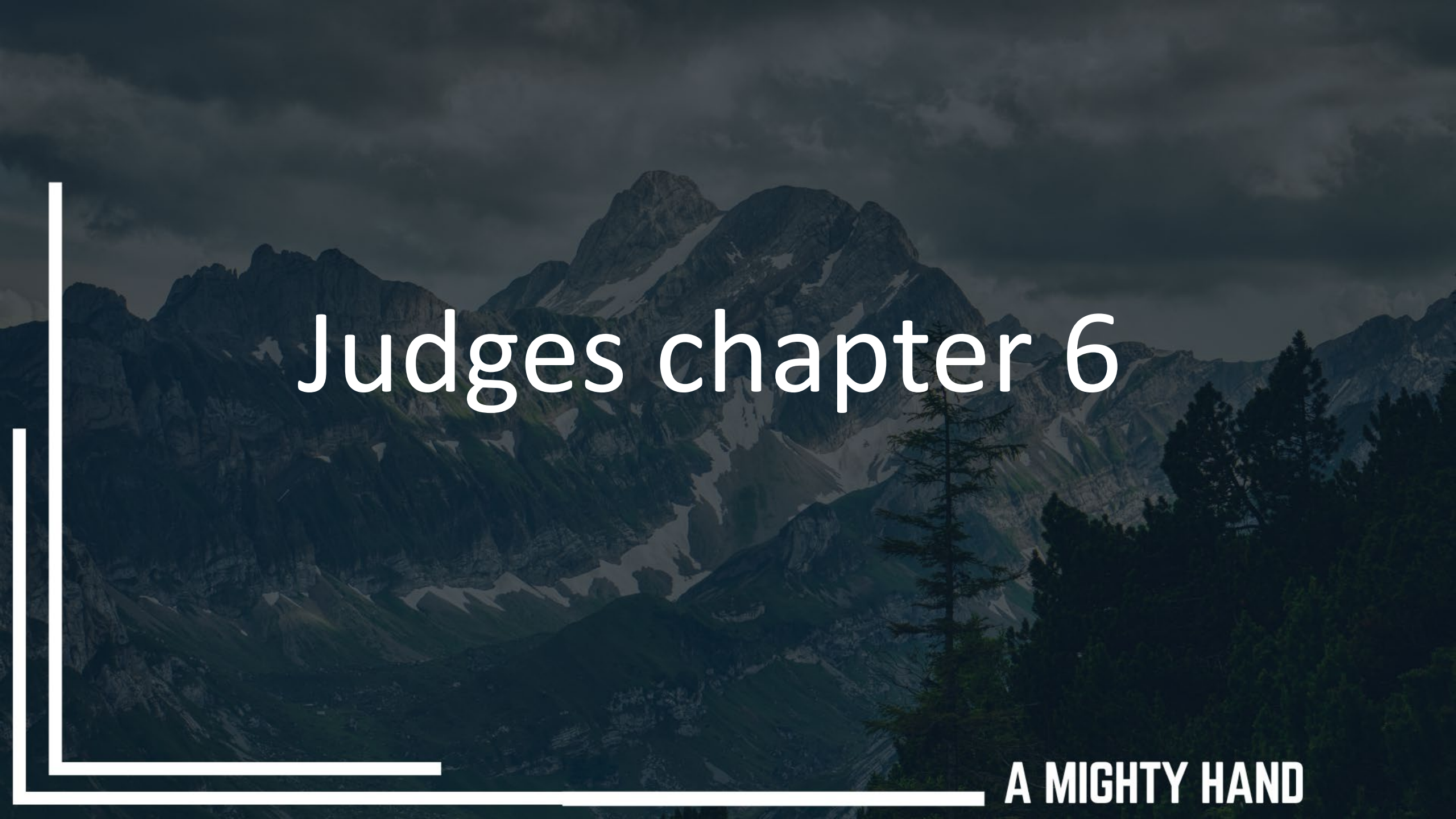




A MIGHTY HAND

SEEING THE POWER OF GOD AT WORK



Judges chapter 6

A MIGHTY HAND

Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian **seven** years. Judges 6:1

In the Samson and Delilah story...

Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines **forty** years. Judges 13:1

The people of Israel keep falling into sin but God always redeems because His commitment is unconditional. People can break their side of the bargain but God can't break God's side of the bargain.

A MIGHTY HAND

Midianites
and
Amalekites
are
nomadic
raiders, not
conquerors
... see
mentions of
hiding in
mountains
and caves

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. For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up [at harvesttime to steal crops] with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it. Judges 6:2-5

*Judges 8:10 says that Midianite army numbered 135,000 men

A MIGHTY HAND

History Lesson

- For seven years, before the calling of Gideon, God allowed the Midianites (and their allies) to ravage ancient Israel. God allowed this to punish the people for their sins, chief of which was idolatry (Judges 6:1, 8-10). The Midianite-led army would regularly enter Israel's territory east of the Jordan River and would sweep both west and south.
- The marauding journey of the Midianites would take them as far south as the Philistine city of Gaza (Judges 6:4). As the hoard traveled, they pillaged and destroyed crops, took whatever cattle and other goods they desired, and committed mass murder (against Gideon's family, see Judges 8:18-19).
- This great army of eastern nomads relied heavily on camels (Judges 6:5), an animal who not only could carry heavy loads and go without water for long periods, but was also relatively fast and could travel up to 100 miles in a single day. The destruction and violence caused by the Midianites brought widespread poverty and led the people, including Gideon, to live in constant fear (Judges 6:2, 6, 11).

<http://www.biblestudy.org/maps/battles-of-gideon.html>

A MIGHTY HAND

So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the Lord. Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian, that the Lord sent a [unnamed] prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery.’” Judges 6:6-8

God is saying... “I am trustworthy, powerful, merciful”

A MIGHTY HAND

“ ‘ “I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, and I said to you, “I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear [worship, respect] the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed (שָׁמָעָה) Shema) Me.” ’ ” Judges 6:6-10

- It is hard for people to believe in and trust an invisible and infinite God, as opposed to idols (like the gods of the Amorites).
- Adam and Eve walked with God and heard from God in the Garden of Eden, but did not see God. They saw the serpent.

A MIGHTY HAND

Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press [not a threshing floor] in order to save it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you [singular], O valiant warrior.” Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.” Judges 6:11-13

A MIGHTY HAND

Gideon's family

Gideon, whose name means “cutter” or “cutter of trees,” was Israel’s 5th judge and his judgeship receives the most extensive narration in the Book of Judges (100 verses comprising three chapters [6-8]). – Bible Knowledge Commentary



Gideon was of the town of Ophrah in the tribal area of Manasseh.

