

JUDGES

Conversational Version

Partial Conquest of Remaining Territory

¹¹After Joshua died, the people asked the LORD, *“Who will go up first to fight the Canaanites?”*

²He said, *“Judah. I’ll deliver the land to him.”*

³Judah said to his brother Simeon, *“Go with me to my territory to fight the Canaanites, and I’ll go with you to yours.”*

So he went with him.

⁴Judah went up and the LORD delivered 10,000 Canaanites and Perizzites to him at Bezek. ⁵⁻⁶They attacked Adoni-bezek ⁶and he fled, but they caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. ⁷He said, *“Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table. God has done to me what I’ve done.”* They took him to Jerusalem, where he died.

⁸Judah fought Jerusalem and took it. They struck it with the sword and set it on fire. ⁹Then they went down to fight the Canaanites in the hill country, the Negev, and the western foothills.

¹⁰Judah attacked the Canaanites in Hebron (called Kiriath-arba before) and defeated Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

Jud 1:1-10

¹¹From there they attacked Debir (called Kiriath-sepher before). ¹²Caleb said, *“Whoever takes Keriath-sepher, I’ll give my daughter Achsah as a wife.”* ¹³Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it, and Caleb gave her to him. ¹⁴When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field. She got down from her donkey, and Caleb asked, *“What do you want for yourself?”*

¹⁵*“A present. Since you’ve put me in the Negev, give me springs.”*

Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

¹⁶The descendants of Moses’ father-in-law, the Kenite, moved from the City of Palms to the Wilderness of Judah in the Negev near Arad, and settled with the people. ¹⁷Judah went with Simeon and defeated the Canaanites in Zephath and “destroyed” it; so the city was called Hormah.

¹⁸Judah also took Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron, and their territories. ¹⁹The LORD was with Judah, and he gained possession of the hill country, but he couldn’t drive out the people in the plain; they had iron chariots. ²⁰They gave Hebron to Caleb, like Moses had said. He drove out Anak’s three sons.

Jud 1:11-20

²¹But Benjamin didn’t drive out the Jebusites in Jerusalem; they still live there among them.

²²Joseph went up against Bethel and the LORD was with them. ²³Joseph’s house spied out Bethel (called Luz before). ²⁴The spies saw a man coming out of the city, and said, *“Show us how*

to get into the city, and we'll have mercy on you." ²⁵He showed them. They struck it with the sword, but they let him and his family go. ²⁶He went to the Hittites and built a city he called Luz. That's still its name.

²⁷Manasseh didn't drive out the people in Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, or Megiddo and their villages. The Canaanites kept living there. ²⁸When Israel grew stronger, they put them to forced labor; but they didn't completely drive them out. **Jud 1:21-28**

²⁹Ephraim didn't drive out the Canaanites in Gezer, who kept living among them.

³⁰Zebulun didn't drive out the people in Kitron or Nahalol, who kept living among them, subject to forced labor.

³¹Asher didn't drive out the people in Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. ³²They lived among the Canaanites.

³³Naphtali didn't drive out the people in Beth-shemesh or Beth-anath. They lived among those Canaanites, who became forced labor.

³⁴The Amorites pressed the Danites back into the hill country. They wouldn't let them come down to the plain. ³⁵They went on living in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim. But Joseph's house pressed heavily on them and subjected them to forced labor. ³⁶The border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and up. **Jud 1:29-36**

The Angel of the Lord Comes to Bokim

^{2:1}The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim and said,

"I brought you up from Egypt to this land that I swore to give your ancestors. I said, 'I'll never break my covenant with you. ²Don't make any covenant with the people here. Tear down their altars.' But you haven't obeyed me. ³So I won't drive them out. They'll become adversaries, and their gods will be a snare to you."

⁴When the angel of the LORD told the people that, they "cried" out loud. ⁵They called the place Bochim and sacrificed to the LORD there.

The Death of Joshua

⁶When Joshua dismissed the people to their inheritances, ⁷they served the LORD while he was alive and the elders that outlived him, who'd seen the LORD's great work for Israel. ⁸He died at 110. ⁹They buried him in his inheritance in Timnath-heres in the hill country of Ephraim north of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰That whole generation passed on to their ancestors, and another generation grew up that hadn't known the LORD or seen his work for Israel. **Jud 2:1-10**

Disobedience and Defeat

¹¹The people did sin and served the images of Baal ¹³and Ashtoreth ¹²and forsook their ancestors' God. They worshiped the gods of people around them. That made the LORD angry; ¹⁴so he let plunderers sell them to their enemies so they couldn't stand against them any longer. ¹⁵Whenever they marched out, he opposed them like he'd sworn. They were in dire straits.

¹⁶Then the LORD raised up judges to save them from their plunderers, ¹⁷but they wouldn't listen to them. They carried on prostitution with other gods and soon turned aside from the way their ancestors lived. ¹⁸Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with him and saved them as long as the judge was alive. He took pity on their groaning. ¹⁹But whenever the judge died, they'd turn back and do worse than their ancestors and wouldn't quit. ²⁰The LORD was angry and said,

"They've sinned against my covenant like their ancestors. ²¹From now on, I won't drive out any nation Joshua left when he died. ²²I'll use them to test Israel to see if they'll follow me like their ancestors." [²³]

Jud 2:11-23

3:¹The LORD left those nations to test the Israelites that hadn't experienced war in Canaan. [²] ³The nations were

the five lords of the Philistines,
all the Canaanites,
Sidonians,
the Hivites on Mount Lebanon from Mount Baal-hermon to Lebo-hamath.

⁴They served to test whether Israel would obey the LORD's commandments to their ancestors by Moses. ⁵So the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ⁶They intermarried with them and served their gods.

Othniel Judges Israel

⁷Israel forgot the LORD its God and served the images of Baal and Ashtoreth. ⁸He was angry and sold Israel to Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, for **8 years**. ⁹When they appealed to the LORD, he raised up **Othniel** son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, to deliver them. ¹⁰The Spirit of the LORD stirred him up to judge Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-rishathaim to him. ¹¹The land had peace for **40 years**. Then Othniel died. **Jud 3:1-11**

Ehud Judges Israel

¹²The people sinned again, and the LORD strengthened Eglon, king of Moab. ¹³He gathered the Amorites and Amalekites, defeated Israel, and took the City of Palms. ¹⁴Israel served him for **18 years**.

¹⁵But when Israel appealed to the LORD, he raised up **Ehud** son of Gera, a Benjamite, a left-handed man. Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon. ¹⁶Ehud made a double-edged sword 18ins

long and fastened it under his right thigh under his clothes. ¹⁷He presented the tribute to Eglon, an obese man. ¹⁸When he sent away the people that carried it. ¹⁹At the idols near Gilgal, he turned back and said, *"I have a private message for you, King."* He said, *"Just a minute."* His attendants went out. ²⁰Ehud came to him while he was sitting alone in his cool roof room. He said, *"I have a message from God for you."* He got up from his seat. ²¹Ehud reached with his left hand, took his sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into *Eglon's* belly. ²²The hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade. He didn't pull it out, and the refuse came out. ²³Ehud went out to the anteroom, closed the doors to the roof room, and locked them. **Jud 3:12-23**

²⁴When he'd gone, the servants came and saw the doors locked, and thought he was relieving himself in the cool room. ²⁵They waited till they were completely confused. When he still didn't come out, they took the key and opened the doors. There he was on the floor, dead.

²⁶While they delayed, Ehud escaped past the idols to Seirah. ²⁷When he arrived, he blew the ram's horn in the hill country of Ephraim. The people went down from the hill country with him leading. ²⁸He told them, *"Follow me. The LORD will deliver the Moabites to you."* They went down and seized the fords of the Jordan from the Moabites and wouldn't let anybody cross. ²⁹They killed about 10,000 Moabites, strong, able-bodied men. No one escaped. ³⁰Israel subdued Moab that day. The land had peace for **80 years**.

Shamgar Judges Israel

³¹After him came **Shamgar** son of Anath, who killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad and delivered Israel. **Jud 3:24-31**

Deborah Judges Israel

^{4:1}After Ehud died, the people sinned again, ²and the LORD sold them to Jabin, king of Canaan in Hazor. Sisera commanded his army from Harosheth-hagoyim. ³The people appealed to the LORD because *Sisera* had 900 iron chariots and oppressed Israel cruelly for **20 years**.

