

**Read the Bible in A Year: Chronological  
Readings March 31-April 6, 2020  
Judges 1-21**

**The Israelites now begin to move into their allotted territories by tribe and to fight against the people of the those lands, with some success and some failures...**

After the death of Joshua, the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, "Who should go up against the Canaanites first, in order to wage war against them?" The LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed, I have given the land into their hands." Then the men of Judah said to Simeon, their brothers, "Come up with us into our allotted territory. We will wage war against the Canaanites. Likewise we will go with you into your allotted territory." So Simeon went with them. Then Judah went up, and the LORD gave the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands. They struck down ten thousand men in Bezek. They found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek and fought against him. They struck down the Canaanites and Perizzites. Yet Adoni-Bezek fled, and they chased after him, seized him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes. Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings whose thumbs and big toes were cut off once collected scraps of food under my table. Just as I have done, so God has repaid me." They brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

Then Judah waged war against Jerusalem. They captured it, struck it with the edge of the sword, and sent the city up in flames. Afterwards, Judah went down to wage war against the Canaanites living in the hill country, the Negev, and the lowlands. Judah went against the Canaanites living in Hebron (previously the name of Hebron was Kiriath Arba) and they struck down Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi. From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir (previously the name of Debir was Kiriath Sepher).

Caleb said, "He who attacks Kiriath Sepher and takes it, I will give him my daughter Aksah as wife." Othniel son of Kenaz, the younger brother of Caleb, captured it. So Caleb gave him Aksah his daughter in marriage. When she came to Othniel, she urged him to ask her father for a field. As she dismounted from her donkey, Caleb said to her, "What can I do for you?" She answered, "Please give me a special gift. Since you have given me land in the Negev, now give me springs of water." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

The descendants of Moses' father-in-law, the Kenite, went up with the descendants of Judah from the City of Palms to the Negev near Arad. Then they went and lived with the people. But Judah went with his brother Simeon and struck down the Canaanites living in Zephath and utterly destroyed it. So now they call the city Hormah. Then Judah captured Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and the territory belonging to each of these cities.

The LORD was with Judah, and they took the hill country but could not drive out the inhabitants of the coastal plain, for they had iron chariots. They gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said, and he drove out the three sons of Anak. However, the tribe of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites living in Jerusalem, so the Jebusites live with the tribe of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

The descendants of Joseph went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. The descendants of Joseph sent spies into Bethel (the former name of the city was Luz). The spies saw a man coming out of the city and said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will deal kindly with you." So he showed them an entrance to the city. They struck the city with the edge of the sword, but they let the man and his extended family go. The man went to the land of the Hittites. He built a city and named it Luz, and that is its name to this day.

Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, or their daughter villages, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that land. When the children of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to hard labor as slaves, but they did not actually drive them out. Ephraim did not drive

out the inhabitants of Gezer, so the Canaanites lived among them in Gezer. Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron and Nahalol, so the Canaanites lived among them and became slave laborers. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Akzib, Helbah, Aphek, or Rehob. Asher lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out. Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or Beth Anath, so they live among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. The *Canaanites* of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath became slave laborers for them. The Amorites pushed the tribe of Dan into the hill country, for they would not let them come down to the coastal plain. The Amorites were determined to live in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim, but the hand of the descendants of Joseph was heavy *on them*, and they became slave laborers. The border of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim to Sela and beyond.

The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I promised your fathers. I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, but you must not make a pact with the inhabitants of this land, and you must tear down their altars.' Yet you have not obeyed Me. What is this you have done? So now I say, 'I will not drive them out before you. They will be thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you.'" When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, the people raised their voices and wept aloud. They named that place Bokim and sacrificed to the LORD there. When Joshua dismissed the people, each Israelite went to his inheritance to possess the land. So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works that the LORD had done for Israel.

Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten. They buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. That entire generation passed away, and after them grew up a generation who did not know the LORD or the deeds that He had done for Israel.

### **Without Moses or Joshua to lead them, the next generation of Israelites struggled to be faithful to the Lord...**

The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. They abandoned the LORD God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed after other gods, the gods of the peoples around them. They worshipped them and provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of those who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they were no longer able to stand against their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them to bring disaster, as the LORD had said and as He had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, for they prostituted themselves to other gods and worshipped them. They quickly turned aside from the path their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD. They did not do *as their fathers had done*. When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for their groaning before their oppressors and tormentors grieved the LORD. When the judge died, the people turned back and acted more wickedly than their fathers, pursuing other gods to serve and worship them. They would not give up their practices and obstinate ways. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has violated My covenant that I commanded their fathers and has not heeded My voice, I will no longer drive out from before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel and see whether or not they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers did." So the LORD left those nations, not hurrying to drive them out; and He did not deliver them into the hand of Joshua. Now these

are the nations that the LORD left to test those in Israel who had not experienced war in Canaan (so that *later* generations of the children of Israel who did not know *war* before might know it, to teach them how to fight): the five Philistine lords, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. They were to test Israel, in order to know if they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. The children of Israel lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. They took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

**Othniel** The children of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. The children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim for eight years. Then the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up a deliverer in order to save the children of Israel—Othniel son of Kenaz, the younger brother of Caleb. The Spirit of the LORD came on him, and he judged Israel. He went out to battle, and the LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hands, so that *Othniel* overpowered Cushan-Rishathaim. The land rested forty years, then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

**Ehud** Then the children of Israel once more did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD strengthened King Eglon of Moab against Israel because they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD. Eglon joined forces with the Ammonites and Amalekites; then he went and attacked Israel and took possession of the City of Palms. The children of Israel served King Eglon of Moab for eighteen years. Then the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up a deliverer—Ehud son of Gera the Benjamite, a left-handed man. The children of Israel sent a tribute payment by him to King Eglon of Moab. Ehud made a cubit-long two-edged sword for himself and strapped it onto his right thigh under his cloak. He brought the tribute payment to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. When Ehud finished offering the tribute payment, he sent away the people who carried it. But he himself turned back from the stone idols that were at Gilgal, and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.” And he said, “Keep silence!” And all who attended him departed from him. Ehud approached him as he was sitting alone in his cool upper chamber. Ehud said, “I have a message from God for you.” And *Eglon* rose from his seat. Then Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh, and plunged it into the belly of *Eglon*. The hilt went in after the blade and the fat closed over the blade and his entrails came out, for he did not pull the sword out of the belly of *Eglon*. Then Ehud went out to the entrance hall and closed the doors of the upper chamber on him and locked them. When he went out, the servants of *Eglon* came. They looked and noticed the doors of the upper chamber were locked. They thought, “Surely he is attending to his needs in the cool chamber.” They waited until they were embarrassed, but he still did not open the doors of the upper chamber. So they took a key and opened it. There, fallen dead on the floor, was their lord. Yet Ehud escaped while they were waiting. He passed the sacred stones and escaped to Seirah. Upon his arrival, he blew a ram’s horn trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the children of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he led them. He said to them, “Follow me, for the LORD has given your enemies the Moabites into your hands.” They followed him, and they captured the Jordan fords leading to Moab. They did not let anyone cross. They struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all strong and valorous men, and not a single man escaped. So Moab was humbled under the hand of Israel that day, and the land had peace for eighty years.

