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Judges (Deborah, Gideon, Samson)

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Who Were the Judges?

- Titles: *Sefer Shophtim* (Hebrew, “Book of Judges”), *Kritai* (Greek, “Judges”)
- The word *shophēt* or “judge/rule” only appears once, in 11:27 where it refers to the Lord
 - Only Deborah clearly adjudicates in the modern sense of the word
 - However, most of the judges are said to “rule” (*shaphat*), a word related to “judge”
 - Cf. judges in the Book of Mormon
- Rather than “judge,” perhaps *moshi`a*, “deliverer” or “savior” would be better
 - Perhaps better to think of them as enforcing God’s judgment, especially upon enemies
 - Frequently, but not always, enjoyed the spirit of prophecy and were divinely raised up and guided
 - Judges portrayed with all their rough edges to show the instability of Israel without a king (covenant of David a Deuteronomistic theme)
- “Some judges did actually settle legal matters, but most were Spirit-empowered military Heroes who delivered Israel from foreign oppressors. The book of Judges compiles their stories to remembers them as important national figures, although their exploits clearly played out only in their home regions; sometimes, their lifetimes apparently overlapped or coincided” (Hubbard & Dearman, 137)

Content and Dates

- More theological narrative
- Period Ostensibly covered: 410 years, assuming that the judges “ruled” sequentially
 - In fact the book probably covers a period of approximately 150 years (c. 1200–1095 B.C., when Saul became king)
 - Numbers are perhaps fixed expressions—20, 40, and 80 years are a half generation, a generation, and two generations
 - Accepting the traditional date of the exodus in the mid-13th centuries, the events in Judges would be set in 12th and 11th centuries
- Authorship and Date of Composition
 - Traditionally attributed to the prophet Samuel
 - Diversity of styles and contradictions in the text suggest a collection of stories that existed independently
 - The Song of Deborah (5:1–31) may be one of the oldest passages in the OT (cf. Song of Moses, etc.)
 - References to there “being no king in Israel” suggest that it was written during the monarchy
 - *Probably collected and edited by DH¹ and/or DH²*

Themes

- “In its final form, Judges gives one answer to what went wrong: disloyalty to God repeatedly resulted in catastrophe. The cyclical pattern of Judges also offered hope in times of national distress. Repentance and obedience might once again lead to deliverance.” (NSRV, Harper Collin Study Bible, 347).
- “The purpose of Judges is to show the failure of the Israelites to keep their part of the covenant. The cycles show how God demonstrated his power and mercy by delivering them time after time after his justice had demanded that he bring punishment. The book shows that neither the leadership of the Judges nor the tribal leadership succeeded in helping the people remain faithful. Instead, the leaders were as bad as the people.” (Hill & Walton, Survey of the Old Testament, 235).
- “Nevertheless **the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.** And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but they did not so.* And when the LORD raised them up judges, then **the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge . . .** And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.” (Judges 2:16–19)
- Key ideas: the cycles of the Judges period; God’s justice and grace; God’s sovereign provision of deliverance; Covenant failure by the people, the priests, and the tribal leadership; the role of the Spirit of the Lord.