⁴**Deborah**, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. ⁵She sat under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. The people came up to her for judgment. ⁶She sent for **Barak** son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali,

"The LORD God of Israel commands you, 'Gather to Mount Tabor 10,000 troops from Naphtali and Zebulun. I'll draw out Sisera, Jabin's general, to meet you by the Kishon River with his chariots and troops. I'll give him to you.'"

⁸Barak said, *"If you'll go, I'll go. If you won't, I won't."*

⁹*"I'll go with you, but that won't give you any honor. The LORD will be selling Sisera to a woman."*

She went with him to Kedesh, ¹⁰and Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; 10,000 men went up with him. **Jud 4:1-10**

¹¹Heber the Kenite had moved away from the Kenites, descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law*. He had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

¹²When Sisera heard that Barak had gone up to Mount Tabor, ¹³he called out his 900 iron chariots and all his army from Harosheth-hagoyim to the Kishon River. ¹⁴Deborah told Barak, *"Get up! The LORD is going to deliver Sisera to you today. Isn't it the LORD that's leading you out?"* So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men. ¹⁵The LORD routed Sisera, his chariots, and army. Sisera jumped down from his chariot and fled on foot. ¹⁶Barak chased the chariots and the army *back home* to Harosheth-hagoyim, and Sisera's whole army fell by the sword.

¹⁷Sisera fled to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, because he and Heber's family had been on good terms. ¹⁸Jael came out to meet him, *"Turn aside, Sir. You don't have to be afraid."* He turned aside into her tent, and she covered him with a rug. ¹⁹He said, *"Please give me a little water. I'm thirsty."* She opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him up. ²⁰He said, *"Stand at the door. If anybody comes and asks if anybody's here, say, 'No.'"* ²¹But she took a tent peg and a hammer, and went quietly to him and drove the peg into his temple till it stuck into the ground while he was asleep, exhausted. That's how he died. ²²As Barak pursued him, Jael went out to meet him, *"Come here, I'll show you the man you're looking for."* He went into her tent and found Sisera lying there dead with the tent peg through his temple.

²³God subdued Jabin that day in front of Israel. ²⁴They kept pressing harder and harder on him till they'd destroyed him.

Jud 4:11-24

The Song of Deborah

5¹Deborah and Barak sang that day,

²*"Bless the LORD!*

*because the leaders led in Israel,
the people volunteered.*

³*Hear, you kings; listen, you officials;*

*I'll sing to the LORD;
I'll praise Israel's God.*

⁴*LORD, when you went out from Seir,*

*when you marched from Edom,
the ground shook,
the sky dripped,
yes, the clouds dripped water.*

⁵*The mountains shook in front of the LORD;*

you, Sinai, shook in front of Israel's God.

Jud 5:1-5

⁶*"In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,*

*in the days of Jael, caravans ceased;
travelers kept to the back roads.*

⁷*The rural people ceased in Israel;
they ceased till you arose, Deborah,
as a mother in Israel.*

⁸*When the people chose new gods,
war was in the gates;
not a shield or spear was seen
among 40,000 in Israel.*

⁹*My heart goes out to Israel's commanders,
who volunteered willingly among the people.*

Bless the LORD. Jud 5:6-9

¹⁰*"Sing, you that ride white donkeys,
who sit on rich carpets
and travel on the highway.*

¹¹*At the sound of those who separate flocks
by the watering places,
they repeat the LORD's triumphs,
the triumphs of his rural people in Israel.
Then the LORD's people went down to the gates. Jud 5:10-11*

¹²*"Wake up, wake up, Deborah!
Wake up, wake up, and sing!
Arise, Barak;
lead away your captives, son of Abinoam.*

¹³*The remnant of the nobles came down;
the LORD's people came down
for him against the powerful.*

¹⁴*They set out to the valley from Ephraim;
they followed you, Benjamin, with your kin.
The commanders marched down from Machir;
from Zebulun they marched
who carry the marshal's staff. Jud 5:12-14*

¹⁵*The officials of Issachar came with Deborah;
as Issachar came so did Barak.
They rushed out to the valley at his heels,
but the clans of Reuben held back.*

¹⁶*Why did you linger among the sheepfolds?*

*To hear the piping for the flocks?
The clans of Reuben held back.*

¹⁷*Gilead stayed put beyond the Jordan.*

*Why did Dan stay with his ships?
Asher sat still at the coast by the sea
and settled down by his landings.*

¹⁸*Zebulun was a people that risked their lives,
Naphtali, too, on the high places in the countryside.*

Jud 5:15-18

¹⁹*“The kings came and fought;
they fought the kings of Canaan
at Taanach by the water of Megiddo;
they got no spoils of silver.*

²⁰*The stars fought from the sky;
from their courses they fought Sisera.*

²¹*The current of the Kishon swept them away,
the rushing torrent in the Kishon.
March on, my soul, with confidence!*

²²*“Then the horses’ hoofs beat loud
with the galloping of steeds.*

Jud 5:19-22

²³*“‘Curse Meroz,’ the angel of the LORD says;
‘put its people under a severe curse.
They didn’t come to help the LORD
against the powerful.’*

²⁴*May Jael be most fortunate among women,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
most fortunate among women in the tent.*

²⁵*He asked for water; she gave him milk.
She brought him curds in a beautiful bowl.*

²⁶*She took a tent peg
and a workman’s hammer;
she struck Sisera a blow
and crushed his head.*

She shattered and pierced his temple.

²⁷*He sank, he fell;
he lay still at her feet.*

He sank and fell down dead at her feet.

Jud 5:23-27

²⁸ “*She looked out the window;
Sisera’s mother gazed through the lattice.
‘Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why do the hoof beats with his chariots tarry?’*”
²⁹ *Her wise ladies answer;
no, she answers herself,*
³⁰ *‘Aren’t they finding and dividing the spoil—
a young woman or two for every man.
spoil of embroidered dyed work for Sisera,
two pieces of dyed work for the spoiler’s neck?’*
³¹ “*May all your enemies perish that way, LORD!
But may your friends be like the sun
when it rises at it brightest.*”

The land had peace for 40 years.

Jud 5:28-31

Gideon Judges Israel

⁶¹ Israel did what the LORD considered sin; so he gave them over to Midian for 7 years.
² Because of Midian, the Israelites made dens and caves and barricades in the mountains.
³ Whenever they sowed anything, the Midianites, Amalekites, and people from the east would come up and attack them. ⁴ They’d camp against them and destroy their crops as far as the territory around Gaza. They wouldn’t leave any sustenance in Israel—sheep, oxen, or donkeys. ⁵ They’d come up with their livestock, camels, and tents like locusts in number. They trashed the land ⁶ and brought Israel low. The people appealed to the LORD,

Jud 6:1-6

[⁷] ⁸ and he sent a prophet,

“The LORD God of Israel says, ‘I led you out of slavery in Egypt ⁹ and delivered you from other oppressors. I drove them out and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I told you, “I’m the LORD your God. Don’t be afraid of the Amorites’ gods where you’re living.” But you’ve ignored me.’”

¹¹ Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. His son **Gideon** was beating out wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

¹² The angel appeared to him, *“The LORD is with you, brave soldier!”*

Jud 6:7-12

¹³ Gideon said,

“Sir, if he’s with us, why is this happening? Where are his wonderful deeds our ancestors talked about when he brought us up from Egypt? He’s thrown us away now and delivered us to Midian.”

14 “Take your strength and deliver Israel from them. Haven’t I sent you?”

15 “LORD, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I’m the least in my family.”

16 “I’ll be with you. You’ll strike the Midianites as if they were one man.”

17 “If I’m pleasing to you, give me a sign that it’s you speaking to me. 18 Don’t leave till I come back with your present.”

“I’ll wait.”

