

The Testament Spectator

SPECIAL GIDEONIC EDITION

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Scriptural Stories Published in Newspaper

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The Lord punishes Israelites for disobeying Him; Deliverance sought

Enemy moves like swarms of hungry grasshoppers; They engulf vegetation

For seven consecutive years, living conditions were very bleak for the Israelites.

The marauding Midianites, the ravenous Amalekites and their Eastern allies robbed and plundered God's chosen people, once liberated from Egyptian bondage by the hand of the Lord God Almighty through His Servant's Moses, Aaron (the Israelites' spokesman) and Joshua son of Nun.

Crops were planted but the enemy, moving rapidly like swarms of hungry grasshoppers, engulfed the vegetation. As a result, it was difficult to breed because livestock feed was scarce. The pillagers routinely rustled the Israelites' sheep, cattle and donkeys.

To prevent looters from stealing their crops, the Israelites retreated in mountainous caves. These cavernous caves, capable of holding up to 4,000 people, were converted to living quarters. Lookouts were posted to warn settlers when a raiding party attacked.

Yet these survival and defensive measures did not alleviate matters. Because the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, the once proud people had been reduced to live like fearful rats in dark caves. The Israelites cried out to the Lord God Almighty for help.

"This must have been our reward for

doing evil in His sight," lamented one farmer about their starvation, impoverishment and bleak conditions.

He was correct. Much to the displeasure of the Lord God Almighty, the Israelites disobeyed His First Commandment (making other gods before Him) and Second Commandment (fashioning no graven images) when they pruned the tree branches and converted them to Asherah poles.

"The Lord warned us that if we followed other gods and refused to obey His commandments, He would punish us. This is our fault. Would He ever forgive us?" — an Israelite farmer

Resembling a totem pole and built next to the idol Baal, these Asherah poles, which appear everywhere, symbolizes an ancient Semetic fertility goddess.

"The Lord warned us that if we followed other gods and refused to obey His commandments, He would punish us," said another farmer, resigned to their dire predicament. "This is our fault. Would He ever forgive us?"

The question whether forgiveness from the Lord would ever come is what the people discussed among each other, that's when they had the time. Hacking out a decent living, feeding themselves and taking care of their young between the many raids was indeed time consuming and laborious. There wasn't much time to bemoan about current events nor yearn to be delivered by an Israelite hero.

Hearing the cry of His people moved the heart of the Lord God Almighty with compassion and mercy. Like a clarion in the silent night, a Prophet was sent to speak for Him. No one knew the Prophet's name, but this man spoke to the Israelites with such Godly authority.

"I bought you out of the land of slavery," the Lord God of Israel spoke through His Prophet, chastising their

wrongdoings and reminding them of their failure to keep His covenant.

"I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of Amorites, in whose land you live,'" the Prophet said.

But the Israelites became influenced by their surroundings. They did not listen to the Lord and consequently, this was their punishment. Some suspected that deliverance was just at hand, but who would lead them and when would deliverance come?

Shortly thereafter, the Lord sent His Angel to Gideon, a timid, careful farmer. This Angelic visit to the son of Joash would set the wheels in motion for God to deliver Israel from all her enemies.

Angel commissions farmer to deliver Israel

Divine encounter with Angel convinces Gideon that he is indeed a 'Mighty Warrior'

A careful and timid farmer claimed to have received his commission to lead the Israelites against her enemies from a divine encounter.

"The Angel of the Lord addressed me as 'Mighty Warrior,'" said a man named Gideon, son of Joash of the Abiezerite clan from the tribe of Manasseh. "No one ever called me that before."

Although Gideon was very skeptical about his Angelic visitor, he still felt it would be prudent for him to be respectful.

"But sir, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us," asked Gideon.

Gideon noted that he and his people were forced to thresh in the winepress rather than out in the open, because separating the grain from straw in the winepress was done to prevent the enemies from stealing it.

