**The Book of Judges**

**Judges Chapter 1**

Israel Fights the Remaining Canaanites

1And it came to pass after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel asked of Yahweh, saying, “Who should go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

2And Yahweh said, “Judah is to go up. Behold, I have given the land into his hand.”

3Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites, and I likewise will go with you into your lot.” So Simeon went with him.

4Judah went up and Yahweh gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand, and in Bezek they struck 10,000 men of them. 5And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and they fought against him, and they struck the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6But Adoni-bezek fled and they pursued after him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his big toes. 7Adoni-bezek said, “Seventy kings, their thumbs and their big toes cut off, scavenged under my table. God has repaid me for what I have done.” And they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there.

8The children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the mouth of the sword and the city they sent up in flames. 9Afterward, the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country and in the Negev and in the Shephelah. 10And Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron in former times was Kiriath-arba) and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai. 11From there he went against the inhabitants of Debir (now in former times the name of Debir was Kiriath-sepher).

12And Caleb said, “He who strikes Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give to him Achsah my daughter as a wife.” 13Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, captured it, and he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife.

14It came to pass when she arrived that she urged him to ask her father for a field. She got off of her donkey and Caleb said, “What do you want?” 15And she said, “Give me a blessing. Since you have set me in the land of the Negev, give me also pools of water.” So Caleb gave her the upper pools and the lower pools.

16And the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up out of the City of Date Palms with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which is in the Negev of Arad; and they went and lived with the people.

17And Judah went with Simeon his brother and they struck the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath and devoted it to destruction. And they called the name of the city Hormah. 18Also Judah captured Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory. 19Yahweh was with Judah and he drove out the inhabitants of the hill country, but he did not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron.

20And they gave Hebron to Caleb as Moses had spoken, and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak.

Benjamin’s Failure

21But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem, but the Jebusites live in Jerusalem among the children of Benjamin to this day.

Success of the House of Joseph

22And the house of Joseph also went up, they *went* against Bethel, and Yahweh was with them. 23The house of Joseph sent *men* to spy out Bethel (now in former times the name of the city was Luz). 24The scouts saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, “Show us the entrance into the city and we will deal mercifully with you.” 25And he showed them the entrance into the city and they struck the city with the mouth of the sword, but they let the man and all his family go. 26And the man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day.

Failure of the Other Tribes

27And Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and its towns, nor Taanach and its towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and its towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns; but the Canaanites were determined to live in that land. 28And it came to pass when Israel had grown strong that they put the Canaanites to forced labor and did not completely dispossess them.

29And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, but the Canaanites lived in their midst in Gezer.

30Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol, but the Canaanites lived in their midst and became subject to forced labor.

31Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants of Sidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob; 32but the Asherites lived in the midst of the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, because they did not drive them out.

33Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but they lived in the midst of the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to forced labor.

34And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill country, for they would not allow them to come down to the plain, 35but the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed so that they became subject to forced labor. 36The border of the Amorites was from the ascent of Akrabbim, from the rock and upward.

**Judges Chapter 2**

Israel’s Disobedience

1And an angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and I led you to the land that I swore to your fathers, and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. 2While you, you are not to cut a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you are to break down their altars. But you have not listened to my voice. What is this you have done? 3So I also say, ‘I will not drive them out from before you, but they will be *thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.’” 4And it came to pass, when the angel of Yahweh spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept. 5So they called the name of that place Bochim, and they sacrificed there to Yahweh.

The Death of Joshua

6Now when Joshua had sent the people away, the children of Israel went, each one to his inheritance, to possess the land. 7The people served Yahweh all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua who had seen all the great work of Yahweh that he had worked for Israel.

8And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died, *at the age of* 110 years old. 9And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 10And all that generation were also gathered to their fathers, and another generation arose after them who did not know Yahweh, nor the work that he had worked for Israel.

Israel’s Unfaithfulness

11Then the children of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and served the Baals, 12and they forsook Yahweh the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down[[1]](#footnote-10939) to them; and they made Yahweh angry. 13They forsook Yahweh and served Baal and the Ashtaroths.

14So the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and he gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies all around so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15Whenever they went out *to war*, the hand of Yahweh was against them for evil, as Yahweh had spoken and as Yahweh had sworn to them, and they were greatly distressed.

Yahweh Raises Up Judges

16But Yahweh raised up judges who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. 17Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they prostituted themselves with other gods and bowed down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, who had obeyed the commandments of Yahweh. They did not do as *their fathers*. 18When Yahweh raised up judges for them, then Yahweh was with the judge and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge, for Yahweh was moved to pity by their groanings because of their oppressors and persecutors. 19But it came to pass when the judge died that they turned back and acted more corruptly than their fathers, following other gods by serving them and bowing down to them; they did not give up what they were doing or their stubborn way.

20The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel and he said, “Because this nation has transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and has not listened to my voice, 21I, for my part, will no longer continue to drive out anyone from before them from any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, 22in order to test Israel by them; whether or not they will keep the way of Yahweh to walk in it as their fathers kept it.” 23So Yahweh left those nations without driving them out quickly, neither did he give them into the hand of Joshua.

**Judges Chapter 3**

Yahweh Tests Israel

1Now these are the nations that Yahweh left to test Israel by them, *that is,* all those *Israelites* who had not known all the wars of Canaan. 2*Yahweh left them* only in order that the generations of the children of Israel might have knowledge *of war*—to teach them war—because they had not known the former *wars*: 3the five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon to Lebo-hamath. 4And they were *left* to test Israel by them, to know whether they would listen to the commandments of Yahweh that he had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. 5The children of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites and the Amorites, and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; 6and they took their daughters as wives for themselves, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and they served their gods.

Othniel, the First Judge

7The children of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and forgot Yahweh their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. 8Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram-naharaim. And the children of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

9And the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh, so Yahweh raised up a savior for the children of Israel who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. 10The spirit of Yahweh came upon him and he judged Israel. And he went out to war and Yahweh gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram into his hand, and his hand prevailed against Cushan-rishathaim. 11And the land had rest: 40 years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Ehud

12And the children of Israel again did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh. And Yahweh strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel because they had done what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh. 13He gathered to himself the children of Ammon and Amalek and he went and struck Israel, and they possessed the City of Date Palms. 14And the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab 18 years.

15And the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh, so Yahweh raised up a savior for them, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a left-handed man. The children of Israel sent by his hand a tribute to Eglon the king of Moab.

16Ehud made himself a sword that had two edges, a gomed[[2]](#footnote-25098) in length, and he strapped it under his clothing on his right thigh. 17He offered the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. 18And when he had finished offering the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. 19But he himself turned back from the carved idols that were near Gilgal and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.”

The king said, “Hush!” And all who were standing by him went out from him. 20Then Ehud came to him, and he was sitting alone in his cool upper room. Ehud said, “I have a message from God to you!” And he arose from his throne. 21And Ehud reached with his left hand and took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his belly, 22and the handle also went in after the blade and the fat closed over the blade (for he did not draw the sword out of his belly), and the feces came out. 23Then Ehud went out to the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind himself and locked them.

24Now after he had gone out, his servants came and they saw, and behold, the doors of the upper room were locked, and they said, “Surely he is covering his feet[[3]](#footnote-21196) in the cool inner room.” 25And they waited anxiously until they were embarrassed, and behold, he did not open the doors of the upper room, so they took the key and opened *them*, and behold, their lord was fallen down to the ground dead.