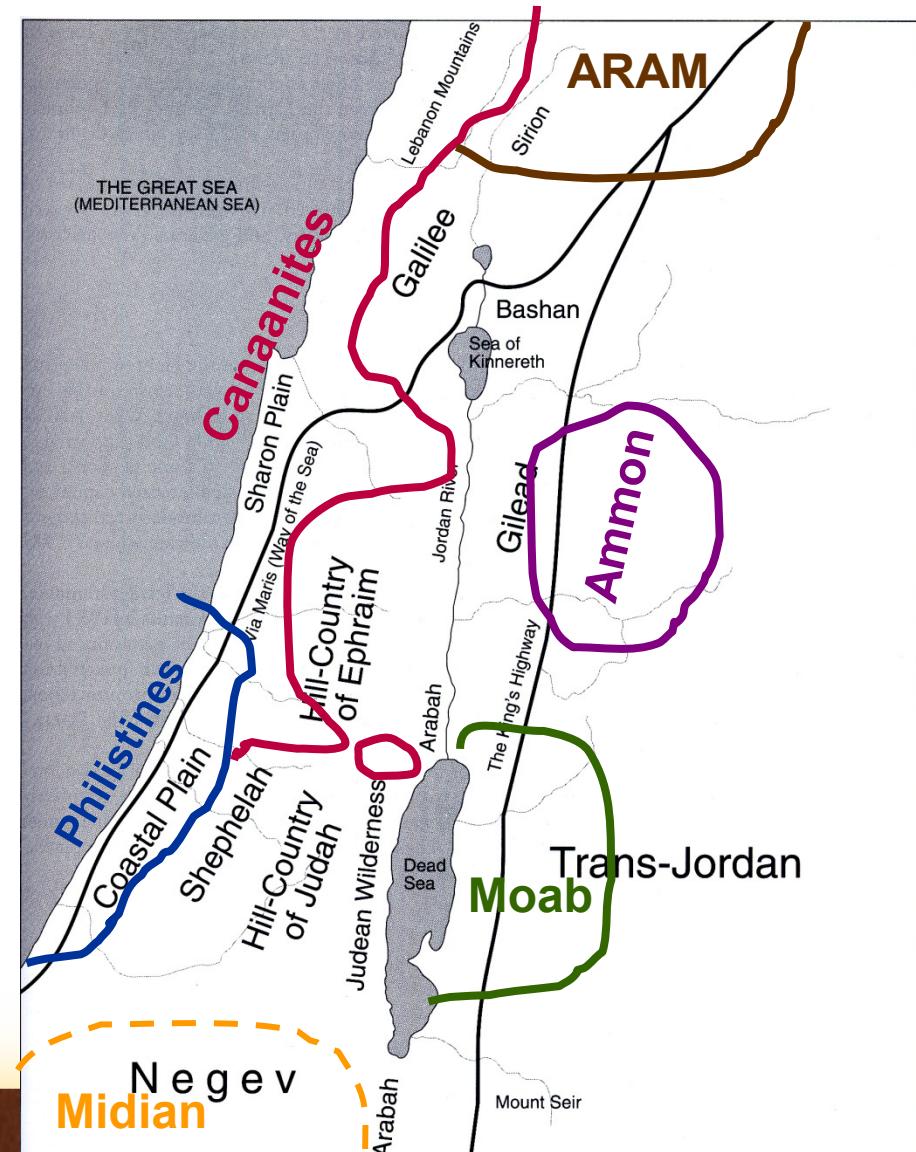
Structure

The central portion of the book names twelve judges (the number is not likely a coincidence), six “major” ones, about whom there are exciting narratives, and six so-called “minor” judges, about whom we get little more than an archival-type notation a few verses long.

- **Background of the Period of Judges (1:1–3:6)**
 - Political Background: Israel’s Failure to Complete the Conquest of Canaan (1:1–36)
 - Spiritual Background (2:1–3:6)
- **History of the Period of the Judges (3:7–16:31)**
 - Mesopotamian Oppression and Othniel’s Deliverance (3:7–11)
 - Moabite Oppression and Ehud’s Deliverance (3:12–30)
 - [Shamgar’s Victory over the Philistines (3:31)]
 - Canaanite Oppression and Deliverance by Deborah and Barak (4:1–5:31)
 - Midianite Oppression and Gideon’s Deliverance (6:1–8:35)
- **Abimelech’s Tyranny (9:1–57)**
Tola’s Judgeship (10:1–2)
 - [Jair’s Judgeship (10:3–5)]
 - Ammonite Oppression and Jephthah’s Deliverance (10:6–12:7)
 - **Intertribal Dissension (12:1–7)**
 - [Ibzan’s Judgeship (12:8–10)]
 - [Elon’s Judgeship (12:11–12)]
 - [Abdon’s Judgeship (12:13–15)]
 - Philistine Oppression and Samson’s Career (13:1–16:31)
- **Apostasy of the Period of the Judges (17:1–21:25)**
 - **Micah and the Migration of the Danites (17:1–18:31)**
 - **The Benjaminite War (19:1–21:25)**

Political Background

- The impression of the book of Joshua notwithstanding, *apparently the Israelites occupied only the hill and high country*
- **Canaanites** and other peoples continued to occupy the valleys, the coastline, and important strategic sites
 - Other newcomers, the **Philistines**, had settled on the southern coast as part of a movement called “the Sea Peoples”
- Neighbors in **Aram** (Syria, apparently “Mesopotamia” in KJV), **Ammon**, and **Moab** also had designs on territory in Israel
- *Generally Israel's opponents were technologically more advanced (good at working iron, used war chariots, etc.)*

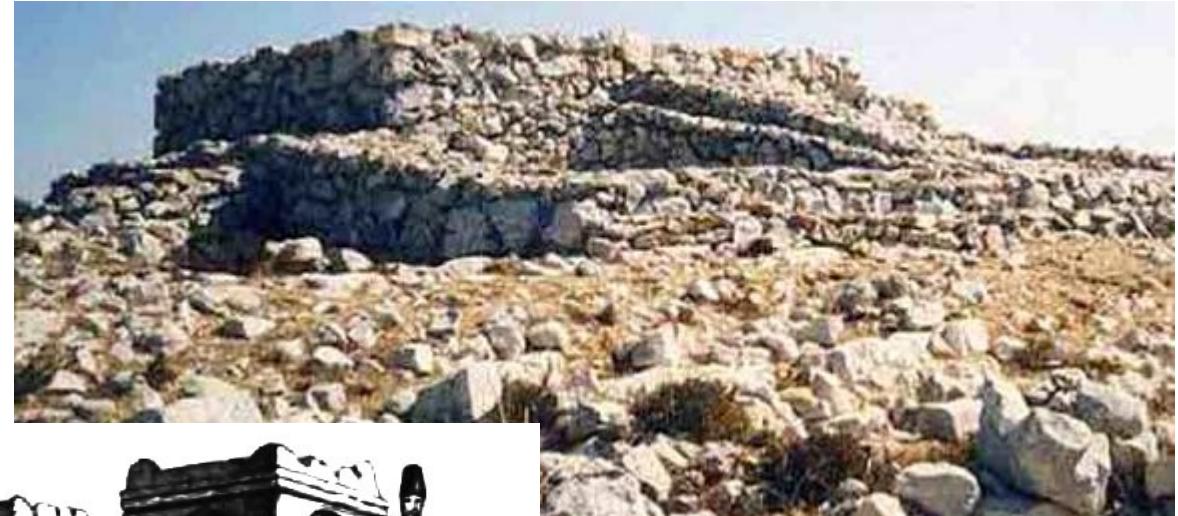


Breaking the Covenant and Military Failure

- **The covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel is typified by the bond between a husband and wife**
 - References to generations that “did not know” the Lord (e.g. 2:10) use covenant language
 - “And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed **my covenant** which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not” (2:20-22)
 - The Canaanite and other nations were left to test Israel
- **“Whoring after other gods . . .”**
 - why the strong term? Note “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God . . .” (Exodus 20:5)
 - “jealous” here (Heb. *Qannā'*) has the sense of **ardor** or **the passionate bond between spouses**

“The book of Judges continues the Deuteronomistic Historians’ presentation of Israel’s history in the Promised Land of Canaan. In the book of Joshua, they presented the ideal: Israel united in worship of Yahweh alone, and united under the leadership of a divinely designated successor to Moses in fighting against their enemies. Immediately following this programmatic presentation, however, the book of Judges gives a sobering and even appalling presentation of the reality, relating how the Israelites repeatedly failed to live up to the ideal by worshiping other gods, by refusing to come to each other’s assistance, and by intertribal warfare.” Coogan, 215

Why did Israel repeatedly decide to worship other Gods?