For a moment the mesmerized Gideon, standing before this towering, imposing yet magnificent Angel of the Lord, told The Testament Spectator that

his mind reflected on the rich history of his people.

As a boy, the elders told him about the Lord God Almighty using the great Moses, the Servant of the Lord, to inflict ten plagues on the Egyptians — thus winning their release after 430 years of slavery.

As a youth, Gideon could recount to the younger ones how God divided the Red Sea, created a dry pathway so the

and put us into the hand of Midian," Gideon said.

Gideon felt the Angel of the Lord seemed to be impressed with his initial confidence.

"Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand," the Angel told him.

But then Gideon hesitated. The bewildered, perplexed look on his face prompted the Angel of the Lord to ask:

"I will be with you [Gideon], and you will strike down all the Midianites together" — The Angel of the Lord

Israelites could cross, and drowned the pursuing Egyptians.

Gideon recalled from the stories of old about the Lord God Almighty providing food, water, protection while the people wandered 40 years in the wilderness.

As a young man, Gideon said he could recount sections of the Mosaic Law.

"Where are these wonders now that our fathers told us about when they said, Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt," asked Gideon, angered at the Midianites, Amalekites and their Eastern allies for marauding, ravaging and pillaging their land, crops and livestock.

"But now the Lord has abandoned us

"Am I not sending you?"

But the "Mighty Warrior" again reverted back to how he and everyone else viewed himself — that of a careful and timid farmer.

The Angel of the Lord had seen this human reaction before. Called ones denying their calling was nothing new to Him.

When the Lord spoke to Moses from the burning bush so many years ago, "the Servant of the Lord" said that he too was unfit to lead, feared the people, claimed he couldn't talk and requested that another be sent in his place.

History was repeating itself. Just like

when the Angel of the Lord spoke to Moses, Gideon now made his fair share of lame excuses.

"But Lord," Gideon asked Him, attempting to negate the Lord's commission. "How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my family."

But the Angel of the Lord refused to accept the fear of a careful and timid farmer, just like He refused to accept Moses' excuses. He still saw standing before him a "Mighty Warrior."

"I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together," the Angel said to Gideon, attempting to bolster his waning confidence.

Gideon still just wasn't sure. "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me," he said to the Angel of the Lord.

"Please, please," said Gideon, not wanting to be inhospitable. "Do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you."

Although victuals were scarce, Gideon wanted to give the best to the Angel of the Lord. He found some fresh unleavened bread, heated some broth, got some meat and quickly returned.

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Farmer...

(Continued from Page 1, Column 4)

The Angel of the Lord told Gideon to take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on a rock and pour out the broth. He quickly obeyed.

When the Angel of the Lord touched the meat and unleavened bread with his staff, fire ignited from the rock. Suddenly, He disappeared without a trace.

Gideon quickly bowed his knees in fear, and said: "Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the Angel of the Lord face-to-face."

"Peace! Do not be afraid," the voice of the Lord assured him. "You are not going to die."

Considering this an omen to lead the Israelites against her enemies, Gideon built an altar on that spot and ironically, the "Mighty Warrior" called the site, "Jehovah-Shalom," meaning the Lord is Peace.

Little did Gideon know that from that divine encounter, he would very soon be inspired to attack Israel's enemy with a band of only 300-men.

Rather than wielding swords, throwing spears and defending themselves with shields, these men would blow trumpets, beat pitchers with lamps inside them as a tactic to scare a vastly superior force, numbered at 150,000!

Gideon sets religious example

Uncompromising moral leadership needed, says Priest

Earning the respect and garnering attention of the Israelites required that Gideon set a religious example, so says a Levitical Priest who found it impossible to enforce the Mosaic Law among the people because they worshipped idols.

"To be an effective military commander and a legitimate moral leader in Israel, Gideon had to set the example that he and his family were going to obey the first two commandments given to Moses, the Servant of the Lord," said the Levitical Priest familiar with the intricacies of Mosaic Law and Israel's religious rituals.

