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**St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church,
Heliopolis, Cairo - Egypt**

*Contemplations on
Gideon's Life*

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His Holiness Pope Shenouda the 3rd

Pope of Alexandria

& Patriarch of St. Mark's Diocese

***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,
teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and
hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your
hearts to the Lord”
(Colossians 3:16)***

With God’s grace, we introduce studies in the Bible, the Old and New Testament. These studies were first presented as sermons and topics for discussion during spiritual days. These are mostly contemplations whereby the word of the Bible can be applied to our daily lives.

With the prayers of His Holiness Pope Shenouda the 3rd, the teacher of generations, we wish this book will be a nourishing meal of God’s living word.

May God reward all those who exert themselves on his behalf. We hope the reader would remember us in his/her prayers.

Praise and honour to our God, the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever Amen.

Father Daoud Lamie

Introduction

A Glimpse of the Old Testament

The Book of Judges follows immediately after Joshua. It is preceded by six books in the Old Testament, Moses Torah “Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy” and the book of Joshua.

The first five books of the Holy Bible (Moses Torah) give an account of the story of God’s people from Adam’s creation till Moses and the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

Moses almost reached Canaan but he did not enter it. He was succeeded by Joshua who is considered the first Judge. The word judge simply means “leader” or “ruler”. The book of Judges is the book of the rulers, who governed the Jewish nation for about 400 years. We may refer to them as “Saviours”, which is the plural of the word “Saviour”. They were so called because each of these judges appeared during one of the predicaments of the nation. They played

the role of the nation's rescuers from its enemies and solving the problem of their predicament. The judges looked up to the prophet Moses as their ideal figure as he was their first saviour and ruler. Moses was succeeded by his disciple Joshua, son of Nun. After Joshua, other judges followed. At that time, there was no king and no kingdom; this system of government was known as theocracy, which means that the Jewish nation was not governed by an earthly king but by God Himself. The judge, therefore was just a representative or saviour sent by God to guide the people and save them during a set period of time.

The prophet Samuel was the last of the judges, and during his rule, the people requested a king like other nations. ***“Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Sam 8:5).***

Thus a period of kings succeeded that of the judges.

In short, the Torah was written in 1500 BC. It started with Adam to the prophet Moses, who received the commandments and guided the Jewish people to the gates of Canaan (Palastine at present).

This period was followed by Joshua, who managed to rehabilitate the nation. Then the period of judges or rulers or saviours followed and their rule lasted less than 400 years. This period ends with prophet Samuel, who was a prophet and a judge at the same time and who was requested by the nation to appoint a king.

God told Samuel that this nation did not reject him but they rejected God by requesting an earthly king because God is The king ***“And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.” (1 Sam 8:7)***

God nominated Saul as king, he was tall and heavily built so the people admired him. ***“And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel ...” (1 Sam 9:2)***

But when Saul deviated from the right path, God said let me choose a king according to my heart. He chose David as king and David was succeeded by Solomon after whom the kingdom was divided into a Northern and Southern kingdom.

The book of Judges marks the repetition of the same story: the story of stubborn people, who obey God for a time but soon deviate from the right path and return to the worshipping of idols, so God abandon them to their stubbornness. Then people of Palestine, or any people from the surrounding area, come and subject them to slavery and sometimes humiliate them. It is then that they remember God and scream for rescue, so God send them a saviour. This story is repeated 10 times in the book of Judges. Thus we can summarise this book into 4 words:

(Sloth - Sin (deviation from God) - Punishment (slavery) - Repentance or salvation).

The repetition of this story reveals the stubbornness of the Jewish people since the rise of the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ glory be unto Him, described them as the killers of prophets and said that He endured them for a long time.

“Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.” (Matthew 23:31)

“How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing..!” (Matthew 23:37)

Gideon's story - which is the subject of our contemplation - begins from chapter 6 in the book of Judges. The name Gideon means "wrestler" or "saviour". He was one of the judges like Samson, Deborah or Yaftah...



“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which [are] in the mountains. So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.” (Judges 6:1-6).

The People of Israel Sinned against the Lord

The Israelites were humiliated because they had sinned in the eyes of the Lord. Whenever man is separated from God, God's grace abandons him. The absence of God in his life makes it difficult for him and he no longer feels secure. He tastes the bitterness of old age and puts up with all kinds of humiliation, such as temptations, illness and humiliating problems.

The Midianites Gained the Upper Hand

The Medianites inhabited the Sinai desert near Palestine. They were powerful people at their time and so they started humiliating the Jewish people. They let the Jews cultivate their land and then when the harvest time arrived, the Midianites and the barbarians in the area damaged the crops. The Midianites were as numerous as locusts and the Jews could not confront them because they always felt defeated and humiliated since they toiled all the year through to cultivate the land and eventually these people came and laid their hands on their crops. This gave the Jews bitter feelings such as those described by the prophet David in the psalms: ***“LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me.” (Psalm 3:1)***

They would not let Israel have the means of subsistence; no sheep, no cows and no donkeys

Truly, the absence of God's blessings takes away all the good things in our lives, for the man who is separated from God does not enjoy His blessings, in wealth, in health and his children are not blessed. Everything in his life becomes distasteful. God allows this to happen until people cry out to Him in repentance.



“And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell" But you have not obeyed My voice.” (Judges 6:7 - 10).

When the sons of Israel cried out to God, He sent them the first spiritual message under the title “**remember**”. It carried a simple

message that suits every person separated from God and suffering pain and humiliation because of this separation. Since a man who is distanced from God forgets what God has done for him, therefore the first step in repentance is to **remember** and recall what God has done for him.

Remember your sins and also remember God's mercy. This is why the prophet said to them: recall how God helped you to get out of Egypt and rescued you from slavery and from the hands of the Egyptians. He saved you from the hands of those who annoyed you. He drove them away from you.

When the Holy Spirit talks to a man who is broken and defeated by his own sins, He tells him, remember God's mercy unto you, how many times he supported you and how many times He protected and saved you. Have you forgotten all this? And distanced yourself from God.

Have you forgotten the day you were baptised!! Do you not know that you were made of dust but God adopted you with His mercy and you have become His son. Do not you know that on that day you received the Holy Spirit as the most expensive treasure within you!!? Have you forgotten that your name is written in heaven?!!

There are many blessings bestowed upon you by God. If you remember them you will return to God with all your heart but if you forget them, you will continue to clash with the Midianites till the end of your life!!!

God did not send Gideon to them first, but He sent them a prophet (whose name is not mentioned). He sent him in order to remind them of what God had done for them and also to convey to them God's message **“remember that I have done a great deal for you, so fear not the gods of the Amorites.”** God was reproaching them because of their fear of the gods of the Amorites, such fear led them to begin worshipping their gods and this was the reason why God commanded them in the first place not to mix with pagans, for they stopped fearing God and started fearing the world (the people, the pagans or money....).

Sometimes, fear is the source of all sins...the fear of pain...of people... of the future.. of the unknown. There is also fear of losing money. Thus fear of anything other than God pushes a man to commit sin and separates him from God.

If for example, you are afraid of the future, you will worry about it so much that you would forget God. You will start depending on other human beings or on yourself.

When the people of Israel feared the gods of the Amorites, the latter gained power over them... ***You should know that devils are coward but they frighten those who fear them!!!***

When man is not afraid of the devil, this is a clear sign of his faith and trust in God. Thus Jesus Christ, Glory be to Him, punished His disciples by saying ***“why are you fearful, o you of little faith, then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm”*** (Matthew 8:26) Jesus attributed their fear to their lack of faith.

Thus there were two messages sent by God to the people through His prophet. The first message was ***“remember”*** and the second message was ***“have no fear”***.

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Chapter One

Invitation



“Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree* which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites” (Judges 6:11)

** The terebinth tree: is a tree that lives for many years and has long branches that go round it.*

When we read about the ancient saviours of the people - like Gideon-, we find symbols in their lives that refer to our true saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ who said: ***“You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they which testify of Me.” (John 5:39).***

The story of Gideon starts as an unknown simple illiterate farmer, who comes from a simple family. At that time, the Midianites used to search houses and confiscate any wheat they might find, leaving nothing for the Jews. Gideon used to smuggle the wheat before their comings. This action shows his bravery and sense of responsibility towards his tribe.

Gideon comes from a small tribe called the tribe of Manasseh (one of the twelve tribes of Israel). It was expected that the saviour, who will lead the people of Israel, comes from a large tribe and not a small one like that of Gideon. Our LORD Jesus Christ was also a simple carpenter and no one expected Him to be “The Saviour of the world”.

- * Gideon used to collect the wheat and thrash it in the winepress to separate the chaff from the wheat and smuggle it away from the Medianites. St. John the Baptist prophesied about Christ saying these beautiful words ***“His winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire”.*** (Luke 3:17).

One of Christ’s characteristics is that He is The Judge who will separate the righteous from the evil ones just like a clever farmer, using His winnowing fan to thrash the wheat, separating the chaff from the wheat.

