

Resource: Familiarization, Internalization, Articulation (Fia)

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Familiarization, Internalization, Articulation (Fia)

JDG

Judges 1:1–8

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 1:1–8 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:1–8 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

We know from previous stories that Yahweh had assigned, or allotted, each Israelite tribe places to live in the land of Canaan. Yahweh told the Israelite tribes to attack and take the land from the people who lived there.

This true story happened sometime after Joshua, the leader of the Israelite people, died. The Israelite tribes, or family groups, lived around the area of Shechem at that time.

In this story, the Israelites no longer had a human leader who could talk with Yahweh on the Israelites' behalf. The Israelite people asked Yahweh which Israelite tribe should go first to attack the people of Canaan, or the Canaanites, on behalf of the Israelites. Yahweh responded that the tribe of Judah should do this. Yahweh promised the tribe of Judah this area of land to live in.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when someone knew they would have success doing something before they even started to do it. Pause this audio here.

The men in the army of Judah asked the men from the tribe of Simeon to join them to fight the Canaanites. Then Judah could conquer the area Yahweh assigned to the tribe of Judah. The army of Judah promised to help the army of Simeon to conquer the area Yahweh assigned to Simeon later.

The tribes of Judah and Simeon were close relatives. The story actually calls Simeon the "brother" of Judah. This refers to the fact that these two tribes descended from the men, Judah and Simeon. Judah and Simeon were full brothers. Their father was Jacob and their mother was Leah. All the Israelite tribes descended from Jacob. However, Jacob had several wives. This means that not all the Israelite tribes descended from the same mother. Judah and Simeon had a closer relationship because they shared both the same father and mother. The descendants of Judah and Simeon continued to have a close relationship.

Also, Yahweh had previously assigned land to the tribe of Simeon from within the land Yahweh had assigned to the tribe of Judah. So, the tribe of Judah's land included the land Yahweh promised to the tribe of Simeon. This made it natural for the two tribes to agree to help each other capture the land Yahweh had assigned to them.

The Simeonites agreed and helped the men of Judah to fight. Though the story does not mention the Simeonites after this, we know that the Simeonites helped Judah to fight the Canaanites.

Then Judah, or the army representing the tribe of Judah, traveled from Shechem to the city of Bezek. We do not know the exact location of Bezek. However, we know a general location. The army of Judah likely walked uphill for at least eight hours northeast from Shechem to Bezek. In Bezek, Judah attacked the Canaanites and Perizzites, or people of Periz. The Perizzites lived near the Canaanites. Yahweh gave the army of Judah victory over the enemy. The army of Judah killed 10,000 men in Bezek.

Stop here and look at the map of Shechem and Bezek as a group. Pause this audio here.

In Bezek, the army of Judah found the Canaanite leader named Adoni-Bezek. Judah defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites in Bezek. Adoni-Bezek ran away, but the men of Judah followed and caught Adoni-Bezek. Men from Judah cut off Adoni-Bezek's thumbs and big toes, which is the largest toe on each foot. In those times, in the area near Canaan, winners of battles often cut off the thumbs and big toes of the defeated people. The winners did this to humiliate the defeated captives. It was also difficult for the captives to run with no big toes, so it prevented them from escaping. Also, with no thumbs, the captives would not be able to use weapons easily to fight back.

Stop here and act out as a group how you would walk, eat, drink, or hold something if you did not have thumbs or big toes. Pause this audio here.

Then Adoni-Bezek told the men of Judah how Adoni-Bezek had cut off the thumbs and big toes of 70 enemy kings. Adoni-Bezek had forced those kings to crawl around to look for pieces of food to eat that people at Adoni-Bezek's home accidentally dropped on the floor. Adoni-Bezek said, "Therefore God has paid me back for what I did to those kings." Adoni-Bezek recognized that God had humbled and disabled Adoni-Bezek, just as Adoni-Bezek had done to the 70 kings before.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when someone recognized that they received justice for something they had done. Pause this audio here.

The army of Judah brought Adoni-Bezek to Jerusalem. This journey took at least 12 hours of walking through a hilly area, so it took at least one day, and possibly a couple days. Adoni-Bezek died in Jerusalem, likely from his wounds. The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem and killed the people there with swords. Then the army of Judah burned the city of Jerusalem. Judah's army had a victory in Jerusalem, but did not yet completely control Jerusalem.

Stop here and look at the map of Bezek and Jerusalem as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a picture of a sword, if needed.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites ask Yahweh for guidance about who will fight the Canaanites first. Yahweh answers that the tribe of Judah will do this.

In the second scene: Men from the tribe of Judah make an agreement with men from the tribe of Simeon. The men all agree to help each other fight the enemies in order to capture the land Yahweh had promised to them.

In the third scene: The army of Judah defeats the Canaanites and Perizzites in Bezek. The enemy king, Adoni-Bezek, runs away.

In the fourth scene: Men from Judah catch Adoni-Bezek and cut off Adoni-Bezek's thumbs and big toes. Adoni-Bezek recognizes that God has paid Adoni-Bezek back for doing this to 70 other kings in the past.

In the fifth scene: The army of Judah travels to Jerusalem with Adoni-Bezek as a captive. Adoni-Bezek dies in Jerusalem. The army of Judah captures the city of Jerusalem by killing the people and setting the city on fire.

The characters in this passage are:

- Israelites
- Yahweh
- The tribe of Judah, including the men in the army from the tribe of Judah
- The tribe of Simeon, including the men in the army from the tribe of Simeon
- Canaanites and Perizzites
- Adoni-Bezek
- Adoni-Bezek's enemy kings
- And the people living in Jerusalem

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Scene one starts "after the death of Joshua." This likely does not happen immediately after Joshua's death, but sometime after the Israelites bury and mourn for Joshua. The sons of Israel, meaning the Israelites, ask Yahweh a question. The Israelites ask who from among the Israelites will go fight the Canaanites first. The Israelites ask who of us is to go "up"? Here, "up" likely refers to the fact that the Israelites have to travel from a lower area up into a hilly area to fight the Canaanites. The story does not say exactly how the Israelites ask Yahweh this question, but we know that somehow Yahweh responds to the Israelites' question. Yahweh uses a word to emphasize that what Yahweh is about to say is important. Yahweh says that Yahweh will give the tribe of Judah control over the land.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What can you say in your language to show that Yahweh was emphasizing something important? Pause this audio here.

In scene two, men in the tribe of Judah's army arrange with men in the tribe of Simeon's army to help each other fight enemies and capture enemy land. "Judah," meaning men from the tribe of Judah, make an arrangement with "Simeon," meaning men from the tribe of Simeon, or Simeonites. The Simeonites agree and help the men of Judah to fight. Though the story does not mention the Simeonites after this, we know that the Simeonites helped Judah to fight the Canaanites.

In scene three, Yahweh gives the army of Judah victory over the Canaanites and Perizzites. Some translations may say that Yahweh gives the Canaanites and Perizzites into the hands, or control, of the army of Judah. The army of Judah kills 10,000 men at Bezek. Also in Bezek, the army of Judah finds and fights against the enemy king, Adoni-Bezek. The story repeats that the army of Judah defeats the Canaanites and Perizzites in Bezek, for emphasis. However, the king Adoni-Bezek runs away from the army of Judah.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Yahweh gives the Canaanites and Perizzites into the hands of, or the control of, the army of Judah. How can you talk about the idea of Yahweh giving the army of Judah control of the two people groups, the Canaanites and the Perizzites? Pause this audio here.

In scene four, the army of Judah chases and catches Adoni-Bezek. After the army of Judah cuts off Adoni-Bezek's thumbs and big toes, Adoni-Bezek speaks. Adoni-Bezek tells how he had cut off the thumbs and big toes of 70 kings. Adoni-Bezek had forced those kings to scavenge for scraps of food under Adoni-Bezek's table. Adoni-Bezek then uses his words to show that God had done to Adoni-Bezek exactly what Adoni-Bezek had done to the 70 kings.

In scene five, the "sons of Judah" represent the army of Judah. Here, the word "sons" means descendants. The army of Judah takes Adoni-Bezek to the city of Jerusalem, and Adoni-Bezek dies there. Then the army of Judah attacks Jerusalem by putting the city to the sword, or killing the people with swords, and setting the city on fire.

Stop here and discuss as a group: The army of Judah puts Jerusalem to the sword, which means that they kill the people in the city with swords. How will you talk about this in your translation? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Israelites
- Yahweh
- The tribe of Judah, including the men in the army from the tribe of Judah
- The tribe of Simeon, including the men in the army from the tribe of Simeon
- Canaanites and Perizzites
- Adoni-Bezek
- Adoni-Bezek's enemy kings
- And the people living in Jerusalem

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

After Joshua had died, the Israelites asked Yahweh, "Who will go first to fight the Canaanites for us?"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person playing the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Our leader died, and we do not have a new leader. We do not know what we should do; or
- Desperate and confused; or
- Who will lead us now that Joshua is dead? or
- Remember that Joshua reminded us that we must faithfully follow Yahweh. We need to ask Yahweh to help us.

Yahweh answered that Judah's army would go first. In fact, Yahweh promised to give the army of Judah control over the Canaanite people.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person playing Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The tribe of Judah wants to obey me to take the land; or
- I promised the tribe of Judah this land, and I will give it to the tribe of Judah.

Ask the person playing the army of Judah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh decided we will have victory over the Canaanites, so we are sure we will have success; or
- We must obey Yahweh.

The men in the army of Judah ask men in the army of Simeon to help fight the Canaanites and take the Canaanite land. The Simeonites agree. Yahweh gives the army of Judah victory over the Canaanites and Perizzites. The army of Judah kills 10,000 enemies in Bezek. However, the leader, Adoni-Bezek, flees.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person playing the army of Judah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh kept his promise to us; or
- Grateful to Yahweh; or
- This battle is not over yet. We must capture Adoni-Bezek.

Judah's army chases and catches Adoni-Bezek. Judah's army cuts off Adoni-Bezek's thumbs and big toes. Adoni-Bezek tells how Adoni-Bezek had cut off 70 enemy king's thumbs and big toes. Adoni-Bezek even made those enemies eat scraps of food from the floor. Adoni-Bezek believes God has punished Adoni-Bezek in kind for what Adoni-Bezek had done. Judah's army brings Adoni-Bezek to Jerusalem, where Adoni-Bezek dies.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person playing Adoni-Bezek, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I once thought I was a great king. I even humiliated my enemies by cutting off their thumbs and toes. Now I am the one who others are humiliating and defeating; or
- I feel empty and useless; or
- I feel broken. God has humbled me.

Ask the person playing the people in Jerusalem, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Adoni-Bezek was a powerful king. These people who defeated Adoni-Bezek must be very powerful; or
- We are scared about what will happen to us.

Judah's army attacks Jerusalem, killing people there and setting the city on fire.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person playing the army of Judah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh has given us victory; or
- We must continue to conquer the land Yahweh has assigned to us.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

This story uses the personal name for God, **Yahweh**.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **Yahweh**. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase throughout this passage.

You will remember that Israel is the name that God gave Jacob after Jacob wrestled with the angel. So, the Bible calls all of Jacob's descendants, "Israelites." You will also remember that Jacob's grandfather was Abraham. God had promised to make Abraham's descendants into a great people group. God also said that God will bless all the families on earth through these descendants.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **Israelites**. Look up Israelites in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Use the same word or phrase throughout this passage. Pause this audio here.

This story talks about the Canaanites. You will remember that people had named some land by the same name as Noah's grandson, **Canaan**. This is the land that God promised to give to Abram's descendants, the Israelites. However, the Israelites did not have control of Canaan yet. Different people groups had control of Canaan. Sometimes the storyteller uses the word Canaanites to refer to one of these people groups, and sometimes he uses Canaanites to refer to all the people groups together that control Canaan. In this story, the armies fight against both the Canaanites and the **Perizzites**, one of the other people groups in Canaan.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **Canaanites** and **Perizzites**. Look up Canaan in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Use the same word or phrase throughout this passage. Pause this audio here.

Adoni-Bezek said that **God** had paid him back for the way he had humiliated other **kings**. Adoni-Bezek uses the general term for the creator God. A king is someone who rules over a city or territory.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **king** and **God**. Look up king and God in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same words that you have used there.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 1:1–8

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (14019284 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (10589635 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 1:9–17

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 1:9–17 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:9–17 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:9–17 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This true story happened after the army of Judah had burned the city of Jerusalem. The army of Judah did not yet take full control of the city of Jerusalem. The "sons of Judah," meaning the men in the army of Judah, went downhill from Jerusalem. Judah's army fought the Canaanites who lived in the hilly areas south of Jerusalem. Judah's army also traveled farther south from those hills to fight Canaanites in the Negev wilderness, the dry flat area there. Judah's army continued farther south to fight Canaanites in the lower hill country, sometimes called the Shephelah. This means that the army of Judah fought and defeated many Canaanites in all these areas. The next part of the story explains details about the specific locations within these areas where Judah's army defeated the Canaanites.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Jerusalem, the hill country south of Jerusalem, the Negev wilderness, and the lower hill country, or Shephelah. Pause this audio here.

Judah's army traveled, walking at least 10 hours to an open valley section of the hilly areas southwest of Jerusalem. Judah's army fought against the people living there in the city of Hebron. We know from previous

stories that many of the Israelites feared the very strong, very tall people in this area. The storyteller briefly tells us that people used to call the city of Hebron, "Kiriath Arba."

Kiriath Arba means the "city of Arba." The Israelites who originally heard this story would have known that Kiriath meant "city," and that "Arba" was a man who the Israelites had previously fought. The man, Arba, had a son named Anak. Anak's three sons became leaders in the army. Anak's sons were Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi. In this story, Judah's army defeated Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi in Hebron. Though Judah's army had a victory, Judah's army did not take full control of the land in Hebron.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Jerusalem to Hebron. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when a people group had a partial, but not full, victory. Pause this audio here.

From Hebron, Judah's army traveled about four hours southwest to go fight against the people in the city of Debir. People used to call Debir, "Kiriath Sepher." Kiriath Sepher means "book city."

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Hebron to Debir. Pause this audio here.

Here, for the first time, the story mentions the name of one of the men who fought as part of the army of Judah. This man is Caleb. This is the same Caleb who Moses had once sent to explore the land of Canaan for the Israelites many years before. Because Caleb had followed Yahweh in the time of Moses, Yahweh had promised that Caleb and Caleb's descendants would inherit and possess the land.

In this story, Caleb spoke to the men in the army of Judah. Caleb promised that the man who could take control of the town of Kiriath Sepher could marry Caleb's daughter, Aksah. Othniel captured Kiriath Sepher. Othniel was Caleb's nephew, the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz. So, Othniel married Aksah as Caleb promised.

Then Aksah convinced her husband, Othniel, that Aksah could ask her father for some more land. Aksah then rode a donkey to visit her father, Caleb. People often rode donkeys when they traveled long distances. When Aksah got down off the donkey, Caleb asked what Aksah wanted. Aksah asked Caleb to give Aksah a blessing, meaning a gift. Aksah reminded Caleb that Caleb gave Aksah land in the Negev wilderness. Traditionally, in those days, fathers of daughters often gave a gift like land to the married couple as part of the wedding. So, Caleb likely had given the land as part of Aksah and Othniel's wedding. The Negev wilderness was a desert area, so Caleb had already given Aksah land in a dry place.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is it like for people who live in a dry place? What challenges might people who live in a dry place have? Look at a photo of a wilderness area. Pause this audio here.

Aksah continued her request to Caleb and asked for springs of water. A spring of water is a source of fresh water from a hole in the ground. In other words, Aksah asked for additional land with better access to water, since she lived in a dry area in the desert. Caleb agreed and gave Aksah control over land with a spring of water in the hills, and land with a spring of water in the lowlands.

Stop here and look at an image of a spring of water, as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of when a child asked their father for something they needed, and the father gave it to them. Pause this audio here.

The story then shifts to mention the descendants of Moses' father-in-law. Moses' wife's father, or father-in-law, was from the Ken people, or the Kenites. The Kenites probably moved around a lot since the time of Moses. In this story, these Kenite descendants had left the city called "the City of Palm Trees," also called Jericho. Then the Kenites traveled with the people of the tribe of Judah farther southwest. After at least a couple days of travel, the group arrived in the "Wilderness of Judah," meaning the Negev wilderness area. The Kenites then lived with the people who already lived in that area, near the city of Arad.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the City of Palm Trees, or Jericho, and Arad. Pause this audio here.

Then the men in the tribe of Judah's army traveled along with the men in the tribe of Simeon, their related tribe. Judah's army led Simeon's army to fight together for the land that Yahweh had assigned to the tribe of Simeon. This trip from the city of Arad to the city of Zephath took around a day. The two tribes attacked the Canaanites

who lived in Zephath, and they fully destroyed the town. So, the men from Judah's army and Simeon's army renamed the town "Hormah," which means destruction.

Stop here and look at a map of the cities of Arad and Zephath, as a group.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:9–17 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: The storyteller describes where Judah's army fought the Canaanites.

In the second scene: Judah's army defeats Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai in the city of Hebron, but Judah's army does not fully capture the city.

In the third scene: Judah's army prepares to fight the Canaanites in the city of Debir. Caleb promises that the man who captures Debir will get to marry Caleb's daughter, Aksah. So, Othniel captures Debir and marries Aksah.

In the fourth scene: Aksah asks Caleb for land with water access. Caleb gives this to Aksah.

In the fifth scene: The Kenites travel with the army of Judah. Then the Kenites settle to live near the city of Arad in the Negev Desert.

In the sixth scene: The armies of Judah and Simeon fight and destroy the city of Zephath.

The characters in this passage are:

- The army of the tribe of Judah
- The Canaanites in Hebron, including Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai
- Caleb
- The Canaanites in Debir
- Caleb's daughter, Aksah
- Othniel
- The Kenites
- The people who live near Arad
- The army of the tribe of Simeon
- And the Canaanites in Zephath

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

This story starts in a way that the listener knows that the events in the story happen sometime after Judah's army burned Jerusalem in the previous story. Scene one tells us the general areas where Judah's army fought battles in this area of Canaan. The storyteller will explain more details of specific battles in these same areas in the next scenes of the story.

In scene one, the storyteller says that the "sons of Judah," which means the army of Judah, went downhill from Jerusalem. Judah's army fought Canaanites first in the hill country, then in the Negev wilderness or southern

desert, and then in the Shephelah or the area at the bottom of the hills. This means Judah's army traveled mostly south and a little to the west to keep fighting Canaanites.

In scene two, Judah's army attacks the Canaanites in Hebron. The storyteller briefly mentions that people used to call Hebron, "Kiriath Arba." The storyteller likely does this to help Israelite listeners in those days who heard the story to understand the historical background. Israelites in those days would recognize that the Israelites had previously lost battles to the strong people in the city of Arba.

Stop here and, if needed, review the map of Jerusalem to Hebron, as a group. Pause this audio here.

In scene three, the tribe of Judah goes to fight the people in the city of Debir. The storyteller briefly mentions that people used to call Debir, "Kiriath Sepher." Once again, the storyteller likely does this to help Israelite listeners in those days who heard the story to understand the historical background. We do not know the historical importance for Kiriath Sepher, but the Israelites in those days would have known.

Stop here and, if needed, review the map of Hebron to Debir, as a group. Pause this audio here.

Also in the third scene, on the way to battle, Caleb promises that the man in Judah's army who leads the army to capture Debir will marry Caleb's daughter. Caleb's younger brother's son, or Caleb's nephew, Othniel, captures Debir. So Othniel gets to marry Aksah. The Bible has many examples of people who gave land as a kind of wedding gift, especially for a daughter. Though the story does not mention it, we know from the next part of the story that Caleb gave Aksah land in the south country, in the Negev wilderness. Aksah likely lived in the land enough time to realize that the land in the Negev wilderness did not have a good source of water.

In the fourth scene, Aksah convinces her husband, Othniel, that Aksah can ask Caleb for land. Though the story does not say this directly, Aksah likely talks with Othniel about the need for water on their land. Othniel agrees. Aksah then rides a donkey to visit Caleb. We do not know where Caleb is at this time since Judah's army has been traveling to fight the Canaanites. Caleb is likely still traveling and fighting with Judah's army when Aksah meets Caleb. Women did not typically go to an army of men, so Caleb immediately knew Aksah wanted something. Aksah asks for land with access to water. Caleb gives this to Aksah.

In the fifth scene, the Kenites travel with the army of Judah. The story mentions that the Kenites come from the area of Jericho, called the City of Palm Trees, which is several days' travel northeast of the Negev wilderness. The story mentions that the Kenites travel with the army of Judah to the Negev wilderness. Judah's army has been fighting Canaanites south of Jerusalem, nowhere near Jericho. This means that the Kenites likely travel part of the way before meeting Judah's army somewhere in the land south of Jerusalem. Then, the Kenites finally settle in the Negev wilderness near Arad.

Stop here, if needed, and review the map of the City of Palm Trees, or Jericho, and Arad, as a group. Pause this audio here.

In the sixth scene, the tribe of Judah's army led the tribe of Simeon's army from Arad to defeat the Canaanites in Zephath. The two Israelite armies destroyed this city and renamed the city "Hormah."

Stop here as a group and, if needed, review the map of Arad and Zephath. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:9–17 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The army of the tribe of Judah
- The Canaanites in Hebron, including Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi
- Caleb
- The Canaanites in Debir
- Caleb's daughter, Aksah
- Othniel
- The Kenites
- The people who live near Arad
- The army of the tribe of Simeon
- And the Canaanites in Zephath

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

After they burn the city of Jerusalem, Judah's army continues south to fight more Canaanites. The areas Judah's army goes to include the hill country, the southern desert called the Negev, and the southwestern foothills called the Shephelah.

One of the places in the hill country where Judah's army fights is Hebron. People used to call Hebron, "Kiriath Arba." In Hebron, Judah's army conquered the armies of the Canaanite military leaders Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Judah's army, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The people in this area are very strong and have beaten the Israelites before. Now we finally have a small victory! or
- We did not defeat the whole city, but we at least defeated three military leaders.

Judah's army goes from Hebron to the city of Debir, formerly called Kiriath Sepher. Caleb promises that the man from Judah's army who defeats Debir will marry Caleb's daughter.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Caleb, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am frustrated that we have not had any full victories yet; or
- I must do something to motivate the men in the army.

Othniel, Caleb's nephew, defeats Debir. Sometime after the battle, Othniel marries Caleb's daughter, Aksah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Aksah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It is a great honor to marry a battle hero; or
- My father gave us a lot of land for our wedding.

After she gets married, Aksah convinces Othniel that Aksah can ask Caleb for more land. Aksah asks Caleb for land with water. Caleb gives land with water to Aksah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Caleb, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am surprised Aksah came to an army camp to meet me. What does she want? or
- I want my daughter to have what she needs. I will happily give her land with water.

The Kenites travel with the army of Judah. Then the Kenites settle to live near the city of Arad in the Negev wilderness. Other people also live in this area.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Kenites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We are grateful that Judah's army helped keep us safe while we traveled in foreign areas; or
- We finally have a place to settle and live after we moved around for many, many years.

The armies of Judah and Simeon fight and destroy the city of Zephath. The armies of Judah and Simeon rename the city as "Hormah," which means destruction.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Judah's army and Simeon's army, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- After many partial victories, we finally have a full victory! or
- The tribe of Simeon finally has some of the land that Yahweh allotted to us.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:9–17 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

This story mentions the "**sons of Judah**." Here, "sons" means descendants. In this story we know that "sons of Judah" specifically refers to the men in the army of the tribe of Judah. Use the same word or phrase for the descendants or men in the army of Judah as you used in previous passages.

This story talks about the Canaanites. You will remember that people had named some land by the same name as Noah's grandson, **Canaan**. This is the land that God promised to give to Abram's descendants, the Israelites. However, the Israelites did not have control of Canaan yet. A different people group had control of Canaan. This

people group is the Canaanites. For more information on the Canaanites, refer to Canaan in the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase as you have used in previous passages.

The Negev is the name of a desert, or **wilderness** area. The Kenites also moved to the Wilderness of Judah. If you need to specify that the Negev is a wilderness area, you may do so in your translation. A wilderness is a lonely, barren place where few people live. There is usually not much water, and very few trees or plants, in the wilderness.

Stop here and discuss as a group if you will say that the Negev is a **wilderness**, or desert area, and what you will call the Wilderness of Judah. See the Master Glossary for more information about wilderness. Look at a photo of a wilderness area. Pause this audio here.

Aksah rode a **donkey** to visit her father. A donkey is an animal that people often rode on when they traveled long distances.

Stop here and look at a photo of a donkey. See the Master Glossary, if needed, for more information about donkeys. Pause this audio here.

Aksah asked her father for **springs of water**. Springs are a source of fresh water from a hole in the ground.

Stop here and look at a photo of a **spring of water** again if needed. As a group, discuss what word or phrase you will use for "spring of water." Pause this audio here.

The Kenites used to live in the City of Palms, or Jericho. A **palm tree** is a kind of tree that grows in the area of Canaan.

Stop here and look at a photo of a date palm tree as a group. Discuss what word or phrase you will use for the name of the City of Palms.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 1:9–17

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (15056977 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (11285806 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 1:18–26

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 1:18–26 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:18–26 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:18–26 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This true story happened after Judah's army and Simeon's army conquered Zephath. We do not know the exact location of Zephath. However, we guess that it likely took Judah's army between one and three days to travel east from Zephath towards the city of Gaza, by the Mediterranean Sea. There in the flat land by the coast, Judah's army conquered the city of Gaza. Then Judah's army traveled about five hours north to conquer Ashkelon. Judah's army conquered a third city, Ekron, about seven hours northeast from Ashkelon. The Philistines, one of the Canaanite people groups, had control of this area. The five big Philistine cities included Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gath. This means that Judah's army took control of three out of the five major Philistine cities. The Philistines were some of Israel's strongest enemies. However, though Judah's army had success at first, the Canaanites still kept control of much of the land.

Stop here and look at a map of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron as a group. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh helped Judah's army to take control of the hill country. However, Judah's army did not take control of the land in the valley areas. The storyteller says Judah's army failed because the people in the area used iron chariots to fight. A chariot is a kind of cart that horses pulled so that soldiers could ride the chariot in battle. The Philistines in that area knew the technology to make iron. These people used the strong iron metal to strengthen the wooden wheels on the chariots. The Israelites did not know how to make iron yet, so the Israelites did not have iron.

Stop here as a group and look at a drawing of a chariot with iron on the wheels. Pause this audio here.

The army of Judah fulfilled one of God's promises from the time of Moses when it gave Caleb ownership of Hebron. Even though Judah's army had previously conquered the descendants of the three sons of Anak, Judah did not take full control of the land. Only after Judah's army successfully won several more battles did the army return to Hebron. Caleb now actually takes full control of the land. The storyteller says that Caleb forced away the three "sons," or descendants of the three sons, of Anak. The Israelites had feared the descendants of the man, Anak. Anak's descendants were very tall and very strong. In a previous story, the army of Judah had conquered the clans of three of these descendants of Anak. These were the clans of Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, in Hebron. However, Judah's army had not taken full control of Hebron yet. The families or clans related to the men, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, still lived in Hebron. In this story, Caleb forces away these tribes. Caleb took control of Hebron.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that includes Hebron. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when God fulfilled one of his promises to someone. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller says that around the same time that Caleb took control of Hebron, the tribe of Benjamin failed to take control of the city of Jerusalem. You will remember that in a previous story, Judah's army killed many of the people in Jerusalem and set the city on fire. However, Judah's army did not take full control of the city from the Jebusite people who lived there. We also know that Yahweh had previously assigned Jerusalem to the tribe of Benjamin. So, the people of the tribe of Benjamin, or the Benjaminites, went to Jerusalem. However, Benjamin's army also did not take full control of Jerusalem. Instead, the Benjaminites lived with the Jebusites in Jerusalem together for a long time. These two people groups continued to live together even at the time when the storyteller told this story to the Israelites.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that includes Jerusalem. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller also tells about the "house," meaning the household or family, of Joseph. The Israelite tribe of Joseph included two smaller groups named after the man Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. So, the tribe of Joseph included the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. During Joshua's time, Yahweh had assigned the northern area of Canaan to these two groups in Joseph's tribe. Joseph's army attacked the city of Bethel. Bethel is in the hill country. It would take a person about eight hours to walk from Bethlehem north to Bethel.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that includes Bethel. Pause this audio here.

Stop and discuss the following question as a group: Talk about large tribes or family groups in your area. How do you divide these large tribes into smaller tribes or clans? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh had allotted Bethel to the tribe of Benjamin, on the southern border of the land Yahweh allotted to the tribe of Ephraim. But it was the tribes of Joseph, which included Ephraim, who attacked Bethel. Yahweh's presence went with the army of Joseph. Yahweh approved of and directed Joseph's army to attack Bethel.

However, instead of immediately attacking Bethel, leaders from Joseph's army send spies ahead to check the situation first. The storyteller also briefly mentions that people used to call the city of Bethel by the name, "Luz." The spies from Joseph's army saw a man who lived in Bethel leave the city, probably from a main gate in the city walls. The spies asked this man to show the spies a way to get into the city. The spies already knew how to find the gate to the city. But the spies asked this man to help the spies find a secret way to sneak into the city so that the army of Bethel would not suspect that Joseph's army would attack Bethel.

Stop here and look at a drawing of what a city with walls and a gate might have looked like at that time. Pause this audio here.

The spies promised this man that, if the man helped the spies, the spies would show the man mercy, or kindness. The man showed the spies how to get into the city. Then Joseph's army killed everyone in the city with swords. Joseph's army let this man and all the man's family go free. The man and his family moved to the area where the Hittite people lived. The Hittite people, one of the largest Canaanite tribes, lived in Syria. The area included present-day Turkey and northern Palestine, as far south as the Orontes River.

Stop here and look at a map of the Hittite area as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and, if needed, look at a drawing of a sword as a group. Pause this audio here.

The man and his family from Bethel built a new city there and called it "Luz," the same name people used to call Bethel. The new city of Luz still kept the same name even at the time when the storyteller later told this story to the Israelites. In other words, because the tribe of Joseph allowed this man to leave, the city of Luz continued, just in a different place. So, the tribe of Joseph did not fully obey Yahweh, because they allowed someone from the city of Luz to live, even though Yahweh had instructed them to destroy everyone in the city.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Tell a story about a time when a group of people did not fully obey God. What happened because of their disobedience?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:18–26 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Judah's army captures cities along the coast and captures the hill country. Judah's army fails to force away the people in the valley area.

In the second scene: Judah's army gives Caleb control of Hebron.

In the third scene: The Benjaminites move to Jerusalem but fail to force away the Jebusites.

In the fourth scene: The tribes of Joseph attack Bethel. Before they attack, the tribes of Joseph send spies to observe Bethel. The spies make a deal with a man as he leaves the city. Then Joseph's army attacks Bethel and kills all the people. Joseph's army spares the man and his family who helped the spies.

In the fifth scene: The man from Bethel takes his family and builds the city, "Luz," in the Hittite area.

The characters in this passage are:

- Judah's army
- Philistine enemies
- Yahweh
- Moses
- Caleb
- The descendants of Anak
- Benjaminites
- Jebusites in Jerusalem
- The tribes of Joseph
- The spies from the army of Joseph who spied on Bethel
- The man from Bethel, a city also formerly called Luz
- People in Bethel
- And the Hittites

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The storyteller starts scene one with a word that helps the listener to know that the events in this story happened just after the events in the previous story. The storyteller says that Judah, which means Judah's army, captured three cities. The storyteller lists the cities in order of how Judah attacked. First Gaza, then Askelon, and finally, Ekron. Judah's army captured each of the cities, including the land all the way to the borders, or the surrounding territories, of each city.

Yahweh "was with" the army of Judah. Here, the storyteller does not mean that Yahweh physically went with the army of Judah into battle. The storyteller means that Yahweh approved of and directed Judah's army to take control of the hill country. Because of this, Judah's army had the ability to take control of the land in the hill country from the people who lived in the area.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time that God helped someone even though God was not physically there with that person. Pay attention to the words the storyteller uses about God. Pause this audio here.

The army of Judah could not force away the people who lived in the valley areas. The enemy soldiers from the valley areas used chariots with iron wheels.

In scene two, Judah's army gives the city of Hebron to Caleb. The storyteller reminds us that, in the past, Moses promised that Caleb would have control of Hebron. After Judah's army promised that Caleb could have the land, Caleb forced away the people who lived in Hebron. Caleb forced away, or drove away, the three sons of Anak. In other words, Caleb forced the descendants of the clans of the sons of Anak to leave the area.

Stop here and discuss as a group: How will you describe how Caleb forces the descendants of the sons of Anak to leave the area? Pause this audio here.

The third scene likely happens around the same time as, or shortly after, Caleb takes control of Hebron. In the scene, the Benjaminites move to Jerusalem but fail to force away the Jebusite people who live there. So, the Benjaminites and Jebusites both live in Jerusalem. The storyteller says this happened "to this day," which means they still lived in Jerusalem together when the storyteller told the story to the original Israelite listeners.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about something that happened long ago that has a result that continues until now. What words does the storyteller use to show that the result still happens? Pause this audio here.

In scene four, the storyteller talks about the "house of Joseph." "House" refers to all the people in the tribe, or the descendants, of Joseph.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How can you describe the house, or tribe, of Joseph? Remember that the tribe of Joseph includes the two smaller tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Pause this audio here.

Joseph's army sent some spies ahead to observe, or spy on, the city of Bethel, formerly called "Luz." These spies from the army of Joseph saw a man as he left Bethel. The spies then spoke to this man. The storyteller does not say it directly, but the spies probably did not walk up to the man right in front of the city. The spies probably waited until the man moved to an area where no one else could see the man talk with the spies.

The spies then made a deal with the man. The words the spies used showed that the spies wanted to persuade the man to help the spies. If the man showed the spies how to sneak into the city, then the spies promised to show mercy to the man. The man did show the spies how to sneak in. Once again, the storyteller does not say directly that the spies likely first returned to report what happened to the rest of Joseph's army. Then Joseph's army would have sneaked into the city to attack and kill the people there with swords. Joseph's army kept the spies' promise to the man who helped the spies. Joseph's army let the man and the man's family go without any harm.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when someone persuaded someone else to do something. What did the first person say that persuaded the second person? Pause this audio here.

In scene five, the man from Bethel moved to the Hittite area and rebuilt the city of Luz. The storyteller says people called the city by the name Luz "to this day," which means at the time when the storyteller told the story to the original Israelite listeners.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:18–26 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Judah's army
- Philistine enemies
- Yahweh
- Moses
- Caleb
- The descendants of Anak
- Benjaminites
- Jebusites in Jerusalem
- The tribes of Joseph
- The spies from the army of Joseph who spied on Bethel
- The man from Bethel, formerly called Luz
- People in Bethel
- And the Hittites

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The army of Judah captured the towns of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron all the way to the borders of each town's territory. Yahweh was with Judah's army so the army took control of the hill country as well. However, Judah's army failed to force out the people who lived in the valley area, because these people had iron chariots.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Judah's army fears the enemy army more than Judah's army trusts me; or
- I made a covenant with the Israelites since the time of Moses that the Israelites would have control of this land. When the army of Judah does not force all of their enemies out of the land, they do not fully keep their part of the covenant to obey and trust me.

Then the army of Judah gave Hebron to Caleb, like Moses had once told the Israelites to do. Caleb forced out the descendants of Anak who lived in Hebron.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Caleb, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel grateful for the land Yahweh promised to give to me and my family; or
- Now I must fight and force out the giants who live here.

The Benjaminites did not force out the Jebusites, so the two groups lived together in Jerusalem for a long time.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Benjaminites do not have faith in me to take full control of the city like I told the Benjaminites to do; or
- The Benjaminites should have courage to defeat the enemy, because I am more powerful than the Jebusites.

The tribe of Joseph attacked Bethel. Yahweh's presence went with the tribe of Joseph. The tribe of Joseph sent spies ahead of the army to scout the situation in Bethel, formerly called Luz. The spies made a deal with a man from Bethel. The spies asked the man to show the guards how to secretly enter the city. In return, the spies promised to show mercy by not killing the man. The man and the spies both kept their promise. The tribe of Joseph snuck into the city by the way the man showed the spies, and they killed everyone in the city except the man and the man's family.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the tribe of Joseph, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Benjaminites failed to force out the Canaanites in Jerusalem. This land belongs to the Benjaminites, but we will not tolerate the Canaanites on the border of our land; or
- We cannot expect the Benjaminites to force the people of Bethel out of here. We must force the people of Bethel out ourselves.

Ask the person who plays the spies from Joseph's army, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We must make a covenant with the man from Bethel so that we can win the battle; or
- Our strategy will give us success.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- My presence went with the tribe of Joseph, but the tribe disobeyed me when they made a covenant with one of the Canaanite people; or
- Once again, one of the tribes of Israel does not fully trust me.

The man from Bethel, and the man's family, built a town called Luz in the Hittite area. The town lasted a long time, even when the storyteller retold this story to the Israelites later.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:18–26 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

This story uses the personal name for God, **Yahweh**. Use the same word for Yahweh as you used in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase throughout this passage.

The tribe of Judah could not fully conquer the people, because the people's **chariots** were made stronger with iron.

Stop here and look again at the image of a chariot, if needed. Discuss what word or phrase you will use for **chariot**. Pause this audio here.

The men of the tribes of Joseph sent **spies** to the city of Bethel. These men went to discover information about the city in order to attack and conquer it effectively.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word you will use for **spies**. Use the same word you have used in other books of the Bible. Pause this audio here.

Bethel was a **city**. In those days, a city was a larger settlement that usually had a wall around it with a gate in the wall.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word you will use for **city**. Use the same word you have used in other books of the Bible. Pause this audio here.

In this story, the **house of Joseph** attacked Bethel. Here, house, or household, refers to the descendants of Joseph who made up the tribes of Joseph. This included the two smaller tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were under the tribe of Joseph.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "house of Joseph." If you have already translated this phrase in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Use the same word or phrase for "kill them with swords" as you used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 1:18–26

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (15183359 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 1:27–36

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 1:27–36 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:27–36 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:27–36 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This true story likely took place sometime after the whole tribe of Joseph attacked Bethel. This story starts as it talks about the tribe of Manasseh, one of the two smaller tribes in the tribe of Joseph. The area of land in this story includes northern Canaan from the Jordan River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

In this story the army of Manasseh failed to force Canaanites out of several areas. The areas included the cities Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Meggido, and the land around those cities. Beth Shan, Taanach, Ibleam, Meggido, and the surrounding areas, were near the north-central hill country. This area lay to the west of the Jordan River and to the south of the Sea of Galilee. All four of these towns had close access to a big, important trade route that went from the coast of the Mediterranean to other, far away countries to the east. This area also produced a lot of crops in the fertile Jezreel Valley. The Canaanites had some important temples in Beth Shan. Dor had a sea trade route for boats through the Mediterranean Sea. Dor also had a trade route on land that ran north and south along the narrow coastal plain.

The Canaanites in these areas carefully guarded the resources and land in these five cities in order to keep control of this valuable area. Even the strong army of Manasseh could not force the Canaanites to leave this area. Gradually, the Israelite tribes grew stronger and eventually forced the Canaanites in these areas to work for the Israelites. So, the Israelites and Canaanites lived together in these areas.

Stop here and look at a map of Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Meggido as a group. Pause this audio here.

The next part of the story talks about the Israelite tribe of Ephraim, the other small tribe in the tribe of Joseph. Remember, Yahweh had assigned territory to Ephraim. This territory went along the south of Manasseh's territory, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean coastal plain. One of the cities in this territory, Gezer, had control of an important trade route. This trade route connected the road from Jerusalem to the seaport in Joppa. A seaport is a town where boats load and unload things to trade or sell. This made Gezer a key political and commercial city.

The army of Ephraim attacked Gezer and did not run away. Ephraim's army either could not, or simply did not, force away the Canaanites who lived in Gezer. So, Ephraim, the other Joseph tribe, lived with the Canaanites in Gezer.

Stop here and look at a map of Gezer as a group. Pay attention to the trade route from Jerusalem and Joppa. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about two enemy people groups who lived in the same area. What happened? Pause this audio here.

The next part of the story talks about the Israelite tribe of Zebulun. Yahweh had assigned land to the tribe of Zebulun in a northern part of Canaan. Zebulun's army fought the Canaanites in Nahalol and Kitron. Nahalol, about a short day's walk west of Nazareth, lay in the center part of Zebulun's allotted territory. We do not know the exact location of Kitron. However, we do know that Zebulun failed to force out the Canaanites in Nahalol and Kitron. So, the tribe of Zebulun lived with the Canaanites there. At some point, the tribe of Zebulun grew strong enough to force the Canaanites to serve as laborers.

Stop here and look at a map of Nahalol as a group. Pause this audio here.

The story continues to talk about the Israelite tribe of Asher. Yahweh had assigned land to Asher northwest of the land he had assigned to the tribe of Zebulun. This fertile land along the Mediterranean coast continued north up towards Sidon. Asher's army fought the Canaanites in Sidon, Ahlab, Akzib, Helbah, Aphek, and Rehob. We do not know the exact location of Ahlab, Helbah, Aphek, and Rehob. Akko, Akzib, and Sidon lay along the northern Mediterranean coast. These port cities would have given the Israelites access to major trade routes by sea. Akzib also had access to an important trade road. However, Asher's army failed to force away the Canaanites in this area. The people of the tribe of Asher lived among the Canaanites. The Canaanites continued to have more power than the tribe of Asher.

Stop here and look at a map of Akko, Akzib, and Sidon as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss major trade routes in your area, either by land or by water. Discuss how your people began to be in control of those trade routes, and how being in control helped your people. Pause this audio here.

Next, the story tells us about the tribe of Naphtali. The land Yahweh had assigned to Naphtali lay to the east of the land Yahweh had assigned to the tribe of Asher. This mostly hilly area also lay northeast of the land Yahweh had assigned to the people of the tribe of Zebulun. Naphtali's army fought the Canaanites in the cities of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath. We do not know the exact location of either city, but these cities likely had access to the Sea of Galilee, which was important for business and trade. However, Naphtali's army failed to force away the Canaanites in this area. So, the people of Naphtali lived among the Canaanites there, and they eventually forced these Canaanites to do hard work for them.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the area of land Yahweh assigned to the tribe of Naphtali. Pause this audio here.

The final part of the story tells us what the Amorite people did to the Israelite tribe of Dan. The tribe of Dan had the worst outcome of all the Israelite tribes even though Dan had the second largest army among the tribes of Israel. The Amorites, a smaller group of Canaanites, pushed the people from the tribe of Dan into the hill country. The Amorites would not even let the people from Dan come down into the valley. However, Yahweh had assigned the land in that valley to the Danites. In fact, the land in the valley was most of the land Yahweh had assigned to Dan. So, if Dan did not take the land in the valley, Dan would not receive very much inheritance from Yahweh.

The Amorites did everything possible so that they could continue to live in Har Heres, which means Mount Heres, as well as in Aijalon and Shaalbim. This included being in control of part of the trade road from the coast to Jerusalem. This means that the Amorites controlled an important, large strip of land in the valley. It would take at least three days to walk this area from south to north of the Amorite territory. This forced the tribe of Dan to move to look for land farther north.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim. Pause this audio here.

Later, the storyteller talks about the northern tribes of Joseph. Some Bible researchers believe that this means the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Other researchers believe that this means all the Israelite tribes in the north part of the land Yahweh had assigned to the Israelites. The storyteller tells us that the northern tribes of Joseph moved to the area to try to establish some control over the Amorites. The tribes of Joseph eventually forced the Amorites to do labor for the tribes of Joseph.

The storyteller ends this story by telling about the Amorites' borders, not the Israelites' borders. The Amorite territory started from an area called the Akrabbim Pass, a path that went up between some mountains. The area continued to the city of Sela and upwards into the mountains. We do not know the exact location of the Akrabbim Pass or Sela. However, we do know that the Akrabbim Pass likely formed the southeastern Amorite boundary. Likewise, Sela likely formed the southwestern Amorite boundary. This represents the southern border of the land Yahweh promised to the Israelites.

Stop here and look at a map of the possible locations for Akrabbim Pass and Sela as a group.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:27-36 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelite army of Manasseh did not force out the Canaanites from five important trade cities. So, the Canaanites lived with the Israelites. The Israelites forced the Canaanites there to work hard for the Israelites.

In the second scene: The Israelite army of Ephraim did not force out the Canaanites, so the Canaanites lived with the Israelites in Gezer.

In the third scene: The Israelite army of Zebulun did not force out the Canaanites from Kitron or Nahalol. So, the Canaanites lived with the Israelites. The Israelites forced the Canaanites there into labor.

In the fourth scene: The Israelite army of Asher did not force out the Canaanites, so the Israelites lived with the Canaanites.

In the fifth scene: The Israelite army of Naphtali did not force out the Canaanites from two important cities where Canaanites worshipped false gods. So, the Israelites lived with the Canaanites there.

In the sixth scene: The Amorites forced the Israelite tribe of Dan into the hill country.

In the seventh scene: The Amorites did everything possible to hold onto the land. The Israelite army of the house of Joseph forced the Amorites into labor. However, the Amorites still had control of a large area of land.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelite tribe of Manasseh
- Canaanites in Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Meggido
- The Israelite tribe of Ephraim
- Canaanites in Gezer
- The Israelite tribe of Zebulun
- Canaanites in Kitron and Nahalol
- The Israelite tribe of Asher
- Canaanites in Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Akzib, Helbah, Aphek, and Rehob
- The Israelite tribe of Naphtali
- Canaanites in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath
- The Israelite tribe of Dan
- The Amorites, which were the Canaanites in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim
- And the Israelite tribe of Joseph, or all the northern tribes

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In scene one, we know that the Israelite tribe of Manasseh fought against the Canaanite people in five cities. Remember that although the storyteller may just say the name of the tribe, he is talking about the people in the tribes. When the storyteller says that Manasseh fought the Canaanites, he means that the people of Manasseh fought the Canaanites.

Stop here and discuss as a group: In your language, how will you make it clear that the storyteller is talking about the people in each tribe? Pause this audio here.

The army of Manasseh did not fully force away the Canaanites in Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Meggido. This also included the Canaanites who lived in the areas around these cities. The original language calls the areas around each city "daughters." Daughters are the smaller villages near each bigger city. People from the bigger cities had established these villages. The people in the bigger cities would give protection to the people in the smaller villages. The storyteller mentions the name of each city and then repeats "her daughters,"

meaning its villages, after each city name. For example, "Beth Shan and its villages," or "Tanaach and its villages." Some translations list all the names of the cities and then simply add one statement, "and their surrounding villages," at the end.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about a bigger city or village that you know about. Describe the area around the city or village. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about some ways you can talk about a list of cities so that someone who listens to the story will find it interesting and can remember it well. Ask a few members of your team to give some possible suggestions for how you could talk about these cities and their nearby villages. Pause this audio here.

Also in scene one, the storyteller emphasizes the reason that the tribe of Manasseh failed to force away the Canaanites. The Canaanites strongly committed to keep the land. So, the Canaanites did everything possible to stay there. However, sometime later, the people of Israel grew more powerful. The Israelites then forced the Canaanites to work as slaves for the Israelites. Still, the Israelites could not force all the Canaanites away completely from this area.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a group that forces another group to work for them. Pay attention to the words that the person who tells the story uses to talk about how the group forces the other group to work. Pause this audio here.

In scene two, the Israelite army of Ephraim did not force out the Canaanites, so the Canaanites lived with the Israelites in Gezer.

In the third scene, the Israelite army of Zebulun did not force out the Canaanites from Kitron or Nahalol. So, the Canaanites lived with the Israelites. The Israelites forced the Canaanites there into slave labor.

In the fourth scene, the Israelite army of Asher did not force out the Canaanites in Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Akzib, Helbah, Aphek, or Rehob. So, the Israelites lived with the Canaanites in those areas.

In the fifth scene, the Israelite army of Naphtali did not force out the Canaanites from Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath. So, the Israelites lived with the Canaanites there. These two important cities had temples where the Canaanites worshipped false gods. Beth Shemesh means "house of the sun," referring to the Canaanite temple to worship the sun god. Beth Anath means "house of Anath," referring to the Canaanite temple to worship a violent goddess of war named "Anath."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about some places of worship in your culture. Then tell a story about some places of worship in other cultures. Pay attention to the words the storyteller uses. What are some possible words you could use for Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath? Pause this audio here.

In the sixth scene, the Amorites forced the Israelite tribe of Dan into the hill country. The Amorites would not even let the people from the tribe of Dan come down into the valley area.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about when a person or group would not allow a different person or group to go somewhere. Pay attention to the words the storyteller uses. How could you describe what the Amorites did to the tribe of Dan? Pause this audio here.

In the seventh scene, the storyteller tells us that the Amorites strongly committed or determined to stay in the cities of Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim. This means that the Amorites likely fought hard to keep control of this land. Later, the army of the house of Joseph grew stronger. The storyteller says that the arm of the house of Joseph grows heavy, or stronger. The "house of Joseph" refers either to all the northern tribes or to the armies of Manasseh and Ephraim working together. The armies of Joseph then fought the Amorites in those cities. Then the armies of Joseph forced the Amorites into labor. However, the Amorites still had control of a large area of land.

The storyteller finishes the story when he tells us the borders of the Amorites' land. The Amorites' land started at the Akrabbim Pass. Akrabbim Pass, means "The Pass of Scorpions." A scorpion is an insect. A scorpion's tail has a stinger on the end. The stinger can stab the skin and inject poison that causes pain. A pass is a path that goes up between some mountains. The border continued from the Akrabbim Pass to Sela and then up into the

mountains. "Sela" means "The Rock." This referred to a particular rock, perhaps the size of a small hill. People in that area at that time simply called it "The Rock" because everyone knew which rock it was.

Stop here and tell a story about a group of people or an army that grew more powerful. What words or phrases did the storyteller use to talk about this? Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a picture of a scorpion as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a pass with a path going into the mountains. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group some possible ways you can talk about the Akrabbim Pass or Scorpion Pass in your language. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group some possible ways you can talk about Sela, or "The Rock," in your language. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:27-36 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelite tribe of Manasseh
- Canaanites in Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Meggido
- The Israelite tribe of Ephraim
- Canaanites in Gezer
- The Israelite tribe of Zebulun
- Canaanites in Kitron and Nahalol
- The Israelite tribe of Asher
- Canaanites in Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Akzib, Helbah, Aphek, and Rehob
- The Israelite tribe of Naphtali
- Canaanites in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath
- The Israelite tribe of Dan
- The Amorites, which were the Canaanites in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim
- And the Israelite tribe of Joseph, or all the northern tribes

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

In the first scene, the Israelite army of Manasseh did not force out the Canaanites in the cities and surrounding villages in Beth Shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Meggido. So, the Canaanites lived with the Israelites. The Israelites forced the Canaanites there into labor.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The army of Manasseh did not force away the Canaanites many years ago. At least we have eventually gained some power back for Israel; or
- Yahweh told us to destroy all the Canaanites so we can take control of the land Yahweh allotted to us. We do not have full control, but at least the Canaanites now work for us as slaves.

In the second scene, the Israelite army of Ephraim did not force out the Canaanites, so the Canaanites lived with the Israelites in Gezer.

In the third scene, the Israelite army of Zebulun did not force out the Canaanites from Kitron or Nahalol. So, the Canaanites lived with the Israelites. The Israelites forced the Canaanites there into labor.

In the fourth scene, the Israelite army of Asher did not force out the Canaanites, so the Israelites lived with the Canaanites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the tribe of Asher, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh assigned these cities to us during Joshua's time. At least we have some access to this land; or
- At least the Canaanites are letting us live with them.

The Israelite army of Naphtali did not force out the Canaanites from two important cities where Canaanites worshipped false gods. So, the Israelites lived with the Canaanites there in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the tribe of Naphtali, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh allotted this land to us; or
- Yahweh does not want us to live with people who worship false gods; or
- We do not have enough power to defeat the Canaanites; or
- At least the Canaanites let us live in the land Yahweh allotted to us; or
- The people in Beth Shemesh worship the sun. Yahweh made the sun, and Yahweh is the God of everything. The people in Beth Anath worship a goddess of war. Our God is more powerful. But, we will compromise and put up with the Canaanites' worship so we can live here.

The Amorites forced the Israelite tribe of Dan into the hill country. The Amorites would not even allow the people from Dan to come into the valley.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Dan, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Most of the land Yahweh assigned to us is in the valley. We are so sad, because we will not receive our inheritance; or
- We have to find another place to live since the Amorites have more power than us.

The Amorites fought hard to stay in the cities of Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shalbim. Later, the Israelite army of the tribes of Joseph moved into the Amorites' area. The power of the tribes of Joseph grew stronger. The tribes of Joseph moved there with the goal to force the Amorites into labor. So, the tribes of Joseph made the Amorites into slaves. However, the Amorites still had control of a large area of land.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the tribes of Joseph, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We are frustrated because Yahweh told the tribe of Dan to take over the land Yahweh allotted in this area. The tribe of Dan failed to do this; or
- We feel proud. Because the tribes of Joseph have more power than the tribe of Dan, we can go fight the Amorites; or
- Let's make the Amorites our slaves and live in the land Yahweh allotted to Dan.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 1:27-36 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

In this story the people of **Israel**, or the **Israelites**, became stronger and forced the Canaanites to work hard for them. Israel, or Israelites, refers to the people descended from the 12 tribes of Israel, or Jacob. See the Master Glossary for more information about Israelites, and use the same word for Israel or Israelites that you have used in previous stories.

This story mentions the **house of Joseph**. Here, "house" means all the descendants of Joseph. In this story we know that "house of Joseph" refers either to all the northern tribes or to the armies of the two half tribes that make up the tribes of Joseph. The two half tribes are the tribe of Ephraim and the tribe of Manasseh. Use the same word or phrase as you used in previous passages for "house of Joseph."

The Israelites do not fully drive out, or force out, the Canaanites. You will remember that people had named some land by the same name as Noah's grandson, **Canaan**. This is the land that God promised to give to Abram's descendants, the Israelites. However, the Israelites did not have control of Canaan yet. Different people groups had control of Canaan, and all together, these people groups are the Canaanites. For more information on the Canaanites, refer to Canaan in the Master Glossary. Use the same words or phrases for drive out, or force out, and for Canaan as you have used in previous passages.

A **city** is a large place with many buildings, roads, and shops where many people live and work. In those days, cities often had walls around them to protect the people inside. A **village** is a small and quiet place with fewer buildings and roads where fewer people live. Usually several villages surround one city.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **city** and for **villages**. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same words that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

This passage talks about the boundaries of the Amorites. One of the boundaries was at the **Scorpion Pass**. The Amorites were one of the Canaanite tribes.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word you will use for **pass** and for **scorpion**. Look at the photos of the mountain pass and of the scorpion again if needed.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 1:27–36

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (18974629 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 2:1–10

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 2:1–10 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:1–10 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

This true story starts after the people of Israel failed to force out the Canaanites living in the land that Yahweh had promised to them. Though Yahweh had instructed them to fully remove the people from the land that he gave to each of Israel's 12 tribes, they did not obey completely, and the Canaanites continued to live among the Israelites.

Now, the focus of the story suddenly shifts. In the last few passages, we heard about the failures of Israelites' armies in the promised land from their point of view. But now, we see things from Yahweh's point of view, and learn how these events damaged the Israelites' relationship with Him. An angel or messenger of Yahweh goes "up," from Gilgal to Bokim and speaks to the Israelites. The angel went "up" from Gilgal because Bokim is in a higher, more hilly area than Gilgal. You will remember from earlier in the Bible that Gilgal is the place where the Israelites camped when they crossed the Jordan River and first went into the promised land. Gilgal was a very important and meaningful place. The Israelite army used Gilgal as a base from which they attacked and defeated the Canaanites. We don't know exactly where Gilgal was, but it was near Jericho, to the east. Bokim, on the other hand, was probably the same place as Bethel, the town that Joseph's whole tribe has just attacked.

Stop here and look at a map including the likely locations of Gilgal and Bokim as a group. Pause this audio here.

We do not know who the angelic messenger is. The messenger could have been Yahweh himself in the form of an angel, or supernatural spirit. Or the messenger could have been a prophet — a human person who gives messages from Yahweh to people. In any case, the messenger confronts the Israelites and reminds them that Yahweh rescued them from Egypt and brought them into the land He swore or promised to give to their fathers or ancestors. The messenger reminds the people of the covenant Yahweh made with them when He rescued them from slavery in Egypt. A covenant is a solemn, unbreakable promise between two people or groups of people. Yahweh had promised the Israelites the land of Canaan and had assured them He would never break His promise. The messenger then reminds the Israelites of their side in this covenant. For the Israelites' part, they were not to make any covenants or agreements with the people already living there. Yahweh also commanded the Israelites to destroy the altars these people used to worship their gods. An altar is where people offer gifts or sacrifices to the gods they worship or to Yahweh.

Stop here as a group and look at pictures of different kinds of altars. Pause this audio here.

However, the Israelites have failed to keep their part of the covenant. They have made deals or agreements with the people living in this land, which has allowed them to continue living there. The Israelites have also left Canaanite altars standing, even in areas the Israelites fully controlled, as we will see later. In doing this, the Israelites have not obeyed Yahweh's "voice," or his commands.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a person who made a promise or strong agreement with a second person but who later broke that promise. What happened? How did the second person react? Pause this audio here.

The messenger then asks a question, "Why have you done this?" He is not expecting an answer to this question. Rather, he is strongly reminding the Israelites that they should not have done this — they disobeyed Yahweh's commands. Now, the messenger tells the Israelites the consequence of not obeying the covenant with Yahweh. Yahweh declares through the messenger that He will no longer force the people out of the land. Instead, the people of the land will become "thorns in your sides." A thorn is a small, sharp pointed growth on the stem of a plant. The angel is saying that the people of the land will constantly be causing the Israelites trouble.

Stop here and look at a picture of thorns as a group. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh's messenger adds that the gods of the people living there will become "snares" to the Israelites. A snare is a trap for catching small birds or animals made from wire or string. The messenger tells them that these people's gods will always be tempting the Israelites, and taking them away from worshipping Yahweh. Since the Israelites have not kept their side of the covenant, Yahweh is withdrawing his help from them.

Stop here and look at a picture of a snare as a group. Pause this audio here.

When the Israelites hear this message, they weep or cry loudly to express their sorrow. It is now that the Israelites call the town "Bokim," which means "the place of weeping." The people also offered sacrifices to Yahweh to show Yahweh they were sorry. A sacrifice is a gift to Yahweh. The gift could be an animal they had killed and then burned on an altar, but it could also be food items, oil, or spices. We don't know exactly which type of sacrifices the Israelites offered to Yahweh. We also don't know if the people were genuinely sorry for their sin, or they were just hoping that Yahweh would forgive them and change his mind.

Stop here and tell stories as a group of a time when people heard about a serious punishment they were going to receive for something wrong they had done. How did they react? How did they show their sorrow or regret? Pause this audio here.

At this point the story suddenly shifts back to an earlier time when the Israelite leader Joshua was still alive. The storyteller takes us back to the moment when Joshua had gathered the Israelites at a place called Shechem. After he spoke to the Israelites, Joshua sent them away to the land Yahweh had given to each of their tribes. Joshua instructed the Israelites to "take possession" of their land, meaning to take the land that was already theirs, and settle there. Joshua calls the land their "inheritance." In those times, when a father died, his property went to his son. The property the son now owns we say is his inheritance. In this situation, the Israelites' inheritance is Yahweh's promise to give them this land.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What happens to someone's property when they die in your culture? Tell stories about what happened to a person's property after the person died. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller reminds us that the people who lived during Joshua's time had been faithful to Yahweh. Some of the elders or leaders at that time lived longer than Joshua. The people continued to be faithful to Yahweh during the time of these elders or leaders. These people had seen the great things Yahweh had done for the Israelites. The storyteller calls Joshua the "servant of Yahweh," which shows that people honour him as one who follows and obeys Yahweh. Joshua had died at the age of 110. When someone lived to be very old, people considered this as a sign that the person lived a life that was honourable to Yahweh. Joshua's people buried him within the land that Yahweh had given to his tribe at a town called Timnath Serah. This town was in the hills belonging to the small tribe of Ephraim, to the north of Mount Gaash. Some translations call this town Timnath Heres. This difference is probably simply a spelling mistake.

Stop here and look at a map which includes the likely locations of Timnath-Serah and Mount Gaash. Pause the audio here.

All the people who lived around the same time as Joshua died. The storyteller uses the expression "gathered to their fathers," which is a polite way of saying that they died. This refers to a tradition at that time where people would bury the bones of those who died at the grave of their ancestors.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Tell the group about what people in your culture do when someone in their family has died. What happens to their remains? Tell stories about what someone did with the remains or the body of their loved ones after they died. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller now contrasts the faithful Joshua and the generation of people who lived around his time with the unfaithful generation of Israelites who lived after Joshua. This new generation of Israelites did not know Yahweh and did not remember the great things Yahweh had done for the people of Israel.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: A messenger from Yahweh appears to the Israelites, reminds the people of Yahweh's covenant, and criticizes the people for their disobedience.

In the second scene: The Israelites hear the message and cry loudly. The Israelites offer sacrifices to Yahweh as a sign of their sorrow and regret.

In the third scene: The focus shifts back in time to when Joshua was still alive. Joshua had sent the Israelites away to take over the areas of land that Yahweh had given to the Israelites. This marks the end of Joshua's leadership.

In the fourth scene: This scene tells of the death of Joshua and the generation that had been faithful to God. However, after Joshua and his generation died, a new generation grew up that did not know Yahweh or remember the great things Yahweh had done. This information will help us understand Israel's future disobedience.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh, speaking through the angel or messenger
- The angel or messenger
- The Israelites at the time of Joshua
- The new generation of disobedient Israelites
- And Joshua

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In scene one, the angel or messenger of Yahweh travels "up" from Gilgal to Bokim to speak to the Israelites. The angel goes "up" because Bokim is in a higher, more hilly area than Gilgal. Whenever we hear the words "angel" or "messenger of Yahweh," that shows that the messenger gives a direct message from Yahweh. When the messenger speaks, it is as if Yahweh himself speaks. The word "angel" that the storyteller uses in the original language can also mean "messenger," and we do not know whether the messenger is a special supernatural being or a human person who brings Yahweh's message. No matter who the messenger is, the important thing is that he delivers Yahweh's message.

Stop here and discuss: What word or phrase will you use to translate "angel," or "messenger of Yahweh"? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites are gathered at Bokim, which is probably the city of Bethel. Bokim was likely around 45 kilometres from Gilgal, to the west. We do not know exactly how the messenger gets there or how long it takes him.

Through the messenger, Yahweh reminds the Israelites that he rescued them from Egypt and brought them into the land he promised to their ancestors. Yahweh reminds the Israelites of the covenant, or solemn promise, he made with the Israelites, and of his promise never to break it. Yahweh also reminds the Israelites that he had commanded the Israelites not to make any agreements with the people who live in the land, and to destroy the altars those people used for worshipping other gods. The messenger then tells the Israelites that they have not obeyed Yahweh's "voice," or his commands. The messenger then asks the Israelites, "Why have you done this?" The messenger does not expect the Israelites to answer this question. The messenger uses this question to tell the Israelites, "You should not have done this."

Stop here and discuss as a group: How will you translate that the messenger really meant, "You should not have done this?" Pause this audio here.

The messenger then announces that the Israelites will have consequences because they sinned when they broke the covenant with Yahweh: Yahweh will no longer force away the people who live in the land, but those people will become "thorns in your sides." Yahweh means that the people who live in the land will constantly cause trouble and problems for the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Remember the story you told in step two about a group of people that constantly caused trouble for others? Pay attention to the words you used to describe how those people caused problems. How will you describe the people who are like thorns in the sides of the Israelites? Pause this audio here.

The messenger warns that the Canaanites' gods will become a "snare" or a "trap" for the Israelites. In other words, these false gods will tempt the Israelites and lead the people away from following Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss how you will describe that the Canaanite gods will become a snare or trap and tempt the Israelites to turn away from Yahweh. Think about how you talk about people who tempt other people to do bad things. How do you talk about these things? Pause this audio here.

The second scene happens right after the first. As soon as the Israelites hear the words of the messenger, they begin to cry loudly to show how sad and regretful they feel. The Israelites are so upset that they decide to rename the city "Bokim," which means "the place of weeping." The storyteller says the messenger spoke to "all" the people of Israel. This probably does not mean that every one of the 600,00 Israelite men was there. Instead, it probably means that the messenger spoke to the leaders, rulers, and other people who represent each of the tribes.

Scene three shifts the focus to an earlier time when the Israelite leader Joshua was still alive.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Tell a story that goes back to an earlier time than where the story began. Pay attention to the language and words you use when you talk about the earlier part of the story. Discuss how you can keep the order of the story clear to your listeners. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller returns to the moment when Joshua had gathered the Israelites to speak to them in a place called Shechem shortly before Joshua died. We must be clear that this scene happens some time before the messenger from Yahweh comes. After Joshua addresses the Israelites, Joshua sends the people off to "take possession" of the land. Joshua uses these words to tell the Israelites to claim the land that Yahweh has already given to them. The people who live during Joshua's time as Israel's leader remain faithful to Yahweh and follow Yahweh's commands. Some of the elders, or leaders in the community, live longer than Joshua, and even when these leaders are still alive, the people stay faithful to Yahweh. These people had witnessed all the great things Yahweh had done for Israel. Joshua dies at the age of 110 years, and the people bury Joshua in the land that belonged to his tribe in Timnath Heres, or Timnath Serah. This land is in the hilly land that belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. We do not know exactly where Timnath Serah was, but it was likely about a ten-hour walk, or around 16 kilometers northwest of Bethel or Bokim.

Stop here and as a group, look at a map that includes Bethel, Timnath Serah, and the mountain of Gaash. Pause the audio here.

All the people who lived at that time were "gathered to their fathers," which means that they died.

Scene four happens after scene three. Once the people from Joshua's time die, many years pass and their children grow up. This new generation of Israelites did not know Yahweh and did not remember the great things Yahweh had done for Israel.

Until now, the storyteller has explained the military history of Israel. Now, the storyteller sets the stage for the next part of Israel's history, about their relationship with Yahweh.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh, speaking through the angel or messenger
- The angel or messenger
- The Israelites at the time of Joshua
- The new generation of disobedient Israelites
- And Joshua

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Yahweh's messenger, or angel, travels from Gilgal to Bokim. Through this messenger, Yahweh speaks to the Israelites gathered there and reminds them that he brought them out of Egypt and into the land he had promised to their ancestors. Yahweh recalls the covenant he made with the Israelites, and his promise never to break that covenant. Yahweh also reminds the Israelites that he commanded them not to make agreements with the people who live in the land and to destroy their altars. The messenger then confronts the Israelites and tells them they have disobeyed Yahweh. He asks, "Why have you done this?" Finally, Yahweh, through the messenger, tells the Israelites that he will withdraw his help from them. Yahweh will not force away the people who live in the land. Instead, those people will be like thorns in the sides of the Israelites, and their gods will become snares or traps to the Israelites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so disappointed in my people. After all the miracles and wonders I did for them, to help them out of slavery in Egypt and into the land I promised them, how could they break the covenant they made with me and disobey my commands? or
- I am angry with the Israelites for what they have done. They have not honored me or the agreement I made with their ancestors. They do not deserve my help any more. I must have justice, and I must punish them; or
- I am terribly sad that my beloved people have disobeyed me. The covenant I made with them is now broken, and I am sad that I have no choice now but to withdraw my help from them.

When the Israelites hear these words, they are very sad and upset, and they cry loudly. The Israelites decide to name the town "Bokim," which means "the place of weeping." The Israelites make sacrifices to Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person or people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- We are so terribly sad that Yahweh has decided not to help us anymore. We should have followed his commands and completely forced away the Canaanites from the land. We should never have made deals with them, and we should have destroyed their altars, as Yahweh commanded us; or
- Let's now offer sacrifices to Yahweh to show him how sorry we are. Maybe he will forgive us and change his mind; or
- We are afraid of the Canaanites. Many of them have strong armies and iron chariots that we do not have. How are we ever going to defeat them without the help of Yahweh?

The action now shifts back to the past. The Israelites gather at Shechem. After Joshua finishes his speech to the Israelites, Joshua instructs the people to go and take possession of the land that Yahweh has given to each tribe. This generation of Israelites are faithful to Yahweh and follow his commands. Joshua dies at the age of 110 years. Joshua's people carry his body to the land that Yahweh had given to Joshua tribe. The people bury Joshua's bones there at the family grave in Timnath Heres.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person or people who play the generation of faithful Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- We saw with our own eyes the wonderful things that Yahweh did for us. He has helped us so much and has shown us so much love and mercy. We love Yahweh and we want to follow his commands; or
- We have seen Yahweh's mighty power. We would not even dare to go against Him.

After that entire generation had died, a new generation grew up who did not know Yahweh or what he had done for Israel.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person or people who play the new generation, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- We heard some stories about Yahweh, but those things happened a long time ago. Yahweh is not relevant to my life now; or
- I do not need Yahweh. He was only the god of my ancestors. There are other gods here in the land where I am living now. I see other people worshipping those gods. They do not seem so bad. Why should I not join in? or
- I heard about the signs and wonders that Yahweh did for my ancestors a long time ago. I do not see any signs or wonders happening now. I do not even believe in those stories. I only believe what I see in front of me. I will join in with these people as that will make my life easier. I will do as they do and worship their gods.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

This story uses the personal name for God, **Yahweh**. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase you have used in previous passages.

An **angel**, or **messenger of Yahweh**, travelled from Gilgal to Bokim. An angel is a supernatural, spiritual being who Yahweh created. Angels give messages to people from Yahweh. In this story, the original word used for "angel" is also the word for "messenger." We do not know from the words in this story whether this messenger was in fact a special angel of Yahweh who directly spoke Yahweh's words, or whether it was a person who passed on Yahweh's message to the people of Israel, the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **angel**, or **messenger of Yahweh**. Look up angel of the Lord in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase throughout the passage. Pause this audio here.

The angel, or messenger, speaks to the **Israelites**, or the **people of Israel**. Israel is the name of the land that Yahweh has given to his chosen people, the descendants of Jacob. The Israelites are the people who are the descendants of Jacob. For more information on the Israelites, or people of Israel, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Israelites throughout the passage.

When Yahweh speaks through his messenger, he reminds the Israelites of the **covenant**, or special agreement, he has **sworn**, or **promised**, to them. Yahweh promised never to break this covenant. The Israelites were not to make covenants with the inhabitants of the land. When people make a covenant, they make a solemn promise with each other they cannot break. When people make a covenant with each other, they say they want to have a good relationship with each other.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **swear**, or **make a promise**. For more information, refer to vow in the Master Glossary. Also discuss what word you will use for **covenant**, or **strong promise**. Look up covenant in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase throughout the passage. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh commanded the Israelites to destroy the **altars** of the people who lived in the land. An altar is a place where people offer gifts or sacrifices to Yahweh. It is like a table where people place their gifts. Other people groups besides the Israelites also made altars to offer gifts to their own gods.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **altar**. Look up altar in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase throughout the passage. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh also says that the **gods** of the people who live in the land will be a "snare" to the Israelites, meaning that the Canaanites' gods will constantly tempt the Israelites. A snare is a trap used to catch small animals and birds. False gods are spirit beings that people sometimes worshipped as if they had power.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **gods**. Look up gods in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

When the Israelites hear Yahweh's words through his messenger, the Israelites weep and offer **sacrifices** to Yahweh. A sacrifice is a gift to Yahweh that people would place on an altar. The sacrifice could involve killing an animal which people would then burn on an altar, but it could also be food items, oil, or spices.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **sacrifice**. Look up sacrifice in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase throughout the passage. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

We go back in time to when Joshua was alive and he has just spoken to the people. Joshua sends the people away to take the land that Yahweh has given to each of the tribes. Joshua calls the land the Israelites' "inheritance." In those times, when a father died, his property went to his son. The property the son now owns we call the son's inheritance. In this situation, the Israelites' inheritance is Yahweh's promise to give them this land.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **inheritance**. Use the same word or phrase throughout the book. Pause this audio here.

After Joshua dies, there are some **elders** who outlive Joshua. The Israelites remain faithful to Yahweh during the time the elders are still alive. An elder is a person with authority in the community. At this time, an elder was usually the head or leader of a family or group of families. They were usually older men who helped the community live together well. When you translate this word, be careful not to use a word that just means "old people." An elder was not just an older person, though they were not likely to be very young.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **elder**. Look up elder in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase throughout the passage. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Joshua is the **servant** of Yahweh. A servant is a man or woman who works for another person and who usually lives in their house in order to serve the family. To be a servant of Yahweh means that Yahweh honors you as someone who is obedient and faithful to Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **servant**. Look up servant in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase throughout the passage. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The people **buried** Joshua in the land he inherited from Yahweh. In those days and in that place, people buried bodies by placing them in a cave or a hole that they carved out of rock.

Stop here and discuss as a group: How will you describe how people **buried** Joshua? Use the most general term for burial of dead bodies that you can. Pause this audio here.

The generation of Joshua's time dies and a new **generation** of Israelites grow up. This new generation of Israelites does not know Yahweh, and they do not know what he has done for the people of Israel. A generation is a group of people who live at the same time and belong to the same age group.

Stop here and discuss what word or phrase you will use for **generation**. Look up generation in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Use the same word or phrase for generation throughout the book.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 2:1–10

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (22746260 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 2:11–19

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 2:11–19 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:11–19 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

*Setting the Stage**Setting the Stage*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:11–19 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Before this passage, the Israelites were living in Canaan, the land that Yahweh had promised to their ancestors. The Israelites had made a promise to follow Yahweh's commands, but over time, they started to disobey. Their leader, Joshua, died, and so did the generation of people who knew and followed Yahweh's commands. A new generation grew up that didn't know Yahweh or remember the great things Yahweh had done for their ancestors. This passage is like a summary of how Yahweh deals with His people as they go through the cycle of obedience and disobedience. Yahweh blesses them when they follow Him, but when they disobey, He lets them face the consequences to help them turn back to Him.

Instead of staying faithful to Yahweh and worshipping only Him, the Israelites start to serve or worship the false gods of the local people. The storyteller describes this as the Israelites doing "evil in the eyes of Yahweh." The Israelites' actions are wrong according to Yahweh's standards—they are seriously disobeying Yahweh's commands. The Israelites abandon or forget about Yahweh, the God of their fathers or ancestors, even though Yahweh has rescued them from Egypt, where they were slaves. Instead, the Israelites choose to worship false gods called Baal and Ashtoreth.

"Baal" was the name which the local Canaanites and other nearby peoples gave to a false god. The Canaanites believed that Baal controlled the weather. However, Baal was not real. Ashtoreth was the name of a goddess, or female god, that some people worshipped but was also not real. The Canaanites believed that Ashtoreth could bring them victory in battle. When the storyteller says "Baals and Ashtoreths," he is likely referring to the many different kinds of false gods that the various tribes in Canaan believed in.

The people who lived in Canaan depended on farming to survive. The Canaanites believed these gods controlled important things like the rain, which farmers needed for their crops to grow. The land was excellent for farming, far better than what the Israelites had known when they were wandering in the desert. The Canaanites thought that this good land was thanks to their gods. Since the Israelites were new to this kind of farming life, they were very tempted to follow the ways of the people around them and worship these false gods.

Stop here and discuss: In your culture, what did people do to try to ensure that they had good harvests? Pause this audio here.

The storyteller says that Yahweh's anger "burned against" the Israelites. This is a figure of speech meaning that Yahweh was very angry with the Israelites. Yahweh controlled the rain and wind, and caused food and crops to grow. Yahweh was the one who could bring victory in battle. However, the Israelites bow down to these false gods. So they bow and lower themselves with their faces to the ground in front of images or statues of these gods. By doing this, they were acting as if these gods were greater than them. They treated the false gods as if they were real, showing them loyalty and worship.

Stop here and discuss: How do religious leaders in your culture respond when people abandon their faith? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh had made a covenant with Israel before the Israelites came into the promised land. A covenant is a very serious agreement between two people or groups of people. In this case, the Israelites agreed to worship Yahweh alone, and Yahweh promised to protect them. But the Israelites have broken this covenant by worshipping false gods. Because of this, Yahweh withdraws His protection and allows raiders to plunder or steal from them. Raiders were violent groups who would attack nations, steal their goods and sometimes make people slaves.^^ The raiders mentioned here are likely neighbouring tribes who attack and steal from the Israelites. Yahweh also "sells" the Israelites to their enemies that are all around them. So basically, Yahweh is allowing the Israelites' enemies to defeat and control them. The Israelites become weak and defenceless.

Stop here and show a map of the various tribes and nations surrounding the Israelites in the land of Canaan at around this point in Israel's history. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites now have no power to fight against their enemies. Whenever they go out to fight in battle, the storyteller says Yahweh's "hand" is against them. This doesn't mean that Yahweh has a physical hand as

humans do. The Israelites now have no power to fight against their enemies. Yahweh actively works against the Israelites in battle. This is a terrible time for the Israelites — they are suffering and struggling because they no longer have Yahweh's help. Yahweh is acting in this way because He had warned the Israelites that if they disobeyed Him and broke their covenant promise, He would punish them.

But Yahweh has not given up on the Israelites. Yahweh "raises up" judges to rescue the Israelites from their enemies. In other words, Yahweh specially chooses and sends judges to help the Israelites. These judges are leaders and warriors who rescue Israel from their enemies and also remind them to follow Yahweh's commands. Even though Yahweh was angry, He is still merciful and wants to continue to help His people even after they have disobeyed Him.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Tell the group about what kinds of military and spiritual leaders there are in your culture. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites do not listen to these judges and the Israelites continue to worship other false gods. The storyteller says that they "prostituted themselves" to these gods. The Israelites were unfaithful to Yahweh, similar to how someone might break the promise of marriage by being unfaithful to their spouse. In this case, worshipping other gods was betraying Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss as a group: What are the most serious ways someone can betray another person in your culture? Tell stories about a time someone betrayed another person in a very serious way. How did the betrayed person react? Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss also: How does a faithful or loyal person act? Tell stories about a person or group of people who was very faithful and loyal to someone else. These discussions will help you understand the ideas of being faithful and obedient to Yahweh, and being unfaithful and disobedient to Him. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites reject Yahweh quickly and easily, unlike the Israelites' ancestors, who had been obedient to Yahweh.

Yahweh has pity on the Israelites when they are "groaning" because of their suffering from their enemies. The Israelites are crying out and complaining. In response to the Israelites' distress, Yahweh shows His mercy by sending a judge to help the Israelites. While the judge is alive, things get better for the Israelites, because Yahweh is with the judge. Unfortunately, when the judge dies, the Israelites soon forget about Yahweh once more and return to worshipping false gods.

This pattern repeats over and over. Even though Yahweh is patient and keeps sending judges to save them, the Israelites keep going back into their old, disobedient ways. After the death of each judge, the Israelites become even more disobedient to Yahweh than the generation before them.

Stop and discuss this question: Tell stories about someone who kept repeating the same mistakes over and over. Why do you think the person did this?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:11–19 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites reject Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, and begin to worship false gods.

In the second scene: The storyteller describes Yahweh's anger. Yahweh withdraws his protection and allows raiders and enemies to defeat the Israelites. The Israelites suffer terribly because they broke their covenant with Yahweh.

In the third scene: Despite the Israelites' disobedience, Yahweh has mercy and sends judges or leaders to save the Israelites from their enemies.

In the fourth scene: Even when the judges lead, the Israelites do not fully listen, and they continue to worship the false gods.

In the fifth scene: While the judges are alive, Yahweh continues to save the Israelites from their enemies, and the Israelites live in peace.

In the sixth scene: When the judges die, the Israelites become even more disobedient to Yahweh and worship the false gods even more than they did before.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- Baals
- Ashtoreths
- Other false gods
- The judges
- And the raiders, or enemies

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Right before the first scene, both Joshua, the Israelite leader, and the elders who served with Joshua have died. This is important because their deaths mark a turning point for the Israelites. The new generation of Israelites now live in Canaan, the land that Yahweh promised to their ancestors. The land in Canaan is excellent to grow food, or to farm, much better than the wilderness where the Israelites had lived before. However, the Israelites now live among tribes who worship false gods like the Baals and the Ashtoreths. Remember that the Canaanites call all the male gods Baal, and all the female gods Ashtoreths.

The Israelites begin to visit the different statues, images, and altars, and they worship them. One way they do this is by bowing down, or lowering themselves in front of the statues with their faces to the ground to show that they worship and honour those false gods.

Stop and discuss as a group how you are going to translate "bow down." Make sure that your translation shows that this is a way to show loyalty and worship to someone in a higher position. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller does not say this but they may also take part in rituals with the Canaanites. The storyteller says that this is "evil in the eyes of Yahweh," which means that it is very wrong and disobedient to Yahweh's commands. When they worship false gods, the new generation of Israelites reject Yahweh, despite all he has done for the Israelites. This is unlike the Israelites' ancestors, who were faithful to Yahweh. This makes Yahweh very angry.

Stop here and act out that at first the Israelites were faithful to Yahweh, and then the Israelites turned away from Yahweh to worship false gods. People can move from one side of the room, which represents faithfulness and obedience to Yahweh, to the other side, which represents their worship of false gods. Pause this audio here.

It is important to be clear about the order of events here. First, the Israelites see the way the Canaanites worship the false gods, and the Israelites are interested and tempted to do the same. Then the Israelites decide to follow these gods and reject Yahweh. After this, Yahweh becomes angry with the Israelites. In this part of the story, the storyteller uses a special repeated pattern to show that the people made the same mistakes. First, the storyteller says they served the Baals. Then, he mentions that the Israelites abandoned Yahweh. Next, he says they followed other gods. After that, he tells us the Israelites worshiped those gods. Then, the pattern flips—again, the Israelites abandoned Yahweh, and finally, they served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. This structure helps highlight how the people went through the same cycle where they turn away from Yahweh to worship

false gods. When the storyteller says that this makes Yahweh angry, it marks a turning point: it shows that what comes next is Yahweh's response to the people's actions.

In the second scene, Yahweh's anger "burns against" the Israelites because of their unfaithfulness. This shows that Yahweh is extremely angry with the Israelites for how they abandoned him to worship the false gods. The "burning anger" shows two things: First, it shows how serious it is that the Israelites broke their special promise with Yahweh to be faithful and obedient to him. And second, it shows how strong Yahweh's response to this is.

Stop here and discuss: Tell stories about a time when one person was extremely angry with another person because the second person has done something terribly bad against the first person. Describe how the angry person reacts. Pay attention to the language you use when you describe the angry person. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh allows raiders from surrounding tribes to attack and steal from the Israelites. Yahweh "sells" the Israelites to their enemies, meaning he allows the Israelites' enemies to take control of the Israelites. The Israelites are weak and without any defence or protection. The Israelites try to go into battle several times, but each time, the Israelites' enemies defeat them. The storyteller says Yahweh's "hand" is against the Israelites. This does not mean that Yahweh has a physical hand as humans do. This is just a way to say that Yahweh actively works against the Israelites. It makes it clear that their defeat is a result of Yahweh's actions.

Stop here and look at the map that shows the various enemy tribes that surround Israel at this time. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, the Israelites "groan," or cry loudly, because they suffer and feel pain as their enemies punish them. Yahweh has pity on the Israelites and shows mercy when he chooses and sends a judge. The word "judge" has a special meaning here. The judge the storyteller describes is a military leader who rescues the Israelites from their enemies, and who also tries to guide people back to follow Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss: Tell stories about a person, or group of people, who suffers terribly. How do they express how they suffer? Pay attention to the language you use. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss also: Think of your discussion from step two about the different kinds of leaders in your culture. Begin to think about how you will describe these judges. Be sure to communicate that these leaders not only made legal decisions, but they also served as military and spiritual leaders to advise and protect the Israelites. Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene the Israelites refuse to listen to or obey the judges, and they continue to worship the false gods. When the Israelites worship the false gods, the storyteller says they "prostitute themselves" to those gods. This is a way to say that the Israelites are unfaithful to Yahweh, like someone who breaks a special promise or relationship. They do not stay loyal to Yahweh, but they give their love and devotion to false gods, just as a person might betray a close relationship in order to devote themselves to something else.

Stop here and discuss: Think about the stories you told in step two about betrayal and unfaithfulness. What words or phrases did you use to describe the behaviour of the person who betrayed or was unfaithful? Discuss how you could translate the Israelites' unfaithfulness to Yahweh in a way that people from your culture can relate to. Pause this audio here.

It is important to be clear on the order of events as this may not be clear from the passage: First the Israelites suffer greatly and "groan." Then, in response, Yahweh has pity on the Israelites and sends the judges.

In the fifth scene, as long as the judge is alive, Yahweh continues to protect the Israelites through the judge. Things go well for the Israelites during this time, and their enemies do not defeat them because Yahweh is with the judge. This marks the start of a repeated cycle: The people worship false gods, Yahweh punishes the people when he sends enemies to defeat them, the people cry out to Yahweh, Yahweh sends a judge to help them, the Israelites enjoy peace, and finally, the judge dies.

In the sixth scene, the judge dies, and the Israelites soon start to be even more disobedient to Yahweh than they were before. The Israelites again worship false gods and they reject Yahweh and his commands.

The action now returns back to the first scene and the story repeats itself over and over. After the death of each judge, the people become even more disobedient to Yahweh than the previous generation.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualise the passage and the action in it.

Here is one idea of how to do this. Stop here and draw or make a model of a pathway to visualise the cycle of the judges, with four stops along the road to represent key stages:

1. **Disobedience:** The Israelites turn away from Yahweh and worship other gods. At this stop, the path splits in two, with one path that leads to Yahweh. This symbolises the Israelites' decision to take the wrong direction—to disobey Yahweh.
2. **Suffering:** The Israelites' enemies overpower the Israelites because of their sin. This could be represented as a section of the road where the Israelites are blocked or trapped by enemy soldiers, to symbolise how they suffer under their enemies.
3. **Regret and calling to Yahweh:** The Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help. You could show this as a stop where they kneel down, pray, or call out to Yahweh, as they ask him for help.
4. **Rescue and Peace:** Yahweh sends a judge to rescue them, and the Israelites are safe again. This could be shown as the judge leading them through a safe passage, possibly a flat, clear road where everything is peaceful and their enemies are nowhere to be seen.

The road then circles back to the start. This shows how the cycle repeats when the judge dies.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:11–19 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- Baals
- Ashtoreths
- Other false gods
- The judges
- And the raiders, or enemies

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The new generation of Israelites lives in Canaan. The people who live there worship false gods called Baals and Ashtoreths. The Israelites start to join in with the people who live there, and eventually, the Israelites forget about Yahweh and begin to worship the false gods as well.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person or people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- We heard some stories about how Yahweh did some amazing things for our ancestors, but that was a long time ago and our ancestors lived in the desert back then. Now, we live as farmers and Yahweh does not mean so much to us anymore. These gods seem interesting, and the people here believe that the gods can help their crops. Maybe they are right! or
- We know we should worship Yahweh, but we are curious about these gods. Maybe we can worship both Yahweh and the gods at the same time.

Yahweh is extremely angry because the Israelites have broken their special promise with him. Because of this, Yahweh takes away his protection from the Israelites. Yahweh allows the Israelites' enemies to defeat the Israelites in battle and plunder the Israelites' belongings. The Israelites suffer terribly.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so angry that my people have broken their promise to me and that they worship false gods when they should worship me alone; or
- I am sad and heartbroken that my special people have done this. After everything I have done for them, and everything I have promised them, they have betrayed me; or
- My people have broken their special promise and I can no longer protect them. But I will never abandon my people.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This is a terrible time for us. Our enemies defeat us and steal from us. We are very afraid; or
- We regret that we worshipped those other gods. Now Yahweh has withdrawn his protection from us; or
- We are in despair and do not know what to do.

In Yahweh's mercy, Yahweh sends a judge who rescues the Israelites from their enemies. All is well as long as the judge is alive and the Israelites are safe. The Israelites also start to follow Yahweh again.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the judge, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh chose me to rescue the Israelite people from our enemies. Yahweh is with me, so I know I will succeed; or
- I am worried that when I die, the people will start to worship false gods again; or
- I have not been able to fully guide the Israelites back to Yahweh. I feel frustrated.

When the judge dies, the Israelites return to disobedience, worship false gods again, and reject Yahweh even more than they did before.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person or people who play the Israelites' ancestors, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- We are terribly upset that our descendants do not follow Yahweh and his commands; or
- It is so painful to know that our children have abandoned Yahweh so easily. They forget so quickly everything we taught them! or
- We are hopeful that the judges will rescue our descendants and bring them back to Yahweh.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:11–19 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The people of Israel, or Israelites, did evil in the eyes of Yahweh and served the Baals.

Israel is the name of the land that Yahweh has given to his chosen people, the descendants of Abraham. The **Israelites** are the people who are the descendants of Abraham. Use the same word or phrase for Israelites as you used in previous passages. For more information on Israel and the Israelites, or people of Israel, refer to the Master Glossary.

When someone does **evil**, that person willingly does things against Yahweh's law and hurts others. Yahweh hates evil.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word you will use for **evil**. If you have translated this word in another part of the Bible, use that word here. See the Master Glossary for more information about evil. Pause this audio here.

This passage uses the personal name for God, **Yahweh**. Be sure to translate Yahweh in the same way as you have in previous passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

Baal can refer to one god, but when it means more than one, it refers to the male gods in the area of Canaan. The people who live in the land believed that the Baals controlled the weather and made the crops grow.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word you will use for **Baals**. If you have translated this word in another part of the Bible, use that word here. For more information on Baal and the Baals, refer to the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites reject Yahweh, the God of their ancestors who rescued them from slavery in Egypt. They follow and worship the various false gods around the land of Canaan. This makes Yahweh angry. The Israelites abandon the worship of Yahweh alone and serve the false gods Baal and Ashtoreth. **Ashtoreth** was a false goddess or female god, and her name can also refer to all the female gods in the area of Canaan. The Canaanites believed that Ashtoreth had many powers; for example, they believed she could help their crops grow and bring them victory in battle.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **Ashtoreth**. Pause this audio here.

False **gods** are spirit beings that people sometimes bowed down to and **worshipped** as if they had power. People would make wood or metal statues of their gods. For more information on false gods, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase you have used for gods as you have used in previous passages, and use the same word or phrase for gods throughout the passage.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **worship**, or bow down. In the original language, the storyteller talks about how people bow down to the false gods. This was a way to say that the people worshipped these gods. If you choose to use your word or phrase for worship, refer to worship in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

The people turned away from the way their ancestors acted when their ancestors obeyed the **commandments** of Yahweh. A commandment is a law from Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will say the word **commandment**. If you have already translated the word in another part of the Bible, use the same word here. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh's anger "burns against" the Israelites, which means that Yahweh is very angry with them. So Yahweh allows **raiders** to attack the Israelites and steal their things. Yahweh allows the Israelites' enemies to defeat the Israelites, and the Israelites become weak and powerless to defend themselves.

Stop here and discuss what word or phrase you will use for **raiders**. If you have translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Whenever the Israelites go into battle, the Israelites' enemies defeat them. Yahweh has not only taken away his protection, but Yahweh actively allows the Israelites' enemies to defeat the Israelites, just as Yahweh swore that he would do if they disobeyed him. Use the same word for **swear** or make a promise as you used in the previous passage, and refer to vow in the Master Glossary for more information.

Yahweh shows mercy to his people and sends special **judges** to lead the Israelites against their enemies. The judges in this story were special leaders Yahweh had chosen to help the Israelites during times of trouble. The judges were leaders who fought battles, guided the people to follow God, and helped settle arguments. Yahweh helped the judge, and because of this, the Israelites' lives improved. But as soon as the judge died, the Israelites rejected Yahweh again and worshipped the false gods.

Stop here and discuss what word or phrase you will use for **judges**. Look up judges in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase for judges throughout the book. Pause this audio here.

This cycle continues every time a judge dies, and the people reject and disobey Yahweh even more than they did the previous time.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 2:11–19

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (20541286 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (21144898 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 2:20–3:6

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 2:20 to 3:6 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:20 to 3:6 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.

4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:20 to 3:6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This passage is the final part of an introduction to the book of Judges. It is a summary of the stories that will come next.

The previous passage describes a cycle in which the Israelites disobey Yahweh and then Yahweh helps them. Instead of worshiping only Yahweh, the Israelites start to worship the gods of the people who live among them. Because of this, Yahweh allows the Israelites' enemies to attack them. When the Israelites suffer, they cry out to Yahweh for help. Yahweh sends leaders, called judges, to rescue the Israelites. But after each judge dies, the people return to worship false gods. This happens again and again.

Now, in this passage, Yahweh responds after the Israelites have disobeyed Yahweh again and again. Yahweh is so angry at Israel, or the Israelites, that his anger "burns" against them.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Tell stories about a time when someone was very angry at another person who continued to do something very wrong even though the first person warned the second person many times and gave chances to stop. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh now speaks and we hear the serious consequences that Yahweh gives the Israelites' for their repeated disobedience. Yahweh declares that the Israelites have failed to keep the covenant he made with their ancestors. The Israelites have failed to obey Yahweh. You will remember from earlier in the Bible that the "covenant" Yahweh talks about was a special promise that he made together with the people of Israel. Yahweh promised to give the Israelites the land of Canaan and to force out the people who lived there. But this would only happen if the Israelites stayed loyal to Yahweh and obeyed his commands. The Israelites could not worship other gods. Since the Israelites have not kept their part of the covenant, they will now face the consequences.

Stop here and discuss as a group: In your culture, what kind of serious promises or agreements do two people, or two groups of people, make together? What happens if the person or people on one side of the agreement fails to keep the agreement? Pause this audio here.

Since the Israelites continue to disobey Yahweh and worship other gods, Yahweh decides to no longer help them force out the nations or enemy people groups Joshua left in the land after his death. Instead, Yahweh says he will leave those nations there to test the Israelites. The test is this: Will the Israelites remain faithful to Yahweh like their fathers or ancestors did, or will they follow the ways of the people in the land?

When Yahweh "tests" the Israelites, Yahweh allows them to face challenges to see what they will do. When Yahweh leaves other nations in the land, Yahweh gives the Israelites a chance to either stay faithful to Yahweh or to follow the other nations' ways. It is like earlier in the Bible when Yahweh asked Abraham to prove Abraham's faith by almost sacrificing Isaac.

The storyteller explains the deeper reason why some nations were still in the land: Yahweh had allowed those people to stay. Yahweh did not let Joshua force out all the nations at that time because Yahweh wanted to test the Israelites.

The storyteller now explains that there is another reason why Yahweh has left some nations in the land. The newer generations of Israelites have not experienced the "Wars of Canaan." These were the battles the Israelites fought with the people who lived in Canaan when Joshua led Israel to conquer the Promised Land. Since this new generation had not seen or fought in those wars, they did not have battle experience, and they did not understand that victory came from Yahweh, not their own strength. When the Israelites faced the

nations who remained, they would learn how to fight and, more importantly, learn to rely on Yahweh. These two parts of Yahweh's test worked together—through war, Yahweh would see if the Israelites would remain faithful and obey his commands.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Have you ever faced a difficult situation that challenged or tested you? How did you respond, and what did you learn from the experience? Pause this audio here.

The storyteller lists the people groups who remain in the Promised Land to test the Israelites. The storyteller starts with the Philistines in the south, and he moves up the coast to the north. The Philistines were also quite new to the land of Canaan. They probably arrived there around 50 to 100 years after the Israelites. The Philistines were a group of people who invaded Canaan from the sea to the west. They settled in the southwest part of the land. They built five main cities in that area. The five rulers of the Philistines refers to the rulers of the five cities.

Stop here and look at a map of Canaan and the surrounding regions. Find the area where the Philistines settled. Pause this audio here.

The next group is "all the Canaanites," which refers here to the people who live along the sea coast in the land between the Philistine cities to the south and the city of Sidon to the north.

Further north, the Sidonians and Hivites lived in the area we now call Lebanon, far from the Philistines who were in the south. The Sidonians came from the city of Sidon and mostly lived along the coast. The Hivites, on the other hand, lived in the Lebanon hills, from Mount Baal Hermon in the north to the city of Lebo Hamath in the south.

Stop and look again at a map of Canaan and the area that surrounds Canaan. Locate where each of these tribes lived. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites had not completely forced out these nations during Joshua's time. Now, Yahweh allows the nations to stay permanently to test the Israelites. Would the Israelites stay faithful to the commandments Yahweh had given to their ancestors through Moses, or would the Israelites start to act like those nations?

We now find out the result: The Israelites completely fail the test. Instead of forcing out the people who live in the land, the Israelites choose to live among them. We hear the names of nations the Israelites lived among, which is slightly different to the list of nations we just heard. The storyteller mentions the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

Yahweh uses this list of nations, or a very similar one, at several earlier points in Israel's history to talk about the nations that the Israelites must force out of the land. The only nation not in this list is the Girgashites, which the storyteller likely left out by mistake. In this list, "the Canaanites" refers in general to all the people who lived in Canaan before the Israelites. The other names refer to specific groups who lived in different areas within the land. When the storyteller repeats this list, he points out how the Israelites have failed to obey Yahweh's command. The list is not just about where each nation lived—it also has a deeper meaning. Wherever the Israelites settled, they allowed these nations to stay. When the Israelites allowed these nations to remain, the Israelites showed their disobedience to Yahweh's instructions.

Stop here and look at a map that shows where each of these nations lived. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites did not only live among these nations, but they also intermarried with them. They took the daughters of these nations as wives, and they gave their own daughters to marry the sons of these nations. Yahweh had specifically forbidden this. The Israelites also began to worship the gods of those nations.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Tell stories about someone from your culture who married someone from another culture. What did people from your culture think about this? Pause this audio here.

This introduction sets the stage for the pattern that repeats throughout the book of Judges. The Israelites disobey Yahweh, face the consequences, and then Yahweh sends a judge to help them.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:20 to 3:6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Yahweh is angry because the Israelites have disobeyed him. Yahweh announces his decision to test Israel when he allows the nations to remain in the land.

In the second scene: The storyteller explains why Yahweh allows the nations to remain, and he lists the nations.

In the third scene: The Israelites marry the people living in the land and worship their gods.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh
- The Israelites
- And the nations who live in Canaan

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In the first scene, the Israelites now live in the Promised Land, but they do not fully obey Yahweh. The land is divided into different areas where the Israelites live, surrounded by other nations. In some areas there are groups that Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to remove earlier in the Bible. But these groups are still in the land and live alongside the Israelites. The Israelites continue to worship the gods of these people. Because of this, Yahweh is so angry that his anger "burns against" Israel. This is special language that shows how strong Yahweh's anger is and how seriously the Israelites have disobeyed Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Remember your discussion in step two about someone who was very angry at another person. What special words did you use to show just how angry they were? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh now speaks. Yahweh says the cause of the situation: The Israelites have failed to keep the covenant or solemn promise that Yahweh made with their fathers, or ancestors. The Israelites have disobeyed Yahweh's "voice," that is, his commands. And the effect is that Yahweh will no longer help the Israelites force out the enemy nations Joshua had left in the land. Instead, Yahweh will leave those nations there to test whether the Israelites will "walk in the way of Yahweh," which means to stay faithful to Yahweh as their ancestors did, or to follow other gods.

You will remember that the last time Yahweh spoke to the Israelites through his messenger, Yahweh spoke directly *to* them, saying "you" to them. But this time he talks *about* the Israelites and calls them "these people," instead of "you." This shows that Yahweh is more distant from the Israelites, as if the Israelites are no longer in a close relationship with Yahweh. Yahweh has given the Israelites so many chances, but the Israelites have continued to disobey him. Yahweh also uses the word "nation" when he talks about the Israelites, which is the same word that he uses for all of the other nations that do not follow Yahweh. Now, Yahweh does not speak like their protector. Instead, Yahweh speaks as a judge who announces their punishment. This change shows how serious the Israelites disobedience is and how badly they have failed to keep their promise to Yahweh.

When Yahweh says the Israelites have "broken" or "violated" the covenant, this is a way to say they have failed to keep the rules of the covenant, so the Israelites can no longer get the blessings and help Yahweh had promised.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Remember your discussion in step two about what happens if someone fails to keep a serious agreement. Pay attention to the language you used to describe this. The team can act out to tear an agreement written on paper to symbolise how the Israelites break the covenant. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, the storyteller explains that Yahweh did not give all the nations "into the hand" of Joshua. In other words, Yahweh did not allow Joshua to drive out all the nations because Yahweh wanted to test Israel. The storyteller explains further why Yahweh left the nations in the land: He wanted the new generation of Israelites who did not experience the "Wars of Canaan" during the time of Joshua to experience what it was like to fight in war. Through the challenges of war, Yahweh wanted to see if the Israelites would stay faithful to Yahweh and follow his commands.

The storyteller lists the nations Yahweh uses to test the Israelites in this way: the Philistines who live under the five Philistine rulers, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who live in the mountains of Lebanon from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

Stop here and look again at the map of where these nations lived in the Promised Land. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, time passes, and the Israelites do not obey Yahweh. Instead, the Israelites live among the nations that Yahweh had told them to force out. These nations are the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The Israelites begin to marry these people and worship their gods.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:20 to 3:6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh
- The Israelites
- And the nations who live in Canaan

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Israelites now live in the land Yahweh had promised them. But the Israelites do not obey Yahweh and stay faithful to him. Instead, the Israelites worship the gods of the nations around them. Many enemy nations still live alongside the Israelites, nations that Yahweh had told them to remove. Yahweh becomes very angry with the Israelites. Yahweh says the Israelites have broken the covenant, or special agreement, he made with their ancestors. The Israelites have not obeyed Yahweh's commands. Since the Israelites have rejected him, Yahweh declares that he will not help the Israelites defeat these enemies any more. Instead, Yahweh will leave these

nations in the land as a test. Yahweh wants to see if the Israelites will finally start to obey Yahweh as their ancestors did, or if they will continue to disobey Yahweh. The Israelites now face a choice: Will they follow Yahweh, or will they continue to go their own way?

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel so angry that my people continue to disobey me. I have given them so many chances, yet they still disobey me; or
- I feel hurt and sad that my chosen people continue to reject me and worship other gods. After everything I have done for them, how could they betray me like this? or
- These are my chosen people, and I still love them. My promise to my people still stands. But they have broken our agreement. I must allow my people to go through the consequences of what they have done. I will see now whether my people will follow me or continue to disobey.

The storyteller explains further why Yahweh did not force out all the other nations from the land during Joshua's time. Yahweh chose not to force those nations out because he wanted to test the new generation of Israelites who had never fought battles to take the land. This way, they would learn what it meant to struggle and rely on Yahweh.

The nations Yahweh left in the land were the Philistines, who were ruled by five leaders, the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived in the mountains of Lebanon. Yahweh allowed these nations to stay there as a test to see if the Israelites would obey Yahweh's commands as their ancestors had.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person or people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- We feel afraid. We had relied on Yahweh's power to help us. We are afraid for our future; or
- We are sorry that we have not obeyed our one true God, Yahweh, and we have followed other gods. We realise we have made a serious mistake. We should have kept the covenant Yahweh made with our ancestors. We regret what we have done and we feel guilty; or
- We feel sad and hopeless. We have lost Yahweh's help and his blessing. We are devastated that we have broken our special relationship with Yahweh.

Time passes and the Israelites now live among the enemy nations. Those nations are the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The Israelites do not stay faithful to Yahweh, but instead they start to marry the people of these nations and worship their gods.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- I am deeply disappointed. My people have failed the test. They have done exactly as I warned them not to do and they have not learned from their past mistakes; or
- Despite all I have done for them, my people continue to disobey. I feel great sorrow as I watch my beloved people continue to make choices that harm them, even though I have warned them many times.

Ask the person or people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person or people might answer things like:

- At first we did not think it really mattered if we married these people and worshiped their gods as well as Yahweh. It felt like a way to fit in and not have conflicts with these people; or
- Now we have changed our minds. We suffer because of our enemies. We feel fear, regret, and confusion; or
- We feel abandoned, desperate, and ashamed!

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 2:20 to 3:6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Yahweh's anger burned against Israel because the Israelites disobeyed more and more. In other words, Yahweh was very angry with the Israelites. This passage uses the personal name for God, **Yahweh**. Use the same name you have used in previous passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

Israel is the name of the territory where the Israelites lived. Here, the word Israel refers to all the descendants of Jacob together. Israel means the same as the Israelites or the people of Israel. Use the same word you have used in previous passages, and remember that Israel is in the Master Glossary.

Yahweh says the Israelites have failed to keep the **covenant** he made with their ancestors. When people make a covenant, they make a solemn promise to each other that they cannot break. Use the same word you have used for covenant in previous passages, and remember that covenant is in the Master Glossary.

Yahweh says he will no longer drive out the **nations** that Joshua had left in the land when Joshua died. A nation is a group of people who belong together and who live in the same country and have the same ruler.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **nation**. Use the same word for nation that you have used in previous passages, and remember that nation is in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh left some nations in the land as a **test** to see if the Israelites would now be faithful to Yahweh or if they would continue to disobey him.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **test**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The **Israelites**, or **sons of Israel**, refers to the people who are the descendants of Abraham's grandson, Jacob. The Israelites lived in the country called Israel. See Israelites in the Master Glossary for more information, and use the same word for Israelites or sons of Israel as you have used in previous passages.

The storyteller explains further that Yahweh left these nations to test the new generations in Israel who had not known the "Wars of **Canaan**." For more information, see Canaan in the Master Glossary, and use the same word for Canaan as you have used in previous passages.

A **generation** refers to a group of people who live at the same time and belong to the same age group. Look up generation in the Master Glossary for more information. Use the same word or phrase for generation as you have used in previous passages.

After the storyteller has listed the nations that are to remain in the land, he adds that Yahweh used those nations to test the Israelites, to see if they would obey Yahweh's commandments.

A **commandment** is a law, a rule, or an instruction. Yahweh gives commandments to people to show those people how to live well and in a good relationship with Yahweh and with others. For more information, look up commandment in the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for commandment as you have used in previous passages.

The Israelites failed Yahweh's test. They did not force out the other nations as Yahweh commanded, but instead the Israelites married those people. The Israelites also began to worship the false gods of these nations.

False **gods** were spirit beings that people sometimes would worship instead of Yahweh, as if those gods had power. For more information on gods, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same words for gods as you have used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 2:20-3:6

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (17105288 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 3:7-11

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 3:7-11 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:7-11 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:7-11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the last few passages, the storyteller has briefly described how Yahweh deals with his people as they choose to disobey or obey him. The storyteller also talked about the nations that still live around the Israelites. Unfortunately, the Israelites act like these other nations and worship these nations' false gods. So Yahweh allows the Israelites' enemies to defeat the Israelites. But when the Israelites ask for help, Yahweh chooses a leader, Othniel, to save them.

As the passage begins, the Israelites disobey Yahweh and behave in a way that Yahweh has told the Israelites is bad or evil. The evil thing the Israelites do is forget Yahweh their God. This does not mean they forget that Yahweh exists. This means that the Israelites do not honor, obey, and worship Yahweh as their God.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about an activity that you loved to do as a child but you do not do anymore. How would you describe how that activity is no longer important to you or that you no longer do that activity all the time? Pause this audio here.

Instead, the Israelites worship false gods that the people groups around them worship. In Canaan, people worshiped many gods. The Canaanites believed that these gods controlled things like the weather and the

harvests and caused people to win or lose battles. Different groups of people would have different versions of these gods that they worshiped in different ways. So sometimes people just called all the male gods "Baals" and the female goddesses "Asherahs." Some translations may say Asherah poles, because sometimes people would make a wooden pole to represent their Asherah goddess.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what are some different ways that different groups of people would worship a god? What are some different names that people may call a god depending on where those people live? How do people talk about the different names and ways to worship a god? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh is very angry that the Israelites worship other gods who cannot help them, instead of Yahweh who loves and protects the Israelites. Yahweh's anger is strong and intense like a fire that burns. Yahweh allows the Israelites' enemies to defeat and control the Israelites, just like Yahweh said he would do if the Israelites disobeyed him. Yahweh gives the Israelites into the hands of king Cushan-Rishathaim. This means Yahweh allows this king to have power over the Israelites. This king's name means Cushan who is double wicked, or twice as evil as others! This is probably a name the Israelites called this king, instead of his actual name. King Cushan-Rishathaim ruled in Aram Naharaim, which is probably an area between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, in the eastern part of what is now the country of Syria.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Israel and nearby nations. Find Aram Naharaim. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When are some times when you would refer to a person, especially a leader, by a different or longer name than their normal name? Why would you call them this? What does this new name say about this person? Pause this audio here.

King Cushan-Rishathaim ruled over the Israelites for eight years. The Israelites cried out to Yahweh for help and Yahweh listened to them. Yahweh raised up or chose a deliverer, someone who will save the Israelites. This man was Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz. This is the same Caleb who Moses had once sent to explore the land of Canaan for the Israelites many years before. You will remember that in an earlier passage, Othniel led some Israelites to capture a Canaanite town.

The Spirit of Yahweh comes upon, or takes control of, Othniel. The Spirit of Yahweh is the power that comes from Yahweh. When the Spirit of Yahweh comes over a person, that person receives a special power or ability. This can be physical strength, special wisdom, or a clear understanding of what God wants. Because the Spirit of Yahweh came to Othniel, Othniel became Israel's first judge. In this book, a judge is not just a person who decides if someone broke the law and is guilty. They are leaders who help the Israelites follow God. Judges often lead the Israelites to fight their enemies, as Othniel does. Yahweh causes Othniel to defeat King Cushan-Rishathaim so that King Cushan-Rishathaim no longer rules over the Israelites.

As long as Othniel, son of Kenaz lived, for another 40 years, the land experienced peace. Othniel led the Israelites to follow Yahweh, so the Israelites did not have to fight against their enemies.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: The storyteller often ends the judges' stories when he says how long the land has peace. In your culture, when you tell a story, how do you finish the story? What kinds of stories do you end with a similar sentence or phrase? Pause this audio here.

Othniel acts exactly as Yahweh's judge should. When Yahweh chooses Othniel, and the Spirit of Yahweh gives Othniel the ability to lead, Othniel leads the Israelites to battle, where Yahweh defeats the Israelites' enemies. Othniel then judges, or leads, the Israelites to follow Yahweh until Othniel dies. The storyteller talks more about what Yahweh does than what Othniel does. This story is really about Yahweh!

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:7-11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites no longer worship Yahweh, and they worship other gods instead. Yahweh allows King Cushan-Rishathaim to rule over the Israelites.

In the second scene: The Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help, and Yahweh chooses Othniel to lead the Israelites. Yahweh causes Othniel to defeat King Cushan-Rishathaim.

In the third scene: The Israelites have peace for 40 years, and then Othniel dies.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- Baals and Asherahs
- King Cushan-Rishathaim
- Othniel, son of Kenaz
- And the Spirit of Yahweh

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In a previous passage, the storyteller gave a summary or overview of how the Israelites acted in this time period. Yahweh blesses the Israelites when they follow him, but when they disobey, Yahweh lets the Israelites' enemies defeat them. When the Israelites turn back to Yahweh, Yahweh sends a leader, called a judge, to save the Israelites. In this passage, the storyteller tells the story of the first time Yahweh sends a judge to help the Israelites. Notice how the storyteller uses a lot of the same words and phrases from the earlier summary. He will continue to do that as he tells the other judges' stories!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, tell a folktale or traditional story from your culture. After you tell the story, discuss whether you used any phrases or sentences that you would also use in other similar stories, such as, "This story begins a long long time ago." Think of other types of stories in your culture that people use similar sentences or phrases to tell. Why do you use these phrases? What do these phrases or sentences tell your listeners about what kind of story this will be? Pause this audio here.

To begin the first scene, the storyteller uses a phrase that he will use again when he begins other judges' stories. He says that the Israelites do evil in the eyes of Yahweh. To do evil in the eyes of Yahweh means to do a thing that Yahweh has said is very wrong to do.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: The phrase, "The Israelites did evil in the eyes of Yahweh," is one of the repeated phrases you have already used in Judges 2:11-19. Review or remind each other of how you translated this phrase before. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites behave in a wrong way when they stop their worship of Yahweh. The storyteller calls Yahweh the Israelites' God to remind us that the Israelites really should worship Yahweh! However, the Israelites serve or worship the Baal and Asherah idols instead. Yahweh is very angry that the Israelites do this. The storyteller compares how angry Yahweh is with the way a fire intensely burns.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: "Yahweh burned with anger" is another phrase you have translated! Review or remind each other how you translated this phrase before. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh acts exactly as Yahweh says he would act if the Israelites disobeyed him. Yahweh punishes the Israelites when he lets another nation defeat and rule over the Israelites. Yahweh sells the Israelites into the hands of King Cushan-Rishathaim. Yahweh does not literally sell the Israelites for money to King Cushan-Rishathaim. The storyteller means that just like slaves serve a master, now the Israelites will have to serve King Cushan-Rishathaim. In that time, people often used the word "hands" to mean power. Yahweh allows King

Cushan-Rishathaim to have power over the Israelites. King Cushan-Rishathaim and his men may have attacked the Israelites, and Yahweh allowed King Cushan-Rishathaim and his men to win. The Israelites are King Cushan-Rishathaim's servants for eight years. The Israelites have to do everything that King Cushan-Rishathaim tells them to do.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how would you describe or talk about the way that a king has power over or rules a group of people? Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, the Israelites cry out to Yahweh. The storyteller does not include what the Israelites say, but they may have admitted that they had acted in an evil way. The Israelites may have told Yahweh how they felt and that they needed help. Yahweh listens and raises up, or chooses, Othniel to be their deliverer, or the one who saves them. The storyteller says that Othniel saves the Israelites. Then the storyteller briefly explains how Othniel saved the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In this story, Othniel saves, or helps, his people. Before the storyteller calls Othniel a judge later in this story, the storyteller first calls Othniel a deliverer, or savior. Think about people in your culture who have come at just the right time to help your people group and save them from evil or from people who want to destroy them. What do you call these people? Pause this audio here.

First, the Spirit of Yahweh comes over Othniel and gives Othniel the ability to lead others. Othniel then gathers the Israelite men and they go attack King Cushan-Rishathaim and his soldiers. When they fight, Yahweh causes Othniel to defeat King Cushan-Rishathaim and his men. Now, Yahweh takes away power from King Cushan-Rishathaim over the Israelites and instead gives the Israelite Othniel power over King Cushan-Rishathaim!

The storyteller ends Othniel's story in scene three when he explains how long the people had peace in their land and then tells of Othniel's death. Here, peace probably means that the Israelites do not have to fight their enemies.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:7–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- Baals and Asherahs
- King Cushan-Rishathaim
- Othniel, son of Kenaz
- And the Spirit of Yahweh

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The people of Israel sinned against Yahweh. The people stopped their worship of Yahweh their God and instead worshiped the Baal and Asherah idols. Yahweh became very angry with the people of Israel. Yahweh let Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram Naharaim, defeat the Israelites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- These Baal and Asherah idols cannot help the Israelites! The Israelites waste their time when they serve and worship these gods. I am angry that the Israelites hurt themselves and others when they act in an evil way; or
- I told the Israelites what would happen if they did not obey me. I will let the Israelites face the consequences to help them remember that they should worship and obey me instead; or
- I love the Israelites and want to have a good relationship with them. I am upset that the Israelites ignore me and instead talk to false gods who cannot hear or understand them.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have seen how wealthy and happy our neighbors are. Those peoples' gods must give them lots of good things! If I worship their gods, maybe I will get those good things too! or
- I do not like the way Yahweh has told us to live. It can be hard, and I would rather do the easy things that I want to do; or
- I am surprised that the king of Aram Naharaim defeated us! I thought these new gods would protect us!

King Cushan-Rishathaim ruled over Israel for eight years. When the Israelites cried out to Yahweh to help them, Yahweh sent Othniel to rescue them. Othniel's father was Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. Othniel saved the Israelites from their enemies. The Spirit of Yahweh gave Othniel power and Othniel became the judge of Israel and led Israel in battle. Yahweh gave Othniel complete victory over King Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram Naharaim. The country was at peace for 40 years and then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Othniel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want to honor Yahweh and do exactly what Yahweh has told us to, because I respect Yahweh. I felt angry and sad when I saw how the other Israelites acted; or
- I am thankful that the Spirit of Yahweh gave me the ability to lead in the right way. It has been hard to teach the Israelites how to worship Yahweh again. I could not have led the Israelites on my own; or
- When we obey Yahweh, we have a good relationship with him and peace with each other. I will remind the Israelites of this as long as I live. I hope the Israelites remember this after I die and I can no longer remind them.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It was awful when King Cushan-Rishathaim ruled over us! I remembered that our lives were good when we worshiped Yahweh. I called out to Yahweh for help because I was so miserable; or
- I am thankful that Yahweh chose Othniel to lead us! I had already seen how Othniel led before and I knew he was a good leader. But when Othniel became our judge, I noticed something different about him. It was like God helped Othniel in everything that Othniel did! or
- I suppose it is better to worship Yahweh than the other gods. I will try to remember to ask Yahweh for help when I need him.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:7-11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The **Israelites** act in a way that Yahweh has told them is **evil**. Evil is the opposite of good. A person who is evil chooses to do bad things that hurt other people. When people no longer obey God, they begin to do evil actions. For more information on Israelites and evil, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same words or phrases for Israelites and evil as you used in previous passages.

The name **Yahweh** was a very personal name for God that showed the close relationship that God had with the people of Israel. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

Yahweh is the Israelites' **God**. This word for God is a general word for God. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for God as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites **serve** the Baals and the Asherahs. When people serve an idol or god, they perform acts of **worship**. For more information on true worship, refer to worship in the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for serve, or worship as you used in previous passages.

The **Baals** and the **Asherahs** are false **gods** of the other nations around Israel. People used wooden or metal statues called idols to represent these gods. Sometimes, people would set up a pole to represent Asherah goddesses. Different areas and people groups would have different idols and ways to worship these gods. So sometimes, people would call all the male gods "Baals" and all the female goddesses "Asherahs." For more information on Baal, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Baal as you used in previous passages.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **Asherahs**, or female goddesses. Look up gods in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh allows **King** Cushan-Rishathaim to rule over the Israelites. A king is someone who rules over a city or territory, like a region or a country. Use the same word for king that you have used in previous passages. Look up king in the Master Glossary for more information.

The **Spirit of Yahweh** came on Othniel so that he became Israel's judge. The Spirit of Yahweh is the power that comes from Yahweh. This power creates, gives life, performs miracles, and changes people. When the Spirit of Yahweh comes over a person, that person receives a special power or ability. This can mean physical strength, special wisdom, or a clear understanding of what God wants.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "the Spirit of Yahweh." Though we do not use the term Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, this is the same Spirit of God that we talk about in the New

Testament. Look up Holy Spirit in the Master Glossary for more information about God's Spirit. If you have already translated "Spirit of Yahweh" in another book of the Old Testament, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Spirit of Yahweh came on Othniel and he became Israel's **judge**. In this book, judges were leaders who helped the Israelites follow God. The Judges were often military leaders. They may have acted as traditional judges sometimes, too, to decide if someone had broken the law and was guilty. For more information on judge, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for judge as you used in previous passages.

The land had **peace** for 40 years. Here, this probably means that the people lived in harmony with each other and did not fight each other, and that other nations did not attack Israel.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **peace**. Look up peace in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 3:7-11

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (15485161 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 3:12–31

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 3:12–31 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:12–31 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:12–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

Just like in the last passage, the Israelites stop their worship of Yahweh and Yahweh allows the Israelites' enemies to defeat them. This time, the Moabites rule over Israel. When the Israelites ask Yahweh for help, Yahweh chooses a man named Ehud to rescue Israel. Ehud kills the Moabite king in a surprising way and leads

the Israelites to defeat the Moabites. Then later, when the Israelites are in trouble again, Yahweh chooses Shamgar to save Israel.

This passage begins in the same way as the last one. The Israelites again do evil in the eyes of Yahweh, or do what Yahweh has said is very wrong. The storyteller does not explain what these evil actions are, but the Israelites probably worship other gods, just like they did in the last passage. So Yahweh gives Eglon, the king of Moab, power over Israel. Eglon convinces the Ammonites and the Amalekites to join him to attack Israel. The Moabites lived to the southeast of the Israelites, on the other side of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The Ammonites lived directly north of the land of Moab. The Amalekites used to live in the land of Israel, but now the Amalekites traveled from place to place without a permanent home.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Israel and the lands around it. Find Moab and Ammon. Pause this audio here.

Eglon leads the Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites to attack Israel, and they take over the City of Palm Trees, which is Jericho. Sixty years before this story, Joshua and the Israelites had destroyed Jericho. Joshua cursed anyone who would rebuild the city, so at this time people may not have built a city in the exact same spot. However, this was a good central area with clean water, so the Israelites may have built some buildings or a town near the old city of Jericho. This is also a good area for the Moabites to block or control the roads that lead into the central hill country of Israel. King Eglon seems to have made a large house here.

Stop here and look at the map of Israel and the lands around it as a group. Find the city of Jericho. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites serve King Eglon for 18 years. When one nation ruled over another nation, the king who ruled would demand payment, or tribute, from the people he ruled over. This tribute could be precious metals, farm produce, or work from the people. Normally, the Israelites give tribute or offerings to Yahweh, since Yahweh is their ruler. But now, the Israelites have to pay the Moabite king, and the Moabites probably demand a lot of valuable things. These tribute payments probably cause the Israelites to be hungry or poor. So again, the Israelites cry out to Yahweh. They may have told Yahweh how miserable they felt or how sorry they were, or they may have just asked Yahweh for help.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your area, when one nation conquers or rules another, what does the nation that rules make the people of the other nation do? What sort of payments or taxes does the second nation have to pay? Why does the nation that rules demand payments or work from the second nation? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh chooses another deliverer, or person to rescue the Israelites, and his name is Ehud. Ehud is from the tribe of Benjamin and is Gera's son. Ehud is left-handed, or uses his left hand to do most actions.

The Israelites choose Ehud to take the tribute payment to King Eglon. To prepare for this trip, Ehud makes a special sword or dagger. This sword was sharp on both sides of the blade, unlike the more common swords at this time which had only one sharp side. Warriors would use one-sided swords to chop, while Ehud could use his sword to stab someone. Ehud's sword probably did not have a cross piece, but only a grip or wrapped surface for Ehud to hold. So Ehud could completely force the whole sword into someone's body to kill that person quickly. This sword is a cubit long, which is about 50 centimeters. The sword is small enough for Ehud to strap to his right thigh under his clothing. This is a good place to hide a sword. Most people are right-handed and would hide a sword on their left side. So the guards may check that side. But because they do not know Ehud is left-handed, they will not think to check Ehud's right side!

Stop here and look at a picture of a long, double-edged dagger as a group. In your culture, what kind of weapons are easy to hide, and where do you usually hide them? What kind of weapons do you have that are similar to Ehud's sword? Pause this audio here.

Ehud brings the tribute to King Eglon, who was a very fat man. The king was rich and had plenty of food because of the tribute payments from the Israelites. Ehud then leaves Eglon, but Ehud stops when he reaches the stone images, or idols, at Gilgal. Ehud tells the people with him to go on while Ehud returns to Eglon. It is not clear exactly where Gilgal was, but it was probably not far northeast of Jericho. Gilgal was a special place for the Israelites where they celebrated what Yahweh had done for the Israelites. But now people have set up stone idols there and people appear to use the idols as a landmark. These stones may have been important to Eglon

in some way, because Ehud chooses to stop and turn around here. If people see that Ehud stops at the stones, it will be easier for everyone, including King Eglon, to think that a god has told Ehud a message for Eglon there.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel and the lands around it as a group. Find the possible location of the town of Gilgal. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What are some important religious places in your area? What are some specific things that people may do at those places? If you heard someone went to one of those places, what might you assume the person did there? Pause this audio here.

