

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

JUDGES

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**GOSPEL
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Preface and Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven member of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs and Henry Simmons. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, Ray Hawk and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections. Our grasp of the infinite will of God is not absolute, despite the diligence of our efforts; there is always more to learn.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The notes were put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over much time. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people. "Outlined" does not imply skimpy—these are full-length books.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we barely cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge to the recipients. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad!

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

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INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES

A. The Name Given the Book.

1. The name of this book is from the Hebrew word *shophetim*, which means "Judges."
2. The term is applied to judges in the normal usage of the word, but these people were more than judicial figures. They were warriors, generals, and administrators.
3. The judges of this book neither inherited the office, nor were they elected by the citizens. Rather, God selected, prepared, and empowered these individuals to alleviate major problems which had developed in Israel. Thirteen judges are identified in the book, and two more (Eli and Samuel) are named in the early chapters of 1 Samuel.

B. The Author and Date of Judges.

1. The author is not identified by any direct statement within the book. There is no actual affirmation elsewhere in the Bible that names the inspired penman.
 - a. An ancient uninspired Jewish source (the Talmud) attributes the authorship to Samuel, who was the fifteenth and final judge (See Young, p.269). Early Christian writers also ascribe it to Samuel.
 - b. Internal evidence places Samuel at the right place and time to have written the material.
 - c. The New Testament makes reference to parts of the book, thus giving us reason to believe in its divine origin.
 - 1) Hebrews 11:32: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets."
 - 2) Acts 13:20: "And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet."
2. The book is very ancient, dating to the time prior to David's conquest of Jerusalem. "And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day" (Judg. 1:21). The report of David's mastery over Jerusalem is related in 2 Samuel 5.
 - a. If Samuel was the human instrument through whom God revealed and recorded the book of Judges, the book would have been written prior to 1014 B.C., the year King Saul perished. Samuel died that same year, or shortly before that year, for the report of his death indicates the close proximity of the passing of these two prominent men (1 Sam. 28:3ff).
 - b. Paul's reference to the period of the Judges spanning 450 years has caused much study so that the figure he gave might be reconciled with the other figures given by which Old Testament dates are established.
 - 1) From 1 Kings 6:1, we learn that the Exodus occurred 480 years before the start of Solomon's Temple, which is placed at 970 B.C. Thus, the Exodus began in 1450 B.C., and Israel entered into Canaan in 1410 B.C., after 40 years in the wilderness.
 - 2) The time factors must be carefully weighed before they fit the definite schedule of when the Exodus occurred in relation to the beginning of the Temple. Some of the years of the oppressions and of the periods of rest may overlap. The years can be made to fit the 480-year span from the Exodus to the beginning of the Temple, but of necessity, there is a measure of uncertainty as to the exact length of time involved.

C. The Purpose and Importance of the Book.

1. The great purpose of every book in the Bible is religious. The Bible was not intended to be merely a book
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of history or science, although it contains information about historical events and makes certain scientific observations. The Bible was designed to be an instruction book about man's need for God and how to serve God acceptably.

- a. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - b. Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - c. John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
2. The Book of Judges gives an excellent presentation of what happens to mankind, individually and collectively, when they live according to their own ideas. Twice the inspired writer describes the cause of the division, decadence, and rebellion as Israel's determination to live as they pleased.
 - a. Judges 17:6: "In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes."
 - b. Judges 21:25: "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes."
 3. The Book illustrates the folly of man going his own way, ignoring the revealed message from his Creator.
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D. The Judges of the Book and Their Times.

ENEMY	PASSAGE	OPPRESSED	JUDGE	RULE
Mesopotamia	Judges 3:7-11	8 Years	Othniel	40 Years
Moab	Judges 3:12-31	18 Years	Ehud	80 Years
Philistines	Judges 3:31	-	Shamgar	-
Canaanites	Judges 4-5	20 Years	Deborah	20 Years
Midianites	Judges 6:1—8:32	7 Years	Gideon	40 Years
-	Judg. 8:33—9:57	-	Abimelech	3 Years
-	Judges 10:1-2	-	Tola	23 Years
-	Judges 10:3-4	-	Jair	22 Years
Ammonites	Judg. 10:6—12:7	18 Years	Jephthah	6 Years
-	Judges 12:8-10	-	Ibzan	7 Years
-	Judges 12:11-12	-	Elon	10 Years
-	Judges 12:13-15	-	Abdon	8 Years
Philistines	Judges 13—16	40 Years	Samson	20 Years
		111 Years		299 Years

E. Outline of Judges.

1. Background of the Judges:
 - a. Judges 1:1-8: Judah and Simeon defeat Adonibezek and subdue Jerusalem.
 - b. Judges 1:9-20: These two tribes conquer Hebron and the hill country.
 - c. Judges 1:21-36: The experiences of other tribes.
 - d. Judges 2:1-5: Israel is rebuked by an angel.
 - e. Judges 2:6-10: The death of Joshua reported.
 - f. Judges 2:11-23: Israel fell victim to idolatry.
2. Israelite Experiences Under the Judges:
 - a. Judges 3:1-6: The nations left in Canaan were intended to test Israel.
 - b. Judges 3:7-11: The story of Othniel.
 - c. Judges 3:12-30: The story of Ehud.
 - d. Judges 3:31: Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an ox goad.
 - e. Judges 4-5: The story of Deborah.
 - f. Judges 6-8: The story of Gideon.
 - g. Judges 9: The story of Abimelech.
 - h. Judges 10:1-5: The stories of Tola and Jair.

- i. Judges 10:6 - 12:7: The story of Jephthah.
 - j. Judges 12:8-15: The stories of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.
 - k. Judges 13-16: The story of Samson.
3. History of Some of Israel's Other Troubles.
- a. Judges 17: Micah's idolatry.
 - b. Judges 18: Expedition of the Danites against Micah.
 - c. Judges 19: The sin at Gibeah.
 - d. Judges 20: The war between Israel and Benjamin.
 - e. Judges 21: The tribe of Benjamin delivered from extinction.
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JUDGES 1

A. Judges 1:1-8: Judah and Simeon Fight Against Adonibezek and Jerusalem.

1. Verses 1-3: "Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him."
 - a. This chapter gives a picture of the current political conditions in Palestine at the time of Joshua's death. Joshua had led Israel successfully in the conquest of Canaan. The land had been divided among the tribes, and they had been dismissed from the general assembly to take up residence on their assigned territories.
 - b. At this point in the story, following Joshua's death, Israel inquired of the Lord concerning an operation against the Canaanites remaining in the land. No one had been appointed to replace Joshua, which was how the Lord had left it. During the Exodus, it was essential that Israel should have a single authority figure, with whom God would deal in directing the affairs of the nation. In the military operations to conquer Canaan, a single head was likewise needed in order that the forces of Israel could be used to its best advantage.
 - c. Now that the land had been occupied, although there were still significant numbers of pagans in the land, the nation was to be directed by the elders of the tribes working in concert with the high priest. By means of the Urim and Thummim, God could communicate his will to them in an unmistakable way.
 - d. The Israelites asked the Lord who should take the lead in fighting against the remaining Canaanites. He answered that the tribe of Judah was to do so. The people of Judah, evidently operating through their elders, invited the men of the tribe of Simeon to accompany them in the campaign. Judah and Simeon were close neighbors in the land.
 2. Verses 4-6: "And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes."
 - a. The Lord enabled Judah and Simeon to subdue the Canaanites and Perizzites. Ten thousand of the enemy warriors were slain in Bezek. Bezek lay within the territory assigned to Judah.
 - b. Although the names are almost identical, the Adonizedec of Joshua 10 and the Adonibezek of this passage are different individuals. The former was king of Jerusalem; the latter had been king of Bezek. Israel captured Adonibezek, and cut off his thumbs and great toes. Without thumbs, it would be impossible for one to use a weapon properly; without big toes, flight would be made very difficult.
 3. Verses 7-8: "And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire."
 - a. This pagan king calmly accepted the mutilation as proper treatment of prisoners. He admitted that he had treated 70 other kings the same way. Those thus mangled were rendered incapable of either fight or flight. Ancient Greeks and Romans also practiced this cruelty. Romans who did not want to go to
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war, sometimes cut off their thumbs; parents were known to have cut off the thumbs of their sons to prevent their being conscripted into the army.

- b. Adonibezek recognized that he had reaped what he had sown, for he had thus mutilated seventy kings, who were reduced to servitude, eating their food under his table. Clarke suggested that this might mean that these former kings were fed under the table, as a man might feed a begging dog. Adonibezek understood that this treatment was God's doing, and represented divine retribution.
- c. This captured and mutilated king was brought to Jerusalem, likely to serve as a means to demoralize the remaining enemies of Israel. Adonibezek died at Jerusalem, although we are not told when or by what means. It may mean that he died of a natural death there, following a period of disgrace.
- d. The statement is made in verse eight that Israel had attacked and captured Jerusalem. Earlier, during the general conquest, they had been unable to subdue the city (Josh. 15:63). David later conquered the city and made it his capital (2 Sam. 5:6ff).
 - 1) Joshua 15:63: "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day." At the time of the writing of Joshua, the Jebusites still occupied Jerusalem.
 - 2) "Joshua had already slain the king of Jerusalem and his four allies after the battle at Gibeon (Josh. 10:3,18-26), but had not conquered Jerusalem, his capital. This was not done till after Joshua's death, when it was taken by the tribes of Judah and Simeon. But even after this capture, and notwithstanding the fact that it had been set on fire, it did not come into the sole and permanent possession of the Israelites. After the conquerors had advanced still farther, to make war upon the Canaanites in the mountains, in the *Negeb*, and in the *shephelah* (vers. 9 sqq.), the Jebusites took it again and rebuilt it, so that in the following age it was regarded by the Israelites as a foreign city (chap. 19:11,12). The Benjamites, to whom Jerusalem had fallen by lot, were no more able to drive out the Jebusites than the Judeans had been" (Keil, p.254).
 - 3) Jamison offers this explanation: "The capture of the important city Jerusalem which ranks among the early incidents of the war of invasion (Josh. 15:63), is here noticed to account for its being in the possession of the Judahites. It appears, however, that it was only the southern part of the city that the men of Judah succeeded in taking. The fortress, as well as the northern part, remained in the possession of the Jebusites (v. 21; cf. 2 Sam. 5:6)" (JFB, p.70).

B. Judges 1:9-20: Judah Takes Hebron and the Hill Country.

1. Verses 9-10: "And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before *was* Kirjatharba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai."
 - a. Evidently, after Israel captured Hebron during Joshua's day (Josh. 10:36-37), the Canaanites had filtered back into the city. It appears that another fight was called for in the present instance.
 - b. During the campaign to conquer Palestine, it was not possible for Joshua to leave an occupying force in every city that was taken; it would be very easy for the people of the land to enter the ruins of a city, rebuild its defenses, and take up residence there.
 - c. It seems, however, that the story related here is simply a repeat of the original narrative, that instead of this being the report of a different attack against Hebron, it is a recapitulation of Joshua 10:36-40.
2. Verses 11-15: "And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjathsepher: And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah

my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, when she came *to him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs."

- a. This passage is a recapitulation of Joshua 15:13-19, inserted here to fill in a significant part of the whole picture being drawn by the narrative.
 - b. There is no meaningful difference between the two accounts. We are told, however, that Othniel was the son of Caleb's *younger* brother; the earlier account merely stated that he was the son of Caleb's brother.
3. Verses 16-20: "And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people. And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof. And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants of* the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak."
- a. The Kenites, who were the descendants of Moses' father-in-law (Jethro), had taken up residence in the city of palms, a place near Jericho. These went with Judah to attack Arad, and when that place was subdued, they dwelled there.
 - b. The Kenites were allied with Israel for many years. Following this recent change in location, they lived at the new site until the time of King Saul, who sent word for them to get away from the Amalekites since the Amalekites were to be destroyed (1 Sam. 15:6). This group of people included the Rechabites in their posterity (1 Chron. 2:55), who were held up before Judah in Jeremiah's time as proper examples of righteousness (Jer. 35).
 - c. This military operation was directed also against Askelon and Ekron, cities of the Philistines. It was successful in fighting the people of the mountains, but unsuccessful against the people of the valley. The reason for failure is stated to be on account of the iron chariots of these lowlanders. "The Bible states that Iron in possession of Canaanites and Philistines was the reason Israel could not drive them out (Judges 1:19; 4:3; Joshua 17:16-18; I Samuel 13:19-22). And that only after Saul and David broke the power of the Philistines did Iron come into use in Israel (II Samuel 12:31; I Chronicles 22:3; 29:7)" (Halley, p.170).

C. Judges 1:21-36: Some Experiences of Other Tribes.

1. Verses 21-26: "And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day. And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the LORD *was* with them. And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before *was* Luz.) And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will show thee mercy. And when he showed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which *is* the name thereof unto this day."
- a. The attack against Jerusalem was successful to a point, but the Benjamites did not remove the

- Jebusites from that city. As noted earlier, they may have gotten them out of the city for a time, only to have them return later. Or, they may have removed them from most of the city, but had to leave some of them in the heavily fortified section. At the time of the present history, the Jebusites remained at Jerusalem.
- b. The descendants of Joseph assaulted Bethel successfully; the Lord was with them. In preparing the attack, they found a man who had come from Bethel, and persuaded him to show them the entrance into the city. It appears that the men of Israel (from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) had besieged the city, but this man had found a way to escape. To find the secret passage by which he had escaped, they could enter the city by the same means.
 - c. Using this secret passage, they entered Bethel, and captured it. They fulfilled their promise to release the informer. This man, we are told, went among the Hittites and built a city, which he named *Luz*, which was the former name for Bethel.
2. Verses 27-28: "Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out."
- a. The men of Manasseh had been unable to evict all the pagans from the cities lying within their territory. This information is related in the earlier account of Joshua 17:12-13: "Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out."
 - b. They thought they could not drive out the Canaanites from the cities, but they did have the means to subject them to tribute when their manpower increased. When they gained the strength to force the pagans to pay tribute, they should have ousted them. It seems that they were more interested in making money from them than in obeying God's command.
3. Verse 29-30: "Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries."
- a. The men of Ephraim did not drive out the pagans from the city Gezer. This would become an obvious problem in time to come; they would prove to be a thorn in Israel's eye, and a cause for much moral trouble.
 - b. The tribe of Zebulun failed to drive out the pagans from Kitron and Nahalol. These people were also subjected to tribute.
4. Verses 31-32: "Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out."
- a. The Canaanites were allowed to dwell among the tribe of Asher. One cannot associate with evil men without being tainted. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11).
 - b. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk
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in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

5. Verses 33-36: "Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, nor the inhabitants of Bethanath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Bethshemesh and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley: But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries. And the coast of the Amorites *was* from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward."
 - a. The people of Naphtali failed to drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, although they did make those people pay tribute. Nevertheless, they did not obey the will of God.
 - b. The Amorites forced the tribe of Dan to live in the mountain, instead of in the valley. The descendants of Joseph, however, were able to exact tribute from the Amorites, whose boundary extended from "Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward." The *rock* is likely a reference to the city of Petra.
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JUDGES 2

A. Judges 2:1-5: Israel is Rebuked by an Angel.

1. Verses 1-2: "And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?"
 - a. The expression *angel of the Lord* appears about 68 times in the Bible. It refers to a messenger from God which, in the light of such passages as Exodus 23:20 and Joshua 5:13-15, is a powerful heavenly being.
 - b. This angel came from Gilgal with a message for Israel. Some scholars have supposed this to be an earthly messenger since his departure point is an earthly location. However, it was at Gilgal that Israel had their first encampment in the land of promise and it was there that they made a solemn commitment to the Lord (Josh. 5:1-9).
 - c. The angel delivered his message to Israel at Bochim, a term which means *weeping* or *weepers* (see margin at verse 5). The name of the place was probably given after the present episode transpired, for when they heard his message, the people wept. Since they sacrificed to the Lord at this place (verse 5), the tabernacle was now located there. Some writers have suggested that the name *Bochim* was used in reference to Shiloh, where the tabernacle was situated at last mention. The only place they were authorized to offer sacrifices was at the tabernacle.
 - d. The sorrow-causing message the angel gave included the charge that "ye have not obeyed" God's word. The messenger identified the source of the communication as God, by saying that it was he who brought Israel out of Egypt into the land of Canaan.
 - 1) God had promised them that he would never break the covenant he established with them. However, a covenant (a pact or agreement) includes at least two parties; in this case, God and Israel. God vowed never to break his commitments to Israel; but if Israel failed to fulfill her part of the agreement, the covenant was broken.
 - 2) One of the conditions of the covenant was that Israel was not to enter into any covenant with the pagans of the land; another requirement was that they were to destroy the pagan altars. Through his messenger, God bluntly accuses them of having violated both of these conditions.
 - 3) These violations released God from his obligations under the covenant, if he chose to exercise that right. But God had established a great plan for the good of all mankind when he promised Abraham that he would bring blessings to the world through his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). This overriding commitment made it necessary for God to suffer with the rebellious Israelites in countless follies, but he would remain true to his word (Acts 17:30; Titus 1:2). God is faithful to his commitments.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 1:9: "God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - b) 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."
 - c) 2 Corinthians 1:20: "For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

- d) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
2. Verse 3: "Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you."
 - a. As long as Israel prosecuted the war against the Canaanites, God worked with them to effect their expulsion from the land which they had contaminated with their ungodly, idolatrous practices.
 - b. After years of struggle, Israel reached a point in their thinking that enabled them to begin to compromise with the pagans. Rather than evicting them, some of the tribes accepted payments of tribute in exchange for allowing the enemy to remain in the land.
 - c. Perceiving the developing rebellion, God did not take direct action to cast out the idolaters unilaterally. Instead, he would use the Canaanites as the means of punishing Israel. These pagans would be thorns in the side of Israel. When a society or an individual resolves not to allow God his rightful place, the Almighty will permit them to be deluded and destroyed (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 1:18-32).
 - d. The book of Judges is a report of how the Canaanites and other enemies afflicted Israel. The sad story of sin and hardship fills the remainder of this book.
 3. Verses 4-5: "And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place *Bochim*: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD."
 - a. Their hearts were still receptive to correction at this point. When they heard this message, they wept. So significant was this episode in their minds that they gave the name *Bochim* ("weepers") to the location where the message was given.
 - b. The time was rapidly approaching when the hearts of Israel would not be teachable. A generation would come on the scene which would be bent on rebellion. A generation of children grew up without the proper foundation of teaching, and consequently, when they gained positions of responsibility, they turned away from God.
 - c. When a society degenerates to the point that God's will is viewed as unimportant, while the values of an evil world hold sway over the minds of the majority, godly parents are hard-pressed to rear their children to be God-fearing. We are living in a similar time and circumstance to that of Judges.
 - d. Israel was filled with remorse when they heard this pronouncement from God. They wept, we may presume, sincerely. They sacrificed to the Lord on that occasion at *Bochim*. The sacrifices would be those prescribed by the Law for sin offerings.
- B. Judges 2:6-10: Israel's Faithfulness During Joshua's Tenure.
1. Verse 6: "And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land."
 - a. This passage repeats, with some important additions, the report given in Joshua about that great man's passing. After the land had been partitioned among the Israelites, Joshua dismissed the people to take up residence in their appointed places.
 - b. To this point, the nation had been operating as a unit, being together for the lengthy time of the conquest. Now they were separate, and set up their private endeavors. Whereas they had been under the more direct control of their appointed leaders, now they were under only general supervision. This gave them more opportunity to make wrong choices.
 2. Verse 7: "And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel."
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- a. It is a tribute to the greatness of Joshua and the elders that the people were faithful to God during the days of their office. Joshua, along with those elders of the tribes during his tenure as leader, was committed to serving God. He had led the nation during a very demanding time, when utmost trust in God was essential if they were to conquer a violent and powerful enemy.
 - b. The people of Joshua's time had witnessed many awesome and mighty miracles. The list included the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, the fall of Jericho's walls, and the great hailstorm which slew thousands of the enemy (Josh. 10).
3. Verses 8-9: "And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash."
- a. Repeating the information given in Joshua 24:29-30, the author gives a report of Joshua's death at the age of one hundred and ten years.
 - b. His burial site was on his inheritance in the land, at Timnathheres, on the north side of the hill Gaash.
4. Verse 10: "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel."
- a. Joshua's generation passed from earthly scenes, and another generation took their place. This has been going on since the beginning of time. Death is one of the most significant parts of earthly life. God's viewpoint is being described in the verse. He watches as one generation gradually fades into history and the next generation, imperceptible to human eye, takes its place.
 - b. This new generation had advantages their parents did not have, but they were lacking in the greatest strengths of their predecessors. The land was handed to them as a gift by the preceding generation; they did not have to go through the rigors of the original conquest. But their parents knew the Lord from their personal knowledge of his work and involvement in his work, and they had seen many wondrous works he did in their behalf.
 - c. The failures of Joshua's generation include their unwillingness to conquer the land entirely and their inability to teach their offspring the word of God properly. In a society which is steeped in unbelief and worldliness, it is virtually impossible to rear young people who are untainted. No parent is omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient.

C. Judges 2:11-23: Israel Turns to Idolatry and is Punished.

1. Verses 11-13: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."
 - a. The history of Israel can be studied fully under the headings of rebellion, punishment, restoration, and prosperity. The story of the human family is one of apostasy, degradation, and revival. Cf. Jeremiah 2:11-13: "Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."
 - b. *Baalim* is the plural form of *Baal*. Many nations served an idol with this name, with his image being depicted in various ways by different people. Baal's female counterpart was called Ashtaroth (a plural word). Worship of these idols often included killing a baby and placing its body in the foundation of a new house; sacrifice of new-born babies; licentiousness. See Halley, pp.166f.
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- c. The foolishness of idolatry is easily perceived by considering what it is. The worshipper engages in various religious exercises which are deemed to placate the supposed god, who was constructed by man from material elements. The *god* depends on human hands for its form, and has no being, no power, no volition, no ability to do or speak. "They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. 44:9-20).
2. Verses 14-15: "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed."
- a. Using expressions that are not exaggerated, the inspired author reports that God allowed Israel to fall prey to their enemies.
- 1) Providentially, God was able to prevent the enemy from molesting their families while the men went to the tabernacle to worship three times a year: "Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year" (Ex. 34:23-24). Conversely, he could withdraw his protective hand to permit the enemy to gain the upper hand.
 - 2) Because God has blessed us richly in the past sometimes gives us the notion that he is obligated to protect and bless us, even when we rebel against him. One with this point of view is certain to wake up to a harsh reality!
 - 3) This passage appears to be a general preview of the material to follow. Here we are given a
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sweeping sketch of the ensuing detailed report.

- b. A man or a nation is cursed indeed when God withdraws his providence! A man or a nation is blessed indeed when God extends his providence. The best security a nation or an individual can have in this life is to have God's approval. The security of Israel was never obtained by a strong army, riches, culture, or worldly knowledge.
 - 1) Psalm 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."
 - 2) Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
 - 3) Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."
 - 4) Psalm 1: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."
3. Verses 16-19: "Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. and yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way."
 - a. Continuing the preview of the book, our author reports that God raised up judges who delivered the Israelites from the oppression under which their enemies placed them. These judges, as will be seen, were warriors or generals, as well as political leaders.
 - b. The other nations had kings who served as a central authority. God so-designed Israel's constitution that there was no central political figure. As long as the people followed God's law, they did not have significant troubles, and a king was unnecessary. Later, when they demanded a king, they would learn that there were more problems with a king than without one!
 - c. When Israel rebelled, as the generation following Joshua's illustrated, God sent or permitted the enemy to prevail over them. After a period of suffering from the ravages of an unholy master, Israel would call on God for deliverance; he would hear their pleas, and sent judges to give them relief. Notice that God did not directly remove the bondage; he sent leaders who would be able to organize and guide Israel in throwing off the yoke.
 - d. God derived no pleasure from bringing punishment upon his people: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:31-32). A godly father is sad when he must punish his child (Heb. 12:1-11).

- e. How painful it must be to God to see humanity fall into the same pitfalls into which uncounted preceding generations have fallen! How frustrating it must be to his tender heart to bless his people, only to see them turn away in rebellion!
4. Verses 20-23: "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua."
- a. Here is God's attitude toward Israel's negligence in driving out the foe. If they had maintained the strong desire to remove these Canaanite idolaters, and had retained their hearty faithfulness to do God's will, he would have assisted them to evict the inhabitants.
 - b. On their own strength, Israel was unable to root out some of the stronger people, for example the Jebusites of Jerusalem. However, when they had God as their ally and strength, they never failed in any venture!
 - c. Perhaps Joshua did all he could do to thoroughly cleanse Canaan of the ungodly people who dwelled there. It may have been that he had grown too old to prosecute the conquest to the full end of those pagans, or maybe the people were too weary of warfare. Whatever the case, God was highly displeased!
 - d. If Israel had sought to fulfill their duty in this regards, God would have assisted them in eradicating all the Canaanites quickly, thus removing the primary causes of their own rebellion: the influence of the unholy idolaters around them. The problem of Israel's unwillingness to take the land entirely was evident even before the death of Joshua, although at that time they were free from the idolatrous practices which abounded in later generations.
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JUDGES 3

A. Judges 3:1-6: The Nations Left in Canaan Were Intended to Test Israel.

1. Verses 1-2: "Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even* as many of *Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof."
 - a. God is amazing. He was able to use Israel's omission as a means of testing and instructing them. Many times during the Old Testament days, the devil devised schemes by which to destroy Israel. If he could ruin Israel, directly or otherwise, he would have brought God's great plan to nought.
 - 1) These plots included complex plans involving strong nations to directly destroy them all, as in the case noted in the book of Esther.
 - 2) There were devious devices by which he sought to bring God's disfavor upon them so that he would destroy them, as in the case of Numbers 25.
 - 3) The present case was one which aimed for Israel to be so-influenced by the Canaanites over a period of time that they would lose their distinctiveness as descendants of Abraham, and be totally weaned away from the Law of God.
 - b. The generation that had fought so ably and long in conquering Palestine was skilled in waging war. Many of the oncoming generation knew little about it.
 - 1) God did not intend to fight their battles with supernatural works, except in very special situations, so it was necessary that Israel learn to fight. Miracles were special actions intended for unique purposes, and were to last only for a limited period of time.
 - 2) Supernatural activity was present at the beginning of each of the three periods of Bible history: Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian Ages. When each of these systems was launched, miracles were withdrawn.
 2. Verses 3-4: "*Namely*, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses."
 - a. The remainder of the inhabitants of the land were permitted to exist for the added purpose of putting Israel to the test, to determine their willingness to follow the will of God. There is no test of faith unless there is a trial or temptation.
 - b. These nations had been powerful. The Sidonians were part of the Phoenician sea power, whose travels and exploits are widely respected. They established colonies at Carthage and elsewhere.
 - c. Each of these nations had corrupted themselves through idolatry, decadent living, and covetousness. Each nation had a hand in corrupting Israel.
 3. Verses 5-6: "And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods."
 - a. Other nations are identified, and the specific sin mentioned is that of intermarriage. It was God's intention and command that Israel refrain from intermarrying with the pagans. They ignored the command and suffered the penalty.
 - b. The grave danger of this practice should have been obvious to Israel. Marriage is the closest human relationship. The husband is influenced by the wife, and the wife is influenced by the husband. The
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righteous have no common ground with the unrighteous. Paul's point in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 does not directly address marriage, but the concept of the passage is good counsel for a believer contemplating marriage to an unbeliever.

- c. The dealings of the Israelite parents with the parents of the pagans their children married led to a breakdown of the faith of the Israelite parents. They broke God's ordinance against intermarriage with the pagans, and before long, they were worshipping idols. One offense naturally leads to another.

B. Judges 3:7-11: The Story of Othniel.

1. Verse 7: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves."
 - a. Idolatry was often practiced in a grove, a thicket usually located on a hilltop. The things done there were hidden from the view of others. Sinners seek to cloak their iniquity.
 - b. The ASV translates *groves* as *Asheroth*. Nevertheless, the places of idol worship were usually in groves where the sinful activities could be masked from public view.
2. Verse 8: "Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years."
 - a. Because of the disobedience noted in the preceding verse, God brought punishment upon his people in the form of oppression at the hand of the king of Mesopotamia.
 - b. Chushanrishathaim obviously entered the land and subjected Israel to do his bidding. No direct statement is made in the text to indicate an invasion, but how else would this foreign king be able to impose his will on Israel? They served him, probably in paying tribute, for eight harsh years.
 - c. Mesopotamia means "the country between the two rivers" (the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers).
3. Verse 9: "And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother."
 - a. The pattern is set for the next many years in Israel's history. They enjoyed a period of ease and prosperity which ended with rebellion; God punished the rebellion by permitting some foreign power to conquer them; they cried out to God for help, which God answered by raising up a judge to effect their deliverance.
 - b. In the present case, God prepared Othniel to rise to the occasion. Othniel was the nephew of Caleb, the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz.
4. Verses 10-11: "And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died."
 - a. God empowered Othniel to deliver Israel by sending upon him the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit upon him meant that he had miraculous powers which were used in gaining Israel's freedom from Chushanrishathaim. Similar statements are used in regards to Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29), and Samson (13:25; 14:6,19).
 - b. In some fashion, the Spirit enabled Othniel to defeat the Mesopotamians in battle, either by supplying him with superior strategy or power (or both).
 - c. Following this great victory, which is reported in only one verse, Israel enjoyed peace and prosperity for a period of forty years, under the leadership of Othniel.

C. Judges 3:12-30: The Story of Ehud.

1. Verses 12-14: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD
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strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years."

- a. After forty years of ease and freedom, Israel once more turned away from God. We are not told in what particular they were disobedient. One generation went astray; the next continued the rebellion and suffered the penalty.
 - b. The punishment was applied by the hands of Eglon, the king of Moab, who was able to conquer and control Israel for eighteen years. The Moabites joined forces with their kinsmen the Ammonites, and Amalek; the combined force of these three countries was able to subjugate the Israelites. The "city of palm trees" was near Jericho.
 - c. The Moabites were distant cousins of the Israelites; they descended from Moab, the son of Lot by one of his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38). The Ammonites descended from Lot by his other daughter.
2. Verses 15-18: "But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon *was* a very fat man. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present."
- a. When Israel cried out to God for help, he sent Ehud to deliver them. Ehud was from the tribe of Benjamin, and was lefthanded. This characteristic must have been quite unique back then since this particular trait is singled out as an identifying feature. In Judges 20:16, we read about seven hundred lefthanded sling-wielders from Benjamin. This seems to be a special trait of the Benjamites, and leads one to wonder whether Benjamin himself might have been lefthanded. Some scholars allege that the Hebrew term may mean that Ehud was ambidextrous and had an injury to his right hand.
 - b. The Israelites conspired with Ehud for him to take a present to Eglon, with the intention for him to assassinate the king when he presented the gift to him.
 - c. In preparation for the mission, Ehud made a dagger which had two edges and was a cubit in length. A cubit is computed to be equal to about eighteen inches. He concealed this formidable weapon under this clothing, upon his right thigh. Evidently, he was known to be lefthanded. The Moabites would not suspect to find a knife on the opposite side of this lefthanded man, for ordinarily it would be carried on the side nearer the hand most often used. Perhaps people in that ancient day were not as suspicious and cynical as many are today.
 - d. Approaching Eglon in company with the men who bore the present, he prepared to deliver the gift. The men who carried the gift were sent away, enabling them to make good their escape before the assassination occurred. We are told that Eglon was a very fat man, hence a dagger eighteen inches long was needed.
3. Verses 19-22: "But he himself turned again from the quarries that *were* by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him. And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly: And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out."
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- a. The quarries referred to may have been a place where engraved stones were obtained (perhaps for idols or boundary markers). Ehud turned back to the king at this point.
 - b. Apparently he had started back home, or perhaps had only taken a few steps, when he approached Eglon again, claiming he had a secret message to deliver. Everyone was sent away so that Ehud could give the message.
 - c. As he neared the king, Ehud stated that he had a message from God. The king rose from his seat to receive the message; Ehud put forth his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and stabbed Eglon in the belly. The man must have been very fat indeed, for the haft went into his abdomen; Ehud could not withdraw it. Where the KJV has "and the dirt came out," the ASV has "and it came out behind." Whatever the exact rendering of this expression, the king had been dealt a mortal wound.
4. Verses 23-25: "Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour *were* locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber. And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened *them*: and, behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth."
- a. Ehud left the summer parlour, closed and locked the doors, and made good his escape. Eglon's servants were afraid to enter the king's chambers, thinking he was asleep.
 - b. The servants waited until they were embarrassed to delay any longer. They unlocked the door, and found their lord dead on the floor.
5. Verses 26-29: "And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath. And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them. And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man."
- a. Meanwhile, Ehud escaped to Seirath. He sounded a trumpet to summon Israel to battle. A group of fighting men went down to the ford of Jordan toward Moab, and closed off the border.
 - b. It appears that the Moabites who were garrisoned in Israel were cut off from support, and these were all slain in the fighting that followed. Ten thousand strong fighting men of Moab were slain.
6. Verse 30: "So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years."
- a. Having lost their king and a prominent part of their army, the Moabites gave up their control in Israel. In a brilliant maneuver, Ehud had done what no one else had been able to do.
 - b. For the next eighty years, Israel lived in ease and freedom. One would think that they had learned their lesson, but as the next passage shows, another generation rebelled against God, and punishment once again came upon them.