- * Gideon smuggled the wheat from the hand of the enemy, also Christ, smuggles us from the hand of the evil, from the devil and from the world which will perish. He beats us by shaking us hard with trials and pain to separate the chaff

which will fly away leaving the wheat, then He purifies us, through the Cross (the stick in the hand of Gideon) while sitting under the tree (the Cross). He was crucified for us and He also gives us a Cross in our life to purify us.

- * Gideon beats the wheat in the winepress using only his staff. The wheat and the winepress are a symbol of the sacrifice which Christ will offer with His Body and Blood. If the terebinth tree symbolises the Cross, our Lord Jesus Christ will purify the world, separate the wheat by throwing the chaff out, and taking the wheat and making it His. He also gives us His wheat “Body” and His Juice “**Blood**” as *He said “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me” (Isaiah 63:3).*



“The Angel of the LORD appeared to Him and said: “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!”. Gideon said to Him, “O my Lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, “Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?” But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” (Judges 6: 12,13).

The word Angel means apostle or messenger and because God is unseen, when He appears, He usually appears as an Angel or a messenger, and here, the Angel is the LORD Himself. This is one of the appearances of Jesus Christ, Glory be to Him, in the Old Testament. He personally came to Gideon to choose him for serving.

Jesus, Glory be to Him, came at the appropriate time, took the flesh from the virgin Mary, and was born and lived as man amongst us. However, He existed from the beginning before taking our flesh, (born of the father before all ages) as we say in the creed, and was appearing in the Old Testament. He spoke to Moses in the burning bush. He also visited our father Abraham with two others. Thus, Jesus Christ spoke to the Jews in the New Testament saying: ***“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day and he saw it and was glad. Then the Jews said to Him “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them “Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was I AM” (John 8:56 - 58).***

Jesus Christ spoke to Jacob in a dream and wrestled with him till dawn, came to Moses in the burning bush and spoke to the

prophets in the Old Testament. Our LORD Jesus Christ spoke to the Jews and Jesus said to them ***“Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning” (John 8:25)***. God Spoke to Gideon saying: God be with you man of Valor. Gideon answered vehemently “I ask my LORD, if the LORD was with us why has all this happened to us? As though he is saying to Him “can you not see what trouble has befallen us? How can you say the LORD is with us? We know that God was with His people. He divided the sea, sent them manna from heaven, brought them water from the rock, but we are humiliated.. where is God? Has He refused us?”

Gideon never doubted the presence of God but he doubted His approval of His people and felt He abandoned them because of their deviation away from Him and that is why He delivered them to the hands of the Midianites.



“Then the LORD turned to him and said “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” (Judges 6:14). As Gideon said to him “God has refused us and put us in the hand of the Midianites.” God surprised him by saying “go in this

might of yours and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

But what is the strength of Gideon and where does it lie?!!

- (1) Gideon's strength might lie in his simple faith because he never doubted what he was told by his fathers.
- (2) Or his strength might lie in his courage and lack of fear of evil, in his love for his people and his sacrifice for them, as he exposed himself to the danger of smuggling the wheat to feed the people. What makes God so happy and makes Him choose us to serve Him, is to find us minded with serving His Church and His children.
- (2) Gideon's strength might also lie in his feeling of weakness and lack of worthiness to serve God. ***"for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Corinth 12:9)***

Have I not sent you?

When God sends someone to serve Him, He gives him the ability and authority to accomplish this service. Imagine a great king sending a messenger for a certain job, is it possible not to give him expenses for the trip? What about God when He sends someone to serve Him!!!



“So he said to Him, “O my LORD, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” (Judges 6:15)

Many of the prophets when called by God to serve Him, felt their weakness and tried to escape as Moses did *“Then Moses said to the LORD, “O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” (Exodus 4:10)*

Also Isaiah the prophet said *“So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of host. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal [which] he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged” (Isaiah 6:5 - 7)*

Gideon also tried to escape saying that his fathers' clan is the smallest in the tribe of Manasseh and he is the youngest in his father's house.

Being the youngest does not change God's choice at all. On the contrary it confirms His calling, as He always encourages His children to serve.

Gideon's strength is in his inner feeling of weakness!! God found him humble, loving to his people and having a strong will to save them. He also found him courageous, faithful and fully recalls God's work with His people.



“And the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man”. Then he said to Him, “If now I have found favour in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me.”(Judges 6:16 - 17)

When God started talking to Gideon, He said to him ***“God be with you”***, but now He is saying ***“I will be with you.”*** This proves it was God Himself talking to him from the beginning. God said to Gideon that in spite of the number of the Midianites (as many as locusts), he

will defeat them as if they were one man (*You shall defeat the Midianites as one man*).



“Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You.” And He said, “I will come wait until you come back.”(Judges 6:18)

Gideon did not believe what happened and thought he was dreaming. With his simple faith, he said to God: *“Give me a sign that it is You talking to me now”*. So God approved and answered: *“go my beloved, I will wait for you!!”*. Gideon suggested the sign to God and God waited for him till he prepared the offering. This was an extreme humility from Christ’s side and an extreme simplicity from Gideon’s side as he tried to invite Christ as his guest.

Jesus Christ accepts His children’s hospitality: our father Abraham went to slaughter a sheep to offer to God, who waited till Sara and Abraham prepared the food. It is out of His humbleness that He accepts our simple offerings - which He does not need - but He deals with us in the way we understand. He knows that Gideon’s

hospitality is a sign of love, thus God said to Gideon: “I will wait till you prepare what you want!!!”



“So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them.” (Judges 6:19)-

Our Lord Jesus sat under the terebinth tree as a sign of the Cross. This is the place where you can see Christ, thus St. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Galatians: *“O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” (Galatians 3:1)*

The portrait of Jesus Christ crucified should never be absent from your sight - The picture of our Lord Jesus under the terebinth tree (the Cross) should not leave your vision, there you should offer your prayer, your fasting and all your love.



“The Angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so. Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.” (Judges 6:20 - 21)-

The Angel of the LORD asked Gideon to put the food on the rock and pour the broth on it. The Angel of the LORD had his staff (a sign of the Cross), this reminds us of Psalm 23 : 4 ***“Your rod and your staff, they comfort me”***. The Cross of Christ for us is the staff that we lean on and that drives the devil away from us. The shepherd uses his staff to drive away any animal attempting to harm his sheep.

The rock is also a symbol of Jesus Christ as St. Paul said: ***“.. and that Rock was Christ.” (1Corinth.10:4).***

As the offering was put on the altar, a fire rose and ate the offering, thus, Christ accepts all we offer to Him with the fire of His love because ***“Our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29).***

Offer your heart, your love, your fasting, and your prayer in front of the altar so that the altars' fire (the rock) eats your offerings with love.

The Angel disappeared after the fire ate the meat and the bread, as though Gideon had prayed a Holy Mass: prepared the food, put it on the rock, and offered it to God who accepted it from him.

Jesus Christ did not eat what Gideon prepared for Him in the normal way but he ate it with fire to make Gideon feel the power of His God as the people, during this rough time, needed to feel the meaning of power.



“Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, “Alas, O LORD GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face. Then the LORD said to him, Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.” (Judges 6: 22 - 23)

There was a belief in the time of Moses that anyone who sees God shall die “.. *No man can see Me and live*” (*Exodus 33:20*) and no one had ever imagined to see God as we read in the story of

Samson: *“And Manoah said to his wife, we shall surely die, because we have seen God.” (Judges 13:22)*

Gideon was terrified when he realised that he saw the Angel of the LORD with his own eyes, so GOD wanted to comfort him by saying: *“Peace be with you, do not fear, you will not die”* as though GOD wants to tell him: “When I said to Moses in the old days *“No man shall see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:20)*, I meant that no man with his normal human body can see the Glory of GOD in his divinity. Man has to have a “glorified” body to be able to see the Glorified Christ. But when I come to earth I will hide my glory so that you can see me **I will come so that you live and not die”**.

This proves that Jesus Christ did not come to judge the world, or end it, but to give life to the world.

Peace be with you. Do not fear, you will not die

Peace be with you... the same words we hear from Christ *“Peace to You”* according to the gospel of Saint John more than a thousand years later...

Do not fear... it is the same comforting word that Christ says to his loved ones *“But when Jesus heard it, He answered him saying “Do not be afraid” (Luke 8:50).*

“You will not die”... This is God’s will for us, He came to give us life and to make us overcome death.



“So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites” (Judges 6:24)

At this time, the natural place for offering sacrifices was the altar of sacrifice inside the tabernacle because the temple was not completed until the time of king Solomon, but Gideon when visited by Christ had the courage to build an altar in his house. This was a symbol of what would happen in the New Testament when every house will be an altar for the LORD, every human being will be a temple of the LORD, and the Church will be everywhere. We are now liberated from the limitations of the Jewish temple as the only place for offering sacrifices.

In the New Testament, we offer one sacrifice (OUR CHRIST) everywhere as Malachi, the prophet says: ***“In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,” Says the LORD of hosts.”*** (Malachi 1:11).