"The Lord God Almighty commanded that we were not to have any other gods before Him nor fashion or erect any graven images," the Priest added, reminding *The Testament Spectator* of Moses' First and Second Commandments, respectively.

"Even though Gideon risked being turned over to the Midians or killed by his own people for cutting down the Asherah pole and tearing down his Father's altar to Baal beside it, he still had to obey God," the Priest said.

As of presstime, *The Testament Spectator* couldn't ascertain whether Gideon consulted the Levitical Priest for religious counsel and advice. However, sources close to Gideon and his family suspected the cleric might have been involved. All Gideon said was that the Lord God Almighty told him to cut down the fertility shrine and after destroying the Baal altar, sacrifice a seven-year-old bull from his father's herd.

"The Lord God Almighty told me to build a proper kind of altar to Him this height," said Gideon, pointing to where his father's Asherah pole once stood. "And use the wood of the Asherah pole that I cut down to ignite the bull for a burnt offering."

To prevent attracting attention, Gideon and ten servants accomplished the mission at night. When the men of the town arose the next morning and saw what Gideon and his ten servants had done in the cover of darkness, they launched an investigation.

"Who did this," they asked one another. After it was revealed who the culprit was, they sought for Gideon's arrest at his father's house.

"Bring out your son," commanded the men to Gideon's father. "He must be executed at once because he has broken down Baal's altar and chopped down the

Asherah pole," they said of the pruned tree which looked like a totem pole.

"Are you going to plead Baal's cause," retorted Joash. The quick defense of his son suggested that fashioning the Asherah pole and altar was not done for religious reasons, but to appease the Israelites who acquiesced to worshipping idols and protect themselves from enemy reprisals.

"Why are you trying to save Baal," Joash asked again. Gideon's father said that whoever raised a hand against his son would not be alive to eat lunch. "If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar."

The men of the town departed from Joash's house after he protected Gideon and defended his bold, defiant act.

"Such uncompromising spiritual and moral leadership is what the Israelites needed," commented the Levitical Priest, elated that Gideon made a stand and relieved his father Joash backed him up.

"Perhaps in my lifetime I will witness the liberation and total freedom of my people from these infidels," the Levitical Priest added.

"It is my emphatic religious opinion that our dire predicament can be attributed to Israel whoring after other gods," he said.

'Mighty Warrior' Gideon fleeces God's call to arms

Asks the Lord to 'not be angry with me'

Still vacillating between the "Mighty Warrior" and the timid farmer, Gideon just needed another sign.

The Angel of the Lord consuming the food he'd prepared with fire and then suddenly disappearing still wasn't enough for Gideon to be assured that he was commissioned to lead the Israelites against her enemies.

Even though he felt the Spirit of the Lord fall on him, maybe summoning his Abiezrite clan to battle and sending messengers to mobilize men from his tribe of Manasseh and the three tribes of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali still could have been a mistake.

He didn't want to make anyone angry by sending them all back. He surely didn't want to get any of the 32,000 men who responded to his call to arms killed. He didn't want to upset the Lord — particularly for disobeying Him. Gideon was in a quandary.

"Could the Lord indulge him just a little and allow me to see yet another sign," Gideon asked the Lord audibly.

Gideon wrapped his fleece more tightly around his body to keep himself warm, moved away from the fire then an idea hit him.

"If You will save Israel by my hand as You have promised, look I will place this wool fleece on the threshing floor," Gideon told the Lord, holding his fleece toward the cool night sky.

"If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You said," Gideon recalled telling God.

Gideon laid the fleece on the threshing floor. The chance of dew saturating the fleece and not the ground was pretty slim, he reasoned.

Awaking early the next day, Gideon couldn't wait to go to the threshing floor. He ran to see if what he requested from the Lord had actually happened. Gideon shouldn't have been surprised for his answered prayer. The fleece was heavy with moisture — just like a sponge. There was so much dew on the fleece that Gideon was able to wring out a whole bowlful of water.

