

A STUDY OF JUDGES

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JUDGES

Commentary by Dr. Mark G. Cambron

This Book, as its name implies, covers the time of the rule of the judges over Israel. Usually in Israel, a judge did not sit and act in a law court, but rather headed the people in rule and authority. A judge, then, was a Ruler. In Judges we have the history of the 12 Judges; the account of one more which was an apostate.

JUDGES is a Book of Rebellion and Apostasy.

I. The Corrupt Heathen and Israel (1:1 - 3:4)

- A. Compromise with the Heathen (1:1 - 2:13)
- B. Institution of the Judges (2:11 - 3:4)

II. The Period and History of the Judges (3:5 - 16:31)

- A. Othniel (3:5-11)
- B. Ehud (3:12-30)
- C. Shamgar (3:31)
- D. Barak (4, 5)
- E. Gideon (6:1 - 8:32)
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- I. Jephthah (10:6 - 12:7)
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III. The Corrupt Heart of Israel (17 - 21)

- A. Corruption of the Individual (17:1-6)
- B. Corruption of the Priesthood (17:7-13)
 - 1. A Man-made God
 - 2. A Man-made Worship
 - 3. A Man-made Priest
- C. Corruption of Two Tribes (18:1 - 20:14)
 - 1. Dan (18)
 - 2. Benjamin (19:1 - 20:14)
- D. Corruption of the Twelve Tribes (20:15 - 21:25)

JUDGES

As we have already entered this section of God's Word labeled the "continuing history of the nation of Israel." We take note before us a treasured book labeled "The Book of Judges."

While the Children of Israel were in the 40 year wilderness journey, Moses' father-in-law advised him to set up judges throughout Israel to lend a helping hand to Moses who was being worn out in deciding legal battles between the children of Israel; therefore, a judge was chosen from among each 10 Israelites, one out of each fifty, one out of each 100, and one out of each 1000.

Should a judge over his ten brethren not decide the answer, then it was turned over to one who judges 50, and if he couldn't decide, then it was turned over to a judge of 100, and if he couldn't decide, then it was turned to the judge over 1000. And if the outcome was too hard for him, then it was turned over to Moses. And he decided God's will in the matter.

We do not find these sets of judgeship in the book of Judges, but one was chosen to judge over all Israel.

The time covered by the book of Judges is 305 years.

From the Scofield Reference Bible we learn "that the book covers seven apostasies, seven servitudes to seven heathen nations, seven deliverances."

The key verse is "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). There was no king, no Moses, and no Joshua. Yet there were some great men such as Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

And this book, as its name implies, covers the time of the rule of the judges over Israel. Usually in Israel, a judge did not sit and act in a law court, but rather headed the people in rule and authority. A judge, then, was a ruler. In Judges we find the history of twelve judges and the account of one more — the apostate.

These judges were:

1. Othniel
2. Ehud
3. Shamgar
4. Barak
5. Gideon
6. Abimelech
7. Tola
8. Jair
9. Jephthah
10. Ibzan
11. Elon
12. Abdon
13. Samson

All of Israel was corrupt

1. Of the individual (17:1-6)
2. Of the Priesthood (17:7-13)
3. Of the Two Tribes (18:1 - 20:14)
 - a. Dan (18)
 - b. Benjamin (19:1 - 20:14)
4. Of the Twelve Tribes (20:15 - 21:25)

The Lord raised up the judges in times when Israel had gone after strange gods (idols), and God punished them with defeat by their enemies causing them drastic servitude until Israel called unto the Lord (Jehovah) for deliverance. He sent them the deliverer, a Judge.

After the time of Joshua's death, Israel made a play at following the LORD (Jehovah) as to the what, why, when of serving God. The enemies of Israel were not fully conquered and driven out of their territories and thus proved to be thorns in their sides for years to come. The following is a step-by-step account of Israel.

After Joshua's death, Israel inquired of the LORD saying, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?"

Chapter 1

Verses 1, 2

"And the LORD said, Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand." Moses was gone, Joshua was gone. With whom did God converse? He, God must have enquired with the high priest who wore the breastplate and within the Urim and Thummim by which the people of Israel could know the will of God.

The place the LORD provided for the Urim and Thummim was in the breastplate of the high priest. What their design was we do not know. Only that the choosing of one or the other, God said "yes" or He said "no." Their design was the same, and by the feel of it in the breastplate, the High Priest could not tell which one was which. Their choice depended upon "chance," for God no doubt guided their hands and they made a choice — God's chance of "yea" or "nay."

Verse 3

And Judah saith unto Simeon his brother, "Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him."

Verse 4

Judah (and Simeon) made their move, for the LORD (Jehovah) delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they slew of them 10,000 men in Bezek.

Verses 5 - 6

They found also Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. However, Adoni-bezek fled, and they, when he was captured, cut off his thumbs and his great toes — "his felling days were over."

Verse 7

Adoni-bezek said to himself, "Seventy kings having their great toes and thumbs cut off

have eaten their meals at my table. As I have done, so God has done to me.” They brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

Verse 8

Later Jerusalem was captured by Judah and destroyed it by fire.

Verse 9

Afterwards the sons of Judah fought against the Canaanites living in the hill country and the Negev and the south country.

Verse 10

So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron. Its name formerly was Kirjath-arba. Then they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai.

Verse 11

Then from there Judah went to the inhabitants of Debir, its name formerly was Kirjath-sepher.

Verse 12

We’re in Caleb’s territory now, for he said, “The one who attacks Kirjath-sepher and captures it, I will give my daughter Achsah to wed.

Verse 13

To keep it in the family, we learn that Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother captured it, and he thus won Achsah for a wife.

Verses 14 - 15

Then the daughter came to Caleb and asked for additional possessions. She said, “The place you offered has no water, and who would like a place like that.” So Caleb gave her some additional land which contained the upper and lower springs.

Verse 16

And the descendants of the Kenites, Moses’ father-in-law went up from Jericho (known as the city of palms) with the sons of Judah to the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad, and they went and lived with the people.

Verses 17 - 18

Together, Judah and Simeon struck the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. The name of the city was called Hormah. And Judah took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory.

Verse 19

Here’s an amazing note of defeat. “Now the LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots.” They could have, had they had a leader and captain and hero as Moses and Joshua!

Verse 20

But some victory anyway; “And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses commanded, and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak (giants).

Verse 21

And the tribe of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that occupied Jerusalem, but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

Verses 22 - 25

And the tribe of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) also went against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. And the house of Joseph spied out Bethel. The name of the city was formerly Luz. And the spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we shall spare you." So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword, but they released the man and his family.

Verses 26 - 27

This released man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz which is its name to this day. But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites couldn't be stopped from living in the land.

Verse 28

There was some recovery, however, for when Israel became strong they were able to put the Canaanites into forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

Verses 29 - 30

Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. And too, Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor.

Verse 31

More sad news; Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Accho, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob.

Verse 32

So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.

Verse 33

The same was with Naphtali, who did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and they inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath became forced labor for them.

Verses 34 - 35

Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley; yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the House of Joseph grew strong, they became forced labor.

Verse 36

And the border of the Amorites save from the ascent of Akkrabbim, from Sela and upward. (Sela as we know it is translated in Isaiah 16:2 as Petra, the place where Israel shall

flee at the beginning of the Tribulation.)

Chapter 2

Verses 1 - 2

In this chapter, there is the review of chapter one; even a little of their history in the past, and Israel's failure in the present, and the exact demands for the future.

Now the angel of the LORD (Jehovah) came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you, and was for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars."

This person whom the LORD placed at the head of Israel's soldiers termed "the angel of the LORD" was what His name implies, the "angel of the LORD" (Jehovah), must be God. For while talking with Joshua,

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, an, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" (Joshua 5:13)

He commanded Joshua to take off his shoes (the same command given to Moses at the burning bush).

Joshua asked the angel "art thou for us or for our adversaries?"

And the angel answered "Nay, but as captain of the host of the LORD am I come."

He is captain of the LORD's host.

"Take off you shoes for you are on holy ground."

This is God speaking!

Yes, He is God. For this angel of the LORD is presented as no other angel in the Scriptures. He possesses a position no other angel could occupy. He is the Messiah, Jesus Christ Himself, as He existed as a theophany before His (birth). He presented Himself to Hagar, Abraham, and Gideon.

Verse 3

Here the Angel of the LORD is quoted again as He spoke to Joshua, "And as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars." But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done? Now the angel of the LORD speaks of the present time. "I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you."

Verse 4, 5

When the angel had spoken these words to all the sons of Israel, that the people lifted their voices and wept; therefore, they names that place Bochim, and there they sacrificed to the LORD. Bochim means "weepers."

Verse 6

Upon Israel's dismissal, the fighting men each to his inheritance to possess the land.

Verse 7

We can say this for Israel, they served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

Verses 8 - 12

Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD died at the age of 110. And they buried him in the lot of his inheritance in Timnath-heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals, and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them. Thus they provoked the LORD to anger.

