

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2

Last week Phil corrected my pronunciation of Abi-ezer-ite. I appreciate that. It made me think of the meaning of names. Sometimes names and their meanings have stories. In the Bible that can become part of the fabric of Scripture.

There was a pastor in Miami who was familiar with the Cuban population there. He told a story of a woman in the 1950's in Havana. In the days before Fidel Castro, American Navy ships docked in the harbor. Pregnant women would sometimes pick the name of a big powerful looking ship as the name of her baby boy. In a case that the pastor related, the child was named Usnavy. Instead of getting the name of the ship, she got the name of the U.S. Navy.

Gideon was an Abiezerite, a descendant of Manasseh. Abi-ezer in Hebrew means "my father is help." The father of Abiezer was Manasseh which means caused to forget. Originally, Joseph named his firstborn "caused to forget."

Genesis 41:51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh; "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all of my father's household."

As sometimes happens in the Bible, something that is supposed to be good gets turned upside down and backwards. Something like what is happening in the world today. Israel, in Judges, forgot their God.

Judges 3:7 So the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and they forgot (not the same Hebrew word used for Manasseh)

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

Now, Gideon's name comes from a Hebrew word meaning to hew or chop. The first time the verb is used in the Bible is in:

Deuteronomy 7:5 (NASB First Edition) “But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

So Gideon's father, for whatever reason, named him the hewer down or cutter downer. So what does Gideon do?

Judges 6:25 Now on the same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;

Judges 6:26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly way, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.”

This is a different word for cut down than used for Gideon's name. I want to emphasize that. But, it is a synonym. Gideon did more than just cut down the Asherah. It is perhaps divine humor. A native Hebrew speaker would have picked this up right away. The man named a hewer down, cut down the Asherah like the Angel of the Lord commanded, but

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

also like God told Moses to do. But, his task was not complete. He also was to cut down the enemy, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Joash was Gideon's father's name. Joash (or Yehoash) can mean God/Yahweh is strong.

I am getting ahead of myself here, but I needed to cover that point.

We covered Judges 6:1 last week. So, let's start with verse 6:2 this week:

Judges 6:2 The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.

You know that Midian is a tribe that is descendant from Abraham and Keturah from last week.

The power of Midian prevailed against. At first glance at the Hebrew I wondered if I was missing something because I didn't see a Hebrew noun for power. The verb can mean prevail. Apparently the "power" comes from the Hebrew word "hand." Literally this is "Prevailed the hand of Midian against." The NASB translation is OK, but it does obscure the concreteness of the Hebrew. Already in this chapter we have had the "eyes" (sight) of God. Now we have the "hand" of the Midianites. The first use of this word, "prevail," in the Bible is in Judges 3:10, according to BibleHub.com.

Judges 3:10 And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went to war, the Lord handed over to him Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

This is the second time words in this chapter have taken us back to the time of Othniel. We saw last week the lack of the word “again” in the phrase “and they did evil.” Interesting. And there will be more to come: The Spirit of the Lord will come upon Gideon. And we noted last week that there is mention in both places of serving the Baals and Asheroth. Perhaps we are to note the differences between Othniel, the fearless “valiant warrior” and the sometimes hesitant fearful beater of wheat, Gideon. I quote the Angel of the Lord’s address to Gideon as “valiant warrior” which he was not at the beginning. But of all the deliverers, Othniel was indeed a valiant warrior.

OK, I talked myself into making a little chart.

Term	Othniel	Gideon
“again” absent	3:7	6:1
Baal & Asherah	3:7	6:25-32
Valiant Warrior	1:12-13	6:12
Holy Spirit	3:10	6:34
Prevailed	3:10	6:2
As one man	1:12-13; 3:10	6:16

These are just the terms I have noticed. As we progress in this episode of apostasy and deliverance, there may be other terms or concepts that pop up that relate back in some way to Othniel.

If the point of the author is to cause the reader to compare Othniel against Gideon, he has provided us with enough information to realize that indeed Othniel was a valiant warrior who acted with determination and resolve to deliver Israel. When we get to Gideon, the people are so afraid that they didn’t stand and fight but ran and hid in the mountains like the tribe of Dan did in chapter 1. And yet in both cases, God’s grace was freely given because there was at least a weak faith looking to God for

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2

Judges Chapter 6

deliverance. After Othniel, the resolve of the sons of Israel decline. After Gideon, things go down rapidly. When you get to the end of the book of Judges, you are convinced, something has to change. There needs to be a valiant warrior like Othniel who has the leadership skills of Moses with enough fame as a deliverer to get the people to follow him. Of course, that is David.