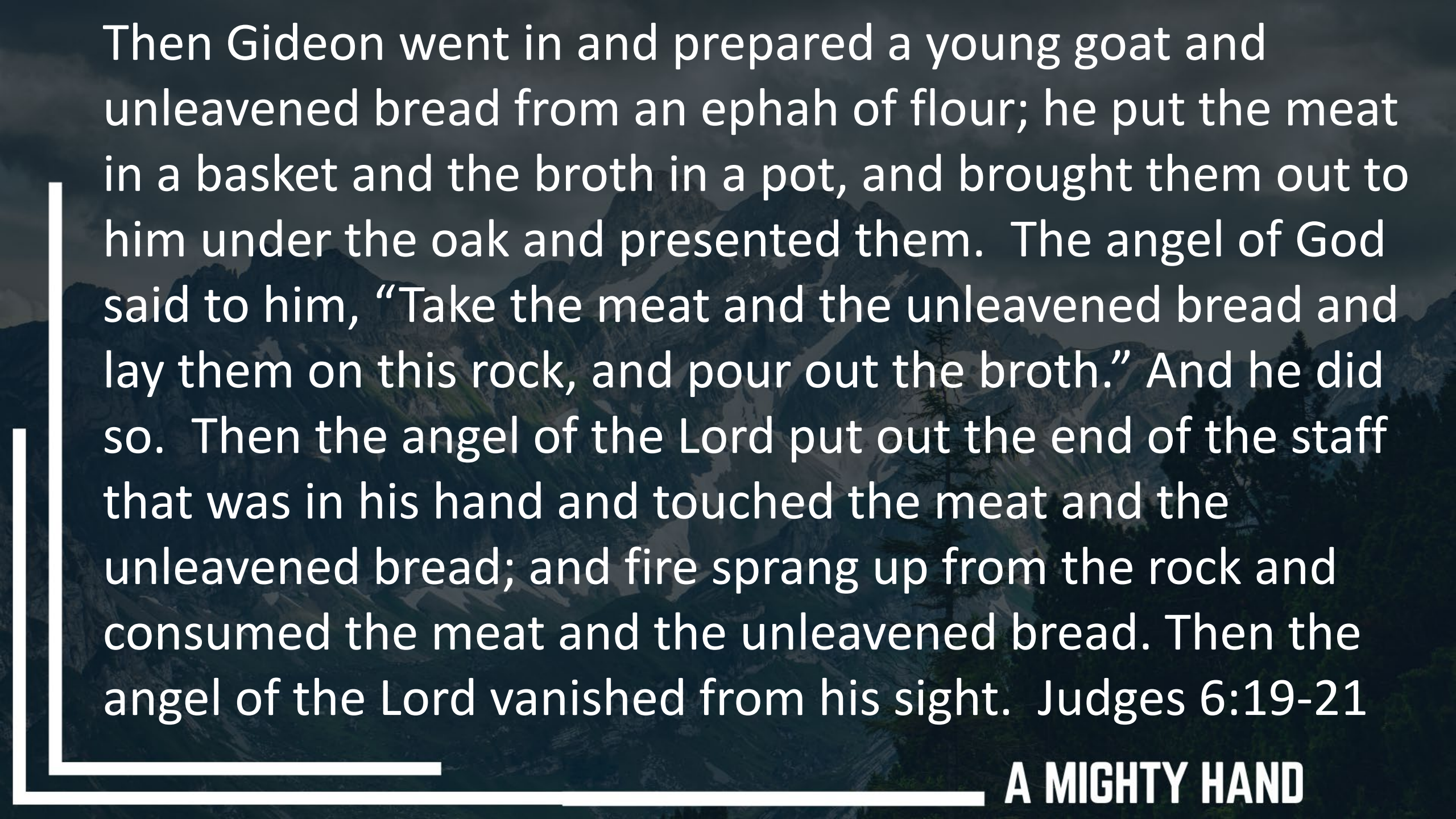
-Harper's Bible Dictionary

Gideon

4

The Lord looked at him and said, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?” He said to Him, “O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.” But the Lord said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.” So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You.” **And He said, “I will remain until you return.”** Judges 6:14-18

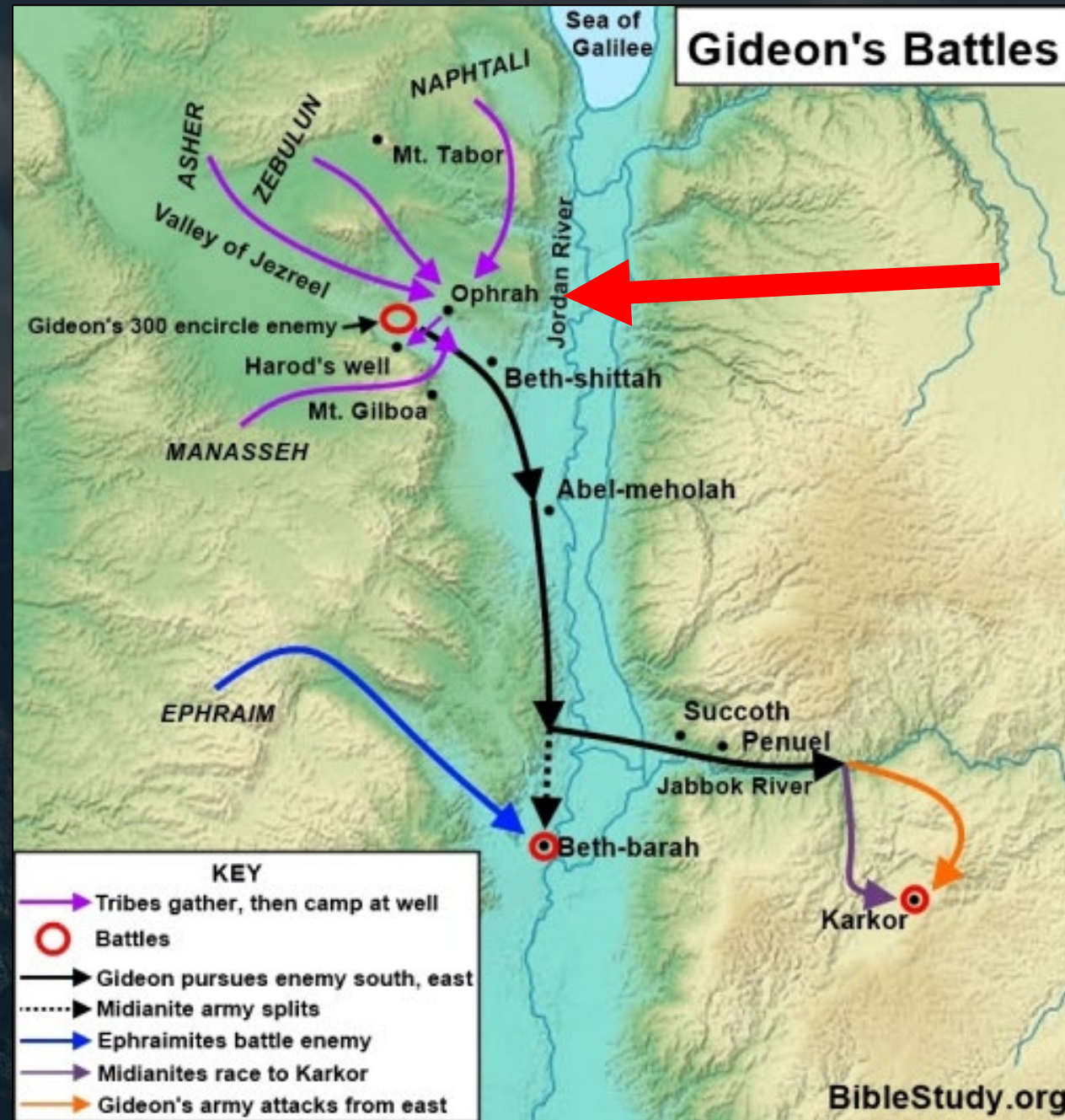
A MIGHTY HAND



Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them. The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. Judges 6:19-21