26And Ehud escaped while they waited and he passed beyond the carved idols and escaped to Seirah. 27It came to pass when he had come that he blew a shofar in the hill country of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was before them. 28And he said to them, “Follow after me, for Yahweh has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand.” They went down after him and captured the fords of the Jordan *leading* to Moab, and did not allow any man to cross over. 29And at that time they struck down about 10,000 men of Moab, all stout ones and all men of valor, and no one escaped. 30So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. The land had rest: 80 years.

Shamgar

31After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down 600 men of the Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel.

**Judges Chapter 4**

Deborah and Barak

1And the children of Israel again did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh when Ehud was dead. 2So Yahweh sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan who reigned in Hazor, the commander of whose army was Sisera who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. 3And the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh, for he had 900 chariots of iron and 20 years he severely oppressed the children of Israel.

4Now Deborah, a woman who was a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, she was judging Israel at that time. 5She was sitting *as judge* under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went up to her for judgment.

6And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, “Hasn’t Yahweh the God of Israel commanded you? Go and deploy *your troops* at Mount Tabor and take with you 10,000 men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun, 7and I will deploy against you, at the brook Kishon, Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude, and I will give him into your hand.”

8Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”

9And she said, “I will go, yes, go with you; but it will not be your glory on the road on which you are going, because Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” And Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10So Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and 10,000 men went up at his feet, and Deborah went up with him.

11Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the children of Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim, which is by Kedesh.

12And they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13So Sisera called together all his chariots, even 900 chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, *to go* from Harosheth-hagoyim to the brook Kishon. 14Then Deborah said to Barak, “Arise! For this is the day in which Yahweh has given Sisera into your hand. Hasn’t Yahweh gone out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men behind him.

15And Yahweh threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic with the mouth of the sword before Barak. And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the mouth of the sword; there was not a man left.

17However, Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18And Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not be afraid.” So he turned aside to her, to the tent, and she covered him with a blanket. 19And he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty.”

And she opened a skin-bottle of milk and gave him a drink, and covered him. 20And he said to her, “Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, and says, ‘Is there any man here?’ that you are to say, ‘No.’” 21Then Jael, Heber’s wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand and went silently to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; now he had been in a deep sleep and exhausted. So he died.

22And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” So he went in to her *tent*, and behold, Sisera lay dead with the tent peg in his temple.

23So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. 24And the hand of the children of Israel pressed harder and harder against Jabin the king of Canaan until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

**Judges Chapter 5**

The Song of Deborah and Barak

1Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2 | “When the leaders took the lead in Israel,  when the people offered themselves willingly,  praise Yahweh! |
| 3 | Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!  I, to Yahweh I will sing.  I will sing praise to Yahweh the God of Israel. |
| 4 | O Yahweh, when you went forth out of Seir,  when you marched out of the field of Edom  the earth trembled,  the heavens also dripped.  Yes, the clouds dripped water. |
| 5 | The mountains quaked at the presence of Yahweh,  even Sinai at the presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel. |
| 6 | “In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,  in the days of Jael  the main roads were unoccupied.  The travelers took winding side roads. |
| 7 | Village life ceased in Israel.  They ceased  until I, Deborah, arose;  until I arose a mother in Israel. |
| 8 | Israel chose new gods,  then war was in the gates.  Was there a shield or spear seen  among 40,000 in Israel? |
| 9 | My heart is toward the leaders of Israel  who offered themselves willingly among the people.  Bless Yahweh! |
| 10 | O you who ride on white female donkeys,  you who sit on rich carpets,  and you who walk on the road, tell of it. |
| 11 | *Far* from the noise of archers,  in the places of drawing water,  there they retell the righteous acts of Yahweh,  the righteous acts on behalf of his village life in Israel.  Then the people of Yahweh went down to the gates. |
| 12 | Get up, get up, Deborah!  Get up, get up, speak forth a song!  Stand up, Barak, and “capture your captives,”  *you* son of Abinoam. |
| 13 | Then a remnant went down against the powerful;  the people of Yahweh went down for me against the mighty. |
| 14 | From Ephraim, whose root was against Amalek, *some* *went down*.  After you, Benjamin, among your peoples.  Out of Machir leaders went down.  And from Zebulun, those who handle the officer’s staff. |
| 15 | The leaders of Issachar were with Deborah.  As was Issachar, so was Barak,  into the plain they were sent out behind him.  Among the divisions of Reuben,  there were great deliberations of heart. |
| 16 | Why did you sit between the campfires  listening to the playing of pipes for the flocks?  Among the divisions of Reuben  there were great searchings of heart. |
| 17 | Gilead lived beyond the Jordan,  and Dan, why did he remain in ships?  Asher sat still at the shore of the sea  and lived by his harbors. |
| 18 | Zebulun—a people who risked their lives to the point of death;  Naphtali—on the heights of the field. |
| 19 | Kings came and fought,  then the kings of Canaan fought  at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo.  They took no plunder of silver. |
| 20 | From heaven the stars fought.  From their courses they fought against Sisera. |
| 21 | The brook Kishon swept them away,  that ancient brook, the brook Kishon.  O my soul, march on in strength. |
| 22 | Then the horse hoofs hammered *the ground*  because of the galloping, the galloping of their mighty ones. |
| 23 | ‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of Yahweh.  ‘Curse, yes, curse its inhabitants,  because they did not come to help Yahweh,  to help Yahweh against the mighty.’ |
| 24 | “Most blessed of women is Jael,  the wife of Heber the Kenite,  most blessed of women in the tent. |
| 25 | He asked for water; she gave him milk.  She brought near *to him* curds in a princely bowl. |
| 26 | She reached out her hand for the tent peg  and her right hand for the workmen’s hammer,  and she hammered Sisera,  she shattered his head,  she pierced and struck through his temple. |
| 27 | Between her feet he bowed down, he fell, he lay.  Between her feet he bowed down, he fell.  Where he bowed down, there he fell—destroyed! |
| 28 | “Through the window she looked and cried out shrilly—  Sisera’s mother—through the lattice,  ‘Why is his chariot so shamefully late?  Why are the hoofbeats from his chariots delayed?’ |
| 29 | The wisest of her ladies answered her,  yes, she repeats her words to herself, |
| 30 | ‘Are they not finding, *are they not* dividing the spoil?  A woman, two women for every warrior;  for Sisera a spoil of dyed garments,  a spoil of ornate dyed garments,  a pair of ornate dyed garments for the necks *as* spoil?’ |
| 31 | “So let all your enemies perish, O Yahweh,  but let those who love him  be like the sun when it rises in its strength.” |

Then the land had rest: 40 years.

**Judges Chapter 6**

Midian Oppresses Israel

1And the children of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and Yahweh gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel, and because of Midian the children of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains, and the caves and the strongholds. 3So it was when Israel had sown *their crops* that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites and the children of the east, and they came up against them 4and they encamped against them and destroyed the produce of the land as far as Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or donkey. 5For they came up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—and they came into the land to destroy it. 6Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh.

7And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh because of Midian 8that Yahweh sent a prophet to the children of Israel, and he said to them, “This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: ‘I brought you up from Egypt and took you out of the house of slavery, 9and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out from before you and gave you their land. 10And I said to you, “I am Yahweh your God. Do not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live.” But you have not listened to my voice.’”

Yahweh Calls Gideon

11The angel of Yahweh came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. 12And the angel of Yahweh appeared to him and said to him, “Yahweh is with you, O mighty warrior!”

13And Gideon said to him, “Oh, my lord, if Yahweh is with us, why then has all this happened to us? Where are all his wondrous works that our fathers told us of, saying, ‘Didn’t Yahweh bring us up from Egypt?’ But now Yahweh has abandoned us and has given us into the hand of Midian.”

14And Yahweh turned toward him and said, “Go in this your might and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?”

15And he said to him, “O Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father’s house.”

