

Judges and Ruth

Teacher Edition

Class material by Gary Copeland, 2026.

Thanks to Phil Davis who began many of the notes and questions and developed the diagram of the "Cycle" and the Table of the Judges.

Syllabus

Date	Lesson # and Topic	
Wednesday, December 3 -	1	The Political Setting (Judges 1)
Sunday, December 7 -	2	The Spiritual Setting (Judges 2)
Wednesday, December 10 -	3	Ehud and Deborah (Judges 3 – 5)
Sunday, December 14 -	4	Gideon (Judges 6 – 8)
Wednesday, December 17 -	5	Abimelech, the Non-Judge (Judges 9)
Sunday, December 21 -	6	Jephthah (Judges 10 – 12)
Wednesday, December 24 -	7	Samson, Part 1 (Judges 13 – 14)
Sunday, December 28 -	8	Samson, Part 2 (Judges 15 – 16)
Wednesday, December 31 -	9	Idolatry in Israel (Judges 17 – 18)
Sunday, January 4 -	10	Immorality and In-fighting (Judges 19 – 21)
Wednesday, January 7 -	11	Ruth's Faith Is Demonstrated (Ruth 1 – 2)
Sunday, January 11 -	12	Ruth's Faith Is Rewarded (Ruth 3 – 4)
Wednesday, January 14 -	13	Dating, Timeline, and Review

Outlines, Figures, and Maps

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Usage note

Because of the **fast pace** of the class, each lesson’s **many questions** are intended to be answered **at home** to give the student a decent grasp of the material.

Class time can then be spent discussing the **higher level questions, relating the events to other Bible passages, and making applications.**

Primary Sources

The Holy Bible, New King James Version, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), © 1988 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, 1996.

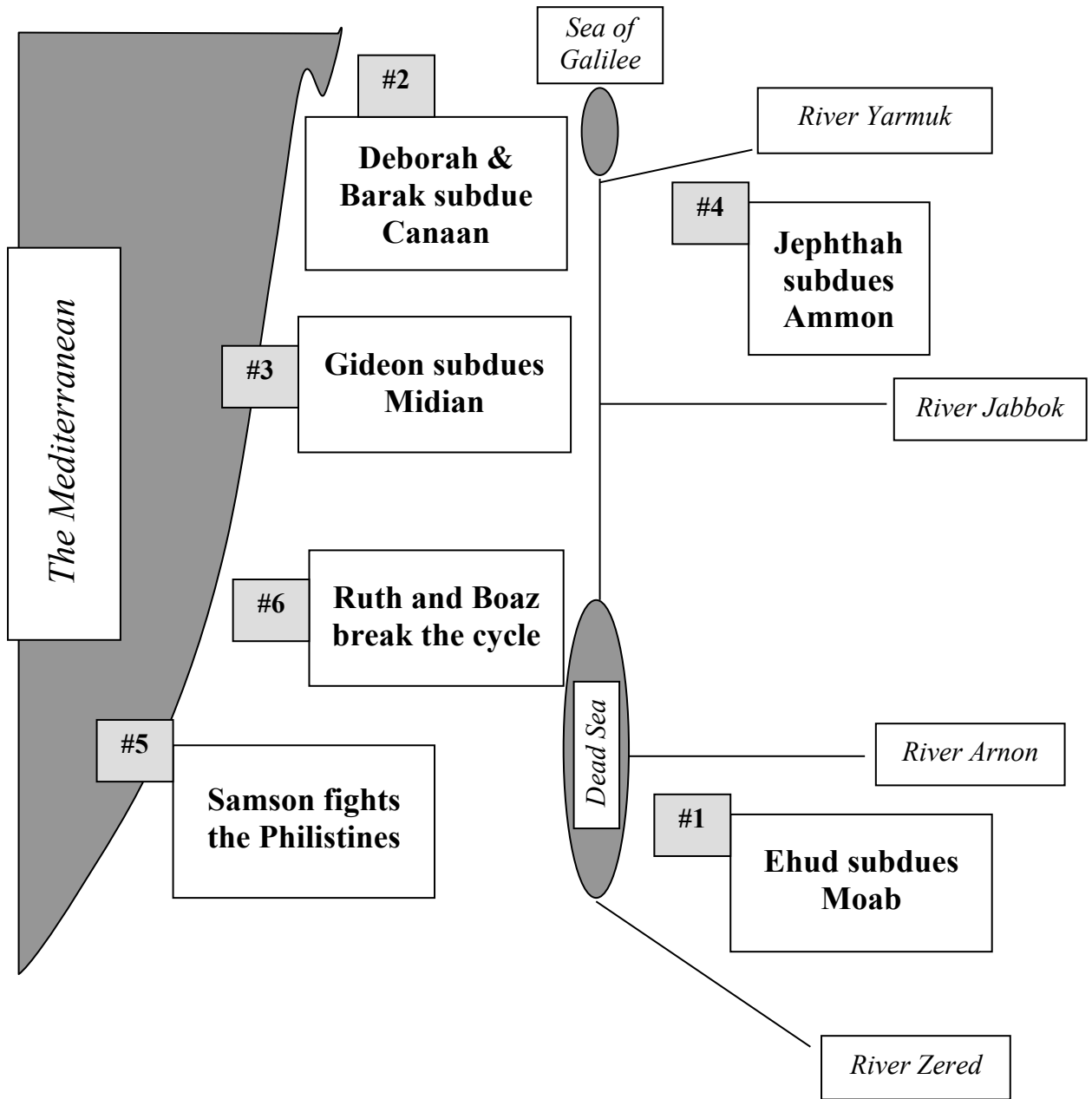
Nelson’s 3-D Bible mapbook [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, ©1985 by Lion Publishing.

Helpful Map Resources

<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/>

<https://www.biblehub.com/> Scroll down to “Bible Study Tools” where you’ll find “Atlas”.

A Simplified Map for Judges and Ruth



(Major characters are numbered in the order in which we read about them.)

Outlines of Judges

The book is arranged more topically than chronologically and actually has a **chiastic** structure:

- A, Reasons for Israel's Oppression:** the incomplete conquest (Chs. 1 – 2)
- B, Deliverance from Oppressors,** Moab, Canaan, and Midian (Chs. 3 – 8)
- c, Abimelech the Non-Judge,** contrasted with true judges (Ch. 9)
- B¹, Deliverance from Oppressors,** Ammon and the Philistines (Chs. 10 – 16)
- A¹, Reasons for Israel's Oppression:** idolatry, immorality, and in-fighting (Chs. 17 – 21)

Here is a linear outline¹:

A: The Deterioration of Israel and Failure to Complete the Conquest (1:1 – 3:6)

- I. Failure to Complete the Conquest: Political and Spiritual Settings (chapter 1)
- II. God's Judgment for Not Completing the Conquest (2:1 – 3:6)

B: The Deliverance of Israel (3:7 – 16:31)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Southern (3:7-31) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Othniel (3:7-11) B. Ehud (3:12-30) C. Shamgar (3:31) II. Northern (chapters 4 & 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Deborah and Barak Are Called (4:1-10) B. Canaanites Are Defeated (4:11-24) C. Song of Deborah and Barak (5:1-31) III. Central (6:1 – 10:5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Gideon (6:1–8:32) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Israel Sins (6:1-10) 2. Gideon Is Called (6:11-40) 3. Midianites Are Defeated (7:1 – 8:21) 4. Gideon Judges (8:22-32) B. Abimelech (8:33 – 9:57) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. Tola (10:1-2) D. Jair (10:3-5) IV. Eastern (10:6–12:7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Israel Sins (10:6-18) B. Salvation: Jephthah (11:1 – 12:7) V. Second Northern (12:8-15) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Ibzan (12:8-10) B. Elon (12:11-12) C. Abdon (12:13-15) VI. Western (chapters 13 – 16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Miraculous Birth of Samson (13:1-25) B. Sinful Marriage of Samson (14:1-20) C. Judgeship of Samson (15:1-20) D. Failure of Samson (16:1-31) |
|--|--|

C: The Depravity of Israel (17:1 – 21:25)

- I. Idolatry (chapters 17 & 18)**
 - A. Personal Idolatry (ch. 17)
 - B. Tribal Idolatry (ch. 18)
- II. Immorality (chapter 19)**
 - A. Personal Immorality (19:1–10)
 - B. Tribal Immorality (19:11–30)
- III. In-Fighting (chapters 20 & 21)**
 - A. War between Israel and Benjamin (ch. 20)
 - B. Failure of Israel after the War (ch. 21)

¹ Modified from Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Nelson's teaching outlines of the Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, © 1986.

Lesson 1: The Political Setting (Judges 1)

The book of Judges opens by emphasizing **Israel's failure to complete the conquest** of Canaan. Although the land has been divided to the 12 tribes during Joshua's lifetime, battles must still be fought in order to "drive out the inhabitants." The case of Jerusalem shows how the Israelites could succeed in battle while *failing to carry through* with the annihilation of the idolatrous natives.

The case of **Jerusalem** also illustrates that some of the fighting is neither the first nor the last time Israel would fight some of the peoples. Although Joshua had killed the king of Jerusalem in Joshua 10, he had apparently not conquered the city itself. The children of Judah attack and burn the city (Judges 1:8), but some of the Jebusites remain in the city (1:21). David later completes the conquest of Jerusalem by taking over the "stronghold of Zion" (1 Samuel 5:6-9). Also, Hormah had been previously conquered during the wilderness wanderings (Numbers 21:1-3).

Some of Judges 1 is simply the *second telling* of the events. For example, we read about the victory over Debir and Kirjath Sepher first in Joshua 15:13-19.

Notice that there is **no longer a single military leader for the nation**. Joshua's only contemporary, Caleb, is a key figure, but does not lead in battle.

Concerning placing certain peoples under **tribute**, see Deuteronomy 20:10-18.

The **Kenites** were Midianites, descendants of Moses' father-in-law, Reuel (a.k.a., Jethro) through Reuel's son, Hobab. (Cp. Judges 1:16; 4:11; Numbers 10:29; Exodus 3:1. Moses only had one wife, and so one father-in-law.) They traveled with the Israelites and now choose to settle among them.

For **mapwork**, here's a good online resource: <https://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney2/28-the-israelites-face-continuing-opposition/the-israelites-fight-the-remaining-canaanites/>.

Judges 1:1-18: Limited Success

1. Which two tribes help each other fight to take control of their territories? **Judah and Simeon**
2. Assuming they start from Shechem, which direction do they head? **South**
3. How is "poetic justice" rendered upon Adoni-Bezek? **:6 Cut off his thumbs and big toes.**
4. What does Judah do to Jerusalem? **:8 Struck w/sword and burned w/fire**
5. How does Caleb motivate the attack against Kirjath Sepher? **:12 Offered his daughter to be wife**
6. Who accomplishes it? **:13 Caleb's nephew, Othniel**
7. How does the woman cause the reward to be increased? **:14-15 Requested a water source (necessary and still a hot commodity in the Negev). Note that the LXX has a different reading, so it's a bit uncertain who did the urging to make the request.**
8. Identify "the city of palms." (Cp. Deut. 34:3 and 2 Chron. 28:15.) **Referenced in verse 16: Jericho**
9. Where do Judah and Simeon attack next? **:17 Zephath, at the far SW tip of the Dead Sea; named the city Hormah**
10. *Concordance work:* What nation is later associated with the three cities of verse 18? **Philistia. "The five lords of the Philistines" are mentioned in Judges 3:3 and they are listed in Joshua 13:3. There were five cities of the so-called Pentapolis: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath. Three are mentioned in Joshua 11:22 and three in Judges 1:18. They will be a problem again in the time of Samson, continuing through the time of David (and into the 21st century with modern Israel fighting the Palestinians in the Gaza strip.**
11. Who lives there at the time of Judges 1? (Cp. Joshua 11:22.) **Anakim**

Judges 1:19-36: Widespread Failure

12. Whom does Judah not drive out, and why? **:19 They could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron. Note that *Egyptian* chariots had been rendered useless by God during the Exodus. *That* was not the real problem!**
13. What does Benjamin fail to do? **:21 "Dispossess the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem"**
What is the result of this failure? **:21 Those people still lived in Jerus. at the time of the writing of Judges.**

14. How does “the house of Joseph” get into Bethel? **:23-25 *Bribed a man – sparing the life of him and his family! – in exchange for telling how to enter.***
What do they do to the city? ***struck it w/the sword***
15. Who is spared by “the house of Joseph,” and what does he do? **:23-26 *The man who told them how to enter the city. He went to the land of the Hittites and built a new “Luz.”***
16. **[Key point]** In verses 21, 27-36, how many tribes fail to “drive out the inhabitants”? **SEVEN - :21, Benjamin; :27 Manasseh; :29 Ephraim; :30 Zebulun; :31 Asher; :32 Naphtali; :34 Dan**
17. Depending on the translation you use (incl., CSB, LEB, MEV, NIV, NKJV, NLT), you’ll see the same reason for both Manasseh’s failure and Dan’s failure in vv. 27 and 35. Tell the reason. ***The inhabitants “were determined to stay/live” there. Some other translations say that the native were “desirous” to live there, or something similar. Other translations (e.g., ESV, NASB) may simply say that they “persisted” in living there or, even weaker, that they “continued” living there.***
18. What is done eventually to the inhabitants in four of these cases? ***Put under tribute (:28, 30, 33, 35)***

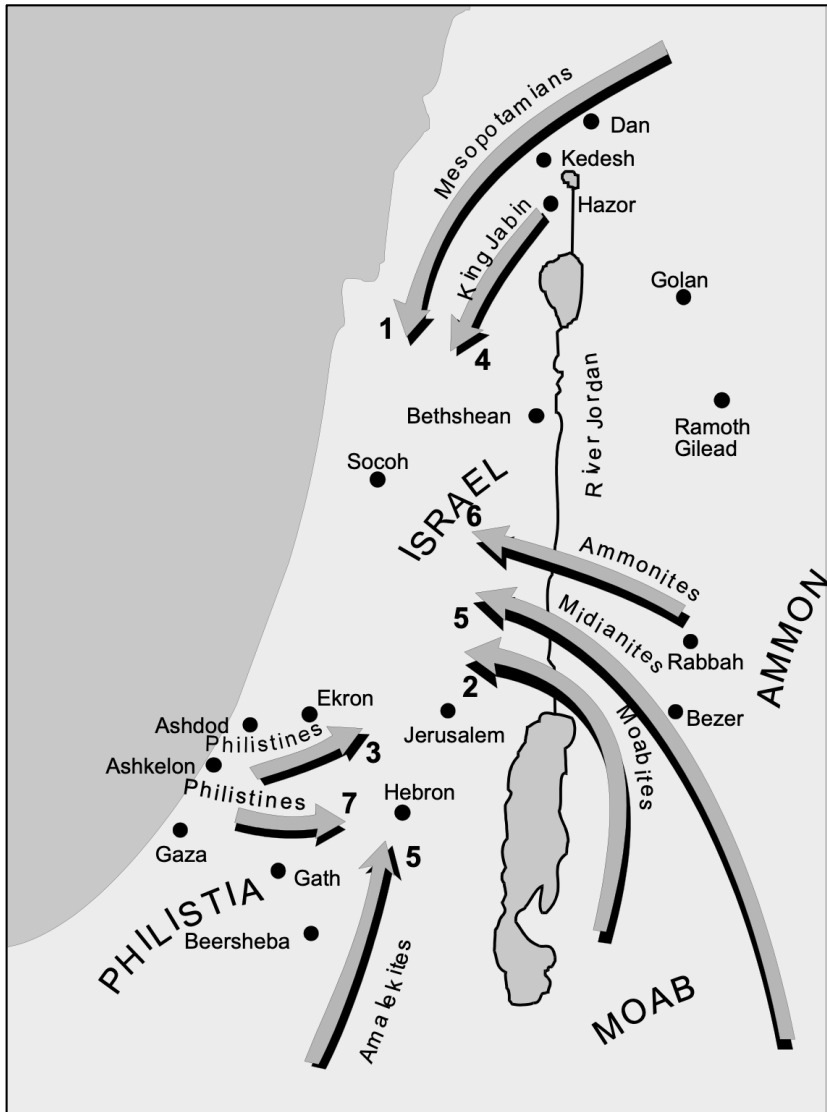
Applications:

- We often leave sin incompletely conquered in our own lives. We tend to fall again and again into old habits as did the following people:
 - **Abraham**, lying more than once about his true relationship with Sarai even though it did not go well the first time
 - **Peter**, repeatedly succumbing to his fear of authority figures, when denying Jesus and when acting hypocritically towards Gentiles in Galatians 2 after being the first to preach that they are of equal spiritual standing in the gospel with Jews
 - **Simon** the Sorcerer, falling into desire for power and fame in Acts 8

After we become Christians, we still have to learn to “drive out” all the enemies from our heart and overcome old ways of thinking (Romans 12:1-2).

- As with the chariots of iron, rooting out sin from our hearts can be very hard! But, at the end of the day, “iron chariots” just become an excuse. God can enable us to win the victory over sin!

Enemies on Every Hand



Israel's incomplete conquest and the worship of foreign gods cause great problems in the time of the judges. The Israelites come under the rule of one country after another. However, several of the judges defeat the enemy armies and liberated Israel.

1. **Othniel** defeats King Cushan Rishathaim of Mesopotamia, who had ruled Israel for 8 years (**Judges 3:7-11**).

2. **Ehud** defeats King Eglon of Moab who had ruled for 18 years (**Judges 3:12-30**).

3. **Shamgar** defeats some Philistines (**Judges 3:31**).

4. **Deborah and Barak** defeat Jabin of Hazor, who had ruled Israel "with cruelty and violence for 20 years" (**Judges 4 – 5**).