A sense of assurance enveloped him.

Then Gideon wondered: What if that experiment was just a fluke. He decided to ask the Lord to reverse the process.

"Do not be angry with me," Gideon pleaded. "Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew."

The Lord did what Gideon asked. The following morning, Gideon again ran to the threshing floor. As requested he found that the fleece was dry and the ground was saturated with dew.

Feeling confident again, Gideon decided to face his 32,000-man army early next morning. Although he was happy with who responded to his call to fight, Gideon felt that a little more men would still have been helpful.

Unusual recruiting method employed

300 men was all that was needed to save Israel from Midianites

The 300 men in Gideon's army were not selected by their military prowess but whether they drank water like a dog.

At the time, Gideon's recruiting method seemed rather unorthodox, especially since it would have been wise not to eliminate anyone because they were to face a vastly superior force, estimated to number at 150,000 men. But Gideon said he was just obeying God.

When the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, he summoned his Abiezrite clan to follow him into battle. He also sent messengers to mobilize men from his tribe of Manasseh and the three tribes of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali.

Gideon's forces amassed on Mount Gilead at Harod Springs, which was north of the camp of Midian, who were in turn mobilized in the Jezreel Valley

to fight the Israelites.

The following morning, the Lord God Almighty said that the 32,000 men who responded to Gideon's trumpet to fight the Midianites, Amalekites and their Easter allies were just too many.

"In order that Israel may not boast against Me that her own strength has

'In order that Israel may not boast against Me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people anyone who trembles with fear may leave' — The Lord God Almighty

saved her, announce now to the people 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead,'" the Lord instructed Gideon to tell them.

Even though 22,000 recruits left — confessing fear about the impending military campaign — the Lord wanted a smaller force than the 10,000 who remained, Gideon confirmed with *The Testament Spectator*.

"Take them down to the water and I will sift them for you there," the Lord

God instructed him. "If I say: 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go. But if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

Gideon said the Lord told him to separate the men who lapped the water with their tongues versus the men who knelt down and drank like a dog.

Perhaps He wanted those who were alert enough to drink water using their hands in the special 300-man army, and exclude the majority of the men, who by drinking like a dog, could not be in a position to fight because they paid attention on satisfying their thirst.

"With the 300 men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands," the Lord God said to Gideon.

"Let all the other men go, each to his

own place," He told the "Mighty Warrior."

Gideon saw fear in the eyes among some of the 22,000 men who initially left and concern in the faces of the 9,700 others who were subsequently released from military service. Yet he was still a little bit befuddled by the Lord God's unorthodox de-selection process, because he needed everyone.

Gideon felt a little concerned. After the majority of men departed, he surveyed the camp and noticed how quiet it was than it was before, when so many had responded to his call to fight. A timid, careful farmer leading so few against so many — the odds were against them. What a paltry force, Gideon thought, but the Lord promised victory.

As the 300 men made themselves comfortable, Gideon could see in their eyes a fire that he did not notice in the eyes of the others. He was beginning to feel that things would work out after all, but prior to the battle, he just wasn't sure.

Dream confirms victory

The Lord assures Gideon will be victorious

Dreams do come true, that's what Gideon son of Joash told his men prior to facing the 150,000 man army.

The Lord God Almighty knew that the careful and cautious Gideon needed to be reassured about the ensuing battle, especially since the "Mighty Warrior" would be fighting an unconventional war against a vastly superior force.

Ordering Gideon to arise and attack the camp, the Lord decided to provide

'Go down to the camp and listen to what they are saying' — the Lord God Almighty

Israel's "Mighty Warrior" with another sign.

"I am going to give it [the victory] into your hands," the Lord God assured him. "But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying."

This was answered prayer, Gideon thought. The son of Joash really had to be certain if he was truly hearing from God, especially since his force had been reduced from 32,000 men to 301 — including himself.