Ehud returns to King Eglon and says that Ehud has a secret message for King Eglon. King Eglon wants to hear this message in private, so King Eglon sends all his attendants out of the room. These attendants probably include his servants, guards, and officials. The attendants leave and now Ehud and King Eglon are alone in a cool room upstairs. There are no guards to protect King Eglon. The room was in a high section of Eglon's palace and probably had windows to let in light and cool breezes.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, when a king or leader is ruling or at important events, what kinds of people stay with the ruler to help and protect the ruler? How would you refer to all those people? Pause this audio here.

King Eglon sits on a seat or a throne. Ehud comes close to the king and says his message is from God. Eglon may not know which god Ehud means, but he stands up to hear the message, perhaps to be respectful to whichever god sent this message.

Stop here and discuss as a group: In your culture, how do people share messages from gods? How do people show that they listen respectfully to this message? Pause this audio here.

But Ehud does not tell King Eglon a message. Instead, Ehud pulls his special sword out and stabs King Eglon in the belly! Ehud stabs so deep that the handle sinks in after the blade. Some of what is inside Eglon's belly comes out, perhaps excrement or the inside parts of his body. Ehud does not pull his sword back out, and Eglon's fat covers the blade.

Ehud then secretly leaves the upper room. Ehud locks the doors to the upper room. Perhaps Ehud uses a key or he bolts the door. Ehud goes out onto a porch, or room outside the upper room, where he then leaves the palace. Perhaps Ehud walks out past all the servants, but we do not know. The servants wait at the upper room door for the king to call them back in. After some time, they find that the door is locked. The servants may be able to smell the bad smell from the king's body and the parts that came out, so they assume that the king is relieving himself or is using a latrine. Eglon seems to have had an area in the upper room, or the closet attached to the upper room, where Eglon could relieve himself. The servants do not want to interrupt the king, so they wait for a long time outside the door until the servants feel embarrassed by how long they wait. The king has still not come out or said anything to the servants, and the servants are worried. Finally the servants unlock the door to the upper room and find that King Eglon is dead.

While the servants waited for King Eglon to come out, Ehud left Eglon's palace and no one stopped him. Now Ehud passes by the stone images at Gilgal again and goes to Seirah. It is not clear where or what Seirah is, but it is a place in the hill country of Ephraim.

Stop here as a group and look at the map of Israel and the lands around it. Find the hill country of Ephraim. Pause this audio here.

There at Seirah, Ehud blows a trumpet to get the Israelites' attention. People made trumpets out of ram's horns and would often use trumpets to gather the people for war. Though Ehud has killed the Moabite king, there are still many Moabites who could choose a new leader and continue to oppress the Israelites.

Stop here and look at a picture of a trumpet as a group. In your culture, how do you call people into battle? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites do gather for war. Ehud tells the Israelites to follow him and that Yahweh will certainly cause the Israelites to defeat their enemies. So the Israelites follow Ehud who leads them to the fords of the Jordan River, which is the place they can cross the river safely.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Israel and the lands around it. Find the Jordan River and the place where they could cross the river. Pause this audio here.

The Moabites come to the place where people cross the river, perhaps to fight the Israelites or to return to the Moabites' own land. The Israelites do not allow the Moabites to cross over the river. Instead, the Israelites kill about 10,000 strong Moabites. The Israelites defeat the Moabites and rule over the Moabites. Then the Israelites have peace, or do not have to fight their enemies, for 80 years. Notice that while Yahweh disciplined the Israelites for 18 years, Yahweh now gives them peace for 80 years!

The last part of this passage is about another man who saves Israel, Shamgar, son of Anath. It is not clear exactly who Shamgar is, since Shamgar and Anath are not Israelite names. Shamgar fights the Philistines, one of the people groups who still live near the Israelites. The Philistines may have attacked the Israelites in some way. Shamgar, however, uses an oxgoad to kill 600 Philistines. An oxgoad is not a weapon but a stick with a sharp tip that people use to prod or drive cattle. Shamgar could only have done this with Yahweh's help!

Stop here and look at a picture of an oxgoad as a group. In your culture, what are some tools you use to guide or drive animals? How useful would any of those tools be as weapons?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:12–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has eight scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites disobey Yahweh. King Eglon of Moab allies with the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and Yahweh allows King Eglon to defeat and rule over the Israelites for 18 years.

In the second scene: The Israelites call out to Yahweh for help, and Yahweh chooses Ehud to save Israel. Ehud makes a special sword and straps it to his thigh. Ehud and some other Israelites take the tribute to King Eglon and then leave Eglon's palace.

In the third scene: When Ehud and the Israelites with Ehud reach the stone images at Gilgal, Ehud stops and goes back to the palace alone.

In the fourth scene: Ehud tells King Eglon that Ehud has a special message. King Eglon tells everyone else in the room to leave. Ehud stabs and kills King Eglon.

In the fifth scene: Ehud escapes to Seirah while the servants wait outside the door to the upper room. Finally, the servants unlock the door and find that the king is dead.

In the sixth scene: Ehud gathers the Israelites and they block the place where people can safely cross over the Jordan River. The Israelites kill 10,000 Moabites.

In the seventh scene: The Israelites rule over the Moabites and have peace for 80 years.

In the eighth scene: Shamgar kills 600 Philistines to save Israel.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- Eglon, king of the Moabites
- The Moabites
- The Ammonites
- The Amalekites
- Ehud, son of Gera
- The people who helped Ehud take the tribute to Eglon
- Eglon's servants and attendants
- Shamgar
- And the Philistines

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Ehud's story follows the same basic order as Othniel's story. First, the Israelites disobey Yahweh. Then another nation rules the Israelites. The Israelites ask Yahweh for help. So Yahweh chooses a leader to save the Israelites. And then, finally, the Israelites have peace. We hear more details in Ehud's story than Othniel's story. Ehud's story describes how Ehud tricks the Moabites. The storyteller seems to mock or disrespect the Moabites as he describes how messy King Eglon's body is when Eglon dies and how the servants stand awkwardly outside the door. King Eglon and all his attendants, servants, and soldiers cannot stop Ehud when Yahweh is helping Ehud.

In the first scene, the storyteller says twice that Israel does evil things to emphasize that the Israelites deserve how Yahweh disciplines them. While the Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites are powerful people groups, the storyteller also shows that these people groups only defeat the Israelites because Yahweh gives these people power over the Israelites. Though the Moabites rule over the Israelites, Yahweh rules over everyone, even people groups who do not worship Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you tell a story, how do you emphasize or show that certain parts of that story are important? Pause this audio here.

The storyteller first says that Yahweh gives power to King Eglon, and then the storyteller explains how King Eglon defeats the Israelites. King Eglon gets two other people groups to join him and his army. Then together they cross over the Jordan River. They attack Israel and take over the City of Palm Trees, or Jericho. It appears that King Eglon then lived in or near Jericho. This was an important area in the middle of the land of Israel. King Eglon has shown how strong his army is, so Eglon can demand tribute and the Israelites must pay him so he will not attack any other areas of Israel. King Eglon rules like this for 18 years, and the Israelites probably pay him tribute regularly.

In the second scene, the Israelites cry out to Yahweh, which means that they strongly ask for help. Yahweh chooses Ehud to be the deliverer or rescuer of the Israelites. It is not clear whether the Israelites know that Yahweh has chosen Ehud when the Israelites send Ehud to take the tribute to King Eglon. Ehud probably knows, since he makes and hides a short sword to take with him. Ehud seems to have planned how he will kill the king. Notice how the storyteller introduces Ehud as a left-handed man and describes Ehud's dagger before Ehud uses it. The storyteller slowly reveals things to make us excited or curious to see what happens in the story. Later, we will see that because Ehud is left-handed, Ehud can surprise the king with a hidden sword. But for now, we must wait to hear how and when Ehud will use this dagger!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, tell a story where someone uses an item to do an important action. Tell the story twice. The first time you tell the story, describe the item towards the start of the story, much earlier than when the person actually uses the item. The second time you tell the story, describe or mention the item right before you say how the person uses that item. Finally, discuss which version of the

story caused your listeners to be more excited or curious about what the person would do with the item. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller does not describe what the tribute is, but at least two other people go with Ehud to transport the tribute to King Eglon. When Ehud enters the room where Eglon is, no one discovers Ehud's sword. Eglon's guards would be less careful to check Ehud's right side, because the right side is not a normal place to keep a weapon. Most people in that time used their right hand to fight, so they kept their weapon on their left side to make it easy to take the weapon out of its holder with their right hand and use the weapon immediately. Ehud brings the tribute near to Eglon, or presents it to Eglon. The storyteller uses the same word as how people "present" an offering to God. The storyteller may say this to suggest that this offering of tribute to Eglon insulted or disrespected the Israelites' God. The storyteller mentions here that King Eglon is very fat, perhaps because the Israelites often bring a lot of tribute, or good food, to the king. Though we know Ehud has his hidden sword, Ehud leaves the king after he gives the tribute.

In the third scene, the storyteller says that Ehud dismisses, or stops his travels with, the other people who brought the tribute. Then the storyteller explains how and when Ehud did that. After Ehud and the people with him had left the palace, they traveled to Gilgal. There, Ehud stops and tells the others to continue to travel home. Ehud, however, returns to king Eglon.

The fourth scene is with king Eglon and all his attendants. These people may already be in the upper room, or a room high in the palace. Ehud wants to get the king alone, so Ehud says he has something secret for the king. King Eglon thinks it is a secret message just for Eglon, so he sends all his attendants out of the room.

Now the storyteller slows down how he tells the story to build up excitement for an important moment. The storyteller explains what room King Eglon is in and that the king is seated. Ehud now has Eglon alone and vulnerable. Ehud's next task is to make Eglon stand up, so that Ehud can stab Eglon effectively with Ehud's short dagger. So Ehud comes closer and says, "I have a message from God for you." Ehud uses the general word for God or gods, so Eglon probably would not be sure which God sent the message. Either way, Eglon stands up, perhaps in respect. But the only message from God that Ehud has is that Yahweh has chosen Ehud to save Israel! Ehud begins to kill Eglon. Though Ehud probably moves quickly, the storyteller takes his time and describes the moment in detail. Ehud reaches with his left hand to his right thigh, pulls out the sword, and plunges it into the king's belly. The storyteller describes how the fat covers the sword, and how excrement or inner parts of the king spill out.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you tell a story, how do you show that you are about to tell an important or exciting part of the story? How do you tell this part differently than the other parts of the story? Now tell an exciting story, and pay attention to how your voice and pace changes as you get to the most important part of the story. Pause this audio here.

In the fifth scene, Ehud escapes from the palace. Ehud leaves the upper room and shuts and locks the doors, so that it will take longer for anyone to discover that the king is dead. Ehud is in a different room than where the servants wait, so that the servants do not see Ehud lock the door. It is not clear what kind of room this is. Some translations say a porch or a room where people wait to see a king. Ehud then leaves the palace, passes the stone idols at Gilgal, and travels to Seirah. We do not know how large these stone idols are, but people may have stood up large stones or sculpted large stones to look like a god. It seems that many people knew about this place to worship idols.

While Ehud travels, the servants wait for Eglon to call for them. At some point, they try to open the doors to the upper room, but the doors are locked. Probably because of the bad smell from the king's body, the servants say that the king must be relieving himself. They say that the king is "covering his feet." This is a polite way to say that someone uses the latrine.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, what is a polite way to say that someone uses the latrine? Pause this audio here.

Though the servants do not want to interrupt their king, eventually they become worried, and even embarrassed by how long they have waited outside the door. The servants must have a key to the upper room because they open the door to find their lord, or master, dead. Because they took so long to find that Eglon was

dead, no one stopped or chased after Ehud when Ehud escaped. It may have taken the servants longer to find out what happened even after they opened the door, since the king's own body hid Ehud's sword from sight.

In the sixth scene, Ehud arrives at Seirah and he blows a trumpet. Seirah is in the hill country of Ephraim, which is a central area in Israel where the Israelites often gathered. The Israelites know that when Ehud blows the trumpet, it means that Ehud wants them to gather to fight. The people who hear the sound of the trumpet probably tell others so that many Israelites gather to follow Ehud down from the hills. Ehud speaks to the Israelites to tell them that Yahweh has certainly given the Moabites into the Israelites' hands, or into the Israelites' power. Though the Israelites have not fought the Moabite men yet, Yahweh will so certainly cause the Israelites to defeat their enemies that Ehud speaks like it has already happened. And already, Yahweh has protected Ehud while Ehud killed the king of the Moabites! Ehud shows that he is the one that Yahweh has chosen to lead the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how would you talk about a thing that you are very sure is going to happen, perhaps because of another thing that has already happened? Pause this audio here.

So the Israelites follow Ehud to the fords of the Jordan River. Anyone who traveled between Israel and Moab would have to cross at this place. The Israelites fight the Moabites at this place to stop any of Eglon's soldiers in Israel so that they cannot return home and to hold off any more soldiers that might come from Moab. At this time, which may have included several battles, the Israelites killed 10,000 Moabites. The storyteller emphasizes this big number, and how vigorous, strong, and well-nourished the Moabites are, to show how amazing it is that Yahweh caused the Israelites to win. The storyteller does not mention what happens to the Ammonites or the Amalekites, but they no longer attack Israel with the Moabites. Instead, the storyteller says that on that day, or at that time, the Moabites became the Israelites' subjects, which means the Israelites now rule over the Moabites!

In the seventh scene, the storyteller ends Ehud's story in the usual way to end a judge's story and says that the Israelites had peace for 80 years.

In the last scene, the storyteller gives a very brief statement about Shamgar. The storyteller says Shamgar struck down or killed the Philistines after Ehud, but it is not clear if this means after Ehud dies or after Ehud stops leading. The storyteller also does not call Shamgar a judge, but he does say that Shamgar saves Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, discuss several leaders who ruled right after each other. Very briefly describe who each person was and an important thing that each person did. Because you only briefly describe what these leaders did, and in what order they ruled, how do you tell this differently than if you were a teacher who gave a lesson about each of these leaders? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:12–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- Eglon, king of the Moabites
- The Moabites
- The Ammonites
- The Amalekites
- Ehud, son of Gera
- The people who helped Ehud take the tribute to Eglon
- Eglon's servants and attendants
- Shamgar, son of Anath
- And the Philistines

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The people of Israel again did things that Yahweh said were evil. Because the Israelites did these evil things, Yahweh allowed Eglon, king of Moab, to defeat Israel.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The last time the Israelites did not obey me, I disciplined them to help them remember that they should worship and obey me. I am sad that they have so soon forgotten what happens when they act in an evil way; or
- I am not surprised that the Israelites have acted in an evil way again. I know how people think and feel. The Israelites need a lot of reminders, so I will remind them again. The last judge, Othniel, reminded the Israelites while he was alive. Now I will remind them by disciplining them; or
- I love the Israelites and want to have a good relationship with them. Just like a father gets upset when his children ignore and disrespect him, I am upset with the way the Israelites act.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- My parents worshiped Yahweh, but the world is different now! I want to worship new gods and try new things that my parents did not do; or
- My neighbors worship other gods and have told me how amazing those gods are. I want to do the interesting things they do; or
- We do not have a man like Othniel to lead us anymore. We can all do what we want.

King Eglon joined with the people of Ammon and Amalek and they attacked Israel. They conquered Jericho, or the City of the Palm Trees. King Eglon of Moab ruled over Israel for 18 years. Then the Israelites again called out to Yahweh to help them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I felt surprised when the Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites attacked us! We lived in peace for so many years. I thought no one would be able to defeat us! or
- We have to pay so much tribute to King Eglon that we do not have enough things like food for ourselves! We need help! or
- I remember now that when my parents were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh for help. Maybe Yahweh will help us again.

Yahweh sent Ehud son of Gera to save the Israelites. Ehud was a descendant of Benjamin. Ehud was a left-handed man. The Israelites sent Ehud to take their tribute payment to Eglon, king of Moab. Ehud made a short sword that was sharp on both sides. It was about 50 centimeters long. Ehud fastened this sword on his right leg under his clothes. Ehud gave the tribute payment to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. After Ehud gave the tribute payment to the king, Ehud told the men who had carried the payment to leave. Ehud left with them, but when he came near the stone idols that were near Gilgal, Ehud went back to King Eglon and said to the king: "I have a secret message to tell you, oh king."

Pause the drama. Ask the person who plays Ehud, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh chose me to save Israel, and the Israelites now send me to the Moabite king. This must be the time I should act. If I kill King Eglon, the soldiers will be confused without anyone to lead them; or
- I cannot stab the king while everyone is in the room. Someone will surely stop me. I need to talk to the king alone; or
- I do not want the people with me to be hurt if I have any problems while I try to kill the king. I will come back to the king after the people with me are safely away from the king. The king and his guards are not wise. They will leave the king unprotected.

Ask the person who plays the Eglon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel powerful and rich when the Israelites bring me tribute. I am not worried about the future. We are strong and have many resources. No one can stop us! or
- Other people said they saw that Ehud stopped at the stone idols. Now Ehud has a message for me. It may be an important message from the gods; or
- I do not know what the message is about, and I want time to decide if I want anyone else to hear this message.

The king ordered his servants to leave, so they all left.

Ehud approached the king who was seated in the upper room of the king's house. Ehud said, "I have a message for you from God."

Then the king got up from his seat. With his left hand, Ehud pulled out the sword that was tied to Ehud's right thigh. Ehud thrust the sword into the king's belly. The sword went in all the way, including the handle, and the king's stomach contents came out. Ehud did not withdraw the sword, and the fat closed over the blade. Ehud closed the doors to the upper room and locked them. Then he went out by another way over a porch.

After Ehud had gone, the servants arrived and saw that the doors were locked. The servants thought the king must be using the latrine. The servants waited for a long time. The servants felt embarrassed, but still the king did not open the door. So the servants got a key and opened the door. The servants saw that their king had fallen on the floor and was dead.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Ehud, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I felt relieved when the king sent everyone from the room. My plan works, so far; or
- I made this sword so I could stab it deep into the king and make sure he was definitely dead; or
- I must hurry and get away from the Moabites. Though I have killed the king, plenty of Moabites can still hurt me and my people.

Ask the person who plays the servants, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The king is alone for a long time! Other people are here to see the king, and we have told those people to wait. People are upset because they have to wait. I am embarrassed that I do not know what is going on; or
- The king will be angry at us if we interrupt him while he is in a secret meeting or while he uses the latrine. I would rather wait until I hear him call for us; or
- The king is dead on the floor! I do not know what happened! I do not know what to do now! We are in trouble!

While the servants waited, Ehud escaped. Ehud passed the stone idols and went to where he was safe in Seirah. There in the hills that belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, Ehud blew a trumpet and gathered the Israelites. Ehud led the Israelites and they came down from the hills together. Ehud said, "Follow me, for Yahweh has given you victory over Moab, your enemies."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Ehud, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am glad that the Israelites gathered together when I blew the trumpet. I was worried that the Israelites would be too afraid to gather for war. Yahweh must be causing us Israelites to be brave; or
- Yahweh has told me to lead, and I trust Yahweh. Yahweh certainly will cause us to defeat the Moabites; or
- The last time we fought against the Moabites, we did not worship or honor Yahweh. I must remind the Israelites that Yahweh is the most powerful God, the one who causes people to win or lose battles. When the people see how Yahweh helps us, maybe then they will worship Yahweh again.

So the Israelites followed Ehud down from the hills and they captured the place at the Jordan River where people could wade or cross over to the land of Moab. They did not let anyone cross the river there. Then the

Israelites killed about 10,000 Moabites, all of them strong and courageous men. None of the Moabites escaped alive. From then on, the Israelites had power over the Moabites. The people of Israel lived in peace for 80 years.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We have been afraid of the Moabites for many years. But when I saw the other Israelites gather together, with Ehud to lead us, I was ready to fight. Yahweh really does help us; or
- The last time the Moabites attacked us, they were much more powerful than us and defeated us. This time, we won! I am amazed at the way that Yahweh caused us to win; or
- I see now what happens when we do evil things. I will be careful to honor and worship Yahweh as long as I live.

After Ehud finished his time as judge, Shamgar the son of Anath saved Israel. Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Shamgar, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Wow! I could not have defeated all those soldiers on my own, especially without a real weapon. I am thankful that Yahweh helped me; or
- The Philistines were going to attack and hurt the Israelites. I did not want that to happen.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 3:12–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The Israelites again act in a way that Yahweh has told them is **evil**. Evil is the opposite of good. When people no longer obey God, they begin to do evil actions. For more information on evil, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for evil as you used in previous passages. Also use the same phrase for "evil in the sight of Yahweh" as you used in previous passages.

The name **Yahweh** was a very personal name for God that showed the close relationship that God had with the people of Israel. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

Yahweh enables **King** Eglon to rule over the Israelites. A king is someone who rules over a city or territory, like a region or a country. For more information on king, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for king as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites pay **tribute** to King Eglon. When a nation conquered another nation, the king of the nation that ruled would demand tribute or payment from the nation he ruled over. This tribute could be things such as precious metals, materials, or farm produce. Tribute could also mean that people had to work for the king. Often the people would have to regularly pay this tribute to the king.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **tribute**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh gives the Israelites Ehud, who is a **deliverer** for them, just as Yahweh had sent Othniel as a deliverer before. A deliverer is someone who saves or rescues a group of people from a conqueror or from danger. Use the same word for deliverer, savior, or rescuer that you used in the previous story.

Ehud makes a **sword**, or long knife, that is sharp on both sides of the blade. Ehud's sword would probably not have had a cross piece, but only a grip or wrapped surface for Ehud to hold. This sword was a **cubit** or a gomed long. At this time, a cubit and a gomed were ways to measure how long a thing was. One cubit is about as long as a man's arm from his elbow to his fingertips, which is about 50 centimeters. A gomed is a little shorter at about 45 centimeters, or about the distance from a person's elbow to their knuckles. So the sword was probably about 45 to 50 centimeters long. This sword would be small enough for Ehud to strap to his right thigh and hide under his clothing.

Stop here and look at a picture of a sword again as a group as needed. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for this short sword or long knife. Also discuss what word or phrase you will use for the length of the sword. Look up cubit in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same words that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Ehud visits King Eglon in an **upper room** in the king's **palace**. An upper room may have been a room above the ground floor, or a room on the roof of the house. A palace is a house where a king or ruler lives. It is probably a large house where the king and his servants live.

Ehud leaves the palace through a **porch**, which may be a large outside open area right next to the rooms in the palace, or it may be an open space that joins the upper rooms to the lower levels.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will talk about the **palace**, the **upper room** in the palace, and the **porch** where Ehud leaves from. Pause this audio here.

Ehud stops at the stone **images**, or **idols**, at Gilgal. An idol or an image is an object that people make in order to worship a god. The object reminds the people about some characteristics of this god. Idols and images could be very large, and these idols could have been large enough to be a landmark.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **idol** or **images**. Look up idol in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same words that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Ehud says he has a message from **God**. This word for God is a general word for God, not Yahweh's personal name. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for God as you used in previous passages.

Eglon sends out all his **attendants**, or everyone who was in the room with Eglon. This probably included his officials, guards, and servants.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **attendants**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Eglon's **servants**, who were part of his attendants, waited outside the doors to the upper room. A servant is a person who does work for someone else. Servants may work in the house or in the fields of their master. Servants usually have a low position in the community. For more information on servant, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for servant as you used in previous passages.

When the servants open the door, they find their **lord**, or **master**, dead on the ground. A master is a general respectful title for someone in a high position or status. Lord is often the title for someone who owns property or is a supreme ruler.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **lord**. Look up lord in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Ehud blows a **trumpet** to gather the Israelites. People made trumpets out of a ram's horn, with a hole at the narrow tip. When someone blew through the hole, the trumpet would make two or three notes. People used trumpets to signal messages, especially messages to gather the people for war.

Stop here and look at a picture of a trumpet again as a group as needed. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **trumpet**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Ehud leads the Israelites to the fords of the **Jordan River**, which is a safe place to cross the Jordan River. The Jordan River is a long river that runs through Israel from north to south. During the rainy season, the river is quite wide and deep. At other times of the year, the river is smaller, and a person can wade or swim through the water to get across. The Jordan River ends at the Dead Sea.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **Jordan River** and for the "fords of," or "low safe place to cross," the Jordan River. Look up Jordan River in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The land had **peace** for 80 years. Here, this probably means that the people live in harmony with each other and do not fight each other, and that no other nation attacks the Israelites. For more information on peace, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for peace as you used in the previous passage.

Shamgar kills the Philistines with an **oxgoad**. An oxgoad is a long stick with a sharp metal point. If a farmer wanted his cattle to move or go forward, he would jab them with the oxgoad.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **oxgoad**. Look at the picture of an oxgoad again if needed. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 3:12–31

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (29845994 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 4:1–10

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 4:1–10 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:1–10 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, Yahweh rescued his people through the judges Ehud and Shamgar. This passage is a story of how Yahweh speaks through the judge Deborah to prepare the Israelites to fight the Canaanite army. Deborah prophesies that Yahweh will give the victory to a woman.

The author tells us that after Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil or continued to do evil. Yahweh let the Canaanites, who had a powerful army, oppress the Israelites. Jabin was the king of Canaan. Jabin was probably a royal title and not the king's name.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What titles or names do you use for people who hold positions of authority or power? Think about any words or phrases you might use to talk about a king or queen, a president, or people in government. Pause this audio here.

Jabin ruled his people from the city of Hazor. Hazor was a fortified, or protected, city in the land that belonged to the Israelite tribe of Naphtali. Hazor was the most powerful city in northern Canaan.

Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, lived in Harosheth Hagoyim. We do not know the exact location of Harosheth Hagoyim. However, as Sisera kept his chariots at Harosheth Hagoyim, it is likely that it was in an area of flat ground rather than in the hills. The details the storyteller tells us later in the passage suggest that Harosheth Hagoyim was probably at the western end of the Jezreel Valley or plain. This would mean the Israelites were in between Jabin to the north and Sisera to the south.

Stop here and look as a group at a map of Hazor, the Jezreel Valley, and the possible location of Harosheth Hagoyim. Pause this audio here.

Sisera had 900 iron chariots. You may recall from a previous passage that iron chariots protected the Canaanites from the men of Judah. The Israelites did not know how to make iron yet. The Israelites' weapons were weaker than the Canaanites' weapons, so Jabin's army was more powerful and very cruel to the Israelites.

Stop here and look at pictures of an iron chariot and iron weapons. Compare them to weapons made of bone, stone, wood, or bronze. What kind of weapons are used in your culture? Pause this audio here.

The Canaanites were cruel to the Israelites for 20 years. The Israelites became desperate. The Israelites cried out to Yahweh for help.

The storyteller now introduces us to Deborah. Deborah is a prophet, and in this story, Yahweh speaks through Deborah. It was very unusual for a woman to be a prophet. Deborah was the wife of a man called Lappidoth. We do not know anything else about Lappidoth, but people often introduced women by also giving the name of the husband. This detail reminds us that Deborah was an ordinary, real person, even though Yahweh had chosen to use her as a prophet.

Stop here and tell a story of a time when you have seen Yahweh use an ordinary person to do something for Yahweh's glory. Pause this audio here.

Deborah acted as a judge over Israel. You will recall that the judges of Israel in this time were the leaders or rulers of Israel as a whole. Deborah is the only woman in the Old Testament to lead Israel in this way.

Deborah would sit under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hilly land of Ephraim. This was in the middle between the northern and southern tribes of Israel.

Stop here and look at the same map from before. Point out Ramah and Bethel as a group. Now look at a picture of a palm tree. Pause this audio here.

Deborah would sit under the palm tree. When a storyteller says that someone "sits," the storyteller compares the person to a ruler who sits on a throne. The storyteller says that Deborah sits under the palm tree to show that she has authority and that the Israelites respect Deborah.

The Israelites would come to Deborah when they had a disagreement. Deborah would make a decision about the disagreement. It is unlikely the Israelites brought every disagreement to Deborah. We learn elsewhere in the Old Testament that there were other elders or leaders in the community who usually decided simple matters. If the community leaders were unable to resolve the disagreement, then Deborah judged the situation.

Stop here and tell a story of someone with authority, like a king or a judge, who listens to a dispute and makes a decision in the matter. Pause this audio here.

Deborah sends for Barak to come to her. Barak's name means lightning. People might remember that Baal, the god of Canaan, often had a lightning bolt in his hand. Barak's name seems like a good name for a warrior who

fights the Canaanites. Barak comes from a town called Kedesh in northern Israel where the tribe of Naphtali lived. This probably means that Barak was part of the tribe of Naphtali.

Stop here and look at the same map of Israel. Point out Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. Pause this audio here.

Deborah speaks to Barak in the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. The battle will be important for the whole of Israel. The author tells us this to remind us that Deborah's authority comes from Yahweh.

Deborah tells Barak to recruit an army of 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. The people of Zebulun lived to the south of the Naphtalites.

Barak must draw, or lead, these warriors to Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor was a mountain on the border between the land that the tribes of Naphtali and Issachar owned.

Stop here and, as a group, look at a picture of Mount Tabor and the map of Israel that shows Mount Tabor and the borders of the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar. Pause this audio here.

Barak will draw, or lead, the 10,000 warriors to Mount Tabor. At the same time, Deborah says Yahweh will draw, or lead, Sisera and his army to meet Barak by the Kishon River. We can see that it is really Yahweh who is in control of this battle, not Barak or Sisera. Yahweh promises to give Barak victory over Sisera.

Barak agrees to do what Yahweh has commanded if Deborah agrees to go with Barak. We do not know why Barak wanted Deborah to go with him. It might be that Barak did not trust that Yahweh would go with Barak, or that Barak wanted to make sure that Yahweh would be with him through the presence of Deborah. Or it might be that Barak was weak and afraid.

Deborah agrees to go with Barak. Deborah tells Barak that Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman. The author uses the same word here for selling as he did earlier in the story. Barak himself does not get to defeat Sisera. A woman will defeat Sisera.

Barak and Deborah go together to a city called Kedesh. This Kedesh may be a different Kedesh than where Barak usually lived.

Stop here and look at a map that shows the possible locations of the two cities called Kedesh: one in the land of Naphtali, and one in the land where the people of Issachar lived. Pause this audio here.

Barak calls out to the 10,000 men from Zebulun and Naphtali. The men followed Barak's command. The men went up with Barak. Deborah also went up with Barak.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites sin against Yahweh after Ehud the judge dies, and so Yahweh gives Jabin, the King of Canaan, control over the Israelites. Jabin cruelly oppresses the Israelites for 20 years until the Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help.

In the second scene: We learn that Deborah was the judge of Israel at this time. Deborah asks Barak to come to her. Deborah tells Barak that Yahweh commands Barak to go and defeat Sisera, the commander of King Jabin's army. Barak agrees to follow Yahweh's command if Deborah will go with Barak. Deborah agrees. Deborah tells Barak that because Deborah goes with Barak, Yahweh will cause a woman to kill Sisera.

In the third scene: Barak calls the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and 10,000 men join Barak. Deborah goes with Barak too.

The characters in this passage are:

- Ehud, a dead judge of Israel
- The Israelites
- Jabin, king of the Canaanites
- Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army
- Yahweh
- Deborah, the judge of Israel
- Barak
- And 10,000 men from Zebulun and Naphtali

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In scene one, the passage begins when it states the Israelites are "again" doing "evil in the eyes of Yahweh." This is special language that is repeated many times in the book of Judges. As you will recall from previous passages, the Israelites have acted this way before.

Stop here and discuss how you describe an action that people repeat again and again. Think about a person or a group of people who do the same things over and over, despite the bad consequences. How do you describe that they repeat these actions? Pause this audio here.

The storyteller tells us Ehud died, and then the Israelites behaved badly again. You will remember there was another judge, Shamgar, who had led Israel after Ehud died. We do not know why the storyteller does not mention Shamgar in this story. It is possible that someone added the story of Shamgar in between the story of Ehud and the story of Deborah at a later time. Or perhaps Shamgar just helped with a small or temporary threat to the Israelites. The storyteller clearly shows that the sin of the Israelites got worse after Ehud died.

Yahweh sold the Israelites into the hands of Jabin, king of the Canaanites. The storyteller uses special language to show that Yahweh owns, or controls, the Israelites in the same way that a person owns a thing that they have bought with money. This is a common way that the storyteller in the book of Judges describes when one people group has more power than the other.

Sisera was a military leader of 900 iron chariots. You will remember that a chariot is a kind of cart that horses pulled so that soldiers could ride the chariot in battle. Sisera's army used strong iron metal to strengthen the wooden wheels on the chariots. The Israelites did not know how to make iron yet. Jabin's army was very powerful because they had iron chariots. Jabin's army, which Sisera led, used the chariots to treat the Israelites very cruelly for 20 years.

Stop here and look at an image of a chariot with iron on the wheels as a group. Pause this audio here.

Scene two begins with language that tells us that the scene has changed. Deborah now sits under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hilly land of Ephraim. This was in the middle between the northern and southern tribes of Israel. We do not know why Deborah chose a palm tree.

Stop here and look at a picture of a palm tree as a group. Pause this audio here.

The people of Israel would come to Deborah when they needed help. Deborah sends for Barak, who lives in the city of Kedesh in the north of Israel. Barak comes a long distance from Kedesh to meet Deborah under the palm tree. Remember that Deborah now sits under the palm tree, much like a ruler sits on a special chair to show that they have authority.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Remember the story you told in the previous step about a ruler who listens to a disagreement between different groups of people. Think about what words you used to describe what the judge or ruler does. Now think about how you will describe how Deborah judged the people and sat under the palm tree to make decisions like a ruler does. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel that shows Ramah and Bethel, and also Kedesh, as a group. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh speaks to Barak through Deborah. Yahweh tells Barak to draw or lead 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun to Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor was on the border between the lands where the tribes of Naphtali and Issachar lived. This was at the top of the valley that leads to the Jezreel Valley. You will remember this was probably where Sisera kept his chariots.

At the same time, Yahweh says he, Yahweh, will draw or lead Sisera and Jabin's army to meet Barak by the Kishon River. The author uses the same word to describe how both armies are drawn out, or led, to the location. The river was southwest of Mount Tabor. Barak and his army would have a big advantage over Sisera's army. The Israelites would be higher up on the mountain land than Sisera's army. This would make it easier for Barak's army to attack Sisera's army. Yahweh will give Sisera into the hands of Barak. The storyteller again uses the phrase "into the hands of" to show how Barak and the Israelites will have more power than Sisera's army.

Stop here and look at a map that shows Mount Tabor, the Jezreel Valley, and the Kishon River. Pause this audio here.

Barak agrees to do what Yahweh says, but on one condition. Barak states the condition in two opposite ways: If Deborah goes to the battle, then Barak will go to the battle. But if Deborah does not go to the battle, then Barak will not go to the battle. Deborah uses special language to tell Barak about the result of his demand. Deborah says that the road Barak goes on will not lead to his own glory. This means Barak will not receive honor, or praise, for the victory over Sisera.

In scene three, after Deborah has agreed to go with Barak and they have finished their conversation, the storyteller uses a special word again to show another change of scene. Barak and Deborah have finished their conversation under the tree, and now Deborah and Barak go together to Kedesh.

Barak cries out to, or calls, the men of Naphtali and Zebulun. Barak asks them to come from where they live to meet him at Kedesh. Barak probably calls the men by sending out messengers throughout the area to tell them where to gather together. The storyteller then makes two different statements using similar words. Ten thousand men went up with Barak. Deborah also went up with Barak. The storyteller does not say where they went up to, but Barak probably led the 10,000 men up to higher ground on Mount Tabor.

Now your group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Ehud, a dead judge of Israel
- The Israelites
- Jabin, king of the Canaanites
- Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army
- Yahweh
- Deborah, the judge of Israel
- Barak
- And 10,000 men from Zebulun and Naphtali

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

After Ehud, the judge of Israel, died, the Israelites did evil things. And so Yahweh gave Jabin, the King of Canaan, control over the Israelites. Sisera was the commander of Jabin's army. Sisera had 900 iron chariots. King Jabin and Sisera cruelly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years, until the Israelites cried out to Yahweh for help.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Ehud, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel angry because after I saved Israel, the people just went back to worship false gods; or
- I am sad I did not have the strength to lead Israel for a longer time. Then they would still worship Yahweh.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Life is so difficult. King Jabin and his commander, Sisera, make everything so hard; or
- We have done a terrible thing by our sin against Yahweh, and now we suffer as a result; or
- Only Yahweh can save us from this terrible oppression. Please come and rescue us, Yahweh.

Ask the person who plays Jabin, king of the Canaanites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Israelites will suffer greatly for taking our land; or
- I am the greatest leader in the world, and my god is better than anyone else's god.

Ask the person who plays Sisera, leader of the Canaanite army, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so powerful because of my iron chariots. I can do anything I want to the Israelites; or
- We will destroy the weak Israelites. King Jabin will give me great honor.

At this time, Deborah was the judge of Israel. Deborah was a prophet and the wife of a man named Lappidoth. Deborah would sit under a tree called the Palm of Deborah, which was between the cities of Ramah and Bethel in the hilly land of Ephraim. The Israelites would go to Deborah when they had a disagreement and needed someone to make a decision between right and wrong.

One day, Deborah sends for Barak, the son of a man named Abinoam. Barak lived in Kedesh, a city in the north where the tribe of Naphtali lived. Deborah says to Barak, "This is what Yahweh commands you. Call 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and go to Mount Tabor. I, Yahweh, will call Sisera, the commander of King Jabin's army, to come to the Kishon River along with Sisera's chariots and warriors. At the Kishon River, I, Yahweh, will give you, Barak, victory over Sisera."

Barak says, "I will go, but only if you will come with me, Deborah."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Barak, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This sounds too good to be true. Will Yahweh really rescue us? or
- I need Deborah to come too, so that I know Yahweh is really with us.

Deborah replies, "Very well, I will go with you. Because you have requested that I come with you, you will not receive honor or glory in the victory. Yahweh will cause a woman to kill Sisera."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Deborah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know that Yahweh will do what he has promised. Yahweh will rescue the Israelites as he has said; or
- Barak is not going on a good path, because he does not trust Yahweh. But Yahweh will show Barak that Yahweh is faithful; or
- I think Yahweh is right to say that Barak will not receive honor or glory in this battle, because he does not fully trust that Yahweh will give the Israelites victory.

So Deborah goes with Barak to Kedesh. At Kedesh, Barak calls together the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand warriors from Zebulun and Naphtali go with Barak and Deborah up to Mount Tabor.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the warriors, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are not a trained army. I am afraid to fight against 900 chariots of iron; or
- We are desperate to be saved, so we will follow Barak like Yahweh said.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

This story uses the personal name for God, **Yahweh**. Use the same term for Yahweh as you have in other passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

This story uses **Israelites** as the name for God's people. Use the same term for Israelites as you have in other passages, and remember that Israelites is in the Master Glossary.

Once Ehud died, the Israelites **did evil in the eyes of** Yahweh. Translate this phrase in the same way you did in previous passages, and remember that evil is in the Master Glossary.

Jabin is the **king** of the Canaanites. Jabin was probably a royal title unique to Canaanites and not the king's name. Use the same word for king as you used in previous passages, and remember that king is in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **Jabin**. Pause this audio here.

The **Canaanites** oppressed the Israelites. The Canaanites are the people of the land of **Canaan**. Use the same word or phrase for Canaanites as you used in previous passages. Remember that Canaan is in the Master Glossary.

Sisera commanded an army of 900 **iron chariots**. This does not mean the chariots were only iron, but likely wood and iron. You may recall that an earlier passage mentions chariots of iron that the tribe of Judah could not defeat. Use the same phrase for iron chariots that you used in earlier passages.

Deborah was a **prophetess**. This word means Deborah was a female **prophet**. The first woman that the Bible calls a prophetess was Miriam, the sister of Moses.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **prophetess**, a female prophet. Look up prophet in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated prophetess in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Deborah was **judging** Israel. This means she judged or led Israel at that time. This is the first time in the book of Judges where the judge of Israel is separate from a military leader. Use the same word for judging as you used in previous passages, and remember you can find more information about judge in the Master Glossary.

Deborah begins her message to Barak when she says it is a command from Yahweh, the **God of Israel**. Use the same word or phrase for God of Israel as you used in previous passages. Remember that God and Israel are in the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 4:1–10

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (16388515 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (12561404 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 4:11–24

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 4:11–24 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:11–24 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

*Setting the Stage**Setting the Stage*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:11–24 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In the previous passage, Yahweh speaks through Deborah to tell Barak to gather warriors. Yahweh says Yahweh will defeat Jabin's army. Deborah agrees to go with Barak to the battle. Deborah declares that a woman, not Barak, will receive the honor and praise for the victory.

This passage continues the story of the time Deborah was judge and prophetess over Israel. In this story, Yahweh helps the Israelites win the battle against the Canaanites.

The passage begins as it sets up characters who will become important later in the story. We hear about a man named Heber. Heber was a Kenite. The Kenites were descendants of a man named Hobab, and Hobab was related to Moses through the father of Moses' wife. The Kenites were probably people who often moved from place to place. You will remember that in an earlier passage we saw the Kenites move to live in the Negev desert area, near the city of Arad. In a time before this passage, Heber had left the other Kenites. We do not know when this happened. Heber had set up his tent by a big tree in Zaanannim. This was near the place called Kedesh in the land of Issachar. This is the same place Barak and Deborah had gone to summon the 10,000 men in the previous passage.

Stop here and look as a group at a map of tribal Israel in the time of Deborah. Look at the Negev Desert area and Zaanannim. Now point out Kedesh in the land of Issachar. Pause this audio here.

Sisera learns that Barak, the son of Abinoam, is at Mount Tabor. Although we do not know who told Sisera this, it is likely that a Canaanite spy told Sisera about Barak and the Israelite warriors. Sisera calls his entire army and the 900 iron chariots to go from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River. The Kishon River is in the Jezreel Valley near Mount Tabor.

Stop here and look at the same map from before. Look at Harosheth Haggoyim, the Kishon River, the Jezreel Valley, and Mount Tabor. Pause this audio here.

Now look at a picture of the Jezreel Valley and Mount Tabor. Sisera's army and chariots were in the valley, and Barak's men were on the mountain. Discuss with the group: What advantages did each army have? What disadvantages did they have? Pause this audio here.

Deborah tells Barak to go fight. Deborah tells Barak that today Yahweh has given Sisera into Barak's hands. Deborah says Yahweh had already gone out before Barak.

Barak's 10,000 men follow Barak down Mount Tabor to fight. Yahweh defeats Sisera, all Sisera's chariots, and all Sisera's men. Sisera leaves his chariot and runs away. Barak and his men chase the Canaanite army and chariots all the way back to Harosheth Haggoyim. Israelite soldiers kill every Canaanite soldier. No one escapes.

Sisera continued to run away when the battle ended. Sisera runs in the opposite direction of Harosheth Haggoyim to the tent of a woman named Jael. Jael is the wife of Heber the Kenite. Jabin, king of Hazor, and the family of Heber the Kenite had made a treaty of peace between them. The storyteller tells us this information to help us understand Sisera's reason to run east. Although Heber's family previously had a good relationship with Moses and the Israelites, Sisera believed that because of the peace between his people and Heber the Kenite, Heber's family would protect Sisera.

Jael goes out of her tent to meet Sisera. Jael tells Sisera to come inside her tent and to not be afraid. Jael tells Sisera two times to come inside. Jael calls Sisera lord, or master, as a title of respect. Sisera goes into Jael's tent. Jael covers Sisera with a blanket, rug, or mat that people would sleep on. Women lived in separate tents from their husbands. Only a husband would go into his wife's tent. It is unlikely Sisera would have normally gone into Jael's tent, but Sisera felt exhausted. It is also possible that Sisera followed Jael because she invited him twice.

Sisera tells Jael he is thirsty. Sisera asks for water to drink. Jael opens a skin of milk and gives it to Sisera. Sisera drinks the milk. Jael covers him up again. We do not know why Jael gave Sisera milk. The milk might have been close by. Or perhaps Jael wanted to provide comfort and nourishment to Sisera.

Stop here and look at a picture of someone who drinks from a jug like in this passage. People often made jugs out of animal skin. Discuss as a group how your culture drinks water or milk. What material do you use to make the container for the water or milk? What are right and wrong ways to drink water or milk in your culture? Pause the audio here.

Sisera gives Jael some instructions to protect Sisera. Sisera tells Jael to stand at the entrance of the tent. If any man comes by the tent, and if the man asks Jael if anyone is inside the tent, Sisera tells Jael to say, "No." Sisera then falls asleep quickly because he is exhausted.

Until now, Jael has been only helpful to Sisera. Jael surprises us by what she does next. Jael will do something against the ally of her husband.

Jael, the wife of Heber, grabs a tent peg, and she grabs a hammer. Jael goes with the tools quietly, or secretly, to Sisera. Jael is familiar with the tools to put up a tent, because in those days women often set up the tents for their homes each time they moved.

Stop here and look at a picture of a hammer and a tent peg in someone's hand. Now look at a picture of a tent that people have tied with ropes to tent pegs. Pause the audio here.

It is clear Sisera did not wake up when Jael came near him. Jael hammers the tent peg into the ground through Sisera's head. Sisera dies.

Barak and his men had killed all of Sisera's army. Then Barak chased Sisera, so that Barak arrives at the tent soon after Sisera dies.

Jael goes out of her tent to meet Barak. Jael tells Barak to come and she will show Barak the man Barak searches for. Barak goes into the tent with Jael. There Sisera lies on the ground with the tent peg in his head. Sisera is dead.

On that day God subdued, or humbled, Jabin the king of Canaan. The Israelites destroyed the Canaanites who Jabin led.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:11–24 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: We learn about Heber, a man related to Moses. Heber left the rest of his people and pitched his tent near Kedesh.

In the second scene: Sisera learns Barak went up to Mount Tabor. Sisera summons his 900 chariots. Deborah tells Barak to attack Sisera's army. Barak attacks and Yahweh makes Sisera's army panic. All of Sisera's army is defeated, but Sisera escapes on foot.

In the third scene: Sisera escapes to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber. Jael welcomes Sisera into her tent, gives him a drink of milk, and covers him.

In the fourth scene: Sisera is asleep and exhausted. Jael kills Sisera with a tent peg. Barak passes by her tent. Jael shows Barak that Sisera is dead.

In the fifth scene: We learn that it was God who defeated Jabin on that day. The Israelites persisted until they completely destroyed Jabin, king of the Canaanites.

The characters in this passage are:

- Heber the Kenite
- Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army
- Sisera's army
- Deborah, the judge of Israel
- Barak
- Barak's men
- Yahweh
- Jael, Heber's wife
- The Israelites
- And Jabin, the king of the Canaanites

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In scene one, the passage begins with a word to change our attention from Barak and Deborah to someone else. The author gives us information that becomes important later in the story. The author gives us information about a new character, Heber.

Stop here and tell a story in which new people come into the story at different points. As you tell the story, pause the story from time to time to tell the group some more information about one of the people in the story, or about the place the people in the story visit. The rest of the group should pay attention to what words you use to show when you tell the story and when you give them more information about a place or person. Pause this audio here.

The author tells us important facts. Heber is a Kenite. Heber left the other Kenites before this story began. Heber is a descendant of Hobab, a man who was related to the wife of Moses. After Heber left the other Kenites, Heber put his tent near the big tree in Zaanannim near Kadesh in the land of Issachar.

In scene two, Sisera's men tell Sisera that Barak has taken his men up the mountain called Tabor. Sisera gathers his whole army and the 900 chariots of iron. Sisera's army goes from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River. The river is near Mount Tabor.

Stop here and look at the same map from before. Notice Harosheth Haggoyim, the Kishon River, and Mount Tabor. Notice Zaanannim where Heber lived. Look at the picture of the Jezreel Valley and Mount Tabor. Pause this audio here.

Deborah tells Barak that Yahweh has gone out ahead of Barak in the battle. This is a military phrase that shows Yahweh is the one who leads the Israelite fighters, not Barak. When Barak and the 10,000 men charge down the mountain, it is Yahweh who causes the Canaanite army to panic. Deborah says Yahweh has given Sisera into Barak's hands. This is the same phrase used in previous stories to show that God gives special power to someone to defeat someone else. Barak and his 10,000 men go down the mountain to fight. Yahweh went before Barak and confused, or scared, Sisera's army. We do not know how Yahweh defeated Sisera's army. It is clear in this story and the previous story that Yahweh is powerful. Yahweh helps Barak. Yahweh does mighty things. Sisera gets out of his chariot and runs away from the battle.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will describe what things Barak does and what things Yahweh does. Pause this audio here.

In scene three, the author tells us again about the battle. The author also gives us new details. Barak chases the chariots and all of Sisera's soldiers all the way west to Harosheth Haggoyim. The author does not mention Barak's men for the rest of the passage; instead, he just says Barak's name when he talks about what Barak's men did. Barak's men killed all of Sisera's men. The storyteller uses special language when he says that all of Sisera's men died by the sword. Most often in battle, men killed other men with swords, so this was a way to say that all of Sisera's men died.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you talk about when men kill other men in battle. How would you describe how Barak's men killed Sisera's men if the main weapons they used were swords? Pause this audio here.

In scene four, the author tells us again that Sisera escaped the battle and ran away on foot. The author gives us new information. Sisera runs away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Jabin the king of the Canaanites had a peaceful relationship with Heber.

Jael meets Sisera outside her tent. Jael tells Sisera twice to come inside the tent. Jael greets Sisera with respect. Jael tells Sisera not to be afraid.

Stop here and discuss as a group: What words, phrases, or gestures does your culture use to give respect between men and women? How do you give respect to a military leader? Pause this audio here.

Sisera goes inside Jael's tent. Jael covers Sisera with a blanket or rug. This hides Sisera, who lies on the ground. Sisera tells Jael he is thirsty, and he asks for water. Jael gives Sisera milk to drink, and she covers him back up. Sisera tells Jael to guard the entrance of the tent. "If any man comes by and asks if someone is in your tent," Sisera instructs Jael, "Tell the man, 'No.'" It is clear that Sisera falls asleep quickly because he is exhausted. The author uses a word to show that we will now see Jael change her behavior. Jael does something unexpected.

Stop here and decide what word or phrase you will use to communicate how Jael changes her actions. Pause this audio here.

Jael takes a tent stake and a hammer in her hands. Jael sneaks to Sisera. The author does not say if Jael uncovers Sisera's head or not. It is clear that Sisera does not wake up because he is exhausted. Jael hammers the stake through the side of Sisera's head. The stake sticks into the ground. Sisera is dead.

Barak comes by the tent right after Sisera dies. Barak has been chasing Sisera. Barak does not know where Sisera is. The storyteller uses a phrase to tell us Barak arrives at the tent right after Sisera dies.

Stop here and tell a story where two things happen in different places at the same time, and then something happens right after something else. Pay attention to the words and phrases you use to describe when each action happens. Pause this audio here.

Jael meets Barak outside the tent. The storyteller uses the same phrase to describe Jael's action as when Jael met Sisera. Jael tells Barak, "Come inside, and I will show you the man you are looking for." Barak goes inside the tent with Jael. Sisera is dead on the ground.

In scene five, the story ends. The storyteller says "on that day" God began to conquer Jabin the king of Canaan. This phrase shows that this is an important moment in the history of the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss what words or phrases you use in your culture to show how something that happened is important to everyone in your culture or that everyone in your culture should never forget. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller ends the passage when he names Jabin the king of Canaan three times. On that day God began to conquer, or humbled, Jabin the king of Canaan. The Israelites pressed against Jabin the king of Canaan. The Israelites destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan. This is the third time in the last scene that the author uses the exact same phrase, Jabin the king of Canaan.

The storyteller says, "The hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin the king of Canaan." This special language shows that the Israelites were strong, and that they were determined to win against Jabin.

Stop here and use your hand to press down on different objects. For example, press down on your leg, or press a stick down into the ground. Have others in your group describe what they see and feel. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:11–24 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Heber the Kenite
- Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army
- Sisera's army
- Deborah, the judge of Israel
- Barak
- Barak's men
- Yahweh
- Jael, Heber's wife
- The Israelites
- And Jabin, the king of the Canaanites

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Now, there was a man called Heber who was a Kenite. Heber was a descendant of Hobab, a relative of the wife of Moses. Heber had moved away from the rest of his tribe, and Heber had pitched his tent by the oak of Zaanannim, near Kedesh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Heber, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not like some of my people, so I moved north; or
- I wanted to find new land to live in with Jael.

Sisera learns Barak, son of Abinoam, went up to Mount Tabor. Sisera calls for all of his 900 iron chariots and all of his warriors. Sisera marches with all of his chariots and warriors from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Sisera, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Who is this man called Barak? Does he really think he can defeat me? Ha! I will prove him wrong; or
- I love to show off the strength of my chariots and warriors. We will crush these silly Israelites.

Then Deborah says to Barak, "Get ready! This is the day Yahweh will give you victory over Sisera, because Yahweh marches ahead of you." So Barak leads his 10,000 warriors down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle.

When Barak attacks, Yahweh makes Sisera and all his chariots and warriors feel panic. Sisera jumps down from his chariot and escapes on foot. Barak chases the chariots and the enemy army all the way to Harosheth Haggoyim, where he kills all of Sisera's warriors. Barak does not leave a single person in Sisera's army alive.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Sisera's army, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Israelites surprised us from the mountain! I am scared! or
- I cannot escape the Israelites! How could they defeat our chariots?

Ask the person who plays Barak's men, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Our God is so strong! He has saved us! or
- Now the evil Canaanites will never be cruel to us again!

Barak chases the chariots and the Canaanite army. Sisera runs to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Heber's family had made an alliance, or an agreement of peace, with Jabin, king of Hazor. Jael meets Sisera outside her tent. Jael says to Sisera, "Come into my tent, sir. Come in, and do not be afraid." Sisera goes into Jael's tent, and Jael covers him with a blanket.

Sisera says, "Please give me some water, I am thirsty." So Jael opens a leather bag of milk and gives Sisera some milk to drink. Jael covers Sisera again with the blanket. Sisera tells Jael, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks if there is anyone here, say no."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Sisera, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have never been defeated like this before. I feel so ashamed; or
- I have lost everything. Maybe Heber and his wife will help me get back to Jabin; or
- I can rest now that my friend's wife helps me.

Sisera falls asleep because he is exhausted. Jael quietly sneaks up to him. Jael holds a hammer and a tent stake in her hand. Jael hammers the tent peg through the side of Sisera's head and into the ground. Sisera dies.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jael, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have no part in this agreement my husband made with King Jabin. Sisera was a cruel man and he deserves to die; or
- Now we can live in peace with the Israelites.

Barak searches for Sisera near where Jael lives. Jael meets Barak outside her tent, and Jael says, "Come, and I will show you the man you look for." Barak follows Jael into the tent. There, Sisera lies dead with the tent peg through the side of his head.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Barak, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Wow, everything Yahweh said has come true, and a woman did get the honor. Now I know for sure that it was Yahweh who won the battle; or
- I cannot believe Sisera is dead. I thought Sisera had escaped and we would never catch him; or
- I am so relieved we won the battle today. Maybe life will get easier now for the Israelites; or
- I fought so hard, but a woman killed Sisera instead of me. I do not have any reward for my hard work.

So on that day, God defeated Jabin the king of Canaan. The hand of the Israelites pressed against Jabin the king of Canaan very strongly until the Israelites destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 4:11–24 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

This passage uses the names of several locations for the action of the story.

Stop here and review the map of Israel in the time of Deborah. Pause this audio here.

Heber had set up his **tent** under a big tree in Zaanannim. A tent is a temporary structure that people made of animal skin or heavy cloth. A tent was easy to move from place to place.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word you will use for **tent**. Look at a photo of a tent. Pause this audio here.

Heber and Jabin had agreed to have **peace** with each other, or to have a relationship without war. This peace was probably a formal agreement, or treaty, between the two groups.

Stop here and discuss how you will describe the peace between Heber and Jabin, and remember that peace is in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

This story uses the personal name for God, **Yahweh**. Use the same term for Yahweh as you have in other passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

This story uses **Israelites** as the name for God's people. Use the same term for Israelites as you have in other passages, and remember that Israelites is in the Master Glossary.

Sisera commanded an army of 900 **iron chariots**. Use the same phrase for iron chariots that you used in earlier passages.

Jael repeats two times her invitation to Sisera, when she tells him to turn aside, or come into, her tent. Jael addresses Sisera with a term of respect like **lord**, master, or sir. If you have already translated lord, master, or sir as a title of respect, you may use that same word. Remember that lord as a title of respect is in the Master Glossary.

The author tells us that God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan. This is the general term for **God**, who is Yahweh. Use the same term for God as you have in other passages, and remember that God is in the Master Glossary.

You will recall from the previous passage that **Jabin** was probably a royal title unique to the Canaanites. It was probably not the king's name. Use the same words to translate king and Jabin as you did previously.

The **Canaanites** oppressed the Israelites. The Canaanites are the people of the land of **Canaan**. Use the same word or phrase for Canaanites as you used in previous passages. Remember that Canaan is in the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 4:11–24

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (18541070 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (14017450 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 5:1–11a

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 5:1–11 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:1–11 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This song is a Hebrew poem. We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Module 1" before you continue with "Step 2: Setting the Stage."

Stop here, if needed, and review the translation decisions your team has made regarding the translation of poetry. Pause this audio here.

Now that Yahweh has caused the Israelites to defeat the Canaanites, the Israelites rejoice! Deborah and Barak sing a song to celebrate the victory. People in this time often created and sang songs to celebrate important events so that people would remember the event whenever they sang the song. Israelites would also sing songs to praise Yahweh for what he had done. In this song, Deborah and Barak tell parts of the story of how the Israelites defeated the Canaanites. Deborah and Barak focus on what Yahweh has done and talk about the special relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Deborah and Barak also bless people who did help fight the Canaanites and curse those who did not. This passage is the first part of the song.

Stop here and tell a story about a time when someone wrote a song to celebrate a very good thing that happened to them or to their community. Who did the person sing the song to? How is a celebration song different from other songs? Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak use beautiful, poetic language. The way they talk about some things in their time may be different than how we talk about those things today. So sometimes, the words in different translations are a little different, but the overall meaning is usually the same.

Stop here and talk about some songs in your culture that people created a long time ago. Discuss what parts of the language in the song are different from how you talk or sing today. Discuss what parts are difficult to understand. How do you still know what the song means? Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak first sing about how leaders willingly chose to lead, and how men chose to fight, to protect Israel. Some translations begin the song with, "Men's hair is long and the wind blows through it." Sometimes, men would grow their hair long to show that the men were devoted to doing what Yahweh wants. Those men were often warriors who led other men into battle. Here, Yahweh wanted the Israelites to fight, so Deborah probably says this to talk about when Israel's leaders took charge or led the people to gather. In this time, Israel did not have a permanent army, so whenever the Israelites needed to fight, the men had to volunteer or willingly choose to fight. Deborah urges the Israelites to praise Yahweh because the leaders and men were willing to gather together and fight. It is like a gift from Yahweh that the men did this!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What are some things people do in your culture to show that they are dedicated or devoted to doing something well? How do your leaders show that they will be good leaders? Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak encourage the Israelites to praise Yahweh, and Yahweh deserves that praise. Deborah and Barak sing that even the kings and rulers of the Canaanites should listen. The whole world should pay attention to the way the Israelites joyfully worship Yahweh—even Israel's enemies!

Deborah and Barak describe what it is like when Yahweh comes to help Israel. Deborah describes how amazing and terrifying that is. Deborah probably says this to remind the Israelites of when Yahweh helped them many years ago. While the Israelites traveled to the Promised Land, Yahweh came to make a solemn promise with them at Mount Sinai. The ground shook and rain fell from the storm clouds when Yahweh spoke to the Israelites' leader, Moses. In that time, people understood that violent earthquakes and the sound of rainstorms showed that God was involved in the thing that happened. Yahweh is powerful. Yahweh controls the ground, sky, and weather, and Yahweh has shown that he is strong enough to defeat the Israelites' enemies. Yahweh protected the Israelites and brought them into the Promised Land through the lands of Seir and Edom. These are two names for a similar area. This area was between Mount Sinai and the Promised Land, so the Israelites had to pass through those areas.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that has Edom, Seir, Israel, and Mount Sinai on it. Pause this audio here.

But while Israel was in close relationship with Yahweh at Sinai, the Israelites later disobeyed Yahweh, so other nations attacked Israel in the Promised Land and conquered them. Deborah and Barak describe what it was like in Israel when the Canaanites ruled. Deborah and Barak mention Shamgar, the previous judge in Israel. Though Shamgar did stop an attack, he did not free Israel from the Canaanites. During Shamgar's life, and during Jael's life, before she killed Sisera, the land was not safe. The Canaanites and their allies had attacked and stopped people so that they could not travel and trade throughout Israel. People had left the good main roads because they were scared of attacks or because the Canaanites would make the Israelites pay the Canaanites money to use the roads. Instead, people would take paths that made many tight turns through mountains, or they would travel through other difficult places. Groups of enemy soldiers probably attacked the Israelites in small villages or on farmlands, so those Israelites fled to the cities. So the small villages are now empty. Some translations say the villagers or warriors would not fight. It was dangerous in Israel!

However, this changes when Deborah calls the people together to fight. Yahweh shows that Yahweh helps the Israelites when he chooses Deborah to lead. Deborah protects the people like a mother takes care of her children. In that time, people would sometimes call prophets who were men, "father," and prophets who were women, "mother," to show that they respected the prophets and would listen to them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What are some respectful names for leaders, especially religious leaders, in your culture? Pause this audio here.

The reason the Israelites were in danger and needed protection is because they chose to follow new gods. Some translations say instead that God chose new leaders, but Deborah probably says that the Israelites chose new gods to describe what causes the Israelites' problems. The Israelites do not serve Yahweh, and so these bad things happen, just like Yahweh said. War is near—people fight near the Israelites, even at the gates of the Israelite cities. In this time, cities often had walls to protect the people and a gate in the wall for people to enter through.

However, it is like there were no spears or shields in Israel, since none of the many Israelite men were ready with weapons to fight. Soldiers would use a shield to protect themselves and a spear to attack. Deborah and Barak say that no one was ready to protect themselves or others! The Israelites really needed Yahweh to protect them!

Stop here and look at a picture of a shield and a spear as a group. Pause this audio here.

And Yahweh did protect the Israelites and give the Israelites courage to fight! Again, Deborah and Barak sing that everyone should praise Yahweh because the leaders of Israel volunteered to fight. Yahweh has caused the people to be willing to fight together. The people are united as the people respond like their leaders do.

Deborah and Barak sing that everyone, rich and poor, should praise Yahweh. Rich people would ride on white donkeys. The Israelites valued white things, so they would want to find donkeys who had white patches and spots. Rich people would lay down a beautiful piece of cloth on the donkey's back to sit on. The common people simply walked to do their daily tasks. Deborah and Barak tell everyone, however they travel and however rich they are, that they should not just continue on as if nothing has happened! Everyone should stop and listen to the good news!

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a white donkey and a saddle blanket. Pause this audio here.

People talk about what has happened at the places where people get water, like a well or a spring. People would often gather at these places to share news. Everyone needed to go get water for themselves or for their animals to drink, so this is the perfect spot to explain and celebrate both the great works of Yahweh and those of his people who follow him. It is not clear who sings or speaks at the watering hole. Whoever these people were, they all sang and celebrated!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Where are some places in your area where most everyone goes to? Where are places you go to hear news?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

Stop here and review as a group: We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Modules 2 & 3" before you continue with "Step 3: Defining the Scenes." Pause this audio here.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Deborah and Barak sing a song. As they sing, Deborah and Barak tell the people to praise Yahweh for the Israelite men who have volunteered to fight.

In the second scene: Deborah and Barak tell even the kings of other nations to listen to what Yahweh has done.

In the third scene: Deborah and Barak sing about Yahweh's power. Deborah and Barak describe what happened to the ground and sky when Yahweh came near the Israelites to help and speak to them.

In the fourth scene: Deborah and Barak sing about how dangerous it has been in Israel since the people have started to worship other gods. That is why Yahweh chose Deborah to lead!

In the fifth scene: Again, Deborah and Barak rejoice that the people have volunteered, especially the leaders. Deborah and Barak tell the Israelites to praise Yahweh. Again, Deborah and Barak sing that everyone should hear what Yahweh has done.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah
- Barak, son of Abinoam
- All the Israelite people, rich or common, including the leaders and the men who fought the Canaanites
- Yahweh, the God of Israel
- The Canaanite kings and rulers
- Shamgar, son of Anath
- Jael
- Other gods
- And the people who sing at the watering places

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

After he tells the story of the Israelites' victory, the storyteller then includes the song Deborah and Barak sing. Deborah and Barak sing in front of a group of Israelites. The men who fought the Canaanites are probably still gathered together, and other Israelites may have joined these men to celebrate. Deborah probably picked the words to the song, since she talks about things that she does in the song. Then Barak sang with Deborah. The Israelites who listen know what has just happened since everyone would have shared the good news! So Deborah and Barak do not explain who the characters in the song are or describe all of the characters' actions in the order they happened. Sometimes, Deborah and Barak encourage or instruct the people to praise Yahweh, to listen and reflect, and to curse or bless people. Others may have joined and sang too!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of events or celebrations in your culture when people sing songs together. How does everyone know when to sing together? How do you encourage others to sing with you? Pause this audio here.

This song has 11 or 12 sections, depending on the translation. Poets create a section in a song or poem when they group several lines and parallel phrases together to create larger sections. This section has five smaller sections inside it. In each smaller section, Deborah will talk about a different subject or sometimes speak to a different group or person. Just like in many other Hebrew poems, Deborah uses parallel or companion phrases to create this song. Each scene has three sets of parallel or companion phrases where Deborah and Barak say the same thing but with different pairs of words. Deborah also uses word pairs throughout this song as well.

Stop here and review as a group: If your team has completed the introduction to poetry, remind one another of the special ways that poets use language. What are the most common ways that poets use language in Hebrew poems? Pause this audio here.

The first scene has one section, where Deborah and Barak sing to the Israelites. Deborah and Barak sing a refrain, or a section that they will repeat later. Deborah and Barak tell the Israelites to praise Yahweh because of the men who volunteered to fight.

Then in the second scene and section, Deborah and Barak sing to kings and rulers and tell them to listen to what Yahweh has done. Deborah uses parallel or companion phrases throughout this song. This means Deborah will say a thing in one line, and then in the next line or couple lines, Deborah develops, or adds to, the idea in

some way. See how Deborah tells the kings to listen, then she tells the rulers to give ear, which means pay attention! In this way, Deborah says two things that mean a similar thing.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will translate the creative language that Deborah uses to tell everyone, even enemy kings, to listen. Pause this audio here.

The kings of the various people groups in Canaan are not actually there to hear Deborah, but Deborah and Barak say that everyone, even the kings of other nations, should hear what Yahweh has done. Deborah and Barak sing three times, "I will sing to Yahweh," to show how certainly they will praise Yahweh, just like they encourage the people to do. In these first two sections, Deborah and Barak show what their song is about: how Yahweh and his people responded to the danger that Israel was in.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you sing a song, what parts of the song do you repeat? Why do you do this? How does this help you know what a song is about? Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Deborah and Barak then sing to Yahweh in a new section, just like they said they would. Deborah and Barak sing, "This is what it was like when you, Yahweh, came to speak to the Israelites!" Then Deborah and Barak sing both to Yahweh and to the people. Deborah and Barak describe how powerful Yahweh is as a way to praise Yahweh and to remind the people what their God is like.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of some songs that you sing for, or to, other people. How do you show who you sing to in your song? What are some songs that you may sing to multiple people? How do you show who you sing to? In your culture, would a person ever also sing to other people while they sing to God? Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak sing that Yahweh went out from the mountain of Seir and marched from the land of Edom. Here is a word pair: Seir and Edom! Remember, when people wrote songs or poems, those people would use pairs of words that go together. These two words go together because the mountain of Seir is in the region or land of Edom.

Yahweh did not literally walk down from those places, but Yahweh was with the Israelites when they walked through those places. However, when Yahweh came to speak to Moses, the earth or the ground actually shook! Lots of rain fell from the heavens, or the sky, as if someone poured water down from the sky. Look at the parallel phrases Deborah uses here. Deborah says in the first line that the ground shook, and then in the next line, she says the mountains shook. Deborah says the heavens poured down water, then clouds poured down water. Deborah repeats this to remind everyone how amazed and terrified people felt!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how would you describe a large storm, where lots of rain falls to the ground? Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak repeat Yahweh's name, and call Yahweh the one of Sinai, because Sinai is where Yahweh made his special promise with the Israelites. Deborah and Barak also emphasize that Yahweh is Israel's God, whom the Israelites should worship.

In the fourth scene, in a new section, Deborah and Barak sing about what life was like in the days of Shamgar and Jael, or when Shamgar and Jael lived. In that time, it was like the highways or the good wide roads disappeared, because no one used them. Deborah and Barak say there were no villages in Israel. Some versions say there were no warriors in Israel. Deborah and Barak do not mean that there literally were not any, but they say this to emphasize how hard it was to find a village with people or warriors who defended their people. Both the people from the villages and the warriors hid from the Canaanites, so it is like there were not any villages or warriors!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How would you emphasize that a thing is gone or is very, very hard to find? Pause this audio here.

This is why Deborah arises, which means that God chose Deborah to lead. Twice Deborah says that she arises, because this was an important time! This is when things began to change in Israel! Deborah says she is a mother in Israel. While Deborah may have had children in her family, Deborah talks here about the way she cares for and protects the Israelites like a mother protects her children.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of someone you know who helps and protects people, like Deborah does. How would you describe the way that person does this? Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak then sing that the war was at the Israelites' gates. Deborah and Barak mean that the Canaanite army was in Israel, at the gates of the Israelite cities, and the Canaanites were ready to fight. But Deborah and Barak say that no one could see shields or spears in the Israelites' hands. This does not necessarily mean people literally did not have these weapons, but it does mean that at that time, none of the 40,000 men of Israel used any kind of weapon to protect the people. Forty thousand is perhaps Deborah's guess at how many Israelite men are able to fight but who do not defend their people during this time.

In the fifth scene, Deborah and Barak repeat a similar refrain to the one they began the song with. Again, they rejoice that people volunteered to fight and lead when Deborah and Barak began to gather an army. Deborah says her heart is with the commanders, who are military leaders. People would use the word heart for the place where a person's thoughts, feelings, and decisions happen. So Deborah says she feels good things for those people—she is thankful for those people and what they do! Again, Deborah and Barak sing to the people who listen, and they tell the people to praise Yahweh for the commanders' willingness to fight and lead.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how do you talk about the place in the body where a person thinks, feels, and makes decisions? Think of someone who you are thankful for. How would you describe the way you feel about that person? Pause this audio here.

Again, just like at the beginning, Deborah and Barak call people to listen, in a new section. They speak to the rich people, who can afford to ride on donkeys, and to the normal people, who must walk as a way to travel. Deborah and Barak mean that everyone should listen to the voices of the people at the watering places who sing about Yahweh's victories. Yahweh has done good and right things. Yahweh has won many victories and has helped people to win victories too!

The last line of this section goes with the next section, so we will discuss that line with the next passage.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah
- Barak, son of Abinoam
- All the Israelite people, rich or common, including the leaders and the men who fought the Canaanites
- Yahweh, the God of Israel
- The Canaanite kings and rulers
- Shamgar, son of Anath
- Jael
- Other gods
- And the people who sing at the watering places

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

On that same day, after the battle, Deborah sang this song with Barak son of Abinoam:

"The leaders of Israel chose to lead
and the people were ready to go and fight.
So praise Yahweh!

Listen to me, you kings. Rulers of the people, pay attention.

I will sing. I will sing to Yahweh.

I will play music and sing to Yahweh, the God of Israel."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Deborah and Barak, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so joyful—our God is powerful! He has saved us! I want to sing and tell everyone what Yahweh has done! or
- When life is hard, or many years have passed since this victory, it may be hard to remember all the things that have happened. I will write a song that people can continue to sing to remember that our God cares for and protects us; or
- We could not have defeated the Canaanites without God. God chose us to lead, he gave the people courage, and he caused us to defeat the Canaanites. I am so thankful for what God has done!

Deborah and Barak then sang:

"O Yahweh, when you came down from Mount Seir

When you walked out of the land of Edom

The earth shook

A great rain fell from the skies. The clouds poured out their water.

The mountains trembled for you, Yahweh, who showed yourself to us at Mount Sinai.

They trembled in the presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I caused the ground to shake and the rain to fall. I want my people to see that I am more powerful than the things that can hurt or attack them. I will protect them like I promised. I also want my people to remember not to turn to other gods. If they do, I will punish them again; or
- The Israelites need to remember that I chose the Israelites to be my people. I want to be in close relationship with the Israelites, and I told them how they can keep this close relationship when I spoke to them at Mount Sinai; or
- I am pleased when my people sing to me and honor me.

Deborah and Barak continued to sing:

"When Shamgar son of Anath was the judge of Israel, and when Jael was alive,

It was too dangerous to travel on the highways. Travelers stayed on the small paths.

There were no people in the villages of Israel.

They were empty until I, Deborah, became their leader.

I took command to defend Israel like a mother defends her children.

The people had chosen other gods, and so the enemy soldiers came to our city gates.

None of the forty thousand warriors of Israel had a shield or a spear.

I rejoice with my heart for the leaders in Israel

And for the people who were willing to fight,

Praise Yahweh!"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite leaders, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have seen how scared people have been in Israel. No one would fight! I was scared of our enemies too, but when Barak told us to gather to fight, I knew I needed to volunteer. I think God helped me to be brave! or
- People in my community respect me. I knew that if I volunteered to fight, then other men would follow my example and do the same; or
- I am honored that Deborah and Barak included me in their song. I am glad I chose to join the other men to fight.

Then Deborah and Barak sang,

"You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on beautiful saddle blankets, think about this.

You who walk the paths, think about the songs of the singers at the watering holes.

They sing about how Yahweh defeated his enemies.

Yes, they sing of how Yahweh's people in Israel have defeated their enemies."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking when you hear this song?" The person might answer things like:

- For so long, we have been afraid of the Canaanites. Now we will be able to travel along the roads again, and gather freely at watering holes like we used to! or
- I was far away from everything that has happened, and I do not know what everyone is talking about! or
- I am amazed at what I hear. We have not talked about Yahweh in a long time, since we have worshipped other gods. Now I see that Yahweh is more powerful than those other gods, and I want to hear more about Yahweh!

Ask the person who plays the people who sing at the watering places, "What are you feeling or thinking when you hear this song?" The person might answer things like:

- I am amazed at all of the things that have happened! I want to tell everyone so I will go sing in the places where people gather; or
- I know Yahweh is the one who has saved us, and I want everyone else to know that too; or
- We should celebrate this victory! This is a big event, and we should take time to rejoice and talk about all of the things that have happened.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Throughout her song, Deborah uses several words to talk about people who lead.

As she begins, Deborah uses a phrase that describes people who let their hair grow long to show they have dedicated themselves to do what Yahweh asks. In this case, Yahweh wants these people to lead, so we understand this phrase to mean **Israelite leaders**, perhaps leaders of tribes and family groups. Use the same word or phrase for Israel and for leaders as you used in previous passages. Israel is in the Master Glossary.

When Deborah calls other leaders to listen, she uses two more words. Deborah says, "**kings**," who are people who rule over a city or territory, like a region or a country. People often use this word for the leaders of various nations around Israel. For more information on kings, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for kings as you used in previous passages.

Deborah also says the word "**rulers**," or "princes," which people often use for people who rule and have authority, but are not the king or top ruler in the land. Use the same word or phrase for rulers as you used in previous passages.

Later in the song, Deborah praises the **commanders**, or military leaders, who willingly chose to lead the army. Use the same word or phrase for commanders as you used in previous passages.

Deborah urges the people who listen to her song to **bless** or praise Yahweh. To bless Yahweh means to worship Yahweh and thank him for his goodness and his blessings. Many translations say to **praise** Yahweh, since it means a similar thing. When you praise God, you speak out loud good things about God and to God, because you recognize that God is good and awesome and that God deserves great honor. You thank God for the good things he has done and blessings he will give. Deborah also says she will praise Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **praise** or **bless**. Look up praise and bless in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The name **Yahweh** was a very personal name for God that showed the close relationship that Yahweh had with the people of Israel. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

Deborah emphasizes this close relationship when she says, "Yahweh, the **God** of Israel." This word for God is a general word for God. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for God as you used in previous passages.

When Yahweh comes, rain comes down, or drops from the **heavens**. Here, heaven means the visible sky: the place where birds fly, where we can see clouds, and where we can see stars at night. You will sometimes hear "heaven" in translations, and sometimes you will hear a word that sounds like more than one heaven: "heavens." But this means the same thing. It does not mean that there is more than one heaven.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **heavens**. Look up heaven in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Deborah also sings about how the earth shakes, which means an earthquake. An earthquake is when huge groups of rocks under the ground shift and cause the ground to shake.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for earthquake, or the way the ground shakes. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Deborah says that the people left the good large roads and instead traveled on narrow roads that had sharp turns. These smaller roads may have gone through areas where it was hard for people to walk, such as mountains or valleys.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for these two kinds of roads. Pause this audio here.

Deborah says that the **villagers** in Israel would not fight. Deborah means the people who lived in the small towns that were out in the country. Villages usually did not have a wall around them.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will describe the villagers, or the people who lived in villages, or small towns in the countryside of Israel. Pause this audio here.

Deborah says no one had a **shield** or a **spear** in Israel. A shield is a broad piece of wood, metal, or leather on a wooden framework that a soldier would carry to protect himself from an enemy's weapons. One side would have straps or a handle so the soldier can carry it. A spear is a long stick with a pointed tip. People would often

make this pointed tip out of metal. Soldiers would use this weapon to stab their enemies or to throw at their enemies.

Stop here and look at a picture of a shield and spear as a group again as needed. Discuss what words or phrases you will use for **shield** and **spear**. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same words that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

When the people chose to worship new or different **gods** than Yahweh, then there were battles in their land, even close to their homes. These are the fake or false gods that other nations worship. Yahweh has told the Israelites not to worship these gods. For more information on gods, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for gods as you used in previous passages.

Deborah says her **heart** is with the military leaders. The heart is a muscle inside our body that makes our blood flow, but in the Bible people use the word heart for the place where a person's thoughts, feelings, and decisions happen. In the language of the Old Testament, the word for "heart" is the same as the word for "mind."

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **heart**. Look up heart in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Deborah sings to the rich people who ride on white **donkeys**. Donkeys were important animals who carried heavy loads and pulled farming equipment. The Israelites valued donkeys with white patches and spots. To ride a donkey, people would put a **saddle blanket**, or a piece of cloth, on the donkey's back to sit on. Rich people would lay down a beautiful piece of cloth on the donkey's back to sit on.

Stop here and look at a picture of a donkey and a saddle blanket as a group again, as needed. For more information about donkey, see the Master Glossary. Discuss what words or phrases you will use for saddle blanket. Use the same word or phrase for donkey as you have used in previous passages. Pause this audio here.

Everyone should listen to the singers at the **watering holes**. This is a general word for the place where people get fresh water to drink, cook, and wash with. A watering hole can be a spring, a well, or a river.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for a **watering hole**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The people at the watering holes sing about Yahweh's **righteous** victories. To be righteous means to behave in the right way. God is righteous, because everything that God does is right and good. The people also sing about the righteous things that God's people do. These righteous things are the things Yahweh wants and has told the people to do. Some translations just say "Yahweh's victories" or "the people's victories."

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **righteous**. Look up righteous in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 5:1–11a

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (19902384 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (23781970 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 5:11b–18

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 5:11–18 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:11–18 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:11-18 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This song is a Hebrew poem. We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Module 1" before you continue with "Step 2: Setting the Stage."

Stop here, if needed, and review the translation decisions your team has made regarding the translation of poetry. Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak continue to sing and celebrate the Israelite victory. In this part of the song, they celebrate the people and tribes who helped fight for Israel and criticize those who did not.

At the end of the last section, Deborah and Barak sang that war, or enemies ready to attack, were at the Israelites' gates. Then Deborah and Barak urged the people to praise Yahweh. Now, in this section, Deborah and Barak sing that Yahweh's people march down to the gates to defend themselves. Sometimes, cities were built on the top of a hill, so the walls and the gate would be at the lowest part of the city.

At this point in the song, someone calls out to Deborah and Barak and tells them to wake up or get ready! Deborah and Barak may sing these words themselves as they repeat the words of the Israelites who went down to the gates. Remember that Barak had called the Israelites to gather. When the people gather, they show with this response that they are ready for Deborah and Barak to lead them. The Israelites confidently look forward to Deborah's victory song and Barak capturing the enemy.

Then Deborah and Barak sing about how Yahweh's people, the ones who gathered at the gates, marched down to the valley of Jezreel, where the people fought the battle. These men are the remnant, or the survivors, whom the Canaanites did not kill when they attacked Israel before. Some translations say that these men are the nobles, or the leaders, who remain. Since Deborah and Barak talk about the whole group of Israelites who fought, Deborah and Barak probably sing that these men marched to the nobles. These nobles may have been the Israelite leaders, or the nobles could be the Canaanite leaders that the Israelites will fight. Either way, the people of Israel go to Deborah so that they can fight the Canaanite mighty warriors.

Now Deborah and Barak sing about which tribes and groups of Israelites came to fight. First they sing about the men from the tribe of Ephraim. The Ephraimites live in the land that used to belong to the Amalekites, another group of Canaanites. Deborah lived in Ephraim, so the Ephraimites probably heard Deborah's instructions to gather first. The men from the tribe of Benjamin also came. These men marched in front of the Ephraimites down into the battle.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the territory of the Benjamites and the Ephraimites. Pause this audio here.

Commanders, or military leaders, also led their men from Machir. Machir is the name of Manasseh's son, so people used this name for the half of the tribe of Manassites who lived on the west side of the Jordan River. Leaders also came from the tribe of Zebulun with the men they led. These leaders carried a special staff or walking stick so everyone could see that they were the leaders. These leaders from Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, and Zebulun came to follow Barak, who led the Israelites to fight the Canaanites.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the territory of the people of Manasseh on the west side of the Jordan River, as well as the territory of the people of Zebulun. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a picture of a commander's staff as a group. In your culture, what are some things that leaders wear or carry so that people can easily see that they are the leader? Why do they carry these items? Pause this audio here.

The tribe of Issachar's princes, or leaders, also came to Deborah and Barak to follow Barak's command. The people of Issachar were so eager to follow Barak that they marched right behind Barak when the Israelites began to fight the Canaanites!

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the territory of the tribe of Issachar. Pause this audio here.

However, not all the tribes of Israel came to fight. The tribes Deborah and Barak have sung about so far have all been close to the battlefield and to where the Canaanites attacked. However, the next few tribes Deborah and Barak sing about are farther away or across a major river. The clans or family groups of Reubenites heard Barak's call to gather, and they discussed whether they should come fight. However, they decided to stay safely at home and in comfort with their flocks of sheep. People often kept their sheep in pens, or an area with fences, near their houses for the night. The Reubenites would rather hear the shepherds whistle for their flocks to return than to hear the noises of battle.

Deborah and Barak sing about Gilead, which is a region in Israel on the east side of the Jordan River. This region includes the land of the tribe of Gad and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh. People would sometimes use the word "Gilead" to refer to both of those tribes. Neither the tribe of Gad nor the other half tribe of Manasseh crossed the Jordan River to help in the battle.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the territory of the tribe of Reuben as well as the region of Gilead on the east side of the Jordan River. See how the tribe of Gad and the other half tribe of Manasseh live in the region of Gilead. Pause this audio here.

The people of the tribe of Dan stay with the ships. At this time the tribe of Dan probably does not have control over the land they were supposed to live in. If the people of the tribe of Dan worked with ships, they probably lived on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The tribe of Asher's territory was on the coastline north of the Kishon River, not all that far from the battlefield. But Asher, too, had settled down to work on ships and chose not to leave their harbors, which are safe places to keep their ships.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the territory of the tribe of Asher. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a picture of a harbor and a ship as a group. Pause this audio here.

However, the people from the tribe of Zebulun were not afraid to die in battle. Another tribe, Naphtali, was also willing to fight in the battle, so they also sent their men to fight on the battlefield. Some translations say they fought on the terraced fields. People grew crops on the sides of hills or mountains. The people planted on terraces, or flat platforms of soil which they cut or built into the slope. These terraces can look like really wide stairs on a slope of the hill. Since the Israelites fought the Canaanites in a valley, the battlefield may have been on terraced fields.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the territory of the people of Naphtali. Also look at a photo of terraced fields. Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak do not sing about all the tribes, so we are not sure what the other tribes did at this time. Though the tribes of Israel come from the same family, they are not united like one nation or people group at this time.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Discuss a time when your people fought a battle or a war. Who was supposed to fight? What were some other ways that people should or did help the soldiers who fought? What did people think about other people who did not help?

*Defining the Scenes**Defining the Scenes*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:11–18 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

Stop here and review as a group: We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Modules 2 & 3" before you continue with "Step 3: Defining the Scenes." Pause this audio here.

This passage has two scenes.

In the first scene: Deborah and Barak sing about how the Israelites gathered together. The people declared that they were ready to follow Deborah and Barak to fight against the Canaanites' mighty warriors.

In the second scene: Deborah and Barak sing about all the tribes who came to help and the tribes who did not come to help.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah
- Barak, son of Abinoam
- The Israelites, who are Yahweh's people
- Yahweh
- The Canaanite soldiers
- The men from Ephraim
- The men from Benjamin
- The commanders and men from Machir, or the half-tribe of Manasseh
- The leaders and men from Zebulun
- The leaders and men from Issachar
- The clans of Reuben
- The people of Gilead, or the tribe of Gad and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh
- The people of Dan
- The people of Asher
- And the men from Naphtali

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember, Deborah organizes her song into sections and gives each section a different subject. This passage has two sections. The first section has the people's call to Deborah and Barak. In the second section, Deborah and Barak sing about the tribes' different responses. Deborah also continues to use parallel or companion phrases. Deborah does this when she says something in one line, and then in the next line or couple lines, she develops, or adds to, the idea in some way.

The first scene in this passage begins with the end of verse 11. Deborah sings of how the Israelites gathered together. Deborah calls these people the people of Yahweh to show that they follow Yahweh when they follow the leaders Yahweh picked: Deborah and Barak. The people show that they are ready to follow when they shout

encouragement to their leaders, which Deborah repeats. The people tell Deborah and Barak to wake up and arise, or to get up! Deborah and Barak were not actually asleep, but the people tell their leaders to get ready because the people are here and ready too! Notice how the people repeat their call to Deborah in two lines to show how enthusiastic and determined the people are. In the second line, the people call to the "son of Abinoam." Abinoam is Barak's father, so this is another way to say Barak.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when you were part of a group of people who gathered together for a specific task, game, or event. How did you show the leaders of the group that you were ready to follow the leaders? How did you show that you were confident that the event would go well? Pause this audio here.

The second scene begins the second section. Deborah and Barak repeat that the people gathered, though this time they say to "me." Since Deborah probably wrote this song, and she was with Barak when the people gathered to fight, this probably refers to Deborah.

Now Deborah and Barak will sing about where the people of Yahweh came from. Sometimes, people talked about the people in the tribes by the name of the tribe. So rather than say that the people of a tribe came, Deborah says just that "Ephraim" or "Benjamin" came. And since in this time just the men would fight, Deborah probably refers to the men of a tribe. Pay attention to the way Deborah pairs together tribes when she describes their actions. These tribes often lived near each other or acted in a similar way.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how would you refer to the people from a certain people group or tribe? Discuss how you want to refer to each of these tribes. Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak sing about the Ephraimites first. Deborah says that the Ephraimites' roots were in Amalek. Sometimes, people use the word root to talk about where they live, just like a tree lives where its roots are. So the Ephraimites' roots, or the land where they live, used to be the Amalekites' land.

Deborah sings about the people, probably both soldiers and their leaders, that came from Benjamin, Machir, Zebulun, and Issachar. Notice how Deborah says that captains came from Machir, but then she says that the people who carry commanders' staffs came from Zebulun. A commander carries a commander's staff, so this is just another creative way to say commander. Both captains and commanders are military leaders.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, discuss ways you can use a title beside a person's name to refer to or talk about that person in your group. Think about what roles that person may have, or things they do, such as "the mother of this child," or "the person who makes good food," or even, "the one who wears a green shirt!" When might you refer to someone like this in your songs, poems, or even normal life situations? Pause this audio here.

Deborah uses a parallel phrase to talk about how dedicated the leaders and soldiers of Issachar were. Deborah says that the princes of Issachar were with Deborah. This means that the princes came to Deborah in answer to her command to gather. But this also means that the leaders of Issachar supported Deborah, and that when Deborah told them to follow Barak into the battle, they did. Deborah emphasizes the way Issachar's leaders dedicated themselves when she repeats, "Yes, they were with Barak." Some translations even say that the people of Issachar "rushed at Barak's heels." This is another way to say that the men of Issachar were right behind Barak when they rushed to the battle!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of someone you know who is very dedicated or committed to a task or a job. How would you describe that person? How would you describe that person if you were going to sing a special song about them? Pause this audio here.

Next, Deborah and Barak sing about the tribes who did not come to help fight. When Deborah and Barak sing about the tribe of Reuben, they sing a refrain, or a section that they will repeat later. Notice how Deborah says, "the divisions, separate groups, or clans of Reuben." This tribe was not united! She says that people of Reuben searched their hearts a lot. People would use the word heart for the place where a person's thoughts, feelings, and decisions happen. To search your heart means to think hard and try to make a decision. The clan of Reuben could not decide. They did not know if they should go to Deborah and Barak or not.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how would you talk about the way that someone thinks long and hard about a decision? Pause this audio here.

Eventually the Reubenites decided to stay home with the sheep. Or perhaps the Reubenites never decided and just stayed home and continued to think about it! Deborah asks the Reubenites why they did this. The Reubenites are not actually there where they can listen, and Deborah does not expect the Reubenites to answer. Deborah says this to show her disappointment and anger at how the people of Reuben behaved. Deborah again sings the refrain: "In the districts of Reuben, there was much searching of heart." Here, Deborah criticizes or maybe even taunts the Reubenites when she repeats this refrain. Though the Reubenites thought for a long time, they did not come to a wise decision!

See how Deborah uses parallel phrases to group together the tribes who all live by water. The Reubenites and the tribes who live in the region of Gilead are on the east side of the Jordan River. Asher and Dan both live to the west of the Jordan River, on the coast of the sea. Deborah also asks why the people of Dan chose to stay with the ships instead of to come help. Again, Deborah does not expect an answer to this question. Instead, Deborah asks the question to show that this was not what Dan should have done. Deborah repeats that Asher remains on the coast and stays by his coves. Deborah talks about each tribe as if they are one person, but she means all the men of that tribe. Deborah emphasizes that these tribes stayed in safe places far away from the battle!

To show the contrast between the tribes who did come and those who did not, Deborah ends this section with a parallel phrase that emphasizes how the people of Zebulun and Naphtali were courageous. Deborah says the people of Zebulun and Naphtali despised or hated their lives, even to death. This means that these men decided that to save the people of Israel was more important than their lives. So the men of Zebulun and Naphtali risked their lives and fought, even though they knew that the Canaanites might kill them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group. Describe someone who bravely went into a dangerous situation to save or help someone else. How would you describe that person if you wanted to sing a special song about them? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:11–18 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has two scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah
- Barak, son of Abinoam
- The Israelites, who are Yahweh's people
- Yahweh
- The Canaanite soldiers
- The men from Ephraim
- The men from Benjamin
- The commanders and men from Machir, or the half-tribe of Manasseh
- The leaders and men from Zebulun
- The leaders and men from Issachar
- The clans of Reuben
- The people of Gilead, or the tribe of Gad and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh
- The people of Dan
- The people of Asher
- And the men from Naphtali

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Deborah and Barak sang,

"Then Yahweh's people went down to the gates of the city.

'Wake up. Get up, Deborah, come out. Rise up and sing a song.

You, Barak, arise. Capture the enemies, O son of Abinoam."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays all the tribes who gathered together, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have seen the Canaanites in our land. I know that the Canaanites can hurt us, so of course I want to gather together to stop them! or
- We have seen that Yahweh has chosen Deborah as a prophet and Barak as our military leader. We want to follow the leaders Yahweh has chosen; or
- I am tired of being afraid that the Canaanites will hurt or kill my family. I am ready to fight back against the Canaanites so that I will not be afraid anymore!

Ask the person who plays Deborah and Barak, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I was encouraged when I saw the people gathered together to fight. There are still Israelites who are ready to obey what Yahweh says! or
- I was worried that the Israelites may not listen to us, but I am relieved to see that so many people are here; or
- Even though all these people are here, ready to fight, I know that Yahweh is the one who will cause us to win.

Then Deborah and Barak sang,

"The survivors came down to the mighty rulers.

Yahweh's people came with me to fight our strong enemies.

Some came from the land of the Ephraimites, where the Amalekites once lived.

People of the Benjamin tribe were with those who followed you.

From Machir came chiefs and from the land of Zebulun came commanders.

The leaders of the tribe of Issachar joined Deborah.

Yes, the men of Issachar followed Barak.

They went into the valley with Barak as their leader."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays these tribes, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Even if the Canaanites have not attacked in our area, the other Israelites are still our people. We will come help fight against the Canaanites! or
- We have not honored Yahweh, and so the Canaanites have attacked us. Now I want to do what Yahweh says, so that he will save us! or
- I trust Barak to lead us well.

Then Deborah and Barak sang,

"But the clan of Reuben could not decide. They did not know if they should go or not.

Why did you people of Reuben stay at the sheep pens and listen to the shepherds whistling for their sheep?

The clan of Reuben could not decide. They did not know if they should go or not.

The clans who live in Gilead east of the Jordan did not go.

Why did the people of Dan remain with the ships?

The tribe of Asher also stayed by the sea, near their harbors.

But the tribe of Zebulun risked their lives

The tribe of Naphtali were willing to fight in the battle."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the tribes who did not gather to fight, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Canaanites are so far away from my land. They are not a real danger to us. I am not sure if the Canaanites are important or dangerous enough for everyone to gather to fight; or
- If I leave my home, no one will be there to protect my family while I am gone; or
- The other Israelites do come from the same ancestors as us. We are the same people, so I see why they are asking us for help. But it has been many generations since we fought together. I do not even know anyone in the areas where the Canaanites are attacking. I am not sure if we have to go help them.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:11–18 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Deborah and Barak sing of how the people of **Yahweh** went to the city gates. The name **Yahweh** was a very personal name for God that showed the close relationship that God had with the people of Israel. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

The remnant or the survivors marched to the **nobles**. Nobles were people who were powerful or important. These nobles may be military leaders.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **nobles**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak praise the **commanders** and captains who came. These commanders and captains were military leaders. The commanders carried a staff to show that they were a commander. Use the same word or phrase for commanders as you used in previous passages.

Princes from Issachar also came to help Deborah and Barak. While princes are often members of a king's family, Israel does not have any kings. So here, princes probably refers to leaders a bit lower than kings, like tribal chiefs.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **prince**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The groups or divisions in the tribe of Reuben searched their **hearts**. In the Bible, people use the word heart for the place where a person's thoughts, feelings, and decisions happen. Someone who searches their heart thinks about what they should do. For more information on heart, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for heart as you used in previous passages.

The people of Reuben stay near the sheep pens to hear the **shepherds** whistle for their flocks. Although the word shepherd is not in the original language, some translations include the explanation that it is a shepherd who whistles or calls for his flock. A shepherd is a person who takes care of sheep and goats.

Stop here and discuss as a group if you will use your word for shepherd, and if so, what word or phrase you will use for **shepherd**. Look up shepherd in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already

translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The people in the region of Gilead stayed on the far side of the **Jordan River**, a long river that runs through Israel from north to south. Three tribes—the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and one half-tribe of Manasseh—lived on the east side of the river, while the rest of the tribes lived on the other side. For more information on the Jordan River, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for the Jordan River as you used in previous passages.

The people of Zebulun and Naphtali were willing to fight on the battlefield or on the **terraced fields**. People grew crops on the sides of hills or mountains. The people grew these crops on terraces, or flat platforms, which they cut or built into the slope of the hills. These terraces can look like really wide stairs on a slope.

Stop here and look at a picture of terraced fields again as a group as needed. Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **terraced fields**.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 5:11b–18

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 5:19–23

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 5:19–23 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:19–23 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:19–23 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This song is a Hebrew poem. We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Module 1" before you continue with "Step 2: Setting the Stage."

Stop here, if needed, and review the translation decisions your team has made regarding the translation of poetry. Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak continue to sing their victory song. In this part of the song, Deborah and Barak sing about the battle against the Canaanites.

Several kings of Canaan may have fought in this battle. In this time, kings or chiefs from several small nations would bring their soldiers together to make an army. Then one general would lead the army. The Canaanite's king, Jabin, probably allied with other kings of northern Canaan, and then General Sisera led them all to fight.

The Canaanites and Israelites fought in the Valley of Jezreel. This is a big valley, and the Kishon River flows through this valley. Deborah and Barak name two Israelite towns near the valley to show the area where the battle happened. The town of Taanach is on the southern edge of the Jezreel Valley. The water from the Kishon River would sometimes cause the ground to become muddy and marshy near this town. The town of Megiddo is located about 8 kilometers northwest of Taanach. Springs and streams of water near the town of Megiddo flow into the Kishon River.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the towns of Taanach and Megiddo, as well as the Kishon River and the Jezreel Valley. Pause this audio here.

Though the Canaanite kings joined together to fight the Israelites, the Canaanites did not win the battle, so they did not gather any spoil. Spoil, or plunder, is all of the things that the people group who wins takes from the other people group and that group's army after the battle.

Remember how the storyteller said earlier that Yahweh defeated the Canaanites and caused their soldiers to flee. In this part of the song, Deborah gives a little more explanation of how Yahweh did that. Deborah and Barak sing that even the stars fought against Sisera. The Canaanites thought the stars were heavenly powers that controlled the weather or even the future, so here the stars fight against Sisera when they "send" a flood. However, just like Deborah and Barak already sang, Yahweh is the one who controls all things in the sky and on the ground, as well as the weather! Yahweh caused the river to flood and caused the victory!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what do people believe about the stars and what stars can do? What do people think causes storms or dangerous events like floods? Pause this audio here.

As the water from the Kishon river rushes down from the hills through the valley, it becomes a powerful flood that surprises Sisera's men. The river water was strong enough to knock the Canaanites down and carry them down the river. Since the storyteller had said in a previous passage that Yahweh "went out before" Barak, the water had probably already flooded the Canaanite army before Barak and his men reached the bottom of the valley. All the Israelites had to do was fight any Canaanites who still stood. Deborah and Barak sing, "have courage because of what Yahweh is doing!" The flooded river would be scary even if you know your God caused it. Barak and the Israelite men would need courage to continue to chase the Canaanites!

The water would also make the ground soft and muddy, so the Canaanites can no longer use their chariots. Remember, the Canaanites had fast and strong chariots which made them powerful and dangerous. These chariots would be heavy, and the wheels would sink into soft muddy ground, so the chariots could no longer move. The horses that pulled the chariots would have broken free of the chariots and galloped wildly over the field, scared of the water and the noise of the battle.

Stop here and look at a picture of a chariot as a group. Pause this audio here.

Now that Deborah and Barak have sung about the battle, they return to their earlier focus on the groups that did not help the Israelites in the battle. Deborah and Barak repeat the words of Yahweh's angel. This angel curses the people of Meroz. The angel prays that Yahweh will punish the people of Meroz. It is not clear what or where Meroz was, but it is probably a group of people who should have shown loyalty to Yahweh and the Israelites. Deborah shows her disapproval of the people of Meroz when she repeats the angel's words. The angel says that the people of Meroz did not come to help Yahweh when Yahweh fought with, and for, the Israelites. Yahweh does not need the Israelites' physical help, because Yahweh can defeat the Canaanites on his own. However, Yahweh does require the Israelites' commitment, loyalty, and obedience.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what do people believe about curses? How do people curse each other? What are the effects of these curses?

*Defining the Scenes**Defining the Scenes*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:19–23 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

Stop here and review as a group: We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Modules 2 & 3" before you continue with "Step 3: Defining the Scenes." Pause this audio here.

This passage has two scenes.

In the first scene: Deborah and Barak sing about the battle. Deborah and Barak say that kings and stars fought in this battle. Deborah and Barak describe how the battleground looked and felt when the water from the river rushed through. They describe the sound as the horses run away.

In the second scene: Deborah and Barak repeat the words of Yahweh's angel. The angel curses Meroz because the people of Meroz did not help in the battle against Yahweh's enemies.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah and Barak, who sing the song
- The Israelites
- The kings of Canaan
- The stars
- General Sisera
- The angel
- Yahweh
- And the people of Meroz

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In this passage, Deborah and Barak use lots of poetic language to describe how amazing Yahweh's victory was. Though the Israelite men participated in the battle, Deborah presents the battle as primarily a fight between the Canaanites and Yahweh, who commands and controls the stars, the weather, and the river.

This passage is all one section, because it is all about the battle. Almost every pair of lines here is a parallel or companion phrase. This means Deborah says something in one line, and then in the next line or couple lines, Deborah develops, or adds to, the idea in some way. In this passage, Deborah repeats a lot to emphasize how amazing these events were!

In this first scene, Deborah uses parallel phrases to talk about the kings of Canaan who came to fight. Deborah emphasizes that these were kings, or important and powerful leaders, who fought here. So it would be a surprise to many people that these kings did not take any silver or plunder after the battle, which means they lost the battle.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: The people who listen to Deborah's song know that the Canaanite kings did not win the battle, because Deborah says the kings did not do something that everyone does after they win a battle. As an activity, think of a normal task people do, such as going to buy food. Pretend that you did not do that task today. Now pretend you want to tell someone you did not do that task, except you do not want to say the words, "I did not go buy food." Think of some other creative ways to explain this, such as, "There is no fresh food in my house." Pause this audio here.

Now Deborah describes who the kings fought against. Deborah says that the stars fought from the heavens in their orbit, or their course across the sky. To us here on earth, it looks like stars travel across the sky as they appear in different parts of the sky at different times of the year. The stars fight against Sisera, who leads the Canaanite kings and the kings' men into battle. While the Canaanites believed the stars had power, Deborah does not mean that the stars came down and attacked the Canaanites. Deborah actually talks about the one who controls the stars. Deborah does not mention Yahweh by name, but Deborah's listeners already know Yahweh controls these things. Remember the first section of this song, which shows that Yahweh controls the heavens, the earth, the water, and the floods!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of some stories or songs in your culture where the speaker talks about things that are not alive, such as stars or rivers, and where the speaker says those things move or act. Sometimes, people include strange or made-up things in those people's songs or stories. But other times the speaker does not actually mean that those things were alive. When are some times when the speaker uses the things that are not alive to actually talk about or represent something else? Pause this audio here.

When Deborah says that the river sweeps the men away, just like a broom sweeps away dirt, the river really did carry the men away. But the Israelites would know that Yahweh is the one who caused the river to flood. The water of the river was all around the battlefield, and the water knocked over enemy soldiers and made the ground muddy. The river was everywhere, and Deborah shows this as she repeats the word river three times! Deborah also does this to emphasize the important role of the river. The river is age-old, or has been there since ancient times, and it probably surprised people to see the river flood like this. The river water stopped the Canaanites so that they could not use their chariots, and so Sisera had to run away on foot. If Sisera was on a fast chariot, Sisera may not have needed to stop and rest at Jael's tent!

Deborah and Barak sing and tell themselves to have courage! Deborah and Barak want their souls to be strong. The soul is the total invisible part of a person, which includes where a person thinks and feels. Deborah and Barak may sing like they are still in the battle and see all the amazing things Yahweh does. Deborah and Barak may also do this to encourage themselves to stay strong and courageous now. Every time anyone sings this song, they can remember the amazing and wonderful things Yahweh has done in the past and can do again!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, what do people call the deep or inner part of themselves? When are some times when people would speak to themselves aloud? How would you tell yourself to have courage or be brave? Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak sing that the way the horses' hooves hit the ground sounds like thunder! They repeat the word galloping so that the song sounds like the noise of horses' hooves as they hit the ground over and over again. In the original language, the words for galloping even sounded like horses as horses run!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how do people use the sounds of a word, or words, in a sentence to imitate an action or the sound of that action? What are some words you know that sound like the sound the word describes? Discuss how you want to describe the sound of the horse hooves as they hit the ground in this song. Pause this audio here.

Deborah and Barak also repeat that the horses galloped to show how intense or loud the sound was. These horses ran around, but because the river flooded, the horses did not pull the chariots. These horses ran in fear, which shows that the Canaanites could not use their powerful and dangerous chariots. These horses were mighty, or strong and powerful, to pull these chariots. These horses could knock over or hurt men as the horses ran around the battlefield!

In the second scene, Deborah and Barak repeat the words of Yahweh's angel. It is not clear when the angel spoke, or who all heard the angel, as the storyteller did not include the angel when he told Deborah's story earlier. Deborah repeats the angel's words in two sets of parallel lines. The first set emphasizes how strongly the angel speaks the curse, and the second emphasizes how badly the people of Meroz acted.

The people of Meroz probably did not help Yahweh and the Israelites chase the Canaanites. This curse transitions the song from the battle where Sisera leads the Canaanites to after the battle, when the Canaanites and Sisera run away. The next passage will talk about what Jael did when she met Sisera as Sisera ran away!

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:19–23 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has two scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah and Barak, who sing the song
- The Israelites
- The kings of Canaan
- The stars
- General Sisera
- The angel
- Yahweh
- And the people of Meroz

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Deborah and Barak sang,

"Kings came and fought. The kings of Canaan fought against us.

They fought at the town of Taanach, near the springs of Megiddo.

But they took away nothing with them. They did not capture any silver.

From the sky even the stars fought.

The stars in their paths in the sky fought against Sisera.

The river Kishon carried away our enemies.

The river that has always flowed, the Kishon River.

My soul, go forth, be strong.

Then the hooves of the horses hit the ground.

The horses galloped away. Sisera's mighty horses ran away from us."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people who listen to this song, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- When Deborah and Barak describe what the battle was like, I can imagine it, even though I was not actually there; or
- I am amazed when I hear how Yahweh has saved our people. Yahweh must be very powerful to control the stars and the river; or
- This is a beautiful song and an important event in our history. I want to learn this song and sing it to my children so that we will not forget what Yahweh did.

Ask the person who plays Deborah and Barak, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I remember when I saw how the battlefield looked. It was loud and I felt confused. Water ran everywhere. Even though Yahweh fought on our side, I was still amazed and a little scared of all the things I saw; or
- Whenever I am worried about terrible or difficult things, I can sing this song to remind myself of how Yahweh is more powerful than these things.

Deborah and Barak sang,

"The angel of Yahweh said: 'Curse Meroz.

Curse, curse its inhabitants for they did not take part in the war of Yahweh.

They did not take part in the war against Yahweh's strong enemies.'"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the angel of Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that the people of Meroz dishonored Yahweh and did not help their fellow Israelites; or
- If the Israelites work together to help and protect each other, the Israelites' lives will be more peaceful and safe! or
- The people of Meroz showed that they cared more about themselves than about doing what Yahweh asked the Israelites to do.

Ask the person who plays the people of Meroz, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not want to get hurt, so I will not help out in this battle; or
- I can see the flooded river and I am afraid! I do not understand what is happening and I would rather hide; or
- The Canaanites might still defeat the Israelites. I do not want to be on the side that loses, so I just will not do anything.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:19–23 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Deborah sings that the **kings** fought. Kings are people who rule over a city or territory, like a region or a country. People often use this word for the leaders of various nations around Israel. For more information on kings, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for kings as you used in previous passages.

These kings did not carry any **plunder** of silver treasures away after the battle. Plunder is anything that an army who wins takes from their defeated enemy after the battle. Use the same word or phrase for plunder as you used in previous passages.

The stars fought from **heaven**. Here, heaven means the visible sky: the place where birds fly, where we can see clouds, and where we can see stars at night. For more information on heaven, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for heaven as you used in previous passages.

Deborah and Barak sing, "Be strong my **soul**!" The soul is the invisible part of a person. God created people with a body, and we can touch and see each other's bodies. But God also created people with thoughts and feelings and desires. We cannot see this part of a person, but we know it is there. This is a different word than the word for heart. The words heart and soul both have to do with the inner, invisible part of a person, but each of them has a slightly different use. The soul is the total, invisible, inner part of a person. This part of a person may live on even after the person's body dies.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **soul**. Look up soul in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The **angel of Yahweh** says, "Curse Meroz!" An angel is a supernatural, spiritual being created by God. Angels give messages from God to people. The angel of Yahweh is a special angel who speaks with so much authority that it is as if God himself speaks. For more information on angel of Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for angel as you used in previous passages.

The name **Yahweh** was a very personal name for God. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

When you **curse** someone, you wish that a bad thing will happen to that person. Sometimes, a curse means that people pray that Yahweh will punish that person. People believed that a curse would come true.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **curse**. Look up curse in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 5:19–23

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 4](#)
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Judges 5:24–31

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 5:24–31 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:24–31 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.

5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:24–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This song is a Hebrew poem. We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Module 1" before you continue with "Step 2: Setting the Stage."

Stop here, if needed, and review the translation decisions your team has made regarding the translation of poetry. Pause this audio here.

In this passage, Deborah and Barak sing about two women to finish their victory song.

First Deborah and Barak celebrate Jael, the woman who killed General Sisera. Deborah and Barak sing that everyone should celebrate Jael, because God has blessed or given good things to Jael. Jael is the wife of Heber, and they are both Kenites. Remember, the Kenites were probably people who moved from place to place. The Kenites lived in tents, which they could move and take with them.

When Sisera asks for water to drink, Jael instead gives Sisera curdled milk, which is good thick milk or yogurt. People would often drink from bowls, so Jael gives the milk to Sisera in a nice, well-made bowl, which she would give to noble or respected guests to drink from. Jael treats Sisera in a friendly and honorable way, probably in order to make him feel safe.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what is the respectful way to treat guests? What sort of food or drink would you serve to them? In what sort of dishes would you serve this food or drink? Pause this audio here.

However, Jael picks up a mallet or large heavy hammer and a tent peg, a short sharp cylinder that holds tent ropes in the ground. In this culture, women often set up the tents, so Jael would know very well how to use the tent pegs and hammer. Jael may have stored the hammer and extra pegs in her tent.

Stop here and look at a picture of tent pegs and a hammer as a group. Pause this audio here.

Then Deborah and Barak clearly describe how Jael uses the hammer to hit the tent peg through Sisera's temple or forehead. Notice how many times Deborah repeats that Sisera lay dead at Jael's feet. In this time, people would often stand near or even on their enemy to show that they had defeated their enemy. Jael both kills and shames Sisera, because in this time, it would be shameful for a man to die because a woman killed him.

Then Deborah and Barak sing about another woman. They imagine what Sisera's mother would feel and say as she waits at home for news from the battle. Since Sisera is an important leader, Sisera is probably a wealthy man and able to provide for his mother. Deborah and Barak mention a few things that show that Sisera's mother is rich. Sisera's mother has handmaidens, or ladies who serve Sisera's mother. These women would be companions or personal assistants for Sisera's mother. Sometimes, daughters of important people would serve as handmaidens to other important women, so some translations call these ladies princesses or noble ladies.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture or history, what kind of people would help care for and serve important women, like queens? What would you call these people? Pause this audio here.

Sisera's mother looks through a lattice, or decorative screen in front of a window, for the army and her son to return. These lattices, which could be intricately carved, would let light into a room but not allow people outside to see inside easily.

Stop here and look at a picture of a lattice as a group. Pause this audio here.

Sisera's mother is worried about her son, so she asks her handmaidens why Sisera has not returned. The chariots in Sisera's army would make a lot of noise that people could hear from a long way off, but no one has heard that sound yet.

The wisest handmaiden reassures Sisera's mother several times that Sisera has not returned because he first has to divide up the valuable items. Although the women worry because Sisera has not come back yet, they know they will also be happy when Sisera comes back with many valuable things. Though Deborah and Barak call this handmaiden wise, we know that this is not a wise answer. Not even the wisest Canaanite woman in the group could imagine that the Canaanites would lose the battle!

The handmaiden says that Sisera and other Canaanites divide the plunder, or all the things the Canaanites have taken from the Israelites after the battle. This would include the weapons and armor that the defeated Israelite soldiers had carried to the battle. The Canaanites would also go through the land and take anything they wanted, which would include women. The handmaiden refers to the Israelite women in a crude way—the way that the Canaanite soldiers would sexually abuse the women they captured. These Canaanite women see this as normal and something they hope happens. The Canaanite handmaiden also suggests that Sisera gathers up richly embroidered cloth and clothes. People use colorful thread to embroider or sew patterns and pictures onto cloth. The Canaanite handmaiden hopes Sisera will share some with her!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture or your history, how do soldiers act after a battle? What are some good things they do? What are some bad or hurtful things they may do to their enemy? Pause this audio here.

At the end of their song, Deborah and Barak pray that all Yahweh's enemies would die like General Sisera. Deborah and Barak also pray that everyone who loves Yahweh will be strong, beautiful, and amazing like the sun when it rises. Deborah and Barak mean that Israel's victory and the Canaanites' defeat were because of their good relationship with Yahweh. The Israelites only won because they loved Yahweh. This kind of love is more than just an emotion, although it includes that. The people love Yahweh when they do not worship anything other than Yahweh. This is a reminder for the Israelites of the way they should act. The Israelites should be faithful as a response to Yahweh's own faithful love.

The storyteller finishes Deborah's story and says that the people of Israel had peace in their land for 40 years.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:24–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

Stop here and review as a group: We recommend that your team complete the "Introduction to Poetry Modules 2 & 3" before you continue with "Step 3: Defining the Scenes." Pause this audio here.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Deborah and Barak sing about how Jael killed Sisera.

In the second scene: Deborah and Barak sing about Sisera's mother, who waits for Sisera's return.

In the third scene: Deborah and Barak pray and end their song. The Israelites live in peace for 40 years.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah and Barak, who sing this song
- The people of Israel who listen to the song
- Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite
- Sisera
- Sisera's mother
- Sisera's mother's ladies or handmaidens
- And Yahweh

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

This part of the song has three sections, and each section is about something different. Almost every pair of lines here is a parallel or companion phrase. Deborah also uses some parallel phrases with three or four lines! Deborah repeats words often and uses short, quick words so the song sounds like a drumbeat or a hand that claps the sound.

Remember how the last passage ends with Yahweh's angel who curses Meroz because the people there did not help the Israelites defeat the Canaanites? This passage begins when Deborah and Barak bless Jael, because Jael did help the Israelites when she killed Sisera. The first scene is the first section, and it is about how Jael kills Sisera. Deborah addresses Jael in three ways: first by Jael's name, then as the wife of Heber the Kenite, and then as one of the women who lives in tents. These are all parts of who Jael is.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, pick someone in the group and come up with several ways to describe or address that person. Think of roles this person has, or groups that this person belongs to. When are some times when you would use someone's name as well as titles like the ones you just came up with? Pause this audio here.

Deborah uses parallel phrases to describe the milk Jael gives to Sisera. Deborah describes in detail the rich thickness of the milk and the beauty of the container in which Jael serves it to contrast with the surprising and violent act Jael does next.

Deborah slows down the story here to focus on the climax or the most intense, exciting, or important point of the story: when Jael kills Sisera. It is like Jael and Sisera move slowly while Deborah sings. First Jael reaches for the tent peg with her left hand. Then she reaches for the hammer with her right hand. Deborah says Jael struck, crushed, shattered, and pierced Sisera's head. Jael only hit Sisera once, but Deborah uses these words to emphasize what an important moment this is.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, tell a story about a thing that amazes or surprises people. Pay attention to the way you show what the most important moment of the story is and how you make it sound exciting. Pause this audio here.

Remember from the story in a previous passage that Sisera was asleep when Jael hit his head. So when Deborah says Sisera fell at Jael's feet, Deborah is probably using the word fall to mean that he died and that Jael defeated him. Deborah wants her listeners to actually imagine Sisera dead on the ground. This is not because Deborah or the Israelites are excited by violence or death. Deborah says this to focus on the thought that Sisera, who ruled and hurt Israelites for years, was now dead with a single strike from Jael.

The second scene is in a new section and is about another woman, Sisera's mother. This section has five parallel phrases. Deborah imagines what Sisera's mother and her handmaidens would do and say. The people of Israel know that Sisera is dead since Deborah has just described it in detail. But Sisera's mother and her maids-in-waiting do not know that Sisera is dead, though these women fear it. Sisera's mother's two questions show how worried she feels. The handmaiden may have to reassure Sisera's mother several times. The handmaiden also mentions several times the valuable things that Sisera will bring, as if she tries to convince everyone that this is what Sisera actually does. The handmaiden answers Sisera's mother's question with another question. It is like the handmaiden asks, "Is this not true?" and expects the other women to say, "Yes, that is true!"

The handmaiden calls the Israelite women "wombs," which is a crude name to show that the Canaanites thought Israelite women were only useful for sex and having children. We are not supposed to feel bad for Sisera's mother or the Canaanite women, because these women hope that the Canaanite soldiers kill the Israelites. These Canaanite women casually talk about and hope for horrible things that the Canaanites will do to and take from the Israelites, especially the Israelite women.

Stop here and discuss how you will translate the Canaanite women's words about the Israelite women. In your culture, what is a polite way to discuss unkind words that other people have said? Pause the audio here.

The third scene is a short section where Deborah and Barak pray to Yahweh to defeat Yahweh's enemies and to bless those who love Yahweh. This is also a reminder to the Israelites that this is how Yahweh does treat those who love him and those who do not. Israelites would often end their songs with a reminder to serve Yahweh. Deborah sings that people who love Yahweh will be like the sun when it rises in its strength. Think of how beautiful and bright the sun is when it rises! Nothing can stop the sun from the way it rises and shines in the sky! Yahweh causes the people who love him to be strong.

The storyteller ends Deborah's story in the normal way for stories about the judges. The storyteller tells how many years the land of Israel, or the people in the land of Israel, had peace.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:24–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Deborah and Barak, who sing this song
- The people of Israel who listen to the song
- Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite
- Sisera
- Sisera's mother
- Sisera's mother's ladies or handmaidens
- And Yahweh

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Deborah and Barak sing,
"May Yahweh bless Jael more than all women.
May Yahweh bless the wife of Heber the Kenite.
May Yahweh bless her more than all the women who dwell in tents.
Sisera asked for water. Jael gave him milk.
In a beautiful bowl, she put thick milk and brought it to Sisera.
Then she took a tent peg in her left hand.
She took a workman's hammer in her right hand.
She hit Sisera. She crushed his head.
She broke his head. She pierced his temple.
At Jael's feet Sisera sank. He collapsed.
He lay stretched out on the ground.
At Jael's feet he sank. He collapsed.
At the place where he fell he lay still. He was dead."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites who listen, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Jael was not even an Israelite, but she helped us when she killed our enemy, Sisera. I am surprised that she did that. I wonder if Yahweh caused her to do this; or
- I had heard that a woman killed Sisera, but I did not know how it happened. I am amazed at how brave Jael was; or
- I am so relieved that Sisera is dead and cannot gather another army to come back and attack us.

Deborah and Barak sing,
"Through the window Sisera's mother watched.
She looked through the lattice-work and cried,
'Why has my son's chariot not come back?
Why do we not hear the noise of his chariots?'
The wisest of the ladies of her court answer her.
It was the same answer that the wise woman said to herself. She said,
'They have found lots of treasure and it takes time to divide the goods.
They have taken a woman or two per soldier.
There will be colorful clothes for Sisera.
There will be embroidered clothes.
Sisera will bring me a present of richly embroidered cloth to put around my neck.
These are the things they have taken from their enemies.'"
Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Sisera's mother and her ladies, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am worried that Sisera has not returned because he is dead. If he is dead and cannot provide for me, I do not know what I will do; or
- Surely no one can defeat our huge army! Our army has defeated the Israelites before. I do not understand why the army has not returned; or
- I do not care about the Israelite people. I want our soldiers to take rich and beautiful things from the Israelites.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites who listen, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so glad that Yahweh defeated the Canaanites so that the Canaanites would not hurt and kill us and capture our women! or
- I am disgusted that the Canaanite women would casually talk about how the Canaanite men will hurt our women. I am ashamed that we have wanted to be like other nations in the past. I do not want to be like the Canaanites!

Deborah and Barak sing,

"O Yahweh, may all your enemies die like General Sisera.

And may all who love you be like the sun when it rises and dazzles bright."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Deborah and Barak, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I rejoice because of what Jael did. I rejoice that the horrible things that the Canaanites probably hoped for—that the Canaanites would hurt the Israelite women and take things from us—are not true. I want the other Israelites to rejoice with me! or
- Right now, we show that we love Yahweh when we do what Yahweh asks. But if we do not love Yahweh, and we disobey Yahweh, we are Yahweh's enemies. Look what happens to Yahweh's enemies! or
- I want the Israelites to remember to love and serve Yahweh whenever they hear this song.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What do you feel or think?" The person might answer things like:

- I am pleased when my people sing beautiful songs to praise me and remember important events like this; or
- I love my people and want them to love me too. I want to have a good relationship with the Israelites so I will continue to send people like Deborah to remind them of this; or
- I am powerful and can defeat any human army, even armies like Sisera's. I am also powerful enough to protect and care for my people. But my people must continue to be loyal to me.

Then the people of Israel had no more wars for forty years.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 5:24–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Deborah and Barak say that Jael is **blessed**. They mean that other people can congratulate and be glad for Jael, because God has blessed or given good things to Jael.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **blessed**. Look up bless in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Jael gave Sisera curdled milk, or thick rich milk in a bowl that **nobles** would use. Nobles were people who were powerful or important. This is a beautiful bowl that people would drink out of. Use the same word or phrase for noble as you used in previous passages.

Sisera's mother asks why she has not heard the sound of Sisera's **chariot** return. Chariots were wagon-like vehicles with two wheels. Horses pulled the chariots, and two men, one driver and one warrior, rode the chariot into battle. Use the same word or phrase for chariot as you used in previous passages.

One of Sisera's mother's ladies says that Sisera and his army must be dividing the **spoils or plunder**. Spoil or plunder is anything that the army who wins takes from the enemy they defeat once that army wins the battle. Use the same word for spoil or plunder as you used in previous passages.

The Canaanite handmaiden also suggests that Sisera gathers up richly **embroidered** cloth and clothes. People use colorful thread to embroider or sew patterns and pictures onto cloth.

Stop here and as a group look at a picture of embroidered cloth. How will you describe this kind of cloth? Pause this audio here.

Deborah prays that Yahweh's enemies would perish or that **Yahweh** would completely destroy his enemies. The name Yahweh was a very personal name for God. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

Deborah asks that the people who **love Yahweh** should be like the sun that rises. When people love Yahweh, they follow him only and they want to keep their promises to obey Yahweh's laws.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will talk about "people who love Yahweh." Pause this audio here.

The land had **peace** for 40 years. Here, this probably means that the people live in harmony with each other and do not fight each other, and that other nations do not attack Israel. For more information on peace, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for peace as you used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 5:24-31

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (12541127 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (14724820 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 6:1-10

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 6:1-10 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:1-10 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.

