
Judges 7

Judges 7:1–25

Gideon Defeats Two Leaders of Midian

Outline of Chapter 7:

- Vv. 1–8 **God culls Gideon's fighting force from 32,000 to 300**
- Vv. 9–15 **God gives Gideon a bonus sign (the interpretation of an enemy's dream)**
- Vv. 16–22 **Gideon's small fighting force throws Midian into great confusion**
- Vv. 23–25 **Reinforcements are called in to capture all the fleeing Midianites**

Chart Index:

Introduction: In the previous chapter, Gideon had sent messengers out to several tribes and he got a fairly reasonable response; 32,000 men volunteered to fight against the forces of Midian. Now, as Gideon looks out over his troops, probably the one thing going through his mind is that he does not have enough soldiers. After all, the Midianites and their allies were like an invasion of locusts in their midst. Although I tend to be wary of large numbers in Scripture, according to Judges 8:10, there were perhaps 135,000 enemy soldiers in Israel at that time. Even Gideon's original 32,000 men were not quite a match for them. And Gideon, although he is feeling slightly better about being the leader in this attack, is still not comfortable. However, in this chapter, God will sift through these men for a small number of crack soldiers. In fact, although Gideon begins with 32,000 men, God will reduce that number to 300. The purpose in this was to indicate clearly to Gideon and to all of Israel that God was still in command and that God Himself would defeat the enemy. You will recall that the eastern invaders were like locusts upon the land for their number and impact. God will take only 300 men and defeat this enemy of Israel—in fact, they will be so soundly defeated in this and the next chapter that Israel will never again have to deal with the Midianites. God chose to do this for several reasons, but one of them was Gideon required of God clear proofs that it was God Who was speaking to him and giving him direction. Now that God convinced Gideon of that, God now expects Gideon to show some faith in God's power, which means that Gideon is going to take 300 men into battle against thousands of men.

Near the end of this chapter, we will have one of the more gruesome plays on words to be found in all of Scripture.

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God Culls Gideon's Fighting Force from 32,000 to 300

Slavishly literal:

And so arose early Jerub-baal (he is Gideon) and all of the people who [were] with him. And so they encamped against a spring [or, well] of Harod and a camp of Midian was to him from [the] north from a hill of the Moreh in the valley.

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Moderately literal:

Then Jerub-baal (he is Gideon) and all the people who [were] with him arose early and camped beside the well of Harod. The camp of Midian was to the north of him at the hill of Moreh in the valley.

Then Jerub-baal (that is, Gideon), along with all of the people who were with him arose early and they camped beside the well of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them at the hill of Moreh in the valley.

It is quite interesting that we go immediately to the use of Jerub-baal as Gideon's name. His fight against Midian was symbolic of his fight against Baal. Where they were encamped was by the well or spring of Harod. We do

not know who this Harod was, but two of his descendants became a part of David's mighty men (II Sam. 23:25 I Chron. 11:27).¹ The *spring of Harod* means *spring of fright (or, trembling)*. Barnes suggests, and this makes more sense, that this was not a person but that the spring was so named at that time because of those who returned home in fear.²

Where the camp of Midian was seems to be in some dispute:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...the camp of Midian was on the north of them...
NASB	...and the camp of Midian was on the North side of them...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...the camp of Midian hath been on the south of him...

As you will recall, Young tends to be the most literal of all the translators; however, they all side up against him here. We first have the prepositional phrase *to him* followed by the feminine singular of *tsâphôwn* (צַפּוֹן) [pronounced *tsaw-FOHN*], which mean *north*. Strong's #6828 BDB #860. We must assume a typo on the part of Young here as none of the six words translated *south* are even close to this word. *Tsâphôwn* is preceded by the *mîn* preposition (*from*).

This is followed by the prepositional phrase *from a hill of Moreh*. The first word is the feminine singular construct of *gîv'ê'âh* (גִּבְעָה) [pronounced *gîv'ê'-GAW*], which means *hill*. Strong's #1389 BDB #148. We do not know where the hill of Moreh is, although there is certainly speculation. It is only mentioned here, although the *plain of Moreh* (mistranslated the *oak of Moreh*) is found in Gen. 12:6 and Deut. 11:30. We are uncertain as to the relationship between these two places. The NIV Study Bible places the camp of Midian about four miles northwest of Israel, with this drama beginning to unfold south of Mouth Tabor between the Jordan River and the end of the Kishon River.

And so said Y^ehowah unto Gideon, “Many the people who [are] with you from My giving of the Midianites into their hand lest boasts against Me Israel to say, ‘My hand delivered me.’”

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So Y^ehowah said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are many more than My giving of the Midianites into their hand lest Israel boasts against me, saying, ‘My hand delivered me.’”

Then Jehovah said to Gideon, “There are too many people with you for me to give Midian into Israel's hand. They will ultimately take the credit, saying, ‘My hand delivered me.’”

The first thing that God says to Gideon is the masculine singular adjective construct of *rah^bv* (רַב) [pronounced *rah^bv*], which means *many, much, great*. Strong's #7227 BDB #912. The first verb after that is rather difficult; it is the Qal infinitive construct of *nâthan* (נָתַן) [pronounced *naw-THAHN*], which means *give, grant, place, put, set*. Strong's #5414 BDB #678. It is preceded by the *mîn* preposition and it has a 1st person suffix, and altogether, they are translated *for me to give* (NASB, Owen); *for My giving* (Young), *for me to deliver* (Rotherham); *for me to deliver* (NIV). The preposition *for* (*lâmed* = ל) and *from* (*mîn* = מ) do not look at all alike so there is no mixup here. Occasionally, *mîn* is used to mean *more than* when placed with a verb, which is one possible explanation here. The rendering is still rough, but it makes more sense. *Mîn* = Strong's #4480 BDB #577.

Then we have the archaic conjunction *pen* (פֶּן) [pronounced *pen*], which means *lest, peradventure; or so that + a negative*. Strong's #6435 BDB #814. The verb which follows is the Hithpael imperfect of *pâ'ar* (פָּאָר) [pronounced *paw-AHR*], which means *to beautify, to glorify*. In the Hithpael, it means *to glorify (onself), to boast, to get glory, to be glorified*. Strong's #6286 BDB #802. God wants there to be no question in their minds as to Who is fighting this battle. As I Cor. 1:29 reads: **That no man should boast before God.**

¹ When Shammah is called a Harorite in I Chron. 11:27, it is simply the confounding of the Hebrew letters ד and ר (*dâleth* and *rêhsh*).

² The NIV Study Bible suggests that this could refer to the fear of the Midianites when Israel attacked, although I personally don't hang with that.

“And now proclaim please in ears of the people, to say, ‘Who is fearful and trembling; let him will return’; and he will depart from a mountain of the Gilead.” And so returned from the people twenty and two thousand and ten thousand remained.

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“And now proclaim please in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return’; and he will depart from the mountain of Gilead.’ Therefore, twenty-two thousand [men] from the people returned and ten thousand remained

“Now announce to the people, ‘Whoever is afraid, let him return’; and he will depart from Mount Gilboa.” Then, 22,000 men returned to their tents and 10,000 remained.

What we have here is an unusual command; God removes from the army all of those who would be fearful in battle. To give you an idea, even though God is on the side of Israel and even though all of these are volunteers, a full two-thirds of the men returned to their homes based upon being afraid. This was in keeping with the Law of Moses. If you will recall Deut. 20:8: **“Then the officers will speak further to the people, and they will say, ‘Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers’ hearts melt like his heart.’ ”**

If you will recall, Gilead is on the other side of the Jordan from where they are. Whereas, it is possible that the troops gathered east of the Jordan, it is unlikely, simply for the reason that they would have to cross the Jordan twice. Unfortunately, we have very few familiar geographical clues in this chapter. The NIV Study Bible suggests that this is Mount Gilboa rather than Mount Gilead (they suggest that it is actually another name for Mount Gilboa). Gilead is the name found in the Septuagint (actually, Galaad). In the Hebrew, Gilead is *gil^e ‘âd* (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced *gil-GAWD*]. Strong’s #1568 BDB #166. Gilboa is *gil^ebbô ‘a* (גִּלְבּוֹ‘א) [pronounced *gil-BOH-ah* or *gilb-BOH-ah* or *gilb-BOH-ahg*]. Strong’s #1533 BDB #162. Therefore, the words are close, but not so close that a simple scribal error could account for the mistake (if it were a scribal error, then the scribe had to flat out incorrectly write the proper noun). The latter location would make the most sense, geographically speaking, as it is south of Mount Tabor, which would allow the initial action of this chapter to take place in between the two mountains, which seems to fit with everything else. Obviously there would have had to have been a mistake in the handling of the text or a change if this occurred, because, even though three of the consonants are the same, the two which are different are very different, as well as being located in different places. Therefore our options are two at this point: (1) there is a mistake in the text; or, (2) there is a mountain west of the Jordan with the name of Gilead (just as there apparently is an unidentified mountain on the northern border of Judah called Seir, as found in Joshua 15:10). The latter explanation is not out of the question. This is all taking place in the northern border of west Manasseh; since there is an east and a west Manasseh, those in the west may have temporarily named one of their mountains Gilead as sort of a tie to their brothers on the other side of the Jordan; this name, apparently, did not last.