Why did Israel repeatedly decide to worship other Gods?

- What did they believe in Egypt for over four hundred years?
- Second, we must recognize that the difference between the monotheism commanded at Sinai and the polytheism of the ancient Near East involved much more than the number of deities. **Monotheism offered a whole new perspective on deity. In this system God is the ultimate power in the universe.** He is not subordinate to anyone or anything. He does not manifest himself in natural phenomena, though he controls all of nature. He is moral and consistent and expects behavior that is moral and just. He is autonomous and therefore cannot be manipulated by cultic ritual.
- In contrast, the Israelites were still seeped in the old religious concepts. The Canaanite religion is observable in tablets found in the port city of Ugarit from the time of the judges. **Each god had its respective sphere of influence and was subject to the decrees of the assembly of the high gods. There likewise existed a power above the gods that could be appropriated by the gods and, to a lesser extent, by men and women through divination.** These gods were often connected with and manifested through the forces of nature. They were capricious and unpredictable and not particularly prone to moral behavior. Their demands were largely ritual in nature, and it was thought that the temple and sacrifice satisfied their needs. And since they had needs that were dependent on humans to provide, the gods could be manipulated.
- **Once the Israelites had arrived in the land and had scattered to their respective territories, the ever-present Canaanite religion influenced the way they thought about God.**

Who were the other gods?

- *Ba'alm* is plural of *Ba'al*, Canaanite for “master” or “Lord”
 - Ba'al was conceived of as a sky god who, among other things, brought fertility to the earth through seasonal rains
 - There was one Ba'al but many (each area had its own version who was somehow still Baal)
 - Frequently worshiped at outdoor sanctuaries (or “high places” or *bamot*), where he was represented by standing stones
- *Asherah* (pl. *Ashtaroth*) was the spouse of the supreme god El and the mother of 70 children, including Baal.
 - The mother goddess, she represented the fecund earth, agricultural productivity, and the power of procreation
 - She was often represented in cult with a wooden pillar or carved wooden statue—hence “the groves” of the KJV



High Places—Local Shrines



This later Israelite “high place” (bahmah) at Dan in northern Israel was modeled on earlier Canaanite shrines. On a hill top it had a “horned altar” and then a few steps higher to the platform for incense and prayer

Functionally similar to the Israelites in some ways, the Canaanites prayed to their gods, celebrated holy days, built temples, had priests, offered animals and agricultural sacrifices (their sacrificial terminology shares similarities with that in the Hebrew Bible), burned incense, and practices various forms of divination to determine the will of the gods. . . .

Canaanites worshipped Baal and other deities at “high places” as well as at formal temples. A “high place” (Hebrew *bamah*) was a local, often open-air, shrine near a city; it had an altar, priests, and other cultic features, such as standing stone and an ‘asherah (a symbol of Asherah). The Israelites worshipped Jehovah at their own high places for much of their history in the land of Israel (e.g. 1 Sam 9:19, 25; 1 Kings 3:3-5), but king Josiah eventually shut these down for religious and political reasons (2 Kings 23:5-9). Thus, a high place was not inherently “bad.” It depended on how it was used. . . . (JWOT 167-68)

The Cycle Pattern in Judges



Apostasy	Oppression	Repentance	Deliverance
2:11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.	2:14 And he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about.		2:16 The lord raised up judges.
3:7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.	3:8 And he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia.	3:9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.	3:9 The Lord raised up a deliverer (Othniel).
3:12 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.	3:12 And the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab.	3:15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.	3:15 The Lord raised up a deliverer (Ehud).
4:1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.	4:2 And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan.	4:3 And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.	4:4 (Deborah)
6:1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.	6:1 And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian.	6:7 When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.	6:13 (Gideon)
10:6 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.	10:7 And he sold them into the hands of the Philistines/ Ammon.	10:10 And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.	11:1 (Jephthah)
13:1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.	13:1 And the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines.		13:24 (Samson)

The Cycle Pattern in Judges



God's justice and grace; God's sovereign provision of deliverers; Covenant failure by the people, the priests, and the tribal leadership; the role of the Spirit of the Lord.

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Deborah

“Deborah is described as exercising both judicial (Judg 4:4-5) and military (4:10; 5:12, 15) function, and she is also called a prophet (4:4). Although, some of the other judges are social outsiders, such as Gideon, who is the youngest of his family, and Jephthah, who is the illegitimate son of a prostitute, Deborah’s status as a woman is not highlighted by the biblical writers. Rather her role as judge, prophet, and military leader are presented matter-of-factly without attention being given to her gender.” Coogan

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Deborah is called a prophetess as well as a judge. Her role was different from the other judges.