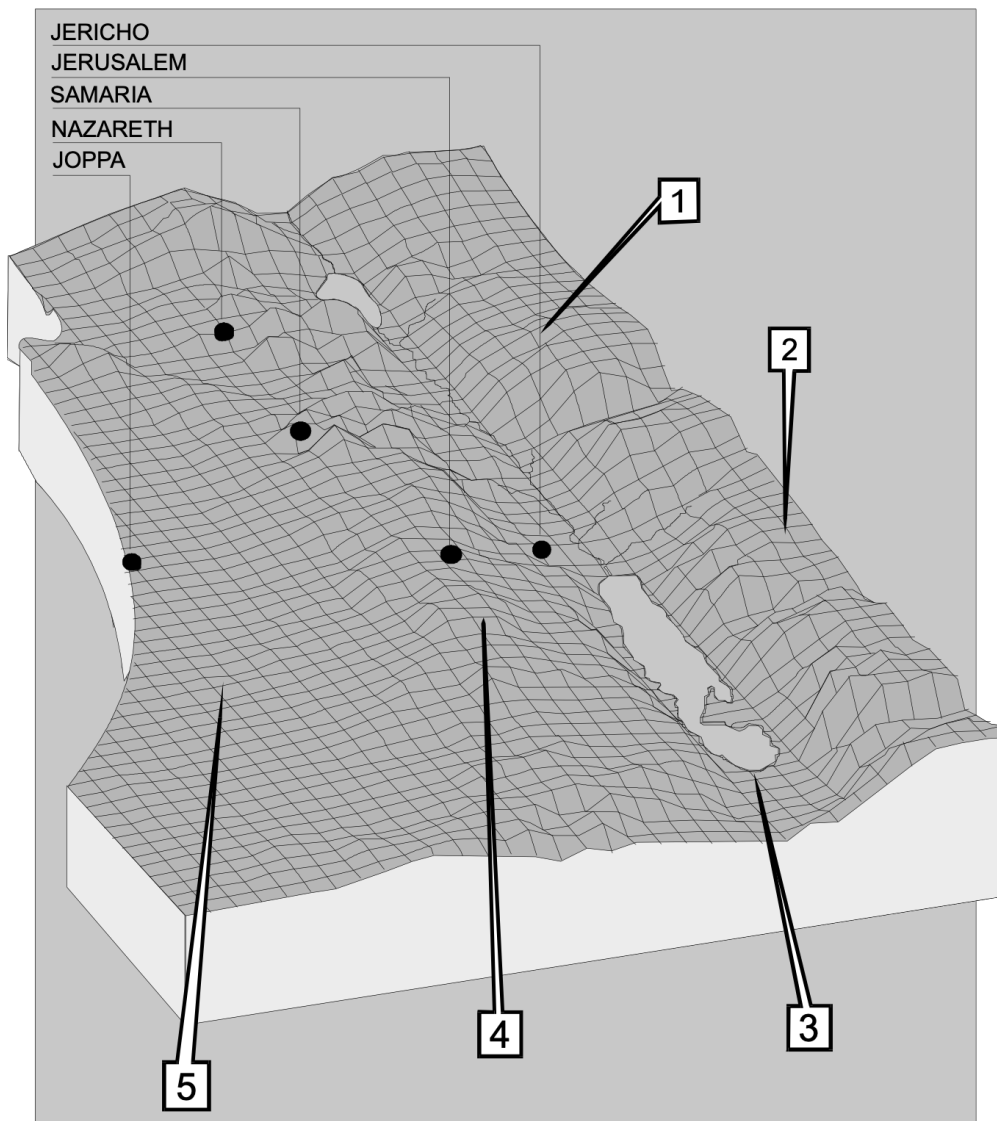
5. **Gideon** drives out the Midianites and Amalekites who had oppressed Israel for 7 years (**Judges 6 – 8**).

6. **Jephthah** defeats the Ammonites, who had ruled in Israel for 18 years (**Judges 10:6 – 12:7**).

7. **Samson** accomplishes great exploits against the Philistines, who had ruled Israel for 40 years (**Judges 13 – 16**).¹

¹Simon Jenkins, *Nelson's 3-D Bible mapbook [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1985 by Lion Publishing.

Topography of Palestine



1. EASTERN HILLS.

These fertile hills made areas like Bashan (in the north) and Gilead (further south) legendary for their grain, cattle, wine, olives, and timber. But the hills soon give way to desert.

2. THE DESERT.

The bleak wastes of the Syrian desert form a natural eastern boundary to the land.

3. THE JORDAN VALLEY.

A great geological fault splits

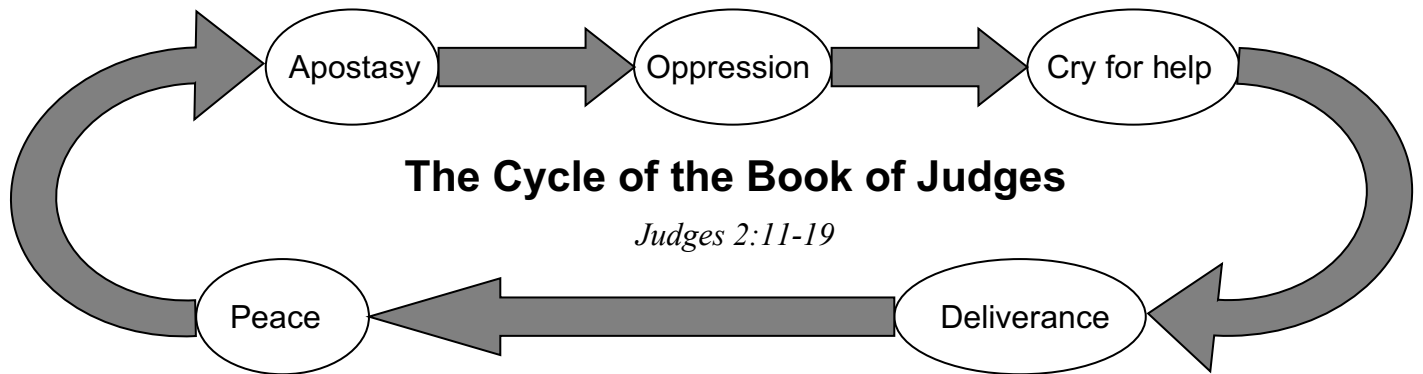
the country. Through it, the River Jordan drops rapidly to the Dead Sea, 1,285 feet below sea level. The bottom of the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet *below that* at its deepest.

4. THE HILL COUNTRY. The hill country of Judah held plenty of opportunities for guerilla warfare and was a formidable challenge for a would-be attacker. The hills were covered by woods. Galilee in the north was richly fertile, prosperous, and densely settled in Jesus' time.

5. THE COASTAL PLAIN. Heavily populated in Old Testament times. Southern end of the plain dominated by the five cities of the Philistines. The straight coastline means there are no natural harbors.²

²Simon Jenkins, *Nelson's 3-D Bible mapbook [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, © 1985 by Lion Publishing.

Lesson 2: The Spiritual Setting (Judges 2)



Judges 2 takes us back in time to an unspecified point during the life of Joshua. It reminds us of the **fundamental reason for the Israelites' failure**, and we come to realize that iron chariots and the natives' fierce determination not to be conquered were, in a word, irrelevant. See pptx for the slide, "Delayed or Failed?"

Then chapter 2 proceeds to give a **preview of the rest of the book** of Judges, with its **theme** being **God's unwavering faithfulness** in spite of the **Israelites' continual unfaithfulness**. The cycle of oppression and ultimate deliverance *begins* with apostasy, and the implication is that the cycle would only be *broken* by Israel's *faithfulness*. Sadly, however, we see no break in the cycle in the pages of the book of Judges.

To be more accurate, we see not simply a *cycle*, but rather a **downward spiral**. (Think, "toilet-bowl.") Notice in verse 19, that once a judge died, the people "reverted and **behaved more corruptly** than their fathers." This ugly trend continues until it reaches the disgusting immorality detailed in the last five chapters of the book. The spiral actually can be seen as continuing well *beyond* the time of the judges, with Israel's condition worsening through the period of the kings and culminating with the conquest of Israel by Assyria, who conquered the northern kingdom after the division, and Babylonia, who conquered the remaining southern kingdom. (Refreshing exceptions of faithfulness *are seen*, though, at least briefly, during the reigns of several kings of Judah, and in – spoiler alert! – Ruth.)

Concerning **making covenants** with the natives of Palestine, see **Exodus 23:30-33, 34:10-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5**. Start the class by reading Ex. 23 and noticing *when* this was said (at Mt. Sinai, having just left Egypt) and then reading Deut. 7, noticing that it was said to the next generation just before crossing into Canaan.

Intro

1. What is the theme of the book of Judges? **God's faithfulness and deliverance in spite of the people's unfaithfulness**
2. What are the five events of the cycle in the book of Judges?
 - a. **Apostasy**, the people rejecting God and His ways
 - b. **Oppression**, God sending enemies to make their lives difficult, sometimes lasting decades
 - c. **Cry for help**, groaning because of the oppression and which moved God to compassion
 - d. **Deliverance**, in terms of military victory over the oppressors by a judge whom God appointed
 - e. **Peace**, rest from troubles
3. How many times had the Israelites promised to follow the Lord in **Joshua 24:14-24**? **Three, vv. 16, 21, 24**. Notice **Joshua's – shall we say? – skepticism**. As a nation, they had a terrible track record! See next question.

Judges 2:1-9: A Previous Visit by an Angel

4. Of what two facts does the Angel of the Lord remind the people? 1) **God's deliverance from Egypt to the Promised Land**. 2) **The people's unfaithfulness**. Think "theme" from Q1.

5. What would their punishment be? **God would not drive out the inhabitants**
6. Translate the name of that place, Bochim. (See footnote or look up the definition.) **Weepers**
7. Where do the people go after Joshua dismisses them? **:6, To their own inheritance**
8. Discuss the restrictions on making covenants with the peoples in Canaan:
 - a. What was the main reason for the prohibition? **Exo. 23:33, To avoid their sinful idolatry; Exo. 34:12 and Judges 2:3, Lest their gods be a snare.**
 - b. What was the extreme requirement regarding how to deal with the natives? **Exo. 34:12-16, Destroy, break, cut down their altars and sacred statues. Deut. 7:2-3, Utterly destroy. No mercy. No intermarrying. Discuss how the agreement with Rahab (in Joshua 2) did not fall under those restrictions.**
9. For how long do the people remain faithful? **:7, While Joshua and the elders serving with him are alive. Comment on the need for each person to have his/her own faith. "God doesn't have "grandchildren"; each generation – each person – must choose to be faithful as His "children".**

Judges 2:10-23: Apostasy and More Apostasy

10. What does the next generation do? **:11-13, Forsook God; served Baal and Ashtoreth. Discuss what would attract people to Baal/Ashtoreth worship. (Think "carnality" and "sensuality". They were fertility gods, so the images of Ashtoreth – "Astarte" in other cultures – are nude and lewd, and their "worship" involved fornication. Some of the surrounding nations were also known for practicing human sacrifice!) Speculate as to why this happened (though they probably crossed the Jordan miraculously and saw Jericho's wall falls). Discuss how to avoid this happening with us: Each generation must teach the next to love God and obey Him. Apostasy can creep in, even to our children!**
11. What is said of the Lord's anger? **:14, burned hot. Comment on the fact that God's WRATH – in the Old *and* New Testaments – is not capricious or moody. It is *always* triggered by people's disobedience and unfaithfulness. What does He do to punish Israel? :14-15, Delivered them to oppressors so they couldn't stand**
12. Whom does God raise up for deliverance? **:16, judges**
13. How does Israel respond to the judges? **:17, Wouldn't listen**
14. Why does God deliver the people? **:18, He "was moved to pity by their groaning."**
15. What happens when the judge dies? **:19, "They reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers"; becoming idolatrous and stubborn. Same as what happened after Joshua died.**
16. What reason is given for God leaving the nations in the time of Joshua and beyond? **:20-23, Testing them to see whether they would keep the ways of the Lord**

Judges 3:1-6: A Hard Test for Israel

17. In addition to the reason given in v. 4 (repeating what was said in 2:20-23), what other purpose is served by the presence of the remaining nations? **:2, A new generation of Israelites were taught to know war. This may refer both to the military requirements of fighting and dying as well as the sacrifices made by the broader society during times of war.**
18. What two things did the Israelites do while dwelling among the Canaanites?
 - a) **:6 Intermarried. Note that this was specifically prohibited in Deut. 7:3.**
 - b) **Served their gods. In other words, they failed the test! Note that this is a natural consequence of marrying someone from a different faith and was specifically predicted in Deut. 7:4. It's also what happens later with Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-8). Compromises *will* happen, and the family will usually be downgraded to the easier religion (which is never *God's* religion!).**

Applications:

- Apostasy after deliverance. Do we do that on an individual level? We need to break the cycle personally and make good use of God's grace.
- The importance of teaching our children. Discuss what that looks like.
- God will fight for us. Exo. 23:20ff
- God has driven out the enemy from our lives. Don't invite him back in by compromising and making provisions for the flesh (Rom. 13:14).

- Intermarrying with unbelievers.
- What can we learn by living surrounded by evil people? (We “learn war” spiritually because of the constant temptations! We can gain spiritual strength if we pass the “test”, keeping the way of Yahweh and walking in it. – 2:22)

Lesson 3: Ehud and Deborah (Judges 3 – 5)

What's a "judge"? There had been **civil judges** appointed in Israel even before the Law was given at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 18:13-27), and the 70 elders had been appointed during the wilderness wanderings to ease Moses's burden of leading (or carrying) the people (Numbers 11:14-17). Moses also intended for there to be judges in Canaan to maintain justice and settle disputes (Deut. 16:18). Eli, the priest, served in this capacity (1 Sam. 1:9; 4:18) as did the prophet, Samuel (1 Samuel 7:6, 15-17) and Samuel's sons (though they did so unjustly, 1 Sam. 8:1-3).

But "*shophetim*", the Hebrew title for the book of "Judges", refers to people who do more than merely pass judgment on various disputes and concerns: They also "deliver" or "liberate." As in the case of Deborah, a judge might have been judging in a civil capacity before God called him or her to deliver Israel in battle (Judges 4:4-5). In this special sense which includes military deliverance, we understand Acts 13:20 (LSB), "He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet."

Only the judges in Judges were military deliverers, but *these* "judges" were *distinct from ordinary* military leaders. **They were appointed by God**, sometimes even over the judge's own doubts and objections (as in the case of Gideon, Judges 6:11ff). **Judges 2:18a (LSB)** "When Yahweh raised up judges for them, Yahweh was with the judge and saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge."

Unlike a *true* judge, Gideon's son, Abimelech (chapter 9) was self-willed and *self-appointed*. And notice that the text says he "**reigned over** Israel three years" (Judges 9:22, emphasis mine, GC), and the text never says he "*judged*" Israel. Also, concerning the nature of Abimelech's *fighting*, notice that he did not deliver Israel from any oppression. Instead, he acted more like an oppressor, himself, than a deliverer! Considerable space is given in the book to Abimelech's actions, apparently to show us what a true judge was *not*.

Take-away: The judges in this period (in this *book*) can be identified by **two key features**:

- 1) They were **selected**, raised up, and supported **by God**.
- 2) They **delivered Israel** (at least certain tribes or areas, not necessarily the entire nation) by providing military victory **over oppressing nations**.

Map work: Even using non-biblical sources, the locations of **Cushan-Rishathaim** and of **Meroz** remain uncertain, beyond what the Bible text says. The city of **Debir** was in the southern hills of Judah. (See the long ISBE article.) **See** the *.pptx* accompanying these notes for a picture of **Mt. Tabor**.

Chapter 5 is the poetic version of chapter 4. Other nations at that time also wrote both poetic and non-poetic accounts of battles. Deborah's Song is one of the oldest Hebrew poems we have. However, it not only adds poetic aspects to the battle such as the contrast between Deborah and Sisera's mother, it also adds some historical detail such as the Israelites' lack of spears and shields (using archers, 5:11, in addition to swords, 4:15, 16 and the role of the weather, 5:4, 5, 21).

Judges 3:7-11: Introduction to the Judges

1. Whom do the people forget, and whom do they serve? **:7, Forgot the Lord their God. Served the Baals and the Asherahs. Compare and contrast.**
2. What is God's emotional reaction? **:8, His anger was hot.**
3. Into whose hand does God sell Israel? For how long do they serve him? **:8, Cushan-Rishathaim. 8 years**
4. Who is the deliverer whom God raises up? **:9, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.**
5. What had he done previously, according to chapter 1? **1:12, Took Kirjath Sepher**
6. For how long does the land have rest? **3:11, 40 years.**

Fill in the following chart *as much as possible* over the course of the next six lessons.

The Table of the Judges				
Judge's Name	Tribe	Oppressor	Years of Oppression	Years of Rest/ Judge's Rule
1. Othniel	Judah (nephew of Caleb, Num. 13:6)	Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia	8	40
2. Ehud	Benjamin	Eglon king of Moab	18	80
3. Shamgar	?	Philistines	?	?
4. Deborah/Barak	Ephraim (her location) Naphtali (his town)	Jabin king of Canaan	20	40
5. Gideon	Manasseh	Midian	7	40
6. Tola	Issachar (but dwelt in the mts. of Ephraim)	?	?	23
7. Jair	"Gileadite" (which incl. Gad, Reuben, and S. Manasseh)	?	?	22
8. Jephthah	"Gileadite" (<i>see above</i>)	Philistines and Ammonites	18	6
9. Ibzan	of Bethlehem	?	?	7
10. Elon	Zebulun	?	?	10
11. Abdon	Ephraim (town, Pirathon)*	?	?	8
12. Samson	Dan	Philistines	40	20

Notes: We don't know which "Bethlehem" Ibzan came from, the one near Jerusalem, or the one up in Zebulun.

Some equate Abdon with the "Bedan" of 1 Sam. 12:11, but MSS differ (the LXX and Syr. read "Barak" instead of "Bedan"), so that passage is variously translated.

Teacher, see pptx to reveal details only as needed.