4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In previous passages, the Israelites disobeyed Yahweh and did what Yahweh considered evil. For this reason, Yahweh allowed the Israelites' enemy, the Canaanites, to oppress the Israelites. However, Yahweh used Deborah and Barak to rescue the Israelites from the Israelites' enemies, and in the last passage, Deborah and Barak sang a song to praise and thank Yahweh.

But now, in this story, the Israelites once again start to disobey Yahweh. The Israelites once again do the things Yahweh considers evil. This most likely means that the Israelites had begun to once again worship false gods. For this reason, Yahweh once again allows Israelites' enemies to oppress the Israelites. This time Yahweh gives the Israelites into the hand of Midian for seven years, which means that Yahweh allows the people of Midian, called the Midianites, to have power over the Israelites for seven years. The Midianites lived in the region south of the Israelites, in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula and western parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

Stop here and look at a map of the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas as a group. Pause this audio here.

Because the Midianites have power over the Israelites at this time, the Israelites make shelters or places to hide themselves in the mountains, caves, and other safe places. The Israelites do this to escape from their enemies. Whenever the Israelites begin to grow food, the Midianites invade the land. Two other foreign groups, the Amalekites and the people of the east, come with the Midianites. The people of the east came from the desert lands of the Arabian Peninsula. The Amalekites probably came with the Midianites from the Arabian Peninsula.

Stop here and look again at a map of the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Midianites, Amalekites, and the people of the east set up camps in Israel, which shows that they want to stay for long periods of time. These groups of people destroy all of the crops of food that the Israelites grow, all the way to Gaza. Gaza was in the north, along the shores of the sea: it was the very edge of the Sinai Peninsula. To say that the Midianites and other invaders destroyed the crops as far as Gaza means that these people destroyed the crops all across Israel. The Midianites, the Amalekites, and the people of the east do not leave even one thing for the Israelites to eat.

Stop here and look at a map that shows the location of Gaza on the Sinai Peninsula. Pause this audio here.

The Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east also kill or take away all of the Israelites' sheep, cows, oxen, and donkeys. The Israelites needed these animals very much. Sheep provided material for clothes to wear and meat to eat. Cows also provided meat to eat, and milk to drink. And oxen and donkeys were strong animals that helped the Israelites do various tasks.

Stop here as a group and look at pictures of sheep, cows, oxen, and donkeys. Pause this audio here.

Without these animals, and without the food that grew in the fields, the Israelites would suffer, and they would begin to starve.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What crops, animals, or industries do you depend on to survive? Tell a story about a time when you did not have, or could not get, these resources. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites' enemies came in very great numbers. These enemies brought their own tents and animals with them. This shows that these enemies would come to the Israelites' lands to stay for long periods of time and take or destroy all of the Israelites' crops and animals. These enemies came like swarms of locusts. Locusts are insects that will come to a place in huge numbers all at once. When locusts come to a place, the locusts eat all

of the food they find there, and the people who live in that place cannot get rid of the locusts. The storyteller compares the Midianites to a swarm of locusts, because the Midianites came in great numbers and ate or destroyed all of the things that grew in the Israelites' land.

Stop here and look at a picture of a swarm of locusts as a group. Pause this audio here.

Many Midianites and other enemy peoples came to take the Israelites' food and animals. So many of these people came that the Israelites could not even count how many of them there were. These foreign people rode camels when they came. Camels are animals that can travel long distances across deserts. The Midianites often rode camels to travel or to attack other peoples. So many Midianites rode on the backs of camels that the Israelites could not count how many camels there were.

Stop here and look at a picture of a camel as a group. Pause this audio here.

Because the Midianites and others came to the Israelites' land and took or destroyed the Israelites' food and animals, the Israelites became very poor and began to starve. So the Israelites cry out to Yahweh to help them. Yahweh sends the Israelites a prophet, one of Yahweh's special messengers. Prophets were people who could deliver Yahweh's messages to the Israelites. When a prophet spoke, it was like Yahweh spoke, because the words came directly from Yahweh.

The prophet tells the Israelites Yahweh's message. We do not know who this prophet is. This time, unlike the previous times in the book of Judges, Yahweh shows that he is frustrated with the Israelites when he responds to them. Yahweh reminds the Israelites of Yahweh's covenant promise, or special agreement, with the Israelites since the time Yahweh rescued them from Egypt. Yahweh delivered the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all the Israelites' oppressors. This special language means that Yahweh took the Israelites out of the power of all those who had abused the Israelites.

Yahweh also says that Yahweh drove out the Israelites' enemies and gave the Israelites the lands that had once belonged to the Israelites' enemies. This refers to the fact that the land the Israelites now live in once belonged to their enemies, the Canaanites. But Yahweh gave the Israelites the ability to defeat these enemies and take their land.

Yahweh reminds the Israelites of all the good things Yahweh has done for the Israelites. Yahweh reminds the Israelites that Yahweh saved and protected the Israelites. Now Yahweh also reminds the Israelites that he gave the Israelites a command. Yahweh had commanded the Israelites that, because he was their God, the Israelites must not worship the gods of the Amorites. The Amorites were the people who had lived in the land before Yahweh gave the land to the Israelites. The Amorites worshiped false gods rather than Yahweh, and so Yahweh commanded the Israelites not to worship those false gods once the Israelites came into that land. However, the Israelites have once again failed to obey this command. This has made Yahweh angry. This is why Yahweh has allowed the Midianites to oppress the Israelites.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites disobey Yahweh when they begin to worship false gods once again.

In the second scene: The Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east come to the Israelites' land. They eat or destroy all of the food that the Israelites grow in the fields, and they take or kill all of the Israelites' animals.

In the third scene: The Israelites run away to their strongholds and the places where they hide in the hills and mountains to escape from the Midianites and other invaders.

In the fourth scene: The Israelites begin to starve. They cry out to Yahweh and pray for Yahweh to help them.

In the fifth scene: A prophet comes to the Israelites and delivers a message from Yahweh.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- The Midianites and other invaders
- Yahweh
- And the prophet

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

At this point in the story, the Israelites have settled the lands in the Sinai Peninsula. The Israelites' enemies come from nearby lands to the south and east of the Sinai Peninsula.

Stop here and look at a map of the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas as a group. Pause this audio here.

As the story begins, the Israelites have begun once again to do evil in Yahweh's eyes. This is another way to say that the Israelites had begun to worship false gods, even though in earlier passages Yahweh ordered them not to do this. This is a terrible mistake that the Israelites have made before, and now they make the same mistake again.

The Midianites come from the south and begin to invade the Israelites' land, along with other foreign peoples, the Amalekites, and the people of the eastern deserts. The Midianites lived in lands to the south of the Israelites, so some translations say that the Midianites and the other invaders "come up" to the Israelites' land. The Midianites and other invaders ride camels when they come. The Midianites and other invaders come in huge numbers, and they set up tents so that they can stay in the Israelites' land for long periods of time.

When the Midianites and other foreign invaders come to the Israelites' land, the Israelites flee from the invaders. The Israelites hide in caves, clefts, and strongholds in the hills and mountains so that the foreign invaders will not kill them or capture them. "Strongholds" refers to places that would be difficult for enemies to find or reach, so they are safe places for the Israelites. The caves would be large openings in the sides of the hills and mountains where the Israelites could hide and not be seen. Clefts were smaller openings where the Israelites could hide.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of a mountain cave. Pause this audio here.

These foreign invaders come when the Israelites' food grows out in the fields. The invaders take or destroy all of the food, so that the Israelites cannot have any of it. The foreign invaders also take or kill all of the Israelites' most important and precious animals, which include sheep, cows, oxen, and donkeys.

Stop here as a group and look at pictures of sheep, cows, oxen, and donkeys. Pause this audio here.

The invaders bring their own livestock, or animals, with them to the land of the Israelites, and the invaders set up tents so that they can stay for long periods of time in the Israelites' land. The invaders come like swarms of locusts, which are insects that come to places in huge numbers and eat all of the food they find in that place. When locusts come to a place, people who live in that place cannot get rid of the locusts. So the storyteller compares the Midianites to a swarm of locusts, because the Midianites came in great numbers and ate or destroyed everything that grew in the Israelites' land.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a single locust, and a picture of a swarm of locusts. Tell a story about a thing that comes or travels in a large group. What would you compare a large group of invaders to? Pause this audio here.

The people of Israel feel great distress, and the people begin to starve. The people cry out to Yahweh. In other words, the people desperately pray to Yahweh for help.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will describe the action to cry out to Yahweh for help. Pause this audio here.

The passage says that when the Israelites began to cry out to Yahweh for help, Yahweh sent a prophet, or messenger, to the Israelites. This means that Yahweh sent the prophet as a response to the Israelites' prayers. Yahweh waited to respond until the Israelites called out to Yahweh.

Yahweh sends a prophet to deliver a message to the Israelites. The prophet says first, "This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says." Although the prophet will speak the words, the words come directly from Yahweh.

Yahweh reminds the Israelites that he freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Yahweh reminds the Israelites that Yahweh delivered the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all those who oppressed the Israelites. The word "hand" here means power or authority. Yahweh delivered the Israelites from the power of the Egyptians, and from the power of the people who oppressed the Israelites. Yahweh gave the Israelites the land that the Israelites now live in.

Stop here and remind each other how you have translated that Yahweh saves someone from the "hand of" their enemies in previous stories. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh also reminds the Israelites of what Yahweh told them in the past. Yahweh told the Israelites before that he, Yahweh, was their only God, and that when the Israelites came to their new land, they must not worship any false gods. At this point in the story, the Israelites have only asked Yahweh to help them, but the Israelites have not truly repented, or shown that they regret the ways they have angered Yahweh. This is why Yahweh reminds the Israelites of all that Yahweh has done for them. Yahweh wants the Israelites to remember their covenant, or special agreement, with Yahweh, and for the Israelites to repent.

Yahweh still speaks through the prophet when Yahweh tells the Israelites that they have not listened to Yahweh's voice. This was a way to say that the Israelites had not obeyed the things that Yahweh said to do.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- The Midianites and other invaders
- Yahweh
- And the prophet

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Israelites begin to do what Yahweh says is evil, even though in earlier passages Yahweh commanded them not to do this.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I no longer think about what Yahweh has commanded. I will do what I want; or
- It is easier to follow other gods. I have forgotten the special relationship that Yahweh made with us.

It angers Yahweh that the Israelites have begun to worship false gods again. As punishment, Yahweh allows the Midianites, the people of the land of Midian, to have power over the Israelites for seven years. The Midianites repeatedly invade the Israelites' land, along with other the Amalekites and the people of the eastern deserts. The Midianites and the other invaders come in huge numbers, and these people set up tents and stay in the Israelites' land for long periods of time.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Midianite invader, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This land is full of good food to eat, and many useful animals. I will take all of these things for myself, and I do not care what happens to the Israelites who own these things.

Whenever the Midianites and other invaders come, the Israelites run away to caves and other safe places in the hills and mountains. The Israelites hide in these places.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am terrified of what the Midianites will do to me if they catch me! or
- I must hide in these strong, secret places to save my life!

The invaders take or destroy the Israelites' food and the Israelites' animals. The invaders do this all throughout the Israelites' land, and all of the Israelites suffer. The Israelites begin to starve, and they cry out to Yahweh to ask Yahweh to help them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am hungry and fearful. I want Yahweh to save us from the Midianites!

Yahweh sends a prophet to deliver a message to the Israelites. The prophet tells the Israelites' what Yahweh has to say to them. Yahweh freed the Israelites when they were slaves in Egypt. Yahweh led them out of Egypt, and Yahweh rescued the Israelites from all those who abused and oppressed the Israelites. Yahweh also gave the Israelites the land they now live in. Yahweh reminds the Israelites of all of these things.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the prophet, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh has specially chosen me to be his messenger. The Israelites may not like Yahweh's stern message, but I must tell the Israelites what Yahweh commands me to tell them.

Yahweh also reminds the Israelites that he made a covenant, or special agreement, with the Israelites in the past. The covenant was that Yahweh would be the Israelites' only God, and that the Israelites would be Yahweh's special, chosen people. Yahweh also reminds the Israelites of the command Yahweh gave them in the past not to worship any other gods. But Yahweh tells the Israelites that they have not obeyed this command.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I remember now all of the good things that Yahweh has done for us. I am so sad that I have disobeyed Yahweh; or
- I understand how wrong it was for me to forget the special relationship that Yahweh made with us.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The **Israelites** began to do what was **evil** in **Yahweh's** sight, or what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh. This means the Israelites did what Yahweh said was evil. Use the same words to translate evil, Israelites, and Yahweh as you have previously used. For more information on evil, Israelite, and Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary.

Yahweh allowed the people of Midian to come to oppress the Israelites, and the Israelites ran away to **strongholds** and caves in the mountains. A stronghold is either a city with strong walls around it, or in this case, a strong place where people can hide and defend themselves from their enemies.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **stronghold**. For more information, refer to stronghold in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

The invaders take or kill all of the Israelites' crops and their **sheep, cows, oxen, and donkeys**.

Stop here and look at pictures of sheep, cows, oxen, and donkeys as a group. Use the same words for these animals as you previously used. Pause this audio here.

The passage compares the invaders to **swarms of locusts**, which are insects that come in massive numbers and eat all of the food and resources in a land. So many invaders come with their **livestock**, or farm animals, that both the invaders and the livestock eat up all of the Israelites' food.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **livestock**, or important animals, and "a swarm of locusts." Pause this audio here.

The passage says the invaders rode **camels**, which are animals that people use to cross long distances of desert lands. The invaders and the camels are so great in number that the Israelites cannot count them.

Stop here and look at a picture of a camel as a group. Discuss what word you will use for **camel**. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh sent the Israelites a **prophet**, or chosen messenger, to deliver Yahweh's message to the Israelites. Use the same word to translate prophet as you have previously used. For more information on prophet, refer to the Master Glossary.

The prophet tells the Israelites what Yahweh, the **God** of Israel, wants to say to the Israelites. The phrase "the God of Israel" means that Yahweh is Israel's God, different from all the other gods that the peoples who live around the Israelites worship. Use the same word to translate God as you have previously used. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary.

Yahweh delivered the Israelites from **slavery** in Egypt. Some translations say that Yahweh brought the Israelites out of the land of slavery. Others say that Yahweh brought the Israelites out of the house of slavery, or bondage. These are all ways to refer to the time when the Egyptians kept the Israelites as slaves.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **slave**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. For more information on slave, refer to the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

The prophet's message from Yahweh states that Yahweh gave the Israelites a command. Yahweh said that he was the God of the Israelites, and that the Israelites must not fear, revere, or worship the false **gods** of the Amorites who live in the land. Use the same word to translate "gods" as you have previously used. For more information on gods, refer to the Master Glossary.

But the Israelites have not listened to Yahweh's **voice**. The word "voice" here means Yahweh's command. To say that the Israelites have not listened to Yahweh's voice means that the Israelites have not obeyed Yahweh's command to not worship false gods.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 6:1–10

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (13673044 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (16619062 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 6:11–27

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 6:11–27 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:11–27 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:11–27 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, the Israelites began once again to worship false gods. This angered Yahweh, the only true God. Yahweh punished the Israelites when he allowed the Midianites and other foreign peoples to oppress

the Israelites. The Midianites and other foreign peoples continue to come to the Israelites' land and take all of the Israelites' animals and food, so that the Israelites begin to starve.

In the previous story, the Israelites begged Yahweh to help them. This story begins when the angel of Yahweh comes to visit an Israelite man named Gideon. An "angel of Yahweh" is a special angel who speaks with so much authority that it is like Yahweh himself speaks.

The angel of Yahweh sits down under a tree. Some translations call this an oak tree. Other translations call the tree a terebinth tree.

Stop here and look at a picture of an oak tree as a group. Pause this audio here.

The tree the angel sits beneath is in a town called Ophrah. The tree belongs to a man named Joash, who was an Abiezrite, which means he was a descendant of an ancestor whose name was Abiezer.

The angel of Yahweh comes while Joash's son, Gideon, threshes a grain called wheat.

Stop here and look at a picture of stalks of wheat and a picture of wheat grains as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon threshes the wheat in a winepress beneath the oak tree. A winepress was not the normal place to do this job. A winepress was a square or circular pit below the ground. People would use a winepress to make the drink called wine. Gideon threshes wheat down in the winepress beneath the oak tree so that the Midianites will not see Gideon and steal the wheat grain for themselves.

Stop here and look at a picture of a winepress as a group. Pause this audio here.

The angel of Yahweh comes before Gideon and says that Yahweh is with Gideon, which means that Yahweh will bless Gideon and help Gideon. Gideon asks how it could be true that Yahweh is with the Israelites, since so many terrible things have happened to the Israelites.

Gideon asks the angel why Yahweh has not performed any great and wonderful acts to help the Israelites. Gideon reminds the angel that Gideon's ancestors have spoken of the time when Yahweh rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. But now Gideon says Yahweh has abandoned the Israelites and allowed them to fall into the hand, or power, of the Midianites.

Then Yahweh turns to Gideon and speaks. The story says "Yahweh" here, not "angel of Yahweh." This may be a reminder that Yahweh himself spoke through the angel, or it may mean that Yahweh appears before Gideon in the form of an angel. But either way, the words are Yahweh's words. Yahweh tells Gideon to go and save Israel from the hand of Midian, or from the power of the Midianites. Yahweh says that Yahweh himself sends Gideon to do this.

Gideon asks how Gideon could possibly save Israel, since Gideon's clan or family group is the weakest in Manasseh, and since Gideon is the youngest or least important member of his family. In Gideon's culture, it was usually the older members of a family, such as a father or grandfather, who took on the responsibility to lead others. Gideon is surprised that Yahweh would want Gideon to lead others, since Gideon is the youngest member of Gideon's family.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when someone who did not seem very talented or important surprised people when they did a thing that was great or important. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh says he will be with Gideon, and that Gideon will be able to defeat all of the Midianites as easily as if Gideon fought only one man. Gideon asks Yahweh to give a sign, or a way to prove to Gideon that Yahweh is really the one who speaks to Gideon. Gideon asks the angel of Yahweh to wait in that place while Gideon goes out to prepare a gift for Yahweh. Gideon offers this gift of food for two reasons. To show hospitality to visitors was extremely important in Gideon's culture, and Gideon hopes that to offer food to his visitor will make it easier for his visitor to give Gideon a sign. The other reason Gideon offers the gift is because Gideon wants to see how this visitor will react to the gift. The visitor's reaction will help Gideon find out who the visitor is. The angel of Yahweh agrees to wait while Gideon prepares the gift.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what kinds of actions or customs do you have to make sure that a person tells you the truth? Pause this audio here.

Gideon goes into his house and prepares a young goat, which means he kills the goat and cooks the goat's meat. Goats were important animals for the Israelites. Goats provided both milk for the Israelites to drink as well as meat for the Israelites to eat. An entire young goat would be a large amount of food.

Stop here and look at a picture of a goat as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon also prepares unleavened bread, or bread without any yeast. Gideon uses an ephah of flour to make the bread. An ephah of flour is between 13 and 23 kilograms of flour. That much flour would make a large amount of bread.

Stop here and look at a picture of unleavened bread as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon puts the goat's meat into a basket, and he puts the broth into a pot. The broth is the water that Gideon cooked the meat in.

Stop here and look at a picture of a pot of broth as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon takes the cooked meat, the broth in the pot, and the unleavened bread back to the winepress under the tree and shows them to the angel of Yahweh. The angel of Yahweh tells Gideon to put the meat and unleavened bread on a rock, and to pour the broth over the meat and the bread. After Gideon does this, the angel of Yahweh touches the meat and unleavened bread with the tip of a staff. The meat and bread catch on fire, and the fire completely burns up the meat and bread. Then the angel of Yahweh disappears.

Now Gideon fully understands that the angel of Yahweh was the one Gideon talked to all this time. Gideon is very afraid because Gideon saw the angel of Yahweh. People in Gideon's culture believed that if a person saw Yahweh face to face, that person would die. But the voice of Yahweh tells Gideon not to be afraid, and assures Gideon that Gideon will not die.

After that, Gideon builds an altar to Yahweh. An altar was a place where the Israelites would kill and burn animals or incense as an offering to Yahweh. Gideon dedicates this altar to Yahweh and gives the altar the name "Yahweh is Peace." The storyteller says that the altar is still there in the town of Ophrah. This means that the altar still stood in the place at the time when the storyteller tells about it.

Stop here and look at a picture of an ancient altar as a group. Pause this audio here.

That night, Yahweh's voice speaks to Gideon once again. Yahweh tells Gideon to get the bull that belongs to Gideon's father. This bull was a fully-grown male cow. Bulls were very strong animals, and the Israelites valued them very highly. The Israelites used bulls to do difficult work, such as to pull heavy things. Yahweh probably also tells Gideon to take another bull that is young, seven years old, that also belongs to Gideon's father.

Stop here and look at a picture of a bull as a group. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh tells Gideon to pull down the altar to Baal that belongs to Gideon's father. Baal was the name that the Canaanites and other peoples gave to the male false gods. The Canaanites believed that Baal controlled the wind and the rain, and that Baal caused food and crops to grow in the fields. Many Israelites had begun to worship Baal and other false gods. Gideon's family worships these gods too. That is why Gideon's father has an altar dedicated to Baal. It angered Yahweh that the Israelites worshiped Baal, because Baal was not real. Yahweh controlled the rain and wind and was the one who caused food and crops to grow, not Baal. That is why Yahweh wants Gideon to destroy this altar to Baal.

Yahweh also tells Gideon to cut down the Asherah, or Asherah pole, that stands beside the altar to Baal. Asherah was the name of the female false gods that the Canaanites worshiped. Just as Yahweh wants Gideon to destroy the Baal altar, so also Yahweh wants Gideon to destroy the Asherah pole.

Yahweh further instructs Gideon to replace the altar to Baal with a new altar, and to dedicate the new altar to Yahweh. Yahweh tells Gideon to kill the younger, seven-year-old bull and to offer that bull as a burnt offering to Yahweh. Yahweh tells Gideon to take the wood from the Asherah pole and use that wood for the fire that will burn up the seven-year-old bull.

Gideon gathers together 10 servants from his household, and does all of the things Yahweh instructed him to do. However, Gideon is afraid of his family and the other men of the town. So Gideon does not tear down the altars to the false gods and make a new altar and burnt offering to Yahweh during the day, when people will be able to see him. Instead, Gideon and his men follow Yahweh's instructions during the night. Gideon and the men do this so that they can destroy the altars to the false gods and make a new altar and burnt offering to Yahweh at a time when no one will be able to see them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when you or somebody else wanted to do what was good and right to do, but were afraid of what others might say, or how others might try to stop you.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:11–27 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: Gideon threshes wheat in a winepress below the ground. The angel of Yahweh comes and speaks to Gideon.

In the second scene: Gideon goes into his house to prepare a gift for the angel of Yahweh.

In the third scene: Gideon presents the gift to the angel of Yahweh. Yahweh gives Gideon a miraculous sign, and Gideon is afraid. Yahweh, who speaks through the angel, comforts Gideon.

In the fourth scene: Gideon creates an altar to worship Yahweh.

In the fifth scene: During the night, Yahweh speaks to Gideon and gives Gideon instructions.

In the sixth scene: Gideon follows Yahweh's instructions.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon
- The angel of Yahweh
- And Gideon's servants

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting: The passage takes place in Ophrah, a town in the land of the Israelites. During this time, the Midianites have attacked the Israelites for the past seven years. The Midianites have stolen or destroyed the Israelites' food and animals so that the Israelites begin to starve. The Israelites have called out to Yahweh for help during these seven years.

As the passage begins, Gideon is in a winepress, which is a pit in the ground that the Israelites would normally use to crush the fruit called grapes to make a drink called wine. However, Gideon is in the winepress to thresh a grain called wheat. This means Gideon beats the wheat plant against the floor to separate the wheat grain from the rest of the wheat plant. The Israelites would normally thresh wheat in the open fields or on hilltops. However, Gideon threshes wheat in the winepress so that the Midianites will not see Gideon and attack him. The winepress is under an oak tree, which helps to hide Gideon.

Stop here as a group and look at pictures of an oak tree, a winepress, stalks of wheat, and grains of wheat. Pause this audio here.

While Gideon is in the winepress to thresh the wheat, the angel of Yahweh comes before Gideon and greets Gideon. The angel of Yahweh says that Yahweh is with Gideon, which means that Yahweh will bless and help

Gideon. The angel of Yahweh calls Gideon "mighty warrior," which is a title that people gave to brave and strong soldiers. In this case, the angel means that Gideon is a man of good reputation in his community.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Think about people you know who fight bravely in battle, or who others consider to be very strong and important to help the community. What kinds of words or phrases do you use to describe these people? How will you talk about Gideon as the "mighty warrior"? Pause this audio here.

Gideon addresses the angel of Yahweh as "sir" or "master," a polite way to greet a stranger. Gideon does not realize at this point in the story that he speaks with the angel of Yahweh. Gideon thinks he speaks with a human being.

Gideon asks, "If Yahweh will bless and help us Israelites, then why have all these terrible things happened to us?" Gideon also asks, "Where are all the wonderful deeds of Yahweh, such as the ones our ancestors told us about, like when Yahweh led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt?" When Gideon asks these questions, Gideon challenges the angel of Yahweh. Gideon does not expect an answer. Gideon doubts that Yahweh could be with Gideon or with the Israelites. Gideon means something like, "We Israelites have not seen any wonderful deeds like the ones our ancestors told us about when Yahweh brought our ancestors out of Egypt."

Gideon says next that Yahweh has abandoned the Israelites, and has allowed the Israelites to fall into the power of the Midianites. The angel of Yahweh turns to Gideon and looks at Gideon. Yahweh, who speaks through the angel, tells Gideon to go and save the people of Israel from the Midianites. Yahweh asks, "Is it now I who am sending you?" Yahweh asks this question as a way to make Gideon know for certain that Yahweh has chosen Gideon. Yahweh means something like, "I, Yahweh, send you!"

Gideon asks, "How can I save the people of Israel from the Midianites?" The fact that Gideon asks this shows that Gideon either knows or suspects now that he speaks with Yahweh. Gideon uses a question to show that he does not believe he can save the Israelites. Gideon means something like, "I cannot possibly save the Israelites!"

Gideon next says that his family is the smallest family in the tribe of Manasseh, and that Gideon himself is the least or youngest person in his family. Gideon says these things to emphasize that he does not believe he can save the Israelites, because Gideon's family is not strong or important, and Gideon is the least strong or least important member of his family.

But Yahweh, who speaks through the angel, says, "I will be with you." Again Yahweh means, "I will bless and help you." Yahweh says that, by Yahweh's help, Gideon will be able to defeat all of the Midianites as easily as if Gideon fought just one man.

Gideon asks Yahweh to give Gideon a sign, so that Gideon will know that Yahweh is truly the one Gideon speaks with. Gideon asks the angel of Yahweh to remain in that place and wait while Gideon prepares a gift for Yahweh. The angel of Yahweh agrees to wait.

In the second scene, Gideon goes into his house and kills a young goat and cooks the goat's meat. Gideon also prepares a kind of bread made without any yeast. The Israelites called this kind of bread unleavened bread. Gideon puts the goat's meat into a basket, and puts the broth or water that he cooked the meat in into a pot.

Stop here and look at pictures of a goat, unleavened bread, and broth in a pot as a group. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Gideon takes the cooked meat, the broth in a pot, and the unleavened bread back to the tree and shows them to the angel of Yahweh. The angel of Yahweh tells Gideon to put the meat and unleavened bread on a rock, and to pour the broth over the meat and the bread. Gideon does this, and the angel of Yahweh takes a staff and touches the meat and unleavened bread with the tip of the staff. When the angel of Yahweh touches these things with the staff, a fire immediately begins to burn on the rock where the meat and bread sit, and the fire completely burns up the meat and bread. The angel of Yahweh disappears.

Now Gideon understands he has talked to the angel of Yahweh during this time. Gideon cries out in fear, and says, "Oh master Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" Gideon is very afraid here. Gideon's words mean something like, "I will die, because I have seen the face of the angel of Yahweh!" Gideon believes Gideon will die. But the voice of Yahweh speaks to Gideon and comforts Gideon. Yahweh says, "Peace to you. Do not be afraid. You will not die." "Peace to you" was a common way to greet people, and in this case Yahweh uses these words to comfort Gideon.

Stop here and tell a story where someone feels surprised and suddenly very afraid. What is the first thing that this person says? How does that person show surprise and fear? What kinds of things does someone say to comfort someone who is afraid? How will you translate how Yahweh comforts Gideon? Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, Gideon builds an altar and dedicates it to Yahweh. Gideon will use this altar to worship Yahweh. People usually built altars out of stone. An altar was a place where the Israelites would kill and burn animals or incense as an offering to Yahweh. Gideon dedicates this altar to Yahweh, and gives the altar the name, "Yahweh is Peace."

Stop here and look at a picture of an ancient altar as a group. Pause this audio here.

All of these things happen during the day. In the fifth scene, it is the night of that very same day. Gideon hears the voice of Yahweh who speaks to Gideon. Yahweh tells Gideon to take the bull that belongs to Gideon's father, and another bull that is young that also belongs to Gideon's father.

Stop here and look at a picture of a bull as a group. Pause this audio here.

At this point in the story, we learn that although Gideon and his family are Israelites, and they know about Yahweh, Gideon and his family worship the false gods of other peoples. Gideon and his family members do not understand the Israelites' covenant or promise that says that they will not worship false gods, or Gideon's family has decided to disobey that covenant. Yahweh now tells Gideon to pull down the altar to the false god, Baal. Although the passage does not say so directly, Yahweh probably intends for Gideon to use the strong adult bull to help pull down the Baal altar. Yahweh also tells Gideon to cut down the Asherah pole that stands next to the altar. This was a wooden pole, or it may even have been a small tree. The Israelites dedicated this pole or small tree to the false goddess Asherah. Gideon's family used the altar and the pole to worship the false gods of foreign peoples. Yahweh further tells Gideon to put up a new altar in the place where Gideon will tear down the altar to Baal. This new altar will be to Yahweh. Yahweh tells Gideon to put the wood from the Asherah pole onto the new altar, and to make a fire with the wood. Yahweh tells Gideon to kill the younger bull and give it as a burnt offering to Yahweh on the new altar.

In the sixth scene, it is still the same night. Gideon gathers 10 servants of his household, and Gideon does all of the things Yahweh commanded. First, Gideon uses the older, larger bull to pull down the altar to Baal. Second, Gideon cuts down the Asherah pole. Third, Gideon builds a new altar to Yahweh and burns the wood from the Asherah pole on this new altar. Fourth, Gideon uses this fire to cook the meat of the young bull, and he offers this meat to Yahweh as a burnt offering. However, Gideon and his servants do all of these things at night, because they are afraid that Gideon's family will see them. As they do the things that Yahweh commanded them to do, Gideon and the servants do them fearfully, because they worry that the other Israelites will see them.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:11–27 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon
- The angel of Yahweh
- And Gideon's servants

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

In the first scene, Gideon threshes wheat down in a winepress, so that the Midianites will not see him. The angel of Yahweh comes before Gideon and greets Gideon. The angel of Yahweh says that Yahweh is with Gideon. Gideon asks why so many terrible things could have happened to the Israelites if Yahweh were truly with them. Gideon asks why the Israelites have not seen Yahweh perform any wonderful deeds of Yahweh, such as when Yahweh led the Israelites' ancestors out of slavery in Egypt. Gideon says that Yahweh has abandoned the Israelites and allowed them to fall into the power of the Midianites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel frustrated, because I have heard stories of how Yahweh helped my ancestors, but Yahweh does not seem to help us now; or
- I feel sad, because it seems Yahweh has abandoned us.

The angel of Yahweh turns and looks at Gideon. The angel of Yahweh tells Gideon to save the people of Israel from the Midianites. The angel of Yahweh says that he himself chooses Gideon to do this.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want Gideon to know that I have not abandoned him or the Israelites; or
- I want Gideon to understand that I will use Gideon to save the Israelites.

Gideon asks how he, Gideon, could possibly save the Israelites. Gideon does not believe he can do this. Gideon says that his family is the smallest and weakest family in the tribe of Manasseh, and that Gideon himself is the youngest or least important member of his family.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am amazed that Yahweh would choose someone so unimportant to carry out Yahweh's will; or
- I do not believe that someone weak and unimportant like myself could possibly save the Israelites. I am not sure if this is really Yahweh.

But Yahweh, who speaks through the angel, says, "I will be with you." Yahweh says that, by Yahweh's help, Gideon will be able to defeat all of the Midianites as easily as if Gideon fought just one man.

Gideon asks for Yahweh to give Gideon a sign, so that Gideon will know that all of this is true. Gideon asks the angel of Yahweh to wait while Gideon prepares a gift for Yahweh. The angel of Yahweh agrees to wait.

In the second scene, Gideon goes into his house and kills a young goat and cooks the goat's meat. Gideon also cooks unleavened bread, or bread made without any yeast. Gideon puts the cooked meat into a basket. Gideon takes the water that he cooked the meat in and pours it into a pot.

In the third scene, Gideon takes the meat, the broth in its pot, and the unleavened bread back to the tree and shows them to the angel of Yahweh. The angel of Yahweh tells Gideon to put the meat and unleavened bread on a rock, and to pour the broth over the meat and the bread. Gideon does this. The angel of Yahweh holds a staff. The angel of Yahweh touches the meat and unleavened bread with the tip of the staff. A fire immediately springs up on the rock where the meat and bread sit, and the fire completely burns up the meat and bread. The angel of Yahweh disappears.

Gideon fully realizes that he has talked to the angel of Yahweh during this time. Gideon cries out in fear and says that he has seen the angel of Yahweh face to face.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am terrified because I believe that to see the angel of Yahweh means that I will die!

The voice of Yahweh speaks to Gideon and comforts Gideon. Yahweh tells Gideon that Gideon will not die.

In the fourth scene, Gideon builds an altar of worship and dedicates it to Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now that I have spoken with Yahweh, I want to serve and worship Yahweh truly; or
- I feel hopeful that Yahweh really will use me to rescue the Israelites from the power of the Midianites.

In the fifth scene, it is night. Gideon hears the voice of Yahweh who tells Gideon to take two bulls that belong to Gideon's father—an adult bull and a younger, seven-year-old bull. Yahweh tells Gideon to pull down the altar to the false god, Baal, and to cut down the Asherah pole that stands next to the altar. Yahweh then tells Gideon to put up a new altar for Yahweh in place of the altar to Baal. Yahweh tells Gideon to kill the younger bull and to burn the bull on the new altar with the wood from the Asherah pole as a burnt offering to Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that the Israelites have broken my commands when they worshiped false gods; or
- I am the only true God, so it angers me when people say there are other gods besides me.

In the sixth scene, it is still night. While everyone else is asleep, Gideon and 10 servants use the adult bull to pull down the altar to Baal. Gideon also cuts down the Asherah pole, and he builds a new altar to Yahweh. Gideon takes the wood from the Asherah pole and uses it to cook the meat of the younger bull, as a burnt offering to Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want to serve Yahweh, but I am also afraid of what my family will say or do to me if they see me tear down their altar to Baal.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:11–27 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Gideon threshes wheat down in a **winepress**. This means Gideon is down in the winepress where he beats the stalks of wheat against the floor to separate the **wheat grain** from the rest of the wheat plant.

Stop here and look at a picture of stalks of wheat, a picture of wheat grains, and a picture of a winepress as a group. Discuss what you will call the wheat grains and winepress in your translation. For more information on winepresses, look up winepress in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

The **angel of Yahweh** comes before Gideon and greets Gideon.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use to translate "angel of Yahweh." Translate "angel of Yahweh" in the same way you translated it in previous passages. For more information, look up angel of Yahweh in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

Remember to use the same word for **Yahweh** in this passage as you have used in previous passages. For more information about Yahweh, see the Master Glossary.

Gideon calls the angel **lord**, or master. This is a polite way to greet a stranger. Use the same word for lord that you have used in previous passages, and see lord in the Master Glossary for more information.

Gideon says that his family is the least important family in his **clan**, or the group of families in his **tribe**.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word you will use for **clan**, or group of families within a tribe. Use the same word for clan, or group of families, that you have used in previous books of the Bible. Pause this audio here.

The angel of Yahweh says that Yahweh is with Gideon, which means that Yahweh will bless or help Gideon. Yahweh says that, by Yahweh's help, Gideon will be able to defeat all of the Midianites as easily as if Gideon fought just one man. Gideon asks Yahweh to give Gideon a **sign**, so that Gideon will know that all of this is true.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use to translate **sign**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you used there. For more information, look up sign in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

Gideon asks the angel of Yahweh to wait while Gideon prepares a gift, or **offering**, for Yahweh. An offering is a gift that people give to God to give thanks or to ask God to forgive them. The angel of Yahweh agrees to wait. Gideon goes into his house and kills a young goat and cooks the goat's meat. Gideon also cooks an **ephah**, or between 13 and 23 kilograms, of flour to make **unleavened bread**, or bread made without any yeast.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **offering**, **ephah**, and **unleavened bread**. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same words that you used there. For more information, look up offering and ephah in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

Gideon takes the goat's meat, the broth the meat was cooked in, and the unleavened bread and shows them to the angel of Yahweh.

Stop here and look at pictures of a goat, unleavened bread, and broth in a pot as a group. Pause this audio here.

The angel of **God** instructs Gideon to put the meat and unleavened bread on a rock, and to pour the broth over the meat and the bread. Interestingly, here the angel is called the angel of God. Use the same word for God that you have used in previous passages, and remember that God is in the Master Glossary.

When the angel of Yahweh makes the meat and unleavened bread burn up, Gideon calls Yahweh, "**Lord Yahweh**," which is a title that shows respect to Yahweh and means that Yahweh is great and powerful. Some translations say "sovereign or all-powerful Yahweh."

Stop here and discuss as a group what title you will use for **Lord Yahweh**. If you have translated this title in another book of the Bible, use the same title here. For more information, you can also look up sovereign in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

After the angel of Yahweh has left, Gideon builds an **altar** of worship and dedicates it to Yahweh. Gideon calls the altar "Yahweh is **Peace**."

Stop here and look at a picture of an ancient altar as a group. Use the same words to translate **altar** and **peace** as you previously used. For more information, look up altar and peace in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

That night, Gideon hears the voice of Yahweh tell Gideon to take two **bulls** that belong to Gideon's father—an adult bull and a younger, seven-year-old bull.

Stop here and look at a picture of a bull as a group. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh tells Gideon to pull down the altar to the false god, **Baal**, and to cut down the Asherah pole that stands next to the altar. Translate Baal and Asherah in the same way you have translated them in previous passages. For more information, look up Baal in the Master Glossary.

Yahweh tells Gideon to put up a new altar for Yahweh in that same place. Yahweh tells Gideon to kill the younger bull and to burn it on the new altar with the wood from the Asherah pole as a **burnt offering** to Yahweh. People gave burnt offerings when they killed and burned the entire animal on the altar.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **burnt offering**. If you have translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same words you have used there. For more information, look up burnt offering in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

At night, Gideon takes 10 **servants** and does what Yahweh commanded. Use the same word for servants that you have used in previous passages, and remember that servant is in the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 6:11–27

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (20547544 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (25482598 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 6:28–40

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 6:28–40 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:28–40 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:28–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, Yahweh told the Israelite Gideon that he, Yahweh, would give Gideon the power to rescue the Israelites from the oppression of the Israelites' enemies. For seven years, these enemies had continued to steal or destroy the Israelites' food and animals. Yahweh commanded Gideon to destroy the

objects that Gideon's family used to worship the false gods Baal and Asherah. Yahweh also commanded Gideon to build a new altar of worship to Yahweh, and to offer a sacrifice to Yahweh on this new altar. Gideon obeyed, but Gideon did all of these things during the night, when everyone was asleep, because Gideon was afraid of what his family would do to Gideon.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when someone was afraid to do a thing because they were afraid of what their family members would think of that thing. Pause this audio here.

At the start of this passage, the people who live in the town wake up in the morning and discover that someone has destroyed the altar to Baal and the wooden pole to Asherah. The people also discover the new altar with the sacrifice on it.

Stop here and look at a picture of an ancient stone altar as a group. Pause this audio here.

The people ask one another who has done all of these things. The people learn that Gideon is the one who has done these things, so the people go to Joash, Gideon's father, and they demand that Joash bring Gideon outside so that the people can kill Gideon. The people are extremely angry that Gideon has challenged the gods that the people worship.

Joash, Gideon's father, asks the people if they can defend or save Baal. Joash says that if Baal is a god, then Baal should be able to defend himself. Joash also says that if anyone in the town tries to kill Gideon in order to defend Baal, then Joash will put that person to death before the next morning. This is because that person would be guilty of the murder of one of Joash's family members.

The people of the town then give Gideon a new name. The people call Gideon "Jerub-Baal," which means, "Let Baal fight against him." They call Gideon this because Joash had said that Baal himself should fight against Gideon, and not the people of the town.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when people gave someone a new name, or a second name, because of some interesting or amazing thing that person did. Pause this audio here.

The foreign peoples who have oppressed the Israelites all gather together. These enemies are the Midianites, or the people of the land of Midian; the Amalekites, who lived near the Midianites; and the people of the east, a people who lived in the desert east of Israel. The Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east cross the Jordan River, which is the river that separates Israel from nearby lands to the east. These enemy peoples come to a place called the Jezreel Valley. A valley is land with high places, like hills or mountains, all around it. The Jezreel Valley was an important place because it allowed people to travel easily into Israel.

Stop here and look at a map of the Jordan River and the Jezreel Valley as a group. Also look at a picture of the Jezreel Valley as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Spirit of Yahweh comes on Gideon, or takes control of Gideon. The Spirit of Yahweh is a power that comes from Yahweh. When the Spirit of Yahweh comes on a person, that person receives a special power or ability directly from Yahweh. In Gideon's case, this was the ability to gather and lead an army of people. In the previous passage, Gideon said he was the youngest and least important member of his family. But in this passage, Gideon leads his family to war against their enemies, and his family members listen to Gideon and obey Gideon. This would not have happened if the Spirit of Yahweh had not come on Gideon.

Gideon blows a trumpet, which was an instrument that made loud noises. In that time, people would make this instrument from the horn of an animal called a ram. People used these ram's horns to call other people to a battle.

Stop here and look at pictures of a ram and of a trumpet made from a ram's horn as a group. Discuss this question as a group: In your culture, how do you call people into battle? Pause this audio here.

The sound of the trumpet calls out the Abiezrites, which is the name of Gideon's clan or family. Gideon also sends messengers to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. These tribes were other groups of Israelites who lived near the Jezreel Valley. The men of these tribes also follow and obey Gideon.

Stop here and look at a map that shows the territories of the 12 tribes of Israel as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon speaks to Yahweh. Gideon says that he will take a fleece of wool, which is the soft, curly hair from a sheep or goat, and lay the fleece of wool on the floor. Gideon says that if Yahweh will cause there to be dew, or water droplets, on the fleece in the morning, but no dew on the ground around the fleece, then this will be a sign that Yahweh will truly use Gideon to rescue the Israelites from the Israelites' enemies.

Stop here and look at a picture of a fleece of wool and a picture of dewdrops on grass as a group. Pause this audio here.

The next morning, Gideon finds that the ground is dry, with no dew, but that the fleece of wool is so wet with dew that when Gideon squeezes the fleece, enough water comes out of the fleece to fill an entire bowl. Gideon is amazed by this, because dew develops on surfaces at night time, and normally there would be dew on both the ground and the fleece. Yahweh made it so that the dew gathered only on the fleece.

Gideon now asks Yahweh for one more sign. Gideon asks Yahweh this time to make the fleece remain dry but to cause there to be dew on the ground at night time. Yahweh does what Gideon asks him to do. The next morning, the fleece is dry, with no dew on it, but there is dew on the ground all around the fleece. This again amazes Gideon, because Yahweh caused the fleece to remain dry.

Gideon asked Yahweh to do these things as a sign, or an assurance from Yahweh, that Yahweh will enable Gideon to defeat the Israelites' enemies in battle. Yahweh showed graciousness and love when he gave Gideon these signs, because Yahweh had previously commanded that the Israelites should not test Yahweh, or ask Yahweh for signs. In the ancient world, people who worshiped false gods often tested their gods when they said, "If the god does something that amazes me, then I will know the god tells the truth." Yahweh told the Israelites not to do this, because Yahweh wanted the Israelites to trust in the covenant or special agreement Yahweh had made with the Israelites. But even though Gideon broke this rule, Yahweh was patient and showed love when he gave Gideon the sign that Gideon sought.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Why is it important to trust someone?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:28–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

In the first scene: The people of the town discover that someone has destroyed the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole, and that someone has built a new altar. The people wonder who could have done this, and they realize Gideon did it.

In the second scene: The people of the town go to Joash, Gideon's father, and demand that Joash give Gideon to the people so that the people can kill Gideon. Joash refuses and argues against the people of the town.

In the third scene: The armies of the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the eastern peoples gather together, cross the Jordan River, and enter Israel. The armies make camp in the Jezreel Valley.

In the fourth scene: The Spirit of Yahweh comes on Gideon. Gideon sounds a trumpet, and his clan, the Abiezrites, gather together and follow Gideon to war.

In the fifth scene: Gideon's messengers come to the Israelite tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali and call them to battle. These tribes go to meet Gideon and the Abiezrites.

In the sixth scene: Gideon speaks to Yahweh and asks Yahweh for a sign. Yahweh grants Gideon's request.

In the seventh scene: Gideon asks Yahweh for another sign, and Yahweh again grants Gideon's request.

The characters in this passage are:

- The people of the town
- Joash, the father of Gideon
- Gideon
- The army of the Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern peoples
- Gideon's clan, the Abiezrites
- Gideon's messengers
- The Israelite tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali
- And Yahweh.

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

At the beginning of the scene, it is early morning, and people have just begun to wake up. The people of the town see that someone has broken apart the stone altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole. The people realize that someone must have done these things at night.

Stop here and look at a picture of an ancient stone altar as a group. Pause this audio here.

The people of the town also see a new altar, and they realize that someone must have made a burnt offering on this new altar, because they see the remains of the young bull that someone sacrificed. The people of the town discuss who could have done these things. They realize that Gideon, the son of Joash, did these things. The passage does not say exactly how the people realize this, but somehow as they talk about it and investigate it together, they find out that Gideon is the one responsible.

In the second scene, the people of the town go to Joash's home. The people tell Joash to bring Gideon outside so that they can kill Gideon. The people tell Joash that they want to kill Gideon, because Gideon broke down the altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole. But Joash says, "Are you going to defend Baal? Are you going to save Baal?" Joash uses these questions to emphasize that a human should not have to defend a god, because a god should be able to defend itself. Joash uses these questions to tell the men of the town, "You should not have to defend Baal."

Joash says that if anyone does try to kill Gideon to defend Baal, then Joash will kill that person before the next morning, which actually means Joash will kill that person that very same day. Joash says that if Baal is a god, then the people should let Baal defend himself or argue for himself, since Gideon has destroyed Baal's altar. After Joash says this, the people of the town decide to call Gideon "Jerub-Baal," which means, "Let Baal argue against him."

The third scene begins with a word that shows that the narrator now starts to tell a new part of the story. The Midianites, the Amalekites, and the eastern peoples all gather together. These people cross over the Jordan River, which is a large river that separates the land of these people from the lands of the Israelites. The Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern peoples make a place to rest and sleep in the Jezreel Valley, because the people have traveled so far and are tired.

Stop here and look at a map of the Jordan River and the Jezreel Valley as a group. Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, the Spirit of Yahweh comes over Gideon and gives Gideon the ability to lead other people. When this happens, Gideon takes a trumpet that people made from a ram's horn and blows into this trumpet to make a very loud sound. When the Abiezrites, Gideon's clan, hear this sound, they come out to Gideon. The Abiezrites agree to follow Gideon into battle.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a ram and a picture of a ram's horn that people used as a trumpet. Pause this audio here.

In the fifth scene, Gideon sends his messengers out to the Israelite tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. The peoples of these tribes live near the Jezreel Valley, where the Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern peoples have stopped to rest. The people of the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali all go with

Gideon's messengers to meet with Gideon and the Abiezrites. Although the storyteller just says the names of the tribes, he really means the people of these tribes who come to fight with Gideon.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows the territories of the 12 tribes of Israel. Pause this audio here.

In the sixth scene, Gideon speaks to Yahweh. Gideon asks Yahweh to give Gideon a sign, so that Gideon will know for sure that Yahweh will use Gideon to save the Israelites from the Midianites and other enemies. Gideon says that he will lay a fleece of wool, the soft, curly hair from a sheep or goat, on the floor. Gideon says that if there is dew, or small water droplets, on the fleece of wool in the morning, but no dew on the ground around the fleece, then that will be a sign from Yahweh.

Stop here and look at a picture of a fleece of wool and a picture of dewdrops on grass as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon lays out the fleece of wool. Gideon gets up early the next morning and finds that the ground is dry, with no dew, but that the fleece of wool is very wet with dew. Gideon squeezes the fleece, and there is enough dew to fill an entire bowl. This means that there is a lot of dew on the fleece.

In the seventh scene, Gideon speaks to Yahweh once more. Gideon asks Yahweh not to be angry with Gideon. Gideon asks for permission to speak to Yahweh one more time. Gideon is worried that he will anger Yahweh because Gideon understands that he is not supposed to test Yahweh or ask Yahweh for signs. Gideon asks Yahweh to provide one more sign. Gideon asks Yahweh to this time make the ground be wet with dew, but for Yahweh to keep the fleece of wool dry, with no dew on it. That night, Yahweh does what Gideon asked.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:28–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The people of the town
- Joash, the father of Gideon
- Gideon
- The army of the Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern peoples
- The army of the Israelites
- Gideon's clan, the Abiezrites
- Gideon's messengers
- The Israelite tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali
- And Yahweh.

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

In the first scene, the people of the town wake up and realize that at night someone destroyed the altar to Baal, cut down the Asherah pole, and made a sacrifice or burnt offering on a new altar. The people of the town discuss who could have done these things. They realize that Gideon, the son of Joash, did these things.

In the second scene, the people of the town go to Joash's home and demand that Joash give them Gideon, so that they can kill Gideon.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of the town, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am afraid because Gideon destroyed the altar to the god Baal! What will our god do to us?
or
- I am angry at Gideon and want to punish him for what he did!

Joash answers that the people of the town should not have to defend Baal, since Baal is a god. Joash says that if anyone tries to defend Baal, then Joash will very quickly put that person to death.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Joash, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that mere human beings would try to defend a god. If Baal is truly a god, then Baal will defend himself! or
- I am afraid these people will try to harm my son!

In the third scene, the Israelites' enemies—the Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern peoples—cross over the Jordan River into the Israelites' lands. The Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern peoples make a place to rest in the Jezreel Valley.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern peoples, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We want the food and animals that belong to the Israelites! or
- We are not afraid, because for seven years we have had power over the Israelites, and the Israelites have never been able to stop us!

In the fourth scene, the Spirit of Yahweh comes over Gideon. Gideon, with the Spirit of Yahweh inside him, takes a trumpet or ram's horn and blows into it to call Gideon's clan, the Abiezrites, to follow Gideon into battle.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of the clan of the Abiezrites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I was angry at Gideon earlier, but now I want to follow Gideon, because I truly believe that Gideon will lead us to defeat our enemies.

In the fifth scene, Gideon's messengers come to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. The warriors of these tribes go with Gideon's messengers. They gather together with Gideon and the Abiezrites.

In the sixth scene, Gideon speaks to Yahweh. Gideon says he will lay out a fleece of wool, and he asks Yahweh to make the dew that gathers on objects in the night gather only on the fleece of wool. Gideon says that he will know that Yahweh's promise to defeat the Israelites' enemies is true if Yahweh does this. That night, Yahweh causes the dew to collect only on the fleece of wool, and Yahweh causes no dew to collect on the ground.

Early in the morning, Gideon finds that the ground is dry, but that the fleece of wool is wet with dew. Gideon squeezes and twists the fleece and finds there is so much dew in the fleece that it can fill a whole bowl.

In the seventh scene, Gideon asks Yahweh for another sign with the fleece. But Gideon also asks Yahweh not to be angry with Gideon.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know that I should not test Yahweh like this, but I am still so afraid that Yahweh will not do what Yahweh said he would do! or
- Even though Yahweh has already given me one sign that Yahweh will help me defeat the enemies, I still struggle to believe Yahweh will really do this.

Gideon asks Yahweh to make the ground wet with dew a night, but to let the fleece be dry, without dew. That night, Yahweh does this. In the morning, Gideon finds that the fleece of wool is dry, even though the ground is wet with dew.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Even though I have commanded my people not to test me and ask for signs, I will give Gideon the sign he asks for, because I love Gideon and the other Israelites; or
- I will be patient and kind towards Gideon, even though Gideon continues to test me.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 6:28–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The people in the town discover that someone has destroyed the **altar** to **Baal** and the wooden **pole** to **Asherah**, and that someone has made a new altar and offered a sacrifice on the new altar. Use the same words to translate "Asherah pole" and "Baal's altar" as you previously used. For more information, look up altar and Baal in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at a picture of an ancient altar as a group. Pause this audio here.

The people of the town demand that Joash bring out his son, Gideon, so that the people can kill Gideon. Joash says that if Baal is a **god**, then Baal himself should be able to fight against the one who destroyed Baal's altar. For this reason, the people of the town then give Gideon a second name, **Jerub-Baal**, which means, "Let Baal fight against him." Use the same word for god that you have used in previous passages, and remember that gods is in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use to explain the meaning of "Jerub-Baal." Pause this audio here.

The Midianites, Amalekites, and the people of the east cross the Jordan River and stop to rest in a **valley** called Jezreel Valley. A valley is land with high places, like hills or mountains, all around it.

Stop here and look at a photo of the Jezreel Valley as a group. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use to translate valley. Pause this audio here.

The **Spirit of Yahweh** comes on Gideon and gives Gideon the ability to lead the Israelites against their enemies. Remember that this phrase consists of just the name "**Yahweh**" and the normal word for "spirit." People do not translate this phrase the same way they translate "Holy Spirit" in the New Testament. However, although the phrase "Spirit of Yahweh" is the general term for God's spirit, you can look up Holy Spirit in the Master Glossary to hear more about the work of God's Spirit in the Old Testament. Translate Yahweh and "Spirit of Yahweh" in the same way you have translated it in previous passages in Judges, and remember that Yahweh is also in the Master Glossary.

Gideon blows a **trumpet**, which is an instrument that people made of a **ram's horn** and that made a loud, clear sound.

Stop here and look at pictures of a ram and a trumpet made from a ram's horn as a group. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "ram" and "trumpet." Pause this audio here.

The Abiezrites, Gideon's clan, come to Gideon. Gideon sends messengers to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and the men of these tribes also come to Gideon. Use the same word for **Israel** or **Israelites** as you have used in previous passages. Look up Israel or Israelites in the Master Glossary for more information on the tribes of Israel.

Gideon says to **God** that Gideon will take a **fleece of wool**, which is the soft, curly hair from a sheep or goat, and lay the fleece of wool on the floor. The storyteller uses the general title for God for the rest of this story. Use the same word for God as you have used in previous passages, and remember that God is in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at a picture of a fleece of wool as a group. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "fleece of wool." Pause this audio here.

Gideon says that if there is **dew**, or water droplets that gather at night, on the fleece in the morning, but no dew on the ground around the fleece, then Gideon will know for sure that Yahweh really will use Gideon to rescue the Israelites from the Israelites' enemies.

Stop here and look at a picture of dewdrops on grass as a group. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "dew." Pause this audio here.

Gideon is here asking Yahweh for a **sign**. Although the passage does not say "sign" directly, you may use the idea of a sign as you translate this passage. Use the same word for sign that you used in previous passages. For more information on sign, consult the Master Glossary.

The next morning, Gideon finds that the ground is dry, with no dew, but that the fleece of wool is very wet with dew. Gideon now asks God for one more sign. Gideon asks God to make the fleece remain dry but the ground wet with dew at night. The next morning, the fleece is dry, with no dew on it, but there is dew on the ground all around the fleece.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 6:28–40

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (19295998 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 7:1–8

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 7:1–8 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:1–8 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, the Spirit of Yahweh entered into Gideon and gave Gideon the ability to lead the men of Israel into battle against the Midianites. The men of Gideon's clan, the Abiezrites, followed Gideon, and so did men from the Israelite tribes Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. Gideon asked Yahweh for two signs, or assurances, that Gideon and the Israelites would defeat the Midianites. Yahweh kindly granted Gideon both assurances, so that Gideon would know certainly that Yahweh would give victory to the Israelites.

Gideon and the Israelite men who are with Gideon get up early in the morning. The storyteller reminds us that Gideon's second name is "Jerub-Baal." Jerub-Baal was a second name that the Israelites gave to Gideon in the previous passage, when Gideon destroyed the stone altar of the false god Baal. "Jerub-Baal" means, "Let Baal fight against him." The name "Jerub-Baal" is a reminder that Yahweh led Gideon to challenge the false gods of the Israelites' enemies, just as Yahweh will now lead Gideon to challenge and defeat the Israelites' enemies directly.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you choose or give names in your culture? Tell a story of a time when a person received a name because of something that person did, or because of something that person was expected to do. Pause this audio here.

Gideon and the Israelite men set up their camp next to a spring, pool, or stream of water that comes out of the ground. The spring's name was Harod, and it was at the bottom of a mountain. The camp of the Midianites was to the north of the Israelites' camp. The Midianites' camp was next to a hill that people called Moreh. The hill of Moreh was in a valley, which is a low land surrounded by higher places. This is the same valley that the previous passage called the Jezreel Valley. The spring of Harod was above that valley, and the hill of Moreh, where the Midianites camped, was about 13 kilometers away from the Israelites' camp.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows the spring of Harod, the Jezreel Valley, and the hill of Moreh. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh speaks to Gideon. Yahweh says that there are too many Israelites in Gideon's army. Yahweh explains that if Yahweh gave the Israelites victory over the Midianites with that many men, the Israelites would boast.

The Israelites would say, "We have saved ourselves without Yahweh's help." This would be prideful, and Yahweh does not want the Israelites to be prideful. Yahweh wants the Israelites to understand that the Israelites could only defeat the Midianites with Yahweh's help.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when someone foolishly boasted that they did something all by themselves, even though someone else helped them do that thing. Pause this audio here.

So Yahweh tells Gideon to speak to the Israelite men, and to say that if any of the men are afraid and shake with fear, then those men may leave the mountain where they have camped and return home. Twenty-two thousand Israelite men go home. At that point, 10,000 Israelite men continue to stay in Gideon's army.

Yahweh speaks again to Gideon. Yahweh says that there are still too many men in Gideon's army. Yahweh tells Gideon to lead the men to the water, which means the waters of the spring of Harod. Yahweh says to Gideon that Yahweh will test the Israelites. When Yahweh says that Yahweh will test the men, Yahweh means that he will do something that shows the men's character, or inner qualities. Yahweh tells Gideon that if Yahweh says, "This man will go with you," then that man will go with Gideon into battle against the Midianites. But if Yahweh says, "This man will not go with you," then that man will not go with Gideon into battle. Yahweh will choose which men go into battle with Gideon, because Yahweh, and not Gideon, is in charge.

Gideon brings the men to the waters of the spring.

Stop here and look at a picture of the spring of Harod as a group. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh tells Gideon to separate the men into two groups. Most Bible scholars believe that every man who will make a cup with his hands and lap the water with his tongue to drink, as a dog does, Gideon will put into one group. And every man who will bend over, or kneel down, to lap the water with his mouth directly from the spring, Gideon will put into a different group.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How would you drink water from a stream or pool? If you were there with the Israelites, which group of men would you choose to fight alongside—the men who bent over to drink, or those men who drank with their tongues? Why would you choose that group? Pause this audio here.

Only 300 men scoop the water into their hands and drink it with their tongues. Everyone else kneels or bends down to drink directly from the water. Yahweh tells Gideon that Yahweh will save the Israelites and give the Israelites power over the Midianites with the 300 men who drank from their hands with their tongues. Yahweh tells Gideon to send all the rest of the men home.

It is not completely clear how Yahweh's test of the Israelites worked. It could be that the men who bent over to drink were more careful, which showed that these men were more afraid. The men who drank with their tongues from their hands, like dogs, were more alert, a quality that might be helpful in battle. However, it could be that Yahweh saw these men as less able to fight, and Yahweh wanted to choose the men who were less able in order to show Yahweh's strength. Or it could simply be that Yahweh wanted an easy way to divide a small group of warriors from a large group of warriors.

But one thing is clear: Yahweh wanted only a very small number of men to fight the Midianites. To go fight the Midianites with only 300 men instead of 30,000 men must have frightened and confused Gideon and the other Israelites! However, Yahweh had two purposes in mind. Yahweh did not want the Israelites to brag that they had saved themselves without Yahweh's help. And Yahweh wanted Gideon and the Israelites to trust in Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when you or someone else had to trust another person to help you, even though it was very difficult to understand how that person could help you. Pause this audio here.

The 300 Israelite men took the other Israelite men's trumpets made from ram's horns, and their provisions, or food and supplies. Then the 300 Israelite men sent the other Israelite men back to their homes.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a trumpet that people made from a ram's horn. Pause this audio here.

Gideon sends the rest of the Israelites back to their tents, or homes, but keeps the 300 men that Yahweh chose. The camp of Midian is down in the valley, below Gideon and the 300 men.

Stop here and look at a picture of the Jezreel Valley as a group.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: Gideon and all the Israelite men who are with him get up early in the morning and set up camp beside the spring of Harod.

In the second scene: Yahweh tells Gideon to speak to the Israelite men, and to say that if any Israelite men are afraid to fight the Midianites, then those Israelite men may return to their homes.

In the third scene: Gideon follows Yahweh's instructions. Twenty-two thousand Israelite men return to their homes, and 10,000 men remain with Gideon.

In the fourth scene: Yahweh tells Gideon there are still too many Israelite men. Yahweh tells Gideon to lead the men to the spring of Harod and separate the men into groups. Yahweh says that the men who drink the water from their hands with their tongues will go in one group, and the men who bend over to drink directly from the water will go in another group.

In the fifth scene: Gideon follows Yahweh's instructions. Three hundred men drink the water from the spring from their hands with their tongues, and Gideon puts them in one group. The other men bend over to drink the water, and Gideon puts these men in a second group.

In the sixth scene: Yahweh speaks to Gideon once more. Yahweh says that Yahweh will save the Israelites with the 300 men who drank the water with their tongues. Yahweh tells Gideon to send the men who remain back to their tents, or to their homes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon
- Yahweh
- The fearful Israelite men
- The Israelite men who are not afraid
- The Israelite men who drink the waters of the spring from their hands with their tongues
- And the Israelite men who bend over to drink the waters directly from the spring.

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

It is early in the morning when Gideon and the other Israelite men wake up. Gideon and the men travel to a spring of water that they called the spring of Harod. They set up their camp next to the waters of the spring. Gideon and other Israelite men are in a high place, where they can look down into the Jezreel Valley. The camp of the Midianites is down below in the valley, beside a large hill people called the hill of Moreh. The Midianite camp is north of the Israelites' camp.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows the spring of Harod, the Jezreel Valley, and the hill of Moreh. Pause this audio here.

After the Israelites have set up camp beside the waters of the spring, Yahweh tells Gideon that there are too many Israelite men with Gideon. Yahweh says that Yahweh will not give the Midianites into the hands of the

Israelites, or give the Israelites power over the Midianites, when there are so many Israelites. Yahweh says that if the Israelites defeat the Midianites now, the Israelites will boast that they saved themselves by their own hands, or by their own power. So Yahweh tells Gideon to tell the Israelite men that if any of them are afraid to fight the Midianites, then those men may leave the camp and return home.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In previous passages, you talked about the hand of Yahweh, which means the power of Yahweh, and the hand of Israel, which means the power of Israel. How did you describe that phrase previously? How will you describe it here? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh tells Gideon to speak into the ears of the Israelites. To speak into "the ears" means to speak to the whole person. Yahweh means Gideon must speak to all the Israelite men who are gathered with Gideon. Yahweh tells Gideon to say to the Israelites that any Israelites who are so afraid that they tremble with fear may go home.

Twenty-two thousand Israelite men go home. These men must have decided to do so after Gideon gave Yahweh's message to the Israelite men, although the passage does not show that Gideon did so. But after they have heard Gideon speak, 22,000 men leave, and 10,000 men stay in the camp.

After this happens, Yahweh says to Gideon that there are still too many men in Gideon's army. Yahweh tells Gideon to lead the men to the waters of the spring nearby. Although the spring is near a mountain called Mount Gilead, this is not the same Mount Gilead we have heard of before. We are not sure where this mountain is. Yahweh says that Yahweh will test the men there at the spring, and Yahweh will tell Gideon which men should fight the Midianites and which men should not. Gideon then leads the men to the spring.

Stop here and look at a picture of the spring of Harod as a group. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh tells Gideon to separate the men into two groups. Gideon should put into one group all the men who fill their hands with the water and then use their tongues to lap up the water to drink as a dog does. Gideon should put into another group all the men who bend over to drink. Although the passage does not say so directly, these words imply that Gideon watches how the men drink the water and divides the men into two groups, just as Yahweh commanded.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will talk about the different ways that the men drank the water. Have the group act out the two different ways to drink the water, and then have the group members describe the actions in their own language. Pause this audio here.

One group of men with Gideon is much smaller than the other group. Only 300 men scoop the water into their hands and drink it with their tongues. This means that the other 9,700 men bent over to drink.

Yahweh speaks to Gideon again. Yahweh says Yahweh will cause the Israelites to defeat the Midianites with only the 300 Israelite men. Yahweh tells Gideon to let the rest of the men go home. Gideon sends the 9,700 Israelite men back to their tents, which is another way to say Gideon sent the men back to their homes. Gideon keeps the 300 men who remain with Gideon.

At the end of this passage, Gideon and the 300 men are still in their camp above the valley, and the Midianites are still in their camp down in the valley. But the 300 men now have the provisions of food and the battle trumpets made of rams' horns that they got from the rest of the men.

Stop here and look at a picture of the Jezreel Valley as a group. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon
- Yahweh
- The fearful Israelite men
- The Israelite men who are not afraid
- The Israelite men who drink the waters of the spring from their hands with their tongues
- And the Israelite men who bend over to drink the waters directly from the spring.

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Gideon and the other Israelite men wake up early and travel to the spring of Harod. Gideon and the men set up their camp next to the waters of the spring. Yahweh tells Gideon that Gideon still has too many men in Gideon's army. Yahweh says that Yahweh does not want the Israelites to brag and boast that the Israelites saved themselves by the Israelites' own power.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am worried that the Israelites will become proud and boastful after I cause them to defeat the Midianites; or
- I do not want the Israelites to think they have won the battle because they were stronger than the Midianites. Instead, I want the Israelites to know that I am stronger than the Midianites.

So Yahweh tells Gideon to give the Israelites in Gideon's army a message, that if any of the Israelite men are afraid to fight the Midianites, then those men may leave the camp and return home.

After Gideon tells the men in the army that anyone who is afraid may go home, 22,000 Israelite men leave and go home.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites who leave, "What are you thinking or feeling?" The person might answer things like:

- I am surprised that Yahweh allows us to leave; or
- If Yahweh commands it, then I will obey.

Yahweh speaks to Gideon again and says that Gideon still has too many men in Gideon's army. Yahweh tells Gideon to bring the men to the spring nearby, where Yahweh will test the men. Yahweh also tells Gideon that

Yahweh will then tell Gideon which men shall stay with Gideon to fight the Midianites and which men shall leave and go home.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you thinking or feeling?" The person might answer things like:

- I am disappointed that Yahweh takes away so many of my warriors, but I know I must trust Yahweh's promise to save us; or
- I know Yahweh wants us to trust Yahweh, but it is really hard not to feel nervous when we have so few men compared to the Midianites!

Gideon brings the men to the spring. Yahweh tells Gideon to put into one group all the men who scoop the water into their hands and then drink it with their tongues. Yahweh tells Gideon to put into another group all the men who bend over to drink directly from the spring.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite men who drink the water with their tongues, and the person who plays the Israelite men who bend over to drink the water, "What are you thinking or feeling?" The people might answer things like:

- I am so thirsty! or
- I am so relieved that Gideon has brought us to a place where we can drink!

Only 300 men scooped the water into their hands and then drank it with their tongues. The other 9,700 men bent over to drink directly from the water. Gideon divides the men into two groups. One group is very large, and the other group is much smaller. Yahweh tells Gideon to send the large group of men back home. Yahweh says that the small group of only 300 men will stay to fight the Midianites in the battle. Yahweh says Yahweh will cause the Israelites to defeat the Midianites with only the 300 men.

So Gideon sends the 9,700 men back to their tents to gather the things that belong to those men and then to go home. However, the 9,700 men leave behind their food and their ram's horn trumpets. The small group of 300 men stay with Gideon. Gideon will fight the whole large army of the Midianites with just these 300 men.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you thinking or feeling?" The person might answer things like:

- I am amazed that Yahweh wants me to lead only 300 men into battle against all of the Midianites! or
- I am afraid. How can we win the battle with only 300 men? But I know that Yahweh can make anything happen, so I will do what Yahweh says.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The passage begins when it mentions that Gideon was also called **Jerub-Baal**. This second name means, "Let Baal fight against him." This phrase refers back to a previous passage, when Gideon destroyed the altar of the false god Baal. Translate the word Baal and the name Jerub-Baal the same way you did previously. Remember that Baal is in the Master Glossary.

Gideon and the other Israelite men go early in the morning to a **spring**, which is a pool or stream of water that comes out of the ground. Use the same word to translate spring as you previously used. The Israelites' name for this spring was, "The spring of Harod."

Stop here and look at a picture of the spring of Harod as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Midianites are down below, in the Jezreel **Valley**. Use the same word to translate valley as you previously used. The Midianites' camp is next to a hill that the Israelites called the hill of Moreh.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows the spring of Harod, the Jezreel Valley, and the hill of Moreh. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh speaks to Gideon. Translate Yahweh the same way you did previously. For more information on this name, look up Yahweh in the Master Glossary. Yahweh says that Yahweh does not want **Israel** to boast that they won by their own strength. Sometimes the word Israel means the nation of Israel, and sometimes it means "the people of the nation of Israel." Here Israel means the people. Use the same word to translate Israel or **Israelites** as you previously used. For more information, look up Israel and Israelites in the Master Glossary.

Yahweh now tells Gideon that Gideon still has too many Israelite men. Yahweh instructs Gideon to lead the Israelite men to the waters of the spring so that Yahweh can **test** the Israelite men. The word for test in this passage means to find a way to discover the inner qualities or inner character of a person.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **test**. Pause this audio here.

Gideon leads the men to the spring. Yahweh tells Gideon to separate the men into two groups. Gideon puts into one group all the Israelite men who fill their hands with water and then lap up the water with their tongues to drink. These are only 300 men. Gideon puts all the rest of the Israelite men into another group. Yahweh speaks again. Yahweh says that Yahweh will use just these 300 men to give the Midianites into the Israelites' hand, or to give the Israelites power over the Midianites. All the other men gather their belongings and their **trumpets**, which were instruments that people made from ram's horns. Use the same word to translate trumpet as you previously used.

Stop here and look at a picture of a ram's horn used as a trumpet. Pause this audio here.

Gideon sends the men back to their tents, but keeps with him the 300 men that Yahweh chose.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 7:1–8

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 7:9–15

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 7:9–15 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:9–15 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

*Setting the Stage**Setting the Stage*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:9–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, Gideon and a large army of Israelite men set up their camp above the Jezreel Valley, at the spring of Harod. The camp of the Israelites' enemies—the Midianites, Amalekites, and peoples of the eastern deserts—was down in the valley below the Israelite camp, at the hill of Moreh.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the spring of Harod, the Jezreel Valley, and the hill of Moreh. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh instructed Gideon in the previous passage to send almost all of the Israelite men home, and to keep only 300 Israelite men to fight in the battle. Yahweh did this so that the Israelites would not think the Israelites had defeated their enemies by the Israelites' own strength. Yahweh wanted the Israelites to fight with only a small number of men, so that the Israelites would know for sure that Yahweh alone would give the Israelites victory in battle.

Now it is nighttime. The events in the previous passage happened earlier that day. Yahweh speaks to Gideon in the night and tells Gideon to attack the camp of the Israelites' enemies, which is another way to say to attack the Israelites' enemies. But Yahweh says that if Gideon is afraid to do this, then Gideon and Gideon's servant, Purah, should go down secretly to the enemy camp. Yahweh says that Gideon should listen to what the Israelites' enemies say there. Yahweh says that what Gideon hears will strengthen Gideon's hand, which means it will encourage Gideon, so that Gideon will not feel afraid to attack the Israelites' enemies.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when you heard new information about a situation that made you feel encouraged about that situation. Pause this audio here.

Gideon and Purah go down into the Jezreel Valley. Many Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east fill this valley. There are so many of these enemies that they are like a swarm of locusts. Locusts are insects that come to a place in huge numbers all at once. A swarm of locusts can even cover up the ground or cover up plants. When the storyteller says that the Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east fill the valley like locusts, it means that their army is very large.

Stop here and look at a picture of a swarm of locusts and a picture of a single locust as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east have also brought their camels to the valley. Camels are animals that can travel long distances across deserts. The Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east often rode camels into battle.

Stop here and look at a picture of a camel as a group. Pause this audio here.

There are so many camels in this valley that no one can count all of the camels. The camels are like the sand on the edge of the ocean. Sand consists of many tiny, loose grains that feel gritty. No person can count all of the grains of sand in a place, because there are so many grains of sand. When the passage says that the camels are like the sand by the ocean, it simply means that there are many, many camels.

Stop here and look at a picture of a sandy seashore as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon and Purah go to the edge of the enemy camp, where some men with weapons sit. One of these enemy men has had a dream. The man who had the dream tells his companion about the dream. The man says he dreamed that a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of the Midianites. Barley bread was a common bread in the ancient world. People made it from the grain called barley. In the ancient world, poor people often made and ate barley bread, because the barley grain was so common.

Stop here and look at a loaf of barley bread as a group. Pause this audio here.

The man says he dreamed that the barley bread crashed into one of the Midianite tents so hard that the tent turned upside down and fell flat onto the ground. The man's companion, after he has heard the dream, says the

barley bread in the dream refers to the sword of Gideon the Israelite. The man's companion says that God has given the whole camp, or whole army, of the Midianites, into Gideon's hand, or into Gideon's power.

Stop here and look at a photo of a tent as a group. Pause this audio here.

In the ancient world, people understood that dreams could sometimes reveal a message about what a person should do, or a message about what would happen. Sometimes the message was not clear, and in the dream, certain objects would represent a thing that would happen. This is the kind of dream the Midianite man had. It was not really about a loaf of barley bread. The bread refers to Gideon's sword. The way the bread destroys the Midianite tent in the dream refers to the fact that Gideon and his army will defeat the Midianites. The barley bread in the dream might also represent the Israelites, because wealthy and powerful peoples despised the Israelites, just like wealthy and powerful people despised barley bread as the food of poor people.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story from your culture about someone whose dream contained images that referred to other events. Pause this audio here.

When Gideon hears the men talk about the dream and what it means, Gideon immediately worships Yahweh. Gideon now firmly believes that Yahweh will give the Israelites victory over the Israelites' enemies, even though there are only 300 Israelite men to fight against the huge number of enemy men.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of 7:9–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: During the night, Yahweh speaks to Gideon and instructs Gideon to go down to the camp of the Midianites, along with Gideon's servant, Purah.

In the second scene: Gideon listens as two Midianite guards discuss a dream that one of the guards recently had. The dream signifies the defeat of the Midianites by the Israelites that will soon happen.

In the third scene: Gideon, who feels greatly encouraged by the Midianite guard's dream, worships Yahweh.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh
- Gideon
- Gideon's servant, Purah
- A Midianite guard who had a dream
- The Midianite guard's companion
- And Israel's enemies in the army camp in the valley.

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The passage begins at night. The events of the previous passage took place earlier in the day, and now it is the night of that same day. The Israelites are in the Israelite camp near the spring of Harod, above the Jezreel Valley. The Midianites are in the Midianite camp down in the Jezreel Valley, near the hill of Moreh.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the spring of Harod, the Jezreel Valley, and the hill of Moreh. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh speaks to Gideon at night and tells Gideon to lead the Israelites in an attack on the Midianites. Yahweh says that if Gideon is afraid to begin the attack, Gideon should go with Gideon's servant, Purah, down into the camp of the Midianites, where Gideon will hear something that will give Gideon courage.

Gideon and Purah go down into the Jezreel Valley. A huge number of Midianites have camped in the valley, as well as Amalekites and people of the east. The passage compares these people to locusts, which is a way to emphasize the huge number of Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east who are in the valley. Locusts were insects that came to places in huge numbers. So many locusts would come to a place at one time that the people who lived in that place could not get rid of them all. The Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east also have their camels with them. The passage compares the camels to the sands on a seashore. A seashore is made up of so many tiny grains of sand that no one could count all of the grains. This means that the enemy had so many camels that the Israelites could not count them all, which is another way to emphasize how many enemies were there.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you describe huge numbers of things in your language? Pause this audio here.

Gideon and Purah go to the edge of the enemy camp, where two Midianite guards sit with their weapons. These guards sit just outside the Midianite camp so that they can stop any Israelite who tries to enter the camp. Although the passage does not say so directly, Gideon and Purah must hide where the guards cannot see them.

The first guard recently had a dream. This guard tells this dream to his companion, the second guard. The first guard says he dreamed that a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp so hard that when it hit a Midianite tent, the tent fell over and lay flat on the ground.

Stop here and look at a loaf of barley bread and a tent as a group. Pause this audio here.

The man's companion says that the barley bread is a sign. The man says the barley bread refers to the sword of Gideon the Israelite, and he says that the dream means that God will give the Israelites victory over the Midianites. When Gideon hears this, Gideon immediately worships Yahweh. The normal way to worship in that time was to bow down in respect.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of 7:9–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh
- Gideon
- Gideon's servant, Purah
- A Midianite guard who had a dream
- The Midianite guard's companion
- And Israel's enemies in the army camp in the valley.

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Yahweh speaks to Gideon at night and says that if Gideon is afraid to attack the Midianites, then Gideon should go with Gideon's servant, Purah, down into the camp of the Midianites and listen. Yahweh says that what Gideon hears there will give Gideon strength and courage.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel compassion for Gideon; or
- Gideon does not ask me for a sign that I will give Gideon the victory, but I want all the same to give Gideon reassurance and encouragement.

Gideon and Purah go down into the Jezreel Valley. Gideon and Purah come in secret to the edge of the Midianite camp. So many Midianites have camped in the valley with their camels that they seem to fill the whole valley. There are so many that Gideon cannot count them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am very afraid! I do not know how I can defeat so many Midianites with only 300 men!

Two Midianite guards sit at the edge of the Midianite camp. The guards do not see Gideon and Purah. One of the guards has had a dream, and he tells the other guard about the dream. The guard dreamed that a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the Midianite camp and crashed so hard into a tent that the tent fell over onto the ground.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the guard who had the dream, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This dream was very strange. I feel confused because I do not know what it could mean; or
- This dream fills me with dread and fear.

The second guard says that the loaf of barley bread is Gideon, and the dream means that God will give the Israelites victory over the Midianites. When Gideon hears this, Gideon begins to worship Yahweh before he does anything else.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This dream makes me feel bold and inspired. I no longer feel afraid, and instead I feel thankful to Yahweh! or
- The fact that Yahweh sent this dream to the Midianites fills me with awe at Yahweh's power.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of 7:9–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

At night, **Yahweh** tells Gideon to go down to attack the **camp of the Midianites**. Use the same word to translate Yahweh as you used previously. For more information on Yahweh, consult the Master Glossary. "The camp of the Midianites" refers to the army of the Midianites, who have gathered together in their camp. Yahweh means that Gideon must attack the Midianites themselves.

However, Yahweh says that if Gideon is afraid to attack the Midianites, then Gideon should go down to the Midianite camp. Gideon will hear something there that will strengthen Gideon, or give Gideon courage.

Gideon and Gideon's servant, Purah, go down to the edge of the Midianite camp. Many Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the eastern deserts have camped there. So many people have come there that they are like a **swarm of locusts**. Locusts are insects that come to a place all at once, and in such huge numbers that they cover the ground. The storyteller says this to emphasize how huge the enemy army is.

Stop here and look at a picture of a swarm of locusts and a picture of a single locust as a group. Use the same word or phrase for "swarm of locusts" as you used previously. Pause this audio here.

The Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the eastern deserts have also brought their **camels**.

Stop here and look at a picture of a camel as a group. Use the same word for **camel** as you used previously. Look up camel in the Master Glossary for more information. Pause this audio here.

There are so many camels that they are like the **sands** of a seashore. Sand consists of many tiny, loose grains that feel gritty. Because these grains of sand are so tiny, no person would be able to count all of the grains of sand in a place. In the same way, there are so many camels that Gideon cannot count them. This emphasizes a second time how huge the enemy army is.

Stop here and look at a picture of a sandy seashore and a picture of a single grain of sand as a group. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use to translate **sand**. Pause this audio here.

A Midianite guard at the edge of the Midianite camp tells his companion, another guard, about a dream he has had. The guard dreamed that a loaf of **barley bread** tumbled into the Midianite camp. Barley bread was a bread that people in the ancient world made from the grain called barley. The loaf of barley bread in the dream crashed into a **tent** and made the tent fall to the ground. Use the same word for tent that you have used in previous passages.

Stop here and look at a loaf of barley bread as a group. Discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use to translate **barley bread**. Pause this audio here.

The guard's companion says this dream means that **God** has given the Midianites and their camp into the hands of Gideon, or into the power of Gideon. The Midianites use the general term God because they do not know the name Yahweh. Translate God the same way you did previously, and look up God in the Master Glossary for more information.

When Gideon hears what the dream means, Gideon immediately begins to **worship** Yahweh. The original language says that Gideon bowed down to Yahweh, which was a way to say that he worshipped Yahweh. You may say that Gideon bowed down if your audience will understand that Gideon did this in order to worship

Yahweh. If you choose to use your word or phrase for worship, use the same word to translate worship as you used previously and see the Master Glossary for more information about worship.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 7:9–15

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 7:16–25

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 7:16–25 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:16–25 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 7:16–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, Gideon and the Israelites are at the spring of Harod, and their enemies, the Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east, are down below in the Jezreel Valley. At nighttime, Gideon and his servant Purah went secretly into the valley. Gideon and Purah came to the edge of the Midianite camp, and they listened to a Midianite guard describe a dream that the guard had recently had. Gideon learned that the dream was a sign that Gideon and the other Israelites would defeat the Midianites. Gideon was so filled with joy that he immediately bowed down and worshiped Yahweh.

At the start of this passage, Gideon and Purah now leave the Midianite camp and go back to the Israelite camp. Gideon tells the men who are asleep to get up. Gideon says that Yahweh has given the army of the Midianites into the Israelites' power. Gideon divides the 300 men into three groups. Gideon gives all the men trumpets, or loud instruments that people made from ram's horns. The Israelite men will use the trumpets in the battle that is about to happen.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a ram and a picture of a trumpet that people made from a ram's horn. Pause this audio here.

Gideon also gives all the men jars, or containers. People in the ancient world made these jars out of clay that was really hard. Each jar that Gideon gives has a torch in it. Gideon may have put the torches in the jar to hide them from the enemy, or Gideon may have put them in the jar so that the Israelite men's hands will be free to blow their trumpets. The Israelite men will use the jars and torches in the battle that is about to happen.

Stop here and look at a picture of an ancient clay jar and a picture of a torch as a group. Pause this audio here.

Gideon tells the Israelite men to watch Gideon when they all go to the camp of the Midianites and other enemies. Gideon tells the Israelite men to copy what Gideon will do. When Gideon comes to the edge of the enemy camp and blows his trumpet, all the other men should blow their trumpets as well. The men will be on all sides of the enemy camp. Gideon also says that when the Israelite men blow their trumpets, the men should all shout, "For Yahweh and for Gideon!"

Gideon and 100 of the Israelite men come to the edge of the enemy camp at the time of the middle watch, which was around midnight. Gideon and the 100 men blow their ram's horn trumpets and smash the jars they hold in their hands. Then the other groups of Israelite men blow their own trumpets and smash their own jars. The Israelite men hold the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands. Then the Israelite men all shout together, "A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!" "Sword" here refers to how the men fight. The Israelite men will not need to use their swords to win the battle, because Yahweh will defeat their enemies for them. So to say, "A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon," is another way to say, "We fight for Yahweh and for Gideon!"

Stop here and look at a picture of a sword as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Midianites feel terrified, probably because the loud sounds from the trumpets and the jars that break make the Midianites think they are surrounded by many Israelite men. The Midianites cry out and begin to run away to escape. The Midianites think a mighty army attacks them, and they do not know there are only 300 Israelites.

When the Israelite men blow their trumpets, Yahweh causes the Midianites to attack one another. This is how Yahweh gives Gideon victory over the Midianites, just as Yahweh had promised. Many of the Midianites now kill each other with their own swords. Yahweh caused this to happen. The Israelites did not win the battle by their own strength. Although Gideon tricked the Midianites so the Midianites would believe there were more than 300 Israelite men, such a small number of Israelites still could not have defeated so many Midianites. Yahweh gave the Israelites the victory.

Other Midianites escape and run away. Some of the Midianites who escape run as far as the town of Beth Shittah, which was near the town of Zererah, or Zeredah. Beth Shittah was about 4 kilometers east of the spring of Harod, where the Israelites had made camp. Other Midianites run as far as the border of the town of Abel Meholah, near the town of Tabbath, to escape. Abel Meholah was on the western side of the Jordan River.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows the spring of Harod, Beth Shittah, Abel Meholah, the hill country of the Ephraimites, and the Jordan River. Pause this audio here.

Gideon calls out Israelite men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh. These Israelite men were probably the same men who Gideon sent away in the previous passage, and they were probably still nearby. These Israelites chase after the Midianites who try to escape. Gideon also sends messengers throughout the land of Ephraim. The messengers tell the Ephraimites, or men of Ephraim, to come down from the hills of Ephraim and to attack the Midianites. The messengers tell the Ephraimites to go to the waters of the Jordan River at a place called Beth Barah. The waters at Beth Barah were the shallow places where people could cross the Jordan River. Gideon wants the Ephraimites to stop the Midianites so the Midianites cannot escape over the river. Gideon seems to have forgotten that Yahweh wanted Gideon to conquer the Midianites with only 300 men.

Stop here as a group and look again at the map that shows the spring of Harod, Beth Shittah, Abel Meholah, the hill country of the Ephraimites, and the Jordan River. Pause this audio here.

The Ephraimites do what the messengers say. The Ephraimites also capture and kill two very important Midianites, whose names were Oreb and Zeeb. Oreb and Zeeb were Midianite princes, which means they were powerful and important leaders among the Midianites. The Ephraimites kill Oreb at a place the Israelites call "the rock of Oreb," and the Ephraimites kill Zeeb at a place the Israelites call "the winepress of Zeeb." A winepress was a square or circular pit below the ground where people made the drink called wine.

Stop here and look at a picture of a winepress as a group. Pause this audio here.

People did not call these two places "the rock of Oreb" and "the winepress of Zeeb" at the time when the story happened. The story uses these names to explain why the Israelites later called those places by these men's names. These were the places where the Ephraimites killed Oreb and Zeeb, which was an important event because Oreb and Zeeb were such powerful and important Midianites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about places in your community that people specially named because of the stories of important things that happened at those places. Pause this audio here.

The men of Ephraim then run after the other Midianites who try to escape. Afterwards the men of Ephraim bring the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of 7:16–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: Gideon and Purah leave the Midianite camp and return to the Israelite camp. Gideon wakes up the Israelite men who are asleep and gives the men trumpets and jars, with torches inside the jars. Gideon tells the men what to do and say when they go down to the camp of the Midianites.

In the second scene: Gideon and the other 300 Israelite men surround the Midianite camp. The men break their jars and hold the torches that were in the jars, and they blow their trumpets. The Midianites think they are surrounded by a large army, and they panic and cry out.

In the third scene: As the Midianites run about and try to escape, Yahweh causes many of the Midianites to kill one another with their own swords.

In the fourth scene: Some of the Midianites escape. Gideon calls more Israelite men, from the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh, to chase the Midianites. Messengers from Gideon tell the men of the tribe of Ephraim to stop the Midianites so the Midianites cannot escape over the Jordan River.

In the fifth scene: The Ephraimites stop the Midianites so that the Midianites cannot cross the Jordan River. The Ephraimites fight the Midianites, and the Ephraimites kill two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb.

In the sixth scene: The Ephraimites bring the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh
- Gideon
- Gideon's servant, Purah
- The 300 Israelite men
- The Midianites in the camp
- The Israelites from the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh
- Gideon's messengers
- The Israelites from Ephraim
- Oreb, a Midianite prince
- And Zeeb, another Midianite prince

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The passage begins at night. Gideon and his servant Purah hide at the edge of the Midianite camp in the Jezreel Valley. Gideon has just worshiped Yahweh, because Gideon received another sign that Yahweh will give Gideon and the Israelites victory over the Midianites.

Now Gideon and Purah go out of the valley and back up to their own camp. The 300 Israelite men that Yahweh chose for the battle are asleep. Gideon wakes the men up and says that Yahweh has given the Midianites into the hands, or power, of the Israelites. Gideon divides the 300 men into three groups. Gideon gives each man a trumpet that people made from ram's horn and a jar with a torch inside it. These torches were probably already lit. While the torches are covered inside the jars, the torches just smolder and do not burn fully.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a ram, a picture of a trumpet made from a ram's horn, a picture of an ancient clay jar, and a picture of a torch. Pause this audio here.

Gideon gives the Israelite men instructions. Gideon says that when the men come to the edge of the Midianites' camp, Gideon will blow into his ram's horn trumpet to make a loud sound. Gideon says that when Gideon does this, all the other Israelite men should blow their own trumpets as well, and shout, "For Yahweh and for Gideon!" This means, "We fight for Yahweh and for Gideon!"

Gideon goes with 100 Israelite men to the edge of the enemy camp. The other two groups of Israelite men surround the camp at different places. It is still the same night. Gideon and the 100 men blow their trumpets loudly, and they smash the jars they hold in their hands. The torches that have smoldered in the jars burst into flame when the jars no longer cover them. Then all the Israelite men who surround the Midianite camp on all sides also blow their trumpets and smash their jars. All of these actions create an enormous sound. The Israelite men hold the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands. The Israelite men all shout together, "A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!" The word "sword" here does not refer to literal swords, since the Israelites do not actually hold swords. Instead, "sword" refers to the battle itself, or to the action the men take when they fight.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will translate "A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!" into your language. Pause this audio here.

The Midianites wake up. The Midianites feel very afraid. The noise of trumpets and the jars when they break, as well as the shouts of the Israelites and the lights of the torches, fill the Midianites with fear. The Midianites begin to run around. Yahweh causes the Midianites to begin to kill each other with their own swords. Some Midianites now kill other Midianites.

Stop here and look at a picture of a sword as a group. Pause this audio here.

Some other Midianites escape and run away. Some of these men run all the way to the town of Beth Shittah, which is about 4 kilometers past the place of the Israelites' camp. Other Midianites run as far as the border of

the town of Abel Meholah, which is near to the Jordan River. These Midianites want to cross the river in order to escape from the Israelites.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows the spring of Harod, Beth Shittah, Abel Meholah, the hill country of the Ephraimites, and the Jordan River. Pause this audio here.

Gideon commands Israelite men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh to chase after the Midianites who try to escape. This probably means that Gideon sent messengers to the men of these tribes to tell the men to chase the Midianites. The Israelites from these tribes do as Gideon says.

Gideon also sends messengers to the Ephraimites, who live high up in the hills. The messengers tell the Ephraimites to go down and fight the Midianites. The messengers also tell the Ephraimites to go to the places where people cross the river at Beth Barah, which was near the place where the Ephraimites lived, so that the Ephraimites can stop the Midianites from escaping over the river.

Stop here as a group and look again at the map that shows the spring of Harod, Beth Shittah, Abel Meholah, the hill country of the Ephraimites, and the Jordan River. Pause this audio here.

The Ephraimites stop the Midianites so that the Midianites cannot cross the river. The Midianites and Ephraimites fight one another. In the battle, the Ephraimites capture a Midianite prince named Oreb. The Ephraimites kill Oreb near a large rock, and the Israelites will afterwards call the rock "the rock of Oreb." The Ephraimites also capture another Midianite prince, named Zeeb, and they kill Zeeb at a winepress, or a pit where people made wine. The Israelites will afterwards call the winepress "the winepress of Zeeb."

Stop here and look at a picture of a winepress as a group. Pause this audio here.

The men of Ephraim chase after the Midianites who try to escape. Then the Ephraimites bring the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of 7:16–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Yahweh
- Gideon
- Gideon's servant, Purah
- The 300 Israelite men
- The Midianites in the camp
- The Israelites from the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh
- Gideon's messengers
- The Israelites from Ephraim
- Oreb, a Midianite prince
- And Zeeb, another Midianite prince

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Gideon and Purah then go back up to the Israelite camp, where the Israelite men are asleep. Gideon wakes the men up and tells them that Yahweh has given the Midianites into the power of the Israelites. Gideon divides the men into three groups. Gideon gives each man a ram's horn trumpet and a clay jar. Each clay jar has a torch inside it.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite men, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel worried, because I do not know how we can defeat the Midianites with only these trumpets, jars, and torches. However, I know I must trust Yahweh to save us.

Gideon tells the men to do what Gideon will do when they come to the edge of the Midianites' camp. When Gideon blows his trumpet, all the other Israelite men should blow their own trumpets as well, and shout, "For Yahweh and for Gideon!"

Gideon and the other Israelites surround the Midianites' camp that same night. Gideon and one of the three groups of 100 Israelite men with him blow their trumpets and smash their jars. Then all the other Israelite men do the same, on all sides of the Midianite camp. The Israelite men also hold their torches, and the men all shout, "A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!"

The sounds wake up the Midianites. The Midianites are very afraid when they wake up. The Midianites panic and begin to run around.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Midianites in the camp, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel terrified because it sounds like a huge army attacks us! or
- I feel confused and afraid, because I just woke up and do not know what to do!

As the Midianites run this way and that way, Yahweh causes some Midianites to kill other Midianites with swords. Some Midianites escape from the camp and run far away. Gideon's messengers tell the Israelite men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manassess to chase after these Midianite men. The Israelite men from these tribes chase after the Midianites so they can fight the Midianites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I suddenly feel like I need more help to defeat the Midianites; or
- I am worried now that we will not have victory over our enemies after all.

Some of the Midianites try to cross the Jordan River to escape from the Israelites. Gideon sends messengers to the hills of Ephraim. The messengers tell the men of Ephraim to go down from the hills to fight the Midianites and to stop the Midianites so that the Midianites cannot escape over the river.

The men of Ephraim do what the messengers from Gideon said. The men of Ephraim stop the Midianites so that the Midianites cannot cross the river, and they fight the Midianites. The men of Ephraim capture two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb. The men of Ephraim then kill Oreb and Zeeb.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Ephraimites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am filled with excitement, because we defeated the Midianites and stopped them so they could not escape over the river; or
- I feel bold and proud, because we defeated two important and powerful Midianite princes!

Afterwards the men of Ephraim cut off Oreb and Zeeb's heads and bring the heads to Gideon.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of 7:16–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Gideon and Purah go back to their own camp. Gideon tells the other Israelites to wake up, because Yahweh has given the Midianite army **into their hands**. This means that Yahweh will give the Israelites victory over the Midianites. Use the same phrases for "into their hands" that you have used in previous passages. Gideon gives each man a ram's horn **trumpet** and a clay jar with a torch inside of it.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a ram, a trumpet made from a ram's horn, an ancient clay jar, and a torch. Use the same word to translate **trumpet** as you previously used. Pause this audio here.

Gideon tells the Israelite men to do what Gideon does. When Gideon blows his trumpet, all the other Israelite men should blow their own trumpets and shout, "For **Yahweh** and for Gideon!" When Gideon and the Israelite men surround the Midianites' camp, the Israelites blow their trumpets and smash their jars. The Israelite men all shout, "A **sword** for Yahweh and for Gideon!" The word "sword" here means the battle that the Israelites fight. The Israelite men mean, "We fight this battle for Yahweh and for Gideon!" Use the same word for Yahweh that you have used in previous passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at a picture of a sword as a group. Use the same word to translate **sword** that you previously used. Pause this audio here.

Gideon sends messengers to the Ephraimites. The Ephraimites were another of the 12 tribes of Israel. The messengers tell the Ephraimites to capture and hold the waters at Beth Barah. These were shallow waters where a person could cross over the Jordan River. To capture or hold the waters means to not let anyone cross the river at Beth Barah. Gideon does not want the Midianites to escape over the river.

The Ephraimites do what Gideon commanded. The Ephraimites also capture two Midianite **princes**, or important leaders, whose names were Oreb and Zeeb. People often use the words prince or ruler for people who rule and have authority, but are not the king, or top **ruler** in the land. Use the same word or phrase for princes or rulers as you used in previous passages, especially in the song that Deborah sang in Judges chapter 5.

Stop here and remember as a group what word or phrase you used for **prince** or **ruler** in earlier passages, and use the same word here. Pause this audio here.

The Ephraimites kill Oreb by a large rock. The Israelites later call this "the rock of Oreb," because the Ephraimites killed Oreb at that place. The Ephraimites kill Zeeb at a **winepress**, and the Israelites later call this "the winepress of Zeeb," because the Ephraimites killed Zeeb there. Use the same word to translate winepress as you used previously. Look up winepress in the Master Glossary for more information.

Stop here and look at a picture of a winepress together as a group. Pause this audio here.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 7:16–25

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (14016002 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (17235298 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 8:1–3

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 8:1–3 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:1–3 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:1–3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, Gideon and 300 Israelite men attacked the camp of the Midianites. The Midianites had oppressed the Israelites for seven years. The Midianites had taken or destroyed the Israelites' food and animals. But Yahweh gave Gideon and the 300 Israelites victory over the Midianites. After Gideon and the 300 Israelite

men attacked, some of the Midianites ran away. The Midianites tried to cross over the Jordan River to escape from the Israelites. Gideon called back the Israelite men that he had sent away in a previous passage, and Gideon told those men to chase after the Midianites.

Stop here and look at a picture of the Jordan River as a group. Pause this audio here.

But Gideon sent the Ephraimites, or Israelites from the tribe of Ephraim, to attack the Midianites. The Ephraimites stopped the Midianites so that the Midianites could not cross the river and escape. The Ephraimites also captured and killed two powerful, important Midianite princes, named Oreb and Zeeb.

As this passage begins, the men of the tribe of Ephraim come to Gideon. These men angrily accuse Gideon. The Ephraimites ask Gideon why Gideon did not call them to fight in the battle against the Midianites. Here, the Ephraimites refer to the first battle against the Midianites, when Gideon and the 300 Israelite men attacked the Midianite camp. The Ephraimites were not in that first battle, although Gideon later called the Ephraimites for help to stop the Midianites so the Midianites could not escape. The Ephraimites imply that Gideon has not treated them fairly, because Gideon did not ask them to fight in the first battle.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell about a time when two tribes did not get along well and were often jealous of each other. What kinds of things did these tribes try to do to show that they were the better tribe? What kinds of things did they accuse each other of? Pause this audio here.

The passage does not say exactly why the Ephraimites are angry. It could be that the Ephraimites envied Gideon and the other Israelites, because the Ephraimites thought that Gideon and the others had done something greater and more important than what the Ephraimites themselves did. Or it could be that the Ephraimites were worried that the other Israelites would not let the Ephraimites have any of the land that the Midianites had controlled, because the Ephraimites had not been part of the first battle. But whatever the reason, the Ephraimites were very angry that Gideon did not include them in that first battle.

Gideon responds when he asks the men of Ephraim, "What have I done compared to what you have done?" Gideon uses this question to honor the men of Ephraim. Gideon means, "I have done very little compared to what you have done!"

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when a wise leader helped stop an angry discussion among two groups of people. How did the wise leader do it? Pause this audio here.

Gideon asks the Ephraimites another question. Gideon asks, "Are not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim greater than the whole grape harvest of Abiezer?" Grapes were an extremely important fruit in the ancient world. People used grapes to make the drink called wine. A "harvest of grapes" refers to the time of year when the Israelites could collect the grapes and use them. "The gleanings of the grapes" refers to the small amount of grapes left over after a harvest. "Abiezer" is the name of Gideon's ancestor, so Gideon uses the name here to mean Gideon's whole family. Gideon means, "Even the small amount of leftover grapes of Ephraim is greater than the entire grape harvest of my family!" Gideon uses this to describe the defeat of the Midianites as a grape harvest. Gideon means that what the Ephraimites did at the end of the battle was more important than what Gideon did at the start of the battle.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of grapes on a grapevine and a picture of grapes that people have already harvested and put into a basket. Pause this audio here.

Gideon then reminds the Ephraimites that God gave the Midianite princes Oreb and Zeeb into the Ephraimites' hand, which means that God gave the Ephraimites victory over the Midianite princes. Gideon asks the Ephraimites, "What have I accomplished compared to what you have accomplished?" This question means, "What you have done is greater and more important than what I have done!"

Gideon says these things to honor the Ephraimites. The Ephraimites were angry that they were not part of the first battle against the Midianites. Gideon wants to remind the Ephraimites that what they did was very important. Gideon makes sure to make his own victory sound less important than the victory of the Ephraimites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time you said something to make people feel better when they felt hurt, angry, or upset. What did you say? Pause this audio here.

Gideon's words calm the Ephraimites down. The Ephraimites no longer feel angry with Gideon after Gideon speaks to them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when a person's words calmed down an angry person.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:1–3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: The Ephraimites angrily accuse Gideon that Gideon did not include the Ephraimites in the first part of the battle.

In the second scene: Gideon reminds the Ephraimites that the Ephraimites' actions after the battle were very important and helpful.

In the third scene: The anger of the Ephraimites disappears so that the Ephraimites no longer feel angry with Gideon.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon
- And the Ephraimites

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

This passage begins shortly after the events of the previous passage. In the previous passage, Gideon and 300 Israelite men, but not the Ephraimites, attacked the camp of the Midianites. God gave Gideon and the 300 Israelites victory over the Midianites. When some of the Midianites tried to cross over the Jordan River to escape from the Israelites, the Ephraimites and men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh fought the Midianites and stopped the Midianites so that the Midianites could not cross the river. The Ephraimites also captured and killed the Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb.

Shortly after they killed Oreb and Zeeb, the Ephraimites must have learned that Gideon and the 300 Israelite men attacked the Midianite camp at night, and that men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh had helped chase the Midianites. The passage does not say how the Ephraimites learned this, but it could be that other Israelites told the Ephraimites.

The Ephraimites are angry that they did not help in the first attack on the Midianites. The Ephraimites come to Gideon and angrily accuse Gideon. The Ephraimites ask Gideon, "What is this thing you have done to us?" This means, "Why have you treated us unfairly this way?" The Ephraimites use these questions to criticize Gideon and to show Gideon how angry they are that Gideon did not call them to attack the Midianite camp at night alongside Gideon.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Remember the story you told from the first step about two tribes that do not get along well. When the two tribes accuse each other, how do they talk to each other? How do you describe these angry discussions? Think about how you will show that the Ephraimites are very angry with Gideon. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, Gideon responds to the Ephraimites' accusations. Gideon honors the Ephraimites when he asks, "What have I done compared to what you have done?" This question means, "What you have done is more important than what I have done!" Gideon means that he has accomplished very little compared to what the Ephraimites have accomplished. Gideon says that the Ephraimites' leftover grapes are greater in number than

all the grapes that the family of Abiezer has harvested. The family of Abiezer is Gideon's own family. Gideon does not mean actual grapes. Gideon means that what he did when he attacked the Midianites' camp at night was not as important or great as what the Ephraimites did when the Ephraimites stopped the Midianites so the Midianites could not cross the river.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of grapes and a picture of a harvest of grapes. Discuss as a group how wise leaders in your culture stop angry discussions between groups of people. Now think about how Gideon honored the Ephraimites. Practice how you will translate Gideon's comparisons of the grape harvests. Pause this audio here.

Gideon then reminds the Ephraimites of another great and important thing the Ephraimites did. Gideon says that God gave the Ephraimites victory over the Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb. Because Oreb and Zeeb were such powerful and important Midianites, the Ephraimites should be proud that they defeated Oreb and Zeeb. Gideon says these things to remind the Ephraimites that God has used the Ephraimites in a great and important way.

Gideon then says again that what Gideon did when he attacked the Midianite camp is not as great as what the Ephraimites did. Gideon repeats these words to emphasize that Gideon tries to honor the Ephraimites. Gideon's attack on the Midianite camp was actually very important, and God gave Gideon the victory just as God gave the Ephraimites their own victory. However, Gideon makes his own victory seem less important than the Ephraimites. Gideon does this to honor the Ephraimites.

In the third scene, the Ephraimites' anger goes away after Gideon says all of these things. Now the Ephraimites are no longer angry with the way Gideon did not call the Ephraimites to fight in the first battle.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Think about a time when someone you knew acted very angry, but then later did not act so angry. How do you talk about someone who was very angry but became less angry? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:1–3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon
- And the Ephraimites

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

In the first scene, the Ephraimites come to Gideon and act very angry. The Ephraimites accuse Gideon that Gideon did not treat them fairly, because Gideon did not call the Ephraimites to help with the attack on the Midianite camp.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Ephraimites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am furious and envious that Gideon and the other Israelites might receive more honor or land than we will! or
- I feel dishonored that Gideon did not want us to help in the first battle.

In the second scene, Gideon responds and honors the Ephraimites. Gideon does this to calm the Ephraimites down. Gideon says that Gideon has accomplished little compared to the great things the Ephraimites have accomplished. Gideon compares his and the Ephraimites' accomplishments to a grape harvest. Gideon says that even the Ephraimites' leftover grapes are greater in number than Gideon's whole harvest. Gideon means that what the Ephraimites did at the end of the battle, when the Ephraimites stopped the Midianites so the Midianites could not escape over the river and killed the Midianite princes, was more important than what Gideon did at the start of the battle when Gideon attacked the Midianite camp.

Gideon reminds the Ephraimites that God gave the Ephraimites victory over the Midianite princes. Gideon says these things to remind the Ephraimites that God has used the Ephraimites in a great and important way.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not want to argue with my fellow Israelites. I want to make them feel better and less angry; or
- The Ephraimites are very strong, and I am afraid to displease them. I want to take their anger away from me.

Gideon now says in plain words that Gideon's attack on the Midianite camp was not as great as what the Ephraimites did.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know that God gave me a great victory too, just as God gave a great victory to the Ephraimites. But because the Ephraimites feel dishonored, I want to restore their honor. The Ephraimites are my Israelite brothers.

In the third scene, the Ephraimites no longer feel angry towards Gideon. Gideon's words that honor the Ephraimites make the Ephraimites' anger go away.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Ephraimites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Gideon's words have honored me, and I no longer feel angry; or
- I am grateful that Gideon reminded us of the importance of what we accomplished.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:1–3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Gideon then asks another question. Gideon asks whether the Ephraimites' leftover **grapes** are greater in number than all the grapes that the family of Abiezer has **harvested**. Grapes were an important fruit that people used to make the drink called wine. Gideon's question means, "The leftover grapes of the Ephraimites are certainly much greater than all the grapes that my family has harvested!" This is another way to say that what the Ephraimites accomplished when they stopped the Midianites, so that the Midianites could not escape, was greater than what Gideon accomplished when Gideon attacked the Midianites.

Stop here and look at a picture of grapes and a picture of a harvest of grapes as a group. Discuss as a group what words you will use for **grape** and for **harvest**. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same words that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Gideon says all of this in order to honor the Ephraimites. To honor someone means to show how great or excellent that person is, or to show that you know about the good things that the person has done. Gideon further honors the Ephraimites when he reminds the Ephraimites that **God** gave the Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb, **into the Ephraimites' hand**. To give the Midianites "into the Ephraimites' hand" means God gave the Ephraimites victory over Oreb and Zeeb. Talk about God and about giving someone into someone else's hands in the same way you have in previous passages. Refer to the Master Glossary for more information about the general word for God.

Gideon refers to the fact that the Ephraimites captured and killed these powerful Midianite **princes**, which was a great and important accomplishment. Use the same word for "prince" or "ruler" as you used in previous passages.

After Gideon says these things, the Ephraimites no longer feel angry.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 8:1–3

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (13303750 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 8:4–21

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 8:4–21 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:4–21 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:4–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

While the Ephraimites killed two Midianite leaders in the previous passages, there are still two kings who lead the rest of the Midianite army. In this section, Gideon chases these kings. As Gideon does this, Gideon asks for supplies from the leaders of two Israelite cities, but the leaders refuse to help. Gideon defeats the Midianite army and captures the kings. Gideon returns and punishes the leaders of the cities who refused to help. Then Gideon kills the two Midianite kings.

This story begins as Gideon chases the Midianite army and their kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. These two men may have been kings of two different groups of Midianites. Gideon and his army cross the Jordan River and travel east, towards the Midianite homeland. Gideon comes to the town of Succoth, which is about 7 kilometers east of the Jordan River. This is an Israelite town, so Gideon asks the leaders for supplies. Gideon asks for round loaves of bread and explains why he and his men have come. Gideon probably expects the leaders to help, since Gideon's soldiers fight the Midianites, who were enemies of all the Israelites.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the Jordan river, the Midianite territory, and the town of Succoth. Also look at a picture of round loaves of bread. Pause this audio here.

However, the leaders of Succoth refuse to help. Perhaps the leaders are not sure that Gideon will win and they worry that if the Midianites win, the Midianites will punish the town for how they helped Gideon. Or perhaps they do not want to help people who are not from their town. Either way, the Israelites are so divided that they will not help each other. The leaders taunt Gideon and say that Gideon does not yet have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna. After a battle, people would sometimes cut off their dead enemies' hands to count how many soldiers they killed. The leaders ask why they should help Gideon. The leaders do not expect Gideon to answer this question. The leaders mean that Gideon has to prove Gideon's victory before the leaders will help.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, when people go to war, what are some items those people bring back to show that they have defeated an enemy? Pause this audio here.

Gideon warns the leaders that Gideon will punish them because they refuse to help. Gideon says that Yahweh will give the Midianite kings into Gideon's hands. This means that Yahweh will cause Gideon and Gideon's army to defeat the Midianites. Gideon will have power and control over the Midianite kings, just like a person can control something in their hand. Then Gideon will return and tear the leaders' skin with thorns, briars, and sharp sticks from the wilderness, which is the barren land where only tough plants grow.

Stop here and look at a picture of desert thorns and briars as a group. Pause this audio here.

Then Gideon travels to a town called Peniel, which is about 9 kilometers east of Succoth. Gideon also asks the leaders of Peniel for supplies. Again the leaders refuse to help, and again Gideon promises to return and punish the people. This time, Gideon says that Gideon will tear down their tower, which was probably a strong safe building where people could hide.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, when people go to war, who gives the army supplies and food? What should people who are not in the army do for the army? What happens if people do not do this? Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the town of Peniel. Pause this audio here.

The Midianite kings and their army travel to a place called Karkor. We are not sure exactly where Karkor was, but it was probably in a valley or plain over 100 kilometers from Peniel, in the Midianite homeland.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find Wadi Sirhan, or the dry riverbed of Sirhan, where Karkor may be. Pause this audio here.

One hundred and twenty thousand Midianite soldiers have fallen, which means those soldiers died. So the people from the east, or the Midianites, only had 15,000 soldiers left in their army. Gideon and his 300 men travel along the trade route. This is the route that traders who live in tents travel on as they go to markets to sell their goods. This route goes east of the towns of Nobah and Jogbehah, Israelite towns on the east side of the Jordan. When Gideon's army attacks, the Midianites are surprised. Though the Midianite kings try to run away, Gideon captures the kings and defeats their entire army.

Gideon travels back to Israel through the Pass of Heres or safe route through the mountains. We are not sure where this pass was either, but Gideon may have taken the same route back, since he goes back to Succoth. On his way, Gideon captures a man from Succoth and asks the man about the leaders of the town. The man writes down the names of the elders and officials of the town. The elders were heads of families, while the officials may have been military leaders or judges. Gideon may do this to make sure none of the leaders escape. Or Gideon may do this to make sure Gideon does not punish anyone else by mistake.

When Gideon arrives back at Succoth, Gideon shows the leaders how he has captured the enemy kings. Gideon repeats the leaders' words to them before he punishes them in the way he had promised. Gideon beats the leaders with sharp thorns and tough sticks. This was a very painful and harsh punishment. Gideon also returns to Peniel, tears down their tower, and kills the men of the town. This is the first time in this book that an Israelite attacks other Israelites. But throughout the book we will hear again and again how the Israelites fight not just their enemies, but each other as well.

Next, Gideon asks the kings of Midian about the Israelites that the Midianites killed at the town of Tabor. The story of the Midianites' attack at Tabor is not included here, but may have happened while the Midianites attacked Israel. The Midianite kings answer that they killed men who were like Gideon, who looked like the sons of kings.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the town of Tabor. Pause this audio here.

Gideon says that those men were Gideon's brothers. Gideon says that if the kings had let Gideon's brothers live, then as surely as Yahweh is alive, Gideon would not kill the kings. However, because the kings did kill Gideon's brothers, Gideon implies that he is right to kill the kings. Gideon orders his oldest son Jether to kill the two kings. Perhaps Gideon does this because it is an honor for his son to kill two important people. Perhaps Gideon does this to humiliate the two kings, since the kings might feel embarrassed for such a young person to kill them. However, Jether is afraid and does not pull out Jether's sword.

The Midianite kings taunt and insult Gideon. The kings say that Gideon is not strong like a real man, since Gideon will not kill the kings himself. To prove them wrong, Gideon kills the two kings and takes their valuable ornaments.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, how do people expect men to act when there is a war or the men are in a battle? How does a man show that he is strong? Pause this audio here.

It was important to the Israelites that the Israelites were loyal to their family, but Yahweh called Gideon to deliver, or save, *all* the Israelite people. Gideon should stay focused to help all the Israelites. But instead, Gideon seeks revenge for his family. From now on, the judges will often focus on what the judges want, and seek revenge for themselves, rather than focus on what is best for all the Israelites.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:4–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Gideon and his army cross the Jordan River and come to the town of Succoth. Gideon asks the leaders of the town for supplies. The leaders refuse to help. Gideon warns the leaders that Gideon will return and punish the leaders.

In the second scene: Gideon goes to Peniel and asks for supplies. Again the leaders refuse and again Gideon warns that Gideon will return and punish the leaders.

In the third scene: Gideon follows the Midianites to Karkor and attacks. Gideon defeats the Midianites and captures the Midianites' two kings.

In the fourth scene: Gideon returns to the land of Israel. Gideon captures a man who tells Gideon the names of the leaders of Succoth. Gideon goes to Succoth and beats the leaders with thorns. Then Gideon tears down the tower of Peniel and kills the men there.

In the fifth scene: Gideon asks the kings of Midian about the men the Midianites killed at Tabor. The kings say the men were like Gideon. Gideon declares that those men were Gideon's brothers. Gideon tells his son, Jether, to kill the kings, but Jether is afraid. When the kings taunt Gideon, Gideon kills the kings himself. Then Gideon takes the valuable ornaments off the kings' camels.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon, son of Joash
- The 300 Israelite soldiers with Gideon
- The elders and leaders of Succoth
- Zebah and Zalmunna, two Midianite kings
- Yahweh
- The men of Peniel
- The 15,000 Midianite soldiers with Zebah and Zalmunna
- A young man from Succoth
- Gideon's brothers
- And Jether, Gideon's son

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

This story focuses on Gideon's revenge. Remember how Gideon had a conversation with the Ephraimites at the Jordan River in the last story. This story explains that Gideon came to the Jordan River because Gideon chased the two Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. Gideon is determined to catch the kings, even though the Midianite army runs away. The narrator does not reveal until later in the story why Gideon wants to catch these two kings. These two kings killed Gideon's brothers some time in the past. Gideon wants to capture and kill these kings to get revenge. Gideon also gets revenge on the Israelites at Succoth and Peniel who do not help Gideon.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, tell a story about someone who was very determined to do something. Tell this story twice. The first time, do not explain why the person was determined to do this thing until the end of the story. When you tell the story a second time, explain at the start of the story why the person was determined. Discuss as a group how the two ways to tell the story affected the story. How did you feel when you listened to each? Which version did you like better? Pause this audio here.

In the first scene, Gideon and Gideon's army travel to the edge of the Israelite land. Only 300 soldiers travel with Gideon. These may be the 300 soldiers from the first fight with the Midianites. Though the Ephraimites were with Gideon in the last section, the Ephraimites do not travel with Gideon to chase the Midianites. Gideon and his men cross the Jordan River and travel by the town of Succoth. Gideon asks the men of Succoth for food to help his men as they chase the Midianites. However, the leaders refuse to help and Gideon warns the leaders that Gideon will return to punish them for their refusal.

In the second scene, Gideon travels on to the town of Peniel and asks for help from the men there. Here, and throughout the rest of the story, the storyteller does not mention Gideon's soldiers again. The storyteller simply says things like, "Gideon goes to Peniel," or "Gideon attacks the Midianites," but the storyteller means that Gideon's soldiers are with Gideon as Gideon does all these things.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: List some things that your leaders have done or decisions that they have made. Discuss whether the leaders were able to do those things by themselves or if they had other people help them. Pause this audio here.

The men of Peniel also refuse to help. These men may have been the leaders of the town. Again, Gideon promises to return to Peniel, in triumph or victory, after Gideon defeats the Midianites. Then Gideon will punish the men of Peniel by destroying their tower.

In the third scene, we now hear where the Midianites are. King Zebah and King Zalmunna have led their army to Karkor. A hundred and twenty thousand soldiers have died, so the Midianite army only has 15,000 soldiers now. The Midianites are probably in or near their own territory, so they felt safe and set up camp. The Midianites probably did not think the Israelites would follow them this far. However, Gideon and his men have traveled along the nomad's route, or traveler's route, to follow the Midianites. This journey probably took several days. Gideon catches up and attacks the Midianites with his Israelite army. The Israelites rout, or defeat, the Midianites. The storyteller does not describe the battle or how Gideon defeats the much larger Midianite army. Nor does the storyteller mention Yahweh. Though the Midianite kings try to run away, Gideon captures the kings.

In the fourth scene, Gideon, Joash's son, travels back to Succoth. Gideon goes through a pass, which is a safe place to cross through mountains or valleys. Again, Gideon and his men probably traveled a long way, so their trip took many days. On the way, Gideon finds a man from Succoth, and Gideon asks the man about the leaders of Succoth. The man writes down the names of all the leaders and elders of Succoth and gives the list to Gideon. Now Gideon knows the names of the men who refused to help Gideon earlier.

When Gideon and his soldiers arrive at Succoth, Gideon speaks to men of the town. Gideon shows the captured Midianite kings to everyone and repeats the leaders' words. Gideon says, "Look, I have proof that I can defeat the Midianites." Then Gideon threshes, or beats, the leaders with briars, which are plants with tough branches and sharp thorns. People would thresh or beat plants with sticks to separate the seeds from the stalks. Some translations say that Gideon taught the leaders a lesson. Gideon wanted to teach people not to refuse Gideon's requests again.

Gideon also returns to the town of Peniel to punish the people there. Gideon punishes the people even more harshly than Gideon said he would. With the help of his men, Gideon pulls down the tower of Peniel. This tower was probably a tall, strong building that the people of the town could hide in when other people attacked. Then Gideon kills the men of the town. It is not clear whether Gideon kills just the leaders or every man who lived in Peniel.

In the fifth scene, the storyteller shows why Gideon was so determined to capture the Midianite kings. Gideon asks the Midianite kings about the Israelite men that the Midianites killed at Tabor. Gideon asks what those Israelite men were like. Some translations say Gideon asks where those men are. Gideon probably already knows that those men are dead and that the men were Gideon's brothers. Gideon may want to see if the Midianite kings will boast about what the kings did. Gideon may want the other Israelites to hear what the Midianite kings did, so the Israelites will understand why Gideon has chased the Midianites so far.

The Midianite kings declare that the men they killed were like Gideon. The kings say that both Gideon and those men look like, or act like, the sons of a king. This may mean that the men were strong, impressive, or that the people respected the men.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe what a king or powerful leader in your culture would be like. Describe not just how he looks, but how he acts and what his character is like. Discuss someone you know who looks or acts like that. Pause this audio here.

Gideon reveals now that those men were Gideon's brothers. Gideon emphasizes that the men were close family when Gideon says that those men were sons of Gideon's mother. If the Midianites had not killed Gideon's brothers, Gideon would not kill the kings. Gideon swears a common Israelite oath and says that this is as sure as Yahweh is alive.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what words or phrases do people use to show that something is very certain? Pause this audio here.

However, since the Midianite kings did kill Gideon's brothers, Gideon implies that the kings should die. Gideon tells his son, Jether, to kill the Midianite kings. While Jether is old enough to travel with the soldiers and fight, Jether is still young. Jether probably has not fought in many battles or killed many people. Jether is afraid and does not pull out his sword to kill the two Midianite kings.

Stop here and look at a picture of a sword as a group. Talk about words you use to describe a boy of Jether's age who is old enough to fight but not very experienced. Pause this audio here.

The kings mock Gideon and say that if Gideon is strong, like a real man, Gideon should kill the kings himself to prove it. So Gideon uses his sword to kill the kings. Then Gideon takes the ornaments, silver and gold decorations, off the kings' camels. Camels were large, strong animals that people would sit on while they traveled.

Stop here and look at a picture of a camel as a group. Look also at a picture of silver and gold ornaments. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:4–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Gideon, son of Joash
- The 300 Israelite soldiers with Gideon
- The elders and leaders of Succoth
- Zebah and Zalmunna, two Midianite kings
- Yahweh
- The men of Peniel
- The 15,000 Midianite soldiers with Zebah and Zalmunna
- A young man from Succoth
- Gideon's brothers
- And Jether, Gideon's son

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Gideon and his 300 soldiers continued to chase the enemy. Even though the men were very tired, they crossed the Jordan River. Gideon and his men arrived at the town of Succoth. Gideon said to the people of Succoth, "Give

some food to the soldiers who are with me, because they are exhausted. We chase Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

But the leaders of Succoth said, "You have not captured Zebah and Zalmunna yet so we will not feed your soldiers. Capture those kings first and then we will give you food."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the leaders of Succoth, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Midianites have attacked us for years. We are not sure if Gideon can defeat the Midianites. If Gideon fails, we are afraid the Midianites will punish us! or
- We do not want to share our food with hundreds of strangers. We gathered the food and supplies to feed our families! If we give the food away, we may not have enough! or
- We do not know Gideon. We did not choose Gideon as our leader. We do not owe Gideon anything.

Gideon replied, "Because you said these things, this is what will happen. Yahweh will help me, and I will capture King Zebah and King Zalmunna. Then I will come back here and beat your bodies with thorns and sharp branches from the wilderness."

From there Gideon went to the town of Peniel. Gideon asked the people there to give Gideon food also. But the people of Peniel responded in the same way as the people of the town of Succoth had responded. So Gideon said, "I am going to win this battle. Then I will come back and destroy the tower of your town."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that the people of Succoth and Peniel disrespect me in front of all my soldiers; or
- I am trying to take care of my soldiers and protect everyone in Israel! I do not understand why these other Israelites will not help me!" or
- The people of Succoth and Peniel should help us! We are all Israelites and Yahweh has picked me to lead the Israelites. The people of these towns have disobeyed me and deserve punishment.