**Shamgar** After *Ehud* was Shamgar son of Anath. He struck down six hundred Philistine men with an ox goad. He also saved Israel.



**Deborah** When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel once more did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. The LORD sold them into the hands of King Jabin of Canaan, who ruled in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera. He lived in Harosheth Haggoyim. The children of Israel cried out to the LORD, for *Sisera* had nine hundred iron chariots and had forcefully oppressed the children of Israel for twenty years. Now Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophetess. She judged Israel at that time. She would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. The children of Israel would go up to her for *her to render* judgment.

She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The LORD God of Israel commands you, ‘Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor, and take ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun with you. I will draw Sisera, the commander of the army of Jabin, with his chariots and large army to you at the River Kishon and give him into your hands.’” Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go, but if you will not go with me, then I will not go.” She said, “I will indeed go with you. However, the way you are going will gain you no glory, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. Ten thousand men went up on foot with him, and Deborah went up with him *also*.

Now Heber the Kenite had moved away from the Kenites, who were descendants of Hobab, Moses’ father-in-law. He pitched his tent at the oak in Zaanannim, near Kedesh. Then they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. So Sisera summoned all his nine hundred iron chariots and all the people with him, from Harosheth Haggoyim to the River Kishon. Then Deborah said to Barak, “Get up, for this is the day that the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men behind him. The LORD routed Sisera and all of his chariots and all of his army with the edge of the sword in front of Barak. Sisera dismounted his chariot and fled on foot.

Barak chased after the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim. The whole army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword. Not a single man survived. Sisera fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite. Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord. Turn aside to me. Do not be afraid.” So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. He said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a leather milk container, gave it to him to drink, and covered him. He said to her, “Stand in the entrance to the tent, and if anyone comes and asks you, ‘Is there a man here?’ then you say, ‘No.’” Then Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg and a hammer in her hand and went quietly to him, for he was fast asleep and tired. She drove the tent peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground, so he died. Now as Barak had been chasing Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you seek.” When he came in, there was Sisera fallen dead with a tent peg in his temple. So God humbled King Jabin of Canaan before the children of Israel that day. The children of Israel grew more and more powerful over King Jabin of Canaan until he was no more.

On that day, Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang:

“When the leaders in Israel lead, when the people freely volunteer, bless the LORD!  
Hear, O kings! Listen, O rulers! I will sing to the LORD;  
I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.  
LORD, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the land of Edom,  
the ground shook and the skies poured, indeed, the dense clouds poured water.  
The mountains quaked before the LORD, this very Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel.  
In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael,

*main* roads were abandoned and travelers used roundabout paths.  
Village life ceased. It ceased until I, Deborah, arose; I arose *like* a mother in Israel.  
They were choosing new gods, and warfare was at the city gates,  
but not a shield or spear was to be seen among forty thousand in Israel.  
My heart is with the rulers of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people.  
Bless the LORD!

You who ride on white donkeys, you who sit in judges' attire, you who walk on the road,  
consider the voice of those who distribute water among the watering places.  
There they tell of the righteous deeds of the LORD, the righteous deeds of villagers in Israel.  
Then the people of the LORD go down to the gates.  
Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song!  
Stand up, Barak, and capture your prisoners, son of Abinoam!

The survivors came down to the nobles;  
the people of the LORD came down for me against the mighty.  
Some came from Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek, following you, Benjamin, with your people.  
From Makir rulers came down, and from Zebulun those who carry the staff of a scribe.  
The princes of Issachar were with Deborah, and Issachar was with Barak;  
they were sent into the valley on foot.  
Among the clans of Reuben there was great resolve of heart.

Why do you sit among the sheepfolds to hear playing of pipes for the flocks?  
In the clans of Reuben there was much searching of heart.  
Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan.  
As for Dan, why did he stay with the ships?  
Asher stayed by the seacoast and settled by its bays.  
Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the *point of death*,  
Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.

Kings came to wage war. The kings of Canaan waged war in Taanach, '  
by the waters of Megiddo; they took no money as profit.  
From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.  
The torrent of Kishon swept them away, that ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.  
My soul, march on in strength!  
Then horses' hooves pounded, the galloping, galloping of his steeds.

Curse Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants,  
for they did not come to the aid of the LORD, to the aid of the LORD against the mighty warriors.

Most blessed of women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women.  
He asked for water, she gave him milk. In a magnificent bowl she brought cream.  
Her hand on a tent peg, her right hand on a workman's hammer;  
she struck Sisera, she crushed his skull, she shattered and pierced his temple.  
Between her feet he sank, he fell, he lay; between her feet he sank, he fell;  
where he sank, there he fell, overpowered.  
The mother of Sisera looked through the window, and cried out through the lattice,  
'Why is his chariot so late? Why is the sound of his war chariots so delayed?'

Her wise attendants answered her, indeed, she replied to herself,  
'Are they not finding and dividing the spoils: a girl or two for each man;  
dyed garments as plunder for Sisera, dyed and embroidered garments,  
two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?'

May all Your enemies perish like this, O LORD!  
But may those who love Him rise like the sun when it rises in full strength."

Then the land was at peace for forty years. **(but it did not last...)**

**Gideon** The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian for seven years. The hands of Midian dominated Israel, and because of Midian the children of Israel made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. Whenever Israel would plant crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east would come up against them. Then they would make camp by them and ruin crops of the land all the way to Gaza. They did not leave any provisions behind in Israel—neither sheep, nor cattle, nor donkeys. For they came with their livestock and tents like a swarm of locusts. They and their camels were too numerous to count, and they came into the land to destroy it. Israel was made weak before Midian and cried out to the LORD. When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of Midian, the LORD sent them a prophet who said, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: I brought you up from Egypt and out of that place of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of Egypt and all your oppressors. I drove them out from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God. Do not worship the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.' But you have disobeyed Me."



Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak tree in Ophrah belonging to Joash the Abiezrite. Gideon his son was threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the LORD appeared and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor." Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, then why has all this happened to us? Where are all His miracles that our fathers told us about? They said, 'Did not the LORD bring us out of Egypt?' Yet now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this strength of

yours. Save Israel from the control of Midian. Have I not sent you?" And he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house." Then the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you will strike the Midianites as one man." And he said to Him, "If I have found favor in Your sight, give me a sign that it is You who are speaking with me. Please do not depart from here until I come to You and bring out my gift and set it before You. And He said, "I will stay until you return." So Gideon went and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought them out and offered them to Him under the oak. And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And so he did. The angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in His hand and touched the meat and unleavened flatbread. Fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD departed from his sight. Then Gideon perceived that it was indeed the angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you. Do not be afraid. You will not die." Then Gideon built an altar for the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace. Even to this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

That night the LORD said to him, "Take a bull from your father's herd and a second bull seven years old. Tear down your father's Baal altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this stronghold in an orderly way. Take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of

the Asherah pole that you will cut down.” So Gideon took ten men from among his slaves and did as the LORD had told him, but because he was too afraid of *the rest of his father’s household* and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it at night. When the men of the city got up early in the morning, the altar of Baal was torn down, the Asherah pole beside it was cut down, and the second bull had been offered on the *new* altar that had been built. They said to each other, “Who has done this?” When they had inquired and asked, they responded, “Gideon son of Joash has done this.” Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son so that he may die, for he tore down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.” Joash then said to all who stood against him, “Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Whoever fights for him will be killed by morning. If *Baal* is a god, let him fight for himself, for someone has torn down his altar.” Therefore on that day he called him Jerub-Baal, saying, “Let Baal fight him, for he tore down the altar *of Baal*.”



