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Introduction

The Lord commands Gideon to make a selection of a small number of his men to go against the Midianites. Three hundred only are selected; and into the hands of these God promises to deliver the whole Midianitish host, Judges 7:1-8. Gideon is directed to go down unto the host in the night, that he may be encouraged on hearing what they say, Judges 7:9-12. He obeys, and hears a Midianite tell a remarkable dream unto his fellow, which predicted the success of his attack, Judges 7:13-15. He takes encouragement, divides his men into three companies, and gives each a trumpet with a lighted lamp concealed in a pitcher, with directions how to use them, Judges 7:16-18. They come to the Midianitish camp at night, when all suddenly blowing their trumpets and exposing their lamps, the Midianites are thrown into confusion, fly, and are stopped by the Ephraimites at the passage of Jordan, and slain, Judges 7:19-24. Oreb and Zeeb, two Midianitish princes, are slain, Judges 7:25.

Verse 1

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon - It appears that Jerubbaal was now a surname of Gideon, from the circumstance mentioned Judges 6:32. See Judges 8:35.

The well of Harod - If this was a town or village, it is nowhere else mentioned. Probably, as *חֶרֶד* (*charad*) signifies to shake or tremble through fear, the fountain in question may have had its name from the terror and panic with which the Midianitish host was seized at this place.

Verse 2

The people that are with thee are too many - Had he led up a numerous host against his enemies, the excellence of the power by which they were discomfited might have appeared to be of man and not of God. By the manner in which this whole transaction was conducted, both the Israelites and Midianites must see that the thing was of God. This would inspire the Israelites with confidence, and the Midianites with fear.

Verse 3

Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return - from Mount Gilead - Gideon was certainly not at Mount Gilead at this time, but rather near Mount Gilboa. Gilead was on the other side of Jordan. Calmet thinks there must either have been two Gileads, which does not from the Scripture appear to be the case, or that the Hebrew text is here corrupted, and that for Gilead we should read Gilboa. This reading, though adopted by Houbigant, is not countenanced by any MS., nor by any of the versions. Dr. Hales endeavors to reconcile the whole, by the supposition that there were in Gideon's army many of the eastern Manassites, who came from Mount Gilead; and that these probably were more afraid of their neighbors, the Midianites, than the western tribes were; and therefore proposes to read the text thus: Whosoever from Mount Gilead is fearful and afraid, let him return (home) and depart early. So there returned (home) twenty-two thousand of the people. Perhaps this is on the whole the best method of solving this difficulty.

There returned of the people twenty and two thousand - Gideon's army was at this time thirty-two thousand strong, and after the above address twenty-two thousand went away. How astonishing, that in thirty-two thousand men there should be found not less than twenty-two thousand poltroons, who would neither fight for God nor their oppressed country! A state of slavery debases the mind of man, and renders it incapable of being influenced by the pure principles of patriotism or religion. In behalf of the army of Gideon we may say, if the best appointed armies in Europe had the same address, bona fide, from their generals as the Israelites had, at least an equal proportion would return home.

Verse 5

Every one that lapped of the water - as a dog - The original word *יָלַק* (*yalok*) is precisely the sound which a dog makes when he is drinking.

Verse 6

The number of them that lapped - From this account it appears that some of the people went down on their knees, and putting their mouths to the water, sucked up what they needed; the others stooped down, and taking up water in the hollow of their hands, applied it to their mouth.

Verse 8

So the people took victuals - The three hundred men that he reserved took the victuals necessary for the day's expenditure, while the others were dismissed to their tents and their houses as they thought proper.

Verse 9

I have delivered it into thine hand - I have determined to do it, and it is as sure as if it were done.

Verse 11

Unto the outside of the armed men - No doubt the vast multitudes of Midianites, etc., which came merely for plunder, were wholly unarmed; but they had a guard of armed men, as all the caravans have, and those guards were on the outside of the multitudes; it was to these that Gideon and his servant came.

Verse 13

Told a dream - Both the dream and the interpretation were inspired by God for the purpose of increasing the confidence of Gideon, and appalling his enemies.

Verse 14

Into his hand hath God delivered Midian - This is a full proof that God had inspired both the dream and its interpretation.

Verse 16

He divided the three hundred men - Though the victory was to be from the Lord, yet he knew that he ought to use prudential means; and those which he employed on this occasion were the best calculated to answer the end. If he had not used these means, it is not likely that God would have delivered the Midianites into his hands. Sometimes, even in working a miracle, God will have natural means used: Go, dip thyself seven times in Jordan. Go, wash in the pool Siloam.

Verse 18

The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon - The word $\chi\text{---}\chi'$ (chereb), $\hat{\alpha}\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\omega}\hat{s}\hat{w}\hat{o}\hat{r}\hat{d}$, is not found in this verse, though it is necessarily implied, and is found in Judges 7:20. But it is found in this place in the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, and in eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. The reading appears to be genuine.

