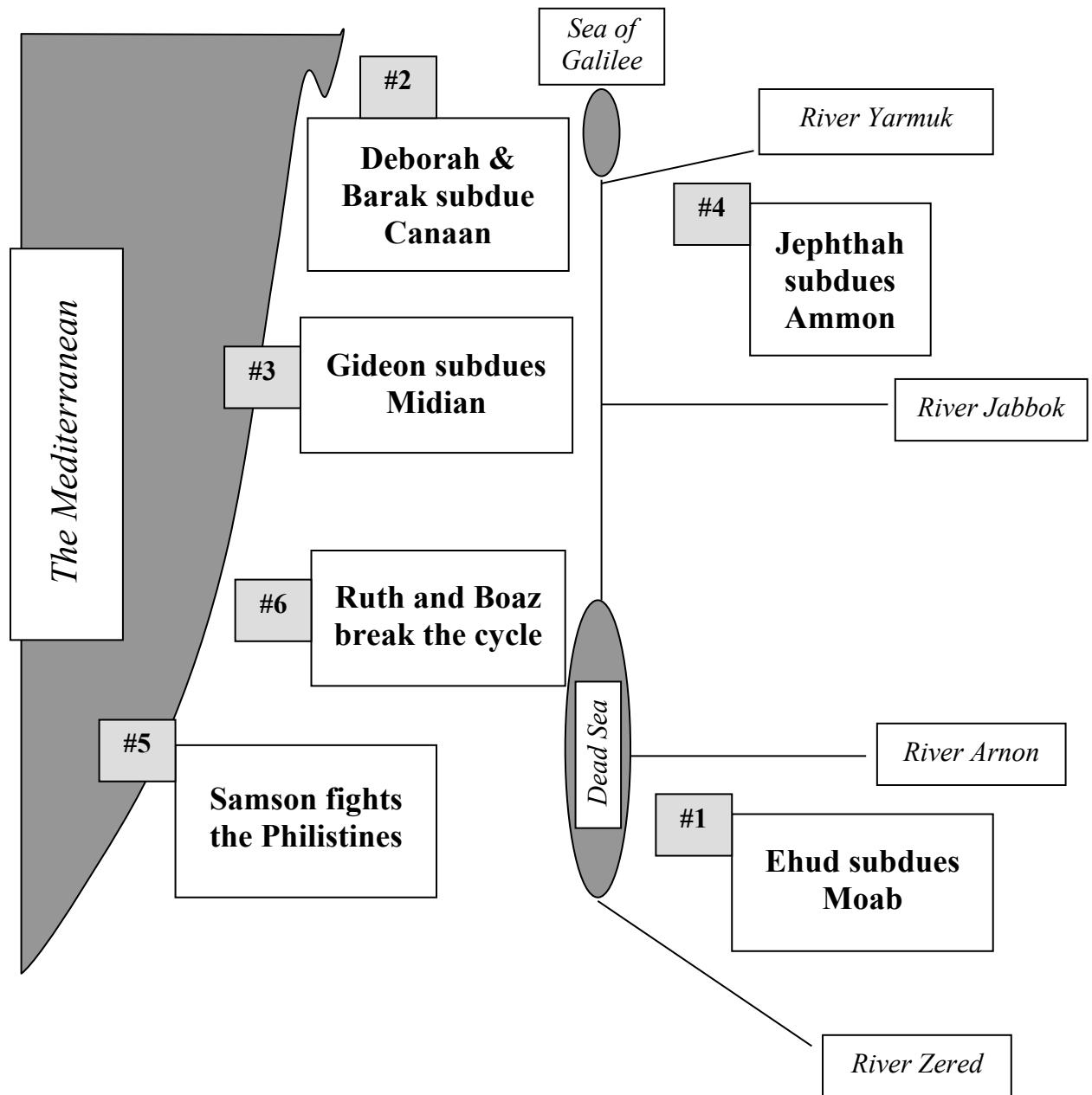


# Judges and Ruth

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

**Class material by Gary Copeland, 2022.**

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

**Usage note:** Because of the fast pace of the class, each lesson has many questions. Each question is not necessarily intended to be answered in class, but the process of answering the questions at home is intended to give the student a decent grasp of the material. Then class time can be spent discussing higher level questions, relating the events to other Bible passages, and making applications.

**Syllabus**

*Insert  
calendar  
dates for the  
class here*

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**Primary Sources**

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

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

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

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

## Outlines of Judges

**Here is an easy-to-memorize outline:**

**Chapters**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>1-2</b>   | The Incomplete Conquest and Its Consequences |
| <b>3-8</b>   | Deliverance from Moab, Canaan, and Midian    |
| <b>9</b>     | Abimelech the Non-Judge                      |
| <b>10-16</b> | Deliverance from Ammon and the Philistines   |
| <b>17-21</b> | Idolatry, Immorality, and In-fighting        |

**Here is a more detailed outline<sup>1</sup>:**

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

- I. Failure to Complete the Conquest: Political and Spiritual Settings (1:1-36)**
- II. God's Judgment for Not Completing the Conquest (2:1 – 3:6)**

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

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

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

- I. Idolatry (17:1 – 18:31)**
  - A. Personal Idolatry (17:1-13)
  - B. Tribal Idolatry (18:1-31)
- II. Immorality (19:1-30)**
  - A. Personal Immorality (19:1-10)
  - B. Tribal Immorality (19:11-30)
- III. In-Fighting Among the Tribes (20:1 – 21:25)**
  - A. War between Israel and Benjamin (20:1-48)
  - B. Failure of Israel after the War (21:1-25)

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

## ***Lesson 1: The Political Setting (Judges 1)***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Judges 1:1-18: Limited Success

1. Which two tribes help each other fight to take control of their territories?
  2. Assuming they start from Shechem, which direction do they head?
  3. How is “poetic justice” rendered upon Adoni-Bezek?
  4. What does Judah do to Jerusalem?
  5. How does Caleb motivate the attack against Kirjath Sepher?
  6. Who accomplishes it?
  7. How does the woman cause the reward to be increased?
  8. Identify “the city of palms.” (Cp. Deut. 34:3 and 2 Chron. 28:15.)
  9. Where do Judah and Simeon attack next?
  10. *Concordance work:* What nation is later associated with the three cities of verse 18?