Judges 3:12-30: Ehud

7. Whom does God strengthen against Israel *next*? :12, **Eglon king of Moab**. **Note the cycle: Israel had done evil in the sight of the Lord. Reminder Moab had warred against Israel unprovoked when they were trying to pass through their territory (Numbers 21), and Israel had conquered several of their cities. But Moab was still a nation.**
8. What other two peoples help him? :13, **Ammon and Amalek**
9. For how long does Israel serve him? :14, **18 years**
10. Who is the deliverer whom God raises up? :15, **Ehud, from Benjamin**
11. What physical trait does he use to his advantage? :15, **Left-handedness**. **Apparently, the sword being strapped on his right thigh would not have been "patted" down by the security guards, assuming people are right handed and wearing their sword on their left thigh.**
12. What is he sent to do? :17, **carry tribute to King Eglon**.
13. Describe the deception and the assassination. :18-21, **Ehud sent away the entourage/carriers of the tribute and said he had a secret message for the king. The king sent away all his attendants. When Ehud said it was a message "from God," Eglon stood his fat self up, and Ehud thrust in his entire sword. Eglon's entrails came out.**

14. How does Ehud escape? **:23-25, He closed and locked the doors, which bought him extra time, the attendants thinking Eglon was relieving himself.**
15. Whom does Ehud rally, and how many enemies do they kill? **:27-29, Men from the mountains of Ephraim. They seized the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab. Apparently, Moab had penetrated west of the Jordan; this battle exterminated 10,000 valiant men of Moab.**
16. For how long does the land have rest? **:30, 80 years. Note that the period of “rest” usually FAR outlasted the “oppression”, at least in the early accounts.**
17. From verse 31, tell the next judge mentioned and what he did. NKJV, **“Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed 600 men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.” Note that “Anath” was a Canaanite goddess, raising the question of why Shamgar is “the son of” someone with her name.**

Judges 4: Deborah and Barak

18. Into whose hand are the Israelites sold, and where does he reign? **:2, Jabin, King of Canaan, reigning from Hazor. See it far north on the map, above the Sea of Galilee**
19. Who is the commander of his army, and where does he live? **:3, Sisera, from Harosheth Hagoyim, which was maybe SE of Mt. Carmel**
20. Why do the children of Israel cry out to the Lord? **:3, 20 years of harsh oppression**
21. Who is already judging Israel (apparently in civil matters) at this time? **:4, Deborah, a prophetess and a married woman**
22. In what territory was her open-air “office”? **:5, mountains of Ephraim**
23. For whom does she send, and what tribe is he from? **:6, Barak, from Kadesh, up closer to the problem with Jabin, near Mt. Tabor**
24. What does she tell him to do? **:6-7, Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you 10,000 men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun (etc.) Sisera would come to the River Kishon; the Lord would deliver.**
25. Why will he receive no glory? **:8-9, He wouldn’t do it unless Deborah went with him. This speaks both to his fear and to her great influence. 10,000 men to fight alongside him, but he needed Deborah to go with him.**
26. Through what event will someone else receive the glory? **:9, The Lord would give Sisera into the hands of a woman.**
27. Who is Heber, and what had he done, especially regarding Jabin? **4:11, Descendant of Hobab, Moses’ father-in-law. (See notes on Lesson 1.) :17, Had made peace with Jabin**
28. Describe the initial battle. **:15-16, It was a rout, thanks to the Lord. Barak defeated the whole army, chasing them down for a few miles.**
29. Who escapes the battle, and where does he go? **:17, Sisera, to the tent of Heber**
30. Tell the events surrounding his death. **:18, Fatigue, milk instead of water... a tent peg. Game over.**

Judges 5: The Song of Deborah

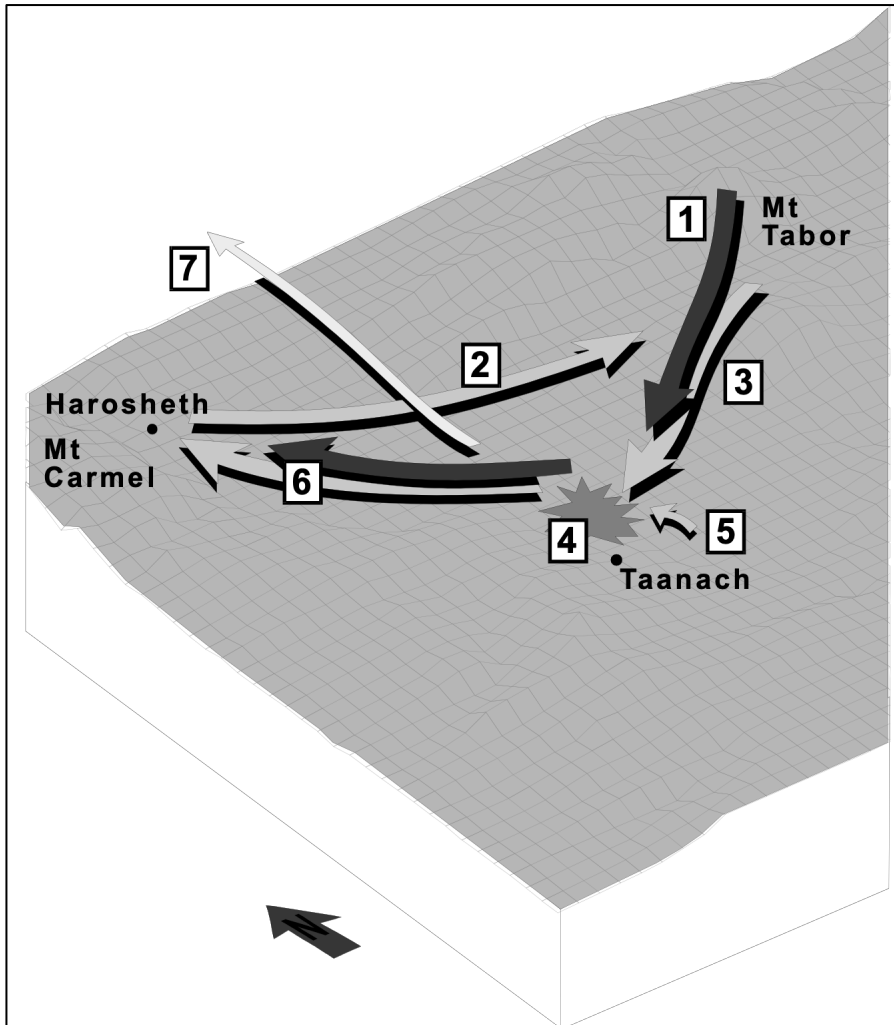
31. What did Deborah and Barak do on that day? **:1, Sang! Memorialized the events in song.**
32. Besides praise to God, what themes emerge in the song?
 - (vv. 2, 9, 14-18, 23) **People who willingly offer themselves for the Lord’s use (unlike Barak, initially); great resolves of heart; risking their lives**
 - (vv. 6, 7, 24) **Women had key roles in the deliverance**
33. What happened when the Lord went out from Seir? **:4-5, Earth trembled – compared to Mt. Sinai; clouds poured rain**
34. How was life before Deborah? **:6-7, At a standstill; not much commerce or traffic**
35. What is to be recounted and spoken? (v. 11) **The righteous acts of the Lord**

36. Which tribes help Deborah and Barak? **:14, Manasseh, Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun; :15, Issachar; :18, Naphtali**
37. Which tribes do not? **:15-16, Reuben; :17, Dan, Asher**
38. Describe the role of nature in Sisera's defeat. (vv. 4, 5, 20, 21) **Apparently, rain flooded the Kishon River and made the chariots useless**
39. Why is Meroz cursed? **:23, Its inhabitants didn't come help fight**
40. Why is Jael most blessed among women? **:24-27, She lured and lulled Sisera and smashed his skull. (Strange contrast between her "womanly wiles" and the violence she brought on Sisera.)**
41. Why is the mother of Sisera worried? **:28, He's not coming home**
42. How do her wise advisors comfort her (with wishful thinking)? **:29-30, He's too busy looting**
43. For how long does the land have rest? **:31, 40 years.**

Applications:

- Although roles are restricted in the church, women can have honor in the kingdom of God.
- When someone needs help, we had better answer the call!
- The "rest" given by God lasted – in many cases, especially early in Judges – much longer than the oppression. Remember that when we're going through trials.
- Let's remember to sing or in other ways give thanks when God gives us deliverance.

Deborah's Victory



Israel has been oppressed by the violent rule of King Jabin of Hazor for 20 years. Deborah, a prophetess, makes plans with Barak to lure the army of Jabin to defeat.

1. Deborah and Barak gather an army from some of the tribes to Mount Tabor, dominating the area.

2. Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, brings his troops and 900 iron chariots to the foot of Tabor.

3. Deborah gives the signal to attack (possibly after a heavy rainstorm). Barak's

forces sweep down the steep slopes of Mt Tabor. Sisera's troops panic and head towards the marshy River Kishon.

- 4. The rainstorm floods the river.** Sisera's chariots are useless or are swept away (Judges 5:21). His army is routed.
- 5. Local Canaanite kings** try to aid Sisera's men near Taanach, but they, too, are defeated. (Judges 5:19)
- 6. Barak pursues** the retreating army as far as Harosheth and wipes them out.
- 7. Sisera** himself abandons his now-useless chariot. He flees for his life but is killed while sleeping in a tent.³

³Simon Jenkins, *Nelson's 3-D Bible Mapbook [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, ©1985 by Lion Publishing.

Lesson 4: Gideon (Judges 6 – 8)

Midian was the son of Abraham through Keturah. Ishmael was Abraham's son through Hagar. The term "**Ishmaelites**" probably came to refer to all peoples dwelling in that certain desert region. Thus, the Midianites are called "Ishmaelites" both in Genesis 37:25, 28 and in Judges 8:24.

Map work: There was apparently more than one **Ophrah** in Israel: One in Benjamin (Joshua 18:23), and the one in this story, which belonged to the Abiezirites of Manasseh. (Judges 6:24, etc.)

Map work: The **hill of Moreh** was next to **Mt. Tabor**, just north of the **Valley of Jezreel**.

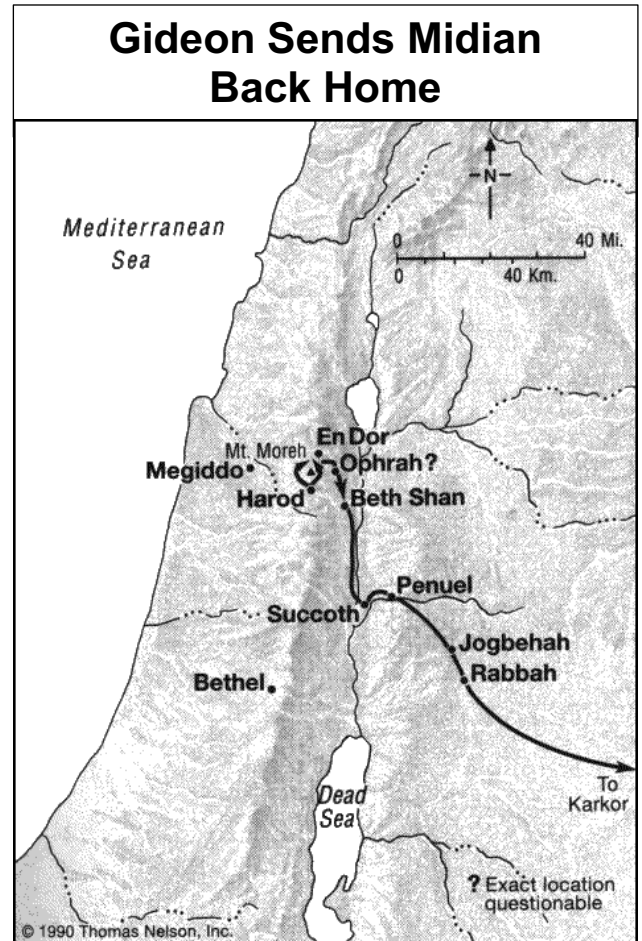
The wooden image beside the altar of Baal (Judges 6:30) may have been an **Asherah pole**, a tall tree stump with idols carved into it. Sometimes whole groves of these were sculpted.

Ephraim apparently wanted to dominate the tribes. This may be one reason that the northern kingdom is sometimes referred to as "Ephraim."

Notice Gideon's exercise of his position as a leader appointed by God when he deals harshly with men who refuse to support him.

An **ephod** was originally a priestly garment made of cloth and adorned with gold, jewels, and ornaments (Ex. 28:4–40; 35:27; 39:2–30). The text does not say how Gideon used so much plunder to fashion one, or exactly what it looked like. But we know that it had nothing to do with Levitical service. We also read in Judges of Micah who presumes to make an ephod which is used in idolatrous worship. (Judges 17:5)

The story of Gideon sadly comes full circle, with the judge delivering the people from oppression and idolatry, only to lead them *back to* (a different) *idolatry* by the story's end.



Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps and charts: Old and New Testament* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

Judges 6:1-10: An Evil Situation

1. When Israelites again do evil, the country of **Midian** persecutes them for 7 years. (:1)
2. When they and their allies move in, how many are there? :5, "**as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number**". See also 7:12 "the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore."
3. How does the persecution affect the Israelites' economy? :3-6, "**greatly impoverished**"; **all their produce was taken or destroyed**
4. Where are the Israelites living? :2, **dens, caves, strongholds in the mountains**
5. Whom does God send (before raising up a judge)? :8, **a prophet**
6. According to him, tell three things God had done for the Israelites.
 - a. :8-9 **Had delivered from Egypt and from the hand of all oppressors**
 - b. **Had driven out nations before them**
 - c. **Had given them their land**

7. What had God asked in return? :10, **Do not fear the gods of the Amorites**
8. The Israelites had not obeyed God's **voice** (:10) Does God still listen to the Israelites? **Yes, He raises up Gideon.**

Judges 6:11-24: Gideon Meets the Angel of the Lord

9. Describe Gideon from verses 12 and 14. **Mighty man of valor, his "might" (NKJV)**
10. Tell Gideon's actions and statements that show he was NOT what the Angel was describing:
 - a. (fear of the Midianites) :11, **threshing in the winepress to hide it**
 - b. (lack of understanding of God's punishment) :13, **"Why has all this happened?" NOTE that Gideon knew some great facts about God's work but not the expectations related to God's covenant. He didn't understand that God was punishing Israel, even though there was public idolatry at his father's house.**
 - c. (walking by sight, not faith) :13, **"The Lord has forsaken us"**
 - d. (reliance on his own strength) :15, **How can I...? My clan is weak; I am the least in the house.**
11. How would Gideon be able to do everything he does? (See verses 12, 14, and 16.) **The Lord was with him and had sent him (and would still be with him)**
12. The defeat of the enemies was foretold as being compared to the defeat of (:16) **one** man."
13. What sign is Gideon shown to prove that it was *the Lord* talking with him? :21, **sacrificed meat and bread (with broth) were consumed by fire from a rock; the Angel disappeared**
14. Tell what Gideon says and does to show his reverence for the meeting and the sign.
 - a. :22, Says, **"Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face."**
 - b. **Builds an altar, "The Lord is peace."**

Judges 6:25-32: Gideon's New Name

15. What is Gideon told to remove *that same night*, and with what is he told to replace them?
 - a. :25, **"tear down the altar of Baal" using his father's bull and "cut down the wooden image that is beside it"**
 - b. :26, **an altar to Jehovah, burning the bull with the wood of the Asherah. Note that this was no small feat: 10 men helped!**
- Note that Gideon's deliverance 1) starts with removing evil things, and 2) starts at home.**
16. Besides the Midianites, of whom is Gideon afraid? :27, **"his father's household and the men of the city." Comment on the fact that, although these things are on his father Joash's property, the whole town becomes incensed when they are removed. Apparently, the whole town came there to worship.**
 17. What do those very men want to do to Gideon? :30, **kill him (!)**
 18. Who (surprisingly) supports Gideon's actions? :31, **his father – "Let Baal stick up for himself!"**
 19. What is Gideon's new name? :32, **Jerubbaal**

What does it mean? **Let Baal plead (for himself)**

Judges 6:33 – 7:18: Preparing for Battle - Three More Signs

20. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Gideon, he is brave enough to do what? :34-35, **Blow a trumpet to rally local troops and send for troops from three tribes**
21. For what two signs does Gideon ask (after this brave act)?
 - a. :37-38, **Wet fleece, dry ground (Note a bowlful of dew!)**
 - b. :39-40, **Dry fleece, wet ground**
22. From how many tribes does Gideon ask help? :35, **Three: Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali**
How many soldiers are there at first? 7:3, **32,000**

23. **[Key point]** Why does God want there to be fewer soldiers? :2, **So Jehovah would get the glory and Israel would not be able to “claim glory for itself against (Him)”**
24. What two methods does God use for thinning their ranks?
- 7:3, If you're fearful, go home! (22,000 out of 32,000 left! Note that Gideon was not the only fearful man in this story!)**
 - :4-7, Sorted the men by how they drank**
25. Why does God select the men who lap? (Choose one answer.)
- Because they are more militarily astute/prepared
 - Because there are fewer of them **This is the correct answer. The other is not stated and is even counterintuitive if they're on their belly drinking. Besides, it's not as if, “Oh, good. With 300 militarily astute men, Israel now stands a chance!” Such thinking goes directly against God's stated intention to avoid Israel being able to take credit for the victory: 7:2 (LSB), “Lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”**
26. What additional sign does God give Gideon to encourage him? :11, 13-14, **He and his servant snuck to the Midianite camp and overheard a man interpreting a dream as meaning that Jehovah had delivered the whole camp into the hand of “Gideon”!** (Wow, how unexpected: This dream can only mean one thing... “the sword of Gideon”?!?! **Speculate: How would they know to mention him by name? Perhaps they had heard that he had rallied troops?**)

Judges 7:19-25: The “Battle”

27. What three things do Gideon and his men do to start the nighttime battle?
- :20, Blow trumpets (a “surround-sound” startle-awake in the middle of the night)**
 - Break pitchers (to suddenly “flip on the lights”/illuminate the landscape)**
 - Shout, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” (leveraging fear from the dream?)**
28. Who does all the killing of Midianites in the camp? :21, **“each stood in his place around the camp”**; :22, **The Midianites killed each other!**
29. Who beheads Oreb and Zeeb? :24-25, **The men of Ephraim**

Judges 8:1-21: Mopping Up

30. What complaint do the men of Ephraim have? :1, **Gideon hadn't called them to fight (Note that this is refreshing after some others didn't go to the battle with Barak.)**
- How does Gideon respond? **8:2-3, Y'all rock! You've done way more than I.**
31. Who is with Gideon at this point, and what are they doing? **8:4, The 300, pursuing, exhausted**
32. What do the men of Succoth and Penuel refuse to do? :6, 8, **Refuse to aid Gideon's army, with some “ridicule” (like, “You haven't won yet!”) These people refuse to support their countrymen. Although these cities were slightly east of the Jordan, they belonged to the tribe of Gad (Joshua 13:27).**
- What does Gideon do to the elders of Succoth? **:14, 16, Whipped them (77 elders) with thorns**
- What does he do to the men of Penuel? **:17, Tore down the tower and killed the men**
33. Where are Zebah and Zalmunna, and how many men are with them? :10, **In Karkor (SE of Succoth and Penuel, just across from the northern edge of the Dead Sea. About 15,000**
- How many men have already been killed? **:10, 120,000 swordsmen**
34. When does Gideon attack their army? **:11, While they felt secure**
35. What command does Gideon's oldest son not obey? **:20, Kill them**
- Why not? **He was still a youth**
- How does Gideon respond? **He does *not* reprimand him; he understood what it was to be afraid! Gideon kills the kings himself.**

Judges 8:22-28: Gideon's Influence

36. Why does Gideon refuse the request of the men of Israel to rule as the first in a dynasty? :23, **"The Lord shall rule over you"; they missed the point that it was the Lord who had delivered them.**
37. What does Gideon do with jewelry from the plunder? :27, **Made it into an ephod and set it up in his hometown**
- What happens with that item? :27, **Israel "played the harlot" with it. Note this is likely a reference to using it as idol worship. Many looser translations insert words like "spiritual" adultery (ISV) or "by worshipping" (CSB). Only the Douay-Rheims 1899 and Jubilee Bible 2000 translate it to suggest physical harlotry ("committed fornication with it" or "fornicated after it") which seems bizarre and improbable, at best.**
38. What becomes of the Midianites? :28, **They never "lifted up their heads" again; no further trouble**

Judges 8:29-35: Gideon's Legacy

39. What happens as soon as Gideon is dead? :33, **"The children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals and made Baal-Berith their god."**
40. The only other Bible reference to Gideon in the Bible is in Heb. 11:32. With what group of people is he mentioned? **The faithful**
- What phrases from Heb. 11:33-38 describe Gideon? :33, **subdued kingdoms**, :34, **out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.**
41. List other faithful men who were little in their own eyes when God called them. **Moses, David**
42. Find New Testament passages that fit with the last half of Judges 7:2.

Judges 7:2b "lest Israel honor themselves, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'"

- **Eph. 2:9**, "not of works, lest anyone should boast."
 - **2 Cor. 4:7**, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."
43. Identify parts of Gideon's story that remind us of ...

Moses's objections to God's calling – **Who am I? We're a small clan. We're the least in Manasseh.**

Abraham's intercession for Sodom – **Asking for yet another sign and another even after the sacrifice on the rock was consumed by fire**

Joshua's conquest of Jericho – **The trumpets and the shouting; God's help in the battle**

Israel asking for a king – **The men of Israel wanted to start a dynasty with Gideon**

The golden calf at Sinai – **The ephod Gideon made – though he wanted the Lord to reign – was worshipped and became a snare.**

Applications:

- We have to first purge idolatry/sin from our own house/life before serving God in other ways
- God plus one is always a majority.
- Doubts can crop up at many points along the path of our obedience, but God is patient with us.
- There are times when we are called on to act boldly. There are times when we are expected to choose a side. We must accept our responsibilities, knowing that God is with us.