Verse 20

Blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers - How astonishing must the effect be, in a dark night, of the sudden glare of three hundred torches, darting their splendor, in the same instant, on the half-awakened eyes of the terrified Midianites, accompanied with the clangour of three hundred trumpets, alternately mingled with the thundering shout of $\chi\text{---}\chi'$ $\chi\hat{\omega}\hat{x}^{\text{TM}}\chi''\chi''\chi''$ $\chi^{\circ}\chi\hat{\omega}\hat{x}'\chi''\chi\hat{\omega}\hat{x}\hat{y}$ (chereb layhovah ulegidon), $\hat{\alpha}\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\omega}\hat{A}$ sword for the Lord and for Gideon! $\hat{\alpha}\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\omega}$ Origen, in his ninth homily on this book, makes these three hundred men types of the preachers of the Gospel; their trumpets of the preaching of Christ crucified; and their lights or torches, of the holy conduct of righteous men. In some verses of an ancient author, attributed to Tertullian, and written against the heretic Marcion, Gideon's three hundred men are represented as horsemen; and in this number he finds the mystery of the cross; because the Greek letter $\hat{\iota}\hat{\pi}$, (tau), which is the numeral for 300, is itself the sign of the cross. The verses, which may be found in vol. v. of the Pisaurian Collection of the Latin heathen and Christian poets, Advers, Marcion., lib. 3, ver. 18, as being very curious, and not often to be met with, I shall here subjoin: -

Ex quibus ut Gideon dux agminis, acer in hostem,
 Non virtute sua tutelam acquirere genti
 Firmatusque fide signum petit excita menti,
 Quo vel non posset, vel posset vincere bellum,
 Vellus ut in noctem positum de rore maderet,
 Et tellus omnis circum siccata jaceret,
 Hoc inimicorum palmam coalescere mundo;
 Atque iterum solo remanenti vellere sicco,
 Hoc eadem tellus roraret nocte liquore,
 Hoc etenim signo praedonum stravit acervos.
 Congressus populo Christi, sine milite multo:
 Tercenteno equite (numerus Tau littera Graeca)
 Armatis facibusque et cornibus ore canentum.
 Vellus erat populus ovium de semine sancto.
 Nam tellus variae gentes fusaeque per orbem,
 Verbum quod nutrit, sed nox est mortis imago.
 Tau signum crucis et cornu praeconia vitae,
 Lucentesque faces in lychno spiritus ardens.
 $\hat{\alpha}\hat{\epsilon}\hat{\omega}$ Gideon, keen in arms, was captain of the host,

And acquired redemption for his people, but not by his own power.
 Being strengthened in faith, his heart was influenced to ask a sign
 By which he might know whether or not he should be successful in battle.
 A fleece was so placed by night, that it might be wet with dew;
 And all the surrounding earth remain dry.
 By this he was to learn that he should gain the victory over his enemies.
 The sign was reversed; the fleece remaining dry while all the ground was moist;
 And by this sign he was to know that he should slaughter those troops of robbers.
 The people of Christ conquer without any military force;
 Three hundred horsemen, (for the Greek letter T, tau, is the emblem of the number),
 Armed with torches, and blowing with trumpets.
 The fleece of the sheep are the people sprung from the Messiah,
 And the earth are the various nations dispersed over the world.
 It is the word which nourishes; but might is the image of death.
 Tau is the sign of the cross; and the trumpets, the emblems of the heralds of life;
 And the burning torches in the pitchers, the emblems of the Holy Spirit.

We see here what abstruse meanings a strong imagination, assisted by a little piety, may extract from what was never intended to be understood as a mystery.

Verse 21

They stood every man in his place - Each of the three companies kept its station, and continued to sound their trumpets. The Midianites seeing this, and believing that they were the trumpets of a numerous army which had then penetrated their camp, were thrown instantly into confusion; and supposing that their enemies were in the midst of them, they turned their swords against every man they met, while at the same time they endeavored to escape for their lives. No stratagem was ever better imagined, better executed, or more completely successful.

Verse 22

Fled to Beth-shittah - This is no where else mentioned in Scripture.

Zererath - This and Tabbath are nowhere else to be found.

Abel-meholah - This was the birth-place of the prophet Elisha, 1 Kings 19:16. It was beyond Jordan, in the tribe of Manasseh, 1 Kings 4:12. The Zartanah, mentioned in this last quoted verse, was probably the same as Zererath. Its situation corresponds well with Abel-meholah.

Verse 23

The men of Israel gathered - It is very likely that these were some persons whom Gideon had sent home the day before, who now hearing that the Midianites were routed, went immediately in pursuit.

Verse 24

Take before them the waters unto Beth-barah - This is probably the same place as that mentioned John 1:28, where the Hebrews forded Jordan under the direction of Joshua. To this place the Midianites directed their flight that they might escape into their own country; and here, being met by the Ephraimites, they appear to have been totally overthrown, and their two generals taken.

Verse 25

They slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb - These two generals had taken shelter, one in the cavern of the rock, the other in the vat of a winepress; both of which places were from this circumstance, afterwards called by their names.

Brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon - Oreb signifies a raven and Zeeb a wolf. In all ancient nations we find generals and princes taking their names from both birds and beasts; the Romans had their Gracchi, jackdaws; Corvini, crows; Aquilini, eagles, etc. We have the same in our Crows, Wolves, Lyons, Hawkes, Bulls, Kidds, etc. Among barbarous nations the head of the conquered chief was often brought to the conqueror. Pompey's head was brought to Caesar; Cicero's head, to Mark Antony; the heads of Ahab's children, to Jehu, etc. These barbarities are not often practiced now, except among the Mohammedans or the savages of Africa and America; and for the credit of human nature it is a pity that such barbarous atrocities had ever been committed.