A MIGHTY HAND

Gideon's Battles



When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." The Lord said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die." Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace (יהוה שלום). To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Judges 6:22-24

A MIGHTY HAND

Now on the same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to **your father**, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.” Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father’s household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night. Judges 6:25-27

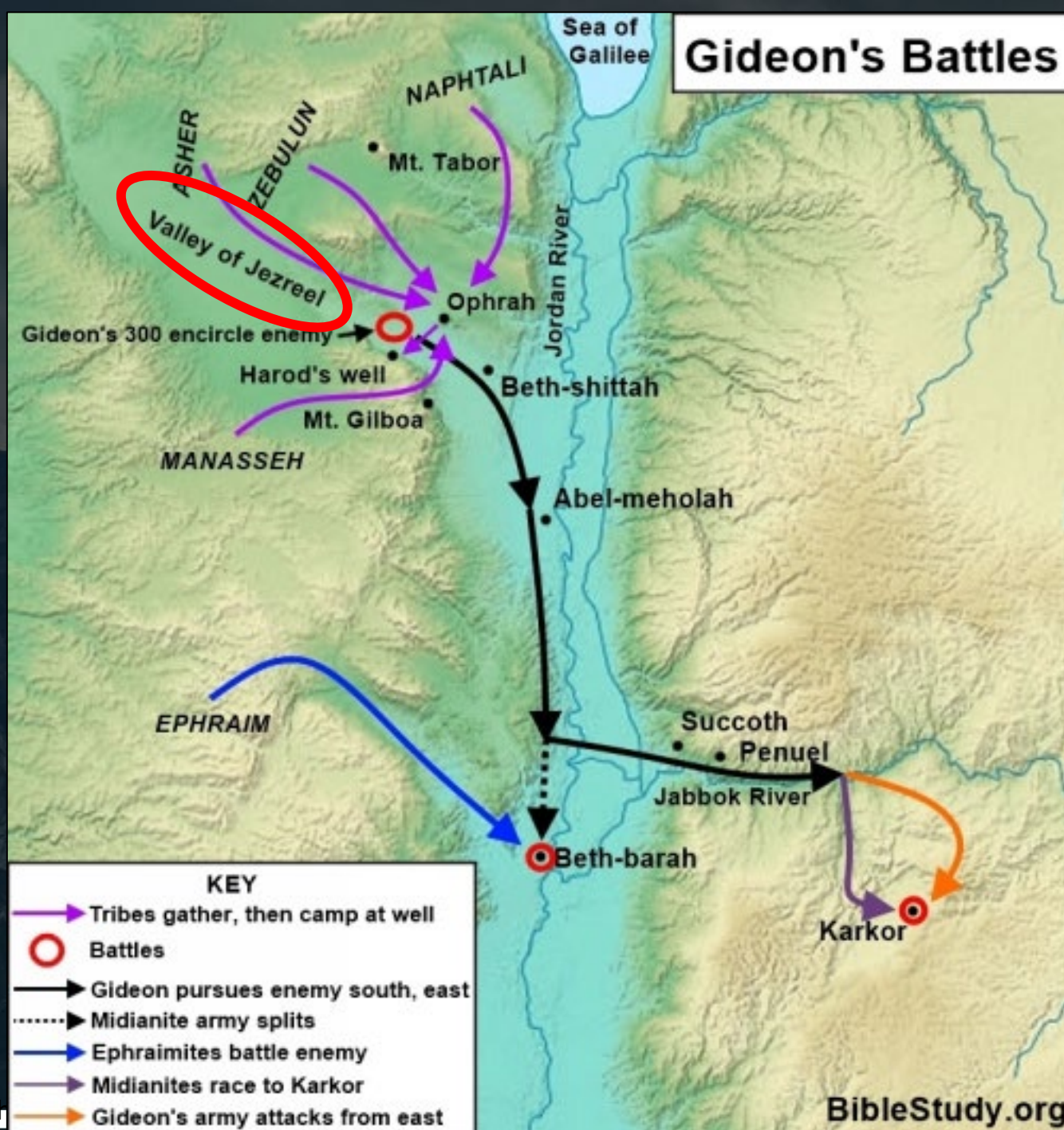
*Gideon passes the first test of faith

A MIGHTY HAND

When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built. They said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing." Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it." But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar."

Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he had torn down his altar. Judges 6:28-32

A MIGHTY HAND



Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over (the Jordan River) and camped in the valley of Jezreel. Judges 6:33