The amount of men involved here is interesting. Back in the first chapter of Numbers, each tribe would have 50,000 or so men above the age of 22. This would give us an average fighting force of 25,000–30,000 in each tribe’s army. Now here, out of 3½ tribes, we’re getting 32,000 men total. This means that, after all of these years in the land, the Israelite tribes are sending in roughly a third of the men that they originally had available for war. Now, either that is the case, or there were a lot fewer Israelites in the land at the beginning of the book of Numbers.

In any case, Gideon’s original force of 32,000 has been reduced to 10,000; however, these are men who do not fear to go into battle. The cowardice of the ones who have left could have infected the entire army of Gideon; and, although Gideon is not comfortable with the arrangement, he is still willing to go forward with the war against Midian. Then God riffs his army again. God would see to it that there would be no way for the people of Israel to glorify themselves when they defeat Midian.

And so said Y^ehowah unto Gideon, “Still, the people many; bring them down unto the waters and I will test them for you there; and he is who I say unto you, ‘This one will go with you’; he [even] he will go with you; and of all whom I say unto you, ‘This one will not go with you’; then he will not go.”

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Then Y^ehowah said to Gideon, “Still, the people [are too] many. Bring them down to the waters and I will test them for you there. And it is [he] whom I say to you, ‘This one will go with you’; he [even] he will go with you; and all of whom I say unto you, ‘This one will not go with you’; he [even] he will not go with you.”

Then Jehovah said to Gideon, “There are still too many people. Bring them down to the river and there I will test them for you. I will choose the ones who will go with you and the ones who will not.”

The first thing that God says to Gideon is the adverb ʿôwd (עוֹד) [pronounced *gôhd*] (it is also written עוֹד), a word which acts as both an adverb and as a substantive. In both cases, it carries the idea of continuation. As an adverb it means *still, yet, again, besides*. Strong’s #5750 BDB #728. There is no verb in the first phrase and the adjective which describes the people is *ra^{bv}* again (רַב) [pronounced *rah^{bv}*], which means *many, much, great*. Several translations went with *too many*. Strong’s #7227 BDB #912. In I Sam. 14:6b, Jonathan will tell his armor bearer: “Jehovah is not constrained from delivering by many or by a few.”

The first verb is the Hiphil imperative of *yârad* (יָרַד) [pronounced *yaw-RAHD*], which means *to descend, to go down*. In the Hiphil, it means *cause to go down, cause to come down, to bring down*. Strong’s #3381 BDB #432. With the verb we have the 3rd person masculine plural suffix. Once they are brought down to the waters, God tells Gideon that He will do the Qal imperfect of *tsâraph* (צָרַף) [pronounced *tzaw-RAHF*], which means *to test* [the purity and the genuineness of a metal]. The purity and genuineness of the people were being tested here. According to Barnes, this is more accurately a word which connotes the separating of a metal from the dross; it is the final step in the refining of a metal. Strong’s #6884 BDB #864.

Then we have the *wâw* conjunction and the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *to be* is found here. Sometimes this is translated *and it will be, and it will come to pass*; and sometimes it is a more integral part of the sentence. This is followed by the relative pronoun. This three words are variously translated *and he of whom* (*The Amplified Bible*, Owen), *and it hath been, he of whom* (Young), *Therefore, it shall be that he of whom* (NASB), and *it shall be that he of whom* (Rotherham). You may be wondering why the more literal translators have over a half dozen words to render these three Hebrew words, but the relative pronoun often implies the verb *to be*. In my most literal translation, I will go with *and he is who*.

Then, literally, we have: I say unto you, “This one will go with you”; he [even] he will go with you. This gives us: And so said Y^ehowah unto Gideon, “Still the people many; bring them down unto the waters and I will test them for you there; and he is who I say unto you, “This one will go with you”; he [even] he will go with you. The next phrase is *and all of whom*, and then we have almost exactly the same wording as before, except with the negative added.

And so he brought down the people unto the waters; and so said Y^ehowah unto Gideon, “All who lap with his tongue from the waters as how laps the dog, you will set him to himself; and all who bow down upon his knees to drink.”³

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Then he brought down the people to the waters and Y^ehowah said to Gideon, “All who lap from the waters with his tongue as how the dog laps, you will set him to himself; and all who bow down upon his knees to drink.”

³ According to the REB, in the Greek text, this verse ends with the additional phrase *on the other*. What God said to Gideon, according to the REB is: ‘Make every man who laps the water with his tongue like a dog stand on one side, and on the other every an who kneels down and drinks.’ In my Greek text, the beta version, it does **not** read that way.

The Gideon led the people down to the river and Jehovah said to Gideon, “Those who cup the water in their hands and lap at it as a dog laps, you will set them aside. The others will get on their knees to drink.”

For those who lap from the water as does a dog, God tells Gideon the Hiphil imperfect of *yâtsag* (אֵצַג) [pronounced *yaw-TSAHG*], which means *to set, to station, to place*. It appears to be only found in the Hiphil. Strong's #3322 BDB #426. This is followed by the lamed preposition and masculine singular pausal. A pausal is a word denoted either by an *ʿatnâh* or a *sillûg* (as well as certain other strong disjunctive accents). These are similar to vowel points which were added long after Scripture was written and they indicate that there is a break in speaking at this point. To us, that simply means the insertion of a comma or a semi-colon. Interestingly enough, this is one of the few marks of punctuation to be found in the Massoretic text.

There will be two groups of people. There will be the men who lap at the water like a dog; which sounds as though (by contrast) that they are cupping the water in their hands and lapping at the water. The others get on their knees to drink. The separation of the two groups appears to be arbitrary, but Thieme suggests that those who lapped at the water were the more alert, that such a drinking habit allowed them to still look around and to keep tabs on the changing situation. Those who were drinking on their knees were the more vulnerable and they let down their guard for just a moment. Barnes writes: *They who threw themselves on the ground and drank freely were the more self-indulgent; while they who, remembering the near presence of the enemy, slaked their thirst with moderation, and without being off their guard for an instant, were the true soldiers of the army of God.*⁴ This test would determine who would go with Gideon and who would remain.⁵

And so was [the] number of the lappers with their hands unto their mouths⁶ three hundred men; and all [the] rest of the people knelt down upon their knees to drink waters.

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And the number of lappers with their hands to their mouths was three hundred men; and all the rest of the people knelt down upon their knees to drink the water.

Only three hundred cupped the water in their hands and lapped at it like a dog. The remainder knelt down to drink.

Although the verb follows the *wâw* consecutive at the beginning of this verse, it is not found in the English until way further into the sentence. Out of the remaining 10,000 men, only three hundred cupped the water and lapped at it like a dog would. A dog is going to lap at the water on a regular basis, but it does not let its guard down. Now, the number of men whom God has chosen to go with Gideon is almost humorous. Abram, back in Gen. 14:14, had a larger fighting force of his own personal workforce. He took with him 308 men to rescue Lot.

And so said Y^ehowah unto Gideon, “By three hundred of the men the lappers, I will deliver you [all] and I have given Midian into your hands. And all the people will go, a man to his home.”

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And then Y^ehowah said to Gideon, “By means of the three hundred men, the lappers, I will deliver you and I will give the Midianites into your hand. And all of the people will go, each man to his home.”

And then Jehovah said to Gideon and to the 300 men who lapped at the water: “I will deliver you and I will give the Midianites into your hand.” The remaining people returned to their homes.

⁴ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 434. This is the first time I think I have seen the word *slaked* used in a sentence.

⁵ Josephus actually gives the exact opposite interpretation of this passage; he calls the one who lapped water as fainthearted. However, considering that the fainthearted had been already sent home, this is incorrect. See Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 363.

⁶ In case you are using a NRSV, they completely misplace the phrase *putting their hands to their mouths*, although they own up to it in a footnote..

This verse has some slight variations when it comes to translating it, enough which bear looking at:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then said Yahweh unto Gideon— By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let [all the rest of] the people go every man to his own place.
My initial translation	And so Y ^h owah unto Gideon, with three hundred the men the lappers: “I will deliver you [all] and I will give Midian into your hand.” And all the people, they went a man to his home.
NASB	And the LORD said to Gideon, “I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the <i>other</i> people go, each man to his home.”
NJB	Yahweh then said to Gideon, ‘With the three hundred who lapped the water, I shall rescue you and put Midian into your power. Let the people as a whole disperse to their homes.’
Owen's Translation	And Yahweh said to Gideon with the three hundred men that lapped, “I will deliver you and I will give the Midianites into your hand. And all the people let go each to his home.” ⁷
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And Jehovah saith unto Gideon, ‘By the three hundred men who are lapping I save you, and have given Midian into thy hand, and all the people go, each to his place.’