Lesson 5: Abimelech, the Non-Judge (Judges 9)

Map work: Apparently **Shechem**'s central location in Canaan was responsible for this ancient city's frequent mention in the Old Testament. (The ISBE has a long article with good photos excavation, incl. some 30' high walls and various artifacts from various periods.)

Show **Shechem** between **Ebal** and **Gerizim**. (The valley is one of the few mountain passes in that area.) And show the ruins of Shechem ("Tel-Balata) **See .pptx file for pictures.**

Shechem is the first city in Canaan where God had appeared to Abraham (Genesis 12:6-7). The text mentions a prominent terebinth tree where Abram built an altar in response to the covenant with God. Centuries later at Shechem, Joshua renewed the covenant of God with the people and erected a large, sacred stone under a prominent oak tree. (Joshua 24:1, 26 - A **terebinth** is a type of oak.) By Abimelech's time, the Israelites had turned that sacred area into a temple for Baal-Berith (literally, "lord of the covenant"), and that temple of Baal had a fortified tower, or "stronghold" (Judges 9:4, 46-47). The men of Shechem "**made Abimelech king** beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that *was* in Shechem" (Judges 9:6, emphasis mine, GC).

"**Abimelech**" means "My father is king." That name strikes one strangely in light of Gideon's stated desire *not* to rule over the people (Judges 8:22-23). Gideon had many wives by whom he fathered 70 sons, and he had Abimelech by a concubine who lived in Shechem (Judges 8:22-23). After Abimelech is made king, one of his half-brothers, Jotham, tells the parable in which a bramble (thorn bush) represents Abimelech. The parable carries a curse which comes alive in the remainder of chapter 9.

Remember from Lesson 3 that Abimelech possesses *neither* of the two features that identify a true judge: 1) Selected by God; 2) Delivered the people. Abimelech *promotes himself* and murders his brothers to stay in power, and eventually kills the (wicked) men who helped put him in power. **Abimelech is more of an oppressor, himself, than a deliverer.** To his everlasting shame, he is finally killed by a woman (Judges 9:53-54; 2 Sam. 11:21). He embodies everything a judge should *not* have been and displays *none* of the qualities of a true servant of God.

Life-and-times note: Milling grain involved grinding with one stone on top of another. Both stones are mentioned in Deut. 24:6. The lower stone need to be particularly hard, as in Job 41:24, and was likely the "great" (or "huge") millstone mentioned in, for example, Rev. 18:21. The "upper" millstone dropped on Abimelech was the smaller of the two, probably 10-14" across and weighing about 5 pounds.

Judges 9:1-6: Abimelech's Conspiracy

1. Whom does Abimelech first approach concerning his desire to reign? **:1, His uncles on his mother's side and his mom's family in Shechem**
2. In what sense was Abimelech a "brother" to the men of Shechem? (9:3) **Abimelech's mother and her father and her brothers were from there.**
3. Who pays Abimelech 70 shekels of silver? **:4, The men of Shechem**
4. From where does the money come? **:4, The temple of Baal**
5. What does Abimelech do with the money? **:4, Hires goons ("worthless, reckless fellows")**
6. What does Abimelech do in Ophrah? **:5, Murders/slaughters his 70 half-brothers**
7. Who escapes? **:5, Jotham, his youngest half-brother**
8. What do the men of Shechem do to Abimelech? **:6, Made him king (!)**

Judges 9:7-21: The Parable of the Trees

9. Which noble trees and plants refused to reign over the trees? **:8-9, olive; :10-11, fig; :12-13 (grape)vine**
10. What does Jotham remind them that his father, Gideon, had done for them? **:17, Fought for them, risking his life, and delivered them from Midian. Note the mention in v. 15 of actions being done in**

“truth”/“good faith.” (Some translations say, “If you really want...” and so lose the connection to the following verses.) Gideon’s/Jerubbaal’s family had not been treated with truth, fairness, or sincerity.

11. What image describes the mutual annihilation of Abimelech and the men of Shechem? **:20, Fire would come from “the bramble” and destroy the big trees, and vice versa!**

Judges 9:22-49: In-fighting at Shechem

12. After three years, what does God send between Abimelech and the men of Shechem? **:23, A spirit of ill-will. We would say his approval ratings dropped in the polls.**
13. What do the men of Shechem do in the mountains? **:25, Set ambushes with robbers**
14. Who comes to Shechem and usurps Abimelech’s position? **:26, Gaal the son of Ebed**
15. Judges 9:28 mentions Hamor. Who was he? (Hint: Gen. 34) **The father of Shechem, back in the day. His son, Shechem – for whom the city was apparently named – had raped Jacob’s daughter, Dinah. Simeon and Levi slaughtered the men, plundered the city, and took the women and children captive.**
16. Who is angered by Gaal’s statements? **:30, Zebul, the ruler of the city, because Gaal suggested that Zebul was Abimelech’s “officer” (think “underling”). Note Zebul being described as the ruler of the city indicates that Abimelech had lost power.**
17. What does he incite Abimelech to do? **:32-33, Lie in wait for them, draw them out, and attack them**
18. How does Zebul stall Gaal? **:36, Your eyes are playing tricks on you. “You’re just seeing shadows.”**
19. What is the result of the ensuing battle? **:40, Abimelech won though he went to live elsewhere, at Arumah, :41. It seems he’s not even welcome in the city that had made him king!**
20. What do the people do on the next day? **:42, Tell Abimelech, apparently that Zebul had driven out Gaal’s people from the city (v. 41).**
21. Describe how Abimelech surrounds them outside the city. **:43, Abimelech, one of three prongs, waited for the people to come out to the field, then rushed the gate, preventing their retreat.**
22. Where do the men of Shechem fortify themselves? **:46, “the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith”. Footnote says, “fortified room”.**
23. How many people fit inside that structure? **:49, 1,000 men and women**
24. What do Abimelech and his people do to the structure? **:48-49, Piled branches against it and turned it into a massive bonfire. As in Jotham’s curse, fire (literally!) came from Abimelech!**

Judges 9:50-57: The End at Thebez

25. What happens when Abimelech tries the same strategy at Thebez? **:53, A woman dropped a big rock (small millstone) on his head**
26. What does Abimelech ask of his armorbearer, and why? **:54, “Kill me”! so men could not say that a woman had killed him. Note what a pointless concern, that his already wicked and impotent legacy would be tarnished by the report that a woman had killed him. As if having a servant kill him were any better.**
27. Whose wickedness was returned to their own heads?
- a. **:56, Abimelech, for murdering his 70 (69?) half-brothers**
- b. **:57, The men of Shechem, for anointing a man based on that treachery and for discarding him but still using him to fight their battles**

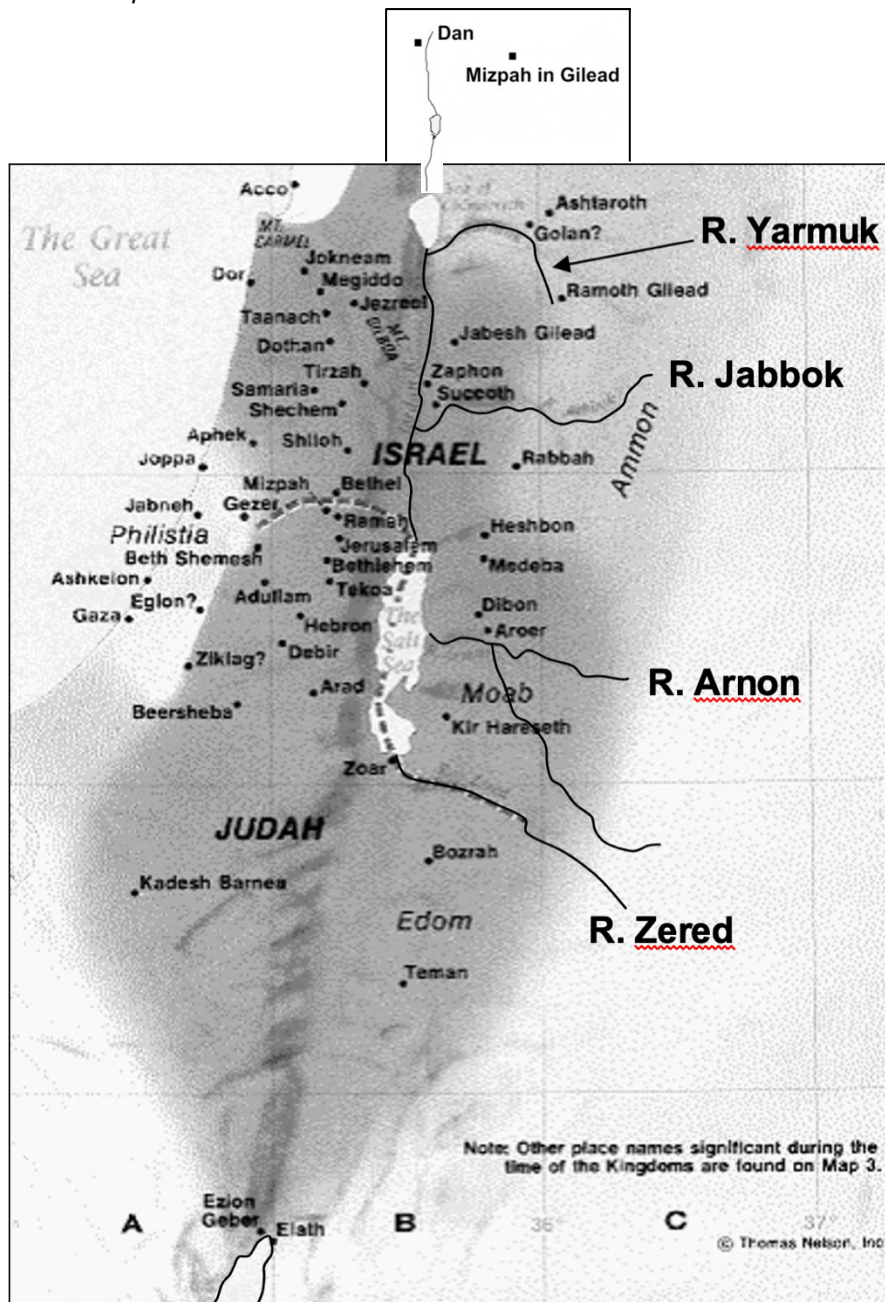
Applications:

- Notice how *carneal* men rule. Apply to the danger of appointing elders who do not meet God’s qualifications.
- God can bring about someone’s downfall any number of ways. Sometimes he uses evil men as an instrument.
- God allows evils to occur but often brings some level of punishment in this life. He *will* make right *all* injustices in the end.

Lesson 6: Jephthah (Judges 10 – 12)

After a brief mention of two judges who serve for 45 years, **the downward spiral continues** in chapter 10. As *refreshing* as it is that Israel actually makes a confession of sins, the Lord's response is equally *harsh*. He reminds them (again!) not only of His delivering them from Egypt, but He also mentions that He had saved them from various oppressors in the more recent period of the judges (10:11-12). He then *rebuffs* their plea for help and refers them for help to the false gods which they had chosen (vv. 13-14)! (We are simply not told how or through whom this dialogue was conducted.). Israel again admits their sin, puts away the foreign gods, and serves the Lord (vv. 15-16). God's emotional response to the people's suffering is expressed at the end of verse 16. Then chapter 10 leaves us with Israel and her oppressor, Ammon, poised for battle at Mizpah, with the leaders of Gilead looking for a deliverer.

Map work: Memorize the rivers.



River Borders of the Transjordan

The Jordan River flows south from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. "Transjordan" means "across the Jordan" from the perspective of Jerusalem (in other words, east of the Jordan).

Four rivers flow from east to west, serving as national boundaries between Ammon, Moab, and Edom.

The first letters of the rivers can be used as a **mnemonic device: Y-J-A-Z**. (Either just say *it* out loud, or put it in a music joke: "Why jazz? Because of the blues!")

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Map work: A few locations bear at least *part* of the name “Mizpah” (or the masculine form, “Mizpeh”), which means “lookout” or “watch tower.” The first two listed here are historically significant:

- 1) Jacob and Laban set up a heap of stones which is called Mizpah because Laban said, “May the Lord **watch** between you and me....” (Gen. 31:44-53, emphasis mine, GC)
This is the Mizpah in the story of Jephthah, east of the Jordan and well north of the Yarmuk River, up near Mt. Hermon. (See Judges 11:29, “Mizpah of Gilead” and Joshua 11:3, 8.)
- 2) Samuel does much of his work from a “**Mizpah**” in Benjamin which was the staging ground for military action against the Benjamites during the time of the judges (Josh. 18:21, 26; Judges 20-21; 1 Samuel 7:5-12).
- 3) A town in **southern Judah** (Josh. 15:38),
- 4) A town in **Moab** (1 Samuel 22:34).

Map work: The land of **Tob** would have been east of the Jordan.

Jephthah, like the Lord, **had been rejected** by his people and is sought out by the very people who had rejected him in their time of distress.

Ammon was a descendant of Lot (Genesis 19:36-37). As Jephthah straightens out the king of Ammon regarding ancient (cf. 11:26) trans-Jordanian history, Judges 11:16-17 parallels Numbers 20:1, 14-21, and Judges 11:19-22 parallels Num. 21:21-26, showing Jephthah’s (and the writer’s) knowledge of the Pentateuch.

Our first reaction as civilized people to **Jephthah’s vow** may be to try to explain it as being something other than what the text describes. However, the word translated “burnt offering” (Hebrew <olah>) indeed refers to a “(whole) burnt offering” or “burnt sacrifice”. While we may wonder what could have come out of his house to greet him that would have been an appropriate burnt offering, it is clear that Jephthah’s vow was rash, apparently stemming either from his fear of the impending battle, or from his lack of confidence about his relationship with God. (In this respect, his vow may remind us of Jacob’s vow in Genesis 28:20-22.) It is also clear that Jephthah keeps his vow, and that his daughter is submissive. **The Law of Moses made provision for rash vows** (Leviticus 5:4-6), but Jephthah, for whatever reason, does not avail himself of that provision.

Unlike some of the other judges, Jephthah has only one child, a fact which makes his vow even more tragic because his lineage ceases. His rash vow brings sorrow on himself, on his daughter, on his daughter’s companions, and on everyone who reads the story throughout time.

Deborah had criticized **the lack of cooperation** between Israel’s tribes (Judges 5:17), and Gideon had been at odds specifically *with Ephraim* because Ephraim had not been called to the battle (Judges 8:1ff). The Ephraimites call Jephthah and his men a bunch of “fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites” (12:4) and stir up perhaps a long-standing dispute between the peoples of that region. Jephthah is always referred to as a “Gileadite.” Gilead was clearly east of the Jordan, though its boundaries are not clearly specified. Originally, the man Gilead was a descendant of Manasseh (Numbers 26:29ff; Joshua 17:3-6), and his clan’s territory was clearly in the area that Manasseh held east of the Jordan. Jephthah takes personal offense at the Ephraimites’ remarks and suggests that there was another side to the story of Ephraim’s supposed eagerness to do battle with Ammon (12:2-3). Jephthah’s response is not nearly so diplomatic as Gideon’s was, and civil war breaks out. Ephraim had moved east across the Jordan and is cut off from retreat by the Gileadites holding the fords. A dialectal difference is used as a test to identify Ephraimites trying to sneak back across the Jordan, and further emphasizes the lack of unity among the tribes.

Not all of Jephthah’s actions are commendable, but insofar as he “through faith subdued kingdoms,” he is listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11:32.

Chapter 12 closes with brief mentions of three judges:

- 1) **Ibzan**. *Map work:* Note that there are two Bethlehems, one in Zebulun (Josh 19:15), and one in Judah (Ruth 1:1). Jewish tradition is said to favor the latter for Ibzan’s home;
- 2) **Elon**, from Zebulun, the same area as Deborah and Gideon;
- 3) **Abdon**. From Pirathon of Ephraim. Notice how many of the judges are from this vicinity.

Judges 10:1-5: Two Judges

1. Fill in the Table of the Judges for the two judges who are mentioned next.

Judges 10:6-18: The Cycle Continues

2. Whose gods does Israel turn to serve? :6, ***“the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him.”*** What a pitiful potpourri!!
3. Into whose hand does the Lord sell Israel, and for how long? :7, ***Philistines and Ammonites; :8, 18 years***
4. What areas of Israel are oppressed? (vv. 8-9) ***Gilead (i.e., Gad, Reuben, and S. Manasseh), Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim***
5. What do the Israelites admit when they cry out to the Lord? :10, ***“We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!”***
6. What does God say to rebuff Israel? :11-14, ***I delivered you from enemies on every side, but you have forsaken me! “Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you!” We should never abuse God’s grace.***
7. What does Israel say and do to try to change God's mind? :15, ***another confession of sin, but esp. v. 16, “they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord.” They were desperate and thus totally humble. They did what was right, not necessarily expecting a blessing.***
8. What is God’s emotional reaction by the end of this chapter? (Contrast this with 10:7.) ***What a fascinating comment about God’s emotions in v. 16: “His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel”. Even though His anger had been hot in v. 7, their repentance swayed Him. We should never underestimate God’s capacity to forgive!***
9. Where do the Ammonites gather? ***10:17, Gilead*** Where do the Israelites gather? ***:17, Mizpah.*** Note the “map work” notes above; this is likely the one northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Judges 11:1-11: Jephthah Arises

10. Why is Jephthah not accepted by his half-brothers? ***:1-2, Born from an illegitimate relationship***
11. What does Jephthah do after fleeing to Tob? ***:3, Goes raiding with worthless men***
12. What had the elders previously done against Jephthah? ***:7, Expelled him***
13. What promise does Jephthah make the elders of Gilead confirm? ***:8-10, Be their head***

Judges 11:12-28: Jephthah’s Diplomacy

14. The king of Ammon wants the land between what borders returned peacefully? ***:13, Jabbok, Jordan, Arnon [Review rivers flowing from the east: North to south, “Y-J-A-Z” Yarmuk, Jabbok, Arnon, Zered, that is, “Y-jazz”.] and :22 “the wilderness” (that is, the Arabian desert to the east).***
15. ***[Key point]*** V. 15, NKJV, “Israel did not ***take away*** the land of Moab, nor the land of the people of Ammon.” So why are the Israelites living there? ***:15-22, Israel didn’t start the fighting. When Sihon picked a fight, God gave Israel victory over Sihon, so the Israelites possessed the land.***
16. Who does Jephthah say should give the Ammonites land? ***:23-24, *Their* god, Chemosh***
17. Why does Jephthah mention the ancient Moabite king, Balak? ***:25, Balak (although he desperately wanted Israel to be cursed) never fought against Israel, implying, “Don’t *you* start a fight, either!” Note that he also says they’re about 300 years too late trying to recover that land.***
18. Jephthah concludes, “May the Lord, the ***Judge*** (v. 27) render judgment this day between ... Israel and ... Ammon.”

Judges 11:29-33: Jephthah Delivers Israel

19. Jephthah advances when the ***Spirit*** (v. 29) of the Lord comes upon him.
20. As he advances, what vow does Jephthah make to the Lord? ***:30-31, If you deliver me, I’ll make a burnt offering of the first thing that comes out of my house***
21. From how many cities does Jephthah drive the Ammonites? ***:33, 20 cities. “Ammon was subdued.”***

Judges 11:34-40: Jephthah Keeps His Rash Vow

22. Who comes out to meet Jephthah with joy? **:34, His daughter**

...and she was his **only child**.