Jud 6:13-18

19 Gideon went into the house and fixed a kid and cakes without yeast from 1.1 bushels ^{1 ephah} of flour. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and took them to him under the terebinth tree. 20 God’s angel said, “Put the meat and cakes on this rock and pour the broth over them.” When he did that, 21 the angel touched the meat and cakes with the tip of his staff. Fire flared up from the rock and consumed them, and he vanished. 22 Then Gideon surmised that he was the angel of the LORD, “Lord GOD! I’ve seen the angel of the LORD directly.” 23 But the LORD said, “You don’t have to be afraid. You won’t die.” 24 Then Gideon built an altar to him and called it The LORD Is Peace [Yahveh Shalom]. It’s still standing at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

25 That night the LORD told him,

“Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down your father’s altar to Baal. Cut down the Asherah pole beside it. 26 Build an altar to the LORD your God on top of the fortress here, with stones laid in order. Offer the second bull as a burnt offering with the wood from the Asherah pole you cut down.”

27 Gideon took ten servants and did that. He was too afraid of family and townspeople to do it in the daytime, so he did it at night.

Jud 6:19-27

28 When people in town got up early, Baal’s altar was pulled down, the Asherah pole was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar Gideon built. 29 They asked one another who did it. After they asked around, people said, “Gideon son of Joash.” 30 They told Joash, “Bring your son out to die. He pulled down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole.” 31 Joash said to everybody lined up against him,

“Will you defend Baal or his cause? Whoever fights for him will be put to death by morning. If he’s a god, he can defend himself. It’s his altar that Gideon tore down!”

Jud 6:28-31

32 That day he called him Jerubbaal (“Let Baal Fight Him”) because he tore down his altar.

33 Then the Midianites, Amalekites, and people east of the Jordan joined forces, crossed the Jordan, and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 The Spirit of the LORD stirred up Gideon. He

blew the ram's horn and called the Abiezrites to follow him. ³⁵He sent messengers all over Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to follow him too. They went up to meet them.

³⁶Then Gideon said to God,

"If you're going to deliver Israel by me, ³⁷I'm laying a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there's dew on it but the ground around it's dry, I'll know you'll deliver Israel by me."

³⁸That's what happened. When he got up early, he wrung out enough dew to fill a bowl. ³⁹Then he said to God,

"Don't be angry with me. Let me test you one more time with the fleece. Let it be dry and the ground around it have dew on it."

⁴⁰That's what God did that night. It was dry just on the fleece; the ground was wet. **Jud 6:32-40**

^{7:1}Then Jerubbaal (Gideon) and the people got up early and camped beside the Spring of Harod. Midian's camp was in the valley north of them by the Hill of Moreh.

²The LORD told Gideon,

"You have too many for me to deliver the Midianites to you. I don't want Israel to pride themselves in thinking they've delivered themselves. ³Tell whoever is afraid and trembling to go home."

Gideon tested them; 22,000 went back, 10,000 stayed.

⁴The LORD told Gideon,

"There are still too many. Take them down to the creek; I'll test them. The ones I tell you, will go with you. The others won't."

⁵He took them down to the water. The LORD told Gideon,

"The ones that lap water like a dog, put in a group. Those who kneel down to drink put in another group."

⁶300 put their hands to their mouths. The rest got on their knees to drink from the water. ⁷The LORD told Gideon, *"I'll deliver the Midianites to you with 300 men. Send the rest home."* ⁸He took the people's jars and rams' horns and sent the rest home. Midian camped below them in the valley.

Jud 7:1-8

⁹That night the LORD told him,

"Get up and go down against the camp. I'll deliver it to you. ¹⁰If you're afraid, go down with your servant Purah. ¹¹You'll hear what they're saying and be confident about attacking the camp."

He went down with Purah to the outposts of the camp. ¹²The Midianites, Amalekites, and people from east of the Jordan lay along the valley like locusts. Their camels were without number, like sand on the shore. ¹³When Gideon got there, a man was telling his friend about a dream,

"I dreamed that a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp. It knocked a tent over and flattened it."

¹⁴His friend answered, *“That’s the sword of Gideon, a man of Israel. God is going to deliver Midian and the erst of the army to him.”* **Jud 7:9-14**

¹⁵When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed *in worship* and went back to camp. He said, *“Get up! The LORD is going to deliver Midian’s army to you.”* ¹⁶He divided the 300 men into three companies. He gave them all rams’ horns and empty jars with torches inside. ¹⁷He told them,

“Do what I do when I get to the edge of the camp. ¹⁸When I and the ones with me blow the rams’ horns, then blow your rams’ horns all around the camp, and raise the battle cry, ‘For the LORD and Gideon!’”

¹⁹Gideon and the 300 got to the edge of the camp when they’d just set the middle watch. ²⁰They blew the rams’ horns and broke the jars, holding the torches in their left hands and the rams’ horns in their right, and raised the battle cry, *“A sword for the LORD and Gideon!”* ²¹Every man stood in place all around the camp, and Midian’s whole army screamed and fled. ²²When the Israelites blew the 300 rams’ horns, the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow soldier throughout Midian’s army. The army fled all the way to Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah by Tabbath. ²³Gideon called out Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh to chase them. ²⁴He sent messengers all over the hill country of Ephraim, *“Come down against the Midianites and seize control of the water, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.”* Ephraim came out and seized it. ²⁵They captured Oreb and Zeeb, Midian’s two rulers. In the chase they killed Oreb at the Rock of Oreb and Zeeb at the Winepress of Zeeb. They brought their heads to Gideon beyond the Jordan. **Jud 7:15-25**

8:¹The men in Ephraim said to him,

“What have you done to us, not calling us when you went to fight Midian?” They were in animated contention with him.

²He said,

“What have I done compared to you? Isn’t the gleanings of grapes in Ephraim better than the vintage in Abiezer? ³God delivered Oreb and Zeeb to you. What have I done compared to that?”

They calmed down.

⁴Gideon and the 300 crossed the Jordan, exhausted from chasing. ⁵He said to the men in Succoth, *“Give loaves of bread to the ones with me. I’m afraid they’re worn out, and I’m chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.”*

⁶The officials in Succoth said, *“Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in hand that we should feed your army?”*

⁷Gideon said, *“All right, then. When the LORD delivers them to me, I’ll flail you with wild briars and thorns.”* ⁸He went on up to Peniel and asked them the same thing, and they answered the same way.

⁹He told them, *“When I come back after peace is restored, I’ll tear down this tower.”*

Jud 8:1-9

¹⁰Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with about 15,000 men, what were left from the entire army from east of the Jordan; 120,000 swordsmen had fallen. ¹¹Gideon went up the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah and caught them in a surprise attack. ¹²Zebah and Zalmunna fled. Gideon chased them and captured them and sent the whole army into a panic.

¹³When he went back from the battle by the ascent of Heres, ¹⁴he captured a young man from Succoth and questioned him. He wrote down the names of the 77 officials and elders in Succoth. ¹⁵Gideon came and said, *“Look, Zebah and Zalmunna that you taunted me about, ‘Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in hand that we should feed your exhausted men?’”* ¹⁶He disciplined the city elders with thorns and briers from the countryside. ¹⁷He tore down the tower at Penuel and killed the men in the city.

¹⁸He asked Zebah and Zalmunna, *“What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?”*

They answered, *“Every one of them was like you, like a king’s son.”*

¹⁹He said, *“They were my brothers, my mother’s sons. As sure as the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I wouldn’t have killed you.”*

²⁰He told Jether his firstborn to get up and kill them.

But the young man was afraid to draw his sword because he was young.

²¹Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, *“Be a man. Come do it yourself.”*

Gideon got up and killed them and took the crescents off their camels’ necks. **Jud 8:10-21**

²²Then the Israelites said to him, *“Be our ruler, you, your son, and your grandson as well. You’ve delivered us from Midian.”*

²³*“I won’t be your ruler. My son won’t either. The LORD will be your ruler.”* ²⁴*Let me ask you for one thing, though. Each of you give me the earrings from your spoil.”*

²⁵*“We’ll be glad to.”* They spread out a cloak and every man tossed on it the earrings from his spoil. ²⁶The gold earrings weighed 50 pounds ^{1700 shekels} of gold plus the camels’ crescents.