16And Yahweh said to him, “Because I will be with you, and you will strike the Midianites as one man.”

17And he said to him, “Please, if I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that you are speaking with me. 18Please do not go away from here until I come back to you and bring out my gift and lay it before you.”

And he said, “I will sit until you come back.”

19So Gideon went and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour.[[4]](#footnote-18848) He put the meat in a basket and he put the broth in a pot and brought *it* out to him under the oak, and presented *it*.

20And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so.

21Then the angel of Yahweh stretched out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread, and fire went up out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread, and the angel of Yahweh departed out of his sight.

22And Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh; and Gideon said, “Alas, Lord Yahweh! Because I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

23But Yahweh said to him, “Peace be to you! Do not be afraid. You will not die.” 24Then Gideon built an altar there to Yahweh and called it “Yahweh is Peace.” To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

25And that night Yahweh said to him, “Take your father’s bull, the second bull seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has and cut down the Asherah that is by it; 26and build an altar to Yahweh your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly way, and take the second-born bull and offer *it* as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you are to cut down.” 27Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as Yahweh had spoken to him. But because he was afraid of his father’s household and the men of the city, he did not do it in the daytime, but he did it at night.

Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal

28When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down and the Asherah that was by it was cut down, and the second-born bull had been offered on the altar that had been built! 29And they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?”

When they had searched and inquired, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.”

30Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die because he has broken down the altar of Baal and because he has cut down the Asherah that was by it.”

31Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you contend for Baal? Or will you yourselves save him? Let the one who will contend for him be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself because someone has broken down his altar.” 32So on that day he named him Jerubbaal, saying, “Let Baal contend against him because he has broken down his altar.”

33Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east assembled together, and they crossed over *the Jordan* and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.

34But the spirit of Yahweh clothed Gideon, and he blew a shofar, and the Abiezrites were called to follow him. 35And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they also were called to follow him, and he sent messengers to Asher and to Zebulun and to Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

The Sign of the Fleece

36And Gideon said to God, “If you are going to save Israel by my hand as you have spoken, 37behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand as you have spoken.” 38And it was so. For he rose up early on the next day and squeezed the fleece and wrung the dew out of the fleece—a bowl full of water.

39But Gideon said to God, “Do not let your anger be kindled against me and let me speak but one *more* time. Please let me make a test only one *more* time with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew.” 40And God did so that night, for it was dry on the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

**Judges Chapter 7**

The Selection of Gideon’s Army

1Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people who were with him rose up early and encamped beside the spring of Harod, and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the plain. 2And Yahweh said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel glorify themselves over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ 3So now proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.’” 22,000 of the people returned and 10,000 remained.

4Yahweh said to Gideon, “The people are still too many. Bring them down to the water and I will separate them for you there. And he of whom I say to you, ‘This one can go with you,’ he will go with you; and of whomever I say to you, ‘This one cannot go with you,’ he cannot go.” 5So he brought down the people to the water and Yahweh said to Gideon, “You are to separate everyone who laps of the water with his tongue like a dog laps, as well as everyone who bows down on his knees to drink.” 6Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people bowed down on their knees to drink water. 7And Yahweh said to Gideon, “By the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, each to his own place.” 8So they took the people’s food in their hand, and their shofars, and he sent all the men of Israel, each one, to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was beneath him in the plain.

Gideon Spies on the Midianite Camp

9And it came to pass the same night, that Yahweh said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. 10But if you are afraid to go down *and attack*, you go down with Purah your servant to the camp 11and hear what they say, and afterward your hands will be strengthened to go down against the camp.” Then he went down with Purah his servant to the edge of the armed men who were in the camp.

12Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east had settled in the plain like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, like the sand that is on the seashore in abundance. 13When Gideon had come, behold, a man was telling a dream to his friend, and he said, “Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it and it fell. And it turned it upside down, and the tent fell down.”

14His friend answered, “This is none other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp.”

15And it came to pass when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he bowed down *in worship*; and he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for Yahweh has given the camp of Midian into your hand!” 16And he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them shofars and empty jugs, with torches inside the jugs.

17And he said to them, “Watch me and do likewise. Behold, when I come to the edge of the camp, as I do, you must do also. 18When I blow the shofar, I and all who are with me, then you also are to blow the shofars all around the entire camp and shout, ‘For Yahweh and for Gideon!’”

Gideon Defeats Midian

19So Gideon and the 100 men who were with him came to the edge of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the shofars and broke in pieces the jugs that were in their hands. 20The three companies blew the shofars and broke the jugs; and they held the torches in their left hands and in their right hands *held* the shofars to blow; and they shouted, “A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!” 21They each stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran: they cried out and fled. 22And they blew the 300 shofars, and Yahweh set every man’s sword against his fellow and against all the army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah by Tabbath. 23And the men of Israel were gathered together out of Naphtali and out of Asher and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after Midian.

24Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against Midian and capture the fords ahead of them as far as Beth-barah, even the Jordan!” So all the men of Ephraim were gathered together and captured the fords as far as Beth-barah, even the Jordan. 25And they captured the two commanders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. And they pursued Midian, and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan.

**Judges Chapter 8**

Gideon Defeats Zebah and Zalmunna

1And the men of Ephraim said to him, “What is this that you have done to us in that you did not call us when you went to fight against Midian?” And they contended against him strongly.

2He said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Isn’t the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3God has given into your hand the commanders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb! What was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their *fiery* spirit against him calmed down when he spoke that word.

4Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the 300 men who were with him, exhausted, yet pursuing. 5And he said to the men of Sukkoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

6But the leaders of Sukkoth said, “Is the palm of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?”

7So Gideon said, “Well then, when Yahweh has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thresh your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars.” 8And he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way, and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Sukkoth had answered. 9So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, “When I come again in peace, I will tear down this tower.”

10Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies were with them, about 15,000 men, all who remained of all the army of the children of the east, for those who had fallen were 120,000 men who drew sword. 11Gideon went up by the Road of the Tent Dwellers on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah and he struck the army; for the army was feeling secure. 12Zebah and Zalmunna fled, but he pursued after them and he captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and threw the whole army into a panic.

13Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle, by the Ascent of Heres. 14And he captured a young man of the men of Sukkoth and questioned him; and he wrote down for him the leaders of Sukkoth and its elders, 77 men. 15And he came to the men of Sukkoth and said, “Look! Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, ‘Is the palm of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are exhausted?’” 16So he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briars, and with them he taught the men of Sukkoth. 17And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

18Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?”

They answered, “As you are, so were they. Each one resembled the son of a king.”

19And he said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As Yahweh lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you.” 20And he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise up and kill them!” But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid because he was still a youth.

21Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself and fall on us; for as the man is, so is his strength.” Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent-shaped *ornaments* that were on their camels’ necks.

Gideon’s Ephod

22Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, even you and also your son and also your son’s son, for you have saved us out of the hand of Midian.”

23But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you.” 24Then Gideon said to them, “I have a request to request of you. Give me, each of you, an earring from his plunder” (for they had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites).

25They answered, “We will give, yes, give them over *to you*.” So they spread a garment and each man threw an earring of his plunder onto it. 26The weight of the golden earrings that he requested was 1,700 *shekels* of gold[[5]](#footnote-13555) besides the crescents, and the pendants and the purple clothing that was on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were around their camels’ necks. 27And Gideon made it into an ephod and put it in his city, in Ophrah, and all Israel prostituted themselves *by going* after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

28And Midian was subdued before the children of Israel so that they lifted up their heads no more. The land had rest 40 years in the days of Gideon. 29Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

The Death of Gideon

30Now Gideon had 70 sons who came out of his thigh,[[6]](#footnote-19680) because he had many wives. 31And his concubine who was in Shechem, she also bore him a son, and he called his name Abimelech. 32And Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33It came to pass when Gideon died that the children of Israel turned back and prostituted themselves *by going* after the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god. 34The children of Israel did not remember Yahweh their God who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side; 35nor did they show faithfulness to the house of Jerubbaal, Gideon, in accordance with all the good things that he had done for Israel.