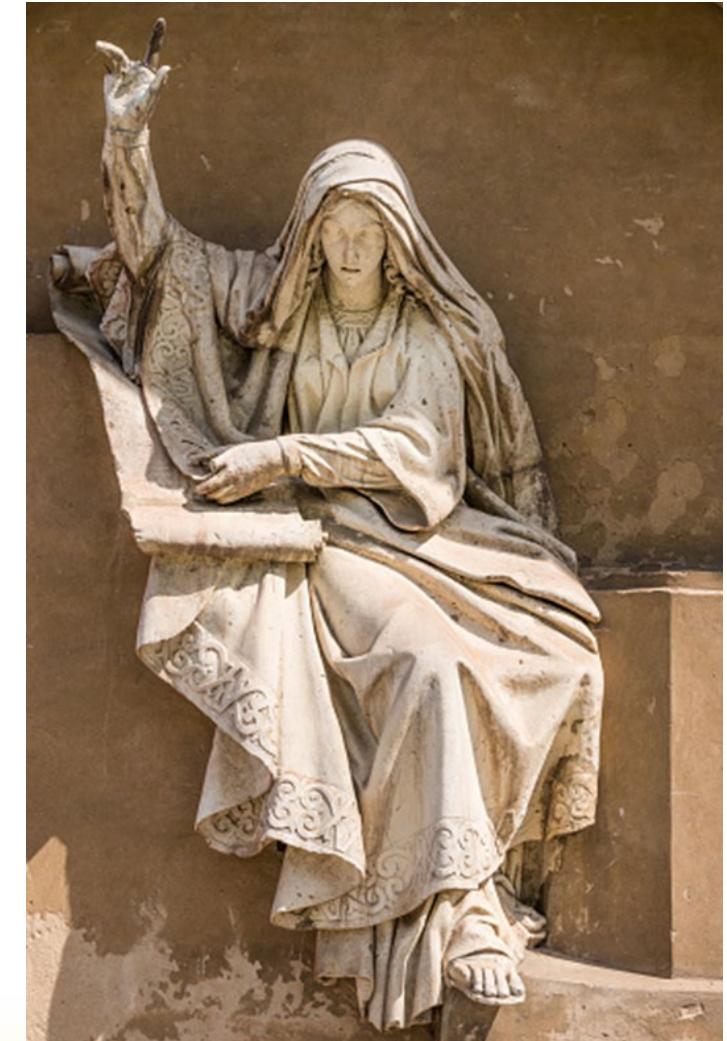


4:4-8 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? . . . And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

What does it mean to be a prophet?

“Unlike priests, generals, judges, and governors, a prophet does not have to be appointed by superiors, and a prophet’s status does not depend on advancement within a hierarchy or on completion of a course of study. . . . societies can accept women as recipients of the “gift of prophecy” and value them as prophets even as they deny women roles in the official hierarchies of religion and polity” (Frymer-Kensky 324).

“The narrator in 2 Kings shows no astonishment that the ‘prophet-in-residence’ was a woman. The author of the book of Chronicles also is not amazed by this. Chronicles relates that the prophet Azariah encouraged King Asa to extend his reform to all of Israel (2 Chron. 15:1-7); the prophet Jehu encouraged King Jehoshaphat to renew the reform that he had begun but appeared to abandon (2 Chron 17:7-9); in the same way, Huldah will encourage Josiah to broaden the reform that he began when he sent his men to repair the Temple. Huldah the female prophet is treated no differently than Azariah or Jehu” (Frymer-Kensky 325).



Deborah: Judges 4 & 5 as a disruptive text

The story of Deborah in Judges 4-5 has disruptive potential. This scriptural account of a female judge, prophet, and war-leader frequently disturbed traditional cultural assumptions and expectations about women's roles through the centuries, both in the Bible and in the world of the interpreter, by exhibiting Deborah as assertive, outspoken, and playing a public role among her people (Schroder 3).

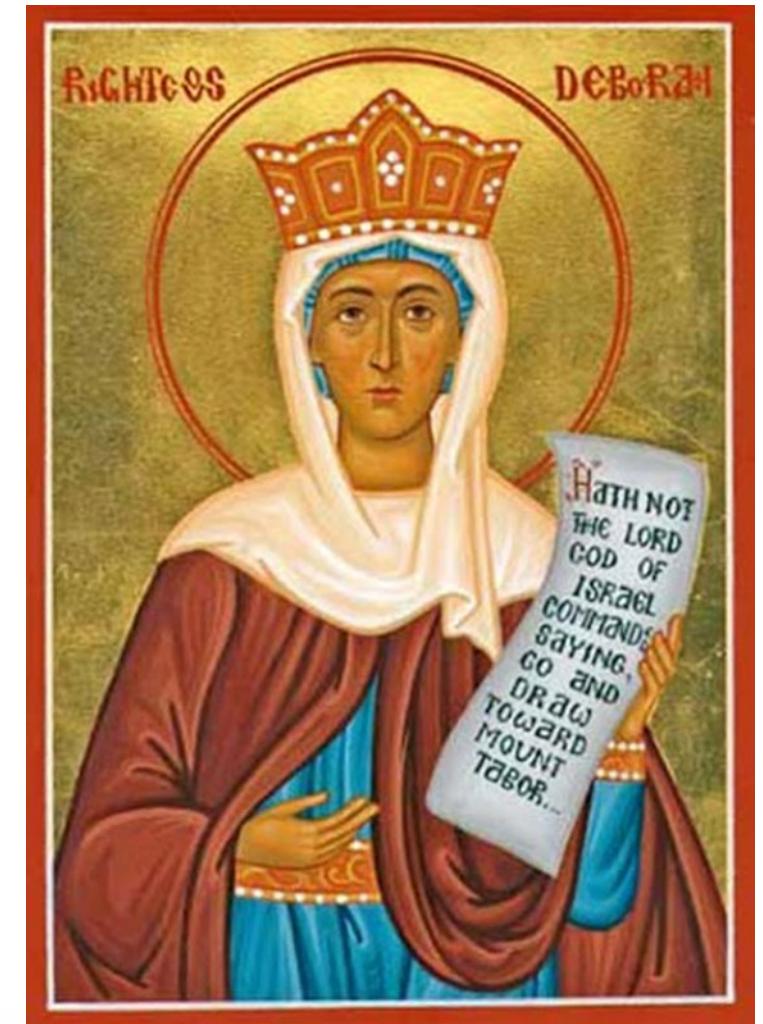


How to deal with her as a military commander, wife, mother, prophetess, civil leader, and judge

Major Questions Asked & Debated over the Centuries

“Through the centuries, interpreters asked and answered the same questions over and over: What does it mean that Deborah judged Israel, functioned as a prophet, and played a central role in Israel’s military defeat of the Canaanites? What sort of authority did she exercise—religious, civil, military, or all three? Was her authority official or unofficial? What was Deborah’s relationship to her husband and her children? What does her name means? Does Deborah’s example have implications for women of one’s own day?” (Shroeder 248)

Also . . . How did she become a judge? Individuals usually gained political authority and became judges after they saved Israel in battle? Did Deborah lead a group in battle? Did she offer sage advice that led to a victory? Did she acquire it for some other reason? How did she bring about order to Israel as mentioned in the song?