²⁷Gideon made an ephod out of it and put it in Ophrah, his hometown. Israel prostituted themselves with it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family. ²⁸So Israel subdued Midian; they didn’t threaten anymore. The land had peace for **40 years** during Gideon’s life.

²⁹Jerubbaal/Gideon went and lived in his own house. ³⁰He had 77 sons from many wives. ³¹A concubine of his in Shechem also had a son he named Abimelech. ³²Gideon died at a good old age, and they buried him in the tomb of his father Joash at Ophrah among the Abiezrites.

³³As soon as he died, the people went back to worshipping the images of Baal. They made Baal-berith their god. ³⁴They didn’t remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from their enemies in every direction, ³⁵or show kindness to Jerubbaal’s family in return for everything he’d done for Israel.

Jud 8:22-35

Abimelech's Conspiracy

^{9:1}Abimelech went to his mother's relatives in Shechem and said to her clan, ²*"Ask the leaders in Shechem which is better: for Jerubbaal's 70 sons to rule you or for one man to rule you. Remember, I'm your flesh and bone."* ³His mother's relatives circulated that around for him, and the people were inclined to follow him *because* he was their *kin*. ⁴They gave him 70 pieces of silver from Baal-berith's temple. He used them to hire worthless, reckless fellows ⁵to go with him to his father's family at Ophrah and kill his 70 brothers on one stone. But Jotham, Jerubbaal's youngest son, hid. ⁶The people in Shechem and Beth-millo gathered and made Abimelech king by the Oak of the Pillar at Shechem. **Jud 9:1-6**

⁷When Jotham heard about it, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and shouted,

"Listen, people of Shechem, so God will listen to you. ⁸The trees went out to anoint a king. They asked the olive tree to rule them. ⁹But the olive tree said, 'Should I leave my richness that honors gods and mortals, and go sway over the trees?' ¹⁰The trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and rule us.' ¹¹But the fig tree said, 'Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go sway over the trees?' ¹²The trees said to the grapevine, 'You come and rule us.' ¹³But the grapevine said, 'Should I leave my wine that cheers gods and mortals, and go to sway over the trees?' ¹⁴Then the trees said to the bramble, 'You come and rule us.' ¹⁵The bramble said, 'If you're anointing me king in good faith, then come and take refuge in my shade. If not, let fire come out of the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon.

"[¹⁶] ¹⁷My father fought for you and risked his life to rescue you from Midian. ¹⁸You've risen up against his family and killed his 70 sons on one rock. You've made Abimelech, son of his maidservant, king of Shechem because he's your relative. ¹⁹If you've acted honorably in good faith with Jerubbaal and his family as his deeds deserved, then be happy with one another. ²⁰If not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the people in Shechem and Beth-millo."

²¹Jotham fled to Beer and lived there for fear of his half-brother.

Jud 9:7-21

²²Abimelech ruled Israel for **3 years**. ²³God put animosity between him and the people in Shechem, and they dealt treacherously with him. ²⁴*That was* so the violence done to Jerubbaal's 70 sons might come on Abimelech who murdered them and on the men who helped him. ²⁵The men in Shechem put men in ambush against him on the mountaintops and robbed everybody that went by. Abimelech heard about it.

²⁶Gaal son of Ebed moved to Shechem with his relatives and gained the confidence of the people there. ²⁷They went out and gathered grapes from their vineyards, trod them, and held a feast. They went to the temple of their god and ate and drank, and ranted about Abimelech. ²⁸Gaal said,

“Who is Abimelech? Why should we serve him? Didn’t the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem? Why then should we serve him? ²⁹If these people were under my command, I’d remove Abimelech! I’d tell him to muster an army and come out and fight.” **Jud 9:22-29**

³⁰When Zebul the ruler of the city heard what Gaal said, he was mad ³¹and sent ambassadors to Abimelech at Arumah,

“Gaal and his relatives have come to Shechem; they’re stirring up the city against you. ³²So you and your men go during the night and lie in ambush in the fields. ³³In the morning at sunup, rush on the city. When he and his men come out against you, do to them what you can.”

³⁴Abimelech and his men got up during the night and laid in ambush against Shechem in four companies. ³⁵Gaal went out and stood in the entrance of the city gate, and Abimelech and his men rose up from the ambush. ³⁶When Gaal saw them, he told Zebul, *“Look, men are coming down from the mountains!”*

Zebul said, *“You’re just seeing the mountains’ shadows.”*

³⁷Gaal said again, *“Look, there are men are coming down from the center of the land, and another company is coming from the direction of the Diviners’ Oak.”*

³⁸Then Zebul said, *“Where’s your bragging now, you that said, ‘Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?’ Aren’t these the men you despised? Go fight them.”* ³⁹Gaal led the men out to fight him. ⁴⁰Abimelech chased him and he fled. Many fell wounded all the way back to the entrance of the gate. ⁴¹Abimelech retreated to Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his relatives out of Shechem. **Jud 9:30-41**

⁴²The next day the men went out to the fields. Abimelech heard about it. ⁴³He divided his men into three companies and laid in wait there. When the men come out of the city, he attacked them and killed them. ⁴⁴Abimelech and his company rushed up and stood at the entrance to the city gate while the two companies attacked and killed the ones in the fields. ⁴⁵Abimelech fought the city all day and took it. He killed the people in it, tore it down, and scattered salt all over it.

⁴⁶When people in the tower at Shechem heard about it, they withdrew into the fortress of El-berith’s temple. ⁴⁷When Abimelech found out they were in the tower, ⁴⁸he and his men went up to Mount Zalmon. He cut a bundle of brush with an axe and put it on his shoulder. He told his men to hurry and do the same thing. ⁴⁹Each one cut a bundle and followed him. He piled the bundles against the fortress and set it on fire over the ones inside. Everybody in the tower died, about 1,000 men and women. **Jud 9:42-49**

⁵⁰Then Abimelech went to Thebez, camped against it, and took it. ⁵¹But the city had a strong tower. The men and women fled to it, shut themselves in, and went up to the roof. ⁵²He attacked it and came to burn down the tower door. ⁵³A woman threw an upper millstone down on him and cracked his skull. ⁵⁴Right away he called to his young armor bearer, *“Draw your sword*

and kill me so people won't say a woman killed me." His young man thrust him through, and he died. ⁵⁵When Israel saw Abimelech was dead, they went home. ⁵⁶So God repaid him for his crime against his father in killing his 70 brothers. ⁵⁷God also made the sinfulness of the men in Shechem come back on their heads and made Jotham's curse fall on them. **Jud 9:50-57**

Tola Judges Israel

10:¹After Abimelech, **Tola** son of Puah son of Dodo from Issachar, rose up to deliver Israel. He lived at Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim ²and judged Israel **23 years**. He died and was buried at Shamir.

Jair Judges Israel

³Then **Jair** from Gilead judged Israel **22 years**. ⁴He had 30 sons that rode 30 donkeys and had 30 "towns" people still call Havvoth-jair in Gilead. ⁵He died and was buried in Kamon.

Jud 10:1-5

⁶Again, Israel sinned and served the images of Baal and Ashtoreth, and the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites and Philistines. They forsook the LORD. ⁷His anger flared at them, and he sold them to the Ammonites and Philistines. ⁸They crushed and oppressed Israel that year. For **18 years** they oppressed Israel beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites (Gilead). ⁹The Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim; Israel was severely distressed.

¹⁰Israel cried out to the LORD, *"We've sinned against you; we've left our God and served the images of Baal."*

¹¹He said to them,

"Didn't I deliver you from the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites, and Philistines? ¹²The Sidonians, Amalekites, Maonites oppressed you too. You appealed to me and I delivered you from them. ¹³Yet you've left me and served other gods; so I won't deliver you anymore. ¹⁴Call out to the gods you've chosen. Have them deliver you."