King Zebah and King Zalmunna were in the town of Karkor with their army of about 15,000 men. That was all who remained of the army of the people from the east. A hundred and twenty thousand of their soldiers had already died. Gideon went up out of the Jordan River valley along the road that the nomads, or traveling tradesmen, used, which was east of the towns of Nobah and Jogbehah. Gideon and his soldiers surprised the Midianite soldiers and attacked them. The two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, ran away. Gideon chased them and caught them, and all the Midianite soldiers fled.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Zebah and Zalmunna, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now that we are at Karkor, we must be safe. We are near our home. Surely the Israelites will not follow us this far. I do not need to tell my soldiers to look out for trouble; or
- I do not understand how such a small group of Israelite soldiers continues to beat us! They must have a god who fights for them; or
- I do not want the Israelites to kill or capture me! If I run away from the battle, maybe I can reach safety!

Then Gideon, son of Joash, returned by the Pass of Heres. Gideon caught a young man from the town of Succoth and asked the man about the leaders of the town. The young man wrote down the names of 77 officials and elders of the town of Succoth and gave it to Gideon.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the young man from Succoth, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am scared of this man who has caught me. This man has so many soldiers, and they just defeated our enemies the Midianites. I will do whatever this man asks; or
- I am ashamed of how our leaders acted when Gideon came to our town. I will tell Gideon the names of the people who taunted him; or
- I do not want Gideon to hurt the people of my town. Maybe if I tell him the leaders' names, Gideon will not punish me and the rest of the people in the town.

Then Gideon and Gideon's soldiers went back to Succoth and spoke to their leaders. Gideon said, "Look, I have captured King Zebah and King Zalmunna. When I was here before, you mocked me. You said that until I captured these kings, you would not give my tired men any food." Then Gideon whipped the elders of the town of Succoth with thorns and sharp sticks from the desert. Gideon wanted to punish the leaders because the leaders refused to help Gideon. Gideon also destroyed the tower in the town of Peniel and killed the men who lived there.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people from Succoth and Peniel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am shocked and horrified at this harsh punishment! I am now afraid of Gideon and will do whatever he says; or
- Gideon and his men may be Israelites, but they are not like us. See how violent these men are. This is why I do not want to help anyone who is not from our town; or
- I do not understand why Gideon punishes us so harshly. Gideon still defeated the Midianites even though we did not give them food.

Then Gideon asked King Zebah and King Zalmunna, "What did the men look like whom you killed at Tabor?"

The kings replied, "They were men like you. They all looked like they were sons of a king."

Gideon said, "They were my brothers, my mother's sons. I swear, as surely as Yahweh is alive, if you had let them live, I would not kill you."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so angry that these Midianite kings killed my brothers. I would have chased them even further than Karkor to catch them; or
- I want the Israelites to hear what the Midianite kings did. The Midianites have killed many of our family members over the years. Everyone knows these kings deserve to die; or
- I care deeply for my family. I will not forgive or spare anyone who hurts my family.

Then Gideon turned to his oldest son Jether and said, "Kill them."

But Jether did not pull out his sword because Jether was still a young boy and was afraid.

King Zebah and King Zalmunna told Gideon, "Come on. If you are strong, like a real man, kill us yourself to prove it."

So Gideon took out his sword and killed both the kings. Then Gideon took the valuable decorations off their camels' necks.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays King Zebah and King Zalmunna, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We know we will die anyway. We will not show fear before we die; or
- We are embarrassed and angry that Gideon and his army defeated us. We cannot do much to get revenge on them, but we can make Gideon look bad in front of his men.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want people to respect my son. It would be an honor to kill the kings of the Midianites, who hurt Israel for so many years; or
- First the Midianite kings kill my brothers, then the kings say I am not a strong man! I will show everyone my strength when I kill those kings! or
- Since I killed the kings of Midian, their belongings are mine now.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:4–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Gideon and his soldiers cross the **Jordan River**. The Jordan River is a long river that runs through Israel from north to south. For more information on the Jordan River, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for the Jordan River as you used in previous passages.

Gideon speaks to the officials or **elders** of Succoth. An elder is a person with authority in the community. For more information on elders, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for elder as you used in previous passages.

Gideon says that Gideon chases Zebah and Zalmunna who are the **kings** of the Midianites. A king is someone who rules over a city or territory, like a region or a country. Zebah and Zalmunna may be kings of different groups of Midianites, or one of the kings may be the Midianites' ally from another nation. For more information on king, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for king as you used in previous passages.

Gideon says that **Yahweh** will help the Israelites defeat the Midianites. Yahweh is God's proper name. Yahweh is a unique name because no other religion in the lands around Israel used a name like this for their god. For

more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

When Yahweh helps the Israelites defeat the Midianites, Gideon says he will use thorns from the **wilderness** to beat the leaders of Succoth. A desert or wilderness is a lonely, barren place without water. There are almost no trees or bushes that grow in a desert. Only very strong plants can grow there. For more information on wilderness or desert, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for wilderness as you used in previous passages.

Stop here and look at a picture of desert thorns and briars as a group, as needed. Pause this audio here.

Gideon says he will punish the people of Peniel when he returns in victory or **peace**. Some translations say Gideon will return in peace, and some say he will return in victory. The original word is peace, but in this case peace refers to the fact that the Israelites have completely defeated the Midianites and do not have to fight anymore. If you choose to use the word for peace, use the same word for peace that you have previously used, and see peace in the Master Glossary for more information.

To follow the Midianites, Gideon goes along the **nomad** or **caravan route**. Nomads were people who lived in tents and traveled in big groups, called caravans, for safety. Nomads would move around and trade goods with people. Nomads knew the best ways to travel, so other people would travel on the same routes the nomads took.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **nomad** or **caravan route**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Gideon returns home through the **Pass** of Heres. A pass is a safe route through rough or dangerous ground. Use the same word or phrase for pass as you used in previous passages.

Gideon takes the ornaments, or valuable decorations, off of the Midianite kings' **camels**. A camel is a large, strong animal that can walk for a very long distance without food or water. People sat on camels while they traveled, and they used camels to carry luggage. For more information on camel, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for camel as you used in previous passages.

Stop here and look at a picture of a camel as a group, as needed.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 8:4–21

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 8:22–35

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 8:22–35 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:22–35 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.

6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:22–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the last section, Gideon and his men captured and killed the Midianite kings. Now the Israelites ask Gideon to rule over them. Though Gideon does refuse to rule, Gideon makes an ephod which the Israelites begin to worship as a god. This story tells the end of Gideon's life and how the Israelites turn away from Yahweh.

This story may begin right after the end of the last story. The Israelite men are excited after they defeat the Midianites. The men want Gideon to rule over Israel. After Gideon's death, the men want Gideon's descendants to continue to rule. In that time, a king was the one who led the nation successfully in battle. The people say Gideon, instead of Yahweh, is the one who saved the Israelites from the Midianites' hand, or from the Midianites' power. Yahweh said earlier that he would save the Israelites in a way that would amaze them so that the Israelites would know Yahweh had saved them. However, the Israelites still claim that a human, not Yahweh, saved them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, how do people choose a king or ruler? How do you honor a leader after a battle? Pause this audio here.

However, Gideon refuses to rule. Gideon says that Israel does not need a ruler because Israel already has one: Yahweh. If the one who saves can rule, then Yahweh should rule since Yahweh saved Israel! Gideon politely asks each of the soldiers to give Gideon one earring out of the things that they captured in the war. After a battle, the army that won would take valuable things, like jewelry, armor, and supplies, from their enemies' bodies and camp. The Israelite soldiers had gathered many earrings from their enemies. The storyteller says that Ishmaelites liked to wear gold rings in their ears. People sometimes used the word Ishmaelites to mean any of the people groups who move often. So the storyteller actually refers to the Midianites, who did not have their own land but moved from place to place.

Stop here and look at a picture of gold earrings as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture and throughout your history, what do soldiers do after a battle? Who gets to own the valuable things that the soldiers take from the enemy? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites happily give Gideon gold earrings. Each soldier gives one earring, and soon Gideon has nearly 20 kilograms of gold earrings. Gideon also has many other valuable things from the Midianites. Gideon has ornaments or jewelry and rich purple clothes that the Midianite kings wore. Gideon also has chains of precious metal with pendants that people put on camels' necks.

Gideon uses the gold from the earrings to make an ephod. This ephod may be like the ephod for the priests at the tabernacle, which was a highly decorated piece of clothing that covered the body from the shoulders down to the thigh. Priests wore this ephod when they asked God for guidance or reassurance about the future. Because the priests used the ephod when they worshiped God, sometimes people connected the ephod with God and worshiped the ephod as well. It is also possible that the ephod Gideon makes is a small metal statue of a person with the clothes that people put on it. It is not clear exactly what Gideon makes or why he makes it. Gideon may make this ephod as a way to honor or give thanks to Yahweh. Gideon may make it as a sign that Yahweh, not Gideon, is Israel's ruler. However, Gideon should not have made this object of worship unless Yahweh specifically said to do so. Gideon puts the ephod in Gideon's hometown of Ophrah, which is in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the territory of Manasseh. Also look at a picture of Yahweh's ephod as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of an important religious object in your culture that people keep in a special place. Who is responsible to make or take care of this object? What would happen if the wrong person made one of these objects? Pause this audio here.

Unfortunately, the Israelites begin to worship this ephod. Like men who are unfaithful to their wives, the Israelites are unfaithful to Yahweh. This ephod is like a trap to Gideon's family, which may mean that Gideon's family worships the ephod too.

As long as Gideon lives, for another 40 years, the land is at peace. The Israelites do not have to fight against their enemies. The Midianites do not raise their heads again, which means that they do not become strong again.

Jerub-Baal, or Gideon, returns to live at his home. Gideon has 70 sons, which shows that Gideon is wealthy and that people respect him. Gideon also has many wives. While men often had several wives in this time, Gideon may have had more than usual. Gideon also has a concubine, or a slave woman who has sexual relations with her master. A concubine does not have the legal rights of a wife, and a concubine's children do not inherit the father's wealth, unless the father specifically says so. This concubine has a son and lives in the town of Shechem, which is also in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the town of Shechem. Pause this audio here.

Gideon dies when he is old, and the people bury Gideon in Gideon's father's tomb. In this time, people would bury several family members in special caves. After Gideon's death, the Israelites worship Baal, a false god, again. They call him "Baal-Berith," which means the covenant god. But the Israelites actually act unfaithful to the real covenant God, Yahweh! The Israelites do not serve Yahweh. The Israelites are also not loyal to the family of Gideon, even though Gideon had done many good things for the Israelites. The Israelites do not acknowledge Gideon as God's chosen leader or honor Gideon for rescuing the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, how do people honor a leader after his death? How should people show respect to the leader's family after the leader dies?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:22–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites ask Gideon to rule over them. Gideon refuses.

In the second scene: Gideon asks the Israelites to give him gold earrings. When the Israelites do, Gideon makes an ephod and places it in Gideon's hometown. The Israelites begin to worship the ephod.

In the third scene: The Midianites do not attack again during Gideon's life. Gideon has many sons, including Abimelech, and lives until Gideon is old. When Gideon dies, people bury Gideon in Gideon's father's tomb.

In the fourth scene: After Gideon dies, the Israelites worship Baal again and do not honor Gideon's family.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Gideon, or Jerub-Baal
- Yahweh
- The Midianites, whom people sometimes call "Ishmaelites"
- The kings of Midian
- Joash, Gideon's father
- Gideon's wives and 70 sons
- And Gideon's concubine and her son, Abimelech

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The first scene probably begins right after the end of the last story. The men of Israel ask Gideon to rule over them. This is probably not all the people of Israel, but just the soldiers with Gideon. These men would be excited after they won the battle and believe that Gideon is the one who gave the men victory. The men want Gideon to continue to lead them to win battles, so the men want Gideon to rule. When Gideon dies, the men want Gideon's son to rule, then Gideon's grandson and further descendants. Gideon refuses. Gideon says that Yahweh rules over Israel. However, Gideon does not correct the Israelites and say that Yahweh, not Gideon, saved Israel.

In the second scene, Gideon asks the men to give Gideon some of the gold the men took from their enemies. The storyteller pauses to explain that the Ishmaelites, or the Midianites, often wore gold earrings. There were many more Midianite soldiers than Israelites, so each Israelite soldier would probably have gathered several gold earrings after the battle.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about another people group near you. At some point in the story, pause to explain the customs or habits of that people group. Pay attention to when you choose to explain information to your listeners. Pause this audio here.

The Israelite soldiers spread a garment, or a piece of clothing like a cloak or a large scarf, on the ground. Each man throws or drops a gold earring on the cloth. They weigh the gold, and it weighs about 20 kilograms. This is a lot of gold! And Gideon has even more for himself from the other valuable items he took from the Midianites.

Gideon uses this gold to make an ephod, and Gideon sets the ephod up in his hometown. Gideon may use the gold to buy the supplies and pay someone to make the ephod. Gideon may put the ephod in a special place of worship, perhaps near the altar he made in Ophrah. Though Gideon may make the ephod to honor Yahweh, this ephod does not honor Yahweh. Instead, the Israelites come to the ephod and worship at the ephod. The Israelites may worship the ephod like a god, or try to worship Yahweh at the ephod. However, this is not the way Yahweh has commanded the Israelites to worship Yahweh. This ephod is like a snare or trap to Gideon and Gideon's family. Like a trap is dangerous to animals, the ephod is dangerous to Gideon and his family because the ephod leads the Israelites, including Gideon's family, away from worship to Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What are some bad habits or dangerous activities that people should not do? What items do you need to do those dangerous activities? Now imagine you had those items with you in your house, where your children could see and touch them. What may happen because those items are so easy to find and use? How would you describe how it is not good to have those items nearby? Pause this audio here.

Like the other judges' stories, Gideon's story ends in scene three with an explanation of what happened to the Israelites' enemy, how long the people enjoyed peace or rest, and then Gideon's death and burial. The storyteller says that Midian did not raise its head again. This means that Midian did not fight against the Israelites again.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: If you want to say that an enemy no longer fights against you because you have conquered that enemy, how would you talk about this? Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Pretend to teach about an important leader in your history. Briefly describe the leader's life, all the way up to the leader's death. What information is important to include? Pay attention to the way you describe the end of this leader's life. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller explains that when Gideon went home to set up the ephod, Gideon also went back home to live, which means that Gideon stayed in his home area with his family instead of leading all of Israel like Gideon had before. The storyteller uses Gideon's other name, Jerub-Baal, which means, "Let Baal fight against Gideon." Remember that Gideon's father gave Gideon this name after Gideon destroyed Baal's altar. Perhaps the storyteller uses this name to show how unexpected the end of Gideon's life is. Gideon had this name to show how Baal could not stop Gideon when Gideon stopped people from worship of Baal. However, now Gideon leads the people to worship an ephod, and the people eventually worship Baal again. It seems like Baal has defeated Gideon.

Gideon lives for 40 years at his home. Though Gideon refuses to rule, he acts like a king. Gideon gathers a lot of money, has a lot of wives and sons, and even names one of his sons Abimelech, which means "my father is king." Abimelech is the son of Gideon's concubine, or a woman that Gideon has sexual relations with, though Gideon does not marry this woman like a wife.

Stop here and discuss what you will say about Abimelech's mother. In your culture, how can you talk about a woman like this appropriately? Pause the audio here.

Gideon died at a good old age, which means that Gideon lived for a long time, and then Gideon died. When Gideon dies, his family buries Gideon in the tomb of Joash, Gideon's father. This tomb was in Ophrah, which is where the Abiezrites, or the descendants of a man named Abiezer, lived. Gideon's family members prepare Gideon's body, then open the tomb, which they probably closed with rocks after the last burial. The family members would place Gideon's body on a shelf in the cave and then close the cave again.

Stop here and look at a picture of a tomb as a group. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller tells us that scene four happens immediately after Gideon's death. The Israelites return to worship Baal idols right away. The people set up Baal-Berith as their god and do not remember Yahweh. This does not mean the people forget that Yahweh exists. This means that the Israelites do not honor, obey, and worship Yahweh as their God, even though Yahweh saved the Israelites from all the enemies around them. The Israelites also were not loyal to Gideon's family. The Israelites probably do not show respect or honor to Gideon's family as they should.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about an activity that you loved to do as a child but that you do not do anymore. How would you describe how that activity is no longer important to you or is something that you no longer do all the time? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:22–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Gideon, or Jerub-Baal
- Yahweh
- The Midianites, whom people sometimes call "Ishmaelites"
- The kings of Midian
- Joash, Gideon's father
- Gideon's wives and 70 sons
- And Gideon's concubine and her son, Abimelech

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "We want you to rule over us. Then when you die, your son and then your grandson will rule over us, because you have saved us from the Midianites."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Wow! We have just defeated an army that had thousands more soldiers than we did! I know we did not win just because of the size of our army. We must have won because Gideon led us! or
- We celebrate because we have saved our land and now come home with lots of valuable things. If Gideon rules us, surely we will always be victorious like this! or
- I love how it feels to be a strong nation. I do not want our enemies to ever defeat us again. We should have a ruler, like other nations do, so that we can always be strong.

Gideon answered them, "No, I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you."

Then Gideon said to the Israelite men, "There is one thing I want to ask you for. Each of you give me one earring out of the things you captured in the war." The Midianites liked to wear gold earrings, because they were people of the wilderness.

The Israelites replied, "We are happy to give you earrings." So they spread out a cloth on the ground. Each man put on the cloth a ring from the things he had captured. The weight of the gold rings the men of Israel gave Gideon was nearly 20 kilograms. Gideon also had many other valuable things, like ornaments and purple garments that the kings of Midian wore and chains from their camels' necks.

Gideon used the gold from the earrings to make an ephod, and he put the ephod in his town of Ophrah. The Israelite people worshiped this ephod. Like men who are unfaithful to their wives, the Israelites were unfaithful to Yahweh. This ephod became like a trap to Gideon and his family.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am surprised and worried that the Israelites asked me to rule them. I do not want to rule them, and I should not either! Yahweh rules and leads us; or
- I want to honor Yahweh and make something special for him since Yahweh helped us win. I know that in our past, people made an ephod to honor Yahweh. I will do the same! or
- Since this ephod is in my town, I can just worship Yahweh here. I will not have to travel to the special place of worship. This is easier for me and my family. I was wise to make this ephod.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am sad that Gideon did not correct the Israelites like he should have. He did not explain that I helped the Israelites win. Instead, Gideon confuses people more! or
- I created the world and the right way of doing things. I told the Israelites how they should worship me. If they worship in the wrong way, the Israelites disobey me and dishonor me. The wrong worship also hurts the Israelites. I do not want the Israelites to harm themselves! or
- I care for the Israelites and I will protect them, even though they do not worship me. However, there will be consequences because they are unfaithful.

That is how the Israelites defeated the Midianites. The Midianites did not become strong again. As long as Gideon lived, for another 40 years, the Israelites had peace in their land.

And so Gideon, whose name was also Jerub-Baal, the son of Joash, went to live in his home. Gideon had 70 sons because he had many wives. Gideon's concubine, who lived in Shechem, also gave birth to a son whom Gideon named Abimelech.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gideon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It is normal for the leaders in a battle to gather many valuable things. It is right for me to be wealthy and continue to gather more money; or
- I have led Israel through difficult battles. Now I deserve to relax and have many wives; or
- I am happy because our enemies no longer attack us, and because I have many sons to take care of me as I grow old.

Gideon, son of Joash, lived for a long time, and then he died. They buried Gideon with Joash, his father, in Ophrah, where the Abiezer people lived.

As soon as Gideon died, the Israelites were again unfaithful to Yahweh and began to worship the idols called Baals. The Israelites worshiped Baal-Berith as their god, and they abandoned Yahweh their God. The Israelites forgot that Yahweh was the one who had saved them from all the enemies around them. The Israelites also were not loyal to the family of Jerub-Baal, also called Gideon, even though Gideon had done many good things for them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It is too difficult to follow all those old rules for worship that Yahweh gave us. Gideon showed that we can change how we worship when he set up the ephod. Now I want to change again. It will be a lot easier to worship Baal-Berith; or
- Now that Gideon is dead, we do not need to do things Gideon's way any longer. Gideon is the one who said he would not rule us, nor would his sons! We do not need to honor his family; or
- Look at how we have had peace for so many years! Surely this is because we are so wise and strong. We can do anything we want and be successful!

Ask the person who plays Gideon's family, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that the people do not honor us! How did the people forget that our father Gideon led them to victory not very long ago? or
- Our town has been a place of worship for many years, and I liked how people honored us when they came to our town. I miss the way things were; or
- Look at how wealthy and powerful my father was. The Israelites should respect us!

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 8:22–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Gideon says that **Yahweh** will rule over the Israelites. Yahweh is God's proper name. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

Gideon asks the Israelites to each give Gideon an earring from their **plunder** or spoil. An earring is jewelry that people put through a hole in their ear. Plunder is anything that an army who wins takes from their defeated enemy after the battle. Use the same word or phrase for plunder as you used in previous passages.

The storyteller calls the Midianites the "**Ishmaelites**." Ishmael and Midian were brothers and their descendants became the Midianites and the Ishmaelites. Both people groups were nomads, or people who moved around the wilderness, so sometimes people called both groups "Ishmaelites."

The gold that the Israelites gave to Gideon weighs 1,700 **shekels**. A shekel is a weight measurement of about 11 grams.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **shekels**. Look up shekels in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Gideon uses the gold to make an **ephod**. An ephod is a piece of clothing for priests, and it was often highly decorated. Yahweh gave specific instructions for how to make ephods for his priests, and the clothing covered the body from the shoulders down to the thigh with two shoulder pieces or straps. Gideon could have copied the ephods that Yahweh's priests wore, or he could have made one in a different style. Sometimes an ephod could mean clothing that people put on a statue of a god. Because the ephod was such a special piece of clothing, people sometimes worshiped the ephod like it was a god.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **ephod**. Look up ephod in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

This ephod is like a dangerous **trap** for Gideon and Gideon's **household**. In the Bible, a household means all the people who live together in one house.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **household**. Look up household in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a picture of a trap as a group. Use the same word or phrase for trap or snare as you used in previous passages. Pause this audio here.

The land is at **rest** while Gideon is alive. In this passage, this means that the Israelites did not have to fight their enemies at this time.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will say that the land was at rest or peace. Pause this audio here.

Gideon has a **concubine** who lives in Shechem. A concubine is a woman who had sexual relations with a man but did not have the full status of a wife. A concubine was often a slave of this man.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **concubine**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The people **bury** Gideon in Joash's **tomb**. A tomb is the name for a place where people bury a dead person. In the Bible, this could be a natural cave in a rock, or it could be a hole that people cut out of rock. Sometimes, people would bury more than one person in the same tomb. A family could have a tomb in which they buried all their dead family members. Inside the tomb could be shelves for the different bodies. People closed the open place in a tomb with a pile of rocks, or with one large slab of rock. This rock would be round so that people could roll it away.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "bury in a tomb." Look up tomb in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites worship **Baal** again after Gideon dies. Baal was a false god that the nations around Israel worshiped. People made idols or statues of this god in order to worship it. People named this statue Baal-Berith, which means "covenant Baal" or "the Baal we have a special promise with." For more information on Baal, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Baal as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites make Baal-Berith their **god** and do not serve Yahweh, their **God**. This is the more general word for God. For more information on God and other false gods, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for gods and for the general term for the creator God as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites do not show loyalty, or **steadfast love** to Gideon's family. For more information on steadfast love, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for loyalty or steadfast love as you used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 8:22–35

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 9:1–6

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 9:1–6 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:1–6 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:1–6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

As you remember, Gideon, or Jerubbaal, died and left behind 70 sons. He also had a son from a different woman, a concubine, in Shechem who Gideon was not married to. Gideon's son from this woman was named Abimelech. Israel has once again rejected Yahweh and turned back to worship one of the Baals, the false Canaanite gods.

Abimelech was the son of Jerubbaal. The Israelites called Gideon Jerubbaal, which means, "Let Baal fight against Gideon." The Canaanites worshiped many different false gods which they called "the Baals." The Israelites called Gideon "Jerubbaal" ever since Gideon followed Yahweh's instructions and destroyed the altars of Baal in his hometown. Since Abimelech's mother was a concubine, Abimelech did not have the same rights or privileges as his half-brothers. A concubine is a woman who the master considers his property. A concubine has no rights. There was no marriage promise between a concubine and her master, only a property contract. Though Abimelech's name means "my father is king," Abimelech had no chance to become king because no sons of concubines could become king.

After Gideon dies, Abimelech decides to speak with his mother's relatives in Shechem. Though Gideon was from the tribe of Manasseh, Shechem was a city in the land of the tribe of Ephraim. Shechem was about 50 kilometers north of Jerusalem and 25 kilometers west of the Jordan river. As you may remember, Shechem lay at the southern end of the valley that separated Gerizim and Ebal, the mountains of covenant blessing and curse. This was the same place where Joshua gathered all of Israel together to read aloud Yahweh's covenant, or binding promise, with his people. Joshua read all of the blessings and curses that Moses wrote and reaffirmed Israel's identity as Yahweh's chosen people.

Stop here as a group and look at the map of where Shechem and Ophrah are located in relation to Jerusalem and the Jordan River. Pause this audio here.

Abimelech speaks to all of his mother's brothers, who were the leaders of his mother's clan or family group. Abimelech urges his family to speak to the town leaders. Abimelech wants his family to ask the leaders if they want all of Gideon's 70 sons to rule over them, or if they want just one man to rule over them. When he says "one man," Abimelech refers to himself, and he reminds the people of Shechem that he is their own flesh and blood, which means Abimelech is their blood relative. Abimelech uses this question as a way to convince his family that Abimelech alone would be a better ruler than his 70 half-brothers who are not from Shechem. It is also likely that many of the people who live in Shechem were Canaanites.

Stop here and discuss with your group: How does someone become a leader in your culture? What qualities or abilities do people want a new leader to have? Pause this audio here.

Abimelech's family begins to spread Abimelech's message to the people in the town and to the leaders. The family convinces everyone and they say that Abimelech is their brother, or blood relative. The leaders are so convinced that they decide to support Abimelech when they give him 70 shekels of silver, or pieces of silver,

from the temple of Baal-Berith in Shechem. A shekel is a unit of measurement that weighs about 11.4 grams, so 70 shekels was more than enough money for Abimelech to hire a group of men to follow him. Baal-Berith means "Covenant Baal." This name shows that the citizens of Shechem had rejected Yahweh and instead worshiped Baal. The leaders take the money from a treasury in the temple. A treasury is a room where the leaders kept money that they used for religious and political purposes. The number of silver shekels is a preview of what Abimelech will do with the money.

Stop here and look at a picture of a silver shekel. Pause this audio here.

Abimelech uses the money to hire worthless and reckless men who begin to follow Abimelech. These are the kind of men who would steal, kill, or follow any kind of immoral orders if people pay them enough money to do so. These men then go with Abimelech to Ophrah, the place where Abimelech's half-brothers lived. With the men's help, Abimelech kills all 70 of his brothers on one stone. Abimelech formally executes his brothers, and this clearly establishes Abimelech's power.

Stop here as a group and look at the map of where Ophrah and Shechem are located in relation to Jerusalem and the Jordan River. Discuss with your group: When one tribe or people group defeats another where you live, how do they show the new change in leadership to the people? Pause this audio here.

Only Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, escapes when he hides. The leaders of Shechem, or Beth Millo, the house of Millo, then go to the terebinth, or oak tree, beside a pillar in Shechem. Beth Millo was likely the name of a large important structure that was easy to defend, where government events usually happened. Therefore, these leaders may be important government leaders in the area. The storyteller uses this information to tell us that something important is about to happen.

Stop here and look at a picture of an oak tree. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss with your group: Where do important meetings happen in your culture? Pause this audio here.

The pillar may be a monument. The pillar is most likely a large stone that people set up as a memorial to important events that have taken place in the past. As you remember, this was an important location since it was where Joshua previously set up a large stone as a monument to Yahweh's covenant with Yahweh's people. Only now, the people no longer depend on Yahweh to choose leaders. Instead, they now support a man who used Baal temple money to murder his brothers to become king.

In the same place where Joshua last proclaimed Israel as Yahweh's covenant people, the people of Shechem officially make Abimelech king. The contrast emphasizes how far away Israel is from Yahweh as they elect a leader who people who worship Baal support.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:1–6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: Abimelech goes to his mother's brothers in Shechem. Abimelech convinces his brothers to talk to the town leaders and ask the leaders if they want 70 men to rule over them or just one man to rule over them.

In the second scene: Abimelech's family convinces the Shechem rulers to support Abimelech. The leaders take 70 shekels from the temple of Baal-Berith in Shechem and give the money to Abimelech.

In the third scene: Abimelech uses the money to hire reckless men to follow Abimelech. The men travel to Ophrah and kill 69 of Abimelech's half-brothers on a stone. Only Jotham, the youngest half-brother, escapes from Abimelech when he hides.

In the fourth scene: Abimelech and his men return to Shechem. The leaders and the people of Shechem gather at an important place by an oak tree and they make Abimelech king.

The characters in this passage are:

- Abimelech
- 70 half-brothers, who include Jotham
- The brothers of Abimelech's mother
- The leaders of Shechem
- And a group of reckless men

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

It is important to remember that Gideon's story began when Gideon obeyed Yahweh and tore down the altars of Baal. But now, the Israelites have rejected Yahweh and returned to their worship of the false god Baal.

It is important to remember that Gideon and Gideon's 70 sons lived in Ophrah. Because Abimelech's mother was a concubine, Abimelech did not live with Gideon and Gideon's other brothers or have the same inheritance rights.

It is important to note that the storyteller does not mention Gideon's actual name but refers to Gideon as Jerubaal, or "fights with Baal."

Abimelech speaks to his mother's brothers in Shechem since they represented his mother's whole family. Abimelech tells the brothers to ask the city leaders if those leaders want 70 men to rule over them or only one man who is their own bone and flesh. It is important to note that Abimelech uses this question to convince the leaders of Shechem that Abimelech could rule them better than his 70 half-brothers. "I am your bone and flesh" is special language that means Abimelech was a blood relative of his family in Shechem and therefore cares about their interests.

Abimelech's family speak with the people and the leaders, or Baals, of Shechem. It is important to note that the word used for leaders in this passage is Baal. This shows the theme that Abimelech will always be linked to the Baals, or false Canaanite gods.

"Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech" is special language that means the leaders were convinced and wanted to support Abimelech. The leaders are convinced because Abimelech was their "brother." Here, brother refers not to an actual brother but to a blood relative.

The leaders of Shechem then take 70 silver shekels from the temple of Baal-Berith in Shechem and give the pieces of silver to Abimelech. The presence of the temple in Shechem shows that the people of Shechem worshiped Baal.

Abimelech uses the money to hire a group of unlawful men who would follow his orders without asking questions. These men march to Ophrah and capture Abimelech's 70 half-brothers. Only one of Abimelech's half-brothers, Jotham, escapes when he hides. Although the storyteller says that Abimelech kills all 70 of his brothers, we know that since Jotham escapes, Abimelech actually kills 69 of his brothers. With the help of the men, Abimelech executed or formally killed all of these 69 brothers on the same rock. We do not know exactly how Abimelech killed the brothers, but he formally executed each man.

Abimelech returns to Shechem and all of the leaders and people gather at an important place beside an oak tree. The leaders make Abimelech king.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:1–6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Abimelech
- 70 half-brothers, who include Jotham
- The brothers of Abimelech's mother
- The leaders of Shechem
- And a group of reckless men

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Act out Abimelech as Abimelech goes to speak with his mother's brothers in Shechem. Abimelech convinces the brothers to talk to the town leaders and ask the leaders if they want 70 men to rule over them or just one man.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Abimelech, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel bitter. My father was like a king, but I have never been treated the same as my brothers. I deserve to be a king! or
- I feel hopeful. Surely the town leaders will listen to my family and support me. I know the people here better than my brothers; or
- I feel ambitious. No one will stop me if I can just get the support of the Shechem leaders.

Act out Abimelech's family going out to talk to the town rulers. Abimelech's brothers convince the rulers to support Abimelech because Abimelech is their relative. The leaders show their support when they take 70 shekels from the temple of Baal-Berith and give the money to Abimelech.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the town leaders, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel hopeful. If Abimelech wins, we can continue to run our town the way we want to and worship Baal; or
- It is worth the risk to not have men rule over us who do not even know us; or
- Abimelech seems like the kind of man who will do what needs to be done to become king.

Act out Abimelech as he uses the money to hire reckless men to follow him. Abimelech and the rest of the men travel to Ophrah and kill 69 of Abimelech's half-brothers on the same stone. The youngest half-brother, Jotham, escapes Abimelech when Jotham hides.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jotham, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel devastated. I have never experienced so much loss at one time; or
- I feel horrified. I will never forget what Abimelech has done; or
- I feel grief. I feel so alone.

Abimelech and his men return to Shechem. The leaders and the people of Shechem gather at an important place by an oak tree and they make Abimelech king.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:1–6 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Abimelech goes to Shechem to speak with the **clan** of his mother's family. As you remember, a clan refers to a group of relatives. The brothers of Abimelech's mother were leaders in their family. The brothers had a higher standing in the community than Abimelech to be able to speak with the town leaders. Be sure to translate clan in the same way you translated it in previous passages.

In this passage, the town **leaders**, or citizens, are called "baals," or little gods. However, most translations just call them leading citizens of the city, or leaders of the city.

Stop here and discuss what word you will use for "city leaders." If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The **hearts** of the leaders were inclined to follow Abimelech. Here, heart refers to the part of a person where thoughts, feelings, and decisions happen. In this story, the leaders wanted to follow Abimelech. If you use the word for heart, use the same word or phrase for heart as you used in previous passages. For more information on heart, refer to the Master Glossary.

The leaders take 70 **shekels** of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith and give it to Abimelech. A shekel is a unit of measurement that weighs around 11.4 grams. In this story, these are specifically pieces of silver. Use the same word for shekel as you have used in previous passages, and refer to the Master Glossary for more information about shekel.

The leaders take the shekels of silver from the treasury in the **temple** of Baal-Berith. The temple was a place where people worshiped and sacrificed to their gods. This temple was a Canaanite place of worship where people worshiped and made sacrifices to the false god Baal-Berith. Baal-Berith was one of the many Baals, or false gods, that the Canaanites worshiped. Use the same word or phrase for a temple that was not for Yahweh as you used in previous passages. For more information on temple, refer to the Master Glossary.

After Abimelech killed his half-brothers, Abimelech travels back to Shechem and the leaders there make Abimelech **king**. A king is someone who rules over a city or territory. Use the same word or phrase for king as you used in previous passages. For more information on king, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 9:1–6

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 9:7–21

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 9:7–21 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:7–21 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:7–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the last passage, Gideon's son Abimelech murdered 69 of Abimelech's half-brothers, and the people of Shechem made Abimelech king. Only Abimelech's youngest half-brother, Jotham, escaped when he hid. Now, Jotham will speak out against Abimelech.

After Jotham escaped being killed by Abimelech, Jotham hears that the leaders of Shechem made Abimelech king. Jotham comes out of the place where he hid and travels to the top of Mount Gerizim. The mountain is a steep wall of rock about 244 meters above the valley of Shechem on the south side of the city. If you remember, the Israelites referred to this mountain as the mountain of blessing. In contrast, Jotham cries aloud a message of judgment on the leaders of Shechem. Jotham speaks as a prophet, or a messenger of Yahweh, when he says that Yahweh will only hear the people of Shechem if the people listen to his message.

Stop here and look as a group at a map that shows Shechem valley, Mount Gerizim, and Jerusalem. Pause this audio here.

Jotham then tells a fable, or a special type of story that teaches a lesson about what is right and what is wrong. Fables use creatures and objects that act like people when they show emotions and thoughts. In Jotham's story,

the trees want to anoint a king. When people anointed a king, the people poured oil on that person's head to show that God chose the king. In this story, the trees represent men who want to choose a new king.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What kind of stories do people tell in your culture? If people use stories with animals as characters, tell a short story that teaches a moral lesson from your culture. Pay attention to the phrases you use to introduce and end the story. Pause this audio here.

First the trees ask the olive tree to be their king.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of an olive tree. Pause this audio here.

But the olive tree responds with a question. The olive tree asks if he should no longer produce oil. Oil is a thing that brought honor to men and to the gods. In those times, people poured oil on a person's head to anoint, or to show that God specially chose that person. The olive tree uses the question to say that the olive tree cannot leave his true purpose, which is to make oil to become king of the trees. Then the trees ask the fig tree to become king.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of a fig tree. Pause this audio here.

When the trees ask the fig tree to become king, the fig tree responds in the same way. The fig tree says he will not stop producing good, sweet fruit to be king. Then the trees ask the grape vine to become king.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of a grape vine. Pause this audio here.

When the trees ask the vine, the vine responds in the same way. Should the vine no longer produce wine that pleased men and the gods? The answer for all three trees is no, they do not want to stop their work and become king. This story uses the term "gods" to show many gods. This means this was probably a Canaanite fable, because the Canaanites worshiped many gods.

It is important to remember that people used the fruit of olive trees to make olive oil, they picked sweet figs from fig trees, and they pressed the grapes from the vines to make wine. These were the three most important products in the land of Canaan.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What kinds of plants or trees do people value most where you live? Why? What plants are the least desirable? Pause this audio here.

Finally, the trees ask the bramble to be their king. The bramble is a wild plant with thorns that can grow in remote places.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of a thornbush. Pause this audio here.

Unlike the other trees, the bramble does not produce anything that pleases people or the gods. The bramble says that if the trees have faith, or trust in the bramble as king, then the trees can take shelter in the bramble's shadow. This was not much of a promise since brambles are low to the ground and do not provide much shade. The bramble then threatens the trees when he says that if the trees do not make the bramble king, then fire will burn the trees. Brambles are unpredictable plants that can catch fire easily. This makes brambles dangerous to people. The bramble says the fire that comes from the bramble will burn down even the cedar trees of Lebanon. People knew that the cedar trees of Lebanon were very tall and strong.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of the cedars of Lebanon. Pause this audio here.

In the fable, the bramble represents Abimelech. Jotham uses the story to tell the leaders of Shechem that Abimelech is dangerous. Jotham asks the leaders if the leaders have acted honorably and did the right thing when they made Abimelech king. Jotham clearly thinks the answer is "no," because when they supported Abimelech with money from their temple, the leaders supported the murder of Jotham's 69 brothers. Jotham says the leaders have not acted fairly toward Gideon's—or Jerubaals's—family even after Gideon rescued the leaders from Midian. Instead, the leaders chose Abimelech to be king simply because Abimelech was a blood relative, since Abimelech's mother was from Shechem. Jotham refers to Abimelech's mother as a slave girl, since she was Gideon's concubine. This was a way for Jotham to insult and question Abimelech's right to even be considered as king.

Jotham ends his message when he says that if the people have acted faithfully and honorably toward Gideon, then the leaders of Shechem will have joy in Abimelech. But if the leaders have not acted faithfully toward

Gideon, and it is clear that they have not, then Abimelech will cause fire to come on them and Beth Millo. If you remember, Beth Millo, or the house of Millo, represented a large structure in Shechem where the people made important decisions like to make Abimelech king. Here, fire represents judgment and destruction. So Jotham leaves them with a curse when he says Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem will end up destroying each other.

Jotham then runs away and hides at Beer, which means "well." We do not know the location of Beer, but it was likely a place on the edge of the desert where people stopped and watered their animals as they traveled between Moab and Canaan.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:7–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: Jotham hears that Abimelech is king. Jotham comes out of the place where he hid and goes to the top of Mount Gerizim. Jotham shouts a message to the leaders of Shechem. Jotham tells the leaders to listen to Jotham's message so that God will listen to the leaders.

In the second scene: Jotham tells a story to the leaders of Shechem about trees who want to find a king. The olive tree, fig tree, and vine decline the offer to be king, so the trees ask the thornbush to rule over the trees. The thornbush tells the trees he will give them shelter, but if the trees do not accept the thornbush as king, then the thornbush will burn the trees up with fire.

In the third scene: Jotham explains the story. Jotham says that Abimelech is like the thornbush. If the people acted in good faith and dealt well with Gideon's family, then the people could rejoice in Abimelech as the people's king. But if the people did not deal well with Gideon's family, then the people could expect destruction from Abimelech.

In the fourth scene: Jotham then escapes to Beer to be far away from Abimelech.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jotham
- The leaders of Shechem
- Abimelech
- The trees
- The olive tree
- The fig tree
- The vine
- And the thornbush

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Jotham hears that the leaders of Shechem made Abimelech king. Jotham comes out of the place where he hid and goes to Mount Gerizim. Jotham cries out, or speaks loudly, to the leaders of Shechem. Jotham tells the leaders, "Listen to me so that God may listen to you."

It is important to remember that the city of Shechem was in the Valley of Shechem, between two mountains. This means that when someone spoke loudly, people could hear that person from very far away because of the echoes. Jotham shouted down at the leaders from a distance where the leaders could not reach Jotham, but people could still hear Jotham. Mount Gerizim was about 244 meters above the Valley of Shechem on the south side of the city.

It is important to notice that what Jotham says means that if the leaders listen to Jotham, God may hear the leaders and help them. Jotham implies that the leaders of Shechem will eventually cry out to God and want God to hear them.

Jotham then tells a story about trees that want a king.

Stop here as a group and discuss how you will act out this part of the story. One way to show how Jotham shouts down to the leaders is to have the actor who plays Jotham stand on a large rock or chair so that this person is above the people who play the leaders of Shechem. Also, one way to visualize the fable is for the actor of Abimelech to act as the bramble. Pause this audio here.

It is important to note that the story Jotham tells is a fable. Jotham does not mean that trees could actually talk when Jotham lived. The story is not a vision, nor does it mean Jotham had the ability to listen to trees speak. Instead, Jotham tells a story that is not real but that teaches a lesson. In Jotham's story, trees take on human characteristics, such as the ability to think and speak. Jotham uses the fable to make the leaders of Shechem think about their own actions. In this way, Jotham does not have to tell the leaders directly what the leaders have done.

Stop here and discuss as a group: How do people in your culture introduce stories that are not real or true, but that use animals or plants that act like people to teach a lesson? Pause this audio here.

In the story, the trees ask the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine to rule over the other trees, but the olive tree, fig tree, and vine all decline the offer to be king. The olive tree, fig tree, and vine each reply with a question. Should they leave what they produce just to wave over the trees? "Wave over the trees" is special language that means the olive tree, fig tree, and vine would rule over, or be king over, the other trees. The olive tree, fig tree, and vine do not expect anyone to answer their questions, because the answer is obvious. They will not stop being fruitful trees just to wave above the other trees.

Finally, the trees ask the bramble to be king. It is important to remember that a bramble is full of thorns, grows in the wilderness, and easily catches fire. The bramble accepts the role of king and promises shelter.

The bramble says if the trees do not make him king, then the bramble's fire will burn even the cedar trees of Lebanon. It is important to remember that cedars are tall and strong trees.

Jotham then explains part of the fable. Jotham says if the leaders acted honorably toward Jotham's father, Gideon, then the leaders would have joy in Abimelech as their king. But if the leaders have not acted honorably toward Gideon's family, then fire from Abimelech will destroy the leaders and Abimelech.

It is important to note that Jotham thinks the leaders are responsible for the execution, or death, of his 69 brothers. Even though the leaders did not physically kill his brothers on the stone, the leaders gave Abimelech the money to hire men who helped Abimelech kill Gideon's sons.

It is also important to notice that when Jotham says Gideon rescued Shechem "from the hand of" Midian, this is special language that means Gideon rescued them from the power of the Midianites. Gideon did not allow the Midianites to defeat the city of Shechem.

After Jotham finishes his message, Jotham runs away to Beer to escape Jotham's brother Abimelech. The word Beer means "well." This was a remote place on the edge of the wilderness where people stopped and gave water to their animals as they traveled between Moab and Canaan.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:7–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jotham
- The leaders of Shechem
- Abimelech
- The trees
- The olive tree
- The fig tree
- The vine
- And the bramble

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Act out Jotham when Jotham hears that Abimelech is king. Jotham comes out of the place where Jotham hid and goes to the top of Mount Gerizim. Jotham shouts a message to the leaders of Shechem. Jotham tells the leaders to listen to his message so that God will listen to the leaders.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jotham, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am furious. These people think they have gotten away with secretly killing my family, but I will tell them otherwise; or
- I am resentful. These people have made a murderer king; or
- I feel rebellious. I want Abimelech to know I am alive and still have a voice.

Act out how Jotham tells a fable to the leaders of Shechem about trees who want to find a king. The olive tree, fig tree, and vine decline the offer to be king, so the trees ask the thornbush to rule over them. The thornbush tells the trees he will give the trees shelter, but if the trees do not accept the thornbush as king, then the fire will burn even the cedars of Lebanon.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the leaders of Shechem, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am surprised. How did Jotham escape? or
- I am angry. Who is Jotham to tell us how to choose a king? or
- I am not impressed. Why would we cry out to Jotham's God when we have our own?

Act out Jotham as Jotham explains the story. Jotham says that Abimelech is like the thornbush. If the people acted in good faith, and dealt well with Gideon's family, then the people could rejoice in Abimelech as their king. But if the people did not deal well with Gideon's family, then the people could expect destruction from Abimelech, and Abimelech would also be destroyed.

Act out Jotham as Jotham escapes to Beer to be far away from Abimelech.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jotham, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry. The leaders know they are responsible for killing my brothers! or
- I am afraid. After what I said, Abimelech will search for me to kill me, too; or
- I am devastated. Abimelech already destroys all of the good my father did in Israel.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:7–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Jotham climbs to the top of Mount Gerizim and shouts to the people in Shechem, "Listen to me, **leaders of Shechem!**" This is the same word for leaders, leading citizens, or "little baals," as in the previous passage, so use the same word here for leaders of Shechem as you did previously.

In Jotham's fable, the trees want to **anoint** a **king** to rule over the trees. A king is someone who rules over a city or territory. When people anoint a king, they pour oil on the person's head to show that God chose the king. Use the same term for king that you used in previous passages. For more information, king is in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **anoint**. Look up anoint in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The trees ask the grape vine to be their king, but the vine does not want to stop producing **wine** that cheers humans and **gods** just so that the vine can be king. Wine is a fermented drink that people made from pressed grapes. Here, gods refer to gods of other nations and not to the one, true God—Yahweh. Many times people made idols from wood or metal to represent their gods. Use the same word for gods as you have used in previous passages, and remember that gods is in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **wine**. Look up wine in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there.

Jotham asks the leaders of Shechem if the leaders have acted in good **faith** toward Gideon and his family, or **household**. Use the same word for household as you have used in previous passages, and remember that

household is in the Master Glossary. If you have faith in someone, you trust what that person says and you are committed to do what that person tells you to do. Here, if the leaders acted in good faith toward Gideon, then the leaders would have acted fairly and sincerely when they chose the next king. Instead, they gave Abimelech money so that Abimelech could kill 69 of his brothers and become king.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **faith**. Look up faith in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Jotham says that the leaders of Shechem have made Abimelech, the son of a woman **servant**, the king. Use the same word for servant as you have used in previous passages, but remember that this refers to women servants specifically. You may refer to servant in the Master Glossary for more information.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for a servant who is a woman.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 9:7–21

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 9:22–29

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 9:22–29 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:22–29 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:22–29 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

Previously, Abimelech used money from the leaders of Shechem to kill all of his half-brothers so that Abimelech could become king. Only Jotham survived when Abimelech killed all of Abimelech's half-brothers. Jotham spoke out against his half-brother Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem before Jotham ran away. Jotham told the

leaders of Shechem that the leaders would bring destruction to each other. Now, the leaders of Shechem will rebel against Abimelech.

As you remember, Abimelech was the son of Gideon, or Jerubbaal, and Abimelech's mother was a concubine from Shechem. Throughout the book of Judges, Yahweh has chosen leaders for Israel. However, in this story Abimelech has made himself king. So Abimelech became king and ruled Israel for three years. This was a very short period of time to rule as king. But the author does not talk about what Abimelech did while Abimelech reigned. Instead, the author only tells us about the downfall of Abimelech's rule. Here, the original word for "ruled" implies that Abimelech most likely used force and violence to rule over all of Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do people choose leaders where you live? In your culture, what happens when people are unhappy with the leader they have? Pause this audio here.

In the third year that Abimelech rules Israel, Yahweh sends an evil spirit to cause problems between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. An evil spirit, or demon, is a supernatural spirit being that tries to destroy and deceive people. Although evil spirits are spirits who have rebelled against Yahweh as the spirits' creator, Yahweh is still in control of all things. Here, Yahweh sends the evil spirit to bring destruction to Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem as a punishment for the wrong things they did. Through the evil spirit, the blood of the murder of Jerubbaal's 70 sons will be laid not just on Abimelech, but also on the leaders of Shechem. In other words, Yahweh will hold both Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem responsible for the murder of Jerubbaal's sons. The leaders had strengthened Abimelech's hands, or made Abimelech more powerful, when they gave Abimelech money to murder Abimelech's brothers.

The evil spirit causes the leaders of Shechem to deal treacherously with, or to be untrue and disloyal towards, Abimelech. The leaders send men to set an ambush for Abimelech in the mountains along the road to Shechem. As you remember, Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal overlooked Shechem from the southwest and northwest.

Stop here and look at a map of Shechem, Mount Gerizim, and Mount Ebal as a group. Pause this audio here.

An ambush is when men hide out of sight to attack and rob people who pass by. The men most likely hid on the mountainsides where they could easily see anyone who approached the narrow road that led to Shechem below. Since the men robbed everyone who passed by, this would have created problems for Abimelech's kingdom. Not only could the ambushes harm Abimelech, but the ambushes on other people could also have caused the people to doubt whether Abimelech was able to rule his kingdom well.

Someone tells Abimelech about the ambushes, but before Abimelech can respond to the threat to his kingdom, another plot takes place against Abimelech. Gaal, the son of Ebed, moves back to Shechem with Gaal's brothers, or relatives. We do not know much about Gaal, only that he will claim to be a descendant of the founder of Shechem. What is clear is that Gaal travels with a group, and Gaal has brought his own supporters. Gaal quickly gains the trust of the leaders of Shechem who are already discontent with Abimelech as king.

Gaal arrives at the time of the grape harvest. This allows Gaal and the leaders of Shechem to meet and plot against Abimelech while everyone is busy as they celebrate a religious festival. At this time, the people of Shechem harvested grapes from their vineyards and pressed the grapes to make wine. Wine is a fermented grape juice.

Stop here and look as a group at pictures of grapevines, grapes, and wine. Pause this audio here.

Then they celebrated as they ate and drank in the temple of Baal-Berith, one of the false Canaanite gods. In the temple, the people cursed Abimelech while they were drunk during their sacrificial meals. When you curse someone, you wish for a bad thing to happen to that person and believe that the curse will come true.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When does someone curse someone else in your culture? Who or what power makes curses come true where you live? Pause this audio here.

Gaal then speaks to the leaders of Shechem and challenges the leaders when he asks several questions. Gaal makes a contrast between who Abimelech is and the people of Shechem. Like Abimelech did before, Gaal makes his argument to the leaders that Gaal should be king based on who is more closely related to the people of Shechem. Gaal argues that Abimelech should not be king of Shechem because Abimelech's father was Jerubbaal, who tore down the altars of Baal, one of the gods that the people of Shechem served. Abimelech was only related to the people of Shechem through his mother, while Gaal claimed to be a direct descendant of Hamor, who was

the founder of Shechem. Gaal also opposes Zebul, the deputy, or assistant, who Abimelech put in charge of Shechem, since Abimelech did not actually live in the city. As a deputy, Zebul took orders from Abimelech and helped Abimelech rule Shechem.

Then Gaal challenges the people to make Gaal their leader. Gaal is confident that he can get rid of Abimelech. Gaal says that if Gaal was in charge, Gaal would call out to Abimelech and tell Abimelech to gather the biggest amount of soldiers Abimelech could and come out to meet Gaal for battle. Gaal probably uses such bold language to inspire confidence in the people he hoped to persuade to follow Gaal. However, as we will see in the next passage, it seems not everyone is convinced to follow Gaal, since someone reports everything that Gaal said to Abimelech.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:22–29 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: Abimelech has been king for three years when Yahweh sends an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem to punish them for the wrong things they have done.

In the second scene: The leaders of Shechem set up an ambush for Abimelech in the mountains along the road to Shechem. The men in the mountains rob and attack anyone who tries to pass by. Someone reports the ambushes to Abimelech.

In the third scene: Gaal and Gaal's brothers travel to Shechem at the time people celebrate the grape harvest. The people pick and press their grapes. Gaal meets with the leaders of Shechem and Gaal gains their trust. The people celebrate in the temple of Baal.

In the fourth scene: In the temple, the people eat, drink, and curse Abimelech. Gaal challenges Abimelech's leadership. Gaal says Gaal is a better king for Shechem because Gaal is a descendant of Hamor, the founder of Shechem. Gaal says Gaal can get rid of Abimelech and will tell Abimelech to bring out all Abimelech's men to fight.

The characters in this passage are:

- Abimelech
- Yahweh
- The evil spirit
- The leaders of Shechem
- The people who lived in the city of Shechem
- The men who are a part of the ambush
- The messenger who tells Abimelech
- Zebul
- And Gaal and Gaal's brothers

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

It is important to remember that Abimelech became king through force and not because Yahweh's spirit chose Abimelech like Yahweh's spirit chose the other judges.

It is important to remember that Jotham told the leaders of Shechem and Abimelech that they would lead to each other's destruction. Now, the leaders of Shechem want to act disloyally toward Abimelech.

Abimelech has ruled for three years when Yahweh sends an evil spirit to cause problems between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. It is important to note that Yahweh is not evil, but Yahweh is still in control of all his creation, which includes the evil spirits.

Stop here and discuss with your group: In your language, how will you talk about how Yahweh sends an evil spirit? Pause this audio here.

The evil spirit causes the leaders of Shechem to deal treacherously with Abimelech. When someone acts treacherously, that person does not act with loyalty and people cannot trust that person. Instead that person intentionally tries to cause harm to another person or to other people.

Stop here and discuss with your group: Think of examples of how someone would act treacherously toward another person. How would you describe this person in your language? Pause this example here.

Yahweh sends the evil spirit to punish Abimelech for the way he shed the blood of, or murdered, Gideon's 70 sons, and to punish the leaders of Shechem for the way they supported Abimelech with money. This phrase, "their blood be laid on Abimelech," does not refer to physical blood. This is special language that means Yahweh holds both Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem responsible for the murder of Jerubbaal's sons.

The men of Shechem strengthened the hands of Abimelech so Abimelech could kill his brothers. This is special language that shows that the leaders helped Abimelech to become more powerful when they gave Abimelech money to hire men to follow Abimelech.

The leaders of Shechem sent men to set an ambush for Abimelech in the mountain pass that led to Shechem. It is unclear whether the leaders set the ambush to help Abimelech, or whether the leaders set the ambush against Abimelech to cause Abimelech harm. The men who the leaders hired to carry out the ambush attack and rob every person who passes by. Somebody hears what the men do and tells Abimelech about the ambush. We do not know who this person is. It is important to remember that Abimelech did not live in the city of Shechem, but in a city close by.

We can hear in the story that a new event happens: Gaal and his brothers arrive in Shechem.

Stop here and discuss as a group: How do you introduce new events and new characters in your stories? Pause this audio here.

Gaal is the son of a man named Ebed. We do not know what Gaal did, but somehow Gaal made the people in Shechem trust Gaal.

Gaal arrives at the time when the people of Shechem harvest the grapes from their vineyards and press the grapes to make wine. The people harvest the grapes during a religious festival.

At the religious festival, Gaal meets the leaders of Shechem in the temple of Baal-Berith, one of the false Canaanite gods. The people eat and drink fermented drinks there in the temple. Gaal gains the trust of the people and the people curse Abimelech.

It is important to remember that when the leaders set an ambush and give their support to Gaal, these things are a result of the evil spirit that Yahweh sent.

Gaal speaks out and challenges Abimelech's leadership of the people. Gaal asks the questions, "Who is Abimelech?" and "Who are the people of Shechem?" not because Gaal does not know the answer, but as a way to show disapproval or contempt of Abimelech. Gaal says Gaal would be a better leader of Shechem because Gaal is a descendant of Hamor, the founder of Shechem.

Gaal asks, "Is not Zebul his deputy?" As you remember, Abimelech did not live in Shechem, so Abimelech put someone in charge of the city who Abimelech could trust. The name of the man Abimelech put in charge was Zebul. Though Zebul lived in and ruled over Shechem, he was still under Abimelech's authority and reported to Abimelech.

Then Gaal asks a question Gaal does not expect anyone to answer: "Who will give this people into my hand?" This question is special language that means Gaal challenges the people to make Gaal their leader. You will recall that when someone holds something in their hand, they have control over that thing. Gaal wants control over the people. Gaal says he will get rid of Abimelech if the people support Gaal. Gaal says if Gaal was their leader, Gaal would challenge Abimelech to bring out all of Abimelech's soldiers to fight.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:22–29 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Abimelech
- Yahweh
- The evil spirit
- The leaders of Shechem
- The people who lived in the city of Shechem
- The men who are a part of the ambush
- The messenger who tells Abimelech
- Zebul
- And Gaal and Gaal's brothers

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Abimelech has been king for three years when Yahweh sends an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem to punish them for the wrong things they have done.

Act out the leaders of Shechem as they set up an ambush for Abimelech in the mountains along the road to Shechem. The men in the mountains rob and attack anyone who tries to pass by. Someone reports the ambushes to Abimelech.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Abimelech, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry. Why do they plot against me? or
- I am nervous. Without Shechem's political and financial support, it will be hard to continue to rule the people; or
- I am not sure what to do. I cannot punish or I will lose my biggest supporters. I need a solution that will bring them back to my side.

Act out Gaal and Gaal's brothers as they travel to Shechem at the time when people harvest the grapes. Act out the people as they pick and press the grapes. Gaal meets with the leaders of Shechem and gains the leaders' trust. The people celebrate in the temple.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the leaders of Shechem, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am happy. Here is a strong man who can bring down Abimelech and support our cause; or
- I want change. Abimelech has been a poor leader. I want the people to turn against him; or
- I am hopeful. Maybe the gods will favor us and curse Abimelech. The gods will bring us success through Gaal.

Act out how the people eat, drink, and curse Abimelech. Gaal challenges Abimelech's leadership. Gaal says Gaal is a better king for Shechem because Gaal is a descendant of Hamor, the founder of Shechem. Gaal says he can get rid of Abimelech and that Gaal will tell Abimelech to bring out all of Abimelech's men to fight.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of Shechem, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am hopeful. Maybe Gaal really can defeat Abimelech and be loyal to us! or
- I am resentful. Abimelech has been a terrible king! Abimelech does not even live in our city; or
- I am doubtful. Gaal does not have that many men, and I have seen Abimelech use cruelty and force before. I am not so sure he can defeat the king.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:22–29 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

After Abimelech ruled for three years, Yahweh sent an **evil spirit** between Abimelech and the **leaders of Shechem**. Use the same word for "leaders of Shechem" as you have used in previous passages. An evil spirit, or demon, is a supernatural, non-physical being that tries to destroy and deceive people. Evil spirits are spirits who have rebelled against Yahweh as their creator.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **evil spirit**. Look up evil spirit in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Abimelech was the ruler of **Israel**. Here, the word Israel refers to all the descendants of Jacob together. It then means the same as **Israelites**, or as the people of Israel. Use the same word for Israel that you have used in previous passages. For more information on Israel and Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

The leaders of Shechem send men to set an **ambush** on the road to Shechem. An ambush is a type of surprise attack. In this case, the men hid by the roadside with the purpose to surprise travelers when they jumped out and hurt or robbed the travelers.

Stop here and discuss with your group: How will you talk about an **ambush** in your language? Pause this audio here.

Gaal arrives in Shechem for the grape harvest and gains the trust of the leaders of Shechem. The leaders have a feast in the house of their god, or their **temple**. You may use "house of their god" or the word for a temple. Use the same word for this temple or house of their gods as you used in previous passages. For more information on temple, refer to the Master Glossary.

This particular temple was a Canaanite place of worship where people worshiped and made sacrifices to one of the false Canaanite **gods**, Baal. Gods of other nations are not the same as the one true God, Yahweh. Yahweh told the people of Israel not to worship or follow any other god but Yahweh. Sometimes people of other nations used wood or metal to make statues or pillars to represent their gods. These were called idols. Use the same word for god as you have used in previous passages. For more information on gods, refer to the Master Glossary.

In the temple, the people ate, drank, and **cursed** Abimelech. Curses are the opposite of blessings. When you curse someone, you wish that something bad will happen to that person and believe that the curse will come true. Use the same word or phrase for curse as you used in previous passages. For more information on curse, refer to the Master Glossary.

Gaal says Zebul is Abimelech's **deputy**. A deputy is an official who rules a city on behalf of the city's king. As a deputy, Zebul was still under Abimelech's authority and reported to Abimelech. Zebul lived in Shechem and ruled over Shechem on a daily basis while Abimelech lived outside of the city.

Stop here and discuss with your group: How will you talk about the role of a deputy in your language? Pause this audio here.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 9:22–29

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 9:30–41

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 9:30–41 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:30–41 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

*Setting the Stage**Setting the Stage*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:30–41 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the last passage, Yahweh sent an evil spirit to cause division between the leaders of Shechem and Abimelech. A man named Gaal came to Shechem and gained the trust of the leaders of Shechem. Gaal challenged Abimelech's rule of Shechem as king, and said that Gaal would make a better leader than Abimelech. Now, Zebul hears about Gaal's challenge and reports the problem to Abimelech.

As you remember, Abimelech did not live in Shechem, but he set up his commanding officer, Zebul, to rule over Shechem and report back to Abimelech. Someone reports what Gaal said to Zebul, and it makes Zebul very angry. Zebul not only reports to Abimelech Gaal's plan to cause the city to rebel against Abimelech, but Zebul also tells Abimelech what Abimelech should do in response to Gaal's threat. Instead of to attack the city directly, Zebul says Abimelech should come with Abimelech's soldiers at night and set an ambush, or hide in the fields and wait until the next day to attack. Zebul says Abimelech and Abimelech's soldiers should attack the city as soon as the sun rises. The conditions of the light at this time of day would make it hard for Gaal to see at a distance. As you remember, the leaders of Shechem were the first ones to set up an ambush against Abimelech. Now Abimelech will do the same thing against the leaders of Shechem.

Stop here as a group: Tell a story of a battle that people won because the leaders had a good plan. Pause this audio here.

We then learn more about Abimelech's plan of attack. Abimelech plans an ambush and splits his soldiers into four companies, or groups. This will allow Abimelech to send Abimelech's soldiers to attack the city at different times and confuse Gaal about how many soldiers Abimelech has. Zebul tells Abimelech that once Abimelech has defeated Gaal and Gaal's soldiers, Abimelech can do, "as his hands find fit." This was another way to say Abimelech could defeat them however Abimelech wanted to.

Abimelech listens to Zebul's advice and goes with his soldiers at night to set an ambush against Gaal. Abimelech splits the soldiers into four groups, and each group hides in a different place. The next morning, Gaal goes out and stands at the entrance of the city. It is probable that Gaal already has control of Shechem at this point since he had convinced the city to rebel against Abimelech. It is also likely that Zebul surrendered the city to Gaal without a fight since Zebul is now at Gaal's side and talks with Gaal. This, of course, is a trick, as Zebul knows Abimelech is about to attack.

Abimelech, who hides with one of the four groups of soldiers, stands up from the place where he hid and runs forward to attack the city. From a distance, Gaal immediately sees Abimelech and the men come down from the mountains. As you remember, Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal were located to the southwest and northwest of Shechem.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Shechem, Mount Gerizim, and Mount Ebal. Pause this audio here.

Gaal points out to Zebul the soldiers who approach and says that men come down from the mountaintops. Zebul tries to deceive Gaal when Zebul says it is not men Gaal sees, but only the shadows of the mountains. Gaal looks again and then shouts in surprise, "Look!" Gaal is shocked to see two more groups of men come to attack the city from different directions. Gaal describes one group of men as "coming down from the center of the land." It is unclear where exactly Gaal meant, but it was a part of the land at a higher elevation than Shechem, which was at the bottom of a valley. It is possible that the "center of the land" might have been a noticeable landmark such as Mount Gerizim.

Gaal describes the second group of men as "coming from the diviner's oak tree." Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to not do divination, which meant that the Israelites could not use spirits to predict someone's future. An oak is a type of tree.

Stop here and look at a picture of an oak tree as a group. Pause this audio here.

Again, it is unclear where this tree was located. It was likely an oak tree with some ceremonial significance at a place that was visible from the city, but some distance away from the city. Now that Gaal can see three groups of soldiers who approach the city, Gaal is unsure what to do. Should Gaal go and attack or risk that the soldiers could surround and trap him in the city? Gaal has no way to know the size of the army that approaches because Abimelech has divided the men into different groups.

Zebul no longer pretends to help Gaal. Instead, Zebul openly taunts Gaal. Zebul says, "Where is your mouth now?" This means that all of Gaal's bold speeches about how Gaal would defeat Abimelech are now useless. Zebul reminds Gaal that Gaal said, "Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?" when Gaal challenged Abimelech as king. Zebul asks, "Are not these the men you despised?" Zebul says this to emphasize that the people Gaal thought were weak now use a strategic plan of attack to defeat Gaal. Zebul tells Gaal to go out and fight the men exactly as Gaal said Gaal would.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, why would someone remind another person of words that the other person said in the past? How does the way people say words change the meaning or intention of those words? Pause this audio here.

So Gaal goes out of the city and leads the leaders of Shechem and the people of Shechem in a battle against Abimelech. Abimelech and his soldiers fight against Gaal and Gaal's men until Gaal and his men run back towards the city. Abimelech chases Gaal as far as the city gate or entrance. Abimelech's soldiers catch and kill many of Gaal's soldiers before those soldiers can reach the city.

After they win the battle, Abimelech returns to Arumah, the nearby city where Abimelech lives. Zebul stays in Shechem and forces Gaal and Gaal's family to leave the city.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:30–41 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: Abimelech's commanding officer, Zebul, learns that Gaal turns the people of Shechem against Abimelech when Gaal speaks out against Abimelech. Zebul is furious. Zebul sends messengers to Abimelech to tell Abimelech that Gaal and Gaal's family now live in Shechem and have caused the people to rebel against Abimelech. Zebul tells Abimelech to set up an ambush at night against Gaal.

In the second scene: Abimelech follows Zebul's advice and plans an ambush. Abimelech divides his men into four groups that surround Shechem. The men hide in the fields and mountains. The next morning, Gaal goes to the city gate and sees Abimelech and Abimelech's soldiers start to come down from the hilltops. Zebul tells Gaal that what Gaal sees is just shadows. Gaal is surprised to see two more groups of men come toward Shechem from different directions. Zebul mocks Gaal and tells Gaal to go fight Abimelech and Abimelech's men just as Gaal said he would.

In the third scene: Gaal leads the people of Shechem out of the town to fight Abimelech. Abimelech defeats Gaal and chases Gaal back to the town gates. Abimelech's soldiers kill many of Gaal's men before the men can reach the town.

In the fourth scene: Abimelech returns to Arumah. Zebul forces Gaal and Gaal's brothers to leave Shechem.

The characters in this passage are:

- Zebul
- The messengers Zebul sends
- Gaal
- Gaal's family
- Abimelech
- Men of Shechem
- And Abimelech's army

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

It is important to remember that Gaal has just boldly spoken against Abimelech and said Gaal would challenge Abimelech to come out and fight him.

Someone tells Zebul what Gaal said, and this makes Zebul angry. Zebul's "anger was kindled," which is special language that means Zebul became very angry. Just like a person adds kindling, or small sticks, to a fire to make it burn, circumstances can kindle anger so that a person becomes very angry.

In secret, Zebul sends a message to Abimelech. The message explains that Gaal and Gaal's family are in Shechem where they tell people to rebel against Abimelech. In the message, Zebul advises Abimelech to set ambushes for Gaal at night.

Zebul tells Abimelech to "do to them as your hand finds to do," when he reports Gaal's behavior to Abimelech. This is special language that means that Abimelech can deal with Gaal however Abimelech wants.

After Abimelech hears the message, Abimelech divides his men into four groups and surrounds Shechem at night. The four groups of soldiers hide in different places.

The next day, Gaal goes to the city gates and sees people as those people come down from the mountains. Zebul tells Gaal that the people are only shadows. As you remember, people built walls around a city as a way to defend the city. People set the city gate in the city wall, and the gate was the only entrance to go in and out of the city.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Talk about a time when shadows played tricks on your eyes, or made it hard for you to be sure of what you saw. At what times of day is it harder to see? Pause this audio here.

Then Gaal is surprised to see two more groups of people come toward Shechem. One group comes from higher ground and the other group comes from the direction of the Diviner's Oak tree. The Diviner's Oak was most likely a tree that marked a Canaanite ceremonial site.

Now, Zebul asks Gaal, "Where is your mouth?" This is a question that Zebul does not expect Gaal to answer. Zebul says this to mean that Gaal did not speak truthfully when Gaal said he could defeat Abimelech in a fight. Zebul says this to challenge Gaal to act in the way that Gaal said Gaal would.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How would you dare someone in your culture to do a thing that they said they would do? Pause this audio here.

Zebul reminds Gaal of the words Gaal said in front of the people of Shechem. Zebul finishes when he tells Gaal to go out and fight Abimelech.

Gaal leads the people of Shechem to fight against Abimelech. Abimelech defeats Gaal and chases Gaal back to the city gate. Gaal runs away from Abimelech. Abimelech's men injure and kill many of the people of Shechem who fought against Abimelech's men.

Abimelech returns to Arumah to live while Zebul forces Gaal and Gaal's relatives to leave Shechem. Arumah was a nearby city that was around 8 kilometers southeast of Shechem.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:30–41 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Zebul
- The messengers Zebul sends
- Gaal
- Gaal's family
- Abimelech
- Men of Shechem
- And Abimelech's army

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Act out that someone tells Zebul about how Gaal challenges Abimelech's leadership. Act out that Zebul sends messengers in secret to Abimelech and tells Abimelech what happened and what Abimelech should do.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the messengers, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel nervous about how Abimelech will react to this news; or
- I feel worried. It seems like Gaal has a lot of support in Shechem; or
- I feel dread. This will surely end in war, and our people will suffer because of it.

Act out that Abimelech listens to the message from Zebul in Arumah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Abimelech, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel furious. I cannot believe the leaders of Shechem plan to rebel against me after they supported me and made me their king; or
- I feel determined. I need to eliminate Gaal and Gaal's rebels quickly before more people want to join them; or
- I feel confident. I made a wise choice when I made Zebul my commanding officer. Zebul has given good counsel.

Act out that Abimelech follows Zebul's suggestions. Abimelech divides his men into four groups. At night, Abimelech commands his men to surround Shechem and hide in different places. The next morning, act out that Gaal comes out of the city gate. Gaal is with Zebul and Gaal sees people come down from the top of the mountains. Zebul tells Gaal that the men are only shadows. Gaal insists that they are people and Gaal points out two more groups of men as those men come towards Gaal and Zebul.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Zebul, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel victorious. Gaal will regret that he ever spoke against the power of Abimelech and Abimelech's army; or
- I feel prideful. I am the leader of Shechem, not Gaal; or
- I feel ambitious. Abimelech will trust me more after I help him to get rid of Gaal.

Act out that Zebul challenges Gaal to go out to fight as Gaal said he would before. Gaal leads the people of Shechem and goes out of the city to fight Abimelech. Act out that Abimelech defeats Gaal. Gaal runs away and Abimelech chases Gaal to the city gate. Abimelech's men injure and kill the people of Shechem who helped Gaal. Abimelech returns to Arumah, and Zebul forces Gaal and Gaal's relatives to leave Shechem.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Gaal, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel ashamed. I wish I had been more careful to unite the people against Abimelech; or
- I feel shocked. I thought we could win, but this was a surprise attack; or
- I feel tricked. I never thought Zebul would have planned this ambush against us.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:30–41 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Here, the narrator refers to Zebul as **the ruler of the city**. As you remember, Zebul was Abimelech's deputy and ruled the city of Shechem on Abimelech's behalf even though Zebul was still under Abimelech's authority.

Stop here and discuss what you will call Zebul in your translation. Pause this audio here.

Zebul hears about Gaal's words and **his anger is kindled**, or he becomes very angry. Be sure to translate this phrase in the same way you have in previous passages.

Zebul sends **messengers** to Abimelech to tell him what is happening in the city. These were people who carried important letters or messages between people in authority. Be sure to translate messenger in the same way you have in previous passages.

Zebul tells Abimelech that Gaal and his **clan**, or relatives, are rebelling against him. A clan is a small group of relatives. Use the same word for clan that you have used in previous passages.

When Abimelech learns that Gaal is turning the people of Shechem against him, he plans an **ambush** and splits his men into four **companies**. Companies is a military term and refers to groups of fighting men. Be sure to use the same word or phrase for ambush and companies throughout Judges.

Gaal stands at the **city gate** when he first sees Abimelech's men coming toward the city. City gates, or the entrance of a city, were very important during this time. The city gate, which opened and closed to allow people inside, sat in walls around the city and was the only way for people to go in or out. If someone shut the gate, it was very hard for the enemy to get inside the city.

One of the places Abimelech's soldiers were coming from was **the diviner's oak**. This was most likely a tree that marked a Canaanite ceremonial site. Divining, or using spirits to tell someone's future, was a practice forbidden by Yahweh's law. It is unclear where this tree was located, only that it was visible at a distance from the entrance of Shechem.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will talk about the **diviner's oak tree**. Look at a photo of the oak tree again, if needed. For more information on divination, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 9:30-41

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (16409110 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 9:42–49

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 9:42–49 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:42–49 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:42–49 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the last passage, Abimelech found out about Gaal's plan to rebel against Abimelech with the leaders of Shechem. Abimelech planned an ambush at night and then attacked Shechem the next day. Abimelech defeated

Gaal, and Zebul forced Gaal to leave Shechem before Abimelech returned to his town. Now, Abimelech will come back and completely destroy the city.

The day after Abimelech defeats Gaal in battle, the people of Shechem leave the city and go out to their fields. As you remember, the last time the people were in their fields and vineyards, the leaders of Shechem plotted with Gaal against Abimelech. Whereas now, the people are most likely unarmed and either check the damage to their fields from the battle or return to work in the fields. Just as before, someone reports to Abimelech that the people of Shechem go out to their fields. As we know, Yahweh sent an evil spirit to cause conflict between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. Now we can see that Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem do not trust each other at all. Something as harmless as when the farmers check their fields causes Abimelech to swiftly and strongly respond.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Describe a time when someone overreacted because they were afraid of what could happen. What were the results? Pause this audio here.

As you remember, Zebul was Abimelech's deputy who lived in Shechem. But Abimelech did not need Zebul's advice this time. Instead, Abimelech uses the same strategy he did before and splits the men who fight for Abimelech into three companies, or smaller groups. Abimelech commands two of the groups of men to set an ambush, or surprise attack, in the fields against the people of Shechem. When some of the people of Shechem come out of the city, Abimelech and his men jump up from the places where they hid. Abimelech and his men attack and kill the people.

Abimelech then goes with the third group of fighting men to block the city gate or entrance of Shechem. The other two groups of fighting men attack and kill all of the people who are out in their fields. Abimelech and his group block and kill any person who tries to run back to the safety of the city. When they blocked the city gate, they also blocked any fighting men so that the men could not leave Shechem to help the people outside. Once Abimelech's men have killed everyone outside of the city, Abimelech and all of his men enter the city. The rest of the day, Abimelech kills every person and destroys every building inside the city. When Abimelech and his men do this, they not only capture the city, but they raze, or completely destroy, the city. The last thing Abimelech does is sow salt all over the city. The salt would make the land unable to produce crops. It was most likely a way for Abimelech to show his hatred for the city and to curse the city, or to mark the city as a place where no one could live and not one thing could grow.

While Abimelech attacks people and destroys the main part of the city, the leaders of Shechem hear about these things Abimelech does. The leaders run to hide in the stronghold of the temple of El-Berith. As you remember, Beth Millo was the place where the leaders of Shechem made Abimelech king, and Beth Millo was a well-protected stronghold or tower. Beth Millo was most likely one structure made up of three parts: a tower where people inside could look out and see enemies who came, the stronghold where people could lock themselves inside and remain safe from enemies, and the temple where the people worshiped their god and trusted in his protection.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of Beth Millo. Pause this audio here.

El-Berith is another name for Baal-Berith, or covenant Baal. This name refers to one of the Canaanite gods. It is most likely that Beth Millo sat at a distance from the main part of Shechem and overlooked the city. This is the same temple where Gaal and the leaders of Shechem ate, drank, and cursed Abimelech earlier.

Stop here and discuss as a group: Describe important structures or buildings in your culture where leaders make important political or religious decisions. How do people build these structures to keep the people inside safe? Pause this audio here.

Just as before, someone informs Abimelech that the leaders of Shechem all hide in the tower of Shechem. Abimelech leads his men up Mount Zalmon, or "the mount of shadow." It is unclear what mountain this refers to, although it most likely refers to either Mount Gerizim or Mount Ebal. As you remember, Jotham shouted down at Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem from those very mountains. Jotham's message was a story about trees that make a thornbush king, and how the thornbush burns up all of the trees as a result. Now, Abimelech takes an ax and cuts some branches off a tree.

Stop here and look at a picture of an ax as a group. Pause this audio here.

Abimelech tells his men to hurry and do the same. The men return from the mountain and carry the branches to the stronghold of the tower of Shechem. Abimelech and his men lay the branches against the stronghold and set the branches on fire. It is possible the men set fire to the roof of the stronghold since the story says the men set the fire over the leaders of Shechem. The stronghold and tower burn down along with all of the people inside. Around 1,000 people, including men and women, die because of the fire.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:42-49 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Some of the people of Shechem leave the city and go out to their fields. Someone sees the people do this and immediately sends a message to Abimelech.

In the second scene: Abimelech hears how the people of Shechem go to their fields. Abimelech divides the men who fight for Abimelech into three groups, travels to Shechem, and has the men hide in the fields. When more people come out from the gate of Shechem, Abimelech's men jump out from the places where they hid and attack the people of Shechem.

In the third scene: Abimelech and his group run to the gate of Shechem. The other two groups kill all of the people in the fields. Abimelech kills anyone who tries to escape back to the city. Abimelech and his men enter Shechem and it takes them all day to kill every person and destroy every building. Finally, Abimelech sows salt on the city.

In the fourth scene: While Abimelech attacks the city, the leaders of Shechem hide in the tower of Shechem. Someone sees the leaders and tells Abimelech where the leaders hid.

In the fifth scene: Abimelech takes his men up Mount Zalmon. Abimelech brings an ax and cuts down some tree branches. Abimelech tells his men to hurry and do the same. They all bring the branches to the stronghold, place them on the roof, and set the branches on fire. All of the people inside the tower die.

The characters in this passage are:

- People who live in the city of Shechem
- Messengers who inform Abimelech
- Abimelech
- The men who fight for Abimelech
- And the leaders of Shechem

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

It is important to remember that the day before, Abimelech and Abimelech's soldiers defeated Gaal and the people of Shechem who followed him in battle.

The next day, the people of Shechem go out of the city and into their fields. Someone reports the peoples' actions to Abimelech, who is in a different city that is not far away.

As you remember, Yahweh sent an evil spirit to cause distrust between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem.

Abimelech splits the men who fight for Abimelech into three smaller groups and the men travel to Shechem in secret. The men hide in the fields until they see the people of Shechem start to come out of the city. Abimelech

and his group jump up and attack and kill the people who come out of the city. Abimelech orders the two other groups of men to jump out from where they hid and to kill the people who were already in the fields.

Abimelech and his group run to block the city gate. It is important to remember that this was the only way people could enter or leave the city. When Abimelech blocks the gate, Abimelech blocks the people in the fields so that they cannot run back to safety, and Abimelech blocks the people inside the city so that they cannot come out to help.

Stop here and discuss with your group: What are common battle strategies in your culture? Why do you think Abimelech used this strategy in this situation? Pause this audio here.

After he kills everyone outside the city, Abimelech and his soldiers kill everyone inside the city and burn down all the buildings. Abimelech takes the whole day to raze, or completely destroy, the city.

Abimelech sows salt all over the city to curse it or make it a desolate place where nothing and no one can live.

At the same time Abimelech destroys the city, the leaders of Shechem learn what Abimelech does and run to hide in the stronghold. It is important to remember that this structure was a little distance from the main part of Shechem and most likely overlooked the city. The structure included a tower, stronghold, and the temple of El-Berith or Baal-Berith, one of the Canaanite gods.

Someone tells Abimelech where the leaders hid. Abimelech takes his soldiers up Mount Zalmon. Abimelech uses an ax to cut branches off a tree and tells his soldiers to hurry and do the same. Abimelech and the soldiers carry the branches on their shoulders and take them to the stronghold. The men stack the branches against the roof of the stronghold and light the branches on fire.

The whole tower burns down, including all of the people inside, both men and women. One thousand people died because of the fire. These people included the leaders of Shechem.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:42–49 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- People who live in the city of Shechem
- Messengers who inform Abimelech
- Abimelech
- The men who fight for Abimelech
- And the leaders of Shechem

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Act out that some of the people of Shechem leave the city and go out to their fields. Someone sees when the people do this and immediately informs Abimelech.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Abimelech, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not trust the people of Shechem any more. They probably plot against me even now; or
- I am furious. I cannot believe they already return to their work and pretend their rebellion did not happen; or
- I feel murderous. The people of Shechem do not deserve to live after they betrayed me. I will take care of them once and for all.

Act out that Abimelech divides the men who fight for Abimelech into three groups, travels to Shechem, and orders his men to hide in the fields. When people come out from the gate of Shechem, Abimelech's men jump out from the places where they hid and attack the people of Shechem.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of Shechem, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am terrified. Why have they come back? We are doing nothing wrong! or
- I am shocked. They kill without cause! or
- I feel hopeless. We have nowhere to run or hide. We are completely destroyed.

Act out that Abimelech and his group run to the gate of Shechem. The other two groups kill all of the people in the fields. Abimelech kills anyone who tries to escape back to the city. Abimelech and his men enter Shechem and take the rest of the day to kill every person and destroy every building. Act out that Abimelech sows salt on the city.

At the same time, act out that the leaders of Shechem hear about the attack and hide in the tower of Shechem. Someone sees the leaders and tells Abimelech where the leaders hid.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the leaders of Shechem, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am afraid. I have already seen how violent Abimelech can be against his enemies; or
- I am angry. Jotham was right. We made a mistake when we made Abimelech king! Now Abimelech will destroy us all; or
- I am hopeful. Maybe Baal-Berith will protect us from Abimelech's anger until we can figure something out.

Act out that Abimelech goes with his men up Mount Zalmon. Abimelech brings an ax and cuts down some tree branches. Abimelech tells his men to hurry and do the same. The men all bring the branches to the stronghold, place them on the roof, and set them on fire. All of the people inside the tower die.

*Filling the Gaps**Filling the Gaps*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:42–49 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Abimelech hears that the people of Shechem go out to their fields. Abimelech immediately reacts when he splits the men who fight for him into three **companies**. A company is a small group of soldiers. Use the same word or phrase for company as you used in previous passages.

Abimelech sets an **ambush**, or surprise attack, for the people of Shechem who are in their fields. Use the same word for ambush as you have used in previous passages.

Abimelech takes his group and blocks the entrance of the **city gate**. As you remember, the city gate, which opened and closed to allow people inside, sat in walls around the city and was the only way for people to go in or out. Use the same word or phrase for city gate as you used in previous passages.

Abimelech has his soldiers take **axes** to cut down branches on the mountain. An axe is a tool with a wooden handle and a sharpened blade on the end that people used to cut wood.

Stop here and look at a picture of an axe with your group. What word will you use for this tool in your language? Pause this audio here.

Abimelech and his soldiers take the cut branches to the stronghold of the **temple** of, or **house of the god** of, El-Berith. Use the same word or phrase for temple or house of the god as you used in previous passages. Temple is in the Master Glossary.

Beth Millo was the stronghold where the leaders of Shechem hid. This was probably a large, stone structure that consisted of three parts: the tower, the temple, and the **stronghold** or inner chamber. The tower was the tallest part of the structure and allowed the people inside to go up and see the things that happened at a distance. The stronghold was the innermost part of the structure where people could lock the doors and hide inside. Finally, the temple was the part of the structure where people worshiped one of the false Canaanite gods, El-Berith.

Stop here and as a group look at a picture of the stronghold. Discuss how you will describe the three parts of the stronghold in your language. Stronghold is discussed in the Master Glossary.

*Speaking the Word**Speaking the Word*

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 9:42–49

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 9:50–57

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 9:50–57 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:50–57 three times, in three different translations, if possible. Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.

5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:50–57 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the last passage, the day after he defeated Gaal, Abimelech heard that the people of Shechem went out to their fields. Abimelech attacked and completely destroyed the city of Shechem. Abimelech killed everyone, including the leaders of Shechem who he burned to death when he set fire to the tower of Shechem. Now, Abimelech will attack a nearby city.

As you remember, Yahweh sent an evil spirit to cause conflict between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. Yahweh did this because they plotted against and killed Gideon's 70 sons. After Abimelech burns down the tower in Shechem, Abimelech goes with his soldiers to a nearby city named Thebez. It is unclear where Thebez is located, although many scholars believe it could be modern-day Tubas, which is about 21 kilometers northeast of Shechem.

Stop here and look at a map of Shechem and Tubas as a group. Pause this audio here.

We do not know why Abimelech attacks Thebez, but we know that he did not trust the people who lived in Shechem after they rebelled against him. Abimelech is determined to stop any challenges to his power as king. Just as he did at Shechem, Abimelech captures Thebez and easily defeats it. The story does not mention that people fight against Abimelech. Instead, all the men, women, and the leaders of the city who escape Abimelech's first attack on the city take shelter in a strong tower. The people shut themselves inside the tower, or lock themselves inside. The people do not hide in the inner stronghold of the tower like the people of Shechem did. Instead, the people of Thebez go up onto the roof to watch what happens below them. This allows them to know what their enemies do and gives them a better angle to throw or shoot things at their enemies.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what are common strategies that cities or towns use to defend themselves from enemies? Pause this audio here.

Abimelech approaches the door to try to burn the door. It is likely that the tower has a wooden door which would be easy to set fire to. However, the people at the top of the tower can see what Abimelech does below them. A woman drops a millstone from the top of the tower and it lands on Abimelech's head and crushes his skull. The woman most likely threw an upper millstone. This was the smaller, upper stone that turns in a pair of stones that people used to grind grain. The upper millstone could have weighed around 2.5 kilograms.

Stop here and look as a group at a picture of a person who uses a millstone to grind grain. Note how the millstone works and which stone is the upper stone that rotates. Pause this audio here.

Though the millstone was small, it could have been heavier than a single woman could have picked up and thrown. Someone probably helped the woman, but the narrator brings more shame on Abimelech when the narrator emphasizes that a woman killed Abimelech. In the warrior culture of that time, it was honorable for someone of equal or greater strength to kill a soldier. Abimelech, as a king, would have been ashamed if a woman had killed him.

As Abimelech dies, he calls to the young man who is his armor bearer, or the person who carries his weapons. Abimelech orders the man to kill him with a sword so that people cannot say that a woman killed Abimelech. So the young man kills Abimelech with his sword.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what are stories of shameful ways for leaders or soldiers to die in war? What are stories of worthy ways for leaders or soldiers to die, and why? Pause this audio here.

When the Israelites who followed Abimelech see that Abimelech is dead, they no longer fight and they all go back to their homes. In this way, Yahweh punishes Abimelech for the evil Abimelech did when he murdered his 70 half-brothers in order to become king. As you remember, Abimelech murdered all of his brothers on one stone. Now one stone kills Abimelech. Yahweh also made all the evil return on the heads of the leaders of Shechem. This means Yahweh allowed Abimelech to kill the leaders of Shechem because those leaders supported Abimelech to kill his brothers so he could become king.

Finally, the narrator reminds us that Jotham's curse came on Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. As you remember, Jotham was the only son of Jerub-Baal, or Gideon, whom Abimelech did not kill. Jotham cursed, or wished Yahweh's punishment upon, Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. Jotham used a story to tell them that Abimelech would cause both Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem to be destroyed. The leaders rejected Jotham's warning which, in the end, led to their destruction. Now, we see Yahweh has caused that curse to come true.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:50–57 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Abimelech attacks Thebez and conquers it. The people of Thebez who escape lock themselves in a strong tower inside the city. The people climb to the roof of the tower. Abimelech follows the people of Thebez and begins to attack the tower. Abimelech approaches the front door to set the door on fire.

In the second scene: A woman drops a large stone on Abimelech's head. The stone crushes Abimelech's skull. Abimelech calls his armor bearer. Abimelech asks his armor bearer to kill Abimelech so that no one can say that a woman killed Abimelech. The young man kills Abimelech with a sword.

In the third scene: Abimelech's men return to their homes. Jotham's curse comes true—Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem are destroyed. Yahweh punished Abimelech and the men of Shechem because of the evil they did.

The characters in this passage are:

- Abimelech
- Men who follow Abimelech
- People of Thebez
- The woman who dropped the stone
- Abimelech's armor bearer
- Yahweh

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

It is important to remember that Abimelech has just destroyed Shechem and all the people in that city.

Abimelech camps against the city of Thebez. This means Abimelech and his army camped outside of the city in tents and then began to attack the city. As you remember, small cities in this time had walls around the city and a city gate that was the only entrance into the city.

Stop here and discuss with your group: Describe how armies attack cities in your culture. How would you describe what the armies do to get inside the city and capture it? Pause this audio here.

When Abimelech attacks the city, the leaders of Thebez and other men and women run to the tower in the town and lock themselves inside. The people climb to the roof to defend the tower. The tower is a tall, stone structure that allows people to see their enemies at a distance. There is also an inner chamber, or stronghold, where people can lock themselves inside. The people of Thebez choose to climb to the top of the tower so they can see their enemies below. Abimelech runs after the people and begins to attack the tower. Abimelech approaches the front door, which is most likely made out of wood, and Abimelech is about to set the door on fire.

It is important to remember that the people on the roof of the tower can see what Abimelech is about to do below them.

A woman drops a large stone from the tower that people used to grind grain. The stone crushes the skull of Abimelech. It is likely that another person helped the woman pick up and drop the heavy stone.

As he dies, Abimelech quickly calls his armor bearer. Abimelech orders the young man to kill him so no one can say that a woman killed Abimelech. It is important to remember that at this time women had little value.

The young man stabs Abimelech with a sword and Abimelech dies. When Abimelech's men see Abimelech die, they all return to their homes.

It is important to note that the storyteller switches when he no longer talks about the battle and he begins to talk about God and how God was at work in the story. This storyteller says that the events that happened are how the curse that Jotham spoke against Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem is fulfilled.

Stop here and discuss with your group: How will you show that the battle events fulfilled Jotham's curse? Pause this audio here.

When the storyteller says that God returned the evil on their heads, the storyteller uses special language that means God punished the leaders of Shechem for the way they supported Abimelech and made Abimelech king.

Stop here and discuss as a group: How would you talk about someone who pays for the evil they have done? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:50–57 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Abimelech
- Men who follow Abimelech
- People of Thebez
- The woman who dropped the stone
- Abimelech's armor bearer
- Yahweh

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Act out that Abimelech attacks Thebez and conquers it with Abimelech's soldiers. The people of Thebez who escape this first attack lock themselves in a strong tower inside the city. The people climb to the roof of the tower. Abimelech follows the people of Thebez and begins to attack the tower. The people watch Abimelech from the roof of the tower. Act out that Abimelech approaches the front door to set the door on fire.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Abimelech, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel powerful. After I defeat Thebez, no one will dare to rebel against me as king; or
- I feel prideful. No one can defeat me now; or
- I feel confident. I will defeat this city just as I defeated Shechem.

Act out that a woman looks down at Abimelech as Abimelech approaches the door. With help, the woman drops a large stone on Abimelech's head. The rock crushes Abimelech's skull. Act out that Abimelech calls for his armor bearer as Abimelech slowly dies. Abimelech asks the young man to kill Abimelech so that no one can say that a woman killed Abimelech. The young man kills Abimelech with a sword.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the woman, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel relieved. Finally, the madness of Abimelech is over; or
- I feel devastated. So much destruction has happened today; or
- I feel justified. Abimelech got exactly what he deserved; or
- God helped me!

Act out that Abimelech's men return to their homes. God fulfilled Jotham's curse and punished Abimelech and the men of Shechem for the evil those men did.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel just. I have punished Abimelech for Abimelech's evil against my people; or
- I feel sad. My people continue to do what is right in their own eyes, and it only hurts them;
or
- I feel in control. I know the plans I have for my people, and those plans are good.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 9:50–57 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Abimelech camps against and attacks the **city** of Thebez. It is important to remember that a city is a larger town that people usually build a wall around. Use the same word for city as you have used in previous passages.

The people of Thebez run and hide in the city **tower**. This was a tall, stone structure that was attached to a stronghold or inner chamber. Use the same word for tower as you have used in previous passages.

After Abimelech died, the men of **Israel** no longer fought and instead returned to their homes. Israel usually refers to all of the descendants of Jacob. Here, the men of Israel refers to the **Israelite** soldiers who followed Abimelech. Use the same word or phrase for Israel as you used in previous passages. For more information on Israel and Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

Yahweh returns or repays the **evil** of Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. Evil is the opposite of good. An evil person does not obey Yahweh and willingly does bad things to hurt other people. Use the same word or phrase for evil as you used in previous passages. For more information on evil, refer to the Master Glossary.

Yahweh causes the **curse** of Jotham to come on Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. When someone curses another person, they wish that something bad will happen to that person. Use the same word or phrase for curse as you used in previous passages. For more information on curse, refer to the Master Glossary.

God fulfills Jotham's curse through the events of the battle. Here, God refers to Yahweh, the one, true Creator God. Use the same word for God that you used in previous passages. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 9:50–57**Audio Content**

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- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 10:1–5

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 10:1–5 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:1–5 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:1–5 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

Before this passage, Abimelech, the son of the judge Gideon, killed 69 of his 70 half-brothers. Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years, and he fought and killed many people in Shechem. While Abimelech fought in a battle, a woman dropped a millstone on Abimelech's head. So Abimelech died because Yahweh wanted to punish Abimelech for the way Abimelech had killed his half-brothers. Now, this passage is about Tola and Jair, who are the next two judges who led Israel after Abimelech died.

In the book of Judges, we have already heard about four of the major judges of Israel: Ehud, Othniel, Deborah, and Gideon. The two major judges who come next are Jephthah and Samson. We know many more details about the leadership of the major judges than we do the minor judges. There are six minor judges, and we already learned about one of those judges, Shamgar. Now, we see the long, peaceful rules of the minor judges Tola and Jair. The book of Judges does not include a lot of details about Tola and Jair. This passage shows a contrast with the violent and warlike judges in the rest of the book.

It is a surprise that a few things are not in this passage. First, similar passages start when they say that Israel did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, but this passage does not use that phrase. This passage also does not mention Yahweh.

The overall purpose of this passage is to show a contrast between the chaos and violence of Abimelech in the last passage, and the peace and prosperity of the long rules of Tola and Jair. Also, this passage shows a contrast between Jair's large family and the next judge, Jephthah, who only had one daughter. After the story of Jephthah, we hear about three other minor judges, and two of these three minor judges also had very large families. The larger families might show that the leaders of Israel thought they did not need to follow Yahweh's laws, and that they might one day rule as a family like a king and his sons.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: The stories in this passage show how Israel and its judges changed as time passed. Tell some stories in your culture that show how things changed over time. Pay attention to how people show that things changed over time. Pause this audio here.

As this passage begins, Abimelech has died, and now there is a new leader of Israel. The new leader is named Tola. Tola is the son of Puah, who is the son of Dodo, which means Tola is the grandson of Dodo. Tola is from the tribe of Issachar, one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Issachar is one of the smaller tribes of Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you introduce yourself or someone else, what information do you include about your father, grandfather, or other relatives? Pause this audio here.

Tola rose to save Israel, which might mean Israel had a new problem or enemy. However, it is more likely that Tola rescues Israel from all the problems that Abimelech caused in Abimelech's lifetime. Tola provides stability and peace instead of murder and war like Abimelech gave. There is no mention of war during Tola's time.

Tola is from the land of the northern tribe of Issachar, but Tola lives and rules from a town called Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. Some people think Shamir is the same place as Samaria because the sounds are similar in the original language. Other people think Shamir was in a different place than Samaria. A hill is a naturally raised area of land. A hill is smaller than a mountain. Hill country is an area where there are many hills.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the likely location of Shamir and a picture of hill country, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Tola ruled Israel for 23 years, and then Tola died. The people buried Tola in Shamir, in the hill country of the land of the tribe of Ephraim. The story gives no other details about Tola.

The other minor judge in this passage is Jair. Jair is from a place called Gilead, which is east of the Jordan River in the land of the tribe of Manasseh. People from Gilead were called Gileadites, and they were a strong group. The Gileadites were descendants of the tribe of Manasseh. Jair led Israel as the judge for 22 years. During his time, people did not fight any wars, and Israel once again experienced a time of peace.

Stop here and look at a map of the location of Gilead as a group. Pause this audio here.

We hear information about Tola's father and grandfather, but the information about Jair in this passage is about his descendants, or children. Jair had 30 sons. It is likely that Jair had several wives to be able to have so many

children. Jair was also likely very wealthy to have so many wives. Each of Jair's 30 sons rode on a donkey, which is a domestic animal like a horse, but smaller in size and with longer ears.

Stop here and look at a picture of a donkey as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Jair was a wealthy judge. The way Jair's sons rode on donkeys is similar to how a king would rule his land with his children to help him rule. At this time, when a man rode on a donkey, it showed the man came in peace. A warrior would ride on a war horse to go to battle.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do the rulers in your community travel around? Pause this audio here.

Jair's 30 sons also had 30 towns in the land of Gilead, which also shows that Jair was powerful and rich. When the author wrote the book of Judges, people still called these 30 cities Havvoth Jair, which means the tent villages of Jair. Actually, these were probably groups of tents where people lived together. In the original language, the words for Jair, donkey, and city are all very similar, and it would be funny for the original audience to hear these similar words together in the description about Jair.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story and include words in the story that sound similar. How do these words that sound similar make the story funny or interesting? Pause this audio here.

Jair died and the people buried Jair in the town named Kamon, which was most likely also in Gilead. Kamon was also possibly Jair's hometown.

Stop here and look at a map of the likely location of Kamon.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:1–5 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has two scenes.

In the first scene: Tola was the judge for Israel for 23 years. Tola was from the tribe of Issachar, and Tola lived in the hill country of Ephraim.

In the second scene: Jair was the judge of Israel for 22 years. Jair was a Gileadite, and Jair had 30 sons who rode 30 donkeys. Jair's sons owned 30 cities.

The characters in this passage are:

- Tola
- The people of Israel
- Jair
- And Jair's 30 sons

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

It is important to remember that this passage comes after the time of Abimelech. Remember that Abimelech killed 69 of his 70 half-brothers and that Yahweh later punished Abimelech for this when Abimelech died. Abimelech ruled for only three years, but the two judges in this passage ruled for 23 and 22 years each, which was a much longer time. Also, remember that Israel experiences peace while Tola and Jair rule, and that this passage shows a contrast to the violent rule of Abimelech before this, and Jephthah and Samson after this.

In the first scene, remember that this passage begins after the time of Abimelech. In the original language, the passage does not say "after Abimelech died." However, we know from the previous passage that Abimelech has already died, and many translations include the information that this passage happens after Abimelech died.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be best to begin the passage with the words "after the time of Abimelech," "after Abimelech died," or something else? Pause this audio here.

Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, became the new judge of Israel. Remember that Tola is from the tribe of Issachar.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "son of Puah, son of Dodo"? Would it be easier to say "grandson of Dodo" instead? Pause this audio here.

Remember that Tola rose, or became an important leader, to save Israel. "Tola rose to save Israel" is special language that might mean that Tola saves Israel from something or someone, or that Tola rescues Israel from the problems that Abimelech caused. The passage also includes background information that Tola lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. Tola must have moved from the land of the tribe of Issachar in the north of Israel to the land of the tribe of Ephraim, which is in central Israel.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the likely location of Shamir and a picture of hill country, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you include the background information that Tola lived in Shamir, and not in the land of the tribe of Issachar? Pause this audio here.

The final part of the first scene tells how Tola ruled as the judge of Israel for 23 years. It also says that Tola died, and that people buried Tola in Shamir.

In the second scene, Jair becomes the next judge for Israel after Tola dies. Remember that Jair is from Gilead, which is a place east of the Jordan River in the land of the tribe of Manasseh. Jair rules Israel for 22 years.

Stop here and look at a map of the location of Gilead as a group. Pause this audio here.

The middle part of the second scene is all background information about Jair. Jair had 30 sons, and each son rode on a donkey and had a town. Remember that it is likely that this description shows Jair had many wives, was wealthy, and ruled in the land of Gilead in the same way a king would rule his people. Remember that the passage does not say that the sons of Jair prepared for battle or were ready for an invasion. An invasion will happen in the next story, and Jair and his sons had not prepared Israel for this.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a donkey again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The 30 cities of the sons of Jair were called Havvoth Jair, which means the tent villages of Jair. Remember that people usually build walls around a city to protect the city from an enemy attack, but these cities of Jair probably are cities without walls. Jair's cities are probably smaller groups of tents where people live together. It is possible that the narrator included the word for city here in this passage because it sounds so similar to the words for Jair and donkey, even though the cities of Jair are actually tent villages without any city walls around them. It is possible that Jair and Jair's sons did not expect an enemy to attack, and that is why they did not build walls around their cities.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the name of Havvoth Jair, now that you know that at this time these are probably smaller settlements of several tents? If it is more clear in your language, you may call these settlements villages or settlements. Pause this audio here.

At the end of the second scene, Jair dies, and the people bury Jair in the town called Kamon. Remember that Kamon is most likely in Gilead, about 24 kilometers east of the Jordan River.

Stop here and look at a map of the likely location of Kamon. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:1–5 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has two scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Tola
- The people of Israel
- Jair
- And Jair's 30 sons

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

After Abimelech died, Tola became the judge of Israel. Tola was the son of Puah and the grandson of Dodo, and he was from the tribe of Issachar. Tola rose up to deliver Israel. Tola lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. Tola was the judge of Israel for 23 years. When Tola died, the people buried Tola in Shamir.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are glad there is no violence or war while Tola rules; or
- We are happy that we finally live in peace after all that happened when Abimelech ruled; or
- We hope that this peace will last and that Yahweh will continue to bless and protect Israel.

Also, ask the person who plays Tola, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This is a lot of work to clean up the mess that Abimelech left in Israel after he died; or
- I am glad that no one attacks us while I rule Israel; or
- I worked hard to lead Israel as the judge for the 23 years of my rule.

After Tola's death, Jair was the judge of Israel. Jair was from Gilead, which was a place in the land of the tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the Jordan River. Jair led Israel for 22 years. Jair had 30 sons who each rode on a donkey, and each of his sons also owned a town in Gilead. The 30 towns are still called Havvoth Jair, the tent villages of Jair. Jair died and the people buried Jair in Kamon.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play Jair's 30 sons, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel proud of our large family; or
- We hope we can rule in Gilead and in Israel after our father Jair dies; or
- We are proud of how wealthy our family is. We deserve to own these towns and ride on these donkeys!

Also, ask the person who plays Jair, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have done a good job as Israel's leader and I am proud of how wealthy I am; or
- I am happy that I can lead Israel as a Gileadite; or
- I think that maybe my 30 sons will help rule Israel after I die.

Also, ask the people who play the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Jair is a good leader. We have had no problems with our enemies while Jair has ruled in Israel; or
- Jair has kept everything peaceful, but I do worry sometimes that we have not built more walled cities in case other people ever attack us; or
- I wonder if Jair's sons think they will rule after Jair since they have those 30 cities in Gilead and those 30 donkeys; or
- I hope that we will continue to have a time of peace even after the time of Jair is over.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:1–5 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

After Abimelech died, Tola was a **judge** and leader in the land of Israel. Remember that the main role of these judges was not to rule over court cases, but instead to lead the people and rescue them from their enemies. Use the same word for lead or judge that you have used in previous passages about the judges of Israel. For more information, see judge in the Master Glossary.

Tola was from the tribe of Issachar, which is one of the 12 tribes of **Israel**. Tola rose up as a leader to deliver Israel, which here means the people of Israel. Tola lived in Shamir in the **hill country** of Ephraim. A hill is a naturally raised area of land. A hill is smaller than a mountain. Hill country is an area where there are many hills. Translate hill country the same as you have in previous passages. Ephraim is also one of the 12 tribes of Israel. For more information on Issachar and Ephraim, refer to Israel and Israelites in the Master Glossary.

Jair was from Gilead, which was in the land of the tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the Jordan River. Jair had 30 sons who rode on 30 **donkeys**. Remember a donkey is a domestic animal like a horse, but smaller. Donkeys showed that a person came in peace instead of for war. Translate donkey the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on donkey, see the Master Glossary.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a donkey again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Jair's 30 sons also owned 30 **cities** in Gilead. The name of these towns was Havvoth Jair, which means tent villages of Jair. Remember that a city is usually larger than a village, and it often has walls around it to protect it from an enemy attack. However, these cities of Jair probably are cities without walls. Even though these are called cities in the passage, it is most likely that they are really smaller groups of tents where people lived together.

People **buried** both Tola and Jair. Use the same words to describe how people bury a dead body, probably in a cave or a hole in a rocky area, as you have used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 10:1–5

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (20293102 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 10:6–16

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 10:6–16 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:6–16 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:6–16 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, Israel experienced a time of peace under the leadership of the judges Tola and Jair. Now, we see that the time of peace comes to an end. Israel again does evil in the eyes of Yahweh. Instead of sending someone to deliver Israel, or free Israel from its enemies, Yahweh lets the Ammonites oppress, or totally defeat, the Israelites for 18 years. Israel cries out to Yahweh for help, and Israel and Yahweh talk about Israel's sin and whether or not Yahweh will save Israel this time.

As the passage begins, the Israelites again do what is evil in the eyes of Yahweh. This same description is in other parts of the book of Judges, and this shows that the Israelites continue to do evil, just like before. In the entire book of Judges, this story has the longest description of the kind of evil that the Israelites do.

The Israelites serve and worship gods from other nations around Israel. The Israelites worship the Baals and Ashtaroths, which might mean they serve several Baals and several Ashtaroths. Many towns or places had their own kind of Baal or Ashtaroth with its own name. The Baals are the male gods of the area and the Ashtaroths are the female gods of the area. The Israelites also serve the gods of Aram and Moab, which are both nations that used to rule over Israel. The Israelites serve the gods of Sidon. Sidon is probably a place where Yahweh

told the tribe of Asher to force the people to leave. Finally, the Israelites also serve the gods of the Ammonites and Philistines. The Ammonites are people who live to the east of the Jordan River, and the Philistines are the people who live to the west of Israel along the Mediterranean Sea.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Who are the gods that people worship in your community or in nearby communities? What do people do to show they worship or serve these gods? Why do people serve these gods? What do people hope the gods will do for them? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh had told the Israelites not to live like these other nations and not to follow their gods, but the Israelites did not obey Yahweh. Instead, the Israelites abandon Yahweh and do not serve Yahweh anymore. Yahweh is angry with the Israelites because they started to serve other gods, and so Yahweh punishes the Israelites when he lets the Philistines and the Ammonites attack the Israelites. This story is an introduction to the stories about how the Ammonites and the Philistines ruled over the Israelites. In this story and in the stories about Jephthah that follow, we see what happens when the Ammonites rule over the Israelites. Later, during the story of Samson, we will see how the Philistines rule over the Israelites.

The Ammonites completely rule over the Israelites, most likely the same year that Yahweh sold the Israelites to the Ammonites, or gave them to the Ammonites. First, the Ammonites oppress the Israelites for 18 years on the east side of the Jordan River in the Amorite country of Gilead. The Amorites are the people who lived east of the Jordan River before the Israelites came. Gilead might refer to all the Israelite land east of the Jordan River. We will see that in the next passage, Jephthah, the next judge for Israel, is from Gilead.

Then, the Ammonites cross over the Jordan River to the west side to fight against the Israelite tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and the house, or family, of the tribe of Ephraim. The future leaders of Israel will later come from these three tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. The Israelites suffered a lot during these 18 years of oppression.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that includes the Jordan River, Gilead, and the land of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. Pause this audio here.

Israel cries to Yahweh for help while they suffer greatly. This is the only time in the book of Judges that the people of Israel say they sinned or did wrong actions against Yahweh. The Israelites also tell specific ways they sinned. The Israelites say how they sinned when they abandoned Yahweh and worshiped the Baals, or false gods. Before Israel can even ask Yahweh directly for help, Yahweh answers the Israelites when he tells them they are wrong in a very strong way. Other times in Judges, when the people of Israel cry for help after they turn away from Yahweh, Yahweh sends someone to free his people, but here Yahweh does not do that.

We do not know exactly how the Israelites heard Yahweh's response. Maybe Yahweh spoke through a high priest or maybe Yahweh spoke inside people's hearts so they could understand Yahweh. It is also possible that Yahweh spoke directly to the people of Israel to show how angry Yahweh is with his people for how they sin again when they serve other gods.

Yahweh reminds the people of Israel that Yahweh already rescued the Israelites seven times from their enemies. Yahweh rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians and the Amorites as the Israelites came to the Promised Land. Yahweh also rescued the Israelites from the Ammonites when the Israelites arrived in the Promised Land, and from the Philistines when Shamgar delivered the Israelites. Finally, Yahweh rescued the Israelites from the Sidonians that Barak defeated, from the Moanites, and from the Amalekites who attacked Israel at Horeb. Some people think the Moanites could be the same as the Midianites that Gideon rescued the Israelites from. Yahweh reminds the Israelites that each time the Israelites cried out for help, Yahweh rescued or freed the Israelites. But each time, the Israelites did not thank Yahweh and serve him faithfully, but instead turned back to serve other gods.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Discuss a time you cried out to Yahweh or to another god for help. What happened? Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here as a group and look at a map of the likely locations of the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Moanites, and the Amalekites. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh says he will not rescue the Israelites from their enemies this time. Yahweh tells the people of Israel that the people should go ask their other gods that they serve to help the Israelites. Yahweh does not actually

think those other gods can save the Israelites, but Yahweh says this to show that the people of Israel seem to trust these other gods more than Yahweh, so these other gods should be responsible to save the Israelites now.

The people of Israel confess again that they sinned. The people are desperate for Yahweh to save them. The people say that they will take any punishment from Yahweh, only please rescue us today! The people of Israel throw away their other gods, which means the Israelites throw away the wooden or metal idols of these gods, and they start to serve Yahweh instead. Some people think that the people of Israel are sincere and ready to serve only Yahweh now. Other people think that Israel is not genuine when they confess their sins, and that the Israelites only want Yahweh to rescue them. Then the Israelites will probably go back to serve the other gods, just as the Israelites have every other time after Yahweh rescued them.

The last part of this passage is again about Yahweh. In the original language, it says, "Yahweh's spirit grew impatient with the suffering of Israel." The spirit is the inner part of a person. Other translations of this could be that "Yahweh grew tired of seeing Israel suffer so much," or "Yahweh could no longer tolerate the misery of the Israelites." It might also mean that Yahweh could no longer bear to see how the Israelites suffer, and that Yahweh is frustrated or annoyed at how the Israelites continue to turn back to serve other gods.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time you were frustrated or impatient with a situation so much that you could not bear it any longer.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:6–16 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites do evil in the eyes of Yahweh. The Israelites no longer serve Yahweh. The Israelites serve other gods from the other nations around them.

In the second scene: Yahweh becomes angry with the Israelites. Yahweh gives the Israelites over to the Philistines and the Ammonites. The Ammonites oppress Israel for 18 years on the east side of the Jordan River. Then the Ammonites move to the west side of the Jordan River to oppress the Israelites there, too.

In the third scene: The Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help, and Yahweh says the Israelites should ask the other gods the Israelites serve for help.

In the fourth scene: The Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help a second time. The Israelites stop how they follow the other gods from the nations around them. Yahweh gets tired of how Yahweh sees the Israelites suffer.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- The Philistines
- And the Ammonites

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that before this passage, Israel experienced a time of peace under the judges Tola and Jair. Remember that in this passage, the Israelites do evil, and Yahweh lets the Ammonites oppress the Israelites. The Israelites cry to Yahweh for help, but Yahweh says the Israelites should ask the other gods the Israelites serve for help. The Israelites suffer a lot in this passage.

The first scene begins in a similar way to other passages in the book of Judges when it says, "The Israelites did evil again in the eyes of Yahweh." Evil is the opposite of good. When someone does evil in the eyes of Yahweh, that person does not follow Yahweh or Yahweh's commands.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when a group of people did not follow the instructions of those peoples' god or gods. In this case, the Israelites do not follow Yahweh's commands, so what the Israelites do Yahweh calls evil. How will you translate the idea that the Israelites do evil again in the eyes of Yahweh? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites serve and worship the Baals, the Ashtaroths, and the gods of Aram, Moab, Sidon, the Ammonites, and the Philistines. Remember that Yahweh had told the Israelites not to serve the gods of these other nations, but only to serve Yahweh alone. Remember that many of these nations are enemies of the Israelites, and many of these nations once ruled over the Israelites, so it is not a surprise that the Israelites would start to follow their enemies' gods! In the original language, the story says the Israelites worshiped the gods of Aram, the gods of Moab, the gods of Sidon, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. Each of these nations had different gods, and the Israelites worshiped these different kinds of gods.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As you think about listing these different gods, what is the most natural way to do so in your language? Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, Yahweh becomes angry with the Israelites because the Israelites follow these other gods. In the original language, the story says Yahweh burns with anger against the Israelites. This is a way that storytellers often talk about Yahweh's anger. Yahweh often becomes angry when Yahweh sees that the Israelites do not obey Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when a leader, or a god, became very angry. How did you describe that leader or god's anger? How will you describe that Yahweh burned with anger? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh sells the Israelites over to the hand, or rule, of the Philistines and the Ammonites. This means that Yahweh allows the Philistines and the Ammonites to defeat the Israelites as if Yahweh sells the Israelites to the Philistines and the Ammonites. Notice that here the passage says the Philistines first and the Ammonites second, but before when we saw a list of all the gods that the Israelites served, the Ammonites were first and the Philistines were second. It is likely that the Ammonites are second here because the story about how the Ammonites defeated Israel comes in a story after this story, and then the story about the Philistines and Samson comes in a story after that.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, how do you talk about how someone betrays or gives someone to their enemies to conquer the enemies? How will you translate the idea that Yahweh sells the Israelites over to the hand of the Philistines and the Ammonites? Pause this audio here.

Remember that the Ammonites shatter and crush the Israelites, much like a person breaks and then crushes a piece of pottery or glass. This probably happens soon after Yahweh hands the Israelites over to the Ammonites. This means the Ammonites attacked the Israelites and completely defeated the Israelites. The words "shatter" and "crush" sound similar to each other in the original language, and together these words emphasize how terribly the Ammonites defeat and oppress the Israelites. Other ways to translate "shatter and crush" are "ruthlessly oppress" or "totally defeat and oppress."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate this part of the passage that the Ammonites shatter and crush the Israelites? Pause this audio here.

Next, we see background information that the Ammonites oppressed the Israelites for 18 years on the east side of the Jordan River. Remember this includes the area called Gilead in the land of the Amorites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story that includes some background details about some of the action and where it happens. How do you include this information in the story? Pause this audio here.

After 18 years, the Ammonites cross the Jordan River and also come to attack the Israelite tribes on the west side of the Jordan River. These are the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. Here the storyteller calls the tribe of Ephraim the house of Ephraim, but this is just another way to say the tribe of Ephraim. Remember that these attacks on both sides of the Jordan River made life miserable for the Israelites.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that includes the Jordan River, Gilead, and the land of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you tell a story where many years pass by between the things that happen? Tell a story that includes things that happen many years apart from each other. Pause this audio here.

The third and fourth scenes are similar because they both begin when the Israelites cry to Yahweh for help, and they both end when Yahweh responds. In the beginning of the third scene, the Israelites pray and ask Yahweh to save the Israelites. The Israelites tell Yahweh that the Israelites have sinned or done wrong things against Yahweh. Then the Israelites tell the two specific ways the Israelites have sinned: the Israelites abandoned Yahweh, and the Israelites served the Baals, or gods of the areas that surround the Israelites. Remember that this is the only time in the book of Judges that the people of Israel say that the people sinned, and then the people list specific ways the people sinned against Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show in your translation that first the Israelites say the Israelites sinned, and then the Israelites tell the two ways the Israelites sinned against Yahweh? Pause this audio here.

The rest of the third scene is Yahweh's response to the Israelites. Yahweh is angry with the Israelites, and Yahweh strongly tells the Israelites that what they have done is wrong. Yahweh does not promise to rescue the Israelites this time like Yahweh did other times that the Israelites cried to Yahweh for help.

First, Yahweh asks the Israelites a question. Yahweh already knows the answer to this question is "yes," but Yahweh asks the question to show the Israelites that Yahweh has saved the Israelites from their enemies' hands, or rescued the Israelites, every time the Israelites cried for Yahweh's help. Yahweh reminds the Israelites how Yahweh saved the Israelites from their enemies seven times. Yahweh saved the Israelites from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Moanites, and the Amalekites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be best to translate the ways Yahweh has saved Israel as a question or as a statement? For example:

- I saved you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Moanites, and the Amalekites; or
- Did I not save you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Moanites, and the Amalekites? Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here as a group and look at a map of the likely locations of the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Moanites, and the Amalekites again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh says the two reasons Yahweh will not save the Israelites this time is because the Israelites abandoned Yahweh, and the Israelites served other gods. These are the same two things that the Israelites said the Israelites did.

In the last part of the third scene, Yahweh tells the Israelites that the Israelites should go ask the Israelites' other gods they serve for help. Remember Yahweh does not think these other gods can help the Israelites, but the Israelites chose those gods now, and those gods should be the ones the Israelites ask for help instead of Yahweh. Why would the Israelites choose to serve gods that cannot help the Israelites? Yahweh is angry and disappointed that the Israelites abandoned Yahweh and served other gods, and Yahweh wants to show the Israelites how the gods they now serve are powerless to save the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate what Yahweh says to Israel about how Israel should go ask the other gods the Israelites serve for help? Pause this audio here.

In the start of the fourth scene, the Israelites do not go to ask their other gods for help. Instead, the Israelites repeat their confession to Yahweh, and this time the Israelites also destroy or get rid of their idols. These idols are the objects that the Israelites use to represent the gods the Israelites serve.

First, the Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help again. Again, the Israelites say, "We sinned!" The Israelites do not repeat the two ways the Israelites sinned again. The Israelites ask Yahweh to please do whatever Yahweh

wants to punish the Israelites, but please save the Israelites today! In the original language, the story says, "Do whatever seems right in your eyes." This means the Israelites want Yahweh to do whatever Yahweh thinks is good in order to punish them because the Israelites know they deserve punishment from Yahweh for how they abandoned Yahweh and served other gods.

Then, the Israelites throw away their other gods and serve Yahweh. Some people think this action shows that the Israelites are genuine and truly want to serve Yahweh. Remember that other people think it is possible the Israelites will return to serve the Israelites' other gods as soon as Yahweh rescues them, and the Israelites do not truly mean their confession.

Finally, the last part of the fourth scene tells Yahweh's reaction to the words and actions of the Israelites. Remember that this part is difficult to understand. Some people think this part means that Yahweh believes the Israelites are genuine in their repentance, but other people think it shows that Yahweh is annoyed or impatient with Israel. Even though the Israelites did get rid of their other gods, Yahweh may think that the Israelites will return to their other gods as soon as Yahweh saves the Israelites from the Ammonites. Remember that the original language says, "His spirit grew impatient with the suffering of Israel."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate Yahweh's reaction to the Israelites' words and actions? If possible, try to translate this part so that it may be possible that Yahweh truly felt sorry for the Israelites, or that Yahweh was annoyed and impatient with the Israelites. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:6–16 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Israelites
- Yahweh
- The Philistines
- And the Ammonites

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Israelites do evil again before the eyes of Yahweh. The Israelites worship and serve other gods. The Israelites serve the Baals, the Ashtaroths, and the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites, and the Philistines. The Israelites abandon Yahweh and the Israelites do not serve Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We want the good things that these gods promise to give us; or
- We want to be like the nations around us and serve those nations' gods instead of Yahweh; or
- We think that maybe we should not have abandoned Yahweh completely.

Yahweh is angry with the Israelites because the Israelites abandoned Yahweh and they serve other gods. Yahweh lets the Philistines and the Ammonites attack the Israelites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that the Israelites stopped following me again. How can the Israelites make the same mistakes over and over? or
- I am disappointed in the Israelites. Have the Israelites not learned from the other times they stopped following me that these other gods cannot save them? or
- I am ready to punish the Israelites and let them suffer because they have started to follow the gods of their enemies instead of following me.

The Ammonites destroy the Israelite armies that year and totally defeat the Israelite people. For 18 years, the Ammonites oppress the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan River in Gilead, the land of the Amorites. Then, the Ammonites cross the Jordan River and fight against the Israelite tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and the house, or family, of Ephraim. The people of Israel suffer a lot.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Ammonites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are glad to win so many battles over these Israelite people; or
- It looks like the Israelite god is not so powerful because we can easily defeat the Israelites; or
- We are not ready to stop how we oppress the Israelites.

Also, ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel sad that my people Israel have to suffer so much; or
- The Israelites deserve this punishment because the Israelites no longer follow me; or
- Why do the people of Israel wait for 18 years to cry out to me for help?

The Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help. The Israelites say, "We sinned against you. We no longer followed you, our God, and we served the Baals."

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are desperate for Yahweh to help us; or
- We suffer so greatly that we have no other choice but to ask Yahweh for help. We hope Yahweh will help us this time; or
- We are ready to start to follow Yahweh again, if only Yahweh will help us! or
- We are sorry that we stopped following Yahweh.

Yahweh says to the Israelites, "I saved you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Moanites in the past. Remember that every time, you cried out for help, and I rescued you from each of these groups of people. But now you abandoned me, and you worshiped other gods. This time, I will not save you from your enemies. You should go ask the gods you chose. Let those gods save you!"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I remember how I saved the Israelites so many times when the Israelites greatly suffered; or
- I know that every time I saved the Israelites, the Israelites returned to follow their other gods. The Israelites will probably do the same thing this time again! or
- I am angry at Israel that they think I will save them this time when the Israelites do so much evil; or
- The Israelites should ask the gods of the other nations for help, because those gods are the ones the Israelites started to follow!

Also, ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel disappointed in ourselves, because we forgot all the great things Yahweh did for us in the past when Yahweh rescued us from our enemies; or
- We are surprised that Yahweh says Yahweh will not save us this time. Yahweh never did this before! or
- We do not want to ask these other gods for help. These other gods have not helped us for 18 years, so we know these gods have no power to save us.