23. Although Jephthah and his daughter agree that he couldn't go back on his vow, what did the Law of Moses say a person could do in the case of a rash/hasty/thoughtless/careless vow? **Lev. 5:4-6 Confess that he had sinned and bring a trespass offering to the Lord. The priest would make atonement for him. Note that nearby Golan was a city of refuge (Joshua 20:8).**

24. What does his daughter request? **:37-38, Give her a couple of months**

25. What annual custom is established? **:40, Women would lament her four days a year**

Judges 12:1-7: Dealing with Ephraim: Diplomacy Goes Out the Window

26. What do the men of Ephraim threaten, because they had not been included in battle? **12:1, To burn down his house on him. This is totally unlawful and sinful. It seems they wanted to be able to claim credit for the victory.**

27. With what accusation does Jephthah counter? **:2-3, I called you, but you didn't come help! Note that this is not recounted in the text, but the Ephraimites also do not deny it.**

28. Why are the Gileadites willing to enter the civil war which ensues? **:4, Verbal insults. Name-calling. [Wow. Really? Are we back in elementary school?]**

29. When Jephthah's men cut off the retreat, how do they determine who is an Ephraimite? **:6, A speech/regional dialectal test: "Say 'Shibboleth'."**

Judges 12:8-15: Three More Judges

30. Fill in the Table of the Judges for the judges who are mentioned next.

Applications:

- Words of confession must be accompanied by acts of repentance.
- *Knowing* the history of God's people (like Jephthah did), with all the wisdom in the world as to how we should learn from it (as Jephthah had), does not guarantee personal faithfulness in all circumstances.
- Keep your vows:
 - Eccl. 5:4 *"When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Do not allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin, and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and wreak destruction on the work of your hands? ⁷ For in many dreams and vanities are many words. Rather, fear God."*
 - Psalm 15:1 *"O Yahweh, who may sojourn in Your tent?... ⁴ He swears to his own hurt and does not change."*
- That said, some vows should NOT be kept! True, they never should've been made, but Jephthah's vow was NOT a case of swearing to his OWN hurt, and keeping a rash vow by sinning is neither right nor noble.
- The judges were, on the whole, very *imperfect* people whom God used for His purposes in the time and circumstances in which they lived.
- Your lineage doesn't prevent you from being one of God's faithful.
- Never underestimate God's capacity to forgive!

Lesson 7: Samson, Part 1 (Judges 13 – 14)

Samson's father **complains** about Samson's choice of a wife but ultimately condones the choice (Judges 14:1-10). This may remind us of Eli, who did nothing more than rebuke his sons (1 Samuel 2:22-25; 3:13-14), and David, who *did not even rebuke* his self-willed son, Adonijah (1 Kings 1:6). Notice in the cases of Eli and David that God brought punishment, both against the wicked sons *and against the parents*. In *this* case, however, the Lord allowed it (14:4).

In chapter 14, Samson is to **blame** for losing the bet, but he uses his complaint about the circumstances as justification for the murder of 30 Philistines. Almost with his dying breath, Samson prays for vengeance for the injuries inflicted on him because of **his own folly** (Judges 16:28). This pattern shows God's purpose in "seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines" (14:4).

Map work: **Zorah**, and its neighbor, **Eshtaol**, originally appear as border cities of **Judah** (Joshua 15:21, 33), but later belonged to **Dan** (Joshua 19:41-48), whose borders are not as clearly defined as those of other tribes – "the border of the children of Dan went beyond these." The Danites later move far north, beyond the Sea of Galilee in the Jordan Valley (Judges 18).

While the **Nazirite** (KJV, "Nazarite") vow is detailed in Numbers 6, the *term* "Nazirite" is only applied to Samson in all of Scripture. Some aspects of the vow are mentioned, however, before the births of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), and during Paul's life (Acts 18:18). Keeping the Nazirite vow would help Samson act responsibly with his strength, but we never read about him keeping most of the rules mentioned in Numbers 6:6-21.

Notice the **limited success** that Samson would have: *Unlike* Ehud who "subdued" Moab (Judges 3:30), Deborah and Barak who *subdued* the king of Canaan (Judges 4:23), Gideon who *subdued* Midian (Judges 8:28), and Jephthah who *subdued* Ammon (Judges 11:33), Samson does not *end* the oppression of the Philistines. The Angel says "he shall *begin* to deliver Israel" from the Philistines (Judges 13:5, emphasis mine, GC). The Philistines *are* later (finally) "subdued" by Israel at the battle of Mizpah (after which the prayerful Samuel raises his "Ebenezer" stone, 1 Samuel 7:7-13), though Saul – and David! – would again do battle with them in 1 Samuel 17.

The **angelic visits** to Manoah and his (unnamed) wife have features in common with other such appearances in Scripture:

- 1) The Angel's **identity** is practically the same as God. Hagar took it as such in Genesis 16:7-14, as did Jacob (of the "man" with whom he wrestled) in Genesis 32:1, 24-30. The "three men" who appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18:1-2 seem to be (and/or be with) "the Lord" in vv. 16ff. And "God" and "the Angel of the Lord" seem to be used *synonymously* in Genesis 22:11-18.
- 2) A **meal** is prepared to show hospitality and honor (see Genesis 18:2-8, but notice that *those men eat*; also, Judges 6:17-23); and
- 3) The human in the story asks the angel's **name** (Genesis 32:24-30).

Supernatural strength was not, of course, a consequence of taking the Nazirite vow: The Spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson for special tasks. (Compare Judges 13:25 and 14:6.) Gideon, Othniel and Jephthah are other judges who had the Spirit of the Lord come on them.

Bees generally avoid dead bodies. This makes Samson's riddle practically impossible from simply a logical-reasoning standpoint. The bees make an exception to their general practice, as does Samson on many occasions.

This lesson has great **application** to modern choices of whom to marry, although the Lord was clearly responsible for using Samson's foolishness to accomplish His will.

The **tactics** that Samson's wife uses are every bit as *effective* as they are *childish*. There is a manuscript difference in Judges 14:15. The reading of the LXX and the Syriac say that the pressure from the 30 men began on the *fourth* day, which seems to make more sense in the account.

As we saw in the cases of Barak, Gideon, and Jephthah, we see weakness, folly, and sin in Samson's life, and his actions do not *always* seem motivated by his devotion to God. But he does ultimately serve God by faith and so, like those others, is honored in Hebrews 11:32.

Judges 13:1-7: The First Angelic Visit

1. Into whose hand is Israel delivered, and for how long? **:1, Philistines; 40 years**
2. To what barren woman does the Angel of the Lord appear? **:2-3, Manoah's wife**
3. From Numbers 6, what three main prohibitions are connected with the Nazirite vow?
 - a. **:3-4, No wine, vinegar, or similar drink; no food from the grapevine**
 - b. **:5, No razor to his/her head**
 - c. **:6, Don't go near a dead body.**
No exceptions for family (v. 7), and lots of regulations about going to the priest and making offerings in the case of violation of the vow, and when the vow is over.
4. From Numbers 6, what word (in one form or another) is used multiple times in vv. 2-8? **NKJV, separate; LSB, dedicate in vv. 2,5,6, abstain in v. 3; HCSB, consecrate in vv. 2,5,6, abstain in v. 3. Footnote: In Hebrew, the words "Nazirite", "consecrate", and "abstain" are all related and involve the idea of separation.**
5. Numbers 6:9-12 makes provision for what violation of the vow? **Sudden death beside the person**
6. Numbers 6:13-20 details the ritual for what event in the life of a Nazirite? **The end of the vow. A sin offering, burnt offering, peace offering, grain offering, drink offering, and wave offering!**
7. Returning to Judges 13, because the woman's child will be a Nazirite "from the womb," what is she to be careful not to do? **:4, not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean.**
8. Compare Judges 13:4-5 and 13:7. What detail does the Angel mention that the woman does *not* relate to her husband (and that is not part of the Nazirite vow)? **"he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."**
9. What detail does she mention to her husband in v. 7 that we do *not* see in the text of v. 5? **"till the day of his death"**

Judges 13:8-25: The Return Visit

10. For what does the woman's husband, Manoah, pray? **"Let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."**
11. Who does Manoah apparently (initially) think this "man" is? **In spite of his wife's clear description of him in v. 6, he didn't know it was the Angel of the Lord (v. 16) and apparently thought he was a human prophet.**
12. Does the Angel directly answer Manoah's question from v. 12? **:12, "What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" That is, "What will he be when he grows up?" Remember that his wife seems to have omitted that detail. But the Angel only addresses the woman's menu choices. Perhaps she was to tell Manoah the rest of what she knew.**
13. Does the Angel allow Himself to be detained? **:16, Yes, but he won't eat. Give it as "a burnt offering to the Lord."**
14. Why does Manoah ask for the Man's name? **:17, To honor him when his words come to pass. The Angel just says, "It's wonderful/awesome/incomprehensible." (Some versions say "secret".) Notice that a similar word describes the miracle of the messenger ascending in the flame. The two related Hebrew words used here are also found in Psalm 139: Verse 6, the "knowledge"/awareness of God's omniscience (described in vv. 1-5) is "too wonderful" for David. Then, verse 14, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works." (KJV)**
15. What happens as Manoah makes his offerings? **:20, The Angel ascends in the flame of the offering**
16. When Manoah overreacts in verse 22, what does his wife point out?
 - a. **:23, He accepted our burnt offering and grain offering**
 - b. **He showed us awesome things**
 - c. **He *told* us awesome things. [Insert sermon here about how all we have been shown and told awesome things from God. He has let us live this long. Now we need to focus on serving him.]**

Judges 14: Intermarriage with the Enemy

17. How does Samson respond to his parents' encouragement to marry an Israelite? :3, ***Ignores what they said. Only, "Get her for me!" Literally, "She is right in my eyes." "I see. I want. I get!"***
18. (Speculate) Why do Samson's parents permit him to marry a Philistine? ***Maybe they were too deferential because he was their only child or because he was "special."***
 Maybe mom remembered that he had a mission related to delivering Israel from the Philistines.
19. ***[Key point] Why does God permit Samson to marry a Philistine? :4, He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines.***
20. How easily, and with what weapon, does Samson kill the lion? :6, ***As easily as tearing apart a young goat. (?!?) No weapon; bare hands.***
21. When Samson later passes by the carcass, what does he find? :8, ***a swarm of bees, plus honey, in the carcass***
22. How long does the wedding feast last? :12, ***Seven days***
At least how many guests attend? 3:11, ***30 companions***
23. What riddle does Samson propose? :14, ***"Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet."***
24. What are the stakes of the challenge to solve the riddle? :12-13, ***Must answer in 7 days. 30 linen garments and changes of clothes***
25. What threat do the men make against Samson's wife? :15, ***"We will burn you and your father's house with fire." Note the barbarism of these people! The riddle is arguably impossible (unless they happened to stumble across the lion's carcass), but they're unwilling to meet the terms of the bet they had agreed to and threaten multiple murders!***
26. What does Samson's wife do? :16, ***Wept on him. "You don't love me." Etc.***
27. How is it clear that "love" or trust has nothing to do with Samson keeping the riddle to himself? :16, ***I haven't even told my parents.***
28. In Samson's words, how do the men solve the riddle? :18, ***Plowed with his heifer***
29. Where does Samson get the changes of clothing to pay off the bet? :19, ***He kills 30 men in Ashkelon.***
 Remember that "the five lords of the Philistines" are mentioned in Judges 3:3 and they are listed in Joshua 13:3. There were five cities of the so-called Pentapolis: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath.
 Samson commits murder to fulfill the terms of the bet.
 Imagine the state of the clothes those 30 partygoers received!
 Righteous indignation and vengeance always seem justified when you watch a movie about extremely wicked bad guys, and – remember – the Lord was looking for an occasion to start something against the Philistines.
30. Where does Samson go, and what is his emotional state? :19 ***to his father's house, MAD!***

Applications:

- God, His angels, and His works are awesome (marvelous, incomprehensible, "secret", beyond understanding)
- God sometimes chose people from the womb (or before!), but those people still have to choose to obey Him. Compare Paul: Acts 9:15 "he is a chosen instrument of Mine", but 1 Cor. 9:27, "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
- Parents should not coddle their children (Eph. 6:4)!
- Shared spiritual values must anchor a marriage. Otherwise, a person's background and family loyalties will get in the way or even take over. It's very true (at least to a degree) that "you marry the family." Be careful whom you marry!
- Emotions can overcome right thinking, especially when the emotional pressure continues, even for only a few days.

Lesson 8: Samson, Part 2 (Judges 15 – 16)

In spite of Samson's statement which might seem to suggest that he intends a measured response (15:7), he **consistently escalates** the killing. By the end of his life, the death toll (according to the story) is about 4,030 (14:19; 15:15; 16:27-30) plus a "very great slaughter" (15:8), compared to *three* killed by his enemies (Samson's wife and her father, 15:6, plus Samson, 16:30). Notice the Philistines' description of Samson as "the one who multiplied our dead" (16:24).

Compare Samson's feats to Shamgar's victory (3:31) and to God's promised blessing of easy victory (Leviticus 26:8; Deut. 28:7; Joshua 23:10).

Map work: **Etam** was close to Bethlehem and Tekoa (2 Chronicles 11:6). **Hebron** lies 30+ miles almost due east of Gaza. From Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers:

In the valley of Sorek.—The English Version here follows the Vulgate, but the word for valley is <nachal>, and the words may mean (as the LXX. take them) "on the brook of Sorek." Sorek was not in the Philistine district, but was near Samson's native town of Zorah (Judges 13:2).

Samson repeatedly allows himself to be **bound**. While this seems to reflect his strategy to gain the element of surprise in chapter 15, it seems to stem from nothing more than flaunting his strength in chapter 16.

Sadly, Samson never learns to overcome the very same **emotional tactics** which his wife had used. Once, they cost him a bet; once, they cost him his freedom and health and give God's enemies an occasion to rejoice in their false god.

Samson's weakness with women contrasts strikingly with his physical strength against men.

Lessons to learn from Samson include the following:

- Choose a mate wisely (2 Corinthians 6:14ff).
- Control your passions (Galatians 5:24; Romans 13:14).
- Beware taking God's blessings for *granted* (Joshua 23:11-13; Ephesians 1:3ff; 1 Peter 1:17ff; 2 Peter 1:4-5; etc.) and becoming full of pride because of our blessings (2 Corinthians 12:7).
- God's giving His blessings is often dependent on our continued obedience (e.g., Heb. 3:14; Col. 1:21-23; etc.).
- God can use people in their selfishness to accomplish His will (Cp. Phil. 1:15-18).
- Even God's servants upon whom "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily" were prone to sin (Cp. Gideon, Judges 8:27; Peter, Galatians 2:11ff; etc.).

Judges 14:20 – 15:3: Samson Loses More Than a Bet

1. When Samson returns to his wife, what does he learn? **14:20, Samson's wife was given by her father to his best man.**
2. Why had this been done? **15:2, The father-in-law says, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion." The fiancée (at the time) had been under threat of death when she pressed Samson for the answer to the riddle. Samson's feelings toward her are simply not mentioned after that incident, but her prying the answer from him and him leaving when so angry make it understandable that her father would think this. That still probably doesn't excuse him giving her to someone else without checking with Samson.**

Judges 15:4-8: "An Eye (and a Hip and Thigh) for an Eye"

3. How does Samson vandalize the Philistines' property? **:4-5, He used pairs of foxes with torches to wipe out standing wheat, vineyards, and olive groves.**
4. When the Philistines learn that it was the Timnite who had stirred up Samson, what do they do? **:6, Burn her and her father with fire (after all!). How tragic. Instead of pursuing Samson, they kill THEM!**
5. How does Samson respond. . . .
 - a. . . . in word? **:7, I'll get my revenge.**

b. . . . in action? **:8, *Inflicted a “great slaughter” Naturally, this elicits a revenge-response from the Philistines in v.10. It’s been tit-for-tat in the Middle East ever since.***

Judges 15:9-20: The Slaughter Increases at Lehi

6. How many Israelites go to arrest Samson on behalf of the Philistines? **:11, 3,000. *In light of the continual escalation, Samson’s responses of “tit-for-tat” is not technically true, is it?***
7. What assurance does Samson seek? **:12, *Don’t kill me yourselves.***
8. With what do they bind Samson? **:13, *Two new ropes***
9. What becomes of the ropes when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson? **:14, *weakened and fell off***
10. What weapon does Samson find? **:15a, *fresh jawbone of a donkey***
11. How many Philistines does Samson kill? **:15b, *1,000 men!***
12. What two names does Samson assign to that place, and what does each name mean?
 - a. **:17 *Ramath Lehi, “Jawbone Height,” acc. to the footnote.***
 - b. **:19 *En Hakkore, “Spring of the Caller,” acc. to the footnote. It’s great that Samson both credits and memorializes God for the victory.***
13. Fill in the Table of the Judges for Samson. ***Note that his time judging was “in the days of the Philistines”, suggesting that his judgeship may have overlapped with the 40 years of oppression (13:1).***

Judges 16:1-3 Samson Versus the Gazites

14. What sin does Samson commit in Gaza (16:1)? ***Fornication; goes in to a harlot.***
15. When does Samson escape the ambush? **:3, *midnight, before the Gazites planned to strike.***
16. How does he “rub in” the fact that he escaped? (Locate the two cities on a map.) **:3, *Pulled up and carried away – uphill! – the doors and the gateposts to the city.***

Judges 16:4-9 Samson Versus Delilah, Round #1

17. What does Delilah love more than she loves Samson? **:5, *Money.***
18. What does he say will weaken him? **:8, *seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried.***

Judges 16:10-12 Samson Versus Delilah, Round #2

19. What does she accuse Samson of doing? **:10, *mocking her and lying to her*** Was her accusation right? ***Pretty much, yes.***
20. What lie does Samson tell *this second* time? **:11, *Bind me with new ropes, and I’ll become weak.***

Judges 16:13-14 Samson Versus Delilah, Round #3

21. What is Samson’s third lie to Delilah? ***“Weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom.”***
22. How does this show that he is toying not only with Delilah, but with God’s blessing? ***He’s edging toward the truth, involving his hair. So cocky!***

Judges 16:15-22 Samson Versus Delilah, Round #4

23. Of what does she accuse Samson *this* time? **:15, *Not loving her***
24. Of what time in Samson’s life does this remind us? **14:16, *“Samson’s wife wept on him, and said, ‘You only hate me! You do not love me!’” He was “lit. impatient to the point of” death, so he gave in.***
25. What is ironic about this accusation coming from Delilah? ****She* obviously didn’t love *him*! She was trying to entrap and destroy him!***
26. (Bonus) What Bible character withstands daily pressure from a woman without sinning? ***Joseph, Gen. 39:7 His master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.”⁸ But he refused ...⁹ ... How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”¹⁰ So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. ...¹² ... She***

caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and ran outside.