All the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east gathered together, and they crossed over, and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. The Spirit of the LORD enveloped Gideon. He blew a ram’s horn trumpet, and the Abiezrites assembled behind him. He sent messengers throughout all of Manasseh and they assembled behind him as well. He *also* sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, so *these tribes* came up to meet them. Gideon said to God, “If You will use my hands to save Israel, as You have said— I am placing a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only and all of the ground remains dry, then I will know that You will save Israel with my hands, as You have said.” So it happened. He got up early the next morning and squeezed the fleece. Enough dew poured out of the fleece to fill a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let Your anger burn against me as I speak only one *more* time.

Please let me perform a test with the fleece one *more* time. Please, let the fleece be the only *thing* dry, and let there be dew on all of the ground.” So God did this during that night. Only the fleece was dry, and the dew was on all the ground.



Then Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him got up early and set up camp at Harod Spring. There was a camp of Midianites to the north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many people with you for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel glorify themselves over Me, saying, ‘Our own power saved us.’ So now, call out so the people can hear, ‘Whoever is afraid or anxious may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand from among the people turned back, and ten thousand were left. But the LORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many

people. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. When I say to you, ‘This one will go with you,’ he will go with you. Everyone about whom I will say, ‘This one will not go with you,’ will not go.” So he brought the people down to the water, and the LORD said to Gideon, “You shall set apart by himself everyone who laps the water with his tongue like dogs; likewise, everyone who kneels down to drink.” The number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was three hundred. The rest of the people had knelt to drink water. The LORD said to Gideon, “With three hundred men who lapped *to drink*, I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. *All the rest of the people* should go home.” So the *three hundred men* took provisions and ram’s horn trumpets in their hands. Gideon sent all the *other* Israelite men to their tents, but he kept the three hundred men.

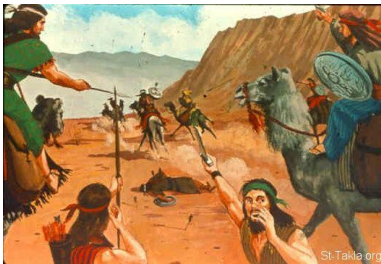
Now the Midianite camp was below him in the valley. That night the LORD said to him, “Get up and go down into the camp, for I have given it into your hands. Yet if you are afraid to go down, then go down to the camp with Purah your servant. Listen to what they say, and afterward you will be emboldened to go down to the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down near the edge of the camp. Now the Midianites, Amalekites, and the Kedemites covered the valley like locusts; and their camels could not be counted, *for they were* as numerous

as *grains of sand* on the seashore. Gideon came and overheard one man who was telling his dream to another. The man said, "Listen to a dream I had. I saw a dry cake of barley bread rolling into the Midianite camp. It rolled up to a tent and struck it. It fell, turned upside down, and collapsed." The other man responded, "This is none other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has given Midian and the whole camp into his hands." When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped, returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Get up, for the LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands." He divided the three hundred men into three combat units. He gave all of them ram's horn trumpets, empty jars, and torches within the jars.



He said to them, "Look at me and do likewise. Watch, and when I come to the perimeter of the camp, do as I do. When I and all who are with me blow the horn, then you will blow the horns all around the camp and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'" So Gideon and a hundred men with him went to the edge of the camp at the start of the middle night watch, just as they were setting the watch. Then they blew the horns and smashed the jars in their hands. The three combat units blew the horns and broke the jars. They held the torches in their left hands and the horns for blowing in their right hands. They called out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" Every man stood in his place all around the camp, but the men in the camp ran, shouted, and fled. When they blew the three hundred horns, the LORD turned every man's sword against his fellow man

throughout the camp. The *Midianite* camp fled to Beth Shittah in the direction of Zererah, up to the border of Abel Meholah, near Tabbath. The men of Israel from Naphtali, Asher, and all of Manasseh were summoned, and they chased after the Midianites. Now Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down to engage Midian in battle. Take control of the water *ways* as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. All the men of Ephraim were summoned, and they took control of the water *ways* as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. They captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two Midianite commanders. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb and killed Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They chased after the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.



Then the men of Ephraim said to him, "What have you done to us by not calling us to go and wage war against Midian?" They argued heatedly with him. He said to them, "What have I done now compared to you? Are not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the harvest of Abiezer? It was into your hands that God gave the Midianite commanders, Oreb and Zeeb. What was I able to do compared to you?" When *Gideon* said this, their anger against him cooled down. Then Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the three hundred men who were with him, exhausted but still

pursuing. He said to the men of Sukkoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian." The officials of Sukkoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands that we should give bread to your army?" So Gideon said, "Because of this, when the LORD gives Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, I will tear your bodies with desert thorns and briers." He went up from there to Peniel and spoke to them in the same way. The men of Peniel answered him just as the men of Sukkoth had. So he also said to the men of Peniel, "When I return safely, I will tear down this tower." Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their armies, about fifteen thousand survivors; they were all who were left of all the army of the Kedemites, for one hundred twenty thousand arms-bearing men had fallen. Gideon went up on the route of the tent dwellers east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the camp while the army was off guard. Zebah and Zalmunna fled, and Gideon chased after them. He captured Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian, and the entire army was terrified.



Gideon son of Joash returned from battle by the Pass of Heres. He captured a young man from among the men of Sukkoth and asked him to write the *names of* the leaders and elders of Sukkoth, seventy-seven men. Then he came to the men of Sukkoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me. You said, 'Have you subjugated Zebah and Zalmunna that we should give bread to your weary army?'" He took the city elders and disciplined the men of Sukkoth with thorns and briers of the wilderness. He tore down the tower of Peniel and killed the men of the city. Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?" They said, "They were like you. Each one looked like the son of a king." He said, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if you had allowed them to live, I would not kill you." Gideon said to his firstborn Jether, "Rise and kill them!" Yet the young man did not draw his sword because he was afraid, for he was still a young man. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "You get up and attack us, for a man is judged by his strength." So Gideon got up and killed Zebah and Zalmunna and took the crescent-shaped ornaments that were on the necks of their camels.