11. Who lives there at the time of Judges 1? (Cp. Joshua 11:22.)

**Judges 1:19-36: Widespread Failure**

12. Whom does Judah not drive out, and why?

13. What does Benjamin fail to do? What is the result of this failure?

14. How does “the house of Joseph” get into Bethel? What do they do to the city?

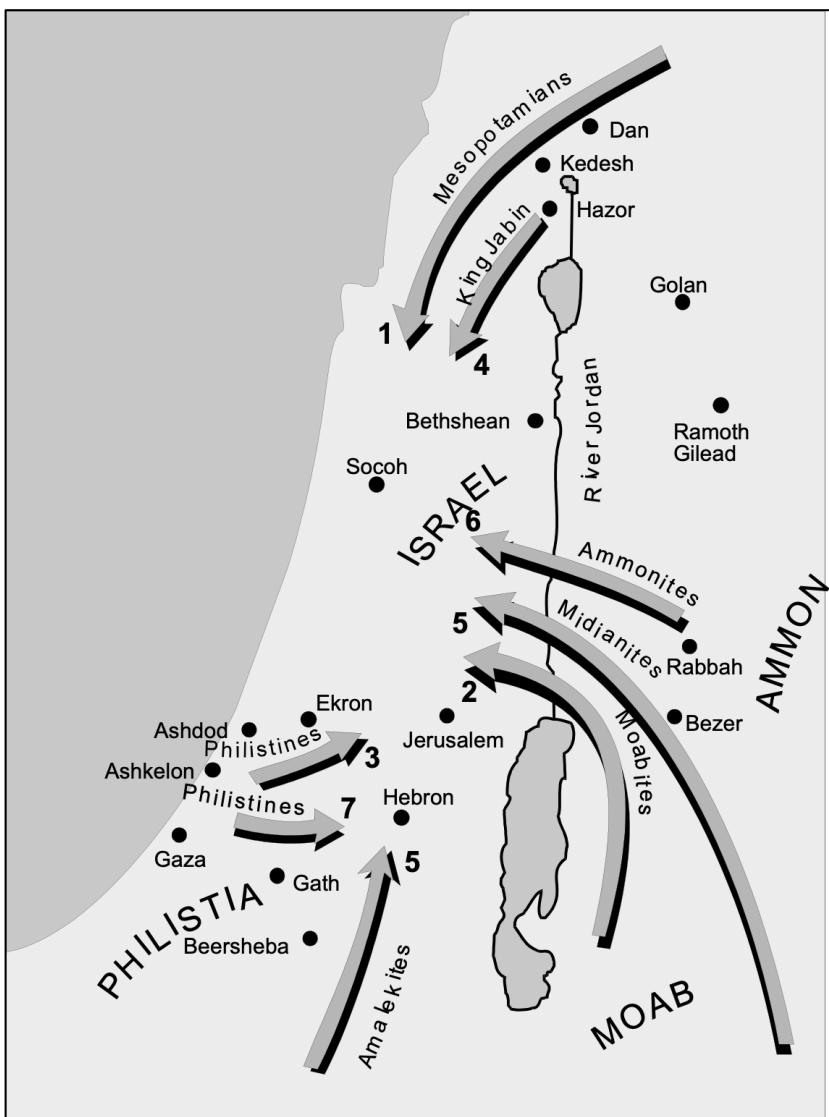
15. Who is spared by “the house of Joseph,” and what does he do?

16. *[Key point]* In verses 27-36, how many tribes fail to “drive out the inhabitants”?

17. Depending on the translation you use (incl., CSB, LEB, MEV, NIV, NKJV, NLT), you’ll see the same reason for both Manasseh’s failure and Dan’s failure in vv. 27 and 35. Tell the reason.

18. What is done *eventually* to the inhabitants in four of these cases?

## Enemies on Every Hand

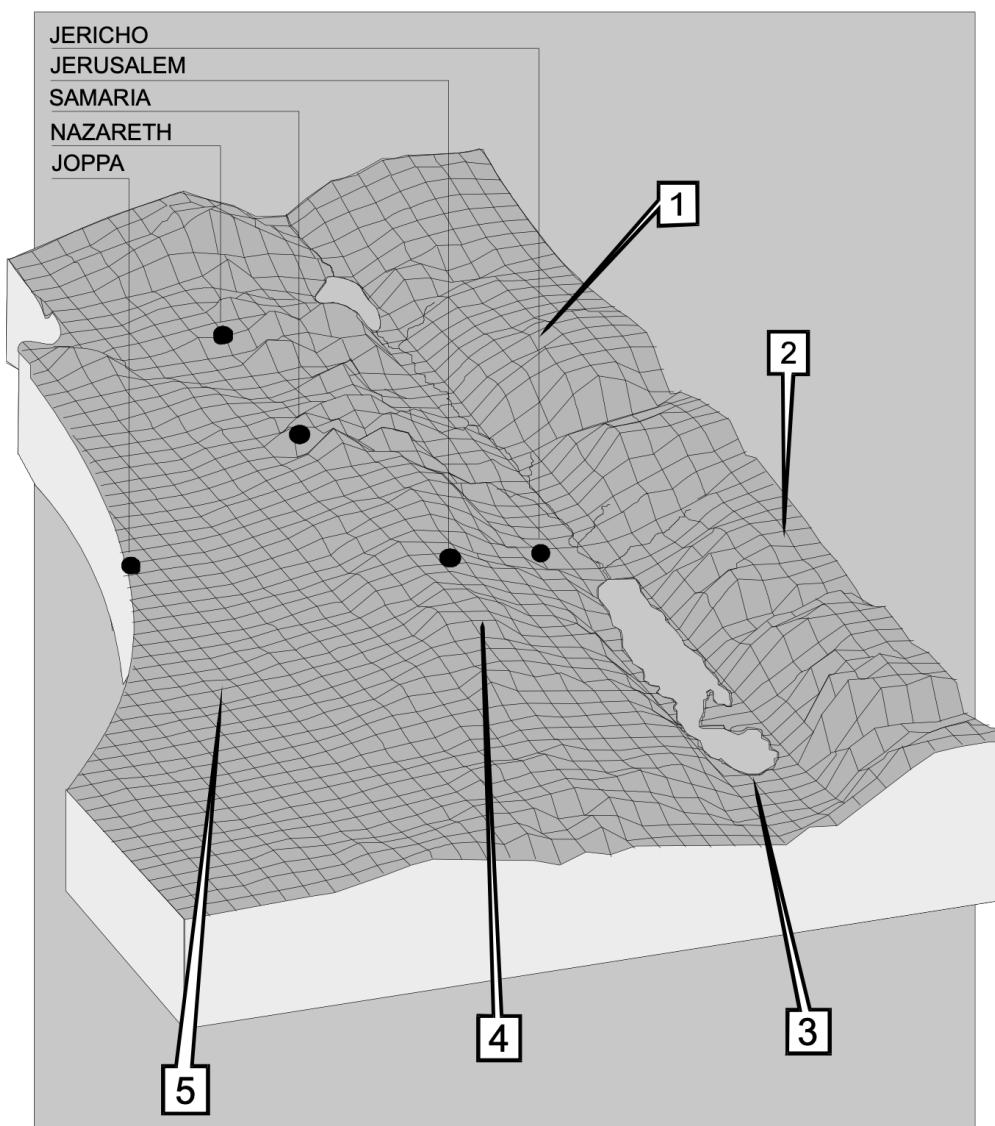


Israel's incomplete conquest and the worship of foreign gods caused great problems in the time of the judges. The Israelites came under the rule of one country after another. However, several of the judges defeated the enemy armies and liberated Israel.

1. **Othniel** defeats King Cushan Rishathaim of Mesopotamia, who had ruled Israel for 8 years (**Judges 3:7–11**).
2. **Ehud** defeats King Eglon of Moab who had ruled for 18 years (**Judges 3:12–30**).
3. **Shamgar** defeats the Philistines (**Judges 3:31**).
4. **Deborah and Barak** defeat Jabin of Hazor, who had ruled Israel 'with cruelty and violence for 20 years' (**Judges 4–5**).
5. **Gideon** drives out the Midianites and Amalekites who had oppressed Israel for 7 years (**Judges 6–8**).
6. **Jephthah** defeats the Ammonites, who had ruled in Israel for 18 years (**Judges 10:6–12:7**).
7. **Samson** accomplished great exploits against the Philistines, who had ruled Israel for 40 years (**Judges 13–16**).<sup>1</sup>

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

## Topography of Palestine



### 1. EASTERN HILLS.

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

### 2. THE DESERT.

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

### 3. THE JORDAN VALLEY.

A great geological fault splits

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

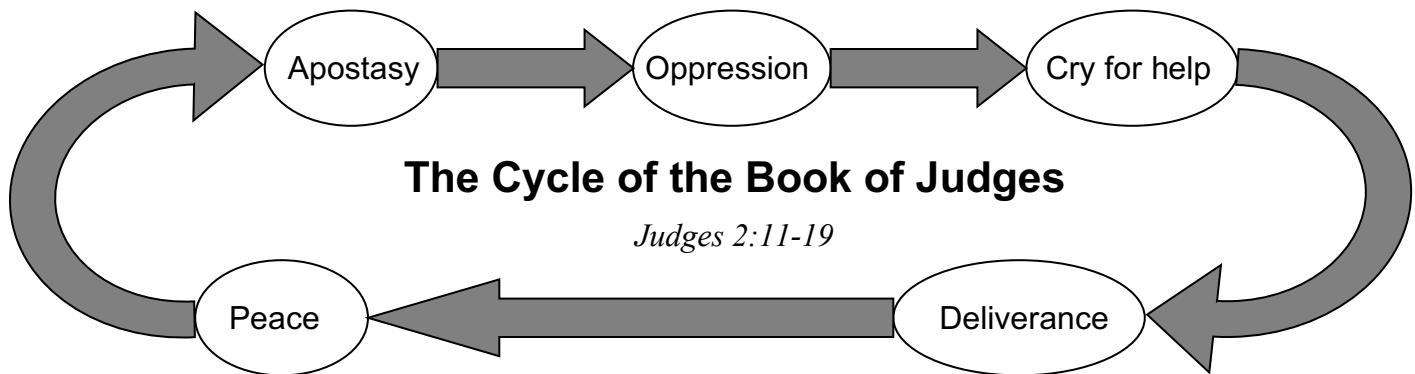
**4. THE HILL COUNTRY.** The hill country of Judah held plenty of opportunities for guerilla warfare and was a formidable challenge for a would-be attacker. The hills were covered by woods. Galilee in the north was richly fertile, prosperous, and densely settled in Jesus' time.