The Israelites tell Yahweh again, "We sinned. Please punish us however you want to. But please, rescue us now!" The Israelites get rid of their other gods, and the Israelites start to follow Yahweh again. Yahweh gets tired of how Yahweh sees how much the Israelites suffer.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are even more desperate now. We will do anything as long as you save us, Yahweh! or
- If Yahweh can only save us now, we will worry about the punishment Yahweh gives us later. Maybe Yahweh's punishment will not be so bad; or
- We are truly sorry that we abandoned Yahweh, and we are ready to follow Yahweh with our whole hearts; or
- We will get rid of these gods now and follow Yahweh now. Maybe after Yahweh saves us, we can follow these other gods again, like we did other times.

Also, ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel compassion for the Israelites, because the Israelites suffer so much; or
- I feel impatient and annoyed with the Israelites, because the Israelites always cry to me for help, but the Israelites never truly change and follow me with their whole hearts. The Israelites always return to follow their other gods; or
- I am glad to see the Israelites got rid of their other gods, at least; or
- I am not sure if I want to save the Israelites now. The Israelites continue to return to the same gods and they do not follow me.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:6–16 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The **Israelites** do **evil** in the eyes of **Yahweh** again. Yahweh is the personal name of God. The Israelites are the 12 tribes, the descendants of Jacob, that Yahweh chose. This passage includes both the Israelites and **Israel**. Here, they both refer to the people of Israel, the Israelites. The only place where this passage uses the term Israel is where it says that Yahweh grew impatient with the suffering of Israel. Someone who does evil does not obey Yahweh. Translate this description of how the Israelites do evil in the eyes of Yahweh in the same way as you have in previous passages. For more information on Israel, Israelites, evil, and Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Israelites serve, or **worship**, the Baals and the Ashtaroths. When people serve, they perform acts of worship. Translate serve, or worship, in the same way you have in previous passages. For more information about true worship, refer to worship in the Master Glossary.

The **Baals** and the **Ashtaroths** are **gods** of the other nations around Israel. The Israelites also serve the gods of Aram, Moab, Sidon, the Ammonites, and the Philistines. These are the false gods of that area, and not the one true god. People used wooden or metal statues called idols to represent these gods. Translate Baal, Ashtaroth, and gods the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Baal and gods, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Ammonites oppressed the Israelites for 18 years on the east side of the **Jordan River**. The Jordan River is a river that goes through Israel from north to south. The area east of the Jordan River is the land of the Amorites, who lived there before the Israelites came. People also called this land Gilead. For more information on the Jordan River, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Ammonites crossed the Jordan River to fight against the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. The **"house" of Ephraim** means all of the people who belong to the tribe of Ephraim. Translate house in the same way as you have in previous passages.

The Israelites cry out to Yahweh. The Israelites say that they have sinned. **Sin** means to do wrong actions against Yahweh and not obey Yahweh's laws. For more information on sin, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate **sin** in this passage? Translate sin the same as you have translated it in other parts of the Old Testament. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites also say they abandoned their **God**. This is the more general name for God. Translate God the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 10:6–16

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 10:17–11:11

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 10:17–11:11 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:17–11:11 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:17–11:11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, the Israelites abandoned Yahweh, so Yahweh let the Ammonites attack the Israelites. The Israelites cried out to Yahweh for help, but Yahweh did not rescue the Israelites, probably because Yahweh knew the Israelites always returned to follow other gods. Now, the Ammonites get ready for battle at Gilead, and the Israelites look for someone to lead them in battle against the Ammonites. Jephthah of Gilead agrees to lead the Israelites in battle.

As the passage begins, the leaders of the Ammonites call together their men to fight. The Ammonites are the people who live east of the Jordan River. The Ammonites oppressed the Israelites for 18 years. The Ammonites camp in Gilead, which means they set up their tents as they prepare for battle against the Israelites. Gilead is the land to the east of the Jordan River. The Israelites also gather together to prepare for battle, but they have no main leader. It is important for all of the Israelites to help fight the Ammonites, because if the Ammonites conquer Gilead, the Ammonites could also conquer the rest of Israel, too. The Israelites camp in Mizpah, which is a town in the region of Gilead. In the original language, Mizpah means "watchtower."

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows Gilead and Mizpah. Pause this audio here.

Although the Israelites all gather together, it is the leaders of Gilead specifically who ask each other who can lead them against the Ammonites. This is probably because the leaders of Gilead are Israelites who live in the land of Gilead, which included the land of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. The leaders of Gilead say whoever can lead them against the Ammonites will become the ruler of all the people who live in Gilead. In other parts of the book of Judges, the Israelites ask Yahweh for help, and Yahweh provides someone to save the Israelites from their enemies. Here, the Israelites do not ask Yahweh for help, and the Israelites try themselves to find someone to save them.

Later in this story, the leaders of Gilead will ask a man named Jephthah to lead them in battle. First, we learn about the background of Jephthah. Jephthah was the son of a man named Gilead, and Jephthah was a brave warrior. Jephthah's mother was a prostitute. A prostitute is someone that a person gives money to in exchange for sex. Jephthah's father Gilead had a wife and sons. These sons, Jephthah's half-brothers, forced Jephthah to move away from their family home when Jephthah grew up because they did not want Jephthah to get an inheritance from their father. An inheritance is the father's money or property that his sons receive when their father dies.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when someone forced another family member to leave the family home. Why did they make their family member leave? How did the family member feel when they had to leave? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah's half-brothers said Jephthah did not deserve an inheritance because Jephthah's mother was a prostitute. According to Israelite law, only the sons of a husband and wife who were married could get an inheritance when their father died. Therefore, Jephthah, as the son of a prostitute, could not get an inheritance from his father Gilead.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Who receives an inheritance in your culture after a father or mother dies? What are some examples of times when someone might not be able to receive their inheritance after their father or mother dies? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah left his father's house in Gilead and went to live in the land of Tob. "Tob" means "the good land" in the original language. While Jephthah was in Tob, "empty men" started to follow Jephthah. These men were lawless or worthless, which probably means they did not follow the law. This is similar to the lawless men who followed Abimelech in a previous story.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that includes Gilead and Tob. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe people who you consider "lawless." What kinds of things do lawless people do? Pause this audio here.

Now, we learn that the leaders of Gilead ask Jephthah to come back from the land of Tob. The Ammonites have attacked the Israelites, and the leaders of Gilead want Jephthah to lead them in the battle against the Ammonites. This is a surprise because Jephthah's half-brothers forced Jephthah to leave their family home. Jephthah is not welcome in Jephthah's own community, but now the leaders of Gilead want a brave warrior like Jephthah to lead them as their commander in battle.

Jephthah does not agree immediately to come back with the leaders of Gilead to lead them in battle. Jephthah says these leaders hated Jephthah and made him leave his father's house. This seems like a surprise, because earlier in the story we hear that it was Jephthah's half-brothers who made Jephthah leave his home. It is possible Jephthah's half-brothers took Jephthah to court about their inheritance, and then the leaders of Gilead might have ruled that Jephthah must leave his family home. Jephthah wants to know why the leaders are coming to him now, only when they are in trouble and need help. Some people think that Jephthah does not agree with the leaders' offer right away because Jephthah tries to bargain, or make a deal, with the leaders of Gilead to give Jephthah more power than just being their commander.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe a time when you made an offer or received an offer from someone else, and then you tried to come to an agreement with that person. For example, if you wanted to buy someone's animal, how did you decide together how much money you should pay for the animal? Pause this audio here.

The leaders of Gilead ask Jephthah again to come fight against the Ammonites. This time, the leaders promise to make Jephthah their ruler, and not just a commander in battle. In the original language, the leaders use the word for head, or the ruler or governor, over all the people who live in Gilead. This is the same word the leaders of Gilead used in the beginning of this story when they said that whoever leads them in battle will become the ruler of all of the people in Gilead. This time, Jephthah agrees to their offer. Jephthah says if Yahweh helps Jephthah win the battle against the Ammonites, then Jephthah will become the ruler of the people in Gilead.

The leaders of Gilead make an oath, or promise, that they agree with what Jephthah says. The leaders say that Yahweh is their witness or judge that the leaders will do what they say they will do. In the original language, the leaders say, "Yahweh will hear between us if we do not do what we say."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe a time when you made an oath or a promise. What did you promise to do, and what did you say to make people believe you that you would really do what you promised? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah and the leaders of Gilead go back to Gilead, and the people make Jephthah both their commander and ruler, even before Jephthah fights against the Ammonites. In Mizpah, Jephthah repeats the agreement that Jephthah made with the leaders of Gilead to officially make Jephthah the new ruler. Jephthah probably spoke in front of all of the people of Gilead. Jephthah also spoke in front of Yahweh, but there is nothing in the story to show that Yahweh chose Jephthah as the leader of the Israelites.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:17–11:11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: The Ammonites and the Israelites prepare for battle. The leaders of Gilead look for a commander to lead them in their fight against the Ammonites.

In the second scene: We see background information about Jephthah. Jephthah's mother was a prostitute. Jephthah's half-brothers forced Jephthah to leave his family home, so Jephthah went to live in Tob.

In the third scene: The Ammonites attack Israel. The leaders of Gilead ask Jephthah to become their commander. Jephthah does not agree to become their commander.

In the fourth scene: The leaders of Gilead ask Jephthah again for help, and they promise Jephthah will become the ruler of the people in Gilead if he fights the Ammonites for them. This time, Jephthah agrees.

In the fifth scene: Jephthah goes with the leaders of Gilead, and the people make Jephthah their leader and commander. Jephthah repeats the words of the agreement in Mizpah.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Ammonites
- The Israelites
- The leaders of Gilead
- Jephthah
- Jephthah's mother, the prostitute
- Jephthah's father, Gilead
- Jephthah's half-brothers, the sons of Gilead's wife
- Lawless men who follow Jephthah
- The people of Gilead
- And Yahweh

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The first scene connects the previous story with this story. Remember that the Ammonites fight against the Israelites. Yahweh let the Ammonites attack the Israelites because the Israelites started to follow other gods. Now, both the Ammonites and the Israelites prepare for battle. In the original language, it says someone called together the Ammonites, and the Ammonites camped at Gilead, and the Israelites came together and camped at Mizpah. People do not know exactly where Mizpah is, but it is somewhere in Gilead, and Gilead is the land on the east side of the Jordan River. It is likely that the leaders of the Ammonites call their men together to fight, but the Israelites have no leader.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show in your language the difference between how the leaders of the Ammonites call together their men to fight, and how the Israelites come together without a leader? Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and look at a map that shows Gilead and Mizpah again as a group if needed. Pause this audio here.

Next, the leaders of Gilead ask one another who will lead them in their fight against the Ammonites. These leaders of Gilead are not the general Israelite leaders, but they are only the leaders of the specific area of Israel that the Ammonites now attack. The leaders of Gilead are similar to the elders or officials who make decisions in a community. They are also men who fight in a battle, and they might be called captains.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to translate "the leaders of Gilead"? How can you show these leaders make decisions in the community like elders do, and they are leaders in the Israelite army in Gilead? Pause this audio here.

Remember that the Ammonites already fought the Israelites in Gilead and on the west side of the Jordan River in the previous story, and the Israelites suffered a lot. The leaders of Gilead say that whoever agrees to lead them as a commander in battle against the Ammonites will become the leader of all the people who live in Gilead.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be better to translate what the leaders of Gilead say as a question or as a statement? For example, "Who can lead us in the fight against the Ammonites?" Pause this audio here.

The second scene gives background information about Jephthah, who later becomes the leader of the people of Gilead. This information happens before the main action of this story.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story, but also give some background information about one of the main characters in the story. How did you introduce the background information about that character? Pause this audio here.

Remember that Jephthah was a brave warrior, and he was from Gilead. Jephthah's father was named Gilead, but his mother was a prostitute. In this passage, the word for prostitute could mean someone that receives money in exchange for sex, or a woman who had sex outside of marriage. Remember that Jephthah's father was not married to Jephthah's mother, and so Jephthah did not have all the same rights as the sons of his father's legal wife.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you talk about someone in your community who is the child of a prostitute or the child of a woman who has sex outside of marriage? What is the best way to translate "son of a prostitute" here? Pause this audio here.

Remember that Jephthah's father had a wife, and Jephthah's father and that wife had other sons. These sons are Jephthah's half-brothers, and they did not want their father to give Jephthah an inheritance like their father would give them. Jephthah's half-brothers forced Jephthah to leave their home in Gilead because Jephthah was the son of a prostitute.

Jephthah left his family's home and went to live in the land of Tob. Tob is probably northeast of the land of Gilead. Remember that empty men started to follow Jephthah in Tob. Other ways to translate "empty men" could be adventurers, worthless men, lawless men, or scoundrels. It might mean these men would do anything to get money, such as to steal or to break other laws.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about your discussion in the previous step about lawless men. What is the best way to describe the empty men here that follow Jephthah in the land of Tob? Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here as a group and look at a map that includes Gilead and Tob again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The third scene returns back to the main action of the passage. Sometime later, which means after Jephthah already left Gilead and started to live in the land of Tob, the Ammonites attacked the Israelites in Gilead. The leaders of Gilead go to the land of Tob to ask Jephthah to come back with them to Gilead.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about the story you told earlier that included background information about a character. How did you return to the main action of the story after you finished how you told the background information? How will you show now that the story about how the Ammonites attack the Israelites is continuing? Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, the leaders of Gilead want Jephthah to come be their commander. Remember that the leaders need someone to lead them in battle. In the original language, this means someone who is in charge of men who fight in a battle or a war. You could translate it as commander or general, or someone who leads the men of Gilead who fight in battle.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about who leads people in battle in your community. What are the different types of leaders, and who is the top leader of all the people who go to fight? How will you translate commander or general here? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah does not agree to come be the commander of the men of Gilead in the fight against the Ammonites. Instead, Jephthah asks them some questions. These questions show that Jephthah remembers what happened when his half-brothers forced him to leave his family's home in Gilead, and that Jephthah blames the leaders of Gilead for this as well. Jephthah emphasizes that "you," the leaders of Gilead, are the ones who made Jephthah leave his father's house.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be stronger to translate what Jephthah says as questions or statements? For example, "I know you hate me. You were the ones who forced me to leave my father's house. You come to me now only because you are in trouble." Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, the leaders of Gilead ask Jephthah again to be their leader. The leaders are desperate for Jephthah's help. This is similar to the desperation that the Israelites felt in the previous passage when they cried out to Yahweh for help. It is likely that the leaders of Gilead were not truly sorry for how they forced Jephthah to leave his family's home, in the same way that the Israelites probably were not truly sorry for how they turned away from Yahweh. The leaders of Gilead make Jephthah a bigger offer than before. The leaders offer Jephthah to be the head, or ruler, over all the people who live in Gilead if Jephthah will lead them in battle.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about how you describe a ruler in your town or region. Decide how you will translate the two different ideas here for a commander of a group of men who fight and a ruler of the people. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah responds to the leaders of Gilead. Some people think that Jephthah asks them, "If I fight the Ammonites and Yahweh helps me defeat them, will you truly make me your leader?" This could show that Jephthah does not believe the leaders. Other people think it is best to translate this as a statement that Jephthah repeats in an official way to show how he will become the leader of the people of Gilead.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Should you translate this as a question that Jephthah asks the leaders of Gilead, or a statement that Jephthah says to make the leaders' offer official? Pause this audio here.

The leaders of Gilead make an oath or promise in the final part of the fourth scene. The leaders of Gilead promise to make Jephthah their ruler. The leaders say Yahweh will be their judge or witness of their promise.

In the fifth scene, Jephthah leaves Tob, and Jephthah goes with the leaders of Gilead back to Gilead. The people of Gilead make Jephthah their military commander and their ruler. Remember this is before Jephthah fights the Ammonites, and it is the people who make Jephthah their commander and ruler, and not the leaders of Gilead. In Mizpah, Jephthah says the agreement again in front of Yahweh. This probably shows that the agreement is official. Remember that this passage started in Mizpah in Gilead, and now it also ends in Mizpah in Gilead.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:17–11:11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Ammonites
- The Israelites
- The leaders of Gilead
- Jephthah
- Jephthah's mother, the prostitute
- Jephthah's father, Gilead
- Jephthah's half-brothers, the sons of Gilead's wife
- Lawless men who follow Jephthah
- The people of Gilead
- And Yahweh

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The leaders of the Ammonites call together the Ammonites to fight. The Ammonites camp in Gilead. The Israelites gather together and camp in the town of Mizpah. The leaders of Gilead ask one another, "Who can lead the attack against the Ammonites? Whoever starts the attack for us will be the leader of all the people who live in Gilead."

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We do not feel ready to fight against the Ammonites since we do not have a leader; or
- We hope someone will be willing to lead the attack, because how else can we win against the Ammonites? or
- We feel hopeless because we already have been so miserable while the Ammonites oppressed us for 18 years.

Also, ask the people who play the Ammonites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are ready to fight and defeat the Israelites again, just like we did many times before; or
- The gods of the Israelites are not very powerful, because we have been able to defeat them already; or
- This should be an easy fight to win, because the Israelites are not very organized or ready to fight.

Jephthah was a brave warrior. Jephthah was from Gilead, and his father was named Gilead. Jephthah's mother was a prostitute. Jephthah's father had a wife, and that wife had also previously had some sons. These sons were Jephthah's half-brothers. These half-brothers forced Jephthah to leave his home when they grew up. These half-brothers told Jephthah, "You cannot have any of the inheritance from our father when he dies because you are the son of a prostitute."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am upset that my half-brothers force me to leave my home and my family; or
- I wish that my father would help me and let me stay in Gilead; or
- I am angry that my half-brothers took away my inheritance. It is not my fault that my mother is a prostitute! I deserve some of my father's inheritance if he wants to give it to me.

Also, ask the person who plays Jephthah's father, Gilead, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I wish that I could help my son Jephthah, but the Israelite law says that he cannot have any inheritance from me; or
- I wish that my other sons would be kinder to Jephthah and not force him to leave; or
- I feel embarrassed by Jephthah, and I just want him to go away.

Also, ask the people who play Jephthah's half-brothers, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Jephthah does not deserve the same inheritance as us because his mother is a prostitute; or
- We feel threatened by Jephthah, because he is a brave warrior, and he might try to fight us if we let him stay here at our father's house; or
- We are glad that we forced Jephthah to leave. Now we will not have to see Jephthah ever again.

Jephthah left his home and went to live in the land of Tob. There were lawless men in Tob, and these men started to follow Jephthah as their leader.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am glad that I found some men who follow me and think I am a good leader; or
- I wish that my half-brothers could see me now. I am a leader and I can go where I want and do what I want; or
- I never want to go back to Gilead now, because here in Tob I am respected, and they did not want me in Gilead; or
- I wish I could still go back home to Gilead to see my father.

Also, ask the people who play the lawless men who follow Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We do not care about Jephthah's background and who his mother or father was; or
- Jephthah is a good leader and we like to follow him; or
- Jephthah keeps us safe because he is a brave warrior, and we will follow him anywhere.

Later, the Ammonites fought with Israel. The leaders of Gilead went from Gilead to the land of Tob to bring Jephthah back with them. The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "Come back with us and be our commander so we can fight against the Ammonites." Jephthah answered the leaders of Gilead, "Do you not hate me? Are you not the people who forced me to leave my father's house and my family in Gilead? Why do you come to me now that you are in trouble?"

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the leaders of Gilead, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel embarrassed that we have to ask Jephthah, the son of a prostitute, for help to fight the Ammonites; or
- We cannot find anyone else to be our commander. Jephthah is a brave warrior, so we know he will be a good choice to lead our people; or
- We wish there was someone else to ask to lead us, but Jephthah is our only choice and we are desperate for help; or
- We wonder why Jephthah blames us for forcing him to leave Gilead, because it was really his half-brothers that wanted Jephthah to leave.

Also, ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am shocked that the leaders of Gilead would come to me for help now! or
- I think that I can ask the leaders of Gilead for more than just to make me the commander of their men, because the leaders are so desperate; or
- I blame the leaders of Gilead that I had to leave my home in Gilead because they did not stop my half-brothers from the way they forced me to leave; or
- I am not sure if I can trust the leaders of Gilead to actually make me their commander.

The leaders of Gilead ask Jephthah again to come back to Gilead with them. The leaders say, "Yes, we are in trouble, and that is the reason we ask you to come help us. Come back and fight the Ammonites with us, and we will make you our ruler over everyone who lives in Gilead." Jephthah asks the leaders of Gilead, "If I go back to Gilead and fight the Ammonites for you, and Yahweh helps me defeat them, will you really make me your leader?" The leaders of Gilead tell Jephthah that Yahweh is their witness to what they told Jephthah. The leaders promise to do everything they say.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am still not sure if I can trust the leaders of Gilead to keep their promises to me; or
- I like the offer to become their commander and also to become ruler of all the people in Gilead! or
- I am ready to make the offer official, so I will repeat it again to the leaders of Gilead; or
- I look forward to how I will fight the Ammonites and get honor from my coming victories.

Also, ask the people who play the leaders of Gilead, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We wonder if this is a good idea to promise Jephthah to be ruler of all the people in Gilead. Jephthah and his men are criminals, and we do not want a criminal to lead us! or
- We are desperate for a leader, so we are willing to promise Jephthah anything if he will come help us; or
- We will keep our promise after Jephthah keeps his promise to be our commander and defeat the Ammonites for us.

Jephthah goes with the leaders of Gilead back to Gilead. The people of Gilead make Jephthah their commander of their army and they make him their ruler. Jephthah repeated all the words of the agreement in front of Yahweh and in front of the people at Mizpah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Gilead, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are ready for a strong and courageous leader like Jephthah! or
- We do not care if Jephthah defeated the Ammonites or not yet. We want Jephthah to rule over us because we desperately need a leader; or
- We are glad Jephthah is back home to help us fight the Ammonites.

Also, ask the people who play the half-brothers of Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are shocked that the leaders of Gilead asked our half-brother, the son of a prostitute, to become our commander and ruler! or
- We are angry that we have to follow Jephthah as our commander and ruler after we forced him to leave, and now he will get a lot more than an inheritance from our father; or
- We are surprised that the people of Gilead want to make Jephthah their ruler so quickly. Jephthah did not even defeat the Ammonites yet!

Also, ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am amazed that I am now the commander and ruler of the people in Gilead; or
- I never thought this would happen to me after my half-brothers forced me to leave my home; or
- I am glad to come home, and glad that I now have honor and can lead my people; or
- I am ready to fight and defeat the Ammonites.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 10:17–11:11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The Ammonites come together to prepare for battle. The Ammonites camp in Gilead. Gilead is the land east of the Jordan River, where some Israelite tribes live. The Ammonites are the descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew.

The **Israelites** also come together and camp in Mizpah. In the book of Judges, the Israelites usually refers to the 12 tribes that Yahweh chose to be his people. In this passage, Israelites most likely refers to the men who fight for Israel. These might be mostly men from the tribes of Israel that live on the east side of the Jordan River, which are the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. Mizpah is a town somewhere in the land of Gilead. In a later story, we learn that Mizpah is the hometown of Jephthah. Translate Israelites the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah is the son of a **prostitute**. A prostitute is a person who has sex with someone in exchange for money. Translate prostitute the same as you have in previous passages.

Jephthah's half-brothers force Jephthah to leave Jephthah's home in Gilead. Jephthah's half-brothers tell Jephthah that he will not receive any **inheritance** from their father because he is the son of a prostitute. An

inheritance is the money and property that goes to a father's sons after the father dies. The oldest son receives double the inheritance from his father.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate **inheritance** in this passage? For more information on inheritance, refer to heir in the Master Glossary.

The leaders, or **elders**, of Gilead ask Jephthah to come back and be their commander. Elders are the leaders of a community. Translate elders the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on elders, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah asks the leaders of Gilead, "Did you not make me leave my father's **house**?" Jephthah's father's house means all the people who live in his father's house. This could include the father's wife, his unmarried children, his married sons and their wives and children, and other relatives or servants. Translate house the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on house, refer to household in the Master Glossary.

Jephthah asks the leaders of Gilead that if Jephthah goes with them and fights the Ammonites, and if **Yahweh** helps Jephthah defeat the Ammonites, will they really make him their leader? Yahweh is the personal name of God. Translate Yahweh the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 10:17–11:11

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (32426902 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 11:12–28

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Joshua 11:12–28 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:12–28 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:12–28 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous passage, the leaders of Gilead looked for a commander to help them fight against the Ammonites. Jephthah of Gilead became both the commander and ruler of the people of Gilead. Now, Jephthah sends a message to the king of the Ammonites to find out why the Ammonites attacked Gilead. The Ammonite

king says it is Ammonite land, and that the Israelites took it from the Ammonites. Jephthah sends a message to the Ammonite king about the history of Israel, and Jephthah carefully shows that the Israelites never took any land from the Ammonites. The Ammonite king ignores Jephthah's messages.

The first action that Jephthah takes as the ruler of the people of Gilead is to send messengers to the king of the Ammonites. The Ammonites are the descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew, so the Ammonites are related to the Israelites. Yahweh gave land to the Ammonites east of the Jordan River. Jephthah asks why the Ammonites now attack Jephthah's land, which means his home in Gilead. This is normally what a king would do when two nations try to solve a problem with words so that the nations will not have to fight a battle. Jephthah probably does not think his message will lead to peace with the Ammonites. Instead, it is possible Jephthah wants extra time to find more men to fight for him, and Jephthah also might want to show that Israel owns the land and that the Ammonites should not fight the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: If two groups of people have a conflict in your community, how do they try to solve the conflict so that the two groups of people will not have to fight each other? Pause this audio here.

The Ammonite king's reply to Jephthah's messengers shows that the Ammonites have a different version of the story of what happened when the Israelites first came to the land. The Ammonites say that the Israelites stole the land of the Ammonites, which is Gilead. This is the land from the Arnon River in the north to the Jabbok River in the south, and to the Jordan River in the west. The Ammonites want the Israelites to give this land back to the Ammonites.

Stop here and look at a map of Gilead as a group. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah does not want to return the land to the Ammonites. Jephthah sends his messengers back to the Ammonite king with a long message. Jephthah speaks like a king in his message to the Ammonite king, and Jephthah speaks for all the Israelites, not just for the people of Gilead. Jephthah says that the Israelites did not steal the land of Moab, which is the land of the Ammonites. The Amorites, who are sometimes called the Canaanites, also used to own this same land. Jephthah mentions the land of Moab here because Jephthah is about to share all of Israel's history, and because Moab used to rule the land long before the Ammonites did. To show that the Israelites did not steal the land, Jephthah gives the history of where the Israelites went when they left Egypt. The book of Numbers has the same story about the Israelites, and this shows that what Jephthah says is true.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell the history of your people. What land did your people have during different parts of their history? Talk about the land in your community that different people owned at different parts of history. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah says that the Israelites traveled from Egypt through the wilderness to the Red Sea, and then to Kadesh. The Israelites sent messages to the kings of Edom and Moab to ask for permission to travel through those kings' lands, but the kings of Edom and Moab said the Israelites could not pass through Edom or Moab. The Edomites and Moabites are related to the Israelites. Jephthah also says that the Israelites did not go into Moabite land, but the Israelites camped on the northern side of the Arnon River. Jephthah shows that the Ammonite king in this passage is similar to the kings of Edom and Moab in the past, who refused to listen to the Israelites when they refused to let the Israelites pass through the lands of Edom and Moab.

Stop here and look at a map of where the Israelites traveled after they left Egypt. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah also says that the Israelites asked the king of the Amorites, King Sihon, if the Israelites could pass safely through the land of the Amorites. The Amorites are also related to the Israelites. King Sihon of the Amorites ruled from Heshbon in the land of Gilead during the time that the Israelites were camped at the Arnon River. Before the Amorites and King Sihon ruled the land of Gilead, the Moabites were the rulers of Gilead.

Jephthah says that King Sihon refused to let the Israelites travel through his land, and King Sihon brought together an army of the Amorites at Jahaz to fight the Israelites. The Israelites defeated the Amorites because Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, gave the Israelites victory over King Sihon and the Amorites. The Israelites took all the land of the Amorites, which was the land from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and from the wilderness in the east to the Jordan River in the west. Remember that this is the same land that the Ammonites now want from the Israelites.

Stop here and look at a map of Gilead as a group. Find the towns of Heshbon and Jahaz. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah says that because Yahweh gave the Israelites this land of Gilead from the Amorites, the Ammonites have no right to take this land. Jephthah says the Ammonites can have the land that the Ammonites' god Chemosh gives to them. We know from other parts of the Old Testament that Yahweh is the one who gave certain land to the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites. Some people think Jephthah believes in more than one god because Jephthah says the god Chemosh gave land to the Ammonites. Or, maybe Jephthah does not believe Chemosh has power, but Jephthah only says that Chemosh gave the Ammonites land to help the Ammonites understand that in the same way, Yahweh gave the land to the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your community, how do people talk about how gods give you land, especially when there is a conflict about who owns land? Pause this audio here.

Some people think Jephthah makes a mistake when Jephthah says Chemosh is the Ammonites' god, because Chemosh is the god of the Moabites. However, it was common for people to adopt the gods of the land they took over, so maybe the Ammonites adopted Chemosh as their own god when the Ammonites took over the land that the Moabites and then the Amorites used to own.

Jephthah also compares the Ammonite king to Balak, the king of Moab. You will remember from the book of Numbers that Balak hired Balaam to curse the Israelites three times, but Balaam blessed the Israelites three times instead. Jephthah reminds the Ammonite king that Balak the king of Moab did not dare to fight the Israelites, so the Ammonite king should not fight the Israelites either.

Jephthah says that the Israelites have lived in the land of Gilead for 300 years. The Israelites lived in the town of Heshbon and its towns, in Aroer and its towns, and in all the towns along the Arnon River. During these 300 years, all the previous Moabite and Ammonite kings accepted that the Israelites lived in the land of Gilead, and the current Ammonite king should also accept this and not fight against the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How long does a nation need to possess a territory before it becomes theirs, and other people cannot take the territory back? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah finishes his long message to the Ammonite king. Jephthah says that he has not sinned against the king of the Ammonites, but that the Ammonites sinned against, or did evil against, the Israelites when they attacked the Israelites. Jephthah says Yahweh is the judge between the Israelites and the Ammonites about who should own the land of Gilead. Some people think Jephthah's final words show Jephthah is ready for a war against the Ammonites.

The Ammonite king receives Jephthah's message, but the Ammonite king does not listen to Jephthah's message.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:12–28 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Jephthah sends messengers to the Ammonite king to ask why the Ammonites attacked the Israelites. The Ammonite king says the Israelites stole the Ammonites' land, and the Ammonites want their land back.

In the second scene: Jephthah says the Israelites did not take the land of the Ammonites. Jephthah tells the history of the Israelites after they left Egypt. The Israelites did not go through the lands of Edom or Moab. The Israelites camped north of the Arnon River, outside of Moab.

In the third scene: Jephthah says the Israelites asked King Sihon of the Amorites for permission to go through Amorite land. King Sihon refused, and he attacked the Israelites. Yahweh handed King Sihon over to the Israelites, and the Israelites took the Amorite land of King Sihon.

In the fourth scene: Jephthah says Yahweh gave the Israelites the land of the Amorites. The Israelites have been in this land for 300 years. Yahweh is the judge of who should own the land.

In the fifth scene: The king of the Ammonites ignored what Jephthah had said.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jephthah
- Israelite messengers
- The Ammonite king
- The king of Edom
- The king of Moab
- King Sihon of the Amorites
- The Amorites
- Yahweh
- The Israelites
- And Balak, king of Moab

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that in the previous passage, Jephthah became the ruler and commander of the people of Gilead. The people of Gilead wanted Jephthah to lead them in order to fight against the Ammonites. Now, instead of starting a battle with the Ammonites, Jephthah sends messages to the Ammonite king. These messages between Jephthah and the Ammonite king slow down the action of the story. The messages also tell the history of Israel, and by the end, the messages will show that Jephthah and the Ammonites cannot solve their conflict with talk.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story that includes parts where the characters do a lot of action, and parts where the characters do less action and talk together more. Pay attention to how the story slows down in the parts with less action. Pause this audio here.

In the first scene, Jephthah and the Ammonite king send their first messages to each other. First, Jephthah sends messengers to the Ammonite king to ask why the Ammonites attacked Jephthah's land. Remember that Jephthah is in Gilead, and the Ammonites have land to the east of Gilead. Remember also that here Jephthah acts like a king when he sends a message to the Ammonite king. We do not know the name of the Ammonite king, and it is possible that Jephthah did not use the name of the Ammonite king in order to insult the Ammonite king.

In the second part of the first scene, the Ammonite king tells Jephthah's messengers that the land of Gilead belongs to the Ammonites. The Ammonite king says that the Israelites stole the land when they came from Egypt. Remember that the land Jephthah and the Ammonite king talk about here is from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and as far west as the Jordan River. The Ammonite king wants this land back. Jephthah's messengers go back to Jephthah, and they tell Jephthah what the Ammonite king told the messengers.

Stop here and look at a map of Gilead again as a group if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, Jephthah sends his messengers back to the Ammonite king with another message. The second, third, and fourth scenes have this long message from Jephthah to the Ammonite king. Remember that Jephthah starts his message with, "This is what Jephthah says," which is similar to how a powerful king talks to someone who is less powerful than he is.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How does a powerful ruler or king in your community start a message to people who have less power than he does? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah begins his message when he says that the Israelites did not take away the land of the Moabites or the land of the Ammonites. Later in Jephthah's message, we learn that Jephthah talks about the Moabites because the Moabites used to own the land of Gilead before the Amorites owned the land of Gilead. To show that the Israelites did not take any land from the Ammonites, Jephthah tells the history of the Israelites. Jephthah does not give every detail of the Israelites' journey, but Jephthah shares important details that he wants the Ammonite king to know about.

Remember that in the second scene, Jephthah tells the part of the story that starts when the Israelites left Egypt. The Israelites traveled from Egypt through the wilderness to the Red Sea, and then the Israelites went to the city of Kadesh. Another name for Kadesh is Kadesh Barnea. Kadesh was west of the land of Edom, and the land of Edom was south of the Dead Sea. Remember that the Israelites sent messengers to the king of Edom to ask if the Israelites could go west through the land of Edom to the land on the other side. The king of Edom "did not listen to the Israelites," which means the king refused to let the Israelites travel through the king's land.

So, the Israelites traveled east around the land of Edom. Remember that the Israelites also asked the king of Moab for permission to go west through the land of Moab to the land on the other side, but the king of Moab also refused. The land of Moab was east of the Dead Sea. So, the Israelites traveled east around the land of Moab. The Israelites camped in their tents on the north side of the Arnon River. The Arnon River was the border of Moabite land. The Israelites did not enter Moabite land. Jephthah tells this history to the Ammonite king to show that the Israelites did not enter Edomite or Moabite land.

Stop here as a group and again look at a map of where the Israelites traveled after they left Egypt, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Jephthah continues to tell the history of the Israelites. This scene has more details than the second scene did. While the Israelites camped on the north side of the Arnon River, the Israelites sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites to ask if they could pass through the land of the Amorites. The Israelites wanted to travel north around the Dead Sea, and then west to travel into the land that Yahweh had promised to the Israelites.

King Sihon ruled the Amorites from the town of Heshbon, which is north of the Arnon River. Heshbon was in the center of the Amorite land of Gilead from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north. Remember that the Ammonites did not rule the land of Gilead at this time. At this time, the Amorites ruled this land. King Sihon of the Amorites refused to let the Israelites pass through the land of the Amorites. The original language says that King Sihon did not trust that the Israelites would pass through his land in peace.

King Sihon even brought together his army of men and camped at the town of Jahaz, which was about 15 kilometers south of Heshbon. Then, King Sihon of the Amorites attacked the Israelites.

Stop here and look at a map of Gilead again as a group, if needed. Make sure to see where the towns of Heshbon and Jahaz are. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites won the battle with the Amorites because Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, handed over King Sihon and his whole army to the Israelites. The Israelites took all the land of the Amorites, which is the land of Gilead, after they won the battle with the Amorites.

In the fourth scene, Jephthah wants to know why the Ammonites think they can take back the land that Yahweh, the God the Israelites worship, gave to the Israelites. Jephthah already knows the answer to these questions, because Jephthah thinks the Ammonites have no right to take back the land that the Israelites took from the Amorites, who had probably taken it earlier from the Ammonites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be stronger to translate what Jephthah says in this scene as statements or questions? For example, when Jephthah says the Ammonites should not make the Israelites leave the land, Jephthah might say, "You do not have the right to take it back," or "So do you now think you can force us to leave?" Also, Jephthah might say, "You take possession of what your god Chemosh gives you, don't you?" or "You live in the land that your god Chemosh gives you." Pause this audio here.

Jephthah also compares the Ammonite king to Balak, the king of the Moabites. Jephthah asks questions that Jephthah already knows the answer to. Jephthah does this to show that the Ammonite king should also not fight the Israelites, just like King Balak of the Moabites did not fight the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to compare King Balak of the Moabites with the Ammonite king? For example, "You are not any better than Balak, the Moabite king. He never fought with Israel," or, "Are you any better than Balak, the Moabite king? Did he ever fight Israel?" Pause this audio here.

Jephthah says that the Israelites have lived in the land of Gilead for 300 years, including in Heshbon and its towns, in Aroer and its towns, and in all the towns along the Arnon River. It is likely that during Jephthah's time, the Ammonites ruled the land to the south of the Arnon River that used to be Moabite land. Jephthah shows that the Ammonites had 300 years to attack the Israelites north of the Arnon River, but the Ammonites never did.

Stop here and look at a map of Gilead that includes Heshbon, Aroer, and the Arnon River. Pause this audio here.

In the final part of the fourth scene, Jephthah uses strong language to say that Jephthah did not sin or do wrong to the Ammonites. Instead, the Ammonites sinned against the Israelites when the Ammonites attacked the Israelites. Jephthah says that Yahweh, the judge, will judge between the Israelites and the Ammonites about whether the Israelites are right or the Ammonites are right.

In the fifth scene, the Ammonite king does not listen to, or agree with, Jephthah's message. This is different from Jephthah's conversation with the leaders of Gilead in the previous story when Jephthah talks with the leaders of Gilead and finally agrees to become both their ruler and commander. In this story, Jephthah's stories and ideas do not convince the Ammonite king to listen to Jephthah. When the story ends, we do not know if a battle will happen next or not.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it. Make sure to use objects to show the journey of the Israelites in the second, third, and fourth scenes. Also, think about how you will show who owns the land of Gilead at different parts of the story, since Gilead is the land that first belonged to the Moabites, then to the Ammonites, then the Amorites, and then to the Israelites at different points in history.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:12–28 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jephthah
- Israelite messengers
- The Ammonite king
- The king of Edom
- The king of Moab
- King Sihon of the Amorites
- The Amorites
- Yahweh
- The Israelites
- And Balak, king of Moab

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Jephthah sends messengers to the king of the Ammonites. The messengers ask the Ammonite king why the king attacked Jephthah's land.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want to show the Ammonite king that he has no reason to fight against us; or
- I do not think that my messages will make the Ammonite king stop his fight against us, but maybe it will give me more time to find more men to fight with me against the Ammonites; or
- I am an equal with the Ammonite king because I am the ruler of the people of Gilead. The king of the Ammonites needs to respect me.

The Ammonite king tells Jephthah's messengers that the Ammonites fight the Israelites because the Israelites took away the land of the Ammonites. The Ammonite king says that the Israelites took the land when they came from Egypt. The land is from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and the Jordan River in the west. The Ammonite king says that Jephthah needs to return this land to the Ammonites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Ammonite king, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know that my history of the land is right. The Israelites took our land when they came out of Egypt, and we deserve to get our land back! or
- I hope that Jephthah listens to me and returns the land peacefully to us. Then we do not need to fight the Israelites anymore; or
- I am willing to talk to Jephthah about the boundaries of this land. I did not say anything about a border to the east of Gilead, because maybe we can make an agreement about the land, and we do not need to fight a battle for the land.

Also, ask the people who play the Israelite messengers, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel worried because we know that Jephthah will not like the message that the Ammonite king told us; or
- We hope that we can fight the Ammonites now because they attacked us, and we know that we did not ever take any land from the Ammonites. The Ammonites were not even in the land of Gilead when our ancestors arrived in the land! or
- We wonder what Jephthah will say or do next after we give him this message from the Ammonite king.

The messengers go back to Jephthah and tell Jephthah what the Ammonite king said. Jephthah sends his messengers again to the Ammonite king. Jephthah says, "This is what Jephthah says. The Israelites did not take away the land of Moab or the land of Ammon. The Israelites left Egypt, they traveled through the wilderness to the Red Sea, and then the Israelites went to Kadesh. The Israelites sent messengers to the king of Edom to ask if they could pass through the land of Edom to their own land, but the king of Edom refused. The Israelites also sent messengers to the king of Moab to ask if they could travel through the land of Moab, but the king of Moab also refused. The Israelites traveled around the land of Edom and around the land of Moab. The Israelites camped on the north side of the Arnon River. The Israelites did not go into Moabite land on the other side of the Arnon River."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel angry because the Ammonite king does not know the true history of who owned the land of Gilead, and how the Israelites took the land from the Amorites; or
- I am glad to tell the story of the Israelites so that the Ammonite king will be shamed and finally see that we never took his land from him; or
- I hope that the Ammonite king sees that he acts just like the king of Edom and the king of Moab when they did not listen to the requests of the Israelites to pass through their lands.

Also, ask the people who play the Israelites in Jephthah's story about what happened in the past, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are tired of how we travel in the wilderness, and we wish someone would let us travel through their land so we can finally get to our own land; or
- We are disappointed that both the king of Edom and the king of Moab did not listen to us and did not let us travel through their land to our land on the other side of the Dead Sea; or
- We wonder if we will ever be able to get to our land that Yahweh promised to give to us; or
- We are camped here on the north side of the Arnon River so that the Moabites will not be angry with us. The Moabites did not give us permission to travel through their land, so we will stay out of the Moabite land.

Jephthah continues to tell the Ammonite king the history of the Israelites. Jephthah says, "The Israelites asked King Sihon, the king of the Amorites, if the Israelites could pass through the Amorite land on their way to the Israelite land. King Sihon ruled in Heshbon. King Sihon did not trust the Israelites to pass through Amorite land peacefully."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays King Sihon of the Amorites in Jephthah's story about what happened in the past, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Who are these people, the Israelites? I do not know them, and I do not trust them; or
- I do not want to let the Israelites travel through my land, because the Israelites might steal something or fight against my people; or
- The land of the Amorites is my land, and I have a right to keep these Israelites out of my land.

Jephthah continues, "King Sihon gathered his army in Jahaz and fought against the Israelites. But Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites. The Israelites took all the land of the Amorites, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and from the wilderness in the east to the Jordan River in the west."

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Amorites in Jephthah's story about what happened in the past, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are shocked that the Israelites defeated us! or
- We wonder who the Israelites have for their god. Their god must be very powerful, because they were able to defeat us! or
- We thought that King Sihon was powerful, but it seems like the Israelites are even more powerful than King Sihon!

Jephthah continues, "Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, gave the Israelites the land of the Amorites." Jephthah tells the Ammonite king, "You do not have the right to take back the land that Yahweh gave to the Israelites. You can have the land that your god Chemosh gives to you. We will have the land that Yahweh our God gives to us."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Ammonite king, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am offended by what Jephthah says about us! The Israelites' God did not give them this land! or
- Jephthah is right. It is true that our god Chemosh gives us, the Ammonites, our land, and that is the land where we live; or
- Maybe this did happen in the past the way that Jephthah says, but it does not matter. The land belongs to the Ammonites.

Also, ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not think their god Chemosh has any power, but I will say this anyway because I know the Ammonites will understand what I mean about how a god gives them land; or
- Yahweh is powerful, but other gods have power too, and it seems like their god Chemosh does give the Ammonites their land; or
- I know that Chemosh was the god of the Moabites first, but then the Ammonites took over the land of the Moabites, so they made Chemosh their god too.

Jephthah also asks the king of the Ammonites, "Are you better than Balak son of Zippor, who was the king of Moab? Balak did not argue or fight with the Israelites. For 300 years, Israel has lived in Heshbon and its towns, in Aroer and its towns, and in all the cities on the Arnon River. Why did you Ammonites not take back the land during that time?"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I hope that the Ammonite king listens to my warning and does not try to fight the Israelites, just like Balak king of the Moabites did not dare to fight the Israelites; or
- I know that I have strong proof that we never took the land from the Ammonites; or
- It is clear that the Ammonites never tried to take our land for 300 years, because the Ammonites knew that it was our right to live here. The Ammonites should not try to take our land now.

Jephthah continues, "I did nothing wrong to you, but you sinned against me when you attacked me and my people. Yahweh is the judge today of whether the Israelites do what is right, or the Ammonites do what is right." But the Ammonite king does not listen to or agree with what Jephthah says.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Ammonite king, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not care what Jephthah says to me. I know that I am right that this is our land; or
- Jephthah and his people have no power, and whatever they say does not matter; or
- I do not care who their god is or what kind of judge he is, but I know that the Ammonites own this land, and we will get it back from the Israelites.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:12–28 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Jephthah sent **messengers** to the **king** of the Ammonites. Messengers are people who bring messages. Sometimes messengers bring messages that people write down, and sometimes messengers bring messages that people have spoken. In the Bible, a messenger might bring a message from Yahweh, or from one person to another person. A king is someone who rules over a city or area of land. Translate messengers and king the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on king, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Ammonite king says that the **Israelites** took the land of the Ammonites when the Israelites came out of **Egypt**. Israel refers to the people of Israel, the Israelites. Egypt is the place where the Israelites were slaves for 400 years before Yahweh rescued the Israelites. Translate Israelites the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on the Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Ammonite king says the Israelites took the land of Gilead, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and to the **Jordan River** in the west. The Jordan River is the river that goes from north to south on the western border of the land of Gilead. Translate Jordan River the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Jordan River, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah says that the Israelites traveled in the **wilderness** after they left Egypt. The wilderness, or desert, is a place with no water or plants. People do not live in the wilderness. Translate wilderness the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on wilderness, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites, and Amorites all appear in this passage, and these groups of people all live in the land of **Canaan**. Sometimes all of the Amorites are also called the Canaanites. For more information on the people who lived in Canaan, refer to Canaan in the Master Glossary.

Yahweh, the **God** of the people of Israel, gave the Israelites victory over King Sihon of the Amorites and the Amorite army. Yahweh is the personal name for God, and God is the general name for the God that the Israelites follow. Translate Yahweh and God the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh and God, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah says that the Ammonites can have the land that their **god**, Chemosh, gives to them. Chemosh was the god of the Moabites, and later the Ammonites probably also adopted the god Chemosh as their own god when the Ammonites took the Moabite land. For more information on Chemosh, refer to gods in the Master Glossary.

Jephthah says that the Israelites have lived in the **cities** and **villages** that Yahweh gave to the Israelites. Remember that cities usually have walls around them, and villages are smaller and do not have walls around them. Translate cities and villages the same as you have in previous passages.

Jephthah says that Jephthah did not **sin** against the Ammonite king. Jephthah says that the Ammonite king sinned against Jephthah when the Ammonites attacked the Israelites. Sin means to do wrong actions against another person. When a person sins, that person also does wrong against Yahweh when they do not obey Yahweh's laws. Translate sin the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on sin, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah says that Yahweh is the **judge** between the Israelites and the Ammonites. A judge is someone who decides what is right when two people, or groups of people, have a problem or conflict. Yahweh is the ultimate judge of all people. Translate judge the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on judge, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 11:12–28

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (35494222 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 11:29–33

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 11:29–33 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:29–33 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Before you have any group discussions for this passage, stop and decide as a group how you want to talk about it. In this passage, you must talk about child sacrifice, which may be difficult for some people, especially those who have experience with honor killings or family violence. Do you want to work in a different way than you do in other sections? Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:29–33 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

Jephthah sent messages to the Ammonite king in the previous passage. Jephthah showed that the Israelites never took the land from the Ammonites, but the Ammonite king did not listen to Jephthah's message. Now, the Spirit of Yahweh is on Jephthah. Jephthah makes an unwise vow to Yahweh to sacrifice the first thing that comes to meet Jephthah if Yahweh gives him victory over the Ammonites. Jephthah is victorious over the Ammonites. This is the first part of a two-part passage.

Remember that this passage talks about child sacrifice, which may be difficult for some people, especially those who have experience with honor killings or family violence.

As the passage begins, the Spirit of Yahweh comes on Jephthah. This is the first time that Yahweh has a role in the story of Jephthah. Israelite men chose Jephthah to be their leader; Yahweh did not choose Jephthah. But now, we know that Yahweh chooses to use Jephthah because Yahweh's Spirit is on Jephthah. This is similar to how the Spirit of Yahweh comes on other judges in Israel, including Othniel, Gideon, and later Samson. This does not mean that Yahweh approves of the vow Jephthah makes, however. Jephthah's vow is Jephthah's own idea.

In the previous story, Jephthah and the Ammonite king sent messages to each other, but now Jephthah no longer talks and instead starts to move around the land of Israel. It is likely that the Spirit of Yahweh leads Jephthah to prepare for the battle against the Ammonites. Jephthah passes through Gilead, Manasseh, and the city of Mizpah of Gilead. It is possible Jephthah travels through the land to show that Jephthah is the leader of the people of Israel. Jephthah might also want to find more men to fight against the Ammonites with Jephthah. Remember the Ammonites oppressed the Israelites for 18 years, and the Ammonites live near the land of Gilead.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Gilead, Manasseh, and Mizpah in Gilead. Pause this audio here.

Before the battle starts, Jephthah talks directly to Yahweh for the first time in Jephthah's story. Jephthah makes a vow to Yahweh. A vow is a promise to do a certain thing if Yahweh answers a request. People do not need to make vows, but people must keep the vows that people make.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time you or someone you know asked for something from your god or gods. What did you vow or promise to do in return if your god or gods did something for you? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah probably makes the vow because Jephthah is unsure if he can win against the Ammonites. Jephthah might be afraid that he will lose people's respect and his role as the leader of the men of Gilead, so Jephthah wants to make sure that Yahweh will help him win against the Ammonites. Jephthah's vow is like a bribe, which is when a person offers money or something else to get someone to do a certain thing for that person. However, we know that Yahweh's Spirit is already on Jephthah, so Yahweh already plans to help Jephthah win the battle, and there is no need for Jephthah to make any vows.

Jephthah wants Yahweh to give Jephthah victory over the Ammonites, and Jephthah also wants to return home safe after the battle. In return, Jephthah promises he will give Yahweh whatever comes out of Jephthah's house first to meet Jephthah when he returns home, and Jephthah will sacrifice that thing as a burnt offering to Yahweh. For a burnt offering, Israelites killed an animal and burned it on an altar as a gift to Yahweh. Yahweh never asked his people to sacrifice their children to Yahweh. Some people think that Jephthah thinks a human being would come out of his house first, but other people think Jephthah thinks it would be an animal like a goat or a sheep.

Some people think Jephthah did not say a specific animal or person in his vow so that Jephthah could cheat Yahweh. Maybe Jephthah hoped Yahweh would think Jephthah offered his only daughter even though Jephthah secretly hoped a different animal or person would come to meet Jephthah. Others think that Jephthah knew his daughter was the most likely person to meet him after the fight against the Ammonites. These people think that Jephthah was okay with this risk to Jephthah's daughter because Jephthah was so desperate to win against the Ammonites and protect his role as the leader of the men of Gilead.

Jephthah fights the Ammonites, and Yahweh gives Jephthah victory over the Ammonites. Jephthah defeats the Ammonites in 20 of their cities from Aroer to Minnith and Abel Keramim. Jephthah slaughters or kills many of the Ammonites. The Israelites subdued or humiliated the Ammonites, which means the Israelites totally defeated the Ammonites. The story does not give any other details about the battle against the Ammonites.

Stop here and look at a map of the likely locations of Aroer, Minnith, and Abel Keramim as a group.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:29–33 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Yahweh's Spirit comes on Jephthah. Jephthah travels through Gilead to prepare to fight against the Ammonites.

In the second scene: Jephthah makes a vow to Yahweh. Jephthah says that if Yahweh helps Jephthah defeat the Ammonites, Jephthah will sacrifice whatever comes out of Jephthah's door first to meet him when Jephthah returns home after the battle.

In the third scene: Yahweh gives Jephthah victory over the Ammonites.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jephthah
- Jephthah's army
- Spirit of Yahweh
- The Ammonites
- And Jephthah's only daughter

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that at the end of the previous story, Jephthah sent a message to the Ammonite king about the history of the Israelites in the land of Gilead and in the region. Jephthah showed the Ammonite king that the Israelites never took any land from the Ammonites. The Ammonite king ignored Jephthah's message, and now the time to talk is over. In this passage, Jephthah and the Ammonites now fight each other.

Two main stories happen in this passage. One is the battle that Jephthah fights and wins against the Ammonites. The other story is the vow that Jephthah makes to Yahweh, and the results of this vow. The action of the passage goes back and forth between these two stories. People might expect that the most important part of the passage is Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites. However, in this passage, we see that Jephthah's vow and the later results of Jephthah's vow are the most important part of Jephthah's story.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story that has two main stories that happen in that story. How do you tell the two different stories? How do you show which story is the most important overall? Pause this audio here.

In the first scene, the story is about how Jephthah fights against the Ammonites. Yahweh's Spirit comes on Jephthah. Remember, this is the first time Yahweh takes a role in Jephthah's story, and it shows that Yahweh chooses to use Jephthah as Israel's leader. Remember also there is nothing in the story to show that Jephthah makes his vow as a result of how the Spirit of Yahweh comes on Jephthah. Jephthah makes the vow on his own.

Jephthah passes through Gilead, Jephthah passes on to Manasseh, and Jephthah goes on to Mizpah of Gilead, probably because Yahweh's Spirit leads Jephthah to these places. Gilead is the land east of the Jordan River. Manasseh is the land of the tribe of Manasseh. This land includes Manasseh on the east of the Jordan River, and it might also include west Manasseh on the west side of the Jordan River. Remember Mizpah of Gilead is where the men of Gilead had gathered together to fight against the Ammonites in a previous passage. Jephthah now prepares to fight a battle against the Ammonites, and Jephthah might also gather men to fight with Jephthah.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Gilead, Manasseh, and Mizpah in Gilead again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group. Describe a time you or someone you know traveled to several different places in a short time. How will you describe how Jephthah travels through Gilead, Manasseh, and Mizpah? Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, Jephthah makes a vow to Yahweh. Remember that a vow is a promise that a person makes to their god to do a certain thing if their god answers that person's prayer or request. Jephthah has two things that he wants Yahweh to do for him. First, Jephthah wants Yahweh to give the Ammonites into Jephthah's hands. "Into his hands" is special language that means Jephthah wants Yahweh to help Jephthah win the fight against the Ammonites. Notice that Jephthah does not say he wants Yahweh to give the victory to the Israelites, but to Jephthah. Second, Jephthah wants Yahweh to return Jephthah home in peace. This means that Jephthah will have won the battle and there will be no more need to fight. Some translations say that Jephthah wants to return home in victory.

If Yahweh does these two things for Jephthah, Jephthah says that he will give to Yahweh whatever comes out of Jephthah's house first to meet Jephthah when he returns home from the battle. Jephthah also says he will sacrifice this thing as a burnt offering to Yahweh. Remember that Yahweh did tell his people, the Israelites, to make burnt offerings, but Yahweh never asked the Israelites to sacrifice their children. Yahweh hates child sacrifice, and Yahweh says not to do this kind of sacrifice.

Remember that Jephthah is not sure he can win against the Ammonites, so Jephthah makes this vow to Yahweh. It is possible Jephthah does this to try to cheat Yahweh or get the best deal possible. This is similar to how Jephthah made an offer to the leaders of Gilead in a previous passage, and then Jephthah became the ruler over all the people of Gilead. This time, we will see that Jephthah's offer cannot trick Yahweh.

In the original language, it is not clear if Jephthah expects a person or an animal to come out to meet Jephthah after the battle with the Ammonites. Remember also that it is possible Jephthah knew his daughter would come out to meet him after the battle, and not an animal.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate Jephthah's vow to Yahweh? How will you show that Jephthah might expect a human or an animal to meet Jephthah after the battle? Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, the passage goes back to the story about how Jephthah fights against the Ammonites. The scene begins when it says, "Jephthah went across to the Ammonites," which is how the first scene ended when Jephthah prepared to fight the Ammonites. This shows that Jephthah's vow in scene two is separate from the story about how he fights the Ammonites, and Jephthah did not need to make a vow to Yahweh in order to win against the Ammonites. Jephthah already had the Spirit of Yahweh with Jephthah.

Jephthah defeats the Ammonites because Yahweh gives the Ammonites into Jephthah's hands. Remember that Yahweh does not give Jephthah victory because of Jephthah's vow, but because Yahweh chose to save Yahweh's people, the Israelites, from the Ammonites. Remember that Yahweh had said in a previous story that Yahweh would not rescue Israel this time because the Israelites always turn to other gods. However, Yahweh does give Jephthah victory over the Ammonites.

Jephthah defeats the Ammonites in 20 cities from Aroer to Minnith and Abel Keramim. It is possible these 20 Ammonite cities are along the Arnon River on the border of the land of the Ammonites. Other people think these 20 cities are in the land of the tribe of Gad, near modern Amman, Jordan. We do not know the locations of Minnith and Abel Keramim, but Minnith may be 7 kilometers east of Heshbon, and Abel Keramim is probably farther to the north in the region.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the possible locations of Aroer, Minnith, and Abel Keramim again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The important part of this scene is that Jephthah defeats the Ammonites with a great slaughter, and Israel subdues, or defeats, the Ammonites. This means the people of Israel killed many Ammonites in their victory over the Ammonites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the victory of the Israelites over the Ammonites? For example, you could say the Israelites defeat, destroy, or devastate the 20 towns of the Ammonites. Or, you could say, "Jephthah defeated them with a great slaughter." Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:29–33 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jephthah
- Jephthah's army
- Spirit of Yahweh
- The Ammonites
- And Jephthah's only daughter

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Spirit of Yahweh comes on Jephthah. Jephthah moves through Gilead, Manasseh, and Mizpah in Gilead. Jephthah prepares to fight against the Ammonites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry at the king of the Ammonites, because the king did not listen to my message. I am ready to fight against the Ammonites, because the Ammonite king did not change the king's mind; or
- I travel around the area because I need to find more Israelites to join my fight against the Ammonites; or
- I hope the Israelites see me as a strong leader, because the men of Gilead made me the head and ruler of all of Gilead, and I want other Israelites to see me as their leader too.

Jephthah makes a vow to Yahweh. Jephthah says that if Yahweh gives Jephthah victory over the Ammonites, Jephthah will give Yahweh a gift. When Jephthah returns home after the battle, Jephthah will give Yahweh whatever comes out of Jephthah's house first to meet him. Jephthah says he will also sacrifice this thing as a burnt offering to Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel afraid that I might lose this battle against the Ammonites. I risk everything in this battle, so I need Yahweh to definitely help me win; or
- My half-brothers rejected me and made me leave my home, and maybe Yahweh will also reject me and not help me win this battle against the Ammonites. I need to make this vow to make sure that Yahweh will help me win against the Ammonites; or
- It worked for me to make an offer to the men of Gilead. Hopefully, it will work with Yahweh too, and I will get what I want without the need to give up anything valuable; or
- I hope Yahweh thinks I offer him something valuable, but I also hope that a servant or an animal will come meet me after the battle, and not my only daughter; or
- It is possible my only daughter could come meet me after the battle, but I am so desperate to win the fight against the Ammonites that this is a risk I am willing to take."

Also, ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I already sent my Spirit on Jephthah, so Jephthah already will win the fight against the Ammonites. Jephthah does not need to make any vows to me; or
- I never asked Jephthah to make a vow, especially not when it might risk the life of his only daughter! or
- I am disappointed that Jephthah does not trust me to give him the victory over the Ammonites. I am also disappointed that Jephthah makes a vow to try to make me do something for him that I already plan to do.

Jephthah fights against the Ammonites. Yahweh helps Jephthah defeat the Ammonites. Jephthah destroys 20 towns from Aroer to Minnith and as far as Abel Keramim. This is how the Israelites defeat the Ammonites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am surprised and relieved that Yahweh gave me the power to defeat my enemies, the Ammonites! Now I do not have to worry that I will lose my role as the leader of the men of Gilead; or
- I am very happy that I won the battle over the Ammonites, because the Ammonites have oppressed us for 18 years; or
- I am thankful that Yahweh helped me win the fight against the Ammonites.

Also, ask the people who play the Ammonites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are shocked that Jephthah and the Israelites defeated us! How did this happen? or
- We are humiliated and ashamed that we lost to the Israelites; or
- We are disappointed that we did not get our land of Gilead back from the Israelites, and we also lost 20 of our towns as well; or
- We are very sad that many of our people died in this fight with the Israelites.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:29–33 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The **Spirit of Yahweh** comes on Jephthah. Yahweh is the personal name for God. The Spirit of Yahweh is also called the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, in other parts of the Bible. When the Spirit of Yahweh comes on a person, that person receives special power or ability. Translate the "Spirit of Yahweh" the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh, refer to Yahweh in the Master Glossary. For more information on the Spirit of Yahweh, refer to Holy Spirit in the Master Glossary. Remember, however, that we should translate "Spirit of Yahweh" as it appears in this passage.

Jephthah makes a **vow** to Yahweh. A vow is a promise that someone makes to Yahweh. The person promises to do something for Yahweh if Yahweh does something that the person asks. People do not have to make vows, but a person must keep their vows. Translate vow the same as you have in other parts of the Old Testament. For example, in Genesis, Jacob makes a vow to Yahweh that Jacob will worship Yahweh if Yahweh brings Jacob back to the land of Jacob's father. For more information on vow, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate **vow** in this passage? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah asks Yahweh to give the Ammonites "**into his hands**." This means Jephthah wants Yahweh to give Jephthah victory over the Ammonites. Translate "into his hands" in the same way as you have in a previous passage in Judges.

Jephthah talks about returning to his home in **peace**, or in victory. In the original language, the story says that Jephthah talks about how he will return in peace. In this case, peace means that there is no more need to fight because Jephthah has won the battle. You may either say Jephthah will return in peace or in victory. If you use the term for peace, use the same word as you have used in previous passages for peace, and see peace in the Master Glossary for more information.

In Jephthah's vow, he promises to give a **burnt offering** to Yahweh. To make a burnt offering, a person kills an animal and then burns the animal completely on the altar for Yahweh. Translate burnt offering the same as you have in previous passages in Judges and in other parts of the Old Testament. For more information on burnt offering, refer to the Master Glossary.

Yahweh gives Jephthah victory over the Ammonites. The Ammonites are the people who lived near Gilead, and the Ammonites oppressed the Israelites for 18 years. Jephthah defeats the Ammonites in 20 of their **cities** from Aroer to Minnith, and as far as Abel Keramim. Cities are larger than towns, and they usually have walls around them. Translate cities the same as you have in previous passages.

The sons of Israel, or the **Israelites**, humiliate the Ammonites when the Israelites defeat the Ammonites. The Israelites include the people of Gilead, where Jephthah is from, and probably also men from other parts of Israel who join Jephthah to fight against the Ammonites. Translate Israelites the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on the Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 11:29–33

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (16588212 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (22189666 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 11:34–40

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 11:34–40 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:34–40 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Before you have any group discussions for this passage, stop and decide as a group how you want to talk about it. In this passage, you must talk about child sacrifice, which may be difficult for some people, especially those who have experience with honor killings or family violence. Do you want to work in a different way than you do in other sections? Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:34–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

Remember that this is the second part of a two-part story. In the first part of this two-part story, Jephthah makes an unwise vow to Yahweh. Jephthah vows to sacrifice the first thing that comes to meet Jephthah if Yahweh gives Jephthah victory over the Ammonites. At the end of the first part, Jephthah wins over the Ammonites. Now, we see what happens when Jephthah returns home. Jephthah's only daughter comes to meet him, and Jephthah keeps his vow to Yahweh. Jephthah sacrifices his only daughter.

Remember that this passage talks about child sacrifice, which may be difficult for some people, especially those who have experience with honor killings or family violence.

After the battle, Jephthah returns home safely to Mizpah, which is in Gilead. No one injured or killed Jephthah in his fight with the Ammonites. Remember that in his vow, Jephthah asked Yahweh to bring Jephthah home

safely, and now Yahweh does bring Jephthah home safely. However, remember that Yahweh chose Jephthah to save the Israelites. Yahweh gave Jephthah victory, and Yahweh protected Jephthah because Yahweh chose Jephthah, not because Jephthah made a vow.

Stop here and look at a map of Mizpah in Gilead as a group. Pause this audio here.

The first person to come to meet Jephthah after he returns home to Mizpah is Jephthah's only daughter. Jephthah's daughter dances to tambourines, which are small hand drums. To dance and play the tambourine was a common way to celebrate during Jephthah's time. This is similar to how Miriam celebrated Yahweh's victory in the Exodus when the Israelites escaped from Egypt.

Stop here and look at a picture of a tambourine. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about how you celebrate something in your community. What kinds of dance, music, or other celebrations do you have? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah is very upset when he sees his daughter. Jephthah tears his clothing, which is something people did during Jephthah's time to show deep sadness and to mourn for a dead person. Jephthah cries out that his daughter has ruined Jephthah and has brought him disaster because she is the one who comes to meet Jephthah. Jephthah blames his daughter, possibly because she ruined Jephthah's plan to cheat Yahweh with Jephthah's vow. In his grief, Jephthah only thinks about himself and how the vow Jephthah made will hurt him. Jephthah does not think about how the vow will hurt Jephthah's only daughter.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you or someone you know was very upset and sad. How did you or that person show your grief and sadness? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah says that he already made his vow to Yahweh, and Jephthah must keep his vow. Some people think this shows that Jephthah takes responsibility for the vow he made. Other people think that Jephthah does not take any responsibility for the vow he made, and that Jephthah blames his daughter for how she makes him keep his vow. Remember that Jephthah's half-brothers forced Jephthah to leave his home and Jephthah lost his inheritance. Now, Jephthah will not be able to pass on any inheritance to his only daughter because of the vow he made. During Jephthah's time, it was very important to have children so that a person's children could continue the family name and remember their father. Jephthah now would have no one to live after Jephthah. It was also shameful to not have any children in Jephthah's culture.

Jephthah's daughter agrees Jephthah must keep the vow that he made to Yahweh. Jephthah's daughter knows that Yahweh gave Jephthah victory over the Ammonites. Jephthah's daughter asks to go to the hills with her female friends to mourn and weep. Hills are areas of raised land that are smaller than mountains.

Stop here and look at a picture of hills as a group. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah's daughter wants to go walk in the hills to mourn with her friends, because Jephthah's daughter will never get married, and she will always be a virgin. A virgin is a woman who has never had sexual relations with a man, and a virgin has no children. In Israel, it was shameful to die without children, and Jephthah's daughter knew she would not have any children.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What does it mean in your culture if someone dies without any children? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah lets his daughter go for two months as she asks. After two months, Jephthah's daughter returns to her father. Then, Jephthah does to her as he had vowed to Yahweh, and she dies without ever getting married. This means that Jephthah kills his daughter and offers her as a burnt sacrifice to Yahweh. This is similar to the time when Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac, but in that story, Yahweh told Abraham to sacrifice Abraham's son. Here, Jephthah makes a vow on his own. Yahweh also provided a substitute for Abraham to sacrifice an animal instead of his son, but in this passage, there is no substitute.

Some people think Jephthah dedicated his daughter to Yahweh as a virgin instead of sacrificing her as a burnt offering. These people think Jephthah's daughter mourned in the hills for two months because she knew she would remain a virgin for the rest of her life. These people also think it was impossible for Jephthah to sacrifice his daughter on his own without a priest or the tabernacle. These people think that if Jephthah sacrificed his

daughter on his own, it would have been a sacrifice to another god, and not to Yahweh. These people also think Jephthah made a spiritual sacrifice of his daughter, and not a physical sacrifice.

However, most people still believe Jephthah did sacrifice his only daughter as a burnt offering, and that when Jephthah sacrificed her, she was a virgin when she died. The story does not give specific details about how Jephthah sacrificed his daughter, but maybe that is because it was so sad. In other parts of the Old Testament, we know that it says Yahweh hates human sacrifice. Also, the law of Yahweh in Leviticus says that if someone makes a vow and realizes it is an evil vow, that person must bring a sin offering. It is possible Jephthah did not know about this law or how the law gave a way for him to buy back his daughter's life. When Jephthah sacrificed his daughter, Jephthah acted like the Ammonites, who did sacrifice their children to their god, Molek.

After Jephthah's daughter died, the people of Israel made a new custom or tradition to remember her in Israel. Every year, the young women of Israel would walk in the hills for four days to remember the daughter of Jephthah. The young women probably wept and cried as they remembered her sad story. Jephthah's daughter's name is not in this story, but all of the women in Israel remembered her every year.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe a custom or tradition that you have in your community to remember an important person in your culture. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller calls Jephthah the Gileadite, which means Jephthah was from Gilead. Jephthah was the son of a prostitute, and his half-brothers forced him to leave his home in Gilead, but now he is called the Gileadite.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:34–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Jephthah returns home. Jephthah's only daughter is the first to come meet Jephthah. Jephthah blames his daughter for ruining him. Jephthah's daughter asks to have two months in the hills with her friends to mourn that she will die a virgin. Jephthah agrees to her idea.

In the second scene: Jephthah's daughter goes to the hills for two months. Then, Jephthah's daughter returns to her home. Jephthah completes his vow and sacrifices his daughter.

In the third scene: The women of Israel make a custom to remember Jephthah's daughter for four days each year.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jephthah
- Jephthah's only daughter
- The friends of Jephthah's daughter
- And Israelite women

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this is the second part of a two-part story. In the first part of the story, Jephthah makes the vow to Yahweh to sacrifice the first thing that comes to meet Jephthah. Jephthah is victorious over the Ammonites. Remember that in this second half of the story, Jephthah returns home and we see who comes to meet Jephthah. We also see if Jephthah keeps his vow to Yahweh.

In the first scene, Jephthah returns home safely from his battle with the Ammonites, and Jephthah sees his only daughter coming to meet him. In the original language, the story says, "Now, look!" to show the action from the eyes of Jephthah as he sees his daughter. Jephthah's daughter dances to the sound of tambourines, which are small hand drums. Remember, this was a common way to celebrate when a leader won battles over their enemy in Jephthah's time.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a tambourine again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story with several characters. Include a part where a new character enters the story, and another character is upset to see the new character. Pay attention to how you introduce the new character. How can you translate the part of this passage where Jephthah first sees his daughter come to meet him? Pause this audio here.

Next, the story gives background information about Jephthah's daughter. We learn that she is Jephthah's only daughter, and except for her, Jephthah does not have any other sons or daughters. This background information about Jephthah's daughter shows how terrible it is for Jephthah that his vow means he must sacrifice his only daughter. It was very shameful for Jephthah that he would not leave any sons or daughters after him when he died.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story and include some background information in the story. Pay attention to how you include the background information. Pause this audio here.

In the next part of the first scene, Jephthah is very upset. Jephthah tears his clothing in grief. Jephthah also blames his daughter for how she brings this problem and disaster on Jephthah. In the original language, Jephthah says, "You have brought me very low."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a problem that someone caused for you or another person that you know. How do you talk about how you blamed a person for a problem or disaster? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah tells his daughter that he opened his mouth to Yahweh. "Opened his mouth" means that Jephthah made a vow to Yahweh. Jephthah says he cannot break the vow to Yahweh. Remember, there are parts of the Old Testament, like Leviticus, that show a person can break his vow if he finds out he vowed something evil. Also, a person can vow something to Yahweh and then buy back the person they made a vow about if they bring a different sacrifice to Yahweh. Remember that it is not clear if Jephthah knows about these parts of Yahweh's law.

In the second scene, Jephthah's daughter says she accepts whatever her father has vowed to Yahweh. Jephthah's daughter wants her father to do as he vowed, because Yahweh gave her father victory over the Ammonites. Maybe Jephthah's daughter thinks that if Jephthah does not keep his vow, then Israel will be in danger again. Remember that Jephthah's daughter only asks to go to the hills for two months with her female friends. Remember that hills are areas of raised land that are smaller than mountains.

Stop here and look at a picture of hills again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The reason that Jephthah's daughter wants to go walk in the hills is to weep with her friends because she will die a virgin. Remember, a virgin is a woman who has not had sexual relations with a man, and in Jephthah's culture, it was shameful for a person to die and not have children.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "virgin"? Remember, it means a woman who has not had sexual relations with a man. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah says his daughter can go to the hills for two months, as she asked. So, his daughter goes to the hills for two months with her friends to weep that she will die a virgin without any children.

The most important part of the story happens in the second scene. Jephthah's daughter returns home at the end of the two months, and Jephthah "does to her as he had vowed." This means that Jephthah keeps his promise to Yahweh that he would sacrifice whatever came to meet Jephthah first when he returned home from the battle with the Ammonites. The same words are in this story where Jephthah makes his vow to give a burnt offering to Yahweh as in the 2 Kings story where the king of Moab offers his son as a sacrifice. This seems to

show that Jephthah physically sacrificed his daughter. This was a common thing for Jephthah's enemies, the Ammonites, to do, but it was something that Yahweh hated.

Remember that some people think Jephthah did not kill his daughter and offer her as a burnt offering to Yahweh. These people think that Jephthah dedicated his daughter to Yahweh to remain a virgin for her whole life. However, most people think that "she dies a virgin" does not mean that she lives the rest of her life as a virgin, but that Jephthah sacrifices her to Yahweh, and she dies at that time as a virgin.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about Jephthah's vow, and how Jephthah completed his vow. What is the best way to translate this part of the scene where it says that Jephthah "did to her as he had vowed"? Pause this audio here.

The last scene happens after the action of the passage. In the last scene, it says that Israelite women remembered Jephthah's daughter each year because she died while she was still a virgin. Jephthah's daughter never had children, and this is very sad and shameful in Israelite culture. Remember that Israelite women remembered Jephthah's daughter for four days every year. The Israelites probably wept and cried as they remembered Jephthah's daughter.

Finally, remember that the end of this passage calls Jephthah "the Gileadite." This is important because it reminds us that Jephthah was from Gilead, even though his half-brothers forced him to leave home earlier in Jephthah's life.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:34–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Jephthah
- Jephthah's only daughter
- The friends of Jephthah's daughter
- And Israelite women

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Jephthah returns to his home in Mizpah in Gilead. Jephthah sees his only daughter come out to meet him. Jephthah's daughter dances to the sound of tambourines. She is Jephthah's only daughter, and Jephthah has no

other sons and daughters besides her. Jephthah tears his clothes, and he says, "My daughter! You have ruined me and brought disaster to me. I made a vow to Yahweh that I must keep."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Oh no! Why does my daughter come to meet me? I hoped it would be a servant or an animal that met me first after the fight with the Ammonites; or
- I won the fight against the Ammonites, but now I regret my vow to Yahweh that I would sacrifice the first thing that came to meet me after the battle; or
- I am miserable. This is all my daughter's fault! Why did she have to be the first one to come meet me? or
- She is my only daughter! Who will live after I die? I have no other children! My life is ruined, just after I won the biggest fight of my life against the Ammonites!

Also, ask the person who plays Jephthah's daughter, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I was so happy to see my father come home safely from the battle, but now I am very sad because I know his vow means I will die soon; or
- I wonder exactly what the vow was that my father made to Yahweh. Why would my father offer me, his only daughter, to Yahweh? or
- I am sad and hurt that my father blames me as the cause of this problem when he is the one who made the vow to Yahweh. I only came to meet him after the battle, just like any other daughter or wife would do in our culture.

Jephthah's daughter says to her father, "You made a vow to Yahweh, so you must keep this promise. You must do what you vowed to Yahweh because Yahweh gave you the victory over your enemies, the Ammonites. But please do one thing for me first. Let me go to the hills for two months to weep with my friends because I will never get married."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah's daughter, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not want my father to break his vow to Yahweh, because if he breaks his vow, maybe then the Ammonites will come attack Israel again; or
- I am devastated that I will never get married, and I will never have any children; or
- I hope my father will let me go to the hills with my friends to weep because I will never get married and have children.

Jephthah tells his daughter that she can go to walk in the hills for two months to weep because she will never get married. So, Jephthah's daughter goes with her friends for two months to weep in the hills because she will never get married.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I wish I did not have to keep my vow to Yahweh, but I see no way to break my vow; or
- I think it is okay for my daughter to have two months to mourn that she will not get married. I can complete my vow after she returns; or
- I am also very sad that my daughter will never get married, and I wish there was a way that I did not have to complete my vow. Maybe my daughter will not come home in two months, and I will not have to sacrifice her to Yahweh as a burnt offering.

Also, ask the person who plays Jephthah's daughter, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am glad that at least my father gave me these two months to weep with my friends because I will never get married; or
- I am jealous of my friends who will get married and have children, because I will never get married or have children; or
- I am very sad because my father made this vow. I wish there was a way for my father to break his vow, but I know there is no way he can break the vow.

Also, ask the people who play the friends of Jephthah's daughter, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are so sad for our friend. It is hard to believe that she will never get married or have children, like we will! or
- We do not understand why our friend has to die. Why did her father make this terrible vow about her? or
- We wish we could help our friend. Maybe she can just stay in the hills with us and not go home to her father. Then she would not have to die.

Jephthah's daughter returned to him after two months. Jephthah did to his daughter what he had promised to do. Jephthah's daughter never got married.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This is the worst day of my life. I wish there was a way I could break my vow and not sacrifice my only daughter; or
- My daughter was my chance to give someone my inheritance so that future generations would remember me, and now I have no one. Why did she do this to me? Why did she come to meet me? or
- My victory against the Ammonites is worthless now because I will lose my precious daughter; or
- I wish my daughter did not return to me. If she stayed in the hills, maybe I would not have to complete my vow to Yahweh; or
- I have to complete my vow to Yahweh. There is no other way. If I do not do what I said I would do, maybe something worse will happen to me, or maybe the Ammonites will attack us again.

Also, ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I hate child sacrifice. This is what people like the Ammonites and Moabites do, but I would never ask my people, the Israelites, to do this terrible thing! or
- Why did Jephthah make this terrible vow? I never asked him to do this! or
- I am so sad for Jephthah's daughter, because she did nothing to deserve this death; or
- I wish that Jephthah had cried out to me for help. I would have helped him if he asked me for help in this terrible situation.

Every year, Israelite women walk in the hills for four days to remember Jephthah's daughter. The women remember the daughter of Jephthah, the man from Gilead.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelite women, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are so sad when we think about Jephthah's daughter. She died so young, and she never got married or had any children; or
- Jephthah's daughter had such a terrible death! Jephthah's daughter was so brave to come back to her father when she knew he had to keep his vow to sacrifice her to Yahweh; or
- We look forward to these four days every year because we can walk in the hills, just like Jephthah's daughter did for two months before her death.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 11:34–40 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Jephthah's daughter comes to meet Jephthah. Jephthah's daughter dances to **tambourines**. Remember that a tambourine is a small hand drum. To dance and play the tambourine were common ways to celebrate during Jephthah's time.

Stop here and look at a picture of a tambourine. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the word **tambourine**? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah tells his daughter that he made a **vow** to **Yahweh** that Jephthah cannot break. A vow is a promise that someone makes to Yahweh. Yahweh is the personal name for God. Translate Yahweh and vow the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh and vow, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah's daughter asks her father if she can go to walk in the **hills** for two months. Hills are raised areas of land that are smaller than mountains. Translate hills the same as you have in previous passages.

Jephthah's daughter wants to be in the hills for two months with her friends so she can weep that she will die a **virgin**. A virgin is a woman who has never had sexual relations with a man. A virgin is not married and has no children. Translate virgin the same as you have in previous passages and in other parts of the Old Testament.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate **virgin** in this passage? Pause this audio here.

Every year, **Israelite** women remember Jephthah's daughter as they walk in the hills for four days. This is a tradition in **Israel**. Translate Israel and Israelite the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Israel and the Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 11:34–40

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (23903506 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 12:1–7

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 12:1–7 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:1–7 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:1–7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the book of Judges, Jephthah tries to make deals with people who have more power than Jephthah does. In the previous passage, Jephthah tries to make a deal with Yahweh, and it leads to the death of Jephthah's only daughter. Jephthah is from the tribe of Manasseh, and Gilead is part of the land of the eastern part of Manasseh. Jephthah and the Gileadites were victorious over the Ammonites, but now we see the results of Jephthah's victory. The Ephraimites are not happy that Jephthah did not ask them to help fight the Ammonites. The Gileadites and the Ephraimites fight each other, and the Gileadites kill 42,000 Ephraimites. This is the final story about Jephthah in the book of Judges.

In the beginning of this passage, the men of the tribe of Ephraim gather together and cross over the Jordan River to talk with Jephthah at Zaphon. The land of the tribe of Ephraim is west of the Jordan River, and Zaphon is a town on the east side of the Jordan River in the land of Gilead, which belongs to the tribe of Manasseh. Remember, the tribe of Ephraim is one of the two tribes from Joseph, the son of Jacob. The other tribe of Joseph is Manasseh. Also, remember that in many other parts of the book of Judges, the Ephraimites did not have someone to lead them from their own tribe of Ephraim.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the Jordan River, the land of the tribe of Ephraim, the land of the tribe of Manasseh, which includes Gilead, and Zaphon. Pause this audio here.

The Ephraimites ask why Jephthah did not ask them to help fight against the Ammonites. Remember that before the battle with the Ammonites, Jephthah traveled through the land of Gilead and the land of Manasseh, and it is likely that Jephthah even went to the west of the Jordan River. It is possible that Jephthah did ask the Ephraimites to come across the Jordan River to help Jephthah fight the Ammonites, and that the Ephraimites refused to help Jephthah because they did not want Jephthah to be their leader.

The Ephraimites threaten to burn Jephthah's house down over Jephthah's head. This might mean they want to burn Jephthah's home down while Jephthah is inside his home. Or maybe the Ephraimites want to burn the people in Jephthah's family, although we know that Jephthah's brothers made Jephthah leave their family home, and now Jephthah has no children of his own. The Ephraimites want to intimidate Jephthah and challenge him as the leader of Israel.

Jephthah's response to the Ephraimites is similar to how Jephthah tried to solve the problem with the Ammonites, who oppressed the Israelites for 18 years. Jephthah was not successful when he talked with the Ammonite king, and so Jephthah led the Israelites to war with the Ammonites. Similarly, Jephthah was not able to solve the problem with the Ephraimites when he talked to them, so Jephthah fought the Ephraimites.

Jephthah wants to know why the Ephraimites did not help Jephthah, and some people think Jephthah was right to ask the Ephraimites this question. However, the previous stories do not say if Jephthah asked the Ephraimites to help him, so we cannot know for sure if what Jephthah says is true. In a different passage in the book of Judges, the Ephraimites got angry at Gideon like they are angry at Jephthah right now. Gideon was able to avoid war with the Ephraimites when he talked to them. Here, Jephthah does not solve the problem with his words. Jephthah says that when the Ephraimites did not come to help Jephthah and his people of Gilead, Jephthah fought against the Ammonites without the Ephraimites. Yahweh gave Jephthah victory over the Ammonites. Now Jephthah wants to know why the Ephraimites want to fight against him when they are the ones who did not help Jephthah in the past in the fight against the Ammonites.

Jephthah no longer talks, and he is now ready to fight. Jephthah gathers the men of Gilead, and they fight against the Ephraimites. The men of Gilead feel that they must attack the Ephraimites, because the Ephraimites insulted the men of Gilead when they said the Gileadites are fugitives in the land of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. A fugitive or refugee is someone who has to leave their home and live somewhere else, usually because of war or some kind of disaster. Some people think the Ephraimites did not accept the men of Gilead as a part of Israel, even though the men of Gilead are from the tribe of Manasseh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about two different groups of people who do not like each other in your community or your area of your country. What kinds of things do the two groups of people say about each other? Pause this audio here.

Jephthah and the Gileadites take control of the Jordan River near where the Ephraimites normally cross the Jordan River. Jephthah wants to stop the Ephraimites so that they cannot cross the river to go back to the other side. This is probably a part of the river where the water is shallow so that people can walk across the river easier. Remember that in a previous passage, Gideon asked the Ephraimites to help control the Jordan River crossing to protect it from the enemy. Now, Jephthah uses the Jordan River crossing to capture the Ephraimites! Gideon wanted peace with the Ephraimites, but Jephthah does not want peace with the Ephraimites.

It was probably difficult to see any difference between men of Ephraim and men of Gilead since all of them are Israelites, and they probably wore similar clothes and spoke the same language. Some Ephraimites tried to go back across the Jordan River to their homes after the Ephraimites saw the Gileadites were winning the battle. Since the Ephraimites and the Gileadites look similar, the Gileadites make a test to know if a man is Ephraimite or Gileadite.

The test is to ask the man who wants to cross over if he is an Ephraimite, and then also to ask him to say the word "Shibboleth." Shibboleth probably means "flood," or maybe "ear of corn," in the language of the Israelites, but what the word means is not important. The men of Gilead wanted to see how the man said the word, because if he said "sibboleth" instead of "shibboleth," this showed that he spoke a little differently than the men

of Gilead. People knew that a man who said "sibboleth" must be an Ephraimite, because Ephraimites usually could not say the "sh" sound in the word "shibboleth."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How can you tell which part of the country people are from? What are some characteristics that show they are from different parts of their country? Think about a group of people who speak your same language, but with some differences in how they say some words. Give some examples of words that these people say differently than you and your community. Pause this audio here.

The men of Gilead kill all of the men who could not say the word the same as a Gileadite. That day, the men of Gilead killed 42,000 Ephraimites at the crossing of the Jordan River. This is a very large number of people. Other stories in the book of Judges have battles between the Israelites and other people like the Ammonites, the Moabites, or the Philistines, but this battle is between two groups of Israelites. This is similar to another battle that the Israelites will fight against each other at the end of the book of Judges.

Many people think Jephthah does not seem like the kind of leader who Yahweh wants for his people. There is nothing in this passage to show that Yahweh approved of how Jephthah killed the Ephraimites. However, the book of Hebrews in the New Testament lists Jephthah as a man who conquered kingdoms because of his faith. Jephthah is most likely listed in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament because of Jephthah's faith in Yahweh when Jephthah fought against the Ammonites. When Jephthah fights against his fellow Israelites and kills them in this passage, that is Jephthah's own choice and not something that Yahweh wants him to do.

The end of this passage is also the end of the story of Jephthah. Jephthah leads Israel for six years, which likely means that Jephthah rules over all of Israel, which includes the land of Israel on the west side of the Jordan River. This land on the west side of the Jordan River also includes the land of Ephraim and the land of other tribes of Israel. After Jephthah dies, they bury him in the cities of Gilead, which might mean the writer of this passage did not know which city the people buried Jephthah in. Unlike in the stories about the other judges, the end of this story does not mention a time of rest or peace in Israel.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:1-7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: The Ephraimites gather together and cross the Jordan River to Zaphon in Gilead. The Ephraimites ask Jephthah why Jephthah did not ask them to help fight against the Ammonites.

In the second scene: In contrast, Jephthah tells the Ephraimites that Jephthah risked his life to fight against the Ammonites. Jephthah says that the Ephraimites should have helped Jephthah.

In the third scene: Jephthah and the Gileadites fight the Ephraimites. The Gileadites did not like how the Ephraimites insulted the Gileadites when they called the Gileadites fugitives.

In the fourth scene: The Gileadites kill any Ephraimites who try to escape across the Jordan River. The Gileadites know who the Ephraimites are because they make the Ephraimites pronounce "shibboleth," and the way the Ephraimites say the word was different than the Gileadites. The Gileadites killed 42,000 Ephraimites.

In the fifth scene: Jephthah leads Israel for six years. Then Jephthah dies and the people bury him in the cities of Gilead.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Ephraimites
- Jephthah
- And the Gileadites

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that Jephthah was successful when he made a deal with the men of Gilead, but Jephthah was not successful when he tried to talk with the Ammonite king. Therefore, the Israelites fought against the Ammonites and defeated the Ammonites. Finally, in the previous story, Jephthah was also not successful when he made a deal with Yahweh. Yahweh does give Jephthah the victory over the Ammonites, but then Jephthah sacrifices his only daughter because of the vow he made to Yahweh. Now, we see what happens after Jephthah wins over the Ammonites.

In the first scene, the Ephraimites talk to Jephthah. It is probably the leaders of the Ephraimites who talk to Jephthah. In the second scene, Jephthah talks back to the Ephraimites. Then in the third and fourth scenes, Jephthah no longer talks and instead starts to fight. We know that many Ephraimites come across the Jordan River because later we hear about how many Ephraimites die. In the third scene, the men of Gilead battle with the men of Ephraim, and in the fourth scene, the men of Gilead kill any Ephraimites who try to escape across the Jordan River back to the land of Ephraim. The fifth scene provides a summary of Jephthah's time as a leader.

In the first scene, the men of the tribe of Ephraim meet together. The Ephraimites go from the west side of the Jordan River across the river to meet Jephthah on the east side at a place called Zaphon in Gilead. Zaphon was a town about seven kilometers north of the Jabbok River, and it was four kilometers east of the Jordan River. Zaphon is not Jephthah's home. We do not know exactly why Jephthah is in Zaphon, but maybe Jephthah went from his home in Mizpah to the town of Zaphon in order to meet with the Ephraimites.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the Jordan River, the land of the tribe of Ephraim, the land of the tribe of Manasseh, the land of Gilead, Zaphon, and the Jabbok River again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The Ephraimites ask why Jephthah did not ask them to help fight the Ammonites. In the original language, the Ephraimites show that they were offended by what Jephthah says because the Ephraimites emphasize themselves when they talk to Jephthah. The Ephraimites say with emphasis, "*to us* you did not call to go with you." The Ephraimites put "*to us*" at the beginning of what they said in their language to make it the most important part of the sentence.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you tell or show someone that you are offended by something they did or said? How will you translate what the Ephraimites said to Jephthah to show that the Ephraimites were offended? Pause this audio here.

Remember that Jephthah probably went across to the west side of the Jordan River in a previous story when Jephthah gathered together men to fight against the Ammonites. The Ephraimites say that Jephthah did not ask them to cross to the east side of the river to fight the Ammonites. Remember that it is not clear if Jephthah did talk to the Ephraimites or not, and if the Ephraimites refused to help Jephthah at that time or not.

The Ephraimites also threaten Jephthah. Remember that the threat is to burn down Jephthah's house over Jephthah's head, which might mean to burn his house with Jephthah in it, or to burn the people who live with Jephthah. Remember that the Ephraimites probably make this threat to challenge Jephthah as their leader.

In the second scene, Jephthah responds to the Ephraimites. Jephthah says he and his people were the ones who tried to solve the problem with the Ammonites. In the original language, Jephthah says "*me and my people*" first in the sentence to show that Jephthah talks about himself as separate from the Ephraimites. Jephthah is the one who fought the Ammonites, and where were the Ephraimites? Jephthah says he asked for the Ephraimites' help, but the Ephraimites did not save Jephthah from the hand, or power, of the Ammonites.

Jephthah says he put his life in his hand, which is special language to mean Jephthah risked his life to fight against the Ammonites. Yahweh gave the Ammonites into Jephthah's hand, which means Yahweh gave Jephthah victory over the Ammonites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you or someone you know took your life in your hands or risked your life for something. What is the best way to translate the idea that Jephthah risked his life? Also, what is the best way to say that Yahweh gave Jephthah victory over the Ammonites? Pause this audio here.

The last thing Jephthah says to the Ephraimites is, "Why are you here today to fight against me?" Jephthah shows that Jephthah asked the Ephraimites for help in the past, and now Jephthah asks the Ephraimites this question to show there's no reason for the Ephraimites to fight Jephthah. Remember that the Ephraimites do not say anything in response to Jephthah at the end of the second scene.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be more natural in your language for Jephthah to ask, "So why are you here to fight against me today?" or for Jephthah to say, "So then, there is no reason for you to come attack me today"? Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Jephthah is ready for a fight. Jephthah gathers the men of Gilead, they fight against the Ephraimites, and they defeat the Ephraimites. The reason the men of Gilead fight against the Ephraimites is because the Ephraimites insulted the men of Gilead. The Ephraimites said that the Gileadites were refugees, or fugitives, in the land of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Remember that a refugee is someone that has to leave their home, and this insulted the Gileadites because it said the Gileadites did not truly belong in the land of Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about the discussion you had before about things two groups of people say to each other if they do not like each other. If groups of people insult each other, what might happen in your community? For example, could violence, war, or something else happen after the insults? What is the best way to translate this part of the passage when the Ephraimites say the Gileadites are like fugitives in the lands of Ephraim and Manasseh? Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, the Gileadites take control of the crossings of the Jordan River. The Gileadites want to make sure that no Ephraimites try to escape and cross back over to the west side of the Jordan River to the land of Ephraim.

Stop here as a group and look again at a map of the Jordan River, the likely location of the crossings of the Jordan River, the land of the tribe of Ephraim, the land of the tribe of Manasseh, and the land of Gilead, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you talk about how you cross a river or stream? What is the best way to say the crossings, or places where people crossed the Jordan River? Pause this audio here.

The Gileadites make a test so they can know which people are Ephraimite fugitives, or refugees, who try to escape from the battle across the Jordan River. This is the same word in the original language for fugitive that the Ephraimites said about the Gileadites earlier, and now the Ephraimites are the fugitives!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to describe a fugitive here and in the earlier part of the passage where the Ephraimites call the Gileadites fugitives? Pause this audio here.

The Gileadites asked each man who tried to cross the Jordan River two questions. First, "Are you an Ephraimite?" When the man answered "no," the Gileadites asked the man to say "shibboleth." The Gileadites did this to test if the man spoke more similar to a Gileadite or to an Ephraimite. An Ephraimite would say "sibboleth," because the way Ephraimites talked did not have the "sh" sound. Remember that Gileadites and Ephraimites spoke a little differently because they lived in different parts of Israel. If the man said "sibboleth," then the Gileadites took the man and killed him at the crossing of the Jordan River because they knew that man was an Ephraimite.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to describe the test that the Gileadites made for the Ephraimites? Pause this audio here.

The final part of the fourth scene says the Gileadites killed 42,000 Ephraimites that day. Forty-two thousand people is the same as 42 units of 1,000 men each, which is a very large number of men.

The fifth scene summarizes Jephthah's story. Jephthah led, or judged, Israel for six years. This shows that Jephthah most likely ruled over all of Israel, and not just Gilead. Jephthah dies, and they bury Jephthah in the cities of Gilead. Remember this probably means that they buried Jephthah in one of the cities of Gilead, but people no longer remember which city. It is possible that the people of Gilead remembered Jephthah in different cities, but it is not clear why the passage says "cities of Gilead" instead of "city of Gilead."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be best to translate this as "cities of Gilead" or "one of the cities of Gilead?" Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:1–7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Ephraimites
- Jephthah
- And the Gileadites

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Ephraimites meet together. The Ephraimites cross the Jordan River to the city of Zaphon in Gilead. The Ephraimites say to Jephthah, "Why did you not ask us to come with you when you crossed over to fight the Ammonites? Now we will burn your house down while you are inside of it!"

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Ephraimites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are very angry at Jephthah, because we are an important tribe of Israel, and Jephthah should have asked us for help before he went to fight the Ammonites! or
- We feel ashamed, because we missed our opportunity to get honor from the battle, and we need to get our honor back somehow. We also wish we got some of the spoils from the battle! or
- We do not accept Jephthah as our leader, and we are ready to kill him and his family!

Also, ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- These Ephraimites are wrong! I did ask them to come help in the fight against the Ammonites! or
- I am the true leader of Israel, because the men of Gilead chose me to lead Gilead, and I just led the people of Israel in a victory over the Ammonites; or
- I feel impatient because I have to explain everything again to these Ephraimites who did nothing to help me in the battle with the Ammonites.

Jephthah said to the Ephraimites, "I and the Gileadites had a difficult problem with the Ammonites. I asked you for help, but you did not help me. When I saw you would not help me, I risked my own life. I fought against the Ammonites, and Yahweh gave me victory over the Ammonites. So, there is no reason for you to come and attack me today."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I cannot believe that these Ephraimites threaten me, the ruler of Gilead, and the one who just saved all of Israel from the Ammonites! or
- I think that Yahweh will help me again now against the Ephraimites, because Yahweh helped me defeat the Ammonites; or
- At least I tried to explain things to the Ephraimites, but now I am ready to fight them and defeat them.

Also, ask the people who play the Ephraimites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Nothing Jephthah said has changed our minds. We are ready to kill Jephthah! or
- Even if Jephthah did ask us to help fight the Ammonites with him, it does not mean we would have come. We do not accept Jephthah as our leader, because no one asked us if Jephthah should be the leader of Israel; or
- We are offended that Jephthah accused us and said we did not come to help him! We have a right to attack Jephthah today because he did not ask us to fight the Ammonites with him.

Jephthah gathered together the men of Gilead. The Gileadites fought against the Ephraimites, and the Gileadites defeated the Ephraimites. The Gileadites fought against the Ephraimites because the Ephraimites insulted the Gileadites. The insult they said was, "You Gileadites are fugitives from Ephraim, and you live in the land of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh."

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Gileadites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are offended by what the Ephraimites said about us! or
- We have to fight the Ephraimites and defeat the Ephraimites now because they have insulted us and called us fugitives; or
- The Ephraimites deserve to die today because they said these terrible things about us. We are a part of Israel, and the Ephraimites are the ones who do not belong in our land.

The Gileadites took control of the crossings of the Jordan River near the land of Ephraim. When an Ephraimite fugitive asked to cross over to the west side of the Jordan River, the Gileadites asked him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If the man said "no," then the Gileadites asked the man to say "shibboleth." If the man said "sibboleth" instead of "shibboleth," then the Gileadites knew the man was from Ephraim, and the Gileadites killed the Ephraimite at the crossing of the Jordan River. The Gileadites killed 42,000 Ephraimites that day.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Gileadites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- All of the Ephraimites need to die because of what they said when they insulted us! or
- The Ephraimites do not say words the same as us, so we are going to use that difference to find out who they are and kill them before they escape; or
- We might not be from the west side of the Jordan River, but we have Jephthah as our leader, and we will kill any Ephraimite who tries to run away from us.

Also, ask the people who play the Ephraimites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Maybe if we act like we are Gileadites, they will not know that we are actually Ephraimites, and we will be able to escape and go back across the Jordan River to our homes in the land of Ephraim; or
- This day was not what we expected. We thought we would kill Jephthah, but now we have to run away like fugitives to try to get back to our homes; or
- We are really sad that so many of our people of the tribe of Ephraim died today. What will happen to the tribe of Ephraim now?

Jephthah was the leader of Israel for six years. Jephthah died and they buried Jephthah in the cities of Gilead.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jephthah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am glad that I was the leader of Israel for six years. I am the son of a prostitute, but I became the leader of this entire group of people; or
- I wish I was the leader of Israel for a longer time, because six years was too short; or
- I am really sad that my daughter is dead, and I will have no children to help people remember how important I was after I die.

Ask the people who play the Gileadites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are glad we had a strong leader like Jephthah to rule us for six years; or
- We feel safe because we know that Jephthah will protect us from enemies like the Ammonites who oppressed us, and even the Ephraimites who insulted us; or
- I wonder who our leader will be now that Jephthah is gone?

Also, ask the people who play the Ephraimites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We wish we did not have to follow Jephthah as our leader, but he defeated us already and we cannot fight against Jephthah and his men again; or
- Maybe now that Jephthah is gone, we can find a new leader. Maybe the new leader will be from the tribe of Ephraim this time; or
- The Gileadites killed so many of our people, but we are glad that at least we survived.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:1–7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

All of the Ephraimite men came together. The Ephraimites were one of the two half-tribes of Joseph, the son of Jacob.

The Ephraimites crossed over the **Jordan River** to Zaphon. The Jordan River is the river that goes from north to south on the western border of the land of Gilead. Translate Jordan River the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Jordan River, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah tells the Ephraimites that he risked his life to fight the Ammonites. **Yahweh** gave Jephthah victory over the Ammonites. Yahweh is the personal name for God. Translate Yahweh the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Gileadites fight against the Ephraimites because the Ephraimites insult the Gileadites. The Ephraimites insult the Gileadites when they call them **fugitives** in the land of Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh is the other half-tribe of Joseph, and their land is on both the east and the west side of the Jordan River. Fugitives are people who escape a land and go to another place as survivors or refugees.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will talk about how the Gileadites are fugitives or refugees in the lands of Ephraim and Manasseh. Pause this audio here.

Jephthah judged Israel for six years. A **judge** is someone who led Israel. Here, **Israel** means the people of Israel. Translate judge and Israel the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on judge and Israel, refer to the Master Glossary.

Jephthah died, and the people **buried** Jephthah in the **cities** of Gilead. Translate "to bury someone" in the same way you have in previous passages. A city is larger than a town and it usually has walls around it. Translate cities the same as you have in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 12:1–7

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (20065187 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (25265014 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 12:8–15

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 12:8–15 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:8–15 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:8–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

The storyteller continues to tell about the list of judges, and now the judges come from the western area of Israel, west of the Jordan River. Immediately before this story, Jephthah ruled as a judge and fought against another tribe of Israel. Jephthah also sacrificed his only daughter to fulfill a vow Jephthah made to Yahweh. Now, in this story, the land of Israel experiences a brief time of peace under the leadership of the judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.

Before this current story, five of the major judges have already appeared—Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah—and only Samson's story remains after this story. We know more about how the major judges led Israel. Of the six minor judges, three have already appeared—Shamgar, Tola, and Jair—and now this story describes the rule of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. These minor judges appear as a contrast to the warlike judges in the book. The storyteller does not give many details about these minor judges.

Jephthah's story before this story, and Samson's story after this passage, both tell about much death and destruction. In comparison, this story does not talk about any conflict or sin. Two of the three judges mentioned in this passage have sons, daughters, grandsons, donkeys, and marriages, which shows this was probably a time of peace, wealth, and prosperity. Ibzan and Abdon have many children, which contrasts with Jephthah who only had one daughter.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you show contrast between war stories and peace stories when you tell the history of your people group? Listen to someone as they tell stories about the history of your people group to see how that person shows contrast between different types of stories. Pause this audio here.

All three of these judges were judges for a short period of time. Ibzan rules for 7 years, Elon rules for 10 years, and Abdon rules for 8 years. The times of peace grow shorter as the time of the judges nears the end. This peace contrasts with the coming war between the Israelites, and the way the Israelites did whatever they thought was fit, or right, in their own eyes at the end of the time of the judges.

The first of the three judges in this passage is Ibzan. Ibzan is from Bethlehem, and most people think this was the town of Bethlehem in the north of the country of Israel in the land of Zebulun, and not the Bethlehem in the south of Israel.

Stop here and look at a map of the likely location of Bethlehem in Zebulun as a group. Pause this audio here.

Ibzan had 30 sons and 30 daughters. It is likely Ibzan had many wives to be able to have such a large family. Ibzan sent his 30 daughters to marry 30 men from outside of his tribe, which was a common way to have more connections with other tribes and leaders across the region. These relationships with other tribes may have helped Ibzan have more power in the region. Ibzan's daughters left his home to go live in the homes of their husbands' fathers who lived outside of Ibzan's tribe. Ibzan brought 30 women from outside of his tribe to marry Ibzan's 30 sons. These 30 new daughters-in-law lived in Bethlehem with their husbands, who were Ibzan's sons.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Where do couples live after they get married in your community? Is it more common for the new husband and wife to live near the husband's family, near the wife's family, or somewhere else? Pause this audio here.

Although this story does not say so, people in that culture believed that if someone had many children, it meant that Yahweh blessed that person. In general, Israel prospered during the time of Ibzan, and the Israelites did not fight any wars. After Ibzan's rule of seven years, Ibzan died, and the people buried Ibzan in Bethlehem.

The second of the three judges in this passage is Elon. Elon was from Zebulun, and Elon was the judge of Israel for 10 years. The storyteller gives no details about Elon, which may show Elon's rule was a time of peace. Then Elon died, and the people buried Elon in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. In the original language, Aijalon is very similar to the name Elon, so it is possible that people named the town of Aijalon after Elon the judge.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the likely location of Aijalon in Zebulun. Pause this audio here.

Abdon is the last of the three judges in this passage. Abdon was the son of Hillel, and Abdon was from the town of Pirathon, which was in the land of Ephraim.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the likely location of Pirathon in Ephraim. Pause this audio here.

Abdon also had many children, like Ibzan did. Abdon's 40 sons and 30 grandsons rode on 70 donkeys. A donkey is a domestic animal like a horse, but smaller in size and with longer ears.

Stop here and look at a picture of a donkey as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Abdon's sons and grandsons rode on donkeys like the judge Jair in a previous story who also had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys. Both Abdon and Jair were wealthy judges, and to ride on donkeys is similar to how a king would rule his land with his children to help him rule. When a man rode on a donkey during that time, it showed the man came in peace. A warrior would ride on a war horse to go to battle.

Abdon ruled Israel for eight years, and then Abdon died. People buried Abdon in Pirathon in Ephraim in the hill country of the Amalekites. A hill is a naturally raised area of land, and it is smaller than a mountain. Hill country is an area where there are many hills.

Stop here and look at a picture of hill country as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The fact that the storyteller mentions the Amalekites may mean that the Amalekites still ruled this part of Israel. The Amalekites were enemies of Israel, and the Amalekites were descendants of Amalek. The Amalekites lived in the land of Canaan before the Israelites came out of Egypt. The Israelites, led by Joshua, successfully defeated the Amalekites when the Amalekites came to fight the Israelites near Sinai.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:8–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Ibzan is the judge of Israel for seven years. Ibzan has 30 sons, 30 daughters, and 30 daughters-in-law.

In the second scene: Elon is the judge of Israel for 10 years.

In the third scene: Abdon is the judge of Israel for eight years. Abdon has 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode on 70 donkeys.

The characters in this passage are:

- Ibzan
- Ibzan's 30 sons
- Ibzan's 30 daughters
- Ibzan's 30 daughters-in-law
- People of Israel
- Elon
- Abdon
- Abdon's 40 sons
- Abdon's 30 grandsons
- And the Amalekites

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that before the passages about the judge Jephthah, we hear about two judges, Tola and Jair, who seem to rule during times of peace. During the rule of Jephthah, there are many wars, and Jephthah even kills his own daughter to fulfill a vow to Yahweh. Remember that this story comes immediately after the stories about Jephthah. Remember that the three judges in this story fight no wars and there is peace in the land.

The past two judges, Jair and Jephthah, both ruled Israel from the east side of the Jordan River. Now, these three minor judges all rule on the west side of the Jordan River. Ibzan and Elon are probably both from Zebulun, and Abdon is from Ephraim. All the other judges of Israel were also from the west side of the Jordan River.

Stop here and look at a map of the tribes of Israel, with the locations of the six major judges of Israel that we hear more detailed descriptions about: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. Also, look at the locations of the six minor judges of Israel that we hear less information about: Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Pause this audio here.

Remember that for each of the three scenes in this story, we hear similar details about each of the three judges. The scene tells where the judge is from, how long that person judged Israel, and where people buried that judge after the person died. The storyteller also tells some additional information about the families of the first judge, Ibzan, and the last judge, Abdon.

In the first scene, Ibzan is a judge from Bethlehem, likely in the region of Zebulun in the north of Israel. Bethlehem was probably near the border of the land of Zebulun and Asher. Remember, this is most likely not the town of Bethlehem in the south of Israel in the land of Judah.

Stop here and look at a map of the likely location of Bethlehem in Zebulun again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

It is important to remember that Ibzan had a very large family. Remember that Jephthah only had one daughter, and Jephthah killed his own daughter to fulfill a vow to Yahweh. Now, Ibzan has 30 sons and 30 daughters, which shows a strong contrast between a judge with no descendants and now a judge with many, many descendants.

The storyteller gives the additional information about the size of Ibzan's family in the middle of the description of where Ibzan was from, how long Ibzan ruled Israel, and where the people buried Ibzan's body. In the original language, the storyteller starts the information about Ibzan's sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, and marriages in a different way to show that this is additional information that does not follow the pattern of the other facts about Ibzan.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you introduce this additional information in your language to show it contrasts with the other information about Ibzan? Pause this audio here.

Remember that Ibzan gave his 30 daughters to be married to 30 men outside of his tribe in Zebulun. It is possible this means Ibzan sent his 30 daughters to marry men from one of the other 12 tribes of Israel, or maybe his daughters married men in Zebulun who were not in Ibzan's direct family. Ibzan likely did this to establish Ibzan's power and rule in the area. Remember also that Ibzan brought in 30 women to marry his 30 sons, since this was the custom at that time for the women to go live where their husbands were from.

Remember Ibzan ruled for seven years, and then Ibzan died. The people buried Ibzan in Bethlehem in the land of Zebulun.

In the second scene, remember that Elon was the next judge. Elon was also from Zebulun. Elon ruled for ten years. Remember that people buried Elon in Aijalon in Zebulun. It is possible Aijalon was about 22 kilometers northeast of Bethlehem in Zebulun. The storyteller does not give any other details about Elon.

Stop here and look at a map of the likely location of Aijalon in Zebulun again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, remember that Abdon was the final judge in this passage. Abdon was the son of Hillel, and Abdon was from Pirathon in the land of Ephraim. It is likely Pirathon was about 9 kilometers southwest of modern Nablus, near the border of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the likely location of Pirathon in Ephraim again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Similar to Ibzan in the first scene, Abdon also was wealthy and prosperous. The judge Elon is in between Ibzan and Abdon, which emphasizes the wealth and number of children that Ibzan and Abdon had.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show the similarities between Ibzan and Abdon in your language? Pause this audio here.

Abdon had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, which shows Abdon also has a big family. Remember the sons and grandsons rode on 70 donkeys, which would be similar to the way people describe a king who rules in peace.

Stop here and look at a picture of a donkey again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Remember Abdon ruled for eight years and then Abdon died. The people buried Abdon in Pirathon in Ephraim. Remember the passage also says this is the hill country of the Amalekites, which shows this part of Ephraim was possibly still in the control of the Amalekites, the enemies of Israel. Remember, the Israelites, led by Joshua, defeated the Amalekites near Sinai.

Stop here and look at a picture of hill country again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:8–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Ibzan
- Ibzan's 30 sons
- Ibzan's 30 daughters
- Ibzan's 30 daughters-in-law
- People of Israel
- Elon
- Abdon
- Abdon's 40 sons
- Abdon's 30 grandsons
- And the Amalekites

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

After the rule of Jephthah, Ibzan was the judge of Israel. Ibzan was from Bethlehem. Ibzan had 30 sons and 30 daughters. Ibzan's 30 daughters married 30 men from outside of Ibzan's tribe. Ibzan brought 30 women to his tribe to marry Ibzan's 30 sons. Ibzan ruled for seven years, and the people buried Ibzan in Bethlehem.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are glad there is no war or bloodshed while Ibzan rules; or
- We are impressed at how many sons and daughters Ibzan has. Yahweh must have really blessed Ibzan.

Also, ask the person who plays Ibzan, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel proud of my large family; or
- I want to make strategic marriages for my 30 sons and my 30 daughters so I have good social and political ties in the region; or
- I feel proud to be the judge of Israel for seven years.

Elon was the next judge of Israel. Elon was from Zebulun, and Elon ruled Israel for 10 years. The people buried Elon in the town of Aijalon in Zebulun after Elon died.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Elon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel happy to rule Israel in peace; or
- I am glad that no one attacks us or causes problems for Israel; or
- I hope that Yahweh will continue to bless our land with peace after my rule ends.

Abdon the son of Hillel was the next judge of Israel. Abdon was from Pirathon, a town in the land of Ephraim. Abdon had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, and these sons and grandsons rode on 70 donkeys. Abdon ruled Israel for eight years. After Abdon died, people buried Abdon in Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I feel impressed at the size of Abdon's family, just like Ibzan's large family! or
- I wonder if the sons and grandsons of Abdon will rule after Abdon, since they have donkeys and act like kings; or
- I wish that the Amalekites were not in our land of Ephraim any longer.

Also, ask the people who play the 40 sons and 30 grandsons of Abdon, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel proud of our large family; or
- We hope that we will be able to rule the land after Abdon dies; or
- We are very wealthy and prosperous as we ride our donkeys around the land and enjoy the peace of Israel.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 12:8–15 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Ibzan was a **judge** and leader in the land of **Israel**, and Ibzan led Israel, or the **Israelites**. Remember this does not mean that the main role of the judge was to rule over court cases, but instead, to lead the people and rescue the people from their enemies. Use the same word for lead or judge that you have used in previous passages about the judges of Israel. For more information about judges, Israelites, and Israel, refer to the Master Glossary.

Abdon had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, and these sons and grandsons rode on 70 **donkeys**. Remember a donkey is a domestic animal like a horse, but smaller. A donkey also showed that a person came to make peace instead of to make war. Translate donkey the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on donkey, see the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at a picture of a donkey again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Abdon led Israel for eight years. Then Abdon died and people buried Abdon in Pirathon, in the hill country of the Amalekites. A hill is a naturally raised area of land. A hill is smaller than a mountain. Hill country is an area of Ephraim where there are many hills. Translate hill country in the same way you have in previous passages.

Stop here and look at a picture of hill country again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The **Amalekites** were enemies of Israel. Yahweh had told Israel to completely destroy the Amalekites. From previous passages, we know that Israel did not obey Yahweh to destroy all the Amalekites, and it is possible the Amalekites are still in the hill country of Ephraim. Translate Amalekites the same as you have in previous passages.

People **buried** these judges when they placed the judges' bodies in caves or holes that people cut out of rock. Use the same words for buried as you have used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 12:8–15

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 13:1–7

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 13:1–7 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:1–7 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:1–7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

During the time of the judges, Israel repeatedly sins, then repents, and then Yahweh saves the Israelites. Before this story, Israel experienced a time of peace in the land with the three judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Now, because the Israelites sin again, Yahweh allows the Philistines to rule over the Israelites for 40 years. In this

passage, we begin to hear the story of the final judge of Israel named Samson. An angel of Yahweh appears to the wife of a man named Manoah. The angel says the wife and Manoah will have a son who will be set apart for Yahweh from birth. This son, Samson, will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. This passage is the first in a two-part story.

The Israelites did evil again in the eyes of Yahweh, just like the Israelites did in other parts of the book of Judges. Usually, the Israelites cry out to Yahweh for help and then Yahweh delivers them, but in this passage, the Israelites do not cry for help. Instead, Yahweh lets the Philistines rule over the Israelites for 40 years. The Philistines are the same people who fought Israel in previous stories, and the Philistines are enemies of Israel.

Manoah and his wife are from the family or clan of Dan, and they live in a town called Zorah in the land of Dan in the south of Israel. Dan is one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Some translations say Manoah is from the "family of Dan," and not the "tribe of Dan," which may show that the tribe of Dan is weak during this time. Manoah's name in the original language means "rest," which is significant because Israel does not have rest during this time.

Stop here and look at a map of the town of Zorah as a group. Pause this audio here.

We do not know the name of Manoah's wife. Manoah's wife is childless and cannot get pregnant. It was important for people to have children so they could continue the family name and honor, and people sometimes thought that Yahweh had cursed a person if the person could not have children. In other parts of the Old Testament, we hear similar stories of childless women who beg Yahweh for a son, and then Yahweh listens and gives them a son. In this passage, Manoah's wife does not beg for a son, but Yahweh promises her a son for a specific purpose. Yahweh does not promise to give Manoah's wife a son just to continue the family's name and honor.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about what it is like to be a woman with no children in your culture. How do people treat women or couples who cannot have children? How do women or couples who cannot have children feel? Pause this audio here.

The messenger, or angel, of Yahweh appears to Manoah's wife and gives her an important message, just like in a previous story when an angel of Yahweh appeared to Gideon to prepare Gideon to serve as a judge. The angel of Yahweh brings messages from Yahweh to people. The angel of Yahweh speaks with so much authority that it is as if Yahweh himself speaks. The angel tells Manoah's wife that even though she has no children now, Manoah's wife will have a son. It is likely Manoah's wife will have the baby naturally. However, the baby will be a special gift from Yahweh.

The messenger also has specific instructions for Manoah's wife and for her son. While Manoah's wife is pregnant, she must not drink wine or beer or eat any unclean food. Both wine and beer were common drinks at this time. Wine was fermented grape juice, and beer was made from fermented grain. Unclean food is food that Yahweh told Yahweh's people Israel not to eat so they could be clean or pure spiritually before Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What kinds of foods make a person spiritually unclean in your culture? What kinds of food do women who are pregnant not eat? Pause this audio here.

Manoah's wife must also never cut her son's hair, and her son will be set apart for Yahweh from birth. We know from another part of the Old Testament that someone who took a "Nazarite vow" was set apart for Yahweh for a special purpose. Normally, a Nazarite vow was temporary. But for the unborn son of Manoah, to be a Nazarite meant he would be set apart for Yahweh from the time of his birth until his death. These conditions about how this son would eat, drink, and cut his hair would continue the boy's entire life.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe what people do when they are set apart or dedicated to the gods in your culture. Do these people not drink alcohol, not eat or drink other food or drinks, not shave or cut their hair, or something else? Pause this audio here.

The reason the angel gives these specific instructions is because the child has a special mission. This child will begin to deliver Israel from the hand or rule of the Philistines. It is significant that the angel of Yahweh says the child will "begin" to rescue the Israelites, because we know that Samson does not completely rescue the Israelites during Samson's lifetime.

Manoah's wife tells her husband what the "man of God" said about how she will have a son. "Man of God" was a common way to refer to a prophet in the Old Testament. Manoah's wife has heard of angels from Yahweh

before, and she thinks the man looked like an angel. Manoah's wife says the angel is awesome, or that she was terrified to see the angel. Manoah's wife does not ask the angel's name, probably because she fears and respects the angel. Manoah's wife repeats the angel's message, but she does not include the information about how they must not cut her son's hair or that her son will begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines. Instead, Manoah's wife says the child will be separated to Yahweh from birth until the day of his death.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:1–7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Israel does evil again, and Yahweh gives Israel to the Philistines.

In the second scene: Yahweh's messenger tells Manoah's wife about the son she will soon give birth to.

In the third scene: Manoah's wife tells Manoah what the messenger of Yahweh told her.

The characters in this passage are:

- Israelites
- Yahweh
- Philistines
- Manoah
- Manoah's wife
- Angel of Yahweh
- And Samson

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this is the first part in a two-part story. Before this passage, the judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon ruled Israel in peace. The first scene begins in a similar way to other stories in the book of Judges when it says, "The Israelites did evil again in the eyes of Yahweh." When someone does evil in the eyes of Yahweh, that person does not follow Yahweh or Yahweh's commands.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that the Israelites did evil again in the eyes of Yahweh? Pause this audio here.

Remember that other times when the Israelites do evil, they cry out to Yahweh to rescue them, and Yahweh sends a judge to help Israel. But here, the Israelites do not cry for help. Instead, Yahweh gives Israel over to the hand of the Philistines for 40 years. The "hand" of the Philistines means the power or rule of the Philistines. For 40 years, the Philistines control and oppress Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that Yahweh allowed the Philistines to control and oppress the Israelites? Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, remember that the storyteller introduces the main characters of this story, which are Manoah, Manoah's wife, and the angel of Yahweh. Remember that Manoah is from the family of Dan from a town called Zorah. Zorah is a town 24 kilometers west of Jerusalem on the border of the land of Judah and the land of Dan.

Stop here and look at a map of the town of Zorah again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

We do not know the name of Manoah's wife, but we do know that she is childless and cannot get pregnant. Remember this was shameful in this culture. The law of Moses promised that if people obeyed Yahweh, no woman would be unable to have a live baby, so people often thought that if a woman was unable to have children, it was because God had cursed that woman. Manoah's wife probably represented Israel. Just like Manoah's wife probably felt hopeless without children, Israel was powerless and without hope while the Philistines ruled them for 40 years. Remember that the messenger from Yahweh came to Manoah's wife and not to Manoah.

The angel brings Manoah's wife an important message when he says, "You will have a son!" The angel also tells Manoah's wife important instructions for how to act while she is pregnant and how her son should live when he is born. Remember these instructions are the same as the instructions for someone who takes a Nazarite vow. That person must not drink alcohol, they must not cut their hair, and they must avoid unclean foods. A Nazarite vow was temporary, but Manoah's son would need to follow these rules for his whole life. Remember the angel of Yahweh repeats the message twice, probably to show how important this message is.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about how you tell someone important news. Do you repeat the same information more than one time, or what else do you do to show how important the news is? Pause this audio here.

Remember also that the reason for these specific instructions was because the child would be a Nazarite, which means the child would be set apart or dedicated to Yahweh. The child would be the one to begin to rescue Israel from the hand or rule of the Philistines.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "set apart to Yahweh" in your language? Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Manoah's wife goes to her husband to tell her husband about her conversation with the angel of Yahweh. First, Manoah's wife tells her husband about the angel, and then she tells the message the angel gave her. Manoah's wife does not know who the angel was, but she calls him "the man of God." "Man of God" was a common way to talk about a prophet who was a man who gave messages from Yahweh. Manoah's wife also says he looked like Yahweh's angel, and he was awesome. She did not dare to ask the angel's name, probably because Manoah's wife feared and respected the angel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "man of God" in your language? Pause this audio here.

Remember that the message Manoah's wife repeats to her husband is like the message the angel gave her, but it is not the same. Remember that Manoah's wife does not include the most important part of the message, that their son will begin to rescue Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Remember that Manoah's wife also does not say anything about how they must not cut their son's hair. We do not know why she did not include these important parts of the angel's message. Manoah's wife says that their son will be dedicated to Yahweh from birth until the day he dies.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:1-7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Israelites
- Yahweh
- Philistines
- Manoah
- Manoah's wife
- Angel of Yahweh
- And Samson

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Israelites do evil again before the eyes of Yahweh, and Yahweh allows the Philistines to rule over the Israelites for 40 years.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We accept that the Philistines are in control of us, and there is nothing we can do about it; or
- We wish that we were not under the rule of the Philistines; or
- We wonder if we should have cried out to Yahweh for help this time.

Also, ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want my people Israel to turn back to me; or
- Israel deserves this punishment. The Philistines will rule over the Israelites because the Israelites again did evil in my eyes; or
- I wait for the day when I will send someone else to deliver Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Manoah was from the town of Zorah in the tribe of Dan. Manoah's wife was barren and childless.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play Manoah and Manoah's wife, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel hopeless because we do not have a son to carry on our family name; or
- We wonder why we cannot have any children; or
- We pray for Yahweh to do a miracle so we can have a baby; or
- We feel ashamed because we do not have any children.

The angel of Yahweh appears to Manoah's wife and gives her a message. The angel says that even though Manoah's wife is barren and childless, she will have a son. Manoah's wife must carefully follow the instructions to not drink wine or beer and not eat any unclean food while she is pregnant with the baby. Manoah's wife must also never cut her son's hair because he will be dedicated to Yahweh from birth. Her son will begin to rescue Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah's wife, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel shocked that the angel said I will have a baby. Can this really be possible? or
- Who is this angel? or
- I feel frightened and awestruck by the angel; or
- Why are there so many specific rules for me and for my son? or
- My son will be very special, because the angel said my son will begin to deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines; or
- I feel honored to be chosen to be the mother of such a special son!

Manoah's wife tells her husband what happened. Manoah's wife says that someone like an angel of Yahweh came to her, and his appearance was very awesome. The angel did not say his name, and Manoah's wife did not ask his name. Manoah's wife repeats the information that the angel told her about how she will have a son, and how she cannot drink wine or beer or eat unclean food. Manoah's wife also tells her husband that the child will be dedicated to Yahweh from birth until the day he dies.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- What is this my wife talks about? My wife is barren and childless. How can my wife have a son? or
- Can this really be true? Will we have a son? or
- I feel confused about what it means that our son will be dedicated to Yahweh from his birth until the day he dies; or
- Who was the angel that came to my wife?"