As though Gideon crossed the limit of the Old Testament and entered into the spirit of the New Testament, he built an altar to the LORD and called it “Yahwa Shalom” meaning “The LORD is Peace” or the “Peace of the LORD” because He said to him “Peace be unto you”, this means that Gideon found his peace in GOD. This altar remained in Ophrah of Abiezrites until now.

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Chapter Two

The First Battle



“Now it came to pass the same night that the LORD said to him, “Take your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it;” (Judges 6:25)

Gideon, the simple farmer, became the chosen one... and the one that GOD chose to work with Him, speak with him and sends him many messages...

In spite of the fact that GOD did not speak with Gideon face to face, as before, yet the relationship between them did not end.

GOD speaks to the prophets in many different ways ***“GOD, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1)***. There is not just one way in which GOD speaks to the prophets. They do not necessarily see Him, as we read in the Holy Book “GOD said to Abraham, GOD said to Moses”.

It is not necessary that GOD appears every time in the burning bush as He appeared to Moses, or visits every time through the terebinth tree as He did with Gideon ...

He speaks to us also in many ways; He might speak to you by sending you a message through another person, or by whispering inside you, or through what is happening around you, and, in many times, He speaks to you in the Gospel.

Thus, if you were chosen for a certain message, you have to train yourself to speak with GOD, and train your ear to hear the voice of GOD, as He says to us “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear” (Matthew 13:16). When we have a deep relationship with GOD, we sometimes see Him and in other times we hear Him and so on

GOD’S first request from Gideon was to go and save His people. Gideon did not know till that moment how he was going to do this task. But let us see what Gideon has done till now:

- He gave his offering which GOD accepted with fire.
- He was afraid... so GOD said to Him: Do not fear, peace be with you, you will not die.
- He built an altar... and said GOD is my peace.

This is the beautiful spiritual manner which a spiritual person adopts in the beginning of his/her relationship with GOD.

First you should love your Church and your brothers. Do not be afraid of evil, love the simple faith in GOD, His work and His wonders, then have plain humbleness, feel that you are small and weak inside, so that GOD speaks to you and favours you. Ask Him simply: “What can I offer you LORD?” Offer Him what you can and He will accept it in great humbleness. Even if you are afraid of getting near to GOD, He will comfort you and you will hear Him saying: “Do not fear. Peace be with you”. Thus, you will be able to perform great works that GOD asks you to.

GOD might not let us know our vocation or our role in His service from the beginning “Yaho Shalom” i.e. GOD is our peace in our life. Gideon did not start his service until he built an altar and called it “Yaho Shalom”.

As you become full of GOD’s peace, you are more able to serve. It was frightening for Gideon to fight these pagan people which were as locusts in number, but it was different for him after he built the “Yaho Shalom” altar, then he was able to fulfil his great vocation.

GOD'S first request of Gideon was to purify his father's house from idols before fighting the Midianites ***“Tear down the altar of Baal that your father has and cut down the wooden image that is beside it.” (Judges 6:25)***

As though GOD wants to tell him, “Forget the Midianites for now as you have a sin in your house, you have Baal in your father's home which you have to purify first... Put down the idols in your home because you will work with me...Make your house a place of rest for me.... Do not leave an idol, another god or any favourite sin even if it was for your father, purify yourself, and your home to be prepared to entering the battle... the battle of destroying the wooden images.

The wooden image was like a Church minaret put next to the Baal altar to point to the place of idol worship. The most important sign that identifies the righteous kings in the history of the Jewish people was their destruction of the wooden images and the altars of Baal. The opposite was true, the most important sign that identifies evil kings was making wooden images and building altars for Baal, which was the most famous idol in Midian and Palestine at that time, from Baal came the word “Beelzebul” (devil).



“and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down.” (Judges 6:26)

It is amazing that God asked Gideon to build an altar when he had already done so!! As though God is telling him: it is true you have already built an altar but only you and I know that.. I want an altar that everybody can see... I want everybody to know that you follow Me and not Baal... this was the first challenge that God gave Gideon because everybody worshipped Baal, how can Gideon destroy the altar of Baal!!!

Many people are afraid of taking the first step in their life with God because they worry about people’s comments and their contempt for the religious people. But God blames everyone saying: Why are you afraid of man, didn’t I tell you “Do not be afraid”!!!

As though God was saying to Gideon: “Why are you afraid of man? Didn’t you yourself say “Yaho Shalom” meaning God is my peace! So proceed Gideon to the next step, destroy Baal, cut down the wooden images and make an altar for Me from its wood”.

“Give me all the time that you will waste in sin... give me your attention that is directed towards evil... give me your money that you were going to use in wrong acts ... give me your sacrifices that you intend to offer to Baal, give me all your heart but slaughter it for me.”

God longs for us to consecrate our hearts for Him, you cannot have two Gods in your home *“No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24)* so if there was Baal at home, God cannot abide in it.

God asked Gideon to build an altar with certain specifications. He asked him to build it on the rock so that it would appear clearly to everyone, and to complete it with certain arrangement i.e. certain rites. Gideon will use the wood from the wooden images in building the altar. This wood is symbolic to repentance which makes an inner altar.



“So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he feared his father’s household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night” (Judges 6:27)

Gideon chose the men who loved him and were ready to help him, and because he was afraid of his father’s household, he worked by night.

It was better for Gideon to do his work during the day without fearing the people trusting that God will protect him, but God is patient and He accepted Gideon’s work, even though he worked at night.

Late, we will see that the fearful Gideon who worked at night, because he was afraid, will stand against a quarter of a million people with God’s grace without fear.

Staying up at night in spiritual action will differentiate the spiritual person from the worldly person, one of the saints said *“Night time is made for prayer”*. If you stay up at night with God, to praise Him or

read the Holy Bible, it is different from staying up to watch TV, to talk with people or to get drunk...

Gideon stayed up at night, gathered men who cut down the wooden images and built the altar, as though he got up to perform the midnight praising of God but in a different way!!!



“And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built.” (Judges 6:28)

The second bull was seven years old; it is symbolic of Jesus Christ. Gideon offered it as a sacrifice and because seven years is the number of perfection, it refers to the perfect Holy Christ. The first bull could have been used by Gideon for destroying the altar of Baal and cutting down the wooden images but he did not offer it as a sacrifice.



“So they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” And when they had inquired and asked, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.” (Judges 6: 29)

Most probably Gideon did not want anyone to know that he destroyed the altar of Baal, sometimes we take some spiritual steps but remain anxious, not sure whether we are on the right track or not!!! Some other times, we become afraid of people talking and commenting or we are afraid of the challenges that we may not be able to confront, but God said to Gideon; “you have to face the challenge whether you did your work by day or night, they will know you are the one who did it, because if you could not challenge your household, how will you fight the Midianites?” If you cannot purify your life, how will I use you to serve those who are faraway from me? First purify your heart and house and tear down Baal, then you will be able to fight the pagan Midianites.



“Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar

of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it.” (Judges 6:30)

The men of Gideon’s city told his father, your son must die because he tore down Baal’s altar and cut down the wooden image. Gideon thought that it would be the Midianites who would try to kill him but now it’s his own people who want him dead. At the same time, there was a promise from God saying, “do not be afraid, you will not die.” - a promise that he should not forget.

From generation to generation, those who went to live godly in Christ will be persecuted “.. *and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” (2 Tim. 3:12). If you are serious in your spiritual life and clinging to God and you are faithful in this life, you will have problems. People will resist you, but do not be afraid because there is a promise from God saying: “Peace be with you, do not be afraid, you will not die.” Even if people try to kill you, they will not be able to do so.



“But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let

*him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!”
(Judges 6:31)*

Gideon’s father was wise and wanted to save his son from death. He said to them: “is Baal unable to defend himself?! Leave him to avenge himself, if he was the true God, he would know what happened and avenge himself against Gideon.”

It seems that Joash was affected by his sons’ enthusiasm and courage and started to think: “What is this Baal whose altar was destroyed by just a boy?! Could not he have protected himself?!” When he saw them trying to kill Gideon, he was very angry with them.

The last thing Gideon expected was that his father would try to save him from their hands. Confront them by himself, protect him with wisdom and overcome them. His father could have been the first to try and kill him because he destroyed Baal in his house. This would not be strange because they used to offer their children as sacrifice in those days and burn them with fire to satisfy the idols.

Thus anyone who works with God witnesses many wonders more than he/she can imagine or ask ***“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20)***, and he will receive unexpected answers and wonderful surprises.



“Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal*, saying, “Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.” (Judges 6:32)

**Jerubbaal: means the destroyer of Baal or enemy of Baal*

On that day, Gideon’s life started to be a spiritual one; his name changed from Gideon to Jerubbaal (Baal is the devil so the name means “enemy of the devil”) which is the best name for a true Christian person.