¹⁵They said to the LORD, *"We've sinned. Do whatever you think's good. Just deliver us today, please."* ¹⁶They put away the foreign gods and served the LORD; he couldn't bear Israel's misery any longer. ¹⁷The Ammonites called to arms and encamped in Gilead. Israel came together and camped in Mizpah. ¹⁸The leaders in Gilead said to one another, *"Whoever will lead the fight against the Ammonites will rule everyone in Gilead."* **Jud 10:6-18**

Jephthah Judges Israel

11:¹**Jephthah** from Gilead was a strong soldier, but he was a prostitute's son. His father was Gilead. ²Gilead's wife also bore him sons. When her sons grew up, they shoved Jephthah out,

"You won't inherit in our father's family. You're another woman's son." ³He ran away and lived in the land of Tob. Ruffians gathered around him and went on raids with him.

⁴After a time the Ammonites went to war against Israel. ⁵The elders in Gilead went to bring Jephthah from Tob, ⁶*"Come, lead us so we can fight the Ammonites."*

⁷*"Didn't you hate me and drive me out of my father's family? Why come to me now when you're in trouble?"*

⁸*"That's why we've turned to you so you can lead us in Gilead to fight the Ammonites."*

⁹*"If you take me home again to fight the Ammonites, and the LORD gives them to me, I'll lead you."*

¹⁰*"The LORD is witness. We'll do that."*

¹¹Jephthah went with them, and the people made him their leader. He swore in at Mizpah in front of the LORD.

Jud 11:1-11

¹²He sent messengers to the Ammonite king, *"What do you have against me that you've attacked my land?"*

¹³The king answered his messengers, *"Because when Israel came out of Egypt, he took away my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok all along the Jordan. Return it peacefully."*

¹⁴Jephthah sent messengers back to him,

¹⁵*"Jephthah says,*

'Israel didn't take away Moab's or Ammon's land. ¹⁶When the Israelites came up from Egypt, they went through open country to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. ¹⁷Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom to let them pass through your land. But he wouldn't. They sent to the king of Moab too, but he wouldn't consent; so Israel stayed at Kadesh. ¹⁸Then they traveled through open country and went around Edom and Moab. They arrived at the east side of Moab and camped on the other side of the Arnon. They didn't go into Moab; the Arnon was its border. ¹⁹Israel sent messengers to Sihon, the Amorite king at Heshbon, to let them pass through his land to go to their own country. ²⁰But Sihon wouldn't trust Israel. He gathered his people, camped at Jahaz, and fought them. ²¹The LORD God of Israel delivered them all to Israel and defeated them. Israel took over Amorite territory ²²from the Arnon to the Jabbok, from the desert to the Jordan. ²³The LORD expelled the Amorites in front of his own people, and you're going to take it back? ²⁴Wouldn't you keep what your god Chemosh gave you? We'll keep everything the LORD our God has taken for us. ²⁵Are you any better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel or go to war with them? ²⁶Why didn't you recover them while Israel lived in Heshbon, Aroer, and their villages, and in the towns on the banks of the Arnon for 300 years? ²⁷I haven't sinned against you.

You've wronged me by attacking me. May the LORD the Judge decide today between Israel and Ammon."

²⁸But the Ammonite king wouldn't listen.

Jud 11:12-28

²⁹The Spirit of the LORD stirred up Jephthah, and *he* went through Gilead and Manasseh to Mizpah in Gilead and on to the Ammonites. ³⁰He vowed to the LORD, *"If you'll give the Ammonites to me, ³¹whatever comes out of my house to meet me when I get back, I'll offer up for a burnt offering."* ³²He crossed over to fight them, and the LORD gave them to him. ³³He massacred them from Aroer to the neighborhood of Minnith, 20 towns, and as far as Abel-keramin. So Israel subdued the Ammonites.

³⁴Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah, and his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and dancing. She was his only child. ³⁵When he saw her, he tore his clothes,

"My daughter! You've brought me low! You've brought me great trouble! I've opened my mouth to the LORD, and I can't take back my vow."

³⁶She said, *"Father, if you've vowed to the LORD, do to me what you've vowed, now that he has avenged you of the Ammonites. ³⁷Do this for me: let me alone two months so my companions and I can wander in the mountains and mourn my virginity."*

³⁸He said, *"Go ahead."*

He sent her away; she and her companions left to mourn her virginity for two months. ³⁹She came back to her father, who did with her according to his vow. She never knew a man. It became a custom in Israel ⁴⁰that the young women went four days a year to mourn the daughter of Jephthah of Gilead.

Jud 11:29-40

12:¹The men of Ephraim gathered an army, crossed over *the Jordan* to Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, *"Why did you cross over to fight the Ammonites and not call us to go with you? We'll burn your house on top of you."*

²Jephthah told them, *"My people and I had a major conflict with the Ammonites. When I called you, you didn't deliver me from them. ³When I saw that you wouldn't deliver me, I took my life in hand and crossed over against them, and the LORD delivered them to me. Why then have you come up to fight me?"*

⁴Jephthah gathered the men from Gilead and struck Ephraim because they said, *"You Gileadites are refugees from Ephraim in Ephraim and Manasseh."* ⁵The Gileadites captured the Jordan fords. When a refugee from Ephraim asked to go across, the Gileadites would ask him if he was an Ephraimite. If he said, *"No,"* ⁶they'd tell him to say *shibboleth*. He'd say *sibboleth* because he couldn't pronounce it right; so they'd kill him. At that time, 42,000 Ephraimites fell.

⁷Jephthah judged Israel **6 years**. He died and was buried in his city in Gilead. **Jud 12:1-7**

Ibzan Judges Israel

⁸After him **Ibzan** of Bethlehem judged Israel. ⁹He had 30 sons and gave 30 daughters in marriage outside his clan. He brought in 30 daughters from outside for his sons. He judged Israel **7 years**. ¹⁰He died and was buried at Bethlehem.

Elon Judges Israel

¹¹After him **Elon** from Zebulun judged Israel for **10 years**. ¹²He died and was buried at Aijalon in Zebulun.

Abdon Judges Israel

¹³After him **Abdon** son of Hillel from Pirathon judged Israel. ¹⁴He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons that rode on 70 donkeys. He judged Israel **8 years**. ¹⁵He died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim in the hill country of the Amalekites. **Jud 12:8-15**

The Samson Cycle

13:¹Israel sinned again, and the LORD gave them to the Philistines for **40 years**.

²A man named Manoah in Zorah from the tribe of Dan had a wife that couldn't have children. ³The angel of the LORD appeared to her,

"You haven't been able to have children, but you'll have a son. ⁴Make sure not to drink wine or alcohol, or eat anything ceremonially unclean. ⁵Your son is not to shave his head. He'll be a Nazirite to me from birth and begin delivering Israel from the Philistines."

⁶She went and told her husband,

*"A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, really awesome. I didn't ask him where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name. ⁷He said, 'You'll have a son; don't drink wine or alcohol, or eat anything ceremonially unclean, because he'll be a Nazirite to me from birth to death.'" **Jud 13:1-7***

⁸Manoah pleaded with the LORD, *"Please let the man you sent come again and teach us what to do with the boy."* ⁹His angel came again while she was sitting alone in the field. ¹⁰She ran and told Manoah, *"The man that came to me the other day has appeared to me."*

¹¹Manoah got up and followed her, *"Are you the man that talked to her?"*
"Yes."

¹²*"When your promise comes true, how should the boy live? What's he supposed to do?"*

¹³*"Make sure to do everything I told her. ¹⁴She's not to eat anything from the grapevine. Don't let her drink wine or alcohol, or eat anything ceremonially unclean."*

¹⁵*"Let me detain you and fix you a kid."*

¹⁶*"If you detain me, I won't eat your food. If you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD."* (Manoah didn't know he was the angel of the LORD.)

¹⁷*“What’s your name, so when your promise come true, we can honor you?”*

¹⁸*“Why ask what my name is? You can’t understand it.”*

¹⁹Manoah took the kid with its grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, who worked wonders while Manoah and his wife watched. ²⁰When the flame went up from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in it. They fell on their faces on the ground. **Jud 13:8-20**

²¹The angel of the LORD never appeared to them again. Then Manoah realized he was the angel of the LORD. ²²He told his wife, *“We going to die! We’ve seen God.”* ²³But she said, *“If he meant to kill us, he wouldn’t have accepted our burnt offering and grain offering. He wouldn’t have shown us those things or told us such things.”* ²⁴She had a son and named him **Samson**. He grew and the LORD blessed him. ²⁵The Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. **Jud 13:21-25**

Samson’s Marriage

14:¹Samson went down to Timnah and saw a young Philistine woman. ²He came up and told his parents, *“I saw a young Philistine woman at Timnah. Get her for me for a wife.”*

³They said, *“Isn’t there a woman among your relatives or all our people that you have to marry a woman from the uncircumcised Philistines?”*

But he told his father, *“Get her for me; I really like her.”*

⁴His parents didn’t know it was all right with the LORD because he was looking for an occasion against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines controlled Israel.