Verse 13

So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashteroth (Baal, one of the Canaanites words meaning “master, lord”. Ashteroth, or Ashtoreth, the name is cognate with the Babylonian Ishtar, the goddess of sensual love. Just think, Israel left the God of purity, of grace, and of true love, for the sensual god that was invented by Satan and those who worship him.)

Verses 14 - 15

The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so they were severely distressed.

Verse 16

Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of them who plundered them.

How can we apply this second chapter already recorded to the state of the Church of today? We say “state” not standing for our position and standing in Christ is perfect, but oh, state or condition is something to be desired.

I have talked with many born again Christian teachers and pastors who admitted that they have never seen the witnessing power of the Holy Ghost in an all out revival.

It is glorious to behold, when a whole city is set on fire with the power of God, Christ being held high, and the Gospel preached and the Gospel believe. [We say the Gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in paying for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Timothy 2:8)]

The Lord Jesus has been so gracious to allow me to witness that kind of demonstration three times:

1. The Billy Sunday Campaign in 1918, Chattanooga, Tennessee, in which I was saved.
2. The Mordecai Ham meeting in 1932, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and
3. The Gypsy Smith meeting in 1942, Minneapolis, Minnesota, held in the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, and after four days moved to the U.S.A. Armory for the balance of

the meeting.

Everyone knew that there was a work of grace in all three. The same can be said of Tennessee Temple Bible School. What a school to attend and teach in. The working of the Holy Spirit did such a wonderful work of grace during those years.

And also the Seaside Mission. God's work among the Jewish as hundreds took Christ Jesus as their Lord and Messiah.

And to think for hundreds of years the Holy Spirit accomplished such a work. These great works must continue, but it rests upon the individuals whether God shall do another great work and receive all the glory.

All Israel shall be saved — the Bible says so concerning Israel — when you are in the Tribulation and all these things (judgments) have come upon you, in the later days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to his voice (Deuteronomy 4:30). “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer” - the Saviour - “and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26).

We know the time when all Israel shall be saved — “in the latter days” — day of the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation. In the time when the antichrist makes a covenant with Israel, and sets himself up as God in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Now comes the ministry of the judges. Israel had no kings so God set up the rule of the people by the Judges who led Israel to deliverance from the hands of those who plundered them.

Verse 17

The Judges were ignored, thus Israel played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They refused to follow in the fathers' footsteps the way God had determined in obeying His commandments. They did not do as their fathers did.

Verse 18

When God raised up the judges, the Lord was with the judge and delivered the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge, for the LORD was moved to pity by their groanings because of those who afflicted them.

Verse 19

But it came about when the judge died they would turn back to the idols and were worse than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them. They did not give up their idols nor quit their practices.

Verses 20 - 22

God was wroth against their evil ways, and showed His anger by not driving out the nations which Joshua had left when he died and thus tested and found out that Israel had rather to serve the false gods than the true God Jehovah.

Verse 23

So God allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly, as a test for Israel. Israel flunked the test, thus these people were not given to Joshua, and thus remained.

Chapter 3

Verses 1 - 3

The following are the nations the LORD left to test Israel by these Gentiles who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might by taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly.

These nations are: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-her-mon as far as Lebo-hamath.

Verses 4 - 6

And they were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which he had commanded their fathers through Moses.

THE FIRST APOSTASY

And the sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

Verse 7

And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals, and the Ashteroths.

Verses 8 - 11

Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of the Cushan-rish-a-thaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

THE FIRST JUDGE

When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a delivered (a Saviour) for the sons of Israel to deliver them. Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. And the Holy Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. Then the land had rest 40 years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

THE SECOND APOSTASY

Verses 12 - 13

And the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. And He gathered unto the children of Ammon and Amalek, went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees (Jericho).

Verse 14

So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

EHUD, THE SECOND JUDGE

Verse 15

But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD [remember Joel 2:32 "whosoever

shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved (or delivered)” - whoever calls, whatever the occasion, God will hear and say you!], the LORD raised them up a deliverer, a saviour, Ehud, the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left handed, and by him Israel sent a present unto Eglon, the king of Moab.

Verse 16

But Ehud made a dagger sharp on both sides and a cubit (1 1/2 feet) in length, and he did gird it under his clothes, hiding it from the sight of all upon his right thigh.

Verses 17 - 22

Thus Ehud brought his present to Eglon, and Eglon was a very fat man, and as Ehud stood before the king to present his gift, he took the dagger and plunged it into the king’s stomach, which had such force that it penetrated the layers of fat, and covered the whole dagger.

Verses 23 - 25

Then Ehud went out into the porch, and shut the doors of the parlor upon him and locked them. When he left, the servants tried the doors and found them to be locked, which they surmised that the king wanted to rest awhile, but after a while, they surmised again, that there was something wrong, and they found the king dead.

Verses 26 - 30

Ehud escaped unto Seirath. Upon his arrival home, that he blew the trumpet to gather Israel from the mountains, and Ehud encouraged them to follow him as they could now attack the Moabites for the LORD had delivered them into Israel’s hand. Success was theirs for they took the fords of Jordan River toward Moab letting no man to pass over. They also slew ten-thousand Moabites. Moab was so subdued that Israel was able to with the land enjoy 80 years of peace.

SHAMGAR, THE THIRD JUDGE

Verse 31

And after him was Shamgar which slew six hundred Philistines and with only an ox goad at that, and was a great deliverer of Israel also.

Chapter 4

THE THIRD APOSTASY AND SERVITUDE

Verse 1

Familiar words, “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.”

Verse 2

The LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan that reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

Verse 3

And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD; for this king had 900 chariots of iron; and 20 years he oppressed the children of Israel.

DEBORAH AND BARAK THE FOURTH AND FIFTH JUDGES

Verse 4

And Deborah, a prophetess the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

Verse 5

She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Verses 6 - 7

Now she sent and summoned Barak, the sons of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, "Behold the LORD, the God of Israel has commanded, Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you 10,000 men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. And I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon; and I will give him into your hand."

Verse 8

Ten Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then will I go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go."

Verse 9

And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

Verse 10

And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and 10,000 men went up with him. Deborah also went up with him.

Verse 11

Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanaim, which is near Kedesh.

Verses 12 - 13

Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount tabor which resulted in Sisera calling together all his chariots, 900 iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon.

Verse 14

And Deborah said to Barak, "Arise! For this is the day in which the LORD has gone out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him.

Verse 15

And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army, with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot.

Verse 16

But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left.

Verse 17

Now Sisera fled away from the carnage on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the

Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

Verse 18

And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me! Do not be afraid.” Every home or tent was so revered that anyone who went to a home was guaranteed perfect safety by all present, but here we find that that custom was destroyed, though as he turned aside for protection and she covered him with a rug.

Verse 19

And he thought that that custom was generated by the throw of a rug, for he asked for a little water to drink. He was thirsty as he had given strength for the battle. So she opened a sheepskin bottle of milk and gave him a drink, and re-covered him with the rug.

Verses 20 - 21

He instructed her to stand in the doorway of the tent, and should anyone who comes by ask of you, “Is there anyone here?” that you shall say, “No.” No doubt time and again he had guaranteed safety to others — it should work for him. But he didn’t know Jael, for Jael, Heber’s wife took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple. It went through to the ground, but he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died.

Verse 22

What a surprise for Barak! As he pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple.

Verse 23

So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel.

Verse 24

And the hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Chapter 5

Victory! Given by God to all Israel — yet it came to such a few people who believed in their God. Usually Israel had a standing army of 600,000, yet only 40,000 came forward to allow God to attain complete victory through them. It is God who attains all glory. Give Him glory right now! Victory did not come by the usual instruments of war. Israel didn’t have any. Israel had so many things to attend to. Idolatry caused her defeat. So she changed gods — she went back to the LORD.

Verse 1

Israel had only two leaders: Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam, and they sang of Jehovah’s victory!

Verse 2

And the people volunteered. She had 40,000, where were the other 560,000?

Bless Jehovah!

Verse 3

Hear, O Kings; give ear, O rulers. I will sing to Jehovah.

Verse 4

O Jehovah, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

Verse 5

While the mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD

At the time of Moses, in like manner, the mountains quake. God, Jehovah (the LORD) manifest Himself.

O How glorious is liberty when victory is given.

Verse 6

In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath; in the days of Jael the highways were deserted, and the travelers chose roundabout ways.

Verse 7

The peasantry cease, they ceased in Israel, Until I, Deborah, arose. Yes, Until I, Deborah, arose a Mother in Israel.

Verse 8

Old gods were deserted, and the true God, Elohim, made Himself to be ours.

Then war broke out, but not a shield or a spear was seen. Israel numbered only 40,000!

Verse 9

My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel, And the Volunteers among the people. Bless the LORD (Jehovah)

Verse 10

Victorious; you who sit upon white donkeys.