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you, and your son, and your grandson, for you have saved us from the hands of Midian." Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you. The LORD will rule over you." Gideon continued, "I have a request to make of you, that each man would give me an earring from his spoils." (*Their enemy* had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites.) They said, "We will certainly give them." So they spread out a cloak, and each man threw a ring of his spoils there. The weight of the golden earrings that he requested was seventeen hundred gold shekels. This was in addition to the crescent-shaped ornaments, jewelry, and purple clothing worn by the kings of Midian, as well as the chains hanging on the necks of their camels. Gideon used these things to make an ephod. He put it in his city, in Ophrah, and all Israel prostituted themselves to it there. It became a snare to Gideon and his family. The Midianites were humbled before the children of Israel and did not lift their heads high again. The land had peace for forty years in the days of Gideon.

Jerub-Baal son of Joash (Gideon) went to his house and lived there. Gideon had seventy sons, for he had many wives. His concubine who lived in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelek. Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age, and he was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. After Gideon died, the children of Israel turned again to prostitute themselves with the Baals. They made Baal-Berith their god. The children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of their enemies around them, and they did not keep faith with the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon), for all the good he had done for Israel.



**Abimelek son of Jerub-Baal (Gideon)** went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers. He spoke to them and to the house of his mother's father saying, "Please say in the hearing of all of the leaders of Shechem, 'Which is better for you, to have all seventy sons of Jerub-Baal rule over you, or for one man to rule over you? Remember that I am your own flesh and bone.'" So his mother's brothers spoke all these things about him in the hearing of all the leaders of Shechem, and their hearts inclined toward Abimelek, for they said, "He is our brother." They gave him seventy silver coins from the temple of Baal-Berith. Abimelek hired unprincipled and undisciplined men, and they followed him. He went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerub-Baal, on a single stone. Yet Jotham, the youngest son of Jerub-Baal, survived because he hid himself. All the leaders of Shechem and everyone from Beth Millo gathered together by the oak near the pillar in Shechem to make Abimelek king.

When Jotham heard this, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim. He raised his voice and called out, saying to them, "Listen to me, leaders of Shechem, so that God may listen to you! The trees once went out to anoint a king over them. They said to the olive tree, 'Rule over us!' Yet the olive tree said to them, 'Should I stop making oil, by which God and men are honored, to go and sway over the trees?' So the trees said to the fig tree,

'You come and rule over us.' Yet the fig tree said to them, 'Should I stop making my sweet aroma and my fruit, to go and sway over the trees?' So the trees said to the grapevine, 'You come and rule over us.' Yet the grapevine said to them, 'Should I stop making my fresh wine, which cheers God and men, to go and sway over the trees?' So the trees said to the thorn bush, 'You come and rule over us.' The thorn bush said to the trees, 'If you really want to anoint me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade. If not, let fire come out from the thorn bush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!' Now then, did you show good faith and integrity when you made Abimelek king? Did you deal well with Jerub-Baal and his family? Did you do to him as his actions deserved, considering that my father waged war for you, risked his life for you, and delivered you from the hands of Midian? Yet you have taken a stand against my father's family today. You killed his seventy sons, each on a single stone. You made Abimelek, son of his slave woman, king over the leaders of Shechem because he is your brother. So if you did show good faith and integrity in what you did with Jerub-Baal and his family today, then rejoice in Abimelek, and may he also rejoice in you. If not, let fire come out from Abimelek and consume the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo, and let fire come out from the leaders of Shechem and from Beth Millo and consume Abimelek!" Then Jotham ran away and fled. He went to Beer and lived there because of Abimelek his brother.

After Abimelek ruled over Israel for three years, God sent an evil spirit between Abimelek and the leaders of Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelek, so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerub-Baal and their blood might come back upon Abimelek their brother, who killed them, and upon the leaders of Shechem, who empowered him to kill his brothers. The leaders of Shechem set ambushes against him on the hilltops and robbed all who passed by them on the road. This was told to Abimelek.

Gaal, the son of Ebed, and his brothers came to *Shechem*, and the leaders of Shechem trusted him. They went out to the field, gathered and trod their grapes, and had a celebration. They went to the temple of their god and ate, drank, and cursed Abimelek. Gaal son of Ebed said, "Who is Abimelek, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerub-Baal, and *is not* Zebul his officer? Serve the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. Why should we serve *Abimelek*? If only this people were under my command, I would get rid of Abimelek." So he said to Abimelek, "Muster your army and come out!" Then Zebul the city ruler heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed and he burned with anger. He secretly sent messengers to Abimelek, saying, "Gaal, the son of Ebed, and his brothers have come to Shechem and are fortifying the city against you. So now, get up at night, you and the people with you, and lie in wait in the field. In the morning at sunrise, get up early and attack the city. He and the people with him will come out to you, then you can do to them as you find opportunity."

So Abimelek and all the people who were with him got up at night and lay in wait by Shechem in four companies. When Gaal son of Ebed went out and stood at the entrance of the city gate, then Abimelek and the people who were with him got up from their hiding places. Gaal saw these people and said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the hilltops." Zebul said to him, "The shadows of the hills look like men to you." Gaal spoke again and said, "Look, people are coming down the middle of the land, and a company is coming by way of the Diviner's Oak." Then Zebul said to him, "Where is your mouth now, which said, 'Who is Abimelek, that we should serve him?' Are not these the people you dismissed out of hand? Go now, I pray, and fight against them." So Gaal went out before the leaders of Shechem and fought Abimelek. Abimelek chased him, and Gaal fled from him. Many fell wounded at the entrance of the gate. Abimelek stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers from living in Shechem.

The next day the people went out into the field, and this was told to Abimelek. So he took the people and divided them into three companies, and they laid in wait in the field. When the people came out from the city, he rose up against them and struck them down. Abimelek and the company that was with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the city gate. The two other combat units attacked everyone in the field and struck

them down. Abimelek fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and killed the people inside it; he tore down the city and spread salt over it.

When the leaders of the Tower of Shechem heard this, they entered the fortified temple of El-Berith. Abimelek was told that all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem had gathered together. So Abimelek and all the people who were with him went up Mount Zalmon. He took an axe in his hand and cut off a tree branch, lifted it, and carried it on his shoulder. Then he said to the men who were with him, "What you have seen me do, hurry and do the same." So everyone likewise cut off a branch and followed Abimelek. They placed them on the fortification and set the fortification on fire over them. So all the people of the Tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

Then Abimelek went to Thebez and encamped against Thebez and captured it. But there was a fortified tower within the city, so all of the men and women and the leaders of the city fled there. They shut themselves in and went up to the top of the tower. Abimelek came to the tower and fought against it. But as he drew near to the tower entrance to burn it with fire, a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on the head of Abimelek, and it crushed his skull. Urgently he called to the young man who carried his gear and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, so that people may not say about me, 'A woman killed him.'" So the young man pierced him through, and he died. Then the men of Israel saw that Abimelek was dead, so everyone went home.

Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelek, which he committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers. God also repaid the evil deeds of the men of Shechem, and the curse of Jotham son of Jerub-Baal came upon them.

**Tola** After the death of Abimelek, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save Israel. He lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim. He judged Israel for twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

**Jair** After him Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel for twenty-two years. He had thirty sons who rode thirty donkeys and owned thirty cities that are in the land of Gilead. They are called Havvoth Jair to this day. Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

**Jephthah** Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They worshipped the Baals, the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites, and the Philistines. They abandoned the LORD and did not serve Him. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. They brutally oppressed the children of Israel that year. For eighteen years *they oppressed* all the children of Israel beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites in Gilead. The Ammonites also crossed over the Jordan to wage war against Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed. Then the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, "We have sinned against You, for we have abandoned our God and worshipped the Baals."

