

## 14.10b Fifth Judge, Gideon's Fleece and Army (Judges 6:33-40; 7:1-8)

✓ “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.
- Sheep’s wool or a sheep skin to show fleece
- A ram’s horn “trumpet” (a shofar)
- To compare the number of Gideon’s men as they decreased, use charts found below and print according to instructions.
- A bowl of water (and a towel) to demonstrate “lappers” (heads directly in the water) and “slurpers” (drinking from hands)

**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.

- *Midianites*: descendants of Abraham and Keturah who had been part of Balaam’s plot against Israel.
- *Amalekites*: the people who fought against the feeble when Israel came out of Egypt
- *Abiezrites* [pronounced ay by EZ ryts]: all the descendants from the first son of Manasseh; this was the family of Gideon

### Scripture: (ESV)

Judges 6:33 Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 But the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. 35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them.

36 Then Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, 37 behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” 38 And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, “Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew.” 40 And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

7:1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod. And the camp of Midian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2 The Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ 3 Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead’” [probably Mount Gilboa]. Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.

4 And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ shall not go.” 5 So he brought the people down

to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.” 6 And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. 7 And the Lord said to Gideon, “With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.” 8 So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

### **Introduction/Review:**

The Midianites had become very populous and, because Israel had turned away from God, controlled Israel seven years. How severe was their hold over Israel? What did they do to Israel? [Israel was poor because the Midianites ate all Israel’s harvests and destroyed or stole all their animals.] What was the Angel of the Lord’s message to Gideon? [Gideon was to be the one to rescue Israel from Midian.] What sign did the Angel give? [Fire burned up Gideon’s offering of goat meat, unleavened bread, and broth.] What additional command did the Angel give Gideon? [To get his father’s bulls, one to tear down Baal’s altar and the other to be sacrificed; to build another altar to God using wood from the idols surrounding Baal’s altar.]

How did the people of the area react when they came to worship Baal in the morning? [They were ready to kill Gideon.] What did Gideon’s father say about Baal’s altar being torn down? [Baal should defend himself; the worshipers of a false god should die.]

Gideon’s new name was Jerubbaal because it means “let Baal plead.”

### **Story:**

#### ***Gideon’s faith bolstered***

The Midianites, Amalekites, and the people of the East came from the East, crossed over the Jordan, and camped in the Valley of Jezreel [locate on a map found below]. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a ram’s horn trumpet, calling his own clan, the Abiezrites, to him. Then he sent messengers to other nearby tribes of Israel: Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali [locate]. They also came to him.

Gideon, ✓faced with what looked like an impossible task, thought he needed another sign from God that He would truly deliver Midian. So he said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as You have said, I’ll put a wool fleece on the threshing floor tonight. In the morning, let the fleece be wet but the ground be dry.”

In the morning when Gideon went out to see what God had done, he found the fleece to be wet, just as he had requested. Enough moisture was in the fleece that Gideon was able to wring out a bowlful of water from it. The ground, however, was dry.

“Please don’t be angry,” Gideon pled. “Let me test You again, God. This time let the fleece be dry and the ground wet.”

You already know what God did, don’t you? What was dry in the morning? [The fleece.] What was wet? [The ground.] Would God save Israel from the Midianites through Gideon? Yes!

#### ***Gideon’s army reduced***

Thirty-two thousand men [refer to ten pages of printed charts found below] gathered with Gideon from the Abiezrites, from Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali [locate again]. They camped at the well or spring of Harod [locate], which was at an elevated area. The Midianites were north of them by the hill of Moreh [locate], but this was down below Gideon and his men in the Valley of Jezreel. The Bible tells us all these enemy nations were “lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude” (Judges 7:12).

Gideon’s men got up early in the morning, ✓ready to fight, but the Lord said, “You have too many men.”

✓Perhaps Gideon thought, “Too many? At least I can count how many I have.”