**Judges Chapter 9**

Abimelech’s Conspiracy

1And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother’s brothers, and spoke to them and to all the family of the house of his mother’s father, saying, 2“Please speak in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem, ‘Which is better for you, that all the sons of Jerubbaal, who are 70 men, rule over you, or that one man rules over you? And remember that I am your bone and your flesh.” 3And his mother’s brothers spoke all these words about him in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem, and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, “He is our brother.” 4So they gave him 70 *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith and with them Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him. 5And he went to his father’s house, to Ophrah and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, 70 men, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself. 6All the leaders of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all Beth-millo, and went and made Abimelech king by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem.

Jotham’s Parable

7When they told Jotham *about it*, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim and lifted up his voice and cried out and said to them,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | “Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem,  that God may listen to you. |
| 8 | “One *day* the trees went out  to anoint a king over themselves.  So they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign as king over us.’ |
| 9 | But the olive tree said to them,  ‘Should I stop producing my rich oil which, by me,  they honor God and man,  and go to sway *back and forth* over the trees?’ |
| 10 | “So the trees said to the fig tree,  ‘You come and reign as king over us.’ |
| 11 | But the fig tree said to them,  ‘Should I stop producing  my sweetness and my good fruit,  and go to sway *back and forth* over the trees?’ |
| 12 | “So the trees said to the vine,  ‘You come and reign as king over us.’ |
| 13 | But the vine said to them,  ‘Should I stop producing my new wine  that cheers God and man,  and go to sway *back and forth* over the trees?’ |
| 14 | “So all the trees said to the bramble,  ‘You come and reign as king over us.’ |
| 15 | And the bramble said to the trees,  ‘If in faithfulness you are anointing me  as king over you,  come, take refuge in my shade;  but if not,  let fire come out of the bramble  and devour the cedars of Lebanon.’” |

16“So now, if you have dealt faithfully and righteously when you made Abimelech king, and if you have done well by Jerubbaal and his house and have acted in accordance with the dealings of his hands— 17for my father fought for you and risked his life and delivered you out of the hand of Midian, 18but you have risen up against my father’s house this day and have slain his sons, 70 men on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the leaders of Shechem, because he is your brother— 19if you have dealt faithfully and righteously with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech and let him also rejoice in you. 20But if not, may fire come out from Abimelech and devour the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo, and may fire come out from the leaders of Shechem and from Beth-millo and devour Abimelech.” 21Then Jotham ran away and fled and went to Beer, and lived there, away from the face of Abimelech his brother.

The Downfall of Abimelech

22And Abimelech governed over Israel three years. 23Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, 24so that the violence done to the 70 sons of Jerubbaal might come and that their bloodguilt might be laid on Abimelech their brother who had killed them, and on the leaders of Shechem who had strengthened his hands to kill his brothers. 25So the leaders of Shechem set an ambush for him on the tops of the mountains and they robbed all who passed by them on the road. And this was reported to Abimelech.

26Then Gaal son of Ebed came with his brothers and moved into Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem put their trust in him. 27And they went out into the field and harvested their vineyards and trod the grapes and held a celebration, and went into the house of their god and ate and drank, and reviled Abimelech. 28Gaal the son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelech, and who are *we of* Shechem that we should serve him? Is *he* not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem! Why should we serve him? 29If only this people were under my hand! Then I would remove Abimelech.” And he said to Abimelech, “Increase your army and come out!”

30When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled, 31and he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, “Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem, and behold, they incite the city against you. 32Now therefore, go up at night, you and the people who are with you, and wait in ambush in the field: 33and in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, start early and rush on the city, and behold, when he and the people who are with him come out against you, then may you do to him whatever your hand finds to do.” 34So Abimelech and all the people who were with him rose up at night and they lay in ambush against Shechem in four companies.

35And Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city, and Abimelech and the people who were with him rose up from the ambush. 36When Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, “Behold, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains.”

Zebul said to him, “You are seeing the shadow of the mountains as if they were men.”

37But Gaal spoke again and said, “Look, people are coming down by the navel of the land, and one company comes by the way of the oak of Meonenim.” 38Then Zebul said to him, “Where is your mouth now, you who said, ‘Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?’ Is this not the people for whom you have shown contempt? Now go out and fight them.”

39So Gaal went out before the leaders of Shechem and fought with Abimelech. 40But Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many fell wounded even as far as the entrance of the gate. 41Abimelech lived at Arumah and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, so that they could not live in Shechem.

42It came to pass on the next day that the people went out into the field, and Abimelech was told about it. 43And he took the people and divided them into three companies and lay in ambush in the field, and he looked and saw the people coming out of the city. So he rose up against them and struck them. 44Abimelech and the company that was with him rushed forward and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city, and the two *other* companies rushed on all who were in the field and struck them. 45Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he captured the city and killed the people who were in it, and he tore down the city and sowed it with salt.

46When all the leaders of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered into the underground chamber of the house of El-berith. 47And it was reported to Abimelech that all the leaders of the tower of Shechem had gathered together. 48So Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him, and Abimelech took axes in his hand and cut down tree branches and picked them up and laid them on his shoulder, and he said to the people who were with him, “What you have seen me do, hurry and do as I have done!” 49So all the people also cut down, each one, his branch and followed Abimelech, and put them on the underground chamber and set the underground chamber on fire over them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died also, about 1,000 men and women.

50Then Abimelech went to Thebez and encamped against Thebez, and captured it. 51But there was a strong tower inside the city and all the men and women fled there, and all the leaders of the city, and shut themselves in and went up to the roof of the tower. 52And Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire. 53But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull. 54Then he quickly called to the young man *who was* his armor-bearer and said to him, “Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, ‘A woman killed him.’” So his young man thrust him through, and he died. 55When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, each one to his home.

56Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech that he did to his father in killing his 70 brothers; 57and all the evil of the men of Shechem, God returned on their heads, and *so* on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

**Judges Chapter 10**

Tola and Jair

1After Abimelech, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, rose up to save Israel, and he lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. 2He judged Israel 23 years, and he died and was buried in Shamir.

3After him arose Jair the Gileadite, and he judged Israel 22 years. 4He had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkey colts, and they had 30 cities that are called Havvoth-jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. 5And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

Further Disobedience and Oppression

6And the children of Israel again did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh and served the Baals and the Ashtaroths and the gods of Syria and the gods of Sidon and the gods of Moab and the gods of the children of Ammon and the gods of the Philistines, and they forsook Yahweh and did not serve him. 7So the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the children of Ammon. 8They smashed and crushed the children of Israel that year; *and then for* 18 years all the children of Israel that were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites which is in Gilead *were afflicted*, 9and the children of Ammon also passed over the Jordan to fight against Judah and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim, and Israel was greatly distressed. 10So the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh, saying, “We have sinned against you! For we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals.”

11Yahweh said to the children of Israel, “Didn’t *I save* *you* from Egypt and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon and from the Philistines? 12And the Sidonians and the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried out to me, and I saved you out of their hand. 13Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods; therefore I will not continue to save you. 14Go and cry out to the gods that you have chosen. Let them save you in the time of your distress!”

15And the children of Israel said to Yahweh, “We have sinned! You yourself do to us whatever seems good in your eyes, only please deliver us this day.” 16And they got rid of the foreign gods from among them and served Yahweh, and his soul was exasperated over the misery of Israel.