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

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

## Lesson 2: The Spiritual Setting (Judges 2)



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

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

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

Concerning **making covenants** with the natives of Palestine, see Exodus 23:30-33, 34:10-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

---

### Intro

1. What is the theme of the book of Judges?
2. What are the five events of the cycle in the book of Judges?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.

3. How many times had the Israelites promised to follow the Lord in Joshua 24:14-24?

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

4. Of what two facts does the Angel of the Lord remind the people?
  - a)
  - b)
5. What would their punishment be?
6. Translate the name of that place, Bochim. (*See footnote or look up the definition.*)
7. Where do the people go after Joshua dismisses them?
8. Discuss the restrictions on making covenants with the peoples in Canaan:
  - a. What was the main reason for the prohibition?
  - b. What was the extreme requirement regarding how to deal with the natives?
9. For how long do the people remain faithful?

**Judges 2:10-23: Apostasy and More Apostasy**

10. What does the next generation do?

11. What is said of the Lord's anger?

What does He do to punish Israel?

12. Whom does God raise up for deliverance?

13. How does Israel respond to the judges?

14. Why does God deliver the people?

15. What happens when the judge dies?
16. What reason is given for God leaving the nations in the time of Joshua and beyond?

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

17. In addition to the reason given in v. 4 (repeating what was said in 2:20-23), what other purpose is served by the presence of the remaining nations?
18. What two things did the Israelites do while dwelling among the Canaanites?
  - a)
  - b)

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

“*Shophetim*” – the Hebrew title “Judges” – refers to people who do more than merely pass judgment on various disputes and concerns: They also “deliver” or “liberate.”

**Judges 2:18** “When the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge.”

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

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

There had been **civil judges** appointed in Israel even before the Law was given at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 18:13-27), and the 70 elders had been appointed during the wilderness wanderings to ease Moses’ burden of leading the people (Numbers 11:14-17). Moses also intended for there to be judges in Canaan to maintain justice and settle disputes (Deut. 16:18; e.g., 1 Sam. 8:3). As in the case of Deborah, a judge might have been serving in that type of civil capacity before God called him or her to deliver Israel in battle (Judges 4:4-5). But only the judges in Judges were military *deliverers*.

However, the judges were distinct from ordinary military leaders. They were *appointed by God*, sometimes even over the judge’s own doubts and objections, as in the case of Gideon (Judges 6:11ff). Gideon’s son, Abimelech (chapter 9) was self-willed and *self-appointed*, unlike a true judge. Notice that the text says he “**reigned over** Israel three years” (Judges 9:22, emphasis mine, GC), and the text never says he “*judged*” Israel. Also, concerning the nature of Abimelech’s fighting, notice that he does not deliver Israel from any oppression. Rather, we see that Abimelech is more of an oppressor, himself, than a deliverer! Considerable space is given in the book to Abimelech’s actions, apparently to show us what a true judge was *not*.

**Map work:** The identity and location of **Cushan-Rishathaim** is uncertain from other historical records, beyond what the Bible text says. The location of **Meroz** has not been confirmed. The city of **Debir** was in the southern hills of Judah. (See the long ISBE article.)

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

### Judges 3:7-11: Introduction to the Judges

1. Whom do the people forget, and whom do they serve?
2. What is God's emotional reaction?
3. Into whose hand does God sell Israel? For how long do they serve him?
4. Who is the deliverer whom God raises up?
5. What had he done previously, according to chapter 1?
6. For how long does the land have rest?

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

<b>The Table of the Judges</b>				
Judge's Name	Tribe	Oppressor	Years of Oppression	Years of Rest/Judge's Rule
1. Othniel				
2. Ehud				
3. Shamgar				
4. Deborah/Barak				
5. Gideon				
6. Tola				
7. Jair				
8. Jephthah				
9. Ibzan				
10. Elon				
11. Abdon				
12. Samson				

### Judges 3:12-30: Ehud

7. Whom does God strengthen against Israel *next*?
  
8. What other two peoples help him?
  
9. For how long does Israel serve him?
  
10. Who is the deliverer whom God raises up?
  
11. What physical trait does he use to his advantage?
  
12. What is he sent to do?
  
13. Describe the deception and the assassination.

14. How does Ehud escape?
15. Whom does Ehud rally, and how many enemies do they kill?
16. For how long does the land have rest?
17. From verse 31, tell the next judge mentioned and what he did. NKJV)

**Judges 4: Deborah and Barak**

18. Into whose hand are the Israelites sold? Where does he reign?
19. Who is the commander of his army, and where does he live?
20. Why do the children of Israel cry out to the Lord?
21. Who is already judging Israel (apparently in civil matters) at this time?
22. In what territory was her open-air “office”?
23. For whom does she send, and what tribe is he from?
24. What does she tell him to do?
25. Why will he receive no glory?
26. Through what event will someone else receive the glory?
27. Who is Heber, and what had he done, especially regarding Jabin?
28. Describe the initial battle.
29. Who escapes the battle, and where does he go?

30. Tell the events surrounding his death.

**Judges 5: The Song of Deborah**

31. What did Deborah and Barak do on that day?

32. Besides praise to God, what themes emerge in the song?

(vv. 2, 9, 14-18, 23)

(vv. 6, 7, 24)

33. What happened when the Lord went out from Seir?

34. How was life before Deborah?

35. What is to be recounted and spoken? (v. 11)

36. Which tribes help Deborah and Barak?

37. Which tribes do not?

38. Describe the role of nature in Sisera's defeat. (vv. 4, 5, 20, 21)

39. Why is Meroz cursed?

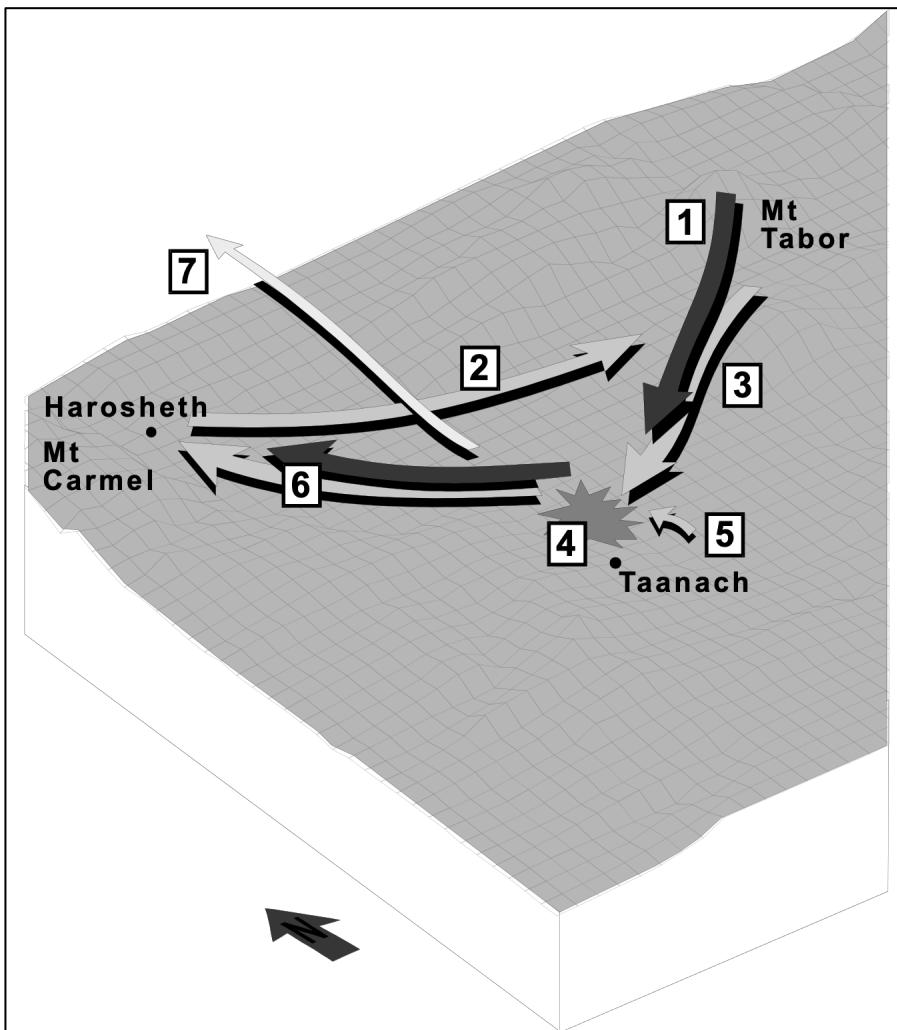
40. Why is Jael most blessed among women?