I considered adding a third column to the chart for Jesus. He did not so much contend against the Baals and Asheroth but had to contend against the legalistic religious crowd. He will be a valiant warrior when He returns at the end of the Tribulation. He will prevail. He was and is a uniquely born man. I wonder if at the end of Judges we will be able to pull out characteristics of the ultimate deliverer. It would be like Jesus Christ is a watermark in the book of Judges. The Angel of the Lord is the second person of the Trinity. He is visible and heard in the book of Judges. The Holy Spirit is evident. The human deliverers in the book of Judges, in spite of themselves, illustrate some aspects of the savior/deliverer Jesus Christ.

And that is like the time of Jesus. There had been deliverers in the inter-biblical period including Judah Maccabee. They and the harsh rule of the Romans prepared the people for the ultimate deliverer, Jesus the Christ (Messiah), son of David and son of the Living God.

Because. This is not the Hebrew word I would expect when reading the English “because.” This word is yet another body part, face. Hebrew sometimes uses face as a preposition to indicate in front of. Kind of like, “in your face.” Because is OK in the English to indicate the cause, but one might say literally, “In the faces of the Midianites, ...” or even “In the face of the Midian (presence),...”

Dens. This exact word is used only here in the Old Testament, according to Biblehub.com. There are two roots with the same consonants. One means to flow like a river and the other means to shine. The Young’s

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

Literal translation uses “the flowings.” Trent Butler calls them “shelters.” I actually like the NIV translation of “shelters for themselves in mountain clefts.”

Caves. It is translated correctly. In Genesis 23 it is used of the cave of Machpelah, the burial place for Sarah and Abraham. Interesting parallel though. The Israelites in the Book of Judges had to hid where you might bury a dead person. From a spiritual perspective, they were dead spiritually. Divine humor. Because of their lack of spiritual life, they hid where dead people would reside.

Strongholds. That is what the dictionaries say. I suspect these would be natural rock formation perhaps fortified by the Israelites.

What the sons of Israel did illustrates fear and impotence against the Midianites. Kind of like what happened to Dan back in chapter 1:

Judges 1:34 The Amorites confined the Danites to the hill country, not allowing them to come down into the plain.

Fear! But did not God say:

Exodus 14:13 But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will perform for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again, ever.

Exodus 14:14 The Lord will fight for you, while you keep silent.”

That was Scripture the Levitical priests had if not copies at least orally that should have been taught weekly. For Christians, we sometimes quote:

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

We have no right to fear the enemies of God. Our duty is to trust God who will fight on our behalf.

Judges 6:3 For whenever Israel had sown, the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the people of the east and march against them.

Had sown. Israel plants their yearly crops. When the crops mature, before the Israelites can harvest them completely, the Midianites come up against them.

Come up/march against. These two verbs are from the same root, to come up. The NASB masks that by translating the second verb differently. It is OK to translate it that way, it just obscures the repetition which is a way of emphasizing the action.

Amalekites. The exact origin and history of the Amalekites is not well known outside the Bible. Per Merrill Unger, "Although this people is prominent in the O. T., archaelology has as yet revealed nothing concerning them." And again according to Unger, "According to the view which we have taken, Amalek, the son of Esau (Gen. 36:12, 16) may have been progenitor of a tribe which was merged with the original Amalekites so as to form part of the great Amalekite race, or he may have taken his name from some connection with the Amalekites, possible as Scipio won his name Africanus."

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

According to Wikipedia, “In Judaism, the Amalekites came to represent the archetypal enemy of the Jews. In Jewish folklore, the Amalekites are considered to be the symbol of evil.” Deuteronomy makes it clear:

Deuteronomy 25:17 “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you came out of Egypt,

Deuteronomy 25:18 how he confronted you on the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.

Deuteronomy 25:19 So it shall come about, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies in the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, that you shall wipe out the mention of the name Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

There is a plaque in The Hague Netherlands that reminds the Jews what the Amalekites did. It quotes Deuteronomy 25:17,19.