Key takeaway today: all too often, exegesis says more about the interpreter than it does about the text itself.

Dr. Shroeder looks at how Deborah was used in gender debates. She lucidly illustrates how competing claims about Judges 4-5 were closely bound up with the agendas and cultural expectations of the interpreters (4)



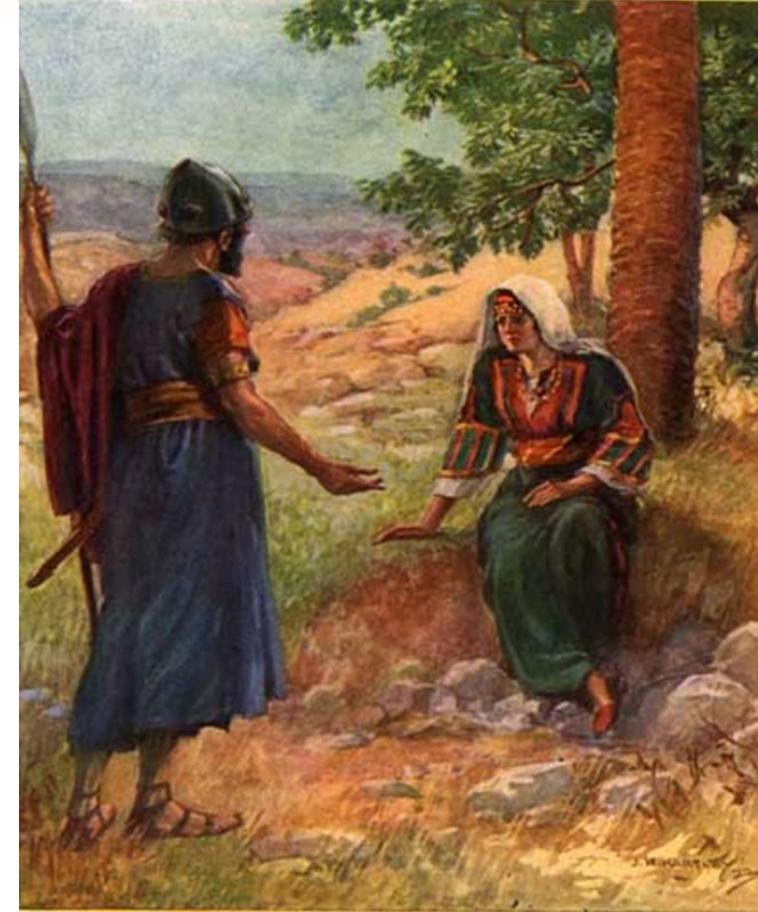
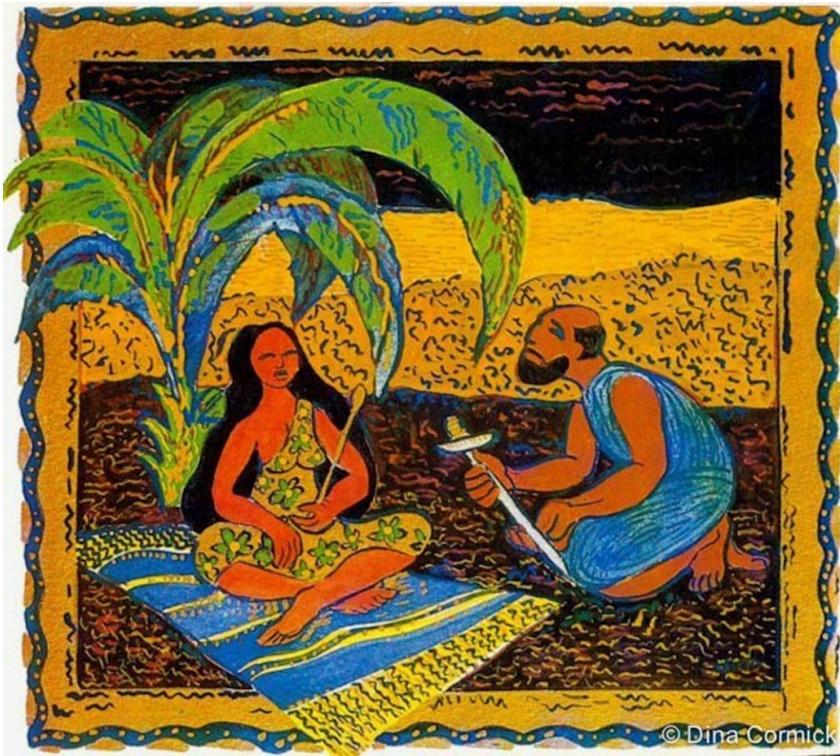
Translation always entails making choices and is bound up in interpretation.

Eset lappidot, usually translated “wife of Lappidoth” could also be rendered “woman of torches.” Christian tradition has followed the Vulgate’s translation of Lappidoth. But Rabbinic tradition interpreted the phrase to mean “woman of flames,” explaining that she had been a wick-maker for the tabernacle’s sanctuary lamps (5)

What do we gain by translating Eset lappidot, as “wife of Lappidoth”? What do we lose?