We begin, literally, with *And so Y^howah said unto Gideon*. Then we have the bêyth preposition, which means *in, by with, against*. Strong's #none BDB #88. Now, if the key were just that Gideon was simply *with* these people, the preposition ךִּימ (כּי) [pronounced *geem*] would have been used instead. It simply refers to an association, a coupling (although, like all prepositions in the Hebrew, it is more complex than that). Strong's #5973 BDB #767. This is where I first messed up; I didn't carefully examine the preposition. The implication of bêyth here is probably *by means of*. This is in keeping with the various uses of bêyth as well as the context.

What God says, literally, is: “*By 300 of the men the lappers, I will deliver you all and I have given Midian into your hands.*” The *you all* refers to Gideon, the 300, the excess men, and to all of Israel. God would deliver all of Israel by these 300 men. Whether the remaining portion of this verse is a part of what God said to Gideon or whether it described what happened, is determined by a simple vowel point. The difference between a wâw consecutive and a wâw conjunction is whether it has a short *e* or an *a* under it; these vowel points were added almost two millenniums after this was originally written based upon the reading of the text. The wâw consecutive (which is not found here), would indicate a furtherance of the action. That is, God would not be speaking, but this would be a portion of the narrative. With the simple wâw conjunction, God is still probably speaking. I do two close pass through's when I examine each verse and I hope to catch any errors by the second time through.

McGee makes an application here which completely eluded me: *Do you know what we have here? It is one of the finest lessons concerning divine election and man's free will. This is the way they work together. God said to Gideon, “I am going to choose the men that I want to go with you, but the way I will do it is to let them make the choice. Bring them down to the water, and the ones who lap water like a dog, just going through and throwing it into their mouths, are the ones I have chosen. You can put aside those men who get down on all fours and take their time drinking. I don't want them.”*⁸ These men made their choice and God made His choice and they coincided. Those who were alert to the situation in which they found themselves were the ones chosen by God in eternity past to fight for Israel. Those who let their guard down, God had rejected them in eternity past. God did not make any man get down on all fours nor did He make any man lap at the water. They acted out of their own free will and God, in His perfect foreknowledge, elected certain ones from eternity past. McGee continues: *You can argue about divine election and free will all you want to, but it works. You cannot make it work out by arguing, but it sure works out in life, friends. each one of the ten thousand men in Gideon's army exercised his free will. God did not interfere with one of them as far as their free wills were concerned. Today God, though His Son Jesus Christ, offers you the free gift of salvation. It is a legitimate offer. It is a sincere offer from God Himself. He says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* (John 6:37). *Now don't tell me*

⁷ I took some liberties, as I always do, with the punctuation of Owen's translation (which is not punctuated).

⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 156.

*that you can argue about election right now. You cannot. You can come to God if you want to come. If you don't come, I have news for you—you were not elected. If you do come, I have good news for you—you were elected. That is the way God moves.*⁹

There were two groups of people; those who were with Gideon who lapped the water as a dog would; God promised Gideon that He would see to it that they defeated the Midianites. The remaining people were returned to their homes. McGee again: *Now these 300 chosen men often have been misunderstood. As a student, I went down to a little church in Georgia. When I got there, a dear little lady wearing a sunbonnet said to me, "Mr. McGee, we have here just a little Gideon's band." They didn't have a Gideon's band! They had the most discouraged, lazy folk I have ever seen in my life. That is not Gideon's band. Gideon's band was a group of dedicated me, willing to die to deliver Israel, men who had their hearts and soul in this matter. May I say to you that these men lapped up water like a dog because they were after the Midianites and not after water. They will drink after the battle is over.*¹⁰

These proportions are more significant than one would suppose at first. Gideon began with 30,000 men. He kept sending out messengers to various tribes until he felt relatively secure that he would have enough men to defeat the enemy. God whittled these men down by a factor of 100; only 1% of those who volunteered were utilized by God. In the Old Testament, it was typical that God used only a few men and He endowed only a very small percentage of men with the Holy Spirit. Of all those called, only a few are chosen.

Our application today—we should not be shocked to find that only 1% of the believers in this world have even a clue as to what is going on and who have a full and a powerful life. Now, all believers have been baptized with the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13), but not all believers utilize God's Spirit. In fact, I would not be surprised if 99% of the believers in this world spent 99% of their lives out of fellowship, quenching the Spirit.

Now there is a great touch of irony here that you might have missed. Gideon is checking this situation out and he wants to make damn sure that it is God Who is in charge. When that is clear, then he gathers just as many men as he possibly can. Certainly, God is in charge, but Gideon is going to make certain that things will go as they are supposed to. So God takes away most of his insurance. God removes the majority of the men which Gideon called and gives him 300 men who drink funny. Gideon put God to the test, so now God puts Gideon to the test.

And so they took the provisions the people in their hand and their trumpets and all of [the] men of Israel he sent a man to his tents and to three hundred the men, he held fast. And a camp of Midian was to him below in the valley.

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And so they took the provisions [of] the people in their hand and their trumpets and he sent all of the men of Israel to their tents, and he held fast to the three hundred men. Below him in the valley was the camp of Midian.

So the 300 men took the provisions of the people and their trumpets; then Gideon sent these men back to their tents, while keeping the 300 men. The camp of Midian was below them in the valley.

The men who volunteered came with their food, their gear, their trumpets and whatever they could dig up for weapons. When someone went to war, they didn't just show up and say, "Here I am; outfit me." What they brought would be what they would eat, what they would need for a change of clothes, and what they would need to fight with.

The simple question would be, *what happened with all of the provisions?* That is, were they retained by those who brought them? Were they taken by the 300 men? We will need some translations in order to determine that:

⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 157.

¹⁰ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 157.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	So the people took provisions in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his home, and retained those 300 men; and the host of Midian was below him in the valley.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So the people took provisions in their hand and their horns but every man of Israel besides sent he away every man to his home, whereas the three hundred men he retained. Now the camp of Midian was beneath him in the vale.
NASB	So the 300 men [lit., they] took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon [lit., he] sent all the <i>other</i> men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And the people take the provisions in their hand, and their trumpets, and every man of Israel he hath sent away, each to his tents; and on the three hundred men he hath kept hold, and the camp of Midian hath been by him at the lower part of the valley.

In the English, our sentence structure tends to be fairly simple. We begin with our subject and then our verb and then the direct object (or predicate nominative). In the Hebrew, every verb already has number, person and gender, so that the pronouns *he, she, I, they, you* are already placed into the verb. We have a sign which indicates a direct object in the Hebrew, but not one which indicates the subject. Often we can match up the subject with whatever else in the verse has the same gender, person and number as the verb, although that is not always the case. What we have here, again, is a sentence which is difficult to unravel, not because it is complex, but because the author understands what it means, but does not completely convey that to the reader. Considering Gideon's temperament and vocabulary, I would say that he is very likely the author of this chapter and its bookends. How should I put this? Gideon's actions, as well as his writing, appear as though they could stand to have an editor or a re-write. That is, if he should go back and re-do some things and re-say and re-write some things, it would all come together better than it does.

Now, this sentence reads, literally: [And so \[they\] took \[the\] provisions](#) [the direct object] [the people in their hand and their trumpets...](#) My personal inclination would be that the provisions mentioned belong to the people in general, as did the trumpets and the *they* of this verb belongs to the 300 men, the lappers. It is the placement of *the people* in between the two direct objects and the fact that not everyone brought trumpets and the fact that the 300 men would use the trumpets which leads me to translate as did the NASB, that the subject of the verse is the 300 men. The NASB is an interesting translation at times; it clarifies the subject in this verse twice (*300 men* and *Gideon* do not occur in this verse, but are inserted by the translators to clear things up). The NASB does footnote these additions and give the actual renderings in the margins. The remainder of the verse is fairly simple. Gideon sends the excess back to their tents and he keeps the 300 men given him by God.

The first group of men then took these things up and returned to their tents. Of the remaining, we have the Hiphil perfect of *châzaq* (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*], which means *to be strong, firm, to strengthen*. The root means *to fasten upon, to seize, to grow firm*; and this word came to mean *to be strong, firm, to strengthen*. The Hiphil means *to take, to strengthen, to repair, to hold fast*. Strong's #2388 BDB #304.

The last phrase is, literally: [And a camp of Midian was to him below in the valley.](#)

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God Gives Gideon a Bonus Sign (The Interpretation of an Enemy's Dream)

[And so he was in the night the that and so said unto him Y^ehowah, "Arise; go down against the camp for I have given him into your hand.](#)

Judges
7:9

[And it was in that night that Y^ehowah said unto him, "Arise and go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand."](#)

[Then, that night, Jehovah came to Gideon and said to him, "Arise and go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand.](#)

At first glance at this verse, I had assumed that God was moving Gideon out against the enemy. They bēyth preposition which is used could mean *against the camp*. However, its primary meaning is *in, into*, so what we have is either "Arise; go down into the camp." or "Arise; go down against the camp." Gideon was given no time to think about this. God is ready for him to attack the camp of Midian.