The LORD said to the children of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from Egypt, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites when they oppressed you? You cried out to Me, and I saved you from their hands. Yet you have abandoned Me and worshipped other gods. Therefore I will not save you again. Go and cry out to the gods that you have chosen. Let them save you in your time of distress." Then the children of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do to us whatever seems good in Your sight. Please, just deliver us today." They removed the foreign gods from among them and worshipped the LORD, and He could no longer endure the suffering of Israel.

The Ammonites had been called out and set up camp in Gilead. The children of Israel assembled and set up camp in Mizpah. The commanders of Gilead said to each other, "Who is the man who will begin to fight against the Ammonites? He will be the ruler of all the inhabitants of Gilead."

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a prostitute. Gilead was the father of Jephthah. Gilead's wife also bore him sons. His wife's sons grew up and drove Jephthah away. They said to him, "You will not inherit anything from our father's house because you are the son of another woman." So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Men of ill repute gathered around Jephthah and went out with him.

Some time passed, then the Ammonites waged war with Israel. When the Ammonites waged war with Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah back from the land of Tob. They said to Jephthah, "Come and be our leader so that we may fight the Ammonites." Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me and drive me out of my father's house? Why have you come to me now that you are in trouble?" The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "Even so, we have turned to you. Come with us and fight the Ammonites. You will be ruler over all the inhabitants of Gilead." Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you bring me back to wage war against the Ammonites, and the LORD gives them to me, then I will be your ruler." The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "May the LORD be a witness between us if we do not act according to your word." So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead. The people set him over them as ruler and leader. And Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.

Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king to say, "What *problem* is there between you and me, that you have come to me to wage war in my land?" The Ammonite king said to the messengers of Jephthah, "Because when Israel came up from Egypt, they took my land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and as far as the Jordan. Now return it peacefully." Again Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king, and said to him, "Jephthah says this: Israel did not take the land of Moab, nor the Ammonite land; for when Israel came up from Egypt, they went into the desert as far as the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, 'Please let us pass through your land.' Yet the king of Edom would not listen. They also sent messengers to the king of Moab, but he was unwilling. So Israel stayed at Kadesh. They went into the wilderness, around the lands of Edom and Moab. They went east of the land of Moab and set up camp on the other side of the River Arnon. They did not cross the boundary of Moab, for the River Arnon was the boundary of Moab. Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon. Israel said to him, 'Please let us pass through your land to our home.' Yet Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory, so Sihon gathered all his people and set up camp in Jahaz to fight with Israel. The LORD God of Israel gave Sihon and all his people into the hands of Israel, and they struck them down. So Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites who lived in that land. They took possession of all of the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the desert to the Jordan. Now that the LORD God of Israel has driven out the Amorites from before His people Israel, should you take it? Will you not take possession of whatever Chemosh your god gives you? So everything that the LORD our God possesses before us, we will take possession of it. Now are you really better than Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab? Did he ever contend with Israel or wage war with them? Israel has lived in Heshbon and its nearby towns, in Aroer and its nearby towns, and in all the cities along the banks of the River Arnon for three hundred years. Why did you not take them back during that time? So I have not sinned against you, but it is you who are doing evil to me by waging war against me. May the LORD, the Judge, judge today between the children of Israel and the Ammonites." Yet the Ammonite king would not listen to the message that Jephthah had sent him.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jephthah and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and went on to the Ammonites. Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, "If You will indeed give the Ammonites into my hands, then whatever comes out from the door of my house to meet me, when I return safely from the Ammonites, will surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to wage war against them, and the LORD gave them into his hands. He struck them down from Aroer to Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel Keramim. The defeat was very severe, and the Ammonites were humbled before the children of Israel. When Jephthah went to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter coming out to meet him, dancing with a tambourine. She was his only child. Other than her, he had neither son nor daughter. When he saw her, he ripped up his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought utter disaster to me. You are my undoing, for I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot take it back." She said to him, "My father, you have opened your mouth to the LORD. Do to me what has come out of your mouth, because the LORD worked vengeance upon your enemies, the Ammonites." Then she said to her father, "Let this be done for me: Give me two months, and I and my friends will wander the hill country and mourn over my virginity." He said, "Go," and he sent her away for two months. She and her friends went and mourned over her virginity in the hill country. At the end of two months she returned to her father, and he did to her according to the vow that he had made. She had not ever slept with a man. So it became a custom in Israel that the women of Israel would commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days each year.

The men of Ephraim gathered together and crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, "Why did you go to wage war with the Ammonites and not call us to go with you? We will burn down your house right on top of you." Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were in a very great conflict with the Ammonites. I called you, but you did not save me from their hands. When I saw that you were not going to save me, I took my life in my own hands and crossed over to the Ammonites. Then the LORD gave them into my hands. Now why have you come up to me today to wage war against me?" Then Jephthah assembled all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim. The men of Gilead struck Ephraim down, for they had said, "You Gileadites are fugitives in Ephraim, living in Ephraim and Manasseh." Gilead captured the fords of the Jordan River leading to Ephraim. Whenever an Ephraimite fugitive would say, "Let me cross," the Gileadite men would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," then they would say to him, "Say, 'Shibboleth!'" Yet he would say, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce it *correctly*. Then they would grab him and kill him at the Jordan fords. During that time forty-two thousand from Ephraim fell. Jephthah judged Israel for six years. When Jephthah the Gileadite died, he was buried among the cities of Gilead.

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon After Jephthah, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. He had thirty sons, and he gave thirty daughters in marriage outside his clan; and he brought thirty daughters from outside for his sons. He judged Israel for seven years. Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem. After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel for ten years. Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. After him, Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode seventy donkeys. He judged Israel for eight years. Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the Amalekite hill country.

Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.



There was a certain man from Zorah, from the tribe of Dan. His name was Manoah. His wife was infertile and had borne no children. The angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed, you are infertile and have borne no children, yet you will conceive and bear a son. Now be careful, I pray, that you drink no wine or strong drink and that you do not eat anything ritually unclean. For you will conceive and bear a son. No razor may touch his head, for the boy will be a Nazirite to God from the womb. He will begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines." Then the woman went to her husband and said, "A man of God came to me. He looked like a very fearsome angel of God. I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name. He said to me, 'You will conceive and bear a son. So now, do not drink wine or strong drink, and do not eat anything ritually unclean, for the boy will be a Nazirite to God from the womb until the day he dies.'" Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, "O my Lord, let the man of God whom You sent come again to us, so that he can teach us what we should do for the boy who will be born." God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman. She was sitting in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. The woman hurried and ran to tell her husband, "The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me." So Manoah got up and went after his wife. He came to the man and said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife?" He said, "I am." Then Manoah said, "Now may your words come true! What will be the boy's way of life and his work?" The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Your wife must observe everything that I said to her. She must not consume anything that grows on the vine. She must not drink wine or strong drink, and she must not eat anything ritually unclean. She must observe everything that I commanded her." Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you, and let us prepare a young goat for you." The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "If I stay, I will not eat your food, but if you want to make an offering to the LORD, you should offer it." (For Manoah did not know that he was an angel of the LORD.) Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that we can honor you when your words come true?" The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name? It is too wonderful." Manoah took the young goat and the grain offering and offered them to the LORD upon a rock. Then he did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife watched. When the flame went up from the altar toward the heavens, the angel of the LORD went up in the flames from the altar. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell face down on the ground. The angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD. Manoah said to his wife, "We are certainly going to die, for we have seen God." Yet his wife said to him, "If the LORD wanted to kill us, He would not have taken the burnt offering and grain offering from us. He would not have shown us these things, nor let us hear things such as these at this time." So the woman bore a son, and she called him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD blessed him. The Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.



Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman from the daughters of the Philistines. He came back up and told his father and mother, "I have seen a woman in Timnah from the daughters of the Philistines; now get her for me as a wife." His father and mother said to him, "Are there no women among your relatives, or all of our people, that you are intending to take a wife from among the uncircumcised Philistines?" Yet Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well." His father and mother did not know that this was from the LORD, for He was seeking an opportunity *to act* against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah. As they came to the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and though unarmed, he tore the lion in two as one might tear a young goat in two. However, he did not tell his father and his mother what he had done. So Samson went down and spoke with the woman, and she pleased Samson. After a while, when he returned to take her,

he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. He scooped it out into his hands and ate it as he went along. He came to his father and mother and gave some to them, and they also ate. Yet he did not tell them he had scooped the honey out of a lion's carcass. Then his father went down to the woman. Samson put on a feast there, for this is what young men would do. When *the Philistines* saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you can explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will find thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes to give you. However, if you are not able to explain it to me, then you will give me thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes." They said to him, "Tell us your riddle, so we can hear it." He said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." They could not explain the riddle after three days. On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Trick your groom into telling us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to steal what we have? Is that not so?" So Samson's wife wept all over him and said, "You must hate me. You do not love me. You have told a riddle to the young men and did not tell it to me." Then he said to her, "I have not told it to my father and mother. Why should I tell it to you?" She wept on him for the seven days of the feast, then on the seventh day he told it to her because she had nagged him. Then she explained the riddle to her people. So on the seventh day before sunset, the men of the city said to Samson, "What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?" Then he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle." Then the Spirit of the LORD mightily came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty of their men. He took their clothes and gave them to the ones who had explained the riddle. His anger burned and he went up to his father's house. So Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.



After a while, during the wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, *taking* a young goat. He said, "I'm going into my wife in her bedroom," but her father would not let him go in. Her father said, "I thought that you thoroughly hated her, so I gave her to your best man. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, let her be your wife instead." Samson said to them, "This time I cannot be blamed by the Philistines when I do them harm." Samson went and caught three hundred foxes. He took torches and turned the foxes tail to tail and put a torch between each pair of tails. He set fire to the torches and sent the foxes into standing grain of the Philistines. He burned the harvested grain, standing grain, vineyards, and olive trees. The Philistines asked, "Who did this?" They said, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because the *Timnite* took the bride of *Samson* and gave her to his best man." So the Philistines went up and

burned her and her father with fire. Samson said to them, "Because you have done this, I will take revenge on you, and afterwards I will stop." He struck them down with a mighty blow, then went to live in a cave in Etam Rock. Then the Philistines went up and set up camp in Judah. They deployed against Lehi. The men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" They said, "It is to take Samson prisoner that we have come up, to do to him what he did to us." So three thousand men from Judah went to the cave in Etam Rock and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are ruling us? Why have you done this to us?" He said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." They said to him, "We have come to take you prisoner, to give you into the hands of the Philistines." Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not attack me." They said to him, "No, we will bind you securely and give you into their hands, but we will not kill you." They bound him with two new ropes and took him away from the rock. <sup>1</sup>He came to Lehi, and the Philistines shouted as they approached him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him. The ropes on his arms became like burned flax and the ties on his hands dissolved. Then he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and with it struck down a thousand men. Samson said, "With a jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps. With a jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men." When he finished speaking, he threw the jawbone away and called that place Ramath Lehi. He was very thirsty, and he called out to the LORD, "You gave this great deliverance through Your servant, but now may I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" So God split open the

basin at Lehi, and water flowed out of it. He drank, was refreshed, and revived. Because of this he called the place En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. Samson judged Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.



Samson went to Gaza. There he saw a prostitute and spent the night with her. The people of Gaza *were told*, "Samson has come here!" So they surrounded him and laid in wait for him all night at the city gate. They kept quiet all night, thinking, "In the morning light we will kill him." Samson lay until midnight, then at midnight he got up. He grabbed the doors of the city gate and the two gateposts and pulled them out along with the bar.

He put them on his shoulder and brought them to the top of the mountain near Hebron. After this Samson loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. The Philistine rulers came up to her and said, "Trick him! Find out about how his strength is so great and how we can overcome him, bind him, and humiliate him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred silver coins." So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me how your strength is so great and how you could be bound in order to be subdued." Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I will become weak and be like an ordinary man." So the Philistine rulers brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. They lay in wait in her inner room. She said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson." Then he split apart the bowstrings like a single thread is split apart at the touch of fire. So the source of his strength did not become known. Delilah said to Samson, "You have deceived me. You have told me lies. Now, please tell me how you can be bound." He said to her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have never been used, then I will become weak and be like an ordinary man." So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them. Then she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson." For men were lying in wait, remaining in the room. But he split apart the ropes on his arms like a thread. Delilah said to Samson, "Up to now you have deceived me. You have told me lies. Tell how you can be bound." He said to her, "If you weave seven locks of my hair into the fabric on the loom *and fasten it with the pin, then I will become weak and be like an ordinary man.*" So Delilah lulled him to sleep and wove seven locks of his hair into the fabric on the loom. She fastened it with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson." He awakened from his sleep and tore away from the loom pin and the fabric. She said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me how your strength is so great." Every day she nagged him with her words and pleaded with him until he was tired to death. So he told her all his secrets and said to her, "No razor has touched my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I were shaven, my strength would leave me, and I would become weak and be like all other men." Delilah saw that he had told her all his secrets, so she sent for the Philistine rulers, saying, "Come up this time, for he has told me all his secrets." So the Philistine rulers came up to her and brought the money in their hands. Delilah lulled Samson to sleep on her knees and called for a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to humiliate him, and his strength left him. She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson." Then he awakened from his sleep and thought, "I will go out as before and shake myself free *of them.*" He did not know that the LORD had left him. The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They took him down to Gaza, bound him with bronze chains, and he ground grain in prison. Yet after it had been shaven, the hair on his head began to grow back.



