

Jehovah-Shalom

¹ Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. ¹² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor." ¹³ And Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." ¹⁴ And the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" ¹⁵ And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." ¹⁶ And the Lord said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man." ¹⁷ And he said to him, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me." ¹⁸ Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay till you return."

¹⁹ So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. ²⁰ And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them." And he did so. ²¹ Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. ²² Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." ²³ But the Lord said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." ²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it, *The Lord Is Peace*. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites. – Judges 6:1-24 ESV

YHWH-šālôm – "The LORD is Peace." The only place in the Scriptures where this name of God is found is in the Book of Judges which chronicles the on-again-off-again relationship between the Israelites and Yahweh. During this period of Israel's existence, they were living in the land promised to them by Yahweh, but they were having a difficult time living in submission to His will. The Book of Judges records their repeated unfaithfulness to God as they struggled with idolatry and spiritual adultery. Throughout the book, a seemingly endless cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and restoration repeats itself. The judges were God-ordained deliverers that He sent to rescue His people from their apostasy. These men and women would come to the rescue of Yahweh's rebellious children whom He had allowed to suffer defeat under the hands of their enemies.

The first chapter of Judges records how the Israelites failed to finish the job that Joshua had begun. Just before his death, their former leader strongly encouraged them to complete their conquest of the land which included the elimination of all the nations that had taken up

residence in Canaan while the Israelites were in captivity in Egypt. But the Israelites had proved less than successful in their assignment. The Canaanites and their false gods remained, and it wasn't long before the Israelites adopted their idols and pagan ways. This brought the judgment of God in the form of military defeat and subjugation to their enemies. But when the people of Israel cried out to God, He graciously sent a judge to redeem and restore them. Yet, as the book reveals, no lessons were learned and the cycle would repeat itself.

In chapter six, the Israelites have been under oppression from the Midianites for seven years. They were experiencing regular invasions at the hands of the Midianites who pillaged their crops and livestock. With their land stripped bare, They were experiencing regular invasions at the hands of the Midianites and the loss of their crops and livestock. With their land stripped bare, they had been reduced to near starvation, which caused them to cry out to God once again.

In response to their cry, Yahweh sent a prophet to remind them of all He had done for them. He had brought them out of Egypt and kept His promise to bring them to the land He had set aside as their homeland, but they had proved faithless.

"I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.'" – Judges 6:10 NASB

The people had been worshipping Baal. Even Joash, the father of Gideon, had been worshipping Baal. So God came up with a plan of rescue and redemption, and He chose an unlikely hero to carry it off. When Gideon first appears on the scene, he is threshing grain in a wine press. He is hiding from the Midianites, trying to keep what little he has from being stolen. Yet when the angel of the Lord comes to Gideon, he addresses him, "O valiant warrior!" The *New Living Translation* renders this phrase, "Mighty hero!" What an unexpected greeting. He had done nothing to deserve this title. Yet God was actually revealing who Gideon would *become*, not who he *was*. It was a title of expectation.

The angel assured Gideon, "The LORD is with you," but Gideon wasn't convinced. He freely expressed his doubts and even questioned Yahweh's integrity.

"Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." – Judges 6:13 ESV

He blamed God for their predicament and portrayed himself as unqualified for the job.

"Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." – Judges 6:15 ESV

But God would not give in to Gideon's excuses.

“Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!” – Judges 6:14 ESV

Gideon remained unconvinced and demanded further proof from Yahweh.

“If you are truly going to help me, show me a sign to prove that it is really the Lord speaking to me. Don’t go away until I come back and bring my offering to you.” – Judges 6:17-18 NLT

Gideon ran home and hastily cooked a young goat and baked bread. He returned with his offering and was instructed by the angel to place the meat and bread on a nearby rock and drench them with the broth from his pot.

Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and bread with the tip of the staff in his hand, and fire flamed up from the rock and consumed all he had brought. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. – Judges 6:21 NLT

Gideon had all the proof he needed. Having witnessed this miracle, he recognized that he had been speaking to an angel of Yahweh. In fear, he cried out, “Oh, Sovereign LORD, I’m doomed! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!” (Judges 6:22 NLT). In his prayer, he acknowledged the sovereignty of Yahweh and recognized his own condemnation for treating Yahweh’s messenger with disrespect. But rather than punish Gideon, Yahweh graciously assured him that all was well and that his calling remained unchanged.

But the Lord said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.” – Judges 6:23 ESV

Instead of punishing Gideon for his stubborn reluctance, Yahweh extended peace. The Hebrew word is *šālôm* (shalom) and it conveys the idea of “completeness, soundness, welfare, peace” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance). Peace is far more than the lack of conflict, it is the presence of God’s blessing. For the believer, peace is the presence of Yahweh, made possible by Jesus, the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Isaiah 54 describes God’s “Eternal Covenant of Peace” and

*“For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace [šālôm] shall not be removed,”
says the LORD [Yahweh], who has compassion on you. – Isaiah 54:10 10 ESV*

Yahweh brings peace because He is “the God of peace” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). He exudes peace because it is a facet of His nature. His peace is closely associated with His love and compassion. But it is only as we rest in His unfailing love that we experience the full weight of the peace that

only He can provide. It is when we doubt Him that we experience inner turmoil and wrestle with His goodness. It is when we question His integrity or doubt His unfailing love that we find ourselves mired in debilitating doubt and despair.

But Yahweh's plan for His chosen people always included the presence of His peace, even when they failed to live in keeping with His will. Paul provided the antidote to a life filled with stress, apprehension, doubt, and despair.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

When Gideon was first approached by the angel, he was in hiding, threshing wheat in secret so the enemy wouldn't steal his harvest. He was a man filled with fear and reluctant to believe that his God cared or could protect him from his enemies. He lacked peace. But God showed up, and rather than pour out His wrath on His doubt-filled servant, He displayed His power and dispensed His peace. This led Gideon to build an altar to Yahweh, which he named Yahweh-Shalom (which means "the Lord is peace").

But Gideon would learn that Yahweh's peace wasn't a vaccine that could inoculate him from trouble. The days ahead would be filled with conflict and confusion. In an attempt to carry out God's assignment, Gideon would encounter opposition, even from within his own family. Peace is not the absence of conflict but the assurance of God's presence and power. God had told Gideon that He would be with Him, and it was that promise that was to bring Gideon peace. It's interesting to note that the last words Jesus spoke to His disciples were intended to provide them with assurance of His presence even after He was gone.

"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." – Matthew 28:18-20 NLT

They were going to face trials, but they could do so knowing they were not alone. The Prince of Peace would be with them. But John clarifies how Jesus could leave but still be present.

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am. I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe." – John 14:27-29 NLT

The gift of peace was the indwelling Holy Spirit who would empower the disciples to face obstacles and opposition with a sense of God's presence and the same divine power that raised

Jesus back to life. Like Gideon, the disciples would face trials and difficulties, but they would know that Yahweh was with them every step of the way. That is why Paul could assure his readers, “let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace” (Colossians 3:15 NLT). We have the promise of peace from Jehovah-Shalom, the LORD is Peace.