Owen has that *hand* is in the feminine plural with a 2nd person masculine suffix, but it is the feminine singular. God adds this note that Midian has been given into Gideon's hand so that Gideon would not be afraid. This is the camp which Gideon would defeat and God had guaranteed him that; so going against the camp should not be a problem for Gideon. However, God realizes that there is still some reticence in Gideon's actions.

<p>"And if fearing you to go down, go down, you and Purah, your young man, unto the camp.</p>	<p>Judges 7:10</p>	<p>"And if you are fearing to go down, [then] go down, you and Purah, your young man, into the camp.</p>
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"And if you are afraid to go down, then go with Purah, your young man, into the camp.

We begin with the wāw conjunction and the hypothetical particle and the Qal active participle of yârê' (אָרַי) [pronounced yaw-RAY] means *fear, fear-respect, reverence, to have a reverential respect*. As a participle, this can act like a noun or a verb. Here it behaves like a verb. Strong's #3372 BDB #431. With it is the 2nd person pronoun. Apparently, some have given the meaning of this protasis "If you are afraid to go (alone or unarmed)..." but that is not the meaning to be taken here. The fear refers to going down to the camp of Midian to war with 300 men. In the previous verse, Gideon is told to go up against Midian in battle, however God recognizes Gideon's reticence, even though Gideon is no doubt holding his tongue and not expressing it.

Purah is called the masculine singular of na'arîym (נַעֲרִים) [pronounced nah-ġgah-REEM], originally meant *young men*. It can refer to an infants, a youth, or to a slave or a servant. Strong's #5288 –5289 BDB #654. Now, why does God send Gideon into the camp of the enemy with his armor bearer (or, his personal servant)? God does not want Gideon to arise the next morning and wonder if it was all just a dream. Did he really go down into the camp of Midian or did he simply dream that he did. With his personal servant, he can verify to himself what he saw and heard.

God recognizes that there is still some unbelief in Gideon, and knows what would be convincing. So God sends Gideon and his servant to the outskirts of the camp of Midian. It is here that God will give Gideon another assurance of his victory. Gideon will find out that the Midianites are more afraid of God than Gideon is of them. They consider their defeat to be a done deal. What is our application? As believers, there will be times that we lack courage and have times of doubt. If we are simply filled with the Spirit and taking in God's Word on a daily basis, He will bolster our faith. There may be times that you think that you are the only believer who thinks correctly (now, I am referring to a person grounded in God's Word), and sometimes you will need faith to hold to that. Now, I am not referring here to being simply hard-headed or stupid about something; and it is highly unlikely that you will be the only person who recognizes the truth; however, in your own personal periphery, that may be the case. I personally recognize the strength and importance of God's Word and recognize that it should be communicated verbally from a pastor to his congregation; however, to listen to the hundreds of sermons on television and the radio, you would think that God's Word is simply a jumping off point to launch into some other topic. However, we learn what God's role is in our lives as well as our place in this world by seeing how He has guided His people in the past. We simply have to make the application that God is not going to speak to us audibly while awake or in dreams, nor will he find it necessary to appear to us in some human or supernatural apparition. **God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many times and in many ways, in these last days, He has spoken to us in [His] Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the ages** (Heb. 1:1–2).

“And you will hear what they say and afterwards strengthened are your hands and you will go down against the camp.” And so he went down, he and Purah, his young man unto an extremity of the ranks by fifties who [were] in the camp.

Judges
7:11

“And you will hear what they say and afterwards, your hands will be strengthened, and you will go down against the camp.” So he and Purah, his young man, went down to the outskirts of the ranks by fifties who [were] in the camp.

“Then you will hear what they have to say and afterwards, you will become strong enough in your will to attack their camp.” So Gideon and Purah went down to the outskirts of the enemy forces encamped nearby.

Where he and Purah went to was the masculine singular construct of qâṭseh (קָצֵה) [pronounced *kaw-TSEH*], which means *end, extremity, outskirts*. Strong’s #7097 BDB #892. The ones which are spoken of next are the masculine plural adjective (used as a substantive) of chāmushîym (חַמֻּשִׁיִּם) [pronounced *kheh-moo-SHEEM*], which means *armed, in battle array, armed for battle*. Young renders this *fifties*; Scofield, *ranks by five*; Barnes, *arrayed in divisions or ranks*. This word is found only in Ex. 13:18 Joshua 1:14 4:12 Judges 7:11 and it is nearly identical with two other words meaning *fifty* and *fifth*; the chief difference being a vowel point or two. Strong’s #2571 BDB #332. God knew that Gideon was still in doubt even though Gideon was no longer expressing that doubt aloud, and He made allowances for that. God arranged for Gideon to go with a servant to check out the enemies. God requires that Gideon be as unwavering as the 300 elite troops that he was leading.

And Midian and Amalek and all sons of [the] east were lying in the valley as locusts for the multitudes and with regards to their camels not of a number as the sand which [is] upon the seashore for multitude.

Judges
7:12

Midian and Amalek and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as locusts with regards to multitude and with regards to their camels, innumerable as the sand which [is] upon the seashore with regards to multitude.

Midian, Amalek and tribes from the east were encamped in the valley as locusts; and their camels were as innumerable as the sands upon the shore.

After the word *locusts*, we have the lamed preposition, the definite article and the masculine singular noun rō^bv (רֹב) [pronounced *roh^bv*], which means *multitude, abundance, greatness*. Strong’s #7230 BDB #913.

When speaking of the camels, we have the negative construct of ‘ayin (אֵין) [pronounced *AH-yin*], which means *naught, nothing*; or it can be used as a particle of negation; *no, not*. Strong’s #369 BDB #34. It is followed by the masculine singular noun miç^ophâr (מִיֻּצָפָהָר) [pronounced *mis^o-FAWR*] means *number, counted, numerical total*. With the negational construct, it means *innumerable*. Strong’s #4557 BDB #708.

The point that is being driven home is that there are thousands upon thousands of enemy soldiers encamped within the borders of Israel; and they have so many camels that they alone are like a locust invasion—there is almost an uncountable number of camels. In the book of Numbers, Amalek was living elsewhere. **“Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.”** (Num. 13:29). By contrast, we have Gideon and 300 men. Now this is a sign which God had not done before. He had never taken a minuscule number of men and gone against so many.

We should stop for a moment and consider the camel; and I will let Keller give you some details you may not have known: *The new “invention” which made it possible for the Midianites to terrorise Israel was the taming of the camel! Tame camels are likely to have been something quite new in the ancient world. The people of the Bronze Age probably knew nothing of them. Egyptian texts never mention them. Even in Mari, next door to the great Arabian*

desert, there is no single reference to them in any of that vast collection of documents.¹¹ Keller goes on to say that the references in the Pentateuch to camels were added later; however, there are so many, that I doubt that. Furthermore, there is only one word in the Hebrew for camel, which is used throughout the Old Testament. However, it is possible that the use of camels in warfare in large numbers was a relatively new thing at this time in the ancient world.

And so came Gideon and behold a man recalling to his associate a dream and so he said, “Behold, a dream I dreamed: and, behold, a round loaf of bread of barley tumbled into a camp of Midian and so he came unto the tent and so he struck him and so he fell and so he turned him upwards and fell the tent.”

Judges
7:13

Then Gideon came and, lo, a man recounting a dream to an associate; and he said, “Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, behold, a round loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and it came to a tent and it struck it [the tent] and it fell and it turned it upwards; and the tent fell.”

When Gideon arrive outside the extremity of the enemy camp, he overheard a soldier speaking to another soldier. “Listen, I have dreamed this incredible dream. A round loaf of barley bread tumbled into our camp and it landed upon a tent and the tent fell, while the bread landed upright.”

One of the things which you may or may not have noticed is that the vocabulary of this chapter and the previous one are very similar; this would suggest that both are authored by the same person (who is very likely Gideon). What the man was doing was the Piel participle of çâphar (ç Ɔ Ɔ) [pronounced *saw-FAHR*], which means, in the Qal, *to number*; in the Piel, it means *to recall, to recount, to declare*. Strong’s #5608 BDB #707. Who is was recalling this dream to is called the masculine singular substantive rêa´ (r Ɔ Ɔ) [pronounced *RAY-ahg´*], which means *associate*. Strong’s #7453 BDB #945. Both of these words were found in Judges 6.