⁵Samson went down to Timnah with his parents and came to the vineyards at Timnah. A young lion roared at him, ⁶and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily on him. Barehanded he tore the lion apart like it was a kid. ⁷He went down and talked to the woman, and she pleased him well. ⁸After a while, he went back to take her and turned aside to see the lion’s carcass. There was a swarm of bees and honey in it. ⁹He scraped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. He came to his parents and gave them some to eat; but he didn’t tell them he got it out of the lion’s carcass. **Jud 14:1-9**

¹⁰His father went down to the woman, and Samson held a feast there. That’s the way young men used to do. ¹¹When the people saw him, they brought 30 companions to be with him. ¹²Samson said to them,

“Let me put a riddle to you. If you can figure it out and tell me during the week of the feast, I’ll give you 30 linen tunics and 30 festive robes. ¹³If you can’t, you’ll give me that many.”

“Let’s hear it.”

¹⁴He said, *“Out of the eater came something to eat.*

Out of the strong came something sweet.”

In three days they couldn’t explain the riddle.

Jud 14:10-14

¹⁵The fourth day, they told Samson's wife, *"Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle means, or we'll burn you and your father's family. Have you invited us here to make us poor?"*

¹⁶Samson's wife cried in front of him, *"You just hate me, you don't love me. You've put a riddle to my countrymen and haven't told me what it means."*

He told her, *"I haven't told my own parents. Am I going to tell you?"*

¹⁷She cried in his presence the week the feast lasted. The seventh day, he told her, because she pressed him hard. Then she told her countrymen the riddle. ¹⁸The men of the city told him on the seventh day before the sun set,

"What's sweeter than honey?

What's stronger than a lion?"

He told them,

*"If you hadn't plowed with my heifer,
you wouldn't have solved my riddle."*

¹⁹The Spirit of the LORD came on him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed 30 men from the city. He took their spoil and gave the festive robes to the ones that told him the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house. ²⁰So Samson's father-in-law gave his wife to his companion, who had been his best man.

Jud 14:15-20

Samson's Vengeance on the Philistines

^{15:1}After a while at the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife with a kid. He said, *"I'll sleep with my wife in her room."*

But her father wouldn't let him go in, ²*"I thought you utterly hated her; so I gave her to your companion. Isn't her younger sister better looking? Take her instead."*

³Samson told them, *"This time I'll be blameless for harming the Philistines."*

⁴Samson caught 300 foxes, turned them tail to tail, and put a torch between each set of tails. ⁵He lit the torches and released the foxes in the Philistines' standing grain and olive orchards.

⁶The Philistines asked, *"Who did this?"* They said, *"Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because he gave his wife to his companion."* The Philistines came up and burned her and her father.

⁷Samson told them, *"If this is what you do, I swear I'll take my revenge on you, and after that I'll quit."* ⁸He struck them hip and thigh with a great slaughter and went down to stay in the cave at Etam.

Jud 15:1-8

⁹Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah and made a raid on Lehi. ¹⁰The men in Judah said, *"Why have you come up against us?"*

They said, *"We've come to tie up Samson and do to him as he did to us."*

¹¹Then 3,000 men from Judah went down to the cave in the rock at Etam, and said to Samson, *"Don't you know the Philistines rule us? What have you done to us?"* ¹²*We've come down to tie you up and give you to the Philistines."*

"Swear that you won't fall on me yourselves."

¹³*“We’ll tie you up and give you to them. We won’t kill you.”*

So they tied him up with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

Jud 15:9-13

¹⁴When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him, and the Spirit of the LORD came on him powerfully. The ropes on his arms became like smoldering flax, and his bonds melted off his hands. ¹⁵He found a fresh jawbone from a donkey and killed 1,000 men with it. ¹⁶He said,

*“With a donkey’s ‘jawbone,’
piles on piles,
With a donkey’s jawbone,
I killed 1,000 men.”*

¹⁷After he said that, he threw it away. That place was called Ramath-lehi [*Jawbone Hill*].

¹⁸He was thirsty and “cried out” to the LORD, *“You’ve granted me this great deliverance. Am I to die from thirst and fall into the hands of uncircumcised men?”* ¹⁹God split open the hollow place that’s in Lehi, and water started coming out of it. When he drank it, his energy returned, and he revived. So he named it En-hakkore; it’s still at Lehi. ²⁰He judged Israel **20 years** during the time of the Philistines.

Jud 15:14-20

Samson and Delilah

^{16:1}Samson went to Gaza and saw a prostitute and slept with her. ²The Gazites heard he was there. They surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate. They kept quiet all night, saying, *“Let’s wait till morning light, then kill him.”* ³But Samson lay till midnight, he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate and its two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all. He put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that’s near Hebron.

Jud 16:1-3

⁴Later he fell in love with a woman named Delilah in the Valley of Sorek. ⁵The lords of the Philistines came and told her,

“Entice him to see where his great strength lies so we can overpower him, tie him up, and subdue him. We’ll each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.”

⁶Delilah said to Samson, *“Please tell me where your great strength lies and how you can be tied up.”*

⁷*“If they tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings that haven’t been dried, I’ll become as weak as other men.”*

⁸The lords of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings, and she tied him up with them. ⁹She had men lying in wait in an inner room. She said to him, *“The Philistines are coming at you, Samson!”* But he snapped the bowstrings like a piece of string snaps when it touches the fire. So they didn’t find out the secret of his strength.

Jud 16:4-9

¹⁰Delilah said to Samson, *“You’ve made fun of me and lied to me. Please tell me how you can be tied up.”*

¹¹*“If they tie me up with brand new ropes, I’ll become as weak as other men.”*

¹²So she tied him up with new ropes and said, *“The Philistines are coming at you, Samson!”* The men lying in wait were in an inner room. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

¹³She said to Samson, *“You’ve making fun of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied up.”*

“If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and make it tight with the pin, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

¹⁴So while he was asleep, she wove the seven locks of his hair into the web. She made them tight with the pin, and said, *“The Philistines are coming at you, Samson!”* But he woke up and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web. **Jud 16:10-14**

¹⁵She said to him,

“How can you say you love me when you’re not honest with me? You’ve made fun of me three times, and haven’t told me where your great strength lies.”

¹⁶When she pressed him hard day after day, it distressed him to death. ¹⁷He told her honestly,

“A razor has never come on my head. I’ve been a Nazarite to God from birth. If I’m shaved, my strength will leave; I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

¹⁸When Delilah saw that he’d been straight with her, she called the lords of the Philistines, *“Come up one more time. He’s told me his mind.”* They came and brought her the money. ¹⁹She had him sleep on her knees and called a man to shave off the seven locks on his head. ²⁰She said, *“The Philistines are coming at you, Samson!”* He woke up and said, *“I’ll go out as at other times and shake myself free.”* He didn’t know the LORD had left him. ²¹The Philistines grabbed him and gouged out his eyes. They took him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains. He ground at the mill in the prison, ²²but his hair began to grow again. **Jud 16:15-22**

The Death of Samson

²³The lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a big sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate. *“Our god has delivered our enemy to us.”* ²⁴When the people saw him, they praised their god; *“Our god has delivered our enemy to us, the destroyer of our country who has killed many of us.”* ²⁵When they’d got half drunk, they said, *“Call Samson so he can entertain us.”* So they called him out of the prison to entertain them. They made him stand between the pillars. ²⁶He told the boy that was holding him by the hand, *“Let me feel the pillars the temple rests on so I can lean on them.”* ²⁷The temple was filled with men and women, and the lords of the Philistines were there. There were about 3,000 men and women on the roof, watching while Samson entertained them.

