prostitution, slavery, the demeaning of women and children, the poverty, corruption, etc... This was how the world was during the Old Testament times as well; human sacrifice, and war atrocities we could not even come close to imagining, religious practices that would turn our stomachs, and the value of life was often little. God wanted to change all of this! Israel however was bent on being like the rest of the world rather than being an example of peace and love. A God that was harsh and uncaring would have simply destroyed Israel to the last and started over again. Instead he continued to try and win them over. God looked over the world and desired much more for them. Israel was to stand apart from the world, not become like it and even worse than it.

The judges God called up in Israel were not judges in the sense that we think of today. These men and women were *deliverers*. When Israel moved out from God and away from their purpose, God allowed their fall which occurred in various ways usually involving other peoples harassing them or even capturing some. Amazingly, Israel would cry out to God who they left, for help. No need for God until things went south. The deliverer would rise up and gather an army to free Israel or even take matters into their own hands. Once Israel was delivered they would return to God, while the deliverer lived. After the death of the deliverer it was only a matter of time before they fell away again. Eventually Israel demanded a king, other than God, so they could be like everyone else, which God allowed.

Gideon was called to be a deliverer. He would not go immediately or without question though.

Judges 6:11-14 NRSV

(11) Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites.

(12) The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty warrior."

(13) Gideon answered him, "But sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian."

(14) Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you."

Gideon had to beat out the wheat in the wine press so the Midians would not steal his food. The angel of the LORD tells Gideon he is mighty and that the LORD is with him, certainly a compliment given before the task is set. Gideon asks where God is now since Israel is suffering? Why isn't God helping? I wonder at this; Gideon obviously knows of God's mighty acts for his ancestors, but he is not sure why he feels like God had forsaken them now. Gideon has grown up with the teaching of who God is but seems to lack understanding of who Israel is and of their relationship with God. Perhaps Gideon is familiar with some of the law and temple worship but all the other additional worldly forms of worship that he has come to think acceptable do not strike him as something that would distance them from God.

In verse 14 Gideon receives his calling. How does he respond?

Judges 6:15-23 NRSV

(15) He responded, "But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

(16) The LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them."

(17) Then he said to him, "If now I have found favor with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me.

(18) Do not depart from here until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay until you return."

(19) So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them.

(20) The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.

(21) Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

(22) Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the LORD; and Gideon said, "Help me, Lord GOD! For I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."

(23) But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die."

Gideon has immediate doubts! He asks for one sign with which the angel of the LORD complies. At this point Gideon exclaims that he has seen the angel of LORD and may be somewhat embarrassed for doubting as he cries out for help! The LORD gives Gideon peace and instruction. Gideon is to destroy the altar of Baal and the sacred pole, building an altar and sacrifice his fathers bull using the wood from the

pole! Of course the people are incensed and demand blood! These are Israelites by the way, who are worshipping Baal. You can see how far off they are.

The time comes for Gideon to deliver Israel and he is anything but sure that he is the one. Gideon shows a little trust issue with God and asks for another sign.

Judges 6:36-38 NRSV

(36) Then Gideon said to God, "In order to see whether you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said,

(37) I am going to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said."

(38) And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water.

Imagine telling God, "God, I need to know for sure, your word is just not good enough"! Without a word, God performs the sign for Gideon. Now surely Gideon will follow...

Judges 6:39-40 NRSV

(39) Then Gideon said to God, "*Do not let your anger burn against me*, let me speak one more time; let me, please, make trial with the fleece just once more; let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew."

(40) And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

No! Gideon asks again, the same sign. He tells God to hold his anger, have patience with me God, please give another sign, I am weak. Again, without a word, God complies. Gideon believes and goes to war. Now, God comes right back at Gideon! God wants to show Gideon that God is mighty! God tells Gideon his force is too big and from verses 2 through 7 of Judges 7, Gideon's force is reduced from 32,000 to just 300! Gideon remains strong.

Judges 7:9-15 NRSV

(9) That same night the LORD said to him, "Get up, attack the camp; for I have given it into your hand.

(10) But if you fear to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah;

(11) and you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to attack the camp." Then he went down with his servant Purah to the outposts of the armed men that were in the camp.

(12) The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along the valley as thick as locusts; and their camels were without number, countless as the sand on the seashore.

(13) When Gideon arrived, there was a man telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, "I had a dream, and in it a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell; it turned upside down, and the tent collapsed."

(14) And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel; into his hand God has given Midian and all the army."

(15) When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped; and he returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Get up; for the LORD has given the army of Midian into your hand."

God has learned something here, he knows Gideon, with just 300 men, may again be worried that he can not do this. God is right, Gideon is fearful. God gives Gideon the option of either heading to battle, or checking the sign first. That, is patience. God knows Gideon may be fearful still and rather than whacking Gideon upside his head and telling him to move his cowardly, no good self to the front, God acts in kindness and love. God desires Gideon to be at peace with the knowledge that God is with him and victory is his. God is not pushing Gideon into something when fear, a killer, is in Gideon's heart. God gives Gideon an option, no strings attached.

If you continue on your own to study the Old Testament I am positive that you will find a loving, caring, and patient God. You will find an open God who has *feelings*. God desired a relationship with his people so that he could also share with the rest of the world who he is. The other nations knew God was mighty, but they did not see the need to follow by watching God's chosen leave his side time and time again. I will leave this topic for now, check the rest out for yourself and be blessed!