41. Why is the mother of Sisera worried?

42. How do her wise advisors comfort her (with wishful thinking)?

43. For how long does the land have rest?

## Deborah's Victory



Israel has been oppressed by the violent rule of King Jabin of Hazor for 20 years.

Deborah, a prophetess, makes plans with Barak to lure the army of Jabin to defeat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Lesson 4: Gideon (Judges 6 – 8)

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

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

**Map work: Mt. Tabor** and the hill of Moreh were next to each other, just north of the **Valley of Jezreel**.

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

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

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

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

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

### Judges 6:1-10: An Evil Situation

1. When Israelites again do evil, the country of \_\_\_\_\_ persecutes them for 7 years.
2. When they and their allies move in, how many are there?
3. How does the persecution affect the Israelites' economy?
4. Where are the Israelites living?
5. Whom does God send (*before* raising up a judge)?

### Gideon Sends Midian Back Home



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

6. According to him, tell three things God had done for the Israelites.

a)

b)

c)

7. What had God asked in return?

8. The Israelites had not obeyed God's \_\_\_\_\_ Does God still listen to the Israelites?

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

9. Describe Gideon from verses 12 and 14.

10. Tell Gideon's actions and statements that show he was NOT what the Angel was describing:

a. (fear of the Midianites)

b. (lack of understanding of God's punishment)

c. (walking by sight, not faith)

d. (reliance on his own strength)

11. How would Gideon be able to do everything he does? (See verses 12, 14, and 16.)

12. The defeat of the enemies was foretold as being compared to the defeat of \_\_\_\_\_ man."

13. What sign is Gideon shown to prove that it was *the Lord* talking with him?

14. Tell what Gideon says and does to show his reverence for the meeting and the sign.

a.

b.

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

15. What is Gideon told to remove *that same night*, and with what is he told to replace them?

a.

b.

16. Besides the Midianites, of whom is Gideon afraid?

17. What do those very men want to do to Gideon?

18. Who (surprisingly) supports Gideon's actions?

19. What is Gideon's new name?

What does it mean?

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

20. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Gideon, he is brave enough to do what?

21. For what two signs does Gideon ask (*after* this brave act)?

a.

b.

22. From how many tribes does Gideon ask help?

How many soldiers are there at first?

23. **[Key point]** Why does God want there to be fewer soldiers?

24. What two methods does God use for thinning their ranks?

a.

b.

25. Why does God select the men who lap? (*Choose one answer.*)

- a. Because they are more militarily astute/prepared
- b. Because there are fewer of them

26. What additional sign does God give Gideon to encourage him?

**Judges 7:19-25: The “Battle”**

27. What three things do Gideon and his men do to start the nighttime battle?

a.

b.

c.

28. Who does all the killing of Midianites in the camp?

29. Who beheads Oreb and Zeeb?

**Judges 8:1-21: Mopping Up**

30. What complaint do the men of Ephraim have?

How does Gideon respond?

31. Who is with Gideon at this point, and what are they doing?

32. What do the men of Succoth and Penuel refuse to do?

What does Gideon do to the elders of Succoth?

What does he do to the men of Penuel?

33. Where are Zebah and Zalmunna, and how many men are with them?

How many men have already been killed?

34. When does Gideon attack their army?

35. What command does Gideon's oldest son not obey?

Why not?

How does Gideon respond?

**Judges 8:22-28: Gideon's Influence**

36. Why does Gideon refuse the request of the men of Israel to rule as the first in a dynasty?

37. What does Gideon do with jewelry from the plunder?

What happens with that item?

38. What becomes of the Midianites?

**Judges 8:29-35: Gideon's Legacy**

39. What happens as soon as Gideon is dead?

40. The only other Bible reference to Gideon in the Bible is in Heb. 11:32. With what group of people is he mentioned?

What phrases from Heb. 11:33-38 describe Gideon?

41. List other faithful men who were little in their own eyes when God called them.

42. Find New Testament passages that fit with the last half of Judges 7:2.

43. Identify parts of Gideon's story that remind us of ...

Moses' objections to God's calling –

Abraham's intercession for Sodom –

Joshua's conquest of Jericho –

Israel asking for a king –

The golden calf at Sinai –

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

*Map work:* Apparently **Shechem**'s central location in Canaan was responsible for this ancient city's frequent mention in the Old Testament. (The ISBE has a long article about the city, with good photographs of extensive excavation. Some remaining walls are 30' high. Various artifacts from various periods have been found at the site.) Shechem is the first city in Canaan where God had appeared to Abraham (Genesis 12:6-7). The text mentions a prominent terebinth tree where Abram built an altar in response to the covenant with God. Centuries later at Shechem, Joshua renewed the covenant of God with the people and erected a large, sacred stone under a prominent oak tree. (Joshua 24:1, 26 - A **terebinth** is a type of oak.) By Abimelech's time, the Israelites had turned that sacred area into a temple for Baal-Berith (literally, "lord of the covenant"), and that temple of Baal had a fortified tower, or "stronghold" (Judges 9:4, 46-47). The men of Shechem "**made Abimelech king** beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that *was* in Shechem" (Judges 9:6, emphasis mine, GC).

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

Remember from Lesson 3 that Abimelech possesses *neither* of the two features that identify a true judge: 1) Selected by God; 2) Delivered the people. Abimelech *promotes himself* and murders his brothers to stay in power, and eventually kills the (wicked) men who helped put him in power.

**Abimelech is more of an oppressor, himself, than a deliverer.** To his everlasting shame, he is finally killed by a woman (Judges 9:53-54; 2 Sam. 11:21). He embodies everything a judge should *not* have been and displays *none* of the qualities of a true servant of God.

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

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### Judges 9:1-6: Abimelech's Conspiracy

1. Whom does Abimelech first approach concerning his desire to reign?
  
2. In what sense was Abimelech a "brother" to the men of Shechem? (9:3)
  
3. Who pays Abimelech 70 shekels of silver?
  
4. From where does the money come?
  
5. What does Abimelech do with the money?
  
6. What does Abimelech do in Ophrah?
  
7. Who escapes?

8. What do the men of Shechem do to Abimelech?

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

9. Which noble trees and plants refused to reign over the trees? :

10. What does Jotham remind them that his father, Gideon, had done for them?

11. What image describes the mutual annihilation of Abimelech and the men of Shechem?

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

12. After three years, what does God send between Abimelech and the men of Shechem?

13. What do the men of Shechem do in the mountains?

14. Who comes to Shechem and usurps Abimelech's position?

15. Judges 9:28 mentions Hamor. Who was he? (Hint: Gen. 34)

16. Who is angered by Gaal's statements?

17. What does he incite Abimelech to do?

18. How does Zebul stall Gaal?

19. What is the result of the ensuing battle?

20. What do the people do on the next day?

21. Describe how Abimelech surrounds them outside the city.

22. Where do the men of Shechem fortify themselves?

23. How many people fit inside that structure?

24. What do Abimelech and his people do to the structure?

**Judges 9:50-57: The End at Thebez**

25. What happens when Abimelech tries the same strategy at Thebez?

26. What does Abimelech ask of his armorbearer, and why?

27. Whose wickedness was returned to their own heads?

a.

b.