You who sit on rich carpets and you who travel on the road — sing! There is victory in Israel. The LORD made it so!

Verse 11

As at Passover

The sound of those who divide the sheep among the watering places. There they shall recount the righteous deed of the LORD. Yea, the righteous deeds for His peasantry in Israel. Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.

Verse 12

Victory is so sweet.

Awake, awake, Deborah; Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise Barak, and take away our captives, O son of Abinoam.

Verse 13

(As in so many cases of Victory) — Then survivors came down to the nobles. The people of the LORD came down to me as warriors

Verse 14

From Ephraim those whose roots are in Amalek came down, Following you, Benjamin, with your peoples; From Machir commanders came down. And from Zebulun those who wield the staff of office.

Verse 15

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As was Issachar, so was Barak; Into the valley they rushed at his heels; Among the divisions of Reuben there were great resolves of heart.

Verse 16

Why did you sit among the sheepfold, To hear the piping for the flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart

Verse 17

Gilead remained across the Jordan; And why did Dan stay in ships? [How pathetic — they did not join in the pursuit, therefore could not share in the spoils] Asher sat at the seashore, and remained by its landings

Verse 18

Zebulun was a people who despised their lives even to death. And Naphtali also marked time, gaining no ground.

Verse 19

The kings came and fought — the kings of Canaan at Taanach near the waters of Megiddo; Israel took no plunder of silver.

Verse 20

Even the very stars of heaven fought for Israel. Yes, they fought against Sisera.

Verse 21

The torrent of Kishon swept the enemy away. The ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon. O my soul march on with strength!

Verse 22

There were so many horsemen, their hooves made sparks on the rocks

Verse 23

Yet “may Meroz be cursed” said the angel of the LORD [who is Messiah], because they did not come to the aid of the LORD. The LORD does work through those who are yielded to Him.

Verse 24

But blessed of women is Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite. Most blessed of women is she in the tent

Verse 25

He asked for water, and Jael gave him milk. (In a magnificent bowl she brought him curds — cottage cheese)

Verse 26

The victory came this way. She reached out her hand for the tent peg, and her right hand for the workman's hammer. Then she struck Sisera; she smashed his head; and she shattered and pierced his temple.

Verse 27

Between her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay; between his feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell dead.

Verse 28

Back home his mother waited for his return. Out of the window, she looked and patiently waited. The mother of Sisera through the window, asked, "Why does he delay in coming? Why do the hoofbeats of his chariot tarry?"

Verse 29

Her wise princesses would answer her. Indeed she repeats her words to herself,

Verse 30

"Are they not finding, are they not dividing the spoil? A maiden, two maidens for every warrior. To Sisera a spoil of dyed work; a spoil of dyed work embroidered; dyed works of double embroidery on the neck of the spoiler?"

Verse 31

"Thus let all Thine enemies perish, O LORD (Jehovah); but let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might." And the land was undisturbed for 40 years.

Chapter 6

Verse 1

After 40 years, the sons of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them unto the hands of Midian seven years.

Verses 2 - 3

And the power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Israel kept worshipping idols. Thus because of the harsh attack upon Israel by the Midianites, the sons of Israel built for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would unite with the Amalekites and the sons of the east to go against them.

Verses 4 - 5

So they would camp against them and destroy the crops of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no grain in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were without number; and they arrived into the land to devastate it.

Verse 6

So Israel suffered the loss of crops because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.

Verse 7

Now when it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, on account of

Midian [remember Joel 2:32 — whatever the need, whosoever calls upon Jehovah, God shall supply the need],

Verses 8 - 10

That the LORD sent a prophet to the sons of Israel. Jehovah has heard, the answer for deliverance is on the way! And the prophet said, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, It is I who brought you up from Egypt, and brought you out from the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, and I said to you, “I am Jehovah your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.”

Verses 11 - 12

Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezerite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.”

Verse 13

Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if Jehovah is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt? But now Jehovah has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

Verse 14

And Jehovah looked at him and said, “Go in your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?”

Verse 15

And he said to Him, “O Jehovah, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.”

Verse 16

But Jehovah said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.”

Verses 17 - 18

So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found grace in your sight, then show me a sign that it is Thou who speakest with me. Please do not depart from here, until I come back to Thee, and bring out my offering and lay it before Thee.” And He said, “I will remain until you return.”

Verse 19

Then Gideon went in and prepared a kid and unleavened bread from an ephrah (about a bushel) of flour: he put the flesh in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak, and presented them.

Verse 20

And the angel of God said to him, Take the flesh and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth (gravy). And he did so.

Verse 21

Then the angel of Jehovah put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the flesh, and the unleavened bread, and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of Jehovah vanished from his sight.

Verse 22

When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Jehovah (LORD - the Messiah Jesus), he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD (Adonai Jehovah)! For now I have seen the angel of Jehovah face to face."

Verse 23

And Jehovah said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die."

Verse 24

Then Gideon built an altar there to Jehovah and named it "Jehovah is Peace." To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezerites.

Verse 25

Now the same night it came about that Jehovah said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your fathers, and cut down the Asherah (a wooden idol of a female deity) that is beside it; and build an altar to Jehovah you God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down. [The offering of the burnt offering was supposed to have been offered at the Tabernacle — thus we can see that the Tabernacle was not held in high esteem by god and man at this time.]

Verse 27

Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as Jehovah had spoken to him; and came about, because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, that he did it by night.

Verse 28

When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold the altar of Baal was torn down and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built.

Verse 29

And they said to one another, "Who did this thing?" and when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon, the son of Joash, did this thing."

Verse 30

Immediately the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring forth your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it."

Verse 31

But the father, Joash, said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whosoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself because someone has torn down his altar."

Verse 32

Therefore on that day he name him Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal content against him,” because he hath torn down his altar. (See 7:1)

Verse 33

Then the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel.

Verse 34

So the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezerites were called together to follow him.

Verse 35

And he sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messenger to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

Verses 36 - 37

Then Gideon said to God, “If Thou will deliver Israel through me as Thou has spoken, behold I will place a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on the ground, then I will know that Thou wilt deliver Israel through me as Thou has spoken.”

Verse 38

And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.

Verse 39

Then said Gideon to God, “Do not let Thine anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please allow me to make a test once more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground.

Verse 40

And God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and the dew was on all the ground.

Chapter 7

Review 6:11, 12

Gideon had become the sixth Judge to deliver Israel out of the hands of Israel’s enemies. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him and said unto him, “Jehovah is with thee, though might man of valor.”

The choosing of Jehovah’s men for Jehovah’s army was truly all of God’s grace and power.

Verse 1

The Enlisting of the Army of Israel

In the sixth chapter, verses 36 – 40, we see how God led His people in finding the will of God in certain things; yes, God led by the casting of lots and by that they knew whether

God was answering by yes or no.

We find also that right before Pentecost, Peter led out the Apostles to choose between Barsabas and Matthias to fill Judas' place, and "the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven" Acts 1:26.

And thereafter the apostles and the rest of the saints never found the will of God by casting lots. How did they know the will of God then? Look at Ephesians 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

No more casting of lots nor the flipping of a coin to know the will of God. How do we learn the will of the Lord? By being guided by the Holy Spirit.

We do believe that the resurrected Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ was the one who chose Paul to be the one who took Judas' place. "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead" (Galatians 1:1).

Knowing God's will to be the new Judge, called together all the men of the new army — 32,000 of them, together rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod, so that they host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

Verse 2

Thirty-two thousand in number seemed to be a fair number to fight under the banner of Israel. But, no, they were too many. For had they taken such a number into the battle, they would have claimed that they victory was because of their great number.

At the time of Moses, Jehovah had given a method by which the fearful, the coward, could be left at home — "What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deuteronomy 20:8).

Verse 3

"All right, all of you who are quivering and scared of facing the enemy, go home right now." Twenty and two thousand left, leaving a much smaller army of ten thousand.

Verses 4 - 7

But that's too many yet. "Gideon, bring them down to water and tell them to drink. Those who lap water as the dogs do, choose, but those who get down and their knees and drink (leaving their swords unguarded), send home." Of the 10,000, only 300 passed God's test. But the LORD said unto Gideon, "By the three hundred men that lapped the water will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand, and let all the other people go every man unto his place."

Verse 8

Whoever imagined such an army? Only 300 to face the army of the Midianites — outnumbered by such a multitude! But God makes the difference. Praise His name!

The 300 took the people's provisions and their trumpets, and sent the rest of the 32,000 back home. He retained the 300 men, and the camp of the Midianites was below him in the valley.

Verses 9 - 12

The next night was set to attack the Midians, for the LORD said, "Arise, go down

against the camp, for I have given it unto your hands. But if you are fearful, take Phurah your servant with you and mingle with the enemy and hear what they say, and afterward you shall be strengthened, that you not shall fear the camp of your enemy. He took his servant Phurah with him and they walked among the enemy. Their number and the number of their camels could not be counted.