The names of many personalities in the Holy book were changed after they took the first step towards their life with God, e.g. Jacob became Israel ***“And He said, “your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel” (Genesis 32:28)***, Simons name was changed to Peter ***“Simon to whom He gave the name Peter” (Mark 3:16)***.

Changing the name signifies a new promotion... new experience...new grace, thus a baby's name changes when he is baptised. Also the name of a priest or a bishop is changed when ordained to take the name of a saint. All these are spiritual promotions.

Gideon might have got afraid of the words "Let Baal plead against him" as the Baal (the devil) was annoyed with Gideon and for sure he will try to fight him and kill him, but Gideon was not afraid anymore and he already took some positive steps: he cleaned his house by destroying Baal and cutting down the wooden images, he challenged the people, and he got the name "Jerubbaal" which means enemy of Baal or the one who resists the devil.

Gideon succeeded in his first battle

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Chapter Three

The Big Battle



“Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the valley of Jezreel.” (Judges 6:33)

The Midianites and their followers started to come down the valley as locusts, but they did not realize that this time Gideon was waiting for them ... the devil attacks exactly as locusts and conquers the people from generation to generation till our Lord Jesus Christ came and said ***“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18)***



“But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali: and they came up to meet them.” (Judges 6:34-35)

Blowing the trumpet was mentioned many times in the book of Judges, it means a warning or announcement of war. The trumpet refers to the word of God or the Holy Bible.

How can Gideon who was afraid of destroying Baal in the day time, stand against a very large number of people? This really needs the LORD'S spirit; being filled with the Holy Spirit is the secret of the real strength that begot Gideon.

When Gideon's call was confirmed and he was filled with enthusiasm, and he destroyed Baal that was in his house, God led him into the big battle. It is strange that his father's family "Abiezrites" who wanted to kill him a little earlier were the first to support him... what a blessing; this must have made Gideon very happy to find faith and support in his own house.

It is true that it pleases any servant of God to find all his household sharing his spiritual life and his service to God.



“So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said – “look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.” (Judges 6:36-37)

Gideon was surprised by this turn of events and said to God: Will You really save Israel from the Midianites by my hands? He was worried, feeling weak and unable to perform his mission and because he was a simple man, he asked God to show him a sign, saying: I will put the fleece on the threshing floor where they keep the seeds, if only the fleece got wet but the land remained dry, this would be a sign that you will save Israel by my hand.

This simple message meant a lot to Gideon. Perhaps if many people passed by this fleece and found it wet, they will not be surprised. For Gideon, this was an encouraging sign from God that suited his simplicity and his world. It made him feel safe when he proceeded to save Israel from the hands of the Midianites.

God speaks to everyone in the way that suits him; He spoke to the Magi with the stars, to the shepherds by way of the manger and to Gideon by the fleece.



“And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.” (Judges 6:38)

Gideon woke up early the next day and he squeezed the fleece releasing dew i.e. plenty of water which filled a bowl, so Gideon was comforted for God has answered him.

This was another sign for Gideon. The previous sign was God's waiting for him to prepare the food and His acceptance of Gideon's offering by fire.



“Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew” (Judges 6:39)

Gideon said to God: Sorry, I need another sign; likewise, our father Abraham argued with God. *“Then he said, “Let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.” (Genesis 18:32)*

Sometimes, man argues with God the same way, which is acceptable when you have a request from God. You can persist in asking Him. Do not worry as

God does not get tired of your requests because He is very patient.

Gideon requested another sign with the same fleece. He said “Is it possible that the fleece remains dry while the ground gets wet? Sometimes, the devil makes a person doubt these signs -as here when he persuaded him that what happened to the fleece is a matter of chance-; a child could have poured water on it or any reason other than its being a sign from God.

Thus, dependence on signs could be unsuitable for some. Also requesting signs too often could be misleading. But Gideon had such a simple faith, so God dealt with him the same way and answered his requests.



“And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.” (Judges 6:40)

Some Saints find some deep spiritual meaning in this: the dew refers to God’s grace, the wet fleece refers to God’s announcement of His

grace, and the dry fleece refers to the lack of grace or lack of strength.

They considered what happened with the fleece as a reference to the work of Jesus Christ in saving humanity. The fleece was wet in the beginning while the ground was dry and later, it was dry while the ground was wet.

In the beginning the grace of God descended on the fleece which is related to the sheep (symbolic of the Jews who believed in animal sacrifice) leaving the rest of the ground dry. After this, grace left the Jews while the ground was filled with grace and faith was shifted from the Jews to the Gentiles. The grace of God covered every human being who believed all over the world, except for the Jews whom God has refused when they refused Christ.

In the beginning, you could squeeze the fleece and get grace and blessings, but when Christ came to earth, He filled it with grace, blessings and only the fleece (Jews) remained dry.



“Then Jerbbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley” (Judges 7:1)

Gideon’s new name is “Jerbbaal”. It is the name that God loves because it means “enemy of Baal” or “enemy of the devil”.

Jerbbaal rose early

Rising early shows enthusiasm. Going early to Church to attend the Mass is a sign of love for God. Going home longing to read the Holy Bible before having supper, is a sign of love for God. Spiritual enthusiasm means that the person loves God, hangs on to Him, and goes early to every act of God. Here we remember the famous verse: ***“And those who seek me diligently will find Me” (Proverbs 8:17)*** meaning that those who come early will find me while those who come late might not find me.

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Chapter Four

The Few & the Many



“And the LORD said to Gideon: “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me saying, “My own hands has saved me” (Judges 7:2)

What an amazing statement said by God to Gideon!!! The most despicable attitude in the eyes of God is that man should boast of his own power: for God prefers to do His work through a weak person. The person, who feels his own shortcomings, does not take pride in himself, but is confident that God does all the work.

Let us recall what St. Paul said in his first epistle to the Corinthians ***“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” (1 Corinth 1:27-29).***

Truly, this verse applies specifically to Gideon.

God was aware that the Jews were proud and glorified themselves, so he said to Gideon: “The people you have with you are too numerous for Me (the people were not too many for fighting the

Midianites because they were 32,000 men where the Midianites numbered almost 135,000 which means less than one quarter of the army of the Midianites. Nevertheless, God said to Gideon “These people are too many for Me”, as God does not do His work through large numbers but works through the weak.

Therefore, the more you stand in God’s presence feeling weak and downcast, the more God works wonders with you. If this feeling of weakness abandons you, the grace of God might also abandon you.



“Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, “Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.” (Judges 7: 3)

When Gideon said to His people that anyone who is afraid may return - as God had requested of him - twenty two thousand men returned, which is more than two thirds of the total number and ten thousand men remained.

- Anyone who is afraid is not fit to follow the way of God.

- Anyone who is afraid of walking in the path of God is not capable of completing the journey.
- Anyone who is afraid of laying his burden on God will find it difficult to continue.
- Anyone who is afraid of people's gossip will not complete his journey.
- Anyone who is afraid of being short of money will not be able to persist to the very end.
- He who fears the devils and the conflict with the devils, is not fit to work with God.

Do not be afraid as God said "Peace be with you, do not fear, you will not die."

He also said *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."* (Luke 12:32)

He who is afraid will not have a share in victory, hence the verse in Revelations says: *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."* (Revelations 21:8)

Thus, He put the cowardly among those categories of people who will not enter the kingdom of God, which is the cause of anxiety to many people. Coward people are those people who suffer from great fear to the extent of denying Christ or those who tend to forget God completely and live in a state of permanent fear.

Resist fear even if this means that you will have a permanent struggle within you between fear and faith. In the end, you will reach a stage when you fear nothing because you believe that whatever happens to you, God will lift it from you as St. Augustine said: I sat on the top of the world when I feared nothing and desired nothing”.

These are the two signs which indicate that you are treading the right path. They point to your proximity to God and His kingdom: that you fear nothing and need nothing.

Gideon was in a difficult position for every one of his army men, who were numbered 32,000, had to kill 3 or 4 Midianites in order to gain victory. Now they have become 10,000 only and each man has

to kill 10 to 12 men of the Midianites, so there is no compatibility between the two armies according to logic and mathematics.



“But the LORD said to Gideon, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, “This one shall go with you,” the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, “This one shall not go with you, the same shall not go.” (Judges 7:4)

The people are still too many

God said to Gideon: “Your men are still too many” meaning you are still powerful on your own!!

Thus, God cannot work with you unless you absolutely deny your own personal power. You still have pride within you, some self-dependence. These should be wiped out of your life and as these disappear from your life, the time comes when God works wonders with you.

This situation was repeated several times with many biblical figures.

If we go back to the stories of Moses when he was at the age of 40,

we find that this was a very suitable age for him to serve his nation for he had the health, the intelligence, the experience of the Egyptians and their wisdom. But God did not find it a suitable time for his service, not even when he was 50 or 60 years old. This makes us wonder why the Lord did not use him for His service before he became an old man who is unable to cope with such service. How could he lead the people through the desert from Egypt to Sinai when he was an old man? But when Moses was 80 years old and became weak, God appeared to him in the burning bush and said to him ***“Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”*** (*Exodus 3:10*). But where were you God a long time ago when I was in good health?