Gideon and his trusted servant Purah quietly descended Moreh Hill, where the small Israelite contingent was encamped. Below they could see the enemy campfires brightly flickering in the still darkness.

Gideon was angry at the sight of seeing so many of the Midianites, Amalekites and their Eastern allies.

They swarmed into the Jezreel Valley like grasshoppers, invaded their land and molested his people. He was angry at

this, but Gideon couldn't let his anger get the best of him — especially not now. A mistake would be costly and Gideon knew that he was taking a chance of detection.

Capture could mean torture and/or immediate death. The son of Joash was fearful about that uncomfortable thought. But more than that, Gideon was fearful about the prospect of his people continually living in fear and bondage.

When the two reached the camps' perimeter, they saw the silhouette of two men seated in a tent talking.

Initially Gideon and Purah only heard

voices, so they beckoned to one another that they needed to get just a little closer to hear what the two men were talking about.

"I had a dream," one man in the tent was telling the other just at the time Gideon and Purah were outside eavesdropping.

"A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed," he explained.

There was a slight pause. Looking at each other, Gideon and Purah waited for the other man's response with great anticipation.

"This can be nothing more than the sword of Gideon, son of Joash, the Israelite," his friend declared, interpreting the dream. "God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands."

Gideon didn't realize that he had made a name for himself and the enemy

was afraid of him.

After hearing the dream and interpretation, Gideon immediately worshipped God right there on the outskirts of the enemy camp. They just couldn't believe what they were hearing. He was a little amused at the metaphor of a loaf of bread rolling down the hill. Everyone knew that barley was less valuable than wheat.

Perhaps this reference to an inferior grain symbolized that his enemy knew that Gideon's force was small.

Gideon said he was finally and completely reassured that victory was at hand, because even though his enemy knew Gideon had insufficient numbers, they were still afraid.

It was hard for the duo to contain their excitement. Gideon and Purah walked just as carefully and quietly as before so as to not alert the enemy and expose themselves.

All along, Gideon reflected what he thought while making the trek up Moreh Hill, it was he who feared the enemy.

He thanked the Lord for giving him the reassurance that the enemy actually feared him.

Meanwhile atop Moreh Hill, the 299 Israelite men (excluding Gideon and his servant Purah) weren't even anxious about the ensuing battle.

They had been asleep in the camp — just snoring away. One of the sentries was suddenly awakened from sleep when the two men emerged out of the darkness.

"Get up," Gideon said to his men, as they rubbed their eyes and stretched from their sleep. "The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands," Gideon said, a victory which was confirmed by the dream of the enemy.

Noisy assault routs enemy

Trumpets, smashed jars, and torches scare troops

A small noisy band of 300 Israelites descended from Moreh Hill, awoke the Midianites, Amalekites plus their Eastern allies and caused them to slay one another in battle.

"A sword for the Lord and for Gideon," shouted the small force.

Divided into three 100-men companies, the men blew trumpets, smashed jars and held torches to illuminate their noisy assault.

It was a miraculous victory. Unconventional weaponry and an inexplicable force caused the enemy — encamped in Jezreel Valley — to cry out aloud and hastily retreat in fear.

The men were under the command of Gideon, a farmer who quickly rose to prominence when he cut down an Asherah pole and tore down his father's altar to Baal beside it. Gideon then boldly built another altar to the Lord God Almighty as a sign to repudiate the Midianites' religion.

Gideon, who is the son of Joash from the Abiezrite clan of the tribe of Manasseh, must have known what he was doing when he commanded the members of his small special force not to wield their swords, throw their spears nor defend themselves with shields.

Frightening the enemy — which numbered 150,000 men — required Gideon's faith and God's supernatural intervention.

"After Gideon divided us into three companies, he ordered us to watch him closely and take his lead," an unidentified soldier, resting from pursuing the fearful retreating enemy, told *The Testament Spectator*.