D. Judges 3:31: The Story of Shamgar.

1. Verse 31: "And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel."
 2. In twenty-six English words, the entire story of Shamgar's deliverance is reported. This time, God used the Philistines as the means of his punishment of Israel. We are not told how long their control over Israel was, or whether they had merely taken a portion of the land. This incursion may have overlapped part of the eighty years of peace under Ehud.
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3. The deliverance Shamgar effected apparently was accomplished single-handed; no other men are mentioned. Using an ox goad, Shamgar was able to slay six hundred Philistine men. An ox goad was an unusual weapon; it was a pole of perhaps six-to-eight feet in length, with a knife on one end and a spike on the other (Coffman, p.45). Such a stick in skilled hands is a powerful weapon.
 4. The implication is that on one occasion he killed these six hundred men, but the number might simply refer to the total number of those he slew.
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JUDGES 4

A. Judges 4:1-3: The Canaanites Subdue Israel.

1. Verse 1: "And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead."
 - a. Following the death of Ehud, Israel went into apostasy again. We are not told the nature of the rebellion, but to rebel against God in one particular is as bad as doing so in another. Eighty years is more than enough time for an entire generation of a prominent society to apostatize. In America, we are witnesses of such an event, and the time factor has been less than thirty years!
 - b. Ehud led Israel for about eighty years during which time the nation enjoyed peace and prosperity.
2. Verse 2: "And 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."
 - a. King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned from Hazor, was able to subdue Israel. The Jabin of this chapter is a different man from the Jabin of Joshua 11. *Jabin* may have been the name of a dynasty or a common name for their kings.
 - b. In Joshua 11:11, the city of Hazor was captured and burned. Obviously, the city had been rebuilt. Jabin had probably gathered a number of the Canaanite peoples and built up a sufficient armed force to attack and subdue Israel. The man in charge of the army was Sisera.
3. Verse 3: "And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel."
 - a. The most significant force in his army were nine hundred iron chariots. This was a formidable military weapon, comparable to a tank force in modern armies.
 - b. For twenty years, Jabin was able to keep Israel under his control, mightily oppressing them.

B. Judges 4:4-10: Deborah the Prophetess.

1. Verses 4-5: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment."
 - a. There was in Israel at that time, a prophetess named Deborah who judged Israel. She exercised her office as judge under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel.
 - b. The Israelites came to her at that place to have their civil grievances addressed by this wise woman. Her authority as judge included civil and military matters.
 - c. That she was also a prophetess shows that she was divinely guided. We are not told how long she had been a judge and a prophet to this point in the story. Apparently, she judged Israel for a total of forty years (5:31).
 2. Verse 6-7: "And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand."
 - a. Deborah sent for Barak, who was to mount a military campaign against the Canaanite army. The Lord had given her the plan which called for Barak to lead a force of ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun to the Kishon River. This river is usually only a dry wadi except in the rainy season, when it becomes a genuine river. From Judges 5:4,21 we learn that God's part in the operation probably included a sudden rainstorm which enabled Israel to gain the victory.
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- b. Barak was to position his army near the river, and God would cause Sisera to send his chariots and soldiers after him. In some manner unexpressed in this text, God would deliver Sisera's forces into Barak's hands.
 3. Verses 8-9: "And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh."
 - a. Barak respected Deborah so much that he desired that she accompany him on this mission. Evidently, he perceived her great influence, and knew that she was a spokesman for God. If something untoward came up, it would be handy to have the prophetess at hand.
 - b. Deborah agreed to accompany Barak, and told him that the battle would not redound to his own glory, but that God would deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman. This prophecy pointed to Jael.
 4. Verse 10: "And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him."
 - a. The ten thousand warriors from Zebulun and Naphtali were assembled, and made their journey under Barak's command to Kedesh; Deborah was in the company.
 - b. Kedesh was situated on the west side of Jordan, near Mount Tabor. Jamison says this Kedesh was different from the Kedesh in Issachar.
- C. Judges 4:11-16: The Battle Begins.
1. Verse 11: "Now Heber the Kenite, *which was* of the children of Hobab the father in law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which *is* by Kedesh."
 - a. Heber is introduced to the story, and identified as a member of the family of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. He was of the Kenite people. These were allied with Israel, but were not Israelites.
 - b. Heber was no longer living among the Kenites, having taken up residence in the plain of Zaanaim, which is near to Kedesh. As will appear later, Sisera came to Heber's tent as he fled from the battlefield.
 2. Verses 12-14: "And they showed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this *is* the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him."
 - a. Barak had stationed his troops on Mount Tabor as directed. As was anticipated, the report of his presence was soon made known to Sisera, who assembled his nine hundred chariots and foot soldiers.
 - b. Barak descended Mount Tabor toward the river, drawing Sisera's army into battle.
 3. Verses 15-16: "And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; *and* there was not a man left."
 - a. In some manner not described by the text, God *discomfited* Sisera, and brought about the destruction of his army. "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength" (Judg. 5:21). This passage seems to show that God caused the River Kishon to rise with a sudden storm, with the mud nullifying the advantage of Jabin's chariot force.
 - 1) Judges 5:4: "LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchest out of the field of Edom,
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the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water."

- 2) Judges 5:21: "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength."
- b. "However, there was a very heavy untimely rain that made a roaring river out of the Kishon and flooded the plains at the foot of mount Tabor (5:4,19-21). Simultaneously, Barak with his ten thousand men rushed down the steep slopes of Tabor and cut to pieces Sisera's entire force. The chariots of iron were not merely useless, bogged down in the mud; but the charioteers, trapped in their mired vehicles, were an easy prey to Barak's men" (Coffman, p.57).
- c. "God himself routs the enemy's army, v. 15. Barak, in obedience to Deborah's orders, went down into the valley, though there upon the plain the iron chariots would have so much the more advantage against him, quitting his fastnesses upon the mountain in dependence upon the divine power; for in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains; in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people, Jer 3:23. And he was not deceived in his confidence: The Lord discomfited Sisera. It was not so much the bold and surprising alarm which Barak gave their camp that dispirited and dispersed them, but God's terror seized their spirits and put them into an unaccountable confusion. The stars, it seems, fought against them, Judg 5:20. Josephus says that a violent storm of hail which beat in their faces gave them this rout, disabled them, and drove them back; so that they became a very easy prey to the army of Israel, and Deborah's words were made good: 'The Lord has delivered them into thy hand; it is now in thy power to do what thou wilt with them.'" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

D. Judges 4:17-24: Israel is Victorious.

1. Verse 17: "Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet 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."
 - a. During the Canaanite occupation, Heber had made peace with Jabin. He was no traitor to Israel, but accommodated himself to the present circumstance of Canaanite domination. For twenty years now, Jabin had been master over the land (verse 3).
 - b. Seeing the futility of further resistance, Jabin fled the battleground on foot, expecting to find refuge in the tent of Heber.
2. Verses 18-19: "And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him."
 - a. Heber was not at home, but his wife Jael was. She met Sisera, and invited him into the tent. No doubt exhausted from the stresses of battle, and thirsty, he readily accepted Jael's apparent hospitality.
 - b. Drinking from a bottle of milk, he lay down to rest. Jael covered him with a mantle.
3. Verses 20-21: "Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died."
 - a. Sisera was aware of the possibility that the Israelite soldiers operating in the area might search the tent; he asked Jael to stand watch at the doorway. He asked her to deny his presence if anyone came.
 - b. While Sisera was asleep, Jael took a nail (a tent pin) and drove it through his head with a hammer. The

- pin was certainly sharp, and the blow that sent it through his temples must have been a powerful one. The manner of his death was horrible, but it was doubtless instantaneous.
- c. Before we feel sorrow for Sisera, we ought to contemplate the cruelties he had dealt to the Israelites. King Jabin used this man as his instrument of oppression. The oppression is described in verse three as being extremely harsh.
4. Verse 22: "And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her *tent*, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail *was* in his temples."
 - a. Barak neared Heber's tent in pursuit of Sisera. Jael came out and invited him to come to see the man he was seeking. We may be sure that Barak was quite impressed and happily surprised to find his enemy dead, pinned to the ground with a tent stake through his temples!
 - b. What should Jael have done with Sisera? He was a deadly enemy to Israel, and Israel and the Kenites were close friends. If he escaped, he might raise another army and continue the oppression. She was not strong enough to fight him in hand-to-hand combat; apparently, there was no one around to assist her. She did what she thought to be the best action.
 5. Verses 23-24: "So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan."
 - a. There were many men and at least two women involved in the great victory that day. There were many acts of individual bravery exhibited during the course of the battle. However, God is rightly adjudged to be the source of the success.
 - b. In the fighting, the children of Israel were able to destroy Jabin and his forces, and regain their freedom. These verses suggest that the military operation continued against the Canaanites until Jabin was destroyed. The next chapter shows that other tribes of Israel were involved in the fighting, instead of only the two which are named in the present chapter.
 - c. There is no other mention in the Bible of any further trouble with the Canaanite population. There were many wars and problems with the Philistines and others, but those Canaanites were subdued.
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JUDGES 5

A. Judges 5:1-11: Deborah's Song Begins.

1. Verses 1-2: "Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves."
 - a. Deborah is the inspired author of the victory song, as is shown by verse seven. She was accompanied by Barak in singing it.
 - b. The song was one of praise to God for his having brought deliverance to Israel from the Canaanites. The people of Israel willingly participated in the fighting, ignoring the danger to their lives.
 2. Verse 3: "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel."
 - a. She called on the kings and princes of the earth to take note, while she sang the praises of the Lord, the God of Israel. To him she gave the credit for the deliverance, for without his help, they would have been unable to fight against the iron chariots of Jabin.
 - b. The circumstances of the victory were sufficient to convince an open-minded investigator that God had taken part in the battle. When Israel was faithful to God, he blessed her. This process should have formed a convincing picture to the pagans around Israel that the God of Israel truly is the living God.
 3. Verses 4-5: "LORD, 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. The mountains melted from before the LORD, *even* that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel."
 - a. Psalm 68:7-9: "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah: The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary." Cf. Habakkuk 3:3-16.
 - b. The Psalmist and Deborah speak about God having led Israel from the wilderness of Seir and out of the land of Edom into Canaan, to take possession of the land promised to them. "Seir and the field of Edom represent the mountain range and the plain, extending along the south from the Dead Sea the Elanitic Gulf. 'Thou wentest out' indicated the particular form in which Jehovah appeared on this occasion for the deliverance of Israel—viz., in a violent tempest which as may be gathered from this description, blew from the south or south-west" (JFB, p.83).
 - c. From verse four and verse twenty-one it is indicated that there must have been a sudden, violent rain storm, which caused the Kishon River (which is a dry wadi most of the time) to flood, wreaking havoc on the Canaanite forces.
 4. Verses 6-7: "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways. *The inhabitants of the villages* ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."
 - a. The same dangerous conditions existed at the time of Jael as were present during the days of Shamgar. The main highways were deserted, due to banditry or danger from the Canaanites; those who traveled used back roads for safety.
 - b. The villages were deserted of inhabitants. Perhaps they had to scatter across the countryside to avoid being persecuted by their oppressive overlords.
 - c. Such was the condition of Israel prior to Deborah's rise to prominence before the Lord. With his help, she was able to deliver his people. She describes herself as a *mother* to Israel. Her rule as judge was
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one which sought the best good of the Israelites. Her administration was one of benevolence and justice; she was not covetous to made money at the expense of her fellow-citizens.

5. Verses 8-9: "They chose new gods; then *was* war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel? My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people."
 - a. The cause of Israel's deplorable condition was traceable directly to the new gods they had accepted. When they turned back from serving the Living God, and accepted idolatry, God withdrew his protective hand, allowing them to fall victim to the ungodly Canaanites.
 - b. The Israelites were subdued by the powerful pagans. They kept their weapons hidden from view, so the Canaanites would not further oppress them. The statement in the text does not mean there were no spears or shields in the land, for when Barak went out to engage the invaders, he and his men were armed. The weapons named were few.
 - c. Deborah spoke with glowing thanks in behalf of the leaders of the nation, for they were willing to expose themselves to danger so that their nation might be delivered.
6. Verses 10-11: "Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the *way*. *They that are delivered* from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, *even* the righteous acts *toward the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates."
 - a. These white donkeys were rare and expensive, available only to the wealthy or prominent. These prominent men were instructed to report the news, evidently that of Israel's great victory. Apparently, she speaks of three different kinds of people: those who are rich and ride wherever they go; those who are prominent in the cities (the local judges), who sit in places of honor among the people; and those who have to walk to their destinations. All of these are to speak of the things God has done for his people.
 - b. The translation of verse eleven is difficult, hence the scholars differ in the interpretation. The KJV gives a clear picture of the situation after the victory. Before the battle, it was dangerous for those who drew water to go to the wells; the Canaanites represented a constant danger. But now that the enemy has been defeated, the women could safely draw water.
 - c. The good things that God had done in Israel's behalf could be openly reported and discussed, even in the most public places, for the enemy was no longer present to oppress them. Those who had abandoned their villages on account of the enemy could now return home.

B. Judges 5:12-22: Deborah Sings of the Victory Over the Canaanites.

1. Verse 12: "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."
 - a. The revelation given called on Deborah to awake and sing, and for Barak to arise and lead his captivity captive. Deborah was the acknowledged leader in Israel, and Barak was the commander of the Israelite army.
 - b. Deborah was to sing and Barak was to lead away the prisoners taken in the battle. Barak is to maintain control of the military situation, and not allow the Canaanites to regain their strength, or other enemies to conquer Israel. With Deborah keeping Israel in step with God's will, and with Barak protecting the nation, all will be well with them.
 2. Verses 13-14: "Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty. Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against
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Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer."

- a. The ASV uses the word "remnant" in place of "him that remaineth" in the KJV. The Bible frequently uses the word remnant as a synonym for "the faithful few." Fighters came from Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, and Machir.
 - b. Enough valiant warriors answered Barak's call to arms that they were able to mount a successful attack (with the Lord's help). The enemy had a greater force, but Israel's smaller number was sufficient for God to bring complete victory.
 - c. Out of Ephraim came those whose "root is in Amalek" (ASV). As Amalek was a long-time enemy of God's people, so it appears there were some in Ephraim who were inclined to rebel against God's will; nevertheless, these men of Ephraim responded to Barak's call to arms. Later, the tribe of Ephraim rebelled against God, and became so dominant in the apostasy that the northern kingdom was called Ephraim (cf. Hosea 4:17).
 - d. Little Benjamin sent as many as possible; from Machir came men who could lead; and Zebulun sent men who could take charge of the muster rolls.
3. Verses 15-18: "And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field."
- a. Issachar sent princes to aid in the campaign. These men from Issachar were as Barak (leaders). "And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As was Issachar, so was Barak; Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet. By the watercourses of Reuben there were great resolves of heart" (5:15, ASV).
 - 1) Those from Issachar entered into the valley where the battle was joined.
 - 2) However, the people of Reuben remained by their watercourses, apparently being unable to reach the decision to come to the aid of the nation. Reuben, the son of Jacob and father of the tribe of Reuben, was described by his father as being as unstable as water (Gen. 49:3f). His descendants partook of Reuben's weakness.
 - 3) "Why satest thou among the sheepfolds, To hear the pipings for the flocks? At the watercourses of Reuben there were great searchings of heart" (5:16, ASV). Deborah asks in the song, "Why did you remain among your flocks, to listen to their bleatings?"
 - b. Deborah extends the rebuke to include the people who settled in the land of Gilead (Gad and Manasseh); they remained at home when they were needed in the battle. The people of Dan did not leave their ships, and those of Asher stayed in their breaches ("creeks", ASV). These tribes thought more of their business pursuits than over the welfare of the nation.
 - c. However, Zebulun and Naphtali, to whom the call to arms was first made (4:10), were willing to risk their lives for the nation. Judah and Simeon are not mentioned at all in the narrative; perhaps they were busy in striving against the Philistines.
4. Verses 19-22: "The kings came *and* fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of
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their mighty ones."

- a. Jabin was evidently reinforced by other Canaanite kings. The battle was joined by the opposing forces in Megiddo near the River Kishon. In the rout that followed the initial engagement, Israel pursued the enemy for many miles as the Canaanites fled from the disaster God brought upon them.
- b. The Israelites were not fighting for booty, but for their national survival. They had a greater incentive to engage the enemy than mere material goods.
- c. Verse twenty-one states plainly that the River Kishon swept the enemy away, giving Israel the distinct advantage. Taken with verse four, God caused an untimely storm to fill the dry riverbed, creating havoc with the Canaanites. As noted earlier, this was a wet weather river. Jabin would know when the river was running and would not have committed his chariot force in such a location during the rainy season. The rain came when the stars were not in their usual position for the rainy season. Obviously, God had caused a sudden heavy rain to fill the river, which aided Israel's cause immeasurably.
- d. The horses in Jabin's army were stampeded by the sudden rush of water and the attack of the Israelites. In that ancient time, horses were not shod; the mad rush over rocky terrain would split the horses' hoofs.

C. Judges 5:23-31: Meroz is Cursed and Jael is Praised.

1. Verse 23: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty."
 - a. Meroz was "a village on the confines of Issachar and Naphtali, which lay in the course of the fugitives; but the inhabitants declined to aid in their destruction. The ground of this anathema was, that the whole body of Israelites, holding the tenure of their lands on condition of military service, were bound when called upon to appear on the field as the national militia in defence or furtherance of the public interests" (JFB, p.86).
 - b. The angel of the Lord was the source of this curse, not Deborah. When the citizens of Meroz ignored their God-given responsibilities, they properly incurred this curse.
 - c. There are countless thousands of members of the Lord's church today who will do nothing in the deadly fight in which we are engaged with the forces of atheism, unbelief, modernism, Catholicism, denominationalism, false religions, immorality, and sin. These indifferent members are likewise under the curse of the Almighty.
 - d. While our once great country is the throes of spiritual death, the great majority is indifferent to its plight. For a time, the evils in the country may not touch an individual, but sooner or later, everyone will feel the effects of iniquity.
 - e. One and a half million babies are aborted each year in our land, but many are unconcerned because they do not see the death dealers in operation; the vile procedures are conducted behind closed doors. But the penalties for such a horrible crime against God and humanity will some day be fully felt by us all. The evils of the Nazis were done against the unfortunate members of their society; the German people tried to ignore it, but the full brunt of those evils was visited upon the entire nation.
 - f. Our nation has allowed its young people of the past thirty or forty years to grow up without proper instruction in morality and discipline. It is only a matter of time before the good influences of earlier generations will be completely overwhelmed by the spreading evils of the immoral and selfish ones of more recent generations. To this scribe, who makes no pretenses to the prophetic office, it appears that a national tragedy of unprecedented degree is ahead of America, unless there is a great
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- improvement in morality and godliness on the part of individuals and the nation.
2. Verses 24-27: "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, *and* she gave *him* milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead."
 - a. A tribute of deserving praise is given to Jael. When the defeated Canaanite general, Sisera, came to her tent, seeking water and rest, she gave him milk and butter.
 - b. But she did not compromise her faithfulness to the Israelite state. When Sisera fell asleep, she took the nail and hammer, and smote the enemy. She smote his head. "She put her hand to the tent-pin, And her right hand to the workmen's hammer; And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote through his head; Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples" (ASV).
 - c. Sisera had reached Jael's tent in a state of utter exhaustion; he fell to the floor, perhaps on a sleeping mat, and was soon fast asleep. Using poetic language, Deborah describes his demise.
 3. Verses 28-30: "The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, Have they not sped? have they *not* divided the prey; to every man a damsel *or* two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, *meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil?"
 - a. "This portion of Deborah's song is beautiful beyond description, exhibiting an imaginative picture of Sisera's mother looking through the windows of Sisera's residence and growing apprehensive at the delay in his return from the battle" (Coffman, p.81).
 - b. Verses twenty-nine and thirty contain the rationalization that Sisera's mother and her attendants offered to explain his delay in returning home. Of course, this description is part of Deborah's song, and represents the worry of Sisera's mother over his plight. They reasoned that he was delayed because it takes time to divide the spoils captured in battle. No doubt his mother and other loved ones at home were deeply affected by his death. This is one of the penalties meted out when God's will is opposed. For this cause, we ought to feel a measure of pity for those who oppose us today, for we know the end result of their opposition to the truth; they do not comprehend it.
 - c. Notice the nonchalant attitude that his mother is depicted to have regarding the damsels given to the victors. This gives an accurate picture of the conduct of ancient warriors. The outcome of battle back then had drastic effects on the wives and families of the defeated army. Mercy was seldom shown.
 4. Verse 31: "So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years."
 - a. The purpose of this song was not to entertain or to gloat over a fallen foe. It was intended to impress the Israelites with the truth that God's enemies will eventually receive the penalty for their opposition to the Almighty. All who are enemies of God will perish.
 - b. On the other hand, Deborah speaks of those who love God as being like the sun when it rises in the morning in all its glory and power.
 - c. So complete was the victory, that the land of Israel was at peace for forty years. That time could have been extended indefinitely if Israel had remained faithful to God's Word.
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JUDGES 6

A. Judges 6:1-10: Israel Rebelled Again, and Was Delivered into the Hands of the Midianites.

1. Verse 1: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years."
 - a. The forty years of peace and freedom which Deborah had provided for Israel finally came to an end when they decided to rebel against God's law. We are not told the exact nature of the evil they did, but it certainly included idolatry (see verse ten). Some wise man has observed that a nation that does not learn from the mistakes of their history, is bound to repeat those mistakes.
 - b. This was the next generation following the one which had thrown off the yoke of the Canaanites. One of man's greatest faults is his ability to take his blessings for granted, as though he had provided them for himself. When Israel prospered and enjoyed a period of peace, they fell victim to this temptation. When men are prosperous, God becomes an unwanted intrusion.
 - c. The Midianites were relatives of Israel, having descended from Midian, one of the sons of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4). Moses had married a woman of Midian and lived among them for forty years (Ex. 2:15-22). Israel's rebellion forced God to punish them, for their own good and for the good of his great purpose (cf. Gen. 12:1-3).
 2. Verses 2-4 "And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And *so* it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them. And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass."
 - a. The Midianites had been decimated by the Israelites during the days of the wilderness (Num. 31), but obviously they had rebuilt their strength.
 - b. Israel was invaded and oppressed by the people of Midian. The tyranny was so severe that many of them had to leave their homes and find shelter in the mountains. They made dens and lived in caves; they established strongholds to defend themselves.
 - c. The Midianites, accompanied by the Amalekites and other tribes of similar sentiment, entered Canaan at harvest times and destroyed the crops, leaving little food for man and beast.
 3. Verses 5-6: "For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; *for* both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD."
 - a. The means of the destruction of the crops is indicated here: the invaders brought their cattle and camels; the animals ate what they wanted, and likely they loaded the camels with more of the harvest when they left. The number of the invaders and their animals is described as being like a great swarm of grasshoppers (locusts, ASV).
 - b. Israel was so greatly impoverished that their only recourse was to cry to God for help. In doing this, they showed penitence and faith. The pain, worry, and want could have been avoided if they had remained loyal to God.
 4. Verses 7-10: "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;
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And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice."

- a. Being desirous of their well-being, when Israel repented and asked for the Lord's help, he was quick to respond. His answer was to send a prophet among them, a prophet whose name we are not told.
- b. Since a prophet is an inspired spokesman for God, this man had a message for Israel. He reminded them first that it was God who brought them from Egypt, where they had served as slaves for centuries. It was God who had delivered them from their Egyptian bondage, and had driven the idolatrous people of Canaan from the land, and allowed Israel to take possession of that prosperous country.
- c. Through the prophet, God reminded them of his word of caution concerning the gods of the Amorites, that they were not to fear them. Those idols had no being, so there was nothing they could do for them or against them. However, his point here is that they were not to reverence or serve those gods. Israel had returned to serving idols, and incurred God's displeasure. He plainly states that they had disobeyed his word. This is the reason for their present dilemma. No mention is made here of the solution, which God was currently developing.

B. Judges 6:11-18: Gideon is Chosen to Deliver Israel.

1. Verses 11-12: "And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour."
 - a. A particular oak tree is indicated by the Hebrew (i.e., the oak). This tree was well-known for some unstated reason. The location was Ophrah, where Gideon lived with his father's family. We learn later that Gideon was of the tribe of Manasseh (verse fifteen).
 - b. The angel of the Lord appeared, sitting under the oak tree. The KJV says *an angel*, and the ASV says *the angel* of the Lord. This person is referred to by Gideon and the inspired author as *The Lord*, indicating that he was more than an angel.
 - c. Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress, intending to hide the grain from the Midianites. The angel saluted Gideon with a greeting which extolled his greatness. This tribute was deserved on account of his willingness to thresh wheat despite the presence of the invaders; if they had found him doing this, probably he would have been slain. The tribute was deserved also because of the accomplishments which he was later to achieve.
 2. Verses 13-14: "And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, do in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"
 - a. Gideon was very much interested in the welfare of his nation. He immediately recognized the greatness of the angel, and addressing him as *Lord*, he inquired about the cause of Israel's present hardships.
 - b. He may have known why the curse had befallen them; he asked why God had not provided a miraculous deliverance as he had done in the past. The nation had already been driven to their knees before God, seeking his aid, but God had not yet taken any steps to aid them. Gideon wanted to know why he had not done so. Although Israel had turned to God for help, there were still some (perhaps
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the majority) who still served idols.

- c. The Lord replied with an unusual answer: "Go in thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites." In other words, the angel said that God was taking action to effect Israel's deliverance by sending Gideon. He stated, "I have given you this mission." This implied that Gideon would have all the authority and power sufficient to accomplish the job.
3. Verses 15-16: "And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."
 - a. Gideon recognized his inability to deliver Israel, so he asked the Lord how he could do it. He stated his humility by saying that his family was poor in Manasseh, and that he was the least member of his father's house. He thought the wrong man had been selected for the work. It seems that he was trying to excuse himself from the mission, as Moses had tried to do (Ex. 3-4).
 - b. Gideon was the ideal person for the job. God did not want some conceited or pompous individual; he wanted someone who was humble and willing to follow the Lord's plan. Cf. Isaiah 66:2: "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."
 - c. The Lord promised to be with him, and that Gideon would be able to smite the host of the Midianites as though they were only one man. The size, strength, and the viciousness of the enemy is of no importance to the Lord; his power and wisdom can easily overwhelm the mighty or the weak.
4. Verses 17-18: "And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set *it* before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again."
 - a. Gideon, wanting to be certain regarding this call, and having no intention of putting the Lord to the test, asked that some sign be given for authentication. This was what Moses did when he received his call to deliver Israel from Egypt (Ex. 3-4). The apostle Thomas wanted evidence that Jesus had truly risen from the dead (John 20:24-29).
 - b. Without some strong convincing evidence, Gideon might later begin to think that he had only dreamed or imagined this experience. Also, he would need some means of convincing the Israelites to accept him as God's agent.
 - c. Gideon asked that the Lord remain there until he could go and prepare an offering for him. The Messenger agreed to wait and receive the offering, which indicates that he was Deity, for a mere angel was not authorized to accept worship; Gideon recognized him as such or else he would not have presented an offering.

C. Judges 6:19-24: Gideon is Convinced.

1. Verses 19-20: "And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay *them* upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so."
 - a. Gideon went to make ready the offering; it consisted of a kid and unleavened cakes. He used an ephah of flour in preparing the cakes. The flesh was transported in a basket and the broth from the flesh was put in a pot. There was a considerable amount of time required for these items to be prepared, but as soon as possible, Gideon returned and presented the offering to the Lord.
 - b. The Messenger instructed Gideon to place the flesh and the unleavened cakes on a certain rock, and
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that he should pour the broth over those items. Gideon complied.

- c. This rock became an altar, separate and apart from the one authorized altar. Offerings were to be given only by the priests, and only at the Tabernacle. Why was Gideon allowed to make this offering? The Lord told him to do so. Also, since the pagans were in control of the land, it is unlikely that Israel was able to conduct their usual worship order. A dire emergency existed, calling for drastic actions; but only the Lord could authorize these actions.
2. Verses 21-20: "Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face."
 - a. Demonstrating his power and authority, the Messenger put forth the end of the staff he carried and touched the flesh and the cakes. Fire sprang from the rock and consumed the flesh and cakes. Having furnished the requested sign, the Angel disappeared. An angel appeared to Manoah in Judges 13:15-20, and following the offering presented there, the angel entered the fire and disappeared.
 - b. The effect of this miracle on Gideon was immediate and profound! He now understood without any doubt that he had been in the presence of a manifestation of Deity. He exclaimed, "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face."
 - c. In the miraculous age of Bible times, when some man witnessed a manifestation of the Godhead, he was without exception profoundly impressed.
 - 1) Daniel 5:5-6: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."
 - 2) Matthew 28:2-4: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men."
 3. Verses 23-24: "And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."
 - a. The Lord spoke to him again, giving him a word of encouragement. Gideon thought that having seen such a sight meant his death, so the Lord gave him a pronouncement of peace, told him not to fear, and that his life was not forfeit on account of the miraculous scene that had unfolded before him.
 - b. Gideon erected an altar at the place, and called it *Jehovah-shalom* [Jehovah Peace]. At the time of the writing of the book of Judges the altar still stood.

D. Judges 6:25-32: Gideon Destroys an Idol's Altar.

1. Verses 25-26: "And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that *is* by it: And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down."
 - a. It seems that the events of the preceding verses took place at night. Jamison thought that it was in the
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daytime that those things occurred and the following night was the time of the present activities. "During the same night" seems more likely to connect the two experiences to the same period of darkness. Threshing wheat could have been done more safely at night when the Midianites might not be aware of his work.

- b. The Lord gave him further instructions which would set in motion the operation which would result in the removal of the Midianite oppression. We are not told the manner the Lord chose by which to communicate this message.
 - c. The first step in the operation was to bring Gideon to the attention of the people as one who was bold and courageous, one who was willing to take action. He was directed to take a seven-year-old bullock and pull down the altar of Baal and to cut down the grove surrounding the altar. The Hebrew, according to some scholars, indicates that two bullocks were to be taken.
 - d. Further, he was to build an altar to God upon the top of "this rock" (evidently the rock where Gideon had made the offering described earlier). Gideon's father and his neighbors had been using this idol's altar; this was the logical first step, for Gideon would be perceived as a hypocrite if he tried to throw off the Midianite yoke and idolatry without cleansing the practices of his family and neighbors. Upon this new altar, Gideon was to offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood from the grove.
2. Verse 27: "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and *so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night."
- a. Knowing the violent nature of his neighbors and his father's household, Gideon took ten servants with him to aid in the work and to provide a measure of security.
 - b. He followed the Lord's instructions, and the job was done before the next morning. The second bullock he offered for the burnt sacrifice (verse twenty-eight).
3. Verses 28-29: "And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing."
- a. The grove and the altar were used by the men of the city of Ophrah, but were situated it seems on land belonging to Gideon's father. The citizens were outraged the next morning when they discovered what had happened.
 - b. Inquiries were made and the perpetrator was identified as Gideon. Perhaps the servants gave the information. It might also be that Gideon was known for having an anti-idolatry stance.
4. Verse 30: "Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it."
- a. The men came to Joash, Gideon's father, and demanded that he bring his son forth so they could put him to death. They wanted their freedom from the Midianites, but they were adamant in holding on to their idols. They were willing to put their deliverer to death for having destroyed the cause of their troubles.
 - b. Those who are in religious error are often very zealous for their false ways. Zeal and devotion do not prove rightness before God. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2).
5. Verses 31-32: "And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet* morning: if he *be* a god, let him plead for
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himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar."

- a. Joash was not a man without wisdom and natural affection. He raised an important point: "If Baal is a god, why is it that a mere man has cast down his altar; let Baal plead for himself. If he could not defend himself, how can you expect him to do anything for you? Rather than killing Gideon, let those be slain who would defend Baal, a god who cannot even defend himself."
- b. Beginning that day, Gideon earned another name: Jerubbaal. This word is interpreted to mean, "He with whom Baal contends" (see Jamison, p.90). Baal was as silent as a tomb, for he had no being, no life, and no power.
- c. The foolishness of idolatry is beyond reason. Anyone who will but stop to think can see that there is no life or power in an image made of some material substance: "They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. 44:9-20).