What he observed was the masculine singular construct of a word found only here and guessed to mean *a round loaf*. The verbal cognates (Strong’s #6749–51) are of no help to us here. Keil and Delitzsch go into great detail as to what it doesn’t necessarily mean, but they have no strong conclusions either.¹² Strong’s #6742 BDB #853. In fact, we can only make a reasonable guess as to what it means by what follows: a masculine singular construct lechem (l Ɔ Ɔ) [pronounced *LEH-khem*], which means *bread*. Strong’s #3899 BDB #536. The grain is given next, which is the feminine plural of s´ Ɔ râh (s Ɔ r Ɔ) [pronounced *soh-RAW* or *sgo-RAW*], which means *barley*. Strong’s #8184 BDB #972. What this loaf of barley bread did was the Hithpael participle of hâphak´ (h Ɔ Ɔ) [pronounced *haw-FAHK´*], which means *to turn, to overturn*. The Hithpael is the reflexive intensive; so this bread is turning over rapidly on its own. We find this particular construction of this verb in only three passages: Gen. 3:24 Judges 7:13 and Job 37:12. What is particularly notable is that Gen. 3:24 reads: *...and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life*. This tie to a brandished sword makes it easy to interpret this loaf of barley as standing for the sword of Gideon. Strong’s #2015 BDB #245.

The way it turned after being struck was the preposition lâmed and the adverb ma´al (m Ɔ l) [pronounced *MAH-ğahl*], which means *the upper part*. This adverb is only found with prefixes and suffixes, and here it means *upside down* (with a lamed) by Owen, NASB, and Rotherham; both Young and literally from the NASB, we have the opposite rendering *upwards*. Strong’s #4605 BDB #751.

When it came to a halt, the tent does the Qal perfect of nâphal (n Ɔ Ɔ) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. Strong’s #5307 BDB #656. This verb actually occurs twice, the first time having a 3rd person masculine singular subject (which could either refer to the *bread* or to the *tent*).

The barley loaf rolls into the camp of Midian and at this point it is difficult to determine who struck whom. Both the tent and the loaf of barley are in the masculine singular, so the striking of one against the other is actually

¹¹ Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition), p. 172.

¹² Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 250.

unclear—that is, who is striking whom is not clear in this dream. I will assume that it is the loaf of barley, in its tumbling, which strikes the tent. That would cause the tent to fall. When *he* turns *him* upwards, it would be the loaf of barley turning the tent upwards. At the end, the verb is given a different subject, so that we can assume the previous verbs had the barley loaf as their subject. However, just for you, I will list what other translators have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...a found cake of barley bread tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came as far as the tent—and smote it that it fell, and turned it upside down, and the tent lay along.
NASB	“...a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down (lit., upwards) so that the tent lay flat.”
REB	‘...a barley loaf rolling over and over through the Midianite camp; it came to a tent, struck it, and the tent collapsed and turned upside down.’
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	‘...a cake of barley-bread is turning itself over into the camp of Midian, and it cometh in unto the tent, and smiteth it, and it falleth, and turneth it upwards, and th tent hath fallen.’

This round loaf of barley is Gideon and his men. They roll into the camp of Midian, their size seemingly insignificant, as the barley loaf is to the tent (although the Midianites speaking about this dream do not catch this particular parallel). They strike the tent of Midian and flatten it. The Midianites discussing this dream recognize that the barley loaf stands for Israel, but they do not realize that its size relative to the tent is significant (or, is as significant as it really is). Barley is worth half the price of wheat because it is an inferior grain (II Kings 7:1). Apparently, a loaf of barley bread is horrible tasting. It fits in with the feelings that Midian had toward Israel. This is a foretelling of what is to come when Gideon and his 300 men strike the camp of Midian.

And so answered his associate and he said, “Not this; is [it] not a sword of Gideon ben Joash, a man of Israel; has given God into his hand Midian and all the army.”

Judges
7:14

And his associate answered and said, “This can be none other than the sword of Gideon ben Joash, a man of Israel. God has given into his hand Midian and all the army.”

Then his associate answered him and said, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given all of Midian and its army into his hand.”

We'd better glance at a few translations here:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then responded his neighbour and said:— Nothing else is this, than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel,—God hath delivered into his hand both Midian and all the host.
NASB	And his friend answered and said, “This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand.”
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And his companion answered and saith, ‘This is nothing save the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel; God hath given into his hand Midian and all the camp.’

What the associate or companion says is the negative construct *ʾayin* again, (אִין) [pronounced *AH-yin*], which means *naught, nothing*; or which can also be used as a particle of negation; *no, not*. Strong's #369 BDB #34. This is followed by the feminine demonstrative *this*. Then we have another negative and the interrogative (or the hypothetical) particle. These are a lot of particles and they are translated variously as *this can be nothing other than* (NIV); *nothing else is this, than* (Rotherham), *this can only be* (NAB, NJB); *this is nothing less than* (NASB); *this is nothing save* (Young); *this can be none other than* (REB). The barley loaf *tumbling* and the sword *being turned every which way* (in Gen. 3:24) are the same verb, which is why we tie the barley loaf to the sword of Gideon.

So what has happened, is that Gideon and his servant sneaked near to the outskirts of the camp of Midian and happened to hear two soldiers speaking. One tells of a dream which he had and the other interpreted that dream. And note that the enemy knew who Gideon was and that they saw Gideon as the great leader of Israel (which is certainly not how Gideon viewed himself). This is a pretty impressive sign to Gideon and one that he did not

specifically ask for. This confirms what God said to Gideon originally. “And Jehovah turned towards him and said, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you? Certainly I will be with you, and you will defeat Midian as one man...I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and I will give Midian into your hands” (Judges 6:14, 16b 7:7b). It is interesting to note that, even though dreams were often ways God spoke to Israel prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture, here the dreamer and the dream-interpreter are both outside the tribe of Israel. Let me add that Keil and Delitzsch go into much more detail about the interpretation of this dream, but I personally didn’t buy into the details that they gave and therefore do not record them here.¹³

And so he was in a hearing of Gideon a recounting of the dream and his interpretation, and so he worshiped. And so he returned unto a camp of Israel and so he said, “Arise and has given Y^ehowah into your hand the camp of Midian.”

Judges
7:15

And so it was when Gideon heard a recounting of the dream and its interpretation, that he bowed himself [in worship]. Then he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Rise up, for Y^ehowah has given the camp of Midian into your hand.”

Then, when Gideon heard the recounting of this dream and its interpretation, he worshipped God. Then he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Rise up because Jehovah has given the army of Midian into your hand.”

The verb *to be* followed by a *bêyth* preposition and an infinitive construct often refers to *when* something occurred. Therefore, Young renders this: *And it cometh to pass, when Gideon heareth the narration of the dream and its interpretation*; the NASB: *And it came about when Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation*; Rotherham: *And it was so when Gideon heard the story of the dream, and the interpretation thereof*. What Gideon heard was the masculine singular construct of *miç^ophâr* (מִצְפָּאֵר) [pronounced *mis^o-FAWR*] means *number, counted, numerical total, a recounting*. Here, where nothing is being counted, it refers to a *recounting of*. The dream is not being *re-numbered*; it is being *recounted*. Strong’s #4557 BDB #708.

When Gideon heard this dream and their understanding of it, he did the Hithpael imperfect of *shâchach* (שָׁחַח) [pronounced *shaw-KHAKH*], which means *to bow, to bow down*. The Hithpael is the reflexive intensive, which involves personal motivation. It simply means that he *makes himself bow low*; which involves motivation, grace-orientation, authority-orientation and doctrine. In this context, this means likely to prostrate oneself completely on the ground, as was the common mode of worship. Strong’s #7817 BDB #1005.

What God gave into the hand of Israel is masculine singular construct of *machăneh* (מַחֲנֵה) [pronounced *mah-khuh-NEH*], which means *camp, encampment*. It can refer to the *camp* or to those in the camp, who are often *soldiers* or *troops*. Strong’s #4264 BDB #334.

The implication of this verse is that Gideon, right outside the camp of the enemy, fell down on his face and worshipped God.

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Gideon’s Small Fighting Force Throws Midian into Great Confusion

And so he divided three hundred of the men [into] three companies and so he put trumpets into a hand of all of them and pitchers empty and torches in the pitchers.

Judges
7:16

Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies. He placed trumpets into the hand of all of them and empty pitchers and torches in the pitchers.

¹³ See Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, pp. 250–251.

Gideon then divided his men into three companies, giving to each one a trumpet, an empty pitcher and a torch.

These three hundred men are separated into three rō`sh (רֹאשׁ) [pronounced *roshe*], which means *head, top, chief, front, choicest*. In the plural, this can mean *divisions* of an army, *company, band*. Strong's #7218 BDB #910. Now, you must realize that this was warfare in its infancy so some of the things which are done early on in the Bible seem to be fairly simple strategies. However, this was a strategy which Israel just began to employ and they did it often. This will be done again in Judges 9:43 I Sam. 11:11 II Sam. 18:2 (see also Gen. 14:15). This is obviously a very effective way to maximize the use of one's army. This way the enemy can be struck from several sides or surrounded if necessary or forced toward a certain direction, yet the number of companies is not so unwieldy as to make strategy difficult. One of the acronyms of the military is KISS; *keep it simple, stupid*. The strategy and tactics of a military organization must be easy to communicate and easy to follow and something which several hundred or several thousand soldiers can keep to.