Deborah & Barak



Deborah calls Barak in her role as a prophet, an envoy of God. He will not go without her because prophets have a significant role to play in war in ancient Near East: they muster and inspire troops, they tell you when to begin the battle (48). Like Moses, Deborah is not a battle commander. Her role is to inspire, predict, and celebrate in song (49).

Deborah & Jael

Standard Reading of Jael: “Chapters 4-5 narrate Deborah’s remarkable rescue of northern Israel from the Canaanite king of Hazor, a major, ancient, wealthy, and politically influential city-state north of the Sea of Galilee. The compilers of Judges thought her victory memorable enough to merit telling it in both prose (a historical report) and poetry (a song)—a literary accolade only elsewhere accorded the momentous exodus itself (Exod 14-15). But the story also has a satisfying irony that makes the victory even sweeter: the weapon through which God strikes the decisive blow is an obscure, non-Israelite woman names Jael, not the male Israelite commander on duty, Barak. This point goes along with a subtheme that weaves its way through the Heroes section: the Israelites’ hope of achieving national security by their own devices rather than by trusting God is futile.” Hubbard & Dearman, 140

What else do we learn from Jael and her story? What else may we gain?



4:15 the account is strikingly similar to that of the victory at the Red Sea (Ex 14.24). Panic is a customary tactic of the Divine Warrior (cf Joshua 10.10). The prose account gives no details of how the Lord created panic, but 5.20-21 suggest a natural catastrophe.

Gideon's Call and Fall (6:1–8:35)

- **The Midianite Oppression** (6:1–10)
- **Gideon's Call** (6:11–27)
- Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal (6:28–32)
 - Known as Jerubbaal “let Baal plead” after this
- **The Sign of the Fleece** (6:33–40)
- **Gideon Surprises and Routs the Midianites** (7:1–23)
 - Giving the fearful Israelites a chance to return home reduces Gideon’s force from 32,000 to 10,000
 - Drinking habits reduce it further to 300
 - Trumpets, jars, and torches confuse the enemy
- **Gideon’s Triumph and Vengeance** (7:24–8:21)
 - Victory sullied with inter-tribal squabbles
 - Punishes the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel, fellow Israelites



Gideon's Idolatry (8:22–28)

- Rejects an offer of kingship but takes a tribute of gold, from which he makes an “ephod” (ostensibly a priestly vestment but perhaps here clothing an idol)
- “judges” for forty years (a generation)

Death of Gideon (8:29–35)

Major Takeaway of the Story: Judges 7:2
You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, “My own strength has saved me.” (Judges 7:2 TNIV).
God is the one who saves Israel, not anyone else

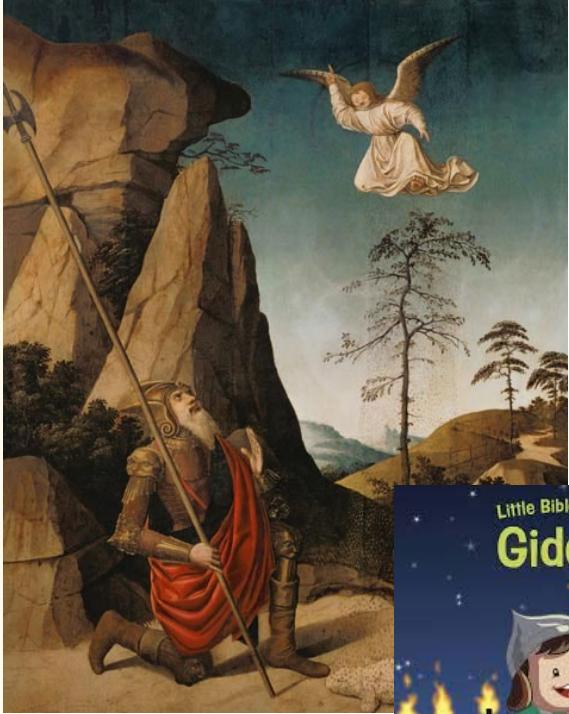
Gideon's given name was Jerubbaal, which literally means "Let Baal contend" and shows his father's devotion to the Canaanite deity (6.25); the name is reinterpreted to mean "one who contends with Baal" (6:32). The name "Gideon," meaning "hacker," is apparently a nickname based on his military prowess, reinterpreted as "the one who cuts down forbidden ritual objects."

Gideon is placed implicitly in the line of Moses and Joshua as a divinely chosen leader who achieves victories with divine assistance, and he acknowledges the divine rule over Israel by refusing to become a king and the founder of a dynasty.

From the perspective of the Deuteronomistic Historians, this episode has several morals: Yahweh alone must be worshiped; he alone is Israel's king who fights on its behalf; and if a human ruler is to be chosen, it is by divine rather than human initiative. Thus, although like the heroes with whom he implicitly is compared, Gideon is a shrewd and successful military leader, in the end he is no model. Coogan 222



How are we to view Gideon?



Judges 7:2



6:12 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

6:15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

6:17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

6:27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.

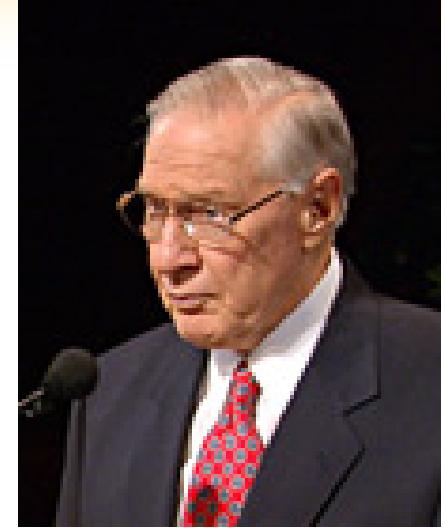
6:33-40 Gideon assumes military leadership, but repeatedly seeks confirmation by a sign. The spirit of the Lord finally prods Gideon to action.