E. Judges 6:33-40: Gideon Calls for Israel and Confirms His Call.

1. Verse 33: "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel."
 - a. The Lord had timed his operation well. The time for wheat harvest had arrived, for Gideon had been gathering and storing it. It was time for the Midianites and their henchmen to return to the land to rob Israel of their harvests again. The invaders gathered their forces for this latest incursion, setting up camp in the valley of Jezreel.
 - b. For seven years, Israel had not been able to defend themselves from these ravagers, who expected no great opposition during this venture.
 - c. "The great plain of Jezreel, or Esdraelon (which is the Greek form of the name), through which the

Kishon flows, is eight hours in length from east to west, and five hours (twelve miles) in breadth from north to south. It is described as 'a very extensive and fertile plain shut in between the mountain ranges of Samaria and Mount Carmel on the south, and of Galilee on the north,' and extending from the Mediterranean at the Gulf of Caipha, or Haipha, to the valley of the Jordan. The access to it from the fords of Jordan in the neighbourhood of Bethshan (or Beishan, called by the Greeks Scythopolis) made it the natural place for invasion by the wild tribes east of Jordan, as it is to this day. Particular parts of this great plain are called 'the valley, of Megiddo' and 'the plain of Samaria.' For a full account of the plain of Esdraelon see Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' ch. 9. Went over, i.e. crossed the Jordan. It appears from vers. 3-5 that these invasions were repeated at certain seasons. When they had plundered all they could get, and eaten up all the produce of the land, they would go back for a while to their own country east of Jordan, and then return again. So they did now, but they met with a different reception this time." [from The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

2. Verses 34-35: "But the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them."
 - a. Gideon's inspired guidance is stated here, showing that the plans he executed were not of his own design. The Holy Spirit guided him to blow a trumpet to assemble the house of Abiezer, to which his father's family belonged.
 - b. Messengers were also dispatched to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to call those tribes to arms. The tribes responded to his call. The message sent to the neighboring tribes doubtless included information about Gideon's experiences with the angel, and what he had done to the altar of Baal. They would soon learn that this was an extraordinary man, who would become a major figure in Israelite history.
 3. Verses 36-38: "And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; *and* if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water."
 - a. Possibly during the time the tribes were being assembled, Gideon entered into this exchange with God. He was already empowered by the Holy Spirit to know God's plan, so the request for these additional signs were not for his personal benefit only. The Israelites would need to believe God had called him before they would be willing to risk their lives by following him against a superior foe.
 - b. The first sign was to place some wool on the floor, and have the wool to be saturated with dew the next morning, but the earth around the wool to be dry, then Gideon could know that God would deliver Israel by his hand.
 - c. The next morning, the wool was so saturated with dew that he wrung out a bowlful of water from it. The ground must have been dry, for that was one of the stipulations.
 4. Verses 39-40: "And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."
 - a. Gideon ventured another test by which his mission could be verified. He would put the fleece out again, but this time the test would be reversed: if the fleece was dry and the ground wet with dew the
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next morning, he could know that God was with him.

- b. He knew that he was walking on shaky ground by making these requests of God, but it was important that he be certain as to his call. It would give him full confidence in the outcome of the operation, and help the people who were to follow him to likewise be sure.
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JUDGES 7

A. Judges 7:1-8: Three Hundred Assistants.

1. Verse 1: "Then Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley."
 - a. The invaders were situated in the valley of Jezreel (6:33); Gideon assembled his host nearby, to the south of the enemy camp. Israel's camp was beside the well of Harod, which may be the same as the fountain in Jezreel. "Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel" (1 Sam. 29:1).
 - b. "The host of the Midianites were on the northern side of the valley, seemingly deeper down in the descent towards the Jordan, near a little eminence" (JFB, p.91).
 - c. "THE HILL OF MOREH. At its foot Midian and Amalek encamped before Gideon's attack (Judg 6:33; 7:1). On the northern side of the valley of Jezreel, and of the height where Gideon's 300 were; *jebel ed Duhy*, 'little Hermon,' answers to Moreh. Two or three miles intervene (enough for Midian's and Amalek's hosts) between Moreh and *ain Jalood*, the spring of 'Harod' at the foot of Gideon's hill, *jebel Fukua* (Gilboa)." [from Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1998 by Biblesoft].
 - d. "The well of Harod, i.e. of trembling, so called, no doubt, from the incident recorded in ver. 3, that every one who was afraid (Hebrew, hated) departed from Mount Gilead. The well of Harod is not mentioned elsewhere, though two of David's mighty men are called Harodites (2 Sam 23:25); but it is thought to be identical with "the fountain which is in Jezreel" (1 Sam 29:1), on the slope of Mount Gilboa, and now called *Ain Jahlood*, the spring of Goliath. On the north side, etc. Gideon and his *Abi-ezrites* were naturally on the south side of the plain, on the hill, apparently Mount Gilboa, which there shuts in the plain. The Midianite host was encamped to the north of him (so it is in the Hebrew), in the valley, i.e. the plain of Jezreel (Judg 6:33, note)." [from The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 2-3: "And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."
 - a. Thirty-two thousand Israelites had responded to Gideon's call to arms. Without God's assistance, however, they would be unable to overcome the great army the enemy had amassed, a number that is placed at 135,000 (Judg. 8:10). In order for Israel to recognize and appreciate God's power, the Israelite army must be reduced in size so as to make it obvious to all that they had not defeated the invaders by their own power.
 - b. The superior strategy God developed would be the key to the success of the coming battle, but only a small number of courageous men would be needed. The first means of paring down their number was to give all of those who were "fearful and afraid" the option of going home. In every army, there are some of these, but in the present case, twenty-two thousand soldiers went home, leaving Gideon with ten thousand men.
 - c. Critics of the Bible allege a mistake in the text, which places the unfolding scene at Jezreel, but here

Mount Gilead, which is on the east side of Jordan, is named. The solution, as Keil suggested, is that Gilead was the name of a range of mountains on the west side of Jordan.

3. Verse 4: "And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go."
 - a. The Midianites had enjoyed an unbroken string of success, and with their vastly larger host, they perceived victory again. The Israelites were over-awed by the enemy, which accounts for two-thirds of the assembled forces being fearful and going home. Only a strong motivation will keep the average man on the scene to face a battle.
 - b. To the worldly-minded Israelites, God's plan already looked foolhardy, but the Lord said there were still too many. He directed Gideon to bring the ten thousand soldiers down to the water for another test to determine their courage and willingness to fight.
 4. Verses 5-6: "So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water."
 - a. "The stream, which makes it possible for the occupiers of the hill to hold also the well against an enemy on the plain, forbids them to be careless in their use of the water; for they drink in the face of that enemy, and the reeds and shrubs which mark its course afford ample cover for hostile ambushes. Those Israelites, therefore, who bowed themselves down on their knees, drinking headlong, did not appreciate their position or the foe; whereas those who merely crouched, lapping up the water with one hand, while they held their weapons in the other and kept their faces to the enemy, were aware of their danger, and had their hearts ready against all surprise. The test in fact was a test of attitude, which, after all, both in physical and moral warfare, has proved of greater value than strength or skill —attitude towards the foe and appreciation of his presence" (ALC, 1981, p.107; original quote from George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p.397).
 - b. It seems impossible for a man to obtain enough water efficiently if he only used his tongue to put water into his mouth, in the exact way of a dog. The method used by the majority of the ten thousand men seems to be prostrating themselves on the ground, sucking the water directly into their mouths. This might be more efficient, but would render them defenseless if the enemy should attack.
 - c. The others, as described in the quote, merely knelt at the water's edge, and with their eye on the enemy, lapped the water with their hand. According to Clarke (pp.132f), the Hebrew word translated "lap" (*yalop*) "is precisely the sound which a dog makes when he is drinking." The word may have been used by the Hebrews more to denote the sound than to describe the exact action.
 - d. Three hundred men lapped up the water with their hands, keeping a watch on the enemy as they did so. Nine thousand and seven hundred did otherwise.
 - e. God used this means to select the best qualified men for his plan. These were brave men who were aware of the danger posed by the enemy. God has often used water as a means of testing and separating.
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CASE	SITUATION	OBJECT	PASSAGE
NOAH	FLOOD	PURE WORLD	GEN. 6; 1 PET. 3:20-21
ISRAEL	RED SEA	FREEDOM	EX. 14
ISRAEL	JORDAN RIVER	CANAAN	JOSH. 3
NAAMAN	JORDAN RIVER	CLEANSING	2 KINGS 5
BLIND MAN	POOL OF SILOAM	SIGHT	JOHN 9
ALIEN SINNER	BAPTISM	PARDON	ACTS 2:38; 10:47-47

5. Verses 7-8: "And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley."
- Knowing ahead of time how the operation would succeed, God affirmed that by the three hundred men who were selected, he would deliver Israel from the Midianites. All the others were released to go home.
 - The three hundred men took food with them, and each had a trumpet. This little band of three hundred was to wage victorious battle with the one hundred and thirty-five thousand-man army in the valley below.

B. Judges 7:9-14: Gideon Spies on the Midianite Camp.

- Verses 9-11: "And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host."
 - The Lord instructed Gideon to go down into the enemy camp that night to see what he could learn. Of course, the Lord had taken some action to produce the desired message for Gideon to hear.
 - Gideon had the option of going by himself or taking his servant with him. He chose to take his servant. They went down to the edge of the camp.
- Verse 12: "And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers or multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude."
 - The enemy was so numerous that they are likened to a great swarm of grasshoppers (locusts), and their camels are described as "without number" and like the sands on the seashore.
 - This description is given to present an accurate picture of the great odds Israel faced. But when the success came, they would know clearly that God's power won the victory.
- Verses 13-14: "And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This *is* nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for*

into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host."

- a. This excursion into the enemy camp took place during the night. The man telling the dream may have just awakened from having the dream.
- b. It is clear that God had given him the dream. Its interpretation was obvious to his companion. The man in his dream had seen a barley cake rumbling into the Midianite army, striking a tent, and causing the tent to fall down flat. The companion said that the dream could only mean that God would deliver their army into the hands of Gideon.
- c. In our dreams, we commonly see items with exaggerated sizes. This may have been the case with the barley cake. Whatever its size, it upset the tent. "Barley was usually the food of the poor, and of beasts; but most probably, from the wide-spread destruction of the crops by the invaders, multitudes must have been reduced to poor and scanty fare" (JFB, p.92).
- d. God's hand was obviously involved in these matters. The man had the dream; the man's friend knew the meaning of the dream; the man discussed the dream at the time where Gideon could overhear it; Gideon was at the right place at the right time to hear the dream; the experience gave him the courage and impetus to carry through the plan.

C. Judges 7:15-25: The Battle Plan is Executed to Perfection.

1. Verse 15: "And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."
 - a. When he heard this exchange, Gideon was convinced that God would be with him. He worshipped and returned to his own camp.
 - b. His worship, under the circumstances, was probably a silent prayer of gratitude. Doubtless he was greatly impressed by this example of divine providence. Faithful Christians today will on occasion see God's providential hand in their lives in some clear-cut manifestation.
 2. Verses 16-18: "And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword* of the LORD, and of Gideon."
 - a. Having called his men together, Gideon divided them into three companies; each company no doubt consisted of one hundred men (cf. verse 19).
 - b. Each man was equipped with a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a lamp. The plan was for the trumpets to be sounded at the same time, and the lights exposed. The operation took place during the hours of darkness. Waking from sleep to the sound of the trumpets, and seeing the three hundred lights, the Midianites would be thrown into confusion.
 - c. Gideon would initiate these actions; his men were to follow his example. When the operation began, the three hundred men would be arranged around the Midianite camp, surrounding it.
 3. Verses 19-20: "So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon."
 - a. Gideon with his one hundred men came to the outside of the Midianite camp at the beginning of the
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- newly-set middle watch. "In the early period of their history the Israelites divided the night into three watches (Ps. 63:6; 90:4), the first watch extending till midnight (Lam. 2:19), the middle watch from midnight till cock-crowing, and the morning till sunrise (Exod. 14:24)" (JFB, p.92).
- b. They each broke the pitcher, exposing the light; they held their lamps in the left hand and the trumpets in the right. The trumpets were sounded, and a shout raised: "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon."
 - c. The beginning of the middle watch was a good time to launch an attack. These new watchmen might not have grown accustomed to the sights and sounds, and may have been still sleepy. A night attack has not been a frequent practice due to the inability to see the enemy.
4. Verses 21-23: "And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites."
- a. The Midianite camp was suddenly thrown into confusion. The great majority of them were asleep when the trumpets sounded; they woke up to the blaring sounds of the three hundred trumpets and the glaring lights of three hundred lamps.
 - b. The enemy soldiers could not see to identify the Israelites, and presuming them to be in their midst, they began to strike out at the nearest presence. By this splendid strategy, God was able to turn the Midianites against themselves.
 - c. Gideon and his men stood in their places around the camp, letting the enemy afflict each other until the mad flight began. The great army took to its heels, fleeing to Bethshittah, to the border of Abelmeholah, and Tabbath.
 - d. Word of the rout was quickly spread to the other Israelites. Men from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh gave chase. One who is fleeing for his life cannot fight, and there was no one to rally them to take a stand. When God took sides with Israel, the enemy's doom was sealed, regardless of their numbers and strength.
5. Verse 24: "And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan."
- a. The Midianite host still represented a formidable force if they should get reorganized. Gideon sent word to the men of mount Ephraim to enter the fray.
 - b. His instruction to them was that they should block the escape route at the Jordan crossing at Bethbarah, at the eastern end of the plain of Jezreel. The fleeing army was hemmed in on the north and south by mountains; Gideon was behind them; the men from Ephraim were set to stop them before they escaped from Israel.
6. Verse 25: " And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan."
- a. Two princes of Midian were captured, named Oreb ["Raven"] and Zeeb ["Wolf"]. Oreb was executed at a rock which later bore his name, and Zeeb was slain at a winepress which was named after him. These two men must have been widely known and feared.
 - b. In the meantime, Gideon had crossed over to the east side of Jordan. "And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them" (Judges 8:4).
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The heads of the two princes were brought to Gideon "on the other side Jordan."

JUDGES 8

A. Judges 8:1-3: Ephraim's Complaint.

1. Verse 1: "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply."
 - a. The men of Ephraim complained to Gideon because they were not invited to join the attack against the Midianites. They were miffed because they did not get a major share of the glory that came from the great triumph.
 - b. "By the overthrow of the national enemy the Ephraimites were benefited as largely as any of the other neighbouring tribes. But, piqued at not having been sharers in the glory of the victory, their leading men could not repress their wounded pride; and the occasion only served to bring out an old and deeply-seated feeling of jealous rivalry that subsisted between the tribes (Isa. 9:21)" (JFB, p.93).
 - c. Ephraim was a large and powerful tribe, and enjoyed the special benefit of having the Tabernacle set up at one of its cities (Shiloh). Their territory was situated in the mountains, giving them extra protection from invaders. The complaint they raised against Gideon grew out of vanity.
2. Verse 2: "And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is* not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?"
 - a. Gideon used good judgment in giving a soft answer to the men of Ephraim. He will praise them for capturing the two princes (Oreb and Zeeb), which he suggests was a more important feat than his defeat of the fleeing enemy. He exalts the tribe of Ephraim over his own tribe of Manasseh, stating that the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim was better than the prime crop of grapes in Manasseh. On the farm in the past, farmers would pick their cotton crops two or three times, and when little cotton was left on the stalks, the last picking was known as "scrapping" the field. Benevolent farmers would sometimes allow some poor neighbor or his own children to do the "scrapping," and sell what they picked for their own profit. In ancient Israel, farmers would allow the poor to take from their fields or vineyards what was left after the reapers had gone through. The Mosaic Law included this feature as one of its provisions for the poor.
 - 1) Leviticus 19:9-10: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather *every* grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I *am* the LORD your God."
 - 2) Leviticus 23:22: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God."
 - b. They had no cause for complaint. Gideon followed God's directions in mounting the attack against the enemy. The Lord did not have use for all of those who initially responded to Gideon's call to arms; all but three hundred men were sent home.
 - 1) After the enemy was routed by the stratagem God devised, a second call to arms was issued, including the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Naphtali, and all of Mount Ephraim (7:23-24). Ephraim's grievance evidently concerned the initial call, for they had a part in the *mopping-up* operation (7:23-25). They had captured two of the enemy commanders, whose heads they had brought to Gideon.
 - 2) If they had been present at the first muster, God would have used some means to pare down the

- number of men he would use; he had determined to win the victory over a vastly superior force in such a way that Israel would know that the outcome was not due to their own power.
- c. Gideon used excellent wisdom in responding to the criticism. His response reflected great principles recorded elsewhere:
 - 1) Proverbs 15:1: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
 - 2) Proverbs 25:15: "By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone."
 - 3) Romans 12:17-21: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
 - d. Gideon's response was a simple statement of fact which downplayed his part. His role in the operation was designed by the Lord; he merely followed directions. The men of Ephraim had sealed off the crossing of Jordan, slaying two of the enemy leaders. Gideon complimented them without flattery, and spoke humbly of his personal importance in the victory with becoming modesty. He was unconcerned about who got the credit for the success. His example is indicative of the kind of disposition Christians are to have.
 - 1) Matthew 20:26-28: "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
 - 2) Matthew 23:11-12: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."
 - 3) James 4:10: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."
 - 4) 1 Peter 5:5-6: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."
3. Verse 3: "God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that."
- a. A commander shares in the victory and defeat of his troops. Gideon, however, did not take credit for the triumph God gave Israel, and even said that he had not done as much as the men of Ephraim had done, since God had given Oreb and Zeeb into their hands.
 - b. To compliment without flattery is an excellent grace, one which will melt animosity and soothe wounded pride. Gideon's fine response defused a serious predicament.
 - c. A compliment that expresses an untruth or exaggeration is flattery.
 - 1) Proverbs 2:16: "To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words."
 - 2) Proverbs 20:19: "He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."
 - 3) Job 32:2-3: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me
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away."

- 4) Proverbs 26:28: "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."
- 5) 1 Thessalonians 2:5: "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness."

B. Judges 8:4-9: The Men of Succoth and Penuel Refuse to Give Gideon Food.

1. Verses 4-6: "And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?"
 - a. With his three hundred men, Gideon crossed over Jordan in pursuit of the fleeing enemy. He and his men were faint from the sleepless night and the running battle.
 - b. They came to Succoth, a city on the east side of Jordan, pertaining to the tribe of Gad (JFB, p.93). He asked for food from these fellow Israelites, with the expectation of receiving it. When Israel first came to Palestine's east side, Moses had led the people in conquering this territory, and gave it to Reuben, Manasseh, and Gad at their request.
 - c. Despite the obligation the people of Succoth had to aid Gideon, they were more fearful of the Midianites than they were of Gideon's little band of three hundred.
 - 1) They refused the request for food, believing that he could not take the Midianite leaders. If Zebah and Zalmunna had been captured, they would have given the food, but thinking that they would suffer retaliation from the Midianites if they aided God's people, they refused.
 - 2) They showed an absence of faith and blindness to what had happened. They should have been fully appraised of the flight of the Midianite host, and seeing Gideon's *posse*, they should have known that God's hand was involved in the operation; a mighty army does not flee from three hundred men. Since the leaders of Succoth numbered seventy-seven men (verse 14), the city had more people in it than Gideon had with him.
2. Verse 7: "And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers."
 - a. Without any ugliness of spirit intended, Gideon promised the men of Succoth a proper retribution for their unwillingness to aid him.
 - b. Expressing no doubt about the outcome of the continuing fight, Gideon stated that when God had given him the final victory over the Midianites, he would "tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers."
 - 1) This is a promise of capital punishment. Jamison describes the action as "a cruel torture, to which captives were often subjected in ancient times, by having thorns and briers placed on their naked bodies, and pressed down by sledges, or heavy implements of husbandry being dragged over them" (p.94).
 - 2) With what is said in verses sixteen and seventeen, these men were put to death. The offense was great, and the penalty must be equal to the guilt. The men of Penuel were slain, and we may be sure that the men of Succoth were also slain.
3. Verses 8-9: "And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel,

saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower."

- a. Proceeding on to Penuel, he requested food from these people, and was again refused. He received the same answer as those of Succoth had given him.
- b. He promised when he returned he would break down their tower. It seems they had taken refuge in this tower. His vow indicated his firm belief that God would bring victory over the remaining Midianites, and that he would be able to return to Penuel.

C. Judges 8:10-17: The Midianite Host is Destroyed.

1. Verse 10: "Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword."
 - a. The Midianites had stopped at Karkor, where they considered themselves to be safe. This was a city at the eastern edge of Gad's territory (JFB, p.94).
 - b. A hundred and twenty thousand soldiers from the enemy army had already been slain; only fifteen thousand remained. They had been able to put distance between themselves and the pursuing Israelites, and had taken refuge. They probably thought that Gideon had given up the chase when he stopped at Succoth for food.
 2. Verses 11-12: "And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host."
 - a. Gideon led his forces, which may have included the other Israelites by now, through the land occupied by nomads, people who lived in tents. They came to the place where the Midianites had taken shelter, thinking they were safe.
 - b. Launching a sudden attack, possibly from the east, he caught the enemy unprepared, and routed them once again. The two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, fled, but Gideon was able to capture them. He destroyed their army.
 3. Verses 13-15: "And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*, And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are weary*?"
 - a. Gideon, returning to Succoth, caught a young man from the city and asked for descriptions of the leaders of the city. He described seventy-seven men. This large number indicates the size of Succoth to be more than a mere village.
 - b. He came to Succoth, and rounding up the leaders, pointed out the two kings to them. They had upbraided Gideon when he asked for food, thinking that he would never be able to subdue the Midianites.
 4. Verses 16-17: "And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taugth the men of Succoth. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city."
 - a. Gideon did to these men what he had promised to do. The method of punishment was cruel and deadly. The victims were placed on the ground and covered with thorns and briers; a heavy sledge [sled] was pulled over them, pushing the thorns into the flesh; perhaps the sledges were heavy enough to crush them, with the thorns and briers added to increase the pain or insure death. The layer of thorns and briers may have been placed underneath the victims.
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- b. He destroyed the tower and slew the men [the leaders] of Penuel. The tower was a watch-tower, such as was used for tending to flocks and herds, but much bigger and well-fortified.

D. Judges 8:18-21: Gideon Executes Zebah and Zalmunna.

1. Verse 18: "Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou *art*, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king."
 - a. Gideon inquired of the two kings he had captured about those people they had slain at Tabor (the mountain or perhaps a village nearby).
 - b. They replied they looked like Gideon, resembling sons of a king.
2. Verses 19-20: "And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: *as* the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth."
 - a. Apparently Gideon suspected that those men slain at Tabor might be relatives or friends. When the two kings described them as looking like him, he knew immediately that they were his brothers. The expression he used shows the closeness of Gideon with his brothers, *the sons of my mother*.
 - b. He told them that if they had not slain them, he would not slay them. Gideon instructed his oldest son Jether to execute the two kings, but he would not so much as draw his sword, because he was fearful and still young.
3. Verse 21: "Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is*, so *is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks."
 - a. When Jether refused to kill the kings, they called on Gideon to slay them, saying, "As the man is, so is his strength." They seem to be saying to Gideon, "You claim to be a man, prove it by doing the job yourself."
 - b. They might have considered it a dishonor for a youth to slay them; also, he might be able to do the job more quickly than the son, with less chance of unnecessary suffering on their part.
 - c. Gideon slew them, and took the ornaments that were on their camels' necks. It is likely that the kings had been permitted to ride to the place of their execution on their camels. "The heads, necks, bodies, and legs of camels, horses, and elephants, are highly ornamented in the eastern countries; and indeed this was common, from the remotest antiquity, in all countries" (Clarke, p.138).

E. Judges 8:22-28: Gideon's Reward.

1. Verses 22-23: "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you."
 - a. Those men who had been associated with Gideon in the Midianite operation were so impressed with this man that they invited him to rule over them, beginning a dynasty with his son and grandson following him. This was a plan to set him up as king.
 - b. Gideon showed his greatness. He understood God's system well enough to know that a king was not what he wanted for Israel. Any of them familiar with the Law of Moses, would remember what God had said regarding a king, thus, he declined the offer and affirmed that the Lord would rule over them. "When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me; Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy

brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deut. 17:14-20).

2. Verse 24: "And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites)."
 - a. Gideon made a request of the men of Israel, speaking to those who accompanied him in the fighting. He wanted each man to give him the golden earrings which they had taken from the men they slew in battle. Some of the ancient pagan kings had a practice of paying a bounty on every enemy soldier his men slew, and required them to bring the heads of their victims as proof.
 - b. The parenthetical statement reports that the Midianite army was made up of Ishmaelites, who obviously were accustomed to wearing golden earrings. *Midianites* and *Ishmaelites* are interchangeable terms. "Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt" (Gen. 37:27-28).
 3. Verses 25-26: "And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks."
 - a. The men of Israel gladly complied with the request. A garment was spread out, and each man cast the earrings he had taken upon the garment.
 - b. The weight of the gold amounted to one thousand and seven hundred shekels, which has been estimated to be about fifty [Keil] to seventy [Clarke] pounds of gold, a sizeable fortune.
 - c. In addition to the earrings, there were also ornaments (crescents), collars (pendants), purple garments, and chains which were around the camels' necks.
 4. Verse 27: "And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house."
 - a. "That no idolatrous use was in view, nor any divisive course from Shiloh contemplated, is manifest from v. 33. Gideon proposed with the gold he received to make an ephod for his use *only* as a civil magistrate or ruler, as David did (1 Chr. 15:27), and a magnificent pectoral or breastplate also. It would seem, from the history, that he was not blameable in making this ephod...but that it *afterwards* became an object to which religious ideas were attached..." (JFB, pp.95f).
 - b. "The ephod (Ex 28:4,6-30) was that part of the high priest's dress (1 Sam 14:3; 21:9) which covered the breast in front, and the upper part of the back behind, the two parts being clasped together by two large onyx stones, one on each shoulder, and kept together by the curious girdle, just above which was fastened the breastplate of judgment. In a modified form the 'linen ephod' was worn by all priests; but
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it was especially worn by the high priest when he inquired of God by Urim and Thummim (1 Sam 23:9; 30:7). Hence it was also connected with idolatrous worship, as we see by ch. 17:5, and Hos 3:4, being probably used for purposes of divination, as we know that idolatrous kings of Israel, instead of inquiring of the Lord, inquired of the false gods (2 Kings 1:2,3). What, then, was Gideon's purpose in making this costly ephod? We may infer from his proved piety that at all events his intention was to do honour to the Lord, who had given him the victory. Then, as he was now at the head of the State, though he had declined the regal office, and as it was the special prerogative of the head of the State to 'inquire of the Lord' (Num 27:21; 1 Sam 22:13; 23:2,4, etc.; 28:6, etc.), he may have thought it his right, as well as a matter of great importance to the people, that he should have the means ready at hand of inquiring of God. His relations with the great tribe of Ephraim may have made it inconvenient to go to Shiloh to consult the high priest there, and therefore he would have the ephod at his own city of Ophrah, just as Jephthah made Mizpeh his religious centre (ch. 11:11). Whether he sent for the high priest to come to Ophrah, or whether he made use of the ministry of some other priest, we have no means of deciding. The people, however, always prone to idolatry, made an idol of the ephod, and Gideon, either because it was a source of gain or of dignity to his house, or thinking it was a means of keeping the people from Baal-worship (ver. 33), seems to have connived at it. This seems to be the explanation best supported by the little we know of the circumstances of the case. A snare, i.e. as in Judg 2:3, that which leads a person to eventual destruction. See Ex 10:7, where Pharaoh's servants say of Moses, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? See also Ex 23:33; 34:12; Deut 7:16; 1 Sam 18:21, etc. Observe in this verse how the narrative runs on far beyond the present time, to return again at ver. 28 (see note to Judg 2:1-6; 7:25; 8:4)." [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

- c. However well-intentioned Gideon's plan was, the ephod became a snare to Israel who turned it into an object of worship. Verse 33 shows that it was after Gideon's death that the people set the ephod up as an idol. Israel exalted him to a position of reverence he did not deserve, one which led to their idolatrous attitude toward the ephod.
5. Verse 28: "Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon."
 - a. This verse summarizes the effect of Gideon's war against the Midianites. He subdued these enemies so that they were no longer a threat to Israel.
 - b. The land enjoyed a period of peace which lasted for forty years, indicating that Gideon served as judge for that period of time. We are not told his age.

F. Judges 8:29-35: The Death of Gideon.

1. Verses 29-31: "And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech."
 - a. Gideon was also known as *Jerubbaal* (6:32). Following the military operation, he lived in his own house at Ophrah, in the territory assigned to his tribe of Manasseh.
 - b. He had many wives, and from them came seventy sons. He also had a concubine who lived in Shechem, who bore him a son named Abimelech.
 2. Verse 32: "And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."
 - a. Gideon died at a ripe old age, and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash. So ended the earthly
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sojourn of one of the great men of Israelite history.

- b. He is mentioned in Inspiration's Hall of Fame, placed in company with other great men and women of the ancient past: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:32-40).
 3. Verses 33-35: "And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD 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, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel."
 - a. Immediately after the death of Gideon, Israel turned to idolatry again, including as an object of their worship the ephod Gideon had made. They quickly forgot God who had aided them so greatly.
 - b. They also failed to show kindness to the family of Gideon, forgetting the good things he had done for Israel. They failed to learn from the mistakes of the past, and doomed themselves to repeat those mistakes, and to suffer the consequences thereof.
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JUDGES 9

A. Judges 9:1-6: Abimelech Kills His Brothers.

1. Verses 1-2: "And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I *am* your bone and your flesh."
 - a. In Judges 8:29-31 we are told that Gideon had many wives who bore him seventy sons, and that his concubine who lived in Shechem bore him a son named Abimelech.
 - b. Abimelech had a lust for power. Going to his mother's brothers, he asked whether they would rather have him or Gideon's seventy other sons to reign over them. Abimelech reminded them that he was of their own flesh and bone. He asked them to speak to all the men of Shechem of his offer to be their king.
2. Verses 3-4: "And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He *is* our brother. And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him."
 - a. His mother's relatives did as he bade them, and secured their allegiance to Abimelech. Their decision was based on the proposition that he was related to them.
 - b. The men of Shechem took seventy pieces of silver from the house of Baalberith, which Abimelech used to hire seventy mercenaries to enforce his plan to establish himself as king in the area.
 - c. Baalberith is the name of a tower or fortress the remains of which have been identified by archaeologists (see Coffman, p.139). Its name derives from Baal, one of the principal idols of ancient times. Obviously these people were involved in idolatry.
 - d. Facts relating to the city of Shechem:
 - 1) This was the place where Abraham built his first altar in the land of promise (Gen. 12:6-7).
 - 2) Jacob disposed of his family's false gods under an oak at Shechem (Gen. 35:4).
 - 3) Jacob bought a parcel of ground near Shechem, where the body of Joseph was buried by Joshua when Israel entered Canaan (Gen. 33:18-20; Josh. 24:32).
 - 4) Joshua gave his farewell address to Israel from Shechem, doubtless in the nearby natural amphitheater located between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal
 - 5) Shechem is known as Sychar [*the town of the sepulchre*] in the New Testament (John 4).
3. Verse 5-6: "And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that *was* in Shechem."
 - a. With the sizeable group of henchmen, Abimelech went to his father's house at Ophrah, and slew all of Gideon's other sons, with the single exception of the youngest one. Jotham hid himself, and escaped being murdered.
 - b. These sixty-nine sons of Gideon were slain on the same rock, which was evidently used as a chopping-block. Such harsh treatment is not unknown in the Old Testament.
 - 1) The seventy sons of Ahab were slain: "And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they

took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him *them* to Jezreel" (2 Kings 10:7).

- 2) The royal seed of Judah: "And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal" (2 Kings 11:1).
- 3) The house of Jereboam: "And it came to pass, when he reigned, *that* he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite" (1 Kings 15:29).
- 4) The house of Zimri: "And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, *that* he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends. Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet" (1 Kings 16:11-12).
- c. The house of Millo is the same as the house of Baalberith (Coffman, p.139).
- d. The men of Shechem proclaimed Abimelech king by the plain (or oak) of the pillar at Shechem.