They were given trumpets and the masculine plural of kad (כַּד) [pronounced *kahd*], which means *water-jar, jar, pitcher*. I prefer to stay with *pitcher*, as it is too easy to visualize a glass jar, which would be incorrect. Strong's #3537 BDB #461. According to Freeman, who depends here on a man named Lane, that in Cairo an executioner and a torch bearer will walk the streets at night. These torches burn constantly, but have to be waved in the air, or at least exposed to the open air, to give off a flame and more light.¹⁴ The pitchers in Gideon's time obviously covered the torches and restricted the oxygen flow to the torches.

Apparently, the idea was to give the impression that there was a great army ready to attack, and that a small portion of this army carried torches in order to provide light for the battle. It would not occur to the Midianites that every one of their enemies carried a torch. When a policeman shines his light on you at night, or has the bright lights of his vehicles shined on yours, there is a certain intimidation factor there (I only know this through rumor, of course).

And so he said unto them, "From me you will be looking and so you will do and behold, I am coming into the extremity of the camp and he is just as I will do so you will do."

Judges
7:17

So he said to them, "You will be looking from me and so you will do. Observe, [when] I am coming into the extremity of the camp, it will be just as I do, so you will do."

Then he said to them, "You will watch me carefully and follow my lead. When we come to the outskirts of the enemy camp, then you will do exactly as I do."

The Hebrew, although not difficult from the standpoint of vocabulary, is rather convoluted, so we will examine a few translations:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then he said unto them, On me shall ye look and in like manner shall ye do, and lo! when I am coming unto the outermost part of the camp then shall it be that as I do so shall ye do.
NASB	And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And he saith unto them, 'Look at me; and thus do; and lo, I am coming into the extremity of the camp—and it hath been—as I do so ye do;

The meaning is fairly simple; there is just some Hebrew to struggle with. What I would like to speculate is that Gideon is nervous, he has a plan, but he is nervous. Gideon begins with the mîn preposition, which means *away from, out of, from*; (Strong's #4480 BDB #577); the 1st person suffix; and the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of rā`âh (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], which means *to see, to look*. Strong's #7200 BDB #906. **From me, you will be looking...**

¹⁴ *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 124.

Then we have the conjunction and the adverb kên (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*] is generally rendered *so*. Strong's #3651 BDB #485. This is followed by *you will do*. Then we have the wâw conjunction and the demonstrative particle hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced *hin-NAY*] *lo, behold*. More freely, we can go with *observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out, holy crap*. Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243. Although I cannot justify this in the Hebrew, the temporal adverb *when* seems to be implied here (you will find it in Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible*, the NIV, the REB and in the NASB (among others)).

The kaph preposition and the relative pronoun together mean *just as* (kaph = Strong's #none BDB #453. `âsher = Strong's #834 BDB #. Together they = Strong's #834 BDB #455). Now once Gideon gets part way through the sentence, his vocabulary is fairly simply and his grammar is clean and clear.

Note that Gideon does have a plan and a strategy for attack, which he comes up with on his own. He does not have to go to God to determine what to do. This is much different from the believer who goes to God in fervent prayer about inconsequential things and yet does not follow the clearest of commandments.

“And I have blown in the trumpet, I and all who [are] with me and you [all] have blown in the trumpets. Also, you [are] round about all the camp and you have said, ‘For Y^ehowah and for Gideon.’ ”¹⁵

Judges
7:18

“And I will blow into the trumpet, I and all who [are] with me and you [all] will blow in the trumpets. Furthermore, you will encircle all the camp and you will say, ‘For Y^ehowah and for Gideon.’ ”

“First, you will encircle the camp. Then, when I blow into the trumpet, and the company with me, then you will all blow into your trumpets. Then you will cry out, ‘For Jehovah and for Gideon.’ ”

The verbs used throughout are in the Qal perfect, the perfect referring to a completed action. Obviously, the Qal perfect is not referring to a here to an action which has already been completed. It is an action to be accomplished in the future and an action which will take up a definite period of time.

In the second line (which may be a continuation of the first), we begin with the adverb gam (גַּם) [pronounced *gahm*], which means *in addition to, moreover, also, furthermore*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. This is followed by the 2nd person masculine plural, personal pronoun, which often implies the verb *to be*. Then we have the preposition çâbîv (צָבִיב) [pronounced *saw^b-VEE^BV*], which means *circuit, round about, encircle*. Strong's #5439 BDB #686.

The orders which Gideon are giving are not in sequential order. They will not blow the trumpets and then encircle the camp; they will encircle the camp and they will be looking towards Gideon. Well, obviously, not all of them will see Gideon; in fact, the majority of them will not actually see Gideon, they will see the men what are in Gideon's direction, who will also be looking at men who are closer to Gideon. What will occur is not 300 trumpets blaring all at once, but there will be Gideon's trumpet, then there will be the trumpets of those who see him; then there will be the trumpets of those who see those who see him; etc. Gideon does not command his troops to listen for his trumpet, but to watch him. Obviously, some will not be able to see him. So the effect will be a blast of trumpets at one end of the camp; then a blast of trumpets on the ends but on both sides of the camp. Then a blast of trumpets further along both sides of the camp; then another blast further along; etc. The Midianites are in camp and they will hear the trumpets encircle their camp. They will also here the cry *for Jehovah and for Gideon*. For men in the deepness of sleep, this will be startling.

¹⁵ The Aramaic and Syriac codices read: “A sword for Y^ehowah and for Gideon.” My thinking is that this was changed in the codices to agree with v. 20.

And so went Gideon, and hundred men who [were] with him, into an extremity of the camp [at] a head of the watch the middle (only a standing up they took a stand the ones guarding). And so they blow into the trumpets and smashed the jars that [were] in their hand.

Judges
7:19

The Gideon and a hundred men who [were] with him went into the extremity of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch (certainly a standing up, they were caused to take a stand the ones guarding). And so they blew into the trumpets and they smashed the jars that [were] in their hands.

Then Gideon and the hundred men who were with him went to one end of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch at the changing of the guard. Then they blew their trumpets and smashed the jars which were in their hands.

In the midst of this verse, it begins to get a bit murky, so let's see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So Gideon came, and the hundred men what were with him, unto the outermost part of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, they had but newly set the watchers,—and they blew with the horns, and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hand.
NASB	So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.
NIV	Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And Gideon cometh—and the hundred men who <i>are</i> with him—into the extremity of the camp, <i>at</i> the beginning of the middle watch (it hath only just confirmed the watchmen), and they blow with trumpets—dashing in pieces also the pitchers which <i>are</i> in their hand;

Recall the Gideon has separated the men into three companies of 100 each, and he takes his group to one end of the camp. When he does this is given by the masculine singular construct of rô`sh (רֹשׁ) [pronounced *roshe*], which means *head, top, chief, front, choicest*. Strong's #7218 BDB #910. What this is the head of is the feminine singular of mish^emereth (מִשְׁמֶרֶת) [pronounced *mish'MEH-reth*], which means *guard, watch, charge*. Here we are referring to a particular time period. Strong's #4931 BDB #1038. This is followed by the adjective tîykôwn (תֵּיכוֹן) [pronounced *tee-KOHN*], and it means *middle*. Strong's #8484 BDB #1064. The middle watch was 10 pm to 2 am. The enemy had been asleep for a couple hours and they would be at their most logy at that time. Furthermore, there had been the changing of the guard as well.

This is followed by the adverb `ak^e (אֲכֵ) [pronounced *ahk^e*], and it means *surely, certainly, no doubt, only, only this once*. Strong's #389 BDB #36. Then we have the Hiphil infinitive absolute of qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced *koom*], which means, in the Qal stem, *to stand, to rise up*. Strong's #6965 BDB #877. The Hiphil infinitive absolute is a verb in the active voice with causative action, used as a verbal noun, generally used as a complement of affirmation. This is followed by the Hiphil perfect of the same verb. To stay with the Hebrew, we would render this *a rising up, they arose* or *a standing up, they took a stand*. The direct object of this is the masculine plural, Qal active participle of shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced *shaw-MAR*], which means *keep, guard, watch, preserve*. Here, it is used as a noun to describe the ones keeping guard and it could be rendered *those watching, those guarding*. Strong's #8104 BDB #1036. The reference here is to the recent changing of the guard at 10 pm. The Hebrews (the Hebrews and their neighbors) split their nights into three watches and the Greeks split the night into four watches. Putting together the information which I got from two different places, the first watch went from 6 pm to 10 pm; the second from 10 pm to 2 am; and the third from 2 am to 6 am. Since it is almost always light at 6 pm and not always at 6 am, I am thinking that this would make more sense if it went from 7 pm to 7 am, or from dusk to daylight. The NIV Study Bible suggests the dusk to dawn, with the changing of the guard occurring at 10 pm and

2 am. There are additional Old Testament references to this in Ex. 14:24 I Sam. 11:11 Psalm 63:6 90:4 119:148 130:6 Lam. 2:19. Barnes goes along with what I would find more intuitive, that this watch began at 11 pm.