## Lesson 6: Jephthah (Judges 10 – 12)

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

**Map work:** Several locations bear at least part of the name "**Mizpah**" (or the masculine form, "**Mizpeh**"), which means "lookout" or "watch tower."

- 1) **Jacob and Laban** set up a heap of stones which is called Mizpah because Laban said, "May the Lord **watch** between you and me...." (Gen. 31:44-53, emphasis mine, GC)  
**This is the Mizpah in the story of Jephthah, east of the Jordan and north of the Jabbok.**  
 (See Judges 11:29, "Mizpah of Gilead")

- 2) **Samuel** does much of his work from a Mizpah in Benjamin which had been the staging ground for military action against the Benjamites during the time of the judges (Josh. 18:21, 26; Judges 20-21; 1 Samuel 7:5-12).

At least three lesser important Mizpahs are mentioned.

- 3) A town in **southern Judah** (Josh. 15:38),
- 4) A place **near Mt. Hermon** in what is later known as Galilee (Joshua 11:3, 8), and
- 5) A town in **Moab** (1 Samuel 22:34).

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

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

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

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

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

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

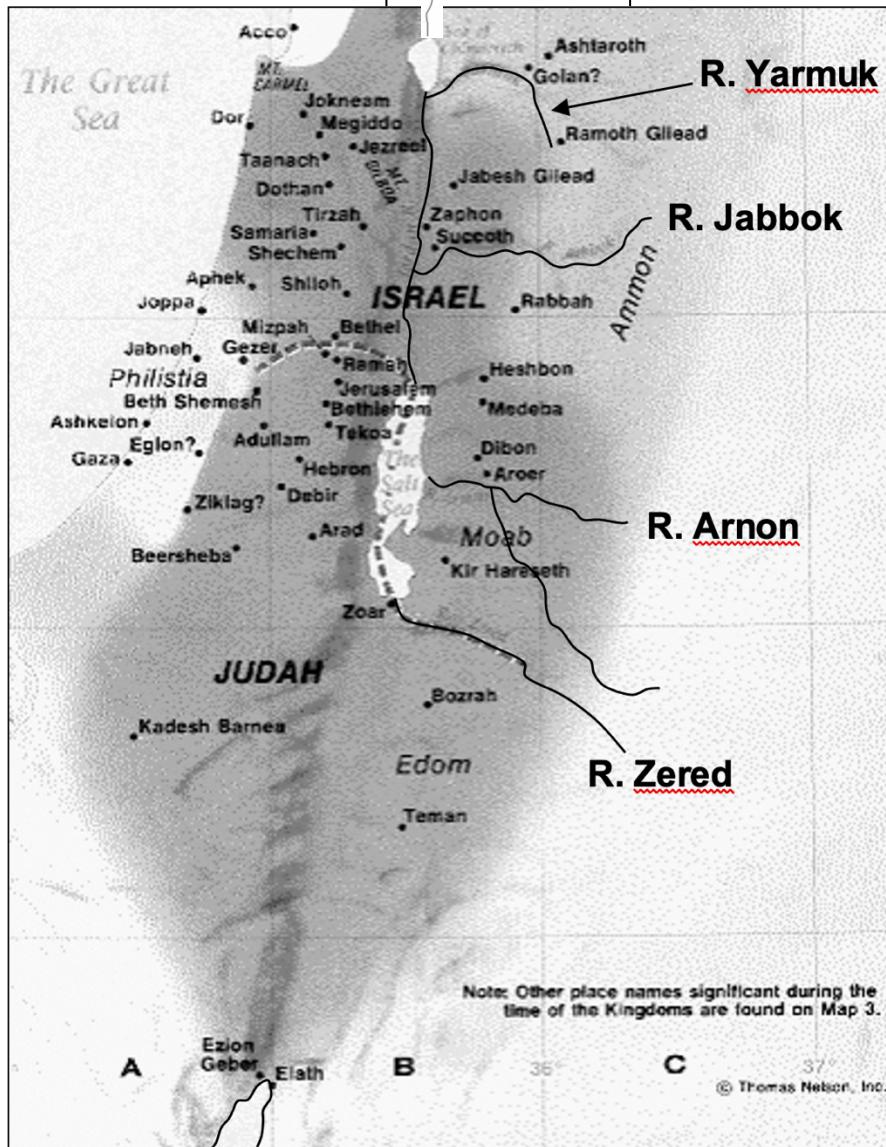
identify Ephraimites trying to sneak back across the Jordan, and further emphasizes the lack of unity among the tribes.

Not all of Jephthah's actions are commendable, but insofar as he "through faith subdued



kingdoms," he is listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11:32.

Chapter 12 closes with brief mentions of three judges:



1) **Ibzan.** *Map work:*  
Note that there are two Bethlehems, one in Zebulun (Josh 19:15), and one in Judah. (Ruth 1:1);

2) **Elon,** from Zebulun, the same area as Deborah and Gideon;

3) **Abdon.** From Pirathon of Ephraim. Notice how many of the judges are from this vicinity.

## River Borders of the Transjordan

Thomas Nelson, Inc.,  
*Nelson's Bible map collection [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, ©1983.*

### Judges 10:1-5: Two Judges

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

### Judges 10:6-18: The Cycle Continues

2. Whose gods does Israel turn to serve?
3. Into whose hand does the Lord sell Israel, and for how long?
4. What areas of Israel are oppressed? (vv. 8-9)

5. What do the Israelites admit when they cry out to the Lord?
6. What does God say to rebuff Israel?
7. What does Israel say and do to try to change God's mind?
8. What is God's emotional reaction by the end of this chapter? (Contrast this with 10:7.)
9. Where do the Ammonites gather?

Where do the Israelites gather?

**Judges 11:1-11: Jephthah Arises**

10. Why is Jephthah not accepted by his half-brothers?
11. What does Jephthah do after fleeing to Tob?
12. What had the elders previously done against Jephthah?
13. What promise does Jephthah make the elders of Gilead confirm?

**Judges 11:12-28: Jephthah's Diplomacy**

14. The king of Ammon wants the land between what borders returned peacefully?
15. **[Key point]** V. 15, NKJV, "Israel did not \_\_\_\_\_ the land of Moab, nor the land of the people of Ammon." So why were Israelites living there?
16. Who does Jephthah say should give the Ammonites land?
17. Why does Jephthah mention the ancient Moabite king, Balak?
18. Jephthah concludes, "May the Lord, the \_\_\_\_\_ render judgment this day between ... Israel and ... Ammon."

**Judges 11:29-33: Jephthah Delivers Israel**

19. Jephthah advances when the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord comes upon him.

20. As he advances, what vow does Jephthah make to the Lord?

21. From how many cities does Jephthah drive the Ammonites?

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

22. Who comes out to meet Jephthah with joy?

...and she was his \_\_\_\_\_

23. Although Jephthah and his daughter agree that he couldn't go back on his vow, what did the Law of Moses say a person could do in the case of a rash/hasty/thoughtless/careless vow?