"He said that when we approached the edge of the camp, we were to blow our trumpets, brake the jars and grasp the torches in our left hand and hold in our right hand, the rams' horns," the soldier explained. "We were then to hold our position and shout: 'A sword for the Lord and for Gideon.' We followed his precise instructions."

When the 300 soldiers did what they were commanded, the Lord honored His promise to Gideon that the marauding Midianites and their allies would be defeated. Somehow God caused the men throughout the enemy camp to cry in fear and slay each other.

"We didn't even need our weapons," another soldier said in amazement. "It was the most strangest thing I've ever witnessed. The Lord God Almighty caused the enemies to do the work for us. They became so afraid, they killed themselves."

Israelites from the tribes of Naphthali, Asher, Manasseh and men from Ephraim pursued the retreating enemy throughout the Jordan Valley to Beth-Sittah, and as far away as the border of Abel-Meholah.

Midianite Princes Oreb and Zeeb were eventually captured and executed by men of the tribe of Ephraim.

Ephraimites feels spurned by the 'Mighty Warrior' Gideon

Accused of hoarding glory

The Ephraimites accused Gideon of not calling them to fight when the "Mighty Warrior" mobilized his army.

"Why have you treated us like this," the Ephraimites asked Gideon son of Joash. "Why didn't you call us when you went to fight Midian," they wondered.

The Ephraimites sharply accused Gideon of ignoring them, chastising him as a Manassehite who sought glory for himself and his tribe rather than fighting for the nation of Israel.

They were all Israelites in this pivotal battle together, Gideon told them.

Apparently the Ephraimites, unaware that the Lord God Almighty told Gideon to dismiss most of the men from the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphthali, thought they were missing out on the glory of battle and the fruits of victory.

Gideon was a little miffed at this petty tribalism. Their competitive mindset was precisely what the Lord God warned Gideon about.

"In order that Israel may not boast against Me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilad,'" Gideon recalled the Lord telling him.

At the time Gideon didn't understand why the Lord told him to release the men who confessed fear about the impending military campaign. About 22,000 recruits left, which amounted to nearly two-thirds of his army!

He also didn't understand why the Lord had him retain the men who knelt down and drank water like a dog and release the men who lapped water with their tongues.

In lieu of the Ephraimites' criticism, Gideon understood why a smaller, more

'Why have you treated us like this' — the Ephraimites

manageable force — a military unit whose members put Israel above the interests of their respective tribe — was selected.

Here Gideon and his 300 men were still in the midst of one of the greatest battles and victories since the days of Joshua son of Nun, and all the Ephraimites could think about was that their tribal name wouldn't be mentioned when this miraculous tale was retold to young Israelite children sitting around future campfires!

If the Ephraimites were so willing to fight, Gideon would have gladly followed their lead. Apparently the only

"Mighty Warrior" the Lord God saw in Israel was in the Abiezrite clan of the tribe of Manasseh!

Gideon recalled the altar he built when the Angel of the Lord, after telling him not to be afraid, invoked "peace" on him.

He called the site "Jehovah-Shalom," meaning the Lord is Peace. The "Mighty Warrior" Gideon had to employ that same sense of peace in this sticky situation.

"What have I accomplished compared to you," Gideon responded to their criticism, pacifying the Ephraimites.

"Aren't the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer," said Gideon, diminishing the clout of his clan.

Gideon reminded the Ephraimites that the Lord God Almighty gave Midianite Princes Oreb and Zeeb into their hands.

It was they, not him or anyone from his 300-man force heroically called "Gideon's Raiders," who had the pleasure of executing the Midianite Princes. "What was I able to do compared to you," Gideon asked artfully.

Because of Gideon's placation, the anger and resentment the Ephraimites harbored toward him quickly subsided and they were able to resume pursuing the retreating enemy.

