

TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

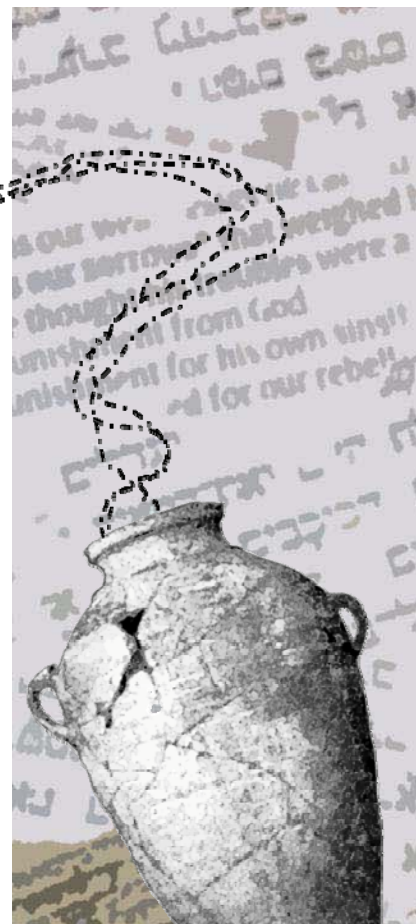


Gideon

Do you ever feel like God has a little too much confidence in you? That He has called you to a task that is much larger than your capabilities? Have you ever questioned whether that was really God talking to you? Have you ever put up a faith filled front that you really didn't feel?

I really appreciate Gideon's honesty with God in Judges 6. When the angel of the Lord appears to him, he doesn't pretend piety, but rather openly expresses his doubts. If God is with the Israelites, why are times so tough? Are the stories of miracles real, or are they just stories? If God really did save Gideon's ancestors, then where is He now? God's answer to Gideon is simple; "of course I am with the Israelites, I'm sending you to save them aren't I?" I don't know about you, but if my world is falling apart, that is not the answer I want to hear! I want God to swoop in and fix things for me. I plead with God to DO something, and honestly feel a bit betrayed when the something turns out to be me. Worse, the place where Gideon is to start saving his nation is in his own family. It is one thing to tackle the enemy "out there", quite another to tackle the enemy within! Destroying the family idols and raising the ire of the very people who were supposed to be on his side was definitely a test of faith. It also tested the strength of his relationship with his father, and the faith of his father as well. When we deal with our own doubt, it can also be helpful to others. I think Gideon so readily agreed to this task because of the straightforward way he went about resolving his doubts.

God tells Gideon to "go in the strength that you have." What is that strength? A God who is mighty to save! Gideon may be the least, but God is the most. There is just one catch. Gideon's not sure that it is really God talking, so he asks for a sign, for proof that it is truly God that he is dealing with. I really admire that. He could have just ignored the whole thing, dismissed the encounter in his mind and in his heart as nothing more than a vivid imagination. He could have been more persistent with his excuses. What he did was honestly lay his doubt out before God. Doubt is only a problem when we fail to bring it to the Lord. As Gary Parker says in his book, *The Gift of Doubt*, "if faith never encounters doubt, if truth never struggles with error, if good never battles with evil, how can faith know its own power?" We may not approve of Gideon testing God, but the fact is that he needed to know, before he went to battle, just how strong his faith was. His doubt needed dealt with, and he took it to the right place. The fire that consumed the offering, and the dew that first soaked the fleece and then didn't, prepared Gideon for the tasks that lay before him. We find no condemnation from God in Gideon's earnest and sincere struggle to answer the doubts that he felt.



"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

2 Corinthians 4:7

READ:

- Judges 6-8

Battle on the Home Front

The Israelites had literally run for the hills as the Midianites and their current ally, the Amalekites made frequent raids on Israel taking whatever plunder they could.

How long had the Israelites been cowering in caves and holed up in fortified towers?

Where was Gideon when the angel of the Lord appeared to him?

What was he doing there?

Why did Gideon feel unqualified to save Israel?

What argument is there for believing that the “angel of the Lord” was the pre-incarnate Christ?

What sign was given to Gideon with the meat and unleavened bread that he placed on the altar?

What name is given to the Lord after this event?

What battle did Gideon first undertake before he took on the Midianites?

Why did he do it at night?

What did the townspeople want to do to Gideon when they discovered what he had done?

What wise words did his father tell them in 6:31?

What effect do you think Gideon’s act had on his father?

What significant occurrence happened in 6:34?

What was the effect?