27. Where does Samson sleep? :19, *On her knees. He's still with his enemy, Delilah!*
28. What does a man shave from Samson? :19, *His seven locks of hair*
29. In verse 20, what does Samson not realize? *"That the Lord had departed from him." He's still totally confident. He's never been beaten, but we see that he's *overly* confident because he had given away his secret (and his strength).*
30. (Speculate) How can a person who is dedicated to the Lord from birth, and who accomplishes such great things for the Lord fall into that state of mind? *Having never paid attention to the failures in his life. Thinking the Lord would stay with him regardless of his careless actions.*

Judges 16:21-31: Samson's Final Victory in Gaza

31. What do the Philistines do to Samson? :21, *Bind him, gouge out his eyes, transport him to Gaza, make him work grinding in a prison.*
32. What do they allow to happen without thinking about the consequences? :22, *His hair to grow. (But see #35 below. The hair itself was not the source of his strength!)*
33. Who is praised for Samson's capture? :23-24, *The Philistines' false god, Dagon. Samson had truly given the enemy an occasion to blaspheme!*
34. How many people join in this praise (and in mocking Samson)? :27, *About 3,000 Philistine lords and ladies*
35. How do we know that the regrowth of Samson's hair did not automatically make him strong? :28, *Samson prayed for strength*
36. So, explain why shaving his hair had weakened him. (Hint: 16:17, 20) *He broke the vow, so God did not offer him superhuman strength.*
37. What does Samson ask of the boy leading him, and what happens next? :26, *Let me feel/lean on the pillars supporting the temple. Vv. 29-30, He pushed out the support pillars, and the temple collapsed, killing all the occupants, as well as himself.*
38. What is said about the number killed? :30, *He killed more in his death than in his life!*
39. Describe Samson's personality and character.

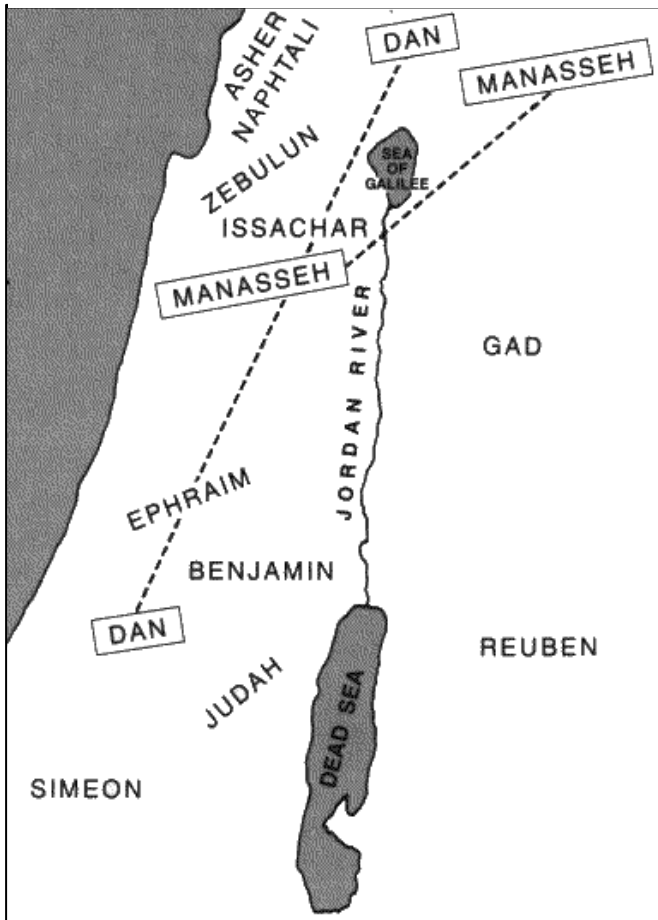
I see, I want, I get.	A loner
Cocky, reckless	Impulsive, a "hot head"
Vengeful	
40. Identify the phrases from **Hebrews 11:33-38** which apply to Samson:

³²Time will fail me if I recount Gideon, Barak, **Samson**, Jephthah, as well as David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, **stopped the mouths of lions**, ³⁴quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, **out of weakness were made strong**, became **valiant in battle**, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were **tortured**, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶Still others had **trial of mockings** and scourgings, yes, and of **chains and imprisonment**. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— ³⁸of whom the world was not worthy. **They wandered in** deserts and mountains, **in dens and caves** of the earth.

Lesson 9: Idolatry in Israel (Judges 17 – 18)

General Area of the 12 Tribes

Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nelson's complete book of Bible maps and charts: Old and New Testament [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.



Map work: While there was a **Bethlehem** which belonged to Zebulun (Joshua 19:15), the Bethlehem of *this* story (17:7; also, 19:1; Ruth 1:1) is in **Judah**, about five miles SSW of Jerusalem, and less than ten miles east of Samson's stomping grounds of Zorah and Eshtaol.

The **wayward Levite** is named Jonathan. He is called "the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh" in the KJV and NKJV (18:30). However, the Septuagint (LXX) and Vulgate (Vg.) both read, "the son of Gershom, the son of Moses," which makes sense, seeing that the man was a Levite (17:7), and that the Gershom of old was the son of *Moses*, not Manasseh (Exodus 2:22). The variant reading can be understood as a scribal error, given the fact that, in Hebrew, there is only one letter's difference between "Moses" and "Manasseh."

An example of a **priest** who lived away from his assigned city (but later returned there) is Abiathar (1 Sam. 22:9-23). Later, king Jehoshaphat specifically sent priests "to all the cities of Judah" in order to teach the people (2 Chron. 7:7-9), but this was clearly not *this* Levite's mission.

Remember that an **ephod** was a vest for the high priest (Ex. 28:4-35; recall Judges 8:24-27).

Obviously, it was wrong for a man to set up a **private sanctuary**. (See Deut. 12:4-14; 16:1-7.) But Micah is willing to admit his sins (when he is aware of them), and seems like a nice, religious man with a very religious family. The problem is that he creates a Jewish-pagan hybrid religion which was sinful and which the entire tribe of Dan later hijacks.

Map work: The **tabernacle** was still in **Shiloh** (Joshua 18:1; Judges 18:31), less than 30 miles from Dan's allotted territory. (Joshua had assigned Dan's territory, Joshua 18:2-10; 19:40-48, but the Danites failed to drive out the Amorites (Judges 1:34-35), and now they apparently find it easier to change the borders of their territory and the worship of the Lord than to stay where they were assigned to be and do their duty. (The translations of Josh. 19:47 vary a bit.) The proximity of the tabernacle apparently means less to the Danites than the proximity of the Philistines.

So **the Danites move** far north, north of the Sea of Galilee, and conquer a peaceful city which they rename Dan. They import stolen idols and a priest, both of which could be bought and sold, and establish a private priesthood for the tribe of Dan which lasts for quite some time (18:30). They seem to take whatever they want, as long as they don't have to work too hard for it.

We are told *four times* in the closing chapters of Judges that “in those days there was no king in Israel” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) which supposedly explains why “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” But we will see later that *kings* sometimes do what is right in *their* own eyes, also. In fact, King Jeroboam later forms two golden calves and establishes his own idolatrous religion fueled by convenience and served by man-made priests (1 Kings 12:26-33). Given the location and the idolatrous history of this new, northern Dan, it should come as no surprise that Dan was selected to house one of Jeroboam’s golden calves.

Judges 17:1-6: Religion Run Amok

1. To whom had Micah’s mother dedicated 1,100 shekels of silver? **:3, To the Lord (ouch. See applications and insert here several lessons on authority.)**
2. For what purpose? **:3, To make a molded image and a carved image for her son!**
3. What has Micah done with the silver before the story opens? **:2, Stolen it from his mom**
4. When he gives the silver to his mother, what does this religious woman say of him? **:2, “May you be blessed of the Lord”.**
5. How much silver does it cost for the silversmith to fashion the 1,100 shekels into two idols? **:4, apparently 200 to pay for the silversmith’s service and 900 for material for the images**
6. What does Micah make to go with his household idols? **:5, A shrine, an ephod, and household idols (“teraphim”).**
7. What does Micah do with one of his sons? **:5, Consecrated him to be “his” priest. Micah repented of his theft (yay!), but supported his mom in carrying out her idolatrous plan and even expanding on it.**
8. What is the prevailing standard for truth? **Humanism, a subjective standard. NKJV: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Sounds like post-modern USA.**

Judges 17:7-13: The “Yeah, sure. Whatever.” Levite

9. Who comes to Micah’s house from Bethlehem? **:7, A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah**
10. What is the man’s new job to be? **:10, Be Micah’s personal “father” and priest**
11. What will be the man’s annual salary (excluding food and clothing)? **:10, Housing and ten shekels of silver per year.**
12. How does the young man feel about the arrangement? **:11, Content, like part of the family**
13. Pinpoint at least two major flaws with Micah’s reasoning in verse 13:
 - a. **Micah had no authority to consecrate a priest. He made that up!**
 - b. **All Israelites *already had* priests appointed by God.**
 - c. **He already had, in the Law of Moses, knowledge of how to be assured of God’s blessing. A priest is not a lucky charm. “Now I know”?!? He knew (or should’ve) from God’s written word!**

Judges 18:1-10: The Danites’ Scouting Trip

14. (Review) What other man of valor was from Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol? **Samson, 13:2**
15. How many men are sent to spy out and search the land? **:2, Five**
16. Where do these men come to first? **:2, The mts. of Ephraim, to Micah’s house**
17. How do they first recognize the young man? **:3, They recognized his voice. (How interesting. Small towns? The Levite had been active in the community?)**
18. What favor do they ask of the young man? **:5, “Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous.” Better late than never, but they should’ve thought to do this before starting out.**

19. How does he respond? :6, **NKJV translates it as a blessing, but it's literally a statement, according to the footnote: Lit. 'The Lord is before the way in which you go.' He's making this up! He sounds like a TV preacher!**
20. What city strikes the Danites' fancy, and why? :7, **Laish. No overlords. Quiet and secure. No ties with others (translate, "protectors/deliverers"; see v. 28). V. 10, spacious and productive.**

Judges 18:11-26: The Danites on the Move

21. How many Danite men head north, armed for war? :11, **600**
22. Besides the city of Laish, what had the five spies seen that they wanted? :14, **All Micah's religious artifacts ("an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image")**
23. When they take the things, who questions them? :18, **The priest**
24. How do they respond to being questioned? :19, **They made him a better offer. "Come be a priest for us, a whole tribe!"**
25. How does the young man feel about the suggested arrangement? :20, **Glad.**
26. How does the young man participate in the Danites' actions? :20, **He helped carry the stolen artifacts**
27. Who overtakes the Danites? :22, **Micah's neighbors. Note that Micah is with them (v. 26), so it is Micah speaking: "my gods", "I made."**
28. What tone of voice do the Danites take with Micah and his neighbors? :25, **Hostile, threatening murder!**
29. Why does Micah not try to stop them? :26, **They're too strong for him.**

Judges 18:27-31: The Danites Settle Down

30. What do the Danites do to Laish? :27, **Strike it with the sword and burn it with fire.**
31. What becomes the icon of the Danites' new religion? :31, **"Micah's carved image which he made"**
32. What new priestly line is established? :30, **Jonathan and his sons. Jonathan was a descendant of Moses through Gershom. Moses was from the tribe of Levi, but the priests came through his brother, Aaron.**
33. For how long does that priesthood continue? :30, **"until the day of the captivity of the land". Note that Jeroboam later also made priests from every tribe (1 Kings 12:31).**
34. How does the writer remind the reader in verse 31 that this whole arrangement is sinful? :31, **"the house of God was in Shiloh"**

Summary: Notice how *no one* in these two chapters seeks God's will. Everyone is active and/or complicit in idolatry: Micah, his mom, the silversmith, Micah's son, the Levite, and the Danites.

Applications:

- Many people justify actions that are unauthorized by God – either *not authorized* in the New Testament, or even in direct opposition to Scripture – by imagining they're doing them *for God* or "in the name of the Lord." But our labels and even our good intentions do not make those actions right.
- People who may appear religious adopt things they like that appeal to the senses.
- The people with the most power use carnal tactics, oppress or silence any who would get in their way, and determine practices for the rest.

Lesson 10: Immorality and In-fighting (Judges 19 – 21)

Recall that the *first two* chapters of Judges are clearly not in *their* literal time sequence, either (1:1; 2:6ff). Recall that the book of Judges is arranged more *topically* (in a chiasmic structure, see the Outline on p. 3) than chronologically. The mention of Phineas in 20:28 tells us that these last chapters' events occur **early in the period of the judges**.

A note about the **ark of the covenant**: In 20:26-27, almost all English translations render that the people wept and offered sacrifices at "Bethel/Beth-El", where the ark was. But a few translations render the verse to say that they went to "the house of God", translating the *meaning* of "Beth" ("house") and "El" ("God") separately, rather than as a place name. So it's unclear whether the tabernacle had moved from Shiloh where Israel had first established it in Canaan in the time of Joshua (Josh. 18:1) to nearby Bethel.

Review: This section is about "**Reasons for Israel's Oppression**", namely, **the Depravity of Israel**. Here is the outline of chapters:

- I. Idolatry (chapters 17 & 18)**
 - A. Personal Idolatry (ch. 17)
 - B. Tribal Idolatry (ch. 18)
- II. Immorality (chapter 19)**
 - A. Personal Immorality (19:1-10)
 - B. Tribal Immorality (19:11-30)
- III. In-Fighting (chapters 20 & 21)**
 - A. War between Israel and Benjamin (ch. 20)
 - B. Failure of Israel after the War (ch. 21)

Immorality

Genesis 19 tells of Sodom; *Judges* 19 tells of **Gibeah, the "new Sodom"** which is later pointed to by Hosea as a beginning point of Ephraim's sins (Hosea 9:9 "They have dug deep in corruption As in the days of Gibeah; He will remember their iniquity; He will punish their sins."; 10:9 – "From the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel; There they stand! Will not the battle against the sons of injustice overtake them in Gibeah?"). A hospitable person is not to be found, except for one outsider (like

Lot), and perversion is the norm. But this time there is no one praying for the city and no miracle to save the travelers. When God's punishment comes, it is not in the form of fire and brimstone, but in the form of Israelite warriors. The justice meted out is not as complete, and the subsequent events pose a whole new set of problems.

One can only wonder if the foreigners in Jebus wouldn't have been more hospitable.

The **Levite** has already shown his love for his concubine, but after he **allows** her to be brutalized, he seems to make **no effort to comfort** her: "Get up and let us be going" (19:28). Then, rather than showing respect to the dead (or to her family), he makes a gory, public display of her body. His actions have the intended effect of rallying the people of Israel to answer the atrocities which had been committed. Sometimes it takes a scandal to arouse people from their tolerant apathy.

In-fighting

The tribe of Benjamin seals its doom by choosing to **harbor and protect** the perverted, violent men of Gibeah. They do not attend the inter-tribal conference at Mizpah (20:3), and when they are directly confronted with the sins of the men of Gibeah, rather than showing proper disapproval and siding with righteousness, they go to battle against their brethren (20:12-14)!

The **Israelites** are said twice to be acting "as one man" (20:1, 11), and their actions seem to be motivated by their **devotion** to God. They assemble "before the Lord" (20:1), and in addition to fasting and offering sacrifices to the Lord (20:26; 21:4), they *three times* inquire of the Lord for advice concerning their actions (20:18, 23, 28). But they should've inquired a fourth and fifth time regarding the two rash vows they make! (Even during acts of service to God, people can get carried away in their religious fervor and exercise their own foolish will and make **rash vows**. Remember Jephthah?)

First, the men of Israel swear not to give their daughters to the men of Benjamin as wife. They **keep this vow** (at least *technically*) at all costs but go to great and terrible lengths to provide wives for the men of Benjamin, which seems to violate the basic intent of their oath which was apparently to ensure that Benjamin would be eliminated. Once the heat of battle subsides – and the civil war which cost over 65,000 lives has not completely eliminated Benjamin – grief over the practical consequences of their oath sets in, and they start looking for a way to salvage the wicked tribe of

Benjamin (21:2-3, 6-7, 16-18). (Sometimes purging sin from a congregation is extremely costly, and sometimes it's hard to carry through completely with the necessary course of action.)

Notice how the **second** rash vow (to kill anyone who didn't join the battle) is used as a way to get around the *first* rash vow. The Israelites take the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead – after they slaughter even the other women of that city! – and give them to the men of Benjamin. They **follow the letter** of their oath, “None of us shall give his daughter...”, but they surely don't hesitate to give someone *else's* daughter to the men of Benjamin! The result is that there is more concern shown for preserving the belligerent Benjamites than the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead (neither of whom had “come up to the Lord at Mizpah,” 21:5). And when there aren't enough (orphaned) virgins from Jabesh-Gilead to go around, the elders of the congregation incite the men of Benjamin to profane one of the annual feasts of the Lord in Shiloh (21:19) by capturing women for themselves. Again, it is important to the elders that no one gives his daughter to them. Obviously, the elders of the congregation who devise this plan are more interested in preserving the *letter* of their oath than the **intent of their oath**, and they obviously do not have children or sisters themselves who will be among “the (kidnapped) daughters of Shiloh” (21:20-22).

