

## GIDEON

1. His name means 'hewer' or 'hacker', not of wood but of people.
2. 5<sup>th</sup> Judge in Judges - i) Othniel (Judah) ii) Ehud (Benjamin) iii) Shamgar (?) Deborah (Benjamin or Ephraim).
3. A member of the tribe of Manasseh.
4. He was the youngest son of Yoash, of the Abiezrite clan.
5. His family seemed to be prosperous.
6. They lived in the town of Ophrah, which was probably on the border between Manasseh and Issachar.
7. The survival of the northern tribes was threatened by an alliance of three nomadic people – Midian, Amalek and Easterners (possibly Ishmaelites) who had been stripping the plains of all food – crops and animals – for seven years.
8. An angel of God approached Gideon and told him that he was the man to drive these nomads out.
9. Gideon was uncertain and fearful, and asked for a sign that God was really with him. Fire sprang from a rock and consumed the soaked sacrifice that Gideon had prepared.
10. At God's command, Gideon smashed his father's pagan altar dedicated to Baal, but only having done the deed at night and with the help of 10 servants. He was still afraid.
11. His father defended him against the outraged community and called him Jerubbaal.
12. Gideon mustered men from Manasseh and three other northern tribes. They convened at En Harod, at the foot of Mt Gilboa, on the southern edge of the Jezreel valley.
13. Gideon still needed reassurance and asked God to perform a double miracle with a fleece and the dew.
14. God would expel the nomads. After two rounds of winnowing, Gideon was left with 300 men out of 32,000.
15. Still fearful, he took a servant with him to reconnoitre the Midianite camp at night. He overheard the interpretation of a dream that said he would be successful.
16. Suitably emboldened, he devised a psychological plan which panicked the nomads and sent them into full flight, armed with nothing more than shofarot, empty jars and torches. Swords remained sheathed.
17. Gideon called on his allies to pursue the invaders. He asked Ephraim to secure the river Jordan crossings.
18. Aggrieved they were not part of the original summons, Gideon placated Ephraim using flattery.
19. Gideon defeated the remnant of Midian with another surprise attack far into the east side of the Jordan.
20. As he returned, he exacted terrible retribution on the leaders of Penuel and Succot for not feeding his men.
21. In revenge for the death of his brothers at Mt Gilboa, he executed the two kings of Midian.
22. He refused the offer of kingship but asked for sufficient gold from which he fashioned an ephod.
23. Unfortunately, this became yet another idol for him, his family and the people. The ultimate irony.
24. The land had 40 years of peace.
25. Gideon had 70 sons from many wives and one son, Avimelech, with a concubine from Shechem.
26. In his story, we are never told that Gideon judged Israel.