God found it a suitable age when Moses did not trust his own power but would trust in God who will do everything.

Also our father Abraham, God promised that his children would be as numerous as the stars in heaven and the sand in the sea. Abraham reached his sixtieth birthday without having even one child. It was after his 99th birthday when Sara became pregnant; it was when he had lost hope in his body and his strength, that he saw God

performing miracles. Sometimes our pride in ourselves and our self-dependence are the obstacles in the way of God's work in us.

Bring Them down to the Water

There is a beautiful meaning in this sentence: water has always been a symbol of purity. We are purified for the first time in the water of baptism then we are purified later with tears of repentance which complete the work of baptism by a continuous renewal.

The words "Bring them down" suggests the necessity for man to get down to overcome his/her pride, to kneel down and pour the tears, then God can work in him/her.

Of whom I say to you: This one shall go with you, the same shall go with you; and of whomsoever I say to you "This one shall not go with you, the same shall not go."

Even choosing the soldiers was not carried out by Gideon, because if it was left to him, he would have chosen those with strong bodies, tall statures or strong muscles. So God said to him "Forget all that Gideon, I will choose for you. I will tell you which one is suitable for war and which one is not!!

Also in spiritual life, the one who enters the field of service is the one called by God and not by man. If your service had started by someone inviting you to serve God, be sure that this invitation came directly from God and not from that person.

Gideon's best virtue is his obedience e.g. he never said to God: It is a great loss to leave 22,000 men behind and not use them in the war - let me encourage them by my words to come back even to stand in the back rows of the army so that we would use them if we need to, but he was obedient. When God said to him: "Tell the people that whoever is afraid can return", he obeyed. When God said "bring them down to the water", he obeyed, and when God said "... of whom I say to you, this one shall go with you; the same shall go with you", he also obeyed.



“So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, “Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink. And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three

hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.” (Judges 7:5-6)

When Gideon ordered the army to go down to the water, it was a great chance for them to rest because they were in a war camp. Most probably the weather was hot and the sun was burning so it was expected that when they reached the water, they would go down and drink from it. This is what actually happened. Everybody got down to drink except 300 men, who were aware that they were still at war. They remained carrying their weapons, wearing their uniforms and drank water quickly and licked up from the water with their tongues.

God said to Gideon “Choose for Me everyone who knelt to drink and everyone who drank quickly to quench his thirst lapping with his tongue as a dog laps.”

The first lesson in our spiritual life is that anyone who is afraid should turn back because s/he is not suitable for the path of the kingdom. Here we take the second lesson: the person who seeks physical comfort is not suitable for spiritual war. A person who searches for food, drink and sleep is not suitable to work with God.

Jesus Christ said: *“Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him,” Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” (Luke 9:57-58)*

“Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” Or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

Seriousness is necessary in the spiritual life: feeling that we are in a continuous battle is necessary to go to heaven. We wish we could learn from these 300 men, who drank the water quickly and just enough for their need, not to satisfy their desire but to quench their thirst to be able to carry on their work. The conditions for choosing the warriors were:

1. Lack of fear and total confidence in God.
2. Seriousness in piety and prayer.

In describing the way these 300 men drank like dogs, our thoughts are driven towards the virtues of humbleness and meekness. They were in the hands of God like obedient animals as it says in the beautiful verse ***“I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before you.” (Psalm 73:22)***

I do not want to depend on my way of thinking. I do not want to take the decision. I do not want to be the captain of the ship. You are the One who fights through me and do what You like.

The woman from Canaan had these same feelings and was poor in spirit, so she said: ***“Yes LORD, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” (Matthew 15:27)***. It is as though she is saying to Him, I do not deserve to be a dog or an animal. Jesus Christ praised her because she accepted such poor treatment and He said to her “O woman, great is your faith”.



“Then the LORD said to Gideon, “By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.” (Judges 7:7)

Gideon might have hoped that 8,000 or 9,000 men would get back with him out of the 10,000 but God said to him that they would be saved by the 300 men who licked up water. This confirms the truth said by our Lord Jesus Christ: *“Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* (Matthew 7:14). True, these who were suitable for war, were a few (300 men out of 32,000).

Sometimes, you feel restless that you are the only faithful one among 50 or 60 people at your work or among your family. Do not be afraid, it will always be the same percentage and the children of God will remain a minority *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* (Luke 12: 32)
“For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and there are many who go in by it.” (Matthew 7:13)

Millions enter by the wide gate to hell. Do not fear and do not change your way of thinking, because you are of the minority. Beware, never go with the majority. Do not follow fashion. Do not go with the worldly current. If you do, you will not be a Christian. If

you go with the majority of the people, you will enter through the wide gate that will lead to hell. If you go into the water with the 9,700 men, you will not be suitable for the spiritual war.

For sure, the 9,700 persons looked at others and found the majority drinking at leisure and swimming, so they did the same. The only exception was the 300 persons who were controlled by their conscience. They said to themselves, we are at war, let us drink quickly and get back to our position. Many people proceed one step in their spiritual life, then look around and find the majority going the wrong way, so they follow them. There are others who never try to follow the path of God from the beginning, as the 22,000 men did, because they think the path of God is frightening and so they turn away from the beginning.

I will deliver the Midianites to your hand,
let all the other people go, every man to
his place

Gideon fought for the people; also when we strive, it is not only to save ourselves but also to protect the Church, to protect our children, to protect the fearful and the lazy.

The blessing of your prayer and strife does not only give you victory, but also gives victory to all those around you. Even if they do not know how to fight as you do, they might repent and serve one day.

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Chapter Five

The Secrets of War



“So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.” (Judges 7:8)

So the people took provisions and their trumpets

The people took two things with them, their trumpets and their provisions. The trumpets are the instruments for the declaration of war, symbolising the Holy Bible, and the provisions are a symbol of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. They are the two principal weapons in our spiritual life for when we eat His body and blood we gain strength; and when the Bible remains open in front of our eyes all the time, it supports us.

And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men

The rest of the people who were not chosen to join the war (9700 men) were sent back to their tents and none of the three hundred men who were chosen objected to Gideon because of their small number compared to the Midianites (135,000 men). This is a proof of their faith, humbleness and the extent of their obedience to their leader and spiritual father. Although the two sides were not compatible in number, I imagine one of these soldiers talking to Gideon saying: who is going to fight after this selection of fighters. For sure it is the larger number which will go to war.

God could not have said that we are the ones who will lead the war, we are the minority. Without our leader Jesus Christ, the devil gains power over us; but with our obedience to Him and by following Him, we become the stronger party.

Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley

There is a beautiful meaning in this sentence, although the Midianites were as numerous as locusts, they were below them and not above them. The Midianites here symbolise the devils, this means do not think that even if they are like locusts in number that

they are above your head, for our Lord Jesus Christ said: ***“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19).***



“It happened on the same night that the Lord said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand”. (Judges 7:9)

God said to Gideon go down to the camp alone ... even the 300 men, he did not take with him. God wanted to say to him even if you go alone without the 300 men, I have promised you from the beginning that I will deliver Israel by your hand but I want to give a blessing to these three hundred men.

The number three hundred in Greek is represented by the letter T (symbolic of the cross). These three hundred men symbolise the cross through which victory is gained.



“But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant and you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hand shall be strengthened to go down against the camp”. “Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp”. (Judges 7:10-11)

“Go down to the camp with Purah your servant”

God said to Gideon, if you are afraid of going down, take your servant Purah with you. This reminds us of the biblical verse that was said when the disciples first started their mission ***“..and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Luke 10:1)***

See how Gideon became outrageously heroic but still needed another person to support him. Everyone needs someone to support him, even the spiritual servant, the priest and the bishop need spiritual power and a spiritual companion to support him. ***“But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:10).***

There are people who claim that spiritual consultation and confession are of no avail. The answer to this is that there is no person on earth who does not need the support of another, each of us needs support. God told Gideon to take Purah with him, just as he told Moses to take Aaron with him. Do you not also want to take another person with you?

“And you shall learn what they say and afterwards your hand shall be strengthened”

God was aware that Gideon’s faith was simple and strong but he needed a push from time to time.... It is certain that Gideon would have wished to tell God: I wish Lord that you could say a few words to support me with ... I only have 300 men while the Midianites are as numerous as locusts... I need a push from you, I am ashamed to ask for more signs ...but I need a new message from you to give me courage, so God said to him: “I will give you a push Gideon without your having to ask for it. Take Purah your servant and go down to them and you will hear with your own ears what they say about you ... I do not want you to look at them from a distance but I want you to go down and hear what they say about you, the simple farmer.



“Now the Midianites and Amolkites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without numbers as the sand by the seashore in multitude” (Judges 7:12).

The sight was frightening to Gideon, he was going down to them with only one other person and he could not see an end to the enemy troops because they were so numerous. Similarly one of us might look at the spiritual path and say. “It is impossible for me to reach it... I am still weak, lazy and reckless ... when am I going to learn to pray and read the Bible? When am I going to have faith, humbleness, love and patience? And with the existence of trials, problems, temptations and worries, I feel desperate.