(From Wikipedia)

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

People of the east. Literally sons of the east. East can also mean front. Trent Butler has a helpful paragraph on this:

“The “Easterners” introduce a mysterious element here. They also appear in Gen 29:1; Judg 6:33; 8:10; and Ezek 25:4,10. They seem to be “nomadic groups that migrated about the Arabic desert” (Block, 252), though they would not refer to themselves as Easterners, that being applied to them by peoples living west of them. Apparently, the Midianites recruited a coalition of nomadic tribesmen to harass Israel and to provide themselves with food and other goods.”

Judges 6:4 So they would camp against them and destroy (Strong’s 7843) the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, nor a sheep, ox, or donkey.

Camp. This can be used of a family camping, like Isaac in Genesis 26:17. But is often used in a military context as in

Joshua 10:34 And Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon, and they camped by it and fought against it.

In a sense, the use in Judges 6:4 is kind of a hybrid: The people camping are not a military force, but the end result is that the land is “destroyed,” as in a military invasion.

Destroy. This can mean both to become corrupt and to destroy. Interesting play on words here. Look at

Judges 2:19 (the pattern) But it came about, when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly (Strong’s 7843) than their fathers, in following other gods to

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their obstinate ways.

The pattern in chapter 2, acting corruptly, leads in chapter 6 to destruction from the enemy. It is the same root word, just different context with a twist. Divine humor. Perhaps it is God's way of saying, "I told you so." Now, I understand that people don't like being told this. But God is a jealous God and wants our fellowship. He has a right to say this. He has provided His Word and the Holy Spirit to empower us. If we don't use it we starting acting corruptly and end up receiving discipline. To paraphrase a song, "All you need is faith."

Produce. This is the produce of the land.

Sustenance. This word can mean several things:

From Brown-Driver Briggs (via BibleHub.com):

1. Preservation of life Genesis 45:5, 2 Chronicles 14:12
2. Sustenance Judges 6:4; Judges 17:10
3. Reviving Ezra 9:8,9
4. The quick (or raw spot) of the flesh Leviticus 13:10, 24

The root word in Hebrew means to live. The sustenance is the food that will keep them alive. The invaders are taking their sustenance like a vampire sucking blood out of them. They did this to themselves by abandoning the God of Life.

Judges 6:5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts in number, and both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to ruin it (Strong's 7843).

To ruin it. This word appeared in verse 4. Now it is repeated. Emphasis.

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2

Judges Chapter 6

Just an observation: This word is used in Genesis 6 in both the sense of corruption and the sense of destruction when the flood comes. Here in Judges 6, it is like there is a flood of people coming into the land. The people are hiding in caves until the deliverer comes to save them. Isn't that something like what will happen at the end of the Tribulation when believers will hid, perhaps some of them in Petra? Then the valiant warrior, Jesus Christ, will save them.

There are some key verses and concepts in these three verses of Judges that hark back to the curses in the covenant between God and Israel.

The curses for disobedience are contained in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. R.B. Thieme refers to them as the five cycles of discipline. In Leviticus 26, the text is broken up into five "paragraphs" starting with something like, "If also after these things you do not obey Me..."

Deuteronomy 28:33 **A people whom you do not know will eat the produce of your ground and every product of your labor, and you will never be anything but oppressed and mistreated continually.**

Deuteronomy 28:38 **"You will bring out a great amount of seed to the field, but you will gather in little, because the locust (same word in Judges 6:5) will devour it."**

Leviticus 26:16 **I, in turn, will do this to you: I will summon a sudden terror against you, consumption and fever that will make the eyes fail and the soul languish; also, you will sow**

Judges Chapter 6 Part 2
Judges Chapter 6

your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it.

Please my fellow Christian, avoid this and walk by faith. Please!

A native Jewish Hebrew would get this. The curses say such and such. Judges mirrors those curses after warning about the activities that the sons of Israel engaged in.

A large part of having people understand that they are doing wrong against God, is to get their attention. That is what discipline of the believer is about. In some cases, the sinning believer understands the wrong he is doing. In other cases, the believer has to be reminded. 1 John 1:8 and 1:10 tells us this:

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Wuest explains verse 10: “In verse eight, we have the denial of the indwelling sinful nature. In this verse we have the denial of specific acts of sin.” They have to realize that what they are doing is wrong, against God and has led them into the current situation of cursing.