Verse 13

As Gideon mingled with them, he heard one relating a dream to his friend, saying, “Behold I had a dream: a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into our camp, and it hit a pole so hard that it fell and turned upside down so flat.”

Verse 14

And his friend said, “This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand.”

Verse 15

Of course Gideon was encouraged, for he bowed in worship, thanking God for the fear of his enemy. He returned to his camp of 300 and said, “Arise, for Jehovah has given the camp of Midian into your hands.”

Verse 16

And he divided the 300 men of his command into three companies, and he put the trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.

Verse 17

Most battles are fought during the daytime, but God through 300 Israelites is going to fight and annihilate the thousands of Midianites. Just keep your eyes on me, said Gideon, and do as I do.

Verse 18

What a surprise is going to happen to the Midianites: “When I and all the men with me blow the trumpet, then you follow suit and blow the trumpet all around the camp and yell “For Jehovah and for Gideon!”

This is God’s plan!

Verse 19

The three hundred, divided into three sections, surrounded the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, about 10 p.m. [first watch: was sunset to 10 p.m.; Middle Watch: was 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; and third watch: was 2 a.m. to 6 a.m.]

The enemy had just posted the watch, 10 p.m.; then the trumpets blasted, the 300 threw down the pitchers with a crash throughout the camp, and at the same time the lamps were held in their left hands giving unanswerable light, and they held the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and yelled “A sword for Jehovah and for Gideon.”

What a blast! Midian thought it was an earthquake!

Verse 21

And each man of Gideon’s 300 stood in his place around the camp; and they enemy ran — just a bedlam — crying, yelling, hollering, as they fled.

Verse 22

And when they blew 300 trumpets, Jehovah set the sword against another, even throughout the whole army; and they army fled as far as Beth-shittah (House of Access) toward Zererath, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

Verse 23

And the men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.

Verse 24

Gideon then sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against Midian and take the waters before them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

Verse 25

And they captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb (wolf) at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across Jordan.

Chapter 8

Verses 1 - 3

Victory — how great it is especially when the Lord is in it.

Gideon and the Israelites can hardly contain themselves, but wait, there shall be a sour song before it's over. And the songs were song by the warriors of the tribe of Ephraim. They were strangers to the fight, and they blamed Gideon for not notifying until late in the battle, “What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against the Midianites?” They argue vehemently at Gideon's actions.

Here were kinfolk about to get into a fight. Gideon was in the section of those who were of the tribe of Manasseh known as Abiezerites. The Ephraimites and the Manassehites were both of Joseph — and half Egyptian! But listen to one, a kinsman, upon whom the laurels of victory were being bestowed. “But he replied to them, What have I done in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer (Manasseh). God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, into you hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you.” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

Now for the clean up!

Verses 4 - 5

Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to Jordan and crossed over, very weary, yet pursuing. And he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the men following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.

Verse 6

And the leaders of Succoth immediately refused this request, saying, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands that we should give bread to your army.”

Verse 7

And Gideon replied, “All right, when Jehovah has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my

hands, that I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

Verse 8

So Gideon then went up from there to Penuel and asked the same favor, and the men of Penuel replied with the same refusal.

Verse 9

So he spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, “When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.”

Verse 10

Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor and their armies with them about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

Verse 11

And Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp when the camp was unsuspecting.

Verse 12

When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and put to flight the whole army.

Verse 13

Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.

Verse 14

And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

Verse 15

And he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?”

Verses 16 - 17

And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he taught the men of Succoth with them — ouch! And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

Verse 18

Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?” And they answered, “They were like you; each one resembling the son of a king.”

Verse 19

And he said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As Jehovah lives, if only you had let them live. I would not kill you.”

Verse 20

So he said to Jether, his first born, “Rise, kill them.” But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

Verse 21

Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself, and fall on us; for as the man, so is his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels’ necks.

Verse 22

What a leader of men by the grace of God, Gideon turned out to be, so the people demanded, “Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son’s son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.”

Verse 23

But Gideon refused their offering by saying, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; Jehovah shall rule over you.”

Verse 24

However, Gideon said to them, “I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil” (for they had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites — descendants of Ishmael, the first son of Abraham).

Verses 25 - 26

And they said, “We will surely give them.” So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil. And the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that were on their camels’ necks.

Verse 27

And Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel went a whoring after it which became a snare to Gideon and his household.

Verse 28

So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore. And the land was undisturbed for 40 years in the days of Gideon.

Verses 29 - 31

Then Jerubbaal the sons of Joash (who was Gideon) went and lived in his own house. Now Gideon had 70 sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives. And his concubine who was in Shechem [a concubine was not a whore, but a wife indeed, who was not of royal blood] also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech (father of the king).

Verse 32

And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

THE FIFTH APOSTASY

Verse 33

“Gideon hadn’t cooled off in the grave” means “very quickly” that they children of Israel turned again and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith [lord of covenant] their god.

Verses 34 - 35

And the children of Israel remembered not Jehovah their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, which is Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

Chapter 9

This is a bloody, unforgiven act of a son of Gideon that brought shame upon the whole house of Israel. Gideon, a great judge of his people was blessed by the LORD with seventy sons. Also, his concubine that was in Shechem also bore him a son whose name he called Abimelech. [A concubine was not a whore but a wife of her husband who herself was lower standing in birth].

Verses 1 - 2

Abimelech goes to Shechem, the home of his mother and the house of his mother's father, and asked that household, whether they would be willing to submit to the reign of only one son of Gideon, or be ruled over by 70 sons of Gideon?

Verse 3

Of course that one son is to be Abimelech, who was related to all of his mother's people, as he was of the same flesh and bone.

His mother's brethren inclined to follow Abimelech for they said he is our brother.

Verse 4

He was then given 70 pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired vain, worthless persons which followed him.

Verse 5

So Abimelech went into his father's house at Ophrah and slew his brothers (70 persons) on one stone. Yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he had hid himself.

Verse 6

Thus all the men at Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo assembled together, and they went and made Abimelech king by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.

Verse 7

And when told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of the Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. [Can we not see how Israel practiced the killing of one and all that is found first in the life of Joseph where he had ten brethren against him?]

Verse 8

Here Jotham forms a fable for all the people there: The trees decided to have a king to reign over all the trees. They said to the Olive Tree, "Reign over us."

Verse 9

But the olive tree said, please excuse anointing me, for I cannot leave my place of fatness, used by God and man to reign over the rest of the trees.

Verses 10 - 11

So the trees spoke to the fig tree, and said reign over us! But the fig tree answered them, “Shall I leave my sweetness and my fruit to reign over the rest of the trees?”

Verse 12

Then said the trees to the vine, “Reign over us!”

Verse 13

And the vine said unto them, “Shall I leave my new wine, which cheers God and men to go wave over the rest of the trees.”

Verses 14 - 15

Finally all the trees said to the bramble, “You come, reign over us!”

And the bramble said unto the trees, “If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow, and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.”

Verse 16

“I humbly ask now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands.”

“If not, you haven’t escaped Jehovah’s judgment against you!”

Verses 17 - 18

For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian. And ye are risen up against my father’s house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem because he is your brother.”

Verse 19

He said, “If you have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech and let him rejoice in you.

Verse 20

But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo and devour Abimelech.

Of course this slaughter was not of Jehovah, for in verses 56 and 57 we find judgment was poured out upon Abimelech and Shechem. We read, “Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, when he did unto his father, in slaying his 70 sons. And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads; and upon them came the curse of Jotham the sons of Jerubbaal.”

Verses 21 through 55 describe how this was brought about.

Verse 21

And Jotham (the youngest sons of Gideon) ran away and fled to Beer and dwelt there fearing what Abimelech might do to him.

Verses 22 - 24

When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel. God then sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and thus the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech; that the cruelty done to the 70 sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon) might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem which aided him in the killing of his brothers.

Watch the retaliation of God begin, then bring itself to the judgment against the workers of iniquity.

The prophecy of doom is about to settle upon these workers of iniquity.

Verse 25

Abimelech thirsts for power; gains it; but the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him.

Verses 26 - 57

Then a man by the name of Gaal hoped to take over the men and conquer Abimelech. But the townsmen prefer another hopeful by the name of Zebul. Zebul fights against Abimelech and is killed.

Then the town of Shechem get together to fight Abimelech and gathers themselves together, but Abimelech gathers branches of trees and piles against the city building and sets them afire.

At last the fate predicted by Jotham in verse 20 overtakes Abimelech. He went from Shechem to Thebez, besieges the city and took it. The town possessed a strong tower, and in this the inhabitants took refuge. When Abimelech approached near the door to set it on fire, a woman threw a piece of millstone (the upper millstone) upon him, crushing his skull. Seeing that he was mortally wounded, he called upon his armor-bearer, to thrust him through with a sword, lest it should be said "a woman slew him."