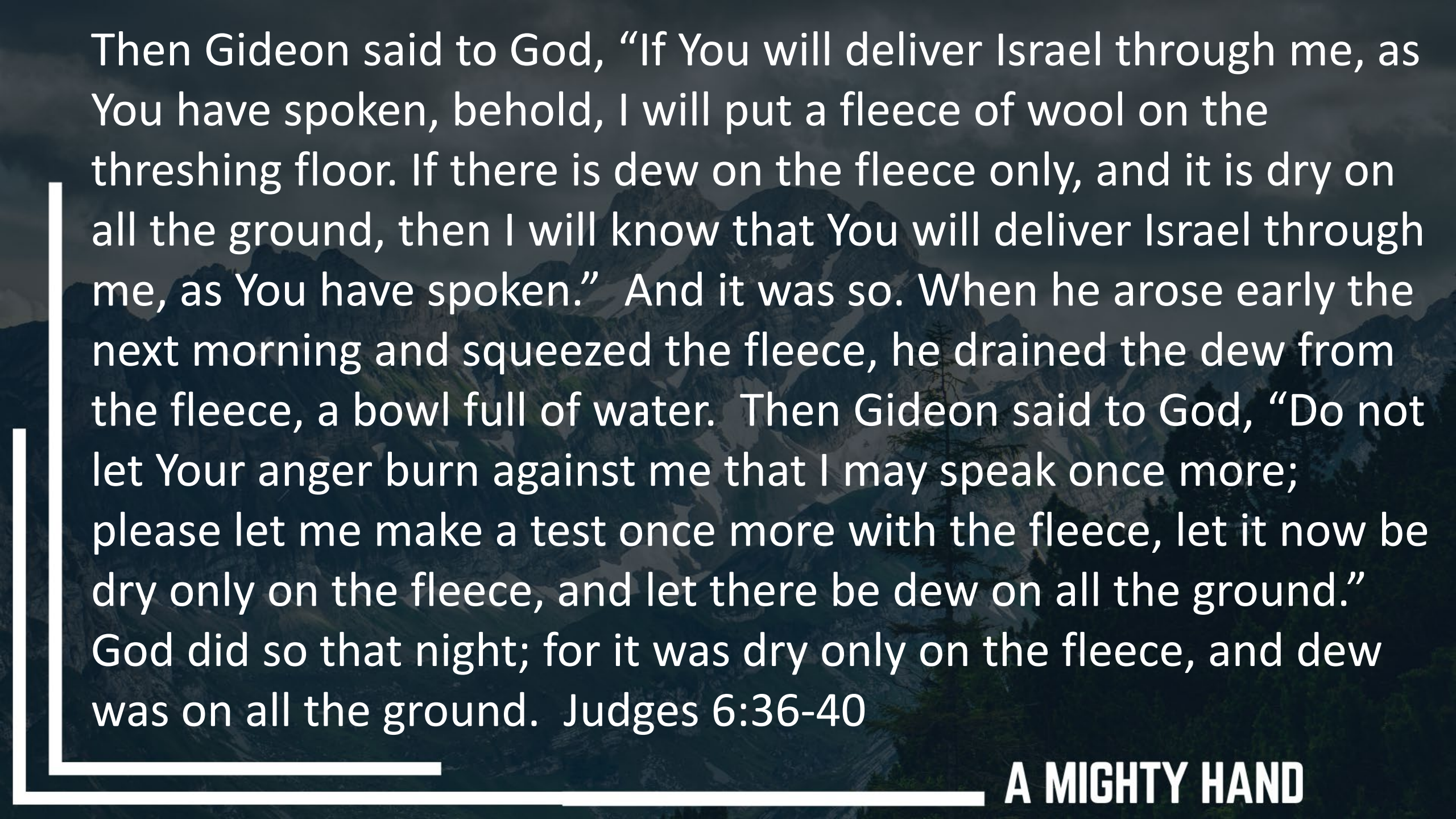
A MIGHTY HAND



So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites [the people whose idols Gideon destroyed] were called together to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

Judges 6:34-35

A MIGHTY HAND



Then Gideon said to God, “If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken.” And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water. Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground.” God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground. Judges 6:36-40

A MIGHTY HAND

What kind of **fleece** are you asking God for?

In what areas of life is your **faith** weak?

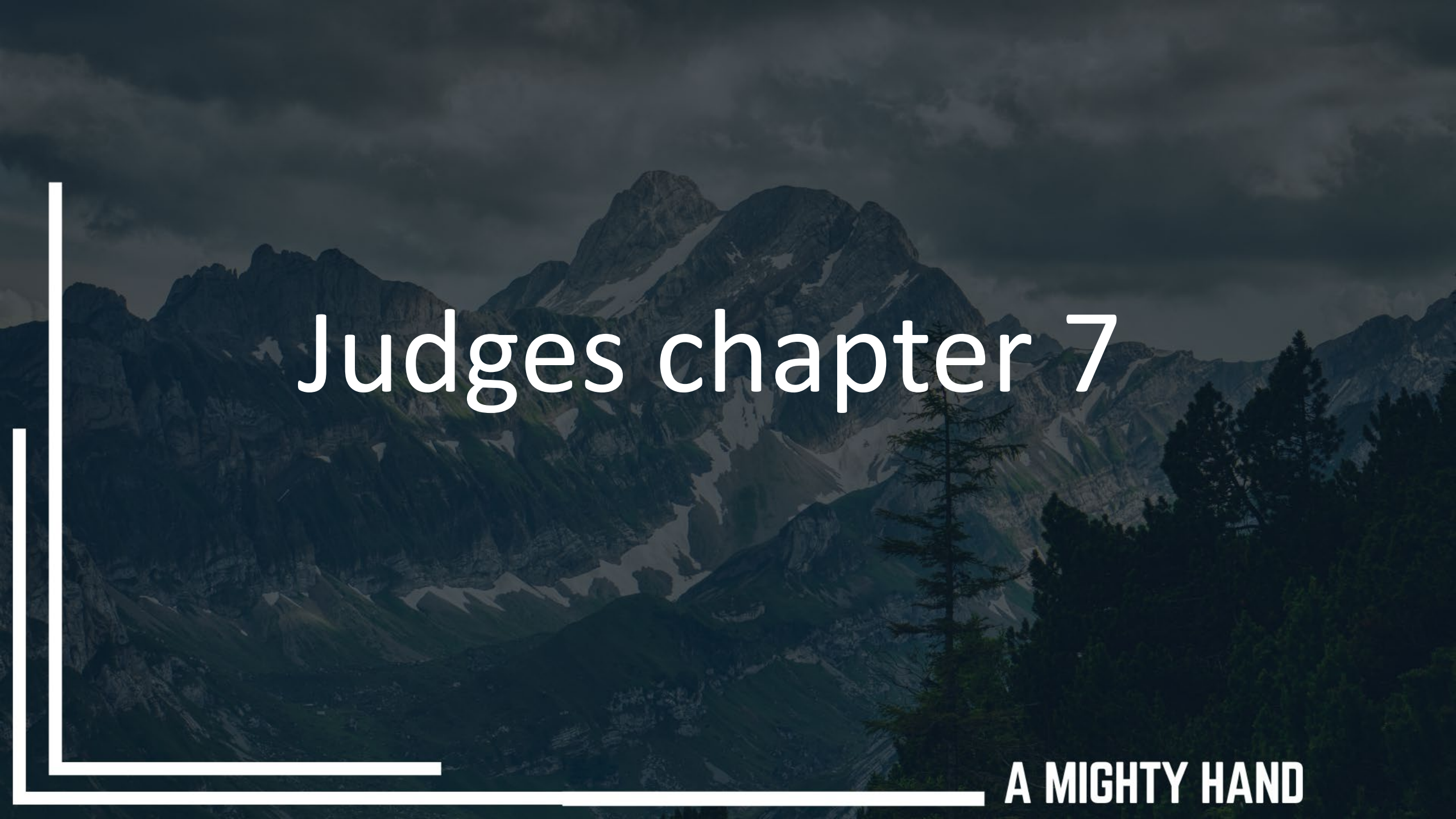
Do you need the **patience** of God?

Gideon was NOT using the fleece to discover God's will, for he already knew from divine revelation what God wanted him to do. The sign related to a confirmation or assurance of God's presence or empowerment for the task at hand.

– Bible Knowledge Commentary

The dilemma in the fleece story was between “do nothing or do something.” It was NOT deciding between two good choices.