17Then the children of Ammon were gathered together and encamped in Gilead, so the children of Israel assembled themselves together and encamped in Mizpah. 18The people, the officials of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? He will be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

**Judges Chapter 11**

Jephthah Delivers Israel

1Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah. 2And Gilead’s wife bore him sons, but when his wife’s sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, “You will not have an inheritance in our father’s house, for you are the son of another woman.” 3So Jephthah fled from the face of his brothers and lived in the land of Tob, and empty men gathered themselves around Jephthah, and they went out with him *on raids*.

4And came to pass after a while that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. 5And it was that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah out of the land of Tob; 6and they said to Jephthah, “Come and be our commander, so that we can fight against the children of Ammon.”

7And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “Is it not you who hated me and drove me out of my father’s house? So why have you come to me now when you are in distress?”

8The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “That being so, we have returned to you now so that you will go with us and fight against the children of Ammon, and you will become our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

9And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “If you bring me back to fight against the children of Ammon, and Yahweh gives them over to me, I will be your head.”

10And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “Yahweh will be a witness between us if we do not do in accordance with your word.” 11So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead and the people made him head and commander over them, and Jephthah spoke all his words before Yahweh in Mizpah.

12Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the children of Ammon, saying, “What is there between me and you, that you have come to me to fight against my land?”

13The king of the children of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, “Because Israel took away my land when he came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok and to the Jordan. So now return those *lands* peaceably.”

14And Jephthah sent messengers again to the king of the children of Ammon, 15and he said to him, “This is what Jephthah says: ‘Israel did not take away the land of Moab or the land of the children of Ammon, 16for when they came up from Egypt, Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. 17Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, “Please let me pass through your land.” But the king of Edom would not listen. And they also sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel stayed in Kadesh.

18“‘Then they went through the wilderness and circled around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and came to the east side of the land of Moab, and they camped on the other side of the Arnon; but they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab.

19“‘And Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, “Please let us pass through your land to my place.” 20But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory, so Sihon gathered all his people together and encamped at Jahaz and fought against Israel. 21And Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel and they struck them *down*. So Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that land. 22They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and from the wilderness as far as the Jordan.

23“‘So now, Yahweh the God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before his people, Israel, and you, would you take possession of it? 24Will you not take possession of whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever Yahweh our God has dispossessed from before us, that we will possess. 25And now are you better, yes better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he contend, yes contend against Israel, or did he fight, yes, fight against them? 26While Israel lived in Heshbon and its daughter-towns, and in Aroer and its daughter-towns, and in all the cities that are along the banks of the Arnon, 300 years, why didn’t you rescue them during that time? 27As for me, I have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me. May Yahweh the Judge, judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.’” 28But the king of the children of Ammon would not listen to the words of Jephthah that he sent to him.

Jephthah’s Vow and Sacrifice

29Then the spirit of Yahweh came on Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, then he passed on to Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed on to the children of Ammon. 30And Jephthah vowed a vow to Yahweh and said, “If you will give, yes, give the children of Ammon into my hand, 31then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it will be Yahweh’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.”

32So Jephthah passed over to the children of Ammon to fight against them, and Yahweh gave them into his hand. 33And he struck them from Aroer as far as where you come to Minnith, even 20 cities, and as far as Abel-keramim, with a very great slaughter. So the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

34And Jephthah came to Mizpah to his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing, and she was his only child, besides her he had neither son nor daughter. 35And it came to pass when he saw her that he tore his clothes and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought, yes, brought me down and have become among those who trouble me, for I myself have opened my mouth to Yahweh and I cannot go back.”

36And she said to him, “My father, you have opened your mouth to Yahweh. Do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, since Yahweh has taken vengeance for you on your enemies, on the children of Ammon.” 37And she said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may depart and go down on the mountains and weep over my virginity; I and my friends.”

38And he said, “Go.” And he sent her away for two months and she departed, she and her friends, and wept over her virginity on the mountains. 39And it came to pass at the end of two months that she returned to her father, who did with her according to his vow that he had vowed, and she never knew any man *sexually*. And it became a custom in Israel 40that the daughters of Israel would go each year to retell *the story* to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in a year.

**Judges Chapter 12**

Jephthah’s Conflict with Ephraim

1And the men of Ephraim were called together and crossed over *the Jordan* to Zaphon, and they said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the children of Ammon and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house over you with fire!”

2And Jephthah said to them, “I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon, and when I called you, you did not save me out of their hand. 3And when I saw that you did not save me, I put my life in my hand and crossed over against the children of Ammon, and Yahweh gave them into my hand. So why have you come up against me this day to fight against me?”

4Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim, and the men of Gilead struck Ephraim because they had said, “You are fugitives of Ephraim, you Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim and in the midst of Manasseh.” 5The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim. And when the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me go over,” the men of Gilead said to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” 6then they said to him, “Now say ‘shibboleth,’” but he would say “sibboleth,” not managing to pronounce it right, then they seized him and slaughtered him at the fords of the Jordan. At that time, 42,000 of Ephraim fell.

7And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in *one of* the cities in Gilead.

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

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

11After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years. 12Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

13And after him Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. 14He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, who rode on 70 donkey colts, and he judged Israel eight years. 15Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim in the hill country of the Amalekites.

**Judges Chapter 13**

The Birth of Samson

1The children of Israel again did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and Yahweh gave them into the hand of the Philistines 40 years. 2There was a certain man of Zorah of the family of the Danites whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and had not given birth. 3And the angel of Yahweh appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have not given birth, but you will conceive and will give birth to a son. 4Now therefore, be careful! Do not drink wine or beer, and do not eat any unclean thing, 5for, behold, you will conceive and bear a son. And no razor is to come on his head, for the child will be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he will begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”

6Then the woman went and told her husband, saying, “A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of an angel of God, very awe-inspiring, but I did not ask him where he was from, nor did he tell me his name, 7but he said to me, ‘Behold, you will conceive and bear a son. So now do not drink wine or beer, and do not eat any unclean thing, for the child will be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’”

8Then Manoah entreated Yahweh and said, “O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we should do for the child who will be born.”

9And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10The woman ran quickly and told her husband, and said to him, “Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.”

11So Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?”

He said, “I am.”

12Manoah said, “Now let your words come to pass. What is to be the rule for the child? And what is his work?”

13The angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, “Let the woman obey all that I said to her. 14She is not to eat of anything that comes from the vine, nor let her drink wine or beer, nor eat any unclean thing. She is to obey all that I commanded her.”

15And Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, “Please let us detain you so that we may make a young goat ready for you,”

16but the angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, “If you detain me, I will not eat of your food, and if you prepare a burnt offering, you must offer it to Yahweh,” (for Manoah did not know that he was an angel of Yahweh).

17Then Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, “What is your name, so that when your words come to pass we may honor you?”

18The angel of Yahweh said to him, “Why do you ask about my name, since it is wonderful?”

19So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to Yahweh, and he did a wonderful thing as Manoah and his wife looked on. 20For it came to pass when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar that the angel of Yahweh ascended in the flame of the altar, and Manoah and his wife looked on, and they fell on their faces to the ground. 21And the angel of Yahweh did not appear to Manoah or to his wife any more. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of Yahweh.

22Then Manoah said to his wife, “We are going to die, yes, die, because we have seen God.”

23But his wife said to him, “If Yahweh were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hand, nor would he have shown us all these things, nor would he have told such things as these at this time.”

24And the woman bore a son and named him Samson, and the child grew, and Yahweh blessed him. 25And the spirit of Yahweh began to stir him up in Mahaneh-dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

**Judges Chapter 14**

Samson’s Riddle and Marriage

1And Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. 2He came up and told his father and his mother and said, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.”