After Abimelech's death, his army was dissolved. Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech upon his head which he did unto his father, in slaying his 70 brethren.

Chapter 10

Tola, the Seventh Judge

Verses 1 - 2

After Abimelech, there arose a judge to save Israel by the name of Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar. He lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. and judges Israel twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

Verses 3 - 4

And after him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years. And Jair had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys, and they had 30 cities in the land of Gilead that are called Havoth-jair to this day.

Verse 5

And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

THE SIXTH APOSTASY

Verse 6

The children of Israel left God and His sweet fellowship in His sight and served Baalim and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook Jehovah and did not serve Him.

Verse 7

And the anger of Jehovah was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and unto the hands of the children of Ammon.

Verse 8

And that year they vexed and oppressed the children 18 years, all the children of Israel which were on the other side of Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.

Verse 9

And beside that the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was sore distressed.

Verse 10

And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD saying, We have sinned against Thee both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

Verses 11 - 12

They cried unto the LORD (Joel 2:32 — for whosoever calleth upon the LORD shall be saved — delivered). Thus the LORD answered, “Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites did oppress you; and you cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.”

Verse 13

“Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore, I will deliver you no more.”

Verse 14

“Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen; and let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation” (see Deuteronomy 4:29-31).

Verse 15

And Israel acknowledged their sins to the LORD, “We have sinned; do unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee; deliver (save us) us only we pray Thee this day.”

Verse 16

And Israel did put away the strange gods from among them and served Jehovah; and His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

Verse 17

Then the children of Ammon were gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together and encamped in Mizpeh.

Verse 18

And Israel agreed among themselves the Israelite who will begin to battle against the Ammonites shall be the head of the army of Israel located in Gilead.

Chapter 11

Verses 1 - 3

Jephthah is translated as “he will open”. He was the ninth judge over Israel; yet by birth he was the illegitimate son of Gilead and was banished from his father’s house. He then took up his residence at Tob, a district of Syria, not far from Gilead.

Verses 4 - 28

Here it was that he became head of a marauding party, and when war broke out between the Israelites and the Ammonites, he probably let it be known that he backed the Israelites.

He became a leader of Israel for the Israelites sought his aid. He asked why they wanted him now as they had rejected him before. Yet upon their solemn oath (promise) that they did recognize him as their leader.

In this position as commander and in war the Ammonites were defeated by a great loss. However, he argued with Israel’s enemy until a great war did break out to the honor of Jephthah.

Verse 29

“Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, then he passed through Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead went to the sons of Ammon.

Verses 30 - 40

“And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, ‘If Thou wilt indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.’”

Now the Ammonites were defeated with great loss. This turned out to be his daughter — an only child, who welcomed his return with music and dancing.

Many who have read of his solemn vow to slay the first of anything that came out of his house say that he *did* kill her as a sacrifice. What do we believe? He did not kill her, but had a substitute lamb to take her place. Why?

1. Human sacrifices were against the law of God. (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5)

2. He was filled with the Spirit when he uttered the vow, and the Holy Spirit would not allow him to make a human sacrifice.

3. Two months were asked for to weep of her virginity, not to weep of her life, but of her virginity. She was to be the LORD’s from then on and never to marry; for in the 39th verse it says, “who did to her according to the vow which he had made; and she had no relations with a man” though she continued to serve the LORD as He directed. “Thus it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.”

God offered a substitute for such a vow — Leviticus 27:1-4.

We believe that the substitute was a male lamb, for Jephthah said it would be a “burnt offering.”

Chapter 12

Jephthah was the Ninth Judge who judged Israel 6 years.

Verse 1

After the great victory over the Ammonites, here comes the leaders of Ephraim with their armies and demanded an instant answer, “Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call to go with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire.”

Verses 2 - 3

Jephthah answered that when he and his army were in dire straights and we called for you help, you came not and left us alone. But the LORD delivered them into my hands.

Verse 4

Jephthah then gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim, and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they accused the Gileadites of breaking away from Ephraim. They accused them throughout Ephraim and Manasseh.

Verses 5 - 6

The Gileadites captured the fords of Jordan opposite Ephraim, so that whenever the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” then they would say to him, “Say now ‘Shibboleth’”, but he said ‘Sibboleth’, for he could not pronounce it correctly. Then they seized him and slew him at the ford of Jordan. Thus there fell at the time 42,000 of Ephraim.

Verse 7

Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then he died and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

IBZAN THE TENTH JUDGE

Verses 8 - 9

And after him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. And he had 30 sons, and 30 daughters whom he sent abroad (whom he gave in marriage outside the family) and he brought in 30 daughters from outside his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

Verse 10

The Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

ELON THE ELEVENTH JUDGE

Verse 11

Then followed Elon, a Zebulunite, who judged Israel ten years.

Verse 12

Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

ABDON THE TWELFTH JUDGE

Verses 13 - 15

Now Abdon the sons of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him. And he had 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode on 70 donkeys, and he judged Israel eight years.

Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of the Amalekites.

Chapter 13

THE SEVENTH APOSTASY AND SERVITUDE

Verse 1

And the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines 40 years.

The plight of Israel is so plainly written. Forty in the Word of God is the number of probation, testing, trial. Forty years under the subjection of the Philistines was indeed a terrible trial. Here begins the raising up of the thirteenth judge over Israel, Samson.

Verses 2 - 3

The story begins with the parents of the coming judge: Manoah and his wife, who was barren and had born no children. Then the angel of Jehovah appeared unto the woman and promised her a child, a son.

Verses 4 - 5

He gave her prenatal advice, “Be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing, for behold you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the by shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

[Here are two important truths to underline “the angel of Jehovah” is no one else but the coming Messiah, and then this boy is to be born a Nazarite — not a Nazarene like Jesus to be born in Nazareth; but a Nazarite, one who is separated unto God for an appointed time. As for this coming child, he is to be separated unto God from his birth, to the day of his death.]

Verses 6 - 7

Immediately the woman went to her husband and told him of the angel’s visit and his prophecy. “A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome [don’t you know it was?]. And I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name. He said to me, “Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine nor strong drink nor eat any unclean thing [there went the pork chops] for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.”

Verse 8

The Manoah entreated the LORD and said, “O Lord,” (lower-case letters meaning Adonai, which is “master, owner”), “Please let the man of God whom Thou has sent to us come again so that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.”

Verse 9

And God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah, her husband was not with her.

Verse 10

So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared unto me.”

Verse 11

Then her husband Manoah, arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” And he replied, “I am.”

Verse 12

And Manoah asked, “Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy’s mode of life and his vocation?”

Verses 13 - 14

So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Let the woman pay attention to all that I said. She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded.”

Verse 15

Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you, so that we may prepare a kid (young goat) for you.”

Verse 16

And the angel of the LORD [Remember the angle of the LORD is the Messiah before He was born] said to Manoah, “Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD.” For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.

Verse 17

Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that when your words come to pass we may honor you?”

Verse 18

But the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”

Verse 19

So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering (King James: meat offering) and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on.

Verse 20

For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this they fell on their faces to the ground.

Verse 21

Now the angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah or his wife. The Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.

Verse 22

So Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God.”

Verse 23

But his wife [how precious are many wives to their husbands] said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering [the offering of dedication] and a grain offering [the offering of separation] from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear things like this at this time.”

Verse 24

Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson [meaning “like the sun”]. And the child grew up and the LORD blessed him.

Verse 25

And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahanehdan [“the camp of Dan”] between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Chapter 14

Samson, the 13th Judge

Verses 1 - 2

As a young man, Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. Later, he returned home and told his parents that he saw a woman beautiful enough to be his wife. Therefore, he wanted them to make the right connections so she could be his wife.

Verse 3

His mother and father tried to persuade Samson to pick a young lady out of the many Israeli families to wed.

Verse 4

But Samson desired even more for this young lady, for “she pleaseth me well.” Little did his parents understand the desire of their sons was from the Lord, for He wanted occasion to attack the Philistines.

Verses 5 - 6

As Samson went down, his father and mother with him, and there in the vineyards he met a young lion which roared against him. And then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent the lion as he would have rent a kid (young goat), and he had nothing in his hands. But he did not tell his parents of his attack upon the lion.

Verse 7

And he went down and talked to the young lady, and she pleased him well.

Verse 8

After some time had elapsed, he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion he had slain. Behold a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion.

Verse 9

He stopped and took some of the honey in his hand and gave to his parents and they did eat of the honey, but he told them not how he took it out of the carcass of the lion.

Verse 10

So his father went down to “make the match” in matrimony of his son Samson and the woman he desired.

Verse 11

So when the young men of the town saw Samson, they brought 30 companions with him.

Verses 12 - 13

Samson then put forth a riddle to these young men. If they should tell the meaning of the riddle, then Samson would give them 30 changes of garments. But if they couldn't, then they were to give Samson 30 changes of clothing.

Both agreed.