B. Judges 9:7-21: Jotham's Curse.

1. Verse 7: "And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of 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."
 - a. When Jotham learned of Abimelech being made king, he ascended Mt. Gerizim and addressed the men of Shechem. There is a projection on the side of the mountain from which one may be heard in the valley below.
 - b. His location would make it possible for him to speak to the culprits in this rebellious enterprise, and at the same time to enjoy a measure of safety. He would be able to see anyone who tried to come up after him, in time to escape.
 2. Verses 8-13: "The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"
 - a. Jotham relates a fable for the purpose of denouncing the foolish scheme of his half-brother to become king. A fable is different from a parable. A parable is a true-to-life story involving events which had happened or which could happen. A fable is a story that is beyond reality. Another fable is given in 2 Kings 14:9: "And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that *was* in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle." Coffman affirms that these are the only two fables in the Bible.
 - b. Jotham's fable tells the story of the trees agreeing among themselves to appoint a king to rule over them. They approached the olive tree with the request that he accept the rule. The olive tree declined, stating that he had a more important mission to fulfill. The olive tree furnishes edible fruit and oil. The oil had various uses, both religious and mundane.
 - c. The fig tree likewise declined the offer, on account of having a more worthy cause to serve: that of producing fruit of which men could eat.
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- d. The vine was next approached with the invitation to become king over the trees, but he also refused the proposition, on account of the good purposes he was already serving.
 3. Verses 14-15: "Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* 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."
 - a. The trees being frustrated (in the fable) in finding a king, finally were reduced to extending the throne to the bramble. The bramble was a thistle or brier, which serves no good purpose except as fuel.
 - b. "Bramble: Not our English trailing blackberries; but the *Paliurus rhamnus aculeatus*, a lowly stunted tree with drooping jagged branches, from which project sharp stiff thorns, affording no shade, but only scratching those who touched it; fit emblem of the self important, petty, but mischievous speaker (answering to Abimelech) in Jotham's parable (Judg 9:8-20), the oldest fable extant. The "bramble bush" (Luke 6:44) is probably the same as Christ's thorn (*Zizyphus spina Christi*) supposed to be the kind of which Christ's crown of thorns was platted; a shrub about six feet high, producing an acid fruit as large as the sloe; the prickles grow in pairs, the one straight, the other curved back. The nebk of the Arabs, common everywhere, easily procurable, and pliable for plating, the leaves a deep green like the ivy; so suited to be a mock crown in imitation of the garlands or crowns with which emperors and generals used to be crowned. [Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1998 by Biblesoft].
 - c. The bramble quickly agreed to the proposal, and demanded that the trees put their full trust in his shadow; if they were unwilling to give him full allegiance, then let fire come and burn down the great trees, the cedars of Lebanon.
 - d. Those trees which were worthy of being accorded the power of kingship all declined, owing to a greater calling they were already fulfilling. The worthless bramble accepted the offer, providing the trees (in the fable) with the kind of king they deserved. The point of the fable was painfully obvious to the men of Shechem.
 4. Verses 16-20: "Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; (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;) If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: 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."
 - a. Having spoken the fable, Jotham immediately declares the application he had in mind. He reminds them of the good things which Gideon (Jerubbaal) had done for Israel, including Shechem. Had they treated Gideon well by killing his sons?
 - b. Gideon had risked his life for them when he delivered Israel from the oppression of Midian. They had rewarded his descendants by killing them all (except Jotham), and exalted his son by a maid-servant to be king. If this was the way Gideon's memory ought to be treated, then rejoice in Abim-elech, and let him rejoice in you.
 - c. On the other hand, if this was an improper action on their part, in exalting the son of a concubine over the natural sons, then let fire proceed from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and the house
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of Millo; and let fire come forth from the men of Shechem and the house of Millo and consume Abimelech. This was the curse that Jotham pronounced upon them, which was fulfilled in about three years.

5. Verse 21: "And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother."
 - a. Having made his public statement denouncing the corrupt actions of Abimelech and Shechem, Jotham fled to a place called *Beer* ("well").
 - b. He knew that it was foolhardy to remain in the area, for as Abimelech had slain his brothers, so he would slay him. Indeed, if Abimelech's original plan had been fully successful, Jotham would now be as dead as his brothers.

C. Judges 9:22-33: God Takes Action Against Abimelech and Shechem.

1. Verses 22-24: "When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: That the cruelty *done* to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal 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 brethren."
 - a. After allowing Abimelech to hold his limited authority, God sent an evil spirit to divide him from his erstwhile subjects. He was not accepted as king over all Israel; he was not in good standing with the men of Shechem for long.
 - b. An evil spirit came upon King Saul later (I Sam. 16:14-15; 18:10). The expression (evil spirit) has been taken to mean a wicked disposition or an actual demon. The New Testament's use of the expression clearly refers to a demon.
 - c. Whichever the case here, the point is that God devised a plan by which Abimelech and his people were separated from each other. The events to be accomplished express the divine justice of God. "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal" (Judg. 9:56-57).
2. Verses 25-27: "And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech. And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes*, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech."
 - a. The men of Shechem, in their rebellion against their king, laid ambushes in the mountains. They were seeking to find and kill Abimelech, but in the meantime, they robbed the caravans that passed that way. Word of this mutiny came to Abimelech.
 - b. A certain man named Gaal appears on the scene. He and his brethren came to Shechem, and won the allegiance of the inhabitants. They gathered grapes, made wine, and entered the idol's temple at Shechem, where they ate, drank and cursed Abimelech.
3. Verses 28-29: "And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *is* not *he* the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him? And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out."
 - a. Gaal denigrates Abimelech, his father, and his agent. "Abimelech was regarded by him as contempt-

ible, not because he was the son of a maid-servant or of very low birth, nor because he was ambitious and cruel...but because he was a son of Jerubbaal, a son of the man who destroyed the altar of Baal at Shechem and restored the worship of Jehovah, for which the Shechemites themselves had endeavored to slay him (chap. 6:27ff)" (Keil, p.367).

- b. Zebul was Abimelech's governor over Shechem. Gaal is saying that there was no need for them to serve Abimelech or his governor. The greatness of the city of Shechem did not derive from either Abimelech or Zebul. Jacob had bought a parcel of land from Hamor, a well-known and powerful pagan of the past. Since Jacob had to purchase the land from Hamor, then Hamor was greater in property than Jacob. "We ought not to serve the offspring of Gideon." Gaal's aim in these statements is to turn the allegiance of the Shechemites from Abimelech to himself.
 - c. Gaal declares his desire that he might be the leader of Shechem, for then he would remove Abimelech. In the heat of his oration, he issues a challenge to Abimelech, that he should strengthen his army and face him in battle.
4. Verses 30-33: "And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee. Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that *is* with thee, and lie in wait in the field: And it shall be, *that* in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion."
- a. Zebul learned of the treasonous words of Gaal, and sent a report to Abimelech to appraise him of the development. In the message, he told of the appearance in Shechem of Gaal and his followers, and how they had fortified the city.
 - b. Zebul advised Abimelech to approach the city during the night, and set up an ambush in the field. When the sun rises the following morning, he was to bring his forces into view, inviting Gaal to come out to do battle.

D. Judges 9:34-45: Abimelech Puts Down a Revolt.

1. Verses 34-36: "And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies. And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him, from lying in wait. And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men."
 - a. Abimelech marched against the city of Shechem, dividing his army into four companies which were positioned about the city. When morning came, Gaal stood at the gate of the city. Realizing that his challenge would not go unnoticed by his enemy, he surveyed the approaches to Shechem. Abimelech and his army rose up from their places of concealment.
 - b. Seeing them, Gaal stated to Zebul that there were some people descending from the mountains. Zebul ridiculed him by saying that what he saw was only the shadow of the mountains, mistaking it for men. "Partly to give Abimelech time, and partly to conceal his own complicity in Abimelech's movements, Zebul affected not to see the men, and explained the appearance as being merely the shadows of the mountains cast before the rising sun." [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 37-38: "And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land,

and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim. Then said Zebul unto him, Where *is* now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who *is* Abimelech, that we should serve him? *is* not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them."

- a. Gaal insisted that he saw companies of men, one coming by the *middle of the land* (taking the main or high road?), and the other by the plain of Meonenim (a well-known landmark to the ancients, but which is not named elsewhere). Evidently he failed to see the other two companies.
 - b. Zebul could not resist the temptation to belittle Gaal. "Where is the mouth with which you scorned Abimelech? Go out and join him in battle!"
3. Verses 39-41: "And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown *and* wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem."
- a. Gaal engaged Abimelech in battle, and was decisively defeated. Many of Gaal's men were "overthrown and wounded."
 - b. Zebul thrust Gaal and his people from Shechem. It may be that when they tried to re-enter the city, Zebul sealed it against their entry. Abimelech dwelled at Arumah, but the fortunes of Gaal are not specified. If he escaped death and capture (as seems to be the case), he was forced to some other locality. He seems to be nothing more than the leader of a band of robbers.
4. Verses 42-45: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech. And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people *were* come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them. And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two *other* companies ran upon all *the people* that *were* in the fields, and slew them. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt."
- a. The next day, Abimelech received a report that the people of Shechem had exited the city to work in the field. He divided his forces into three companies, laid an ambush, and attacked them.
 - b. Abimelech led one company to the gates of the city, keeping the Shechemites from re-entering; the other two companies slew the people who went to the fields. Abimelech assaulted Shechem all that day; he captured it and slew the people. He beat down the city and sowed the fields with salt, showing his cruelty and hatred in this operation. Spreading salt on a field would ruin its ability to produce crops for some time.

E. Judges 9:46-57: Abimelech is Slain.

1. Verses 46-49: "And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith. And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that *were* with him; and Abimelech took an ax in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid *it* on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, *and* do as I *have done*. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women."
 - a. The specific statements of the story may not be given in strict chronological order; it appears that the previous verse tells what happened following the capture of the city. The men of Shechem entered into
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- a defensive position within the idol's temple.
- b. Abimelech determined he would burn them out. Taking an axe, he cut down a tree limb; he directed his men to follow his lead. Placing the boughs at the proper place, the house was set ablaze, killing about a thousand men and women.
2. Verses 50-52: "Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut *it* to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place."
 - a. Intending to wipe out all opposition, Abimelech led his men against the city of Thebez. He took the city, and began an assault against its tower, planning to burn the defenders as he had done at Shechem.
 - b. A certain woman cast down a piece of millstone, which struck and mortally wounded Abimelech. He ordered his servant to slay him with a sword, to prevent the report that he had been killed by a woman.
 3. Verses 56-57: "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal."
 - a. God's hand was behind the outcome of this tragic story: Abimelech was punished for his misdeeds; the people of Shechem likewise received a just payment for their crimes.
 - b. The curse of Jotham, the son of Gideon, was fulfilled. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).
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JUDGES 10

A. Judges 10:1-2: The Story of Tola.

1. Verse 10: "And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim."
 - a. Following the episode in which Abimelech played an important part, there arose another strong man to defend Israel. Nothing is said about any incursion by their enemies, so the statement may simply mean that he led the nation in maintaining a position of military strength. It may have been the case that idolatry was not as wide-spread as at other times.
 - b. Tola judged Israel from Shamir which was in mount Ephraim. "The town of *Shamir*, upon the mountains of Ephraim, where Tola judged Israel, and was afterwards buried, was a different place from the *Shamir* upon the mountains of Judah, as mentioned in Joshua 25:48, and its situation (probably in the territory of Issachar) is still unknown" (Keil, p.372).
2. Verse 2: "And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir."
 - a. Of his specific activities, we know nothing. Evidently, the time of his judgeship was characterized by peace with the pagan nations around them.
 - b. His rule as judge covered twenty-three years.

B. Judges 10:3-5: The Story of Jair.

1. Verse 3: "And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years."
 - a. The information concerning Jair is as limited as that of Tola. Jair is the same name as Jairus (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41). His service as judge covered twenty-two years.
 - b. His time seems to have been one of peace since no mention is made of trouble with the pagans. That it was also a time of prosperity is suggested by the facts that his sons rode on asses and were given thirty cities.
2. Verses 4-5: "And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havothjair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon."
 - a. He had thirty sons who rode on asses. These animals were used by people of position or wealth. Jair gave to each of his sons a city (village), which indicates this man's authority and wealth. These cities bore the title of *Havoth-jair*, which means the "Villages of Jair."
 - b. "Some have imagined a conflict between what is written here and the statement in Numbers 32:39-41, where another Jair, probably an ancestor of this one, named certain cities which he conquered Havoth-Jair; but many Jewish names were repeated generation after generation. Indeed, it is true today. In 1952, this writer met General Ulysses S. Grant in command of a large military unit in Japan; but he was not 'the' General Grant of the Civil war period, but a descendant" (Coffman, pp.158f).
 - c. The place of his burial has not been located for certain, but some scholars have identified it with Qamm, on the Jordan-Irbid road (Coffman, pp.159f).

C. Judges 10:6-14: Israel Rebels Again.

1. Verse 6: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, 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 children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him."
 - a. By this time, a new generation had come on the scene, comprised of people who had forgotten, or had never been properly taught, either the word of God or the lessons of the past.
 - b. This generation had turned away from God, and had taken up idolatry. They served Baalim, Ashtaroth,
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- and the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistines.
- c. This was a common occurrence in ancient Israel.
 - 1) 1 Kings 11:33: "Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father."
 - 2) 1 Samuel 5:2: "When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon."
 - d. America today has its own gods: Alcohol; Drugs; Sex; Fashion; Travel; Pleasure; Power; Wealth; Self; Pseudo-Religion. These constitute a rebellion greater in scope than that of Israel at the time of this passage.
2. Verses 7-8: "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead."
 - a. The Lord's wrath toward Israel on account of their wholesale rebellion led him to permit the Philistines and the Ammonites to conquer their nation.
 - b. Ammon was situated on the east side of Jordan; the Philistines occupied the area which lay in the southwestern portion of Canaan. Together, these pagans represented a formidable power with which Israel was unable to cope. For eighteen years, these enemies oppressed God's people
 3. Verse 9: "Moreover 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."
 - a. The Ammonites invaded Israel's territory, engaging the men of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. The tribes of Judah and Ephraim, being populous clans, represented the strength of Israel.
 - b. Despite the relative strength of Israel's fighting forces, they had incurred the wrath of God, and succumbed to the invaders, and were sorely distressed by them.
 4. Verses 10-12: "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. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I 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 ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand."
 - a. The Israelites once again came to see their errors, and confessed them to God. Their statement recognized the fact that they had committed two evils, forsaking God and serving idols.
 - 1) Jeremiah 2:13: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."
 - 2) When one turns from God, he will begin serving another *god*: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).
 - b. God reminded them of his having delivered Israel from the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites, Philistines, Zidonians, Amalekites, and the Maonites; these had all oppressed Israel, but God delivered them from their hands.
 - c. The Maonites are not named elsewhere in the Bible, however the LXX version renders the Hebrew term as "Midianites." That the Midianites are indicated appears from the absence of any other reference
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to them in this summary passage; it will be remembered that they were prominent in afflicting Israel.

5. Verses 13-14: "Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation."
 - a. In an apparent test of Israel's resolve, God declared that he had delivered them time and again, only to have them forsake him after the emergency was past, therefore he would help them no more.
 - b. He stated their problem succinctly: since you insist on serving idols, go to them for help, and let them deliver you! No man knows more fully the utter foolishness of idolatry than the one who has fashioned the image (cf. Isa. 44:9-20).

D. Judges 10:15-18: God is Touched by Israel's Misery.

1. Verse 15: "And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day."
 - a. Israel recognized the futility of asking Baal for help, so they sincerely appealed to the Lord for help. They showed their penitence by openly confessing their sins.
 - b. They placed themselves at the Lord's mercy, asking him to do with them as he saw fit; they were willing to suffer any sort of punishment if he would deliver them from the present oppression.
 2. Verse 16: "And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel."
 - a. They demonstrated their penitence more fully by putting away the strange gods which they had been serving, and turned back to the Lord.
 - b. God's heart was sorely grieved by the misery Israel was suffering. The text does not plainly state that he delivered them again, but the following report shows that he did so. God is touched with our afflictions, and is willing and able to help.
 - 1) Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light."
 - 2) John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
 - 3) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - 4) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 3. 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."
 - a. The Ammonites appeared on the scene again. They had vexed and oppressed Israel for eighteen years, and had come to bring upon them another round of trouble.
 - b. The Israelites assembled themselves to do battle with the invaders at Mizpeh. Mizpeh was located in Gilead.
 4. Verse 18: "And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, What man *is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."
 - a. The Israelites began to inquire among themselves to locate someone who would take the lead in the upcoming fight. "If everyone is in charge, no one is in charge."
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- b. The one who would take the responsibility would be made head over all the people of Gilead. "This means that he would be head over those tribes of Israel which dwelt east of the Jordan river. Gad, Reuben and half of Manasseh were those tribes" (Coffman, p.167).
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JUDGES 11

A. Judges 11:1-3: Jephthah the Outcast.

1. Verse 1: "Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he *was* the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah."
 - a. The name Gilead is applied to a territory on the east side of Jordan, but it was also the name of Jephthah's father. Lest we should think that the name is here used in reference to the territory of Gilead, his wife is mentioned in the next verse.
 - b. Jephthah is described as a mighty man of valor. He had already earned this distinction, for when trouble with the Ammonites came to a head, the elders of Gilead sought him out to lead them in the battle (10:18; 11:5-6).
 - c. He was the son of a harlot, which placed him as a misfit in society. Those who are conceived out of wedlock, and especially in a case such as Jephthah's, are often ill-treated, although they bear no guilt for their lineage.
2. Verse 2: "And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou *art* the son of a strange woman."
 - a. Evidently, Jephthah grew up in his father's house, but when the sons of Gilead's wife reached manhood, they cast out Jephthah. They would not permit him to share in Gilead's estate. Gilead must have been dead.
 - b. The reason for their action was the fact that he was the son of a *strange woman*. She is called a harlot in verse one. She may have been both a prostitute and a Canaanite.
3. Verse 3: "Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him."
 - a. Jephthah had no choice but to accept expulsion, for not only had he been rejected by his relatives, the elders of Gilead took part in forcing him into exile (vs. 7).
 - b. Certain *vain men* gathered around Jephthah. Jamison describes these men as "idle, daring, or desperate; probably the Arabs of the adjoining desert" (JFB, p.101). In leading these men in certain forays, Jephthah gained a reputation as a bold commander.
 - c. When David was forced to flee from Saul, he gathered men about him, and gained a reputation as a protector of the small villages in the outlying areas of the country (cf. 1 Sam. 23). Perhaps this was also true of Jephthah.
 - d. *Went out* is an expression which described conducting raids.

B. Judges 11:4-11: Jephthah is Called to Lead Israel Against the Ammonites.

1. Verses 4-5: "And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob."
 - a. When the Ammonites arrayed themselves against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to Jephthah to ask for his help. When the Israelites repented of their idolatry and resolved to resist Ammon, they cast about for someone who had the ability and willingness to take the lead.
 - b. The inquiry (10:18) pointed to Jephthah. The elders of Gilead went to Tob, where Jephthah had established his headquarters, to ask him to take charge of the fighting.
 2. Verses 6-7: "And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my
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father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?"

- a. Stating the proposition, they requested him to become the leader of their forces. They knew that they must make a good case, for they had mistreated Jephthah earlier. In view of this, they had no right to expect him to help them. Their willingness to come to him showed their humility, however, and made his acceptance more likely.
 - b. Jephthah made the expected reply: "You hated me and expelled me from my father's house, yet you now come to me for help when you are in trouble." They had taken side with his brothers.
3. Verses 8-9: "And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?"
- a. They implored him to help them in this hour of need, and offered him the position of ruler over all the people of Gilead. This probably included the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half of Manasseh on the eastern side of Jordan.
 - b. Jephthah inquired if they would retain him as ruler after the Ammonites had been defeated. "With his former experience, he would have shown little wisdom or prudence without binding them to a clear and specific engagement to invest him with unlimited authority, the more especially as he was about to imperil his life in their cause" (JFB, p.102). He wanted to retain his authority as judge after the fighting was done.
4. Verses 10-11: "And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh."
- a. The elders agreed to the terms Jephthah indicated. They assured him of their good intentions by calling the Lord to witness the agreement.
 - b. Jephthah returned with the elders to Mizpeh, where he repeated the words of the agreement before the Lord. This confirmed the covenant, in God's sight, and brought it to the attention of the people who may not have been privy to the purpose of the elders' visit with him at Tob. His purpose was to make the appointment official and binding.
 - c. In the case of Jephthah, is found another example of how hardship and trouble combine to develop a man to his full potential, and make him useful to the Lord. Despite the ignominy of his birth, the rejection by his brothers, his expulsion from his father's house, and his exile from his people, he developed an integrity and devotion that led him into inspiration's hall of fame (Heb. 11:31).

C. Judges 11:12-28: Jephthah Communicates With the King of Ammon.

1. Verses 12-13: "And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land? And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those *lands* again peaceably."
 - a. Seeking a peaceful solution if possible, Jephthah send a message to the king of Ammon to learn the cause of this most recent incursion into Israel's land.
 - b. The king of Ammon asserted that he was merely seeking to reclaim the land which Israel stole from Ammon when they first entered Canaan following their exodus from Egypt. The territory that he sought to liberate lay between the rivers Arnon, Jabbok, and Jordan.
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- c. The king's message made it clear that he was determined to take possession of the land; Israel's only recourse would be to fight.
 2. Verses 14-15: "And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon: And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon"
 - a. In his reply, Jephthah denied that Israel had taken either the land of Moab or Ammon. It is true that Israel now occupied the land identified, but they had not taken it from the Ammonites or Moabites, but from the Amorites. These two kingdom were distant relatives of the Israelites, but the Amorites were of a different background.
 - b. "Jephthah's reply was clear, decided, and unanswerable, - first, those lands were not in the possession of the Ammonites when his countrymen got them, and that they had been acquired by right of conquest from the Amorites; secondly, that the Israelites had now, by a lapse of 300 years of undisputed possession, established a prescriptive right to the occupation; thirdly, having received a grant of them from the Lord, His people were entitled to maintain their right on the same principle that guided the Ammonites in receiving from their god Chemosh (cf. ch. 21:29...) the territory they now occupied; and, fourthly, that no attempt had been made, even by Balak, to dispossess the Israelites..." (JFB, pp.102f).
 - c. "This is a very important paragraph [11:14-22], a great deal of it being a repetition, much of it verbatim, of what is written in the Books of Moses, namely in Numbers 13:26, 14:25, 20:1, 18-21, 21:21-42. This fact establishes every word of what Jephthah stated here as absolutely accurate and is also a glorious proof of the fact that the Pentateuch existed many, many years before the Book of Judges. As we have often pointed out, nothing is any more erroneous and ridiculous than is the radical critical dictum that the Pentateuch did not exist till the times of Josiah" (Coffman, p.175).
 3. Verses 16-19: "But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh; Then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab: but he would not *consent*: and Israel abode in Kadesh. Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon *was* the border of Moab. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place."
 - a. Jephthah continued his reply by sketching Israel's experiences after obtaining their freedom from the Egyptians. They had traveled through the wilderness to the Red sea, which they crossed, and made their way to Kadesh.
 - b. From Kadesh, Israel had sent messengers to the king of Edom to obtain his permission for them to pass through his land; this reasonable request had been denied. A similar request had been made of the king of Moab, which was also refused. So Israel remained at Kadesh.
 - c. Israel later bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab; they did not violate the territorial rights of either of these kingdoms. They sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites at Heshbon, requesting permission to pass through his land as they made their journey into their own place. Through these experiences, Israel had respected the borders of these kingdoms. The requests to pass through these lands were reasonable, and could have been allowed without violating anyone's rights.
 4. Verses 20-24: "But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon
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and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan. So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess."

- a. Sihon did not trust Israel, and thus refused permission for them to pass through his land. He was fearful that consent would have allowed Israel to attack him where he was vulnerable. Arraying his army before Israel, Sihon forced a battle which led to the destruction of his forces. Jephthah properly accords the victory to God.
 - b. With God's help, Israel took the land from the Amorites, who had been in possession of it. This territory was that which lay between the eastern desert and Jordan, between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok. Jephthah plainly states the truth: "We did not take this land which you claim from you, but from the Amorites; you have no legal right to it."
 - c. The Ammonites had no right to this land; it was the God of Israel who dispossessed the Amorites and gave the land to Israel. "The argument *ad hominem* is that since the Ammonites do not hesitate to take whatever they claim was given to them by their god Chemosh, they should also allow that whatever Jehovah, the God of Israel, has given Israel should belong to them" (Coffman, p.176).
 - d. Jephthah is not to be understood as admitting that Chemosh has a being; rather, he builds an argument from the point of view of the Ammonites. His argument destroys any legality to the Ammonite incursion into the disputed land.
5. Verses 25-26: "And now *art* thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that time?"
- a. Jephthah knew and believed the story of Balak, which is recorded in Numbers. His statement gives added reason for the contents of the Pentateuch. The point he made was that Balak, king of Moab, did not make any efforts to obtain the disputed land. Ammon's claim was no better than Moab's; since Moab did not claim it as their own, neither should Ammon.
 - b. Further, after defeating the Amorites and gaining right to the land by virtue of God's help, Israel occupied the disputed territory for three hundred years. Why did not Ammon state their right to the land during those three centuries? The point obviously is that they had no right to it, and were only making the claim at this time because they believed themselves strong enough to take it by force.
 - c. The fact is stated that Israel had occupied the land under consideration for three hundred years. If the Exodus took place in 1450 B.C., then Israel began their conquest in 1410 B.C., following their forty years in the wilderness. The year Jephthah's judgeship began would be 1110 B.C.
6. Verses 27-28: "Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon. Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him."
- a. Jephthah denied, in the face of the preceding information, that he was at fault in this controversy. It was the king of Ammon who did wrong in seeking this war against Israel.
 - b. He had done his best to avert the violence, so he committed himself into the hands of the Judge, the God of Israel, who would determine the outcome of the impending battle.
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- c. The king of Ammon was unable to meet the logic of Jephthah's arguments. He had come against Israel because he believed he could take with military action what did not belong to him. The only thing such a man will respect is a force greater than his own. He was about to meet the power of Israel's God.

D. Judges 11:29-31: Jephthah's Vow.

1. Verse 29: "Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over *unto* the children of Ammon."
 - a. At this point, the Spirit of God came upon Jephthah. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he traveled over Gilead and Manasseh.
 - b. We are not told the purpose of this trip, but it possibly was for the intent of organizing an army with which to do battle with Ammon. It was only after this excursion that he went against Ammon. He was at Mizpeh when he began the trip, and afterwards he returned to Mizpeh, and then set about to do battle with the invaders.
 - c. It is probable that Jephthah was judge only over a limited part of Israel. No mention is made about his going into southern parts of the land, where Judah was located. It may be that the tribes on the eastern side of Jordan were the ones primarily involved with the aggression of Ammon, while the western tribes were primarily involved in checking the oppression brought on them by the Philistines. Judges 10 introduces us to the invasions of the Ammonites and the Philistines. Jephthah did not fight the Philistines. The story of Samson begins in Judges 13, and tells of his battles against Philistia; no introduction is given there concerning the origin of the trouble with Philistia. This suggests that while Jephthah was dealing with the Ammonite incursion in the east, Samson was contending with the Philistines in the west.
2. Verses 30-31: "And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."
 - a. The vow this good man made to God grew out of his prayer for help in the upcoming battle. If God would deliver the enemy into his hands, he promised to offer as a burnt offering to God whatever came forth from the doors of his house when he returned home.
 - b. Notice that he used the term *whatsoever* instead of *whosoever*. It may not have been his intention to promise a human sacrifice. His thought likely was to offer the first animal to come forth from his house.
 - c. This is the most difficult issue to grasp in the story of Jephthah. Before dealing with the problem, the battle itself must be considered.

E. Judges 11:32-33: Israel Defeats Ammon.

1. Verse 32: "So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands."
 - a. Having organized his army, Jephthah engaged the enemy. The Lord delivered the Ammonites into his hands, in keeping with his request.
 - b. We are not told how God caused him to win the victory. No mention is made of any direct divine force being applied. Perhaps divine help was employed in a more indirect way.
 2. Verse 33: "And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto
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the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel."

- a. From Aroer to Minnith to the plain of the vineyards, Israel routed and slaughtered the enemy. The battle raged over a span of sixty miles (JFB, p.104), and resulted in the subjection of the Ammonites to Israel.
- b. It was a great triumph for God's people! Jephthah's prayer was fully answered.

F. Judges 11:34-40: Jephthah is Faced With His Vow.

1. Verses 34-35: "And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back."
 - a. When Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, he obviously moved his family from Tob to Mizpeh. When he got back to his home in Mizpeh following the victory, it was his daughter who came forth to meet him first. The text is very specific in pointing out that she was his only child, emphasizing the severity of his vow.
 - b. The integrity of the great man is demonstrated in his reaction to seeing his daughter. He rent his clothes in a dreadful cry of despair and anguish. He confessed that he had opened his mouth in making a vow to the Lord, and could not renege on his promise. Her appearance "hast brought me very low."
 2. Verses 36-38: "And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains."
 - a. The daughter was very perceptive and devoted. Although her very life was forfeit, she would not oppose her father in fulfilling his vow. From this statement and the following verses, it is clear that the daughter was nearing adulthood, that she was dedicated to the proposition of following the will of God, and that she was devoted to her father.
 - b. God had taken vengeance on the oppressors by the hand of her father, and she was content to abide by the promise her father had made in his prayer for God's help in the battle.
 - c. She requested that before the vow was carried out that she be permitted to go into the mountains with her friends for two months, during which she would bewail her virginity. The ultimate affliction to an Israelite woman of the Old Testament era was to be barren. They all knew the promises of the Messiah, the seed of Abraham, through whom God would bless all mankind. Each faithful woman desired children, not only for the purpose of continuing the husband's lineage, but with the hope of having the privilege of bringing the Promised Seed into the world. This girl wished to bewail her virginity in view of the fact that she would not have the honor of bearing children.
 - d. Jephthah willingly gave consent to her request.
 3. Verses 39-40: "And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, *That* the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year."
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- a. At the end of the two months, she returned to her father, who "did with her according to his vow." Does this mean that he offered her as a burnt sacrifice?
- 1) If so, did God accept the offering? And who did the offering? Did Jephthah do right in this? If not, why is he included in the list of the faithful in Hebrews 11?
 - 2) If God did not allow Abraham to offer Isaac, why did he permit the sacrifice of the maiden (if she was offered)?
 - 3) If he had not offered her, would his failure to do so have constituted a sin? Would God require us to follow through with a rash vow today even though the vow required us to violate some precept of the gospel? If I vowed to blow up an occupied abortion clinic if he would help me with some particular problem, would I be committing sin if I refused to blow up the clinic after having my prayer answered?
 - 4) How could God be consistent if he allowed Jephthah to sacrifice his daughter, when he punished later Israelites for offering their children to Molech (2 Kings 23:10)?
 - 5) Is the keeping of a vow of greater importance than observing some other feature of God's will?
- b. Coffman (pp.182-185) offered the following ten reasons for rejecting the idea that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter on an altar:
- 1) Jephthah was under the direction of the Spirit of God, which would not have allowed him to offer his daughter as a burnt sacrifice. [However, a vow must be a personal decision; it cannot be forced on one by inspiration—bw].
 - 2) Jephthah was familiar with the Mosaic Law governing sacrifices; that law required the firstborn among man and beast to be the Lord's, and were to be redeemed by offering a lamb instead. "It is simply inconceivable that Jephthah would have been ignorant of this principle, or that he would have failed to take advantage of it on behalf of his daughter.
 - 3) Verse thirty-one stated as part of the vow that the sacrifice would be the Lord's. Hannah gave up her only son Samuel to a life of service to God at the tabernacle (cf. 1 Sam. 1:11). She sacrificed him in this fashion.
 - 4) The Hebrew word for burnt-offering does not carry the idea of death, but of something offered completely to God. An animal was slain and literally sacrificed, but the girl could have devoted herself to God's service, sacrificing her child-bearing capabilities.
 - 5) She went into the mountains for two months to bewail her virginity, not to bewail the forfeiture of her life.
 - 6) The same verse that says Jephthah did with her according to his vow, also says that she knew not a man. "Does that mean that she became a burnt-offering? Certainly not. She was dedicated as a perpetual virgin servant of the tabernacle."
 - 7) The daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah. Where did they go? To the tabernacle, where Jephthah's daughter was. If she had been offered as a burnt-sacrifice, no *going* would have been involved.
 - 8) Human sacrifices have always been an abomination to the Lord. How could Jephthah have been included in the list of the faithful, a list including David and Samuel, if he had literally sacrificed his daughter?
 - 9) If Jephthah had decided to actually offer the daughter on the altar, who would have "done the honors?" Would the high priest or any of the other priests have been willing to do it? Would Israel have stood for it?
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- 10) God knows the future as well as he knows the past and present. Knowing that the daughter would come forth from the house first, and that Jephthah would actually sacrifice her (as many contend happened), would God have given Jephthah the victory over Ammon, knowing that a victory would force Jephthah to fulfill his vow?
- c. Notice the marginal reading of *lament* in verse forty. It reads, "to talk with." This would mean that the ladies of Israel went to the tabernacle to talk with Jephthah's daughter, who had sacrificed, not her life, but the privilege and honor of marrying and bearing children. In this case, she devoted her life to serving God at the tabernacle.
- d. That vows are to be fulfilled, is plainly taught in the Scriptures.
- 1) Numbers 30:2: "If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 23:21: "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."
 - 3) Ecclesiastes 5:4-5: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."
 - 4) But caution is enjoined. Ecclesiastes 5:2: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."
- G. It may be informative to consider the views of certain scholars on Jephthah's vow (Judg. 11:30-40):
1. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown:
 - a. Verse 31: This evidently points not to an animal—for that might have been a dog, which, being unclean, was unfit to be offered; but to a person: and it looks extremely like as if he, from the first, contemplated a human sacrifice. Bred up as he had been, beyond the Jordan, where the Israelite tribes, far from the tabernacle were looser in their religious sentiments, and living latterly on the borders of a pagan country where such sacrifices were common, it is not impossible that he may have been so ignorant as to imagine that a similar immolation would be acceptable to God. His mind, engrossed with the prospect of a contest, on the issue of which the fate of his country depended, might through the influence of superstition, consider the dedication of the object dearest to him the most likely to ensure success. Shall surely be the Lord's, and (or) I will offer it up for a burnt offering. The adoption of the latter particle, which many interpreters suggest, introduces the important alternative, that if it were a person, the dedication would be made to the service of the sanctuary; if a proper animal or thing, it would be offered on the altar.
 - b. Verse 34: Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house. The return of the victors was hailed, as usual, by the joyous acclaim of a female band (1 Sam 18:6), the leader of whom was Jephthah's daughter. The vow was full in his mind; and it is evident that it had not been communicated to any one, otherwise precautions would doubtless have been taken to place another object at his door. The shriek, and other accompaniments of irrepressible grief, seem, in the opinion of many, to indicate that her life was to be forfeited as a sacrifice; that the nature of the sacrifice (which was abhorrent to the character of God), and distance from the tabernacle, does not suffice to overturn this view, which the language and whole strain of the narrative plainly support; and that although the lapse of two months might be supposed to have afforded time for reflection, and a better sense of his duty, there is but too much reason to conclude that he was impelled to the fulfillment by the dictates of a pious but unenlightened
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conscience. On the other hand, there are strong reasons for the adoption of another view of the mode in which this vow was carried into effect—namely, by the daughter being devoted to perpetual virginity. The words, Judg 11:35, "thou hast brought me very low," or thou hast greatly crushed me, are quite, susceptible of a meaning which implies Jephthah's being reduced from his high position to deep obscurity—nay, of having his name and family extinguished, through want of posterity. Then again, the statement, "thou art one of them that trouble me," is very singular to be made at the time when her presence and her purpose were intended to do honour to her father. [ʿaabad (OT:5647) means to disturb, to put in confusion, or bring evil, upon one (cf. Josh 6:8; 7:25; 1 Sam 14:29); and the daughter cannot be conceived to have produced such an effect upon Jephthah, but by her presence suddenly calling up the remembrance of his rash vow.]