24. What does his daughter request?

25. What annual custom is established?

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

26. What do the men of Ephraim threaten, because they had not been included in battle?

27. With what accusation does Jephthah counter?

28. Why are the Gileadites willing to enter the civil war which ensues?

29. When Jephthah's men cut off the retreat, how do they determine who is an Ephraimite?

**Judges 12:8-15: Three More Judges**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### Judges 13:1-7: The First Angelic Visit

1. Into whose hand is Israel delivered, and for how long?
2. To what barren woman does the Angel of the Lord appear?

3. From Numbers 6, what three main prohibitions are connected with the Nazirite vow?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
4. From Numbers 6, what word (in one form or another) is used multiple times in vv. 2-8?
5. Numbers 6:9-12 makes provision for what violation of the vow?
6. Numbers 6:13-20 details the ritual for what event in the life of a Nazirite?
7. Returning to Judges 13, because the woman's child will be a Nazirite "from the womb," what is *she* to be careful not to do?
8. Compare Judges 13:4-5 and 13:7. What detail does the Angel mention that the woman does *not* relate to her husband (and that is not part of the Nazirite vow)?
9. What detail does she mention to her husband in v. 7 that we do *not* see in the text of v. 5?

**Judges 13:8-25: The Return Visit**

10. For what does the woman's husband pray?
11. Should Manoah have had to ask the Angel's identity?
12. Does the Angel directly answer Manoah's question from v. 12?
13. Does the Angel allow Himself to be detained?
14. Why does Manoah ask for the Man's name?
15. What happens as Manoah makes his offerings?
16. When Manoah overreacts in verse 22, what does his wife point out?
  - a.

b.

c.

**Judges 14: Intermarriage with the Enemy**

17. How does Samson respond to his parents' encouragement to marry an Israelite?

18. (Speculate) Why do Samson's parents permit him to marry a Philistine?

19. **[Key point]** Why does God permit Samson to marry a Philistine?

20. How easily, and with what weapon, does Samson kill the lion?

21. When Samson later passes by the carcass, what does he find?

22. How long does the wedding feast last?

At least how many guests attend?

23. What riddle does Samson propose?

24. What are the stakes of the challenge to solve the riddle?

25. What threat do the men make against Samson's wife?

26. What does Samson's wife do?

27. How is it clear that "love" or trust has nothing to do with Samson keeping the riddle to himself?

28. In Samson's words, how do the men solve the riddle?

29. Where does Samson get the changes of clothing to pay off the bet?

30. Where does Samson go, and what is his emotional state?

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

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

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

**Map work:** Etam was close to Bethlehem and Tekoa (2 Chronicles 11:6). Hebron lies 30+ miles almost due east of Gaza.

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

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

Samson's weakness with women contrasts strikingly with his physical strength against men. Lessons to learn from Samson include the following:

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

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

1. When Samson returns to his wife, what does he learn?

- ## 2. Why had this been done?

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

3. How does Samson vandalize the Philistines' property?

- 4 When the Philistines learn that it was the Timnite who had stirred up Samson, what do they do?

- ## 5 How does Samson respond

- What does Samson say in word?

- h in action?

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

6. How many Israelites go to arrest Samson on behalf of the Philistines?

7. What assurance does Samson seek?
8. With what do they bind Samson?
9. What becomes of the ropes when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson?
10. What weapon does Samson find?
11. How many Philistines does Samson kill?
12. What two names does Samson assign to that place, and what does each name mean?
  - a.
  - b.
13. Fill in the Table of the Judges for Samson.

**Judges 16:1-3 Samson Versus the Gazites**

14. What sin does Samson commit in Gaza (16:1)?
15. When does Samson escape the ambush?
16. How does he “rub in” the fact that he escaped? (Locate the two cities on a map.)

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

17. What does Delilah love more than she loves Samson?
18. What does he say will weaken him?

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

19. What does she accuse Samson of doing?

Was her accusation right?

20. What lie does Samson tell *this second time*?

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

21. What is Samson's third lie to Delilah?
  
22. How does this show that he is toying not only with Delilah, but with God's blessing?

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

23. Of what does she accuse Samson *this* time?
  
24. Of what time in Samson's life does this remind us?
  
25. What is ironic about this accusation coming from Delilah?
  
26. (*Bonus*) What Bible character withstands daily pressure from a woman without sinning?
  
27. Where does Samson sleep?
  
28. What does a man shave from Samson?
  
29. In verse 20, what does Samson not realize?
  
30. (*Speculate*) How can a person who is dedicated to the Lord from birth, and who accomplishes such great things for the Lord fall into that state of mind?

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

31. What do the Philistines do to Samson?
  
32. What do they allow to happen without thinking about the consequences?
  
33. Who is praised for Samson's capture?
  
34. How many people join in this praise (and in mocking Samson)?
  
35. How do we know that the regrowth of Samson's hair did not automatically make him strong?

36. So, explain why shaving his hair had weakened him. (**Hint:** 16:17, 20)

37. What does Samson ask of the boy leading him, and what happens next?

38. What is said about the number killed?

39. Describe Samson's personality and character.

40. Identify the phrases from Hebrews 11:33-38 which apply to Samson:

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

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

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

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

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

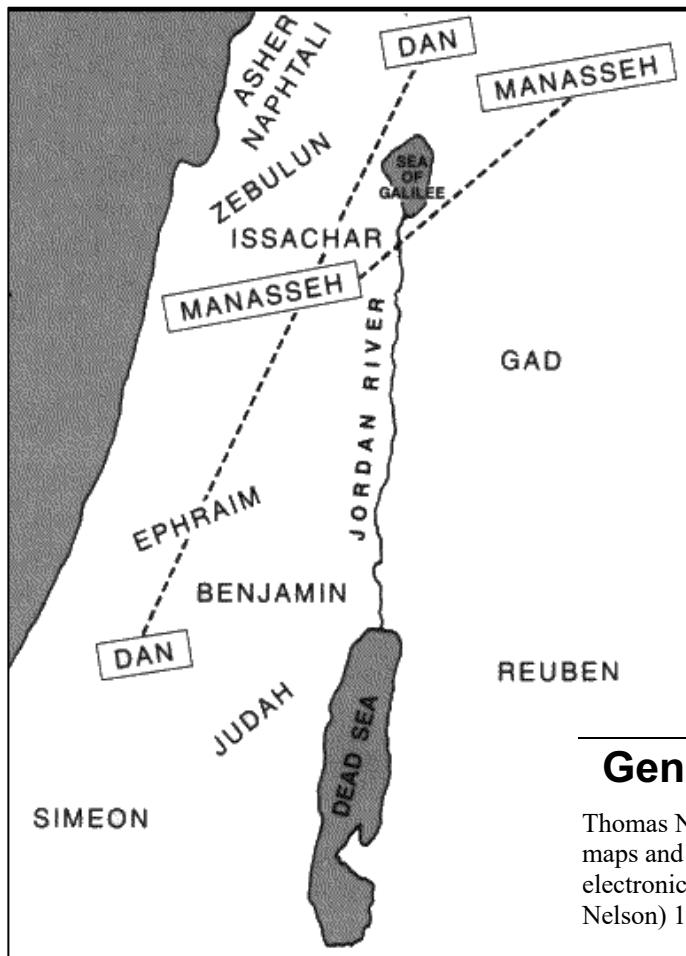
Remember that an ephod was a vest for the high priest (Ex. 28:4-35; recall Judges 8:24-27).

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

**Map work:** The **tabernacle** was still in **Shiloh** (Joshua 18:1; Judges 18:31), less than 30 miles from Dan’s allotted territory. (Joshua had cast lots after seven of the tribes had surveyed the remaining land, Joshua 18:2-10; 19:40-48.) Remember that the Danites have failed to drive out the Amorites (Judges 1:34-35), and now they find it easier to change the borders of their territory and the worship of the Lord than to stay where they were assigned to be and do their duty. The proximity of the tabernacle means less to the Danites than the proximity of the Philistines.

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

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



### General Area of the 12 Tribes

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

**Judges 17:1-6: Religion Run Amok**

1. To whom had Micah's mother dedicated 1,100 shekels of silver?
2. For what purpose?
3. What has Micah done with the silver before the story opens?
4. When he gives the silver to his mother, what does this religious woman say of him?
5. How much silver does it cost for the silversmith to fashion the 1,100 shekels into two idols?
6. What does Micah make to go with his household idols?
7. What does Micah do with one of his sons?
8. What is the prevailing standard for truth?