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:1-7 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The **Israelites** did **evil** in the eyes of **Yahweh** again. The Israelites are the 12 tribes, the descendants of Jacob, who Yahweh chose. Someone who does evil does not obey Yahweh. Translate that the Israelites did evil in the eyes of Yahweh in the same way as you have in previous passages. For more information on Israelites, evil, and Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary.

Yahweh hands over Israel to the **Philistines** for 40 years because of the evil they did. The Philistines are enemies of Israel who lived in the land of Israel before Israel came.

The **angel of Yahweh** comes to Manoah's wife to give her an important message. This messenger is a special angel who speaks with so much authority that it is as if God himself speaks. Translate "angel of Yahweh" in the same way as you have in previous passages. For more information on "angel of Yahweh," refer to angel of the Lord or "angel of Yahweh" in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "angel of Yahweh?" How will you show this angel comes from Yahweh, and is like other angels that have previously appeared to people in the book of Judges? Pause this audio here.

The angel of Yahweh tells Manoah's wife that she will have a son. Manoah's wife must be careful not to drink **wine** or **strong drink**. Wine is fermented grape juice. Grapes grow on a grapevine. "Strong drink" is something like beer. Translate wine the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on wine, refer to the Master Glossary.

Manoah's wife must also not eat any **unclean** food. People, food, and animals can all be **clean** or **unclean**. This does not mean the people, food, or animals are clean or dirty on the outside. To be clean or unclean is about whether a person is fit to worship Yahweh. If a person eats unclean food, that person is unfit to worship or serve Yahweh. Examples of unclean food are pigs, wild animals, and reptiles. Translate unclean the same as you have in other parts of the Old Testament. For more information on clean and unclean, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea of food that is unclean? Pause this audio here.

The angel of Yahweh also says Manoah's wife should never cut her son's hair because her son will be dedicated to Yahweh from birth. "Dedicated to Yahweh" means the son will be separated. These instructions are like the instructions for a person who takes a Nazarite vow. A person who took a Nazarite vow must not drink alcohol, must not cut their hair, must avoid unclean foods, and must avoid dead bodies—even the dead bodies of their family members. These rules are like how priests were set apart for Yahweh. Normally, Nazarite vows were temporary, but the son of Manoah would be a Nazarite for life. For more information about Nazarite vows, refer to Numbers 6:1-8 where Yahweh tells Moses about Nazarite vows.

Manoah's wife tells her husband that the "man of **God**" came to her. Translate God the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 13:1–7

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (15740714 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 13:8–25

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 13:8–25 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:8–25 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.

2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:8–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This is the second part of a two-part story about the birth of Samson, the final judge of Israel. The previous passage ends when Manoah's wife tells her husband what the angel of Yahweh told her. Now, the angel of Yahweh appears to Manoah's wife again, and to Manoah. The angel repeats his message about their son. Then Manoah and his wife offer a burnt sacrifice to Yahweh. Finally, the angel of Yahweh goes up in the flame to heaven. Later, Samson is born just as the angel says, Samson grows, and the Spirit of Yahweh starts to direct Samson.

The story begins when Manoah hears the message from his wife and then prays to Yahweh for the man of God to return. Manoah wants to hear for himself how they should raise the child. It is possible Manoah doubts the word of his wife, or that Manoah wants more details about how to raise their son.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe a time you heard some news from someone else about a friend or family member. How did you feel when you did not hear the news directly yourself? Maybe you doubted the information, wanted more clarification or details, or just wanted to hear it for yourself. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh listens to Manoah's prayer and sends the angel a second time, but again to Manoah's wife. At that time, Manoah's wife sits in a field, and Manoah is not with his wife. A field is an open area of land where people grow crops for food.

Stop here and look at a picture of a field as a group. Pause this audio here.

Manoah's wife runs quickly to bring her husband to meet the angel of Yahweh. Manoah asks the angel if he is the same person who spoke to Manoah's wife before. When Manoah's wife ran to tell Manoah about the angel, she said the angel had appeared to her. Manoah only asked if this was the same man who "spoke" with his wife, not if it was the same man who had appeared before. This may show that Manoah still did not realize the messenger was an angel of Yahweh. Manoah also wants to know how to raise the child that will be born, but the angel does not give any more information than he already gave to Manoah's wife the first time the angel visited her.

The angel says that Manoah's wife must follow all the instructions about how to eat and drink that he already gave to Manoah's wife. The angel also says that Manoah's wife should not eat anything that the grapevine produces. Grapes grow on a grapevine, and people use grapes to make wine.

Stop here and look at a picture of a grapevine as a group. Pause this audio here.

Manoah invites the angel of Yahweh to stay for a meal. In this culture, people expected hospitality, and Manoah probably only wants to provide the normal meal for his guest. Manoah plans to cook a young goat to eat. A goat is a common animal with horns that people raised during Manoah's time for food and milk.

Stop here and look at a picture of a goat as a group. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you take care of a guest in your culture? What kinds of food, drink, or other hospitality do you offer to guests? Pause this audio here.

The angel of Yahweh tells Manoah that the angel will not eat the food, but that Manoah and Manoah's wife can make a burnt offering to Yahweh instead. A sacrifice or offering is something that Yahweh commanded his people to give to Yahweh as a part of their worship. In a burnt sacrifice, people burn the entire animal, and not just parts of it. Manoah probably did not realize the angel was from Yahweh. It is likely that Manoah thought the man was a prophet, but not an angel.

Manoah asks the angel what the angel's name is, so that Manoah can honor him when the baby is born. The angel rebukes Manoah. The angel says that humans cannot understand his name, and that the angel has a wonderful name. The angel is closely related to Yahweh, and Manoah should not have asked the angel's name. Manoah still does not understand who the angel is.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Manoah wanted to honor the angel of Yahweh when the baby is born. How do you honor someone in your culture? How would it help you to know someone's name to honor them well? Pause this audio here.

Manoah does what the angel says, and he takes the young goat and a grain offering and offers them on a rock as a sacrifice to Yahweh. A grain offering is grain that people cook in a fire, and it was common for people to make a grain offering after a burnt offering. The Israelites offered their sacrifices on an altar, which for Manoah was made from a rock.

Stop here and look at a picture of a rock altar as a group. Pause this audio here.

While the flame goes up from the goat and grain that burn on the altar, the angel goes up to heaven in the flame. Manoah and his wife see all of this happen, and they fall face down on the ground when they see this sign from Yahweh. To lay face down on the ground is a common way that Israelites worshiped Yahweh when they sensed Yahweh's powerful presence. This is also like how the angel of Yahweh disappeared into the flames after he visited Gideon earlier in the book of Judges. This is the last time the angel of Yahweh appears to Manoah and Manoah's wife.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when you have seen evidence of the powerful presence of God. In your case, what happened? As a response, what are common ways that people in your culture worship God or the gods of your community? Pause this audio here.

Manoah and his wife respond in different ways after they see this wonderful thing from Yahweh. Manoah finally knows this was an angel from Yahweh, and Manoah is afraid he will die because of what he and his wife saw. In the original language, it says that Manoah thinks they saw Yahweh, or a supernatural being. Other people in the Old Testament, like Moses, Jacob, Gideon, and Isaiah, are also afraid when they see Yahweh. In contrast, Manoah's wife reassures Manoah that Yahweh will not kill them because Yahweh accepted their offering, showed them wonderful things, and told them about the future.

Another wonderful thing happens when Manoah's wife has a son just like Yahweh's angel said she would, and she is no longer barren and childless. Manoah's wife names her son Samson, which means "sun-like" or "little sun." It is also possible Manoah's wife hopes her son will be strong like the sun to defeat Israel's enemies, which is a part of the Song of Deborah earlier in the book of Judges.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Does the mother, the father, or someone else name a baby in your culture? Why do you think this is how your culture names babies? Pause this audio here.

Samson grew and Yahweh blessed Samson. Yahweh's spirit began to direct Samson in Mahaneh Dan. Mahaneh Dan means "the camp of Dan." Mahaneh Dan was between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, near Samson's father's home of Zorah. Remember this is on the border between the land of the tribes of Judah and Dan, and near the land of the Philistines.

Stop here and look at a map of Mahaneh Dan and the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol as a group. Pause this audio here.

In the original language, the way the Spirit of Yahweh "controls" Samson can also mean to "direct," "disturb," or "stir." Yahweh's Spirit probably caused Samson to be restless and disturbed as Yahweh's Spirit prepared Samson to become the next judge of Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you prepare for a big task, how do you feel?

*Defining the Scenes**Defining the Scenes*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:8–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: Manoah prays to Yahweh for the angel of Yahweh to return.

In the second scene: The angel of Yahweh returns to Manoah's wife in the field, and Manoah's wife brings Manoah to talk with the angel of Yahweh.

In the third scene: Manoah invites the angel of Yahweh for a meal, and Manoah asks for the angel's name.

In the fourth scene: Manoah gives a burnt sacrifice to Yahweh, and the angel of Yahweh goes up in the flame to the sky. Manoah and his wife fall face down on the ground.

In the fifth scene: Manoah is worried that he and his wife will die because they saw the angel of Yahweh. Manoah's wife reassures Manoah.

In the sixth scene: Samson is born. Samson grows and Yahweh blesses Samson. The Spirit of Yahweh directs Samson.

The characters in this passage are:

- Manoah
- Yahweh
- Manoah's wife
- Angel of Yahweh
- And Samson

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this is the second part in a two-part story. In the first part of the story, an angel of Yahweh appears to Manoah's wife and brings her an important message about a son that she and Manoah will have. Manoah's wife tells her husband the message.

In the first scene, Manoah prays to Yahweh. Manoah pleads with Yahweh to send "the man of God" a second time. Manoah also says "please" or "pardon" in his prayer to Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about how you plead politely for something. Pause this audio here.

It is possible that Manoah doubts what his wife told Manoah, or that he wants more information about how to raise this special child they will have. In his prayer, Manoah says he wants to know how to raise the child and what to do for the child.

In the second scene, Yahweh hears Manoah's prayer and answers the prayer. However, Yahweh does not send the angel to Manoah. Instead, the angel of God goes again to Manoah's wife. Remember that Manoah's wife sits in the field when the angel comes to her, and that a field is land where people grow crops for food.

Stop here and look at a picture of a field again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Manoah's wife immediately runs back to get her husband to tell him the news. Remember that when Manoah meets the angel of Yahweh, Manoah asks the angel two questions. First, Manoah asks, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife?" In the original language, instead of "my wife" it says, "this woman." It is most likely that

Manoah is not disrespectful of his wife here, because "woman" was a common way to refer to a wife during Manoah's time.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate Manoah's first question to the angel of Yahweh? Pause this audio here.

Manoah now asks a second question about how he and his wife should raise their son. In the original language, Manoah's question is, "When your word comes to pass," or "When what you have said happens." This means the word or message that the angel of Yahweh spoke to Manoah's wife about how she will conceive and have a son. Manoah shows in this question that he believes the angel tells the truth, and Manoah wants more information about how to care for their special son.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate Manoah's question about when the word of the angel comes to pass? Pause this audio here.

Remember that the angel of Yahweh repeats the same information he already told Manoah's wife about how she must not drink alcohol or eat anything that makes her unclean. The angel emphasizes what Manoah's wife should do, and that she should pay attention to everything the angel told her to do. The man of God uses special language to emphasize that Manoah's wife should make sure to do everything, not just some of the things, that the man told her to do.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your language, how do you emphasize one part of your idea? For example, you might put that word or idea first in your sentence. How will you emphasize this idea that Manoah's wife must do everything the angel of Yahweh told her to do? Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Manoah invites the angel for a meal. Remember this was a common way to show hospitality during that time, and it also shows that Manoah thought this was a normal man who talked with them. Remember Manoah offers to cook a young goat for the meal.

Stop here and look at a picture of a goat again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Remember that the angel of Yahweh says the angel will not eat the meal, but that Manoah can offer a burnt offering to Yahweh instead. Remember people offered an animal or grain to Yahweh as a sacrifice of worship. In the original language, the storyteller gives us background information—Manoah did not know this was Yahweh's angel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you tell this additional information that Manoah did not know that this was Yahweh's angel? Try to tell a story where you include some additional background information in your story to help the audience understand the actions of the characters in the story. Pay attention to how you introduce this background information. Pause this audio here.

Now, Manoah asks the angel for the angel's name, so that Manoah can honor the angel when Manoah and his wife have their baby in the future. Remember that the angel of Yahweh does not answer Manoah, but instead rebukes Manoah because Manoah asks this question. The angel says that no one can understand the angel's name, and Manoah should not have asked for the angel's name.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that the name of the angel of Yahweh is wonderful and no one can understand the angel's name? Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, remember that Manoah does what the angel of Yahweh says to do. Manoah offers a burnt sacrifice of the young goat and a grain offering on a rock to Yahweh. Remember the flame went up from the altar to the sky, and then the angel of Yahweh went up to the sky in the flame. Manoah and his wife see this happen, and they lie down on their faces on the ground in worship. Manoah and his wife do not literally trip and fall down. Remember this shows that they know they are in Yahweh's presence. The angel does not appear again to Manoah and Manoah's wife after this.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you describe how Manoah and his wife lay down on their faces in worship of Yahweh? Pause this audio here.

In the fifth scene, remember that Manoah finally realizes the angel was from Yahweh, and that the angel was not a normal man. Manoah is afraid and thinks he and his wife will die because they saw Yahweh, or a

supernatural being. In the original language, Manoah says they saw "God," which could mean they saw Yahweh himself.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate what Manoah says? Pause this audio here.

Remember that Manoah's wife reassures Manoah that Yahweh does not want them to die. Manoah's wife tells Manoah that Yahweh accepted their burnt offering and grain offering. Yahweh also showed them "all these things," which means how the angel went up in the flame as a sign, and how the angel told Manoah and Manoah's wife about the baby they would have in the future. Because Yahweh did all this, Manoah's wife says this shows that Yahweh does not want to kill Manoah and his wife.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate Manoah's wife's answer to Manoah? Would it be more natural to translate it negatively as, "If Yahweh wanted to kill us, he would not have," or positively as, "Yahweh accepted our sacrifices and showed us these things, so this shows Yahweh does not want to kill us"? Pause this audio here.

Remember that in the final scene, Manoah's son is born, even though Manoah's wife was previously barren and childless. Remember this is just as the angel of Yahweh said it would happen. Manoah's wife names her son Samson. Samson grows and Yahweh blesses or empowers Samson. To bless probably means that Samson has everything Samson needs to be healthy physically and develop normally as a child and a young man.

The last part of this passage says that Yahweh's spirit started to "direct" Samson in Mahaneh Dan, which means "the camp of Dan." Remember that Mahaneh Dan was between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, which were both towns west of Jerusalem, about 12 kilometers apart. Remember this area is close to the land of the Philistines.

Stop here and look at a map of Mahaneh Dan and the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol as a group. Pause this audio here.

Remember that "direct" can also mean "disturb," or "stir," like a person stirs liquid in a pot so that the liquid moves around. This probably means that Yahweh's Spirit showed Samson what to do next to fulfill the plans that Yahweh had for Samson. Samson was disturbed and restless. People who heard this story of Samson's birth would expect that Samson would fulfill Samson's vows as a Nazarite, and that Samson would be the hero they hoped for to deliver them from the rule of the Philistines.

Stop here and remember your story in the previous step of how you prepared for a big task. How did you talk about how you felt and what it was like to know that you would soon do an important, difficult task? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:8–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Manoah
- Yahweh
- Manoah's wife
- Angel of Yahweh
- And Samson

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Manoah prays to Yahweh and asks Yahweh to send the man of God again. Manoah wants to ask the man of God how Manoah and his wife should raise the son they will have.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I need to hear this news for myself to believe it. I want Yahweh to send this man of God to us again; or
- I feel confused about the message my wife gave to me; or
- How will we raise this special son?

Yahweh answers Manoah's prayer and sends the angel a second time. The angel comes to Manoah's wife while she sits in the field, but Manoah is not with her. Manoah's wife runs quickly to get her husband to see the angel of Yahweh. Manoah gets up to go with his wife.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I prayed for the man of God to come again, so why did he come to my wife instead? or
- I feel frustrated that I am left out again of this important news; or
- I feel excited to finally meet the man of God and hear for myself how to raise our son that will be born.

Manoah asks the man, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife?" The man answers, "Yes." Manoah also asks, "When the baby is born that you told my wife about, how should we raise our child?" The angel of Yahweh says that Manoah's wife should pay attention to all the things the angel already told her about what not to drink or eat. Manoah's wife must obey everything the angel told her to do.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The man really did not answer my question about how to raise our son; or
- I wonder why the man only talks about what my wife should do and not how I should raise my son; or
- I feel offended that the man seems to leave me out so that I cannot raise my own son; or
- I wonder who this man really is.

Manoah tells the angel of Yahweh to stay so Manoah and his wife can cook the angel a young goat to eat. The angel says he will not eat the food, but that Manoah can make a burnt offering to Yahweh if he wants to. Manoah does not know that this is the angel of Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the angel of Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I wish that Manoah could understand who I am; or
- I hope that Manoah will listen to me and offer a burnt sacrifice to Yahweh and not make me a meal to eat; or
- I feel disappointed that Manoah is so slow to understand.

Manoah tells the angel of Yahweh to tell them the angel's name, so that Manoah and his wife can honor the angel when the baby is born.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want to honor this man when we have our baby; or
- I hope I can learn his name because it will confirm these things really will happen; or
- I want to control this man, so I need to know his name and who he really is.

The angel of Yahweh tells Manoah that Manoah should not ask for the angel's name, because the name is wonderful and no one can understand his name.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the angel of Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like

- I feel disappointed that Manoah still does not understand who I am; or
- I am unwilling to reveal myself completely to Manoah and his wife.

Manoah offers a young goat and a grain offering on a rock to Yahweh. While Manoah and his wife watch, the angel of Yahweh goes up in the flame on the altar into the sky. Manoah and his wife fall face down on the ground after they see this.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play Manoah and Manoah's wife, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel shocked that we saw the angel of Yahweh go up to the sky in the flame! or
- How did that happen? or
- We are amazed that we are in the presence of Yahweh!

The angel of Yahweh does not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Manoah knows this was the angel of Yahweh. Manoah is terrified and thinks that he and his wife will die because they saw Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am convinced this was the angel of Yahweh; or
- How did I not realize sooner who we talked with? or
- I feel terrified that Yahweh will kill us now because of what we saw!

Manoah's wife tells Manoah that if Yahweh wanted to kill them, Yahweh would not have accepted their burnt offering and grain offering. Yahweh also would not have shown Manoah and Manoah's wife these things and told them everything he said.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Manoah's wife, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know that we are safe because Yahweh accepted our sacrifices, and Yahweh's angel told us these things and showed us these things; or
- I feel calm and not afraid; or
- I want to help my husband calm down and trust that we will not die. Yahweh has a plan for us to have a special son.

Manoah's wife gives birth to a son, and she names him Samson. Samson grows and Yahweh blesses him. Yahweh's Spirit starts to direct Samson while Samson lives in Mahaneh Dan, between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am glad to live a normal childhood; or
- I feel disturbed and restless from the Spirit of Yahweh; or
- I am not sure why I feel so restless and disturbed, or what will happen in my life.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 13:8–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Manoah prays to **Yahweh** for the "**man of God**" to return. Translate Yahweh and "man of God" the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh and God, refer to the Master Glossary.

The **angel of Yahweh** speaks to Manoah and Manoah's wife. The angel is also called the angel of God. Translate angel the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on "angel of Yahweh," refer to angel of the Lord or "angel of Yahweh" in the Master Glossary.

The angel comes to Manoah's wife again while she is in the field, and Manoah's wife brings her husband to the angel. The angel tells Manoah that Manoah's wife should do everything the angel commanded her to do. The angel includes the information that Manoah's wife should not drink anything that the grapevine produces. Grapes grow on a grapevine, and people use grapes to make wine.

Stop here and look at pictures of a field and a grapevine again as a group if needed. Pause this audio here.

Manoah's wife must also not drink **wine** or eat any **unclean** food. Translate wine and unclean the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on wine and unclean, refer to the Master Glossary.

Manoah tells the angel to stay for a meal, but the angel tells Manoah to make a **burnt offering** to Yahweh instead. A burnt offering is an animal that a person kills and then burns completely on an altar to Yahweh. Translate burnt offering the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on burnt offering, refer to burnt offering in the Master Glossary.

Manoah offers a young goat as a burnt offering, and he also offers a **grain offering**. A grain offering is cooked or raw grain that people give as a gift to Yahweh. Translate grain offering the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on grain offering, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at a picture of a goat again as a group if needed. Pause this audio here.

The angel of Yahweh went up in the flame from the **altar** to the sky. An altar is a place where Israelites killed animals and burned them as an offering to Yahweh. People make altars from stones or rocks.

Stop here and look at a picture of an altar made of rock again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Manoah's wife has a son, and she names him Samson. Samson grows and Yahweh **blesses** Samson. When Yahweh blesses a person, Yahweh does something good for that person. Translate bless the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on bless, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Spirit of Yahweh begins to stir or direct Samson while Samson lives in Mahaneh Dan, between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol.

Stop here and look at a map of Mahaneh Dan and the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The **Spirit of Yahweh** is also called the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, or the Spirit. Translate "Spirit of Yahweh" the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on the Spirit of Yahweh, refer to Holy Spirit in the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 13:8–25

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (20563227 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (30417039 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 14:1–9

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 14:1–9 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:1–9 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.

2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:1–9 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

The angel of Yahweh came to Manoah and Manoah's wife with an important message that they will have a son who is to be set apart for Yahweh from birth until death. Their son Samson is born, and the previous passage ends when Yahweh's Spirit starts to direct Samson. Now, as the story of Samson continues, the audience may expect that Samson will fulfill his lifelong vow as a Nazarite and that Samson will begin to save Israel from the Philistines. But instead, Samson marries a Philistine girl and breaks Samson's vows to Yahweh. This passage is the first major story of Samson's life as Samson moves further and further away from his dedication to Yahweh from before Samson's birth. This passage is the first part in a two-part story.

The passage begins as Samson travels down to the city of Timnah from Zorah and Eshtaol, which are in the hills. The Philistines control the city of Timnah, because the people of the Israelite tribe of Dan never conquered Timnah. The Philistines were enemies of the Israelites, and the Philistines currently ruled over the Israelites. The Philistines ruled over the Israelites for 40 years.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the journey from Zorah and Eshtaol to Timnah. Pause this audio here.

While Samson is in Timnah, Samson sees a Philistine girl that he thinks is beautiful. When Samson goes home, Samson tells his parents that he wants to marry this Philistine girl. It is a surprise and a dishonor that Samson chooses who he wants to marry himself instead of letting his parents choose his bride, as people normally did during that time.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your community, who decides who someone should marry? Is it the family of the bride, the family of the groom, the bride and groom themselves, or someone else? What would happen if someone in the community wanted to get married in a way that the community did not approve of? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh had commanded Israel not to marry foreigners, or people from other nations who were not Israelites. Therefore, Samson's parents want Samson to marry someone from their own tribe or group. Samson's parents do not want Samson to marry someone from the uncircumcised Philistines. Circumcision was a custom for men where people would cut off the loose skin at the end of a boy's penis, usually when the boy was one week old. Some other groups besides the Israelites also practiced circumcision, but for the Israelite people, circumcision showed the Israelites were God's chosen people. People who were not Israelites were unclean, and especially the Philistines, because they were not circumcised.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Who do people expect you to marry in your community? Is it someone from your family, from your tribe, from a different tribe, or from outside of your community? Who are the people you should not marry, if any? If someone marries a person other than the approved people they should marry, how does their family feel? Pause this audio here.

Samson's parents do not want Samson to marry a Philistine woman, because it would look bad for their son to marry someone from Israel's unclean, uncircumcised enemies. Samson's parents may also be concerned about how Samson can keep his vow to be separate to Yahweh if he marries someone from outside of Israel. But Samson is sure this woman is the right wife for him. In the original language, Samson says she is right "in his

eyes." This is the same way the storyteller in Judges says that everyone goes against Yahweh, or does "what is right in his own eyes."

Surprisingly, the passage says that Samson's choice to marry this Philistine woman is not just because of his desire for her, but is actually from Yahweh. This is difficult to understand, because Yahweh commanded Israel not to marry people from other nations, and now Yahweh directs Samson to marry this foreign wife. Yahweh chooses to use Samson and Samson's sexual desire to begin to fulfill Samson's purpose to deliver Israel from the rule of the Philistines. Samson's mother and father are not aware of Yahweh's purpose for this marriage.

Samson and Samson's parents go down to Timnah again, probably to prepare for the wedding. They approach the vineyards of Timnah where people grow grapes on vines. People use grapes to make wine to drink. Remember Samson should not drink wine or touch anything from the grapevine because of what Yahweh's messenger told Samson's mother in the previous passage.

Stop here and look at a picture of a vineyard as a group. Pause this audio here.

A young lion that roars suddenly attacks Samson in the vineyard. A lion was the most powerful wild animal in Israel. The roar of a lion is loud and threatening.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young lion as a group. Pause this audio here.

The spirit of Yahweh comes on Samson with great power, and Samson tears apart the young lion with his hands. Samson probably would not have been able to kill the lion unless Yahweh's Spirit empowered Samson. The story also says Samson did this "as easily as one would tear a young goat." A goat is an animal with horns that people raised for food and milk. Other judges or leaders of Israel killed people or animals with weapons, but Samson uses only Samson's bare hands.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young goat as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Because Samson's parents travel with Samson in the passage, some people feel confused that the passage says Samson did not tell his parents about the lion attack. Most likely, however, Samson was by himself in the vineyard when Samson left his parents for a short time and killed the lion. Also, the passage does not talk about the parents again when Samson goes to Timnah and speaks with the girl Samson wants to marry. After Samson talks with the girl, Samson still thinks she is right in his eyes.

Later, Samson goes back to Timnah again to marry the girl, and Samson leaves the path to stop and see the lion that Samson killed before. Surprisingly, a swarm of bees are in the lion's dead body, along with some honey that the bees made. Bees are insects that fly and can sting and attack, and people call a group of bees a swarm. It is likely the lion's body had dried out so that the bees could build a home in the lion's body. Bees also produce a sweet, sticky liquid called honey that is good to eat. Bees do not normally make a home in dead animals.

Stop here and look at a picture of bees and honey as a group. Pause this audio here.

Samson takes some of the honey to eat as Samson walks. Samson also gives some of the honey to his parents, but Samson does not tell his parents that he found the honey in a dead lion's body. Remember that Samson was set apart for Yahweh. This means that Samson should never touch a dead body. Most people think that Samson breaks this vow when he touches the lion's dead body. Samson also dishonors his parents when Samson makes them unknowingly break the laws of Israel when they eat food from a dead body, which is an unclean place.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:1-9 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Samson goes to Timnah and sees a Philistine girl that Samson likes.

In the second scene: Samson talks to his parents about how he wants to marry the Philistine girl. Samson's parents disagree about Samson's choice, but Samson insists that he wants to marry her.

In the third scene: Samson and his parents go to Timnah, and Samson tears apart a lion in a vineyard near Timnah.

In the fourth scene: Samson talks with the girl in Timnah, and she is right in Samson's eyes.

In the fifth scene: Samson goes back to Timnah. Samson sees bees and honey in the lion's dead body, and Samson eats the honey. Samson also gives some of the honey to his parents to eat.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Samson's father
- Samson's mother
- Philistine girl
- And Yahweh

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this passage comes after the story of Samson's birth. The previous story ends when Yahweh's Spirit starts to direct Samson. Remember also that before Samson was born, the angel of Yahweh told Samson's mother that Samson must never drink wine or cut his hair because he is dedicated to Yahweh. Remember this is the first part in a two-part story.

In the first scene, Samson goes down to the Philistine city of Timnah. Remember that at that time Samson lived in Mahaneh Dan between the cities of Zorah and Eshtaol, and that Zorah and Eshtaol are in the hills. Timnah is on lower ground, which is why it says that Samson goes down to Timnah. Timnah is about 7 kilometers to the west of Samson's home. Remember that Samson sees a Philistine girl that Samson likes in the city of Timnah.

Stop here and look at a map of the journey from Zorah and Eshtaol to Timnah again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show the many trips between Samson's home in the camp of Dan and the Philistine city of Timnah? Sometimes Samson goes by himself, and sometimes Samson's mother and father go with Samson as well. Sometimes the passage does not directly say they returned home between trips, but we know they do because of future trips to Timnah. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, Samson goes back home and tells his parents that Samson wants to marry this Philistine girl. Remember that at this time, the Philistines rule over the Israelites, and that Yahweh has commanded the people of Israel not to marry people from other nations. Remember also that in the previous passage, Yahweh's angel told Samson's mother that Samson would be the one to start to rescue Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Samson's parents are confused about Samson's choice for a wife. Samson's parents ask Samson some questions that show their disapproval and concern. Samson's parents ask Samson if there is not a wife Samson could choose from among the daughters of their own tribe and people. Samson's parents also ask Samson why he must marry a woman from the uncircumcised Philistines. Remember circumcision was a Jewish custom that Yahweh told his people to do, and circumcision showed the Israelites were different from the other people around them. In the original language, Samson's parents ask Samson questions to show their concern, but you could also translate these questions as statements.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the most natural way to translate what Samson's mother and father say to Samson? For example, it may be more natural to say something like, "You should be able to find a wife from your own people," instead of, "Is there not a woman from your own people that you could marry?" Pause this audio here.

Remember that Samson's reply shows Samson already decided what Samson wants to do. Samson tells Samson's father to get her for Samson. In the original language, Samson says "her" first to emphasize that Samson wants only this girl and no one else. Samson also says this girl is "right in my eyes." Remember this is the same way the book of Judges describes how all of the people of Israel do "what is right in his own eyes."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show that Samson is determined to marry this girl, and that she is the one for Samson? Pause this audio here.

The storyteller gives background information in the passage that "this was from Yahweh." Perhaps Samson's choice of wife is from Yahweh, or perhaps the circumstances all work together for Yahweh to work in this situation. Samson's mother and father did not know about Yahweh's involvement in Samson's actions, and Samson probably does not realize it either.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "this was from Yahweh?" Also, how will you show that Samson's parents, and probably Samson as well, do not know this additional information? Pause this audio here.

Yahweh looks for an opportunity to stir up trouble for the Philistines. Remember this may seem hard to understand, because Yahweh commanded Israel not to marry foreigners, but Yahweh does want to use Samson's desire to marry this Philistine girl for Yahweh's purposes. The storyteller also gives a reminder that the Philistines currently rule over Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate this background information in your language? Tell a story and share additional information the characters in the story do not know themselves. Pay attention to how you include this additional information. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Samson and his parents go down to Timnah. Remember that Samson and his parents probably go to prepare for the wedding. Samson and his parents come to the vineyards of Timnah. A vineyard is a field where grapes grow, and people use grapes to make wine. The passage does not say that Samson touches the grapes or drinks any wine, but remember Samson's vow says he must not drink wine.

Stop here and look at a picture of a vineyard again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

A young lion suddenly appears! The lion roars and attacks Samson. Lions are dangerous wild animals that can easily kill people. In the original language, the passage says, "Look!" to show what a surprise it is to see a lion in the vineyard.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young lion again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show that the lion appears suddenly? Remember what a surprise it is to see a lion in a vineyard. Pause this audio here.

When the lion attacks Samson, the Spirit of Yahweh "rushes on," or comes on, Samson. This phrase can also mean Yahweh's Spirit "empowers" Samson, and causes Samson to be physically strong. In two future passages in Judges, Yahweh's Spirit also rushes on Samson again and empowers Samson to do other powerful, physical actions.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that the Spirit of Yahweh rushes on Samson? Pause this audio here.

Because of the power of Yahweh's Spirit, Samson tears apart the young lion with Samson's own hands. In the original language, the story says, "And there was nothing in his hand." Normally, a person would need a weapon to be able to kill a dangerous animal like a lion.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to translate the idea that Samson had bare hands, or nothing in his hands, when Samson killed the lion? Pause this audio here.

Samson tears apart the lion as easily as a person would tear a young goat. This compares two similar ideas to show how easily Samson was able to kill the lion. Remember a young goat is an animal with horns, and a lion could easily kill a young goat when it tore the goat apart with the lion's teeth.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young goat again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you compare two similar ideas in your language? Think of sayings in your language that show how easily someone can do something in your language. Pause this audio here.

The final part of the third scene gives more background information. Samson does not tell his mother and father about how he killed the lion in the vineyard. It is possible Samson did not want his parents to know he was around a vineyard or a dead body, which are both against Samson's vow as someone dedicated to Yahweh. Even though Samson traveled with his parents, it seems that Samson is alone when the lion attacks Samson. This may show that Samson's parents are not as important in Samson's life.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate this background information that Samson does not tell his parents about the lion? Remember this is another example of something his parents do not know about. Pause this audio here.

The fourth scene is like the first scene. Samson continues on his way to Timnah, and Samson talks with the Philistine girl. Samson again thinks this girl is the right one for Samson—she is "right in his eyes." It is possible in the first scene that Samson did not talk with the girl, but now Samson does talk with her. Again, Samson's parents are not in this scene, because the focus is on Samson and on what Samson wants to do. We do not know the name of the Philistine girl.

The fifth scene happens "some time later," when Samson goes down to Timnah again. We do not know how long this is, but it is the time between Samson's engagement and Samson's wedding. The passage does not say that Samson and his parents returned to their home in the place where the people of the tribe of Dan lived after Samson's previous visit to talk with the girl. However, we know Samson did return home, because now he returns to Timnah on this trip to go marry the girl.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show that some time has passed between Samson's last visit to Timnah and his visit now to marry the Philistine girl? Remember the passage does not say if it was a long time or a short time. Pause this audio here.

While Samson travels to Timnah, Samson stops to see the dead lion's body in the vineyard. Remember it is a surprise that Samson sees a swarm of bees and some honey in the lion's dead body. Remember, this means the lion's body had dried out, because the bees made their home in the lion's dead body.

Stop here and look at a picture of bees and honey again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show what a surprise it is to see a swarm of bees and honey in the dead lion's body? Also, how will you translate "dead lion's body?" Pause this audio here.

Samson takes the honey and eats some of the honey. Samson goes back to his parents' home and gives his parents some of the honey too, and Samson's parents eat the honey. The storyteller also gives the background information that Samson does not tell his parents where Samson found the honey, probably because he knows his parents would disapprove. Remember that to eat food from an unclean place is against the laws of Israel, and to touch a dead body is to break Samson's vow as someone dedicated to Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the background information that Samson does not tell his parents where Samson found the honey? Remember, this is another example of something Samson's parents do not know. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:1–9 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Samson's father
- Samson's mother
- Philistine girl
- And Yahweh

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Samson goes down to the city of Timnah. Samson sees a Philistine girl there that Samson likes. Samson goes back home and tells his mother and father about a Philistine girl Samson saw in Timnah. Samson tells his parents to go get the girl so Samson can marry her.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want to marry this Philistine girl, even if she is not an Israelite; or
- This girl looks good to me; or
- I feel determined that I will marry this girl. Nothing will stop me.

Samson's mother and father ask Samson if Samson cannot find a wife from among the daughters of Samson's people. Samson's parents also ask Samson why he must marry a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play Samson's mother and father, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We cannot understand why our special son wants to marry an uncircumcised Philistine! or
- Samson is dedicated to Yahweh. How can Samson break his vows and defile himself when he does not follow the laws of Yahweh? or
- How can Samson begin to rescue Israel from the power of the Philistines if he marries one of them? or
- We feel ready to go find a wife for Samson from our own tribe so Samson does not marry this Philistine girl; or
- We feel embarrassed and ashamed that our son wants to marry an unclean Philistine.

Samson tells his father to get this girl for Samson. Samson thinks this girl is the right wife for Samson. Samson's mother and father did not know that Samson's actions were from Yahweh. Yahweh wanted an opportunity to stir up trouble for the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at this time.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play Samson's mother and father, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel shocked that Samson is so insistent that he wants to marry this girl; or
- We feel worried that if we refuse to help Samson, we will completely lose our son; or
- We still do not understand why Samson wants to marry a Philistine girl.

Also, ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I will look for a way to make trouble for the Philistines; or
- I am willing to use Samson and all his faults for my purposes to rescue Israel from the power of the Philistines; or
- I will use Samson's desire to marry this Philistine girl as a way to confront the Philistines.

Samson goes down to Timnah with his mother and father. In the vineyards of Timnah, a young lion suddenly attacks Samson. The Spirit of Yahweh rushes on Samson, and Samson tears apart the lion with his bare hands, as easily as a person tears apart a young goat. Samson does not tell his mother and father about how Samson kills the lion.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I felt terrified that the lion would kill me; or
- I felt empowered by Yahweh's Spirit somehow to be able to kill that lion with my bare hands! or
- How did I do that? I have never done anything like that before! or
- I do not want to tell my parents about the lion, because I touched a dead body, and I am not allowed to do that in my vow as a person set apart for Yahweh.

Samson talks to the girl in Timnah, and Samson likes the girl.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I knew I liked this girl before, even though I only saw her, and now I like her even more after I talked with her! or
- I feel excited to marry this girl soon; or
- I do not care if my parents approve or disapprove of my marriage to a Philistine girl.

Later, Samson returns to Timnah again to marry the Philistine girl. Samson stops to look at the dead lion's body. Surprisingly, Samson sees a swarm of bees in the dead body, and some honey the bees made. Samson takes some of the honey, eats it, and gives the honey to his parents, too. Samson does not tell his mother and father where Samson found the honey.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This honey is really good! or
- I do not want my parents to know where this honey is from, since I know my parents would not approve of eating honey out of a dead lion. I know this is against our laws from Yahweh; or
- I do not care that I break Yahweh's laws. This honey is really good; or
- I deserve this honey because I killed that lion myself; or
- I think this means my marriage will be good, because I found this honey.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:1–9 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Samson goes down to Timnah and sees a Philistine girl there that Samson wants to marry. Timnah is 7 kilometers west of Samson's home in Mahaneh Dan. The Philistines currently rule over the Israelites.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of the journey from Zorah and Eshtaol to Timnah again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson's parents ask Samson why he must marry someone from the uncircumcised Philistines. **Circumcision** was the Jewish custom where people cut off the loose skin at the end of a boy's penis, usually when the boy was one week old. A person who was uncircumcised was not a part of the Jewish people.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the word **uncircumcised** in your language? Translate circumcision the same as you have in other parts of the Old Testament. For more information on circumcision, refer to the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

Samson insists the Philistine girl is the right one in Samson's eyes. Samson's mother and father did not know that Samson's marriage to the Philistine girl was from **Yahweh**. Yahweh looked for an opportunity to make trouble for the Philistines, who ruled over **Israel** during this time. Translate Yahweh and Israel the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh and Israel, refer to the Master Glossary.

Samson goes down to Timnah with Samson's mother and father, and a young lion attacks Samson in the vineyards near Timnah. A lion is a dangerous wild animal, and a vineyard is where grapes grow. People use grapes to make wine.

Stop here and look at pictures of a young lion and a vineyard as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The **Spirit of Yahweh** rushes on Samson, and Samson tears apart the lion as easily as someone would tear apart a young goat. A goat is a small animal people raise for food and milk. Translate "Spirit of Yahweh" the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on "Spirit of Yahweh," refer to Holy Spirit in the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young goat again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

When Samson goes to Timnah again, Samson stops to see the dead lion's body. Samson finds a swarm of bees inside the dried-out body, and also some honey the bees made. Samson eats some honey, and Samson also gives some of the honey to his parents to eat, too. Samson does not tell his parents where Samson found the honey.

Stop here and look at a picture of bees and honey again as a group, if needed.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 14:1-9

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (21732898 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 14:10–20

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 14:10–20 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:10–20 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:10–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This passage is the second half of a two-part story about Samson's marriage to a Philistine girl.

In the previous passage, Samson kills a lion with Samson's bare hands and then later eats some honey Samson finds in the dead lion's body. This story tells what happens at Samson's wedding.

The passage begins as Samson and Samson's father travel down to Timnah for the wedding feast. In the original language, the story says Samson's father went down to Timnah to the woman, which shows Samson's father may have expected to prepare for the wedding between Samson and the Philistine girl. Remember that the Philistines control the city of Timnah.

Stop here and look at a map of the journey from Zorah and Eshtaol to Timnah again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson is the one who prepares the wedding feast, which was probably the custom for Philistine men to do when they got married. In Israelite culture, people expected the father of the groom to prepare for a wedding. The Philistines gave Samson 30 young men as companions to be with Samson during the wedding feast. These men may have protected Samson from the other Philistines, or the men may have protected the other Philistines from Samson.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you celebrate a wedding in your culture? What kind of party or feast do you have? Who helps the groom in the wedding preparations? Pause this audio here.

During the seven days of the wedding feast in the Philistine culture, people ate, drank, and had contests and riddles to entertain their guests. A riddle is a word puzzle. A riddle can be a question or a statement that a person has to solve. A riddle uses words with more than one meaning.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Take turns to tell riddles in your language. When do people tell riddles to one another in your community? Pause this audio here.

Samson tells the 30 companions a riddle about the lion who attacked Samson and about the honey that Samson later found in the dead lion. Samson's plan is to trick these companions. Samson knows no one could know the answer, since no one had seen when Samson killed the lion or when Samson found the bees and honey inside the dead lion. Remember it is not common for bees to make honey inside the body of a dead animal. Samson offers the men 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes if they can tell Samson the answer within the seven days of the feast. A linen garment is a long shirt or tunic that people wear next to the skin under their other clothes. Linen is a kind of cloth. Changes of clothes are sets of outer clothing. It would be much more costly for Samson if the men find out the riddle's answer, because 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes would be expensive.

Stop here and look at a picture of a linen shirt and a picture of a set of clothes as a group. Pause this audio here.

The 30 companions know they will lose honor if they cannot tell Samson the answer to the riddle. Samson is an Israelite, and Samson's companions probably felt it would be shameful to lose such a large bet to someone from the group of people that the Philistines ruled over. During this time, young men were still a part of their father's house, and to buy this many garments to give Samson would have been a lot of money as well.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you or someone you know made a bet. What was the bet about, and what would you gain if you won the bet? If you lost the bet, what would you lose? Pause this audio here.

On the fourth day of the feast, the companions beg Samson's wife to convince Samson to tell her the riddle's answer. The companions say that if Samson's wife does not tell the companions, the companions will kill her and her father's household when they set the house on fire and burn it down. A household is everyone who lives in the house, which includes a man's wife, unmarried daughters, married sons and their families, and servants. The men are desperate because they know there is no other way they will find out the answer to the impossible riddle.

In response, Samson's wife pleads with Samson. Even though Samson explains that he has not told anyone the answer, she continues to plead with him for the seven days of the feast. Some people are confused about how Samson's wife could cry for seven days when the companions did not threaten her until the fourth day of the feast. However, it is possible that Samson's wife asked Samson about the riddle every day, and she was even more insistent after the threat from the companions. Samson's wife does not tell Samson about how the

companions threatened her life and her father's household. Samson finally tells his wife the answer to the riddle, and she tells her people, the Philistines.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you or your friend pleaded with someone to tell you something important. What kinds of things did you or your friend say to convince the other person? Pause this audio here.

At the end of the seventh day, at sunset, the men of the city tell Samson the answer to Samson's riddle. The men are probably the older men and leaders of the city. The men tell the answer in the form of questions, and some people think this shows that the men ridicule Samson to say anyone could answer this. The men know the answer is honey in a lion, but the men's questions could also mean that love is sweeter than honey, and Samson is stronger than the lion. It might mean that Samson is helpless and powerless when Samson loves a woman, even if Samson is very strong physically.

The companions shame Samson, and Samson's answer shows his anger. Samson calls his wife a heifer, or young cow. A person puts a plow on the back of one or two cows or other animals to plow or break up the soil in their fields to plant crops for food. A man used only his own heifer to plow, and not someone else's heifer. Samson's reply blames his wife for how she told the men the riddle's answer, and some people think Samson's words also mean the companions had sex with his wife to get the answer from her.

Stop here and look at pictures of a plow and a heifer. Pause this audio here.

Samson also needs to pay the companions 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothing. The Spirit of Yahweh comes on Samson again, and Samson goes to the Philistine city of Ashkelon to kill 30 of their men. Samson takes their clothing to pay Samson's debt to the 30 companions in Timnah. Ashkelon was about 40 kilometers southwest of Timnah. It is a surprise that Samson's first battle against the Philistines is not to save Israel, but to pay off a bet. Yahweh uses Samson to fight the Philistines, even though Samson murders and steals to pay a bet.

Stop here and look at a map of the city of Ashkelon as a group. Pause this audio here.

Samson returns in anger to his father's house in Mahaneh Dan without Samson's wife. The Philistines in Timnah, probably the girl's father, give Samson's wife to Samson's closest companion from the wedding, but Samson does not know about this. This completes the first major story about Samson.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:10–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: Samson and his father go to Timnah for the wedding feast. The Philistines give Samson 30 young men as companions.

In the second scene: Samson tells a riddle to the 30 companions and makes a bet of 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothing.

In the third scene: On the fourth day, the companions threaten Samson's wife if Samson's wife does not find out the answer to the riddle for the companions.

In the fourth scene: Samson's wife convinces Samson to tell her the answer. Samson's wife tells her people the answer to the riddle.

In the fifth scene: The men of the city tell Samson the answer to the riddle, and Samson replies with a saying that shows Samson knows how the men found out the riddle's answer.

In the sixth scene: The Spirit of Yahweh comes on Samson, and Samson kills 30 men in Ashkelon and takes those men's clothing. Samson gives their clothing to the men in Timnah to fulfill the bet Samson made, and Samson angrily returns to his father's house. The Philistines give Samson's wife to Samson's closest companion from the wedding.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Samson's father
- 30 Philistine companions
- Philistine girl, who becomes Samson's wife
- Father of Samson's wife
- Men of the city of Timnah
- 30 Philistines in Ashkelon
- Other Philistines in Timnah
- And Samson's closest companion at Samson's wedding

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember this is the second part in a two-part story. Remember the first part of the story ended when Samson took some honey from the body of the dead lion. Samson ate the honey, and Samson gave the honey to his parents to eat. But Samson did not tell his parents where Samson found the honey. Now, time has passed, and it is time for the wedding celebration between Samson and the Philistine girl.

In the first scene, Samson and his father go down to the city of Timnah again.

Stop here and look at a map of the journey from Zorah and Eshtaol to Timnah again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson prepares a wedding feast, and the Philistines give Samson 30 young men as companions when they see Samson has no companions of his own with Samson. Remember it is not clear if these 30 companions are also there to protect Samson from the Philistines, or to protect the Philistines from Samson. Remember also that it is a surprise that Samson's father did not prepare the wedding feast. Samson's father is not in the story anymore after this scene.

In the second scene, Samson tells the 30 companions a riddle. Remember a riddle is a thing people say that means more than one thing and that people try to solve. Riddles were common during this time because people liked to have entertainment during a seven-day-long wedding feast. Samson also makes a bet with the companions. The companions must give Samson 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes if they cannot solve the riddle within the seven days of the wedding feast.

Stop here and look at a picture of a linen shirt and a picture of a set of clothes again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea of a riddle? Pause this audio here.

The companions agree to hear the riddle, which also means they agree to the bet with Samson. The riddle is about the honey Samson found inside of the dead lion's body. The riddle describes the dead lion and the honey in two different ways, but it does not say the words "lion" and "honey." Samson describes the lion as an "eater" and a "strong one." Samson describes the honey as "something to eat" and "something sweet."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the riddle about the lion and the honey? Pause this audio here.

The companions still cannot solve the riddle after three days. Remember this is a large bet and the companions would lose a lot of money and honor if they could not figure out the answer before the wedding feast ends after seven days.

In the third scene, the companions threaten Samson's wife if she does not tell the companions the answer to the riddle. This happens on the fourth day of the wedding feast. The companions say they will burn Samson's wife and her father's household with fire and kill them. The companions also ask Samson's wife a question when they say, "Have you not invited us here to rob us?" In the original language, the companions put the emphasis on how Samson's wife takes away their possessions when they say, "To take away our possessions, have you invited us, or not?" It may be more natural to translate this as a statement instead of a question.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the most natural way to translate this in your language—as a question or a statement? How will you show how the companions emphasize that Samson's wife wants to rob them by inviting them to the wedding feast? Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, Samson's wife listens to the companions, and she pleads with Samson to tell her the answer to the riddle. At first, Samson refuses because Samson says he did not even tell his mother and father the answer. But Samson's wife pleads and cries for the seven days of the feast, which probably means she had already started to try to make Samson tell her the answer before the companions threatened her on the fourth day. Finally, on the seventh and final day of the feast, Samson's wife persuades Samson to tell her the answer. Samson's wife tells her people the answer. Samson's wife may have told the companions the answer, or all the men of the city. Either way, all the men of the city find out what has happened. Remember it says Samson's wife tells "her people," which shows she more closely identifies with the Philistines still than with her new husband Samson.

In the fifth scene, the men of the city of Timnah tell Samson the answer to Samson's riddle. The men wait until sunset on the seventh day before the end of the feast to tell Samson the answer. Remember that sunset is the end of the day. The men wait until the very end of Samson's deadline before the men bring the answer to the riddle. This creates tension in the story so that the people who listen to the story will wait and wonder if the men will come with the answer or not.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story that has suspense and surprise in it. Pay attention to how you create suspense, or how you show that people wonder what will happen next at an important part of the story. Pause this audio here.

The men of the city tell Samson the answer in the form of questions, which may show the men laugh at Samson. Remember the two questions show that the men know the answer to the riddle is honey in a lion, but the men's questions could also mean love is sweeter than honey, and Samson is stronger than the lion.

Samson's response shows Samson is angry with the men, and that Samson knows how the men solved the riddle. Samson compares his new Philistine wife to a heifer, which is a young cow, and Samson says the men plowed with her to get the answer. Remember this could mean the companions had sex with her to get the riddle's answer. Remember that it is not a kind way for Samson to talk about his wife when he calls his wife a heifer.

Stop here and look at pictures of a plow and a heifer again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you say this riddle about the heifer? Pause this audio here.

In the sixth scene, the Spirit of Yahweh rushes on, or comes on, Samson again. Samson goes down to the city of Ashkelon, which is a major city about 40 kilometers southwest of Timnah. Ashkelon is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Stop here and look at a map of the city of Ashkelon again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In Ashkelon, Samson kills 30 Philistine men and strips off the men's clothing. Samson takes their clothing to Timnah to pay off the bet to the 30 companions in Timnah.

Finally, Samson returns to his father's house, and Samson burns with anger. This is another way to say Samson is very angry.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you describe someone who is very angry in your language? Examples could be "hot with anger," "red with anger," or something else. Pause this audio here.

Remember that Samson's new Philistine wife is not with Samson. Samson's wife is still in Timnah. In Timnah, the people give Samson's wife to Samson's closest companion from the wedding. Another way to translate "closest companion" could also be "best man." Samson does not know the Philistines gave Samson's wife to someone else.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:10–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Samson's father
- 30 Philistine companions
- Philistine girl, who becomes Samson's wife
- Father of Samson's wife
- Men of the city of Timnah
- 30 Philistines in Ashkelon
- Other Philistines in Timnah
- And Samson's closest companion at Samson's wedding

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Samson's father goes down to Timnah, and Samson prepares the wedding feast there. Samson follows the customs of the Philistines for Samson's wedding. The Philistines give Samson 30 young men as companions for the wedding.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson's father, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not want to be around Philistines or have my son marry one of the Philistines; or
- I feel offended and dishonored because Samson did the wedding preparations without me, and I am the father! I should make the wedding feast plans.

Also, ask the people who play the 30 companions, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We want to help Samson and be with Samson during his wedding feast; or
- We need to protect Samson from the Philistines that might want to hurt Samson; or
- We want to make sure Samson does not hurt any Philistines while Samson is here. We do not trust Samson or his people.

Samson tells his 30 companions a riddle. Samson promises to give these men 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes if the men can tell Samson the answer within the 7 days of the wedding feast. The men must give Samson 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes if the men cannot tell Samson the riddle's answer before the end of the feast. The men agree to hear the riddle.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know I have a riddle they can never solve, because I never told anyone about the honey in the dead lion's body! or
- I am about to become rich, because they will never guess the answer; or
- The men will be so embarrassed when they are not able to tell me the answer by the end of the feast, and they are the Philistines who rule over us!

Also, ask the people who play the 30 companions, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- This should be easy. This Israelite cannot possibly have a riddle that we cannot solve; or
- We look forward to how we will shame Samson when we easily solve this riddle; or
- Surely the 30 of us can solve a simple riddle with 7 days of time to work on it.

Samson tells the men the riddle: "Out of the eater came something to eat, out of the strong one came something sweet." The men try to figure out the riddle for three days of the feast, but no one knows the answer. On the fourth day, the men threaten Samson's wife that they will kill her and her father's household if she does not find out the answer and tell it to them. The men ask if Samson's wife invited the men to the party only to rob them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the 30 companions, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel desperate to solve this riddle; or
- It will be so shameful if we cannot solve this by the end of the seven days of the wedding feast; or
- What will we tell our fathers if we have to each ask them for a linen garment and a set of clothes to pay a bet to an Israelite? or
- We feel worried that we will lose a lot of money; or
- We are ready to kill Samson's wife and her father's household if she does not find out the riddle's answer for us!

Samson's wife cries and begs Samson to tell her the answer to the riddle. Samson's wife says Samson does not love her since he did not tell her the answer. Samson says he did not even tell his own mother and father the answer, so why should he tell her the answer? Samson's wife cries for the rest of the wedding feast and continues to plead with Samson to tell her the answer.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson's wife, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel desperate because I do not want to die for this man I barely know, or let my whole father's household die for him; or
- I am willing to say anything to get Samson to tell me the answer to the riddle; or
- If Samson tells me the answer, I am ready to betray Samson and tell my people; or
- I will relentlessly plead and push Samson to tell me the answer.

On the seventh day, Samson finally tells his wife the answer to the riddle because of how she pleads. Samson's wife tells her people the answer to the riddle. At sunset on the seventh day, the men of the city of Timnah tell Samson the answer when they say, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?"

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the men of the city, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Now Samson is the one shamed because we found out the answer to his riddle! or
- We feel glad that Samson has to pay the bet to the 30 companions now; or
- Anyone could have solved such an easy riddle; or
- We laugh at Samson because we know that Samson is not really powerful when he is in love with a woman; or
- We are happy to wait until the last possible moment to say the answer to the riddle so we can laugh at Samson.

Samson says to the 30 companions, "If you did not plow with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel angry that my wife told the Philistines the answer to my riddle! or
- I regret that I told my wife the riddle's answer; or
- I feel shame that I lost the bet; or
- I am angry that the men waited until the very end of the feast to tell the answer; or
- I wonder how I will be able to pay off the bet to these men.

The Spirit of Yahweh rushes on Samson again, and Samson goes down to the city of Ashkelon. Samson kills 30 men there and takes their clothing. Samson brings their clothing back to Timnah to the 30 companions who solved the riddle.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the 30 companions, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Where did Samson get these 30 sets of clothes? or
- I am shocked at this man and scared of him now; or
- I am glad that Samson is leaving Timnah now.

Samson felt very angry. Samson went back to his father's house. Samson's wife stayed in Timnah, and the Philistines gave Samson's wife to Samson's closest companion.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel furious and angry that the Philistines laughed at me; or
- I wonder how I was able to kill those 30 men in Ashkelon so easily; or
- I do not want anything to do with my wife now. My wife betrayed me!

Also, ask the person who plays Samson's closest companion at his wedding, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am glad that I get to marry this beautiful girl now! or
- I hope Samson never finds out that I married his wife.

Also, ask the people who play the Philistines in Timnah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel justified that we gave Samson's wife to another man because Samson abandoned her; or
- We hope we never have to see Samson again; or
- We are angry that Samson killed the 30 men in Ashkelon. Samson could have paid off the bet a different way and not killed anyone.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 14:10–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Samson prepares for the celebration, or feast, that lasts for seven days, according to the customs of the Philistines. The Philistines give Samson 30 young men as companions to be with Samson during the wedding celebration. Samson offers the companions 30 **linen shirts**, or **tunics**, and 30 sets of clothes if the men can solve Samson's riddle before the end of the seven-day celebration. People wore linen shirts or tunics under the outer clothes, and sets of clothes were more expensive.

Stop here and look at a picture of a linen shirt and picture of a set of clothes again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate **linen shirts**, or **tunics**? This is similar to the same word used for linen clothes in Exodus and Leviticus. For more information on linen garments or tunics, refer to tunic in the Master Glossary. Pause this audio here.

The companions threaten to burn Samson's wife and her father's **household** with fire if she does not tell the companions the answer to Samson's riddle. Translate household the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on household, refer to the Master Glossary.

Before sunset on the seventh day, the men of the city tell Samson the answer to the riddle. Samson is angry and the **Spirit of Yahweh** rushes on Samson again. Translate that Samson burns with anger in the same way you have translated the idea of how a person burns with anger in previous passages. Translate "Spirit of Yahweh" and Yahweh the same as you have in previous passages, and refer to Yahweh in the Master Glossary for more information. For more information on the Spirit of Yahweh, refer to Holy Spirit in the Master Glossary.

Samson angrily goes back to his father's house. The Philistines give Samson's new wife to Samson's closest companion from Samson's wedding.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 14:10–20

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (30034570 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 15:1–8

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 15:1–8 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:1–8 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous story, Samson loses a bet with his wedding companions after his wife betrays him, so Samson kills 30 Philistines and uses their clothes to pay off the bet. The story ends when Samson angrily returns to his father's house without Samson's wife, and the Philistines give Samson's wife to someone else. Now, we find out the end of the story about Samson's wife. Samson goes back to Timnah to see his wife, but Samson's wife's father says he gave Samson's wife to another man. Samson takes revenge on the Philistines twice in this passage. First, Samson destroys the Philistines' property, and later Samson kills many of the Philistines after they kill his wife and his wife's father.

Some time has passed since the previous passage, and now it is the time of the wheat harvest. People grew wheat as a crop for food, and the harvest was when the people gathered all the wheat together in piles or bunches.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of people who harvest wheat. Pause this audio here.

Samson goes from his home where he lives with his father and mother in Mahaneh Dan to the Philistine city of Timnah where his Philistine wife lives. Samson takes a young goat with Samson as a gift for his wife and her family. It is possible the gift shows Samson is sorry for what happened at their wedding celebration. A goat is a common animal with horns that people raised for food and milk.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young goat as a group. Pause this audio here.

Samson thinks the woman is still his wife, and he wants to go to her, most likely to have sex with her. Samson's wife's father refuses to let Samson go see his daughter. After what happened with the riddle and Samson's angry behavior, Samson's wife's father thought Samson hated or strongly disliked his daughter and had rejected her. Samson's wife's father gave his daughter to Samson's companion as his wife, and now he offers Samson his younger daughter as a wife instead. Samson's wife's father says his younger daughter is even more beautiful than his older daughter.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, if a man abandons his wife, what happens to her? Is the marriage legally over, and can she marry another man? Pause this audio here.

Samson does not want to marry the younger sister of his wife. Samson's wife's Philistine father gave away his wife to marry another man. Samson feels he has been wronged or hurt by this, and now Samson feels he has the right to do harm to the Philistines. Remember that Yahweh handed Israel over to the Philistines for 40 years because of the evil the Israelites did. The Philistines are the enemies of Israel.

It is not clear if Samson talks to himself or to the Philistines when Samson says he will harm the Philistines, and that he will not be guilty this time for the things Samson will do to them. During Samson's time, it was common to take revenge or hurt another person when that person hurt you.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you or someone you know did something out of revenge or to get even with someone else. Pause this audio here.

The first action of revenge that Samson does in this passage is to use 300 foxes to destroy the property of the Philistines. A fox is a small, wild animal like a dog that lives in groups in the wilderness. Foxes have long, bushy tails. Some people think the story talks about a similar animal called a jackal. Jackals are slightly bigger than foxes and also live in the wilderness, but foxes can live in other places too.

Stop here and look at pictures of a fox and a jackal as a group. Pause this audio here.

Samson somehow catches the 300 foxes. Yahweh probably helped Samson do this, because it would be difficult to catch that many foxes at one time. Samson ties the tails of the foxes together in pairs, and then Samson puts a flaming torch into each knot. People soak rags in oil and wrap the rags around the end of a stick to make a torch. People light the rags on fire, and they burn the torch so that they can see in the dark.

Stop here and look at a picture of a torch as a group. Pause this audio here.

Samson sends the 300 foxes into the standing grain to destroy it. Standing grain is wheat or other grain that people did not harvest yet. The fire from the foxes also destroys the stacked grain, the vineyards, and the olive groves. People put their harvested grain in stacks or bundles. Grapes grow in vineyards, and people eat grapes

and use the grapes to make wine. Olive groves are fields of olive trees. People eat olives and use the oil from olives to cook and burn for light.

Stop here and look at pictures of standing grain, stacked grain, a vineyard, and an olive grove as a group. Pause this audio here.

Samson's actions were against the law of Yahweh's people because anyone who burns the standing or stacked grain in another person's field must pay back the person for the lost grain. It is likely Samson's actions destroyed all the crops around Timnah, which cost the Philistines a lot of money and food. Samson's actions are like Samson declares war on the Philistines. Remember that in previous passages, Yahweh says Yahweh looked for a way to stir up trouble for the Philistines, who ruled over Israel during that time. Samson's actions do stir up trouble with the Philistines.

The people from Timnah tell the Philistines that Samson destroyed all of the people's property because the Timnite, Samson's wife's father, gave Samson's wife to another man. Philistines from nearby cities come up to Timnah and burn Samson's wife and her father to death with fire. Some translations also say the Philistines burned her father's household, which would include all the people who live in her father's house. This is the same threat the Philistines made to Samson's wife when they wanted her to tell them the answer to the riddle at the wedding celebration. It is possible the Philistines burned Samson's wife and his wife's father with fire because they thought Samson's wife's father was the one responsible for how Samson burned their crops and cost them so much food and money. If Samson's wife's father did not give Samson's wife to another man, it is possible Samson would not have burned the crops of the Philistines and caused these problems for the community.

Samson tells the Philistines that because they killed Samson's wife and her father, Samson will not stop until Samson completes his revenge on them. Samson takes an oath and says, "I will surely avenge myself on you." Remember there are laws that say Yahweh's people can take revenge on someone who kills their family member when they kill the murderer. In the second act of revenge in this passage, Samson attacks the Philistines and slaughters them violently.

After Samson kills many Philistines, Samson goes down to a cave in the rock of Etam to live. A cave is a hollowed-out place in the earth where people can hide, store things, or bury the dead. People do not know the exact location of Etam, but it was probably in the land of the tribe of Judah. Samson went to the rock of Etam instead of his father's home possibly so that Samson could hide from the Philistines, or because Samson thought that now the Philistines would leave Samson alone.

Stop here and look at a picture of a cave and a map of the rock of Etam as a group.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:1-8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: Samson goes to Timnah to visit his wife. Samson brings a goat as a gift.

In the second scene: Samson's wife's father refuses to let Samson visit his daughter because he gave his daughter to Samson's companion as the man's wife. Samson says he will pay back the Philistines for the harm they did to Samson.

In the third scene: Samson uses foxes and fire to destroy the standing grain, the stacked grain, the vineyards, and the olive groves of the Philistines.

In the fourth scene: The Philistines find out who destroyed their grain, vineyards, and olive groves. The Philistines kill Samson's wife and her father when they burn them in the fire.

In the fifth scene: Samson declares his vengeance on the Philistines, and then slaughters many of the Philistines.

In the sixth scene: Samson goes down to the rock of Etam and stays in a cave there.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Samson's wife
- Samson's wife's father, the Timnite
- The Timnite's younger daughter
- Samson's companion from the wedding celebration
- And the Philistines

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this passage happens after Samson kills 30 Philistines in Ashkelon and takes their clothes to pay off a bet to his wedding companions in Timnah. Samson is angry, and Samson returns to his father's house in Timnah without Samson's wife. Remember also that the Philistines, probably Samson's wife's father, gave Samson's wife to be married to one of Samson's companions. Samson does not know his wife is now the wife of his companion.

As the first scene begins, remember that some time has passed since Samson returned in anger to his father's house in Mahaneh Dan. It is the wheat harvest now, which is the time when people gather wheat in the fields. The wheat harvest was usually in June or July.

Stop here as a group and look again at a picture of people as they harvest wheat, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson goes to Timnah to visit his wife, and Samson brings a young goat with him as a gift for his wife and her family. Remember a goat is a common animal with horns that people raised for food and milk.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young goat again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

It may help to reorder the ideas in the first scene. You could say that Samson went to visit Samson's wife, and then include the information that it was during the wheat harvest. Finally, you could include the information that Samson brought a goat as a gift.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to order the ideas at the beginning of the first scene when Samson goes to his wife during the time of harvest and brings a goat with him as a gift? Pause this audio here.

The second scene has several parts. Samson has a conversation with his wife's father, and the scene ends when Samson says he will punish the Philistines for what they did to Samson.

In the beginning of the second scene, Samson wants to go to his wife's room to have sex with her. In the original language, "go to her" is another way to say that Samson wants to have sex with her.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that Samson wants to go to his wife's bedroom to have sex with her? What is an appropriate way to say this in your language? Pause this audio here.

The woman's father refuses to let Samson go in. Remember he tells Samson he thought Samson hated her, so he gave her to Samson's companion as his wife. The father asks Samson, "Do you not agree that her younger sister is more beautiful?" The father wants Samson to take his younger daughter as a wife instead of Samson's previous wife.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be more natural in your language to translate his wife's father's idea as a question or as a statement? For example, you could say, "Her younger sister is more beautiful than her." Pause this audio here.

At the end of the second scene, Samson says that Samson has the right to punish the Philistines this time because Samson's wife's father gave his wife to his companion as a wife. Remember that Samson already killed 30 Philistines in the city of Ashkelon to pay back the bet to his wedding companions, and it is possible that Samson thinks he was not completely right to kill all of them. But "this time" Samson feels no one can blame Samson for what Samson is about to do to them because the Philistines have truly harmed Samson and treated him with disrespect.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you talk about the idea that Samson punishes the Philistines as revenge for the harm the Philistines did to Samson? Pause this audio here.

Remember that Samson might talk to himself about what he will do to the Philistines, or Samson might talk to his father-in-law and the other Philistines.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about how you can translate Samson's reply in a way that could mean Samson talks to the Philistines or to himself. For example, "Samson said...." If you need to include who Samson talks to in your language, choose to say that Samson said it to the Philistines. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Samson catches 300 foxes to help Samson punish the Philistines. Foxes are small, wild animals with bushy tails. Remember that the word in the original language could also mean "jackal" instead of fox. A jackal is slightly larger than a fox, but otherwise it is very similar.

Stop here and look at pictures of a fox and a jackal again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson ties the tails of the 300 foxes together, which means Samson takes pairs of the foxes and ties each pair's tails together. Another way to say this is that Samson ties the tail of each fox to another fox. Then, Samson puts torches in the tails of each pair of foxes. Samson lights the torches and sends the 300 foxes with their flaming tails into the wheat fields of the Philistines. Remember that a torch is a stick with rags soaked in oil wrapped around the end of the stick.

Stop here and look at a picture of a torch again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The flaming fox tails burn up all the standing grain, which is the grain still in the wheat field. The foxes also destroy the stacked grain, the vineyards, and the olive groves. Remember that stacked grain is grain that people have already harvested. Vineyards are gardens where people grow grapes, and olive groves have olive trees. The destruction of the three main crops of grain, grapes, and olives was very costly for the Philistines. It takes years to grow vines and olive groves, and a whole year to grow the grain. This was a big loss to the Philistines.

Stop here and look at pictures of standing grain, stacked grain, a vineyard, and an olive grove again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The fourth scene has two parts. First, the Philistines ask who destroyed their grain, vineyards, and olive groves. These are probably Philistines from outside of Timnah. Some other Philistines answer that it was Samson who destroyed their property. These other Philistines may have been relatives or friends of Samson's wife's father, so they knew what happened already. Remember the other Philistines say the reason Samson destroyed the property was because Samson's wife's father gave Samson's wife to another man.

Next, the Philistines go up to Timnah and burn Samson's wife and his wife's father with fire. These Philistines probably come from land and cities around Timnah that are not in the hills, and that is why they go up to the higher ground of Timnah. Remember also that some translations say these Philistines burned her "father's household," which would include all the people who lived in the house, and not only her father.

The fifth scene also has two parts. First, Samson says what Samson will do to take revenge on the Philistines. Samson's statement has three parts. Samson says there is a reason for Samson to get even with the Philistines because of what the Philistines did to Samson—the Philistines burned Samson's wife and his wife's father in the fire. Next, Samson makes a promise when he says, "I will surely avenge myself on you." This means Samson

promises he will do this. Lastly, Samson says there will be a limit to the harm Samson will do to the Philistines. Samson will stop when Samson completes his full revenge on the Philistines.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe a common way that people make promises or oaths in your language. For example, Samson says, "I will surely...." How will you translate Samson's promise in this passage? Pause this audio here.

In the second half of the fifth scene, Samson slaughters many Philistines. Samson kills these Philistines violently. In the original language, the storyteller says Samson strikes their "hip and thigh," which was probably special language to say Samson killed the Philistines violently and cruelly. We do not know how many Philistines Samson killed.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that Samson attacked and killed the Philistines violently? Pause this audio here.

In the sixth scene, Samson goes down to the rock of Etam to stay in a cave. A cave is a hollowed-out place in the earth where people can live. Remember this is probably in the land of the tribe of Judah on the northern slope of the Sorek Valley near the town of Zorah. Remember that Samson does not go back to his father's house this time after he kills many Philistines like Samson did after he killed the 30 men in Ashkelon.

Stop here and look at a picture of a cave and a map of the rock of Etam again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:1-8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Samson's wife
- Samson's wife's father, the Timnite
- The Timnite's younger daughter
- Samson's companion from the wedding celebration
- And the Philistines

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Sometime after Samson returns to his father's home, Samson goes back to Timnah again. Samson does this during the wheat harvest. Samson brings a young goat with him as a gift for his wife and her family.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel sorry that I was so angry and abandoned my wife in Timnah; or
- I hope that the gift of this young goat will help my wife and her family take me back; or
- I want very much to see my wife. I am her husband.

Samson tells his wife's father that Samson wants to go to see his wife in her room. But his wife's father refuses to let Samson go into the room. The father tells Samson that he thought Samson hated his daughter since Samson abandoned her in Timnah. The father gave his daughter to Samson's best companion from the wedding as that man's wife. The father also offers his younger daughter as a new wife for Samson instead and tells Samson this daughter is even more beautiful than his older daughter.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am shocked that my wife's father will not let me see my own wife! or
- I am angry that my wife's father gave my wife to someone else, and he did not even tell me!
or
- I am embarrassed that I found out my wife is married to someone else.

Also, ask the person who plays Samson's wife's father, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am not willing to let Samson visit his previous wife, because now she is married to someone else; or
- I feel that I was right to give my daughter to someone else to marry. Samson left my daughter and she needed to marry someone because Samson shamed her when he abandoned her; or
- I feel generous to offer Samson to marry my younger daughter, who is even more beautiful than my older daughter; or
- I feel guilty that I married my daughter to someone else when clearly Samson still wants his wife and did not reject her.

Samson says, "I am right to hurt the Philistines this time because of what my wife's father did!" Samson catches 300 foxes and ties their tails together in pairs. Samson puts torches in their tails and lights the torches. Samson makes the foxes run through the fields of grain of the Philistines. The foxes destroy the standing grain, the stacked grain, the vineyards, and the olive groves of the Philistines.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have the right to do harm to the Philistines, because my wife's father gave my wife to another man! or
- I want to hurt the Philistines as much as possible, so I will destroy all their grain, grapes, and olives; or
- I think that if I use the foxes to destroy the grain, grapes, and olives, it will be faster and easier than to burn it all myself, and no one will know who did it.

Also, ask the people who play the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Who burned our fields, vineyards, and olive groves? or
- This destroys all our food and money for the whole region! or
- Why would someone want to do this to us?

The Philistines ask, "Who did this?" Other Philistines tell them that Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, did it. Samson burned everything because his wife's father gave Samson's wife to Samson's friend.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Why did Samson hurt all of us for a personal problem with his wife's father? or
- We need to do something to punish the Timnite for how he caused this problem for us! or
- Maybe we can also hurt Samson to punish him!

The Philistines went up to Timnah and burned Samson's wife and her father to death. Samson tells the Philistines that because the Philistines killed Samson's wife and his wife's father, now Samson will hurt the Philistines until Samson gets his full revenge on them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now I am really angry and I have every right to kill these terrible Philistines who killed my wife and her father! or
- I will take my full revenge on the Philistines for what they did to me; or
- I feel sad that I never got to be with my wife again; or
- Before, I only destroyed their property, but now I will destroy their lives.

Also, ask the people who play the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I feel scared of Samson. We heard about how Samson killed the 30 men in Ashkelon to pay back the bet he lost; or
- I wonder if it was a good idea to kill Samson's wife and his wife's father; or
- I am ready to fight Samson.

Samson attacks the Philistines and kills them violently. Then Samson goes and stays in a cave in the rock of Etam.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now that I killed so many Philistines, I have completed my revenge; or
- The Philistines will surely leave me alone now; or
- I will be safer here in this cave than at my father's house.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:1–8 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Samson goes back to Timnah to visit Samson's wife during the wheat **harvest**. Remember this was probably during June or July, and it was when people gathered all the wheat in the fields into bunches or piles. Wheat was one of the common grains that people grew for food during Samson's time. Translate harvest the same as you have in previous passages.

Samson brings a young **goat** as a gift for Samson's wife and her family. A goat is a common animal with horns that people raised for food and milk. Translate goat the same as you have in previous passages.

Stop here and look at a picture of a young goat again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson takes 300 foxes, ties together their tails in pairs, and puts torches in the foxes' tails. A fox is a small, wild animal with a long, bushy tail. Remember, it is also possible this is a similar animal called a jackal. To make torches, people soak rags in oil and wrap the rags around the end of the stick.

Stop here and look at pictures of a fox, a jackal, and a torch again as a group, if needed. Decide how you will translate these words. Pause this audio here.

Samson sends the flaming-tailed foxes into the **standing grain**, which is wheat that still stands in the fields. The foxes destroy the standing grain, the **stacked grain** that is already harvested, and the **vineyards** and the **olive groves**. A vineyard is a garden where people grow grapes, and an olive grove is a garden where people grow olive trees. Translate vineyard the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on vineyard, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at pictures of standing grain, stacked grain, a vineyard, and an olive grove again as a group, if needed. Decide how you will translate each of these things. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines found out that Samson, **the Timnite's son-in-law**, burned their property. The Timnite is someone from the city of Timnah. A man's son-in-law is the husband of a man's daughter.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will translate "the Timnite's son-in-law." Pause this audio here.

Samson makes a promise to get revenge on the Philistines after the Philistines kill Samson's wife and his wife's father.

Samson attacks and slaughters many Philistines. Samson kills them violently. Then Samson goes down to stay in a cave in the rock of Etam. A cave is a hollowed-out place in the earth where people can live or hide. The rock of Etam was probably a well-known place during that time, and it was most likely on the northern slope of the Sorek Valley near the town of Zorah.

Stop here and look at a picture of a cave and a map of the rock of Etam again as a group, if needed.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 15:1-8

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (20285026 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (31174822 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 15:9–20

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 15:9–20 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:9–20 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:9–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

Samson and the Philistines continue their cycle of paying back wrong for wrong. In the previous story, Samson used 300 foxes to burn the Philistines' property, because the Philistines gave Samson's wife to another man. And then Samson took revenge on the Philistines, because the Philistines had killed Samson's wife and Samson's wife's father. The story ended where it said Samson lived in the rock of Etam. Now, we see how Yahweh uses Samson's desire for revenge to start to rescue Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

The Philistines still want revenge on Samson for all their people that Samson killed in the previous story. The Philistines go up from their home to the higher land in the east where the tribe of Judah lives. The Philistines prepare for a battle at a place called Lehi, which is probably close to where Samson was at the rock of Etam. Lehi is the short way to say Ramath Lehi, or Jawbone Hill. Later in this passage, we find out why people name this place Jawbone Hill.

Stop here as a group and look at a map that shows the Philistines' journey from their own land to the possible location of Lehi. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines probably come to the land of the tribe of Judah because Judah is the tribe who were leaders of Israel. In the beginning of the book of Judges, the tribe of Judah led Israel in battle with the Canaanites. It was common during that time for people to talk before they started a battle. The men of Judah ask why the Philistines have come to attack them, because the men of Judah do not know about what Samson did in Timnah. The Philistines say they want to tie up Samson and take Samson as their prisoner. The Philistines want to pay back, or take revenge on, Samson for all the death and destruction Samson did in their land.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about someone who paid back, or took revenge on, someone else for a bad thing that person did to them. Pause this audio here.

Instead of going to battle with Samson against the Philistines, the men of Judah decide to give Samson over to the Philistines. This is a surprise, because Samson is also an Israelite. The men of Judah do not cry out to Yahweh for help. Three thousand men of Judah go to talk with Samson at the cave at the rock of Etam, which shows these men now know how dangerous Samson is. Remember a cave is a hollowed-out place in the earth where people can hide. The rock of Etam was probably in the land of the tribe of Judah.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a cave and a map of the rock of Etam again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The men of Judah worry that Samson's actions will hurt all of Israel. Samson says he only did the same thing to the Philistines that the Philistines did to Samson. The men of Judah and Samson do not trust one another, and Samson makes the men of Judah promise not to kill Samson, most likely because Samson wants to protect himself. The men of Judah bind Samson with two new ropes, probably around Samson's arms and his hands. People often made a rope or cord from flax, and people twisted the flax together to make it strong. New ropes were probably stronger than old ropes, and harder to break. The men of Judah use two new ropes to make sure Samson cannot escape.

Stop here and look at a picture of rope as a group. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: What do you use in your community when you need something strong to fasten or tie things together? Do you use rope or something else? Pause this audio here.

Samson comes to the Philistines at Lehi, and the two new ropes are still bound around his arms and hands. The Philistines shout as they come to meet Samson. The Philistines may shout out in victory as they see Samson tied up, just as they wanted. The Spirit of Yahweh comes on Samson with power, and Samson breaks free of the two new ropes and attacks the Philistines. The ropes around Samson's arms become like flax in a fire, which breaks easily. The ropes fall off Samson's arms. Flax is a plant people use to make rope and clothing, and flax burns easily. The bonds on Samson's hands, which probably tie his hands together behind his back, also fall off his hands.

Stop here and look at a picture of a flax plant as a group. Pause this audio here.

Now that Samson's hands are free, Samson quickly finds something to use to attack the Philistines. Samson finds the jawbone of a donkey. A donkey is a domestic animal like a horse, but smaller in size and with longer ears. The jawbone is the bone under the donkey's mouth.

Stop here and look at pictures of a donkey and a picture of the dried jawbone of a donkey as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The jawbone is fresh, which means the donkey had recently died and the jawbone was not dry, so it would not break easily. The jawbone was probably bloody, and this was another example of how Samson broke his vows. Because Samson was set apart for Yahweh, Samson should not touch dead animals. Yahweh is likely the one who provides the jawbone for Samson, which seems confusing because Yahweh is also the one who said Samson should not touch anything unclean, including dead animals. However, in this special circumstance, it was more important for Samson to touch the jawbone and use it to kill the Philistines than to keep his vow not to touch dead animals.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Why do you think Yahweh provided the jawbone of the donkey for Samson to use when this normally would go against Samson's vows? Talk about a difficult situation in your life or someone else's life where you might do something that you would not normally do. Pause this audio here.

Samson uses the donkey's jawbone to kill 1,000 Philistines. It is possible Samson did not kill exactly 1,000 men, but this was about how many men Samson killed. Samson was only one man against 1,000 men. Because of the power of Yahweh's Spirit, Samson was able to do something impossible.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story from your culture about someone who did something that seemed impossible. Pause this audio here.

After his victory, Samson sings a song about how he killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. This is a similar song to the victory songs of Deborah and Barak in the book of Judges after they won a battle. Samson does not say anything about Yahweh in Samson's victory song, and some people think Samson was proud of himself for Samson's victory. Samson throws away the jawbone and names the place after Samson's victory with the donkey's jawbone. Samson calls the place Ramath Lehi, which means Jawbone Hill.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Sing a song in your language that talks about a victory, triumph, or celebration of something that someone did that amazed other people. Pause this audio here.

Samson is very thirsty, so Samson cries out to Yahweh for the first time in Samson's story, because Samson thinks he will die of thirst. It is probably very hot summer weather because this story happened during the time of the wheat harvest. It is possible Samson did not want to ask the men of Judah for water to drink because the men of Judah had turned Samson over to the Philistines. In his prayer to Yahweh, Samson calls himself Yahweh's servant and says Yahweh is the one who gave Samson victory over the Philistines. Samson also asks why Yahweh would let Samson die of thirst after this victory, and let the uncircumcised Philistines take Samson. Remember, circumcision is a Jewish custom where people cut off the loose skin at the end of a boy's penis, and it shows that Israel is Yahweh's people. The Philistines were uncircumcised and the enemies of Israel. It would be shameful to Samson if Samson died because the uncircumcised enemies of Yahweh killed Samson.

Yahweh listens to Samson's prayer. Yahweh opens up a hollow place in the ground in Lehi, and water comes out of the hollow place. Samson drinks the water, his strength returns, and he survives. Samson names the spring En Hakkore, which means, "Caller's Spring." Samson probably names it this because Samson called to Yahweh for water at this spring. When the author of Judges told this story, this spring still had water in it at Lehi.

The final part of this story tells us that Samson was the judge for Israel for 20 years. This shows that Samson's great victory at Lehi made Samson the leader of Israel instead of the men of Judah. All of Samson's time as the judge of Israel was during the rule of the Philistines, which is a reminder that Samson only started to rescue Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:9–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: The Philistines come to Lehi in the land of the tribe of Judah. The Philistines tell the men of Judah they have come to take Samson prisoner.

In the second scene: Three thousand men of the tribe of Judah go to Samson in the rock of Etam. The men tie Samson up with two new ropes to hand Samson over to the Philistines. The men agree that the men will not kill Samson themselves.

In the third scene: When Samson comes to Lehi, the Spirit of Yahweh comes on Samson. Samson breaks his ropes, and he kills 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. Samson names the place Jawbone Hill.

In the fourth scene: Samson cries out to Yahweh for help when he is thirsty. Yahweh provides water for Samson, and Samson's strength is restored.

In the fifth scene: Samson is the judge for Israel for 20 years during the rule of the Philistines.

The characters in this passage are:

- Philistines
- Men of Judah
- Samson
- Yahweh
- And the people of Israel

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this story happens after Samson kills many Philistines violently, and then Samson goes to stay in the rock of Etam. This story is the end of a major story of Samson's life, and it tells how Yahweh uses Samson to start to save Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

In the first scene, the Philistines come to the men of Judah in Lehi because they still want revenge on Samson. Remember, the men of Judah are the leaders of Israel. No one knows the exact location of Lehi, but it is probably near the border of the land of the Philistines and the land of the tribe of Judah, about 13 kilometers from the rock of Etam where Samson was. The Philistines must go up to Lehi because it is on higher ground than their home on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Remember also that Samson names this place Ramath Lehi, or Jawbone Hill, later in this story.

Stop here as a group and look again at a map that shows the Philistines' journey from their own land to the possible location of Lehi, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines prepare for battle in Lehi. In the original language, the story says the Philistines spread out, which shows the Philistines move into a position to attack.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How would you and your community get into a position to attack other people? Pause this audio here.

The men of Judah come to ask why the Philistines have come to attack them. The Philistines answer that the Philistines came to take Samson prisoner, to tie Samson up with ropes, and to do the same thing to Samson that Samson did to them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that the Philistines do the same thing to Samson that Samson did to the Philistines? Review the story about how someone pays back someone else that you discussed in step two. Pay attention to the words you use to show how one person pays back someone else, or takes revenge on someone else. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, 3,000 men of Judah go down to Samson in the cave of the rock of Etam. Remember that Samson stays in this cave or hollowed out place in the rock. The men of Judah have come there to take Samson prisoner and to hand Samson over to the Philistines. Remember that it is a surprise that the men of Judah do not want to fight the Philistines, because the men of Judah are the leaders of Israel.

Stop here as a group and look again at a picture of a cave and a map of the rock of Etam, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The 3,000 men of Judah ask Samson two questions. First, the men ask if Samson knows the Philistines rule over them. The men already know that Samson is aware that the Philistines rule over them. The men ask this to show Samson how much the men disagree with Samson's actions and how those actions provoke the Philistines to fight the men of Judah. The second question the men ask is, "Why have you done this to us?" This question shows the men want Samson to know that Samson's actions got the men of Judah in a lot of trouble.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be more natural in your language for the men of Judah to ask Samson questions, or to say these things as statements? For example, you could say, "Surely you know we are under the rule of the Philistines. You caused a lot of trouble for us." Pause this audio here.

Samson replies that Samson did the same thing to the Philistines that the Philistines did to Samson. This is the same thing that the Philistines told the men of Judah in the first scene about why they wanted to take Samson prisoner. So the men continue the cycle of revenge. The men of Judah tell Samson they came to the rock of Etam to tie up Samson and hand Samson over to the Philistines. Samson agrees to this, but Samson tells the men of Judah to swear, or promise, that they will not kill Samson themselves. The men of Judah promise to not hurt Samson, and only to tie Samson up and hand Samson over to the Philistines.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "swear to me" or "promise me"? Pause this audio here.

The men of Judah tie up Samson with two new ropes and lead Samson up from the rock of Etam. Remember that people can make rope from flax, and people twist the flax together to make it strong. New ropes are probably stronger than old ropes.

Stop here and look at a picture of rope again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Samson comes up from the rock of Etam to Lehi where the Philistines are. The men of Judah are not the focus anymore in the story, so the storyteller no longer mentions them. Samson is still bound with the two new ropes. Remember that the Philistines shout as Samson comes to them, and this possibly was a shout of victory, because the Philistines saw Samson tied up, just as the Philistines wanted.

The Spirit of Yahweh comes on, or rushes on, Samson in power, and Samson breaks his bonds. Remember this is like how the Spirit of Yahweh came on Samson before Samson tore apart the lion that attacked Samson in the vineyards of Timnah. Samson had nothing in his hands to defend himself, but Samson still killed the lion. Here, Samson is bound, and the power of Yahweh's Spirit causes Samson to break free.

The ropes on Samson's arms become like flax in a fire, and the bonds on Samson's hands fall off. Remember that flax is a plant people use to make rope, and flax burns easily.

Stop here and look at a picture of a flax plant again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson had ropes binding Samson's arms, and Samson's hands were also bound, probably behind his back. In the original language, this description of how Samson broke free from both his bonds is special language to describe two times, in different ways, how the two different ropes came off.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you describe how the bonds fall off Samson's arms and hands? Pause this audio here.

Samson finds the jawbone of a donkey, which Yahweh probably provided for Samson to find. The jawbone is fresh, which means it was not dry and did not break easily. Remember that Samson was not supposed to touch any dead animals because of Samson's Nazarite vows as someone separated to Yahweh for life. Here, Yahweh still provided the fresh jawbone of a dead donkey for Samson to use, even though that normally would go against Samson's vows as someone dedicated to Yahweh for life.

Samson takes the donkey's jawbone and uses it to kill 1,000 Philistines. This is the most important part of the passage, and this whole story of Samson's conflict with the Philistines, so far.

Remember that after Samson kills the 1,000 Philistines, Samson sings a song about his victory. In both the first half and second half of the song, Samson describes how he killed the Philistines with the donkey's jawbone, which is a common way to sing or say poetry in the original language. Samson begins each half of the song the same way when he says, "with the jawbone of the donkey." The second part of each half of Samson's song is different. In the first half of the song, Samson says he left them in heaps, which probably means Samson piled up large numbers of the dead bodies together in a pile. In the original language, the words for "donkey" and "heap" sound similar, and this is probably why Samson uses the word "heap." Also, to show he piled them in several piles, Samson says "one heap, two heaps" in the original language. In the second half of the song, Samson says he killed 1,000 men.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate Samson's victory song? How can you show the two similar halves of the song, and how will you translate "heap?" Pause this audio here.

The third scene ends when Samson throws away the jawbone because Samson has finished using it. Samson also names the place of his victory Ramath Lehi, which means Jawbone Hill. Remember this is the longer way

to say Lehi, which is the same place where the Philistines come to the men of Judah to take Samson prisoner in the beginning of this passage.

In the fourth scene, Samson is very thirsty. Samson is so thirsty that he thinks he might die, so Samson cries out to Yahweh for help. Remember this is the first time in all the stories of Samson that Samson cries out or prays to Yahweh. Samson calls himself Yahweh's servant and says Yahweh gave the victory over the Philistines. Samson asks Yahweh if now Samson must die of thirst and fall into the hands, or power, of the uncircumcised Philistines. Remember circumcision is a Jewish custom where people cut off the loose skin at the end of a boy's penis, and circumcision shows that Israel is a part of Yahweh's people. Samson did not want the Philistines to take Samson's body if he died. Samson might have been worried that the Philistines would change the facts of the true story of what happened at Lehi when Samson killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.

In response to Samson's prayer, Yahweh opens up a hollow place, or hole, in the earth at Lehi, and water comes out of it. Samson drinks the water, and Samson becomes stronger. Samson does not die, but lives! In the original language, the story says that "his spirit is revived." Here, it means Samson's physical strength returns to Samson's body and not that anything spiritual happens. Spirit is another way to say strength. Samson names the spring "En Hakkore," which means "Caller's Spring."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "his spirit is revived" in your language? Pause this audio here.

The fifth scene is additional information about Samson's rule as a judge of Israel. Some people include this information at the beginning of the story that follows, but it is better to include it at the end of this story, because it summarizes Samson's time as a judge of Israel. After the events of this story, Samson becomes the leader of Israel because of Samson's victory over the Philistines at Lehi. Remember it is also important that it says the Philistines still ruled Israel during all of Samson's time as the judge of Israel. This shows that Samson only starts to save Israel from the rule of the Philistines, and not that Samson finishes saving Israel.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:9–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Philistines
- Men of Judah
- Samson
- Yahweh
- And the people of Israel

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Philistines go up to the land of the tribe of Judah. The Philistines prepare for battle in a place called Lehi.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are ready to take revenge on Samson for what he did to us! or
- We are prepared for a great battle against the people of Israel if they do not hand over Samson to us like we ask; or
- We will show how powerful we are to the people of Israel. We are ready for war.

The men of Judah ask the Philistines, "Why are you here to fight us?" The Philistines tell the men of Judah that the Philistines are there to take Samson as a prisoner. The Philistines will do to Samson the same things that Samson did to the Philistines.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the men of Judah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- What exactly did Samson do to the Philistines? or
- We feel confused about why the Philistines have come here to attack us. We do not cause the Philistines any trouble; or
- We wonder if we should hand Samson over to the Philistines since Samson is an Israelite like us; or
- We do not trust that Yahweh can protect us, so we need to do anything the Philistines ask, even if we have to betray one of our own people; or
- We think that to sacrifice one man, Samson, would be worth it if we avoid a war with the Philistines.

Three thousand men of Judah go down to Samson in the rock of Etam. The men of Judah ask Samson if Samson does not know the Philistines rule over them. The men of Judah also ask why Samson has caused so much trouble for them with the Philistines. Samson says Samson did the same things to the Philistines that the Philistines did to Samson.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the men of Judah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We hope that we can work things out with the Philistines so we will not have to fight a war with them; or
- We feel mad at Samson for the way he has caused trouble for us with the Philistines; or
- We think Samson should not have caused these problems with the Philistines, so it is Samson's fault if we hand him over to the Philistines.

Also, ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel disappointed that the men of Judah found where I was staying in the rock of Etam; or
- Of course I know the Philistines are rulers over us! or
- I never meant for my actions to cause problems between the Philistines and the men of Judah; or
- I still think the Philistines deserved everything I did to them for what they did to me.

The men of Judah tell Samson they came to tie Samson up and hand him over to the Philistines. Samson tells the men of Judah to swear they will not kill Samson themselves, and the men of Judah agree not to kill Samson. The men say they will only tie up Samson and hand him over to the Philistines. The men of Judah tie up Samson with two new ropes and lead Samson up from the rock of Etam.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not trust the men of Judah, so I need them to promise that they will not hurt me; or
- I feel worried that I might kill some of my own people of Israel if they try to attack me, so I need them to promise that they will not attack me; or
- I will deal with the Philistines after the men of Judah bring me to the Philistines.

Also, ask the people who play the men of Judah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We do not trust Samson, so we need to make sure he is bound very well so Samson does not escape; or
- We want to use two new ropes to make sure Samson is secure; or
- We have heard how strong Samson is, so we must make sure Samson will not be able to get away from us before we hand him over to the Philistines.

Samson comes to Lehi, and the Philistines shout as they come to meet him. The Spirit of Yahweh comes on Samson in power, and the ropes fall off Samson's arms like flax burns in a fire. The bindings on Samson's hands also fall off.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- How did Samson get free from his ropes? or
- Maybe the men of Judah did not bind Samson very well? or
- We feel terrified that Samson will hurt us. We have heard about things Samson has done in the past.

Samson finds a fresh jawbone of a donkey and uses the jawbone to kill 1,000 Philistines. Samson sings a song. Samson sings, "With a donkey's jawbone, I make heaps of them. With a donkey's jawbone, I killed 1,000 men." Then Samson throws the donkey's jawbone down and names the place Ramath Lehi, or Jawbone Hill.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel shocked that I was able to kill 1,000 men with only the jawbone of a donkey! or
- Yahweh provided the victory for me! or
- I feel proud of all that I did to kill those 1,000 Philistines.

Samson is very thirsty, so Samson cries out to Yahweh. Samson says he is Yahweh's servant, and that Yahweh gave Samson the victory over the Philistines. Samson also asks Yahweh why Samson must die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines after this victory over them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh should listen to me. I just did something amazing when I killed all those Philistines, and it would be terrible to die of thirst now; or
- I feel weak and need water. Yahweh, please come save me and provide me with some water! or
- I feel hopeful that Yahweh will listen to my prayer, because if I die of thirst and the Philistines take my body back to their home, it is likely the Philistines will change the story about my great victory over the Philistines.

Yahweh opens up the hollow place at Lehi and water comes out. Samson drinks the water, and Samson's strength returns to him. Samson names the spring En Hakkore, or "Caller's Spring." This spring is still in Lehi today.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel glad to listen to my servant Samson's prayer for water; or
- I want to save Samson's life, because Samson is the one who starts to save Israel from the rule of the Philistines; or
- I am glad that Samson finally prayed to me for help and sees that I am the one who gives him victory over his enemies.

Samson leads the people of Israel for 20 years during the rule of the Philistines.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Samson is our judge now because of Samson's great victory over 1,000 Philistines at Lehi; or
- I wish that Samson could save us from the rule of the Philistines completely; or
- I feel happy that Samson is our judge, because Samson is more powerful and better able to defend us than the men of Judah.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 15:9–20 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The Philistines go up to the land of the tribe of Judah to Lehi to prepare for war. Judah is one of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the men of Judah are leaders of Israel. The Philistines are the enemies of Israel. Lehi is a short version of the name Ramath Lehi, which means Jawbone Hill.

Stop here as a group and look again at a map that shows the Philistines' journey from their own land to the possible location of Lehi, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Three thousand men of Judah go down to Samson in a cave in the rock of Etam to take Samson prisoner for the Philistines. A cave is a hollowed-out place in the earth where people can hide. The rock of Etam was also probably in the land of the tribe of Judah.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a cave and a map of the rock of Etam again, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson tells the men of Judah that the men must promise Samson, or **swear** to him, that they will not kill Samson. People swear something to make a promise more serious. Translate swear the same as you have in previous passages. For more information about how people make a strong promise, refer to vow in the Master Glossary.

The men of Judah bind Samson with two brand new ropes. People often make rope from flax, and they twist it together to make it stronger.

Stop here and look at a picture of rope again as a group if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson goes to the Philistines at Lehi, and the **Spirit of Yahweh** comes on Samson, which allows Samson to break the bonds around his arms and hands. Translate "Spirit of Yahweh" the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on "Spirit of Yahweh," refer to Holy Spirit in the Master Glossary.

Samson takes the fresh jawbone of a **donkey** and uses it to kill 1,000 Philistines. Remember a donkey is a domestic animal that people use to carry heavy loads or people. The jawbone is fresh, so it is not dried out and will not break easily. Translate donkey the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on donkey, refer to the Master Glossary.

Samson cries out to **Yahweh** because Samson is very thirsty. Samson calls himself "Yahweh's **servant**." A servant is someone who works for another person, so for Samson to call himself the servant of Yahweh shows Samson's humility before Yahweh. Translate Yahweh and servant the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Yahweh and servant, refer to the Master Glossary.

Samson does not want to die and fall into the hands of the **uncircumcised** Philistines. Circumcision is a Jewish custom where people would cut off the loose skin at the end of a boy's penis, usually when the boy was one week old. Circumcision was a sign that the boy was a part of the Jewish people, and non-Jews were required to be circumcised to become Jews. Translate uncircumcised the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on uncircumcised, refer to circumcision in the Master Glossary.

Yahweh opens up a **hollow place** in the ground and water comes out. The word for "hollow place" in the original language is difficult to understand. Other ways to describe a hollow place are a round hole in the ground, a basin, or a spring. The important thing to know is that Yahweh causes the water to come out.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "hollow place"? If you describe this as a spring of water that comes from the ground, use the same word for spring that you have used in previous passages. Pause this audio here.

After Samson drinks the water, Samson's **spirit** is revived, which means his strength returns. Translate spirit the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on spirit, refer to spirit in the Master Glossary.

Samson is the **judge** of **Israel** for 20 years. Remember, Samson's main role as judge was not to rule over court cases but to lead the people and rescue them from their enemies. Use the same word for lead or judge that you have used in previous passages about the judges of Israel, and refer to the Master Glossary for more information about judge. Israel refers to the people of Israel, the Israelites. Translate Israel the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on Israel, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 15:9–20

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (24103856 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (37222438 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 16:1–3

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 16:1–3 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:1–3 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:1–3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the first half of Samson's story, Samson fought against the Philistines several times to get personal revenge on them. In the previous story, the Spirit of Yahweh came on Samson and Samson broke the ropes that bound him. Then, Samson killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey at a place called Lehi. The story ended

when it said that Samson served as the judge of Israel for 20 years. During this time, the Philistines were in control of the territory, and Samson led the Israelites. Now, the second half of Samson's story begins. Samson goes to Gaza and spends the night with a prostitute. The Philistines in Gaza plan to kill Samson the next morning, but Samson gets up in the middle of the night, escapes from Gaza, and takes the city's gate, posts, and bar with Samson to the city of Hebron.

As the passage begins, Samson goes down to the city of Gaza from his home in Mahaneh Dan in the land of the tribe of Dan. Gaza is the most southern city of all the major Philistine cities, and it is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This passage happens some time after Samson's victory at Lehi in the previous passage, and it is likely that Samson goes to Gaza near the end of his 20 years of service as the judge of Israel.

Stop here and look at a map of Gaza, Mahaneh Dan, and Hebron as a group. Pause this audio here.

We do not know why Samson goes to Gaza, but while Samson is in Gaza, Samson sees a prostitute. It is possible Samson goes to Gaza in order to visit a prostitute, or for some other reason. People would not expect that the judge of Israel would go to a prostitute of the Philistines, who are the enemies of Israel. A prostitute is a person who has sex with someone in exchange for money.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What do people think about prostitutes in your community? What do people think about people who go to prostitutes? Pause this audio here.

Samson goes to spend the night with the prostitute, most likely to have sex with her. In the original language, it says Samson "went in to her," which is probably a polite way to say Samson went to have sex with her. Having sex with someone you are not married to was against Yahweh's laws.

Someone—possibly other people from Gaza, or people who live in Gaza who are from another place—tell the people of Gaza, or leading men of Gaza, that Samson is in Gaza. The people of Gaza plan to kill Samson. The people surround the place where Samson is. It is possible the people of Gaza surround the city of Gaza because they do not know the exact house where Samson stays with the prostitute. The people surround Samson somehow, and they hide all night at the gate of the city. Usually, a city gate has two large wooden doors with metal laid on top of the wood to make the gate stronger. The two posts on each side of the doors help the doors swing open and shut. The gate is at the entrance of the city, and people in the city open the gates during the day and shut the gates at night to stop enemy attacks. A gate also normally has people who guard it, with six guard posts, three on each side of the gate.

Stop here and look at a picture of a city gate as a group. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: What kind of gates, doors, or defenses does your town, village, or city have? Pause this audio here.

The people of Gaza plan to kill Samson when the morning comes. The people may think Samson will be more sleepy and easier to attack in the morning, and that Samson cannot hide in the morning light. Instead, Samson leaves the prostitute in the middle of the night. Maybe Samson hears about the plan to kill him in the morning, but the passage does not say why he leaves in the middle of the night.

Samson goes to the city gate, and we do not know how Samson gets past the guards on each side of the gate. Samson not only escapes out of the city of Gaza, but Samson tears the city gate loose and takes it with him on Samson's shoulders! Samson also takes the two posts on each side of the two gate doors, and the bar that locks the gate. Samson is very strong because no normal person could take the gate, posts, and bar out of their place and carry them on their shoulders.

Stop here and look at a picture of a city gate, along with the two posts and the bar again as a group. Pause this audio here.

When Samson takes the gate from the city of Gaza, Samson shames the Philistines, because this leaves the Philistines' city open to an attack from an enemy. Samson does not need to take the gate in order to escape, but Samson's actions show his power over the Philistines. We do not know where the people of Gaza are when Samson escapes and takes the gate with Samson.

Samson carries the gate, posts, and bar on his shoulders all the way from the city of Gaza to the top of a hill opposite the city of Hebron, about 60 kilometers away. A hill is a raised area of land that is smaller than a

mountain. Hebron was the lead city of the tribe of Judah during Samson's time. Some people think Samson went up a hill closer to Gaza that was only in the general direction of Hebron. Either way, it was an impossible task for a normal man to carry this load so far.

Stop here and look at a map of Gaza, Mahaneh Dan, and Hebron as a group. Pause this audio here.

Some people think that Samson tries to challenge the men of the tribe of Judah to attack the Philistines, since Samson brings them the gate of their enemies, but the men of Judah do nothing. Samson's actions shame both the Philistines and the men of the tribe of Judah. When Samson took the gate of a major Philistine city, Samson once again continued Yahweh's plan to make the Philistines attack the Israelites. Samson may or may not realize that he starts to rescue Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:1-3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Samson goes to Gaza and sees a prostitute. Samson spends the night with the prostitute.

In the second scene: Someone tells the people of Gaza that Samson is in Gaza. The people surround the place and wait all night at the city gate. The people prepare to kill Samson in the morning.

In the third scene: Samson gets up in the middle of the night. Samson goes to the city gate and takes the two gate doors, the two posts, and the bar. Samson puts all of these on his shoulders and carries them out of the city all the way to a hill opposite the city of Hebron.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- A prostitute
- People of Gaza
- And someone who tells the people of Gaza that Samson is there

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this story happens sometime after Samson's victory over the Philistines at Lehi. It probably happens near the end of Samson's 20 years of service as the judge of Israel.

In the first scene, Samson goes to Gaza, which is one of the five major Philistine cities. Gaza is the most southern of the five cities, and it is 72 kilometers from Samson's home in Mahaneh Dan.

Stop here and look at a map of Gaza, Mahaneh Dan, and Hebron again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Remember that at the start of the first half of his story, Samson went to Timnah and saw a Philistine woman that Samson wanted to marry. Now, Samson sees a prostitute, probably a Philistine. Remember it is not clear if Samson goes to Gaza in order to visit a prostitute, or if Samson is in Gaza for a different reason. In the original language, it says this woman is "a woman, a prostitute." Another way to describe her could be a woman who trades sex for money.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you describe this woman in your language? Pause this audio here.

Samson goes in to spend the night with this woman, which most likely means he also has sexual relations with her. Remember that in the original language, it says Samson "entered in to her," which is a polite way to talk about how Samson has sex with her.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that Samson spent the night with the prostitute? Think about what the most acceptable way is to say it in your language, such as to sleep with her, to stay the night with her, or to have sex with her. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, someone tells the people of Gaza that Samson is there in Gaza. Remember the people of Gaza in this story are probably the men who lead the city. Also, remember that we do not know who tells the people of Gaza that Samson is there, but it could have been other people from Gaza or people who stayed in Gaza who were from another place. The original language is unclear about how the leading men of the city found out that Samson was there.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the most natural way to translate the idea that someone told the people of Gaza that Samson came to Gaza? For example, you could say that the people in Gaza found out Samson was there, or that someone told the people of Gaza, "Samson is here." Pause this audio here.

Remember that the people of Gaza do several things when they hear the news that Samson is in Gaza. First, it is not clear if they surround the place where Samson is with the prostitute, or if they surround the entire city of Gaza. In the original language, the story only says "they surrounded."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What will you say in your translation about what the people of Gaza did? Will you say they "surrounded the place," "they gathered around the city," or something else? Pause this audio here.

Some of the people of Gaza wait at the city gate all night for Samson to try to leave Gaza the next morning. The people are prepared to kill Samson. Remember that the people are quiet all night, and they tell each other that they will kill Samson at dawn when it is light outside. Remember also that the gate is shut because it is night, and the city does not want any enemies to attack at night.

In the third scene, remember that Samson does not stay with the prostitute the entire night. Instead, Samson gets up in the middle of the night and leaves the place where Samson is with the prostitute. Remember that the storyteller does not say why Samson gets up in the middle of the night. Other ways to describe the middle of the night are midnight or half the night.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate "the middle of the night"? Pause this audio here.

The people of Gaza do not capture Samson or kill Samson. Samson leaves the city of Gaza, and Samson even brings the gate with him! Remember the city's gate is large and heavy, and it was impossible for a normal man to pick up the wooden doors with metal on them, two large posts on each side of the doors, and the bar on the gate. Remember that we do not know exactly how Samson escaped through the city gate so that the guards did not see Samson or try to stop him.

Stop here as a group and look again at a picture of a city gate, along with the two posts and the bar. Pause this audio here.

Remember that Samson carries the gate, posts, and bar on Samson's shoulders. Samson walks from the city of Gaza to the top of a hill opposite the city of Hebron. Remember that a hill is a raised area of land that is smaller than a mountain, and Hebron was the lead city of the tribe of Judah during Samson's time. Remember that it is possible that Samson climbed a hill closer to Gaza city, but others believe Samson walked the 60 kilometers to Hebron city.

Stop here and look at a map of Gaza, Mahaneh Dan, and Hebron again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

When Samson takes Gaza's city gate, Samson shames the Philistines because he leaves their city of Gaza with an open door. Remember, Samson is possibly challenging the men of Judah to attack the Philistines, but the men of Judah do nothing. Samson does not try to rescue Israel himself from the rule of the Philistines. However, Yahweh still uses Samson to begin to save Israel from the Philistines.

Remember that in the first scene, Samson goes from his home in Mahaneh Dan to the city of Gaza on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This is a distance of 72 kilometers. Think about how to use objects to show how Samson goes to Gaza. Samson spends the night with a prostitute in Gaza.

In the second scene, the people of Gaza find out Samson is in Gaza, and the people prepare to kill Samson in the morning. Think about what objects you will use to be the city gate.

In the third scene, Samson gets up in the middle of the night and leaves the city of Gaza. Remember that Samson takes the city gate, the two posts, and the bar with Samson. Samson carries the gate, posts, and bar to the top of a hill opposite Hebron, a city 60 kilometers away from Gaza city. Think about how you can use objects to show the gate, posts, and bar that Samson carries on his shoulders, and how you can show the long distance that Samson walked to Hebron city.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:1-3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- A prostitute
- People of Gaza
- And someone who tells the people of Gaza that Samson is there

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Samson goes to the city of Gaza. Samson sees a prostitute in Gaza city, and Samson goes to spend the night with the prostitute.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I deserve to have some comfort after all my hard work as the judge of Israel; or
- None of the people of Gaza know that I am here, so I am safe; or
- Going to a prostitute is easier than marrying a Philistine woman. Things did not end well the last time I tried to marry a Philistine! or
- I hope that none of the Philistines find out that I am here in their city, because the Philistines might try to kill me.

Someone tells the people of Gaza that Samson is in the city of Gaza. The people of Gaza surround the place and wait at the city gate. The people plan to kill Samson in the morning when Samson tries to leave Gaza through the gate.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Gaza, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We felt shocked that Samson would come here! Samson knows we hate Samson, and we want revenge on Samson for what he did to us! or
- We think we can rest tonight, because the city gate is the only way in or out of the city, and we have people who guard our gate well; or
- It will be easier to kill Samson in the morning because Samson will be sleepy.

Also, ask the person who tells the people of Gaza that Samson is there, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I cannot believe Samson would come here to our city after what he has done to the Philistines! or
- I want to make sure the people of Gaza know about the threat Samson is here; or
- I feel glad to be able to help the people of Gaza find out this important information.

Samson stays with the prostitute until the middle of the night. Samson gets up and goes to the city gate of the city of Gaza. Samson leaves the city, and Samson also takes the city gate, the two posts on each side, and the bar that locks the gate with Samson! Samson carries the gate, posts, and bar on his shoulders to the top of a hill opposite the city of Hebron.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Gaza, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- How did Samson escape? We were ready for him at the city gate! or
- We feel embarrassed that Samson took our gate with him and left our city defenseless; or
- We feel angry that Samson shamed us, and we are even more ready to kill Samson the next time we see him! or
- We are afraid of Samson and his great strength.

Also, ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want to embarrass the Philistines, so I will take their gate; or
- I hope that the men of Judah will go attack the city of Gaza now because their gate is open;
or
- I feel tired after I carried the gate, posts, and bar this long distance to Hebron.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:1-3 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Samson goes to the city of Gaza in the land of the Philistines. Gaza was one of the major cities of the Philistines. Gaza was 72 kilometers from Samson's home in Mahaneh Dan.

Stop here and look at a map of Gaza, Mahaneh Dan, and Hebron again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson sees a **prostitute** in Gaza and goes to spend the night with her. A prostitute is a person who has sex with someone in exchange for money. Use the same word for prostitute here as you have used in previous stories in the book of Judges.

The people of Gaza set up an **ambush**, or hide and wait for Samson at the city gate. Translate ambush in the same way as you have in previous passages.

Samson gets up in the middle of the night and leaves the city of Gaza. Samson takes the city gate along with the two doors, the two posts, and the bar that locks the gate. City gates often had metal on them because enemies could burn wooden doors more easily if the doors did not also have metal. The gate was the weakest point in the city wall, so it was where enemies attacked the city. Samson puts the doors, posts, and bar on Samson's shoulders and carries them away from Gaza.

Stop here as a group and look again at a picture of a city gate, along with the two posts and the bar, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Samson carries the doors, posts, and bar to the top of a hill opposite the city of Hebron. Hebron is one of the leading cities of the tribe of Judah, and it is 60 kilometers from Gaza to Hebron. Hebron is also an important city for the people of Israel because it is where Abraham built an altar to God and set up a camp.

Stop here as a group and again look at a map of Gaza, Mahaneh Dan, and Hebron, and also a picture of a hill, if needed.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 16:1–3

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (15006971 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (23408974 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 16:4–14

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 16:4–14 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:4–14 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:4–14 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

So far during the story of Samson, Samson married a Philistine woman at Timnah and later visited a prostitute in Gaza. The previous story ended when it told how Samson escaped from the city of Gaza and took the city gates with him. Samson showed that he was very strong, and now in this passage, we see where Samson's strength comes from. This passage has the third and final story of Samson's relationship with a woman, and that woman's name is Delilah. Delilah agrees to betray Samson for money, and she asks Samson three times for the secret of Samson's great strength. This is the first part of a two-part story about Samson and Delilah.

At the beginning of this story, Samson falls in love with a woman named Delilah. There are a few important differences between Delilah and the other women in the stories of Samson. First, we know Delilah's name, which may show she is more independent than the other women because we do not hear anything about her father or her family. One of the words that Delilah's name sounds like is the word for "night" in the original language, which is a contrast to Samson's name, which means "sun." Another difference is that the story says that Samson loved Delilah.

Delilah lives in the Sorek Valley. This is an area between Israelite and Philistine territory. The story is not clear if Delilah is a Philistine or an Israelite, but she acts like a Philistine in this passage. The passage also says nothing about whether or not Samson is married to Delilah.

Stop here and look at a map of the Sorek Valley as a group. Pause this audio here.

The leaders of the Philistines offer Delilah money if Delilah can find out the secret of Samson's great strength. This is sometimes called a bribe. A bribe means someone offers another person money in exchange for information or because that person agrees to do something for the other person. It is not likely that Samson was physically larger, or had bigger muscles, than other men, because otherwise the Philistines would not need to ask about the secret of Samson's strength. Delilah does not seem to feel badly about how she betrays Samson.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when someone bribed someone else in your community. What is a common reason that a person might bribe another person in your community? Pause this audio here.

These Philistine leaders might be the five rulers of the five major Philistine cities. The rulers say the reason they want to know Samson's secret is so they can overpower Samson and humiliate him. The rulers probably want to tie Samson up. The rulers offer Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver each, which is a great amount of money. This shows how valuable Samson is to the Philistine rulers. People used silver pieces as money to buy and sell things during Samson's time.

Stop here and look at a picture of pieces of silver as a group. Pause this audio here.

Delilah agrees to the bribe, and she directly asks Samson how someone can tie Samson up so he cannot escape. It is likely that Delilah wants Samson to show her how much he loves Delilah by telling her the secret that every Philistine wants to know. Samson's false answers to Delilah are like a game. Samson does not want to refuse to tell Delilah his secret, but Samson also does not want to give Delilah the answer.

Samson says that he will become weak like any other man if someone ties Samson up with seven fresh bowstrings that are not dried out yet. Seven is a special number for the Israelites because it means something is complete or whole.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about important numbers in your culture. Are there any special or complete numbers in your culture? Pause this audio here.

The bowstrings are probably raw pieces of an animal's gut or raw sinews. People would use bowstrings when they made a bow to shoot an arrow. It is possible Samson laughs at the Philistines when he says they can tie him up with something fresh, just like Samson used a fresh donkey's jawbone to kill 1,000 Philistines at Lehi. Remember that because of Samson's Nazarite vow, Samson should not touch parts of a dead animal. Samson does not seem to care that he will touch raw animal insides, which is against Samson's Nazarite vow.

Stop here and look at a picture of a bowstring and a bow as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines bring Delilah the seven fresh bowstrings and Delilah ties up Samson with the bowstrings. Samson probably sleeps while Delilah ties Samson up. The Philistines hide in Delilah's inner room, ready to come out and attack Samson. When Delilah tells Samson the Philistines are coming, Samson breaks the bowstrings as easily as a thread breaks when it is close to a fire. Samson does not know that the Philistines waited to capture Samson, and the Philistines do not come out of the inner room. Delilah still wants to know the secret of Samson's strength, and she still does not know it.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about two people who did not trust one another, and were not sure if they should tell secrets to each other. How do you know in your culture when it is safe to tell a secret to someone else? Pause this audio here.

Delilah is angry that Samson did not tell her the truth, so Delilah demands again to know Samson's secret. Samson gives another false answer that he will be as weak as any other man if someone ties him up with new ropes that no one has ever used for work. People often twisted strong stems from a plant together to make ropes. New ropes were probably stronger than old ropes, and harder to break.

Stop here and look at a picture of rope as a group. Pause this audio here.

This second time ends the same as the first, when Samson breaks the ropes off as easily as if they were threads. Remember that the men of Judah bound Samson in two new ropes at Lehi, and Samson easily broke those ropes too. Delilah still does not know Samson's secret.

The third time Delilah asks him for his secret, Samson still gives a false answer when he says he will become weak like any other man if Delilah weaves the seven braids of his hair into the fabric on a loom and tightens it with the pin. During Samson's time, it was common for women to braid their hair when they twisted it together into knots.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do men and women wear their hair in your community? What does it mean when a man has very long hair or braids in his hair? Pause this audio here.

During Samson's time, people used a loom to weave thread into cloth. People used the cloth to make clothes or other materials. The pin was probably the thin piece of wood that people tapped on the rows of thread to make the rows tight.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a loom with a pin. Pause this audio here.

Also, stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do people make cloth for clothing in your community? How do they weave together the threads for the cloth? Pause this audio here.

Samson goes to sleep and then Delilah weaves Samson's hair into the fabric on the loom, just as Samson said to do. The third time ends similarly to the first time and the second time because Samson breaks free from the loom after he wakes up. It is likely Samson could still use his arms and legs to get free while the hair on his head was tied to the loom.

*Defining the Scenes**Defining the Scenes*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:4–14 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Samson falls in love with Delilah in the Sorek Valley.

In the second scene: The rulers of the Philistines tell Delilah they will each pay her 1,100 pieces of silver if she betrays Samson and finds out the secret to Samson's great strength.

In the third scene: Delilah asks Samson to tell her the secret to his great strength. Samson says he will become weak if people tie him up with seven fresh bowstrings. Delilah ties Samson up, but Samson breaks free.

In the fourth scene: Delilah asks Samson again for the secret to Samson's strength. Samson says he will become weak if people tie Samson up with new ropes. Again, Delilah ties him up, but again Samson easily breaks free.

In the fifth scene: For a third time, Delilah asks Samson to tell her his secret. Samson says he will become weak if people fasten his hair to a loom. Delilah ties Samson's hair to the loom, but again Samson easily breaks free.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Delilah
- The rulers of the Philistines
- And the men who hide in the room

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In the previous story, Samson escaped from the city of Gaza and took the city gates with Samson. This story begins with a phrase that shows some time has passed since Samson carried the gates from Gaza to Hebron. We do not know exactly how much time has passed since the previous story, but because Samson carried the gates of Gaza away from the city, it is possible that Samson now thinks he is so strong that no one can stop him. Remember that this is the first part of a two-part story about Samson and Delilah.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show that some time has passed since the previous story? For example, you could say something like "after this," "some time later," or something else. Pause this audio here.

In the first scene, remember that Samson falls in love with a woman named Delilah. Remember that one of the words Delilah's name sounds like in the original language is the word for "night." Also, her name might mean "flirtatious," "to praise," or "to be little." Remember it is also the first time in Samson's story that it says Samson loved, or had strong romantic feelings for, a woman, which is important for what happens later in the passage.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate Delilah's name? Would it be best to translate it to the word in your language that means "night" or to keep it as a word that sounds like Delilah? Pause this audio here.

Remember that the other important information in the first scene is that Delilah lives in the Sorek Valley, which is between the Israelite and Philistine territories. This shows that Samson goes back once again to the area of land near the Philistines. Samson's home of Zorah and Eshtaol is north of the Sorek Valley, and Timnah is to the south.

Stop here and look at a map of the Sorek Valley again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, the rulers of the Philistines go up to Delilah, which might mean they traveled north to where she is in the Sorek Valley. These rulers are possibly the five rulers of the five major Philistine cities. In a previous passage, the Philistines threaten Samson's Philistine wife in Timnah so she will find out the answer to Samson's riddle for them. Now, the Philistine rulers bribe Delilah if she will betray Samson. The rulers offer Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver each if she will tell them the secret of Samson's strength. Remember this is a very large amount of money.

Stop here and look at a picture of pieces of silver again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The Philistine rulers want to know Samson's secret to his strength in order to overpower him so they can humiliate or torture Samson. Remember this probably means the rulers want to tie him up so Samson cannot escape. Samson has shamed the Philistines several times already, such as when he killed 30 men at Ashkelon to pay off his bet from the wedding in Timnah, when he killed 1,000 men with the donkey's jawbone at Lehi, and when he carried away the city gates in Gaza. Now the Philistines want to shame Samson, probably by tying Samson up.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate this part of the story that says the Philistines want to overpower Samson so they can humiliate him? Other ideas are that they want to capture Samson and tie him up, or they want to know Samson's secret so that they can subdue him. Pause this audio here.

Also stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be more natural to include the part about the amount of money the Philistine rulers offered Delilah at the beginning of this scene, or after they explain why they want to give her the money? Pause this audio here.

In the third, fourth, and fifth scenes, Delilah asks Samson three times for his secret, and three times Samson gives her false information about the source of his strength. Delilah follows Samson's instructions, but Samson breaks free of the bonds Delilah puts on him each time. Each time, Delilah becomes increasingly more angry because she feels like Samson makes a fool of her when he lies to her. These three scenes build the expectation and tension of what happens at the end of the story. Each of these three scenes may have happened on a different day.

In the third scene, it is a surprise that Delilah asks Samson directly about his secret and how someone can tie Samson up so he cannot escape. Three times in a row, Samson does not tell Delilah the truth, which shows that although Samson might not want to tell her his secret, he also does not want to refuse to tell her.

Remember that Samson tells Delilah that if someone ties Samson up with seven fresh bowstrings, Samson will become as weak as any other man. Another way to say this is, "Someone would need to tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings. The bowstrings must not be dried. Then I would be as weak as any other man." Remember, the bowstrings are probably raw sinews or raw animal's gut, and the strings are not dried out yet. Remember also that Samson probably broke his Nazarite vow when he touched these parts of a dead animal.

Stop here and look at a picture of a bowstring and a bow again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also stop here and discuss this question as a group: Would it be more natural in your language to put the part about how Samson becomes as weak as any other man first, or second, in what Samson says? For example, "I will become as weak as any other man if someone ties me up with seven fresh bowstrings." Pause this audio here.

Remember that Delilah ties up Samson with the bowstrings, and there is also the background information that the Philistines hide in Delilah's inner room, ready to attack Samson. Delilah tells Samson, "The Philistines are here!" Other ways to translate this are, "The Philistines are here to capture you!" or "The Philistines are here to get you!"

Samson gets up and breaks the bowstrings as easily as a thread breaks when it is close to the fire. In the original language, it says that Samson broke the bowstrings as easily as a thread breaks when it smells fire.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that Samson easily broke the bowstrings? Pause this audio here.

Remember that the third scene ends when it gives more background information that Delilah did not find out the secret to Samson's strength.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the background information that the Philistines hide in Delilah's inner room and that Delilah does not discover the secret to Samson's strength? Tell a story and include some background information that the characters in the story do not know about. Pay attention to how you include the background information. Pause this audio here.

The fourth scene is very similar to the third scene. This time Delilah says she wants to know how someone can tie up Samson, but she does not add how they will humiliate or subdue Samson. Delilah also begins her words to Samson with a word that emphasizes how she wants Samson to pay attention to what she will tell him.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the beginning of Delilah's words in the fourth scene? Pause this audio here.

Again, Delilah does what Samson says and ties up Samson with new ropes. Again, the passage includes background information that the Philistines hide in Delilah's inner room. Be sure to translate this background information in the same way as you did in the third scene. Samson breaks the new ropes easily, as easily as if the ropes were threads.

In the fifth scene, Delilah is even more frustrated that Samson makes a fool out of her when he lies to her about the secret of his strength. Delilah says that up until now, Samson has lied to her. Delilah shows Samson that she expects a different answer this time. Delilah expects Samson to tell the true secret of his strength. But Samson again gives her false information. Samson says he will become weak like any other man if she weaves the seven braids of his hair into the loom's fabric and tightens the pin that people use to make the cloth tight on the loom.

