

the Midianites were captured. So started the rout of the enemy "For there fell 120,000 men that drew the sword".

After this great victory the people wanted to make Gideon the king. He refused and told them that God should rule over them. During the next forty years there was peace in the country.

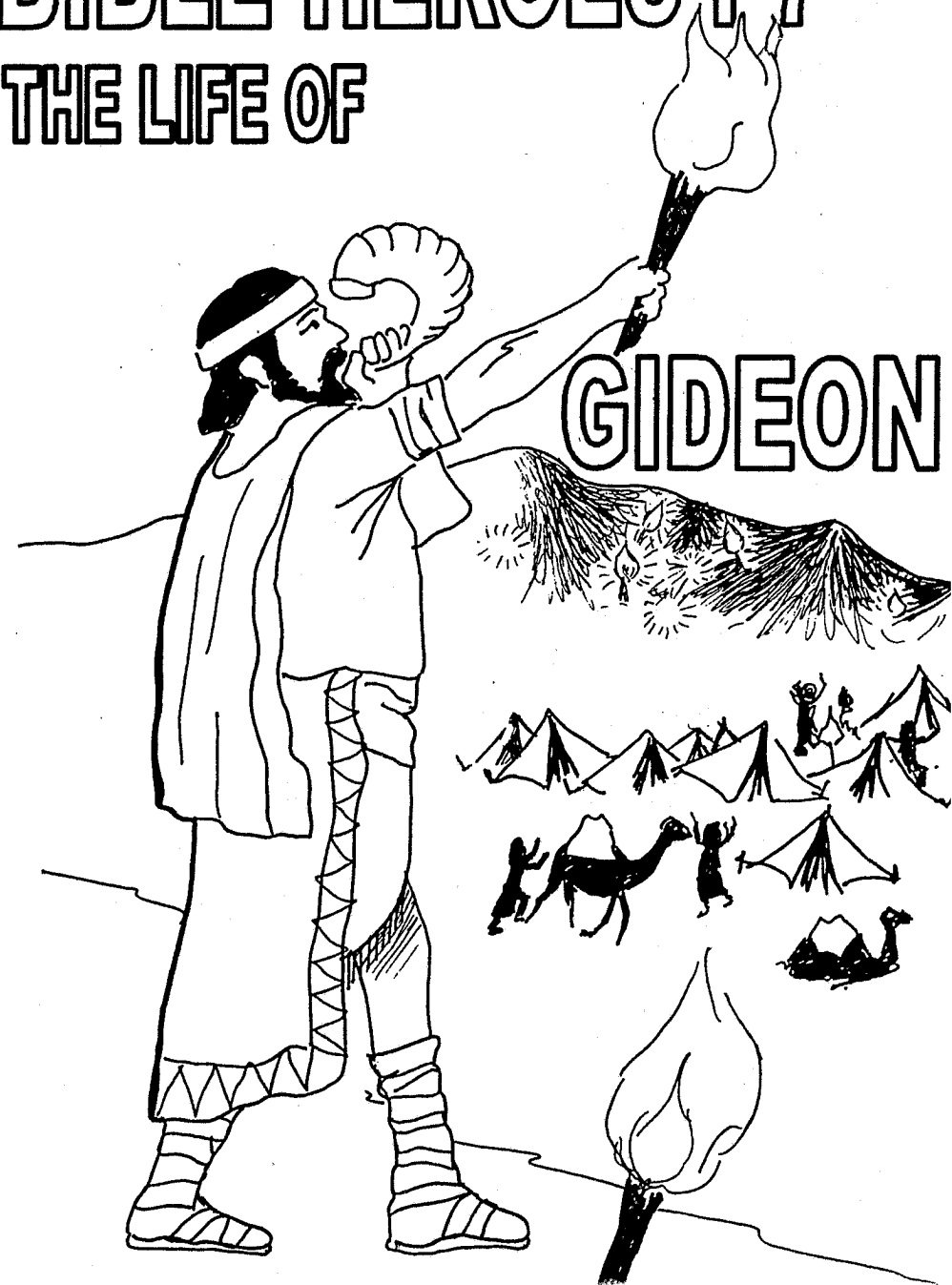
You can read more about Gideon in Judges chapters 6-8.



BIBLE HEROES : 7

THE LIFE OF

GIDEON



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The people of Israel were disobedient to God and so He punished them by letting their enemies win battles against them. When Gideon was a young man it was the Midianites who were in control of the land. They took the best of the harvests for themselves and left the Israelites only a little.

One day Gideon was busy threshing wheat behind a winepress to hide it from the Midianites when an angel came and sat under the nearby oak tree. He spoke to Gideon about the sad state of affairs and said "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent thee?"

Gideon was rather nervous, but the Lord told him, "Surely I will be with thee and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man".

Gideon went indoors and prepared some meat, cakes and some broth. The angel told him to put these on a rock. Then the angel touched the food with his staff. A fire came up out of the rock and burnt them up.

That night the Lord told Gideon to break down the altar to Baal, the heathen god and build one to God on top. Gideon was afraid to do this in the daylight so he did it at night.

The next morning the men of the city were furious and wanted to kill Gideon. However, Gideon's father said, "Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save him? He that will plead for him let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning. If he be a god, let him plead for himself".

The Midianites and men of the east were waiting to fight. "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet". The men of Israel gathered around him. Gideon wanted God to prove that He would save Israel by his hand. He would put a fleece on the ground and if in the morning there was only dew on the fleece and not on the ground Gideon would believe God. And that is what happened.

Gideon was still doubtful and the next night asked God to make the ground dewy but let the fleece stay dry. God did so that night. The fleece was bone dry.

So Gideon became leader and set off to fight the Midianites. God said he had too many men because if they defeated the Midianites with a big army they would say they had done it themselves; however if they defeated a large army with a small number of people they would recognise that it was all God's doing.

He spoke, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid let him return." 22,000 went home. However, 10,000 were still too many. They came to water. Some men lapped like dogs scooping up water in their hands but the rest got on their knees and drank. The Lord said unto Gideon, "By the 300 men that lapped will I save you" The rest went away.

That same night the Lord told Gideon to take his men and go down to the enemy. If Gideon was afraid to fight he could first go down with his servant Phurah to the enemy camp. One of the Midianites had a dream and Gideon overheard him tell a friend. He saw a cake of barley bread roll down the hill and crush a tent. His friend said, "It must be the sword of Gideon for God has given him the victory".

Gideon went back and thanked God. Then he divided his men into three groups of 100 each. He gave each empty jars and a lamp. They hid the lamps inside the empty jars. Gideon took a trumpet and each man had a trumpet too. "When I blow on the trumpet, I and all that are here with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout "The sword of Lord and of Gideon."

They did as Gideon had told them, breaking the jars and then holding up the lamps and shouting "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon". Gideon's men surrounded the Midianites who fled from them and all the Midianites attacked one another in their confusion. The men of Gideon chased the enemy. Other men joined them and two princes of