A MIGHTY HAND



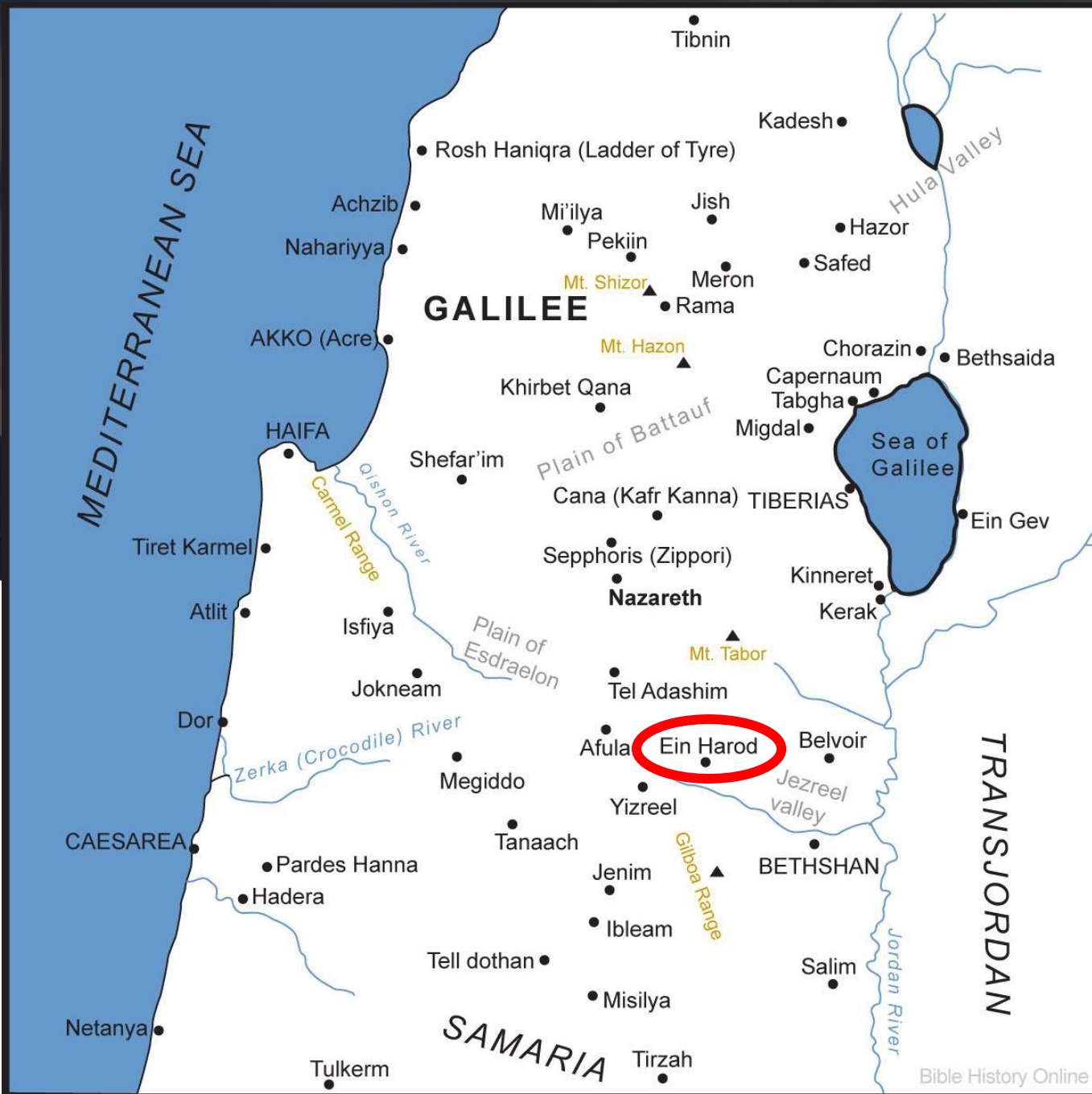
Judges chapter 7

A MIGHTY HAND



WWW.PADFIELD.COM

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



A MIGHTY HAND

The Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, **for Israel would become boastful**, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’ Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.’ ” So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained. Judges 7:2-3

*Literally “**glorify itself against me**”... the ultimate degree of sinful pride; “My own power has delivered me.”

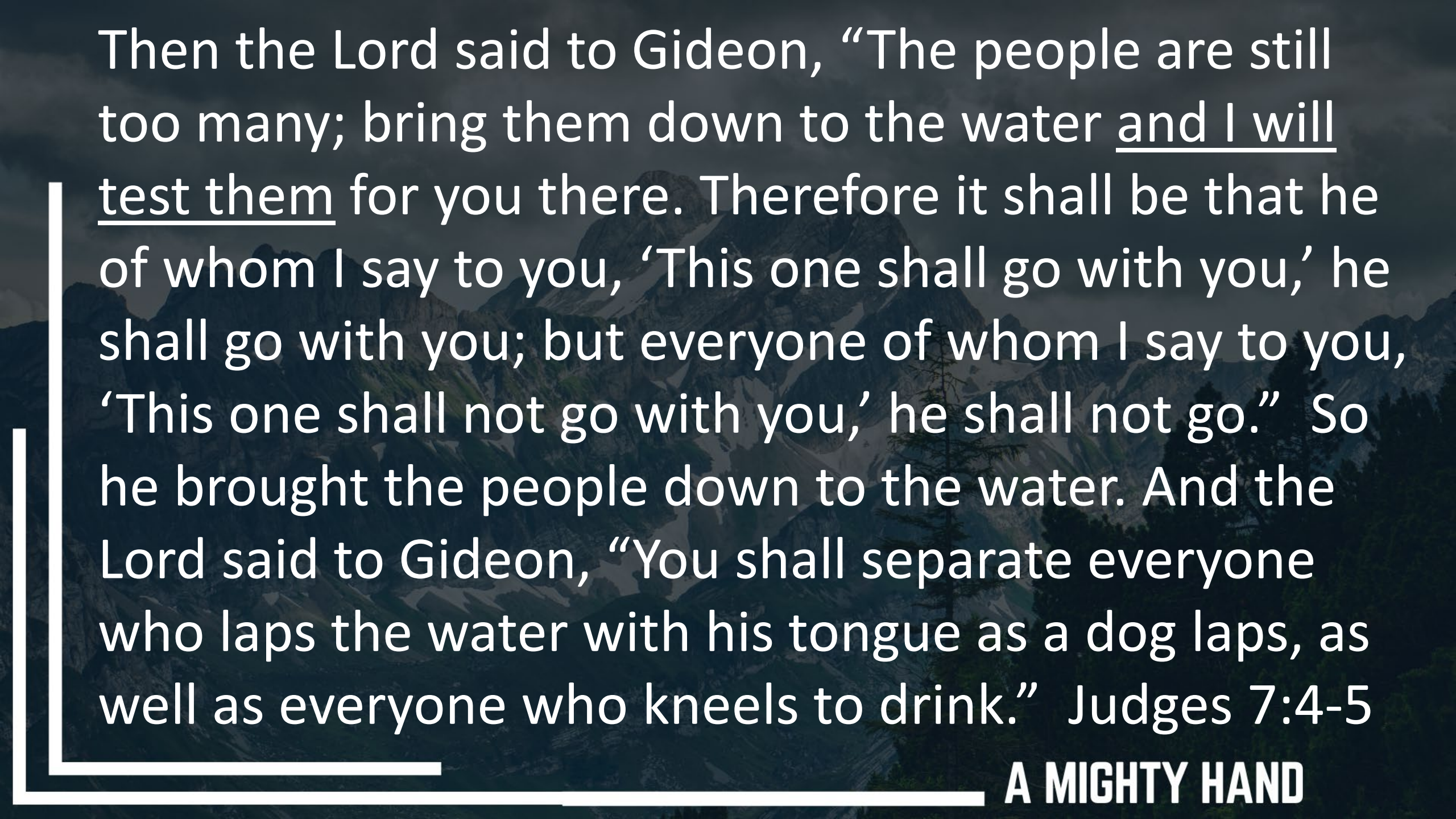
*“Then the officers shall speak further to the people and say, ‘Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers’ hearts melt like his heart.’” Deuteronomy 20:8

A MIGHTY HAND



At the base of Mount Gilboa in Israel, a spring still flows today as it has for millennia. Green grass, a swimming pool, and beautiful picnic spots surround the spring that takes its name from the valley that spreads before it. **Ein Harod**, sometimes called, “Gideon’s Spring,” is the place where Gideon selected his three hundred men to fight the armies of Midian.

<https://waynestiles.com/truths-as-lasting-as-their-settings/>



Then the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink.” Judges 7:4-5

A MIGHTY HAND

Those who kneel were not aware of the enemy – they are also likely the people who are used to bowing to Baal and were not prepared spiritually.