Verse 14

So Samson gave his riddle: “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And in three days the young men could not expound the riddle.

Verse 15

Now on the seventh day, they said to Samson's wife, “Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire.”

Verse 16

And Samson's wife wept before him, “You hate me, and lovest me not. For you have made a riddle and have not revealed it to me.”

Verse 17

She wept before him. Oh, how precious it is to have a wife that will not cry when she desires a favor of her husband and he refuses to tell her the meaning of a secret.

Verse 18

On the seventh day, as she had worn him down, he revealed the secret: the meaning of the riddle the men of the city began to explain. “What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?”

Then Samson recoiled, “If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found my riddle.” He knew that his wife, a heifer, had told them his secret.

Verse 19

The Spirit of the LORD came upon Samson, and he went down to Ashkelon and slew 30 men of them and took their spoil, and gave changes of garments unto them who had expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his own father's house.

Verse 20

But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend.

Chapter 15

Verses 1 - 2

At wheat harvest time, Samson decided to visit his wife and took a young goat as a present, and said, “I will go into my wife in her room.” But her father would not allow him to enter, saying, “I really thought that you hated her so intensely, so I gave her to your

companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please let her be yours instead.”

Verse 3

Samson then answered them, “This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm.”

Verse 4

Think of this: Samson went and caught three foxes and took torches and turned the foxes tail to tail and put one torch in the middle between two tails.

Verse 5

When he had set fire to the torches, he released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines, thus burning up both the shocks and the standing grain, along with the vineyards and groves.

Verse 6

Then the Philistines demanded, “Who did this?” And they said, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite because he took his wife and gave her to his companion.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

Verse 7

Then Samson said to them, “Since you act like this, I will surely take revenge on you, but after that I quit.”

Verse 8

And he struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter; and he went down and lived in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

Verse 9

Then the Philistines went up and camped in Judah and spread out in Lehi.

Verse 10

And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come against us? And they said, “We have come up to bind Samson in order to do to him as he did to us.”

Verse 11

Then 3000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?” And he said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”

Verse 12

And they said to him, “We have come down to bind you so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines.” And Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me.”

Verse 13

So they agreed to that, saying, “No, but we will bind you fast and give you into their hands; yet surely we will not kill you.” Then they bound him with two new ropes, and brought him up from the rock.

Verse 14

When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily so that they ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hand.

Verse 15

And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it.

Verse 16

Then Samson said, “With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have killed a thousand men.”

Verse 17

And it came about when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand; and he named that place Ramath-lehi (the high place of the jawbone).

Verse 18

When he became very thirsty, he called to the LORD and said, “Thou hast given great deliverance by the hand of Thy servant, and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?”

Verse 19

But God split the hollow place that is in Lehi so that water came out of it. When he drank, his strength returned and he revived. Therefore, he named it En-hakko-re which is in Lehi to this day.

When God’s people get thirsty, the LORD gives them water. Right after Israel escaped from Egypt, God gave them water out of the rock which Moses had smitten, and that water followed them for 40 years in the wilderness. When the need arises, no matter what, God performs a miracle!

Verse 20

So Samson judged Israel 20 years in the days of the Philistines.

Chapter 16

Samson was a judge over Israel, yet for some reason God has withdrawn the knowledge of any case he ever tried. The main purpose of this part of Judges is to show that the most powerful man on earth had his testings as other men do — that he must ever be watchful and careful in the secrets of the LORD.

Verses 1 - 3

Samson went down to Gaza and saw there a harlot, and he went unto her. And then his identity was known. The enemy of the Philistines was right in their midst. The men of Gaza lay plans to take him captive in the morning. But at midnight Samson took the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and went away with them bars and all, pulling them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of a hill that is before Hebron — the home of the high priest of Israel (Samson was of the tribe of Dan [Judges 13:2]).

Verses 4 - 5

Later, he fell in love with another Philistine (should have married an Israelite). Her

name was Delilah. The Philistines came to Delilah and demanded that she entice Samson to find the secret of his strength. Right there the Holy Spirit is revealing to us that Satan, the enemy of Israel and the Church, attacks us in our strength. So be on your guard.

What was the matter with Samson? Delilah led him about and he played innocent to her advances. The flesh is so strong, even in the life of a judge of Israel.

These Philistines promised Delilah that if she found the secret of his strength, each man would give her 1100 pieces of silver.

Verses 6 - 9

She asked the first time what was his secret strength. He played along with her and said, “If you bind me with seven green cords, I will be as weak as other men.” She got him asleep, bound him with seven green cords, then awakened him and said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson.” And he broke the cords.

Verse 10

“Oh,” she said, “you don’t love me, for that wasn’t your secret.”

Verses 11 - 12

“If you bind me fast with new ropes, I will be as another man.” She bound him and said, “The Philistines are upon you,” but he broke them as a thread.

Verse 13

Now watch Samson getting closer and closer to his secret. It has to do with his hair. The hair was the sign of his vow; the Nazarite vow = separation unto Jehovah. “Here’s the secret,” just toying with her — but closer and closer to the real truth, “If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with a pin, I shall lose my strength.”

Verse 14

And she did so with his hair, then she said again, “The Philistines are upon you.” He awoke of his sleep and carried the beam which his hair was pinned to away.

Verse 15

Now she was provoked by these past failures to find his secret of strength. “You’ve mocked me three times,” she said. What’s the matter with Samson — doesn’t he get the warning? No, for when sin takes charge, the man loses all constraint. Sin becomes attractive. He can fool around and still have his secret of strength. No, you can’t; the web is being spun; all reasoning lost. Counting the cost, but gladly taking it to his bosom. What a scolding Delilah gave Samson. She knew he hadn’t told her, but she kept on and sure enough, he wanted Delilah and her charming sin rather than the power of God.

Verse 16

So he tells her the truth. Though he did, he didn’t have to stay there. Oh, no! But he played the fool and went to sleep with his head in Delilah’s lap. Gone!

Verse 17

So he told Delilah his heart. “There has not come a razor upon my head, for I have been a Nazarite [not a Nazarene — a Nazarene was one who lived in Nazareth, as Jesus did. A Nazarite was a Jew who took the oath of separation unto the LORD. Jesus was not a Nazarite] unto God from my mother’s womb. If I be shaven then, my strength shall go, and I

shall be like any other man.

Verse 18

Delilah knew Samson was telling her all. Oh, how the children of God lose their power in living a separated life unto Jesus by partaking of that which God has led them to ignore.

Verse 19

Oh, Samson! You haven't lost your vow yet. Get up and go — leave the bed of Delilah right now.

But he went to sleep with his head in Delilah's lap — making it so easy for the barber to shave his locks.

Verse 20

He shook himself as before. He knew not that the LORD had left him.

Verse 21

The Philistines took him, took out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, bound him with fetters of brass — they could hold him now — and he did grind in the prison house.

What a picture of any Christian who falls: there was the binding. Then there was the blinding. and then the grinding.

Verse 22

But the LORD is not through with His child. Praise the LORD there is the need of REDEDICATION! “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand” (Psalm 37:23, 24).

“Howbeit, the hair of his head began to grow.” Strength began to return again after he was shaven.

The Christian may fall, but remember, the strength can return.

Verse 23

Then the leaders of the Philistines gathered themselves together to offer a great sacrifice unto a pagan god, Dagon, who was their god. For they said, “Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hands.”

Verse 24

And when Samson was bound and presented to the crowd, they broke out cheering for they praised their god, for they said, “Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.”

Verse 25

And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may make us sport.” And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made their hearts merry, and they set him between the pillars.

Verse 26

And Samson said unto the lad who held him by the hand [this lad did not know, but judgment was going to be poured out on him], “Would you please place my where I can feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.”

Verse 27

Now, this public meeting place was packed full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about 3000 men and women, that beheld while Samson made them laugh as a blind person would as he fumbled and stumbled about.

A call was shouted aloud — “Who made that screeching sound?” asked the Philistines one and another.

Here Samson’s wandering years were over. He is in his strength. His hair had grown back like it was. No more Delilah’s lap to place that precious head of dedication. He was about to go to sleep in the arms of his Saviour!

Verse 28

“O Lord GOD” — oh Adonai Jehovah, “remember me? I pray thee only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

Verse 29

And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars on which the house rested and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left.

Verse 30

And Samson prayed, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life (Amos 9:1).

Verse 31

Then his brothers and all his father’s household came down, took him, brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. Thus he had judged Israel 20 years.

Chapter 17

Verses 1 - 3

In the hill country of Ephraim lived a man named Micah. One day he said to his mother, “That thousand dollars you thought was stolen from you, and you were cursing about — well, I stole it.”

“God bless you, son, for confessing your theft,” his mother replied. So he returned the money to her.

Verse 4

So when he returned the silver to his mother, two hundred pieces of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made them into a graven image and a molten image, and they were in the house of Micah whose name means “who is like unto Jehovah?”.