Judges 19:1-7: A Happy Family Reunion

1. For how long is the Levite's concubine at her father's house after playing the harlot? **:2, Four months. The fact that he puts forth effort to get her back, speaking “kindly” or “friendly” (literally “to her heart,” so, earnestly) speaks well of him. Note that he is called both her “husband” (v.3) and her “master” (vv. 26, 27, in most versions), from two Hebrew words.**
2. How is the Levite received by the woman? **:3, She brought him into the house**
... by her father? **Glad to see him; kept detaining him for days**

Judges 19:8-21: Lodging at Gibeah

3. On which day does the Levite finally break away from Bethlehem? **:8-10, The fifth day, late in the afternoon**
4. Who is with the Levite? **:10, His concubine and (:11) his servant**
5. Ironically, why do they not lodge in Jebus? **:12, They're foreigners, not family. But they sure don't end up being treated like family in Gibeah!!**
6. Why do they choose Gibeah instead of Ramah? **:14, The sun went down on them**
7. Who is the only one who will put them up for the night? **:16, An old man staying in Gibeah who was from the mts. of Ephraim, the same general area as the Levite's new home**

Judges 19:22-26: The New Sodom

8. What do certain men of the city demand? **:22, They wanted to sexually assault the Levite**
9. What do they receive instead? **:24-25, They refused the (horrible) offer of a virgin daughter and the concubine, but they ended up with the concubine**
10. When do they stop their violence? **:25, All night till morning**

Summary: *So far in the story, the concubine committed adultery, the people of Gibeah showed no hospitality, the host and the Levite offered up the daughter and wife as victims, and the worthless men wanted to commit sodomy and *did* commit rape and assault which proved fatal. There is no righteous person in the story!*

Judges 19:27-30: The Call to Action

11. Where does the Levite take the dead woman's body? **:28, Back to his home by donkey**
12. What does he do with the body? **:29, Cuts it into 12 pieces and sends it “throughout all the territory of Israel”**

Judges 20:1-11: The Israelites

13. From what places do the children of Israel gather? :1, *From Dan to Beersheba (the northern and southern extremes), incl. Gilead (east of the Jordan), which is significant in ch. 21 when it is revealed that no man from one of their cities, Jabesh-Gilead, had participated.*
14. Where do they meet? :1, *Before the Lord at Mizpah. This suggests they were seeking the Lord's counsel in their righteous indignation.*
15. Toward what target is their wrath directed? :9-11, *The worthless men of Gibeah, appropriately*

Judges 20:12-17: The Benjamites

16. From verse 3, what have the children of Benjamin heard? *The children of Israel had gone to Mizpah*
17. What demand is made on the Benjamites? :13, *“Deliver up the men, the perverted men who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel”*
18. How do the Benjamites respond? :14-15, *The whole tribe comes for war, 26,000 swordsmen plus 700 men from Gibeah who were skilled with a sling. (v. 16, The Israelites were 400,000.)*

Judges 20:18-48: The Battle

19. What is the result of the first day's battle? :21, *Israel lost 22,000!*
20. What is the result of the second day's battle? :24-25, *Israel lost 18,000 more!*
21. What new actions accompany the Israelites' inquiry of the Lord in verse 26? *Fasting, plus burnt offerings and peace offerings.*

NOTE: *It seems from the Lord's statements to send Judah first (v. 18), to “go up” again (v. 23), and then “tomorrow I will deliver them” (v. 28) that the Lord was severely testing their resolve to purge evil.*

22. What new military strategy is employed on the third day? :29, *Ambush, :31-32 drawing them out from the city to the highways*
23. Who loses more total men, Israel or Benjamin? *Israel. Israel (from the numbers reported) had lost 40,300; v. 35, Benjamin lost 25,100. (Verses 36-48 seem to be the retelling of events in more detail.)*
24. How many escape to the rock of Rimmon? :47, *600. Note that no pursuit is given, although they know they're there (21:13).*

Judges 21:1-15: What Was Right in the People's Eyes

25. What had the men of Israel sworn at Mizpah? :1, *“None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife.” That seems extreme, but not unreasonable.*
26. What new concern among the people is expressed in verse 3? *We're going to be missing a tribe. Too often, people slack off instead of carrying through with a determined punishment because of human emotion. (Think, disciplining children.) What had started well (righteous indignation, assembling before the Lord, tens of thousands willing to sacrifice their lives to punish the people supporting the evil men of Gibeah, fasting and offering sacrifices) was not finalized. (Does that remind you of the incomplete conquest of Canaan?) There were still 600 men, but they had no wives. See verses 6-7. According to 20:48, the Israelites had wiped out men and beasts from all the Benjamite cities.*
27. What solution is proposed? :11, *To destroy more Israelites, namely, to kill “every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately” in Jabesh-Gilead and (:12-14) to give their virgins to the remaining men of Benjamin. Whether or not those men deserved death (per the “great oath that had been sworn, 21:5) the oath may have been rash and, in carrying out the punishment, even the women of the city were killed (21:11). How unfair! And it was really the 600 Benjamites who should've died (either in battle, or later)!*
28. Why was Jabesh-Gilead selected? :8-9, *Because they hadn't sent anyone to fight, although people from that region, Gilead, had come (20:1).*
29. To what place are the survivors taken? :12, *The camp at Shiloh, back “in Canaan,” that is, west of the Jordan. IF the tabernacle was still at Shiloh (not Beth-el), the fact that they didn't consult the Lord on this new plan is especially painful.*

30. What is the problem with this new “solution”? :14-15, *There weren't enough virgins from Jabesh-Gilead for the men of Benjamin. (20:48, 600 men; 21:12, 400 virgins. So, 200 short.)*
31. What are the terms for the surrender of the Benjamites? :13, *None! They simply announced peace. Ouch. What a tragic relenting on the righteous punishment that had been originally intended.*

Judges 21:16-25: What Was Right in the Elders' Eyes

32. What plan do the elders devise for providing the remaining wives? :19-21, *Raid the “yearly feast of the Lord in Shiloh” and kidnap women. With this sinful plan, the elders “double down” on their determination to provide women to all the remnant of Benjamin, although those men rightfully should've died because they came out to war against Israel in defense of the ungodly men of Gibeah, and now others suffer because of this horrible plan. Those elders become almost as bad as the barbaric men of Gibeah had been in the first place!!*
33. How would the inevitable complaints be soothed?
- a. :22, *“Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war.” In other words, it's easier to seek forgiveness than permission.*
- b. :22, *Don't worry: You're not “giving” them, so you're not guilty of the oath.*

Applications:

- It's sometimes extremely **messy and costly to confront evil**. Whether in our hearts or within a family or within a church, layers of defenses spring up to protect evil. (We make many excuses in our evil hearts to prevent ourselves from truly repenting. Family members and church members rally around the evil doer and “spin” the situation to make it seem like the ones holding to God's will are in the wrong (accusing them of being uncompassionate, unloving, without understanding, etc.).
- **Emotions** can (sadly) override good intentions to deal fully with sin.
- When punishment is deserved, the people in authority must keep their resolve and **carry out discipline fully**. *Relenting* signals that the offense wasn't that serious, after all.
- Those in error must **repent**, and not simply be given a pass. (Luke 17:1-3, etc.)
- When punishment is incomplete, **others will likely suffer**, and even more harm may be done. (“Many become defiled,” Heb. 12:15)
- People often comfort themselves by imagining they've kept **the letter of the law** when they have, in fact, totally disregarded the *spirit*.
- The tribe of Benjamin is well described in Romans 1 (LSB): ²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to an **unfit mind**, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ having been filled with **all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil**; full of envy, **murder**, strife, deceit, **malice**; they are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, **violent**, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and **although they know** the righteous requirement of God, **that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they** not only do the same, but also **give hearty approval to those who practice them**.

Final note on Judges:

It should seem fitting that the Israelites do not complete their punishment of the tribe of Benjamin. After all, the book of Judges *opens* with the Israelites' failure to drive out the inhabitants of the land, and the cycle in the book suggests that Israel isn't making any progress spiritually. So why should the *end* of the book be any different from the first?

In order to see a different picture, we'll have to go the next book!

Lesson 11: Ruth's Faith Is Demonstrated (Ruth 1 – 2)

Individual Levites, various families, and even entire *tribes* are practicing idolatry, and entire cities and tribes are condoning immorality. Religion and morality in Israel have become completely personal and subjective. **Who can break this cycle of unfaithfulness?** Ruth can! Although raised as a Moabitess, she marries a Jew and later freely chooses to leave the religion of her native land and to serve the Lord. **Who can avoid apostasy?** Boaz can! He honors God's laws and Israel's traditions, and we are refreshed to see that *not everyone* is doing what is right in *his own eyes*.

Map work: It seems especially fitting that Ruth comes to **Bethlehem** of Judah (the home of the wayward Levite in Judges chapters 17 and 18, and the home of the adulterous concubine in chapter 19), and that she and Boaz help to restore that city's reputation. Notice that Elimelech and his family, including Boaz (2:1), are **Ephrathites** of Bethlehem (1:2). Boaz serves as a redeemer of the family, so it is fitting – *poetic* even – that *our ultimate* Redeemer is born there (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1ff). When male children in and around Bethlehem are slaughtered after Jesus's birth, Jeremiah's prophecy is quoted about Rachel weeping for her children (Matthew 2:16-18). Rachel, Jacob's wife, is mentioned because the **first biblical reference to Bethlehem** is in Genesis 35:19, when Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin whom she names "Son of my sorrow" (Heb. "Ben-Oni) en route to "Ephrath which is Bethlehem." **See** the accompanying *.pptx* for a map of Bethlehem and Moab across the Dead Sea.

In this story, Ruth is every bit as humble and selfless as Naomi is (initially) bitter and self-absorbed. In the beginning, Naomi seems not to realize what a blessing Ruth is to her. By the end of chapter 2, however, Naomi begins to acknowledge the Lord's use of Ruth in her life.

Outline of Ruth ⁴

A: Ruth's Faith Is Demonstrated

I. Ruth's Decision to Remain with Naomi	Chapter 1
A. Her Need to Remain with Naomi	1:1-5
B. Her Opportunity to <i>Leave</i> Naomi	1:6-15
C. Her Choice to Remain with Naomi	1:16-18
D. Ruth and Naomi Return to Bethlehem	1:19-22
II. Ruth's Devotion to Care for Naomi	Chapter 2
A. Boaz Provides for Ruth in the Field	2:1-9
B. Boaz Blesses Ruth Because of Her Choices	2:10-13
C. Ruth Shares Her Abundance with Naomi	2:14-18
D. Naomi Endorses Boaz to Ruth	2:19-23

B: Ruth's Faith Is Rewarded

I. Ruth's Request for Redemption by Boaz	Chapter 3
A. Naomi Seeks Redemption for Ruth	3:1-5
B. Ruth Obeys Naomi	3:6-9
C. Boaz Desires to Redeem Ruth	3:10-18
II. Ruth's Reward of Redemption by Boaz	Chapter 4
A. Boaz Marries Ruth	4:1-12
B. Ruth Bears a Son, Obed	4:13-15
C. Naomi Receives a New Family	4:16
D. Ruth Is the Great-Grandmother of David	4:17-22

⁴ Modified from Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps and charts: Old and New Testament [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

Ruth 1:1-5: A Non-Traditional Family

1. What is the general time frame for the events of this book? *:1, In the days when the judges (lit.) "judged." Many versions say "ruled." The timing becomes obvious, too, by the end of the book when we see how Ruth fits into David's genealogy.*
2. Why do Elimelech and his family move to Moab? *:2, Famine*
3. Describe how Elimelech's wife, Naomi, ends up alone with two Moabite daughters-in-law. *:2, The family remained in Moab. :3, Elimelech died. :4, The sons married Moabitesses. (Note that this was not prohibited by Deut. 7:1.) There were five in the family for about 10 years. :5, The sons, Mahlon and Chilion, died.*

Ruth 1:6-15: A Tearful Farewell

4. Why does Naomi decide to return to Israel? *:6, She heard there was food in Israel again.*
5. To what place does Naomi suggest that her daughters-in-law go? *:8, Back to their mothers' houses.*
6. What is the basic reason that Naomi suggests they separate? *:11-13, She could not offer them another husband.*
7. What does she wish for them in verse . . .
 . . . 8? *The Lord deal kindly with you (as you have dealt with my sons and me).*
 . . . 9? *Find rest in the house of your (new) husband.*
8. How many times (total) does Naomi tell Ruth to "go," "turn back," or "return"? *Three times to them both (:8, Go, return; :11, Turn back; :12, Turn back), plus another to Ruth (v. 15, "return after your sister-in-law").*
9. Fill in the blanks from the NKJV (or a version of your choice)

(NKJV) ^{1:16} Ruth said: "Entreat me not to **leave** you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you **go**, I will **go**; And wherever you **lodge**, I will **lodge**; Your people shall be my people, And your **God**, my **God**. ¹⁷ Where you **die**, I will **die**, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but **death** parts you and me."

Ruth 1:16-22: A Bitter Woman

10. When the people of Bethlehem are glad to see Naomi, what is Naomi's initial response? *:20, Don't call me Naomi ("pleasant") but Mara ("bitter").*
11. How does Naomi interpret the events of her life (vv. 13, 20, 21)? *The hand of the Lord has gone out against me, dealt bitterly with me, testified against me, afflicted me, and brought me home empty. WOW. "Bitter" indeed!*
12. Describe an alternative "spin" to put on her life's events. *The Lord gave me a great husband and two wonderful sons. He helped us through times of famine. I have a loyal daughter-in-law, and the Lord has brought us safely back to Bethlehem.*
13. At what time of the year do they arrive in Bethlehem? *:22, The beginning of barley harvest, around the end of March.*

Ruth 2: Refuge Under the Lord's Wings

14. Describe Boaz's financial standing. *2:1, "great wealth"; farmer with servants setting a big spread.*
15. What does it mean to "glean"? *Gather grain left behind by reapers. See v.3. Think of picking up cotton from a field left by the harvester. Lev. 23:22 re: not reaping the whole field and not gleaning your own field.*
16. As if Ruth's gender and economic status don't present enough challenges for her, how do we know she was expecting to suffer from others' racial prejudice, as well? *:10, Didn't expect to be noticed or to find favor. V. 13, She knew she wasn't like one of Boaz's maidservants. (The lead servant had identified her as a Moabitess in v. 6.) She said he had "spoken kindly", though she was not like one of his maidservants.*

17. What details inform us about Ruth's good work ethic? **:7, 17 Worked all day (having asked permission) from morning till evening; :3, 8 worked in multiple fields. Doing this for her mother-in-law.**
18. With whom is Ruth to associate while gleaning? **:8 Boaz, "stay close by my young women."**
19. What protection does Boaz provide for Ruth while she is gleaning (before mealtime)? **:9, He commanded his men not to touch her. Also allowed her to drink water that they had drawn.**
20. Why does Boaz treat her so kindly? **:11-12, He had heard of her loyalty to Naomi and of her decision to leave Moab and come to Israel.**
21. At the meal (vv. 14-16), what additional help does he give in terms of . . .
 - a. . . . where she sits? **Beside the reapers**
 - b. . . . how much she is given? **Enough to satisfy her and have a "to go bag"!**
 - c. . . . rules about where she may glean? **Among the sheaves**
 - d. . . . new rules determining *how much* there will be to glean? **Let some fall from the sheaves on purpose**
 - e. . . . protection from verbal abuse? **Do not reproach/rebuke her (:15 and :16)**
22. Tell two things that Ruth brings back to Naomi.
 - a. **:17, About 21 dry quarts (an ephah) of barley, after beating**
 - b. **:18, The lunch leftovers**
23. Obviously, God shows kindness to the living Naomi (and to Ruth). In what sense does He show kindness to *the dead*? (v. 20) **Boaz was a "close relative" (lit. "redeemer," < gā'al> same word as is used of the avenger of blood – Num. 35:12, 19 – and of God, "our Redeemer" – Is. 43:14; 44:24; 47:4; etc.) on the side of Naomi's deceased husband, Elimelech (v. 1).**
24. For how long is Ruth allowed to glean? **:21, The whole harvest season, for barley AND wheat (v. 23). This probably lasted about 3 or four months (late March to July).**

Applications:

- **Perspective.** Life can take unexpected turns. "Time and chance" happen to all (**Eccl. 9:11**); there may or may not be a divine (or Satanic) plan behind it. We know that, whatever happens, God has at least "allowed" it. We can choose 1) to see God's hand in the events, in spite of sorrows, or 2) imagine that God has abandoned us or even gone out against us. The latter thinking shows a lack of faith, blaming God for everything bad in our lives. Regardless of the underlying reason for a particular event of suffering, we should remember that **life is ultimately a test**.
 - **Proverbs 17:3b** "The Lord tests the hearts." (Also **1 Chron. 29:17**), **Eccl. 3:18b** (NKJV) "... God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals." Also, **Deut. 8:2** The Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to **humble you and test you**, to know what was in your heart.... **16** ... that He might **humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end**. Also, **Rev. 2:10** The devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be **tested**.... Concerning "trials," – note that the word refers to both "trials" (Acts 20:19 "trials which happened to me (Paul) by the plotting of the Jews") AND "temptations" (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; Luke 4:13 "when the devil had ended every temptation" or "testing" of Jesus).
 - **James 1:2** Count it all joy when you fall into **various trials***, ³ knowing that **the testing of your faith produces patience**. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, **that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing**. ... **12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation**....
 - **1 Peter 1:6** You greatly rejoice ... you have been grieved by **various trials**, ⁷ **that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ**....
- **Reputation.** Ruth's action preceded her. People see how choices we make and observe how we live. We can ruin our reputation in a moment, and it may take a lifetime to rebuild it.

Lesson 12: Ruth's Faith Is Rewarded (Ruth 3 – 4)

“For the Hebrew people — and indeed for any people engaged in agriculture — harvest was a most important season (Genesis 8:22; 45:6) ... (and) events were reckoned from harvests (Genesis 30:14; Joshua 3:15; Judges 15:1; Ruth 1:22; 2:23; 1 Samuel 6:13; 2 Samuel 21:9; 23:13). Harvest time came to be the occasion for festivals and rejoicings on the part of all the people (Exodus 34:22; Isaiah 9:3) ... (but) harvest was more than a merely material and self-centered order, for from early times it was associated with requirements with respect to God and mankind. On the one hand the first fruits of the harvest must be offered to Yahweh (Exodus 22:29; Leviticus 23:10); and on the other hand, the harvester must leave a corner of his field without harvesting it, setting it aside for the poor person and the stranger (Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19).

The three principal feasts of the Jews corresponded to the three harvest seasons (Exodus 23:16; 34:21f): (1) the Feast of the Passover in April at the time of the barley harvest; (2) the Feast of Pentecost seven weeks later at the wheat harvest (Exodus 34:22); and (3) the Feast of Tabernacles at the end of the year (October) during the fruit harvest (Leviticus 23:24)...”⁵

Boaz's permission for Ruth to stay the rest of the night shows he accepts her proposal, and his **help to keep her visit a secret** shows his desire to preserve her already-good reputation.

The book of Ruth is important from a linguistic standpoint because of its contribution to our knowledge of archaic Hebrew words. (Apparently Boaz uses a distinctly “countrified” dialect at times.)

Remember that Ruth had gleaned all day for about an **ephah** of barley (2:17). An ephah is about 2/3 of a bushel. The KJV tells us that Boaz gives Ruth “six measures of barley.” If this is indeed what the NKJV calls “six *ephahs*,” then Ruth ends up with almost four bushels!

The first mention of a **levirate marriage** (Latin <levir> for “brother”) occurs in Genesis 38:8 where Er's brother Onan refuses to perform the duty. This duty is later mandated and regulated in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and covers the case where the dead man's brother refuses to take the responsibility. In the case of Ruth, her husband's brother had died, as had her husband's father. So the duty passes to a close relative of her father.

The threshing floor was an open, public place. Boaz sleeps there probably to help protect his newly harvested crop. From 3:14, we know that others (probably Boaz's servants) would've been aware of her presence. She lays at his feet for the night. While this was a proposal, Ruth was not “seducing” Boaz, as some have claimed, twisting the Scripture in an attempt to justify *their own* lewd acts done in secret. There was no inappropriate contact or behavior on the part of either Ruth or Boaz.

The focus of the transaction in chapter 4 is initially on buying back (“redeeming”) some land which Naomi had sold (4:3). (The **redemption of land** is discussed in Leviticus 25:8-28. In the year of Jubilee, the land would be returned to the original owner. In the meantime, the land was only for *use*, not for *ownership*.) But Naomi's situation is not simply a case of redeeming the *land*. When it is revealed that the deal would involve also perpetuating Elimelech's *name* by having children with Ruth, the closer relative backs out. In this case, there doesn't seem to be any element of personal insult to Ruth, thanks to Boaz who gladly agrees to redeem the land and perform that duty.

The blessing pronounced on Boaz and Ruth by the people mentions Rachel and Leah primarily because of the 12 sons that came from them. (Also, recall Rachel's connection to Bethlehem. See the notes with Lesson 11.) Their blessing also makes a rare mention of **Tamar**, which seems odd only until we recall that she, like Ruth, 1) had been turned down for a levirate marriage, 2) ended up giving birth by an older man (in Tamar's case, her father-in-law, Judah) and 3) appears in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:3, 5). The book of Ruth connects Ruth to her great-grandson David, then backs up a few generations, not to Abraham or Jacob or even Jacob's son, Judah, but to *Tamar's* son, Perez.