- c. Verse 35: And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. I have opened my mouth, [paatsiytiy (OT:6475)]—the verb used for the utterance of rash, hasty, and foolish words (cf. Job 35:16; Ps 66:13-14); and it is perfectly evident that the daughter had no knowledge of what her father had bound himself by solemn obligation to do, until he informed her; and when, on the startling information being communicated, that her own fate was involved in his vow, does it seem wonderful that, under the mental agitation the intelligence must have produced, she requested that the performance of the vow should be delayed for a specified time. When that time had expired, she returned home, and surrendered herself, with filial piety, to her father's disposal.
- d. Verse 36. But how or what did he do with her? Certainly he did not offer her in sacrifice. The immolation of a human victim had never been made by any Israelite who was a worshipper of the true God; and supposing the case of Jephthah was an exception, the offering of his daughter must either have been made at Shiloh, where the tabernacle, the only appointed place of sacrifice, was established, or at some place east of Jordan. But the sacrifice could not have been offered at Shiloh, not only because Jephthah was not likely to go to Shiloh, having a bitter feud with the Ephraimites, within whose territory it lay, but because no Levitical priest would have lent his services to put a human victim upon the altar of God; and if Jephthah himself had immolated her at his own home, he would have incurred the triple guilt of the impious assumption of the priestly office, of offering at an unaccepted place, and presenting a sacrifice abhorrent to the law and character of God. Jephthah, who appears to have been a pious man (Judg 11:11), and from his despatch to the Ammonite king (Judg 11:14-27), well acquainted with the Mosaic history, would not have perpetrated any of these presumptuous sins; and hence, we conclude that no sacrifice of the kind was made. Dropping, therefore, the alternative part of the vow, and accepting the first part of it as that which Jephthah performed—namely, that whatsoever came forth of the doors of his house to meet him, when he returned in peace from the children of Ammon, should surely be the Lord's—we believe that his daughter was consecrated for life to the service of the sanctuary. This view is strengthened both by the significant clause, "she knew no man," being doomed to live unmarried—a disappointment particularly severe to a Hebrew damsel—and by the annual custom, which was thenceforth adopted by her female associates, of celebrating her deed of public devotion. It was a custom in Israel.
- e. Verse 39. That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament ... [l¹tanowt (OT:8567)]—to rehearse (Judg 11:11) her doings; i.e., to praise her for the religious life she led. It might be that this anniversary was observed only during the lifetime of Jephthah's daughter, and chiefly by the women of the

Gileadite district who were acquainted with her, or cognizant of the circumstances connected with her pious self-sacrifice. This view of Jephthah's vow, which has occasioned perplexity in every subsequent age of the Church, seems in perfect accordance with Scripture, and possesses the merit of rescuing from the reproach of a dark and malignant superstition the character of a judge in Israel, whom the Spirit of God has enrolled among the worthies of the ancient congregation. [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, (JFB), Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].

2. Adam Clarke:

- a. [Shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.] The text is w^ahaayaah (OT:1961) la-Yahweh (OT:3068), w^aha^alyitihuw (OT:5927) `owlaah (OT:5930); the translation of which, according to the most accurate Hebrew scholars, is this: I will consecrate it to the Lord, or I will offer it for a burnt-offering; that is, "If it be a thing fit for a burnt-offering, it shall be made one; if fit for the service of God, it shall be consecrated to him." That conditions of this kind must have been implied in the vow, is evident enough; to have been made without them, it must have been the vow of a pagan or a madman. If a dog had met him, this could not have been made a burnt-offering; and if his neighbour or friend's wife, son, or daughter, etc., had been returning from a visit to his family, his vow gave him no right over them. Besides, human sacrifices were ever an abomination to the Lord; and this was one of the grand reasons why God drove out the Canaanites, etc., because they offered their sons and daughters to Molech in the fire, i.e., made burnt-offerings of them, as is generally supposed. That Jephthah was a deeply pious man, appears in the whole of his conduct; and that he was well acquainted with the law of Moses, which prohibited all such sacrifices, and stated what was to be offered in sacrifice, is evident enough from his expostulation with the king and people of Ammon, Judg 11:14-27. Therefore it must be granted that he never made that rash vow which several suppose he did; nor was he capable, if he had, of executing it in that most shocking manner which some Christian writers ("tell it not in Gath") have contended for. He could not commit a crime which himself had just now been an executor of God's justice to punish in others...."From Judg 11:39 it appears evident that Jephthah's daughter was not SACRIFICED to God, but consecrated to him in a state of perpetual virginity; for the text says, She knew no man, for this was a statute in Israel. Wat^ahiy (OT:1961) choq (OT:2706) b^a-Yisraa'eel (OT:3478); namely, that persons thus dedicated or consecrated to God, should live in a state of unchangeable celibacy. Thus, this celebrated place is, without violence to any part of the text, or to any proper rule of construction, cleared of all difficulty, and caused to speak a language consistent with itself, and with the nature of God."....
- b. Verse 34. [With timbrels and with dances] From this instance we find it was an ancient custom for women to go out to meet returning conquerors with musical instruments, songs, and dances; and that it was continued afterward is evident from the instance given 1 Sam 18:6, where David was met, on his return from the defeat of Goliath and the Philistines by women from all the cities of Israel, with singing and dancing, and various instruments of music.
- c. Verse 35. [Thou hast brought me very low] He was greatly distressed to think that his daughter, who was his only child, should be, in consequence of his vow, prevented from continuing his family in Israel; for it is evident that he had not any other child, for besides her, says the text, he had neither son nor daughter, Judg 11:34. He might, therefore, well be grieved that thus his family was to become extinct in Israel.
- d. Verse 36. [And she said unto him] What a pattern of filial piety and obedience! She was at once obedient, pious, and patriotic. A woman to have no offspring was considered to be in a state of the

utmost degradation among the Hebrews; but she is regardless of all this, seeing her father is in safety, and her country delivered.

- e. Verse 37. [I and my fellows] Whether she meant the young women of her own acquaintance, or those who had been consecrated to God in the same way, though on different accounts, is not quite clear; but it is likely she means her own companions: and her going up and down upon the mountains may signify no more than her paying each of them a visit at their own houses, previously to her being shut up at the tabernacle; and this visiting of each at their own home might require the space of two months. This I am inclined to think is the meaning of this difficult clause.
 - f. Verse 38. [And she knew no man] She continued a virgin all the days of her life.
 - g. [To lament the daughter of Jephshah] I am satisfied that this is not a correct translation of the original l^atanowt (OT:8567) l^abat (OT:1323) Yiptaach (OT:3316). Houbigant translates the whole verse thus: ..."But this custom prevailed in Israel, that the virgins of Israel went at different times, four days in the year to the daughter of Jephthah, that they might comfort her." This verse also gives evidence that the daughter of Jephthah was not sacrificed: nor does it appear that the custom or statute referred to here lasted after the death of Jephthah's daughter.[Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft)
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JUDGES 12

A. Judges 12:1-7: The Battle Between Gilead and Ephraim.

1. Verse 1: "And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire."
 - a. The fighting men of Ephraim were called together (see margin), and went to confront Jephthah as they had faced Gideon (Judg. 8:1-3). Gideon used tactful words to defuse the volatile situation. Here, the men from Ephraim stated their intention of burning down Jephthah's house with him in it. Compare:
 - 1) Judges 14:15: "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto 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: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it not so?*"
 - 2) Judges 15:6: "Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire."
 - b. Gideon was not less courageous than Jephthah, but in the former case, a diplomatic reply was the proper solution, but the latter case called for a stern response. The Ephraimites in this confrontation came prepared to attack Gilead because of a supposed insult. They demanded to know why he had not called them when he fought against Ammon. Their real motive was likely jealousy. If they were so bent on attacking Ammon, why did they not initiate a battle on their own?
 - c. Ancient Hebrew did not have a word for "northeast," and thus used the word "northward" here. The direction of the travel of Ephraim into Gilead was northeast.
 2. Verses 2-3: "And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands. And when I saw that ye delivered *me* not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?"
 - a. Jephthah states bluntly that he and his people faced a great challenge at the hands of the Ammonites, and when he asked for the help of the Ephraimites, they offered no assistance. Their complaint was fabricated.
 - b. When Jephthah saw that he could expect no help from Ephraim, he placed his life in his own hands, and the Lord gave him the victory.
 - c. By simply stating the facts, Jephthah destroyed their grievance.
 3. Verse 4: "Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, *and* among the Manassites."
 - a. Ephraim was a large and powerful tribe among the Israelites. Their conceit led them to demand greater leadership in the nation than they were qualified to hold. As Coffman suggests, if they had succeeded in establishing their assumed authority, the full apostasy of the entire nation would have been more quickly in coming.
 - b. In the battle that developed, the men of Gilead defeated the men of Ephraim. The reason Ephraim refused to come to Jephthah's assistance was that they considered him and his brethren of Gilead to be worthless, mere fugitives. They said that this was the view of both Ephraim and Manasseh (the half-tribe on the west side of Jordan). *Fugitive* is from the Hebrew word *palit*, which means "one who
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slips out" (Young).

4. Verses 5-6: "And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so* that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand."
 - a. Gilead blocked the Jordan River crossing, to prevent Ephraim from escaping back to their own territory. The men of Ephraim sought to conceal their identity, and since they could not be identified by their dress, another means had to be devised quickly to recognize them.
 - b. A distinguishing feature of the Ephraimites was their inability to pronounce the *sh* sound. Each person seeking to pass the Gileadite guard at Jordan was required to say *Shibboleth*, which those of Ephraim could not enunciate; they called the word *Sibboleth*.
 - c. Forty-two thousand men of Ephraim were slain in the fighting.
5. Verse 7: "And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of the cities of Gilead*."
 - a. Jephthah judged Israel for only six years. We are not told how old he was at either the beginning of his rule or the end. His death is not indicated to be other than natural.
 - b. Some ancient versions identify the place of his burial as Gilead (Coffman, p.192). However, the place of one's burial is not nearly as significant as how he lived his life.

B. Judges 12:8-10: The Story of Ibzan.

1. Verses 8-9: "And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, *whom* he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years."
 - a. Ibzan lived and ruled at Bethlehem. Josephus asserted: "He did nothing in the seven years of his administration that was worth recording, or deserved a memorial. So he died an old man, and was buried in his own country" (*Antiquities*, V, VII, 13, p.118).
 - b. Ibzan had thirty sons and thirty daughters; he acquired thirty wives from abroad for his sons.
2. Verse 10: "Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem."
 - a. His administration lasted only seven years. Evidently, as Josephus said, his tenure was without any remarkable deed being attributed to him.
 - b. He was buried at Bethlehem.

C. Judges 12:11-12: The Story of Elon.

1. Verse 11: "And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years."
 - a. Elon, from Zebulun, judged Israel for a period of ten years. Josephus also says that this man did nothing noteworthy (*ibid.*, 12).
 - b. The times may have been peaceful, and there may have been no major troubles.
2. Verse 12: "And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun."
 - a. His body was interred at Aijalon, in the territory belonging to his native tribe (Zebulun).
 - b. Although nothing significant is recorded about this man's life, his contributions to the nation may have been of some importance, even though no great war was fought. Some of our lesser-known presidents contributed to our history and strength, even if all they did was to hold the *status-quo*

D. Judges 12:13-17: The Story of Abdon.

1. Verses 13-14: "And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. And he had forty sons
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and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years."

- a. "He is only recorded to have been happy in his children; for the public affairs were then so peaceable, and in such security, that neither did he perform any glorious action. He had forty sons, and by them left thirty grandchildren; and he marched in state with these seventy, who were all very skilful in riding horses; and he left them all alive after him. He died an old man, and obtained a magnificent burial in Pyrathon" (Josephus, *ibid.*, 15).
 - b. The thirty *nephews* were grandchildren.
2. Verse 15: "And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites."
- a. Abdon was from the tribe of Ephraim, which is indicated by his burial place being at Pirathon in Ephraim.
 - b. His rule was for eight, uneventful years.
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JUDGES 13

A. Judges 13:1-7: The Philistines' Forty-Year Oppression.

1. Verse 1: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years."
 - a. "The Israelites were represented (ch. 10:6,7) as having fallen universally into a state of gross and confirmed idolatry; and in chastisement of this great apostasy the Lord raised up enemies that harassed them in various quarters, especially the Ammonites and Philistines. The invasions and defeat of the former were narrated in the two chapters immediately preceding this; and now the sacred historian proceeds to describe the inroads of the latter people. The period of Philistine ascendancy comprised forty years, reckoning from the time of Elon till the death of Samson" (JFB, pp.106f).
 - b. The introduction of this story is short owing to the fact that a fuller prelude was given in chapter 10, which included the background to the trouble with the Ammonites and the Philistines. The Philistine oppression covered a period of 40 years.
2. Verse 2: "And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren, and bare not."
 - a. The territory given to the tribe of Dan included the village of Zorah: "*And* the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families. And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Irshemesh" (Josh. 19:40-41).
 - b. In this place lived Manoah, a man whose wife was barren. It is more than a coincidence that several important ladies in the Bible history were barren [for a while]; the list includes Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth.
 - c. Josephus alleges that Manoah was jealous of his beautiful wife (ibid., VIII, 2-3).
3. Verses 3-5: "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou *art* barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean *thing*: For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."
 - a. The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife, giving her the promise that she would conceive and bear a son. It is very likely that this godly couple had been praying for a son.
 - b. A word of caution was given to the woman, which included these conditions:
 - 1) She was not to drink wine or strong drink.
 - 2) She was not to eat any unclean thing.
 - 3) The son she would bear was not to have a razor to come on his head.
 - c. The reason for these restraints was because the son was intended to be a Nazarite from the womb. For details of the Nazarites, see Numbers 6:1-21, Lamentations 4:7, and Amos 2:11-12. Compare:
 - 1) 1 Samuel 1:11: "And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."
 - 2) Luke 1:15: "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb."
 - 3) "The common Nazarite vow was for a limited time, like Paul's (Acts 18:18; 21:23-26). Others, like

Samuel (1 Sam 1:11), were Nazarites for life” [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997 by Biblesoft].

- d. The angel stated that her son would **begin** to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Trouble with this idolatrous nation continued until at least the time of Saul and David. Their forty years of domination over Israel included the twenty years of Samson's administration: "And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years" (Judg. 15:20; cf. 16:21).
4. Verses 6-7: "Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance *was* like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he *was*, neither told he me his name: But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean *thing*: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death."
- a. The woman reported to her husband about this encounter. She was much impressed by the angel's appearance. She thought he was a man of God, although his countenance was like that of an angel of God, very terrible (frightening). She had never seen an angel before, obviously, but she had heard reports from earlier times concerning the image of angels. Reports from the time of Gideon most likely had been circulated regarding the angel who appeared to him.
 - b. She did not know where this *man of God* came from, nor did he tell her his name. He told her she would conceive and bear a son, and that she was to drink no wine or strong drink, refrain from eating anything unclean, and that the child was to be a Nazarite unto God from the womb to his death. Samson and John the Baptizer were to be life-long Nazarites. Numbers 6 deals with those who were to be "Nazarites of days" (for a limited period of time).

B. Judges 13:8-14: Manoah Speaks With the Angel.

1. Verse 8: "Then Manoah entreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born."
 - a. Manoah showed his faith by the prayer he uttered. He pleaded with God that the man who had appeared to his wife should be sent back to them. He did not question the truthfulness of his wife's report, and believed God capable of sending this person to them.
 - b. His motive was also pure. He wanted to learn from this *man of God* how they should tend to the child. His later question shows his meaning: "How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" (verse 12).
 - c. Since "man of God" is frequently used in the Scriptures to describe a prophet, it is clear that Manoah thought the angel was a prophet. "Manoah's wife applies it to the angel, not being sure that he was not human. It would not be improper to apply to an angel, seeing that Gabriel means man of God" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - 1) 1 Samuel 2:27: "And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?"
 - 2) 1 Samuel 9:6-8: "And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go. Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and *there is* not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we? And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way."
 - 3) 1 Samuel 9:10: "Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the

- city where the man of God *was*."
- 4) 1 Kings 12:22: "But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God...."
 - 5) 1 Kings 13:1,5-6: "And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense....The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Entreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as *it was* before."
 - 6) 1 Kings 13:11: "Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father."
 - 7) 1 Timothy 6:11: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."
2. Verses 9-10: "And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day."
 - a. God heard and answered the prayer, dispatching the angel to the woman as she sat in the field. It seems curious that Manoah was not present, but the Lord's timing was not haphazard. For reasons known only to the Lord, the angel appeared to the woman when her husband was not present. In the quietness of being alone, prayer can be most fervent and open; perhaps during her solitude, she prayed very earnestly, with the appearance of the angel the result.
 - b. Again, Manoah's wife quickly reported to him of this second appearance, and brought her husband to the angel. She was not the kind of woman who would want to hide things from her husband. Why did she not ask the angel to accompany her to her husband? She realized that she was the servant, in this case, and it was more becoming that she bring her husband to the messenger. Manoah was not angry or distressed that the angel had again appeared to his wife and not to him; it was enough that this messenger had returned—in response to his prayer.
 3. Verses 11-12: "And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, *I am*. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?"
 - a. This time, the angel was still present when Manoah arrived. His first question was to ask whether this was the same visitor who had spoken to his wife. The angel answered in the affirmative.
 - b. Manoah's next question was to inquire how they were to order the child. The margin shows that he was interested also in what this son would be able to do. This godly man understood the gravity of bringing up a child, especially in the case of the child he and his barren wife were promised.
 - c. Where an individual spends eternity depends in a large degree on the kind of training and guidance given by the parents. Both husband and wife are responsible for the rearing of their children.
 4. Verses 13-14: "And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe."
 - a. The angel repeated the conditions he had stated to the woman, and warned them of the signal importance of seeing that they did not deviate from those restraints. "He shall separate *himself* from
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wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried" (Num. 6:3).

- b. These restrictions were not merely for appearance; they were serious conditions which God had set. Anything God has said in his word is significant.
- c. Christians are to be clean in every respect of their lives.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
 - 2) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

C. Judges 13:15-23: Manoah Offers a Sacrifice.

1. Verses 15-16: "And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD."
 - a. Manoah, still thinking that this was a man of God, invited him to stay long enough for them to prepare a kid for his meal. The angel declined to stay for that purpose, but stated that if Manoah was intending to make an offering, that it should be offered to the Lord.
 - b. "The language of Manoah, like that of Gideon (Judg 6:18), seems to indicate some suspicion that his visitor was more than human. The word rendered 'made ready,' is also the proper word for 'offering a sacrifice,' and is so used by the Angel in the next verse. By which it appears that the Angel understood Manoah to speak of offering a kid as a burnt-offering. Hence, his caution, 'thou must offer it unto the Lord.'" (Compare Rev 19:10; 22:8; Acts 10:25-26.) [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997 by Biblesoft].
 - c. "The stranger declined the intended hospitality: and intimated that if the meat were to be an offering, it must be presented to the Lord. Manoah needed this instruction, for his purpose was to offer the prepared viands to Him, not as the Lord, but as what he imagined Him to be, not even an angel (v.16), but a prophet or merely human messenger. It was on this account, and not as rejecting divine honours, that he spoke in this manner to Manoah. The angel's language was exactly similar to that of our Lord, Matt. 19:17" (JFB, pp.107f). "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*" (Matt. 19:17).
2. Verses 17-18: "And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* secret?"
 - a. Manoah asked the messenger to tell him his name. "The Hebrews seem to have attached great importance to names, a circumstance due, in part, to every name being significant in the spoken language (see Gen 4:1,25; 5:29; 16:5, etc.; 17:19; 25:25, 26; 29. and 30; 1 Sam 1:20 Isa 9:6; 62:4; Jer 23:1. 6; Eph 1:21; Phil 2:9,10; Rev 19:16, etc., and. many other passages). Compare also the phrase, the name of the Lord (Isa 30:27; Ex 23:1. 21; 33:19; 34:5, 6, 7). Manoah had certainly some suspicious as to the mysterious character of his visitor, and expected the name to reveal his true nature." [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by Biblesoft].

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- b. He wanted to know it so that when the promises came to pass, they would know to whom the thanks should be given. The angel's reply showed that Manoah had no right to ask the question, since the angel's name was secret [*wonderful*, cf. Isa. 9:6]. Paul saw and heard things that he was not permitted to repeat, even if it could be described in human language: "And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:3-4).
 - c. Not even an angel, although any one of them is a powerful and awesome being, is worthy of worship. "And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22:8-9).
 - d. We are reminded of the fact that glorified saints will be given new names: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*" (Rev. 2:17—spoken to the church at Pergamos).
3. Verses 19-20: "So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered *it* upon a rock unto the LORD: and *the angel* did wonderously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and fell on their faces to the ground."
 - a. Manoah made an offering of the kid on a rock, an offering directed to the Lord. The text states that the angel did "wondrously" in connection with the sacrifice. What this wondrous action was is not stated, however it was likely similar to that which the angel did when Gideon offered his sacrifice in Judges 6:21: "Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight."
 - b. The angel ascended in the flame as it rose upward toward heaven. This act itself was a wondrous act; it may have been the wondrous activity indicated in verse nineteen. Manoah and his wife beheld this, and were greatly astounded and fearful.
 4. Verses 21-23: "But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these."
 - a. Another appearance of the angel was not necessary. He had accomplished his purposes. Manoah and his wife were told of the forthcoming conception and their responsibilities regarding this son they were to have. He had convinced them both that what they had heard was not their imagination. They now had the knowledge and motivation to do as they had been instructed.
 - b. Manoah was so impressed with what he had experienced that he felt sure they must die, for "we have seen God." He perceived that anyone who beheld God must surely die, and that he had just had that experience.
 - 1) It is true that no human could see God and expect to live: "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex. 33:20). Gideon was apprehensive when he beheld the angel who visited him: "And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD,
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Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face" (Judg. 6:22).

- 2) Compare: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is it that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:24-30).
- c. His wife was more perceptive than he. She stated that if God was going to kill them because they witnessed such an event, he would not have received the burnt offering and meat offering at their hands. He would not have revealed to them the things they had been told.

D. Judges 13:24-25: Samson is Born.

1. Verse 24: "And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him."
 - a. The woman conceived and bore a son. They named him *Samson*, which means "strong man" (according to Josephus). His great strength was supernatural in nature. After God took away his special strength, he did not sense its absence; he felt as strong as ever. That he was also endowed with great natural strength is not to be doubted—the Philistines made him grind grain, which evidently required strength. But Samson's great gift was supernatural strength.
 - b. The child grew and was blessed by the Lord. God preserved him from harm and disease, gave him strength and health, and brought him to manhood so that he could fulfill his mission in life.
 2. Verse 25: "And the spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol."
 - a. The Spirit of the Lord began to move him from time-to-time, stirring him to do certain things which were in keeping with his life's work.
 - b. At this point, his activity was limited to an area described as between Zorah and Eshtaol within the territory of the tribe of Dan.
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JUDGES 14

A. Judges 14:1-4: Samson Sought a Philistine Wife.

1. Verse 1: "And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines."
 - a. Timnath (Timnah—ASV) was situated about five miles west of Zorah, Samson's hometown. Zorah was in the land that pertained to the southern portion of Dan. Timnah was at the border shared by Judah and Dan. The report that Samson went down from Zorah to Timnath indicates that Zorah was located on higher terrain.
 - 1) The village had been taken over by the Philistines. "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, 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 children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon" (Judg. 10:6-7).
 - 2) "The city of Timnah was once an Israelite city, or, at least it seems so from Joshua 15:10; but at this time the Philistines had control of most of Israel. 'Archaeological remains point to an extended period of intercourse and trade between the two peoples (Philistines and Israelites) from about 1150 B.C., which corresponds exactly with the date Boling determined for Judges'" (Coffman, p.213).
 - b. Coffman describes this episode as "the first of many stupid mistakes this hero made. He chose a wife, contrary to the pleadings of his father and mother..." (p.211).
 - 1) This view creates a difficulty with the statement of verse four, which seems clearly to say that the operation was God's plan. Coffman says about verse four: "This does not mean that God approved of Samson's sinful marriage, but that God overruled Samson's strong-headed determination to marry a Philistine woman and turned it into an occasion for God to show his displeasure with the Philistines" (p.212).
 - 2) On the other hand, if verse four is understood to say that Samson's effort to marry the Philistine woman was God's strategy, we must reconcile that activity with God's prohibition for the Israelites to intermarry with the Canaanites.
 - a) Deuteronomy 7:1-4: "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."
 - b) Exodus 34:12-17: "Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods,

and *one* call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods."

- 3) Verse four seems too clear to be misunderstood. Samson's quest for a Philistine wife was an operation of God's design, for a situation to be developed for Samson to use his great strength against these idolatrous people. That this man made grievous errors is clear; that this was one of them is far from certain.
 - c. In Timnath, Samson saw a girl that would suit the purposes of the plan.
2. Verses 2-3: "And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well."
 - a. Samson requested that his parents reach an agreement with the girl's parents for him to marry her. In those days, it was the custom in many lands for the parents to arrange the marriages of their children.
 - b. Manoah and his wife remonstrated with their son regarding his choice. They thought there should be someone from among his own people who would be a suitable wife. They understood that God had proscribed intermarriage with the people of Canaan (Deut. 7:1-4; Ex. 34:12-17).
 - c. Jamison offered an enlightening comment on Samson's statement that "she pleaseth me well." Literally, his remark means "'she is right in mine eyes;' not by her beautiful countenance or handsome figure, but *right* or *fit for his purpose*. And this throws light on the historian's remark in reference to the resistance of his parents; 'they knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines,'—rather, *from* the Philistines—originating on their side. The Lord, by a course of retributive proceedings, was about to destroy the Philistine power; and the means which He meant to employ was not the forces of a numerous army, as in the case of the preceding judges, but the miraculous prowess of the single-handed champion of Israel. In these circumstances, the provocation to hostilities could only spring out of a *private* quarrel; and this marriage scheme was doubtless suggested by the secret influence of the Spirit as the best way of accomplishing the intended result" (JFB, p.109).
 - d. "His parents expressed their astonishment at the choice, and asked him whether there was not a woman among the daughters of his brethren (i.e., the members of his own tribe), or among all his people, that he should want to fetch one from the Philistines, the uncircumcised. But Samson repeated his request, because the daughter of the Philistines pleased him. The aversion of his parents to the marriage was well founded, as such a marriage was not in accordance with the law. It is true that the only marriages expressly prohibited in Ex 34:16 and Deut 7:3-4, are marriages with Canaanitish women; but the reason assigned for this prohibition was equally applicable to marriages with daughters of the Philistines. In fact, the Philistines are reckoned among the Canaanites in Josh 13:3 upon the very same ground. But Samson was acting under a higher impulse, whereas his parents did not know that it was from Jehovah, i.e., that Jehovah had so planned it; 'for Samson was seeking an opportunity on account of the Philistines,' i.e., an occasion to quarrel with them, because, as is afterwards added in the form of an explanatory circumstantial clause, the Philistines had dominion over Israel at that time...." [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database.

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3. Verse 4: "But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel."
 - a. The opposition of Samson's parents to the proposed marriage with the Philistine woman grew out of their knowledge that God had prohibited intermarriage with the Canaanites, and their natural aversion to taking to their bosom one of their oppressors.
 - b. They did not know that **it** (the plan) was from the Lord, that God was using this method to furnish Samson with an occasion for attacking the Philistines. This obvious meaning seems to be the better understanding of the passage.
 - c. However, Samson's weaknesses of the flesh, evidenced in his encounter with a harlot (Judg. 16:1), may have been present in the case at hand, and God may have used it to fulfill his purpose. If this is so, then Samson may not have been privy to God's full plan.
 - d. "It was of or from the Lord. It was the method decreed by God's providence for bringing about a rupture with the Philistines. That he sought. Rather, because he sought. The writer explains the purpose of the providence. It is doubtful whether 'he' refers to Samson or to the Lord. Most comment-ators refer it to Samson; but it is contrary to the whole tenor of Samson's impetuous course, and to all probability, that he should have asked for the Timnathite damsel merely for the sake of quarreling with the Philistines; whereas the statement that Samson's obstinate determination to take a Philistine wife was the means which God's secret purpose had fixed upon for bringing about the eventual overthrow of the Philistine dominion is in exact accordance with other declarations of Holy Scripture (cf. e.g. Ex 7:3,4; Josh 11:20; 1 Sam 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). An occasion. The noun only occurs here; but the verb, in its several conjugations, means, to happen at the right time; to bring a person or thing at the right time (Ex 21:13, deliver, A.V.); to be brought at the right time (Prov 12:21, happen, A.V.); to seek the right time for injuring any one (2 Kings 5:7, seeketh a quarrel, A.V.)" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by BibleSoft].

B. Judges 14:5-7: Samson Kills a Lion.

1. Verse 5: "Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him."
 - a. As he and his parents traveled to Timnath, as they passed the vineyards pertaining to the village, a young lion roared against Samson. In this part of Israel, in the territory belonging to Judah, lions were prominent. Our Lord is spoken of as "the lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5).
 - b. "The valley of Sorek (Judg 16:4), so famous for its vines (Isa 5:2; Jer 2:21), from which it derived its name (Sorek, translated in the above passages the choicest vine, and a noble vine), is thought to have been in the immediate neighbourhood. Probably the whole district under the hills was a succession of vineyards, like the country round Bordeaux. Samson had left the road along which his father and mother were walking, at a pace, perhaps, too slow for his youthful energy, and had plunged into the vineyards. Of a sudden a young lion, - a term designating a lion between the age of a cub and a full-grown lion—brought there, perhaps, in pursuit of the foxes or jackals, which often had their holes in vineyards (Song 2:15), roared against him" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - c. A young lion was one which was in the prime of its strength. What follows is a very striking example of Samson's great power, a power that was a gift from God.
2. Verse 6: "And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a

kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done."

a. The source of his feat is stated to be the spirit of the Lord which came mightily upon him. His action here was directed by the Lord and was accomplished through the power the Lord had provided Samson. Having no weapon in his hand, Samson tore the lion as if it had been a kid. David and Benaiah also killed lions.