Verse 5

And the man Micah had a shrine and he made an ephod and household idols and consecrated one of his sons, that he might become his priest.

Verse 6

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Verse 7

At this time, there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, one of the family of Judah, who was a Levite (member of the tribe of Levi — he was not a Cohen [priest] but just a Levite — one whose job it was to take care of the Tabernacle, later the Temple), and he was staying there.

Verse 8

Then the man departed from the city, from Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he might find a place. [Right here we shall point out that it was the Cohens (priests) who were of the tribe of Levi, position to serve the brazen (bronze) altar of the Tabernacle. The priests were taken care of by the Law. The priest ate of the Meal Offering; he ate of the right shoulder and right breast of the Peace Offering, and the whole carcass of the Sin and Trespass Offering were the Cohen's.

Now the Levites, not Cohens, were given the tithes of the harvests, and also shared the first fruits which were ripe.

At the time of this writing, Judges 17, it was 400 years before David became king. At the close of his reign he organized the priests (Cohens) into 24 orders. Two orders served each month. Each priest, and each Levite, knew what to expect. But here in this chapter of Judges, we learn that a Levi could go anywhere in search for a place to live. No organization; but 400 years later David did organize the Levites (who now served the Temple) and the Cohens who served the Brazen Altar in the Temple. No hit and miss in their service.]

And he made his journey, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah.

Verse 9

And Micah said to him, “Where did you come from?” And he replied, “I am a Levite (not a Cohen, a priest) from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I may find a place.”

Verse 10

Micah then said to him, “Dwell with me and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and your maintenance.” So the Levite went in.

Verse 11

And the Levite agreed to live with Micah; and the young man became to him like one of his sons.

Verse 12

So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest (God did not look upon this favorably), and lived in the house of Micah.

Verse 13

Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me seeing I have a Levite as priest. Nowhere in the Scripture is such a blessing offered.

All Cohens were Levites, but not all Levites were Cohens (priests). To be a priest, the

Levite had to be a descendant of Aaron. That was the only way.

Chapter 18

Our attention is directed to the Tribe of Dan (Dan means judge) as they secure a larger claim on the land of Promise for their inheritance.

In Joshua 19:47 we read, “And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them.” Forty years later, “the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them, for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father.”

Now, let us turn to Judges 18 and find how Dan did capture their new inheritance.

Verse 1

In those days there was no king of Israel; and in those days the tribe of Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves in which to dwell, for until that day an inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel [they did cast lots for one place but it was too small].

Verse 2

The tribe of Dan sent from among their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it; and they said to them, “Go, search the land.” And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah and lodged there.

Now, we bring into focus from the 17th chapter of Micah dealing with the Levite to be his priest, but now we find the whole tribe of Dan will get the Levite to be theirs.

Verse 3

When they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite, and they turned aside there, and said to him, “Who brought you here? And what are you doing in this place? And what do you have here?”

Verse 4

And he said to them, “Thus and so has Micah done to me, and he has hired me, and I have become his priest” [God didn’t make him a priest].

Verse 5

They then commanded him, “Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether our way on which we are going will be prosperous.” Why ask this young man? He was only a Levite, not a Cohen. He was not of Aaron, neither did he possess the Urim and the Thummim (those articles which were placed in the breastplate of the priest, and only one drawn out — either the Urim or the Thummim to find the will of God).

Verse 6

Immediately this Levite said to them, “Go in peace; your way in which you are going has the LORD’s approval.” He was only guessing. He could have said the same thing after flipping a coin.

Verse 7

Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure, for there was no ruler humiliating them for anything in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone.

Verse 8

The five returned with a glorious report!

Verses 9 - 10

“Arise right now. For here is a land that lacks nothing.”

Verse 11

Then from the tribe of the Danites a small army of 600 was raised.

Verse 12

And they went up and camped at Kirjath-jearim in Judah; therefore, they called that place Mahaneh-dan to this day.

Verse 13

And they passed from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

Verse 14

It was then that they five men who went out to spy out the land of Laish answered and said to their kinsmen, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod and household idols and a graven image?”

Verse 15

So the rest of the men came to the house where the young Levite stayed and asked him of his welfare.

Verse 16

And the six hundred armed soldiers who were of the sons of Dan stood by the entrance of the gate.

Verses 17 - 18

Now the five men went into the house and took the graven image, the ephod and the household idols while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the 600 armed soldiers. These went into the house and took all the religious things, then the Levite asked, “What are you doing?”

Verse 19

And they said, “Keep quiet. Come with us and be a father to us and a priest, and don’t you think that being a priest to the whole tribe of Dan will be better to you than to be a priest of one house.”

Verse 20

A promotion already. The young Levite was overjoyed to make that change. So he took charge of the idols, etc., and went among the people.

Verse 21

Then they turned and departed, and placed the baggage including the little ones in front

of them.

Verse 22

When they had gone some distance from the house of Micah, the neighbors gathered themselves together and overtook the sons of Dan.

Verse 23

Then they shouted their protest, “What goes?” You’ve taken my possession.

Verses 24 - 25

“What is the matter with you?”

The sons of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard. These fierce soldiers can fall upon you and you will lose all including your life.”

Verse 26

Yes, the son of Dan went on their way. Micah was very wise. He knew they were too strong for him, and so he went back home.

Verse 27

Then the sons of Dan took what Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure and struck them with the edge of the sword, and they burned the city with fire.

Verses 28 - 29

There were none to help the city of Laish, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob. They rebuilt the city and lived in it. And called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish.

Verse 30

We see that the tribe of Dan was responsible of introducing idol worship to Israel.

Verse 31

Here’s a pathetic closure to this chapter. While Dan was setting up their and Israel’s idolatry, all the time the house of God (Tabernacle) was at Shiloh!

Hence, the tribe of Dan ushered into the “religion” of Israel’s idol worship.

When we read in Revelation 7 of the tribe of Israel which supplies 12,000 each to the preaching of the Gospel during the Tribulation, the tribe of Dan is omitted. Some have suggested that they are omitted due to the fact that Dan began idol worship in Israel. Whatever reason it was, we know that in the Millennium Dan is recognized again as a tribe of Israel and shares the blessings of the other tribes in receiving their inheritance in the Millennium.

“Now these are the names of the tribes, from the north end of the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-ezan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hammath; for these are the sides east and west; a portion for Dan.” (He is mentioned first to receive his inheritance in Israel).

Chapter 19

Verse 1

“And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.”

Here’s a good time to speak about concubinage which was practiced in Israel. A concubine was a wife (not a slave, not a whore). She was a wife but came from a lower caste than an Israelite. She and her children could not share in her husband’s inheritance.

Verse 2

In this account we find that a Levite married this woman, a concubine, from a lower class; however, she left him and went away to her father’s house, to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

Verse 3

And her husband (see, they were married) arose and went after her, to speak friendly unto her and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple donkeys. And she brought him into her father’s house, and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. He was happy to see his son-in-law and the future father of his grandchildren.

Verse 4

Her father was so overjoyed to meet his son-in-law that he retained him for three days; so he abode with him, and they did eat and drink and lodged there.

Verse 5

On the fourth day, they arose early, to depart; and his father-in-law then suggested that they east bread, and afterwards he could go.

Verse 6

So they both ate and drank together, and the father-in-law then suggested that they tarry all night.

Verse 7

And when the man arose to depart, his father-in-law urged him again to lodge there again.

Verse 8

And he arose early to depart on the fifth day, and his father-in-law urged him to stay, and they tarried unto afternoon.

Verse 9

And when the man arose to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father-in-law said, “Behold, the day draweth toward evening. I pray you, tarry all night. Behold, the day groweth to an end; lodge here tonight that your heart might be merry, and tomorrow you can go home.”

Verse 10

But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed and came over against Jebus which is Jerusalem [we find that Jerusalem and Bethlehem are only about 5

miles apart], and there were with him two donkeys saddled, his concubine also was with him.

Verse 11

When they were by Jebus, the day was far spent, and his servant suggested that he be allowed to find a place to spend the night and feed the donkey.

Verse 12

But his master refused to stay here, for they are strangers to Israelites. We will continue until we come to Gibeah.

Verse 13

We can stay here in Gibeah or in Ramah [Ramah became the home of Samuel many years later].

Verse 14

They continued on their way, and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belonged to Benjamin — Israelites.

Verse 15

They found no lodging for man or beast, and no man was found to take them in.

Verse 16

However, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which was also on mount Ephraim, and he sojourned in Gibeah; but the men of the place were Benjamites.

Verse 17

This man lifted up his eyes and saw this man and asked the traveler, “Wither goest thou? and whence comest thou?”

Verse 18

And the Levite replied, “we are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from when I am — that’s home to me. I went to Bethlehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of Jehovah, and there is no man that receiveth me to house.”

Verse 19

“Yet I have all necessary things: straw and provender for the donkeys, and there is bread and wine also for me and my wife, and my servant.”

