

14.10a Fifth Judge, Gideon's Call (Judges 6:1-32)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- Beka Flash-a-Cards for Judges are recommended.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Midian*: Fourth son of Abraham and Keturah whom Abraham sent away east (Genesis 25:2). Midian settled near Mount Sinai in Arabia but later moved east of Canaan near and in Moab. His descendants are the Midianites.
- *valor*: bravery

Scripture: (ESV)

Judges 6:1 The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2 And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. 3 For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in. 6 And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord.

7 When the people of Israel cried out to the Lord on account of the Midianites, 8 the Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. 9 And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 And I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.’ But you have not obeyed my voice.”

11 Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.” 13 And Gideon said to him, “Please, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.” 14 And the Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” 15 And he said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” 16 And the Lord said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” 17 And he said to him, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. 18 Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you.” And he said, “I will stay till you return.”

19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. 20 And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them

on this rock, and pour the broth over them.” And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. 22 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, “Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.” 23 But the Lord said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.” 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it, The Lord Is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

25 That night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it 26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.

28 When the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. 29 And they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” And after they had searched and inquired, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.” 30 Then the men of the town said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it.” 31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.” 32 Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend against him,” because he broke down his altar.

Introduction/Review:

On Israel’s way to the Promised Land while Moses was still alive (Numbers 22–25), Balak, king of Moab, and the elders of the Midianites sent for Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam couldn’t curse because God would not let him; instead, Balaam gave advice for the Moabites and Midianites to intermarry with Israel, causing Israel to serve other gods and thus bring God’s curse on them. In the plague God caused for their false worship, 24,000 Israelites died.

In Numbers 31 God said to war against Midian in order to take revenge. The Midianites were decimated at that time, 1423 B.C. The males were killed.

One hundred seventy-four years passed. The Midianites, ✓perhaps joined by cousins who were not previously involved in the war, again increased to a great number.

Story:

In the repeating cycle of judges, Deborah’s forty years of peace and proper worship had passed. Israel again sinned—“did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” (Judges 6:1). This time in their worship of other gods, they served Baal. Israel built altars and images to this god, whose name means “lord” as in *master*.

Midianite domination

By God’s command because of Israel’s sin, the Midianites took over the land for seven years. In fact, the Midianites took over so much that Israelites made dens, caves, and strongholds in the mountain. When Israel planted their crops, the Midianites and Amalekites and other people of the East would come with all their livestock and eat or destroy all the food Israel had grown, leaving none for Israel. They also stole all sheep, oxen, and donkeys. The territory the Midianites raided was clear to Gaza [locate] by the Mediterranean coast. The Midianites were as numerous as locusts: the Bible states they and their camels were so many they couldn’t be numbered.

God’s prophet

Because the Midianites destroyed the land for those seven years, Israel became very low in spirit and very poor. That's when they finally cried out to the Lord (vv. 6, 7). God sent a prophet to rebuke them, who said, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: 'I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. And I said to you, "I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed my voice.'"

That was it: no fighting against the enemy but only scolding. That prophet was not a saving judge like the others, was he? But we admire him because he boldly proclaimed God's message.

The Angel of the Lord

However, one day the Angel of the Lord, whom we know to be Jesus before He was born on earth, sat under a tree in the tribe of the western Manasseh at a town named Ophrah, which was near Bethel and Shechem [locate].

A man named Gideon was threshing wheat there. Why do you suppose Gideon could not thresh his wheat out in the open? Because the Midianites, who always stole or destroyed Israel's food, would find it and take it. Gideon was threshing in a winepress, which must have been lower than the ground around it. Threshing in this place kept him and his wheat out of sight from the Midianites.

Suddenly as Gideon was working, he heard, "The Lord is with you, mighty man of valor." Looking up, Gideon saw the Angel of the Lord (Jesus).

Gideon might have been thinking about God and the Midianites' being in the land, for he answered, "If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened? Where are God's miracles as when He brought us from Egypt? The Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hand of the Midianites!"

Then the Angel commissioned Gideon to do something about the situation, saying, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from Midian. Haven't I sent you?"

I wonder what The Angel of the Lord meant by "go in this *might* of yours." Well, Gideon had just confessed he knew and believed God had performed miracles in bringing Israel out of Egypt. "This might" of his was likely his belief that God could do miracles in the dire circumstances faced by Israel because of Midian. God is pleased with such faith.

However, Gideon's faith did not include his being the deliverer. He doubtfully asked, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? My family is weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest child of my father."

Does this sound like someone else who lived for a time in the land of Midian—the man God sent to deliver His people from Egypt? Who? [Moses.] Just as with Moses, God reassured Gideon: "Surely I will be with you, and you will defeat Midian as one man."

Again, just like Moses, Gideon asked, "If I have found favor, show me a sign that it is You, God, talking to me." Then he added, "Don't go away until I bring my offering to you."

The Lord answered, "I will wait."

So Gideon prepared meat from a young goat and put it in a basket. He made unleavened cakes and a pot of broth and presented all of it to the Lord.

"Lay the meat and bread on this rock, and pour the broth over them," said the Angel of God.