At the changing of the guard (the guards who just got up were rather tired from only a couple of hours sleep; those who just went off to sleep were worn out; and the men of the camp had been asleep for a few hours. Then Gideon struck, but not as most warriors would strike. They had torches or lamps in these jars (which were opaque). They suddenly blew their trumpets and broke the jars (this is so the lamps could suddenly be seen). McGee: *The Midianites and Amalekites were among the nomadic tribes of the desert. They had raided the land of Israel and seized their crops and supplies. They had a very loose organization. They moved as disorganized nomads through the desert and did not have an organized army. They had set a few guards about the camp but most of the people were asleep, here, there, and yonder. They did not expect to be attacked at night. To begin with, it is difficult to see at night. So Gideon posted his three hundred men in three groups around the camp. At a certain time they blew their trumpets, and broke the pitchers so that the light shone out. Each trumpet represented the fact that there were probably several hundred of the enemy present. Imagine the Midianites waking out of a sound sleep. The first thing they did was start whacking with their swords in every direction. The Israelites did not have swords. All they did was hold the light so the Midianites could go after each other. It was a regular riot! The Midianites soon fled over the hills into the tall timer and out of that area.*¹⁶

And so blew three of the companies into the trumpets and so they broke the jars and so they held fast in a hand of their left with the torches and in a hand of their right the trumpets to blow. And so they cried, "A sword for Y^howah and for Gideon."

Judges
7:20

The three companies then blew into the trumpets, broke the jars and held firmly the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands. They then cried out, "A sword for Y^howah and for Gideon."

Then the three companies blew into the trumpets, broke their jars, holding the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands. They then cried out, "A sword of Jehovah and for Gideon."

A verb in the midst of this verse is the Hiphil imperfect of *châzaq* (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*], which means *to be strong, firm, to strengthen*. The root means *to fasten upon, to seize, to grow firm*. The Hiphil means *to take, to strengthen, to repair, to hold fast*. Strong's #2388 BDB #304. Notice that if they have both hands full, that they cannot draw their swords, if they even had swords. McGee: *When they went into battle, their cry was to be, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The interesting thing is that Gideon did not have a sword and neither did any of the three hundred men. You see they were under the rule of the Midianites, and the Midianites did not let them have an arsenal. They kept the weapons and the swords for themselves. So Gideon's strategy employed pitchers, lamps, and trumpets.*¹⁷

We have a lot of parallels between Gideon and various Biblical characters who have gone before him. He is almost a mixture of several important believers, when it comes to similar incidents. This battle is not unlike the battle at Jericho, where Israel marched around the city of Jericho for seven days and then blew their trumpets, and the walls of Jericho suddenly came down (Joshua 6).

It is interesting that the author quoted Gideon's order as "For Jehovah and for Gideon" whereas what the men said was "A sword for Jehovah and for Gideon." We do not necessarily have a contradiction here, as the what was first recorded just did not include everything that they were to say. Furthermore, since we are only a small handful of verses apart, if all of this were manufactured after the fact, then the verses would have coincided completely.

I have seen some analogies between our light and the light (torches) of Gideon's men and this is tied to Philip. 2:14–15, but I don't think the analogy is strong enough to really make. Certainly it is true that we are lights

¹⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; pp. 159–160.

¹⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 159.

to the world, as we know our Eternal Savior and we know the gospel; however, I don't really see that as apropos to this portion of Scripture.

And so they stand a man under him round about with respect to the camp and so ran all the camp and so they cried out and so they caused [them] to flee.

Judges
7:21

So [each] man stood under him [i.e., under the command of Gideon] round about the camp. Then all the camp ran and cried out and fled.

So each man stood fast under the command of Gideon while the enemy camp fled for their lives, crying out.

The preposition after *man* is tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced *TAH-khahth*], which means *underneath, below, under beneath*. Strong's #8478 BDB #1065. Affixed to the preposition is the 3rd person masculine suffix. Gideon was in charge and the men were under his command, standing as they were supposed to stand.

The final verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Hiphil Imperfect of nûṣַץ (נָוַץ) [pronounced *noose*], which means *to flee*. In the Hiphil, it means *to put to flight, to cause to flee*. Strong's #5127 BDB #630. This is read *and so they fled* (the Qal stem) but written *put [them] to flight* (which is the Hiphil stem).

Their enemy did not even put up a fight. They were awakened, they had no idea what was going on other than they were being attacked, and they began to make a run for it. This is not too unlike Moses and the children of Israel when the pharaoh and his men had them pressed up against the sea of reeds. **But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid! Stand firm and observe the deliverance of Jehovah which He will accomplish on your behalf today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again. Jehovah will fight for you while you remain silent."** (Ex. 14:13–14; see also II Chron. 20:17). We will see a very similar fleeing of the enemy in II Kings 7:7.

And so they blew three hundred of the trumpets and so set Y^howah a sword of a man against his associate and against all the camp. And so fled the camp as far as Beth-shittah Zererah as far as a border of Abel-meholah by Tabbath.

Judges
7:22

Then they blew the three hundred trumpets and Y^howah set [each] man's sword against his associate and against all the camp. Therefore the camp fled as far as Beth-shittah, Zererah and as far as Abel-meholah by Tabbath.

And, while Gideon's men continued to blow their trumpets, Jehovah set each man's sword against his own army. They fled in several directions and got as far as Beth-shittah and Zererah; and as far as Abel-meholah, which is near Tabbath.

In all the confusion, the Midianites and their allies turned on one another, as there were a lot of them and the confusion got the better of them. After *associate*, we have the wâw conjunction, the bêyth preposition, the construct of *all* and *the camp*. It is actually a fairly simple group of words which can mean basically two different things: *even in all the camp* (Owen, Rotherham); or, *and against all the camp* (NASB, Young).¹⁸ As you see, we have the best of the translators disagree here. Although the primary meaning of the bêyth preposition is *in*; in the previous phrase it is used to mean *against his associate* (which essentially agrees with the NASB, Owen, Rotherham and Young). Since it is used that way in the first clause, then it is reasonable to go with that meaning in the second.

Barnes gives an apt description of the melee which followed: *The effect to the Midianites would be, that they were surrounded by a mighty host. Their own camp being in darkness, as soon as the confusion of flight began they would mistake friends for foes, and fleers for pursuers. When once fighting had begun by the first casual mistake, the clashing of swords and the shouts of the combatants in the camp, accompanied by the continuous blowing of*

¹⁸ These were not direct quotes from these translators but the gist of this phrase.

Gideon's trumpets outside, would make it appear that the whole of the enemy was in the camp. Suspicion of treachery on the part of their allies would also be likely to arise in the minds of Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabs.¹⁹ We will see this kind of confusion repeated in I Sam. 14:20 and II Chron. 20:23 (see also Isa. 9:21 19:2 Ezek. 38:21 Haggai 2:22 Zech. 14:13). After going through this chapter and reading a few comments by others, I have a firmer grasp as to why Gideon's men did what they did. Certainly, not every man carries a trumpet into battle and not many would carry torches either, for the simple reason that they need at least one hand free to wield a sword. Even if they only had one hand free for a sword, that would place them in a precarious situation right there. Therefore, when the Midianites et. al., found themselves surrounded by torches and trumpets, they had assumed that they were being attacked by perhaps 10 to 100 times the number of men than Gideon's 300.

Gideon and his men came up over a hill and *struck* the Midianite camp. Nelson has the Midianites fled along a quarter circle route heading first west and then north along the valley. ZPEB has them traveling due east, also along the valley. The problem is that no one knows where Beth-shittah is, and it is mentioned only here. *Shittah* means *acacia*, which is why the NASB renders this as Beth-acacia.²⁰ Acacia trees grow in the plains of Moab and in the peninsula of Sinai. Barnes suggests that Beth-shittah could be another name for Shuttah, found in the valley of Jezreel, or for Scythopolis or Beth-shan. Obviously, he is only guessing at this point.

In most of the major translations, we have the city of Zererah; however, not only is this a poor transliteration, but it may be faulty as well. In the Hebrew, we have ts^érêrâthâh (צֵרֶרְתָּה) [pronounced ts^éray-RAW-thaw]. It is suggested by the Syriac, Arabic and various manuscripts that the second rêhsh should be a dêleth (the second *r* should be a *d*). Strong's #6888 BDB #866. Although this form is found only here, it is suggested that it might be Zeredah in II Chron. 4:17 and it might also be Zarethan in I Kings 4:12 or Zeredah in I Kings 11:26 (which would then place it in Ephraim; I should mention that these spellings vary somewhat from translation to translation). My educated guess is that because of the sentence structure, it appears as though the enemies of Israel fled in two directions. We have the preposition 'ad (אֲד) [pronounced *gád*] which means *as far as, even to, up to, until*, used twice. Strong's #5704 BDB #723. My thinking is that this is giving us the furthest in two directions that the fleeing soldiers got to.