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

9. Who comes to Micah's house from Bethlehem?
10. What is the man's new job to be?
11. What will be the man's annual salary (excluding food and clothing)?
12. How does the young man feel about the arrangement?
13. Pinpoint at least two major flaws with Micah's reasoning in verse 13:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

**Judges 18:1-10: The Danites' Scouting Trip**

14. (Review) What other man of valor was from Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol?

15. How many men are sent to spy out and search the land?

16. Where do these men come to first?

17. How do they first recognize the young man?

18. What favor do they ask of the young man?

19. How does he respond?

20. What city strikes the Danites' fancy, and why?

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

21. How many Danite men head north, armed for war?

22. Besides the city of Laish, what had the five spies seen that they wanted?

23. When they take the things, who questions them?

24. How do they respond to being questioned?

25. How does the young man feel about the suggested arrangement?

26. How does the young man participate in the Danites' actions?

27. Who overtakes the Danites?

28. What tone of voice do the Danites take with Micah and his neighbors?

29. Why does Micah not try to stop them?

**Judges 18:27-31: The Danites Settle Down**

30. What do the Danites do to Laish?
31. What becomes the icon of the Danites' new religion?
32. What new priestly line is established?
33. For how long does that priesthood continue?
34. How does the writer remind the reader in verse 31 that this whole arrangement is sinful?

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

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

**Review:** This section is about **the Depravity of Israel**. Here is the outline of chapters:

<b>I. Idolatry (17:1–18:31)</b>
A. Personal Idolatry (17:1–13)
B. Tribal Idolatry (18:1–31)
<b>II. Immorality (19:1–30)</b>
A. Personal Immorality (19:1–10)
B. Tribal Immorality (19:11–30)
<b>III. In-Fighting Among the Tribes (20:1–21:25)</b>
A. War between Israel and Benjamin (20:1–48)
B. Failure of Israel after the War (21:1–25)

### Immorality

Genesis 19 tells of Sodom; Judges 19 tells of **Gibeah**, the “**new Sodom**” which is pointed to by the prophets as a beginning point of Ephraim’s sins (Hosea 9:9; 10:9). A hospitable person is not to be found, except for one outsider (like Lot), and perversion is the norm. But this time

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

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

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

### In-fighting

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

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

**First**, the men of Israel swear not to give their daughters to the men of Benjamin as wife. They **keep this vow** (at least **technically**) at all costs but go to great and terrible lengths to provide wives for the men of Benjamin, which seems to violate the basic intent of their oath which was apparently to ensure that Benjamin would be eliminated. Once the heat of battle subsides – and the civil war which cost over 65,000 lives has not completely eliminated Benjamin – grief over the practical consequences of their oath sets in, and they start looking for a way to salvage the wicked tribe of Benjamin (21:2-3, 6-7, 16-18). (Sometimes purging sin from a congregation is extremely costly, and sometimes it’s hard to carry through completely with the necessary course of action.)

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

**Judges 19:1-7: A Happy Family Reunion**

1. For how long is the Levite's concubine at her father's house after playing the harlot?
2. How is the Levite received by the woman?

... by her father?

**Judges 19:8-21: Lodging at Gibeah**

3. On which day does the Levite finally break away from Bethlehem?
4. Who is with the Levite?
5. Ironically, why do they not lodge in Jebus?
6. Why do they choose Gibeah instead of Ramah?
7. Who is the only one who will put them up for the night?

**Judges 19:22-26: The New Sodom**

8. What do certain men of the city demand?
9. What do they receive instead?
10. When do they stop their violence?

**Judges 19:27-30: The Call to Action**

11. Where does the Levite take the dead woman's body?
12. What does he do with the body?

**Judges 20:1-11: The Israelites**

13. From what places do the children of Israel gather?

14. Where do they meet?
15. Toward what target is their wrath directed?

**Judges 20:12-17: The Benjamites**

16. From verse 3, what have the children of Benjamin heard?
17. What demand is made on the Benjamites?
18. How do the Benjamites respond?

**Judges 20:18-48: The Battle**

19. What is the result of the first day's battle?
20. What is the result of the second day's battle?
21. What new actions accompany the Israelites' inquiry of the Lord in verse 26?
22. What new military strategy is employed on the third day?
23. Who loses more total men, Israel or Benjamin?
24. How many escape to the rock of Rimmon?

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

25. What had the men of Israel sworn at Mizpah?
26. What new concern among the people is expressed in verse 3?
27. What solution is proposed?

28. Why was Jabesh-Gilead selected?
29. To what place are the survivors taken?
30. What is the problem with this new “solution”?
  
31. What are the terms for the surrender of the Benjamites?

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

32. What plan do the elders devise for providing the remaining wives?

33. How would the inevitable complaints be soothed?
  - a.
  - b.

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**Final note on Judges:**

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

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

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

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

*Map work:* It seems especially fitting that Ruth comes to **Bethlehem** (the home of the wayward Levite in Judges chapters 17 and 18, and the home of the adulterous concubine in chapter 19), and that she and Boaz help to restore that city's reputation. Notice that Elimelech and his family, including Boaz (2:1), are **Ephrathites** of Bethlehem (1:2). Boaz serves as a redeemer of the family, so it is fitting – no, it is *poetic* – that *our ultimate Redeemer* is born there (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1ff). When male children in and around Bethlehem are slaughtered after Jesus' birth, Jeremiah's prophecy is quoted about Rachel weeping for her children (Matthew 2:16-18). Rachel, Jacob's wife, is mentioned because the first biblical reference to Bethlehem is in Genesis 35:19, when Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin whom she names "Son of my sorrow" (Heb. "Ben-Oni) en route to "Ephrath which is Bethlehem."

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

### Outline of Ruth<sup>4</sup>

#### A: Ruth's Faith Is Demonstrated

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

#### B: Ruth's Faith Is Rewarded

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

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

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

1. What is the general time frame for the events of this book?
2. Why do Elimelech and his family move to Moab?
3. Describe how Elimelech's wife, Naomi, ends up alone with two Moabite daughters-in-law.

**Ruth 1:6-15: A Tearful Farewell**

4. Why does Naomi decide to return to Israel?
5. To what place does Naomi suggest that her daughters-in-law go?
6. What is the basic reason that Naomi suggests they separate?
7. What does she wish for them in verse . . .  
    . . . 8?  
    . . . 9?

8. How many times (total) does Naomi tell Ruth to "go," "turn back," or "return"?
9. Fill in the blanks from the NKJV (or a version of your choice):

<sup>1:16</sup> Ruth said:

"Entreat me not to \_\_\_\_\_ you,  
Or to turn back from following after you;  
For wherever you \_\_\_\_\_ , I will \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
And wherever you \_\_\_\_\_ , I will \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
Your people shall be my people,

And your \_\_\_\_\_ , my \_\_\_\_\_ .

<sup>17</sup> Where you \_\_\_\_\_ , I will \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
And there will I be buried.  
The Lord do so to me, and more also, If  
anything but \_\_\_\_\_ parts you and me."

**Ruth 1:16-22: A Bitter Woman**

10. When the people of Bethlehem are glad to see Naomi, what is Naomi's initial response?
11. How does Naomi interpret the events of her life (vv. 13, 20, 21)?
12. Describe an alternative "spin" to put on her life's events.
13. At what time of the year do they arrive in Bethlehem?

**Ruth 2: Refuge Under the Lord's Wings**

14. Describe Boaz's financial standing.
  
15. What does it mean to "glean"?
  
16. As if Ruth's gender and economic status don't present enough challenges for her, how do we know she was expecting to suffer from others' *racial* prejudice, as well?
  
17. What details inform us about Ruth's good work ethic?
  
18. With whom is Ruth to associate while gleaning?
  
19. What protection does Boaz provide for Ruth while she is gleaning (before mealtime)?
  
20. Why does Boaz treat her so kindly?
  21. At the meal (vv. 14-16), what additional help does he give in terms of . . .
    - a. . . . where she sits?
  
    - b. . . . how much she is given?
  
    - c. . . . rules about where she may glean?
  
    - d. . . . new rules determining *how much* there will be to glean?
  