3Then his father and his mother said to him, “Is there not a woman among the daughters of your brothers or among all my people, that you must go to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?”

But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes.” 4But his father and his mother did not know that this was from Yahweh, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

5Then Samson went down, and his father and his mother, to Timnah, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion *came* roaring toward him. 6But the spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore it apart as one would tear apart a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. 7Then he went down and spoke to the woman, and she was right in Samson’s eyes.

8After a while he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the remains of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the carcass of the lion, and honey. 9And he scooped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. And he came to his father and mother and gave *some* to them, and they ate, but he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

10And his father went down to the woman and Samson made a banquet there, as the young men were accustomed to do. 11And when they saw him, they brought 30 companions who remained with him.

12And Samson said to them, “Now let me tell you a riddle. If you can tell, yes, tell it to me within the seven days of the banquet and find it out, then I will give you 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothing, 13but if you cannot tell it to me, then you must give me 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothing.”

And they said to him, “Tell us your riddle, that we may hear it.”

14So he said to them,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | “Out of the eater came food to eat;  out of the strong came *something* sweet.” |

And in three days they could not tell *him* the riddle.

15It came to pass on the fourth day[[7]](#footnote-25370) that they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband to tell the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father’s house with fire. Have you all called us to take our property?”

16So Samson’s wife wept before him and said, “You surely hate me, and do not love me. You have told a riddle to the children of my people and have not told it to me.”

And he said to her, “Behold, I have not told it to my father or my mother, and should I tell you?”

17And she wept before him the seven days while their banquet lasted. And on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him hard, and she told the riddle to the children of her people. 18So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | “What is sweeter than honey?  What is stronger than a lion?”  And he said to them,  “If you had not plowed with my heifer,  you would not have found out my riddle.” |

19And the spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down 30 men of them, and took their spoil and gave the changes of clothing to those who had told *him* the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father’s house. 20But Samson’s wife was given to his companion who had accompanied him.

**Judges Chapter 15**

Samson’s Revenge Against the Philistines

1But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, “I will go into my wife into the inner room.” But her father would not allow him to go in.

2Her father said, “I said to myself, I said, indeed, I thought that you hated, yes, hated her, so I gave her to your companion. Isn’t her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead.”

3Samson said to them, “This time I will be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm.” 4So Samson went and caught 300 jackals and took torches, and turned tail to tail, and put a torch in the middle between every two tails. 5When he had set the torches on fire, he let *them* go into the standing grain of the Philistines and burned up both the stacked grain and the standing grain, and also the vineyards *and* olive trees.

6Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?”

They said, “Samson the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

7So Samson said to them, “Since you do *things* like this, surely I will be avenged of you, and *only* after that will I stop.” 8And he struck them leg on thigh with a great slaughter, and he went down and stayed in the cave of the rock of Etam.

9Then the Philistines went up and encamped in Judah, and spread themselves out in Lehi.

10The men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?”

They said, “We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.”

11Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cave of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?”

And he said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”

12They said to him, “We have come down to bind you *and* to give you into the hand of the Philistines.”

Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not attack me yourselves.”

13And they spoke to him, saying, “No, but we will bind, yes, bind you, and give you into their hand, but kill—we will not kill you.” So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

14When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted[[8]](#footnote-22340) as they met him, but the spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that has been burned with fire, and his bonds melted from off his hands. 15And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey and stretched out his hand and took it, and struck down 1,000 men with it. 16Then Samson said,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | “With the jawbone of a donkey,  heaps on heaps;  with the jawbone of a donkey  I have struck 1,000 men.” |

17And it came to pass when he had finished speaking that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi. 18And he was very thirsty and called on Yahweh and said, “You have given this great deliverance by the hand of your servant, and now will I die for thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” 19So God split open the hollow place that is in Lehi and water came out of it. And when he drank, his spirit came again and he revived; therefore its name was called En-hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day. 20And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines 20 years.

**Judges Chapter 16**

Samson and Delilah

1And Samson went to Gaza and saw a prostitute there and went into her. 2The Gazites *were told*, “Samson is here!” They surrounded *the house* and waited in ambush for him all night in the gate of the city and were quiet all night, saying, “*Wait* until morning light, then we will kill him.” 3Samson lay until the middle of the night then arose in the middle of the night and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

4And after this he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. 5So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him and see where his great strength lies and how we can overpower him so that we can bind him to subdue him, and we will each give you 1,100 *shekels* of silver.”

6So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies and how you can be bound to subdue you.”

7And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have never been dried, then I will become weak and be as any other man.”

8Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9Now she had an ambush waiting in the inner room. And she said to him, “The Philistines are on you, Samson!” But he broke the bowstrings just as a string of flax is broken when it smells fire. So his strength was not known.

10Then Delilah said to Samson, “Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now please tell me how you can be bound.”

11He said to her, “If they bind, yes, bind me with new ropes with which no work has been done, then I will become weak and be as any other man.”

12So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, “The Philistines are on you, Samson!” The ambush was waiting in an inner room, but he broke them off his arms like a thread.

13Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you can be bound.”

He said to her, “If you weave the seven braids of my head into the web *on the loom*.”

14She fastened it with the pin and said to him, “The Philistines are on you, Samson!” But he awakened out of his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom and the web.

15And she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times and have not told me where your great strength lies.”

16And it came to pass when she pressed him hard with her words daily, and pressured him, that his soul was exasperated to death. 17And he told her all his heart and said to her, “No razor has ever come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will go from me and I will become weak and be like all *other* men.”

18When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up this once, for he has told me all his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and brought the silver in their hand.

19And she caused him to sleep on her knees, and she called for a man and he shaved off the seven braids of his head, and she began to humiliate him, and his strength left him. 20And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke out of his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that Yahweh had left him.

21Then the Philistines grabbed him and gouged out his eyes, and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he had to grind *grain* in the prison. 22But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

The Death of Samson

23Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to sacrifice a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, for they said,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | “Our god has given  Samson our enemy into our hand.” |

24And when the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | “Our god has given into our hand our enemy  and the destroyer of our land,  who has slain many of us.” |

25And it came to pass when their hearts were merry that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may amuse us.” So they called for Samson out of the prison and he provided amusement for them. And they stood him between the pillars,

26And Samson said to the boy who held him by the hand, “Let me rest, and let me feel the pillars that support the house, that I may lean on them.” 27Now the house was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about 3,000 men and women who were watching while Samson provided entertainment. 28And Samson called to Yahweh and said, “Lord Yahweh, remember me, please, and strengthen me, please, only this once, God, that I may be avenged with one *act of* vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes.” 29Then Samson took hold of the two middle pillars on which the house was supported and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left. 30And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” He pushed out with strength, and the house fell on the lords and on all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than those who he killed in his life.

31Then his brothers and all the house of his father came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burial site of Manoah his father. And he had judged Israel 20 years.

**Judges Chapter 17**

Micah and the Levite

1And there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. 2And he said to his mother, “The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you and about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.”

His mother said, “May my son be blessed of Yahweh.”

3And he gave the 1,100 pieces of silver back to his mother. And his mother said, “I dedicate, yes, dedicate the silver to Yahweh from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a cast *metal* image. So now I will give it back to you.” 4When he gave the money back to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave them to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a cast *metal* image, and it was in the house of Micah.

5Now the man Micah had a house of God, and he made an ephod and teraphim and installed one of his sons, who became his priest. 6In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did what was right in his own eyes.

7There was a young man out of Bethlehem *in* Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite; and he lived there. 8The man departed out of the city, out of Bethlehem *in* Judah, to live where he could find a place, and he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah as he traveled. 9Micah said to him, “Where did you come from?”