If he looks from a distance, he will find no solution to this problem. God says to him, “My beloved do not look from a distance, I want you to go down and listen closely. I will show you that those devils who were frightening to you and the world of evil which you thought was stronger than you, will fear your power even though you feel you are nothing but a simple farmer like Gideon”.



“And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said “I have had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed” (Judges 7:13).

It was night, Gideon came to the nearest tent and stood outside it. He heard one of the Midianites soldiers inside the tent telling his friend about a strange dream...

The Midianites were in the valley surrounded by mountains and hills. This man dreamt that a loaf of barley bread rolled down from the mountain into the camp of the Midianites and destroyed the tent.

The barley bread was the cheapest and the least quality type of bread (the bread of the poor). The loaf made from wheat was more costly and tastier than the loaf made from barley. What a ridiculous dream! How can a barley loaf destroy a tent and overturn it?



“Then his companion answered and said “This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God had delivered Midian and the whole camp” (Judges 7:14).

His friend explained to him that the loaf of barley bread is Gideon’s sword. It could be that what suggested this to him is that Gideon used to smuggle the wheat from the hands of the Midianites to make bread for his poor people.

It was encouraging for Gideon to hear his enemies say “...into his hands God has delivered Midian and the whole camp” so he knew how frightened they were of him and how God will be glorified with this simple loaf of barley which will destroy the whole camp. What a wonderful encouragement god has given Gideon!!



“And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshipped. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Median into your hand” (Judges 7:15).

Now Gideon was absolutely convinced that God delivered his enemies into his hands, so he worshipped God thankfully and faithfully, feeling happy, then he returned to the camp of Israel and said to them confidently that they will gain victory, despite his former fear when he thought that 300 men was a very small number to face his enemies.

Gideon needed this consolation from God as it taught him that God can do so much through his weakness.

This can happen with us also: God can encourage you in many ways and give you signs that only you, can understand e.g. the fleece for Gideon ... you might be surprised that the people who frighten you, are also frightened of you. God might use your fear to give you courage as it happened with Gideon when he heard the explanation of the dream.

The big problems and the weak points in your life are the things that raise you up, make you stronger and give you self confidence, which is the opposite of what people might think.

“And he said to me “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinth 12:9)



“Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers” (Judges 7:16)

Let us imagine this very strange scene: three hundred men carrying empty pitchers, trumpets and torches inside the empty pitchers. Anyone who sees them would never think they are going to war but probably to a show; they have no swords for war, how can they gain victory!?! The empty pitchers are symbolic of our weak bodies; the Holy Bible refers to our bodies as earthen vessels. ***“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Corinth 4:7)***

In spite of our weak bodies (earthen vessels), we carry two important things: a trumpet that has a magic power (the word of God) and a torch (the spirit of God) which we put inside the pitcher which turns it into a huge power, not affected by swords, beauty or the enemy’s weapons (devils).



“And he said to them, look at me and do likewise, watch and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do” (Judges 7:17).

Gideon said to them “look at me and do likewise, our Lord Jesus Christ says the same to us: be like me. *“Learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29)*

**I will give myself on the cross,
so you also can give yourselves,
I will rise from the dead, you will also rise with me,
I will ascend to heaven,
you will also ascend to heaven with me,
I will forgive my enemies, you will also forgive your
enemies,
I will put up with pain, you can also put up with pain,
I will love all people, you can also love all people,
Do not look at anyone but me.**

If any of Gideon's men looked from the top of the mountain down, he might have tried to escape because the Midianites camp looks frightening. So Gideon said to them ***“Look towards me and do not look down so that you would not be frightened and here I am coming to the edge of the camp”*** i.e. I will be so close to the enemy camp.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says the same to us: “Look towards me and do not turn your eyes from me, do not look to this world so that you would not be frightened. The devil took Jesus Christ to the top of the mountain and he said to Him look down ***“All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9)***. Christ answered him: “You look upwards” ***“You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Matthew 4:10)***. I do not look downwards but upwards, and I have taught my sons and daughters also to look upwards. “So what I do, you also will do”. This is the summary of the Holy Book, therefore our Lord Jesus Christ came and walked on earth to let us do on earth what he did.

The one who knows how to put Christ in front of his own eyes and to do as he did, no doubt, will he conquer and his way to heaven is secured.



“When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon” (Judges 7:18).

Gideon divided the three hundred men into three groups, so only the nearest one hundred men would see Gideon and do the same as he does, while the two hundred men will look at the other hundred men and imitate them without looking at Gideon.

Some people might be nearer to Christ than others. The rest can look at them and imitate them, therefore St Paul said: ***“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1Corinth 11:1)***. St Paul put Christ in front of his own eyes and we can put St Paul in front of our own eyes and act like him or put our eyes on our spiritual father or on a certain saint. Accordingly, we will be looking at Christ.

Gideon told them to blow their trumpets and shout for “God and Gideon” i.e. for “God and his Christ” because Gideon is the Christ of God (i.e. the anointed of the Lord). At that time the victory over the kingdom of the devil is from God through his only son.



“So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp and the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands” (Judges 7:19).

They will fight in the middle of the night at the beginning of the middle watch, therefore the mid night prayer is divided into three services; as if we break the night with prayer instead of the night breaking us with laziness and recklessness.

The camp of the Midianites was asleep leaving only the guards. It is to be expected that the number of guards alone, is larger than the three hundred men with Gideon: because they guard a hundred and thirty five thousand men of Midian.

They blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers

Let us imagine the scene ... in the middle of the night when it was all quiet and everybody was asleep. The sound of 300 trumpets is

heard in that mountainous area. The echo was multiplied and mixed with the sound of the broken pitchers. When the empty pitchers were broken, they produced a loud noise. Some say that perhaps every two men banged their pitchers against each other or hit the pitchers against the nearest rock to break them. In this, they were imitating Gideon even if they did not know it. Thus all the pitchers were broken producing a noise like that of a succession of explosions. They held the torches with their hands to light the place, and here their role ended. The Midianites were so frightened, thinking they were being attacked, so they started fighting each other while Gideon's men were watching from above, and the war ended.



“Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers – they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing – and they cried “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon”. And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled” (Judges 7:20 - 21).

Gideon's men continued blowing the trumpets which caused the Midianites great fear and they cried "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" meaning victory is for God and His anointed.

Everyone stood in his place nothing was asked of them, they never held swords, they never fought as they were too weak to carry out such an act. The Midianites screamed and escaped.



“when the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zerrerah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath” (Judges 7:22).

God's grace made the Midianites fight each other, because they were extremely frightened. It was very dark but light surrounded the mountain, they heard fearful noises around them so they thought that the Jews were numerous in number and had great strength.

As soon as the three hundred men blew their trumpets, thousands of men from the enemy camp escaped, therefore our work in this life is not difficult. The world around us is evil and is hypothetically much stronger in number and in equipment, however, we only have to

hold the Bible and blow the trumpet all our lives, then break the pitchers (our bodies) for if we spoil ourselves and give ourselves all its desires, the torches inside will not appear and neither will the light. In order for the light to appear, the pitchers have to be broken. We have to fast and to worship, and to humble ourselves. When the pitchers break, the light appears and the victory becomes stronger. **We become amazed when we read about saints fasting for several days, sleeping so little... all these saints do is break the pitcher so that the light appears. The more you stay up in the night praying, the more your light appears... the more you fast zealously, the more your light appears and your victory is strengthened.**

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Chapter Six

The Victorious Church



“And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh and pursued the Midianites” (Judges 7:23)

One hundred men started blowing their trumpets and breaking their pitchers followed by the other two hundred.

The first hundred men are like the saints that lead the way. God, out of his love for others, made them share the victory as mentioned in the parable of the eleventh hour workers: ***“And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius” (Matthew 20:9)***

The rest of the tribes, who did not share in the war with the Midianites, were afraid and went into the river; God wanted them to share the victory as well, so they went after the Midianites who were trying to escape. There are levels of those who fought with Gideon from the beginning and degrees of those who joined the war at the end. The latter will also have a share in the heavenly kingdom but

not to the same degree of greatness as those who fought from the beginning.



“Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying “come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan...” (Judges 7:24).

Gideon said to them: go behind the Midianites who are trying to escape and take the water from them because the Midianites were controlling the water source and preventing the Jews from taking water.

The Midianites are now frightened, without weapons, and the job is easier.

There are two types of water as Christ said to the Samaritan ***woman*** ***“whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst” (John 4:14).***

The devil always tries to steal the good water (the work of the Holy Spirit in us), so he always tempts us to dirty the water, resist the Holy Spirit and make it sad by laziness, bad language and reckless living, stealing Gods grace from us.

In order to succeed in our spiritual war, we should take the water (the source of grace) which was in the hands of the Midianites (the devil) and fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit once more.