7:9-14 The story continues to emphasize Gideon's fearful hesitancy and the Lord's providential response, this time via a pagan sentry's dream.

8:23, 27 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you. . . . 27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

“You may feel that there is nothing special or superior about you or your ability... Gideon felt this when the Lord asked him to save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon said, ‘My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.’ He had only three hundred men, but with the help of the Lord, Gideon defeated the armies of the Midianites. The Lord can do remarkable miracles with a person of ordinary ability who is humble, faithful, and diligent in serving the Lord and seeks to improve himself. This is because God is the ultimate source of power.”

Gideon is clearly a mixed individual with strengths and weaknesses. He is a model in some ways, but not in others ways. Why is this useful for us?



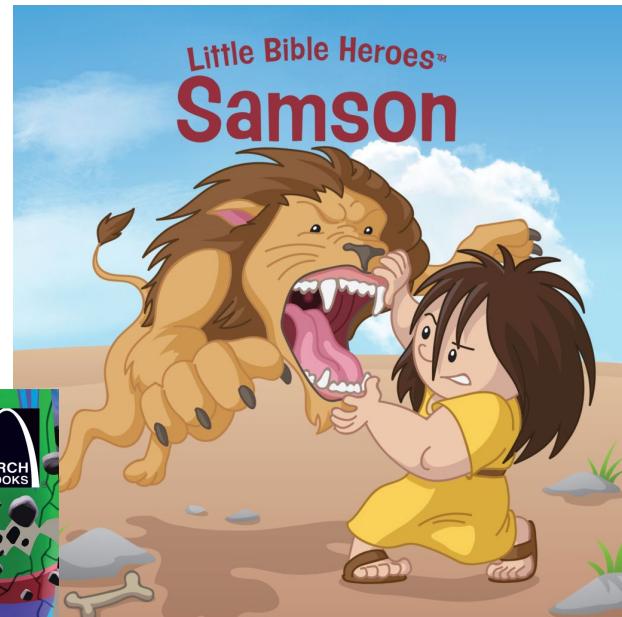
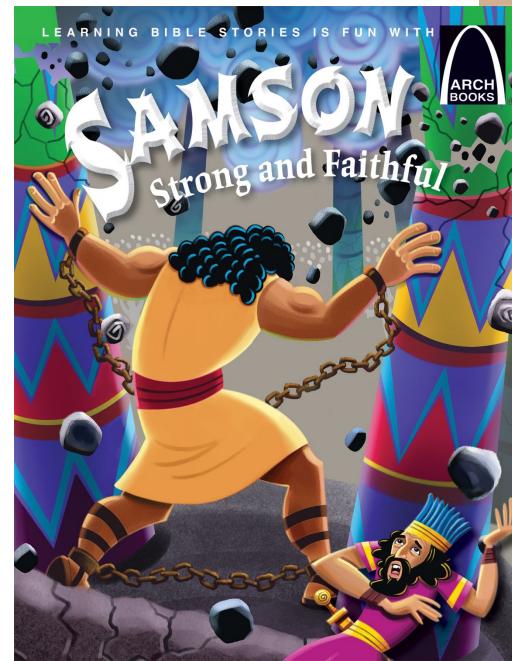
James E. Faust
Apostle: 1978-2007

James E. Faust, “Acting for Ourselves and Not Being Acted Upon,” *Ensign* (Nov. 1995), p. 47.

Judges 7:2 God is the one who saves Israel, not anyone else

How are we to view Samson and the other judges?

“We must conclude, therefore, that the judges were not intended to be spiritual role models, nor was their spirituality necessarily a criterion for God’s raising them up. Indeed, the text never implies that it was. This is not to suggest that the judges did not act in faith; rather, it warns us not to place them on too high a pedestal. There were unquestionably some unethical things done by certain judges (e.g., 3:20; 15:4-5). The Bible does not express approval even though it acknowledges that deliverance was still possible nevertheless. . . . The fact that deliverance was accomplished does not imply approval of the means used. Of Samson, it is noted that the Lord was using even his bad choices to accomplish his purposes (14:4).” (Hill & Walton 243).



People may be models in some way but not in others. The Bible is just as often a book that shows us how not to act as it shows us how to act.

The Birth of Samson (13:1–25)

Philistine Oppression and Samson's Career (13:1–16:31)

- **The last of the judges is Samson, but he is not a typical judge. He is divinely chosen before his birth, rather than as a divine response to Israelite pleas for help in an immediate crisis.**
- **Promise to a barren mother** —reminiscent of Sara and looking forward to Hannah (mother of Samuel) and Mary
 - *The miracle of the angel of the Lord*
- **The Nazarite vow** (cf. Numbers 6:1–8)
 - For both Manoah's wife *and* the child—both were specially dedicated to the Lord
 - ***Samson was dedicated from conception and birth***
- “And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol” (13:25)
 - *The spirit comes and goes . . .*



Samson and Philistine Women

Philistine Oppression and Samson's Career (13:1–16:31)

- **Samson's Marriage to a Philistine from Timnah (14:1–20)**
 - Lion and honey incident (14:5–9)
 - The riddle and the subsequent killing of 300 Philistines (14:10–20)
- **Samson Defeats the Philistines (15:1–20)**
 - Kills 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass at Lehi or “jawbone place”
- **Samson and the Harlot of Gaza (16:1–3)**
- **Samson and Delilah: The Downfall of Samson (16:4–22)**
 - Falls in love with a Philistine woman from Sorek
 - Three times he does not reveal the source of his strength; fourth time gives in and she has his head shaved.