The Philistine rulers gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate. They said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands." The people saw him and praised their god, for they said, "Our god has given into our hands our enemy, the one who ruined our land and killed many of us." When their hearts were merry, they said, "Call for Samson, so he can entertain us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. They placed him between the pillars. Samson said to the young man who held his hand, "Let me rest and touch the pillars on which



the temple is set, then I can lean against them.” The temple was full of men and women, and all the Philistine rulers were there. There were about three thousand men and women on the roof watching Samson entertain. Samson called out to the LORD, “Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Please strengthen me just this once, God, so that I may get full revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes!” Then Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the temple was set and leaned against them, one with his right hand and one with his left. Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” He pushed with all his strength, and the temple fell upon the rulers and all the people who were in it. At his death he killed more than he had killed in his life. Then his brothers and all his family came down, carried him, brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the grave of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel for twenty years.



There was a man from the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. He said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from you, on which you put a curse, even speaking the curse in my ears—here is the silver with me. I took it.” Then his mother said, “May the LORD bless my son!” Then he returned the eleven hundred silver coins to his mother. His mother said, “I certainly consecrated the silver to the LORD, for my son to make a carved idol and a metal idol, so now I return it to you.” When he returned the silver to his mother, she took two hundred *shekels* of silver and gave them to a silversmith to make a carved idol and a metal idol. And they were put in the house of Micah. This man Micah owned a shrine. He made an ephod and household idols, and he hired one of his sons to be a priest for him. In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his eyes. There was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah. He was a Levite from Judah, and he stayed as a resident foreigner there. The man went from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find *a place*. He came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, to do his work. Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?” He said to him, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I can find *a place*.” Micah said to him, “Live with me, and be a father and a priest for me. I will give you ten silver coins a year, a set of clothes, and food.” So the Levite went in. The Levite decided to live with the man, and the young man became like one of his sons. Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in the house of Micah. Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will do good for me, for I have a Levite to be my priest.”

In those days there was no king in Israel.

And in those days the tribe of the Danites was looking for an inheritance in which to live, for no territory had come into their possession among the tribes of Israel up to that time. So the children of Dan sent out from their families five valourous men from Zorah and Eshtaol in order to spy out and explore the land. They said to them, “Go, explore the land.” They came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and they spent the night there. When they were at the house of Micah, they noticed the speech of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?” He told them what Micah had done for him, saying, “He hired me, and I became his priest.” They said to him, “Please ask God if we may know whether our mission will be a success as we go to do it.” The priest said to them, “Go in peace. The LORD is watching the way you are going.”

The five men went away and came to Laish. They saw the people who were there, living securely according to the culture of the Sidonians. There were no rulers in the land who might put them to shame for anything. They were far from the Sidonians and had no ties with anyone. When they came back to their brothers in Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers asked them, “What do you have to say?” They said, “Get up! Let us go up against them, for we have seen the land. It is very good. You are silent, but do not hesitate to go to take the land. When you go, you will come to a secure people and to an expansive land. For God has given it into your hands: a place where there is no lack of anything on the earth.” So six hundred fully armed men set out from the family of the Danites, from Zorah and Eshtaol. They went up and set up camp in Kiriath Jearim in Judah. Therefore they call

that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. It is west of Kiriath Jearim. From there they passed the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah. The five men who went to spy out the land of Laish said to their brothers, "Did you know that in these houses are an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a metal idol? Now think about what to do." So they turned aside there and came to the house of the young Levite, to the house of Micah, and greeted him. The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were the children of Dan, stood at the entrance to the gate.

In those days, when there was no king in Israel, there was a certain Levite living as resident foreigner in a remote part of the hill country of Ephraim. He took a concubine for himself from Bethlehem in Judah. Yet his concubine became angry with him and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah. She was there for four months. Her husband got up and went after her in order to speak tenderly to her and bring her back. His servant and two donkeys were with him. When he came to her father's house, the girl's father saw him and was happy to meet with him. His father-in-law, the girl's father, prevailed upon him to stay with him for three days. So they ate and drank and spent the night there. On the fourth day they woke up early in the morning. He got ready to go, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Strengthen yourself with a little food, and then you can go." So the two of them sat down to eat and drink together. Then the girl's father said to the man, "Please spend the night and let your heart be merry." The man got up to go, but his father-in-law urged him until he turned back and spent the night there. He got up early in the morning on the fifth day to go. The girl's father said, "Please, strengthen yourself and wait until later in the day." So the two of them ate. Then the man got up to go: he, his concubine, and his servant. His father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look! It is getting dark. Spend the night! Settle in and spend the night here, let your heart be merry. You can get up early tomorrow and go home." Yet the man did not want to spend the night, so he got up and left and approached Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). Two saddled donkeys and his concubine were with him. When they were near Jebus, it was getting very late. The servant said to his master, "Come, let us turn aside to this Jebusite city and spend the night in it." His master said to him, "We must not turn aside to a city of foreigners, who are not children of Israel. We will continue on to Gibeah." He said to his servant, "Come, let us go to one of these places. We will spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah." They continued and went on. The sun went down when they were near Gibeah in Benjamin. So they turned aside there to go and spend the night in Gibeah. They went in and sat in the city square, but no one took them in to spend the night. Just then, an old man came in at evening time from his work in the field. The man was from the hill country of Ephraim and lived as a resident foreigner in Gibeah, but the townspeople were Benjamites. He looked up and saw the traveler in the city square. The old man said, "Where are you going, and where do you come from?"



He said to him, "We are traveling from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote part of the hill country of Ephraim. I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and now I am going to the house of the LORD. No one has taken me into his home. Yet there is enough straw and fodder for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me, your maidservant, and the young man who is with your servant. We do not lack anything." The old man said, "Do not worry. I will take care of whatever you need. Just do not spend the night in the city square." So he brought him into his house and gave food to his donkeys. They washed their feet, ate, and drank. While they were

enjoying themselves, the men of the city, who were wicked men, surrounded the house and pounded on the door. They said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came to your house, so we can have relations with him." The master of the house went out to them and said, "No, my brothers, do not commit this evil act, not after this man has come into my house. Do not commit this disgrace. Here are my virgin daughter and the man's concubine. Let me bring them out to you. Ravish them and do to them what you please. But do not commit this vile act against this man." The men were unwilling to listen to him, so the man seized his concubine and brought her out to them in the street. They knew her and abused her all night until morning. As

the dawn began to break, they let her go. The woman came back at daybreak and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, *lying there* until it was light. Her master got up in the morning and opened the doors of the house. He went out to go on his way, but there was the woman, his concubine, fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, "Get up, let us be going," but there was no answer. So the man put her on a donkey and went home. When he got home, he took a knife and seized his concubine, then cut her body into twelve pieces. Then he sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. Everyone who saw this said, "Nothing like this has been done or seen since the day the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt until today. Consider it, take counsel, and speak up!"

All the children of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and *also from* the land of Gilead, went out and gathered together in an assembly as one man before the LORD at Mizpah. The leaders of all the people from all the tribes of Israel presented themselves in an assembly of the people of God, who numbered four hundred thousand infantrymen bearing swords. (The Benjamites heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) The children of Israel said, "Tell how this evil happened!" So the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, answered, "My concubine and I came to Gibeah, in Benjamin, to spend the night. Then the leaders of Gibeah rose up against me. At night they surrounded the house where I was staying. They wanted to kill me; instead they ravished my concubine so that she died. I seized my concubine, cut her into pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel, because they committed an infamous and disgraceful act in Israel. Now, all of you are children of Israel. Give your advice and counsel here."