Stop here and look at a picture of a loom with a pin again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the original language, there are some words left out in what Samson tells Delilah to do with his hair and the loom, and in what the passage says about how Delilah fastens Samson's hair to the loom. This might show how Samson becomes more frustrated so that he does not finish what he says. This is the first time Samson talks about his hair, but it is also the first time Samson talks directly to Delilah about how she will make Samson weak, instead of how someone else will make Samson weak. Remember that while Samson is sleeping, Delilah weaves Samson's hair into the loom.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate this part of the passage about how Delilah will weave Samson's hair into the fabric of a loom and tighten it with the pin? Pause this audio here.

Even though the passage does not say the Philistines were again hidden in the inner rooms, it is likely they were there again as they waited to capture Samson. But after Delilah calls, "The Philistines are here!" Samson wakes up and tears himself free from the loom.

These three short stories in scenes three, four, and five build expectation as the listener waits to see what will happen to Samson next.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:4–14 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Delilah
- The rulers of the Philistines
- And the men who hide in the room

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Samson falls in love with a woman named Delilah. Delilah lives in the Sorek Valley.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel in love with Delilah. This is different than how I felt about any of the other women I have ever known; or
- I feel like the Philistines cannot hurt me, because I took the city gates from Gaza last time I was in their territory; or
- I want to do whatever I want and be with whatever woman I want to.

The rulers of the Philistines go up to visit Delilah. The rulers offer Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver each if she will trick Samson to tell her the secret of Samson's great strength. The rulers of the Philistines want to tie up Samson and humiliate him.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the rulers of the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We hope that Delilah will agree to our bribe, because we really want to humiliate Samson; or
- We feel embarrassed that Samson has humiliated our Philistine people so many times. We feel like Samson deserves for us to humiliate him now; or
- We are willing to give a very large amount of money to Delilah if she will betray Samson to us.

Also, ask the person who plays Delilah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel surprised that the rulers of the Philistines came to talk to me; or
- I feel honored that the rulers would offer me such a large amount of money! or
- I like Samson, but I am ready to betray him because that is too good of an offer to refuse such a huge amount of money!

Delilah asks Samson to tell her the secret of his strength, and how someone can tie Samson up and make him helpless. Samson tells Delilah that if someone ties him up with seven fresh, undried bowstrings, Samson will become as weak as any other man.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Delilah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I hope that what Samson told me about the secret of his great strength is true, because I really want all of that silver the Philistine rulers promised me! or
- I think that Samson has told me the secret of his strength, because Samson wants to prove his love for me; or
- I know that Samson likes danger and will enjoy this game. He will tell me how to tie him up.

Also, ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am not willing to tell Delilah the truth of my great strength; or
- I do not want to refuse to tell Delilah, because I do not want to lose her love; or
- I feel in love with Delilah, so I want to play a game with her in order to show her that I love her; or
- I know that I will easily be able to break the seven fresh bowstrings when Delilah ties me up with them.

The Philistine rulers bring Delilah the seven fresh bowstrings, and Delilah ties up Samson with the bowstrings. The Philistines hide in Delilah's inner room. Delilah calls out, "Samson, the Philistines are here!" Samson gets up and breaks the seven bowstrings as easily as a string breaks when it is close to the fire. No one finds out the secret of Samson's strength.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Delilah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel surprised that Samson could so easily break the bowstrings; or
- I feel angry that Samson lied to me about the secret of his strength; or
- I feel foolish, because Samson made me look foolish.

Delilah tells Samson that he made a fool of her because Samson lied to her. Delilah says to tell her how someone can tie Samson up. Samson tells Delilah that if anyone ties Samson up with new ropes that no one has ever used, Samson will become as weak as any other man. Delilah ties Samson up with new ropes, and the Philistines hide in Delilah's inner room again. Again, Delilah says, "Samson, the Philistines are here!" Samson gets up and breaks the new ropes off his arms as easily as if they were threads.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I still am not willing to tell Delilah the secret of my strength; or
- I enjoy this game with Delilah; or
- I hope that Delilah will no longer ask me about the secret of my strength.

Delilah says that Samson made her look like a fool again, and that Samson lied to Delilah again. Delilah tells Samson that now he must tell her how someone can tie Samson up. Samson says Delilah should weave the seven braids of his hair into the fabric of the loom and tighten it with the pin. Then Samson will become weak like any other man. Samson goes to sleep and then Delilah weaves Samson's hair into the loom and tightens it with the pin. Again, Delilah calls, "Samson, the Philistines are here!" Samson wakes up and pulls out the pin and the loom with the cloth.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Philistine rulers, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel shocked that Samson was able to get free three times in a row! or
- It does not seem like Delilah is able to find out the secret of Samson's strength; or
- Maybe Delilah cannot find a way to humiliate and overpower Samson. Maybe we need to think of a different idea.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:4–14 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Samson **loves** a woman named Delilah. This is the first time we learn that Samson loves, or has strong romantic feelings, for a woman.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to translate **love** in this passage? How do you talk about how someone loves another person in a romantic way? Pause this audio here.

The **rulers** or **leaders** of the Philistines come to Delilah to bribe her to help them learn the secret to what makes Samson strong. These men may be the five rulers of the five major Philistine cities. Use the same word for rulers or leaders as you have used in previous passages.

The rulers offer Delilah 1,100 **shekels**, or pieces of silver. Altogether, 1,100 shekels probably weighed around 12.5 kilograms. Use the same word for shekels as you have used in previous passages, and remember that shekels is in the Master Glossary.

Delilah asks Samson what his secret is, and how someone can tie Samson up and overpower him. The first time Delilah asks, Samson tells her that he will become as weak as any other man if someone ties Samson up with seven fresh **bowstrings**. These bowstrings are probably the raw sinews from an animal or an animal's gut. People used bowstrings on a bow in order to shoot an arrow. Normally, the bowstring was dried out before it was attached to the bow, but these bowstrings are not dried out yet.

Stop here and look at a picture of a bowstring and a bow again as a group if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate **bowstrings** in your language? Pause this audio here.

Delilah tells Samson that he made a **fool** of Delilah when he did not tell her the secret of Samson's strength. Delilah feels like Samson made her feel stupid when he lied to her.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the word **fool** in your language? Pause this audio here.

Delilah asks Samson a third time about the secret of his strength. Samson tells Delilah he will become as weak as any other man if Delilah weaves the seven braids of Samson's hair into the fabric of the **loom** and tightens the **pin**. People used a loom to weave thread into cloth. The pin is probably the part that people used to make the cloth tight on the loom. There are several types of looms.

Stop here and look at a picture of a loom with a pin again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate **loom** and **pin**?

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 16:4–14

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 16:15–22

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 16:15–22 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:15–22 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:15–22 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This is the second part in a two-part story about Samson and Delilah. In the first part of the story, Delilah tries three times to find out the secret of Samson's strength. Three times, Samson tells Delilah the wrong information about how someone can overpower Samson. Now, Delilah asks Samson one more time to tell her the secret of his strength, and this time Samson tells her the truth. Delilah cuts off Samson's hair, and the Philistines capture Samson.

At the beginning of this passage, Delilah continues to ask Samson daily, and finally she persuades Samson to tell Delilah his secret. Delilah says, "Your heart is not with me," which means that Samson had not confided in Delilah. Clearly, Samson has already told Delilah, "I love you," and now Delilah uses that against Samson to say he must prove his love to her or risk losing her. Delilah annoys Samson so much that he feels he wants to die, and finally Samson tells Delilah that no one has ever cut Samson's hair, because Samson has been a Nazarite dedicated to God from before he was born.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you were so annoyed or upset about something that you wanted to die. Also, talk about a time when you finally gave in to someone's request because

you were so tired of how that person asked you. Another way to translate this idea is that a person is "sick to death" of something. Pause this audio here.

Samson says that if someone cuts his hair, Samson will become weak like all other men. This is the first time that we find out Samson knows about the vows his mother made before his birth that set Samson apart for Yahweh. In these vows, Samson's mother promised that Samson would never cut his hair. We do not know exactly what makes Samson finally tell Delilah the truth. Maybe it is because Samson is so tired of how Delilah tries to persuade him to tell her the answer, or maybe Samson wants to finally be like other men and not have to live with the burdens of a man dedicated to Yahweh.

Remember that instead of acting like a man dedicated or set apart for Yahweh, Samson often acted like an ordinary man. For example, Samson married a woman outside of the Israelite tribes, Samson visited a prostitute, and Samson hid from the Philistines. Now, when Samson tells Delilah his secret, it might show that Samson hopes he will finally be free of his vow. However, it does not work out like Samson hopes it will. Delilah realizes that this time, Samson told her the truth. Delilah sends for the Philistine rulers, and the rulers return with the silver they promised to give her. Delilah puts Samson to sleep on her lap, or between her knees. This probably means Samson's head was on Delilah's lap when he went to sleep.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you know in your culture when someone tells you the truth? Pause this audio here.

Delilah calls for someone to shave Samson's head. This person might help Delilah shave off Samson's hair, or the person might only bring the razor to Delilah. A razor is something sharp that men used to shave their hair or beards. Delilah shaves off the seven braids of Samson's hair. Remember that it was common for women to braid their hair. A woman would twist the hair together into knots to braid it. Samson had long hair because of his lifelong vow as someone dedicated to Yahweh, and not because he wore his hair like a woman. Remember that no one had ever cut Samson's hair before, so his hair was very long.

Samson now becomes weak and loses his strength. Delilah starts to humiliate or overpower Samson. This probably means Delilah begins the process of Samson's humiliation and defeat. Samson does not realize the strength of Yahweh left him already, and the Philistines capture Samson. The Philistines gouge out, or cut out, Samson's eyes. This is important, because Samson's story started when he saw a woman he wanted to marry and thought she was "right in his eyes," which meant Samson was sure she was the right wife for him. Samson was once powerful and strong, but now Samson is blind and defenseless. A person also feels shamed and humiliated when they lose both eyes.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you or someone you know saw someone who was blind in both eyes. Describe the blind person and how other people in the community treated the blind person. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines also bring Samson down to the city of Gaza. Gaza is the most southern city of all the major Philistine cities. Gaza is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Stop here and look at a map that includes the city of Gaza. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines also bind Samson in bronze chains. People used bronze chains to bind the hands and feet of prisoners.

Stop here and look at a picture of bronze chains. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines make Samson a grinder in the prison. Often, women, slaves, or animals ground grain between two large stones to make flour. This was difficult work, and Samson would have felt humiliated to do this kind of work. Samson had once killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, but now Samson is blind, hairless, chained, imprisoned, and forced to do the humiliating work of a slave for his enemies, the Philistines.

Stop here and look at a picture of a person who grinds wheat. Pause this audio here.

Also stop here and discuss this question as a group: What are certain kinds of jobs that men do in your community? What kinds of jobs would a man feel humiliated to do? Pause this audio here.

The last part of the story offers some hope, because Samson's hair starts to grow back while he is in prison. Even though Samson is at a very low point in his life as a blind, hairless prisoner who does forced labor, we feel

hope that Samson's story is not finished yet. Perhaps when Samson's hair grows back, Samson's strength might return to Samson too.

Even though Samson might have hoped he could be free of his vow if he told Delilah his secret, we see that Samson's action will instead lead to Yahweh continuing to use Samson to stir up trouble with the Philistines again, just as Yahweh promised.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:15–22 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: Delilah annoys Samson so much that Samson finally tells Delilah the secret of his strength.

In the second scene: Delilah sends for the rulers of the Philistines and tells them Samson's secret. The rulers bring the silver to Delilah.

In the third scene: Delilah puts Samson to sleep and shaves off Samson's hair. Samson's strength leaves him.

In the fourth scene: The Philistines capture Samson, gouge out his eyes, and make Samson a prisoner in Gaza.

In the fifth scene: Samson's hair starts to grow back.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Delilah
- The rulers of the Philistines
- A man to help shave off Samson's hair
- And the Philistines

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this is the second part of a two-part story about Samson and Delilah. In the first part of the story, Delilah asks Samson three times about the secret of Samson's great strength. Remember that Samson tells Delilah a lie each time about how someone can tie Samson up and overpower him. Remember Samson said someone could tie Samson up with seven fresh bowstrings, with new ropes, or tie his hair to a loom. Delilah did what Samson said to do all three times, and all three times, Samson escaped from his bonds.

Remember that Delilah became more and more frustrated and angry each time Samson told her the wrong information about how to tie Samson up. This story tells what happens when Delilah asks Samson the last time what the secret is of Samson's strength. This pattern of three stories and then a fourth one was a common way to tell a story during Samson's time. The fourth story usually brings an unexpected change. This makes the audience expect that something important is about to happen. In fact, something important is about to happen. Samson will tell Delilah his secret and the Philistines will capture Samson.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you tell a story, what are common ways that you make people expect that something important is about to happen? For example, do you repeat ideas a certain number of times before you get to the most important part of the story? Pause this audio here.

In the first scene, Delilah asks Samson how Samson can say he loves Delilah when he does not share his secret with her. In the original language, Delilah says, "Your heart is not with me," which means Samson does not tell

Delilah his secret. This part of the story has many more details than the previous three times Delilah asks Samson for his secret.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What is the best way to translate what Delilah says to Samson here? For example, "I know you do not really love me, because you will not tell me your secret." Pause this audio here.

Remember that Delilah continues to ask Samson every day to tell her the secret of his strength, and finally Delilah pressures and annoys Samson so much that he wishes he were dead. This is another way to say that Samson feels that being with Delilah is worse than to die, because at least a dead person cannot be pressured or annoyed by anyone. In the original language, the story says Samson's spirit was impatient to the point of death.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you show that Delilah annoys Samson so much with her continual requests that Samson finally gives up and tells Delilah what she wants to know? Pause this audio here.

Finally, Samson tells Delilah his secret, or "all that is in his heart." This means Samson confides in Delilah. Remember, this is the first time in the entire story of Samson that the audience finds out that Samson knows about his Nazarite vow as someone dedicated to do God's work from before Samson's birth. Samson says if someone shaves his hair off, Samson's strength will leave him, and he will become weak like all other men. Remember that the three previous times Samson told Delilah he would become weak like any other man, but here Samson says he will become weak like all other men. This might show that before, Samson thought he was still an individual and different from other men, but now Samson thinks he will become like other men, and finally not be different from them anymore.

In the second scene, Delilah believes Samson, and she sends for the Philistine rulers to come to her again. Delilah tells the rulers that she now knows the secret of Samson's strength. Remember that the rulers come back, and the rulers bring the silver with them that they promised to give to Delilah if she told them Samson's secret. Remember that each ruler brings Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver, and it is likely there are five rulers. Also, remember that the Philistines likely hide in Delilah's inner room again, even though the passage does not say this directly.

In the third scene, Delilah calls for a man to come. In the original language, the story says that Delilah herself is the one who shaves off the seven braids of Samson's hair, but many translations say that Delilah called for a man to shave off Samson's hair. Remember that during Samson's time, it was common for women to braid their hair. Women would twist the hair together into knots to braid it. Also, remember that Samson did not grow his hair long to try to look like a woman. Instead, Samson let his hair grow long because of his lifelong dedication to Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the idea that Samson had braided hair, but not make it sound like Samson wore his hair like a woman? Pause this audio here.

Samson's strength leaves him, and Delilah starts to torment and humiliate Samson. Samson is vulnerable now without his hair, and this is the start of Samson's defeat. Then Delilah calls out for the fourth and final time, "Samson, the Philistines are here!" Samson wakes up and thinks to himself that he can break free like the other three times, but Samson does not realize that Yahweh has left Samson. Remember this probably means that the strength of Yahweh left Samson. This is background information that the author gives about why Samson cannot break free this time.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the background information that Samson did not know that the strength of Yahweh left him? Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, remember that the Philistines come out from where they hid and capture Samson. The story only says, "the Philistines," so it could be the rulers of the Philistines, or it could be other Philistine men. The Philistines gouge out or pluck out Samson's two eyes. This means Samson cannot see any longer, and now Samson is helpless. We do not hear any more about Delilah, but it is likely that Delilah took her money and left.

The Philistines bring Samson down to the city of Gaza. The story probably says the Philistines took Samson "down" to Gaza because the Philistines needed to travel south to arrive in Gaza. Remember Gaza is the

southernmost city in the Philistine territory, and it is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This is the same city that Samson escaped from and took the city gates from in a previous passage. Gaza was 72 kilometers from Samson's home in Mahaneh Dan.

Stop here as a group and look again at a map that includes the city of Gaza, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines also put Samson in bronze chains, even though Samson was no longer strong and was now blind and helpless. Remember that people used bronze chains to bind the feet of prisoners.

Stop here and look at a picture of bronze chains again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the city of Gaza, remember that Samson becomes a grinder in the prison. Remember that usually women, slaves, or animals ground grain between two large stones called millstones to make flour. A person used their hands to turn one of the large millstones on top of the other millstone, and they ground the grain in between the stones. Remember that it humiliates a man to do this work, especially a man like Samson who used to be so strong.

Stop here as a group and look again at a picture of someone who grinds wheat, if needed. Pause this audio here.

In the fifth scene, Samson's hair that Delilah shaved off starts to grow back. Remember that this is hopeful because it shows that Samson's story is not finished yet. The next story is the final part of the story of Samson, and it will show what happens after Samson's hair grows back.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story that ends in a way where the audience is left to expect that something important will happen. Pay attention to how you end the story so that the audience expects something important to happen next. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:15–22 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Samson
- Delilah
- The rulers of the Philistines
- A man to help shave off Samson's hair
- And the Philistines

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Delilah asks Samson how Samson can say that he loves Delilah when he will not tell his secret to her. Delilah says Samson made a fool of Delilah three times. Delilah continues to say the same thing to Samson day after day until Samson is so upset that Samson wants to die.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so miserable with Delilah's questions that I wish I was dead; or
- I feel like I am ready to tell Delilah my secret because I am so tired of her questions that annoy me day after day! or
- If I tell Delilah my secret, maybe Delilah will no longer bother me!

Also, ask the person who plays Delilah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel angry at Samson, because Samson lied to me three times about the secret of his strength; or
- I hope that this time Samson will finally tell me the truth; or
- Samson has to tell me the truth this time, or I will know that Samson does not really love me; or
- I want to get the money from the Philistine rulers so much that I do not care if I have to betray Samson.

Samson tells Delilah his secret. Samson says that no one ever cut Samson's hair, because Samson has been a Nazarite set apart for God from before Samson's birth. Samson says that if someone cuts Samson's hair, his strength will leave him, and Samson will become as weak as all other men.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Maybe if I tell Delilah my secret, I can finally be free of my vow as a man set apart from Yahweh, and I can live like any other man; or
- I hope that this will make Delilah no longer ask me the same question day after day; or
- I hope that nothing bad will happen because I told Delilah my secret.

Delilah knows that this time, Samson told her the truth about the secret of Samson's strength. Delilah sends for the rulers of the Philistines to come, because now Delilah knows why Samson is so strong. The rulers of the Philistines return, and the rulers bring the silver with them.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Delilah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know Samson told me the truth this time; or
- I feel eager to get the Philistine rulers back here so I can finally get the money they promised me; or
- I am ready to betray Samson, and finally finish this long game with him.

Delilah puts Samson to sleep on her lap. Then, Delilah calls for a man to come and shave the seven braids of Samson's hair off Samson's head. Samson begins to get weaker, and all Samson's strength goes away. Delilah calls again, "Samson, the Philistines are here!"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Delilah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I know that this time it will be different. Samson told me the truth about his secret; or
- I feel anxious to see what will happen when the Philistines try to come get Samson; or
- I look forward to the large amount of silver I will get when the Philistines capture Samson.

Samson wakes up and thinks that he will make himself free as Samson did the other times. But Samson does not realize that Yahweh already left him, and Samson was no longer strong.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel shocked that I am not strong anymore; or
- I regret that I told Delilah the secret of my strength; or
- I wonder how I will defend myself now that I do not have my strength anymore.

The Philistines capture Samson and pull out Samson's two eyes. Then the Philistines take Samson down to the city of Gaza. The Philistines bind Samson with bronze chains and make Samson grind wheat in the prison. But the hair on Samson's head that Delilah shaved off starts to grow back again.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Philistine rulers and the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I feel glad that we finally can shame and humiliate Samson in the same way Samson humiliated our people in the past; or
- I feel surprised at how easy it was to capture Samson; or
- I am glad that we get to shame Samson when we capture him. We will blind Samson, bind him in bronze chains, imprison him, and make him do the hard labor of a slave.

Ask the person who plays Delilah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Oh no! I did not think they would treat Samson so badly! I regret what I did!

Also, ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel embarrassed that I am now a blind, hairless, and weak prisoner of the Philistines; or
- I wish that I did not tell Delilah my secret; or
- I feel very sad and surprised that Delilah betrayed me and did not love me the way I loved her; or
- I will try to endure the humiliation in prison, and hope that I can escape someday; or
- I am glad that my hair starts to grow back. Maybe my strength will also return when my hair grows back.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:15–22 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Samson finally tells Delilah the secret to Samson's strength after Delilah continues to annoy him and ask him daily until Samson wants to die. Samson tells Delilah that he is a Nazarite to **God** from birth, and that Samson's strength will leave him if Delilah shaves Samson's hair. Translate the general term for God the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary.

Delilah asks Samson how he can say, "I **love** you." This is a romantic kind of love. Translate love the same as you have in previous passages.

Delilah also says that Samson has again made a **fool** of Delilah, or **deceived** her. Translate fool, or deceived, in the same way as you have in previous passages.

Remember that a **Nazarite vow** meant a person must avoid alcohol, not cut their hair, avoid unclean foods, and avoid dead bodies—even the dead bodies of their family members. These rules are like how priests were set apart for Yahweh. Normally, Nazarite vows were temporary, but Samson was a Nazarite for life. Remember that the angel of Yahweh came to Samson's mother, the wife of Manoah, before Samson was born to tell her that Samson must be set apart for Yahweh from birth. Samson was a Nazarite from the time he was in his mother's womb, or before Samson was born. For more information about Nazarite vows, refer to Numbers 6:1–8 where Yahweh tells Moses about Nazarite vows. Translate "Nazarite vow" in the same way as you have in previous passages.

Delilah calls the Philistine **rulers**. Use the same word for rulers or leaders that you have used in previous passages.

After Samson tells Delilah his secret, Yahweh leaves Samson. Translate **Yahweh** the same as you have in other passages. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Philistines put Samson in **bronze** shackles or chains. This is a common way people bound prisoners or slaves. Bronze is a combination of copper and tin. Translate bronze the same as you have in other parts of the Old Testament. For more information on bronze, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and look at a picture of bronze chains again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines also made Samson a grain grinder in the prison in Gaza. A person used their hands to turn one of the large millstones on top of the other millstone. The stones ground grain into flour that people could use for food.

Stop here and look at a picture of someone who grinds wheat again as a group, if needed.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 16:15–22

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (17645315 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (26629618 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 16:23–31

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 16:23–31 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:23–31 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:23–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This is the final part of the story of Samson. In the previous story, Samson told Delilah the secret of his strength, and Delilah cut off Samson's hair, and Yahweh left Samson. The Philistines captured Samson, took out his eyes, and put Samson in prison in Gaza. Now, the Philistines bring Samson out of the prison to entertain the Philistines in the temple to their god, Dagon. Samson pulls down the entire temple, which kills himself and all the Philistines in the temple and on the temple's roof. Samson dies, but his actions inspire the Israelites to save Israel from the power of the Philistines, just as Yahweh said he would.

As this story begins, the rulers of the Philistines gather together to give a great sacrifice to their god and to celebrate. The Philistines have ruled over Israel for 40 years. A sacrifice could mean the Philistines killed an animal or gave other food and spices to their god to show their worship. The main god of the Philistines is named Dagon, and Dagon was probably the god of grain, although some people think Dagon was a fish god instead.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What kind, if any, of sacrifices do you and your community make to any gods in your culture? How do you celebrate or worship your gods? Pause this audio here.

In previous parts of Samson's story, Samson ruined the Philistines' land when he destroyed their grain with 300 foxes, and also when he killed many of the Philistine soldiers with a donkey's jawbone at Lehi. Now, the Philistines celebrate their victory over Samson, because Samson is finally the Philistines' prisoner. Several times the Philistines say that their god Dagon handed their enemy, Samson, over to them. Even though the Philistines do not know it, Yahweh is actually the one who let the Philistines capture Samson. Yahweh left Samson in the previous story when Delilah cut Samson's hair, and this current passage shows the reason Yahweh allowed the Philistines to capture Samson.

Sometime during their celebration, the Philistines call for someone to bring Samson to their celebration from Samson's prison. This is when the Philistines' hearts are glad, which might mean the Philistines are drunk on alcohol and ready to celebrate even more than before.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe a time you saw people celebrate, maybe at a religious ceremony or at some other time when people gathered together. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines want Samson to entertain them, which might mean the Philistines make Samson show how weak he is now compared to before. Remember, Samson used to be very strong and powerful, but now Samson is blind, weak, and vulnerable, and this humiliates Samson. Remember also that we know Samson's hair has continued to grow back while he has been in prison.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you saw some people humiliate, mock, or laugh at another person. Pause this audio here.

Samson stands between the two pillars of the temple. The pillars are probably made of stone. The pillars support the temple, or hold the roof up, and the pillars might also have images of the Philistines' gods on them. The temple is a large building with a central courtyard surrounded by a balcony, or flat roof high above the ground, where people could stand and watch what happened below. Temples were places to worship the god or gods of a people, and sometimes to decide the punishment for people who do wrong things. It is possible the Philistines make Samson stand there so the Philistines can mock, or make fun of, Samson as the judge of Israel.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a pillar and a building with balconies around a central courtyard, or a flat roof where people can stand and watch what happens below. Pause this audio here.

Also stop here and discuss how people celebrate a victory over someone. Pause this audio here.

A young servant boy helps Samson, because Samson is blind. Samson asks the boy to help Samson lean against the pillars that support the temple. The temple is crowded with men and women. The Philistine rulers are all there, and there are also 3,000 people on the roof who look down on Samson as Samson performs. It is possible there were not exactly 3,000 people there, but there were a lot of people, and it was dangerously overcrowded.

Samson puts his hands on the two pillars, and Samson prays to Yahweh one last time. The first time Samson prayed to Yahweh, Samson asked Yahweh for help after a great victory at Lehi. Now, Samson asks Yahweh again for help. Samson wants personal revenge on the Philistines, because the Philistines took Samson's two eyes from him. It is not clear if Samson thinks about this plan before this moment, or if it is a sudden idea. Also, Samson could not see all of the people, but Samson must have sensed that the two pillars were important to hold up the temple.

In his prayer, Samson calls Yahweh "Sovereign, or lord Yahweh," which is a reminder of the covenant promise that Yahweh made with his people Israel. Samson wants Yahweh to remember Yahweh's promises to Israel, and to strengthen Samson one more time. Samson wants to take revenge for the way the Philistines treated Samson, but Yahweh has other reasons to rescue Israel from the Philistines. Because of Yahweh's reasons, Yahweh answers Samson's prayer and gives Samson strength one last time.

Samson stretches out his hands and pushes down the two pillars of the temple. The temple collapses, and all the people inside the temple and on the roof of the temple die, which includes Samson. All the rulers of the Philistines also die, which shows that the Philistine god Dagon is not more powerful than Yahweh. Samson kills more people in his death than he killed during his life, and Samson fulfills his destiny because he does begin to rescue Israel from the power of the Philistines. Samson kills many Philistines who ruled over Israel during this time, but he does not completely free Israel from the Philistines. Later in the Old Testament, David finishes saving Israel from the Philistines.

During most of his life, Samson was very strong and did many amazing physical things, but he actually was one of the spiritually weakest judges of Israel because of his desire to be with Philistine women. However, Yahweh still used Samson to show that Yahweh is more powerful than Dagon. Yahweh does this when Yahweh answers Samson's prayer, restores Samson's strength, and helps Samson destroy many Philistines, which includes the Philistine rulers.

Some people think the person Samson is like the people of Israel because they both want to be like other nations and have other gods besides Yahweh. In the end, Samson cries out for help from Yahweh, just like Israel does. Samson's story warns Israel to stop how they follow other gods and to return to Yahweh.

We know from the book of Hebrews in the New Testament that Samson was someone who trusted God. Even though Samson did many wrong things in his life, Samson did start to rescue Israel. Samson defeated the Philistines at Lehi, and now Samson kills over 3,000 Philistines in Gaza. An angel of Yahweh announced Samson's birth, Samson had the Spirit of Yahweh in him, Samson's own people rejected him, Samson's people mocked him, and Yahweh defeated the god Dagon through Samson at Samson's death. Yahweh did all of this to start to save Israel from the Philistines. Each of these parts of Samson's story are like similar parts of the story of Jesus in the New Testament.

After Samson's death, Samson's brothers and all of Samson's father's household come to Gaza to get Samson's body and bring it back to their home to bury Samson. "Samson's father's household" means all the people who live in Samson's father's house, which probably included Samson's uncles. Samson's father, Manoah, already died in the past.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you bury dead people in your culture? Who is responsible to bring a body back home if someone dies away from their home? Pause this audio here.

Samson's family takes Samson back to bury him in the tomb of Samson's father Manoah. This was at their home between Zorah and Eshtaol. Remember this is where Samson grew up, and where the Spirit of Yahweh first started to move in Samson at the start of Samson's story. A tomb is a place where people bury a dead person. A tomb could be a natural cave in a rock, or a hole that people cut into a rock.

Stop here and look at a map of Zorah, Eshtaol, and Gaza, and a picture of a tomb as a group. Pause this audio here.

The final part of the story of Samson says that Samson judged, or led, Israel for 20 years. Samson started to judge Israel at Lehi when Samson killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, and Samson's rule ended with Samson's victory and death in Gaza. Samson's time to judge Israel was different from other judges in the book of Judges, because Samson did not settle disputes or lead armies against Israel's enemies, but Samson did start to save Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:23–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: The rulers of the Philistines make a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. The rulers praise their god for handing their enemy, Samson, over to the Philistines.

In the second scene: The Philistines bring Samson out to entertain the Philistines. Samson stands between two pillars, and Samson leans on the pillars for support. Over 3,000 people are on the roof, and many rulers and people are inside the temple.

In the third scene: Samson prays to Yahweh to strengthen Samson one last time. Samson pushes on the two pillars, and the temple collapses. Samson and all the people in the temple and on the roof of the temple die.

In the fourth scene: Samson's brothers and his father's household bring Samson's body back to their home between Zorah and Eshtaol. The people bury Samson in his father's tomb.

In the fifth scene: We learn that Samson was the judge for Israel for 20 years.

The characters in this passage are:

- The rulers of the Philistines
- Samson
- A young man to help Samson
- Three thousand Philistines on the roof to watch Samson perform
- Yahweh
- And Samson's brothers and his father's household

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Remember that this is the final part of the story of Samson. Remember that at the end of the previous story, Samson was in prison in the city of Gaza. Delilah had shaved off Samson's hair, and Samson was now weak and vulnerable. The Philistines also took out Samson's two eyes, so he was blind. Samson worked as a grinder in the prison. Remember also that Samson's hair starts to grow back while Samson is in the prison, which shows that maybe Samson's strength from Yahweh will return again.

In the first scene, the rulers of the Philistines gather together to celebrate. The rulers are also in the city of Gaza, which we know is farther south than the other major Philistine cities. Remember, this is also the same city where Samson took the gate and carried it away to Hebron. Now, the rulers of the Philistines celebrate because they captured Samson! The rulers give a great sacrifice to their god, Dagon, which is probably the god of grain.

The Philistine rulers say that their god Dagon gave their enemy Samson into their hands. The rulers say that their god is the one who delivered Samson to the Philistines and made Samson their prisoner.

The passage says that when the Philistines saw Samson, the Philistines praised their god Dagon. It is possible that "him" means they saw Samson, even though the Philistines do not call Samson to come to the temple until the next scene. The passage might tell these events out of order. Or it is possible that "him" means the Philistines saw an image of their god Dagon. The Philistines saw Dagon and started to praise him because the Philistines thought Dagon was the one who helped capture their enemy Samson!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate who the Philistines saw in this part of the passage? If possible, do not name who the Philistines saw. Pause this audio here.

The Philistines say that Samson did two things against the Philistines. First, Samson ruined the Philistines' land when he destroyed their grain with 300 foxes that Samson set on fire. Second, Samson multiplied or made many dead people when Samson killed over 1,000 men at Lehi with a donkey's jawbone. The Philistines celebrate that they now have this same man, Samson, as the Philistines' blind prisoner. The Philistines might have sung these two things in a song or said them in a poem.

In the second scene, the Philistines call for Samson to come entertain them. The Philistines have already started to celebrate, and they probably have drunk alcohol and are now drunk. Now, the Philistines' hearts are glad, and their spirits are high, which means they enjoy themselves and have a good time. It might be the rulers of the Philistines who call for Samson to come, or it might be the crowd of people who call for Samson to come.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think back to the story you told in the previous step about people who celebrate. How will you translate the idea that the Philistines celebrated and their hearts were glad? Pause this audio here.

The Philistines bring Samson out of the prison and put him between two pillars so Samson can entertain the Philistines. Remember, we do not know exactly what Samson did to entertain the Philistines, but it is likely that the Philistines laughed at Samson while he stood in front of the Philistines. Remember that the Philistines wanted to bind Samson in order to humiliate him, and now the Philistines have what they want.

Remember that a young man, probably a servant, holds Samson's hand, probably to help Samson because Samson is blind. Samson asks the boy to help Samson lean on the two pillars that support the temple. Samson may want to rest against the pillars. Remember, the temple is a place where the Philistines worship their god Dagon, and the temple had a large balcony or roof around it so people could watch from above.

Stop here and look at pictures of a pillar and a balcony or flat roof on a large building again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The last part of the second scene gives background information about the temple. The temple is filled with men and women, and there are also 3,000 men and women on the roof of the temple. Remember, the Philistine rulers are also all there. The temple and the roof of the temple are very crowded.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story that includes some background information about the place where the story happens. Pay attention to how you tell this additional information. How will you translate this background information about the temple in your language? Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Samson prays to Yahweh for strength one last time. Remember that Samson calls Yahweh "Lord Yahweh," which shows that Samson wants Yahweh to remember his promises to Israel. Samson's prayer is all about Samson and what Samson needs. Samson wants to pay back the Philistines for how the Philistines took Samson's two eyes.

Samson pushes each of his hands against one of the two pillars of the temple. Samson says, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Samson stretches out Samson's hands and pushes hard. Samson pushes so hard that the entire temple falls down! Remember that the temple is very overcrowded with 3,000 people on the roof, and this already makes the pillars have extra pressure on them. This extra pressure would also make it more difficult for the pillars to fall down. However, Yahweh answers Samson's prayer and gives Samson the strength to be able to push down the pillars. Everyone in the temple dies, which includes Samson and all the Philistine rulers. Everyone on the roof of the temple dies too.

Remember that this part when Samson pulls down the temple is the most important part of this passage. Yahweh is victorious over Dagon, and Samson is victorious over the Philistines, even in Samson's death.

The final part of the third scene says that Samson killed more people in Samson's death than in Samson's life. This is background information that shows Samson's final victory hurt the Philistines a lot. It also shows that Samson did not live Samson's life to follow Yahweh, but at the end, Samson did do what Yahweh intended for Samson—Samson started to save Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate this background information that Samson killed more people when Samson died than when Samson was alive? Pause this audio here.

In the fourth scene, Samson's brothers and all of his father's household come to Gaza to take Samson's body back home to bury Samson. Remember, "Samson's father's household" means all the people who live in Samson's father's house. Remember also that Gaza is about 70 kilometers from Samson's home between Zorah and Eshtaol. Remember that Samson's father, Manoah, already died. The people bury Samson in the tomb of his father Manoah.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Zorah, Eshtaol, and Gaza, and also a picture of a tomb, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The fifth scene is the final information or summary of Samson's time as judge of Israel. The scene says that Samson served as Israel's judge for 20 years. We saw similar information about the start of Samson's 20-year rule as Israel's judge when Samson killed the Philistines at Lehi. Now, this is the end of Samson's time as Israel's judge. Samson's time as judge ends when Samson dies, but Samson also kills many Philistines with Samson. Remember, even though this is the end of Samson's story, Samson only started to save Israel from the rule of the Philistines. Others will finish that story.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:23–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The rulers of the Philistines
- Samson
- A young man to help Samson
- Three thousand Philistines on the roof of the temple
- Yahweh
- And Samson's brothers and Samson's father's household

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The rulers of the Philistines gather together. The rulers give a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, and the rulers celebrate because they say their god has handed the Philistines' enemy, Samson, over to them. The rulers praise their god because they say Dagon gave them their enemy, Samson. Samson was the one who ruined the Philistines' land and killed many of the Philistine people.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the rulers of the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel glad that we finally captured our enemy, Samson! or
- We celebrate the great victory of our god, Dagon, because this shows that Dagon is greater than Samson and Samson's god, since we captured Samson; or
- We feel like we can finally have justice after Samson ruined our land and killed our people.

The Philistines start to really celebrate, and then the Philistines call for Samson to come entertain them. The Philistines bring Samson out of the prison, and Samson entertains the Philistines. The Philistines make Samson stand between the two pillars of the temple where the Philistines are.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the rulers of the Philistines, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are ready to laugh at Samson and mock Samson. Samson cannot hurt us now! or
- We enjoy that now Samson is blind and weak, and that Samson cannot hurt us anymore; or
- We are ready to celebrate even more and enjoy this great victory of our god Dagon over our enemy Samson.

Also, ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel humiliated because I must stand here helpless and blind in front of the Philistines; or
- I wish that I was strong again; or
- I wonder if there is anything I can do to pay the Philistines back for how they took my eyes, humiliated me, and put me in prison; or
- I feel angry that the Philistines make me entertain them.

Samson tells the young boy who helps Samson, "Put me next to the two pillars that support the temple. I want to lean on the pillars." The boy puts Samson next to the two pillars. The temple is full of people, which includes the rulers of the Philistines. Three thousand people are also on the roof of the temple, and these people look down on Samson below.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the 3,000 Philistines on the roof of the temple, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel excited to finally see Samson, our greatest enemy! or
- Samson is not so strong and powerful now, is he? or
- We want to get closer so we can see Samson better.

Also, ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel tired and need to rest, so I will lean on these pillars; or
- I feel embarrassed by how I stand here in front of the Philistines so they can laugh at me; or
- I am glad that this young boy helps me, because I cannot see anything and I am completely helpless.

Samson prays to Yahweh to ask Yahweh to strengthen Samson one last time. Samson wants to pay back the Philistines for how the Philistines took Samson's two eyes from Samson. Samson takes hold of the two pillars that hold up the temple and Samson pushes against the pillars. Samson says, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then Samson pushes hard and the temple collapses on Samson. Samson dies, and all of the rulers of the Philistines, the people on the roof of the temple, and the people in the temple die too. Samson kills more people when Samson dies than Samson had killed when Samson was alive.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Samson, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel grateful that Yahweh listened to my prayer so I could have revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes that the Philistines took from me; or
- I knew that I did not deserve Yahweh to answer my prayer, but I am glad that Yahweh strengthened me one more time; or
- I feel thankful that Yahweh listened to me and answered my prayer so I had the strength to pull the temple down on all the Philistines.

Also, ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel happy to answer Samson's prayer to kill the Philistines. This is what Samson's purpose has been his whole life; or
- I wish Samson saw the larger story about my work to save Israel from the rule of the Philistines; or
- I will now wait for someone else to come finish saving Israel from the rule of the Philistines.

Also, ask the people who play the rulers of the Philistines and the 3,000 Philistines on the roof of the temple, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- How is Samson so strong again? I thought Samson lost his strength already! or
- What is happening? This is impossible. No man could pull down this large temple! or
- If Samson can destroy the temple of our god Dagon, maybe Dagon is not more powerful than Samson and Samson's people after all.

Samson's brothers and Samson's father's household come to Gaza and get Samson's body. These people bring Samson's body back to bury Samson between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Samson's father, Manoah. Samson was the judge of Israel for 20 years.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play Samson's brothers and Samson's father's household, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Finally Samson is home and at rest with Samson's family; or
- We feel glad to hear that Samson killed many Philistines when Samson died; or
- We wonder what will happen to our people of Israel now that Samson is dead. Samson was Israel's leader for 20 years.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 16:23–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The rulers of the Philistines are probably all of the leaders from the different Philistine cities.

The rulers of the Philistines offer a great **sacrifice** to their **god**, Dagon, because the Philistines believe Dagon helped the Philistines capture Samson. A sacrifice is a gift people give to their gods to thank the gods or worship the gods. Sometimes people kill an animal, and then burn the animal on an altar for the peoples' gods. Other

times, people offer gifts of food, spices, or oil to a god. Translate sacrifice and god the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on sacrifice and god, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Philistines call for Samson to come entertain the Philistines. The Philistines make Samson stand between two pillars. These are the two central **pillars** that hold up the entire **temple**. People used pillars to support a building or a temple. People often created pillars to worship their gods, and in some passages, the Israelites even set up pillars, or piles of stones, to worship Yahweh. People also might put images of their gods on the pillars. A temple is a place where people worship their gods. Translate temple the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on temple, refer to the Master Glossary. The temple in this passage is not the temple to Yahweh.

Stop here and look at a picture of a pillar again as a group, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Also stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you translate the word **pillar**? Pause this audio here.

Samson prays to Yahweh to strengthen Samson one more time. Samson calls Yahweh, "**Lord or Sovereign Yahweh**." Lord can mean almighty, sovereign, or master. Translate Yahweh and Lord or Sovereign in the same way as you have in previous passages. For more information, refer to Yahweh, Lord, and sovereign in the Master Glossary.

Samson also calls Yahweh the general name for **God**. Translate God the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on God, refer to the Master Glossary.

Samson wants **revenge** on the Philistines for Samson's two eyes that the Philistines took from Samson. In other words, Samson wants to pay back the Philistines for something the Philistines did to Samson in the past. Translate revenge the same as you have in previous passages.

Samson's brothers and all of Samson's father's **household** come to Gaza to bring back Samson's body. The household is all of the people who live in a house together. A household could include a man's wife, unmarried children, married sons and their families, other relatives, and servants. Translate household the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on household, refer to the Master Glossary.

Samson's family takes Samson's body back to bury him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the **tomb** of Samson's father, Manoah. A tomb is a place where people bury a dead person. A tomb could be a cave in a rock, or a hole people cut out of a rock. Translate tomb the same as you have in previous passages. For more information on tomb, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Zorah, Eshtaol, and Gaza, and also a picture of a tomb, if needed.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 16:23–31

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (20926496 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (31947886 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 17:1–13

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 17:1–13 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 17:1–13 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.

5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 17:1–13 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This story happens during the time of the judges, when the Israelites destroyed themselves as they disobeyed Yahweh. An Israelite man named Micah tries to serve Yahweh, but not in the way Yahweh has told the Israelites to serve Yahweh. Instead, Micah follows the example of other nations. Micah makes an idol and hires a priest for Micah's own household. Even though Micah disobeys Yahweh, Micah expects Yahweh to bless Micah. Micah, like the other Israelites, does whatever Micah thinks is right, not what Yahweh has declared to be right.

Micah is an Israelite who lives in the hilly country of the Ephraimites. As the head of the household, Micah would be in charge to take care of his mother, his children, and any servants. Micah has stolen 1,100 pieces of silver from Micah's mother. Micah's mother curses the thief, or wishes something bad to happen to the thief. Micah's mother does not know the thief was Micah. Micah is afraid of the curse, and Micah confesses to his mother and says that Micah will return the silver. When Micah's mother hears this, Micah's mother asks Yahweh to bless Micah and to undo the effects of the curse.

Micah returns the silver to Micah's mother, and Micah's mother solemnly consecrates or dedicates the money to Yahweh. Micah's mother wants her son Micah to pay someone to make a carved idol and a metal idol. Idols are objects people make in order to worship a god. Micah's mother thinks that if she does this, Micah's mother will honor Yahweh with the silver. Even though Yahweh had forbidden the Israelites to make idols, the Israelites often made idols in this time.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when someone dedicated or promised money to a god or a person. How did that person show that the money was for that god or person? How did that person choose what to use the money for? Pause this audio here.

So after Micah returns the silver, Micah's mother takes 200 pieces of silver to a silversmith, a man who shapes silver into things like jewelry. Micah's mother hires the silversmith to make a carved idol covered in silver and a solid metal idol. Micah's mother does not use all the silver to make the idols. It is possible Micah's mother used the rest of the silver to continue to buy offerings or hire someone to take care of the idol to maintain it. It is also possible that Micah's mother did not fulfill her promise to dedicate all the silver to Yahweh. When the silversmith finishes his work to make the idols, Micah's mother places the idols in Micah's house.

Micah already has a shrine, a place where people kept and worshiped idols. In that shrine, Micah has an ephod, which are clothes for a priest. It may have been like the ephod for the priests at the tabernacle, which was like an apron of special fabric and colorful threads. Priests wore the ephod when they asked God for guidance or reassurance about the future. Sometimes people so closely associated these clothes with God that the people worshiped the ephod as well.

Micah also had small household gods, or little idols for a family to worship and which people thought brought luck and prosperity to a family. The idols Micah's mother made would probably be larger and grander than those. To take care of the idols, Micah ordains or appoints Micah's son to be a priest. Micah's son would lead the other members of the household to worship the idol. The family would do rituals, burn offerings, and pray to the idol.

Stop here and look at a picture of the small household gods and idols as a group. Describe the idols or religious images of the religions in your area. How do they look similar or different from the idols in this picture? Discuss what words you would use to describe the idols in the picture. Pause this audio here.

To have a special shrine like this, Micah was probably a wealthy man. Micah could afford to travel to the tabernacle, which was not far from Micah, to learn how to correctly worship Yahweh. However, Micah follows

the example of the Canaanite people. Micah does not learn the difference between Yahweh and other gods. Like Micah, the other Israelites ignored Yahweh, their ruler. Since the Israelites had no human king to lead them to serve Yahweh, everyone did whatever they wanted to do, just like the Canaanites around them.

Stop here and look at a map of the hill country of Ephraim as a group. Find Shiloh, where Yahweh's tabernacle is. Pause this audio here.

Now another character enters the story. This character is a young man who lived in Bethlehem, a town which belonged to the people of Judah. This young man was a Levite who temporarily lived among the people of Judah. Levites were members of the Israelite tribe of Levi, and Levites were supposed to serve Yahweh. Levites who were not descendants of Aaron helped the priests in the priests' duties in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. Levites could leave their hometowns and go serve in God's tabernacle, but this Levite does not do this. This Levite leaves Bethlehem and goes to look for a new place to live. While the Levite travels, the Levite comes to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim. When Micah asks where the Levite is from, the Levite answers that he is a Levite from Bethlehem and he looks for a place to stay.

Micah wants to make his personal shrine more legitimate, so Micah invites the Levite to live with Micah and be Micah's priest. Micah says that the Levite will be Micah's father, which is an honorable title people would give to a priest. Micah means that this Levite will be a fatherly friend and spiritual adviser to Micah. Micah promises to pay the Levite 10 pieces of silver each year and to provide food and clothes for the Levite.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what do you call people who are wise or give good advice? How do you show that you respect these people and will listen to them? Pause this audio here.

The Levite agrees, and the Levite stays with Micah. Micah treats the Levite like Micah treats his own sons. Micah ordains the Levite as Micah's priest. Only descendants of Aaron were supposed to be priests, and other Levites were assistants to the priests. This Levite probably was not a descendant of Aaron, and Micah definitely does not have the authority to ordain this Levite.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In the religions around you, how do you choose priests or leaders? Who decides who can be a religious leader? What kinds of people cannot be leaders? Pause this audio here.

However, Micah is pleased that Micah now has this Levite as Micah's priest, and Micah says that surely Yahweh will be good to Micah, since Micah has a Levite priest! Just like Micah assumes that an idol that a person creates can represent Yahweh, Micah also thinks Micah can guarantee that Yahweh will be good to Micah because Micah buys the right priest.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 17:1–13 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: Micah confesses that Micah stole silver from his mother, and Micah's mother blesses Micah because Micah admits it.

In the second scene: When Micah returns the silver, Micah's mother consecrates the silver to Yahweh and pays a silversmith to make two idols. Micah's mother puts the idols in Micah's shrine.

In the third scene: A Levite leaves Bethlehem to look for a new place to stay. Micah invites the Levite to live with Micah and become Micah's priest. The Levite agrees.

In the fourth scene: Micah appoints the Levite to be a priest, and Micah treats the Levite like Micah's own son. Micah declares that because Micah has a Levite priest, Yahweh will bless Micah.

The characters in this passage are:

- Micah
- Micah's mother
- Yahweh
- The silversmith
- Micah's son
- And the Levite

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

This story happens during the time when the Israelites rebelled and Yahweh sent judges, but this story does not necessarily happen right after the last story. Micah's story is an example of how the Israelites constantly serve idols instead of Yahweh. The Israelites' actions cause conflict with each other and attacks from other nations.

Micah is likely a wealthy man. Micah is the head of a household of people who live in the hill country of Ephraim. This area is a central, important place near where the tabernacle is located. Micah is not far from people who can teach Micah the right way to serve Yahweh. But Micah does not try to learn. Instead, Micah chooses to act in the way Micah wants, instead of the way Yahweh wants.

Before the story begins, Micah steals 1,100 pieces of silver, which is close to 13 kilograms of silver, from his mother. When Micah's mother discovers that the silver is gone, Micah's mother is upset and curses the thief. Micah hears this and is afraid, so in the first scene, Micah confesses what he did to his mother. To stop the effects of the curse, Micah's mother asks Yahweh to bless her son Micah.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what do people believe about blessings and curses? How do people bless or curse each other? What are the effects of these blessings or curses? Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, Micah returns the silver, and Micah's mother consecrates, or dedicates, the silver. Micah's mother declares that she solemnly dedicates the silver to Yahweh. But Micah's mother does not give the silver to the priests at the tabernacle. Instead, Micah's mother chooses to pay a silversmith to make two idols. Micah's mother gives Micah 200 pieces of the silver, and she may use the rest of the silver to make offerings and to take care of the idols. When the silversmith finishes the idols, probably Micah and his mother put the idols in Micah's house, in Micah's shrine.

This shrine may be a separate structure or a part of Micah's own house. Inside the shrine are some small household gods. To take care of the shrine, Micah had appointed his son as a priest and made special clothes for his son called an ephod. Micah's son probably offered incense, made requests, and offered thanksgiving offerings to both Yahweh and these household gods.

Stop here and look at a picture of an ephod as a group. Pause this audio here.

This section ends with a phrase that we hear several times in the last few stories in Judges. In that time, Israel had no king, so everyone did what was right in their own eyes, or what they wanted to. This is a way for the storyteller to state the big problem in the nation of Israel. The Israelites do not accept Yahweh as their king. The judges solve disputes and give guidance, but the judges do not rule the people. The judges are not able to lead all the people to serve Yahweh. In everything, even their religious practices, the Israelites ignore Yahweh's teachings and act in any way that seems right to them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about a problem or conflict in your community, then tell a story that shows an example of the effect that problem creates. Pay attention to how and when you state the problem and how it connects to the story. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, Micah meets a Levite. This Levite lived in Bethlehem, a town in Judah that was south of where Micah lived. This Levite leaves his home and looks for a new place to live. While this Levite travels through the

hill country of Ephraim, the Levite passes by Micah's house. Micah stops the Levite and asks the Levite where the Levite comes from. The Levite introduces himself and lets Micah know that the Levite looks for a place to stay.

When Micah hears that this man is a Levite, Micah asks the Levite to stay and live with Micah. Micah offers the Levite a job as a priest. Micah asks the Levite to be a father or a spiritual advisor to Micah. Micah promises to provide payment, food, and clothes to the Levite. Micah assumes that this is what would please Yahweh, but Micah does not actually ask Yahweh. The Levite agrees to the job Micah offers the Levite.

In the fourth scene, the Levite moves into Micah's house. Micah appoints the Levite as a priest. The Levite probably replaces Micah's own son as Micah's priest. In religious matters, the Levite gives guidance like a father to Micah, while in household matters, Micah provides like a father for the Levite. Micah now expects Yahweh to bless Micah, since Micah believes he did a proper thing when he appointed this Levite to be Micah's priest.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 17:1–13 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Micah
- Micah's mother
- Yahweh
- The silversmith
- Micah's son
- And the Levite

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

There was a man whose name was Micah. Micah was from the hill country of the Ephraimites. Micah said to his mother, "Someone stole 1,100 pieces of silver from you. You cursed the person who did this, and I heard you. I am the one who stole the silver, and I still have the silver."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Micah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want the silver my mother has. I already provide for my mother as the head of the household. What does my mother need all that silver for? I could use the silver better than my mother could! or
- When I heard my mother curse whoever stole her silver, I felt afraid. I do not want that curse to happen to me! I hope if I return the silver, the curse will not affect me; or
- I am embarrassed to have to admit that I stole the silver, but I am more afraid of the curse than the embarrassment!

Micah's mother said, "My son, may Yahweh bless you because you have told me what you did."

Then Micah gave the silver back to Micah's mother.

Micah's mother said, "I give this money to Yahweh so that my son can use it to make a carved statue and a metal statue. And so I will give the money back to you, my son."

So after Micah returned the silver to his mother, Micah's mother took two hundred pieces of the silver and gave those silver pieces to a man who works with precious metals. This man used the silver to make a metal idol and the covering for a carved idol. Then Micah and his mother placed the idols in Micah's house.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the mother, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so relieved to have my silver back that I will dedicate the silver to Yahweh as a thankful offering; or
- I am sure Yahweh will be pleased if I make an idol to worship Yahweh with. That is what other people do when they want to honor their gods! or
- I would not want to curse my own son! I care for my son, and my son takes care of me! I will bless my son to counter the curse. That way maybe nothing bad will happen to my son.

Micah had a special room for worship to the gods. Micah made some small statues of gods for Micah's family, and Micah made special priest's clothing. Micah appointed one of Micah's sons to serve as Micah's priest.

There was no king in Israel at that time and each person did whatever that person wanted to do.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It makes me so sad to see the people spend time and money to build shrines and idols when I have already given the people a good place and way to worship me! or
- I am angry that people assume that they know how to serve me in a way that is better than the way I have given them; or
- The Israelites think they can create idols and rituals to guarantee that they will have a good life. The Israelites think they can control me like other gods. This is an ignorant and dangerous way for the Israelites to live.

There was a young man from the tribe of Levi. This young man lived in the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judah. This young man lived among people of the Judah clan even though he was a Levite. One day, this young man left Bethlehem and went to look for a new place to live. While this young man traveled, he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim.

Micah asked this young Levite man, "Where do you come from?"

The Levite man answered, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I look for a place to live."

Micah said, "Stay here with me. Give me advice like a father and be my priest. I will pay you 10 pieces of silver every year, and I will give you clothes and food."

The Levite answered, "I will live with you."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not want to go to the tabernacle to find work or a place to live. I will not follow the rules of the priests and other Levites. Instead, I will find something that I would want to do; or
- This sounds like a good job! I will be able to live in comfort and be important! I am excited to accept Micah's offer; or
- I do not care about the ways or traditions of my people, the Levites. I am pretty sure I know the best way to live and act.

So the Levite became like one of Micah's own sons and lived with Micah's family. Micah appointed the Levite to be Micah's priest.

Then Micah said, "I am sure that Yahweh will bless me now that I have a Levite to be my priest."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Micah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Wow, even though I did have to confess that I stole the silver, this has all worked out very well for me! I have new fancy idols and a Levite priest to bring importance to me and my household! or
- I do remember something about how Yahweh likes Levite priests. I definitely pleased Yahweh when I hired a Levite, so now Yahweh must bless me! or
- I feel very happy and content with how I have arranged things. I was very smart when I thought to hire this Levite. Now Yahweh will bless me, all because I have done such clever things!

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 17:1–13 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Micah hears his mother **curse** whoever stole her silver. When you curse someone, you wish that something bad will happen to that person. People believed that a curse would come true. If someone cursed another person, that other person would become very afraid. For more information on curse, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for curse as you used in previous passages.

Micah confesses that Micah stole 1,100 pieces of silver from Micah's mother. Some translations say silver **shekels**, which is a weight measurement of about 11 grams. If you use the word shekels, use the same word for shekels as you have used in previous passages, and remember that shekels is in the Master Glossary.

When Micah returns the silver, Micah's mother asks **Yahweh** to bless Micah. Yahweh is God's proper name. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

To **bless** someone means to pray that God will do good things for this other person. For more information on bless, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for bless as you used in previous passages.

Micah's mother declares that she will **consecrate** the silver to Yahweh. To consecrate means to make or dedicate something or someone as holy and set apart for God.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **consecrate**. Look up consecrate in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Micah's mother gives some of the silver to a silversmith to make two **images**, or **idols**. An idol is an object that people make in order to worship a god. The object reminds the people about some characteristics of this god. People make an object—an image—of a god and worship that object as if it is that god. This object could look like a person, or like an animal, or just have any shape. God told the Israelites in God's commandments to never make these kinds of images and to never worship these kinds of images. Micah has small household gods or idols, which people thought made a family lucky and prosperous.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **idol** or **image**. Look up idol in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

A **silversmith** is a man who shapes silver into objects like jewelry.

Micah puts the idols in Micah's house, in Micah's **shrine**. A shrine is a special room or area where people can worship gods.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **shrine**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

In his shrine, Micah has an **ephod**. An ephod is a piece of clothing for priests. Ephods were often highly decorated. Yahweh gave specific instructions for how people were to make ephods for Yahweh's priests. The ephod clothing for Yahweh's priests covered a priest's body from his shoulders down to his thighs, with two shoulder pieces or straps. Micah could have copied the ephods that Yahweh's priests wore, or Micah could have made an ephod in a different style. Sometimes, because the ephod was such a special piece of clothing, people worshiped the ephod like it was a god. For more information on ephod, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for ephod as you used in previous passages.

First, Micah **ordains** Micah's son as Micah's priest, and later, Micah ordains the Levite as Micah's priest. To ordain means to officially dedicate or make someone a priest.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **ordain**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

A **priest** was a person who served a god. Priests presented offerings and prayers on behalf of other people. Yahweh had priests to work in the tabernacle and to serve Yahweh in a specific way. The people who lived in the countries that surrounded Israel also had people who served their gods. People also called those people priests. Micah's son and the Levite did not serve Yahweh in the way Yahweh had said to serve, so Micah's son and this Levite were not Yahweh's priests.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **priest**. Look up priest in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

A **Levite** leaves Bethlehem and looks for a new place to live. Levites were descendants of Jacob's son Levi, and Levites were supposed to serve Yahweh. Yahweh's priests were Levites who were descendants of Aaron. Levites who were not descendants of Aaron helped the priests in the priests' duties.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **Levite**. Look up Levite in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 17:1–13

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 18:1–10

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 18:1–10 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:1–10 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This story continues from the last section, and it adds a new group of characters who are the people of the Israelite tribe of Dan. The Danites are unable to conquer the land that Yahweh had given to them, so the Danites look for a new place to live. As a small group of Danite men search for new land, the men travel by Micah's house and meet Micah's Levite priest. After the Danite men find a wealthy city in the north, the men return home and urge their people to attack this city. Like Micah, the Danites seek Yahweh incorrectly. The Danites assume Yahweh will bless and help the Danites do whatever the Danites want.

The Danites have trouble with their land. Earlier, the Israelite leaders had divided up the land between each of the tribes. This was their inheritance, or their rightful possession from Yahweh. The Israelite leaders had assigned land to the tribe of Dan, but the Danites could not fully defeat the Canaanite people who currently lived in that land. These Danites do not trust Yahweh or ask Yahweh for help. The Danites do not even ask for help from other Israelites. Instead, the Danites decide to search for land that is easier to take over. Just like Micah in the last section, the Danites do not seek Yahweh's guidance, nor do the Danites have a human king to help them.

The Danites choose five capable and strong men from Zorah and Eshtaol, two of the towns the Danites currently live in. Since the Danite's assigned land is in the middle of other Israelite tribes' lands, the Danites start to head north to find land outside Israel's border. As the Danites travel, they go through the hill country of the tribe of Ephraim and come to Micah's house. The Danites do not specifically plan to go to Micah's house, but Micah's house appears to be on the men's route. As the men pass by Micah's house, the men hear and recognize the way the Levite talks. The Levite may have sounded different than the Ephraimites. Maybe the Levite had a southern or Judean accent, or the men may have met this Levite before.

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find the Danite's assigned land, and the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol. Find the hill country of Ephraim. Pause this audio here.

The five Danite men feel curious, so the men ask the Levite what the Levite does and who brought the Levite here. The Levite tells his story and explains that Micah hired the Levite as Micah's priest.

The five Danite men want all the help they can get, so the men ask the Levite to ask God if God will make the men's mission to find a new land successful. Note that the men do not use God's personal name, Yahweh. The men may also ask the Levite to check with the household gods, which were in Micah's shrine.

The writer does not mention that the Levite talks with Yahweh. This may mean that the Levite did not ask Yahweh or any other gods. The Levite may just tell the Danites to go with peace and to continue on their journey without any worry. The Levite says vaguely that Yahweh will be with the men on their journey. The Levite may not specifically answer the men's question.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: People used the phrase "go in peace" both as a goodbye and a reassurance not to fear or worry. In your culture, what kind of phrases do you use for reassurances or goodbyes? Pause this audio here.

The Danite men spend the night at Micah's house and then continue on their journey. Eventually, the men come to the edge of the Israelite land, to the Canaanite town of Laish. People also called this town Leshem, and it was a wealthy town at the source waters of the Jordan River. The people who lived in this town were peaceful and safe, like in the wealthy town of Sidon. The people of Laish may have had connections with Sidon, but they lived far from Sidon and had no other allies who could help them if someone attacked Laish. No other groups attacked or bothered the Sidonians, so the people of Laish were not worried and did not watch for enemies. The five Danite men decide that this is the perfect place for their people.

Stop here and look at the map of Israel as a group. Find Laish and Sidon on the map. Pause this audio here.

When the men return to their people at Zorah and Eshtaol, the other Danites ask the explorers what the explorers found. The five men begin to describe Laish. They urge the Danites not to hesitate, but to attack the city, because the land is good. This land will have everything they need! The people in Laish do not expect any attacks, so they will be easy to defeat. Because the city looks like an easy target, the Danites assume that God gives them this land. Again, they use a more general word for God instead of Yahweh's name. And again, they do not actually ask Yahweh if this is what Yahweh wants them to do.

Rather than seek Yahweh's help or follow Yahweh's guidance, the Danites try to control their own future. The Danites go find other land that is easier to take over, instead of the inheritance Yahweh has given to the Danites. The Danites think they can handle their lives better when they disobey Yahweh than if they follow Yahweh.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: When the Danites give up trying to take over their allotted land, they decide to search for somewhere else to live. The Danites choose five capable men, and they send these men to explore the land and find a good place.

In the second scene: On their way, the five Danite men meet the Levite priest at Micah's house. The men ask the Levite to ask God if their mission will be successful. The Levite quickly responds that the men do not need to worry and that Yahweh will be with the men. The Danite men spend the night at Micah's house.

In the third scene: The Danite men come to Laish and find that the town is in a good area and the wealthy people are not prepared to defend themselves.

In the fourth scene: The five Danite men return home and their people ask the men what the men found. The five men urge their tribe to go attack Laish. The men say it is a good land, and since it looks easy to take over, God must want to give this land to the Danites.

The characters in this passage are:

- The tribe of Danites
- The five Danite men or spies
- Micah
- Micah's Levite priest
- The people of Laish
- And the people of Sidon

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In the first scene, the Danites decide to search for a new land. This section begins with a shorter version of the last section's key idea: In that time, the Israelites had no king. Though the Danites are the main characters in this section, this phrase shows that this section is still part of the same story as the last section. This phrase is a reminder that this story shows how the Israelites do whatever they want without a strong leader to unite the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about stories in a series, or stories that have a lot of characters to introduce. If you tell a story like that, how would you show that each part is still a part of the same big story? What kind of phrases or ways to speak do you use to remind your listener that these characters or events are connected? Pause this audio here.

The Danites have decided that their assigned land is too hard to take over. Some English translations say that no inheritance had fallen to them. This probably means that the Danites had not been able to take over their inheritance, which is the land that God had given the Danites. The Danites' land is in the middle of the Israelite land. The people groups who live there have fought back against the Danites. The Danites only have a few mountain towns, which is not all the room they want. The Danites give up hope that they will be able to control their land and decide to find new land in the north. The Danites pick five capable men from Zorah and Eshtaol, two of the towns that the Danites own and live in. The Danites tell the men to go spy out or explore the land and find a good place for the Danites to live. The five men leave and head north.

In the second scene, the five men travel and come to Micah's house. Micah's house is probably on a main travel route, since both the five Danite men and the Levite came to it as they traveled. When the men hear the Levite talk, the men recognize the Levite's voice or his accent. The men are curious why the Levite is here, so the men ask the Levite what the Levite does, why he is here, and if someone brought him here. Here, the author does not tell the Levite's story again, but instead sums up what the Levite said with a phrase that means that the Levite explains his situation.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you tell a story, and someone in your story tells information that your listeners already know, how do you explain this in a way that you do not have to repeat yourself? What kind of phrases do you use? Pause this audio here.

Now, after they have already started their journey, the Danites stop to ask God about their journey. The men ask the Levite to speak to God because the men probably know that Levites and priests are supposed to have a special connection with God. The men only ask if their trip will be successful. The men do not state exactly which god they want the Levite to ask.

The Levite does not seem to actually pray or do any rituals to ask the other gods. The Levite says that the Danites should continue without worry. Yahweh will be with the men as they travel, and Yahweh approves. The five men stay the night at Micah's house.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In the original language, the author says that the Danites stayed the night at Micah's house, and then the author explains why the men stopped at Micah's house. As an activity, announce that you are about to tell a story about an event, and then explain how and why that event happened. Discuss if that is ever something you would do in the middle of a story in the way your culture tells stories. Discuss how you want to arrange this section of the story. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, the five men continue to travel until they come to Laish, which they find is a good place to live. The city is just outside the northern edge of the Israelite land. The people there are wealthy and live there safely. Since the people of Laish are not worried about attacks, the people have not made alliances or agreements with any other peoples in case of trouble. Though Laish is far from the city of Sidon, the author compares the good way the people live in Laish to how the Sidonians live in their wealthy town. The people of Laish are able to get all they need from the land around them.

In the fourth scene, the five men return to their people because the men have found a new place for the Danites to live. When the five men arrive back in Zorah and Eshtaol, the people ask the men what the men found. The five men respond that the Danites should go attack Laish now! The men try to get the people excited. The men describe how good the land is and urge the people not to hesitate. The people of Laish do not watch for attacks, so this will be an easy win! Unlike here in Zorah and Eshtaol, the Danites will have plenty of room in Laish. God has given us this land, the men say! This is a land that has everything the Danites will need!

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, tell the group about a beautiful or fun place to visit. Try to convince your group that they should visit this place soon. Pay attention to the phrases the speaker uses or the ways they try to get the group excited about this place. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The tribe of Danites
- The five Danite men or spies
- Micah
- Micah's Levite priest
- The people of Laish
- And the people of Sidon

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Israel did not have a king at that time, and the tribe of Dan still tried to find their own place to live. The Danites had not been able to conquer the land that would be their inheritance among the other tribes of Israel.

So the people of Dan chose five capable men to look for a new land. These men were from the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, and these men represented all of the people of Dan. These men went ahead as spies to explore the land and find a place to live. The people told these men, "Go explore the land."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Danites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The people in this land are too strong for us! I do not think we will ever be able to beat them. I am confused why God would give us land we will never be able to conquer; or
- I am tired of fighting to take over this land. I would rather find somewhere else, where the people are not so strong, but the land is still good; or
- I am embarrassed that we have not been able to take over our assigned land. Surely the other tribes would laugh at us if we asked them for help! We will just figure this out on our own instead.

These five Danite men traveled to the hills of the clan of Ephraim. When the men came to Micah's house, the men stopped there to spend the night. The men stopped there because when they were near Micah's house, they heard the accent of the young Levite. The men knew that the Levite was from the south, just like these men were.

The men went over and asked the Levite, "Who helped you get here? What are you doing here? Why do you live here?"

So the Levite told the men about his agreement with Micah. The Levite said, "Micah has hired me and I am his priest."

Then the men asked the Levite, "Please ask God for us to see if our mission will be a success."

The priest told the men, "Go on your way in peace. Yahweh approves of your mission."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the five men, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I have been worried about our people, since we do not have enough room to live. I will do everything I can to find a safe place for our people to live; or
- This is convenient! We do not even have to go anywhere special to ask for help from God! or
- I was so surprised to hear the familiar accent of the Levite man here in Ephraim! I guess we are not the only people who look for new places to live.

Ask the person who plays the Levite, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Even people from other tribes ask me for advice and guidance. This makes me feel important and happy; or
- I will just tell these men what they want to hear. It is not like any of these idols respond when I pray to them anyway; or
- I have enjoyed talking to these men. I like these men and want to encourage them, so I will act like their priest, even though I am Micah's priest, not theirs.

So the five men left Micah's house and went to the town of Laish. The men saw that the people who lived in Laish were safe from attack. Just like the people of Sidon lived in peace and security, so did the people of Laish. The people of Laish had all they needed, because their land was good. Also, the people of Laish lived far away from Sidon and had no alliances with any other town.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of Laish, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- There is no reason to have any guard or watchmen to look out for trouble. It has been so long since anyone has bothered us that we are not even worried about attacks! or
- We already get all that we need from the good land we live on. We do not need to make alliances with other towns for protection or trade. We do not need anyone else's help.

When the five men returned to Zorah and Eshtaol, the people of Dan asked the men, "What did you learn?"

The men answered, "We should attack them! We saw how good the land is. Do not wait any longer! Go attack them and take the land. You will find people who do not expect to be attacked. The land is large, and God gives it to us. The land has everything we will want or need."

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the five men, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- When I saw the land of Laish, I was so excited! I know this will be a good place for our people. I already think about where I want my new house to be in this new land! or
- We have to get our relatives and fellow Danites excited about this new land. It is hard to get a big group of people to move if they are not excited. I will say whatever I can to rouse the people, because I really want to live in this new land; or
- The city of Laish is such a good spot that someone else may come first and take it over before we do. We need to move fast so we do not lose our opportunity!

Ask the person who plays the Danites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am glad that the explorers not only returned safely, but that they have good news to share with us! or
- I am worried about this new place. It may be just as hard to take over as the land we are in now. It would be horrible if we traveled all the way up there only to fail again; or
- This is a big decision, to move our people up north. I think we should take some time to think it over, but these men say we need to move quickly. I do feel assured that a Levite priest has told us that God gives us this land.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

This story starts with, "In those days, **Israel** did not have a **king**." Use the same words for Israel and king as you have used in previous passages, and refer to Israel and king in the Master Glossary for more information.

The tribe of Dan, or Danites, have been unable to conquer their **inheritance**. Normally, an inheritance is the possessions and land a person gives to their children after the person's death. The land of Israel is the Israelites' inheritance from God, though God still lives and owns the land. God has allowed the Israelites, his children, to live in this land, and God requires the Israelites to obey and serve him in order to keep the land. Use the same word or phrase for inheritance as you used in previous passages.

The Danites send five men to **spy** out the land, or to explore, gather information, and find places that the Danites could easily conquer. Use the same words for spy as you have used in previous passages.

The five Danite men who explore the land stop at Micah's house when they hear the **Levite's** accent. Levites were descendants of Levi and they were supposed to serve Yahweh. For more information on Levite, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Levite as you used in previous passages.

When the men ask the Levite why he is here, the Levite tells the men how Micah hired the Levite as his **priest**. A priest is a person who serves a god. A priest presents offerings and prayers on behalf of other people. Yahweh had priests to work in the tabernacle and to serve Yahweh in a specific way. The Levite did not serve Yahweh in the way Yahweh had said to, so the Levite was not Yahweh's priest. For more information on priest, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for priest as you used in previous passages.

The five men ask the Levite to ask **God** if their journey will be successful. Instead of "Yahweh," God's personal name, the men use a general word for God, which could refer to other gods. Again, later, when the men speak to their people, they say that God has given the town of Laish to them. For more information on God or gods, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for God as you used in previous passages.

The Levite tells the men to **go in peace**. This phrase was often a blessing, a goodbye, and a reassurance. Here, the Levite uses this phrase to encourage the men to continue on their journey and not to worry.

Stop here and discuss as a group what phrase you will use for "go in peace." Look up go in peace in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this phrase in another book of the Bible, use the same phrase that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Levite says that the five men should not worry because **Yahweh** will be with the men as they travel. Yahweh is God's proper name. This is the only time Yahweh is used in this passage. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

When the five men returned back to Zorah and Eshtaol, their **brothers**, or fellow Danites, asked the men what they found. Storytellers sometimes use the term brothers to talk about fellow Israelites or men from the same tribe, even though they are not brothers from the same father and mother.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will translate "fellow Danites," or brothers.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 18:1–10

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 18:11–21

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 18:11–21 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:11–21 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

Six hundred Danite men and their families set out for the land the five explorers found in the last section. On their way north, the people travel by Micah's house and steal Micah's idols, and the people convince the Levite priest to join them as well. Like Micah and other Israelites at this time, the Danites think that they can get God to bless them just because they own religious items or do various rituals.

After they hear what a good place Laish is, a group of Danites from Zorah and Eshtaol decide to go attack Laish. Six hundred men with their weapons are ready to fight, so these men leave the territory of Dan. These men also bring with them their families and the things that belong to these men, as the storyteller mentions later. This is an official move and the men do not plan to come back. This could be the entire tribe or just a portion of the tribe that decides to go.

On their way, the people stop and set up their camp to the west of the town of Kiriath Jearim in Judah. This area was so big, and people remembered it so much, that even in the storyteller's time, people still called that area Mahaneh Dan, which means "Camp of Dan."

Stop here and look at a map of Israel as a group. Find Kiriath Jearim and the region of Dan and Judah on the map. Pause this audio here.

As the people continue their journey through the hill country of Ephraim, the Danites travel by Micah's house. The five men who traveled to Laish as spies in the last section may lead the group, and they take the same route north. The spies point out Micah's shrine among the houses. Micah could have had several buildings, or Micah's home could be in a town. Though the spies ask if the others know about the shrine, the spies actually say this to tell the people that Micah has an ephod, some household gods, and idols.

Stop here and look at a picture of the idols as a group, as needed. Pause this audio here.

In some translations, the spies ask, "What shall we do?" In other translations, the men say, "You know what you should do." Yahweh's law says that the people should destroy the shrine, because the shrine is not for Yahweh. However, this is not what the spies hint at. Instead, the spies encourage their kinsmen to take these items so the people can have a shrine of their own. The spies think that these idols will bring the people luck or prosperity.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, if you did not want to say to do something out loud, how would you hint or signal at it? What are some reasons why someone would not want to say their suggestion out loud? Pause this audio here.

The other Danites seem to agree, because they stop at Micah's house and stand at the gate while the five spies go inside. Micah probably has a wall around his buildings with a gate at the entrance. All 600 of the men are there with their weapons. These men guard the entrance, which must have frightened other people to see! The five spies go into the house on Micah's property where the Levite lived. The spies just greet the Levite, which probably means Micah was not there at the time.

Then the five men go to the shrine and take the carved statue, the priest's clothes, the family idols, and the metal statue. Again, the storyteller repeats that the 600 men with their weapons stand at the gate and frighten anyone who may have wanted to stop them. The Levite priest stands there with them.

When the priest sees the five spies take the idols and ephod, the priest asks the spies what they are doing. The spies tell the Levite to be quiet! The spies want the Levite not to warn his employer, Micah. The spies offer the Levite a deal. The spies ask the Levite to come with them to be a father, or a spiritual advisor, and priest for the Danites! The five men ask the priest to decide if it would be better, or more important, to be a priest for just one household or for an entire tribe and clan. The men may have said "tribe and clan" because, although they are no longer as big as a tribe because of their difficulties, the men hope to be a tribe again.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, what kind of terms do you use for people groups or big family groups? What terms do you use most of the time? Pause this audio here.

The priest is very pleased with this offer, so he accepts. The priest takes the stolen goods and becomes a thief himself. Then the priest moves into the middle of the Danite group, which shows that he is a part of their group now too.

Now the Danites leave Micah's house. The Danites probably expect Micah to chase after them. The Danites put their little ones, which probably means their children, women, and elderly, in the front of the group. The Danites also put their livestock and valuables at the front, and then the men who can fight follow along behind. This way, if anyone follows the Danites and tries to attack them because of what they just did, the fighting men can protect the others in the group.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Six hundred Danite fighting men leave Zorah and Eshtaol and head north with their families and the things that belong to them. On their way, the people camp outside the town of Kiriath Jearim.

In the second scene: The people continue to travel through the hill country of Ephraim until they come to Micah's house. The five spies suggest that the people should steal Micah's idols.

In the third scene: The five spies enter Micah's house and greet the Levite priest. Then the spies steal the items in Micah's shrine. When the Levite priest asks the men what they are doing, the men tell the priest to be quiet. The men offer the Levite a job as their priest, and the priest agrees and joins the Danites. With their families and all that belongs to them in the front of the group, the Danites leave Micah's house.

The characters in this passage are:

- Six hundred Danite men who can fight
- The families of the 600 men
- The five men or spies who traveled to Laish
- Micah
- And the Levite priest

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In the first scene, a group of Danites leave their assigned territory to go north. Six hundred men have weapons and are ready to fight to take over the town of Laish. These men bring their families and all that belongs to them with the men. All of these people move slower than the five spies did, and the people camp first outside the town of Kiriath Jearim. This town was in Judah's territory, and the Danites camped to the west of this town. The storyteller explains that their camp is so large that people remember it for a long time. Even in the storyteller's time, people still call that area Mahaneh Dan, which means "Camp of Dan."

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, tell a story about a location near you. Tell how people named that place or an important event that happened at that place. Pay attention to how and when you choose to stop and tell your listeners about information that connects to how the place is now. Pause this audio here.

In the second scene, the Danites continue to travel into the hill country of Ephraim, and the people come to Micah's house. Micah's house was probably near a main road, and the five spies probably led the group along the same way the spies had traveled before. In that place was a group of houses. Micah could have several buildings for his family members, animals, and the shrine. Micah is probably also near a small village.

When the Danites come near Micah's house, the spies tell the others that Micah has an ephod, household gods, and idols in Micah's house. Although the spies do not say it directly, the spies suggest that the Danites should steal these items.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: As an activity, walk around the room or the space you are in together. Point out things and give pieces of information about those things that the others in the group may not know. Discuss the different ways you point out or share information that others do not know. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, the other Danites seem to agree with the spies. The people turn aside off of their route and go to Micah's gate. While the 600 men with their weapons stand outside the gate, the five spies go inside. The spies go to where the Levite lives and greet him. Then the five men go to Micah's shrine and take the carved idol, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal idol.

The storyteller repeats that the 600 men continue to stand at the gate while the five men steal the items. This is a reminder that the 600 men kept anyone in the household from stopping the five men.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a dangerous situation, like a storm or an encounter with wild animals. As you tell this story, pay attention to how you describe the danger. How do you

show that that thing was dangerous? What descriptions or actions of the dangerous thing do you emphasize or repeat? Why do you repeat those parts or pieces of information? Pause this audio here.

The Levite priest also stands with the 600 men. The priest may be able to see the five spies as they steal, but the priest still asks the men what it is that they do. The five men probably come out towards the priest with the stolen items. The five men tell the priest to be quiet. Then the men offer the Levite a job as their priest. The five men imply that the Levite would be more useful or important as the priest for a whole tribe, instead of just for one man.

Pleased with the job offer, the Levite priest accepts. The Levite takes the stolen items from the men and moves into the center of the group of Danites. The Danites then arrange their group for travel. The families of the men, who carry all that belongs to them, are in the front of the group, while the fighting men are in the back. This way, if Micah follows the people with any of Micah's people to attack the Danites, the Danites will be able to protect their families. Then the people leave Micah's house and continue on their journey north.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Six hundred Danite men who can fight
- The families of the 600 men
- The five spies
- Micah
- And the Levite priest

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

Six hundred soldiers from the clan of Dan set out from the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol. All of these men took their weapons with them. On their way, the people camped near Kiriath Jearim in the land of Judah. The people camped to the west of Kiriath Jearim, and people still refer to that area as Mahaneh Dan, which means "Camp of Dan."

Then the Danites went to the hill country of Ephraim until they came to the house of Micah. The five men who had explored the land around Laish said to the people of Dan, "There is a house here that has a priest's clothes, some family idols, a carved statue, and a metal statue. What do you think we should do?"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays five spies, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Last time we were here, the priest told us good things and our trip was successful. I always want to have God's blessing when we do things; or
- Surely if we had a shrine, God would be happy with us and bless us; or
- I will not say we should steal the items in the shrine, just in case the others think that it would be bad to steal. That way no one can accuse me. But I will hint at it, in case they want to steal it too!

Ask the person who plays the Danites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Our last battles have not gone well, and we were not able to take over our land. Now we have another battle we will need to fight, and we will need all the help we can get; or
- I can see how wealthy this man's household is. It must be because this man has a shrine in his house! We should take it so that we can have blessings and protection for our people; or
- We need the idols much more than Micah does. We have a lot more people, and we have a battle to win, while Micah lives here in peace and safety.

So the people left the road and went to the house where the young Levite lived on Micah's property, and they greeted the Levite. The 600 men from Dan, armed and ready for battle, waited at the gate entrance. Then the five spies went inside and took the carved statue, the priest's clothes, the family idols, and the metal statue. The priest stood at the gate entrance with the 600 men who were armed and ready for battle.

When the five spies went into Micah's house and took the carved statue, the priest's ephod, the personal idols, and the metal statue, the priest spoke to the men. The priest asked the men, "What are you doing?"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the priest, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am a little nervous to speak up, because all these men with their weapons could hurt me if I protest. So I will not criticize the men. Instead, I will just ask what the men are doing; or
- If Micah does not have a shrine, he will not need a priest, and he will not pay me anymore. Maybe Micah will kick me out of his house! Now I am worried! or
- If the Danites take the idols, they will need a priest. Maybe they will want to hire me like Micah did.

But the five spies replied, "Stop talking. Do not say another word. Come and live with us. Give us advice like a father and be a priest for us. Is it not better to be a priest for an entire clan and tribe of Israel than for just one man's household?"

This suggestion made the priest very happy, so the priest took the priest's ephod, and the personal idols, and the carved statue, and he went with the men.

So the entire group left Micah's house, and they walked with the little ones in the front, along with the cattle and all their valuable things.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Danites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Wow! Now we have some new religious items and a priest! This must be a sign that God blesses us. Now I am not as worried to attack Laish; or
- I am worried that Micah will gather his relatives and neighbors and come after us. We will travel in a certain way so that we can easily protect our families; or
- If we have a priest and idols for a shrine, we will not ever have to come back down south to worship God or ask God for help. I am glad we will not have to travel much more. I am ready to settle down and live on my new land.

Ask the person who plays the priest, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- While it was good to live at Micah's house and be his priest, now I will be even more important as the priest of an entire tribe! I am excited about this new job; or
- I am a little worried about the battle the Danites have to fight, but at least they will not expect me to fight; or
- I do not really feel guilty for coming with the Danites. There were too many men for me to stop, and being Micah's priest was just a job. Now I have another job, and Micah will not be able to stop the Danites, or me, either.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

As they pass Micah's house, the five **spies** talk to their fellow Danites, or **brothers**. Use the same words for spies and for brothers as you have used in previous passages.

The five men point out that Micah has an **ephod**. An ephod is a piece of clothing for priests, and it has lots of beautiful decorations and designs. Sometimes, because the ephod was such a special piece of clothing, people worshiped the ephod like it was a god. For more information on ephod, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for ephod as you used in previous passages.

The spies also mention that Micah has some carved and metal **images** or **idols**. An idol is an object that people make in order to worship a god. People make an object—an image—of a god and worship that object as if it is that god. For more information on idol, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for idol or image as you used in previous passages.

Micah also has household idols, which he used to worship household **gods**. These were false gods which people thought brought luck and prosperity to the family. Although the story does not use the word for false gods, you may choose to use the word for gods to show that these idols were for the worship of those gods. For more information on gods, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for gods as you used in previous passages.

When they go into Micah's house, the five spies greet the **Levite** priest. Levites were descendants of Levi and they were supposed to serve Yahweh. For more information on Levite, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Levite as you used in previous passages.

A **priest** is a person who serves a god. A priest presents offerings and prayers on behalf of other people. For more information on priest, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for priest as you used in previous passages.

The Danites put their women, children, and old people in the front with their **livestock**, or **farm animals**, such as sheep, goats, oxen, and donkeys. Use the same word for livestock, or animals, as you have used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 18:11–21

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (11705535 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (13620041 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 18:22–31

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 18:22–31 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:22–31 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:22–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this section, Micah chases after the Danites and confronts the Danites because they stole Micah's idols. But when the Danites threaten him, Micah has to return home without his property. The Danites successfully take over Laish and settle down with their idols and their priest. The priest and his descendants continue to lead the Danites in idol worship until the Danites' enemies defeat them and take the Danites out of their land. The Danites, like the other Israelites, acted and worshiped however they wanted. The Danites expected God to bless them, but the Danites' disobedience eventually brought God's punishment.

When Micah discovers that the Danites stole his idols, Micah calls together the men who live near him. Micah is probably a respected man in his community, as the men come and quickly catch up with the Danites, even though the Danites had already traveled some distance away. Micah and his neighbors call out to the Danites to get the Danites to stop. When the Danites hear Micah, the Danites taunt him when they ask, "What is wrong? Why are you here?" even though they expected Micah to chase after them.

Micah accuses the Danites. Micah says the Danites took the gods Micah made, as well as Micah's priest. Micah asks what he has left without his idols and priest, which means that those were Micah's most important things.

When the Danites took those items, it was like they took everything from Micah. Micah asks the Danites why they would ask, "What is wrong?" even though the Danites know what is wrong.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when someone treated you or someone you know unfairly or stole something from you. How did you react? What did you say when you talked with the people who treated you badly? Pause this audio here.

The Danites reply harshly. The Danites tell Micah not to argue with them or some of their fighting men will get angry. The fighting men would attack Micah and Micah's family and kill them. The men show disrespect for Micah when they turn and continue on their journey, as if Micah is not even there. Micah sees that the Danites have more men than Micah does. Micah knows the Danites would win in a fight, so Micah returns home without the idols he came for.

The Danites continue to travel and arrive at Laish, where they attack and win. The Danites also burn the city. This is not an impressive victory, as the people of Laish were peaceful and did not suspect that anyone would attack. There was no one to help the people of Laish as they did not have any allies nearby. Laish was not near any other towns as it was in a valley near Beth Rehob. Now the Danites have land. However, this is not the land God gave them, but land the Danites gained when they destroyed a peaceful people.

Stop here and look at a map of Laish, Sidon, and the valley of Beth Rehob as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Danites rebuild the city and rename it Dan, after their ancestor Dan who was Israel's son. The Danites settle down and set up their stolen idols for worship.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of some names of cities or towns in your area. Who named these cities? What do these names mean? Have people changed any of the city names over the years? How and why did people change these names? Pause this audio here.

Now the writer reveals the Levite priest's name and family. The priest's name is Jonathan and he is a descendant of Moses. This would be a shock to the Israelites, that a descendant of such a godly man like Moses would lead the Danites in their worship of idols. Some translations may say "son of Manasseh," instead of Moses. It is possible some people did not want to dishonor Moses by Jonathan's actions, so they changed the name in some versions. The writer says that Jonathan is the son of Gershom, Moses's son. Sometimes, people used the word "son" to mean descendant. Gershom was Moses's son, but Jonathan was probably a descendant of Gershom.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think of a well-known person whose children or descendants acted in a wicked or evil way. When people talk about the children's wild actions, how do they bring up or talk about the famous person? How do the children's wild actions affect the way people talk about the famous person? Pause this audio here.

Jonathan and his sons, or his descendants, were priests for the tribe of Dan until their enemies defeated them and took them out of their land into exile many years later. The Danites thought that to have this Levite and his descendants as their priests would please Yahweh. Instead, Yahweh will punish the Danites for their disobedience. Eventually, like the Danites stole idols at Micah's shrine, other people will invade and steal from the Danites.

The Danites use Micah's idols for a shorter time, just while the house of God was at Shiloh. The Israelites set up the tabernacle, or the house of God, at Shiloh after they first arrived in Canaan, and the Israelites kept it there until after the time of the judges. Later, after the Israelites move the tabernacle many years later, the Danites will set up a different idol that Jonathan's descendants lead the Danites to worship.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:22–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: Micah and his neighbors chase after the Danites and accuse them of theft. The Danites threaten Micah. When Micah sees the Danites have more men than he does, Micah returns home without his idols.

In the second scene: The Danites travel to Laish and attack the city. The Danites kill the people and burn the city.

In the third scene: The Danites rebuild the city and name it Dan. The Danites set up the idol and worship it. The Levite priest, who is a descendant of Moses, as well as his sons, act as the priests for the Danites until the Israelites go into exile many years later.

The characters in this passage are:

- Micah
- Micah's neighbors
- The Danites
- The people of Laish
- The Levite priest, whose name is Jonathan
- And Jonathan's descendants

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

In the first scene, not too long after the Danites leave, Micah learns that the Danites stole his idols. Micah calls together other men who live near Micah to chase after the Danites. These men may have also brought weapons with them in order to attack or fight the Danites. Micah's group catches up to the Danites, because Micah's group is not slowed down by children and belongings.

When the people are close enough to hear each other, Micah's group shouts at the Danites and probably tells the Danites to stop. The Danites do stop and turn around to face Micah. The Danites ask Micah what is wrong.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When someone comes to speak with you, what kind of phrases do you use to ask what they want to talk about? What are some respectful phrases? What are some phrases that are more casual or disrespectful? Pause this audio here.

Micah, who is close enough to talk now, says that the Danites took Micah's idols and his priest. Micah complains that he has nothing else important left without those things. Micah wonders why the Danites would taunt Micah when they pretend they do not know why Micah has come.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When someone acts in a way that confuses or worries you, how do you ask that person why they did that thing? What kind of phrases would you use to say this? Pause this audio here.

The Danites respond with threats. The Danites tell Micah not to argue or speak harshly with them. The Danites warn that some of their men might get angry and kill both Micah and Micah's family. Though the Danites say this as if they warn Micah, the Danites really mean that the Danites will hurt Micah if he continues to accuse them.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think about stories you have heard where one person threatens another person. What kind of threats or phrases do these people use? When do these people use clear threats and when do they hint at or hide the threat they really mean? Pause this audio here.

Then without any more talk, the Danites turn and continue their journey. Micah can see that the Danites' group of 600 fighting men is much larger than Micah's group. Micah's group would not be able to take the idols back if they fought the Danites. So Micah turns around and goes back to his home.

In the second scene, the Danites continue their journey, with the idols and the priest, until they arrive at Laish. The Danites attack the people of Laish without any warning. The storyteller shows that the Danites win, but

their victory is not because of the Danites' own strength or strategy. Rather, the people of Laish are peaceful and are not prepared for a battle. The Danites surprise the people of Laish, who do not suspect an attack. The Danites attack with the sword, which means they use their swords to kill the people and then they destroy the city with fire.

The storyteller pauses to remind us that no one else came to help the people of Laish, because the people lived a long way from Sidon, who might have been their allies. The town of Beth Rehob was in the same valley as Laish, but the people of Laish had no treaties or agreements with them or anyone else. Throughout this story, the storyteller seems to have sympathy for the people in Laish.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when you were in a place far from any big towns or cities and you needed something you could not get. Pay attention to how and when you describe the remoteness of the location. Pause this audio here.

In the third scene, the Danites rebuild the city and settle down there. The Danites completely claim the city and the land. Even though the city used to be Laish, the Danites rename the city Dan, after their ancestor who was Israel's son. The Danites also set up the idols they stole from Micah. The Danites use these idols for as long as the house of God, or the tabernacle, is at Shiloh. Shiloh was a town in the hill country of Ephraim where the Israelites set up the tabernacle. About the same time that the Israelites moved the tabernacle, the Danites probably set up new idols.

The Levite priest who came with the Danites takes care of the idols. Now the writer reveals the Levite priest's name and family line. The writer says that the priest's name is Jonathan and he is the son of Gershom, who is the son of Moses. Israelites used "son" to mean both an actual son or a descendant. Gershom was Moses' son, but since it is not clear when this story takes place, it is possible that Jonathan was a grandson or descendant of Gershom.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Discuss what words you use for children, grandchildren, and descendants. Think about important or famous people in your family line, or of your friends. How do you say that you or that friend is related to that famous person? Pause this audio here.

Jonathan's sons and later descendants were also priests for the people of Dan, even after the Danites changed the idols and moved the shrine. These descendants continued to be priests until other nations defeated the nation of Israel and took the people into exile many years later.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:22–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Micah
- Micah's neighbors
- The Danites
- The people of Laish
- The Levite priest, whose name is Jonathan
- And Jonathan's descendants

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

When the Danites were a long distance away, Micah called the men who lived nearby to gather. The men chased and caught up with the people of Dan. Micah and his men shouted at the Danites to make the Danites stop.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Micah's neighbors, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that these other people came and stole from my neighbor! Those Danites not only disrespected Micah, but they showed disrespect for our tribe when they stole from him! or
- I saw the Danites come through our area, and wow, that was a lot of people! I hope we do not actually have to fight when we catch up with the Danites!

But the Danites shouted back at Micah and asked, "Why have you gathered together your people to fight us?"

Micah answered, "You stole the idols that I made, and took my priest and left. Now what do I have left? Do you not understand why I am angry?"

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Micah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am angry that the Danites stole from me, and even though I can see how many men they have, I will confront them for what they did; or
- I am offended that the Danites have responded to me like this! The Danites act like they did not do anything wrong; or
- I hope the Danites will give me back my idols and my priest. Without those things, I will become less important and God will no longer bless me for my good works.

The Danites answered, "Watch what you say or some of our men may get angry and attack you. Then you and your family will die."

Then the people of Dan continued to walk. Micah realized that the Danites were stronger than he and his men were, so Micah turned back and went home.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Danites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Micah and his neighbors do not worry us. We are a large group of fighting men, and we are prepared for battle. There is no way Micah could defeat us and take back his idol; or
- I do not feel ashamed because we took the idols. Micah may be an Israelite, but he is not in my tribe, so I do not feel any care or concern for Micah; or
- This conversation with Micah is unimportant and slows us down. I want to hurry up and get to this new land!

So the Danites took Micah's idols and Micah's priest and went to attack Laish. The people of Laish lived in peace and security. The Danites killed the people of Laish with their swords and burned the city down. No other people came to the rescue of the people of Laish, because they lived far away from Sidon and they had no friends in any other town. Laish was in a valley near Beth Rehob.

The descendants of Dan built the town again, and they lived there. The Danites named the town Dan after their ancestor Dan, a son of Israel, though the town used to be named Laish.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Danites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Surely God blesses us, since we took over this town so easily and we have beautiful idols to worship God with. We must have acted in the right way; or
- We will name this city Dan, to show that this land is ours and we really belong here, even though this is not the land God told us to take over; or
- If we kill all the people of Laish, then they will not fight back or get help from other towns. I think it is a good thing to do.

The Danites put the carved idol and metal idol there to worship it. Jonathan, who was a descendant of Gershom the son of Moses, was their priest. Jonathan and his descendants were priests for the tribe until their enemies took the people into exile. The people of Dan continued to worship the idol made by Micah even though the house of God was in Shiloh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Jonathan, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel very important as the priest for a whole tribe! I am glad I left Micah's house! or
- I am not worried that I need to worship in the same way as other Israelites, so I will not go to Shiloh to learn from the priests there. I will just decide how to lead worship here; or
- When I was younger, I remember that I heard something about how priests should act, but I have acted how I wanted, and things are going well. God must be pleased with me, so I will continue to do things how I want.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 18:22–31 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Micah accuses the Danites that they took his **gods**, which are the **idols** that the Danites stole. An idol is an object that people make in order to worship a god. Micah used idols to worship both Yahweh and other false gods. For more information on god and idol, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same words or phrases for gods, idol, and image as you used in previous passages.

Micah also says that the Danites took his **priest**. A priest is a person who serves a god. A priest presents offerings and prayers on behalf of other people. For more information on priest, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for priest as you used in previous passages.

The Danites attack Laish and kill the people in that city with swords. Use the same words and phrases for "**struck them with the sword**" as you have used in previous passages.

The Danites rename their city Dan, after **Israel's** son Dan. Israel is the name that God gave to Jacob, and Jacob's descendants are the Israelites. For more information on Israel, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Israel as you used in previous passages.

Jonathan and his descendants continue to serve as priests for the Danites until the time of the **exile**, or **captivity of the land**. An exile is a time when people are sent out of or kept from their own land. This is when enemies of Israel captured the Israelites and took them away from their land. This was a punishment from God because Israel had not obeyed God.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **exile**, or "captivity of the land." If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Danites used Micah's idol for as long as the **house of God**, or the **tabernacle**, was at Shiloh. The tabernacle, which people often called the house of God, is a large tent that the people moved from place to place where the Jewish ancestors worshiped God. This was a place where priests made sacrifices on behalf of the people.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **house of God** or **tabernacle**. Look up tabernacle in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 18:22–31

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (12336298 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (14388467 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 19:1–10

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 19:1–10 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:1–10 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

*Setting the Stage**Setting the Stage*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This story is the beginning of the second story at the end of the book of Judges. This comes after the first story about Micah, the Levite, and the Danites. The writer uses a second story to tell us about the character of the people of Israel. Yahweh gave many instructions to Israel about how to live and have a good society after the Israelites left Egypt. After Joshua died, the people of Israel do not live the way Yahweh wants them to live, and this puts the people of Israel in danger. We know from later on in the book of Judges that the event in this story happened when Phineas was the high priest and after Joshua died.

The writer of the passage starts when he says that this story comes from the time of the judges, before Israel has a king. In the time of this story, the people of Israel had no effective leadership from one single place or person. Although the author wrote this story after Israel had kings, the author wants to remind his audience that before Israel had kings, it was a difficult time in Israel. When the kings began to rule, they at first made life better for the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story from your culture that was about a bad time in your history. Pause this audio here.

During the difficult times when Israel had no king, a Levite man, an Israelite from the tribe of Levi, lived in Ephraim. The Levite man did not live in a town or in a city that Yahweh gave to the Levite tribe. The Levite man probably lived in and depended on an Ephraimite household in the hills away from a town or a city. You will remember that this is not where Yahweh told Levites to live. The Levite man has taken a woman to live with him. We do not know if the woman wanted to go to live with the Levite man. The woman is not a Levite, but comes from the town of Bethlehem in the lands Yahweh gave to the tribe of Judah. The woman was probably from the tribe of Judah. The man took the woman as his concubine. A concubine is a woman who lives with a man in a full relationship but does not have the full status and responsibilities that a wife would have. The word concubine in the original language of the story shows us that the woman was probably a wife of lower status or position in the household. At the time, it was common for Israelite men to have a first wife and a secondary wife or wives. The Levite man did not give the woman from Bethlehem the position and honour to be the main or first wife even though the Levite man seems to not have a first wife in his household.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your community, can a woman join the household of a man but not be the man's wife? If this happens, what is the woman's position in the household? Tell a story about a woman in your culture who lived in a man's household but did not have the full status of a wife. Pause this audio here.

The woman was angry and unhappy in the relationship. The story says that the woman broke the agreement that she had with the Levite man. The woman left the Levite man in Ephraim and went back to her parents' home in Bethlehem, Judah. Some people would say that this woman was unfaithful to the Levite man. However, it is unlikely that the woman committed adultery or had sexual relations with another man. If the woman had committed adultery, the law of Israel would allow the Levite man to kill the woman. But the story says the Levite man wanted the woman to come back home.

Stop here and look at a map of the lands in this story. Notice that the hill country of Ephraim is north of Bethlehem in Judah and separated from Judah by land owned by the tribe of Benjamin. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man waited four months before he went after the woman. A month is the period of time from one new moon to the next new moon. We do not know why the Levite man waited this long to go to try to bring her back. The Levite man goes to persuade the woman, to use words or actions to try to get the woman to change how she feels and to come back home. The Levite man wants to change how the woman feels in her heart about the Levite man. Israelite people thought of the heart as the part of the body connected to a person's feelings and love. The Levite man wanted to speak to the heart of the woman to change how the woman felt about him.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When has someone persuaded you to change how you thought or felt about something or someone? What did they do or say to help you to change what you thought? Pause this audio here.

When the Levite man left Ephraim, the Levite man took his servant, a young man who worked for him, and two donkeys, or asses. People used donkeys to carry belongings and to ride on.

Stop here and look at a picture of a donkey with a saddle on its back. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man traveled to Bethlehem in Judah. The woman took the Levite man into her parent's home, and the woman's father welcomed the Levite man into his home in Bethlehem. The woman's father is the Levite man's father-in-law, which means the Levite man's father by marriage. Because the story says that the father is the Levite's father-in-law, we know that the father and the Levite consider the woman the Levite man's wife. The woman is in a formal relationship with the Levite man. The woman's father gave the Levite man food, drink, and shelter for three days. The woman's father behaved properly to the Levite man who was a guest in his home. The good welcome from both the woman and her father shows that both the woman and her father wanted the relationship between the woman and the Levite man to get better. The Levite man stayed at the home of the woman's father for three days.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you welcome sons-in-law who come to stay in your homes? How can families show pleasure or unhappiness about the visit? Pause this audio here.

After four days, the woman agrees to go home with the Levite man. The Levite man and the woman decide to leave Bethlehem and get up early in the morning to go. The woman's father asks the Levite man to stay and have some food before the Levite man leaves with the woman. The woman's father talks about how the Levite man must have food to support his heart, or to support the Levite man to have good feelings in his heart. The woman's father wants the Levite man to feel good and kind towards the woman's family. The Levite man does not leave. The Levite man sits down to have a meal with the father. The woman's father then invites the Levite man to stay one more night and have a good time in his home. Again, the woman's father says that he wants the Levite man to be good in his heart, in how he feels. The Levite man gets up to leave, but the woman's father encourages the Levite man to stay one more night. The woman also stays another night. We do not know why the woman's father wants the Levite man to stay longer.

The next morning, the Levite man prepares to travel home and his father-in-law invites the Levite man to stay longer. The father invites the Levite man to eat, to let the food make his body stronger, and to wait until the afternoon to leave. The father and the Levite man share another meal together. After the meal, in the afternoon, the Levite man prepares to leave with his concubine and his servant. The concubine's father tries to persuade the Levite man to stay, because it is the afternoon. The Levite man, the concubine, and his servant cannot travel very far before they will need to stop for the night. The concubine's father wants the Levite man to stay longer, have a good time, and then start on the journey the next morning.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you want to travel on a long journey for more than one day, what time do you get up and leave? Have you ever been late to leave on a journey, and did it cause a problem? How did you feel? Pause this audio here.

The Levite man did not want to stay any more. The Levite man left the home of his father-in-law in the afternoon of the fifth day. The Levite man traveled towards the town of Jebus, also called Jerusalem, with his donkeys and his concubine. The servant put saddles on the donkeys so the people could ride on the donkeys.

Stop here and look at a map of the lands in this story again, if needed. Notice how Bethlehem and Jebus, or Jerusalem, are near to each other.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: When Israel had no king, a Levite man lived in the hills of Ephraim with a woman from Bethlehem. There was a problem in the relationship between the woman and the Levite man, so the woman left to go to her family home in Bethlehem in Judah.

In the second scene: Four months later, the Levite man went to Bethlehem to try to bring the woman home. The woman and her father welcomed the Levite man into their home, and the Levite man stayed for three days.

In the third scene: On the fourth day, the Levite man and the woman tried to leave, but the father persuaded the Levite man to stay another day.

In the fourth scene: On the fifth day, the Levite man tried to leave again, but the father persuaded the Levite man to stay for another meal.

In the fifth scene: In the afternoon of the fifth day, the Levite man decided to leave with his woman and his servant. The father wanted the Levite man to stay, but the Levite and his woman left and traveled towards Jebus, or Jerusalem.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Levite man
- The woman, who is the Levite man's concubine
- The servant
- And the woman's father

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Although this story is written after the time of the judges in Israel, the storyteller tells us that this story happens during a time in the past before Israel had a king. You will remember that the story before this one started in a similar way.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Think back to the story you told in step two about a bad time in your history. How did you start the story? Did the start of your story give a clear idea of when the story happened? What are some opening phrases to other stories you know that tell when those stories happened? Pause this audio here.

The story starts when it tells us about a Levite man who lives in the hill country of Ephraim. The man has taken a woman from Bethlehem in Judah to live with him as a wife, but the man does not give this woman the honour that a man normally gives a first wife in that culture.

Stop here and look at a map of the lands in this story, if needed. Pause this audio here.

The woman and the Levite man had a problem in their relationship. The story describes the woman as unfaithful to the Levite man. In other words, the woman left the Levite man and went back to her family home, the home of her father, in Bethlehem, Judah.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How would you describe a woman who has left her husband? In this case, the woman had not necessarily had sexual relations with another man. This woman left her husband for other reasons. Pause this audio here.

The woman was back at her father's house in Bethlehem for four months before the Levite man decided to go after her. Four months means that there have been four new moons between the time the woman left the Levite man and when the man went to Bethlehem. The Levite man wants to persuade the woman to come back and change how the woman's heart feels towards the Levite man. This is the first mention in the story of a person who tries to change the heart, or the feelings, of someone else. The Levite man would have taken a few days to travel from Ephraim to Bethlehem. The servant travelled with the Levite man to Bethlehem. The Levite took

two donkeys with him. The Levite man went to Bethlehem to speak kindly to the woman to get the woman to come back to their home in Ephraim.

When the Levite arrived at Bethlehem, the woman who was the Levite's concubine met the Levite man. The woman invited the Levite man into her family home. The woman's father lived at the family home. The woman's father was happy to have the Levite man in his home and wanted the Levite man to stay in his home in Bethlehem. The woman's father talks to the Levite man to make the Levite man stay. The woman's father made the Levite man comfortable and gave the Levite man food, drink, and somewhere to sleep. The Levite man stayed with the woman's father in Bethlehem for three days.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when someone offered you food, or somewhere to sleep, but you did not really want to stay in that place. What did the person or people say to try to make you stay and accept the food or place to sleep? Pause this audio here.

After three days, on the morning of the fourth day, the Levite man, the woman, and the man's servant prepared to leave the father's house. The Levite man and the woman got up early in the morning so that there was plenty of time in the day to travel back towards Ephraim.

The woman's father talked to his son-in-law, the Levite man. The woman's father wanted to stop the Levite man from leaving. The woman's father offered the Levite man something to eat before the Levite man started his journey. The woman's father wanted the Levite man to feel good in his heart towards the woman's family. The father and the Levite man ate together. After the Levite man ate, the woman's father talked to the Levite man to encourage him to stay another night. When the Levite tried to leave again later on in the day, the woman's father wanted the Levite to stay longer, so he persuaded or talked the Levite man into staying another night. Again, the woman's father wanted the Levite man to feel good in his heart. Here, the story repeats the idea of how one person wants to change how another person feels in their heart towards another person.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Choose someone to be the Levite man and another person to be the woman's father. Act out how the Levite man tries to leave three times on the fourth day, but the woman's father persuades the Levite to stay and eat, and then to stay another night. Pause this audio here.

On the fifth day, in the morning, the Levite man tried to leave again. The woman's father again tried to stop the Levite man. The woman's father wanted the Levite man to wait and leave later in the day, in the afternoon. The Levite man stayed and ate with the woman's father. In the afternoon, the Levite man, the woman, and the Levites' servant prepared to leave. Again, the woman's father tried to stop the Levite man. The woman's father said it was late in the day to start a journey. This time, the woman's father did not persuade the Levite man to stay, and the Levite man decided to leave. The Levite man, the servant, the donkeys, and the woman traveled towards Jebus, which is also known as Jerusalem. The storyteller mentions the donkeys in the story before the concubine. The storyteller shows us that the woman is less important than the donkeys. The city of Jebus is in the land of Benjamin, and it is close to the border between the land of Judah and the land of Benjamin. Jebus is north of Bethlehem.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Levite man
- The woman, who is the Levite man's concubine
- The servant
- And the woman's father

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

When Israel had no King, a Levite man lived in the hills of Ephraim with a woman from Bethlehem.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I like the hills of Ephraim much more than the city I used to live in; or
- I am happy to have a woman live with me and provide for my needs.

There was a problem in the relationship between the woman and the Levite man, so the woman left to go to her family home in Bethlehem in Judah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not like how my woman behaved; or
- I am cross that my concubine left me to go back to her family.

Ask the person who plays the woman, the concubine, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I feel so alone and no one understands me. I want to go back to my family.

After four months, the Levite man went with his servant to try to get the woman to come back from Bethlehem.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I hoped my wife would come back to me; or
- I go to see if I can get my concubine to come back to Ephraim.

Ask the person who plays the servant, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I must go where my master goes; or
- I hope I get to ride on a donkey to Bethlehem.

At Bethlehem, the Levite man was met by the woman and taken to her family home. The woman's father welcomed the Levite man and persuaded the Levite man to stay at the home.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- My concubine is pleased to see me; or
- My concubine's father really wants me to stay with him; or
- I will stay for a short while at my father-in-law's home before I go back to Ephraim.

Ask the person who plays the concubine, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I did not know if my husband would come; or
- Please come into my father's home.

Ask the person who plays the woman's father, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am relieved that my daughter's husband has come for her; or
- I really want my son-in-law to stay and have a good time; or
- I want my son-in-law to be pleased with our family and take back my daughter; or
- It is good for us to have a Levite man as part of our family.

After he stayed for three days, the Levite man, the woman, and the servant tried to leave on the fourth day. The woman's father encouraged the Levite to stay longer, to have a meal, and then to stay another night.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It is time to go back to our home in Ephraim; or
- I have stayed in Bethlehem long enough; or
- My father-in-law makes me feel a bit embarrassed. He tries very hard to make me stay longer.

Ask the person who plays the servant, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Will we stay or will we go? or
- If we do not leave in the morning, we will not travel very far before it gets dark.

On the fifth day, the Levite man tries to leave again. The father of the woman persuades the Levite man to stay for another meal and until the afternoon. The father of the woman wants the Levite man to stay longer, but the Levite man, the woman, and the servant leave and travel towards Jebus.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I will stay for one more meal; or
- My father-in-law tries too hard to make me stay; or
- Even though it is the afternoon, we will leave Bethlehem.

Ask the person who plays the woman's father, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- My daughter treated her husband badly when she left him; or
- I want to make sure the Levite man is not angry at our family; or
- Maybe the Levite man will stay! People will respect us more if a Levite man stays with our family.

Ask the person who plays the woman, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- My husband shows me mercy when he takes me back; or
- We will not travel very far today; or
- I am glad that I can ride a donkey back to Ephraim.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:1–10 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

At the time of the story, **Israel** did not have a **king**. Use the same word or phrase for Israel and king as you used in previous passages. For more information on Israel and king, refer to the Master Glossary.

The **Levite** man sojourned or lived in a **remote** part of the hill country of Ephraim. A remote place is somewhere that is far away from places where many people live. Use the same word for Levite that you have used in previous passages, and see Levite in the Master Glossary for more information.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **remote**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man took a **concubine** from **Bethlehem** in Judah. A concubine is a woman who lives with a man in a full relationship but does not have the full status and responsibilities that a wife has. Use the same word or phrase for concubine as you used in previous passages. For more information on Bethlehem, refer to the Master Glossary.

The concubine was **unfaithful** to the Levite man. The woman strongly disliked the Levite man. The woman did not behave correctly to the Levite man and broke the agreement between herself and the Levite man.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **unfaithful**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

In this story, the Levite man is called the father's **son-in-law**, because he was married to the father's daughter. The father is called the Levite man's **father-in-law**, because the father's daughter is married to the Levite man.

Stop here and discuss as a group what words or phrases you will use for **son-in-law** and **father-in-law**. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man waited four **months** before he travelled to his concubine in Bethlehem. A month is the period of time from one new moon to the next new moon.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **months**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man travelled to Bethlehem with his **servant**. Use the same word or phrase for servant as you used in previous passages. For more information on servant, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Levite man travelled with two **donkeys**. Use the same word or phrase for donkeys as you used in previous passages. For more information on donkeys, refer to the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 19:1–10

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 19:11–21

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 19:11–21 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:11–21 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This passage continues the story of the Levite man who traveled with his concubine, a woman who is like a wife to him. You will remember that the Levite man went to Bethlehem in Judah to talk to his concubine after the concubine left the Levite man at their home in Ephraim. In Bethlehem, the concubine's father made the Levite man welcome and wanted the Levite man and the concubine to live together again. The concubine's father wanted the Levite man to stay longer in Bethlehem, but the Levite man wanted to go home. The Levite man left Bethlehem in the afternoon with his servant, donkeys, and concubine. They traveled towards the city of Jebus, which is later called Jerusalem.

Stop here and look at a map that shows Bethlehem, Jebus, Ramah, Gibeah, and Ephraim. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man with his servant and concubine traveled for about two hours from Bethlehem until they came near Jebus toward the end of the afternoon. The group did not want to travel after the sunset because it would be dark and possibly dangerous. The servant of the Levite man wanted to stop and sleep in Jebus. You might remember from earlier passages that Jebusite people owned and lived in Jebus. At the time of this story, the people of the tribe of Benjamin, the Benjamites, lived in the land that surrounded Jebus. Joshua defeated the

king of Jebus, and the men of Judah attacked Jebus, but the Benjamites did not make all the Jebusite people leave. Many years later, people changed the city name from Jebus to Jerusalem. The Levite man in the story did not want to sleep in a city of people who were not Israelites. The Jebusites and the Israelites did not have a good relationship.

The Levite man decided to continue to travel a bit further to the cities of Gibeah or Ramah. Gibeah and Ramah are about a 2.5-hour walk from Jebus. The cities of Gibeah and Ramah are about a 1-hour walk from each other, with Gibeah on one side of the valley and Ramah on the other side of the valley. Benjamites owned and lived in Gibeah and Ramah. The group traveled to Gibeah as the sun was about to set.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when you needed to rest on a journey and one place was better or safer to rest in than another. Pause this audio here.

The travelers stopped at Gibeah for the night. When the travelers arrived, they were not welcomed by the people of the city. The travelers sat in an open part of the city in a space where the people of Gibeah could see them. The Levite man expected the people of Gibeah to offer him food and somewhere to stay. The Israelite tribes were supposed to provide for the Levite tribe and offer hospitality to Israelite travelers.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe the shape of your village, town, or city to each other. Where do people come together to meet? What is the area called? Is the area inside or outside? Pause this audio here.

Nobody offered the travelers a place to sleep. This is not the way Israelites would normally behave towards other Israelites who traveled. Normally, the people of the city would give travelers somewhere to sleep and food and drink.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do people in your community behave towards travelers who arrive in your community? Are there particular places for travelers to stay? Do travelers eat their own food, or does the community offer food to the travelers? Pause this audio here.

The story tells us about an old man who lived in Gibeah but who was not a Benjamite. The old man was an Ephraimite, born in the hills of Ephraim. The Levite man was traveling home to the hill country of Ephraim. The old man lived in Gibeah, but he was not fully part of the community. The people of Gibeah treated the old man as a foreign person in the city. The old man worked in the fields outside Gibeah, but he probably did not own the land.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Who, if anybody, in your community works to grow food in the land around your home? Do these people own the land or do they work for other people? Pause this audio here.

The old man saw the Levite man and asked the Levite where he was going and where he had come from. The old man only talked to the Levite man. The old man did not think the servant and the woman were important.

The Levite man told the old man that the group of travelers were on their way from Bethlehem back to the Levite man's home in a remote area of the hill country of Ephraim. The Levite man says that he has been to Bethlehem in Judah. The Levite man talks about going to the house of Yahweh, which is usually another name for the tabernacle, or the place where the Israelites worship and give sacrifices to Yahweh. The Levite will probably not go to the tabernacle. The Levite man might mean that he travels to serve Yahweh as a Levite and he wants the old man to know how much he serves Yahweh. The Levite man says that he is different from the people of Gibeah. The man is a Levite, not a Benjamite, and that is why the people of Gibeah have not offered shelter or food for the night. The Levite man, his servant, and his concubine are strangers to the people of Gibeah, and the people of Gibeah do not welcome strangers.

The Levite man refers to the whole group of travelers as servants of the old man. The old man can decide what happens to the travelers as a master decides what happens to a servant. The group is at the mercy of the old man, and the old man can choose if the travelers have somewhere to stay or must sleep outside. The Levite man tells the old man that the travelers have straw and fodder for the donkeys. Straw is the stalks of wheat or barley. People use straw to make a bed for animals. Fodder is food for animals. Fodder for donkeys may be dried grass and other plants or grain.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of straw that animals sleep on. Pause this audio here.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of dried grass and grain that animals eat for food. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a picture of a donkey as a group. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man also tells the old man that the travelers have enough food, bread, and wine to feed themselves. Bread is a food that people typically make from ground wheat and that may be flat or risen with yeast. Wine is a drink that people typically make from fermented grape juice. Wine contains alcohol. The old man will not have to use his food to look after the travelers if the old man lets the travelers stay in his home.

Stop here and look at a picture of bread as a group. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and look at a picture of wine as a group. Pause this audio here.

The old man greets the Levite man and wishes the Levite man peace. This is a traditional way that Israelites greet each other. This shows that the old man makes the travelers welcome in his home. The old man shows good hospitality and provides everything the travelers need. The old man does not want the travelers to spend the night outside in the open area. We do not know if the old man was worried about the people of Gibeah or if he just did not want the travelers to sleep outside.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What traditional ways do people greet other people in your community? What are the different greetings for people who are family and those who you have not met before? Pause this audio here.

The old man took the Levite man into his home in Gibeah. The old man gave the donkeys food to eat. The servant and the concubine also went into the home of the old man. All the travelers washed their feet and ate and drank food. It was normal for people to wash their feet when they went into a house. The ground was dusty and feet were dirty. People provided water to wash feet to make visitors welcome in the home. A person who did not wash their feet was rude and offensive.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about when you enter a home. What clothing do you take off or what part of your body do you wash to help to keep the home clean? Is this something that is personal to your family, or is it something that everybody in your community does?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has four scenes.

In the first scene: The Levite man, servant, donkeys, and concubine come near to Jebus. The servant wants to stop and sleep in Jebus, but the Levite man wants to sleep in the Israelite city of Gibeah.

In the second scene: At sunset, the travelers arrive at Gibeah. The travelers go to the open space where people meet, and the travelers sit down. The travelers have no shelter.

In the third scene: An old man from Ephraim who lives in Gibeah meets the travelers and asks the Levite man where the Levite man goes to and where the Levite man has come from. The Levite man tells the old man about the journey from Ephraim to Bethlehem and back towards Ephraim. The Levite man says that he and the other travelers need somewhere to stay for the night and that the travelers can provide everything that the travelers need to eat. The old man welcomes the travelers. The old man does not want the travelers to sleep in the open space.

In the fourth scene: The old man takes the travelers to his house, feeds the donkeys, and makes everyone comfortable.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Levite man
- The servant of the Levite man
- The woman, who is the Levite man's concubine
- The people of Gibeah
- The old man
- And the donkeys

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The Levite man, his servant, concubine, and donkeys travel in the afternoon. We know from the previous story that the travelers did not start their travels until the afternoon. It is late in the afternoon when the group gets close to Jebus. The travelers do not go into the city of Jebus. The travelers go past the city of Jebus and travel north to Gibeah. The travelers arrive at Gibeah at sunset. The travelers walk through the city of Gibeah to an open space in the city, sometimes called a town or city square. A town or city square is a large clear area in a town or city where people can gather or have a market. The open, clear space can be any shape, not just a square. As the travelers sit in the open space, night comes and it begins to get dark.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How might you feel if you arrive in a strange city at sunset with nowhere to stay? Where would you go to try to find somewhere to stay? Pause this audio here.

As the travelers sit in the open space, an old man comes from the fields outside of Gibeah and walks through the city to his home. As the man walks through Gibeah, he walks through the open space and sees the travelers.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: If your community grows food around your city, town, or village, where are the fields and how far away are they? Pause this audio here.

The storyteller gives us some extra information about the old man. The old man is from Ephraim and is part of the tribe of Ephraim. The people from Gibeah are from the tribe of Benjamin. The storyteller wants to show that the old man is different from the people of Gibeah and behaves differently.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How would you talk about extra information about someone's background in the middle of a story? Pause this audio here.

The old man stops and talks to the Levite man. The old man does not talk to the people as a group. The Levite man tells the old man about their journey.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Draw on a piece of paper or on the ground the places that are in the story. Use circles or stones to show the cities. Then draw lines to show the journeys from the hills of Ephraim to Bethlehem, and then from Bethlehem past Jebus to Gibeah on the way back to the hills of Ephraim. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man says that they do not have anywhere to sleep that night. This is the night that started when the travelers entered Gibeah. The Levite man has all the food and drink that he and the other travelers need, but the Levite has no shelter. No one in Gibeah offered shelter to the travelers for the night.

The old man greets the Levite man in the proper way and offers the travelers a place to stay. The old man does not want the travelers to sleep outside in the open space. The travelers go with the old man to the house of the old man. The old man gives the travelers everything the travelers need, which includes food for the donkeys. The travelers wash the dirt off their feet. When the travelers are clean, the travelers eat and drink.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has four scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Levite man
- The servant of the Levite man
- The woman, who is the Levite man's concubine
- The people of Gibeah
- The old man
- And the donkeys

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Levite man, his servant, and his concubine traveled with two donkeys until they came near Jebus. The servant asked the Levite man to stop at Jebus to stay the night. The Levite man did not want to stay in Jebus. The Levite man wanted to stay in an Israelite city.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the servant, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am tired and want to find somewhere to sleep; or
- I do not know if we can travel any farther today. We must find somewhere safe to sleep.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I do not like the Jebusites; or
- We will be safer to stay with Israelites. I want to go on to Gibeah or Ramah.

The travelers arrived at Gibeah at sunset and went to the open space.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Why does no one offer us somewhere to sleep tonight? or
- We will wait here and see if anyone offers us somewhere to stay.

Ask the person who plays the woman, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am so tired and want somewhere to sleep; or
- I do not have any choice in what happens to me on this journey; or
- Will we be safe to sleep here in the open?

An old man walks home from the fields outside Gibeah and sees the travelers. The old man asks the travelers where they go and where they have come from. The Levite man tells the old man about the Levite's journey.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the old man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am tired and want to go home to rest and eat; or
- Who are these strangers in the middle of Gibeah?

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Here is someone who might help us; or
- This old man comes from Ephraim, where I live, so maybe he will be kind to us; or
- I am angry that no one welcomed us and gave us somewhere to stay; or
- Maybe if the old man knows that we do not need any food or drink, he will take us in. I am desperate.

The old man tells the Levite man that the Levite man and the other travelers can stay at the old man's home. The old man will give the travelers everything they need. The old man does not want the travelers to sleep outside in the open area.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the old man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It is right that I look after these people tonight; or
- These travelers must not sleep here, as it is not safe for them.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- At last someone will treat us travelers in the right way; or
- The old man is kind to welcome us and give us his food and drink; or
- I am glad that we do not have to sleep outside tonight.