'Gideon's Raiders' pursue Midianites; Relief asked but rejected by neighbors

More than 135,000 troops die in daring raid, 15,000 retreat

Fatigued from their nighttime assault and daylight rout of the enemy, "Gideon's Raiders" pursued the remaining Midianites across the Jordan River.

Gideon's band of 300 Israelites — known as "Gideon's Raiders" for their fearless, relentless pursuit — arrived at Succoth tired, hungry and thirsty.

"Give my troops some bread," requested Gideon, formally introducing himself as the son of Joash from the Abiezrite clan of Israelite's tribe of Manasseh.

"They are worn out, and I am still

pursuing Midianite Kings Zebah and Zalmunna," he explained to the 77 Princes and Elders of Succoth.

The officials of Succoth didn't want to get involved in this skirmish. Anyway, they favored the two Midianite Kings

Gideon became angered at their inhospitality and gave them a warning. "Just for that," Gideon said sternly, putting them on notice, "when the Lord God Almighty has given Midianite Kings Zebah and Zalmunna into my

and his "Raiders" came to Peniel, they again requested food and water. The men of Peniel also refused to provide "Gideon's Raiders" with provisions.

"When I return in triumph," Gideon predicted to the men of Peniel, "I will tear down this tower," he said, pointing to the structure which had been a pride of their community.

"Gideon's Raiders" pursued the enemy east of Nobah and Jogbehah. They ambushed the enemy and routed the entire army. Midianite Kings Zebah and Zalmunna fled, but they were eventually captured and executed.

As he promised, Gideon retaliated against the 77 Princes and Elders of Succoth and the men of Peniel for their taunts, sarcasm and inhospitality.

"Why should we give bread to your troops?" — the Princes and Elders of Succoth

over the Israelites.

Taunting Gideon, the Succoth officials responded to Israel's "Mighty Warrior" quite sarcastically.

"Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession," the Princes and Elders of Succoth said. "Why should we give bread to your troops?"

hand, I will flog you with desert thorns and briars."

"Gideon's Raiders" departed. It seemed that either the inhospitality of the Princes and Elders of Succoth fueled their resolve or they were strengthened by the Lord God Almighty.

They pursued Midianite Kings Zebah and Zalmunna even further. After Gideon

'Mighty Warrior' refuses Israel's Kingship

Not lured by prospect of Gideonic Dynasty

Impressed with Gideon's leadership abilities, the men of Israel offered to crown the "Mighty Warrior" as Israel's first King.

"Rule over us because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian," they asked Gideon, son of Joash of the Abiezrite clan from the tribe of Manasseh.

The coronation offer was made after Gideon and his 300 men routed Midianite Kings Zebah and Zalmunna's 150,000-man army.

Not only did the men of Israel want to coronate Gideon, they also wanted

Gideon's firstborn son (Jether) and grandson to rule in succession after the "Mighty Warrior's" death. A Gideonic Dynasty might have lured some, but not humble Gideon.

Perhaps some men would have seized the opportunity of ruling the 12 tribes of Israel. Gideon didn't want that kind of responsibility. He recalled all too well that one of the tribes (the Ephraimites) falsely accused him for ignoring them when the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali were initially mobilized to fight the enemy.

He artfully dealt with that situation without causing an intertribal feud during the battle against the Midianites, Amalekites and their Easter allies.

As an Israelite King, Gideon knew he would have to deal with these kind of sticky situations again. He just wasn't cut out for that. The Lord God Almighty called him to be "Mighty Warrior" not a "Mighty King."

Gideon acknowledged that he was a little bit humbled by the men of Israel's request. Uncomfortable about he and his family being put upon a pedestal, Gideon credited the Lord God Almighty for one of the greatest battles and victories since the days of Moses, the Servant of the Lord and Joshua son of Nun.

"I will not rule over you, nor will my son [Jether] rule over you," Gideon responded to the men of Israel. "The Lord God Almighty will rule over you."

Gideon may not have wanted to become King nor his son and grandson to rule Israel after him, but the "Mighty Warrior" did have a fondness for something else.