²⁸Samson called to the LORD, *“Lord GOD, remember me this one time so I can be avenged on the Philistines for my eyes.”* ²⁹Samson took hold of the two middle pillars the temple rested on, and leaned his weight on them, his right hand on one, his left hand on the other. ³⁰He said, *“Let me die with the Philistines!”* He bowed with all his might, and the house fell on the lords and people in it. He killed more people in his death than in his life. ³¹His brothers and family came down to get him. They took him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in Manoah’s tomb. He’d judged Israel **20 years.** **Jud 16:23-31**

Micah’s Idols

17:1 A man named Micah in the hill country of Ephraim ²told his mother, *“I took the 1,100 pieces of silver that were stolen from you, that you told me about and I heard you speak a curse on; I have them.”* She said, *“May the LORD bless my son.”* ³He gave them back to her. She said, *“I consecrate the silver to the LORD for my son to make a carved image and a molten image. Now I’ll return it to you.”* he gave 200 pieces of it to a silversmith to make a carved image and a molten image. It was in Micah’s house. ⁵He had a shrine and appointed one of his sons as his priest. ⁶In those days, there wasn’t any king in Israel. Everyone did what seemed right to them. **Jud 17:1-6**

⁷A young Levite from the family of Judah was living temporarily in Bethlehem in Judah. ⁸He left to find a place to live. As he traveled, he came to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim. ⁹Micah asked him where he was from.

“I’m a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I’m going away to find a place to live.”

¹⁰*“Stay with me. Be a father and a priest for me. I’ll give you 10 pieces of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and living expenses.”*

¹¹The Levite was content to live with him and became like one of his sons. ¹²Micah installed the Levite as his priest in his house. ¹³Then he said, *“Now I know the LORD will prosper me; I have a Levite as a priest.”* **Jud 17:7-13**

Idolatry Among the Danites

18:1 In those days there wasn’t any king in Israel. The tribe of Dan was looking for a territory to live in, because no inheritance in Israel had fallen to them yet. ²They sent out from Zorah and Eshtaol five capable men from their tribe to spy out the land and explore it. They happened to come to Micah’s house and lodged there. ³While they were at his house, they recognized the voice of the young Levite and turned aside to him, *“Who brought you here? What are you doing here?”*

⁴*“Micah has done such and such with me and hired me to be his priest.”*

⁵*“Ask God so we can know if our journey will be successful.”*

⁶*“Goodbye. The LORD is watching the journey you’re on.”* **Jud 18:1-6**

⁷The five men left and came to Laish and saw how the people lived in security, like the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting, lacking nothing and possessing wealth. *They saw* how far they were from Sidon and had no dealings with anybody. ⁸When they came to their relatives at Zorah and Eshtaol, they asked them for their report. ⁹They said,

“Let’s go up against them. The land is fertile. Aren’t you going to do anything? Don’t hesitate to take the land. ¹⁰When you go, you’ll come to an unsuspecting people. The land is extensive. Yes, God will give you the place that doesn’t lack anything.”

¹¹Then 600 armed men from *the tribe of Dan* set out from Zorah and Eshtaol. ¹²They went up and “camped” at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. That’s why the place is still called Mahaneh-dan—west of Kiriath-jearim. ¹³They went on from there to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim.

Jud 18:7-13

¹⁴The five men that had spied out the country of Laish told their kin, *“Did you know there are household idols, an ephod, a carved image, and a molten image in these houses? Think what you can do.”* ¹⁵They turned aside to the house of the young Levite at Micah’s home and asked him how he was doing. ¹⁶The 600 armed Danites stood by the gate entrance, ¹⁷and the five men went in and took the carved image, ephod, household idols, and molten image, while the priest stood by the gate entrance with the 600 men. ¹⁸When they went into Micah’s house and took those things, the priest asked, *“What are you doing?”*

¹⁹They told him, *“Keep your voice down, cover your mouth, and come with us. Be a father and priest for us. Is it better to be a priest for one man’s house, or for a family and tribe in Israel?”*

²⁰The priest was happy. He took the ephod, household idols, and carved image and went in among the people.

²¹So they turned around and left, putting their little ones, livestock, and goods in front of them. ²²When they were a good way from Micah’s house, the men in the houses close by were called out and overtook the Danites. ²³They shouted at them. They turned around and said to Micah, *“What ails you that you’ve come with such a crowd?”*

²⁴He said, *“You take away the gods I made, and the priest, and what do I have left? What do you mean, ‘What ails you?’”*

²⁵The Danites said, *“Don’t raise your voice at us or angry fellows might fall on you. You’ll lose your life and your family’s lives.”*

²⁶The Danites left. Micah saw that they were too strong for him and went home. **Jud 18:14-26**

²⁷The Danites took what Micah had made and his priest, and went to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the sword and burned the town. ²⁸There wasn’t any deliverer because it was too far from Sidon, and they didn’t have dealings with anybody. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth-rehob. They rebuilt the town and lived in it. ²⁹They renamed it Dan

after their ancestor, Israel's son. ³⁰They set up the carved image, and Jonathan son of Gershom son of Moses and his descendants were priests for the tribe of Dan till the time of the captivity. ³¹They set up the carved image Micah made for as long as God's house was at Shiloh.

Jud 18:27-31

A Levite and His Concubine

^{19:1}At that time, there wasn't any king in Israel. A Levite was living in a remote part of the hill country of Ephraim. He took a concubine from Bethlehem, Judah. ²She got mad at him and went back to her father's family in Bethlehem for four months. ³Then her husband went after her to speak graciously to her and bring her back. He had a servant and a couple donkeys with him. She^{LXX} brought him to her father's family. When her father saw him, he was glad to see him. ⁴His father-in-law urged him to stay awhile, so he stayed three days. They ate and drank and lodged there. ⁵On the fourth day, they got up early, and he got ready to go, but the girl's father told him, *"Strengthen yourself with some bread and after that you can go."* ⁶The two men sat and ate and drank together. The girl's father told him, *"Spend the night and enjoy yourself."* ⁷When he got up to go, his father-in-law urged him till he stayed there again. ⁸On the fifth day, he got up early to leave, and the girl's father said, *"Strengthen yourself and wait till this afternoon."* So they ate together again. ⁹When the man, his concubine, and his servant got up to leave, his father in-law said, *"It's getting toward evening; stay here tonight and relax. You can get up early tomorrow for your trip home."*

Jud 19:1-9

¹⁰But he wouldn't. He left and headed toward Jebus (Jerusalem) with two saddled donkeys and his concubine. ¹¹When they got close to Jebus, it was late in the day, and the servant said, *"Let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night."*

¹²His master said,

"We won't turn aside to a city that doesn't belong to Israel. We'll go on toward Gibeah. ¹³Let's get close to a place there and spend the night at Gibeah or Ramah."

¹⁴So they went on past *Jebus*. The sun went down on them near Gibeah, in Benjamin. ¹⁵They stopped there to go in and spend the night. He sat down in the open square of the town because nobody had taken them home.

Jud 19:10-15

¹⁶At evening an old man came in from working in the field. He was from the hill country of Ephraim and living in Gibeah. The men there were Benjamites. ¹⁷He saw the traveler in the open square and said, *"Where are you from, and where are you going?"*

¹⁸He said, *"We're going from Bethlehem to a distant part of Ephraim, where I come from. I went to Bethlehem, and I'm going home. Nobody is taking me to his house. ¹⁹We have straw and hay for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me, my maidservant, and the young man with us. We have everything we need."*

²⁰The old man said, *“Don’t worry. I’ll take care of everything you need. Just don’t spend the night in the square.”*

²¹He took him into his house and gave the donkeys hay. They washed their feet and ate.

Jud 19:16-21

²²As they were relaxing, some riffraff from the town surrounded the house, beating on the door and saying to the old man that owned the house, *“Bring the man out that came to your house so we can rape him.”* ²³The man went out and said,

“No, brothers, don’t do something so wicked. He has come to my house; don’t do that awful thing. ²⁴Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do with them what you want, but don’t do such an awful thing.”