All the people arose as one man and said, "Not a man among us will go to his tent, and no one will turn aside to his house. Now this is what we will do to Gibeah. We will go against it by lot. We will take ten men out of every hundred, from every tribe of Israel, a hundred from every thousand, and a thousand from every ten thousand, to bring provisions for the troops. Then when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay them for all the evil that they committed in Israel." So all the men of Israel gathered at the city, united like one man. The tribes of Israel sent men throughout the whole tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this evil that has been committed among you? Now hand over the wicked men in Gibeah, so that we can kill them and purge the evil from Israel." Yet the Benjamites were not willing to listen to their fellow children of Israel. The Benjamites gathered from their cities at Gibeah in order to go out and wage war against the children of Israel. That day, the Benjamites mustered twenty-six thousand armed men from the cities and seven hundred specially chosen men from Gibeah. Out of all these people there were seven hundred specially chosen men who were left-handed, all of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. The men of Israel, apart from Benjamin, gathered four hundred thousand armed men who drew the sword; all of them were men of war. The children of Israel arose, went up to Bethel, and asked God, "Who should go up first to wage war against the Benjamites?" The LORD said, "Judah first." The children of Israel got up in the morning and camped against Gibeah. The men of Israel went out for battle with Benjamin, and the men of Israel lined up for battle at Gibeah. Then the Benjamites came out from Gibeah and struck twenty-two thousand Israelite men down to the ground. The people, the men of Israel, rallied and lined up for battle again in the place where they had lined up on the first day. Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening. They asked the LORD, "Should we advance and fight our brother-tribesmen the Benjamites again?" The LORD said, "Advance against them." So the children of Israel advanced against the Benjamites for the second day. And on the second day, the Benjamites went out from Gibeah to meet them and again struck eighteen thousand men down to the ground, every one of them armed. Then all the children of Israel, all the people, went up to Bethel where they wept and sat before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. The children of Israel asked the LORD (because the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it then), "Should we go out again to wage war with our brother-tribesmen the Benjamites, or should we not?" The LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hands." So Israel set an ambushing force around Gibeah. The children of Israel went up against the Benjamites

on the third day and lined up at Gibeah as before. The Benjamites went out to engage the people and were drawn away from the city. They began to strike the people down as before. On the main roads that go up to Bethel and Gibeah and in the field, they struck down about thirty children of Israel. The Benjamites said, "They are struck down before us like at the beginning." But the children of Israel said, "Let us retreat and draw them away from the city toward the main roads." So all the men of Israel rose up out of their place and assumed their battle positions at Baal Tamar. Then the men of Israel in ambush charged out of their places, out of the meadows of Gibeah. Ten thousand specially chosen men from all of Israel came against Gibeah. The battle was fierce, and the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them. The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel, and that day the children of Israel struck down twenty-five thousand one hundred Benjamites, every one of them armed. The Benjamites saw that they were defeated.

Now the men of Israel had withdrawn from Benjamin, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah. So the ambushing force rushed on and attacked Gibeah. They struck down the whole city with the edge of the sword. The men of Israel had made an agreement with the ambushing force that when they sent up a large amount of smoke from the city, the children of Israel would turn around in battle. When the Benjamites had begun to strike the children of Israel down, about thirty men, they said, "Surely they are struck down before us like at the beginning." Yet when the smoke began to rise up from the city in a column, the Benjamites looked behind them and suddenly noticed the whole city going up in smoke to the sky. Then the men of Israel turned around, and the men of Benjamin were horrified because they saw that disaster had come on them. So they fled from the men of Israel toward the direction of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them. Whoever came out of the cities destroyed them in their midst. They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them without rest, and trampled them down near Gibeah toward the east. Eighteen thousand men from Benjamin fell; all these were men of valor. The rest turned and fled toward the wilderness to Rimmon Rock, and they cut down five thousand men on the main roads. They pursued them relentlessly until they reached Gidom and killed two thousand of them. So the Benjamites who fell that day numbered twenty-five thousand, every one of them armed, valorous men. However, six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness, to Rimmon Rock. They dwelled at Rimmon Rock for four months. Yet the men of Israel turned back against the Benjamites and struck them with the edge of the sword—city inhabitants, animals, and everything that could be found. Indeed, they set on fire every city that could be found.

In Mizpah the men of Israel had taken an oath: "No one among us will give his daughter to a Benjamite as his wife." So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening. They raised their voices and wept, sobbing loudly. They said, "Why, LORD God of Israel, has this happened in Israel, that today a tribe is missing from Israel?" In the morning the people got up early and built an altar there. They offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.



THE BENJAMITES AT BETHEL.—/1897 EX. 93.

The children of Israel said, "Who from all the tribes of Israel did not go up with the assembly to the LORD?" For they vowed a solemn oath regarding whoever did not go up to the LORD at Mizpah stating, "He must be killed." The children of Israel lamented for Benjamin their brother, and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today. What can we do to find wives for those who are left? For we swore by the LORD not to give them our daughters as wives." So they said, "Is there anyone from among the tribes of Israel who did not go up to the LORD at Mizpah?" Then they learned that no one from the camp of Jabesh Gilead had come to the

assembly. When the people were counted, indeed, there was not a man there from among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead. So the assembly sent twelve thousand valorous men there and commanded them, "Go and strike down the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including women and children. This is what you will do: You will kill every man and every woman who has slept with a man." So among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead they found four hundred young virgins who had never slept with a man, and they brought them to

the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan. Then the whole assembly sent *someone* to speak to the Benjamites who were at Rimmon Rock, and they declared peace. So the Benjamites returned at that time, and they gave to them the women who were still alive from among the women of Jabesh Gilead. Yet they did not find enough for them. The people felt sorry for Benjamin, for the LORD had made a gap among the tribes of Israel. The elders of the assembly said, "What can we do to find wives for those who are left? The Benjamite women were destroyed." They said, "*There must be* an inheritance for the remnant of Benjamin, so that a tribe will not be wiped out from Israel. Yet we cannot give them our daughters for wives, for the children of Israel swore, 'Cursed be anyone who gives a wife to Benjamin.'" They said, "Wait! There is an annual festival of the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, east of the main road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah." So they commanded the Benjamites, "Go and hide in the vineyards. Watch, and then when the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, come out from the vineyards and have every man grab a wife for himself from among the daughters of Shiloh. Then go to the land of Benjamin. When their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, we will say to them, 'Be favorable to them for our sakes, because we did not take for each man a wife in the battle; for you have not given women to them at the time, thereby making yourselves guilty.'" So the Benjamites did this. They carried away wives for each man from among the dancers that they caught. Then they returned to their inheritance, rebuilt the cities, and lived in them. At that time, the children of Israel departed from there each man to his tribe and to his family. They went out from there to their own inheritance. In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.