As long as we start the war and gain victory in our spiritual life, the source of grace which we were deprived of, will come back to us; we will be enjoying the Holy Communion, and we will be happy in serving and in everything that will bring back the water we were deprived of. The most important thing that Gideon said to the people was to get back the source of water; it is an invitation for us to fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit and get back what the devil has stolen from us i.e. to keep our feelings and thoughts ... consecrated for God.



“And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb

they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan” (Judges 7:25).

They captured the two princes of the Midianites Oreb and Zeeb. These names are symbols of the devil. Oreb and Zeeb can capture, deceive and betray. They killed Oreb at a rock, the rock is a symbol of Christ as St Paul taught us **“that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinth 10:4).**

The devil cannot be beaten except at the feet of Christ. Whenever the word “rock” is mentioned in the Holy Bible there is victory, so we remember it is a symbol of Christ as it says in the psalm **“Happy the one who takes and dashes Your little ones against the rock”! (Psalm 137:9).** It means happy are those who get hold of the foxes and small devils (sins that seem small) in the kingdom of evil and bury it at the feet of Christ (the Rock). Do not leave any sin in your life, no matter how small but go to Christ and bury this sin at His feet. Zeeb was killed at the winepress of Zeeb. The winepress reminds us of the Holy Mass and the Holy Communion, so we bury evil thought at the altar.

They brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, as a symbol of victory.

We notice the presence of a skull below the Cross in some pictures. The word Golgotha means skull referring to Adams skull. The devil overcame Adam and stepped on his head, equally Jesus Christ stepped (with the Cross) over the devil's head and overcame death.



“Now, the man of Ephraim said to him, “Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites and they reprimanded him sharply” (Judges 8:1)

After Gideon's victory, the devil tried to take away his happiness by dividing the people. Gideon expected everybody to be happy with the victory but those who did not fight with the three hundred said to him: “Why did you not invite us to war?”



So he said to them “What have I done now in comparison with you?” Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?”(Judges 8:2).

What have I done now in comparison with you?

Gideon could have said to them: “I went to war risking my life and the life of my men and you are saying I did not invite you to war!?” But Gideon, due to his humbleness, said to them “You have done everything and we did not do anything. All we did was that we blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, but what you did was greater and more important: you killed Oreb and Zeeb the princes of the Midianites”.

Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?

The vintage is the first harvest of the fruit which is usually the best. The gleaning of the grapes is the leftover of the fruit which is

usually not fully ripened or not perfect. It used to be left for the poor. This was a Jewish tradition during harvest; any fruit that falls on the ground will be left for the poor to collect. Gideon said to them: “Your leftover is better than our best”.

Gideon won the first round of the war with the Midianites by his lack of fear, his faith and courage when he encouraged his men to blow the trumpets, break the pitchers and hold the torches shouting “The sword of God and Gideon”.

He faced the war of pride and dignity by humbleness, so he won the second round of war with amazing humbleness saying: “I am nothing; the smallest of you is better than I”. He had beaten the devil of anger, pride and divisions by his humbleness.

Whenever someone progresses a few steps in his spiritual life, the devil fights him with pride and dignity.

The most famous spiritual war at the beginning of repentance is that of pride. When you repent and walk with God, the devil who encouraged you to sin and was beaten by your repentance will say to

you: “You are clever ... perfect... how happy must you be ... there is no one like you... you are a giant... how did you beat sin? How did you reach such a spiritual level?”

The only way to overcome the war of pride is by saying: “I am nothing ... the smallest child can do much better than I” *“But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1Corinth 15:10)*. Gideon was wise and was not beaten by pride. Perhaps anyone else after this great victory would have confronted them and rebelled for his pride, but this would have divided the people (divided the church) so he absorbed their anger and pride by his humbleness. It is true that *“A soft answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1)*. A humble person wins the round.

Believe me ... humbleness is the principal treatment for any argument between people. The one who knows how to be humble and is not arrogant, will never have a problem.

As long as there is humbleness, the whole house will live in peace and all problems will be solved. The most important thing is to

know how to be humble and feel your weakness saying “The gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim is better than the vintage of Abiezer”, and then you will overcome all problems. ***“God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you? Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that” (Judges 8:3).***

Gideon said to them: your hands are blessed, you won victory over Oreb and Zeeb and I did nothing “What was I able to do in comparison with you?” although arresting the two princes was easy because they ran horrified.

“Then their anger toward him subsided i.e. their souls rested and the devil of anger and jealousy left them when they heard Gideon’s humble words.

You only have to say - with humbleness -: “I have sinned, forgive me, I am not worthy... you are better than me”. You will find that the natural reaction is “their anger toward him subsided when he said that”.

It is a great virtue to learn such words and say them with humbleness. The devils fight us because we do not know how to be humble.

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Chapter Seven

*What occurred
after the war?*



“When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who were with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit” (Judges 8:4).

We find that the three hundred strongest victorious men were exhausted and still in pursuit. So, do not think that when God gives us victory, our life becomes easy: we would still have trials, pain, exhaustion and tiredness. You might struggle, hold on to God, repent and try to do good, but you will be fought from outside and face discrimination because you are a Christian. Do not worry and remember the victorious men who were exhausted and still in pursuit.

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake” (Matthew 5:11).



“Then he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian” (Judges 8:5).

Gideon and the three hundred men were pursuing two other princes, Zebah and Zalmunna. After the war ended, they were exhausted on their way back and they passed by a village called Succoth. Gideon asked the people in the village to give his men food for they were exhausted and wanted to finish their journey.

The people of Succoth had the blessing of sharing the war indirectly by supporting the others; this reminds us of what Jesus Christ said: ***“And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42).***

There could be someone who does not serve nor preach but supports others in their war against evil with a glass of water.

God does not forget even a glass of cold water. There are degrees of warriors, so if we cannot serve or preach the gospel as the apostles did, at least we can encourage them by attending to their simple needs.



“And the leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army? So Gideon said “For this cause, when the Lord has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers!” (Judges 8: 6-7).

This question is sarcastic; they ask Gideon, Have you captured the kings so that you ask for food?

Gideon said to them “When the Lord has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers”.

When the men of Ephraim participated in the war by killing Oreb and Zeeb and were struck by pride and jealousy, Gideon said to them you are better and with great wisdom he kept the unity of his people and avoided divisions. But, if someone refuses to offer a helping hand in serving God, insults the children of God and refuses to abide by the vine who is our Lord Jesus Christ, what will his fate be?

This reminds us of the words of Jesus Christ: *“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2)*

The people of Succoth mock those who go to church and accuse them of being crazy, and mock those who fast or do any spiritual act!!!

Is this all what you can do? Share in the work. God will not forget even a glass of water, He wants to save you, but if you do not want to share at all, you will lose your chance.



“Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. So he also spoke to the men of Penuel, saying “When I come back in peace I will tear down this tower” (Judges 8:8-9).

Gideon went to another village, Penuel, and the people there told him the same hurting words he was told in Succoth, so he responded that when he comes back in peace, he would tear down their tower.

This is a symbol of Jesus Christ's second coming to judge and destroy evil. He will judge all kinds of evil that faced the righteous. No matter how much evil overcomes the children of God and takes away their right, the day will come when God punishes evil.



“Now Zebah and Zalmunna were at Karkor and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew the sword had fallen” (Judges 8:10).

Although a hundred and twenty thousand men died from the enemy troops, Gideon and his men were trying to put an end to the last fifteen thousand and the two kings. This teaches us not to leave any traces of evil in our life. If you stopped stealing, try to stop lying as well. If you have stopped lying, try not to say any useless word.

If you have forgiven someone, but you both do not communicate as before, try to take any chance to get nearer to that person and compliment him/her for he/she might be suffering inside.

Abolish any remaining hatred ... abolish any useless word ...; abolish every evil thought, it is good that you have killed a hundred and twenty thousand but you must remember that there is still fifteen thousand still alive.



“Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while the camp felt secure” (Judges 8:11).

Gideon attacked the Midianites, who used to steal their wheat, and gained victory over them.

“And being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled “ (2 Corinth 10:6).

This is the case during war, but you do not always have to defend yourself against the devil, he attacks and you resist but you can attack him first.

A drug addict might repent and come back to God - God saved him so he became a very active servant looking after other addicts as though he is avenging himself of the devil who beat him and is still beating his brother. If someone repented and came back to God, he should serve others in order to avenge himself from the devil that humiliated him for long and is still humiliating his brothers. Overcome evil, not only in your life but in the lives of your brothers as well.

The way of those who live in tents

The way of those who live in tents is symbolic of the narrow road and a life as if a stranger in the world, so all those who live in tents are strangers.

This was said of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, although they were very rich and God promised them that they will inherit the promised land, they lived in tents till the end of their lives so that they would remember that they are strangers in the world. ***“By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Hebrews 11:9).***

One of the main principles of the spiritual road is to feel like a stranger ... there is nothing permanent in this life. Do not rest because this life will not last and you too will not last in this life ... there will come a time when you leave this tent (body) and be lifted.

