

# Judges 8:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

## Analysis

**God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.**

Gideon's argument climaxes by attributing glory to God and to Ephraim while minimizing his own role. The phrase **God hath delivered into your hands** (beyedkhem natan Elohim, בְּיַדְכֶם נָתַן אֱלֹהִים) uses the perfect tense, emphasizing completed divine action—God gave the victory, not human prowess. By crediting Ephraim with capturing the princes Oreb (meaning "raven") and Zeeb (meaning "wolf"), Gideon acknowledged their significant contribution. These leaders' deaths demoralized the remaining Midianite forces and prevented regrouping.

Gideon's rhetorical question **what was I able to do in comparison of you?** (umah yakholti asot kakhkhem, עַמָּה יָخַלְתִּי אֲסֹת כָּקַחַם) expresses extreme self-deprecation. In reality, Gideon's 300 had routed 135,000 Midianites (Judges 8:10), while Ephraim pursued stragglers. Yet Gideon's humility defused the crisis: **their anger was abated** (rafetah rucham, רָפַתָּה רֻחָם)—literally "their spirit relaxed." The verb rafah (רָפַח, "to sink, relax, let go") indicates complete de-escalation.

This passage illustrates biblical peacemaking that prioritizes reconciliation over being right. Jesus taught: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called

the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Gideon could have cited his divine calling (Judges 6:14), his miraculous signs (Judges 6:36-40), or the Spirit's empowerment (Judges 6:34). Instead, he chose humility and generosity, preventing bloodshed within Israel. Paul similarly urged: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

## Historical Context

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The capture of Oreb and Zeeb (Judges 7:25) was strategically crucial—leaderless armies often disintegrated in ancient warfare. With their princes dead, the remaining Midianite forces lost command structure and morale. The places where they fell were memorialized: "the rock of Oreb" and "the winepress of Zeeb," becoming proverbial references to God's judgment (Psalm 83:11, Isaiah 10:26).

Ephraim's acceptance of Gideon's explanation prevented civil war that plagued later periods. When Jephthah faced similar Ephraimite anger, his harsh response led to slaughter of 42,000 Ephraimites at the Jordan fords (Judges 12:1-6). Gideon's diplomatic wisdom preserved unity, allowing continued pursuit of the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna. This contrast illustrates how leadership responses to unjust criticism significantly impact outcomes—gentleness can preserve peace while defensiveness escalates conflict.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does Gideon's credit to God for victory model proper response to success in ministry or life?
2. What does the contrast between Gideon's diplomacy and Jephthah's harshness teach about responding to criticism?

3. In what situations should believers prioritize peace and unity over being vindicated or proven right?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּ יַדְכֶם		נָתָן	יְמִינָת	אֱלֹהִים	אַתָּה	שָׁרֵךְ	מִדְיָן	אַתָּה
into your hands		hath delivered		God	H853	the princes	of Midian	H853
H3027		H5414		H430		H8269		H4080
וְאַתָּה עֶרֶב	וְאַתָּה זְבַב	וְמִתְהַזֵּב	זָאָב	וְאַתָּה עֲרָב	וְאַתָּה עֲרָב	וְאַתָּה עֲרָב	וְאַתָּה עֲרָב	וְאַתָּה עֲרָב
Oreb	and Zeeb	H4100	and what was I able	H3201	to do	H0		H227
H6159	H2062				H6213			
בְּ פַתַּח הַ	רוֹקֵם				בְּ דָבָר וּמַעַל יְ			
was abated	in comparison of you	Then their anger			H5921	that		
H7503		H7307				H1696		
פִּתְבַּח רָ		בְּ קַח:						
toward him when he had said		H2088						
H1697								

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 15:1** (Parallel theme): A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.