But the Lord said, “If you fight with 32,000, Israel will claim glory for itself against God, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me’” (Judges 7:2). “Tell the men who are afraid of the enemy and don’t want to fight that they may hurry home.” Twenty-two thousand hurried home. Maybe they thought something like, ✓“Sure glad to be out that sure-death scene. Our army doesn’t have a chance against those innumerable Midianites.”

With 22,000 gone, only 10,000 [refer to 3+ charts] soldiers of Israel were left (about the population of Lamar, Colorado). [Teacher, compare to a town near you.]

The Lord said again, “Still too many men. Bring the men down to the water, and I will show you who will go with you.” Gideon brought them to the water.

“Notice which men slurp water from their hands and which ones get down on their knees, ✓putting their faces in the water,” said God. “Separate them into two groups. Then tell those who get down on their knees and lap like a dog that they may hurry home. Those who slurp from their hands I will use to go with you to save Israel and deliver the Midianites into your hand.”

So 9,700 “lappers” hurried home, and only 300 “slurpers” remained. These few got their provisions and their own ram’s horns and went with Gideon to camp at the crest of the hill overlooking valley where the Midianites camped below.

Only 300 soldiers! Can God win a battle against uncountable numbers? Of course He can! We will see how He does it in lessons to come. This will be interesting!

### Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:  
“Gideon was obedient to the heavenly vision, v. 27. He that was to command the Israel of God must be subject to the God of Israel, without disputing, and, as a type of Christ, must first save his people from their sins [by tearing down the altar to Baal], and then save them from their enemies”  
(<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/judges/6.html>).

### Activities:

- Play dough: fleece; ram’s horn
- Snack: Bugles® snacks produced by General Mills or Tom’s Snacks
- Try to count a very small amount of sand, perhaps 1/8<sup>th</sup> teaspoon. Provide a paper on which to pour out the sand and perhaps a magnifier for each student or each team.
- Blow a ram’s horn, the kind of trumpet Gideon’s army had. If students blow the horn, have them purse lips tightly and blow into the small hole of the horn. Wipe with disinfectant wipe after each student blows.
- Discuss why the men who knelt and lapped like dogs to get water were dismissed. It might have been just an arbitrary test, but some have suggested that those men who did not kneel were acting as trained soldiers should act—always vigilant for the enemy with their eyes up instead of looking into the water.
- Review questions: (Game: If a shofar/ram’s horn is available, allow students to try to blow once or twice after answering a question correctly. Otherwise, the student who answers correctly may pantomime the way s/he would have drunk water in God’s test.)
  1. Name one of the three groups of people who came from the East and crossed the Jordan into Israel. [Midianites; Amalekites; people of the East.]
  2. Name one of the four tribes that Gideon called by his trumpet and by sending messengers. [Manasseh (or Abiezerites); Asher; Zebulun; and Naphtali.]
  3. Gideon wanted two more signs that God would save Israel by his hand. What were they? [Fleece would be wet while ground was dry; ground would be wet while fleece was dry.]

4. What is another name for Jerubbaal? [Gideon.]
5. How many people came to help Gideon? [32,000.]
6. How many men were dismissed because they were afraid? [22,000.]
7. Why did God not want so many men to fight against Midian? [Israel would boast over God, saying, “My own hand has saved me.”]
8. What was the test to see who would remain in Gideon’s army? [The men who lapped water like a dog were sent home. Those who lapped water from their hands remained.]
9. What was the final count for Gideon’s army? [300.]
10. Where did Israel and Midian camp? [Israel was at the top of the valley, and Midian was below in the valley.]