1) 1 Samuel 17:34-35: "And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him."

2) 2 Samuel 23:20: "And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow."

b. Josephus reported that Samson strangled the lion (*Antiquities*, V,VIII,5, p.119). Perhaps he strangled the beast and rent his body.

c. He said nothing to his parents about what he had done.

3. Verse 7: "And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well."

a. Communicating with the woman, who pleased him well, plans were made for their marriage. Understanding that the parents made the arrangements in those days, the communications were probably done through them, with Samson and the girl not speaking directly with each other. Until now, Samson had only seen the damsel.

b. The marriage agreement was settled, and Samson and his parents returned home.

C. Judges 14:8-11: Samson Makes a Feast.

1. Verses 8-9: "And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion."

a. *After a time* probably covered from several weeks to a few months, for this amount of time was necessary for the bees to make the honey Samson now found in the lion's carcase.

b. He took a sizeable portion of the honey and ate it, giving some of it to his parents who were with him, and they ate. The inspired historian states that Samson did not tell his parents where he had gotten the honey. There would be a natural revulsion to eating anything taken from the carcase of a long-dead animal.

c. What remained of the lion was probably akin to a mummy, since the hot and dry climate can dry up a dead body within a few hours of its death. "When some time had elapsed after the betrothal, he came again to fetch her (take her home, marry her), accompanied, as we learn from v. 9, by his parents. On the way 'he turned aside (from the road) to see the carcase of the lion; and behold a swarm of bees was in the body of the lion, also honey.' The word...signifies not the mere skeleton, as bees would not form their hive in such a place, but the carcase of the lion, which had been thoroughly dried up by the heat of the sun, without passing into a state of putrefaction. 'In the desert of Arabia the heat of a sultry season will often dry up all the moisture of men or camels that have fallen dead, within twenty-four hours of their decease, without their passing into a state of decomposition and putrefaction, so that they remain for a long time like mummies, without change and without stench' (Rosenmüller, *Bibl. Althk.* iv. 2, p. 424). In a carcase dried up in this way, a swarm of bees might form their hive, just as well as

in the hollow trunks of trees, or clefts in the rock, or where wild bees are accustomed to form them, notwithstanding the fact that bees avoid both dead bodies and carrion (see Bochart, Hieroz, ed. Ros. iii. p. 355)" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

- d. His parents would not have eaten the honey if they had known where it had been found, and also, if he had related the source of it to them, they would have known the answer to the riddle he later propounded. Perhaps to have eaten this honey would have made them ceremonially unclean since it was found inside the body of a long-dead animal.
2. Verses 10-11: "So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him."
 - a. The custom of the times was for the bridegroom to give a feast on the occasion of his wedding, to which guests were invited. Samson followed this custom.
 - b. The parents of the bride-elect brought in thirty companions to enjoy the feast with Samson. Apparently, Samson had brought only his parents. Samson and his parents were to pay for the celebration. This may indicate that Manoah was a man of wealth. "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast" (Matt. 9:15). The guests were called "the children of the bridegroom."

D. Judges 14:12-18: Samson's Riddle.

1. Verses 12-13: "And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments: But if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it."
 - a. As in our modern parties, the practice of entertaining games was followed. Samson propounded a riddle for his guests to solve. He challenged them to risk thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments on their ability to answer the puzzle. The time limit was set at seven days. If they answered it correctly in that time frame, he would pay the wager to them, if not, they would pay it to him. The sheets were wide garments worn next to the body by persons of rank and wealth (JFB, p.110).
 - b. Does this example of gambling give us the right today to gamble? If it was right for Samson to bet, why is wagering wrong today?
 - 1) First, there were many things overlooked in Old Testament days which are clearly forbidden under the gospel. Jacob had two wives and engaged in sexual relations with two female servants. Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3). God commands all men everywhere to repent and turn from all sinful conduct today (Acts 17:30-31).
 - 2) Second, the gospel is our rule of conduct today. Our Lawgiver is Christ, and it is to him that we owe allegiance (Heb. 1:1-4; Col. 3:17; Matt. 28:18).
 - 3) The gospel contains certain principles which forbid gambling:
 - a) Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
 - b) Mark 12:31: "And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - c) Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his*

hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

- d) 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."
2. Verse 14: "And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle."
 - a. We are able to answer the riddle easily, since we are privy to the episode about the lion and the honey within its body. If we knew nothing of that matter, we would be in no better position to answer it than were the Philistines.
 - b. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." It is extremely logical, concise, and accurate. After three days of pondering the problem, they were no closer to its solution.
3. Verse 15: "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto 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: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it* not so?"
 - a. On the seventh day, they still had no clue to the riddle. But with pressure applied to the bride, they expected to get the answer. They gave her the strongest possible motive to entice the secret from Samson: they would burn her father's house down on both her and her father. It appears that they pondered on the riddle for three days; seeing no possible answer, they approached the bride and made their demands of her.
 - b. They accused Samson's bride of inviting them to the feast just so they could be "cleaned out" by Samson's riddle. Applying strong psychological pressure (combined with threats), they were able to get her to agree to "sweet-talk" Samson into revealing his secret.
4. Verses 16-17: "And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee? And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people."
 - a. Having used three days vainly seeking to solve the problem on their own, they resorted to threats of violence to coerce Samson's bride to obtain the answer. The seventh day came, and they still did not know the solution. They were getting desperate, for the stakes were high.
 - b. The bride's help was enlisted on the seventh day (verse 15), but this passage indicates that she pleaded with Samson to reveal the secret for the entire seven days. Verse seventeen speaks of her having belabored him with tears "the seven days," which the margin translates as "the rest of the seven days." The verse goes on to state that on the seventh day he revealed the solution.
 - c. "Three days of the seven had already elapsed before she was asked and had undertaken to do so. But the full week is mentioned, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, which is followed in Scripture; just as it was foretold that our Lord should be three days and three nights in the grave, although He was not laid in the tomb till late in the first, and He left it very early on the third day" (JFB, p.110).
 - d. It may have been the case that the bride tried to get him to tell her the secret from the first, and that she increased her cajoling and tearful begging on the seventh day, when the Philistines applied their full pressure on her. Samson was moved by her appeals, and told her the answer; she quickly reported it to the Philistines.
5. Verse 18: "And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What *is* sweeter than honey? and what *is* stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with

my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle."

- a. Before the sun went down on the seventh day, the men of the city were ready to give the answer to the riddle. They stated that nothing is sweeter than honey and no beast is stronger than the lion.
- b. Samson was undoubtedly dismayed over their reply, and knowing how they were able to give the correct response, he stated: "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." This was clear reference to his bride, who had been able to extract the secret from him.
- c. "They put their answer in a form to make it seem as if they had guessed the riddle; but Samson instantly perceived his wife's treachery, and showed that he did so by quoting the proverb of plowing with another person's heifer. They had not used their own wit to find out the riddle, but had learnt the secret at Samson's cost, through his wife. He insinuates that had they acted fairly he would have won the wager" [The Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].

E. Judges 14:19-20: Samson Slays Thirty Philistines.

1. Verse 19: "And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house."
 - a. Leaving Timnath, Samson went to the Philistine city of Ashkelon, located about twenty-four miles to the southwest. Coffman reports that this city still exists, and was prominent during the Crusades. A variety of onion known as *shallot* takes its name from this ancient city.
 - b. Samson slew thirty men at Ashkelon, and took their garments with which to pay the wager (verses 12-13). His anger smoldered over the underhanded conspiracy that was used to obtain the solution to the riddle. In this slow-burning rage, he returned to his father's house. "Nevertheless he was obliged to keep his promise (v. 12). Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, slew thirty men of them, i.e., of the Ashkelonites, took their clothes...and gave the changes of garments to those who had shown the riddle. This act is described as the operation of the Spirit of Jehovah which came upon Samson, because it showed to the Philistines the superior power of the servants of Jehovah. It was not carnal revenge that had impelled Samson to the deed. It was not till the deed itself was done that his anger was kindled; and even then it was not against the Philistines, to whom he had been obliged to pay or give the thirty garments, but against his wife, who had betrayed his secret to her countrymen, so that he returned to his father's house, viz., without his wife" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - c. "This act is described as the operation of the Spirit which came upon Samson, because it showed to the Philistines the superior power of the servants of Jehovah. It was not carnal revenge that impelled Samson to the deed. It was not till the deed was done that his anger was kindled; and even then it was not against the Philistines, to whom he had been obliged to pay or give the thirty garments, but against his wife, who had betrayed his secret to her countrymen, so that he returned to his father's house, viz., without his wife" (Keil, pp.412f).
 - d. Was his marriage consummated? It is unclear. Evidently Samson intended to keep her as his wife, for he returned to Timnath for her in the next chapter.
 - e. "The faithlessness of the Philistines toward the Israelites was no doubt apparent here; for even if Samson went home enraged at the treacherous behaviour of his wife, without taking her with him, he did not intend to break the marriage tie, as chapt. 15:1,2 clearly shows. So that instead of looking at the wrong by which Samson felt himself aggrieved, and trying to mitigate his wrath, the parents of the

- woman made the breach irreparable by giving their daughter as a wife to his companion" (Keil, p.413).
- f. "The parents of the Thimnathite, having no doubt obtained Samson's dower, and supposing him to have finally broken with his treacherous wife, proceeded to give her in marriage to the Philistine young man who had been Samson's friend—perhaps the man to whom she had told the riddle. The sad end of this unhappy alliance fully justified the opposition of Samson's parents to it in ver. 3" [The Pulpit Commentary, *ibid*].
2. Verse 20: "But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, whom he had used as his friend."
 - a. Samson's wife was given to the man he had used as his friend during the preceding nuptial festivities. This man would be roughly equivalent to the *best man* in today's customs.
 - b. His bride's father apparently thought that Samson would not return, in view of the way he had been mistreated, and so felt free to give the daughter to the *friend*.
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JUDGES 15

A. Judges 15:1-8: Samson Wreaks Vengeance on the Philistines Because of his Wife.

1. Verses 1-2: "But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: *is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.*"
 - a. After an unspecified amount of time had passed, Samson decided to visit his wife, intending to go into her chamber at her father's house. It was at the time of wheat harvest, about the end of April, a different time of the year from the time of the wedding festivities.
 - b. Samson had left the wedding feast in anger when his wife revealed the secret of his riddle, but he did not propose to disregard the marriage. He brought a kid with him as a present for her, which from old times had been considered a worthy gift. "And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it?" (Gen. 38:16-17).
 - c. The woman's father would not permit Samson to enter. He claimed that when Samson left the feast as he did, it appeared that he did not wish to consummate the marriage due to "hating" his bride for her treachery, consequently he had given her to Samson's "best man" as his wife. The truth probably was that the father sought to mollify the embarrassing situation Samson's sudden departure had created.
 - d. The Philistine probably feared Samson, not knowing what to expect from him, so he offered his younger daughter to him, claiming that she was prettier than the other. This proposal was an admission that he had done Samson an injustice.
2. Verse 3: "And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure."
 - a. Samson reasoned that he had an adequate reason to punish the Philistines. He had been seeking a situation in which he could have just grounds to launch an attack (cf. 14:4). "Samson regarded the treatment which he had received from his father-in-law as but one effect of the disposition of the Philistines generally towards the Israelites, and therefore resolved to avenge the wrong which he had received from one member of the Philistines upon the whole nation, or at all events upon the whole of the city of Timnath" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - b. The father-in-law had tried to avoid disgracing his family completely when he gave the older daughter to Samson's companion, but now he had to face the effects (direct and indirect) of Samson's revenge.
3. Verses 4-5: "And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives."
 - a. Critics assail the text here, alleging that it would have been impossible for a single man to catch three hundred foxes in a single day, especially since foxes do not run in packs. Several things are wrong with this assault on the sacred text.
 - 1) The report says nothing about Samson catching these animals in one day.

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- 2) The text does not declare that he caught each of the animals personally. He might have gotten others to help him with this roundup.
 - 3) The Hebrew word [*shualim*] is thought by many scholars to include both foxes and jackals. Our English word *jackal* comes from the Persian word *shagal*, which certainly resembles the Hebrew *shual* (*shualim* is the plural). Whether the actual animals in the story were foxes or jackals is immaterial; what Samson did with them is the point of emphasis in the report.
 - b. The following from prominent scholars indicate the animals may have been jackals:
 - 1) “Went and caught three hundred foxes—rather [shuw`aaliym (OT:7776)], jackals—an animal between a wolf and a fox (*Canis aureus*), which, unlike our fox, a solitary creature, are gregarious, prowl in large packs or herds, and abound in the mountains of Palestine. The collection of so great a number would require both time and assistance. They were probably snared into traps, or caught in pitfalls; and as these creatures are exceedingly numerous about Gaza and the southern parts of Philistia (Hasselquist: cf. Josh 19:3; 1 Sam 13:17), Samson could have had no difficulty, with the aid of servants, in procuring the number here specified” [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997 by BibleSoft].
 - 2) “Rather, ‘jackals,’ which are still very common in Palestine, especially about Joppa and Gaza. 1 Sam 13:17 and Josh 15:28; 19:3, are indications of the abundance of foxes or jackals giving names to places, especially in the country of the Philistines. It belongs to Samson's character, and agrees with the incident about the lion, that he should be an expert hunter. Ovid relates a very curious custom at Rome of letting loose foxes with lighted torches fastened to their tails in the circus at the Cerealia, in commemoration of the damage once done to the standing grain by a fox which a rustic had wrapped in hay and straw and set on fire, and which, running away, put the grain-fields in a blaze. This custom, which may have had a Phoenician origin, is a curious illustration of the narrative” [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997 by BibleSoft].
 - c. Tying two foxes together at the tail, Samson also affixed a firebrand between the two, and released them. This he did with all of the one hundred and fifty pairs of foxes. When he released each pair, they naturally would run for cover, which meant they ran into the wheat fields. The KJV uses the word *corn* for *wheat* (see verses 1 and 5).
 - d. The wheat fields of this part of Palestine are said to have been extensive, extending continuously for thirty miles (see Coffman, p.223f). The damage the fire had on the Philistine economy must have been terrible. Part of the wheat was still standing; part of it had already been cut and gathered into shocks. Since this was the harvest season, there had been no rain; the crops and the countryside were dry. A frightful conflagration resulted, consuming the grain, the vineyards, and the olive trees in its path.
4. Verse 6: "Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire."
 - a. The Philistines soon found out who had done them this great damage. We are not told how they found out; it may have been that someone saw Samson, or that he had openly announced his culpability. He wanted them to know.
 - b. They learned that Samson had burned their wheat fields, and that he had done so because of the treatment his bride's father had shown to Samson. Revealing their cruel nature, the Philistines burned Samson's would-be wife and her family. The wedding guests had threatened to do that very thing (14:15) if she did not entice the solution of the riddle from her husband.
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- c. We are not told why the Philistines murdered this family, but their motive was doubtless one of revenge. They could not attack Samson since he was not present, but they could slay his wife's family. They understood that Samson had burned their grain because his father-in-law had given his wife to another man; their wheat fields would not have been bothered if he had not mistreated Samson.
5. Verses 7-8: "And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam."
- a. The killing of the family of his wife served as a reprisal for the wrongs they had done to Samson (but we may be sure that these Philistines did not intend to do Samson a favor). Despite this, he would nevertheless avenge himself against Israel's enemies (these very Philistines).
- b. His mission as judge called for him to use his miraculous strength against them. Apparently Samson perceived that their actions against his in-laws was an expression of their hatred of him. Since they had slain his in-laws, he would slay them; he would not cease until he had taken his vengeance. "And Samson said unto them, If ye do after this manner, surely I will be avenged of you, and after that I will cease" (Judg. 15:7, ASV).
- c. He smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. "Smiting hip and thigh is a proverbial expression for a cruel, unsparing slaughter, like the German 'cutting arm and leg in two,' or the Arabic 'war in thigh fashion'" (Keil, p.414).
- d. Following this slaughter, Samson went down and dwelled in the top of the rock of Etam. "The *Etam* of this verse is mentioned in 1 Chron. 4:32, along with Ain Rommon and other Simeonitish towns, and is to be sought for on the border of the Negeb and of the mountains of Judah.... The expression 'he went down' suits this place very well, but not the Etam on the mountains of Judah, to which he would have had to go up, and down, from Timnath" (Keil, pp.414f). This rock probably had a cave in which Samson lived for a time.
- e. Judges 15:8: "And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam" (ASV).
- B. Judges 15:9-12: Samson Slays a Thousand Philistines With the Jawbone of an Ass.
1. Verses 9-10: "Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us."
- a. The Philistines were not going to allow Samson's attack to go unanswered. They organized an army, entered into the territory of Judah, and arrayed their forces in Lehi. The word *Lehi* means "jawbone." The name is used by the author, who lived at a later time when Samson's use of a jawbone here came to be the name of the area (verse 19).
- b. The men of Judah inquired of the invaders the purpose of their show of military force. The Philistines stated that they had come to capture Samson and do to him as he had done to those he had slain.
2. Verses 11-13: "Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines *are* rulers over us? what *is* this *that* thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock."
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- a. Three thousand men of Judah went to Etam to get Samson. They were willing to forfeit a fellow Israelite in order to avoid a pitched battle with the Philistines. They were ruled by the Philistines, and obviously believed that they were unable to defeat their oppressors militarily. This disposition may have had some impact on God's plan to throw off their yoke by the strength of Samson. Instead of joining their forces to Samson and driving out the common enemy, they were quite willing to sacrifice the man God had raised up to deliver them.
 - b. Samson explained his action as a simple case of exacting an eye for an eye. The Philistines had done him evil by killing his wife and her family, and he had wreaked vengeance on them for that cruel act.
 - c. The men of Judah stated their purpose in coming, to bind him and deliver him into the hands of his deadly enemies. Samson was willing to be bound, on condition that they would not attack him once he was bound. They promised him that they would do him no harm. They secured him with two new ropes.
3. Verses 14-15: "*And* when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith."
- a. The hatred and fear the Philistines had for Samson burst forth in raucous shouting when they saw him being brought to them in bonds. They fully believed that he was no longer dangerous to them.
 - b. When Samson heard their rejoicing, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he broke the ropes that bound his arms. The statement about "his bands loosed from off his hands" is probably Hebrew parallelism, emphasizing the complete freedom he now had.
 - c. The ropes on his arms broke as though they were nothing more than flax which had been burned: having no strength or real substance. Some things (such as paper) can be burned, leaving behind only an ashy form of their image.
 - d. Taking a jawbone of an ass which was nearby, Samson attacked the Philistines, killing a thousand of them. The number "one thousand" is probably to be understood as a round number. The ferocity of his attack probably put the rest of them to flight, if there were more than one thousand. The Hebrew word translated "new" is the word that means "moist." Some commentators think that he ripped it from the partially-decayed body of an ass. It was at least still moist, meaning that it retained its former strength.
4. Verses 16-17: "And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi."
- a. There is no indication that Samson had on any armor as protection; it is clear that the only offensive weapon he had was the jawbone. In the hands of this man who possessed supernatural strength, it was a very formidable club!
 - b. There is an evident play on words in the poetic statement Samson cited. The words "ass" and "heaps" are the same in Hebrew (Coffman, p.229).
 - c. "The supernatural strength with which Samson rent asunder the fetters bound upon him, when the Philistines thought they had him safely in their power, filled them with fear and awe as before a superior being, so that they fled, and he pursued them, smiting one heap after another, as he overtook them, with an ass's jaw-bone found in the way" (Keil, p.416).
 - d. He tossed the jawbone away, and named the place *Ramathlehi*.
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5. Verses 18-20: "And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? But God clave an hollow place that *was* in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which *is* in Lehi unto this day. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years."
- a. After the exertion of the battle, Samson was thirsty. He called on the Lord to provide him with water, lest he die of thirst, and be overcome by his enemies in this way. In his call to God, he gave the Lord full credit for the victory.
 - b. God split open a hollow place in Lehi where some water was enclosed, causing the water to flow forth as a spring. After drinking deeply, Samson was revived and refreshed. The word "Lehi" is to be understood as the proper name of the area, and not as a reference to the literal jawbone.
 - c. He named this place *Enhakkore*. "Hence the fountain received the name of *En-hakkore*, 'the crier's well which is at Lechi,' unto this day" (Keil, p.417). The area was still called "Lehi" at the time the report was written.
 - d. The author then states that Samson filled the role as Judge for twenty years. Apparently, this remark is intended to summarize the remaining years of Samson's life. The episode detailed in the next chapter occurred at the end of his judgeship which culminated with his death at the Philistine temple.
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JUDGES 16

A. Judges 16:1-3: Samson Removes the Gates of Gaza.

1. Verse 1: "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her."
 - a. Gaza is located about two miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Jamison describes this as "the largest of the five Philistine principal cities, about fifteen miles south-west of Ashkelon, and, like that town, was captured by the tribe of Juda, but re-taken by the Philistines. The object of Samson's visit to this city is not recorded; and, unless he had gone in disguise, it was a perilous exposure of his life in one of the enemy's strongholds" (pp.112f).
 - b. At Gaza, Samson went in unto a harlot he met there. "Samson's judicial labours reached their highest point when he achieved his great victory over the Philistines at Lechi. Just as his love to the daughter of a Philistine had furnished him with the occasion designed by God for the manifestation of his superiority to the uncircumcised enemies of Israel, so the degradation of that love into sensual lust supplied the occasion for his fall which is related in this chapter" (Keil, p.417).
2. Verse 2: "*And it was told* the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed *him* in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him."
 - a. Before long, Samson's presence was discovered by the Philistines, who set a watch lest he should escape. If they had broken into the harlot's dwelling during the night, they could have come to grips with their adversary, but they decided to wait until the morning. They assumed that Samson would leave Gaza early the next morning.
 - b. All night, the guard passed the night quietly at the city gates. Perhaps they slept, which might account for their lack of opposition to his taking away the doors and posts of the gate.
3. Verse 3: "And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that *is* before Hebron."
 - a. Samson arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate and the two posts to which they were attached, and carried them away. It seems strange that the guard did not take action when he removed these items. Probably the greater portion (if not all) of them were asleep. It may also be that any who may have seen what he did were too stricken with terror to do anything about it.
 - b. The gates of ancient cities were sometimes small. Jamison (p.113) states: "The gates of cities, as well as of houses and temples, are generally very low and strait, or narrow, as they appear to have been also in the most ancient times (Ps. 24:7; Luke 13:24). 'On entering Tiberias from the south I could not get through the gate of the city except by stooping close to the mane of my horse. If the gates of Gaza were like those of Tiberias, the act of Samson, who carried them a considerable distance, would still be regarded as an extraordinary feat, but not beyond the limits of credibility' (*Bovet, Voyage en Terre Sainte*, p.285)."
 - c. The gate being narrow, with two posts supporting the doors, Samson could take hold of each post and pull them from their moorings; the doors were attached to the posts, so the entire assembly could be taken in one piece. Even the bar with which the doors were locked was taken.
 - d. Carrying this heavy load, Samson ascended the top of the hill that is at Hebron. "The distance from Gaza to Hebron was about nine geographical miles. To the east of Gaza there is a range of hills which runs from north to south. The highest of them all is one which stands somewhat isolated, about half

an hour to the south-east of the town, and is called *el Montar*....From this hill there is a splendid prospect over the whole of the surrounding country. Hebron itself is not visible from this hill, but the mountains of Hebron are. According to an ancient tradition, it was to the summit of this hill that Samson carried the city gates" (Keil, pp.418f). Map measurements show that the distance between Gaza and Hebron is more like forty miles, so perhaps Keil's comment has a misprint when he placed the distance at nine miles.

- e. The feat is seen to be phenomenal, when the weight of the load and the distance he covered are considered. Some of the journey was uphill, and some was doubtless through loose sand. None but Samson could have done it.

B. Judges 16:4-14: Delilah Tries to Learn the Secret of Samson's Strength.

1. Verse 4: "And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah."
 - a. Coffman (p.237) locates the beginning of the valley of Sorek at thirteen miles southwest of Jerusalem, and that a railroad runs through it, connecting Jerusalem and Jaffa. Its name comes from a variety of grape. Samson's home was nearby.
 - b. The name *Delilah* means "the weak or pining one" (Keil, p.419). Samson loved Delilah, and thus fell under her mercenary character. That she was a harlot we are not able to affirm; that their relationship was merely platonic is highly unlikely. It is clear that her love for Samson was non-existent. She used his love for her as a weapon with which to extract the secret of his immense strength.
 2. Verse 5: "And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver."
 - a. Having learned through hard experience that Samson could not be overpowered, they sought to learn the secret of his power. They thought his miraculous strength was obtained from some amulet he wore; if they could identify the talisman, they could deprive him of it somehow. "There was a certain truth at the foundation of this heathen superstition, inasmuch as this gift of divine grace was really bound up with the possession of a corporeal pledge, the loss of which was followed by the immediate loss of the gift of God" (Keil, p.419).
 - b. The means by which the Philistine leaders hoped to learn the secret were Delilah's charms. They bribed her to get Samson to reveal the secret by enticement. The amount of money offered is put at eleven hundred pieces of silver. The value of this bribe was placed at \$3750 in 1925 (Coffman, p.238).
 3. Verses 6-9: "And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. Now *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known."
 - a. Her first attempt resulted in his telling her that he would be rendered helpless if he were bound with seven withs which were still green. *Withs* were stalks or vines; the number seven carried a special significance to the ancients. Some writers claim that the withs were undried bowstrings.
 - b. She reported to the Philistines what he had said; they supplied her with seven withs, which she used to bind him while he slept. Josephus said that Samson had passed out from drink at the time, but this
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- would have been a violation of his vow (Num. 6).
- c. Thinking that he was now rendered weak, she woke him by announcing that "the Philistines be upon thee." Some of the Philistines were hiding in the chamber, ready to take him in charge. Samson sprang to his feet and broke the withs as threads of tow [fibers of flax] are instantly consumed by fire.
4. Verses 10-12: "And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And *there were* liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread."
- a. On another occasion, when she had set the stage again, Delilah pleaded with Samson to divulge his secret. Likely she cried as she spoke of his having mocked her.
 - b. Continuing to play games with her enticements, Samson said that he could be rendered as weak as ordinary men if he were bound with new ropes, ropes which had never been used.
 - c. Again she believed him, so obtaining new ropes, she bound him with them. Once more, she had secreted Philistines within the chamber. She woke him with the same cry as before, and as before, Samson broke the ropes as though they were mere strings.
5. Verses 13-14: "And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web" (KJV). "Delilah said to Samson, 'Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with.' And he said to her, If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"; So she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, 'The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!' But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom" (NKJV).
- a. The third time she pleaded with him to reveal the truth about his strength, accusing him of having mocked her with lies as on the two former occasions. It seems strange that Samson stayed with her, since he should have known that she was using her charms to elicit information with which he was to be captured by his enemies. He appears to have been very overconfident, perhaps even thinking that his strength was of his own making. His vanity soon led to disaster. A Christian's strength is not of his own design; he operates by God's grace and providence. If we begin thinking that since we have had success in the past, that future triumph is certain, we are doomed to fail.
 - b. This time, Samson claimed that his strength was derived from the seven locks of his head. He has gotten nearer the truth in his statement, and was certainly endangering himself. Delilah was as much his enemy as were the Philistines who were bribing her to uncover his secret.
 - c. Believing him, Delilah fastened the seven locks of his hair with a pin, and summoned his enemies against him. His long hair was probably braided in seven parts; these locks she bound with *a web and a pin*. The device she used is difficult to picture. Jamison describes it as a loom around which Samson's hair was fastened. "It was of a very simple construction: the woof was driven into the warp, not by a reed, but by a wooden spatula; the extremity of the web was fastened to a pin or stake fixed in the wall or ground; and while Delilah sat squatting at her loom in a recess of the chamber, Samson lay stretched on the floor, with his head reclining on her lap..." (p.114).
 - d. The Pulpit Commentary offers this information of this passage: "The seven locks, by which we learn that his mass of hair as a Nazarite was arranged in seven locks or plaits. His resistance was becoming
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weaker, and he now approached the dangerous ground of his unshorn hair. With the web. This must mean the warp, which was already fastened in the loom, and across which Samson's locks were to be woven as the woof. And she fastened it with the pin. The Septuagint and many commentators understand that she used the pin (it is the common word for a tent pin) to fasten the loom or frame to the ground, or to the wall. But a good sense comes out if we understand the phrase to mean, So she struck with the shuttle, i.e. she did what Samson told her to do, viz., wove his locks into the warp which was already prepared. This was done by successive strokes of the shuttle, to which the hair was fastened. To strike with the peg or shuttle may have been the technical phrase for throwing the shuttle with the woof into the warp; and it is a strong argument in favour of this interpretation that it makes her action the simple fulfilment of his directions. He said, 'Weave my locks into the warp. So she struck with the shuttle.' With the pin of the beam, and with the web. The Hebrew word 'ereg cannot mean the beam, as it is here translated; it is the substantive of the verb to weave in ver. 13. Its obvious meaning, therefore, is the woof. The pin of the woof, therefore, is the shuttle, with the woof attached to it, i.e. Samson's hair, which was firmly woven into the warp. He went away with. This is the same word as was applied in ver. 3 to his plucking up the gateposts. Now, with the strength of his neck, he tore up the shuttle which fastened his hair to the warp, and so dragged the whole solid frame along with it. However, as we do not know the technical term of the art of the weaving among the Hebrews and Philistines, nor the precise construction of their looms, some obscurity necessarily attaches to this description. [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

- e. Samson had deceived her again. When she woke him up, he went away, taking the entire apparatus with him.

C. Judges 16:15-20: Samson Reveals the Source of His Strength.

1. Verse 15: "And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*."
 - a. Delilah continued to press him daily to reveal his secret. She demanded to know how he could say he loved her while refusing to take her into his full confidence.
 - b. The case she made may have had a strong appeal to Samson. His love for her was the avenue through which she made her plea. How many men have been victimized by such a scheme? And how many women have been thus deceived by unscrupulous men?
 2. Verses 16-17: "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death; That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man."
 - a. His resolve was gradually weakened by her unending pleas over a period of time, so that his "soul was vexed unto death." He thought that he could resist her efforts no longer. His attraction to her got the better of his judgment, and he revealed the truth.
 - b. Apparently she had never paid close attention to his long hair, and made no connection between his hair and his power. She must have been totally ignorant of the Nazaritic vow. Samson confessed that his hair had never been cut, that he had been a Nazarite unto God from his mother's womb, and that if his hair was shaved off, he would lose his strength. He was aware that his strength was connected to his hair, but more was involved than the hair.
 3. Verse 18: "And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the
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Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand."

- a. Delilah was shrewd enough to recognize Samson's sincerity. She now knew his secret, so summoning the princes of the Philistines who bribed her, she reported to them what she had now learned. They brought the pay-off money.
 - b. Why did Samson trust this woman? She had already shown her treacherous heart to him three times!
 - 1) Did he think that she was incapable of betraying him? Was he so overconfident that he thought he could not lose his strength? Did he believe that he could violate his vow without incurring God's wrath?
 - 2) Christians sometimes, either by design or by ignorance, see how close they can get to the edge without plunging themselves into sin; some think that the only thing between an erring Christian and salvation is a simple request for forgiveness. More is involved! It is impossible for any sinner to be saved without repentance; repentance is produced by a genuine sorrow for sin; this godly sorrow produces a sincere commitment to change his way; and it is followed by a truly reformed life (2 Cor. 7:10; Mt. 3:8). It is difficult for one to repent of a sin which he willfully entered.
 - a) Hebrews 6:1-4: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost."
 - b) Hebrews 10:25-31: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
4. Verses 19-20: "And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him."
 - a. When Samson went to sleep with his head in her lap, she called for a man to cut off his hair. How could this be done without waking him up? It may be as Josephus suggested: that he was in a drunken stupor, but again, his vow did not permit him to drink anything that would make him drunk (Num. 6).
 - b. The deed was done and Samson's strength was gone; he was as any ordinary man now. Delilah began to afflict him, possibly smacking him with her hands or beating him with some instrument. When she determined that his strength was gone, she called for the Philistines.
 - c. Samson awoke out of his sleep, and thought that he could do as he had done before: to shake himself and overpower anyone or anything that stood in his way. He had not at the moment learned that the Lord had departed from him. That is the way sin is: it cannot be identified or felt by the physical
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senses. This great man's sad case illustrates the fact that one can sincerely believe he is right with God, but actually be alienated from the Almighty. We walk by faith, not by sight (or by any earthly method), which means that we are with God only to the extent that we hear, believe, and follow the will of God.