And he said to him, “I am a Levite of Bethlehem *in* Judah and I am looking for a place to live.”

10Micah said to him, “Dwell with me and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver per year, a suit of clothing and your food.” So the Levite went in. 11So the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man was to him as one of his sons. 12So Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and was in the house of Micah. 13Then Micah said, “Now know I that Yahweh will do good to me, since I have a Levite to be my priest.”

**Judges Chapter 18**

Dan’s Invasion and Idolatry

1In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites sought an inheritance to live in, for up to that day their inheritance had not fallen to them among the tribes of Israel. 2So the children of Dan sent of their family five men from among all their people, men of valor from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to explore it. And they said to them, “Go, explore the land!”

And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and they spent the night there. 3When they were at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man the Levite, and they turned aside there and said to him, “Who brought you here? What do you do in this place? What *business* do you have here?” 4And he said to them, “Thus and thus has Micah dealt with me, and he has hired me and I have become his priest.”

5And they said to him, “Please inquire of God, so that we may know whether the way on which we are going will be successful.”

6And the priest said to them, “Go in peace. *Acceptable* before Yahweh is your way on which you are going.”

7Then the five men departed and came to Laish. And they saw the people who were in it living securely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; lacking nothing that is in the earth and possessing wealth, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone.

8They came *back* to their brothers—to Zorah and Eshtaol—and their brothers said to them, “What do you *think*?”

9And they said, “Arise, and let’s go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. Do you stand still? Do not be slothful to go and to enter in to possess the land. 10When you go, you will come to a secure people, and the land is wide; for God has given it into your hand, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth.” 11So they set out from there—out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol—600 men of the family of the Danites armed with weapons of war. 12They went up and encamped in Kiriath-jearim in Judah, so they called that place Mahaneh-dan[[9]](#footnote-22726) to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim. 13And they passed from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

14Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brothers, “Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod and teraphim[[10]](#footnote-21435) and a carved image and a cast *metal* image? Now, therefore, consider what you have to do.” 15So they turned aside there and came to the house of the young man the Levite, to the house of Micah, and greeted him. 16And the 600 men who were of the children of Dan, armed with their weapons of war, stood by the entrance of the gate. 17The five men who went to spy out the land came up and went in there, and took the carved image and the ephod, and the teraphim and the cast *metal* image, and the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the 600 men armed with weapons of war.

18When these *men* went into Micah’s house and took the engraved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the cast *metal* image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

19But they said to him, “Be quiet! Put your hand over your mouth and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?” 20And the priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod and the teraphim and the carved image and went along with the people. 21So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the livestock and the goods before them.

22And when they had gone quite far from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah’s house were gathered together and caught up with the children of Dan. 23And they called out to the children of Dan, and the Danites turned their faces and said to Micah, “What is the matter with you, that you have gathered yourselves together *to fight*?”

24Then he said, “You have taken away my gods that I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what do I have left? So how can you say to me, ‘What is the matter with you?’”

25Then the children of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall on you and you lose your life and the lives of your household.” 26So the children of Dan went their way, and Micah saw that they were too strong for him so he turned and went back to his house.

27So they took what Micah had made and the priest that he had and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the mouth of the sword and they burned the city with fire. 28And there was no deliverer because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with any man, and it was in the valley that lies by Beth-rehob. And they built the city and lived in it. 29And they called the name of the city Dan after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel, however, formerly the name of the city was Laish.

30And the children of Dan set up the carved image for themselves, and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. 31So they set up for themselves Micah’s carved image that he made, all the days that the house of God was in Shiloh.

**Judges Chapter 19**

A Levite and His Concubine

1And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a man, a Levite, living in the remote part of the hill country of Ephraim who took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem *in* Judah. 2But his concubine was unfaithful to him and went away from him to her father’s house to Bethlehem *in* Judah, and was there for a period of four months. 3Then her husband arose and went after her to speak to her heart to bring her back. He had his young servant with him and a pair of donkeys. And she brought him into her father’s house, and when the father of the young woman saw him, he rejoiced at meeting him. 4His father-in-law, the young woman’s father, prevailed upon him so that he stayed with him three days, and they ate and drank, and spent the nights there.

5And it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning and prepared to leave, but the young woman’s father said to his son-in-law, “Strengthen your heart with a piece of bread, and after that you can go.” 6So they sat down, the two of them together, and they ate and drank. And the young woman’s father said to the man, “Be content, please, and stay the night, and let your heart be merry.” 7And the man rose up to go but his father-in-law pressed him, and so he stayed there again. 8And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman’s father said, “Please strengthen your heart and wait until the day lengthens.” So the two of them ate. 9And when the man rose up to depart, he and his concubine and his servant, his father-in-law, the young woman’s father, said to him, “Behold now, the day is weakening, *growing* toward the evening! Stay the night, look, the day is declining. Stay here and let your heart be merry, and tomorrow you can go on your way early and go to your tent.”

10But the man would not stay that night, but rose up and departed and arrived at *a place* opposite Jebus (which is Jerusalem) and with him were a pair of loaded donkeys, and his concubine was with him. 11When they were by Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his lord, “Please now, let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it.”

12But his lord said to him, “We will not turn aside into the foreign city that is not of the children of Israel, but we will go on to Gibeah.” 13So he said to his servant, “Come and let’s draw near to one of these places and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah.” 14So they passed on and went their way, and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. 15And they turned aside there to go in and to spend the night in Gibeah, and he went in and sat down in the open square of the city. But no one took them into his house to spend the night.

16And behold, in the evening an old man came from his work, from the field, and the man was from the hill country of Ephraim. He was living in Gibeah even though the men of the place were Benjamites. 17And he lifted up his eyes and saw the man, the traveler, in the town square, and the old man said, “Where are you going? And where did you come from?”

18And he said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem *in* Judah to the remote hill country of Ephraim. I am from there, and I went to Bethlehem *in* Judah. I am going to the house of Yahweh, but no one has taken me into his house. 19Yet there is both straw and feed for our donkeys, and there is bread and wine for me and for your female servant and for the young man who is with your servants. There is no lack of anything.”

20And the old man said, “Peace be to you; but let whatever you lack be on me, only do not spend the night in the square.” 21So he brought him into his house and gave the donkeys food. And they washed their feet and ate and drank. 22As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, surrounded the house. They kept beating on the door, and they spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came into your house so that we can know him *sexually*!”

23But the man, the owner of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brothers, please do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house do not do this disgraceful folly. 24Behold, here is my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Abuse them and do with them whatever is good in your eyes, but do not do to this man any such disgraceful folly.”

25And the men did not want to listen to him, but the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them, outside, and they knew her *sexually* and abused her all night until the morning, and they sent her away when the day began to dawn. 26And toward the morning, the woman made her way back and fell down at the door of the man’s house where her lord was, *and remained there* until it was light.

27And her lord rose up in the morning, and he opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way. And behold, the woman, his concubine, was fallen down at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold! 28And he said to her, “Get up! Let’s go!” But there was no answer. Then he put her up on the donkey, and the man arose and went to his place.

29And he came into his house, and he took a knife and laid hold of his concubine and divided her, limb by limb, into 12 pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. 30And it came to pass that all who saw it said, “Never has been and never has been seen, *anything* like this from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt to this day! Consider it, take counsel, and speak up.”

**Judges Chapter 20**

War against Benjamin

1Then all the children of Israel went out and the congregation was assembled as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, along with the land of Gilead, to Yahweh at Mizpah. 2The “cornerstones” of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew sword. 3(Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah).

The children of Israel said, “Tell us, how did this evil happen?”

