

The Lord sent a prophet who reminded the Israelites that God had brought them from Egypt to the Promised Land. God drove out all of the people before us and turned their land over to us. But we had deserted him and worshiped other gods. Many times, we had deserted him and worshiped foreign gods.

Even so, God decided to give Israel another chance and send another savior to them. Me.

We were secret farmers. Everybody in the community knew we were farmers, but our family farmed in secret. We threshed wheat in the winepress so nobody could see. We hid our oxen in the forest, and only brought them out for short periods of time to plow.

Our family members were also secret believers in God. Everybody else in Israel was worshiping the Baals and the Asherahs of the Amorites and Canaanites. Because the Israelites worshiped false gods, we lost the protection of our God, allowing us to be punished by people of the surrounding lands, especially the Midianites and Amalekites.

The Midianites and Amalekites were wild and vicious. They covered the landscape like a locust invasion. Numerous is an understatement. They ravaged Israel badly, they tried to take everything we had. They so impoverished the Israelites that we finally called out to God for help. That's when he sent me.

Here I am threshing wheat in the winepress so nobody will see me. The angel of the Lord appears out of nowhere. He says to me, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."

I am Gideon, the son of Joash. Mighty warrior? I'm nothing but a poor farmer. Mighty warrior?? Ridiculous. So, because the best defense is a good offense, I say, "If the Lord is with us, why are all these bad things happening to us? Why has the

Lord abandoned us instead of doing miraculous things like he did for our ancestors?”

Instead of backing down or answering my question, he tells me to go in the strength he had given me and for *me* to save Israel from the Midianites. I want to laugh out loud, but say, “I am from the weakest tribe, the weakest clan in the weakest tribe, and I am the weak link in the weakest family of that weak clan.

The angel of the Lord says, “I will be with you. Strike down all the Midianites. Leave none alive.”

Well, if God can do that, he can surely do a much smaller miracle as a sign for me. I make an offering of a young goat and some bread without yeast. I put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. The angel tells me to put the meat and bread on a rock, and pour the broth over them. I do, and he touches them with the tip of the staff in his hand. Boom. Everything is consumed in a fire, and the angel disappears.

Later that night, the Lord tells me to take our family’s bull, the seven-year-old bull, tear down the altar to Baal and the nearby Asherah pole, and build an altar to the Lord. I do just that, and I use the bull as an offering on the altar. I am afraid of what my community might think, so I do all of this at night.

Sure enough, the next morning, the townspeople have a fit. They investigate. They discover I have done the damage to Baal’s altar and pole. They demand my death and that my father turn me over to them. He refuses, and convinces them that if he is a real god, Baal can defend himself.

Then the real trouble starts. The Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples join forces and invade the Jezreel Valley of Israel. This valley is the breadbasket of our country, and the invasion portends disaster.

The Spirit of the Lord comes upon me, I feel it. I blow the trumpet for my people to join me, and I send messengers to three other tribes to join as well. I look at all of the people, and realize, I am a farmer, not a general. I need more reassurance from the Lord.

I ask God to show me a sign that he will indeed save Israel, and he agrees. I place a wool fleece on the floor and ask him to make the fleece wet with dew, but keep the ground dry. The next morning, guess what. It happened exactly. I even squeeze a bowlful of dew from the fleece.

I ask God, not to be angry, but could he please show me just the opposite. Just so I'm completely sure. The next morning, you guessed it. The fleece is dry, but the ground is soaked with dew. I am convinced that God will save Israel.

Now, in modern times, the Spring of Harod is in an Israeli trailer park campground with power outlets, and hot and cold showers. The Spring of Harod is a small ground spring that flows into a pool of cool, refreshing water. The spring was like that in my time, too.

My thirty-two thousand men camp at the Spring of Harod. I try to divert their attention from the hordes of Midianites camped north of us near the hill of Moreh. The Midianite army dwarfs ours in size. So, you can understand why I laugh out loud when God says to me, "You have too many men."

Too many men! Surely God cannot be serious. But he is. He says that Israel will boast that they won through their own strength when they win. I know he is right, so I quit laughing. God tells me to send home all the men who are fearful. Two-thirds of my men walk off, and I kind of wish I was with them. Ten thousand men are left.

"Still too many men," God tells me. "Take them to the water and I will eliminate more." My ten thousand men, ten thousand thirsty men, follow me to the spring. He tells me to keep only those who cup their hands for the water and drink it out of their hands. The ones who stick their heads in the water are eliminated. They are too thirsty to stay vigilant. Three hundred men are left.

I start to protest, but God stops me, he says that is the right number. The others leave their provisions and trumpets and go home. I kind of want to go with them.

During the night, God tells me to take my servant and go spy on the enemy camp. He says that what I hear will be encouraging. The Midianites look like locusts in number, and the smell of their camels is overwhelming. I don't even have to

disguise myself to walk through camp since there are so many types of peoples. I overhear two men talking and move closer to get the details.

One man tells the other that he had a dream in which a loaf of barley bread struck the Midianite camp and overturned it. The other man interprets the dream to mean that God has given the Midianites to Gideon, to me. I know victory is in reach.

I rush back to camp and divide my men into three groups of one hundred. Each man is given a trumpet and a jar with a lit torch inside. I tell them to surround the camp and follow my lead. When I blow my trumpet, you blow your trumpets, break the jars, and shout, "For God and Gideon!"

We surround the camp and do exactly as planned. Trumpets blare, jars crash, torches shine, men shout. The Lord causes so much confusion in the camp that the Midianites kill each other, with the survivors fleeing. I call on volunteers from some of the nearby Israelite tribes, and we chase the Midianites and kill them and their leaders. One hundred and twenty thousand Midianites are dead.

We chase the remaining fifteen thousand, and finally capture them, again, killing their leaders. On the way back, we punish any towns that refused to give us supplies while we chased the Midianites.

Because I led the Lord's forces against Midian, the people of Israel ask me to rule over them, I refuse. However, I do ask that each one give me a gold earring taken from the plunder of the Midianites. I take the huge amount of gold and stupidly make an ephod, which I place in my hometown of Ophrah. The Israelites begin to worship the ephod, and it becomes a spiritual trap for me and my family.

The land of Israel has peace for forty years. As soon as I die, the Israelites go back to worshipping false gods. All of my good work is for nothing. The Israelites will not be faithful to God, no matter how faithful he is to them. Once again, they are in need of a savior.