**Memory Verse[s]:** (ESV)

- **1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

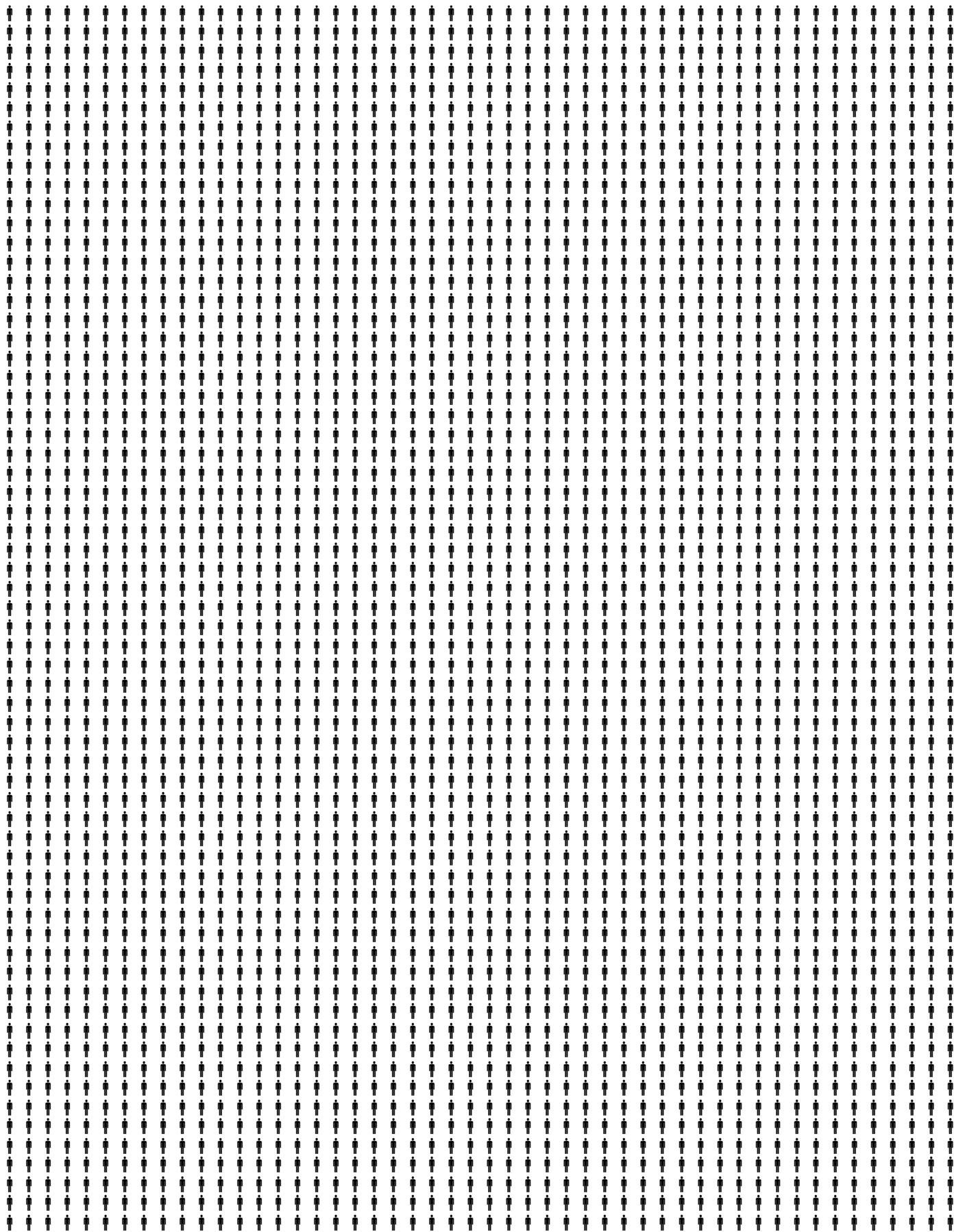
**Handwork:**

- Go to <https://www.kgmcrafts.com/support-files/gideonsmen2.pdf> for a craft to make soldiers who drank water from their hands. Instead of brads, use sewing snaps for the moveable arms.