    - e. . . . protection from verbal abuse?
  
22. Tell two things that Ruth brings back to Naomi.
  - a.
  
  - b.
  
23. Obviously, God shows kindness to the living Naomi (and to Ruth). In what sense does He show kindness to *the dead*? (v. 20)
  
24. For how long is Ruth allowed to glean?

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

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

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

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

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

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

The first mention of a **levirate marriage** (Latin *<levir>* for "brother") occurs in Genesis 38:8 where Er's brother Onan refuses to perform the duty. This duty is later mandated and regulated in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and covers the case where the dead man's brother refuses to take the responsibility.

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

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

### Lessons from Ruth:

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

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

## ***Ruth's Choices***

Personal

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

## **Determined**

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

## **Comprehensive**

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

Early

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

Lasting

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

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

## Ruth 3: “Take Your Maidservant Under Your Wing”

1. What is Naomi seeking for Ruth?
  2. How will this also benefit Naomi?
  3. From verses 3 and 4, how does Naomi suggest that Ruth “propose” to Boaz in terms of ...
    - ... her appearance?
    - ... the time to make her move?
    - ... how she actually approaches him?

4. What happens around midnight?
  5. What does Ruth request of Boaz?
  6. Describe the emotion of Boaz's response.
  7. What do all the people know about Ruth?
  8. What is the only situation preventing Boaz from accepting her proposal immediately?
  9. When does Ruth leave his presence?
  10. What instruction does Boaz give in v. 14?
  11. What gift does Boaz send?
  12. What does Naomi seem to know about Boaz?

**Ruth 4:1-10: Boaz Arranges The Marriage**

13. Whom does Boaz gather at the city gate?
  
14. After the near kinsman agrees to redeem the land, what additional information does Boaz reveal?
  
15. What reason does the near kinsman give for changing his mind?
  
16. What custom is there for confirming redeeming and exchanging?

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

17. Why would it be a blessing for a person's house to "be like the house of Perez"?
  
18. How do the women describe Ruth?
  
19. What role does Naomi play once Ruth bears a son?
  
20. What relationship did Naomi have to King David?

## Lesson 13: Dating, Timeline, and Review

### When Judges and Ruth Were Written

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

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

Perhaps one passage that goes against a date of writing before 1004 is Judges 18:30, which refers to “the day of the captivity of the land.” One might think of the time of the Assyrian captivity (that is, the captivity of the land of the tribe of Dan in 721 B.C.), in which case either the *entire book* of Judges was written *after* that time (which would seem to go against 1:21 about the Jebusites), or an editor came along later and inserted *that reference*. (We know that some books were given additional details by a later writer. For example, the book of Deuteronomy is attributed to Moses but also recounts Moses’s *death*. With that in mind, we can’t be dogmatic about dating the writing of *Ruth* based on its mention of the genealogy down to David.) Some believe another option: That “the captivity” means the Israelites’ completion of *their* conquest of Canaan during the reign of David. But “captivity” would be an odd term in that context. Although some captives were taken during battle (e.g., Deut. 21:10), kings that were captured were then *killed* (e.g., Josh. 11:17; Judges 7:25). Israel was not so much “capturing” as “conquering” the land (e.g., Deut. 7:2; 29:7; Joshua 10:40; 12:6).

### The Timeline of the Book

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

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

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

Events related to Solomon’s reign can be dated by secular references, and the time reference given in 1 Kings 6:1 is very specific.

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

Non-biblical history confirms that Solomon began his reign around 970, so his 4<sup>th</sup> year would be 965 (discounting the first year – “accession-year reckoning” was common in Judah – and counting four more years after 969. Again, see the *Simplified Summary*, Appendix.)

Dates *after* the time of Solomon are much more easily corroborated with the written histories of various other world powers, so those dates are basically undisputed. However, Egyptian and Canaanite history *before* the time of Solomon is more difficult to sort. For example, there is significant controversy among Egyptologists who struggle to form simply a clear *list* of early pharaohs. One

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

pharaoh was monotheistic, so later pharaohs sought (*almost* successfully) to eradicate any reference to him, and there were three periods of political turbulence which complicate the historian's task. We also hear theories of the *early date* of the Exodus (in the 1400s B.C.) and the *late date* of the Exodus (in the 1200s B.C.). Some insist on the late date because of Exodus 1:11 which says the Israelites built the city of "Raamses." However, the city named for Ramses II who reigned in the 1200's existed long before Ramses renamed it. It's likely that a scribe later changed the name in the text to "Raamses." (See the article "Evidence of Israelites in Egypt" in the *Simplified Summary* for two examples of cities whose later names were used *because the book of Genesis was written later*, after the cities' names were changed.) In an attempt to support a *late* date for the Exodus *from the Scriptures*, those scholars make an assumption that the reference to 480 years in 1 Kings 6:1 is simply the writer's (almost symbolic) calculation for each of 12 generations at 40 years each. Then the scholars recalculate the 12 generations at 25 years each for purposes of a timeline and say that the temple was really built in the 280<sup>th</sup> year after the Exodus. **Based on 1 Kings 6:1, the early date wins "hands down," with the Exodus occurring in 1445 B.C.**

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

Note that the Bible versions vary on how to punctuate or sequence events (and even break up the verses) in Paul's sermon in **Acts 13** which summarizes Israelite history from God choosing Abraham to the conquest of Canaan (verses 17-19). Most versions then say something like "*all of which took about four hundred and fifty years*" (NASB1995) in verse 19 or 20. The versions related to the KJV say that the period of the judges takes up "about 450 years" *after* the land was conquered and distributed to the tribes, but that doesn't seem to fit the chronology.

In conclusion, I favor a date for the Exodus of 1445 B.C., the Wilderness Wanderings lasting till 1405 B.C., the Conquest of Canaan lasting till about 1400 B.C., then the judges in place till Saul became king in 1050 B.C., a period of about 350 years. Here is a line-up of the judges listed in the order they're mentioned:

The Judges, with Their Relative Lengths of Service								The Kings	
Othniel	Ehud	Shamgar	Deborah	Gideon	Tola	Jair	Jephthah	Ibzan	Elon
							Ibzan		Abdon
							Eli		
								Samson	
									Samuel
									1050 Saul
									1010 David

(Abimelech)

**Review**

1. What are some themes of Judges?
  
  
2. What does Ruth have such a fitting place in this study?
  
  
3. A “judge” ... 1) was appointed by \_\_\_\_\_, and 2) \_\_\_\_\_ Israel from oppression.
4. Name a left-handed judge who assassinates a fat king and subdues his nation.
  
  
5. Who arises “a mother in Israel”?
  
  
6. Who is “most blessed among women”?
  
  
7. Whose “calling” is accompanied by four signs?
  
  
8. Why are *those particular* 300 men chosen to help Gideon?
  
  
9. Name the “non-judge.”
  
  
10. Whose curse about “fire” comes true against the men of Shechem?
  
  
11. Who kills Abimelech?      a. a man      b. a woman
  
  
12. Who is not well received by his people before acting as a deliverer east of the Jordan?
  
  
13. What is Samson to be from birth?
  
  
14. What interest does Samson repeatedly show that gives the Lord an occasion to kill Philistines?
  
  
15. Name the New Testament passage that lists several of the judges in the “Hall Of Faith.”

16. Which judges "subdue" nations? (Mark all that apply.)

- a. Ehud
- b. Deborah/Barak
- c. Gideon
- d. Jephthah
- e. Samson

17. Fill in the chapter content.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Setting – Incomplete Conquest
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Setting – The Cycle
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ subdues Moab
- 4-5 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ subdue Canaan
- 6-8 \_\_\_\_\_ subdues Midian
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ the Non-Judge
- 10-12 \_\_\_\_\_ subdues Ammon
- 13-16 \_\_\_\_\_ versus the Philistines
- 17-18 \_\_\_\_\_ in Israel
- 19-21 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

18. Fill in the blanks in each numbered box. (People's names on top, the enemies' underneath.)

Bonus: Identify the western sea and the two inland bodies of water and the river that flows between them.