"I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder," asked Gideon, reasoning that this would compensate him sufficiently for his military service to Israel.

Gideon didn't know that this simple request would soon cause the Israelites again to disobey the Lord. "We'll be glad to give them," the men of Israel said.

Gideon Dies

"Mighty Warrior" Gideon, whose 300 "Raiders" attacked 150,000 of Israel's enemies 40 years before, died at a good old age.

Gideon is credited for leading the "Gideon's Raiders" — so named for their fearless, relentless pursuit tactics — against the Midianites, Amalekites and their Easter allies.

Gideon, who hailed from the Israelite tribe of Manasseh, was a farmer by trade. A religious reformer who abhorred idol worship, Gideon credited the Lord God Almighty for calling him to deliver his people.

Buried in the tomb of his Father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites, Gideon had many wives and concubines.

He is survived by Jether, his firstborn son; Abimelech, another son; and 68 other sons, plus an incalculable number of daughters, grandchildren, great grandchildren and other relatives.

This special Gideonic Edition of *The Testament Spectator* recounted relived and reported the glory days of Gideon's exploits.

Gideon's ephod ensnares Israelites; People worship Priestly garment

Holy vest is tailored and enshrined at Ophrah

As time progressed, the Israelites again worshipped an idol, and it became the ephod which Gideon fashioned from the riches he accepted as a reward for his country's stupendous victory.

"Mighty Warrior" Gideon requested that each man give him an earring and they, grateful of not being pillaged any more by the Midianites, Amalekites and the Eastern allies, gladly complied with his request.

A garment was laid on the ground and the men tossed a ring from their plunder on it. About 1,700 shekels (amounting to \$16,000) was collected. Gideon's accountant revealed.

This amount did not include the ornaments, pendants or chains worn

around the camels' necks.

Nor did the amount include the expensive purple garments which graced Midianite Kings Zebah and Zalmunna before their capture and execution.

Although Gideon became a wealthy man, he still did not forget the Lord God Almighty.

To replace the ephod worn by the Levitical High Priest, Gideon tailored another one from the gold he collected.

He wanted to restore the true worship of the Lord God Almighty and the ephod would be a symbol of establishing the Mosaic laws and Levitical rituals, he reasoned.

Gideon fashioned the ephod and displayed the priestly garment in his hometown of Ophrah.

Patterned from the previous ephod, the apron-like cape was embroidered in

bands of gold, purple, scarlet and blue.

The priestly garment had two shoulder straps, ornamental attachments for securing the breastplate with a waistband.

Gideon had hoped that when the people of Israel saw the purse inset of the ephod displaying the 12 precious stones which represented the 12 tribes of Israel, it would remind them of the Lord God Almighty.

Without a High Priest qualified to wear the garment — a man conversant with the intricacies of Mosaic Law and Israel's religious rituals — the beautiful ephod unfortunately became an object of worship.

Ironically "Mighty Warrior" Gideon, a man dedicated to not making other gods nor fashioning graven images, ensnared Israel.

Editor's Note: *The Testament Spectator*, a newspaper which reports in a contemporary manner the characters, events and issues appearing in THE HOLY BIBLE, is intended to inform, educate and edify its readers. The events reported and sources quoted in this Special Gideonic Edition of *The Testament Spectator* are scriptural passages or notes taken from *Dake's Annotated Reference King James Bible* and scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission by Zondervan Bible Publishers. This edition, which also contains events from the book of Judges Chapter's 6 through 8, has been journalistically paraphrased to achieve contemporary readability and clarity. In some cases, the Editor/Publisher has fictionalized some events, sources and their quotes to enhance stories covered in *The Testament Spectator*. For further information, contact Ronald Owens Jr., Editor/Publisher, *The Testament Spectator*, P.O. Box 2102, Rancho Cordova, CA 95741, at (916) 366-9576. Send e-mail queries to: rottestspec@aol.com