²⁵But the men wouldn’t listen, so the man grabbed his concubine and put her out to them. They raped her and abused her all night till morning. As it started getting daylight, they let her go. ²⁶She came and fell down at the door of the house where her husband was.

²⁷Her husband got up in the morning; and when he opened the doors to leave, his concubine was lying there with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸He said to her, *“Get up; let’s go on.”* But she didn’t answer. He put her on the donkey and went on to his home. ²⁹When he got there, he took a knife and divided her limb by limb into 12 pieces and sent them all over Israel. ³⁰Everybody that saw it said, *“Such an awful thing has never happened since Israel came up from Egypt. Consider it, take counsel, and speak.”*

Jud 19:22-30

Israel Fights the Benjamites

^{20:1}The people came out from Dan to Beersheba, including Gilead, and gathered in unity to the LORD at Mizpah. ²The chiefs from all the tribes presented themselves in the assembly of God’s people, 400,000 infantry that drew sword. ³(Now the Benjamites heard that the people had gone up to Mizpah.) They said, *“How did this wickedness happen?”* ⁴The Levite, husband of the murdered woman, said,

“My concubine and I came to Gibeah, in Benjamin, to spend the night. ⁵The men there rose against me and set on the house around me after dark. They meant to kill me. They raped my concubine, and she’s dead. ⁶I cut her up in pieces and sent them all over Israel because they’ve committed a detestable, disgraceful act.

⁷People of Israel, all of you, give your advice and counsel here.”

⁸The people arose in agreement,

“None of us will go to his tent or house. ⁹We’ll go up against Gibeah by lot.

¹⁰We’ll take 10 men from 100 from all the tribes, 100 from 1,000, 1,000 from 10,000, to bring provisions for the people, so when they come, they can pay back Gibeah for that awful crime.”

¹¹The men of Israel gathered in unity against the town.

Jud 20:1-11

¹²The tribes of Israel sent men through the whole tribe of Benjamin, and said, *“What’s this wickedness that’s taken place among you?”* ¹³*Give up the base men of Gibeah, so we can put them to death and purge sin from Israel.”* But the Benjamites wouldn’t listen. ¹⁴They came together out of the towns to Gibeah to fight. ¹⁵That day they mustered 26,000 swordsmen, besides 700 elite men in Gibeah. ¹⁶Among them were 700 elite men that were left-handed. Every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. ¹⁷Israel, not including those from Benjamin, mustered 400,000 swordsmen.

¹⁸The people of Israel went up to Bethel and asked God, *“Which of us should go up first to fight Benjamin?”* The LORD said, *“Judah.”* ¹⁹The people got up in the morning and camped against Gibeah. ²⁰They went out to fight Benjamin and drew up the battle line against them at Gibeah. ²¹The Benjamites came out of Gibeah and felled 22,000 Israelites that day. ²²But the people took courage and formed the battle line again in the same place. ²³They went up and cried to the LORD till evening and asked him, *“Should we go again against our relatives the Benjamites?”*

“Yes.”

Jud 20:12-23

²⁴So they attacked the Benjamites the second day. ²⁵Benjamin went against them out of Gibeah the second day and felled 18,000 swordsmen. ²⁶Then the entire army of Israel went up to Bethel and cried. They sat in front of the LORD and fasted that day till evening and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. ²⁷(The Ark was there at that time, ²⁸and Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron performed service in front of it.) They asked him, *“Should we go up again against our fellow Jews?”*

“Yes, I’ll deliver them to you tomorrow.”

²⁹Israel set men in ambush around Gibeah. ³⁰On the third day, they went up against the Benjamites and set themselves in formation against Gibeah like before. ³¹The Benjamites came out against them and drew away from the town. As at other times, they began to strike down and kill some people in the highways—one that goes up to Bethel, the other to Gibeah—and in the countryside, about 30 men of Israel. ³²The Benjamites said, *“They’re routed like the first time.”* But the men of Israel said, *“Let’s retreat and draw them away from the town onto the highways.”* ³³They rose up out of their place and set themselves in formation at Baal-tamar, and the men lying in ambush rushed out of their place west of Geba. ³⁴10,000 elite men out of all Israel attacked Gibeah. The battle was hard, but the Benjamites didn’t know that disaster was coming. ³⁵The LORD defeated Benjamin in front of Israel. Israel destroyed 25,100 Benjamite swordsmen that day. ³⁶Then the Benjamites realized they were defeated.

Jud 20:24-36a

The men of Israel gave ground, because they relied on the ones in ambush to attack the town. ³⁷The men in ambush hurried out and struck the whole town with the sword. ³⁸The signal

by the men in ambush was that when they made a big cloud of smoke rise out of the town,³⁹ the men of Israel should turn around in battle. Benjamin said, *"We've struck them down like in the first battle."*⁴⁰ But when the signal began to rise, the Benjamites looked back. The whole town was going up in smoke.⁴¹ Then Israel turned around and Benjamin panicked when they saw that disaster was on them.⁴² So they turned their backs on Israel toward open country, but the battle overtook them. Those who came out of the towns⁴³ cut them down and pursued them down from Nohah all the way across from Gibeah to the east.⁴⁴ 18,000 Benjamites fell.⁴⁵ They turned and fled toward the open country to the Rock of Rimmon. On the roads they cut down 5,000 *more* and pursued them hard to Gidom and killed another 2,000.⁴⁶ 25,000 Benjamites fell that day, trained soldiers.⁴⁷ But 600 fled toward open country to the Rock of Rimmon and stayed there four months.⁴⁸ The men of Israel turned back and struck them with the sword, people and animals and everybody they found. They set on fire the towns they found.

Jud 20:36b-48

Wives for Benjamites

21¹The men of Israel had sworn at Mizpah that none of them would give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin.² The people came to Bethel and sat till evening in front of God and cried bitterly.³ *"LORD God of Israel, why has this happened that a tribe should be missing from Israel?"*⁴ The people got up early the next day, built an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.⁵ They said, *"Which tribe didn't come up to the assembly to the LORD?"* They'd taken an oath at Mizpah to put to death anyone that didn't come up to the LORD.⁶ They felt sorry for Benjamin, their fellow Jews, *"A tribe has been eliminated from Israel today."*⁷ *What are we going to do for wives for the ones that are left? We've sworn by the LORD not to give them our daughters for wives."*

Jud 21:1-7

⁸They said, *"What tribe didn't come up?"*⁹ When the people mustered, not one person from Jabesh-gilead was there.¹⁰ The community sent 12,000 of their bravest men, *"Go strike the people in Jabesh-gilead with the sword, including women and children."*¹¹ *Destroy every male and every woman that has been with a man."*¹² They found 400 young virgins in Jabesh-gilead and brought them to the camp at Shiloh in Canaan.

¹³Then the whole community sent word to Benjamin at the Rock of Rimmon to announce a truce.¹⁴ Benjamin came back, and they gave them the women they'd saved from Jabesh-gilead, but they weren't enough.¹⁵ The people had mercy on Benjamin because the LORD had created a division in the tribes.

Jud 21:8-15

¹⁶The elders of the community said,

*"What are we going to do for the rest of them? The women from Benjamin had been destroyed."*¹⁷ *There has to be an inheritance for the survivors so a tribe doesn't disappear."*¹⁸ *But we can't give them our daughters for wives."*

The people had sworn, *“Anybody that gives a wife to Benjamin is under a curse.”*

¹⁹They said, *“There’s the annual festival of the LORD at Shiloh, north of Bethel, east of the road from Bethel to Shechem and south of Lebonah.”*

²⁰They told the Benjamites,

“Lie in wait in the vineyards ²¹and watch. If the young women of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, each man come out of the vineyards, grab his wife, and go to Benjamin’s land. ²²When their fathers or brothers complain to us, we’ll say, ‘Grant them graciously to us because we didn’t take wives for them in battle. You didn’t give them wives; otherwise, you’d be guilty.’”

²³The Benjamites did that and took their wives according to their number from the dancers they carried off. They went back to their inheritance, rebuilt the towns, and lived in them. ²⁴Each man of Israel went to his tribe and family, to his inheritance.

²⁵In those days there wasn’t a king in Israel. Everybody did what seemed right to them.

Jud 21:16-25

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