- 1) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
- 2) Romans 10:17: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
- 3) 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
- 4) James 2:14-26: "What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

d. When Samson violated his vow, God was not obligated to continue the miraculous strength which he had given to him.

- 1) Isaiah 59:1-2: " Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear."
- 2) Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

D. Judges 16:21-31: Samson's Capture and Death.

1. Verses 21-22: "But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."
 - a. His enemies knew how to render him incapable of further deviltry against them: they put out his eyes! We are not told how they did this, but probably by using a hot iron, or by gouging his eyes with a sharp instrument.
 - b. They led him bound in fetters of brass to Gaza, where they put him to work grinding in the prison house. A draft animal was used to turn the grindstone under which grain was spread; Samson, who still had his natural strength, was put to this task. His physique may have naturally been large and strong, but his real strength was supernatural.

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- c. With the passage of time, his hair began to grow long again, and clearly Samson began to see the error of his way. Man sins at his own pleasure, and repents with much sorrow. Sin promises great advantages and happiness, but can give nothing but degradation and punishment. Never again would Samson regain his freedom to follow his normal pursuits of life. He had sown to the wind and was reaping the whirlwind.
 2. Verses 23-24: "Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, 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."
 - a. The Philistines convened a great religious gathering for the purpose of honoring their idol Dagon. With shouts of joy, they praised Dagon for having delivered their long-time enemy into their hands. Actually, their treacherous scheme with Delilah had led to Samson's downfall, coupled with his own foolishness. Dagon was a *fish deity*. Keil describes the image as in shape resembling "the body of a fish and with the head and hands of a man (1 Sam. 5:4)" (p.424).
 - b. Embedded in their tributes of praise to Dagon are admissions of the terrible damage Samson had been able to inflict on Philistia: to some significant degree, he had destroyed their country and slain many of their citizens.
 - c. God was not going to allow such irreverence to remain unpunished. On this occasion, as at other times in the Old Testament ages, God vindicated himself and his people (cf. 1 Kings 18). The real battle lines were drawn between the false god Dagon and the Living God of Israel, not merely between Samson and the Philistines.
 3. Verses 25-27: "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 them sport: and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport."
 - a. After the festivities continued for a time, when their hearts were merry, they asked that Samson be brought from the prison house so he could "make sport" for them. Their religious service seems to have been well-supplied with strong drink.
 - b. In some way undescribed by the author, Samson was called on to put on some kind of physical display. His supernatural strength had not as yet been restored, but it may be that he was naturally a very strong man. Following this display, he indicated fatigue by requesting to be allowed to lean against the pillars that supported the temple.
 - c. The building was full of men and women, including all the lords of the land. To suggest the great number present, the report lists those who were on the roof as being about three thousand. It is probable that the total number may have been two or three times that figure.
 - d. Samson's request to lean on the two pillars of the temple shows that he had a plan in mind to pull down the idol's temple upon the leading citizens of this pagan society.
 4. Verse 28 : "And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."
 - a. He knew that he could not accomplish his design without God's help. He prayed to God, with
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- undoubted sincerity, to strengthen him this last time that he might bring vengeance upon the Philistines on account of his two eyes.
- b. "This building seems to have been similar to the spacious and open amphitheatres well known among the Romans, and still found in many countries of the East. They are built wholly of wood. The standing-place for the spectators is a wooden floor resting chiefly upon two midmost pillars, and rising on an inclined plane, so as to enable all to have a view of the area in the centre. In the middle there are two large beams, on which the whole weight of the structure lies, and these beams are supported by two pillars placed almost close to each other, so that when these are unsettled or displaced, the whole pile must tumble to the ground" (JFB, p.115).
 - c. "And Samson called unto the Lord. This is the first mention we have of Samson praying since the memorable occasion when he gave the fountain the name of En-hakkoreh (Judg 15:19, note). Perhaps we may see in this an evidence that his affliction and shame had not been without their effect, in bringing him back to God humbled and penitent. The language is very earnest. 'O Lord, Jehovah, remember me strengthen me only this once, O God!' The threefold name by which he addresses the Almighty implies great tension of spirit. That I may be at once avenged. Meaning at one stroke—he would take one vengeance so terrible that it would be sufficient for his two eyes, which makes very good sense if the Hebrew will bear it. The literal translation would be, that I may be avenged with a vengeance of one stroke. Others take it, that I may be avenged with a vengeance for one of my two eyes, which it is not easy to understand the meaning of" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
5. Verses 29-30: "And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life."
- a. Having prayed for God's help, Samson took hold of the two pillars, one with each hand. He bowed himself to exert the full measure of the strength God gave him for this final task.
 - b. He knew full well that when the building collapsed, he was doomed to die with the Philistines, but he was quite willing to sacrifice himself for the good he would accomplish.
 - c. Using the supernatural strength God restored to him, he pulled the two pillars loose so that the entire building fell in upon itself, crushing to death all that were in it, including himself. We can only wonder whether Delilah was present on this fateful occasion. Those princes who connived with her to learn Samson's secret, and so gained control over him, must have been there; the text reports that all the lords of the Philistines were present.
 - d. Is this a case of suicide? If so, how could Samson be praised by inspiration (Heb. 11:32)? If a man rushes into the thick of battle to try to save his friends, knowing that the odds are so awesome as to make his mission impossible, the loss of his life is the same as though it were suicide. Our Lord willingly went to the cross; did he commit suicide? Certainly not! If Samson had died in a battle with the Philistine army, his death would not have been suicide; his death under the circumstance of the present case was not suicide, for he was seeking to destroy God's enemies, and was willing to sacrifice his life in the process. In a classic case of suicide, the individual destroys himself, usually in a vain attempt to avoid a distasteful situation; he is not so much interested in doing something good for someone else.
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- e. In Samson's final earthly action against the Philistines, he slew more of these enemies than he had slain during all of his preceding engagements with them. His efforts went a long way toward removing the yoke of their oppression from the necks of the Israelites.
6. Verse 31: "Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years."
 - a. When his relatives learned of his death, they came to Gaza, took Samson's body, and buried it in the burying place that his father had. This site was located between Zorah and Eshtaol.
 - b. His work as judge in Israel covered twenty years.
- E. Some of Samson's sins and errors:
1. He chose some evil companions, including the harlot of Gaza and Delilah.
 - a. These women did him no good, only evil:
 - 1) Proverbs 1:10: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (ASV).
 - b. If one marries a child of the devil he will have trouble with his father-in-law! "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).
 - c. We are judged by our companions and we pick our marital mate from our youthful companions. Our choice of companions can, therefore, have a strong effect, on our influence in the here and now, and on our eternal destiny.
 2. He gave in when he was badgered to compromise his faith.
 - a. He revealed his riddle to the woman of Timnath and his Nazaritic vow to Delilah.
 - b. The Bible tells of many who remained steadfast in their convictions, including Joseph and Daniel.
 - c. The devil can be successfully resisted.
 - 1) Matthew 10:22: "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
 - 2) Luke 22:31-32: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
 - 3) James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
 3. He committed fornication.
 - a. His guilt is obvious when he went in unto the harlot at Gaza.
 - 1) Exodus 20:14: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."
 - 2) Judges 16:1: "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her."
 - b. The New Testament forbids all sexual activity outside of scriptural marriage.
 - 1) Matthew 5:27-28: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 7:2: "Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."
 - 4) Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness....and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have
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also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

4. He became unfaithful to his vow.
 - a. He was a Nazarite (Num. 6). "Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean *thing*: For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judg. 13:4-5).
 - b. His revealing the secret of his supernatural strength to Delilah resulted in his hair being cut.
 - c. The attitude that causes one to break one of God's laws can cause him to break all other parts of God word. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10).
 5. His sin of breaking the vow resulted in being separated from God.
 - a. Passages:
 - 1) Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear."
 - 2) Romans 10:17: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
 - 4) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - b. "And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him" (Judg. 16:20).
 - 1) Fleshly senses cannot tell when union with God has been broken.
 - 2) There are no bells or whistles, and no bright light flashes across the sky, when we commit an act of sin. When we are forgiven, there are no manifestations in nature to report that we have been saved. Our connection with God is obtained and maintained by faith.
 6. The cost of his errors was great.
 - a. He lost his sight.
 - b. He lost his freedom.
 - c. He lost his strength.
 - d. He lost his fellowship with his family.
 - e. He lost his life.
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JUDGES 17

- A. There are some striking similarities between the times of Judges 17-18 and our own modern times.
1. It was a time of religious interest, but little real commitment to God's will. Many today attend religious services, but have little genuine concern for the truth of God's word. Some modern sects are experiencing great growth in numbers, but their love for God's truth is limited to only those doctrines and practices which have special interest to them. Only a love for all of God's word will avail.
 - a. Psalms 119:6: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."
 - b. Luke 16:10: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."
 - c. John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - d. James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
 2. It was a time of ignorance of God's word. Micah, his mother, his priest, and the Danites were all willing to follow a program that rivaled God's appointed system.
 3. It was a time when religious fervor was grossly misdirected. Zeal for God and his word is essential, but it must be directed by God's truth. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:1-3).
 4. It was a time of differing standards of religious authority. "In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6),
 5. It was a time of little commitment and dependability. The priest served Micah only until he obtained a better offer. Many today are loyal to God's word or to a congregation only as long as it is to their advantage. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep" (John 10:11-13).
 6. It was a time of superstition. The people of the story placed great value on the symbols (the man-made ephod, the teraphim, the graven and molten images) and rites (they thought that Micah's priest could actually obtain a message from Jehovah. Today, millions place trust in icons of "saints", angels and crosses, as well as in the unsupported word of some preacher. Some even have a misdirected view of copies of the Bible, treating it as a talisman. Many have thought that the reading of certain Biblical passages would cause a wound to stop bleeding.
 7. It was a time when God's word was rejected. "And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh" (Judg. 18:30-31).
- B. Judges 17:1-6: Micah's Mother Fashions an Image.
1. Verses 1-2: "And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver *is* with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed *be thou* of the LORD, my son."
 - a. Micah, who lived in the mountain country of Ephraim, confessed to his mother that it was he who had

- stolen the eleven hundred shekels of silver.
- b. In making his confession, Micah stated that she had cursed in connection with the theft. He openly admitted his guilt, which elicited an expression of praise from his mother for his willingness to tell his fault.
 - c. We are not told why he committed the crime or why he decided to return the money. At least, he showed a measure of honesty that seems to place him above many of his peers.
2. Verses 3-4: "And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah."
- a. He and his mother seem to have had the best of intentions, but their understanding was grossly out of harmony with God's law. She stated that she had dedicated the money to the Lord, and proposed to make a graven image and a molten image, but that she wanted him to take the money.
 - b. The son refused the offer of the money, so his mother took two hundred shekels of the silver and gave it to the founder to be used to make a graven and a molten image. A graven image was one which was carved out of some material, and sometimes overlaid with gold or silver. A molten image was one which had been formed by pouring molten metal into a mold. At the first, she planned to devote the entire eleven hundred shekels to the Lord, but for some unexplained reason she reduced the amount to two hundred.
 - c. These images which the mother had fashioned were put in the house of Micah. There was a time when such an action as that done by these two people would have been punished directly from heaven by divine fiat: "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Lev. 10:1-2).
3. Verse 5: "And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest."
- a. Micah had his own private chapel. He made an ephod and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons to serve as priest: a very convenient arrangement, but one that was utterly out of step with the will of God. No mention is made of the worship being offered to Baal or some other prominent idol. Micah apparently thought that he could worship Jehovah by the means he had provided, being ignorant of (or indifferent to) the command forbidding graven images (Exod. 20).
 - b. The teraphim were some kind of figurines, such as those described in Genesis 31:19: "And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that *were* her father's." Rachel had stolen the teraphim from her father. The Ephraimites descended from Rachel through her son Joseph.
4. Verse 6: "In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but every man did that which was* right in his own eyes."
- a. This statement, in part or in whole, appears again in chapter 18:1, 19:1, and 21:25. It is highly descriptive of those rebellious times within the nation of Israel. The events of the time transpired prior to the time Israel had a king; what men did, they did without fear of being opposed by any strong central government. It was a lawless time, in which a man did what he thought he was strong enough to do.
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- 1) Judges 18:1: "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel."
 - 2) Judges 19:1: "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 Bethlehemjudah."
 - 3) Judges 21:25: "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes."
- b. In the system God had set up in the Mosaic Law, the High priest and his associates were charged with the duty of leading the nation in worship, teaching the people the will of God, and seeing to it that God's will was followed. Elders of each tribe were to govern in civil affairs. In each city, certain respected men filled the local judicial offices, resolving problems of a local nature.
 - c. If God's arrangements had been followed, the terrible situation described here would have been avoided. Rebellion against God brings troubles of many kinds.
- B. Judges 17:7-13: Micah Hires a Levite to Serve as Priest.
1. Verses 7-8: "And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed."
 - a. A certain young man from Bethlehem-Judah came to Micah's place as he made a journey. He is described as a Levite and a member of the tribe of Judah. This situation could exist if his mother was from Judah and his father from Levi. That his primary identity is with the Levitical tribe is seen in his selection to be a priest; his former home had been in Bethlehem of Judah because of his mother's lineage.
 - b. The city is identified as Bethlehem-Judah so as to distinguish it from the Bethlehem that was situated in the territory belonging to Zebulun (Josh. 19:15). The little city of our text was located about six miles from Jerusalem. This man was not a citizen of Bethlehem but had sojourned there.
 - c. He left Bethlehem to find a proper situation in which to settle. As he journeyed, he came to the house of Micah.
 2. Verses 9-10: "And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place*. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in."
 - a. Micah inquired of the young man's home, to which the Levite stated his case. He had left Bethlehem in search of a suitable place to take up residence.
 - b. This information probably seemed too good to be true to Micah. Immediately he invited the young man to stay with him, and be his father and priest. *Father* carries the idea of *advisor and counsellor*. Micah offered him a wage of ten shekels of silver annually, plus a suit of clothing and food. The young Levite recognized a comfortable arrangement, and accepted the offer. Micah did not have a monopoly on ignorance of God's will.
 3. Verses 11-12: "And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah."
 - a. Micah treated the Levite well, accepting him as if he were one of his own sons. Evidently the son
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Micah had formerly consecrated to serve as priest was willing to quietly step aside and let the Levite have the position.

- b. The Levite settled into his new situation, and apparently was content for the present to abide in the house of Micah. But a mere hireling will not stay long if a better arrangement is offered.
4. Verse 13: "Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to *my* priest."
- a. Micah thought that God would surely be good to him now, since he had a genuine Levite to serve him as priest. He must have had some doubts as to his son's qualifications for the priestly office, but now all was well!
 - b. Micah's understanding reflects a high measure of superstition. He seems to think that the presence of a Levite would automatically bring God's blessings upon his house.
 - 1) Some people look at a copy of the Bible as though the material book carries some kind of magical charm. An old superstitious notion held that if someone received a dangerous cut, the mere reading of a certain Old Testament passage would stop the bleeding! Others have had the idea that a copy of the Bible would scare away spooks.
 - 2) Some view the Lord's Supper as some kind of magical meal. To them, to eat it is to bring abundant blessings on the individual regardless of how he lives during the week. Sectarians sometimes partake of "the Lord's Supper" at weddings and funerals, as though this action will have some magical effect on those involved.
 - 3) Neither Micah nor the other Israelites of that ancient time had an exclusive claim on ignorance; many of our day are well-endowed with the same!
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JUDGES 18

A. Judges 18:1-6: Men of Dan Come to Micah's House.

1. Verses 1-2: "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there."
 - a. Again the oft-repeated phrase is stated, that there was no king in Israel during the time of the judges. The point of the statement is to say that there was no central government. Elsewhere, added to this statement is the declaration that every man did what he was brave and powerful enough to do without any fear of retribution from the long arm of the law.
 - b. The people of Dan sought a place to settle. "And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley" (Judg. 1:34).
 - 1) Presently, the Danites dwelt in a parcel of land in the southwest portion of Canaan, surrounded on the north, east, and south by Manasseh, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Judah, with the Mediterranean Sea forming their western boundary. At the time of Numbers 26:43, the men of Dan numbered 64,400. The area assigned to them would have been ample except for the opposition of the Amorites (Judg. 1:34).
 - 2) "The Danites had a territory assigned them as well as the other tribes. But they were the last of the tribes to whom, in the division of the land, an allotment was assigned. Their portion was small, and small as it was, it suffered diminution by the encroachments of their powerful neighbours, the Amorites (ch. 1:34), and still more of the Philistines. It was the most exposed part of the country, not only on the seacoast, where at Joppa (Jaffa) foreign invaders might easily at any time debark to attack them, but on the side of the Philistines; for the plain of Sharon is only a continuation of their country, and there was no kind of barrier or protection between them and the Shephelah" (JFB, p.117).
 - c. Their territory was small, so five of their leading men were sent out to find other land they might obtain. During their search, these five men came to the house of Micah, and stayed there.
2. Verses 3-4: "When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place?* and what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest."
 - a. At Micah's house, they recognized the voice of the Levite who served as Micah's priest. This can be understood in two ways. They may have known the young Levite from earlier times; their homeland was not far from Bethlehem. Another possibility is the fact that the Levite may have had a distinctive speech or tone which was peculiar to his former home. Peter's speech revealed that he was a Galilean.
 - 1) Matthew 26:73: "And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee."
 - 2) Luke 22:59: "And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this *fellow* also was with him: for he is a Galilaeen."
 - b. The travellers inquired as to how the Levite had come to be at this place, and what he was doing here. The Levite explained his situation to them fully. Micah had not told his visitors about the priest,

perhaps fearing their opposition to the arrangement.

3. Verses 5-6: "And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go."
 - a. The Danites offered no opposition to Micah's priest; instead, they asked the priest whether God would prosper them on their mission. They had enough faith in God to know to ask. The priest replied that they were to journey in peace and that the Lord would prosper their way. He spoke from his own mind, not by revelation from God.
 - b. "The Danites expressed no emotions either of surprise or of indignation at a Levite daring to assume the priestly functions, and at the existence of a rival establishment to that of Shiloh. They are ready to seek, through means of the teraphim, the information that could only be lawfully applied for through the high priest's Urim; and, being thus equally erroneous in their views and habits as Micah, showed the low state of religion, and how much superstition prevailed in all parts of the land" (JFB, p.117).

B. Judges 18:7-13: The Men of Dan Found Land They Could Conquer.

1. Verse 7: "Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man."
 - a. Leaving Micah's house, the Danites traveled on to Laish, a place located about 25 miles southeast of Sidon. They were impressed at the easy lifestyle of the inhabitants of Laish, how they dwelt quiet and secure, in keeping with the usual manner of the Zidonians. The people apparently were Phoenicians from Sidon (Zidon). They had no one in the land who exercised authority.
 - b. "The place was very secluded, the soil rich in the abundance and variety of its produce, and the inhabitants, following the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, lived in their fertile and sequestered valley, according to the Zidonian style of ease and security, happy among themselves and maintaining little or no communication with the rest of the world. The discovery of this northern paradise seemed, to the delight of the Danite spies, an accomplishment of the priest's prediction, and they hastened back to inform their brethren in the south both of the value of their prize and how easily it could be made their prey" (JFB, p.117).
 2. Verse 8-10: "And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye? And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good: and *are* ye still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth."
 - a. Returning to their native cities of Zorah and Eshtaol, they brought a glowing report of what they had found. They urged their brethren to arise quickly and go to take possession.
 - b. Their arguments extolled the richness of the land and described the vulnerability of the inhabitants. They honestly believed that God had led them to find and possess this new place.
 3. Verse 11: "And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war."
 - a. From Zorah and Eshtaol, an armed company of six hundred was dispatched to take possession of Laish and the area surrounding it.
 - b. From the intelligence gained by the scouts, the 600-man force was deemed sufficient to conquer and
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control Laish. Laish is also known as Leshen. It was about 45 miles southwest of Damascus, and was situated between the northern portions of Naphtali and Manasseh (the portion of Manasseh which was on the eastern side of Jordan).

4. Verses 12-13: "And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjathjearim. And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah."
 - a. Kirjathjearim was situated in Judah, where Dan and Benjamin met. The Danite military force camped near this city, at a place later known as "the camp of Dan" (Mahanehdan).
 - b. Continuing their journey northward, they passed into Ephraim, coming to the house of Micah. Obviously, reports from the five scouts included information about Micah and his priest. In fact, the five spies were in the present company.

C. Judges 18:14-21: The Danites Convince the Young Levite to Serve as Their Priest.

1. Verse 14: "Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do."
 - a. Calling their attention to the fact that there were in Micah's houses an ephod, teraphim, a graven image, and a molten image, the five spies indicated that the presence of these items demanded action on the part of their brethren.
 - b. The scouts had reported on their good fortunes in finding a suitable place to which the Danites could emigrate, which they doubtless attributed to the positive words the priest has spoken, they now intimated that these items and the priest would make excellent acquisitions for the emigrants.
 2. Verses 15-17: "And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even* unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war."
 - a. The armed party stopped at Micah's place. The five scouts entered the house where the Levite lived, and took the items named earlier. The priest was with the six hundred men at the gate. No harm was intended for the priest, and no threat had been made toward him.
 - b. The Danites were making the same great error that Micah had made earlier. Neither Micah nor the Danites were authorized to set up a rival system to the tabernacle. Although we may properly assume that both parties honestly thought they were doing right, their actions were certainly opposed to God's law. Those times were characterized by high religious interests, which were followed without due regard to the written revelation God had given. Our own times are remarkably similar to these ancient days!
 3. Verses 18-20: "And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye? And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?"
 - a. When the five scouts came out of the house bearing the ephod, the teraphim and the images, the priest demanded to know what they were doing.
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- b. The reply was quick and inviting: hold your peace and come with us; be a father and priest to us, for it is better to serve in this capacity for an entire family in Israel rather than for one man only.
4. Verses 20-21: "And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them."
 - a. The priest's fears allayed, his heart was glad for the offer; he took the ephod, the teraphim, and the graven image, and went with the Danites.
 - b. They put their children, animals, and possessions in front of the fighting men, fearing an attack by Micah and others from the rear.
 - c. The entire picture of this priest and the tools of his trade is a sorry story of the degraded state of their religion. "In proportion to the slender influence religion wields over the heart, the greater is the importance attached to external rites; and in the exact observance of these the conscience is fully satisfied, and seldom or never molested by reflections on the breach of minor morals" (JFB, p.118).
- D. Judges 18:22-31: The Danites Capture the Land they Sought.
 1. Verses 22-24: "*And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, What aileth thee?"
 - a. The precaution of having the fighting men act as a rear guard proved to be necessary. Micah and his cohorts gave chase and overtook the Danites.
 - b. The men of Dan demanded to know what the trouble was, saying "What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?" Micah replied that they had taken his gods and his priest, and that he had nothing of importance left.
 2. Verses 25-26: "And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house."
 - a. The Danites indicated their intention of keeping his gods and his priest, and warned him about raising his voice against them lest he lose his own life and the lives of those with him.
 - b. Micah knew that he was overmatched, that the Danites spoke from a position of strength. His only recourse was to concede the loss of his gods and priest, and return home with a whole skin. He knew the Danites would do what they threatened.
 3. Verses 27-29: "And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they had no business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by Bethrehab. And they built a city, and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city *was* Laish at the first."
 - a. The Danites came to Laish, attacked and slew the population, and burned the city. The inhabitants had made no solid plans for defending the city, and they were too far from Zidon to get any help from them in time; they had no ties with any other people from whom they could obtain help.
 - b. Laish lay in a valley near Bethrehab. The Danites raised a city of their own in this valley, and settled

in to conduct the normal affairs of life. They called the name of their city *Dan*, after the name of the father of their tribe. At the first, however, it was still known as Laish.

4. Verses 30-31: "And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh."
 - a. They set up the graven image, and Jonathan and his sons served as priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. "Their distance secluded them from the rest of the Israelites; and doubtless this, which was their apology for not going to Shiloh, was the cause of perpetuating idolatry among them for many generations" (JFB, p.119).
 - b. The Jonathan of the passage is the Levite of this story; after his tenure as priest was over, his sons took his place. He is identified further as the son of Gershom; some manuscripts list Gershom's father as Moses, although the text calls him Manasseh.
 - 1) Judges 18:30: "And the children of Dan set up for themselves the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land" (ASV).
 - 2) Keil notes that the difference between the names *Moses* and *Manasseh* is slight, distinguished in the Hebrew only by a slight change in spelling. Whether the Gershom indicated was actually the son of Moses is not of great importance to understanding the story. It is certainly possible that Jonathan could have been his descendant. It is also possible that the names Gershom and Manasseh, who were of the tribe of Levi since the priest of the story is clearly identified as a Levite, could have been given to other men.
 - c. "The time cannot be determined with perfect certainty, as all that can be clearly inferred from ver. 12, as compared with chapt. 13:25, is, that it took place some time before the days of Samson....In all probability this took place shortly after the death of Joshua, as we may infer from ver. 30..." (Keil, pp.433f). This conclusion is subject to disagreement. We have no concrete evidence placing this story at the very beginning of the period of the judges.
 - d. Jonathan and his son continued as priests in Dan *until the day of the captivity of the land*. If the Assyrian captivity is meant, then the report of the text was not made until 721 B.C. or later, unless the statement is somehow prophetic. In 2 Kings 15:29, Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria captured the population of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali, where Dan was situated; this was about 750 B.C.).
 - 1) But both of these conclusions are made untenable by the statement in verse thirty-one that Micah's graven image remained at Dan while the tabernacle was at Shiloh. The tabernacle was at Shiloh until the time of Eli and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:3ff; 3:21; 4:3). It was thence removed to Nob (1 Sam. 21); during the reign of David it was at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39; 21:29).
 - 2) Citing the above facts, Keil observes: "Consequently 'the house of God' only stood in Shiloh till the reign of Saul, and was never taken there again. If therefore Micah's image, which the Danites set up in Dan, remained there as long as the house of God was at Shiloh, Jonathan's sons can only have been there till Saul's time at the longest, and certainly cannot have been priests at this sanctuary in Dan till the time of the Assyrian captivity" (p.440).
 - 3) David would not have tolerated the image worship at Dan during his tenure as king.
 - 4) "All these difficulties preclude our explaining the expression, 'the day of the captivity of the land,' as referring to either the Assyrian or Babylonian captivity. It can only refer to some event which

took place in the last years of Samuel, or the first part of the reign of Saul...With the carrying away of the ark of the covenant [by the Philistines, 1 Sam. 4:21f], the tabernacle lost its significance as a sanctuary of Jehovah" (Keil, p.441).

JUDGES 19

A. Judges 19:1-15: A Levite and His Concubine.

1. Verses 1-4: "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 Bethlehemjudah. And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Bethlehemjudah, and was there four whole months. And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there."
 - a. A certain Levite, obviously a different man from the Levite of the preceding chapters, took a concubine as a wife from the city of Bethlehem in Judah. She played the harlot against him, and then returned to her father's house. That such things as these could occur in Israel was possible because of the depressed state of morality and spirituality at the time.
 - b. Deuteronomy 24:4: "Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." It was unscriptural for the man to take his wife back after her escapade. The RSV asserts that the Levite and his wife had had a quarrel, which precipitated her going home to her father.
 - c. The husband learned of his wife's whereabouts, and after four months, he went to the house of his father-in-law to seek a reconciliation with his wife. He was invited into the house by his wife, which indicates reconciliation; he lodged there for three days. The husband had brought a servant and two donkeys.
 2. Verses 5-6: "And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way. And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry."
 - a. The woman's father, evidently wanting to have his daughter around him as long as possible, pleaded with her husband to stay another day.
 - b. He persuaded the Levite to eat and drink, and to spend another night with him.
 3. Verses 7-10: "And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them. And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home. But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which *is* Jerusalem; and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him."
 - a. Having spent the fourth night with his father-in-law, the Levite arose on the fifth morning with the definite intention to be on his way. His host persuaded him, however, to stay long enough to eat another meal.
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- b. When he arose to take his leave, the host tried to persuade him to stay yet another night, since it was afternoon already, and night was not far away. The Levite refused the invitation, and began his journey. He would have been much better off had he remained another night, in view of the subsequent events.
4. Verses 11-15: "*And* when they *were* by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that *is* not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah. And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah. And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by Gibeah, which *belongeth* to Benjamin. And they turned aside thither, to go in *and* to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that took them into his house to lodging."
 - a. Nightfall found them near Jebus, which was later to be known as Jerusalem. Joshua had captured this city from the Jebusites (Josh. 10:23; 12:10), but the enemies later re-occupied it. It was left to David to capture the city many years later. " And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither" (2 Sam. 5:6).
 - b. At the present time, the Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem, which the Levite knew, and thus refused to "turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel."
 - c. Believing they could find friendlier lodgings among the Israelite population, the Levite insisted on pressing on to Gibeah or Ramah. Jerusalem was about six miles from Bethlehem; Gibeah was about four miles beyond Jerusalem; Ramah was a few miles farther on. Again, the servant's suggestion that they lodge at Jerusalem would have averted the tragic events which later were to occur.
 - d. The sun had gone down by the time they reached Gibeah. They entered the city, and sat down in one of the streets. For a while, the travellers were ignored by the citizens.
- B. Judges 18:16-21: The Levite is Invited to Stay with an Old Man in Gibeah.
1. Verses 16-17: "And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place *were* Benjamites. And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?"
 - a. At nightfall, an old man entered the city from his work in the nearby fields. The people of Gibeah were from the tribe of Benjamin, but the old gentleman was from Ephraim.
 - b. The old man, recognizing them as travellers, asked them of their destination and from where had they come.
 2. Verses 18-19: "And he said unto him, We *are* passing from Bethlehemjudah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence *am* I: and I went to Bethlehemjudah, but I *am now* going to the house of the LORD; and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing."
 - a. Giving him a report of their journey, the Levite stated that he lived in Ephraim, and was bound to the house of the Lord. The tabernacle was located at Shiloh, which was within the territory belonging to Ephraim. Keil states that the man was only saying that he worked at the Tabernacle.
 - b. The Levite told the old man that he had not been invited into anyone's house at Gibeah, even though
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he had with him food for the animals and people of his little company, and even had a servant to tend to their needs. In other words, all he needed was a safe place to stay; there would be no expense to their keep.

3. Verses 20-21: "And the old man said, Peace *be* with thee; howsoever *let* all thy wants *lie* upon me; only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink."
 - a. Obviously, there was a danger in staying on the streets then at that place, as there is today in America. He invited them to abide with him.
 - b. Not only did he offer them shelter, he also provided for their needs. They washed their feet, and partook of the old man's food and drink.

C. Judges 19:22-30: Certain Wicked Men of Gibeah Abused the Concubine.

1. Verses 22-24: "*Now* as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not *so* wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly. Behold, *here is* my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing."
 - a. As the old man and his guests ate, certain "sons of Belial" surrounded the house, demanding that the Levite be brought out to them "that we may know him." Their desire was not merely to get acquainted! These were homosexual men who were demanding that the guest be given to them for their perverted lusts. This was the very same demand that the perverts of Sodom made concerning the angels who visited Lot (Gen. 19).
 - b. The old man offered to give these *animals* his own virgin daughter and his guest's concubine, and so protect his guest from the heinous intentions of these sons of Belial.
 - c. Homosexuality has been foisted off on our society as a perfectly acceptable lifestyle. Major denominations have taken steps which permit people who openly practice this vile manner of life into their membership; some have taken this plan a step farther, and have allowed these perverts to enter the pulpit. A generation ago, homosexuality was hardly mentioned; it was certainly not countenanced by any right-thinking person. It would have been beyond belief for any who professed to believe the Bible to think that one could be a Christian and a homosexual. When an individual or a denomination denies clear Bible truths regarding the plan of salvation and worship, it is only a short step to denying its authority in matters of morality.
 - d. Ancient societies learned the hard way to exclude homosexual conduct for the common good of all mankind. The civil codes developed through the centuries which outlawed prostitution, gambling, and homosexuality, grew out of hard experiences. Not only does the Bible forbid such things, but human experience has shown that these practices are hurtful in every conceivable way. Modern America has forgotten the lessons of the past. When infidels are allowed to set the standards, the future becomes exceedingly bleak for later generations.
 2. Verses 25-28: "But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light. And her lord rose up in the morning, and
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opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place."