A MIGHTY HAND

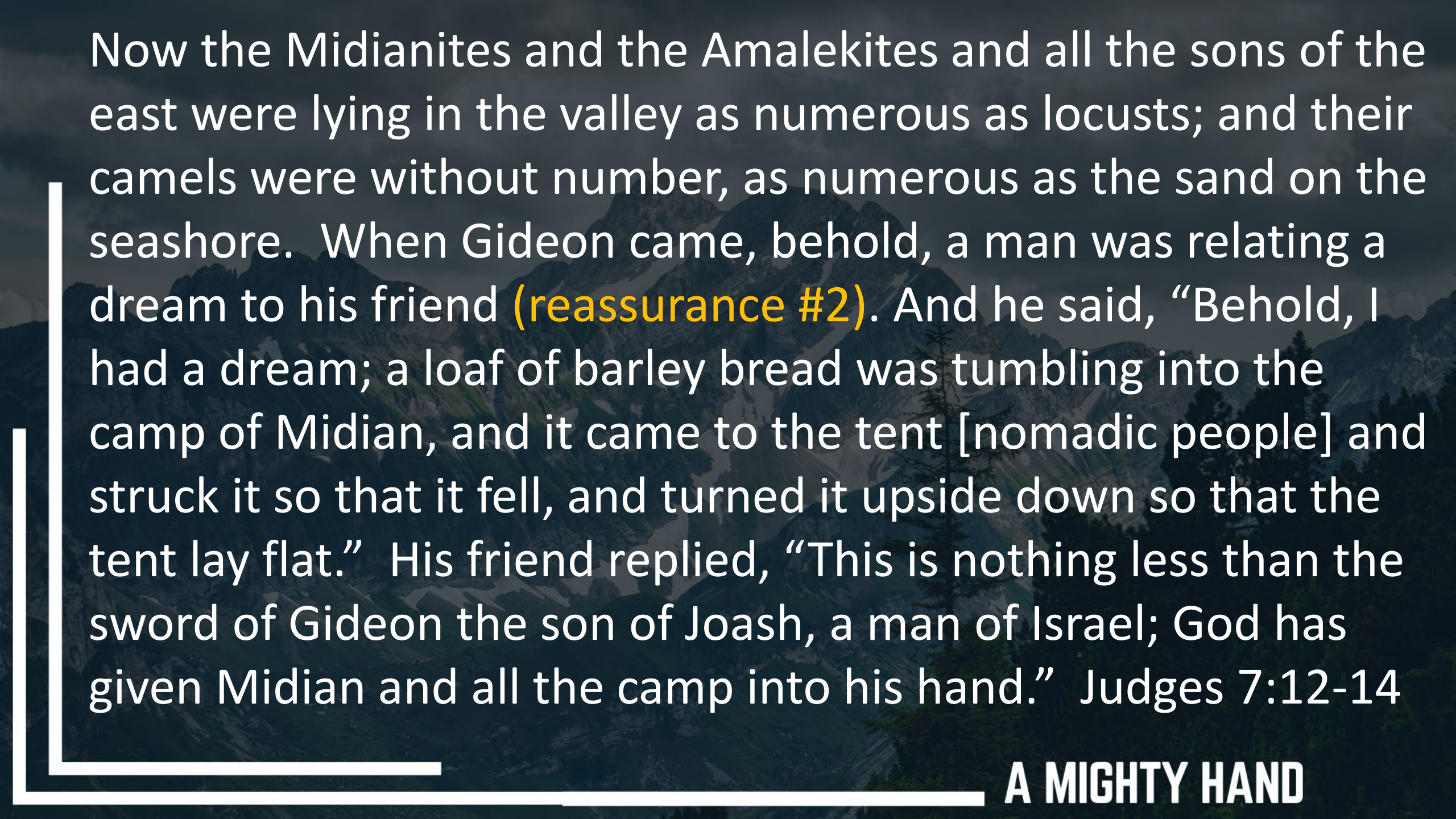
Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water. The Lord said to Gideon, “**I will deliver you** with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home.” So the 300 men took the people’s provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley (3 miles north). Judges 7:6-8

* Sovereignty of God vs. Free Will of Man

A MIGHTY HAND

Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands (reassurance #1). But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp.” So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp. Judges 7:9-11

A MIGHTY HAND



Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend (reassurance #2). And he said, “Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent [nomadic people] and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.” His friend replied, “This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand.” Judges 7:12-14

A MIGHTY HAND

When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands.” He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers [easily breakable earthenware] into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers. He said to them, “Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’ ” Judges 7:15-18

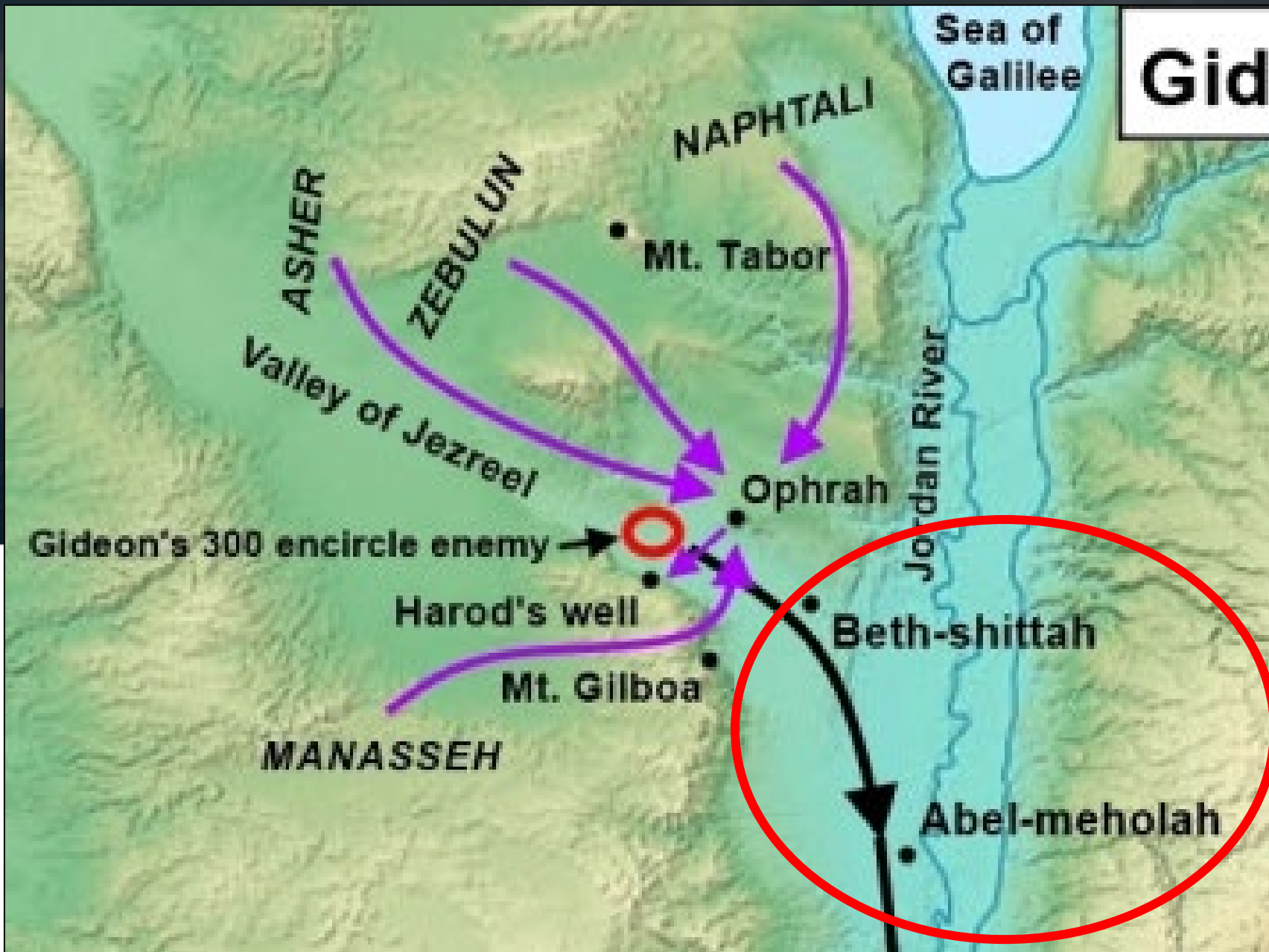
*You should believe in God but you still have to do the job... Gideon had faith but he also created a smart military strategy