Gideon did so. Then the Lord took the staff in his hand and touched the meat and bread. Fire rose out of the rock and burned up the meat and bread as Gideon watched in wonder. Suddenly, the angel disappeared.

Now, Gideon knew this "Angel of the Lord" was God Himself. He knew the Word of God says, "No man shall see God and live"; so Gideon said, "Alas! ✓I am doomed because I have seen the Angel of the Lord God face to face!"

The obedience of Gideon

Somehow, though, the Lord informed Gideon, “Peace to you; you shall not die.”

Being assured of God’s peace, Gideon built an altar to the Lord and named it Jehovah-Shalom, which means “The Lord is Peace.”

But that same night God again spoke to Gideon in a kind of pre-exercise, telling him to take his father’s bull in order to tear down his father’s altar to Baal and the wooden idol images near the altar. ✓If Gideon had to use a bull to tear down the altar, one can assume the altar was massive. Although Gideon’s father, Joash, might have built the altar for his family alone, other people from the area also worshiped there.

Not only was Gideon to pull down the Baal altar, but also was he to build an altar to God, ✓perhaps an altar that was more official-looking and bigger than his own “Jehovah-Shalom” altar. Upon the new altar Gideon was to offer another bull that was seven years old, burning him with the wood that had formerly been the wooden idols, the Asherah.

Gideon did as the Lord commanded, taking ten servants and doing the deed at night for fear of being caught by his family and the men of the town in this act of destruction during the day.

The defense of Joash

Early in the morning, ✓perhaps before dawn, men of the city, devout worshipers of Baal, got up and went to Joash’s Baal altar. Lo and behold, those men found the wooden images were gone, their altar was broken down, and another altar with a burning bull was in its place. “Who did this?” they asked and began searching for the culprit. When they learned it was Gideon, they went to his father, demanding he give them Gideon so that they could kill him for breaking down the altar to Baal.

I love the way Joash, even though he had erected the altar to Baal, defended his son and made fun of Baal: “Are you begging for Baal? Do you want to save Baal?” Maybe he was reminding these men of the first and second commandments. What are they? [No other gods beside Me; no idols.] Joash continued, “Let anyone who pleads for Baal be put to death by morning! If Baal is a god, let him beg for himself because his altar is torn down.” That challenge silenced the wicked ones.

Because Joash said, “Let Baal plead for himself,” he renamed Gideon with the name *Jerubbaal*, which means “let Baal plead.”

Gideon was showing himself to be a mighty man of valor. He will do even more, as we will see in the following lessons.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
He is the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Gideon. Note that Gideon knew the Angel was God.
- Are we as devout in our worship of God as these worshipers of Baal were, rising before dawn in order to pray and worship? Do we inconvenience ourselves in order to take time for our one true God?

Activities:

- Play dough: rock, bread, goat
- Snack: Unleavened cakes served alone or with a broth
- Pretend to hide things from the Midianites by playing “Button, Button, Where Is the Button?” Hide a small object (perhaps a head of wheat) somewhere in the room. Give hints like “cold, warm, or hot” when a child nears or moves away from the object.
- Thresh and winnow wheat.

- Crush grapes with the back of a spoon in a bowl. A wine press was the place where grapes were crushed by bare feet.
- Sing the Gideon song found at <http://biblesongsandmore.wordpress.com/songs/old-testament-songs/gideonsong/>.
- Play a game, “Find Gideon,” found at <https://www.daniellesplace.com/html/bible-themes-gideon.html> about halfway down the web page. Several other activities may be found on this page.
- Review questions: (Game: Print the clipart of ten wheat stalks on cardstock if placing in a pocket chart. If using on a flannel board, print on paper and back with paper towel. Cut apart. For each correct answer, the students may place a sheaf of wheat in the pocket chart or on the flannel board.)
 1. After the death of Deborah, the Lord gave Israel into the hand of what nation for seven years? [Midian.]
 2. In what ways (name two) did Midian oppress Israel? [They devoured the produce of the land; left no sustenance in Israel; stole sheep, oxen, and donkeys.]
 3. What was the first thing the Lord did when Israel cried to Him? [Sent them a prophet who reprimanded the people for their disobedience.]
 4. Where was Gideon beating out wheat, and why in that place? [In a winepress; to hide it from the Midianites.]
 5. What did Gideon answer when the Angel of the Lord said, “The Lord is with you”? [“If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers told us?”]
 6. What did God commission Gideon to do? [“Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?”]
 7. What happened to the meat, unleavened cakes, and the broth Gideon presented to the Angel of the Lord? [The Angel of the Lord touched it with His staff, and it all burned up.]
 8. What did the Angel of the Lord ask Gideon to do with his father’s two bulls? [Use one to pull down the altar to Baal; sacrifice the second one on a new altar to God.]
 9. What did the men of the town want to do when they discovered the altar to Baal was pulled down? [To find Gideon and slay him.]
 10. What did Joash, Gideon’s father, say about Baal? [“Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.”]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Judges 6:8, 9: The Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land.”

Handwork:

- Color, cut, and glue a simple picture of Gideon and the angel found at <https://auntiesbiblelessons.wordpress.com/tag/the-angel-of-the-lord/>.

Midian

valor