- a. Those comprising the mob outside refused the offer. The man sent out the concubine anyway. The beasts outside were too fearful or too weak to force their will on the men in the house, and contented themselves to abusing the concubine all night. One can well-imagine the frightful atrocities the woman suffered from these *beasts*.
 - b. When morning came, they let her go. She was able to painfully made her way to the house where her husband, who should have been her protector, abode in safety. Apparently, she died at the threshold before her husband came out after the sun arose. When he left the house, he was intending to continue his journey, having given up any hope of seeing his wife alive again.
 - c. He commanded the dead girl to get up, but of course she could not answer or obey. Her husband put her body on one of the animals, and continued his journey home.
3. Verses 29-30: "And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak *your minds*."
- a. When he reached home, he cut the body of his wife into twelve pieces, and sent one part of the grisly message to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Obviously, an oral message accompanied the package.
 - b. "Sending the dissected pieces of the corpse to the tribes was a symbolical act, by which the crime committed upon the murdered woman was placed before the eyes of the whole nation, to summon it to punish the crime, and was naturally associated with a verbal explanation of the matter by the bearer of the pieces" (Keil, p.446).
 - c. Compare 1 Samuel 11:7: "And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent."
4. "We should not leave this tragic episode without observing the low estimate which the men of that era placed upon the value of women. Not only did the men of this chapter offer a virgin daughter and a concubine to satiate the lust of the savage homosexuals of Gibeah, even Abraham offered to sacrifice Sarah to save himself (Genesis 12:10-20). Women should beware of forsaking the principles of the Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who alone, has elevated woman above the humiliations that marked her status in the Pre-Christian era. Satan is today offering women all kinds of inducements to turn against the teachings of Christ; but once those teachings are rejected, woman will quickly find herself again treated as a chattel. India supplies the only proof of this that is needed" (Coffman, p.289).
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JUDGES 20

A. Judges 20:1-7: The Israelites Assemble to Address the Problem.

1. Verses 1-2: "Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpeh. And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword."
 - a. The Israelites were greatly incited over the criminal act perpetuated against the woman of the context. All the tribes on the west of Jordan were present, along with those on the east side (the land of Gilead). The tribe of Benjamin may not have been included, for the offense was committed by members of their clan. The extent of the gathering is described as including men from Dan to Beersheba (from the northernmost to the southernmost limits of Israelite territory).
 - b. The fact that the city of Dan is identified by that name lends credence to the belief that the events of Judges 17-18 took place earlier, not long after Joshua's death. The city was not called Dan at the first, but wore the name Laish (18:29).
 - c. The place of assembly was Mizpeh, which was a city of Benjamin, located only a few miles from Gibeah, the place where the tragedy occurred. It was later on the border between Judah and Israel (1 Kings 15:22; 2 Chron. 16:6). Saul gathered the people there (1 Sam. 7:5ff; 10:17). Gedaliah lived there after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:23; Jer. 40:6; 41:1ff). The spelling is given here as *Mizpeh* but in other places it is *Mizpah*.
 - d. The Israelite army that was assembled on the present occasion was numbered at 400,000 sword-wielding soldiers. The leading men of the nation were present. These all were gathered "unto the Lord." This phrase does not declare that the tabernacle was there, but that the nation considered themselves to be under God's guidance. Possibly the high priest was there and made use of the Urim and Thummim.
 2. Verse 3: "(Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell *us*, how was this wickedness?"
 - a. The Benjaminites learned of the gathering of the nation at Mizpeh. Some writers have suggested that the twelve pieces of the woman's corpse may have been sent to the other eleven tribes, with the extra part being sent to the part of Manasseh on the east side of Jordan. It is possible, however, that a piece was also sent to Benjamin.
 - b. When the tribes had congregated, the leaders inquired of the Levite the purpose for the call. Probably the messengers delivering the grisly packages gave a summary report of the case, for the delivery of the body parts only would not have said anything about the problem. The Levite was called on to furnish the full details of the problem.
 3. Verses 4-7: "And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, *and* thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. Behold, ye *are* all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel."
 - a. The Levite reported that he and his concubine entered Gibeah, seeking lodging for the night. The men of Gibeah beset the house, intending to kill him. This fact is not expressly stated in the foregoing
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account (chapter 19), but that would doubtless have been the result if those vicious men had obtained their initial demand. The sexual assault of the man would not have ceased until the lusts of the whole mob had been satiated.

- b. His report (unless it is only given in brief here) did not include all the details. He did not tell how the mob got hold of the woman, but he stated plainly that they forced her to the extent that she died. His report did not specify that only a part of Gibeah's men were responsible, however the fact that the citizens did not take action to prevent it or to punish it shows the culpability of the entire city.
- c. He next reported that he divided the body of his concubine, and sent the parts to the whole nation, reasoning that the men who made the attack had committed "lewdness and folly in Israel." He closed his statement with a request for their "advice and counsel."
- d. Coffman and others think that the Levite only told a half-truth in his report, and that with this slanted statement he was able to arouse Israel to a state of frenzied anger. However, he reported the basic essential of the episode, giving enough true information to properly incite the righteous indignation of the God-fearing Israelites. Realizing that the Levite's statement may have only been recorded in a condensed form, and in the absence of proof that he did not tell the whole truth, we conclude that he endeavored to give a fair and accurate report of the events. His servant and his Ephraimite host could confirm his statement.

B. Judges 20:8-17: Israel and Benjamin Prepare to do Battle.

1. Verses 8-11: "And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any *of us* go to his tent, neither will we any *of us* turn into his house. But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* by lot against it; And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man."
 - a. To their credit, the men of Israel decided to take united action against the guilty city. They vowed not to return home until they had settled the issue properly. The law prescribed capital punishment for this capital offense. "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel" (Deut. 22:22). In the present case, the woman was an unwilling participant, making the offense extremely grave for the "sons of Belial" who committed the crime.
 - b. To go up *by lot* against Gibeah was to "deal with it as with the towns of the Canaanites, conquer it, lay it in ashes..." (Keil, p.448). But perhaps the "lot" was used to select the ten percent of the forces to provide the supplies for the fighting men. The first wave of attackers was also decided by lot (vs. 18).
 - c. "The words we will go up are not in the Hebrew, but are supplied by the Septuagint, who very likely found in their Hebrew copy the word *na'aleh*, we will go up, which has since (perchance) fallen out of the Hebrew text from its resemblance to the following word *'aleha* against it. The sense will then be, Not one of us will shrink from the dangers of the war; but we will cast lots who shall go up against Gibeah, and who shall be employed in collecting victuals for the army, 40,000 having to be told off for the latter service. And exactly in the same spirit (if indeed the answer was not actually given by lot) they inquired of the Lord who should go up first (in ver. 18), and, we may presume also, who should follow in the subsequent attacks, though this is omitted for brevity. Others, however, think the words against it by lot are purposely abrupt, and that the meaning is that Israel would deal with Gibeah as they had done with the Canaanites, viz., destroy their city, and divide its territory by lot among the

other tribes, after the analogy of Josh 18:8-10. But this interpretation is not borne out by what actually happened, nor is the phrase a likely one to have been used" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

- d. The great assembly was "knit together as one man." There is strength in unity, and weakness in division. Compare Acts 4:32: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."
2. Verses 12-14: "And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness *is* this that is done among you? Now therefore deliver *us* the men, the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel: But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel."
 - a. The Benjaminites were not present in these deliberations. After the commitment was reached to go to war, a group of representatives was sent to Benjamin, asking about the "wickedness" that had been done in their midst, and demanding that the leaders hand over the "children of Belial" at Gibeah for execution. The guilt of the crime was demonstrated by the dismembered body of the concubine.
 - b. If the people of Benjamin were interested in truth and justice, they would have handed over the culprits gladly, but they rejected the demand. A tragic civil war could have been avoided if they had done right. The Benjaminites showed the unchangeable nature of their decision by summoning their fighting men for battle. "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29:1).
 - c. The Benjaminites took the side of the offenders, which led to civil war. Those who died in consequence of the ensuing battles, and the near-destruction of the tribe of Benjamin, are an outgrowth of the decision here made.
 3. Verses 15-17: "And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men. Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair *breadth*, and not miss. And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these *were* men of war."
 - a. The forces of Benjamin numbered 26,000 soldiers, plus 700 chosen fighters from Gibeah. Their army included 700 men who were left-handed sling-throwers, who could sling a stone at a tiny target and not miss. The sling was a deadly weapon in the hands of a skillful man. With a single throw using a sling, David was able to slay mighty Goliath (1 Sam. 17). The sling was a dangerous weapon up to about 200 yards.
 - b. Israel had an army of 400,000 men of war. Seemingly, their superior forces were so tremendous, that the little army of Benjamin had no chance. A wise general has ways of turning the overwhelming strength of an enemy against itself.
 - c. In Numbers 26:38-41, the tribe of Benjamin had 45,600 fighting men. The whole nation had a combined force of 601,730 soldiers. In the present case, both of these numbers had been reduced by about one-third, which indicates the attrition of the wars they had fought in the meantime. It is possible, of course, that not all of the Israelite men of war was present, but that is unlikely.

C. Judges 20:18-25: Benjamin Wins Two Victories.

1. Verses 18-19: "And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah *shall go up* first. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah."
 - a. The Israelites decided at this point, after having committed themselves to go to war, to approach God to request his counsel. This was a good decision, but it should have been done prior to committing themselves to do battle.
 - b. Since *house of God* is the meaning of *Bethel*, it is maintained by some that reference is to the city of Bethel, that it was to Bethel that Israel went to consult God, rather than to the tabernacle. Verse 27 says that the ark of the covenant was located "there in those days." Does this mean that the tabernacle was at Shiloh and the ark of the covenant was at Bethel? Or does the verse simply say that the ark of the covenant, along with the tabernacle, was at the place meant? Bethel was only a short distance from Mizpeh, but Shiloh was only a few miles further. The point is of small relative significance; what is highly meaningful is their desire to obtain God's guidance and blessing. Keil suggested ✠ the ark of the covenant had been brought from Shiloh temporarily, to serve during the present war (p.453).
 - c. The Israelites were clearly in disobedience to God; the Benjaminites were also in rebellion against him. Both segments of the nation needed divine correction, which occurred in the following experiences. Israel asked God which of the tribes should first do battle with Benjamin; he indicated Judah. Feeling confident of success, Israel went forth.
2. Verses 20-21: "And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men."
 - a. The fighting men of Judah engaged the men of Benjamin, and were soundly defeated. Twenty-two thousand of Judah's army were slain.
 - b. The outcome of the battle should have reminded Israel of the disastrous first battle their predecessors had at Ai (Josh. 7). That earlier defeat at the hands of the ungodly men of Ai happened because Israel had sin in their own camp. It did not matter that the people of Ai were far more ungodly than Israel; Israel had the information to do right. While Benjamin was guilty of gross sins against God, yet Israel was not unspotted. In his providence, God was about to punish both parties.
 - c. "Gibeah (sometimes called Geba, literally, the hill) was doubtless very difficult to assault, and the steep approach greatly favoured the defenders. The men of Judah probably came up carelessly, and with an overweening confidence, and so met with a terrible disaster. The word destroyed here used is the same as is applied to the destroying angel (Ex 12:23; 2 Sam 24:16; see also 2 Chron 24:23)" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - 1) Exodus 12:23: "For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite *you*."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 24:16: "And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite."
 - 3) 2 Chronicles 24:23: "And it came to pass at the end of the year, *that* the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people

from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus."

3. Verses 22-23: "And the people 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. (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)"
 - a. Failing to recognize the cause of their defeat, the men of Israel consoled themselves with the belief that since God had directed that Judah should first enter the fray, that God implied that he would be with them.
 - b. They wept before the Lord the rest of the day, until evening, and asked his counsel again. This time, they were more specific in their request: "Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?" God's plain reply was, "Go up against him." His response, however, did not mean that his approval of their plan promised success in the battle. It only meant that it was God's will that they attack Benjamin.
4. Verses 24-25: "And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword."
 - a. The Israelites launched another attack the next day, and eighteen thousand men of the Israelites fell in the fighting. This defeat was a crushing blow to Israel! It was beyond their comprehension. How could it be that God directed them to prosecute the war, but permit them to suffer such a humiliating defeat?
 - b. Forty thousand Israelites had been killed in the two battles; the enemy started out with only twenty-six thousand men. We are not told the number of dead from the Benjamite camp, but evidently their losses were not great. The success of Benjamin undoubtedly gave them a high degree of confidence, possibly even to cause them to believe they were invincible.
 - c. Israel had decided at the first that ten percent of their forces would be assigned the task of providing food for the whole army. It is of more than passing interest that in the two battles, they lost ten percent of their men (40,000 men).

D. Judges 20:26-35: Benjamin is Defeated.

1. Verses 26-28: "Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, (for 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 in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand."
 - a. If Israel had fasted and prayed at the first, before deciding on their course of action, perhaps they would have met with immediate success. But they decided on their plan, and then asked God to give his blessing on it. That was their primary mistake in this episode. Along with their fasting and prayers, they offered certain sacrifices unto the Lord.
 - b. "Led to reflection, they became sensible of their guilt in not repressing their national idolatries, as well as in too proudly relying on their superior numbers, and the precipitate rashness of this expedition. Having humbled themselves by prayer and fasting, as well as observed the appointed method of expiating their sins, they were assured of acceptance as well as of victory. The presence and services of Phinehas on this occasion help us to ascertain the chronology thus far, that the date of this

- occurrence must be fixed shortly after the death of Joshua" (JFB, pp.123f).
- c. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, served the tabernacle in those days. Israel approached God through Phinehas, asking whether they should continue the war against Benjamin. God plainly told them to fight again on the morrow and that he would deliver Benjamin into their hands.
 - d. "Sat there. Sitting with the Jews, especially on the ground, was the attitude of grief and mourning (Job 2:13; Isa 47:1,5; Lam 2:10, etc.). The Jews at the present day often sit on the ground at the place of wailing in Jerusalem. Before the Lord, i.e. before the tabernacle (see Judg 11:11, note), Fasted until evening. The usual time for terminating a fast among the Jews, as at the present day among Mahomedans. For similar fasts on solemn occasions of national guilt or grief, see 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Sam 1:12; Jer 36:9; Neh 9:1; Joel 1:14, etc. Peace offerings. Usually thank offerings (Lev 3; 7:11,12), but applicable to any voluntary sacrifice of which the flesh might be eaten the same day, or the day following, by the offerer (Lev 7:15,16). Doubtless the people at the close of their fast ate the flesh of these peace offerings" [from The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 29-32: "And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times. 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 thirty men of Israel. And the children of Benjamin said, They *are* smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways."
- a. Israel had a better plan in mind when they entered this third battle. They set men in ambush around Gibeah before sending their men against the city. From Gibeah's viewpoint, the fighting was to follow the same pattern as before.
 - b. Seeing the Israelites approaching Gibeah in force, the Benjaminites came forth to engage them. As Benjamin pressed their counterattack, Israel began to fall back, just as they had done earlier. About thirty men of Israel were slain at this stage of the battle. The fighting was done on the nearby highways, one of which led to *Bethel*, and the other led into Gibeah.
 - c. Without realizing their tactical error, Benjamin thought Israel was being routed as on the two other days. The strategy was to draw the Benjaminites away from the city, and have the ambushers to take Gibeah. The battle plan was the same as that employed by Joshua in defeating Ai.
3. Verses 33-35: "And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baaltamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, *even* out of the meadows of Gibeah. And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil *was* near them. And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjaminites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword."
- a. The Israelites who had initiated the attack against Gibeah, arose from their place and retreated to Baaltamar, where they quickly set themselves in array against the pursuing Benjaminites. As this action was being completed, the ambushers rose from their concealment and rushed into Gibeah. These ambushers, who numbered ten thousand men, left their hiding places and approached Gibeah across the plains (meadows) near the city.
 - b. The Benjaminites did not realize the grave danger they were in until it was too late. The fleeing
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Israelites turned back to attack them, and overwhelmed them with their superior force. The number of Benjaminites who were slain that day totaled 25,100 men.

E. Judges 20:36-48: The Losses Benjamin Suffered.

1. Verses 36-39: "So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjaminites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah. And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew *themselves* along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword. 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. And 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."
 - a. In this passage, the inspired penman gives another description of the battle. Israel approached the city; the men of Benjamin left Gibeah to counterattack; Israel fell back, drawing the men of Benjamin further from the city.
 - b. The ambushers arose from their concealment when Benjamin had gotten far enough away from the city; these "liers in wait" rushed into the city, and slew those who were inside.
 - c. A plan had been developed for the ambushers to set fire to the city as a sign that Gibeah had been taken. When the main force saw the city in flames, they pressed a great counterattack upon Benjamin (see verses 40-43).
2. Verses 40-44: "But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjaminites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven. And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them. Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them which *came* out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them. *Thus* they enclosed the Benjaminites round about, *and* chased them, *and* trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sunrising. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valour."
 - a. The hearts of the Benjaminites must have melted when they beheld their city on fire. This was the signal for Israel to re-enter the battle. Only now did the men of Benjamin recognize their danger. Their arrogance had destroyed them: "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov. 16:18-19).
 - 1) Many eloquent warnings are given in the Scriptures against pride. Many examples of men and women who fell victim to this sin have their stories revealed for all to read in God's word. "Be not highminded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20). The Pharisee (Luke 18) showed his arrogant spirit by the words of his prayer. One with a haughty spirit is one who has his head held high; in looking up, he cannot see where he walks. David gloried in the great number in Israel, but God took away his pride by pestilence (2 Sam. 24). Hezekiah boasted of his treasure, but the Lord caused him to lose it (2 Kings 20:14-18). When King Nebuchadnezzar became proud of his Babylon, he lost his throne (Dan. 4:28-37). See also the case of the vain women of Zion (Isa. 3:16-26). Our pride is a great danger.
 - 2) The humble publican (Luke 18) is placed in stark, favorable contrast to the highminded Pharisee. Solomon [Prov. 16:19] declares that it is better to be of humble spirit and be united with men of low estate (spiritually and materially), than to have a proud disposition and share in the spoils

obtained by others of a similar heart.

- b. The Benjaminites tried to flee into the wilderness to avoid annihilation, but they were surrounded by Israel and slain. Eighteen thousand men of valor from Benjamin fell during this stage of the battle.
3. Verses 45-48: "And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valour. But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well 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."
- a. During the flight toward the rock of Rimmon, five thousand more Benjaminites fell, and subsequently two thousand more were slain. Six hundred of them, however, were able to break through the Israelite battle lines, and escaped to the rock of Rimmon, where they lived for four months.
 - b. "The rock Rimmon. There are two proposed identifications of this place. One makes it the same as Rummon, 'a village perched on the summit of a conical chalky hill,' 'rising on the south side to a height of several hundred feet from the Wady Muti-yah,' and defended on the west side 'by a cross valley of great depth,' which lies three miles east of Bethel, and seven miles northeast of Gibeah (Tullel el-Ful), and is situated in the wilderness between the highlands of Benjamin and the Jordan. This is advocated by Robinson ('Biblical Researches,' 1:440), by Mr. Grove in the 'Dictionary of the Bible,' and by Lt. Conder ('Quart. State. for July 1880,' P. 173). The other is advocated by Mr. W. F. Birch ('Pal. Expl., Quart. State. for April 1880'). This identifies it with the Wady er-Rummon, discovered by Mr. Rawnsley, where there is a vast cave, Mugharet el Jai, about a mile and a half from Geba, capable, according to the local tradition, of holding 600 men, and used to the present day by the villagers as a place of refuge from the government persecutions According to this view, the statement that they abode in the rock Rimmon is strictly correct" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - c. Josephus gives us the following uninspired comment on the latter stage of the battle: "Now, as soon as ever they perceived themselves to be deceived, they knew not what to do; and when they were driven into a certain hollow place which was in a valley, they were shot at by those that encompassed them, till they were all destroyed, excepting six hundred, which formed themselves into a close body of men, and forced their passage through the midst of their enemies, and fled to the neighbouring mountains, and, seizing upon them, remained there; but the rest of them, being about twenty-five thousand, were slain" (*Antiquities*, Book V, Chapter II, p.112).
 - d. The Israelites smote the cities of Benjamin, destroying man, woman, child, and beast, and burned the cities. "This frightful vengeance, extending from Gibeah to the whole territory of Benjamin, was executed under the impetuous impulse of highly-excited passions. But doubtless the Israelites were only the agents of inflicting the righteous retributions of God; and the memory of this terrible crisis, which led almost to the extermination of a whole tribe, was conducive to the future good of the whole nation" (JFB, p.125).
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JUDGES 21

A. Judges 21:1-7: Israel Weeps for Benjamin.

1. Verse 1: "Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife."
 - a. In the heat of facing the Benjamite problem, the other tribes of Israel had vowed together at Mizpeh that none of them would permit the men of Benjamin to marry their daughters. With the rebellion of Benjamin then standing so brazenly before the nation, it is easy to see why they made this commitment. They refused to repudiate the actions of the *sons of Belial*, and had decided to fight a pitched battle with the other tribes rather than hand the offenders over to be tried and punished according to the Mosaic Law.
 - b. Now, after the battle was over and Benjamin had almost been wiped out, a natural feeling of sorrow arose within the hearts of the Israelites. This change of heart is demonstrated in the following verses.
 2. Verses 2-3: "And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore; And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel?"
 - a. In the aftermath of the civil war, it became apparent that the tribe of Benjamin was on the verge of extinction. The nation assembled at the house of God [the ASV renders this as *Bethel*] to pray and mourn over the disastrous result. Their great military triumph was bitter-sweet. They were unable to understand how such a tragedy had developed.
 - b. The Benjaminites had all been slain except for the six hundred men who had escaped from the battlefield, and were now in hiding at the rock of Rimmon.
 - c. The consequences of an action sometimes can have profound and far-reaching effects. King Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, as was Saul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul). What would the world be like today without the great apostle to the Gentiles having lived?
 3. Verses 4-5: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And the children of Israel said, Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death."
 - a. The next day, they built an altar, and offered sacrifices. Some reliable scholars affirm that the location of the present gathering was Bethel, and that the ark of the covenant had been brought there (cf. Judg. 20:26-27). They had offered sacrifices on the occasion of Judges 20, which required an altar. Why did they build another altar? Perhaps the one they used in the previous instance was deemed too small for the present needs. Another possibility is that the genuine altar may have been present with the ark of the covenant in chapter 20, and had been returned to Shiloh.
 - b. That Israel itself was in a state of rebellion against God is evident from the two severe defeats they suffered during the first two battles with Benjamin. That Benjamin was in the greater error is evident from the fact that they met with such a tremendous setback during the third battle. The only authorized altar was at Shiloh, where the tabernacle was located. If Israel was willing to trample one feature of God's Law underfoot, they would not be averse to doing the same to another. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10).
 - c. In their deliberations on the present occasion, they referred to another vow they had made prior to the war against the tribe of Benjamin: that those among their tribes who did not come out to participate
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in this holy war would be put to death. The point of the question is to discover whether any part of the nation failed to respond to the call to arms. This query indicates the seed of a plan by which Benjamin could be spared from extinction.

4. 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 the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?"
 - a. The magnitude of the problem had become clear to them: the tribe of Benjamin would soon cease to exist if the six hundred surviving men were not furnished with wives.
 - b. The next question sought a solution to the problem. If there was a city whose men did not respond to the call, their daughters could be given as wives to the men of Benjamin. This solution was of their own design. There is no record of their having asked God for a solution, or even that they asked his approval for this plan.

B. Judges 21:8-15: The Initial Plan to Provide Wives to Benjamin.

1. Verses 8-9: "And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabeshgilead to the assembly. For the people were numbered, and, behold, *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead there."
 - a. The question is repeated here by the author, regarding the identity of those who did not answer the call to arms. It was reported that the men of Jabesh-gilead had not responded. The great host was numbered, and none from that city was found.
 - b. Jabesh-gilead "lay within the territory of Eastern Manasseh, about fifteen miles east of the Jordan, and was, according to *Josephus*, the capital of Gilead. The ban which the assembled tribes had pronounced at Mizpeh seemed to impose on them the necessity of punishing its inhabitants for not joining the crusade against Benjamin; and thus, with a view of repairing the consequences of one rash proceeding, they hurriedly rushed to the perpetuation of another, though a smaller tragedy" (JFB, p.126).
 - c. "This verse goes back a little to explain why the children of Israel asked the question, viz., because they repented them for Benjamin, and wished to repair the mischief resulting from their rash oath not to give their daughters to a Benjamite; therefore they said (repeating ver. 5), What one is there that came not up to Mizpeh? (ver. 8) and on numbering the people it was found that no one had come up from Jabesh-gilead. This is the first time that Jabesh-gilead is mentioned in Scripture. It comes up twice afterwards. First in 1 Sam 11, on occasion of its being besieged by the Ammonites and rescued by Saul; and secondly in 1 Sam 31:11-13, when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shah, and buried them at Jabesh, for which brave and pious act David thanked them (2 Sam 2:5). The name of Jabesh is only preserved in the Wady Yabis, which debouches on the eastern bank of the Jordan about lat. 32'24. Robinson thinks the ruins called ed Deir in this valley are the remains of Jabesh, which agrees exactly with the situation assigned to it by Eusebius in the , Onomasticon" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 10-11: "And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man."
 - a. The assembly decided on a harsh course of action against Jabesh-gilead. A force of twelve thousand men was sent to kill all the men of that city, along with the children, married women, and other women

who were not virgins.

- b. Only female virgins were to be spared, and these were to be given to the men of Benjamin as wives. The women and children were guiltless, but the Israelites were filled with wrath against the citizens of the city for their failure to help with the war.
3. Verses 12-13: "And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan. And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them."
 - a. That the destruction of the intended victims of Jabesh-gilead was accomplished is implied by the passage. Four hundred young virgins were found and brought to the camp at Shiloh. These young women were only a partial solution to the problem; there were six hundred men and only four hundred women.
 - b. Unless the camp had been transferred to Shiloh after the raiding force was sent to Jabesh-gilead, the place for the gathering was at Shiloh. Since some details are not furnished, we have difficulty in knowing for certain whether the assembly was first at Bethel and later moved to Shiloh, or whether they were at Shiloh during the whole episode.
 - c. Messengers were sent to the rock of Rimmon to tell the hiding Benjaminites about the plan that had been formed. The nation knew that the time for reconciliation was at hand.
4. Verses 14-15: "And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabeshgilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel."
 - a. Benjamin accepted the offer, and received the young women as wives, and were reconciled with the rest of the nation. As already seen, there were not enough women. How were the four hundred women assigned? Perhaps by casting lots, since this was a common method the ancients used in deciding many issues.
 - b. Josephus reported: "So these men with sorrow confessed, that what had been done was according to the decree of God, and had happened for their own wickedness; and assented to those that invited them, and came down to their own tribe" (*Antiquities*, Book V, Chapter III, p.113).

C. Judges 21:16-24: A Further Plan to Provide the Benjaminites With Wives.

1. Verses 16-18: "Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel. Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed *be* he that giveth a wife to Benjamin."
 - a. These Israelites were fully committed to adhering to their oath not to allow the Benjaminites to take wives from among their daughters. Since there were still two hundred men of Benjamin who had no wives, how were these men to be supplied?
 - b. Discussions were held to try to concoct a plan. A scheme was developed by which the two hundred men could obtain wives. The devious plot sought to excuse the leaders from any fault, and at the same time keep their oath intact. That the plan did not absolve them of complicity seems not to have occurred to their scheming minds.
 - c. "The other tribes could not give them their daughters, on account of the oath which has already been mentioned in vv. 1 and 7 b and is repeated here (v. 18). Consequently there was hardly any other

course open, than to let the Benjaminites seize upon wives for themselves. And the elders lent them a helping hand by offering them this advice, that at the next yearly festival at Shiloh, at which the daughters of Shiloh carried on dances in the open air (outside the town), they should seize upon wives for themselves from among these daughters, and promising them that when the thing was accomplished they would adjust it peaceably (vv. 19-22)" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

2. Verses 19-21: "Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly *in a place* which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin."
 - a. Three times a year the Israelite men were commanded to assemble at the tabernacle to participate in the scheduled sacrifices and festivities: "Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year" (Ex. 34:23-24). Many of them brought their wives and children with them. The plan was for the Benjamites to lie in concealment until the women came out of camp to dance. Each man was to capture the girl of his choice, with the assurance that he would not be punished for this crime.
 - b. Josephus gives this interesting report of the deliberations, telling about a certain person who claimed he had a plan. "They asked him what his proposal was. He said, 'That three times in a year, when we meet in Shiloh, our wives and our daughters accompany us: let then the Benjamites be allowed to steal away, and marry such women as they can catch, while we will neither incite them nor forbid them; and when their parents take it ill, and desire us to inflict punishment upon them, we will tell them, that they were themselves the cause of what had happened, by neglecting to guard their daughters, and that they ought not to be over angry at the Benjamites, since that anger was permitted to rise too high already'" (*Antiquities*, Book V, Chapter III, p.113).
 - c. The close description of the location where the capture was to be done indicates that the situation was ideally suited to success. We wonder how much these maidens struggled.
 - d. "I have already referred to the rape of the Sabine virgins. The story is told by Livy, Hist. lib. i, cap. 9, the substance of which is as follows: Romulus having opened an asylum at his new-built city of Rome for all kinds of persons, the number of men who flocked to his standard was soon very considerable; but as they had few women, or, as Livy says, penuria mulierum, a dearth of women, he sent to all the neighbouring states to invite them to make inter-marriages with his people. Not one of the tribes around him received the proposal; and some of them insulted his ambassador, and said... 'Why have you not also opened an asylum for WOMEN, which would have afforded you suitable matches?' This exasperated Romulus, but he concealed his resentment; and, having published that he intended a great feast to Neptune Equester, invited all the neighbouring tribes to come to it: they did so, and were received by the Romans with the greatest cordiality and friendship. The Sabines, with their wives and children, came in great numbers, and each Roman citizen entertained a stranger. When the games began, and each was intent on the spectacle before them, at a signal given the young Romans rushed in among the Sabine women, and each carried off one, whom however they used in the kindest

manner, marrying them according to their own rites with due solemnity, and admitting them to all the rights and privileges of the new commonwealth. The number carried off on this occasion amounted to near seven hundred; but this act of violence produced disastrous wars between the Romans and the Sabines, which were at last happily terminated by the mediation of the very women whose rape had been the cause of their commencement. The story may be seen at large in Livy, Plutarch, and others” [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft].

3. Verses 22-23: "And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that* ye should be guilty. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them."
 - a. The men of Benjamin agreed to the scheme, and fulfilled it to perfection. They each caught a young woman, and went back to their territory, where they repaired their cities and went about the business of replenishing their numbers and re-establishing themselves in their inheritance.
 - b. "The dance was anciently a part of the religious observance; and it was done on festive occasions, as it is still in the East, not in town, but in the open air, in some adjoining field, the women being by themselves. The young women being alone, indulging their light and buoyant spirits, and apprehensive of no danger, facilitated the execution of the scheme of seizing them, which closely resembles the Sabine rape in Roman history. The elders undertook to reconcile the families to the forced abduction of their daughters. And thus the expression of their public sanction to this deed of violence afforded a new evidence of the evils and difficulties into which the unhappy precipitancy of the Israelites in this crisis had involved them" (JFB, pp.126f).
 - c. Josephus states that the tribe of Benjamin was able in time to become a populous clan once more. "And thus was this tribe of the Benjamites, after they had been in danger of entirely perishing, saved in the manner fore-mentioned, by the wisdom of the Israelites: and accordingly it presently flourished, and soon increased to be a multitude, and came to enjoy all other degrees of happiness. And such was the conclusion of this war" (*Antiquities*, Book V, Chapter III, p.113).
4. Verse 24: "And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance."
 - a. When the conference was concluded, during which the above plan was conceived, the Israelites returned to their homes and property, and went about their usual business.
 - b. If the belief is accurate that the episodes reported in Judges 17-21 took place during the early part of the period of the Judges, then many of the events lying between the early chapters and the story of Samson follow the affairs described in these last four chapters.

D. Judges 21:25: The Cause of Israel's Problems.

1. "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes."
 - a. This concluding statement of the book is also found in chapter 17:6. Implied in the statement is the fact that if Israel had not followed their own selfish ways, and had been obedient to the law of God, the many tragedies of the book could have been avoided.
 - b. But everyone did what he deemed right by his own judgment, and got away with it, since there was no powerful, central government to enforce law and order. The statement does not imply that the book was written many centuries after the events of the text, during a time when Israel had a king. Evidence is to be found in this verse, however, to suggest Samuel as the inspired author. During his life, he saw

- the time when a king was established in the land, an event which would bring great trouble to Israel.
2. "Thus ends the book of *Judges*; a work which, while it *introduces* the history of *Samuel* and that of the *kings* of Judah and Israel, forms in some sort of a *supplement* to the book of *Joshua*, and furnishes the only account we have of those times of anarchy and confusion, which extended nearly from the times of the elders who survived Joshua, to the establishment of the Jewish *Monarchy* under Saul, David, and their successors" (Clarke, p.189).
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