A MIGHTY HAND

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch [10 pm], when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands. When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled. When they blew 300 trumpets [shofar], the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. The men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian. Judges 7:19-23

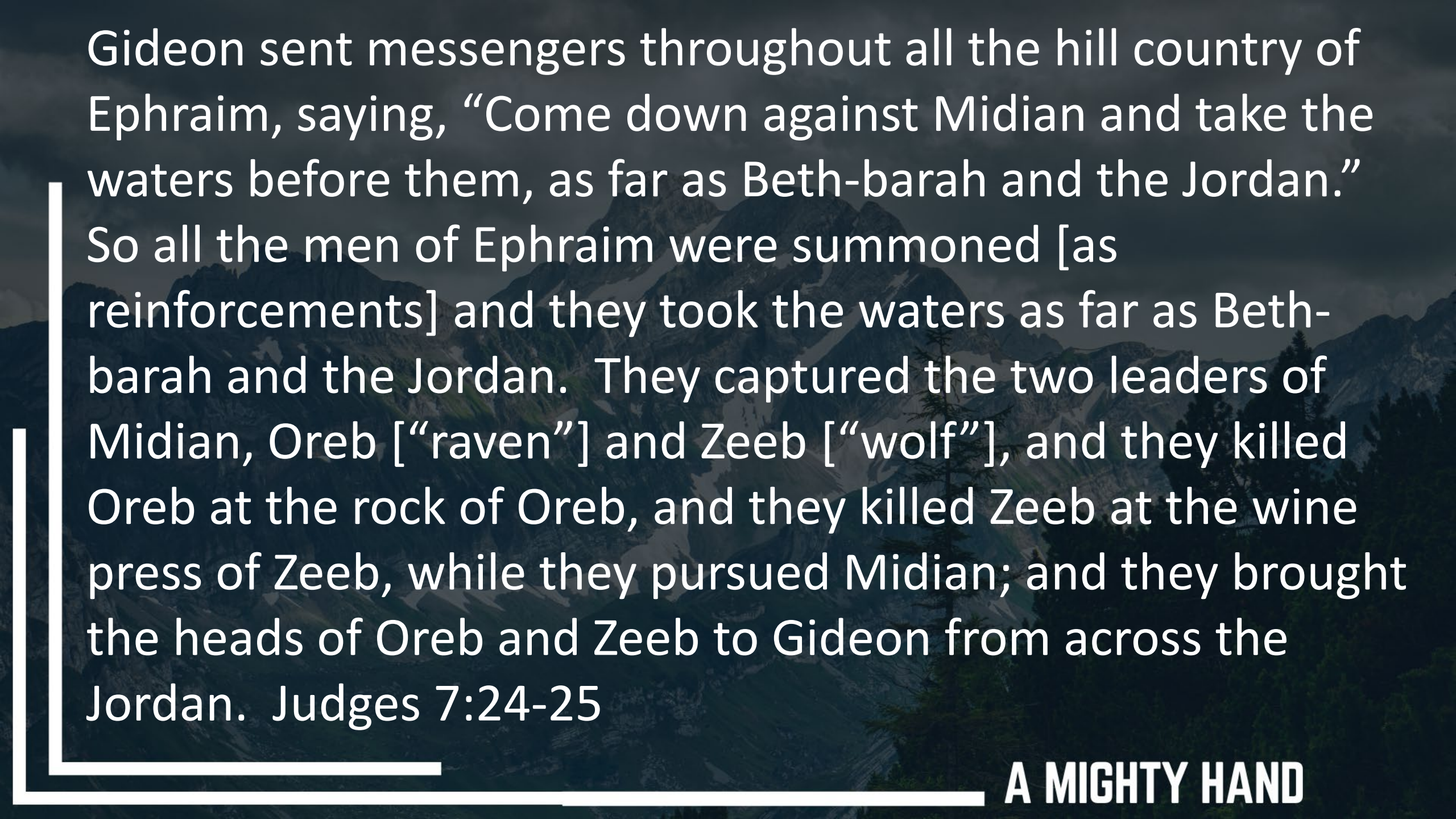
A MIGHTY HAND

Gideon's Battles



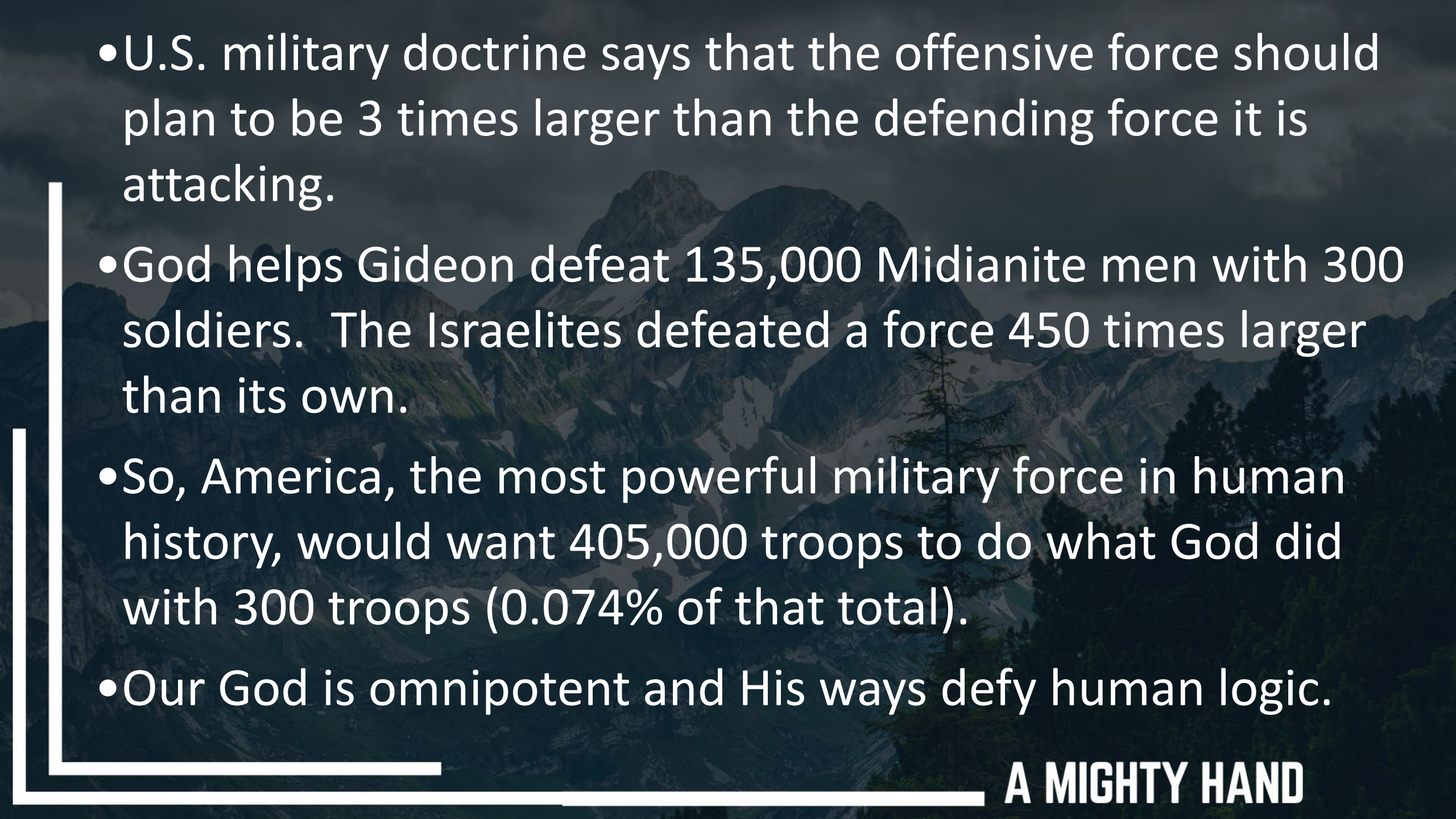
*Gideon's army does not surround the enemy, he offers them a way to flee... enemy soldiers are much more likely to panic and disintegrate rather than fight to the death (classic military strategy).