This is what St Paul said in his epistle to the Corinthians “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinth 5:1).

The first tents were those of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the first fathers ... those who lived in this life but this life did not live in them, so they remained like strangers.



“When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army. Then Gideon, the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of Heres. And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated him; and he

wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy seven men. Then he came to the men of Succoth and said “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your weary men?” (Judges 8:12-15).

Gideon took revenge from the heads of evil and overcame them, then he went back to the people of Succoth, got hold of a young boy and asked him about the names of the elders who refused him. The boy wrote him the names of seventy seven men. Gideon said to them, here are the two kings about whom you ridiculed me (here is the devil about whom you ridiculed me and said to me go and beat him then come and ask what you want) and he took revenge.

On the day of judgement, God will bring the devil in front of his followers and say to them: you thought he would overcome me but I overcame him and stepped on his head.

So, you also are not worthy because you followed him and were against me. Their condition is described in this verse: *“And said to the mountains and rocks “fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb” (Revelations 6:16).*

Have you ever seen an angry lamb? Of course not, the lamb is a symbol of meekness but a day of anger will come, when the lamb is angry. Our Christ is very meek, patient, loving and sacrificing, but there will be a day of horrific anger for those who live recklessly in sin.



“And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city” (Judges 8: 16-17).

Gideon carried out everything he threatened to do to those who insulted his men. The same will happen when Jesus Christ comes again, everything that he has promised will happen. He will come to reward the righteous and punish the evil. Blessed are those who believe his promises and woe to those who do not believe.



“And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor”? So they answered

***“As you are, so were they; each one resembled the son of a King”
(Judges 8:18).***

What a wonderful situation ... Gideon asked Zebah and Zalmunna, who are symbolic of the devil (like all kings of the Midianites), about the Jewish men they killed in Tabor. They answered him that they looked like him, like sons of a King.

The devil says to Jesus Christ: I have ruined your children who look like you and ruined your image in them, and Christ answers: “You have done something awful and I will never have mercy on you because you ruined my beautiful image in my children and harmed them, so Gideon will kill them (kill the devils)”.



“Then he said, “they were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you” (Judges 8:19).

Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna: the men you killed were my brothers; I would have spared you if you had left them alive. Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us his brothers: ***“For whom He foreknew,***

He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

Every lost/sinful person saddens Christ’s heart.



“And he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise, kill them” but the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he was still a youth” (Judges 8:20).

Gideon had a young son called Jether who was thirteen or fifteen years old. He said to Jether kill them as Jesus Christ says to everyone of us (even when we are weak in our spiritual life); get up and kill the devil ... I condemned him to death.

But Gideon’s son was young and so frightened to kill them although they were tied up. The devil is now tied up. Our Lord Jesus Christ says to everyone of us: hold your sword and kill the devil because he killed and ruined many of my children.



“So Zebeth and Zalmunna said, “Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man is, so is his strength”. So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna and took the crescent ornaments that were on their camels necks” (Judges 8:21).

Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon no one will kill us but you (because he was strong). It is the same with Christ: for no one can kill the devil but our Lord Jesus Christ. True he gave us authority over the devil, but only He can beat him and deliver the final blow. Gideon killed Zebah and Zalmunna and took the crescent ornaments that were on their camels’ necks which were symbols of their glory, pride and victory.



“Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian; But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you, the Lord shall rule over you” (Judges 8:22-23).

This is the first time the people ask for a king to rule over them, but the humble Gideon knows well that he is a judge and not a king, so he refused as though he is saying “I know well my place among you, I am not your king but God is; I have done what I should do and finished my mission but God must remain your King”.

The same with any spiritual father or servant, they have a certain mission but God is the ruler and the King.

The men of Israel asked Gideon to be their king. This is a natural feeling for everyone who sees Christ the saviour and so says: “God you are our King... thy kingdom come ... for you have saved us from the devil and conquered the Midianites. You are our King and we have no one but you”.

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Chapter Eight

*I have a few things
against you*



“Then Gideon said to them, “I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder! For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites. So they answered, we will gladly give them”. And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were around their camels’ necks. Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house” (Judges 8:24-27).

Gideon knew very well that some of the Jews that followed him still had pagan and earthly inclinations. But even so, he made a big mistake by asking them to collect all the gold they confiscated and made a huge gold ephod.

The ephod is a priestly garment worn by priests during the period of Judges and after. ***“Then David danced before the Lord with all his might and David was wearing a linen ephod” (2 Sam 6:14).***

It was sometimes used to ask guidance from God. *“Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelche’s son, “Please bring the ephod here to me” and Abiathar brought the ephod to David. So David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He answered him “Pursue for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all” (1 Sam 30:7-8).*

The pagans also wore golden ephods when they stood in front of idols. *“The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest” (Judges 17:5).*

Thus Gideon had given a permission for the return of paganism to please the people who found pride in worshipping idols. Adultery was part of the pagan rites and the pagan priests were mostly adulterous women like Isabel who spread paganism.

Gideon opened the door for sin and flattered the people at the expense of truth, he made golden ephod “And all Israel played the harlot with it there”. The People had the permission to sin because

Gideon made the golden ephod. If a servant of God permits sin, it will spread and produce more limitless sins.

Gideon's mistake was that after his victory over the Midianites and after killing their kings, he gave himself up to rest and thought of worldly glory. It is truly frightening that after he achieved all this victory, he deviated from the way and led the people to sin.

It became a snare to Gideon and his house
This sin was a black spot in Gideon's life after all the glory, the humbleness, the zeal and prayer, after he witnessed the work of God, and after Christ appeared to him and after he killed the kings of Midian by himself. He allowed paganism to come back and allowed the people to betray their God.

This story is extremely painful but it contains a very important meaning and that is to continue fighting to the end of your days ... fearful of falling in sin. Do not say to yourself: I have served much ... gave God a lot ... it is enough ... I fasted a lot; I can rest now and have a delicious meal. Be careful of such thoughts!!

**It is best to go to heaven fasting, praying striving
and serving**

**It is best if your last moments on earth
are moments of spiritual war**

Beware of giving in to rest and stopping your spiritual strife

Beware of thinking that you do not need to strive anymore

Beware ... for all those who depended on their past,
have had a great fall

This was not the first incident of its kind for after the people of Israel crossed the red sea, led by the prophet Moses, they praised the Lord yet they asked Aaron (during Moses' absence for 40 days on the mountain) to make them a golden calf like what they had in Egypt. They wanted to see a god made of gold in front of their own eyes i.e. they wanted the worldly glory in front of their eyes. Aaron sinned, same as Gideon, and made them what they asked for. When Moses came down, he broke the golden calf and interceded for the people so that God would forgive them.



“Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon” (Judges 8:28).

In the beginning of the story, ***“Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites ..” (Judges 6:6)***. But now, ***“Midian was subdued before the children of Israel..” (Judges 8:28)***. This shows that the devil (Midianites) is now under our feet.

“And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon”. This verse explains to us that Gideon himself (even though he sinned) did not approve of the people’s deviation from God; he obeyed them and made the ephod but did not realize that their sin would escalate. The same happens if you open the door a little bit for evil or sin: you will not be able to shut it or control it.

When Moses came down from the mountain and found the people worshipping the pagan calf, he got hold of it and destroyed it by grinding it and throwing it into the water. He then asked the people

to drink the water so that they would know the bitterness of their action.

“Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powders; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it” (Exodus 32:20).

Moses did not leave any traces of evil, he destroyed the calf totally ... but Gideon was not as strong as Moses, so the people of Israel went back to paganism and adultery. They needed a new saviour to save them. Even if Gideon remained faithful to God, he still needed a saviour every now and then. There is no perfect saviour to save the people completely: not Moses, nor Joshua, nor Gideon nor any others; all these personalities point to our Lord Jesus Christ, The True Saviour.



“Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives” (Judges 8:29-30).

Jerubbaal the son of Joash is Gideon, the name means “enemy of the devil” as we mentioned earlier. He had seventy sons, symbolic of the seventy disciples who went after our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gideon had many women, symbolic of the many souls consecrated to Jesus Christ who are called His brides.



“And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites” (Judges 8:31-32).

Gideon died at a good old age, meaning he did not worship idols. The sin was only related to the people but Gideon as a leader did not deal with this betrayal. He might have repented before he died at a good old age.

As for Abimelech, he will kill his seventy brothers and cause strife due to his desire to rule over the Jews (Judges 9).

Gideon’s relationship with his Cannanite concubine was another mistake that caused a lot of destruction and death.



“So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the house of Jenubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel” (Judges 8:33-35).

The people of Israel forgot what God had done for them, how he saved them from their enemies. They did not show kindness to the house of Gideon (the enemy of the devil). Many times we forget what God has done to save us, and we go back to living for other people and for ourselves.

“You were bought at a price, do not become slaves of men.”

(1 Corinth 7:23).

*Glory be to God for ever,
Amen.*

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