

# MIDIANITE OPPRESSION

## Judges 6:1–10

### MIDIANITE OPPRESSION (6:1–6)

- the people turned back to idolatry after Barak and Deborah died (6:1a; cf. 2:11; 3:7; 10:6)
- so God removed Israel's protection (cf. Num 14:9) and this fourth oppression lasted for 7 years (6:1b)
- the Midianites, Amalekites, and sons of the east invaded the central region in the territory of Manasseh and Issachar (6:1–10:5)
  - Gideon was from the tribe of Manasseh (6:15) and lived in the town of Ophrah (6:11, 24; 8:27, 32)
- Midianites came from the Arabian desert, probably up Wadi Sirhan east of Amman; Amalekites probably came from the Negeb
- they crossed the Jordan, hit the Plain of Jezreel, and raided as far south and west as Gaza, near the Mediterranean Sea (6:3–4)
  - they murdered people at will (8:18–21)
- families fled their homes, farms, and towns and hid in the mountains, in caves, and on the mountain-tops (6:2; cf. Lev 26:6)
  - their clean-earth policy left the land ravaged: they are compared to a plague of locusts—swarms of them came soon after the wheat harvest in May and June (6:3, 11)
    - they camped in tents and plundered the surrounding area (6:4–5)
    - they took Israel's food, sheep, oxen, and donkeys for themselves (6:4)
  - camels enabled them to move quickly over great distances for several days without water—their advantage (6:5)
    - people hid their food supplies (6:11)
    - the raids came every year and soon left Israel desperate for food (6:6; cf. Lev 26:5, 10)
    - the most threatened areas were the rich, fertile plains, such as the Plain of Jezreel (6:33)
- up to the twentieth century bedouin Arabs came up the Wadi of Jezreel and Wadi Sherrar to ravage the same area (Thomson)

### ISRAEL CRIES FOR DELIVERANCE (6:7)

- God was faithful to the Covenant and delivered his people every time they cried out (3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6–7; 10:10–16; Neh 9:26–31)
  - God delivered Israel 13 times over 350 years—showing the love, patience, forgiveness, and grace of God (cf. Judg 2:1c)

### GOD SENDS A PROPHET (6:8–10)

- sending an unnamed prophet to rebuke Israel suggests their apostasy has reached its lowest point yet: apparently no prophets were sent before deliverance from the previous three oppressions (but see Neh 9:26)
- a prophet is sent because Israel needs to know why they have been oppressed before God delivers them: "the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian" (6:1b) because they "have not listened to My voice" (6:10b)
- this unnamed prophet reminds Israel of God's grace—the Exodus from Egypt and the Conquest of Canaan (6:8b–9), repeats God's prohibition of idolatry (6:10a; cf. Deut 6:13–15), and levels God's accusation of disobedience to the Sinaitic Covenant (6:10b)—a risky proposition for a prophet (Neh 9:26)
- their suffering is cursing for disobedience to the Covenant (= first cycle of discipline, Lev 26:14–17; cf. Deut 28:15, 29–34, 48)
  - their suffering was a result of disobedience and idolatry—"you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not listened to My voice" (6:10b)
  - they wanted to escape from their circumstances but God wanted them to reflect on their circumstances: holiness is more important than deliverance, peace, and prosperity
    - the purpose of discipline is to wake us up and bring us back to God
    - discipline was the only way God could preserve his rule and his fledgling Kingdom