4The Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered, “I came to Gibeah that belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. 5And the men of Gibeah rose against me and surrounded the house against me at night. They intended to kill me, and they abused my concubine so that she died. 6So I took my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel, for they have committed lewdness and a disgraceful folly in Israel. 7Behold, all of you, O children of Israel, give your advice and counsel here.”

8And all the people arose as one man, saying, “None of us will go to his tent, nor will any of us turn aside to his house. 9But now this is the thing that we will do to Gibeah: *go up* against it by lot, 10and we will take ten men of 100 throughout all the tribes of Israel, and 100 of 1,000, and 1,000 out of 10,000, to get food for the people so that they may make *it ready* for when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin in accordance with all the disgraceful folly that they have committed in Israel.”

11So all the men of Israel were gathered together against the city, united as one man. 12And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this evil that has happened among you? 13So now give over the men, the sons of Belial who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and eliminate evil from Israel.”

But Benjamin did not want to listen to the voice of their brothers the children of Israel. 14And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities to Gibeah to go out to battle against the children of Israel. 15The children of Benjamin were numbered on that day out of the cities 26,000 men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah who were 700 chosen men. 16Out of all these people there were 700 chosen men *who were* left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

17And the men of Israel, apart from Benjamin, numbered 400,000 men who drew the sword; all these were men of war. 18The children of Israel arose and went up to Bethel and inquired of God, and they said, “Who is to go up first for us to battle against the children of Benjamin?”

And Yahweh said, “Judah first.”

19So the children of Israel rose up in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. 20And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel set themselves in battle formations against them at Gibeah. 21And the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and destroyed of the Israelites on that day 22,000 men; *cut them down* to the ground. 22But the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and set battle formations again in the place where they had set battle formations on the first day. 23And the children of Israel went up and wept before Yahweh until evening, and they inquired of Yahweh, saying, “Should I again draw near to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?”

And Yahweh said, “Go up against him.”

24So the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin on the second day. 25And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah on the second day and again destroyed down to the ground 18,000 men of the children of Israel. All these drew the sword.

26Then all the children of Israel and all the army went up and came to Bethel, and wept, and sat there before Yahweh, and fasted that day until evening, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh. 27And the children of Israel inquired of Yahweh (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days 28and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, “Should I once again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or should I cease?”

Yahweh said, “Go up, for tomorrow I will give him into your hand.” 29So Israel set ambushes all around against Gibeah. 30The children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day and set battle formations against Gibeah as at other times. 31And the children of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city and they began to strike and kill of the people, as at other times, on the highways (of which one goes up to Bethel, and the other to Gibeah in the open country), about 30 men of Israel. 32And the children of Benjamin said, “They are struck down before us, as at the first!”

But the children of Israel said, “Let’s flee and draw them away from the city to the highways.” 33And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place and set up *battle* formation at Baal-tamar, and the ambushers of Israel broke forth out of their place, out of Maareh-geba. 34And 10,000 chosen men out of all Israel came over against Gibeah, and the battle was severe, but the *Benjamites* did not know that evil was coming upon them. 35Yahweh struck Benjamin before Israel, and the children of Israel destroyed of Benjamin that day 25,100; all these drew the sword. 36So the children of Benjamin saw that they were struck.

The men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they trusted the ambushers whom they had set against Gibeah. 37The ambushers hurried and rushed on Gibeah, and the ambushers spread out and struck the whole city with the mouth of the sword. 38Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the ambushers was to send up a great cloud of smoke from the city. 39The men of Israel had turned back in the battle and Benjamin had begun to strike and kill of the men of Israel about 30 persons, for they said, “Surely they are defeated, yes, defeated before us, as in the first battle.” 40But when the cloud began to arise up out of the city in a pillar of smoke, Benjamin looked behind him, and behold, the whole city was going up *in smoke* to the heavens! 41Then the men of Israel turned around, and the men of Benjamin were dismayed because they saw that evil had come on them. 42So they turned from before the men of Israel to the way of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them, and those who were from the cities they destroyed in each *city*. 43They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them and trod them down from Nohah to a point opposite Gibeah, toward the sunrise. 44There fell of Benjamin 18,000 men; all these were men of valor. 45They turned and fled toward the wilderness to the Rock of Rimmon, and they gleaned of them 5,000 men on the highways, and overtook them and cut them down, and struck *another* 2,000 men of them.

46So that all who fell that day of Benjamin were 25,000 men who drew the sword; all these were men of valor. 47But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the Rock of Rimmon and stayed at the Rock of Rimmon four months. 48Then the men of Israel returned to the *cities of* children of Benjamin and struck them with the mouth of the sword, both the entire city and the livestock and all that they found; moreover, all the cities that they found they sent up in fire.

**Judges Chapter 21**

Wives Provided for Benjamin

1Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, “None of us will give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife.” 2And the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, and lifted up their voices and wept—a great weeping! 3And they said, “O Yahweh, the God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel, that today there should be one tribe counted *missing* from Israel?” 4And on the next day the people rose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5And the children of Israel said, “Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to Yahweh?” For they had made a great oath against anyone who did not come up to Yahweh to Mizpah, saying, “He will be put to death, yes, death.”

6The children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother and said, “Today one tribe is cut off from Israel! 7How can we provide wives for those who remain, since we have sworn by Yahweh not to give them our daughters as wives?” 8Then they said, “Which one is there of the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Yahweh to Mizpah?” And behold, no one had come from Jabesh-gilead to the camp, to the assembly. 9For when the people were counted, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

10So the congregation sent there 12,000 of the most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the mouth of the sword, along with the women and the little ones. 11This is the thing that you are to do. You are to devote to destruction every male, and every woman who has lain with a man.” 12And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him, and they brought them to the camp, to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

13And the whole congregation sent and spoke to the children of Benjamin who were in the Rock of Rimmon and called out to them, “Peace!” 14So Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead. But even so, they did not find enough for them.

15The people grieved for Benjamin, because Yahweh had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. 16Then the elders of the congregation said, “How can we provide wives for those who remain, since the women have been destroyed from Benjamin?” 17And they said, “*There must be* an inheritance for the survivors from Benjamin, so that a tribe is not wiped out from Israel. 18However, we may not give them wives from our daughters” (for the children of Israel had sworn, saying, “Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin”) 19so they said, “Behold, there is a feast of Yahweh from year to year in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem and on the south of Lebonah.”

20They commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards 21and keep watch. And behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then you are to go out of the vineyards and seize for yourselves, each one, his wife from the daughters of Shiloh and go *back* to the land of Benjamin. 22And when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we will say to them, ‘Be gracious to them, because we did not get a wife for each man in the battle. And you did not give *your daughters* to them, otherwise you would now be guilty.’”

23And the children of Benjamin did so, and took wives, according to their number, of those who danced, whom they carried off. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, rebuilt the cities, and lived in them. 24And the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from there, every man to his inheritance.

25In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

1. Or “worshiped” [↑](#footnote-ref-10939)
2. A “gomed” is likely just shorter than a cubit. Likely 16 inches (40 centimeters) [↑](#footnote-ref-25098)
3. A euphemism for going to the bathroom [↑](#footnote-ref-21196)
4. Almost 8 gallons (22 liters) [↑](#footnote-ref-18848)
5. Roughly 42.5 pounds (19 kilograms) [↑](#footnote-ref-13555)
6. Euphemism for genital area. [↑](#footnote-ref-19680)
7. The Masoretic Hebrew text reads “seventh.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25370)
8. Or “shouted a war cry” [↑](#footnote-ref-22340)
9. Mahaneh-dan means “Camp of Dan.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22726)
10. Teraphim were household gods. [↑](#footnote-ref-21435)