The old man took the travelers to his home. The old man fed the donkeys. The travelers washed the travelers' feet and ate and drank the old man's food.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the old man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now we are safe in my house; or
- It is good to share my home with these people and animals.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- It is good to wash the dust off our feet; or
- This is how Israelites should welcome other Israelites; or
- I am happy that the old man found us.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:11–21 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The Levite man, his **servant**, **concubine**, and **donkeys** all travelled north from Bethlehem and came near the city of Jebus. Translate concubine and servant in the same way you have before, and for more information on servant, refer to the Master Glossary.

The servant wanted to stop, but the Levite man, his **master**, did not want to stop. A master is a general respectful title for someone in a high position or status. It is interesting to notice that the storyteller calls the Levite either master or traveler throughout this story.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **master**. Look up master in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man did not want to stop in a city of **foreigners**, a people of a different culture and community. Instead, the Levite man wanted to go to a city of **Israelites**. For more information on Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **foreigners**. Look up foreigner in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The travelers went on to the Benjamite town of Gibeah and entered the town as the sun set. The travelers went to the **open area for meeting people**, or the **city square**, in Gibeah.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "open space for meeting people" or "city square." If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

An old man came to the town square from the fields. The old man lived in Gibeah. The old man asked the Levite where he traveled to and where he came from. The Levite man said that the travelers came from **Bethlehem**. For more information on Bethlehem, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Levite man says he goes to the house of **Yahweh**. Yahweh is the personal name for God. In this passage, God is called Yahweh. Be sure to translate Yahweh in the same way as you have in previous passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

The Levite man tells the old man that the travelers have **straw** and **fodder**, or animal food, for the **donkeys**.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of straw for animals to sleep on, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **straw**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of dried grass and grain that animals eat for food, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **fodder**, or animal food. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Use the same word or phrase for donkey as you used in previous passages.

The Levite man has enough bread and **wine** for himself, his servant, and his concubine. For more information on wine, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of bread, if necessary. Pause this audio here.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of wine, if necessary. Pause this audio here.

The old man welcomes the travelers to his home and feeds the donkeys. At the old man's home, the travelers wash their feet, eat, and drink.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 19:11–21

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
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Judges 19:22–30

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 19:22–30 and put it in your hearts.

This passage tells us about a violent event. You might find that the passage upsets you or reminds you of events that happened to you or people who you know. If you find this passage difficult to read, you might decide to not work on the translation of this passage. If you do work on the translation of this passage, and you are upset by the content of the passage, please talk to someone about how you feel.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:22–30 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:22–30 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this passage, the story continues of the Levite man and his concubine. The Levite man, his concubine, and his servant are in the town of Gibeah and in the home of an old man. The old man lives in Gibeah, but he comes from Ephraim. Gibeah belongs to people from the tribe of Benjamin. The old man invites the travelers to stay in his home. The old man does not want the travelers to sleep outside in the city square.

This passage tells us about a violent event. You might find the passage upsets you or reminds you of events that happened to you or people who you know. If you find this passage difficult to read, you might decide to not work on the translation of this passage. If you do work on the translation of this passage, and you are upset by the content of the passage, please talk to someone about how you feel.

In the old man's house, the travelers and old man enjoy themselves. The old man and the Levite man are pleasing their hearts. You will remember that in this story, the storyteller talks about how different people change the heart or feelings of a person. You will remember that the heart of a person connects to how a person feels. If a person is happy in their heart, the person feels happy. In the old man's house, the old man makes the travelers feel welcome and gives the travelers a good time. At the same time, some men of Gibeah come and surround the outside of the old man's house. The men are Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin. The writer calls the men sons of Belial. This means that the men come from wickedness. The men have no value and are of bad character. The men come from a community in Gibeah that does not follow Yahweh's instructions for the Israelites. The men knock on the door. The men strike the door with the knuckles on their hands to make a loud noise and get the attention of the people inside. The men knock harder and louder and do not stop.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you attract the attention of someone inside a home to get them to come out? Have one person knock three times on a hard surface quickly. This can be a polite way to get someone's attention. Now, have several people knock harder and longer. How does it make you feel to hear this? Pause this audio here.

The men from Gibeah shout at the old man. The men say that they want the Levite man who is in the old man's house. The men want to know the Levite man, or know him fully and intimately. At this point in the passage, when the men say they want to know the Levite man, the men mean that they want to have sexual intercourse with the Levite man. The men of Gibeah are not interested in or attracted to the Levite man as a person. The men want to cause the Levite man shame when they rape or have forced sex with the Levite man.

The Benjamite people of Gibeah do not follow Yahweh's instructions for the Israelites. The people of Gibeah did not offer a place for the travelers to stay, and now the people of Gibeah want to harm a fellow Israelite and rape him. Yahweh told the Israelites to offer hospitality to Israelites who travel and to keep guests safe. Yahweh also forbade the Israelites to have sex between two men.

The old man is the master of his house and the people in the house. The old man is responsible for the people in his house. The old man was safe inside his house, but now the old man goes outside of his house to talk to the men of Gibeah. The old man does not let the men of Gibeah have the Levite man. The old man tells the men of Gibeah that what the men want to do is wrong and not how the Israelite community should behave. The old man calls the men of Gibeah his brothers as the old man tries to persuade them to not harm the Levite man. The old man and the men of Gibeah are not brothers with the same father and mother. This is a way for the old man to remind the men of Gibeah that he, the old man, and the men of Gibeah are all Israelites, and they are Yahweh's special people. The old man tells the men of Gibeah to not do something that is against the way Yahweh wants the Israelites to live. The old man does not want the men to be foolish and to put the Israelite community in danger.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How does a host treat guests in your community? What customs or rules do you have for hosts to protect guests in your community? Pause this audio here.

Then the old man offers the men of Gibeah his daughter, a virgin, an unmarried woman who has never had sexual intercourse. Yahweh instructed Israelite men to protect women in their families. Yahweh told the Israelites that sexual intercourse should only happen between a man and woman married to each other. The old man also offers the Levite man's concubine to the men of Gibeah. The woman belonged to the Levite man, not to the old man. The concubine is a guest in the old man's house, and the old man should protect the concubine. The old man says that the men of Gibeah can do what they want to the women. The men can do what

feels right to them, not what Yahweh tells the Israelites is right. The old man does these things to bargain with the men. The old man offers the two women instead of the Levite man. What the old man does is terrible, but the old man does what he thinks is right. The old man might think that it is better for the men of Gibeah to force the women to have sexual intercourse than to force a man to have sexual intercourse with them. However, the old man does not follow Yahweh's instructions for Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story of a time when a person or a group of people in your community broke the rules of your community and harmed someone or a group of people in your community. Who, if anybody, tried to stop what happened? Pause this audio here.

The men of Gibeah did not listen to the old man and they did not agree to the old man's bargain. The Levite man probably put his concubine outside the house to give her to the men of Gibeah. The Levite man gave the woman to the men as a sacrifice to keep his own body and reputation safe.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: If possible, tell a story of a time when somebody did something bad to another person to stop something bad happening to themselves. Pause this audio here.

The men of Gibeah knew the concubine. Again, this does not mean that the men of Gibeah met and understood the woman. The story uses the word "to know" as a polite way to say the men had forced sexual intercourse with the woman all night. We do not know if the men took the woman away from the house or if they stayed near the house. The men of Gibeah abused or treated the woman very badly all night. The men of Gibeah let go of the woman at the end of the night when morning started. The woman returned to the old man's house, where her master the Levite stayed, as dawn started and sunlight appeared in the sky. The woman fell at the door to the old man's house and lay at the door until there was light and it was daytime.

The Levite man, the woman's master, woke up after he slept at the old man's house. The Levite man did not search for his concubine, and the story does not say that the Levite man worries about her. The Levite man got up to continue his journey to his home. The Levite man found the woman at the door to the old man's house. The woman lay in the door opening with her hands on the threshold. The threshold of a door is the floor in the doorway and it is the entrance to a home. The Levite man told the woman to get up and go with him. The woman did not answer the Levite man. We do not know if the woman was dead or alive, but she was not able to speak. The Levite man put the woman on one of his donkeys and left the old man's house to go back to Ephraim. We do not know what happened to the servant of the Levite man.

The Levite man returned to his home in Ephraim. We do not know how long the Levite took to travel home. The journey probably took about two days.

Stop here and look at a map of the towns in this story. Notice the distance between Jebus and Gibeah, and also the distance between Gibeah and the hills of Ephraim. Pause this audio here.

We do not know if the woman, the Levite man's concubine, was dead or alive when she arrived at the Levite man's home in Ephraim. The Levite man took a knife and cut his concubine's body into 12 pieces. We do not know if the woman was alive or dead when the Levite man cut her into 12 pieces. The Levite man cut the woman up in the same way a person cut up an animal as a sacrifice to Yahweh. Yahweh instructed the Israelites to separate an animal for sacrifice into the head, skin, blood, fat, internal organs, or entrails and legs. We do not exactly know how the Levite man cut up the woman to make 12 pieces of her body. The Levite man did not follow normal practices for how to care for a dead person. The Levite man did not treat the woman's body with respect.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about what your community does with a person's body after a person has died. How might you feel if people did not follow normal practices for a dead person in your community? Pause this audio here.

The Levite man sent one piece of the woman's body to each region where each Israelite tribe lived. Messengers probably took the pieces of the body to the different places in Israel. The messengers probably told the Israelites what had happened to the Levite man and his concubine in Gibeah.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when your community needed people to come from other communities to come to support your community or to fight with you. How did you tell the other people about the problem? What was their response? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites who saw a part of the woman's body talked to each other. The Israelites said that the abuse of the woman was not something that had happened since the Israelites left Egypt. The Israelites thought that the abuse in Gibeah was worse than anything that happened since they left Egypt. The Israelites did not say that Yahweh led the Israelites out of Egypt. The Israelites told each other to think about what the men of Gibeah did, talk with each other, and say how the Israelites should punish the men of Gibeah. The Israelites wanted their leaders to respond to the message from the Levite man.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when somebody did something very bad in your community. How did people talk about what happened? How did people want to punish the person who did the crime? Pause this audio here.

The Levite man did not behave like a husband, and he did not treat the woman as his wife. The Levite man used the woman as something that he owned. The Levite man did whatever he wanted with the woman.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:22–30 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

In the first scene: The Levite man, the old man, and the concubine are together inside the house. Some men of Gibeah are outside the house. These men knock on the door and shout for the Levite man.

In the second scene: The old man goes outside to stop the men. The old man offers two women to the men of Gibeah instead of the Levite man. The men of Gibeah refuse the offer from the old man. The Levite man puts his concubine outside, and the men of Gibeah take the woman.

In the third scene: The men of Gibeah rape and hurt the concubine all night.

In the fourth scene: At the end of the night, the men of Gibeah let the woman go. The woman goes back to the old man's house where the Levite man sleeps. The woman collapses at the door.

In the fifth scene: In the morning, the Levite man wakes up and opens the door of the old man's house. The Levite man finds the concubine. The Levite man tells his concubine to get up and come with him back to Ephraim. The concubine does not speak, and the Levite man puts the woman on his donkey and travels back to Ephraim.

In the sixth scene: At the Levite man's home in Ephraim, the Levite man cuts the concubine into 12 pieces. The Levite man sends the pieces of the woman's body to the tribes of Israel.

In the seventh scene: The Israelites see pieces of the woman's body and talk to each other. The Israelites say that Israel must respond to what happened in Gibeah.

The characters in this passage are:

- The old man
- The Levite man
- Some Benjamite men of Gibeah
- The old man's daughter
- The Levite man's concubine
- And Israelite people

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The story begins when it tells us that the travelers are inside the old man's house and they feel good and happy. At the same time, some Benjamite men from the town of Gibeah come to the old man's house. The men of Gibeah who come to the house are bad people, known as sons of Belial. The men are Israelite Benjamites, but they do not follow Yahweh. The men of Gibeah knock hard on the door of the old man's house. The men of Gibeah knock more and louder. The men of Gibeah also shout to the old man inside the house. The men of Gibeah want the old man to bring out the Levite man so that the men of Gibeah can know, or have sexual intercourse with, the Levite man.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Sometimes people use a polite word or phrase to refer to things that people may feel upset or embarrassed to talk about. What words or phrases, if any, would you use in this way to talk about sexual intercourse? Pause this audio here.

The old man goes out of his house to talk to the men of Gibeah. The old man calls the men of Gibeah his brothers or friends to show that he, the old man, is an Israelite like these men. The old man tries to persuade the men of Gibeah to not do anything bad to the Levite man. The old man reminds the men of Gibeah that Israelites should look after guests and that, for Israelites, sex between men is not allowed. The men of Gibeah put the community in Gibeah in danger.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What words or phrases would you use to talk to people in your community if you wanted to persuade them of something and help them to understand that you are part of the same community as them? Pause this audio here.

The old man suddenly changes how he talks to the men. The old man tries to offer to give the women in the house to the men instead. The old man tells the men of Gibeah to pay attention and consider an alternative solution. We do not know if the old man suddenly thinks to offer the two women to the men of Gibeah, or if the old man thought of the women before but decided to wait and offer the women only if the men of Gibeah did not stop asking for someone.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do you attract someone's attention to something that you want them to see or particularly notice? What do you do to calm angry people down? Are there particular words you would use for the crowd of people? Pause this audio here.

The old man tells the men outside the house that the old man will bring out the concubine and the old man's daughter. The old man tells the men that the men can do whatever they want to the women. The old man offers the women in exchange for keeping the Levite man safe. The men of Gibeah do not listen to the old man. Then the Levite man takes action, because the men of Gibeah still want the Levite man. The Levite man takes his concubine and puts her outside. The men of Gibeah stop wanting the Levite man and take the woman.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you tell a story, what do you say to show that one thing happens as a result of another thing before it? Pause this audio here.

The men of Gibeah rape and hurt the woman through the night. The men of Gibeah let the woman go at the end of the night, just as the sky begins to get light. As the day starts and the sun rises into the sky, the woman goes back to the old man's house. The storyteller no longer calls the Levite man at the house the woman's husband. Instead, he calls the Levite man her master. The woman falls down at the door of the old man's house and lays at the door until the full light of the day comes.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How does the sky change as night ends and morning starts? What words do you use to describe or name the different times as night changes to day? Pause this audio here.

The morning after the night the men raped the concubine, the Levite man gets up from his bed and gets ready to leave to go home to Ephraim. The Levite man opens the door of the old man's house and walks out to travel home. The Levite man sees the concubine where she lays on the ground. The woman's hands are on the ground at the entrance to the house. The Levite man tells her to get up and go with him. The woman does not answer. The Levite man puts his concubine on his donkey and starts his journey to go home to Ephraim.

The Levite man arrives back home in Ephraim. At the home of the Levite man, the Levite man uses a special knife to cut up his concubine. The Levite man cuts the woman up in the same way that a Levite priest cuts up an animal that people give as a sacrifice to Yahweh. The Levite man cuts the woman into 12 different pieces.

Stop here and discuss this activity as a group: If possible, talk about a time when you saw a person or an animal and did not know if that person or animal was alive or dead. Notice what words you use for a live animal or person compared to a dead animal or person. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man sends the 12 parts of the woman's body to all the different areas in Israel. The Levite man probably sends a message to the 12 tribes of Israel. The messengers who tell the story of the Levite man and the concubine carry the body parts with them.

Israelites in different parts of Israel see the body parts and hear the story of the Levite man and the concubine. The Israelites are shocked and say that nothing like this story has happened since the Israelites left Egypt. The Israelites talk to each other and say that people need to speak out and do something. Israel needs to respond to the message from the Levite man.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Have one person tell a story of a time when a person did something terrible to another person. What did people say when they heard about what happened? How did the community ask the leaders to respond or punish the person who did something terrible? Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:22–30 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

The story in this passage is very violent, so the group will not dramatize the passage in this step.

This passage has seven scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The old man
- The Levite man
- Some Benjamite men of Gibeah
- The old man's daughter
- The Levite man's concubine
- And Israelite people

In scenes one, two, and three, the Levite man, the old man, and the concubine are together inside the house. Some men of Gibeah are outside the house, and they knock on the door and shout for the Levite man. The old man goes outside to stop the men. The old man offers two women to the men of Gibeah instead of the Levite

man. The men of Gibeah refuse the offer from the old man. The Levite man puts his concubine outside, and the men of Gibeah take the woman. The men of Gibeah rape and hurt the concubine all night.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the old man is feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the Levite man is feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the men of Gibeah are feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the Levite man's concubine is feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

In scenes four and five, at the end of the night, the men of Gibeah let the woman go. The woman goes back to the old man's house where the Levite man slept. The woman collapses at the door. In the morning, the Levite man wakes up and opens the door of the old man's house. The Levite man finds the concubine. The Levite man tells his concubine to get up and come with him back to Ephraim. The concubine does not speak, and the Levite man puts the woman on his donkey and travels back to Ephraim.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the Levite man is feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the Levite man's concubine is feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

In scenes six and seven, at the Levite man's home in Ephraim, the Levite man cuts the concubine into 12 pieces. The Levite man sends the pieces of the woman's body to the tribes of Israel. The Israelites see pieces of the woman's body and talk to each other. The Israelites say that Israel must respond to what happened in Gibeah.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the Levite man is feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what the Israelite people are feeling or thinking. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group how this story makes you feel and think. Do you need some time to think or talk about this story with someone in your team or another person? What can you do to take care of yourself as you think about a story like this?

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 19:22–30 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The old man and the Levite man enjoyed themselves. At the same time, some **wicked** or **worthless men** surrounded the old man's house. The Israelite people thought these men, called sons of Belial, had no worth in the community. These were men of bad character. These men were born from, or came from, a bad community.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "wicked or worthless men." If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The men of Gibeah **knocked hard** or **pounded** on the door. The men of Gibeah hit the door hard with their hands or hard things. The men hit the door again and again and made a louder noise.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **knocked hard** or **pounded** on the door. Pause this audio here.

The old man, the **master** of the house, went outside to talk to the men of Gibeah. Use the same word or phrase for master as you used in previous passages. For more information on master, refer to the Master Glossary.

The men of Gibeah wanted to **know**, or have sexual intercourse with, the Levite man.

Stop here and discuss what word or phrase you will use for **know**, which is a polite way to say sexual intercourse. Think about the discussion you had about this phrase when you defined the scenes in step three.

If you have already translated this idea in another book of the Bible, use the same words or phrases that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The old man called the men of Gibeah his **brothers**. Use the same word or phrase for brothers or fellow Israelites as you used in previous passages.

The old man asked the men of Gibeah to not do a **wicked**, outrageous, or shameful thing. The old man did not want the men of Gibeah to do something that breaks the rules of the Israelite community or damages the Israelite community.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **wicked**, outrageous, or shameful thing. Look up wickedness in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The old man offered his **virgin** daughter to the men of Gibeah. A virgin is unmarried and has not had sexual intercourse.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **virgin**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The old man offered the Levite man's **concubine** to the men of Gibeah. Use the same word or phrase for concubine as you used in previous passages.

The men of Gibeah **knew**, or had sexual intercourse with, the Levite man's concubine. The word for sexual intercourse in the passage is both what people use to describe sexual intercourse that both people agree to, and to describe sexual intercourse that one person forces on the other person. The sexual intercourse between the men and the concubine was forced on the woman. The woman did not want to have sexual intercourse with the men of Gibeah. The men of Gibeah raped the woman.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **knew** or raped when people force someone else to have sexual intercourse. Pause this audio here.

The men of Gibeah let the woman go at **daybreak**, the end of the night when the sky starts to get light.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **daybreak**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The woman fell down at the door of the old man's house where her master slept. The woman's master, the Levite man, got up in the morning and opened the door of the house. The Levite man found his concubine where she lay in the doorway with her hands on the **threshold**.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **threshold**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man told the woman to get up to travel home. The woman did not answer the Levite man. The Levite man put his concubine on his donkey and went home to Ephraim. At home, the Levite took a knife and cut up the woman, **limb by limb**. This means that he cut off different parts of her body.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **limb by limb**. Pause this audio here.

The Levite man sent the pieces of the woman's body to the different tribal areas in the land of Israel. The **Israelites** saw the pieces of the woman's body and were shocked by the story of the Levite man and his concubine. The Israelites talked about the story and wanted the Israelite tribe leaders to speak out. Use the same word for Israelites that you have used in previous passages, and refer to Israelites in the Master Glossary for more information.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 19:22–30

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (26486858 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (19448680 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 20:1–11

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 20:1–11 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:1–11 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

This passage continues the story of the Levite man after the Levite man returned to Ephraim and sent pieces of his concubine to all the tribes of Israel. The Levite man sent the pieces of the woman as a message to bring the Israelite people together.

After the Israelites received the message from the Levite man, people from the different tribes of Israel travelled to gather together at Mizpah. Mizpah was a village in the territory of Benjamin. Israelites travelled to Mizpah from all the different lands that Yahweh gave to the tribes of Israel. The tribe of Dan lived at the northern boundary of Israelite lands. Beersheba is the most southerly town of land that Yahweh gave to the Israelites. Gilead is home to Israelites who lived east of the River Jordan. The people of the tribe of Benjamin, the Benjamites, did not come to Mizpah. All of Israel's leaders came together, but the Benjamites were not with the Israelites. The Benjamites responded to the message differently. The story shows a separation between the tribe of Benjamin and the other tribes of Israel.

Stop here and look at a map of the lands of the Israelites that shows where each tribe lived, including the city of Beersheba, the land of Gilead, the city of Shiloh, the city of Gibeah, and the village of Mizpah. Pause this audio here.

We do not know why the Israelites met at Mizpah. The tabernacle and Phineas, the high priest, were at Shiloh in the hill country of Ephraim. Perhaps the Israelites came to Mizpah because Mizpah was closer to Gibeah than Shiloh and was in the centre of the lands of the Israelites. The Israelites came together as a people that Yahweh led. The Israelites are Yahweh's people.

The communities respected the leaders of the different Israelite tribes. The Israelite tribal leaders supported the Israelite communities and helped the Israelite communities to follow Yahweh's instructions to the Israelites. The Israelites followed Yahweh as the leader of the Israelites. The story tells us that the Israelites were united as people who belonged to their God. The storyteller does not use Yahweh's name when he says that the people belonged to God. Perhaps this is because a tribe of Israelites, the Benjamites, had not come, and so the people were not truly united together.

A large number of Israelites gathered at Mizpah. The storyteller says there were 400,000 men. This number of men is probably an estimate. The storyteller wants to show us how angry the Israelites are about what happened. The Israelite men were ready to fight on foot with swords, which is how they normally fought.

Stop here and look at a picture of an Israelite foot soldier with a sword from the time of Judges. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller gives us the extra information that Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin, the Benjamites, knew that people from the other tribes of Israel had gathered at Mizpah. The Benjamites had received the message but did not join with the other Israelites at Mizpah. We do not know why the Benjamites chose to not go to Mizpah.

The messengers had told the Israelites some of the story of the Levite man and the concubine when they received the body part and the call to gather. Now, the Israelites at Mizpah asked the Levite man to explain to the Israelites the full story.

The storyteller now reminds us that the man is both a Levite and husband of the woman who died. However, the man did not behave as a Levite or a good husband. The Israelites expected the Levites to be leaders in the community and to be examples of good behaviour. People expected a husband to protect his concubine. The storyteller reminds us that someone killed the woman on purpose and against the law of Israel. The Levite man tells the story, but the Levite changes some of the details of the story. The Levite man blames all the leaders and men of Gibeah for what happened. The Levite man shows more concern about his concubine in this story than he seemed to show in the earlier story. The Levite man does not include parts of the story that make the Levite man look bad as a Levite and as a husband.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when someone you know told a story that did not tell all of the truth. How and why did the person change the facts? Did everybody believe the person who told the story? Pause this audio here.

The Levite man tells the Israelites that the Levite cut up his concubine and sent one piece of her body to each region of Israel. You will remember from the book of Numbers that Yahweh gave different regions of the Promised Land to the Israelites as an inheritance for all Israelites from one generation to the next. The Levite man refers to the land as Israel's inheritance to make the Israelites think that the event in Gibeah threatens Yahweh's gift to the people of Israel. The Levite man calls on the Israelite tribes to respond to what happened to the Levite's concubine. The Levite man called the Israelites to bring judgement onto the people of Gibeah. The Levite man uses his words to make the Israelites angry so that the Israelites will want to destroy Gibeah. The Levite man suggests that the Israelites punish the people in Gibeah in the same way Yahweh punishes people in a city who do not follow Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about a time when you heard someone talk to a group of people in a way that made the group angry so that the group wanted to bring revenge or judgement on a person or another group of people. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites listened to the Levite man and believed what the Levite man said. The Israelites did not try to find anybody else who knew what happened in Gibeah. The Israelites did not carefully find out the truth before they made a judgement. The Israelites did not consult Yahweh or follow Yahweh's instructions. Instead, the Israelites did what they thought was right. The Israelites were united in their response to the Levite man. The Israelites said that no one at Mizpah would go back to his home where he normally lives. The Israelites would bring their judgement on Gibeah when they cast lots. We are not sure what this means, but it is possible that the Israelites cast, or threw, lots in order to decide which men would go to Gibeah in what order. Alternatively, the Israelites may have cast lots to decide how they would distribute the land of Gibeah after they destroyed the city and the people in it. Here, the Israelites use the traditions of the Israelites, but the Israelites do not seek help and guidance from Yahweh. Yahweh's high priest and the Urim and Thummim that the priest used to cast lots were at Shiloh, not Mizpah.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Discuss a time when someone used the traditions or ceremonies of your community in a wrong or incomplete way. Why did this person do this? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites prepare to provide for the army against Gibeah. The Israelites take a portion of men from each group who will take care of food and other needs for the army. This will make it possible for the army to fight Gibeah.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your community or nation, who is responsible to provide food and weapons to the people who fight? Are these people part of the group that fights, or are these people separate from the group that fights? Pause this audio here.

The portion of men from each group is one-tenth of the number of men in the group.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Make 10 marks in a group on a piece of paper or on the ground, and then circle 1 mark from the group. Now make 100 marks in a new group on the paper or ground and circle 10 marks from the group. The marks that you circle are one-tenth of each group of marks. Pause this audio here.

All the Israelites work together against the city of Gibeah. However, the tribe of Benjamin are not with them.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has three scenes.

In the first scene: The tribes of Israel and the leaders of the tribes gather at Mizpah, ready to fight. The tribe of Benjamin does not come to Mizpah. The people ask the Levite man to tell his story of what happened at Gibeah.

In the second scene: The Levite man tells his story of what happened at Gibeah. The Levite man challenges the people of Israel to bring their judgement on the city of Gibeah.

In the third scene: The Israelite men decide to destroy the city of Gibeah. A portion of the fighting men will be responsible to provide what the army needs.

The characters in this passage are:

- Fighting men of the tribes of Israel
- The leaders of the tribes of Israel
- And the Levite man

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

Some time has passed since the Levite man sent out the pieces of his concubine's body. We do not know how much time has passed, but it has been enough time for people to travel to the village of Mizpah from all over the lands of Israel. The leaders from the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh, Ephraim, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher have gathered together along with many fighting men.

Stop here and look at a map of the lands of the Israelites that shows where each tribe lived, the city of Beersheba, the land of Gilead, and the village of Mizpah, if needed. Pause this audio here.

Fighting men from all the tribes of Israel except Benjamin gathered at Mizpah. These men came from as far north as Dan and as far south as the town of Beersheba, and even from the east side of the Jordan River, from Gilead. All of these Israelites came together as one man before Yahweh. This means that the tribes were united in purpose and thought as the people of Israel, Yahweh's people. The entire congregation, or community, of Israelites came together in an assembly. An assembly was a formal meeting of people. The leaders of each tribe gathered together at the assembly.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do the people in your community meet together formally to make decisions? What do you call these special times when you meet? How do you describe that all of these people of Israel are united and act together like one person? Pause this audio here.

There are no people from the tribe of Benjamin at Mizpah even though Mizpah is in the lands of the tribe of Benjamin. The storyteller pauses the story and tells us that the Benjamites heard about how the people gathered, but the Benjamites did not come.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When you tell a story, how do you give extra information that is not in the main narrative of a story? Pause this audio here.

After the people gather at Mizpah, the Israelites ask the Levite man to tell his story to the gathered people. The Levite man tells the Israelites what happened to him and his concubine when they travelled to Gibeah from Bethlehem. The Levite man changes the story to make himself look better and to make the leaders of Gibeah responsible for what happened to the Levite's concubine. The Levite man blames all the men and the leaders of Gibeah for what happened. The Levite man does not just blame the few wicked men who came to the door of the old man's house. The men of Gibeah came after the Levite man. The men came to the same place as the Levite man and wanted to attack the Levite man. The Levite man accused the leaders and men of Gibeah. The Levite says these men wanted to kill the Levite man, even though the men did not say they wanted to kill the Levite man. The Levite man says that the leaders and men of Gibeah damaged and abused the concubine of the Levite man when they performed sexual intercourse with her. The Levite man says that the men of Gibeah caused the Levite's concubine to die. The Levite man blames the men of Gibeah for the concubine's death, even though the concubine died afterwards. You will remember from the previous passage that the Levite man possibly killed the concubine when the Levite cut up the concubine's body. The Levite man tells the Israelites to judge the city of Gibeah and decide what should happen to the city of Gibeah.

After the Levite told his story, the Israelites at Mizpah all rose up together, "as one man." This is a way to say that all of the Israelite leaders are united in purpose and that leaders make this decision together. The Israelite leaders decide that the Israelites will not go home but that the Israelites will fight and destroy the city of Gibeah. We do not know if the Israelites make their decision immediately after the Levite man finishes his story or if the Israelites take time to decide what to do.

Now, the Israelites make a plan to fight and destroy the city of Gibeah. The Israelites say that they will provide for the army of fighting men. The Israelites will take a portion—one-tenth—of each group of men. Later, the one-tenth will get provisions, such as food, weapons, and water for the rest of the army. This plan will make it possible for the Israelites to fight the people of the city of Gibeah and bring the Israelites' judgement on Gibeah. Now, the Israelites at Mizpah worked together and agreed together their judgement on the city of Gibeah.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Talk about what you do now. Then talk about what you will do later. Then return to talk again about what you do now. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has three scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Fighting men of the tribes of Israel
- The leaders of the tribes of Israel
- And the Levite man

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The tribes of Israel and the leaders of the tribes gather at Mizpah, ready to fight. The Israelites at Mizpah ask the Levite man to tell his story of what happened at Gibeah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the fighting men from the tribes of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We are so angry that people killed this woman; or
- Who will we punish for this terrible act? or
- Now we are here, so let us hear what happened.

Ask the person who plays the leaders of the tribes of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We have brought our fighting men to bring justice; or
- We must find out what happened to the woman; or
- We are responsible to lead our tribes wisely.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I want everyone to know how the city of Gibeah insulted me; or
- I am so proud. So many people have come to give justice; or
- Now is my chance to tell my story to everyone.

The Levite man tells his story of what happened at Gibeah. The Levite man challenges the people of Israel to bring their judgement on the city of Gibeah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Levite man, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The people of Gibeah made me afraid; or
- I must make myself look like a good husband; or
- I want the Israelites to blame the city of Gibeah for what happened to me and my concubine.

The Israelite men decide to destroy the city of Gibeah. A portion of the fighting men will be responsible to provide what the army needs.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the fighting men from the tribes of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This is a terrible story. We are so angry at the people of Gibeah; or
- The people in the city of Gibeah do not follow Yahweh; or
- We must bring judgement on the city of Gibeah; or
- We will make sure our fighters are ready to attack the city of Gibeah.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:1–11 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

Fighting men from all the tribes of Israel except Benjamin gathered at Mizpah. Use the same word or phrase for **Israel** as you used in previous passages. For more information on Israel, refer to the Master Glossary.

The **Israelites** came **together as one man** before Yahweh. Use the same word or phrase for Israelites as you used in previous passages. For more information on Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "together as one man." If you have already translated this phrase in another book of the Bible, use the same word or phrase that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Yahweh is the personal name for God. In this passage, God is called Yahweh. Be sure to translate Yahweh in the same way as you have in previous passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

Four hundred thousand **fighting men** came on foot and carried **swords**. This means that these men did not ride a horse or a chariot to fight. Use the same words or phrases for fighting men and swords as you used in previous passages.

The **Levite** was the husband of the woman who the people **murdered**. Murder is when someone deliberately and illegally kills a person. Use the same words or phrases for Levite and murdered as you used in previous passages. For more information on Levite, refer to the Master Glossary.

The woman was the **concubine** of the Levite man. Use the same word or phrase for concubine as you used in previous passages.

The men of Gibeah came after the Levite man. The men of Gibeah were the landowners and people with authority in the city of Gibeah. Use the same word or phrase for **men with authority** or **men who are landowners** as you used in previous passages.

The men **raped** the Levite man's concubine. Use the same word or phrase for rape as you used in previous passages.

The Levite man sent pieces of the dead concubine to each region of Israel's **inheritance**. Use the same word or phrase for inheritance as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites will attack Gibeah by **casting lots**. Casting lots probably refers to how people put marked objects, or lots, into a bag or container. These objects were usually pebbles. People marked these objects either with different colours, different symbols, or different names. Then a person shook the bag until one of the objects fell out. The high priest of the Israelites casts lots to help make important decisions.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "casting lots." If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites plan to take some men from each group of men to get **provisions** for the **army**, the men gathered to fight. Use the same words for provisions and army as you used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 20:1–11

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (15043508 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 20:12–25

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 20:12–25 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:12–25 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:12–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

You will remember from the previous passage that fighting men and leaders from the tribes of Israel gathered at Mizpah. At Mizpah, the people gathered to listen to the Levite man tell his story about how the Levite's concubine died. People from the tribe of Benjamin did not come to Mizpah. The Israelites at Mizpah were angry.

All the Israelites at Mizpah wanted to punish the people of Gibeah from the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelites at Mizpah prepared to fight the people of Gibeah. In this passage, Israel and the Israelites means people from all the tribes of Israel apart from the tribe of Benjamin.

The Israelites at Mizpah sent out men who spoke a message to the people in the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelites wanted the tribe of Benjamin to respond to the evil thing that the men in Gibeah did. We do not know if the Israelites at Mizpah expected the tribe of Benjamin to respond well to the message or if the Israelites just needed some time to organise the army. The messengers told the tribe of Benjamin to give the men from Gibeah to the rest of the Israelites. The Israelites at Mizpah wanted to kill the men from Gibeah as a punishment for what the men of Gibeah did to the Levite man's concubine. According to the laws that Yahweh gave the people of Israel, if a man has sexual relations with another man's wife, the people of Israel would kill the man and the woman to remove the evil from the people of Israel. The Israelites wanted to punish the people of Gibeah more than Yahweh told the Israelites to do.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What actions do the people of your community call evil actions, or actions that are against the laws of your community? What is the punishment for very evil actions? Describe a time, if there are any, in the history of your community when people executed someone as punishment for an evil thing that the person did. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites at Mizpah give the men of Gibeah the same name as the storyteller gives the men earlier when we learn what happens in Gibeah. The storyteller calls these men a name that means the men have no value and they have bad character. This is not what the Levite man called the men when the Levite man told his story to the Israelites at Mizpah. The Israelites at Mizpah do not follow the Levite man and the Levite man is not important anymore.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Tell a story about people who act in a way that shows they have a bad character and are of no value. Pause this audio here.

The people of the tribe of Benjamin do not listen to their "brothers," the people from the tribes of Israel who are like family to the tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin does not give the men from Gibeah to the Israelites at Mizpah. We do not know why the tribe of Benjamin chooses to take the side of the men from Gibeah. The tribe of Benjamin breaks the family bonds between the tribes of Israel and decides to fight against the rest of Israel.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Describe a time in your family or community history when one part of the family or community became completely separate from the rest of the family or community due to an argument or something similar. How did the two groups of people fight or argue with each other? Pause this audio here.

The tribe of Benjamin called the fighting men together from the cities, or from anywhere the people of the tribe of Benjamin lived. The tribe of Benjamin gathered together 26,000 men who fought with a sword. The people of the city of Gibeah provided 700 fighting men to the army of the tribe of Benjamin. Within the army of the tribe of Benjamin, there were also 700 men who were special fighters. The storyteller describes these special fighters as left-handed. To be left-handed means to have a right hand that does not work as well as the left hand. You might remember that earlier in the book of Judges, Ehud, the Benjamite judge, was also called left-handed. Left-handed fighters probably used their left hand to hold the sword instead of their right hand. It is possible that this was a special type of fighter only in the tribe of Benjamin. Right-handed fighters will find left-handed fighters more difficult to fight, because the left-handed fighters fight differently from right-handed fighters.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Have two people in the group each pick up a pencil, a pen, or a stick and hold it in their right hand. Now ask those two people to fight each other carefully with the sticks. Now have a new person hold a pencil, pen, or stick in their left hand and join the fight. How does it feel different to try to fight the person who holds the stick in their left hand? Pause this audio here.

The passage also tells us that these special fighters can use a sling very well to throw a stone. A sling is a simple weapon in the form of a strap or loop of leather or material that people hold in their hand and use to throw stones or other hard items. Israelites used slings and stones to keep animals and birds away from their sheep and goats, and from the crops the Israelites grew. Also, fighters used slings and stones to hurt people from a distance. The special fighters could use a sling to throw a stone very well because the fighters could hit a hair,

a very small target. Fighters with a sling can hurt another person before the person gets near enough to hurt the fighter.

Stop here and look at a picture of a person who holds a sling and some stones. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What special fighters do you have as part of your regular army? What kind of special training and weapons do these fighters have that are different from others? Pause this audio here.

The men of Israel at Mizpah gathered together 400,000 fighting men with swords. All the men from the tribe of Benjamin, and the men who gathered from the rest of the tribes of Israel, were fighting men ready to go to war. As with other times in the Bible, we do not know if the number of men was a true number or if the words represent units of fighting men. We do know that the number of fighting men from the tribes of Israel at Mizpah was much bigger than the fighting men from just the one tribe of Benjamin.

After the tribe of Benjamin showed the Israelites at Mizpah that the tribe of Benjamin supported Gibeah and would fight with Gibeah, the Israelites wanted to talk to their God. The Israelites probably travelled to the town of Bethel which is about a two-hour walk from Mizpah. You may remember that Jacob made an altar to Yahweh at Bethel, and Bethel was an important place for the Israelites.

Stop here and look at a map of the cities of Gibeah, Mizpah, Bethel, and Shiloh. Pause this audio here.

We learn later in the book of Judges that the Levite priests and helpers brought the ark of the covenant to Bethel. We do not know when the priests moved the ark of the covenant. We do not know if the ark of the covenant and Phinehas, the high priest, were at Bethel when the Israelites came to ask questions of their God. In the story, the storyteller uses the name God instead of the Israelites' personal name for God, Yahweh. The Israelites do not ask Yahweh what the Israelites should do. The Israelites only ask Yahweh how the Israelites should start the fight. The Israelites do not show respect to Yahweh. Instead, the Israelites do what the Israelites think is right. Yahweh answers the Israelites and tells the Israelites that Judah should lead the fight. It is possible that Yahweh chose Judah because the Levite's concubine came from Judah. Yahweh's law states that when someone kills a person, a close relative of the killed person can go to get justice for the killed person.

After the Israelites received instructions from Yahweh, the Israelites left Mizpah in the morning and moved to make a new camp near Gibeah. The fighting men went from the place where they were camped and arranged themselves ready to fight against the people from the tribe of Benjamin. The fighters from the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and killed, or cut down, 22,000 Israelite men.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: On the ground or on a piece of paper, draw a circle to show the city of Gibeah. Outside of the circle, on one side place 40 small stones to represent the Israelites. Inside the circle, place three small stones to represent the tribe of Benjamin. Now move the three stones outside the circle and towards the Israelite stones. Cover two Israelite stones with small bits of paper or leaves to show the number of Israelites who fell to the ground dead. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites probably felt shocked because so many Israelite fighters died on the first day of the fight. The Israelites probably expected to kill all the Benjamite fighters because there were many more Israelite fighters than Benjamite fighters. We do not know if any Benjamite fighters died on the first day of the fight. The Israelites encouraged each other and got ready to fight again at the same place as the first day of the fight.

The storyteller tells us a little bit more about what happened after the first day of the fight before the Israelites got ready again. After the first day of the fight, when the Israelites felt shocked and sad, the Israelites went from near Gibeah to talk to Yahweh. The people who went to Bethel were very sad and cried in front of Yahweh. The Israelites probably cried at the altar at Bethel or in front of the ark of the covenant, if the ark of the covenant was already at Bethel. This time, the Israelites wanted guidance from Yahweh. The Israelites asked Yahweh if the Israelites should fight their family, the tribe of Benjamin. Yahweh told the Israelites to go up against the Benjamites, but Yahweh did not give the Israelites further instructions, and Yahweh did not promise that the Israelites would win the battle. Yahweh did not clearly tell the Israelites to fight the tribe of Benjamin. This is very different to Yahweh's response to requests for guidance at the beginning of the book of Judges when Yahweh promised victory to the Israelites.

The people of Israel returned to Gibeah and got ready to fight for a second day of the fight. We do not know how long it was between the first and second day of the fight. The fighting men of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and killed another 18,000 Israelite fighting men. The Israelite men were men who used swords. These men were not special fighters.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Cover two more Israelite stones outside the circle to show the number of Israelite men who fell to the ground dead on the second day of the fight.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:12–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has five scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites at Mizpah sent messengers to the tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin did not listen to the other tribes. Instead, the tribe of Benjamin chose to support the people of Gibeah. The tribe of Benjamin built an army of regular and special fighting men from all the cities of Benjamin. The Israelite army of fighting men was much bigger than the Benjamite army.

In the second scene: Some Israelites left Mizpah and went to Bethel to ask God who should fight the Benjamites first. Yahweh told the Israelites that Judah should go first.

In the third scene: The Israelites left Mizpah and moved to camp at Gibeah. The fighting men got ready to fight, and the Benjamites came out of Gibeah and killed 22,000 Israelites.

In the fourth scene: The Israelites got ready to fight again. At that time, some Israelites went to Bethel to ask God if the Israelites should fight the Benjamites again. Yahweh answered and the Israelites returned to Gibeah.

In the fifth scene: The second day of the fight started and the fighting men of Benjamin came out from Gibeah and killed 18,000 fighting Israelite men.

The characters in this passage are:

- Israelite messengers
- Tribe of Benjamin
- Fighting men of the tribe of Benjamin
- Special left-handed fighting men
- Fighting men of the Israelite tribes
- Group of Israelite leaders
- And Yahweh

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The Israelite tribes gathered at Mizpah, but the tribe of Benjamin did not come. After the people at Mizpah heard the story from the Levite man, the tribes of Israel at Mizpah sent out messengers to the tribe of Benjamin. We do not know how much time passed between when the Levite man told his story and when the Israelite tribes sent messengers out to the different parts of land owned by the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelite messengers wanted the tribe of Benjamin to agree that the men of Gibeah did something very wrong. The Israelite messengers called the men of Gibeah wicked, worthless, and of bad character.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What will you call the men of Gibeah in your translation? Remember that the men are of bad character, of no value, and wicked. Pause this audio here.

The messengers want the tribe of Benjamin to give the men of Gibeah to the Israelites at Mizpah. The Israelites want to kill the men of Gibeah who hurt the woman. The Israelites want to follow the law that Yahweh gave to Israel.

When the tribe of Benjamin heard the messengers, the Benjamites did not agree with the message of the other Israelites. Benjamites from cities in the land that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin gathered together at Gibeah. The people who came to Gibeah were fighters, or men who used a sword to fight. When the tribe of Benjamin counted the fighters at the time that they gathered, they found there were 26,000 men. There were also 700 fighting men from the city of Gibeah. Some of the 26,000 men were special fighters. The special fighters were left-handed, which means that they were trained to use their left hand to fight in a battle. The special fighters could also use a sling to throw a stone very well to fight people in a battle.

Stop here and look at a picture of a person who holds a sling and some stones, if necessary. Pause this audio here.

At the same time, at Mizpah, there were 400,000 Israelite fighting men with swords.

After the Benjamites gathered at Gibeah, the Israelites got ready to fight. The Israelites wanted to know what to do in the battle. Some Israelites left Mizpah and went to Bethel to ask for guidance from God. It is unlikely that every person at Mizpah left Mizpah. It was probably the leaders who travelled to a place with an altar. It would take people about two hours to walk from Mizpah to Bethel. We do not know how long the Israelites were at Bethel. In the passage, the storyteller tells us that the Israelites asked guidance from God, but the storyteller says that Yahweh replied and told the Israelites at Bethel that Judah should go first.

The Israelites went back to Mizpah and joined the rest of the Israelites. The next morning, the Israelites left Mizpah and made a new camp, or a temporary place to stay, near Gibeah.

Stop here and look at a map of the cities of Gibeah, Mizpah, Bethel, and Shiloh, if necessary. Pause this audio here.

After the Israelites move to near Gibeah, the Israelites prepare to fight the Benjamites. On the first day of the fight, the Israelites arrange their fighters ready to meet and fight the Benjamites. The Israelites' fighters might have stood in lines, or they may have stood in a different arrangement of people ready to fight.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How do your fighters arrange themselves ready to fight against an enemy? How could you describe how the Israelite fighters get themselves into positions ready to fight? Pause this audio here.

The Benjamite fighters came out of the city of Gibeah and killed 22,000 Israelite fighters. When the Israelite men died, the storyteller says the Israelite men were cut down and fell to the ground. After the fight on the first day, the Israelites encouraged each other and arranged the fighters in the same way as before, ready to fight again.

The storyteller then tells us more about what the Israelites did after the first day of the fight. It is not likely that all the Israelites left Gibeah. It was probably the community leaders who left the fighters at Gibeah and went to Bethel again. We do not know where the Israelites went to hear from Yahweh, but the Israelites probably went back to Bethel. When the Israelites got to the place where the Israelites could hear from Yahweh, the Israelites cried. The Israelites cried until the end of the day. This is probably a different day from the first day of the fight. The Israelites asked Yahweh if the Israelites should fight the Benjamites. Yahweh told the Israelites to go against the Benjamites. It is not clear what Yahweh meant when Yahweh said this.

The passage does not tell us that the Israelites returned to Gibeah from Bethel, but it is very likely that the Israelites went back to Gibeah. The Israelites got ready to fight again. We do not know how many days passed between the first and second days of the fight. On the second day of the fight, the Benjamites came out of Gibeah and killed another 18,000 fighting men from the tribes of Israel.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

*Embodying the Text**Embodying the Text*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:12–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has five scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- Israelite messengers
- Tribe of Benjamin
- Fighting men of the tribe of Benjamin
- Special left-handed fighting men
- Fighting men of the Israelite tribes
- Group of Israelite leaders
- And Yahweh

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Israelites at Mizpah sent messengers to the tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin did not listen to the other tribes. Instead, the tribe of Benjamin chose to support the people of Gibeah. The tribe of Benjamin built an army of regular and special fighting men from all the cities of Benjamin. The Israelite army of fighting men was much bigger than the Benjamite army.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite messengers, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- You need to listen to us; or
- Think about what the bad men in Gibeah did to the Levite's concubine; or
- We want the bad men of Gibeah to be gone from our nation.

Ask the person who plays the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Why do our brothers from other tribes get so angry? We do not need all the tribes to punish the men of Gibeah; or
- The other tribes of Israel treat us like foreigners, not brothers; or
- We need to support the town of Gibeah against the army from the other tribes of Israel.

Ask the fighters of the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We will defend and protect our tribe and Gibeah; or
- We are strong and ready to stand with Gibeah.

Ask the special left-handed fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Our special training makes it hard for people to fight against us; or
- We will kill any fighter before he comes near us with his sword.

Some Israelites left Mizpah and went to Bethel to ask God who should fight the Benjamites first. Yahweh told the Israelites that Judah should go first.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the group of Israelite people, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now that we have decided to fight the Benjamites, we want guidance from God for our battle; or
- Yahweh has given his blessing to Israel's battles before. We want Yahweh's blessing now.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- My people do what they think is right. Only I can bring judgement on people who have done something wrong; or
- It is right that the people of Judah look for justice, because the woman was from Judah.

The Israelites left Mizpah and moved to camp at Gibeah. The fighting men got ready to fight, and the Benjamites came out of Gibeah and killed 22,000 Israelites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the fighters of the Israelite tribes, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We are ready to kill all the very bad men from Gibeah; or
- All the tribe of Benjamin will be judged because of how Benjamin's tribe chose to support Gibeah; or
- Today was terrible. How can so few men from Benjamin kill so many of us?

Ask the person who plays the fighters of the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Israelites thought it would be easy to fight us; or
- The Israelite fighters did not get close to us. Our special fighters killed the Israelites before the Israelites could use their swords; or
- Today the tribe of Benjamin won the battle!

The Israelites got ready to fight again. At that time, some Israelites went to Bethel to ask God if the Israelites should fight the Benjamites again. Yahweh answered and the Israelites returned to Gibeah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the fighters of the Israelite tribes, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Even though the fight killed lots of us, we know we do the right thing; or
- Next time we fight, we will do better. There are still lots more of us than them.

Ask the person who plays the group of Israelite people, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We need guidance from Yahweh before we fight again; or
- Yahweh, many of our men died. We are so sad. Hear our sadness and guide us; or
- Yahweh, tell us what we should do. Should we fight our brothers?

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I did not tell my people to fight; or
- When my people fight without me, my people lose the battle; or
- What should I say to teach my people to follow me?

The second day of the fight starts and the fighting men of Benjamin come out from Gibeah and kill 18,000 fighting Israelite men.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the fighters of the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We will kill any Israelites who come close to Gibeah today; or
- We have won! Our fighters are strong and well-trained.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:12–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The tribes of **Israel** were at Mizpah. In this passage, Israel and the Israelites means people from all the tribes of Israel apart from the tribe of Benjamin. For information on Israel, refer to the Master Glossary.

The tribes of Israel sent men to talk to all the people in the tribe of Benjamin and to give them a message from the tribes of Israel.

Stop here and discuss what word or phrase you will use for **men who bring messages**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The messengers ask the tribe of Benjamin what the tribe of Benjamin will do about the **wickedness** or **evil** that people have done. Use the same word for wickedness or evil as you used in previous passages. For more information on wickedness or evil, refer to the Master Glossary.

The messengers ask the tribe of Benjamin to give the **wicked** or **worthless men** in Gibeah to the Israelites at Mizpah. Use the same word or phrase for wicked or worthless men as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites at Mizpah want to kill the men of Gibeah to **purge** the evil from Israel. Purge means to remove something completely.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **purge**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Benjamites would not listen to their **brothers**. Here, brothers is a way to talk about fellow tribes of Israel. Use the same word or phrase for brothers as you used in previous passages.

The tribe of Benjamin **mustered** 26,000 fighting men with swords from their cities. To muster means to call and gather together a group of fighting people.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **mustered**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

Cities are larger than towns and they usually have a wall around them. Use the same word for city as you have in previous passages.

Use the same word or phrase for **fighting men with swords** as you used in previous passages.

Stop here and look at a picture of an Israelite foot soldier with a sword from the time of Judges. Pause this audio here.

The tribe of Benjamin had 700 **left-handed special fighting men**. Use the same word or phrase for "left-handed special fighting man" as you used in previous passages.

The special fighting men could **sling a stone** very well. To "sling a stone" means to use a sling to throw a stone.

Stop here and look at a picture of a person who holds a sling and some stones, if necessary. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "sling a stone." If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites went to Bethel to ask questions of **God**. The Israelites used the general title for God when the Israelites went to Bethel to ask God questions. Then the storyteller uses **Yahweh** when Yahweh responds to the Israelites. Translate God and Yahweh in the same way as you used in previous passages. For more information on God and Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Israelites made camp at Gibeah, ready to fight. The Israelites went to fight the Benjamites and **took up battle positions**, or **formed a battle line** against the Benjamites. The Israelites arranged their fighters in lines or a different pattern or positions ready to fight.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "took up battle positions" or "formed a battle line." If you have already translated this idea in another book of the Bible, use the same words or phrases that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Benjamites **cut down, destroyed**, or made men fall to the ground when the Benjamites killed the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **cut down** or **destroyed**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites went and cried before Yahweh. The Israelites asked Yahweh for guidance. Yahweh told the Israelites to go up against the Benjamites. On the second day of the fight, the Israelites went near the Benjamites and the Benjamites cut down another 18,000 Israelite fighters with swords.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 20:12–25

Audio Content

[webm zip](#) (27260405 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

[mp3 zip](#) (19963446 KB)

- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 20:26–35

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 20:26–35 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:26–35 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:26–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this story, Israel and the Israelites means people from all the tribes of Israel apart from the tribe of Benjamin. The tribes of Israel gathered at Gibeah to punish the people of Gibeah and the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelite fighting men fought the Benjamite fighting men on two separate days. The fighting men of the tribe of Benjamin killed many Israelites and won both battles.

After the second day of the fight, all the people from the tribes of Israel who gathered at Mizpah and who fought near Gibeah left their camps. All the people went to Bethel. You may remember that Jacob made an altar to Yahweh at Bethel, and Bethel was an important place for the Israelites. It would take people about half a day to walk from Gibeah to Bethel.

Stop here and look at a map of the cities of Gibeah, Mizpah, Bethel, and Shiloh, and the location of Baal Tamar. Pause this audio here.

Everybody at Bethel cried. The people of Israel felt very sad. The people sat before Yahweh. The people sat on the ground in front of the presence of Yahweh. The presence of Yahweh was with the ark of the covenant. You will remember that the ark of the covenant was a special box that had the laws of Yahweh inside it. We do not

know if the ark of the covenant was in the tabernacle or if the ark of the covenant was uncovered and not inside the tabernacle. The Israelites mourned the deaths of the fighting men and how the Israelites lost the battle. The Israelites fasted until the evening. This means that the Israelites did not eat certain foods or possibly any food or drink until the evening. To fast was part of how Israelites mourned for people. To fast showed that the Israelites submitted themselves to Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your community, how do people show their sadness and mourn for dead people? Pause this audio here.

This time, the Israelites at Bethel showed respect for Yahweh. The Israelites worshipped Yahweh when they gave offerings to Yahweh. Burnt offerings are when the people gave an animal to the priest for Yahweh. The priest killed the animal and burnt it on the altar as a gift to Yahweh. The Israelites gave burnt offerings to please Yahweh. Peace or fellowship offerings are when the people gave an animal to the priest to share between Yahweh, the priest, and the people. The priest killed the animal and burnt some of the animal on the altar. Then the priest shared the remainder of the burnt animal between the priest and the people. The Israelites gave fellowship offerings to remind the Israelites of their relationship with Yahweh.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What do you do to remind yourself of your relationship with God and help you feel closer to God? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites asked Yahweh for guidance in the right way this time. We do not know if this is the first time that the Israelites asked Yahweh for help through the high priest at the ark of the covenant. We do not know when the Levites and the priests moved the ark of the covenant from Shiloh to Bethel. The ark is a symbol of Yahweh's presence with Israel. The presence of Yahweh at the ark of the covenant guided Israel at war in the time of Joshua. We do not know if the Levites moved all the tabernacle structures to Bethel or only the ark of the covenant. Now Israel was at war again, and the Israelites needed the ark of the covenant nearby.

This is the first time that the passage tells us that the high priest, Phinehas, a male descendant of Aaron, was with the ark of the covenant at Bethel. This tells us that this story is from early in the time of Judges in Israel. The writer of the book of Judges put this story separately and at the end of the book of Judges because this story is a very important warning to Israel.

The Israelites asked Yahweh if the Israelites should fight their brothers in the tribe of Benjamin or if they should stop the fight. This was the first time the Israelites gave another choice besides to fight. The Israelites declared the close family relationship between the Israelites and the tribe of Benjamin. Yahweh told the Israelites to go and fight again. Yahweh told the Israelites that Yahweh would give victory to the Israelites. Yahweh would give the tribe of Benjamin into the hand, or power, of the Israelites.

The Israelites now knew that the Israelites should fight the Benjamites again and that Israel would win the battle. The Israelites left Bethel and went back towards Gibeah. This time, Israel tried a new way to fight the Benjamites. Israel put men in place for an ambush. An ambush is an attacker or group of attackers who hide and wait and then make a surprise attack. You might remember when Yahweh told the Israelites to use an ambush to attack Ai in the book of Joshua. This time, Yahweh did not tell the Israelites to use an ambush, but the Israelites knew that an ambush was a good way to win a battle. The Israelites made groups of fighting men and left the men in different positions.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: If possible, tell a story of a time when some people used an ambush to fight other people or to hunt for food. Pause this audio here.

One group of Israelite fighting men went back to the same fighting place near Gibeah. The Israelites near Gibeah got ready to fight in the same arrangement of men as the Israelites used for the first two days of the fight. Fighters from the tribe of Benjamin came out from the city of Gibeah to fight the Israelites. The Israelites did not stay at the place of the fight but started to move away. Some of the Israelites went up the road towards Bethel and some went down the road towards Gibeah. The Benjamites killed about 30 Israelites at the place where they fought and as the Israelites moved down the roads. The storyteller tells us that the two groups of people who fought the battle had different thoughts about what happened. The Benjamites thought that the Benjamites were winning like on the first two days of the fight. However, the Israelites followed the Israelite plan for an ambush. The Israelites made the Benjamite fighters follow the Israelites. The Israelites wanted the Benjamites to move farther away from Gibeah and along the roads near the city.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: On a piece of paper or on the ground, draw a circle for the city of Gibeah and lines to show roads from Gibeah towards Bethel. Use some stones to place the Israelite fighters near the city on the northern side. Use some leaves or something else to place the Benjamite fighters next to the Israelite fighters in the battle. Now move your markers to show how the fighters move away from the city. Pause this audio here.

The battle became more complicated. The Israelites had most of their fighters north and northeast of Gibeah. The Israelite fighters who started the battle at Gibeah moved to a place called Baal Tamar. Baal Tamar was probably a short distance northeast of Gibeah. Other Israelite fighters joined the group at Baal Tamar. We do not know if Israelite fighters waited at Baal Tamar or if Israelite fighters hid or waited near Baal Tamar. The Israelite fighters arranged themselves ready to fight at Baal Tamar.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Use the picture you made before to show the movements of the fighting men in the battle. Add a circle for Baal Tamar, northeast of Gibeah, and move your Israelite markers to it. Add more stones for more Israelites. Move your Benjamite markers towards Baal Tamar. Pause this audio here.

While the Israelites fought outside Gibeah, a small group of Israelite fighters waited in ambush, possibly to the west of Gibeah. This small group of Israelite fighters were separate from the main force of Israelite fighters. The Benjamites could not see this small group of Israelites. After the Benjamites followed the Israelites towards Baal Tamar, the small group of fighters left the place where they hid, which people sometimes called Maareh Geba. The Israelite fighters quickly came across open land to the city of Gibeah. There were 10,000 fighting men in this small group that attacked Gibeah.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Place a new group of stones for the Israelites west of Gibeah and then move them into the city of Gibeah. Pause this audio here.

People fought hard in the battle. The Benjamites fought hard at Baal Tamar. The Israelites fought hard at Baal Tamar and at the city of Gibeah. The Benjamites did not know that the Israelites were about to defeat them. Yahweh defeated the tribe of Benjamin and gave Israel the victory. The fighting men of Israel killed 25,100 Benjamite men. All the men were fighting men who used swords. We do not know what happened to the 700 special Benjamite fighters. You may remember that the Benjamites and the city of Gibeah gathered 26,700 fighters. Most of the Benjamite fighters were killed on the third day of the fight.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: If possible, talk about a time in your people's history when people fought and almost all of one group of people was killed. Why were so many people killed?

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:26–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites go to Bethel and cry in front of Yahweh at the ark of the covenant. The Israelites worship Yahweh and ask Yahweh for guidance. Yahweh tells the Israelites that Yahweh will give the Israelites the victory over the Benjamites. Phinehas is the high priest.

In the second scene: The Israelites prepare an ambush for the Benjamites.

In the third scene: Some of the Israelite fighters prepare to fight at Gibeah. The Benjamites come out to fight the Israelites. The Benjamites kill some Israelites, but the rest of the Israelites run away to get the Benjamites to follow and move away from Gibeah.

In the fourth scene: The Israelite fighters gather at Baal Tamar and fight the Benjamites.

In the fifth scene: Ten thousand chosen Israelite fighters come out from the place where they hid and attack Gibeah.

In the sixth scene: Yahweh defeats the Benjamites as the Israelites kill most of the Benjamites.

The characters in this passage are:

- The people of Israel
- Yahweh
- Phinehas, the high priest
- Fighters of the tribes of Israel
- Fighters of the tribe of Benjamin
- Ten thousand chosen Israelite fighters
- And the people in the city of Gibeah

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The events in this passage happen immediately after the events in the previous passage. After the Benjamites defeated the Israelites a second time on the second day of the fight, the Israelites left their camp near Gibeah and moved to Bethel.

Stop here and look at a map of the cities of Gibeah, Mizpah, Bethel, and Shiloh, and the location of Baal Tamar, if necessary. Pause this audio here.

When the Israelites arrived at Bethel, the Israelites sat in front of Yahweh. This means that the Israelites were in front of the ark of the covenant. We do not know if the entire tabernacle was there or not. The Israelites spent at least one day at Bethel. During the day, the Israelites wept and fasted and made offerings to Yahweh. On that day, or a day soon after, the Israelites asked Yahweh for guidance. We do not know how long Yahweh took to answer the Israelites. Yahweh told the Israelites to go back to fight because then Yahweh would give the Benjamites into the hands of the Israelites. The Israelites would hold power over the tribe of Benjamin. Yahweh used similar words at the beginning of the book of Judges when Yahweh gave the land into Judah's hand. Yahweh told the Israelites that the victory would come tomorrow or in the future. Yahweh did not give the victory to the Israelites before the fight.

After Yahweh told the Israelites that Yahweh would give the Benjamites into the power of the Israelites, the Israelites left Bethel. The Israelites got ready to fight the Benjamites again, but the Israelites arranged their fighting men in a different way. Ten thousand Israelite fighters hid around the city of Gibeah as an ambush. Some of the fighting men went back to near Gibeah and got ready to fight with the men in the same place and arrangement as before. Some of the Israelite fighters might have been between Gibeah and Baal Tamar, or at Baal Tamar.

On the third day of the fight between the Israelites and the tribe of Benjamin, the Israelite fighters got ready to fight near Gibeah. The Benjamite fighters left the city of Gibeah and went to fight the Israelites. The Israelite fighters did not stay at the same place but moved along the roads nearby. The Israelite fighters attracted the Benjamite fighters away from Gibeah. The Israelite fighters tricked the Benjamite fighters so that the Benjamite fighters followed the Israelite fighters.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: When have you used a lure to make a person or an animal do something that they should not do or go a certain way? What did you do to trick the person or animal? Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you talk about how the Israelites drew away the Benjamite fighters from Gibeah? Pause this audio here.

The roads go in different directions. One road goes towards Bethel and another road goes towards Gibeah. The storyteller gives us two different views of the battle. The Benjamite fighters think that the Israelite fighters

have begun to run away, so the Benjamites follow the Israelites. The Israelites take the Benjamite fighters away from Gibeah.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Talk about a time when one person thought one thing happened but another person saw the same thing and thought a different thing happened. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites began the next part of the battle plan. All of the main group of Israelite fighters met at Baal Tamar and got ready to fight the Benjamite fighters. The Benjamite fighters were away from Gibeah. At the same time, the 10,000 Israelite fighters who hid outside Gibeah ran towards Gibeah and attacked the city of Gibeah. Men fought heavily everywhere. The fighters had a lot of fighting which was difficult and intense. The fighters found the amount of fighting hard to manage.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: How will you describe heavy fighting in your translation? Pause this audio here.

The Benjamites did not realise that the men of the tribe of Benjamin were about to lose the battle.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Use your picture of battle movements from step two to talk through the movements of the Israelites and Benjamites in the battle. Pay attention to when people move at the same time or at different times to each other. Pause this audio here.

The storyteller changes the view of the battle. We now see Yahweh's role in the battle. Yahweh brought about the defeat of the tribe of Benjamin. The storyteller gives us a summary of how many people from the tribe of Benjamin died and tells us that all the men were fighting men.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:26–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The people of Israel
- Yahweh
- Phinehas, the high priest
- Fighters of the tribes of Israel
- Fighters of the tribe of Benjamin
- Ten thousand chosen Israelite fighters
- And the people of the city of Gibeah

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Israelites go to Bethel and cry in front of Yahweh at the ark of the covenant. The Israelites worship Yahweh and ask Yahweh for guidance. Yahweh tells the Israelites that Yahweh will give the Israelites the victory over the Benjamites. Phinehas is the high priest.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- So many of our brothers died at Gibeah. Why did we not win the battle? or
- Yahweh, we are your people. Please bless us, Yahweh; or
- We need Yahweh to guide us.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now my people remember that they need me; or
- I am pleased with the offerings my people give me; or
- It is time to punish the tribe of Benjamin and end the fight.

Ask the person who plays Phinehas, the high priest, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Yahweh, please tell us what to do; or
- It is right that the ark of the covenant is at Bethel to help lead and guide Israel.

The Israelites prepare an ambush for the Benjamites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays fighters of the tribes of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This time we will beat the Benjamites; or
- We will use an ambush to kill the Benjamites; or
- The Benjamites will be surprised when our fighters appear from the other side of Gibeah.

Some of the Israelite fighters prepare to fight at Gibeah. The Benjamites come out to fight the Israelites. The Benjamites kill some of the Israelites, but the rest of the Israelites run away to get the Benjamites to follow and move away from Gibeah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays fighters of the tribes of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We are ready. Come and fight us, tribe of Benjamin! or
- The tribe of Benjamin thinks we will fight the same as before, but we have a better plan; or
- Come on, follow us.

Ask the person who plays fighters of the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We won before, and we will win again; or
- Stand and fight! Why do you run away?"

The Israelite fighters gather at Baal Tamar and fight the Benjamites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the fighters of the tribes of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Now we are ready to win; or
- See how many there are of us! We tricked the Benjamites to follow us here; or
- We will kill all of you!

Ask the person who plays the fighters of the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Where did all the Israelite fighters come from? or
- Fight well brothers; or
- This battle is hard.

Ten thousand chosen Israelite fighters come out from the place where they hid and attack Gibeah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the 10,000 chosen Israelite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The people of the city do not know that we come! or
- Kill the people in the city! or
- Our plan has worked!

Ask the person who plays the people in the city of Gibeah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Where are our fighters? or
- We will all die today.

Yahweh defeats the Benjamites as the Israelites kill most of the Benjamites.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I will end this fight; or
- I will punish the tribe of Benjamin because they did not follow my laws.

Ask the person who plays the fighters of the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We have lost; or
- Yahweh is with our brothers in the other tribes; or
- So many of us have died today.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:26–35 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The people of Israel went to Bethel. In this passage, **Israel** and the **Israelites** means men from all the tribes of Israel apart from the tribe of Benjamin. For more information on Israel and Israelites, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Israelites **sat before** Yahweh. The people sat in front of the presence of Yahweh. Use the same word or phrase for before Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

Yahweh is the personal name for God. In this passage, God is called Yahweh. Be sure to translate Yahweh in the same way as you have in previous passages, and remember that Yahweh is in the Master Glossary.

The Israelites **fasted**. When a person fasts, that person does not eat or drink anything for a certain amount of time.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **fasted**. Look up fasting in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The people gave **burnt offerings** to Yahweh. Use the same word or phrase for burnt offerings as you used in previous passages. For more information on burnt offering, refer to the Master Glossary.

The people gave **fellowship or peace offerings** to Yahweh. An offering is a gift or sacrifice that people offer in a ritual to God, usually in the temple or on a special altar.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "fellowship or peace offering." Look up fellowship or peace offering in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word or phrase that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites inquired of Yahweh. The Israelites asked for guidance from Yahweh at the **ark of the covenant of God**. The ark of the covenant was a wood box that Yahweh asked Moses to make. The Israelites believed that Yahweh was literally in the space directly above the ark.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for the "ark of the covenant of God." Look up ark of the covenant and God in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated these words in another book of the Bible, use the same word or phrase that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites asked Yahweh for guidance with Phinehas, the high priest. Phinehas was the **son**, or a male **descendant**, of Aaron. Use the same word or phrase for son or descendant as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites asked Yahweh if they should fight their **brothers from the tribe of Benjamin**. Use the same word or phrase for "brothers from the tribe of Benjamin" as you used in previous passages.

Yahweh told the Israelites that Yahweh would give the Benjamites **into the hands of** the Israelites. Use the same word or phrase for "give into the hands" of someone as you used in previous passages.

Israel set an **ambush** around Gibeah. Use the same word or phrase for ambush as you used in previous passages.

The Israelite fighters drew away the Benjamite fighters from Gibeah. The Benjamite fighters moved away from the city of Gibeah because the Benjamite fighters followed the Israelite fighters. The Israelite fighters gathered together at Baal Tamar. The 10,000 Israelite fighters charged from the place where they hid and attacked Gibeah. The fighters found the amount of fighting difficult and intense.

Yahweh defeated the tribe of Benjamin before, or in front of, the tribes of Israel. The Israelites killed 25,100 **fighting men** from the tribe of Benjamin who had **swords**. Use the same words and phrases for fighting men and swords as you have used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 20:26–35

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 3](#)
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- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
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- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 20:36–48

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 20:36–48 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:36–48 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:36–48 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this passage, Israel and the Israelites means people from all the tribes of Israel apart from the tribe of Benjamin. In the previous passage, the Israelites asked Yahweh to guide the Israelites and help the Israelites punish the Benjamites for the crimes at Gibeah. Yahweh told the Israelites that Yahweh would give the

Benjamites to the Israelites. The Israelites got ready to fight again at Gibeah and set an ambush. The Israelites fought the Benjamites and won the third day of the fight. Most of the fighting men from the tribe of Benjamin died.

In this passage, we learn more about the third day of the fight between the Israelites and the Benjamites. The beginning of this passage is probably related to the end of the last passage. The storyteller probably tells us that the Benjamites saw how many Benjamites the Israelites had killed so far in the battle and the Benjamites knew that the Israelites had defeated the tribe of Benjamin. Some people think that the storyteller tells us that the Benjamites thought that the Benjamites had defeated the Israelites. These people think this because the next part of the story reminds us that the Israelites ran away from Benjamin at the beginning of the battle. However, it is more likely that the story tells us that the Benjamites know that the Israelites had defeated the Benjamites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: What helped you to know when you won, or lost, a serious argument or fight? What particular event, action, or exchange of words happened? Pause this audio here.

You will remember from the earlier story that, at the beginning of the battle, a group of Israelite fighters were outside of Gibeah, a group of Israelite fighters waited at Baal Tamar, and a group of Israelite fighters hid in ambush west of Gibeah. The men outside of Gibeah gave way and moved away when the fighters of Benjamin came out from Gibeah. The Israelites gave way because the Israelites had a plan to use the ambush to win the battle. The ambush Israelite fighters ran to Gibeah and went into the city. The Israelite fighters from the ambush used swords to kill the people in the city. The Israelite fighters probably killed all the people in the city. All of the people included non-fighting men, women, and children. The Israelite fighters punished the city as if the city was a Canaanite city, even though the city belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, part of Yahweh's chosen people.

The Israelites planned to use smoke that the Israelites made when they burned Gibeah as a signal to communicate between the groups of fighters. The Israelite fighters from outside Gibeah, and the fighters at Baal Tamar, planned to stop running, turn around, and start to fight the Benjamite fighters when the Israelite fighters saw the smoke. You may remember that the Israelites used this plan to fight the people of the city of Ai in the book of Joshua. The Israelite fighters from the ambush planned to set fire to Gibeah or light signal fires around Gibeah to make a large amount of smoke. There would be so much smoke that the smoke would look like a cloud that went up from the city.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Talk about when you have seen smoke rise in the distance from a big fire. How far away was the fire? Why did the fire burn? Pause this audio here.

At the beginning of the battle, fighters from the tribe of Benjamin started to fight and kill the Israelite fighters outside Gibeah. You will remember from the previous passage that the Benjamite fighters followed a group of the Israelite fighters away from Gibeah. The Benjamite fighters killed about 30 Israelite fighters. The Benjamite fighters felt encouraged and thought that the tribe of Benjamin would win the fight again just like in the first battle outside Gibeah. However, the Benjamites saw the smoke rise out of the city of Gibeah. The Benjamites could see that the city was on fire. The city burned and the smoke went high into the sky. The Israelite fighters saw the smoke signal as well. The Israelite fighters near Baal Tamar used the signal to know when to come together and to turn and fight the Benjamite fighters. The Israelite fighters turned to fight and made a counterattack. The Israelites fought back against the Benjamites.

Stop here and look at a map of Gibeah, Baal Tamar, and possible sites for Rock of Rimmon and Gidom where the Benjamite fighting men ran away to. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: On a piece of paper or on the ground, draw a circle for the city of Gibeah. Use some stones to place the groups of Israelite fighters near the city on the northern side, outside the city on the western side, and north at Baal Tamar. Use some leaves or something else to place the Benjamite fighters next to the Israelite fighters near the city. Move your stones and leaves to show the movement of the Israelite and Benjamite fighters away from and into Gibeah. Use something to show smoke that comes from the city. Bring your stones and leaves together to show the fight near Baal Tamar. Pause this audio here.

The fighters of the tribe of Benjamin felt sad, worried, and frightened. The fighters of Benjamin knew that there were more Israelite fighters than Benjamite fighters and that the Benjamites were about to lose the battle. The

Benjamite fighters ran away from the battle site near Baal Tamar towards the wilderness east of Gibeah. The Benjamite fighters did not get to the wilderness, because the Israelite fighters followed and caught up with the Benjamites. The Benjamite fighters could not get away from the Israelite fighters.

The storyteller talks about how people come from the cities to help fight. We do not know if the people from the cities were Benjamite fighters from other cities or Israelite fighters who joined the fight from different cities. Some people think the storyteller means that the Benjamite fighters from the nearby cities were killed. Other people think the storyteller means that the Israelite fighters from the surrounding cities killed the Benjamite fighters. The battle is confusing. Fighters come together from different directions and the Israelites kill Benjamite fighters. The ambush Israelite fighters probably left Gibeah and joined the battle. The place where the Israelite fighters overtook the Benjamite fighters and killed many Benjamite fighters is sometimes called Nohah. Nohah was not a city but an area of land somewhere near Gibeah.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Use the picture you made in the earlier activity. Move your stones and leaves to show the movement of Israelite and Benjamite fighters towards the southeast away from Baal Tamar. Move the ambush Israelite fighters out of Gibeah and into the battle with the Benjamite fighters. Pause this audio here.

The Israelite fighters fought the Benjamite fighters to a place east of Gibeah. The Israelite fighters killed 18,000 Benjamite fighters during the battle at Nohah and towards the place east of Gibeah. The Benjamite fighters turned from the place east of Gibeah and moved along the roads. The Benjamite fighters tried to get away from the Israelites to a place of safety. The Benjamite fighters moved towards the wilderness to a place called the Rock of Rimmon. We do not know where the rock of Rimmon is. Rimmon means pomegranate in the original language, and a pomegranate is a fruit with different sections inside it. The rock of Rimmon might be a hill that is about six miles, or a three-hours walk, north-northeast of Gibeah and three miles east of Bethel. Alternatively, the rock of Rimmon might be a group of caves a little over one kilometer, or a 30-minute walk, east of Gibeah. The Benjamites went to a place where the Benjamites could defend themselves and be safe.

Stop here and look at a picture of the hill that might be the rock of Rimmon. Pause this audio here.

On the roads, on the way to the rock of Rimmon, the Israelites killed 5,000 Benjamite fighters. The Israelites continued to follow the Benjamites until a place called Gidom. Gidom means to cut off or to cut to pieces in the original language. It is possible that the place is named Gidom because it was where the Israelites cut down and killed 2,000 Benjamite fighters. These fighters were the last fighters that the Israelites killed in the battle.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Use the picture you made in the earlier activity. Move your stones and leaves to show the movement of Israelite and Benjamite fighters from Nohah, along the roads towards the rock of Rimmon. Leave some of the leaves behind at each place to show the dead Benjamite fighters. Pause this audio here.

Twenty-five thousand Benjamite fighters died on the third day of the fight at Gibeah. All of the dead Benjamite fighters were brave and fought well. Six hundred Benjamite fighters survived the battle and escaped towards the wilderness. The Benjamite fighters went to the rock of Rimmon and stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months. The Israelite fighters did not follow the rest of the Benjamite fighters to the rock of Rimmon.

The men of Israel, the Israelite fighters, went back or turned their attention to the people of the tribe of Benjamin. If the rock of Rimmon was north-northeast of Gibeah, it was possibly on the edge of the lands of the tribe of Benjamin or in the land of the tribe of Ephraim. The Israelite fighters killed everything that lived in the cities in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. The Israelites killed non-fighting men, women, children, and the peoples' animals. The Israelites burned all the cities. The Israelites treated the cities and people of the tribe of Benjamin as foreign or Canaanite cities and people. The Israelites did not follow Yahweh's instructions for Yahweh's people.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your community or family, when did someone punish another person or group of people too much or too severely? Why do you think the person did more than the person needed to?

*Defining the Scenes**Defining the Scenes*

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:36–48 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has nine scenes.

In the first scene: The Benjamite fighters know they have lost the battle with the Israelite fighters.

In the second scene: The Israelite fighters near Gibeah run away from the Benjamite fighters.

In the third scene: The Israelite fighters who hid in the ambush moved towards Gibeah and attacked Gibeah with the Israelites' swords.

In the fourth scene: The Israelites planned a signal between the ambush fighters in Gibeah and the Israelites outside the city. A signal of smoke from the Israelite fighters in Gibeah told the Israelite fighters away from Gibeah to no longer run away and to turn to fight.

In the fifth scene: The Benjamite fighters fought the Israelite fighters near Gibeah and killed about 30 Israelites as both groups of fighters moved away from Gibeah. The Benjamites thought that the Benjamites would win.

In the sixth scene: The smoke signal from Gibeah rose into the sky. All the fighters saw the smoke. The Israelite fighters started to fight the Benjamite fighters, and the Benjamite fighters were worried and frightened.

In the seventh scene: The Benjamite fighters tried to run away from the Israelite fighters. The Israelite fighters surrounded the Benjamites and killed the Benjamites. The Israelites killed 18,000 Benjamite fighters.

In the eighth scene: The Benjamite fighters ran from the Israelite fighters along the roads towards the wilderness and the rock of Rimmon. The Israelite fighters killed 5,000 Benjamites as the Benjamites ran along the roads. The Israelite fighters followed the Benjamite fighters to a place called Gidom and killed 2,000 more Benjamites. The Israelites killed 25,000 Benjamites on the day of the fight. Six hundred Benjamite fighters escaped towards the wilderness and stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months after the battle.

In the ninth scene: The Israelite fighters travelled through the land of the tribe of Benjamin and killed all the Benjamites and the Benjamites' animals in the cities. The Israelites burned the cities.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Benjamite fighters
- The Israelite fighters
- The Israelite fighters in the ambush
- The people in the city of Gibeah
- And the people of the tribe of Benjamin

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

This passage follows on from, and connects with, the previous passage. The Benjamites knew that the Israelites had defeated the Benjamite fighters, because most of the Benjamite fighters died in the fight.

Then, the storyteller tells us about the battle in a different way. The storyteller returns to the beginning of the fight on the day of the battle. The storyteller tells us that the Israelite fighters gave way, or gave up, the ground that the Israelites were on and ran away from the Benjamites. The Israelites were confident in their plan and trusted the Israelite fighters in the ambush.

After the Israelite fighters retreated and moved away from Gibeah, the Israelite fighters in the ambush moved and attacked the city of Gibeah. The Israelite fighters in the ambush killed the people in Gibeah.

The storyteller now pauses as he retells the battle. The storyteller tells us that the Israelites had a plan. The groups of Israelite fighters needed to communicate with each other over a distance. Before the battle started, the Israelites agreed that the Israelite fighters in the ambush should use smoke from fires in Gibeah to tell the Israelites who were away from Gibeah that the ambush fighters had successfully attacked the city of Gibeah. The signal was the sign for the Israelite fighters to no longer run away and to turn and fight.

The storyteller now returns to how he retells the fight. The Benjamite fighters killed some Israelite fighters as the Israelite fighters retreated from the Benjamite fighters. The Benjamite fighters thought that the Benjamite fighters were winning just like on other days they fought near Gibeah. But then the Benjamite fighters saw the smoke signal and how the city of Gibeah burned. The city burned and the smoke went high into the sky. Some translations say that the smoke went up to heaven. In this case, heaven means high in the sky.

The Israelite fighters also saw the smoke signal. The Israelite fighters stopped how they ran away and turned to fight the Benjamite fighters. The Benjamite fighters felt worried and frightened and saw that the Benjamites were probably defeated.

The Benjamites ran away from the Israelite fighters because the Benjamites knew that the Benjamites were probably defeated. The Israelite fighters followed the Benjamite fighters and overtook the Benjamite fighters. The large number of Israelite fighters surrounded the Benjamite fighters and killed many Benjamite fighters. The Benjamites and Israelites fought from a place called Nohah to land east of Gibeah. In this time of fighting, the Israelites killed 18,000 Benjamite fighters.

The Benjamite fighters tried to run away again. The Benjamite fighters ran towards the wilderness and the rock of Rimmon. The Israelite fighters killed 5,000 Benjamite fighters on the roads towards the rock of Rimmon. The Benjamite fighters fought the Israelite fighters at Gidom, and the Israelite fighters killed another 2,000 Benjamite fighters. The storyteller tells us that the Israelites killed 25,000 Benjamite fighters on the day of the fight. We do not know why the number of dead Benjamite fighters in this story is less than the number of dead Benjamite fighters in the earlier story. The battle is chaotic, and the storyteller tells the story in a chaotic way. The story also tells us that 600 Benjamite fighters ran from the Israelite fighters towards the wilderness. The 600 Benjamite fighters reached the rock of Rimmon and then stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months after the fight at Gibeah.

Stop here and do this activity as a group: Use your picture of battle movements from step two to talk through the movements of the Israelites and Benjamites in the battle and the smoke signal. Pay attention to when people move at the same time or at different times to each other. Pause this audio here.

The Israelite fighters did not follow the Benjamite fighters to the rock of Rimmon. After the day of the fight, the Israelite fighters travelled across the lands of the tribe of Benjamin. The fighters killed the people of Benjamin in all of the cities. We do not know how much time the Israelites spent to kill the people of Benjamin and the cities of Benjamin.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:36–48 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has nine scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The Benjamite fighters
- The Israelite fighters
- The Israelite fighters in the ambush
- The people of the city of Gibeah
- And the people of the tribe of Benjamin

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

The Benjamite fighters know they have lost the battle with the Israelite fighters.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Benjamite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We have lost; or
- This is a terrible day for us.

The story of the battle starts again. The Israelite fighters near Gibeah run away from the Benjamite fighters.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Benjamites think we are scared, but we are not scared! or
- Just you wait until our brothers in the ambush attack your city! or
- We need to lure the Benjamites away from Gibeah.

The Israelite fighters who hid in the ambush moved towards Gibeah and attacked Gibeah with their swords.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite fighters in the ambush, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Let's go! or
- We will kill the wicked people of Gibeah; or
- Our plan works!

Ask the person who plays the people of the city of Gibeah, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Where did the Israelites come from? or
- We are being killed! or
- All our fighters have gone. We will all die.

The Israelites planned a signal between the ambush fighters in Gibeah and the Israelites outside the city. A signal of smoke from the Israelite fighters in Gibeah told the Israelite fighters away from Gibeah to no longer run away and to turn to fight.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This is a good plan; or
- We have a good way to communicate between our groups of fighters.

The Benjamite fighters fought the Israelite fighters near Gibeah and killed about 30 Israelites as both groups of fighters moved away from Gibeah. The Benjamites thought that the Benjamites would win.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Benjamite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Come on! The Israelites feel afraid of us; or
- Look! We will win again!"

The smoke signal from Gibeah rose into the sky. All the fighters saw the smoke. The Israelite fighters started to fight the Benjamite fighters, and the Benjamite fighters felt worried and frightened.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- That is the signal! Now we fight! or
- We will punish the tribe of Benjamin for what the Benjamites did; or
- Today we will win!

Ask the person who plays the Benjamite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Gibeah is on fire! or
- Oh no! The Israelites are fighting back! or
- If we stay here, we will all die.

The Benjamite fighters tried to run away from the Israelite fighters. The Israelite fighters surrounded the Benjamites and killed them. The Israelites killed 18,000 Benjamite fighters.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Benjamite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- Run! We cannot fight them all; or
- The Israelites are all around us; or
- So many people are dead.

The Benjamite fighters ran from the Israelite fighters along the roads towards the wilderness and the rock of Rimmon. The Israelite fighters killed 5,000 more Benjamites as the Benjamites ran along the roads. The Israelite fighters followed the Benjamite fighters and killed 2,000 more Benjamites. The Israelites killed 25,000 Benjamites on the day of the fight. Six hundred Benjamite fighters escaped towards the wilderness and stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months after the battle.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Benjamite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We need to get away; or
- Get to the rock of Rimmon! We can find shelter there; or
- We feel desperate! If we stop, the Israelites will kill us all.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We will win! We will kill the Benjamites; or
- Keep going! We have killed most of the Benjamites; or
- Some Benjamites got away, but we won.

The Israelite fighters travelled through the land of the tribe of Benjamin and killed all the Benjamites and the Benjamites' animals in the cities. The Israelites burned the cities.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the Israelite fighters, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- We will punish all of the tribe of Benjamin, because they did not give us the wicked men of Gibeah; or
- We will destroy everyone and everything; or
- We will remove the tribe of Benjamin from this land.

Ask the person who plays the people of the tribe of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- The Israelites will kill us all! or
- Why do our brothers destroy us? or
- Will the tribe of Benjamin disappear?

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 20:36–48 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The Benjamites saw that the Israelites **defeated** the Benjamites. Use the same word or phrase for defeated as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites **gave way** and ran away from the Benjamites. To "give way" means that the Israelites gave up the ground where the Israelites stood and ran away from the Benjamites.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "gave way." Pause this audio here.

The Israelites relied on the **ambush**. Use the same word or phrase for ambush as you used in previous passages.

The Israelite fighters would send up a **great cloud of smoke**. This means that fire created so much smoke that the smoke would look like a cloud that went up from the city.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "great cloud of smoke." If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The **column** of smoke began to rise from the city. A column is something with a tall narrow shape.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **column**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites turned to fight or **counterattacked** the Benjamites. When a group of people counterattacks, it means that the people fight back against the people who first attacked them.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **counterattacked**. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Benjamites ran towards the **wilderness**. Use the same word or phrase for wilderness as you used in previous passages. For more information on wilderness, refer to the Master Glossary.

The Israelites **cut down**, or killed, the Benjamites along the highways or roads all the way to Gidom. Twenty-five thousand Benjamites died on the day of the battle but six hundred Benjamites **fled** to the rock of Rimmon. Use the same words or phrases for fled and cut down as you used in previous passages.

The Israelites **put all the cities to the sword**. The Israelites used swords to kill all the people. Use the same word or phrase for "put all the cities to the sword" as you used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 20:36–48

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 3](#)
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Judges 21:1–12

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 21:1–12 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:1–12 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.
2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.

5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:1–12 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In the previous stories, we heard about men who did wicked things in the city of Gibeah, in the territory of Benjamin. We learned how the men of Israel gathered at Mizpah and how the men battled with the tribe of Benjamin to punish the tribe of Benjamin for the wicked things that Benjamin had allowed to happen in its territory. We also learned how the Israelites killed all of the Benjamites in battle except for 600 Benjamite men who escaped to the rock of Rimmon in the wilderness.

Stop here as a group and look at the map of Canaan. Find where Gibeah, Mizpah, and the rock of Rimmon are located. Pause this audio here.

In this passage, we now learn that before the men of Israel fought against Benjamin, the men of Israel swore an oath at Mizpah not to give their daughters in marriage to the Benjamites. To swear an oath means to make a special promise that says, "If I do not keep my promise, God may punish me." This oath was not something Yahweh told the men of Israel to make. Instead, it seems the Israelites made this oath quickly and without much thought while they were angry with the tribe of Benjamin. Since the men of Israel swore an oath, the men would be very afraid not to keep their promise. If the men did not keep their promise, Yahweh could punish the men.

Stop here as a group and discuss this question: Tell a story about a time when you made a decision while you were angry that you later wished you had not made. What happened because of your decision? What do you wish you had done differently? Pause this audio here.

In this story, now that all but 600 of the Benjamites are dead, the Israelites no longer feel angry. Instead, the storyteller says that the Israelites feel compassion for the Benjamite men. The Israelites seem to suddenly realize the bad thing that has happened because of the oath that they took in anger at Mizpah. Because the Israelites killed all of the Benjamite women, and swore an oath that the Israelite men would not give any of their daughters in marriage to the Benjamites, now the 600 Benjamite men who are still alive cannot get married and have children. This means that the tribe of Benjamin will no longer exist once the 600 men grow old and die.

The Israelites begin to weep and cry out to God, because now the Israelites feel compassion for the Benjamite men. The Israelites ask God why the tribe of Benjamin had to be removed, or cut off, from the tribes of Israel and die. The Israelites use God's personal name, Yahweh, to remind God that he really is their special God. The Israelites ask Yahweh this question as if Yahweh has created this problem, not the Israelites. The Israelites speak as if the Israelites blame Yahweh that he did not protect the Israelites.

Stop here as a group and discuss these questions: Tell a story about a time when someone blamed someone else for a bad situation and did not take responsibility for their own actions. What happened when that person blamed someone else? How did the other person respond, or not respond, when the first person blamed that person for what happened? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites build an altar at Bethel and make offerings to Yahweh. You will remember that the Israelites had already made offerings on an altar at Bethel in the last story during the war with Benjamin. The Israelites made offerings at Bethel because that is where the ark of the covenant was. This was the normal place to make offerings. We are not sure why in this story the Israelites build a new altar, but it is possible that the first altar is not large enough for all of the offerings that the Israelites make to Yahweh now. We do not know exactly how many Israelites have gathered to make these offerings, but we know that it is thousands of people, if not more.

Stop here as a group and look at the map of Canaan. Find where Bethel is located. Pause this audio here.

After they build the new altar, the Israelites make both burnt offerings and peace or fellowship offerings. You will remember that the Israelites made these offerings to show the Israelites' devotion to Yahweh and to restore the Israelites' relationship with Yahweh after the Israelites sinned. The Israelites know that to solve this problem, the Israelites need Yahweh's help. But Yahweh does not accept the blame for the Israelites' situation. Yahweh does not respond to the Israelites' questions or offerings, and Yahweh does not provide a solution to the problem the Israelites have created.

Instead, the Israelites come up with their own plan to solve the problem. When the Israelites first came to Mizpah to make war against the Benjamites, the Israelites had taken a "great oath" that any of the tribes who did not join the other Israelites at Mizpah would be put to death. If a tribe did not come to Mizpah, it would be as if that tribe supported Gibeah and Benjamin, so the punishment would be death.

At the time that the Israelites took the "great oath" at Mizpah, the Israelites did not report that any tribes were missing. However, now that the Israelites want to find brides for the 600 Benjamite men, the Israelites decide to check carefully to see if anyone was missing from the assembly at Mizpah. While the laws of the Israelites allow the Israelites to kill anyone who broke the oath and did not come to Mizpah, it is important to notice that the Israelites did not decide to carry out this sentence until now, when they needed wives for the Benjamite men. Although the laws of the Israelites may allow the Israelites to carry out this punishment, it seems that the Israelites do this to get what they want and not because it is important to get rid of wickedness and obey Yahweh.

Stop here as a group and discuss these questions: Are the laws and rules of your culture designed to protect people or hurt people? If someone does what the law allows them to do, but that person does it for selfish reasons and it causes harm to others, is this the fault of the law or of the person who made the decision? Pause this audio here.

When the Israelites check to see who had not come to Mizpah, the Israelites discover that no one from the town of Jabesh Gilead had come. You will remember that the "great oath" only said that some people from every tribe needed to come. The oath did not say that everyone must come, or even that someone from every town must come. But now the Israelites use the oath as a way to punish Jabesh Gilead for how it did not join in the battle, even though Jabesh Gilead did not actually break the oath. The Israelites send 12,000 warriors to Jabesh Gilead with instructions to kill everyone in that town except for the young women who have never had sexual relations with a man. The Israelite warriors follow these instructions and find 400 young women who have never had sexual relations with a man. The Israelite warriors bring these young women to the camp at Shiloh, which the passage reminds us is "in the land of Canaan." You will remember that at the beginning of the book of Judges, the tribes of Israel did not take all of the land of Canaan as Yahweh had told the Israelites to do. Instead, the Israelites had left some of the Canaanite people to live in different parts of the land. So this passage reminds us that the Israelites still live in a foreign land. This land is not "Israel," it is "Canaan."

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:1–12 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has six scenes.

In the first scene: We learn about an oath that the men of Israel made in a previous passage when the men gathered at Mizpah. The men made an oath that none of the men would give their daughters in marriage to men from the tribe of Benjamin.

In the second scene: The people of Israel come to Bethel where they weep and cry and ask God why the Benjamites had to be removed, or cut off, from the tribes of Israel to die.

In the third scene: The people of Israel build a new altar at Bethel and make burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to Yahweh.

In the fourth scene: The people of Israel check to see who broke the "great oath" and did not join the rest of Israel at Mizpah. The Israelites discover that Jabesh Gilead had not come to Mizpah.

In the fifth scene: The people of Israel send 12,000 warriors to Gilead to kill all of the people in that town except for the young women who had never had sexual relations with a man.

In the sixth scene: The 12,000 warriors capture 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead who had never had sexual relations with a man. The warriors take these young women to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

The characters in this passage are:

- People of Israel
- 600 Benjamite men
- Yahweh
- People of Jabesh Gilead
- 12,000 Israelite warriors
- And 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

At the beginning of the story, we learn for the first time about an oath that the men of Israel made in a previous passage. When the men of Israel gathered at Mizpah to make war against Benjamin for the wickedness that happened in the city of Gibeah, the men took an oath that the men would not give any of their daughters in marriage to the men of Benjamin.

After the storyteller tells us about the oath that the Israelite men made in the previous story, the storyteller begins to tell us what the Israelites do now. The Israelites now gather at Bethel, which is a little less than 20 kilometers north of Jerusalem.

Stop here as a group and look at the map. Find where Bethel is located. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about something that happened today, but first tell about something that happened a few days or weeks before that people must know about in order to understand your story about today. How do you help people to understand which part of the story happened in the past and which part happened today? Pause this audio here.

The passage says the people of Israel come to Bethel. Bethel is where the ark of the covenant is. At Bethel, the people of Israel weep loudly before God. Here, the storyteller uses the general word for God rather than God's personal name, Yahweh. The storyteller probably wants us to understand that the Israelites are not close to Yahweh at this time. The Israelites have not obeyed Yahweh or treated Yahweh like Yahweh is holy. Instead, the Israelites treat Yahweh like the Canaanites treat the Canaanites' false gods.

The Israelites now blame God for this problem. The Israelites blame God in the form of a question that the Israelites do not expect God to answer. The Israelites ask why the Benjamites had to be removed from the tribes of Israel to die. Here the storyteller says that the Israelites use God's special name, Yahweh, when the Israelites ask their question. The Israelites probably use Yahweh's special name to remind Yahweh that the Israelites are Yahweh's people and that Yahweh is "supposed" to treat the Israelites well. The Israelites not only blame Yahweh for the problem, but the Israelites also expect Yahweh to fix the problem for the Israelites.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a person who acted badly toward someone else over and over. Tell how that person finally did something nice, not because that person cared about the other person, but because that person wanted to get something nice in return. How do you describe how this person's actions appear kind on the outside but are actually selfish? Pause this audio here.

The Israelites build a new altar at Bethel. The Israelites make burnt offerings and peace or fellowship offerings to Yahweh. These are offerings that people normally make to ask Yahweh's forgiveness and to show Yahweh that the Israelites will change their behavior. However, the Israelites blame Yahweh instead of admitting the Israelites are wrong. So Yahweh remains silent.

The Israelites begin to ask each other who among the tribes of Israel did not gather at Mizpah when the men of Israel went to war against the Benjamites in the previous story. The storyteller explains why this question is important. The storyteller says the Israelites made a second oath at Mizpah that the Israelites would kill any tribe who did not gather at Mizpah. The storyteller shows that this second oath was even more serious than the first when he calls the oath the "great oath." The author uses the word "great," or "important," because if an Israelite did not keep this promise, the other Israelites would kill that Israelite. Also, the oath was "great" because everyone in Israel knew about the oath.

Stop here and discuss how you will describe how everyone in Israel knew about this oath. Remember that everyone in Israel also included the people who were not present at Mizpah when the men of Israel made the oath. Pause this audio here.

Here, the passage says again how the Israelites felt sorry for the 600 men of Benjamin. The passage tells us the questions that the Israelites asked each other. The Israelites asked each other what the Israelites should do to provide the Benjamite men with wives. Then the Israelites asked which one of the tribes of Israel had not come to the assembly at Mizpah. When the author says these two questions one right after another, the author shows that the reason the Israelites wanted to punish the people who did not come to Mizpah was not because the Israelites wanted to obey Yahweh, but because this was a way to get wives for the Benjamites.

When the people of Israel check to see who broke the "great oath" and did not join the rest of Israel at Mizpah, the Israelites discover that Jabesh Gilead had not come to Mizpah. The exact location of Jabesh Gilead is uncertain, but people believe Jabesh Gilead was about 35 kilometers south of the Sea of Galilee and just a little east of the Jordan River.

Stop here as a group and look at the map. Find the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the approximate location of Jabesh Gilead. Pause this audio here.

The people of Israel send 12,000 of their warriors to Jabesh Gilead to kill all of the people in that town except for the young women who had never had sexual relations with a man. The city of Jabesh Gilead was a fortified city, which means it had tall, strong walls all around to protect it from enemies. However, the story does not say that the people of Jabesh Gilead resist the attack. It is very possible that the people are taken by surprise, since the Israelites quickly made this decision to carry out this punishment. The storyteller does not describe the battle and how the Israelites kill the people. But the passage says that the 12,000 warriors capture 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead who have never had sexual relations with a man.

The story ends when it tells us that the warriors take these young women to the camp at Shiloh, where it appears the Israelites moved their camp after the battles. Shiloh was about 21 kilometers north of Bethel. The passage reminds us that Shiloh is in the land of Canaan. We already know this information, so the author probably says this here to remind us that after all the events in the book of Judges, Israel still lives in a foreign land.

Stop here as a group and look at the map. Find where Shiloh is located. Pause this audio here.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:1–12 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has six scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- People of Israel
- 600 Benjamite men
- Yahweh
- People of Jabesh Gilead
- 12,000 Israelite warriors
- And 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The following is an example of the drama and possible responses.

In a previous passage, the men of Israel gathered at Mizpah to make war against Benjamin for the wicked things people did in Gilead. Act out how these men gathered at Mizpah and how the men made an oath while they were angry that the men would not give any of their daughters in marriage to the men of Benjamin.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the men of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I feel shocked by what the men in Gilead did! How could those men be so wicked? or
- I feel angry that the Benjamites did not stop how these people acted in their lands; or
- The Benjamites deserve to die for what the Benjamites have done! or
- I will never have anything to do with the tribe of Benjamin again!

Act out how the Israelites gather at Bethel, weep and cry before God, and ask God why the Benjamites must be removed from the tribes of Israel to die.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- This is a terrible situation! How will the tribe of Benjamin survive? or
- Why did God allow this to happen? I thought God promised to protect all of the tribes of Israel; or
- God needs to do something to fix this situation! or
- We do not want to admit it, but maybe we should not have made that oath when we were angry.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- This is not my fault. The Israelites created this problem themselves; or
- I did not tell the men of Israel to make an oath not to give their daughters to Benjamin in marriage. The Israelite men made that choice when they were angry; or
- The Israelites weep and cry, but it is not because the Israelites feel sorry for what the Israelites did wrong. If the Israelites were really sorry, the Israelites would not blame me for this problem the Israelites created!

Ask the people who play the 600 men of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel very afraid! Will the other tribes of Israel come attack us again? or
- We feel hopeless! Will we die here in the wilderness? or
- Even if we can return to our land, we have no future if we do not have children!

Act out how the Israelites build a new altar at Bethel and make burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to Yahweh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I hope that God will be impressed with all of these offerings. I hope that God will help fix this problem because of all the offerings we make for God.

Ask the person who plays Yahweh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- I am not pleased with these offerings at all. What I want is for the Israelites to admit that the Israelites did wrong and say they are sorry. I want the Israelites to obey me! or
- I have already given the Israelites instructions, but the Israelites have not obeyed me. If the Israelites will not listen and obey, why should I say anything more to the Israelites?

Act out how the Israelites ask each other how they should get wives for the men of Benjamin.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I feel terrible for the men of Benjamin! What the people of Gilead did was wrong, but these 600 men are still part of our people. I think these men have been punished enough, because the men saw all of their family members die; or
- This is a tricky situation. Since God did not give us a solution, we will have to come up with a solution ourselves.

Now act out how the Israelites ask each other which of the tribes did not come to Mizpah, and how the Israelites report that Jabesh Gilead did not come to Mizpah.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We cannot give our daughters to the men of Benjamin. God might punish us if we break our oath. But maybe there is another way to fix this problem and we will not have to suffer any consequences; or
- I have an idea! Maybe we can fix the problem that we caused with our first oath if we use our second oath to get the women we need for the Benjamite men.

Act out how the Israelites send 12,000 of the Israelites' warriors to Jabesh Gilead to kill all of the people in that town except for the young women who had never had sexual relations with a man.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the 12,000 warriors, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I am tired of all this killing. If we continue to kill our own people of Israel, soon there will not be anyone left!

Ask the people who play the people of Jabesh Gilead, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- Why do these warriors suddenly swarm our city and kill everyone? What did we do to deserve this?

Act out how the 12,000 warriors capture the 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead and take the women to the camp at Shiloh.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the 400 young women, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I am terrified! I just saw all of my friends and family die in front of me, and now the men who killed my family and friends have taken me away from my home! or
- I wish I had died too. I am so sad and frightened. This feels worse than death!

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:1–12 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

At the beginning of this passage, we learn that in a previous passage, the men of **Israel**, or the **Israelites**, made an oath that none of the men would give their daughters in marriage to the tribe of Benjamin. The people of Israel, or the Israelites, are the ancestors of Jacob, who was later named Israel. Jacob was Abraham's grandson. Use the same words for Israel and Israelites that you have used in previous passages, and remember that Israel and Israelites are in the Master Glossary.

An **oath** is a promise that uses special words to make that promise even more serious. When someone swears an oath, that person says, "I will absolutely keep my promise. If I do not, God may punish me."

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **oath**. Look up oath in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The passage includes two different words for **God**. When the storyteller says how the Israelites acted toward God, the storyteller uses the general word for God. But when the storyteller says what the Israelites said to God, the storyteller says the Israelites used God's personal name, **Yahweh**. Be sure to use the same words for God and for Yahweh that you have used in previous passages, and remember that God and Yahweh are in the Master Glossary.

The people of Israel say that the tribe of Benjamin has been **cut off** from Israel. To cut off means to use a sharp object to remove something or to stop the provision of something.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for "cut off." If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The Israelites make **burnt offerings** and **peace or fellowship offerings** to Yahweh on an **altar** after they ask Yahweh to help fix this problem. An offering is a gift or sacrifice that people offer in a ritual to God. People can make offerings for many reasons, including to give thanks, to be purified, or to ask forgiveness for sin. An altar is where people make these sacrifices. An altar is like a table or a platform that people make of earth or large stones. Use the same words or phrases for burnt offering, peace or fellowship offering, and altar that you used in previous passages. For more information on burnt offering, peace or fellowship offering, and altar, refer to the Master Glossary.

The **congregation of Israel** sent 12,000 men to Jabesh Gilead. "Congregation of Israel" means people of Israel.

Stop here and discuss as a group how you will translate "congregation of Israel." If you have translated congregation of Israel in another book of the Bible, use the same word or phrase you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The congregation of Israel instructed the 12,000 men to **put to the sword** the people of Jabesh Gilead. To "put to the sword" means to kill the people with swords. Use the same word or phrase for "put to the sword" that you have used in previous passages.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 21:1–12

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

Judges 21:13–25

Hear and Heart

Hear and Heart

In this step, hear Judges 21:13–25 and put it in your hearts.

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:13–25 three times, in three different translations, if possible.

Pause this audio here.

Now, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. What do you like in this passage? Pause this audio here.

2. What do you not like or not understand in this passage? Pause this audio here.
3. What does this passage tell us about God? Pause this audio here.
4. What does this passage tell us about people? Pause this audio here.
5. How does this passage affect our daily lives? Pause this audio here.
6. Who do you know who needs to hear this passage?

Setting the Stage

Setting the Stage

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:13–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

In the previous story, the people of Israel made a plan to get wives for the 600 men of Benjamin who had not been killed in the battle. The Israelites sent men to Jabesh Gilead to kill the people in that city because the people had not joined the rest of the Israelites in the war against Benjamin. But the Israelites kept 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead alive. The Israelites brought these women back to the camp at Shiloh.

In this story, the Israelites now send a message of peace to the 600 Benjamite men who still hide at the rock of Rimmon in the wilderness. The assembly of Israel, or all of the people of Israel, give the 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead to the 600 Benjamite men as wives. The Benjamite men then return to their homes with these women as wives.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Canaan that shows the location of the rock of Rimmon in relation to the region of Benjamin. Pause this audio here.

However, there are still not enough wives for all of the Benjamites, because the 400 young women were not enough wives for 600 men. Once again, the people of Israel felt sorry for Benjamin because Yahweh had created a gap in, or cut off, the tribes of Israel.

To find wives for each of the Benjamites seems important to the Israelites, not just so the Benjamites will survive as a tribe, but also as a way to create a peace agreement. In that part of the world, in Bible times, people often gave and received women as wives as a way to form peace agreements between people groups or kingdoms.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, if two groups of people have a fight or disagreement, and one group wants to make peace with the other group, what are the traditions or rituals that the group might follow to bring peace? For example, is there a specific order of things that the group must do or say, or are there certain gifts or offerings the group must make to the other group? Pause this audio here.

The elders of Israel, or the most senior and responsible members of the assembly, now begin to ask each other what they should do to get more wives for the men of Benjamin. It seems the elders have run out of ideas for how to fix this problem. The elders say again how important it is for the men of the tribe of Benjamin to have children who will inherit the land that Benjamin has been given. But the elders also remind each other again of the oath that the men of Israel took at Mizpah not to give their daughters to Benjamin as wives. The elders speak in a way that seems to show that the elders feel anxious and unsure what to do.

Suddenly the elders come up with an idea. The elders remind each other that people make a feast each year in Shiloh where the daughters, or young unmarried women, come out to dance at night. The elders speak to the men of Benjamin and give the men instructions. The elders tell the men of Benjamin to hide in the vineyards, or grapevines, in Shiloh on the night of the feast, or festival. The elders tell the Benjamite men that when the young women of Shiloh come out to dance, the Benjamite men must steal, or carry away, some of the young women. The elders say the Benjamite men must take the young women back to the homes of the Benjamite men to become the wives of the Benjamite men.

It is not clear exactly what this festival was. It may have been one of the annual festivals that the law of Moses began. However, in the book of Judges, the Israelites seem to have neglected those festivals and laws for a long time or even changed the festivals to resemble the practices of the Canaanites. The description in this story of

how the young women dance also seems unlike the original festivals that Yahweh commanded. This dance may even come from Canaanite idol worship. But the story does not tell us that information.

This festival, or feast, will happen at Shiloh. Shiloh was north of Bethel, but east of the road that went from the town of Bethel to the town of Shechem, and south of the town of Lebonah. You will remember from the last passage that Shiloh was about 21 kilometers north of Bethel.

Stop here as a group and look at a map of Canaan that shows the location of Shiloh. Pause this audio here.

The elders know that the fathers and brothers will complain that the Benjamites stole their young women. The elders explain to the Benjamites what the Benjamites will say to the fathers and brothers when the fathers and brothers complain. The elders say the Benjamites will remind the fathers and brothers that the fathers and brothers did not give the young women to the Benjamites, so the fathers and brothers are not guilty of breaking their vow. The elders will also ask the fathers and brothers to show compassion on the men of Benjamin and not to try to punish the men of Benjamin, because the Benjamites did not attack the Israelites in battle, so there is no need to start a war. The elders will ask the fathers and brothers to accept what has happened and to not do anything further about the situation, because the fathers and brothers must put the needs of the tribe and nation before the needs of their own personal and family interests.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when there was a fight between two groups of people that had been going on for some time, but then one group decided not to take revenge or fight back anymore so that there could be peace. Pause this audio here.

The passage says that the men of Benjamin did exactly what the elders of Israel told them to do. Each man who needed a wife stole one of the young women during the night of the festival and took her back home to be his wife. And the Benjamite men rebuilt the cities in their land that had been destroyed during the battles in the previous passages.

This passage ends by saying that in those days, or during that time in Israel's history, every person did what was right in their own eyes. The phrase "in their own eyes" means whatever that person decided they thought was right. This means that instead of everyone following the same rules and laws for living that Yahweh had given to the Israelites through Moses to obey, each person made up their own rules. Maybe the writer put this here at the end of the book of Judges to help us understand the story about Benjamin, or maybe to help us understand the whole book of Judges. You will remember that at the beginning of the book of Judges, the Israelites failed to drive all of the Canaanites out of the land as Yahweh had told them to do, and the people of Israel began to worship the idols of the Canaanites and follow their ways of living. So it may be that the writer is reminding us that the bad things that have happened in each of the stories in the book of Judges have happened because the people of Israel have not been following Yahweh and obeying the rules that Yahweh gave the Israelites to show them the right way to live.

Defining the Scenes

Defining the Scenes

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:13–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will define the scenes, characters, and setting of this passage. Then the group will visualize this passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

In the first scene: The Israelites send a message of peace to the Benjamites who hide at the rock of Rimmon.

In the second scene: The Israelites give the 400 women from Jabesh Gilead to the 600 Benjamite men as wives. Then the Benjamites return to their own homes. However, there are not enough wives for all of the men.

In the third scene: The Israelites again show their grief for Benjamin. The Israelites blame God and say God cut Benjamin off from the other tribes of Israel.

In the fourth scene: The elders of Israel ask each other how the elders should get wives for the men of Benjamin. The elders say how important this is so that the tribe of Benjamin will survive and inherit the land. Then, as the elders talk together, the elders suddenly think of a solution to the problem.

In the fifth scene: The elders of Israel meet with the Benjamites and tell the Benjamite men how to carry out the elders' plan. The elders tell the Benjamite men to hide in the vineyards of Shiloh during the festival and to steal some of the young women who dance to be the men's wives. The elders also explain to the Benjamite men what the elders will say to the fathers and brothers of the young women when the fathers and brothers complain about how the Benjamites stole the women.

In the sixth scene: The Benjamite men do what the elders told the men to do. The men steal the young women away as the men's wives and return to the men's own land to rebuild their cities.

In the seventh scene: The writer finishes the passage and the whole book of Judges when he says that in those days, there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The assembly, or people, of Israel
- 600 Benjamite men
- 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead
- Elders of Israel
- Young women at Shiloh
- Fathers and brothers of the young women at Shiloh
- And the writer of the passage

As a group, pay attention to these parts of the passage's setting:

The story begins when the Israelites send a message of peace to the Benjamite men and give the men 400 women from Jabesh Gilead as wives. To give and receive wives was a way to form peace and to strengthen relationships between people groups and communities in Bible times. Yahweh had told the people of Israel never to intermarry with, or form relationships of peace with, the Canaanites. But earlier in the book of Judges, the Israelites disobeyed Yahweh when they married Canaanites. So it is interesting that the Israelites did not worry about the consequences when they married Canaanites, but they worry now about the consequences if the Israelites break this oath.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when a parent gave their child instructions for how to do a task. Tell how the child was very careful to follow certain parts of the instructions, but the child ignored other parts of the instructions. How well did the child do the task? Was the parent pleased? Why or why not? Pause this audio here.

When the Israelites realize that there are still not enough wives for the Benjamite men, the storyteller says again that the people felt sorry for, or had compassion on, Benjamin. In the original language, the storyteller uses a word that means that Yahweh has made a gap in, or cut off, the tribes of Israel. This is special language that compares Israel to the secure walls of a city and compares the tribe of Benjamin to a gap in that wall. Because the Israelites have almost completely destroyed the Benjamites, Israel is now more vulnerable against its enemies since there are not enough people to defend the land of Benjamin. The word in the original language is also special language to show how the tribe of Benjamin has been cut off from the rest of Israel, like someone might cut off a body part from the rest of a body.

Stop here as a group and look at a picture of a breach, or gap, in a city wall. Pause this audio here.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: In your culture, how do you talk about people you have cut off or thrown out from your community or family? What are some reasons why you might cut someone off? Pause this audio here.

It is unclear if the storyteller says that Yahweh intended for the Israelites to kill off as many of the Benjamites as the Israelites did, or if the storyteller just says that the Israelites think that Yahweh is to blame. In a previous story, Yahweh did tell the Israelites to go ahead and attack the Benjamites when the Israelites were already at war and asked Yahweh if they should attack again. But nowhere in that story did the storyteller say that Yahweh told the Israelites to kill the entire tribe of Benjamin. It seems the Israelites made this decision in anger and did not ask God first.

While we do not know if Yahweh meant for Israel to kill so many Benjamites, it is important to notice that in these stories, it is not just the Benjamites who disobey Yahweh. All of the Israelites disobey Yahweh in different ways, and all of the Israelites experience the consequences of that disobedience.

Stop here and discuss this question as a group: Tell a story about a time when a tool or piece of equipment broke or fell apart. What caused that item to break or fall apart? Was it just one situation, or one person's action, that caused it to break? Or did multiple actions over time cause the item to wear out? Pause this audio here.

The elders tell each other the problem again. The Benjamites need more wives, but the men of Israel took an oath, so the men cannot give their daughters to the Benjamites. What can the elders do? The storyteller uses a word in the original language that shows the elders suddenly have a creative idea to solve the problem.

Stop here and discuss what words or phrases you use to describe when someone suddenly thinks of a good idea. Pause this audio here.

The elders decide the Benjamite men must steal young women during the night of a festival in Shiloh. In the original language, the elders use a word that we rarely hear in the Bible. The word means that each of the men of Benjamin must "catch" a young woman. The leaders mean that the women will not go willingly. The men must abduct or kidnap the women. It is interesting to note that the battle with Benjamin began over a situation where a woman was abused, and now the solution will once again abuse women when the men force the women to become their wives.

Now the storyteller says that the Benjamites returned home and rebuilt their cities. The storyteller also says that the rest of the Israelites left Shiloh, and everyone went back to the land of their own tribe and family. Here, the writer emphasizes that everything went back to the way it was before. The Israelites have killed many people and done many wrong things, but the Israelites have accomplished nothing. The people of Israel have not returned to follow and obey Yahweh.

As the story ends, everyone goes home in different directions. We see how separate and not united the tribes are. The storyteller says that in those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. This means people did whatever they wanted to because the people did not have a king to make the people follow Yahweh's laws. A king could have stopped Israel from this disaster with the Benjamites.

Now, the group should storyboard, draw, or use objects to visualize the passage and the action in it.

Embodying the Text

Embodying the Text

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:13–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will dramatize the passage.

This passage has seven scenes.

The characters in this passage are:

- The assembly, or people, of Israel
- 600 Benjamite men
- 400 young women from Jabesh Gilead
- Elders of Israel
- Young women at Shiloh
- Fathers and brothers of the young women at Shiloh
- And the writer of the passage

As a group, act out the passage twice. You should act out the passage in your own language.

First, act out the passage without stopping. Pay attention to the dialogue, flow, plotline, and chronology of the passage. Make sure you do not skip acting out the difficult or important parts of the passage. Help each other remember every part of the passage.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage.

The group should act out this passage a second time. At certain points in the drama, pause the drama and ask the person playing the character, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person playing the character should answer what they would be feeling or thinking if they were that character. Then continue the drama.

Pause this audio here and act out the passage a second time.

The passage begins when the Israelites send a message of peace to the Benjamites who hide at the rock of Rimmon.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the people of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are not angry with the Benjamites any longer. We are tired of battle. We just want to be at peace again; or
- When we started to fight the Benjamites, we were angry and did not think about how we would feel after the battle was over. Now we feel sad and regret what we did; or
- We feel afraid. We killed many Benjamite warriors, and now we do not have enough people to protect ourselves from our enemies. If those people groups attack, they might take away the land that Yahweh promised and that we fought so hard to take.

In the second scene, the Israelites give the 400 women from Jabesh Gilead to the 600 Benjamite men as wives. The Benjamites return to their own homes, but not every man has a wife.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the men of Benjamin, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel happy that the other tribes of Israel allowed us to live and that they want us to be strong and secure again; or
- We men who got wives are very happy, but the men who did not get wives are jealous. This is not fair!

In the third scene, the Israelites again express their grief because Benjamin has been cut off. The Israelites blame God for these problems.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Israelites, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We felt angry when we went to war, but now we feel sad, because so many of our people died and we are divided; or
- We feel afraid that if our enemies attack and try to take back the land, we will not be able to defend ourselves.

In the fourth scene, the elders of Israel ask each other how they should get wives for the men of Benjamin. The elders say how important this is so the tribe of Benjamin will survive and inherit the land. Then, as the elders talk together, the elders suddenly think of a solution to the problem.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the elders of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We have to solve this difficult problem to bring peace in Israel and protect our lands for future generations! or
- Ah! We finally have a solution! We know that some of the fathers and brothers will not be happy with this solution, but at least Israel will feel secure again.

The elders of Israel meet with the Benjamites and tell the Benjamite men how to carry out the elders' plan. The elders also tell the Benjamites what the elders will say when the fathers and brothers come to complain.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the Benjamite men, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- I feel uncomfortable with this plan. How can I be sure that the fathers and brothers of these women will listen to the elders and not come to kill us and take the women back? or
- I want to have a good relationship with my wife's family, but I guess a stolen wife is better than no wife at all!

Ask the elders of Israel, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We are very clever! We have figured out a way to get what we want without consequences; or
- We know the fathers and brothers of the young women will be angry and will complain to us. But we will remind them that they need to think about what's best for all of Israel and not just about themselves. They should not be selfish!

In the sixth scene, the men of Benjamin carry off their wives and return to their land to rebuild their cities.

Pause the drama.

Ask the people who play the young women from Shiloh, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The people might answer things like:

- We feel very sad and afraid! We miss our families, and now we have to marry the men who kidnapped us! or
- The men of Israel try to make the men of Benjamin happy. But what about us? Does nobody care what is best for us?

In the final scene, the writer finishes the passage when he says that in those days, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Pause the drama.

Ask the person who plays the writer of the passage, "What are you feeling or thinking?" The person might answer things like:

- How could the Israelites be so unwise? The Israelites disobeyed Yahweh so many times that they seemed to no longer know right from wrong! or
- I feel discouraged and frustrated! Yahweh forgave the Israelites so many times and gave them so many chances to change. But the people were stubborn. Maybe if the people had a king to force them to follow Yahweh's laws, the people would not have acted so badly.

Filling the Gaps

Filling the Gaps

Listen to an audio version of Judges 21:13–25 in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this step, the group will discuss key terms and words in this passage.

The passage begins when it says that the whole **congregation** or **community of Israel** sends a message of **peace** to the Benjamites. In this passage, peace means to live in harmony with each other and not fight. However, the Bible talks about true peace as more than not to fight. True peace as Yahweh intended, means that all the people in the community are content. All the people live in harmony with each other and with God. In this passage, although Israel and the Benjamites no longer fight, they continue to harm people—particularly women—and to disobey Yahweh in other ways. Use the same words or phrases for peace, and for congregation or community of Israel, as you have used in previous passages. To learn more about peace, see the Master Glossary.

The passage reminds us again that the people felt **compassion** for the Benjamites. When someone has compassion for someone, that person has a deep affection or love for that person.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **compassion**. Look up compassion in the Master Glossary for more information. If you have already translated this word in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The passage says **Yahweh** made a **breach** in, or **cut off**, the tribes of Israel. Yahweh is God's personal name. For more information on Yahweh, refer to the Master Glossary. Use the same word or phrase for Yahweh as you used in previous passages.

Stop here and discuss as a group what word or phrase you will use for **breach**, or **cut off**. A breach is an opening in a city wall. To cut off is to remove with a sharp object, like a knife. If you have already translated breach, or cut off, in another book of the Bible, use the same word that you have used there. Pause this audio here.

The elders of Israel ask each other how the elders should get wives for the men of Benjamin. The elders say how important this is so the tribe of Benjamin will survive and **inherit** the land. To inherit means to receive a person's property or wealth after that person dies. The person who receives this property or wealth is called the "heir." For the people who lived in the time of the Bible, when a father died, his property went to his son, or sons. So to have sons was very important. Use the same word or phrase for inherit, or inheritance, that you have used in previous passages. To learn more about inheritance, look up the word heir in the Master Glossary.

The **Israelites** could not give their daughters to the men of Benjamin, because in a previous story, the Israelite men had taken an **oath** that they would never do so. Use the same words or phrases for Israel, Israelites, and oath that you used in the previous passages, and remember that Israel, Israelites, and oath are all in the Master Glossary.

In this story, the elders say that when the men of Israel took the oath and said they would not give their daughters as wives to Benjamin, the men of Israel said that anyone who did give their daughter as a wife to a Benjamite would be **cursed**. When you curse someone, it means that you wish that something bad will happen

to that person. People believed that a curse would come true, so it made people very afraid. Use the same word or phrase for curse that you have used in previous passages. You can find more about curse in the Master Glossary.

The elders of Israel told the Benjamite men to hide in the **vineyards**. A vineyard is a garden where people grow grapes. A vineyard usually had a wall around it so that wild animals or thieves could not come into the garden. Use the same word or phrase for vineyard that you have used in previous passages. You can find more about vineyard in the Master Glossary.

At the end of the passage, it says that Israel had no **king**, and everyone did what was right **in his own eyes**. This is special language that means that each person made their own decisions about what to do or not to do based on what that person felt was right or wrong. In other words, the people did not all follow the same rules or laws about what was right or wrong, and they certainly did not follow the instructions Yahweh had given to Moses. Use the same word or phrase for king and "in his own eyes" that you have used in previous passages. King is in the Master Glossary.

Speaking the Word

Speaking the Word

Listen to an audio version of the passage in the easiest-to-understand translation.

Pause this audio here.

In this session, retell the passage, as a group, in your own language.

First, the whole group should practice telling the passage in your own language. Remember to include the things you decided in previous steps, like chronology, words, phrases, emotions, or anything else you discussed.

One group member should tell a few sentences of the passage and pause. Another group member should tell the next part of the passage and pause. Do this until the group has retold the whole passage. The group members can correct each other in this step.

Pause this audio here.

Next, each member of the group should tell the whole passage without interruption at least one time. A group member can use random objects, motions, or their storyboard to help them remember the passage.

Pause this audio here.

Next, the group can decide whose version of the passage you like the most. You may decide that you liked the way one group member told one scene but you liked the way a different group member told another scene.

Pause this audio here.

Finally, the group can put together a final version of the passage that everyone agrees on. Each group member should practice telling this final version of the passage.

Judges 21:13–25

Audio Content

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- [FIA Step 1](#)
- [FIA Step 2](#)
- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)

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- [FIA Step 3](#)
- [FIA Step 4](#)
- [FIA Step 5](#)
- [FIA Step 6](#)