What assurance did Gideon ask for that God would really use him to save Israel?

What was the first condition by which the Israelite army was reduced?

How many finally ended up going with Gideon into battle?

What additional encouragement did God give to Gideon?



Gideon's Army

What did the Israelites carry into battle with them?

What happened in 7:22?

Who were upset that they had not been called to help with the battle?

What diplomatic answer from Gideon satisfied them?

How far did the Israelites chase the Midianites?

What two cities refused to give bread to Gideon's army?

What happened to them?

Why did Gideon refuse to rule Israel as king?

What did Gideon ask for from the plunder?

What did he make with it?

Why?

How did it become a snare to Gideon and his family?

How many sons did Gideon have?

Which son was the child of a concubine?

What did he do?

How many years of peace did Israel have during Gideon's life?

What did Israel do as soon as Gideon died?

What did they neglect to do for Gideon's family?



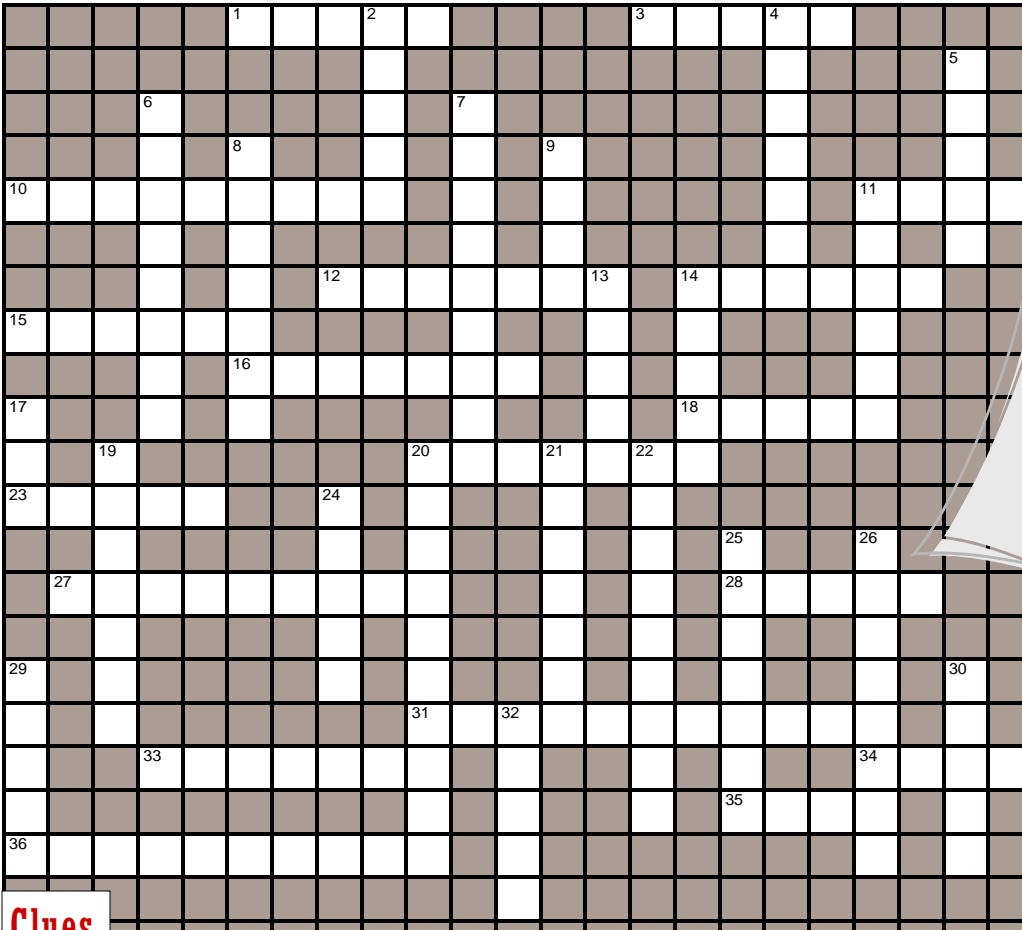
Baal

Gideon's own family must have been very devoted to Baal. As the god of storms, Baal was credited with bringing rain, and therefore the annual crops. Since Baal was known to be a bumbling god, who charged in with muscle, but little wisdom, it was necessary for him to be accompanied by a wiser god such as Asherah, who along with El, sort of parented the other gods.

Gideon was called Jerubbaal after he destroyed the altar to Baal. The nickname means "let Baal plead".