⁵ Bromiley, Geoffrey W., ed, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 2001, c1988.

Lessons from Ruth:

1. God rewards the faithful. (Consider Ruth's and Naomi's family blessings, as well as Ruth's place in the genealogy of Christ.)
2. Loyalty to family may involve big changes in life.
3. "God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34-35).

Ruth's Choices**Personal**

- She chose of her own accord.
- She considered the sacrifices, duties, and rewards of her decision.

Determined

- ... in spite of Orpah's example and Naomi's attempts to dissuade
- Her steadfastness silenced Naomi.

Comprehensive

- New country
- New home
- New religion
- New co-workers

Early

- She chose when she was "young."
(Ruth 2:15)
- Compare Joseph, Daniel, and Jesus

Lasting

- "I will die ... and be buried."
(Ruth 1:15)

Ruth serves a great example for anyone who would follow Jesus Christ!

Ruth 3: "Take Your Maidservant Under Your Wing"

1. What is Naomi seeking for Ruth? :1, **NKJV, NASB1995, "security"; ISV, "financial security"; YLT, ESV, "rest"; LSB, "a state of rest"; NIV, "a home".**

2. How will this also benefit Naomi? **She would likely be taken into the same family.**

3. From verses 3 and 4, how does Naomi suggest that Ruth "propose" to Boaz in terms of ...

... her appearance? **Wash, anoint, best garment**

... the time to make her move? :4, **when he lies down; :7, After he eats, when his heart would be cheerful**

... how she actually approaches him? **Uncover his feet and lie down.**

4. What happens around midnight? :8, **He awakens startled by her presence.**

5. What does Ruth request of Boaz? :9, **"Take me under your wing" (NKJV) because you are a redeemer. Lit., "spread your skirt" (or corner of robe, or cloak).**

Ezek. 16:8 LSB "I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares Lord Yahweh.

6. Describe the emotion of Boaz's response. :10, **He's flattered and overjoyed.**
7. What do all the people know about Ruth? :11, **She's a virtuous woman.**
8. What is the only situation preventing Boaz from accepting her proposal immediately? :13, **There is a closer relative than he.**
9. When does Ruth leave his presence? :14, **In the dim light of morning; no one could recognize her**
10. What instruction does Boaz give in v. 14? **Don't let it be known that she came to the threshing floor.** Speculate as to his reason(s). **1) To protect her reputation. 2) Perhaps he didn't want the closer relative to know that she preferred and had requested Boaz.**
11. What gift does Boaz send? :15, **Six measures of barley. If six "ephahs," it was sure a lot!**
12. What does Naomi seem to know about Boaz? :18, **He's a man on a mission! He will take immediate action, which is what he had promised Ruth in v. 13.**

Ruth 4:1-10: Boaz Arranges The Marriage

13. Whom does Boaz gather at the city gate? :1, **The closer relative, plus (v.2) 10 of the elders of the city**
14. After the near kinsman agrees to redeem the land, what additional information does Boaz reveal? :5, **If you take the land, you also have to take Ruth and perpetuate Elimelech's name.**
15. What reason does the near kinsman give for changing his mind? :6, **Taking her would ruin my own inheritance. Perhaps he did not yet have sons of his own?**

16. What custom is there for confirming redeeming and exchanging? :7, **Give the other party your sandal. Acc. to Deut. 25:9, if the man refused, the woman got to remove his sandal. (More research is indicated regarding the custom.)**

Ruth 4:11-16: The Union Is Blessed Indeed

17. Why would it be a blessing for a person's house to "be like the house of Perez"? **He was the son of Tamar (who had been turned down for a levirate marriage) and was born to an older man. He appears in the genealogy of David (Ruth 4:18-22) and of Jesus the Christ (Matt. 1:3).**
18. How do the women describe Ruth? :15, **Better than seven sons**
19. What role does Naomi play once Ruth bears a son? :16, **Nurse, a.k.a., "doting grandma". A son is born "to Naomi" (although Obed was "Ruth's" son!). {-}**
20. What relationship did Naomi have to King David? :17, 22, **Naomi was his great-great grandmother, so Ruth & Boaz were David's great-grandparents, v. 21: [Naomi – Ruth/Boaz – Obed – Jesse – David]**

Additional applications:

- Reputation:
 - **Proverbs 22:1** A **good name** is to be chosen over great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold.
 - **1 Peter 2:11** I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul, ¹² by keeping your conduct excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good works, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.
 - **1 Tim. 3:7** (An elder) "must have a good reputation with those outside"
- Every honorable action can be carried out in an honorable way.
- Marriage is, by definition, a **vow** (between a man and a woman) made **public**. There must be human witnesses (as there were also in the case of Rebekah and Isaac, Gen. 24).
- God is not concerned about interracial marriage. After all, He made *all* the races. The priority is that couple be *spiritually* compatible, partly because God seeks godly offspring (Mal. 2:15).

Lesson 13: Dating, Timeline, and Review

When Judges and Ruth Were Written

The book of Judges contains several clues as to when it was written. Of course, an inspired writer can have knowledge of the future as well as the past, but the tone of the passages seems simply historical rather than prophetic/predictive. Taking them at face value,

The passages 18:31 and 20:27 show that Judges was written after the ark of the covenant was removed from Shiloh (cf. 1 Samuel 4:3-11). The repeated phrase “In those days there was no king in Israel” (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) indicates that Judges was written **after the commencement of the monarchy**. The fact that the Jebusites were dwelling in Jerusalem “to this day” (1:21) means that it was written **before 1004 B.C.** when David took control of the city. (2 Samuel 5:5-9)⁶

Perhaps one passage that goes against a date of writing before 1004 is **Judges 18:30**, which refers to “**the day of the captivity of the land.**” One might think of the time of the Assyrian captivity (that is, the captivity of the land of the tribe of Dan in 721 B.C.), in which case either the *entire book* of Judges was written *after* that time (which would seem to go against 1:21 about the Jebusites), or an editor came along later and inserted *that reference*. (We know that some books were given additional details by a later writer. For example, the book of Deuteronomy is attributed to Moses but also recounts Moses’s *death*.) With that in mind, **we can’t be dogmatic about dating the writing of Ruth** based on its mention of the genealogy down to David.

Some believe another option: that “the captivity” means the Israelites’ completion of *their* conquest of Canaan during the reign of David. But “captivity” would be an odd term in that context. Although captives might be taken during battle (see Deut. 21:10), *kings* who were captured were then *killed* (e.g., Joshua 11:17; Judges 7:25). Israel was not so much “capturing” as “conquering” the land (e.g., Deut. 7:2; 29:7-8; Joshua 10:40; 12:6).

The Timeline of the Book of Judges

The events in the book of Judges are **not presented in chronological order**. For example, Judges 20:27-28 mentions Phinehas, who served shortly after the entrance into the promised land. Also, some events during the judges overlap in time. For example, Deborah and Barak judged “in the days of Shamgar” (Judges 5:6), and Samson’s service probably overlaps in time with anywhere from two to four other judges. **Simply adding** the periods of oppression and/or judgeship and/or peace in the case of every judge mentioned yields 410 years, which **doesn’t seem to fit the chronology**. Remember that the judges (as even King Abimelech) ruled *regionally*, not nationally, which allows for **simultaneous judgeships**.

Time references especially in the Old Testament are sometimes difficult to reconcile with each other. For a detailed discussion, see “The Dating of Old Testament Events” in the Appendix of the *Simplified Summary of the Old Testament* (by Vicki Dvorak Copeland, 2022) which addresses “Difficulties of the Divided Kingdom,” “Issues in Dating Prior to Abraham,” and “How Long Were the Israelites Slaves in Egypt?”

Understanding that the *events* in Judges *happened after* the Conquest of Canaan and *before* the time of the kings in Israel (as is apparent from the order of the Bible books of Joshua, Judges, and the Samuels) means that establishing the timeline of Judges becomes necessarily entangled with trying to establish a date for the *Exodus*. Here are some passages and some numbers to consider:

Interestingly, the *date of the Exodus* can be calculated by first establishing a date for the *reign of Solomon*, because a Biblical time reference is very specific.

It came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which *is* the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD. – **1 Kings 6:1**

Extra-biblical history confirms that **Solomon began his reign around 970**, so his 4th year would be 965 (discounting the first year – “accession-year reckoning” was common in Judah – and counting

⁶ Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Nelson’s complete book of Bible maps and charts: Old and New Testament [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

four more years after 969. Again, see the *Simplified Summary*, Appendix.)

Dates *after* the time of Solomon are much more easily corroborated with the written histories of various other world powers, so those dates are basically undisputed. However, Egyptian and Canaanite history *before* the time of Solomon is more difficult to sort. For example, there is significant controversy among Egyptologists who struggle to form simply a clear *list of early pharaohs*. One pharaoh was monotheistic, so later pharaohs sought (*almost* successfully) to eradicate any reference to him, and there were three periods of political turbulence which complicate the historian’s task.

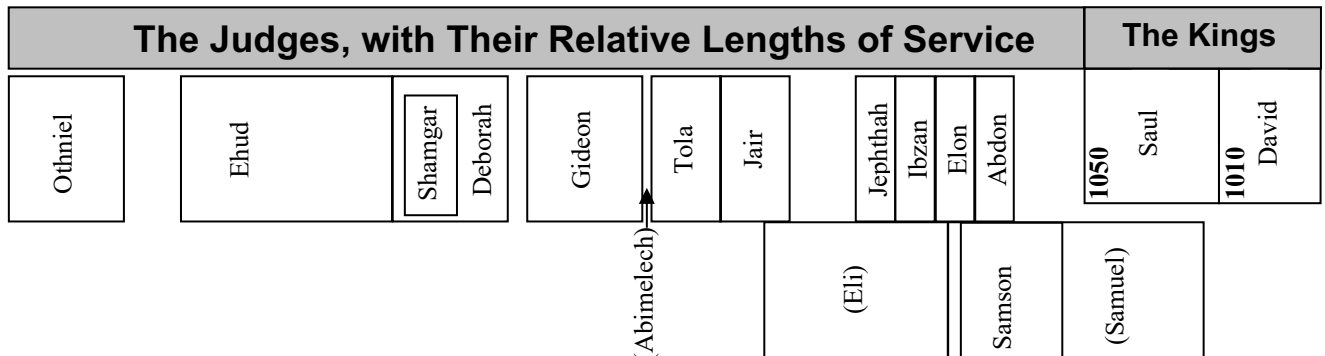
We also hear theories of the *early date* of the Exodus (in the 1400s B.C.) and the *late date* of the Exodus (in the 1200s B.C.). Some insist on the late date because of Exodus 1:11 which says the Israelites built the city of “Raamses.” However, the city named for Ramses II who reigned in the 1200’s *existed* long before Ramses renamed it. It’s likely that a scribe later changed the name in the text to “Raamses.” (See the article “Evidence of Israelites in Egypt” in the *Simplified Summary* for two examples of cities whose later names were used *because the book of Genesis was written later*, after the cities’ names were changed.) In an attempt to support a *late date* for the Exodus *from the Scriptures*, those scholars assume that the reference to 480 years in 1 Kings 6:1 is simply the writer’s (almost symbolic) calculation for each of 12 generations at 40 years each. Then the scholars *recalculate* the 12 generations at *25 years each* for purposes of a timeline and say that the temple was really built in the *280th year* after the Exodus. But there is no other reason to try to undo the face-value reading of 1 Kings 6:1, so **the early date wins**, in this writer’s opinion.

There is also controversy concerning how to date the *archaeological* evidence in Canaan: Archaeologists agree that certain Canaanite cities were destroyed (most likely by the Israelites, judging from an abrupt change in the type of artifacts found, especially the pottery) but cannot agree on exactly *when* this happened. We must be careful not to accept any theory based on a proposed Egyptian or Canaanite chronology if that chronology contradicts the Bible record.

Note that the Bible versions vary on how to punctuate or to sequence events (and even to break up the verses) in Paul’s sermon in **Acts 13** which summarizes Israelite history from God choosing Abraham to the conquest of Canaan (verses 17-19). Most versions in verse 19 or 20 say something like “*all of which took* about four hundred and fifty years. After these things, He gave them judges” (NASB1995). The versions related to the KJV say that the *period of the judges* takes up “about 450 years” *after* the land was conquered, but that doesn’t seem to fit the chronology. (The word order in Hebrew is likely difficult, judging from the YLT.)

In conclusion, I favor a date for the **Exodus of 1445 B.C.**, the Wilderness Wanderings lasting till 1405 B.C., the Conquest of Canaan lasting till about 1400 B.C., then the **judges** in place, starting after the death of Joshua and the elders of his time, almost till Saul became king in 1050 B.C., **a period of almost 350 years.**

Here is a proposed, rough line-up of the judges: (For a proposed *extremely detailed* chronology, see <https://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-date-chronology-of-judges.htm> which includes references to extra-Biblical sources and some other events in Judges. When comparing that work to the rough line-up below, you will note some minor differences in the overlaps of the judgeships.)



The Timeline of the Book of Ruth

Matthew 1:5 (LSB) informs us about Boaz's family tree: "Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab." We are not given the people's ages when they have their children, but this at least places Ruth relatively early in the time of the judges. Her great-grandson, David, is anointed King of Israel in the city of Hebron (2 Samuel 2) in the year 1010 B.C.

Review

1. What are some themes of Judges?
 - A: 1) The people's continual and toilet-bowl-worsening unfaithfulness.**
 - 2) God's amazing capacity to repeatedly rescue them/relent from the punishment He was inflicting through the hands of the enemies (i.e., longsuffering). He did so not only when the people cried out for relief, but especially when they displayed humility, confession of sins, and repentance (Judges 10:10-16).**
 - 3) Some people were faithful in spite of the prevailing moral sickness. The judges themselves were mostly faithful, and others could at least be rallied by those faithful people to help in the cause of righteousness from time to time as the need arose.**
2. Why does Ruth have such a fitting place in this study?
 - A: 1) She lived during that general time frame.**
 - 2) More importantly, that Gentile woman displayed loyalty and faith which most of Israel didn't.**
 - 3) Boaz was a man of integrity and honor, unlike so many of his countrymen.**
 - 4) Reading their story is a welcome breath of fresh air after the putrid stench of so much of the book of Judges.**
3. A "judge" ... 1) was appointed by **God**, and 2) **delivered** Israel from oppression.
4. Name a left-handed judge who assassinates a fat king and subdues his nation. **A: Ehud**
5. Who arises as "a mother in Israel"? **A: Deborah, Judges 5:7**
6. Who is "most blessed among women"? **A: Jael, Judges 5:24**
7. Whose "calling" is accompanied by four signs? **A: Gideon's**
8. Why are *those particular* 300 men chosen to help Gideon? **A: There were fewer of them**
9. Name the "non-judge." **A: Abimelech**
10. Whose curse about "fire" comes true against the men of Shechem? **A: Jotham's, Gideon's youngest son**
11. Who kills Abimelech? a. a man **A: his armor bearer finished him off, but...** OR, b. a woman **A: a random female citizen of Thebez dealt him the mortal blow with an upper millstone**
12. Who is not well received by his people before acting as a deliverer east of the Jordan? **A: Jephthah because his father had gone in to a harlot, 11:1-2.**
13. What is Samson to be from birth? **A: Nazirite**
14. What interest does Samson repeatedly show that gives the Lord an occasion to kill Philistines? **A: He was attracted to Philistine women (first his wife from Timnah, ch. 13; later a harlot in Gaza, ch. 16; then Delilah in the Valley of Sorek, ch. 16) Also, he had a vengeful spirit and was a violent person.**
15. What New Testament passage lists some of the judges in the "Hall Of Faith"? **A: Heb. 11:32-40**
16. Which judges "subdue" nations? (Mark all that apply.) [Answers in **bold font**.]
 - a. **Ehud**
 - b. **Deborah/Barak**
 - c. **Gideon**
 - d. **Jephthah**
 - e. Samson

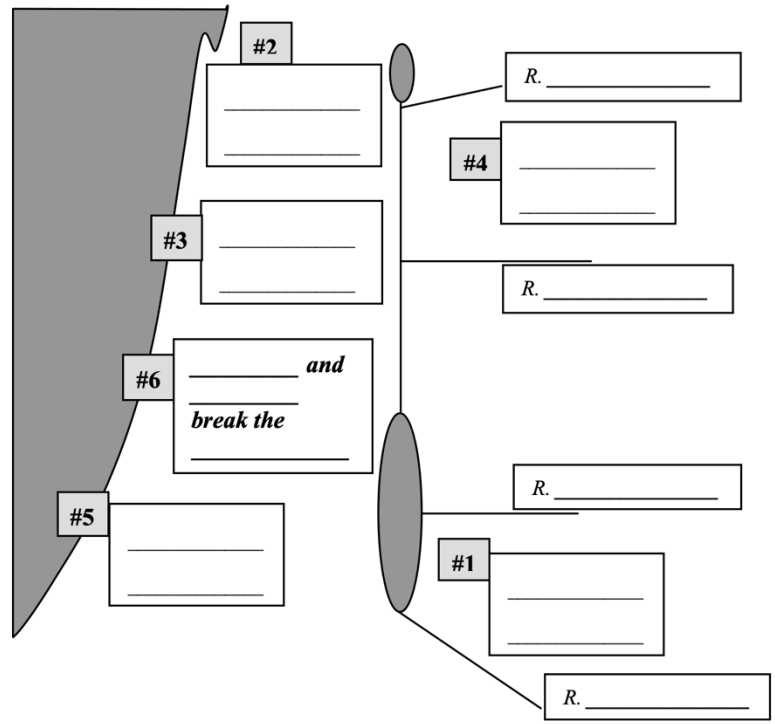
17. Fill in the chapter content.

- 1 _____ Setting – Incomplete Conquest **A: Political**
- 2 _____ Setting – The Cycle **A: Spiritual**
- 3 _____ subdues Moab **A: Ehud**
- 4-5 _____ and _____ subdue Canaan **A: Deborah, Barak**
- 6-8 _____ subdues Midian **A: Gideon**
- 9 _____ the Non-Judge **A: Abimelech**
- 10-12 _____ subdues Ammon **A: Jephthah**
- 13-16 _____ versus the Philistines **A: Samson**
- 17-18 _____ in Israel **A: Idolatry**
- 19-21 _____ and _____ **A: Immorality and In-fighting**

18. Fill in the blanks in each numbered box. (People's names on top, the enemies' underneath.)
Bonus: Name the western sea, the two inland bodies of water, and the river flowing to the South.

Answers:

1. Ehud subdues Moab	
2. Deborah & Barak subdue Canaan	
3. Gideon subdues Midian	
4. Jephthah subdues Ammon	
5. Samson fights the Philistines	
6. Ruth and Boaz break the cycle	
<i>R. = Rivers (N to S):</i> Yarmuk Jabbok Arnon Zered	<i>Other</i> Med. Sea Sea of Galilee R. Jordan Dead Sea



Application:

- Though dating Judges may seem to be only an academic exercise, establishing a timeline for Bible events that harmonizes with all Scripture and synchronizes with secular timelines is, in fact, a crucial skill for being able to answer skeptics' criticisms and to add reasons that strengthen our own confidence in the validity of the Bible.