Abel-Meholah means *dance-meadow*. It is also mentioned in I Kings 19:16 as the residence of Elisha the prophet as well as in I Kings 4:19. Barnes places it in the Jordan valley.²¹ Merab, one of Saul's daughters, who almost became one of David's wives, was a Meholathite (I Sam. 18:19). ZPEB places it east of the Jordan, the NIV on the western side of the Jordan. It would make the most sense for it to be at least in that direction, as it would be the mostly likely direction for Israel's eastern enemies to run towards. Tabbath is also tentatively located by ZPEB as east of the Jordan. Barnes places it south of Abel-Meholah, but still in the Jordan valley. It seems likely that the camp of Midian fled in both directions, since two destinations are given. If they remained in the valley, then heading both east and west would have kept them in the valley.

Interestingly enough, this is not the only time that such tactics were used; in fact, we have several similar examples from history. In the middle of the 18th century A.D., *two Arabian chiefs were fighting for the Imamate of Oman*. Bel-Arba was the leader of 4000–5000 men who attacked Achmed ben Said, who was hold up in a small castle on a mountain. Said was able to slip out of the caste and he gathered to himself several hundred men. They each put a mark or a sign on their heads, to distinguish themselves from their enemy, and then stationed very small companies at each pass around the enemy. At the same time, all of the men blew their trumpets, all from these several passes, and the larger force of the enemy found itself surrounded on all sides, with every pass controlled by their smaller enemy (although they did not realize the difference in size). This threw the larger army into disorder, as they realized that every pass was controlled and that they appeared to be surrounded by a huge opposing force.²²

¹⁹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 435.

²⁰ These same trees lend their name to the city Shittim (Num. 23:49).

²¹ See Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 435 for his two guesses..

²² Taken from Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 251, footnote, where other examples are given as well.

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Reinforcements Are Called in to Capture All the Fleeing Midianites

And so were called out men of Israel from Naphtali and from Asher and from all of Manasseh and so they pursued after Midian.

Judges
7:23

So the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all of Manasseh and they pursued after Midian.

Then the men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali, Asher and from east and west Manasseh and all of those called upon pursued Midian.

You will recall the Gideon contacted these tribes in the previous chapter for his original army and they responded (Judges 6:35). However, God sent the majority of them home prior to the initial attack. However, they were still at the ready. Asher and Naphtali are the northernmost tribes and they would be only slightly north of the attack. Manasseh would be slightly south of the attack. This would give us a pincher movement, no matter which way the men of Midian fled. The phrase *from all of Manasseh* would imply that Manasseh west and east of the Jordan were called upon, which would give further credence that the camp of Midian went in two directions.

And messengers sent Gideon into all hill country of Ephraim to say, "Come down to meet Midian and seize with respect to them the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan. And so called out all of [the] men of Ephraim and so they seized the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

Judges
7:24

So then Gideon had sent messengers into all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down to meet Midian and seize with respect to them the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan. And so all of the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

Gideon also sent messengers into the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come on down and secure the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan." Therefore, the men of Ephraim, responding to Gideon's summons, secured the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

What Gideon asks Ephraim to do after coming down from the hill country is the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative of *lâkad* (לָקַד) [pronounced *law-KAHD*], which means *to capture, to seize, to take*. Strong's #3920 BDB #539. Ephraim is south of west Manasseh and would have to send its troops out quickly. Beth-barah is mentioned only here and the Massoretic text suggests that it might have originally read *the fords of the Jordan*. The reason that is suggested is that back in Judges 3:26–30, Ephraim had been called upon to secure the fords of the Jordan when dealing from an attack by Moab in response to the assassination of their leader. There were several streams which ran through the hill country and Ephraim in into the Jordan, where there would be pools and marshes that the Midianites, when fleeing south-southeast, would have to travel through. It would make sense for Ephraim to position her troops there. Scofield suggests that Beth-barah is actually Beth-abara, which is found in Joshua 15:6, 61 18:22. This would place it originally as a border between Judah and Benjamin. However, Ephraim is only a few footsteps away from that border. If they were going to secure the fords of the Jordan, then it would seem reasonable that they went this far south (which is not very far at all). Since the time of Origen, it has been thought that this is where John the Baptizer baptized his disciples (John 1:28).

There is an interesting thing to note. At the beginning of the book of Judges, it appeared as though only Judah and Simeon were actually doing anything. God had given them the land and they went immediately after the unsecured cities. The remainder of Israel seemed to hold back and never make any headway. The other tribes, primarily those north of Judah, had the men and the ability to fight, but they only seemed to do so in reaction to the normal course of events of having enemies within their borders or at their borders.

I am curious as to the time frame here, whether Gideon had sent messengers to these men (1) when the troops were originally gathered; (2) when Gideon sent most of the soldiers home, did they act as messengers; (3) whether

Gideon, immediately prior to the attack, sent out messengers, or, (4) when Gideon's attack went so well, did he send out messengers? We tend to think in a completely linear fashion, which would indicate the latter. Gideon attacks Midian and her allies, is unbelievably successful, and he quickly sends out men to the various Jewish states for reinforcements. We can reasonably rule out option #1, because Gideon did not originally send messengers to Ephraim. Option #2 does not seem feasible, as why would Gideon send out messengers side-by-side the soldiers that he is sending home? My opinion is that, immediately prior to, if not simultaneous with the attack, Gideon sent messengers to these Jewish states. The other Jewish states are obviously armed and ready; Gideon's confidence had been bolstered by overhearing the dream and its interpretation; and he probably knew by sheer numbers, it would be impossible for his men to actually kill all of the Midianite soldiers.

And so they seized two of [the] chiefs of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And so they killed Oreb by a rock of Oreb and Zeeb they killed at a winepress of Zeeb. And so they pursued unto Midian and heads of Oreb and Zeeb they brought unto Gideon from beyond the Jordan.

Judges
7:25

And so they seized two of the chiefs of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They then killed Oreb by the rock of Oreb and they killed Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. Further, they pursued unto Midian and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from beyond the Jordan.

Ephraim therefore seized the two heads of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They executed Oreb by what was therefore named the rock of Oreb; and they executed Zeeb at what was therefore called the winepress of Zeeb. Most of Ephraim continued to pursue Midian, while a small detachment brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

This verse confirms that, whether the camp of Midian went in two directions or not, they certainly went over the Jordan River. One the two leaders were seized, we then have the Qal imperfect and then the Qal perfect of *hârag* (הָרַג) [pronounced *haw-RAHG*] means *to kill, to slay*, and, occasionally, *to execute*. Strong's #2026 BDB #246. Obviously, where these leaders were executed were then named after these leaders. They will be mentioned again in Psalm 83, which I will cover after Judges 8; and Oreb is mentioned once again in Isa. 10:26 (in retrospect, of course). According to the Hebrew, the pursuit went *unto* Midian, meaning that Israel did more than simply chase Midian out of her borders.

What we have here in this verse is one of the more gruesome plays upon words. Israel seizes two of the *princes* or *heads* of Midian. This is the masculine plural of *sar* (סַר) [pronounced *sar*], and it means *chieftain, chief, ruler, official, captain, prince, commander*. Strong's #8269 BDB #978. Once they catch up to these men, they kill them and bring their heads to Gideon. The word for *heads* is the masculine plural of *rô'sh* (רֹשׁ) [pronounced *roshe*], which means *head, top, chief, front, choicest*. Strong's #7218 BDB #910. In other words, these are synonyms. Israel seized the *heads* of Midian and then they brought the *heads* of the *heads* of Midian to Gideon. It is a rather gruesome play on words, one of the more gruesome in the Bible.

Now, as for the practice, that is something else again. How do you indicate that the leaders of your enemies have been slain? You can carry the entire rotting corpse around with you or you can carry ten pounds of head with you, which is as readily identifiable. So, even though it sounds like a rather sick practice, it was actually a very practical, if not dramatic way to show that the heads of your opposition had been defeated and slain. For a simple body count, the hands or the foreskins²³ of the slain were often removed to brought as evidence of the kill (I Sam. 18:25).

This is an odd place to end this chapter. The pursuit of Midian is continued in the next chapter and there will be a minor dispute between Ephraim and Gideon as a result of all of this. When Midian is completely defeated by Israel, it will be the last time that we hear of Midian as a world power. This does not mean that Israel wiped them out in this war, but that she so soundly defeated Midian that Midian never chose again to come across the Jordan into Israel. Midian also fades from Biblical history at this point, indicating that either this defeat was final or that a subsequent, unrecorded defeat at the hands of another country was final.

²³ I would think what was actually brought back was the entire, uncircumcised penis.

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