PUZZLE PAGE



Clues

Across

- 1 where the Israelites were living (5)
- 3 years of peace in his lifetime (5)
- 10 what he thought God had done to Israel
- 11 sent twenty two thousand away (4)
- 12 sent to Israel to rebuke them (7)
- 14 his oldest son (6)
- 15 the enemy's shouldn't be counted (6)
- 16 inside empty jars (7)
- 18 the ephod became one to Gideon and his family (5)
- 20 he cut down his father's _____ pole
- 23 crop he was threshing (5)
- 27 his new name (9)
- 28 he tore down his father's (5)
- 31 wore earrings (11)
- 33 his position in his tribe (7)
- 34 he wanted one (4)
- 35 he refused to do this (4)
- 36 oppressed Israel (10)

Down

- 2 made from plundered gold (5)
- 4 each of the three hundred had one (7)
- 5 people of Succoth failed to give this (5)
- 6 was not shown to his family (8)
- 7 where he was threshing (9)
- 8 enemy like a swarm of these (7)
- 9 out of the rock to consume the offering
- 11 used to test God (6)
- 13 said he would tear this down in Peniel
- 14 his father (5)
- 17 bowlful of this on first test
- 19 number of his sons (7)
- 20 joined the Midianites against Israel (10)
- 21 tribe that was left out (7)
- 22 his son by a concubine (9)
- 24 God didn't want Israel to do this (5)
- 25 angel called him a mighty one
- 26 his tribe (8)
- 29 he overheard the telling of one (5)
- 30 time of day he destroyed his father's altar
- 32 three hundred used this to drink (5)



Map

What did Gideon do at each of these locations?

Hill of Moreh

Ophrah

Spring of Harod

Abel-meholah

Zererah

Peniel

Succoth

Hill of
Moreh +

+ Ophrah

Spring
of Harod +

+ Abel-meholah

Zererah +

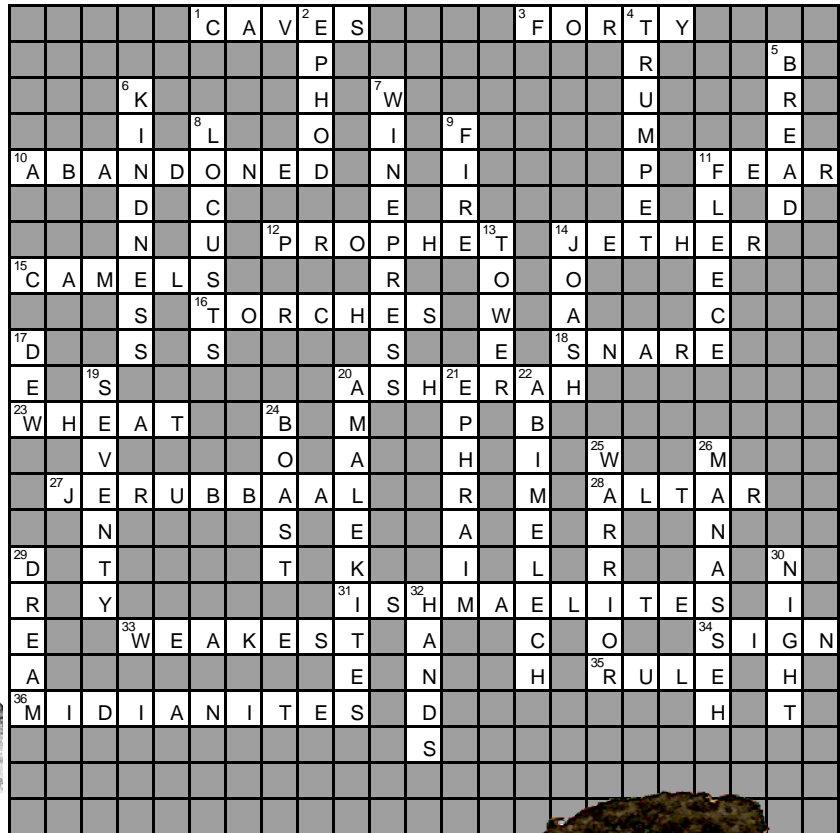
+ Peniel

+ Succoth

Jerusalem★



Puzzle answers:



“Behavior is the mirror in
which everyone shows their
image.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

For more studies,
go to:



Down Victory Road
www.downvictoryrd.com

Sources:

Map p.5

“Gideon’s Battle.” *Tyndale Handbook of Bible
Charts and Maps*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale
House Publishers, 2001. Print.

