

Downsizing

“The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men with you for me to hand Midian over to you. Israel might brag and say, ‘We saved ourselves.’ Announce to the troops, ‘Whoever is scared or frightened should leave [...]’” So 22,000 men went back home, and 10,000 were left. The Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. [...]” So Gideon took the men down to the water. The Lord said to him, “Separate those who lap water with their tongues like dogs from those who kneel down to drink.” [...] Then the Lord said to Gideon, “With the 300 men who lapped water I will save you and hand Midian over to you. All the other men should go home.”” (Judges 7:2-7, Gods Word Translation)

At 32,000 troops strong Gideon’s army was facing the far superior Midianite enemy force of 135,000 soldiers (Judges 8:10), meaning that statistically each Israeli had to contend with 4.2 Midianites, putting the odds to just below 24%. Due diligence would suggest to better withdraw from this conflict or, alternatively, increase the task force. So, judging from a very experienced and balanced human viewpoint it was absolutely nuts, illogic, and even suicidal to cut Israel’s already inferior army down in size, first to less than one-third, then even to just below 1% of its original strength, reducing the odds in this battle to a mere 0.2%!

- 0.2% - thats evenly matched for the magic potion drinking citizens of the small, Roman Empire resisting, Gallic village in the cartoon stories of Asterix & Obelix, but surely not in real life challenges as we don’t do magic. Everybody knows from history as well as own experience that unlike in cartoons and movies the strong always swallow the weak, the big the small, the many the few, and so forth. So what was this downsizing all about?
- Though its still an issue in military context, downsizing today has become a commonplace buzzword in the marketplace. When we downsize our “army” (workforce) in these times, we usually release/fire/lay-off people to cut our expenses, aiming to either match or even better, conquer an overwhelming enemy threat (competition). This working tool of our survival-mode-tool-box is commonly and widely used as it typically leads to the quickest results. Put differently, we downsize for financial gain. Sadly, this approach means sacrificing some to keep others alive, a cruel but generally accepted necessity in today’s world, where those in charge hardly bother to truly care for those left in the cold.

This worldly approach, however, was not the basis for God downsizing the Israelite army as He didn’t sacrifice 99.1% to save 0.9%. Far from it, He (not Gideon!) simply selected the best suited lads for this specific task to save them all! Victory of 300 over 135,000 would also ensure the credit (glory) going to God, not people, which is an important Kingdom aspect.

- Without twisting it into relevance for us today this event could perhaps throw a different light on our downsizing moves, no matter in which sphere of life? To begin with, God-given tasks have always to do with overcoming Kingdom opposition. Question is how we tackle it. Do we muster everyone and everything at our disposal to get the job done based on our usually limited understanding? Do we downsize to keep our operation, church, etc. financially afloat, even if it does harm individuals? Or do we allow the Lord to show us other, unconventional ways that will benefit everyone? Do we allow Him to select those He, in His all-encompassing view, sees best suited for His assignment?
- One thing is for sure in God’s Kingdom - victory in any kind of conflict has nothing to do with quantity but everything to do with suitability. Thats why God downsized the army here to those who were (a) listening to Him, (b) obedient to do as He instructed, (c) un-

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afraid of an overwhelming enemy, (d) free from the fear of man, i.e. unconcerned with other people's perception of them, (e) humble enough to not feeling being above menial tasks and requirements, and (f) willing to give Him the glory as He alone deserves it!