*Sun Tzu said "When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard." (Art of War)



Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against Midian and take the waters before them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.” So all the men of Ephraim were summoned [as reinforcements] and they took the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan. They captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb [“raven”] and Zeeb [“wolf”], and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan. Judges 7:24-25

A MIGHTY HAND

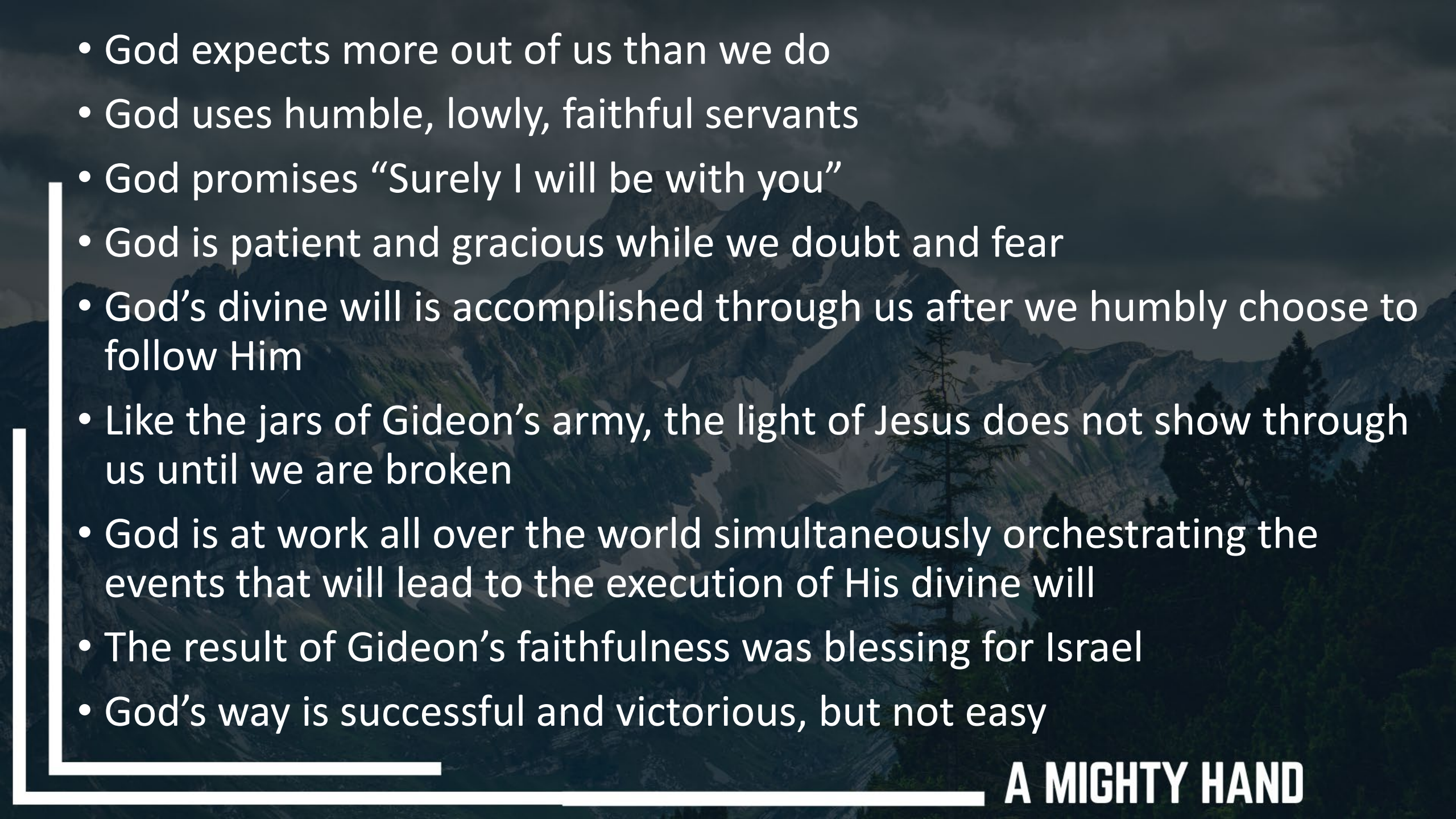
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- U.S. military doctrine says that the offensive force should plan to be 3 times larger than the defending force it is attacking.
 - God helps Gideon defeat 135,000 Midianite men with 300 soldiers. The Israelites defeated a force 450 times larger than its own.
 - So, America, the most powerful military force in human history, would want 405,000 troops to do what God did with 300 troops (0.074% of that total).
 - Our God is omnipotent and His ways defy human logic.

A MIGHTY HAND



Lessons from the life of Gideon

A MIGHTY HAND

- 
- God expects more out of us than we do
 - God uses humble, lowly, faithful servants
 - God promises “Surely I will be with you”
 - God is patient and gracious while we doubt and fear
 - God’s divine will is accomplished through us after we humbly choose to follow Him
 - Like the jars of Gideon’s army, the light of Jesus does not show through us until we are broken
 - God is at work all over the world simultaneously orchestrating the events that will lead to the execution of His divine will
 - The result of Gideon’s faithfulness was blessing for Israel
 - God’s way is successful and victorious, but not easy

A MIGHTY HAND



Therefore humble yourselves under
the **mighty hand of God**, that He
may exalt you at the proper time,
casting all your anxiety on Him,
because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

A MIGHTY HAND