The Bible does not express approval even though it acknowledges that deliverance was still possible nevertheless. . . . The fact that deliverance was accomplished does not imply approval of the means used. Of Samson, it is noted that the Lord was using even his bad choices to accomplish his purposes (14:4).” (Hill & Walton 243).

The Death of Samson (16:23–31)

Philistine Oppression and Samson's Career (13:1–16:31)

- Blinded and pressed into servitude
- Brought in to be mocked in the temple of the Philistine god Dagon
- Prays for “one last” moment of strength, pulling down the columns supporting the roof and killing himself and all within



Symbolism of the Samson Saga:

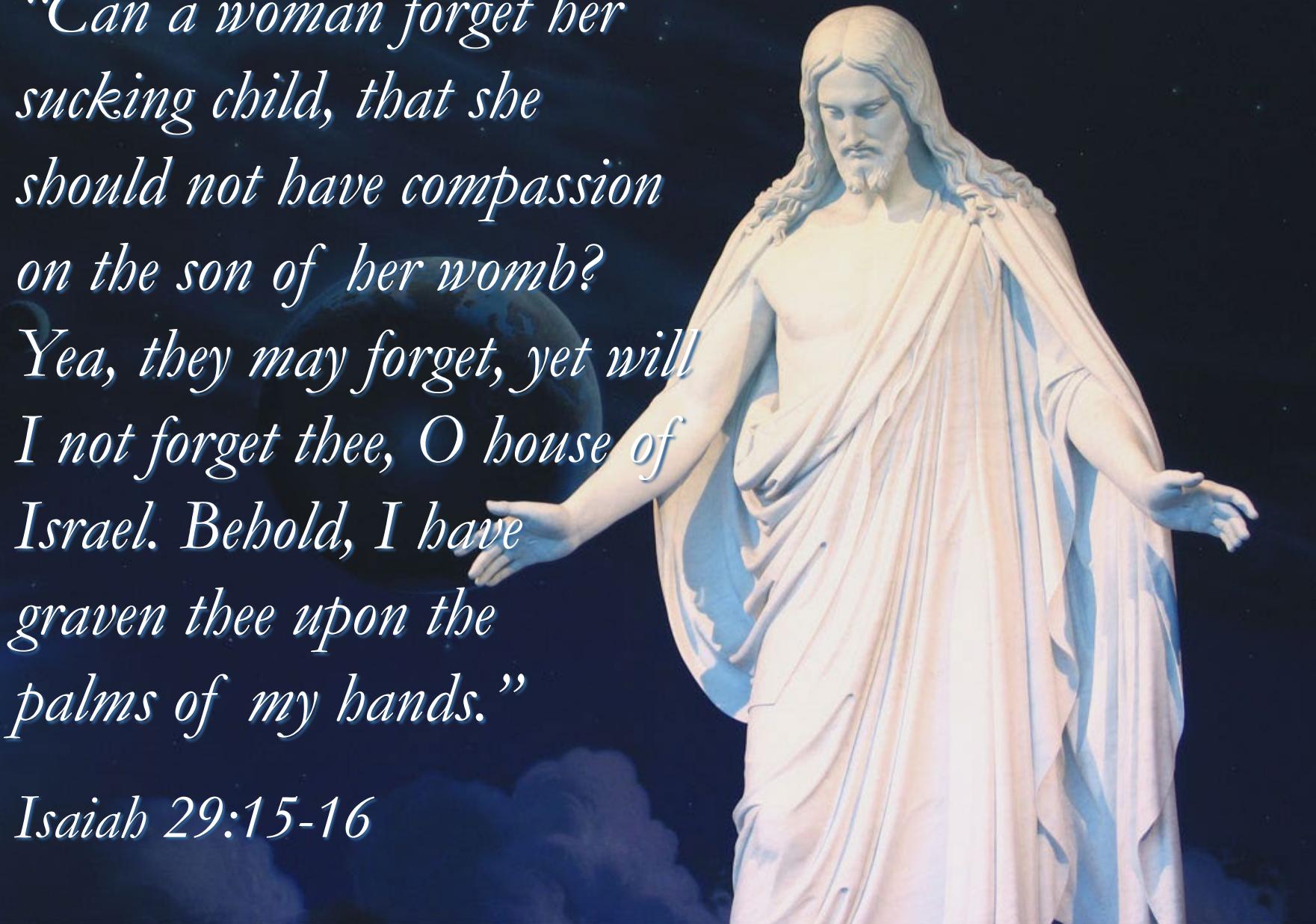
Samson as a Type of Israel

- **A Nazarite from the conception**
 - Israel was specially promised and called before birth—e.g. Isaac
- **A Nazarite from the womb**
 - Israel was “born” in the Exodus story—meant to be called and dedicated to God
- **Eating honey from a dead lion**
 - By definition, the honey, having contacted a corpse, was unclean
 - Samson did not consistently respect his Nazarite obligations—Israel likewise did not keep all the requirements of the Law of Moses
- **Consorting with, and marrying, Philistine women**
 - Symbolic of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God and “whoring” after other gods
- **The Lord was with Samson in the end**
 - YHWH never abandoned Israel

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?

Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”

Isaiah 29:15-16



“Yet in all these times, though, apostasy and injustice brought punishment, the mercy of the Lord was also evident. In the books of Kings, God’s mercy is evident in his raising up of prophets to warn the people; in Judges it is evident in his raising up judges to deliver the people. The message emphasized Yahweh’s longsuffering grace in the face of continual and rampant apostasy and injustice among his people. **Covenant failures of the people were met by covenant faithfulness from the Lord**” (Hill & Walton 240).