

# Judges 8:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up,

## Analysis

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### **And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up—**

The Hebrew phrase mima'aleh heheres (מִמֵּעֶל הַשֶּׁמֶן) literally means "from the ascent of Heres" or "before the sun." This marks Gideon's swift return from pursuing the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna across the Jordan. The timing emphasizes his military efficiency and determination—he didn't delay to celebrate victory but immediately returned to settle accounts with the Israelite cities that refused aid.

This verse transitions from Gideon's divinely-ordained victory over Midian (chapters 6-7) to a troubling sequence of personal vengeance. While pursuing God's enemies was righteous, Gideon now turns his fury against fellow Israelites who failed to support him. The phrase shub (שוב, "returned") suggests purposeful intent—this wasn't a casual journey home but a deliberate mission of retribution. The context reveals a shift from Spirit-empowered deliverance to flesh-driven vindictiveness, foreshadowing Gideon's later failures (the ephod, polygamy, and his son Abimelech's tyranny).

Reformed interpretation sees here the danger of mixing divine calling with personal agenda. Gideon's early career demonstrated radical faith (reducing his army from 32,000 to 300, Judges 7:2-7); his later actions reveal how quickly spiritual victory can breed carnal pride. This pattern warns believers that seasons of God's blessing may expose hidden pride more dangerously than seasons of trial (Deuteronomy 8:11-17, 1 Corinthians 10:12).

## Historical Context

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The geography indicates Gideon pursued the Midianite kings eastward across the Jordan River into the wilderness regions of Transjordan, then returned westward. The 'ascent of Heres' likely refers to a mountain pass or the rising sun marking direction. Ancient warfare often involved long-distance pursuits to prevent regrouping—Gideon's 300 men chased a massive Midianite coalition army to ensure complete victory. The timing 'before the sun was up' suggests either an all-night return march or departure at dawn, demonstrating military discipline and urgency in an era before standing professional armies.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How can spiritual victories in your life become occasions for pride and self-promotion rather than humble gratitude to God?
2. What warning signs indicate a shift from pursuing God's purposes to pursuing personal vindication or revenge?
3. In what ways does the New Testament teaching on forgiveness and leaving vengeance to God (Romans 12:19, Matthew 5:38-42) challenge cultural expectations of honor and retribution?

## Interlinear Text

מִלְמָעֵל הַפְּמַלְכָּתִים הַיְּשָׁבֵב וְגַדְעָוְבָן וְיַוְאָשָׁמָן מִן הַפְּמַלְכָּתִים הַיְּשָׁבֵב וְגַדְעָוְבָן וְיַוְאָשָׁמָן

## התרס:

the sun

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