

Small But Mighty

Biblical stories remind us how we can function as small communities.

Many truths are hidden in the stories of the ancient sages.

Thirteen hundred years ago Gideon became leader of a very young Israel. His people had faced many trials. No longer were they nomads; they had to develop a political structure that would serve their agrarian way of life. They had to stand up against aggressive foreign cultures. Defending their territory was a major preoccupation.

In one instance they felt they had to amass as many fighters as they could to do battle with their most hostile enemy. But God told Gideon he had too many warriors. If he won the battle with this many, they would boast about how wonderful they were – and would not give credit to their God.

So they reduced the army by 50% by encouraging fighters to go home. Still too many! God sent the rest to a stream for a drink. Those who stretched out and lapped the water like dogs showed they left themselves vulnerable to attack. They were eliminated. The others who kneeled and drank from their hand while keeping alert became the trimmed down army. All of them were given trumpets, torches and clay jars to go to battle.

Using the element of surprise in the dark of night, Gideon's small band drove the frightened enemy encampment out of the valley.

The story, told and retold, is a terse reminder that small can be powerful.

In our own rural story, we can bemoan the puniness of our community, which is treated as insignificant by the politicians, the financiers, and the urbanizers. But maybe this is only an excuse.

We are reminded of the story of why Gideon's tiny army was so successful. They prepared for battle in their own unique way. They followed the commands of their special charismatic leader. And they did all this in the name of God, knowing that God was always with them.

They were small in number but mighty in spirit!

(written by Joyce Sasse)