Verse 20

“Peace be with you; however, let all your wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.”

Verse 21

So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the donkeys; and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

Verse 22

Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold the vilest men of the town beat upon the door of the old man’s house, and demanded that he turn this visitor over to them. We know they were the vilest of all for they were perverts as they asked, “that we may know him.”

Verse 23

The master of the house then went outside and tried to talk to these men, “Nay, my brethren, may, I pray you. No, don’t do such wickedness for this visitor has come into my house, and by our custom, he sanctifies my home and his God’s protection as well.”

Verse 24

“Right here is my daughter, take her. Take the visitor’s concubine. Then will I bring out to you. Humble them should you care, but spare this young Levite from such a vile thing.”

Verse 25

But they would not follow his advice; so he brought forth the man’s concubine, and brought her forth unto them. And they forced sexual advances on her, and abused her all the night long until the morning; and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

Verse 26

Then came the woman at the dawn’s light and fell down at the door of the man’s house where her owner (lord) was, till it was light.

Verse 27

And her lord (Adonai, master) rose in the morning and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go on his way. And behold, the woman was fallen down at the door of the house, and pathetically her hands were upon the threshold.

Verse 28

And the husband said, to her, “Up and let us be going.” But no answer. Then the man took her up upon a donkey, and the man rose up and got him into his own home.

Verse 29

When he came into his own house, he took a knife and laid hold upon his wife, and divided her into 12 pieces and sent her pieces to all the tribes of Israel.

Verse 30

When all of Israel saw her raw pieces, they said, No such deed has ever been done in Israel since the children of Israel came up out of Egypt unto this day. Examine, consider the next move and speak your mind.

Chapter 20

Verse 1

All Israel came together as one man to decide what punishment they could measure out to the tribe of Benjamin for allowing such a thing to happen without a punishment. They came from Dan (northern boundary) to Beersheba (southern boundary).

Verse 2

We find there were 400,000 footmen of Israel that drew the sword.

Verse 3

The men of Israel asked the husband of the woman that was slain the details of this disgrace.

Verses 4 - 6

I and my concubine came to Gibeah that belonged to Benjamin to lodge, but the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night and thought to kill me, but instead they forced my wife. Now she is dead. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces and sent her pieces throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel. They certainly did commit lewdness and follow in Israel.

Verse 7

The young husband is still talking, “Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice.”

Verse 8

The people arose as one man saying, We will not go home, nor take upon ourselves any other responsibility until we see Benjamin chastised.

Verses 9 - 10

“We shall go against it by lot. And we will take ten men of a hundred throughout the tribes of Israel, a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people until we work out this punishment.”

Verse 11

So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

Verses 12 - 13

All Israel desired to know more about this great sin and sent men through all the tribes of Benjamin demanding that these men who did this deed be delivered into their hands.

Verse 14

But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel. However, the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle their brethren, the children of Israel.

Verses 15 - 16

At that time, the children of Benjamin were numbered out of their cities 26,000 swordsmen, and among those that lived in Gibeah 700 chosen men. Among all these people there were 700 chosen men, left handed, everyone could sling stones at a hair breadth and not miss.

Verse 17

The men of Israel, besides Benjamin, there were numbered 400,000. (See verse 2)

Verse 18

Now, the children of Israel went up to the house of God, and asked God’s counsel. “Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?” And the LORD answered by the Urim and Thummim, “Judah shall go up first.”

Verses 19 - 21

So the army of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah. And the men of Israel put themselves against Benjamin their brother. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah to fight against the children of Israel, and they destroyed down to

the ground 22,000 men.

Verse 22

A noble loss; however, the men of Israel encouraged themselves and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

Verse 23

The children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD and asked His counsel, saying, “Shall I go up again to battle the children of Benjamin my brother?” And the LORD said, “Go up against him.”

Verse 24

And the children of Israel [while the Scriptures are calling the soldiers of Benjamin and the soldiers of Israel as children, they were not children as we would say — they were grown men, however, the Scriptures call them God’s children].

Verse 25

And Benjamin went against them at Gibeah the second day and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again 18,000; all of these drew the sword.

Verse 26

Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up and came unto the house of God (the Tabernacle) and wept, and sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt and peace offerings before Jehovah.

Verse 27

And the children of Israel enquired of Jehovah (for the ark of the covenant of God was therein those days).

Verse 28

And Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days, saying, “Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease?” [In the two skirmishes with Benjamin, Israel had lost 40,000 fighting men! What a loss it was!]

And Jehovah said, “Go up; for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand.”

Verses 29 - 30

Now, Israel set liers [ambushes] in wait round about Gibeah and went against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah as at other times.

Verse 31

And the children of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city, and they began to smite of the people, and kill as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about 30 men of Israel.

Verse 32

And the children of Benjamin began yelling at each other, “They are being smitten down before us as at the first.” But the children of Israel said, “Let us flee and draw them

out from the city unto the highways.”

Verse 33

There all Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar. The liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah.

Verse 34

And there came against Gibeah 10,000 (ten thousand) chosen men out of all Israel and the battle was sore; but Benjamin did not realize that evil, death, and defeat was near them.

Verses 35 - 36

And Jehovah smote Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day 25,100. All these drew the sword. And the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten, for the men of Israel [here is growth; not children, but men] gave place to the Benjamites because they trusted in the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.

Verse 37

And the liers in wait hastened and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword.

Verse 38

Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city.

Verse 39

So when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons; for they said, “Surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle.”

Verses 40 - 41

But when the flame began to rise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and behold, the flames of the city ascended up to heaven. And when the men (men now) of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed, for they saw that the loss of the battle was really theirs.

Verse 42

Therefore, they turned their backs before the men of Israel into the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and they which came out of the cities, they destroyed in the midst of them.

Verse 43

Thus Israel inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trod them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sunrising.

Verse 44

There fell of Benjamin 18,000; all these men were men (not children) of valor.

Verse 45

And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon; and they gleaned of them in the highways 5,000 men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom and

slew 2,000 of them.

Verses 46 - 47

So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were 25,000 men that drew the sword; all these were men of valor. But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

Verse 48

And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well as the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand. Also, they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

Chapter 21

Verse 1

Now the men of Israel had sworn that none of the other tribes would give their daughters to Benjamin to wife. With this vow, and the many of the men of Benjamin claim, Israel was endangered in loosing a whole tribe!

Verses 2 - 3

Thus the people came to the house of God (the Tabernacle) and abode there till even before God and lifted up their voices and wept sore. And they said, "O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel?"

Verse 4

And it came to pass on the morrow that the people rose early and built there an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offering.

Verse 5

And the children (back to being humble before Jehovah) of Israel said, "Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto Jehovah? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to Jehovah to Mizpeh saying, "He shall surely be put to death."

Verses 6 - 7

And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, "There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by Jehovah that we will not give them out daughters to wives?"

Verse 8

And they asked, "What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to Jehovah?" And behold there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

Verse 9

For the people were numbered, and behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

Verse 10

Then the congregation sent thither 12,000 of the most valiant men and commanded them saying, "Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword,

with the women and children.

Verses 11 - 12

“And this thing you must do. Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that has lain by man.” And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins that had not known men by sleeping with them. And they brought them unto the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

Verse 13

And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon (there where 600 fighting Benjamites fled to — see 20:47), and to call peaceably unto them.

Verse 14

And Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had kept alive from the women of Jabesh-gilead, yet they were not enough for them.

Verses 15 - 16

And the rest of Israel was sorry for Benjamin because Jehovah had made a breach in the tribe of Israel. Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those who are left since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?”

Verses 17 - 18

They spoke among themselves and said, “There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be blotted out from Israel. But we cannot give them wives of our daughters.” For the sons of Israel had sworn saying, “Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin.”

Verse 19

So they said, “Behold, there is a feast of Jehovah from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south side of Lebonah.”

Verses 20 - 21

So they commanded the sons of Benjamin saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, and watch, and behold, of the daughters of Shiloh come out to take part in the dances, then you shall come out of the vineyards and each of you shall catch his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

Verse 22

“And it shall come about, when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us that we shall say to them, Give them to us voluntarily, because we did not take for each man of Benjamin a wife in battle, nor did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty.”

Verse 23

And the sons of Benjamin did so, and took wives according to their number from those who danced, whom they carried away. And they went, and returned to their original inheritance, and rebuilt the cities and lived in them.

Verse 24

And the sons [was children, then men, now sons] of Israel departed from there at that

time, every man to his tribe and family, and each one of them went from there to his inheritance.

Verse 25

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” is repeated time and time again blaming Jehovah for there low rate in righteousness. They had the Law of God; they had the house of God, and they had the priests of God. Don't ever blame Jehovah for our mistakes!

The 600 who escaped to the rock Rimmon were first considered to receive their choice of the 400 virgins. But there were not enough of these young ladies. Therefore, the dancing virgins of Shiloh supplied that need.