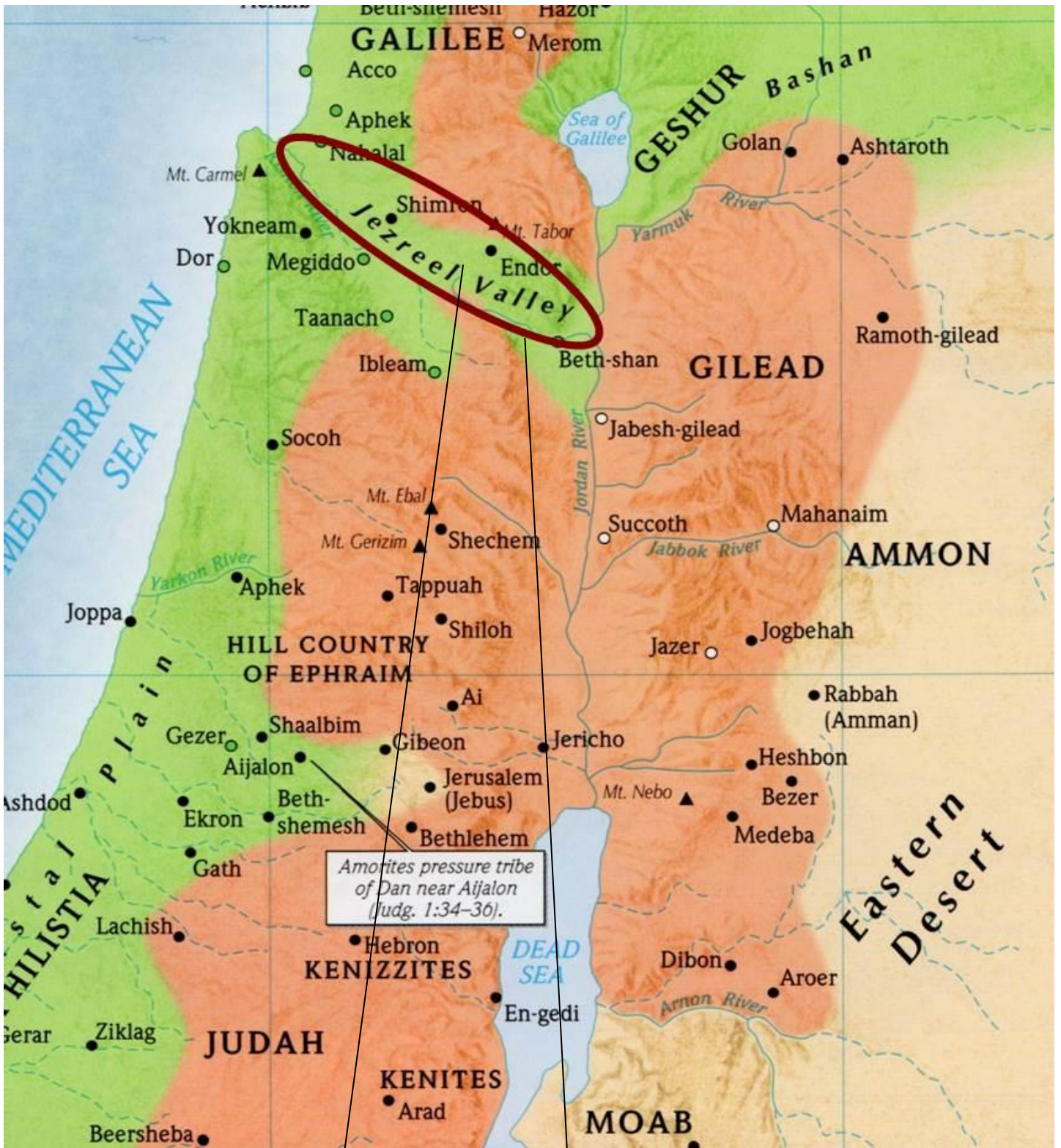
**Midianites**

**Amalekites**

**Abiezrites**



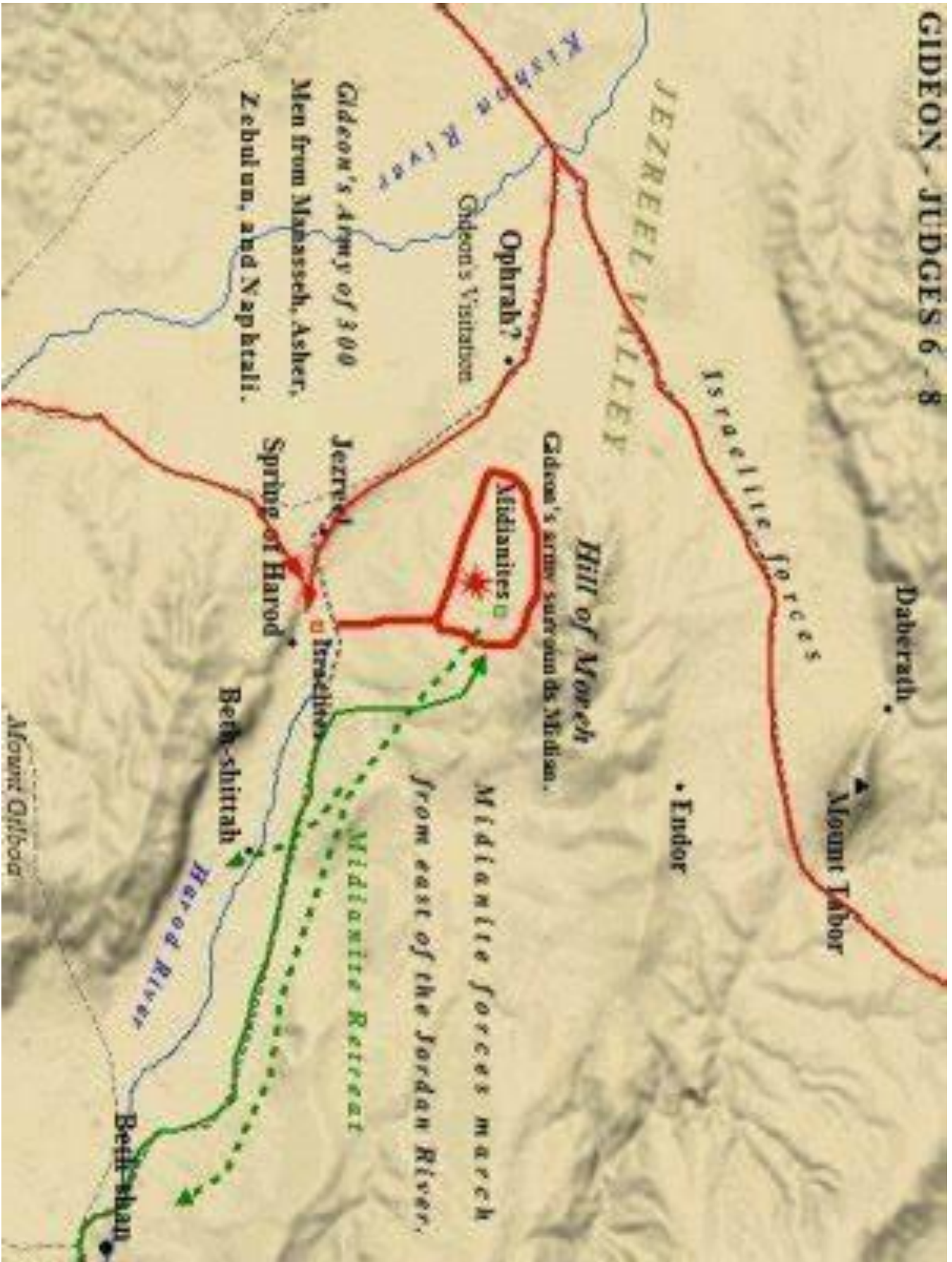
32,000 men (10 copies of this page, each showing 3,200, to total 32,000.)  
Take away 7 pages to show the approximately 22,000 who were afraid. Actual page number is 3 plus eight lines.  
Fold one page to show six rows, to total 300.



Hill of Moreh

Spring of Harod; Beth Barah (or Beth Shittam) is near here

(unknown source)



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Present-day Jezreel Valley