

**Old Testament Survey**  
**Lesson 8 – Judges**  
**Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School**  
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**Introduction**

The time of the Judges has been called the Dark Ages of Jewish history since: 1) the people forsook God (Judg 2:10-13) and 2) God judged the people for rebellion (Judg 2:14-15; 20-23). It covers the historical period between the death of the great military and spiritual leader, Joshua, and the creation of a human monarchy under Saul. This was a period of approximately 350 years that was a turbulent and often tragic time in Jewish history that is well defined by the phrase which ends the book, *"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*

This indicates two important things: 1) they gave up the kingship of God for anarchy and 2) what was right in their eyes was contrary to what was right in God's eyes. They did not just do wrong, they did wrong thinking it was right. That sounds very modern.

Israel has come out of a long era of bondage in Egypt. They marched directly to the border of the Promised Land, failed to trust God, wandered aimlessly in the desert for years, and finally entered the land and took it with a flurry of military activity. Now the life of hardship, toil, deprivation, wandering, and warring is over. The nomads operating on minimum rations are now the settlers and city dwellers in a *"land flowing with milk and honey."* Does Scripture not teach us that there is often more danger in prosperity than in want (Prov 30:8-9)? This was a time of moving from physical warfare to spiritual warfare.

Solemnly and repeatedly, Israel was warned to have no contact with the inhabitants of Canaan. The sin of the Moabites, Ammorites, Amalikitites, Canaanites, Midianites, and Philistines was extensive and intense. Their religious, moral, and social lifestyle was completely vile. They polluted the land with their abominations. Their Gods were demon-inspired and were worshiped in the most immoral ways. The worship of Ashtaroah was especially odious and offensive to God and included sexual immorality and human sacrifice in its religious ceremonies. The fact is that Israel was instructed to remove this moral cancer from the land and to set up a land of pure worship of Yahweh and be His witness (and a blessing, by the way) to the surrounding world. Just scan chapter one and look for "but" and "did not." Instead, they *"Forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of slavery and followed after other gods."* This caused God to respond angrily. The people's turning away and God's response to that disobedience is the story of The Book of Judges.

The Book of Judges gets its name from the civil leaders God raised up to deliver Israel from its oppressors. Although Israel inherited the land of promise, they repeatedly disregarded their covenant with God by doing what they wanted. Disobedience resulted in oppression at the hands of their neighbors. That oppression led Israel to cry out to God. God responded to their cries by sending judges to lead in their deliverance. The people returned to God but soon went back to their disobedience. The Judges were not trained arbiters in a court of law, as they are today. They were, in fact, Spirit-gifted leaders, chosen by God for very definite and specific tasks. As opposed to the prophets, who warned the nation of coming judgment because of their disobedience to God, the judges were the instruments of God in delivering the people when they repented. Their job was to bring justice to the oppressed people of Israel. In order to make their role clear, the NIV translators use the word "led" instead of "judged" as it is translated in most other versions. Although the judges are remembered primarily as military leaders they also functioned as civil authorities in a time when leadership was needed to counter the anarchy.

The writer of the Book of Judges is unknown, but Jewish traditional literature presents Samuel as the writer. The book was probably compiled during the early monarchies since it indicates it was written "in the time when Israel had no king."

Reading Judges can be depressing, making this many peoples least favorite Bible book, especially after the upbeat Joshua. It seems that Israel is spending all 350 years rebelling. A careful reading and charting of the book proves about 100 years of disloyalty and 250 years of obedience. An important thing to notice is that the nation advanced and prospered when obedient and floundered and suffered when rebelling.

#### Lessons of the Book:

1. Ongoing history shows God's faithfulness to His covenant when Israel disobeyed as well as obeyed.
2. Judges explains why Israel often suffered under the hands of their enemies. God even used enemies to discipline Israel.
3. God holds his people responsible for their moral and spiritual behavior. There is no victim mentality.
4. The book proves, again and again, that the Lord, not the gods of their enemies, is the true God.
5. The book illustrates the moral decay that comes, even to the best people, when they ignore God's leadership. We cannot make it alone.
6. The book shows the power of prayer and faith. Repentance brings response.

There were fourteen Judges involved in seven cycles (or six depending on how the book is outlined) and, as monotonous as the book can appear, there is something different in each story. A good study is to chart the events and note those differences. We will only have time to outline the chapters and hit some high points. All of the judges had some defect, odd characteristic or handicap that God used. The judges reveal that God can use any man or woman who is willing to be used.

The story is presented to us in seven, four part cycles that become the foundation for our study.

1. The people **REBEL**, disobeying God and turning to idols.
2. That rebellion brings **RETRIBUTION** from God in the form of allowing oppression and slavery at the hands of their enemies.
3. Retribution and its pain cause the people to **REPENT**, to cry out to God confessing their sins and asking for His grace.
4. The peoples' true repentance brings a renewed blessing from God in the form of Judges to lead them to throw off the yokes of their enemies bringing **RESTORATION** of the covenant relationship.

#### **I. Israel's Wars (Chapters 1-2)**

The early victories of Israel were not totally carried out. Areas of land still harbored the Canaanite occupants. Along the seacoast, the Philistines dominated such cities as Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod. It is possible that the dawning of the "iron age" in Canaan brought their enemies military weapons and machines frightening them (see 1:19).

They seemed to forget that the "Lord of Hosts" was the true "Captain" of their armies. Israel would be captured by or surrender to eight nations, but worse than that they would, in turn, serve their gods: the idols, Baal, Asherah (Asteroth), and Dagon would be served in turn. Again and again God allowed cruel, evil, and ruthless tyrants to oppress Israel. Again and again, the enemies they failed to drive out came back to haunt them, growing strong and enslaving them.

#### **A. The Tribe of Judah (1:1-21)**

The book starts with the death of Joshua (1:1) and the sons of Israel asking God, "Who shall go up first against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" God not only answers, but promises success.

### 1. Promise of victory (1:1-18)

The Lord said, "*Judah shall go up, behold, I have given the land into his hand.*" (v2). Judah went out and with the help of Simeon and their armies, routed the Canaanites and the Perizzites (armies that had ten thousand men). They continued from city to city until they hit the hill country and the armies of charioteers.

### 2. Peril of incomplete victory (1:19-21)

These victories were great, but sometimes incomplete. Especially in the hills, Judah did not drive the enemies of God out of the land (v19). At this same time, Benjamin also failed to destroy or drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem resulting in their "*being there to this day*" (v21).

## B. The House of Joseph (1:22-3)

Moving on into the chapters, we find tribe after tribe winning the physical battles but, in essence, losing the spiritual war.

### 1. Promise of victory (1:22-26)

"The house of Joseph went up against Bethel and God was with them" (v22). The victory is guaranteed as long as they obey God and are true to him BUT (v25), "they let the man and his family go."

### 2. Peril of incomplete victory (1:27-2)

The phrases "but... did not" became the operative words:

v27--"But Manasseh did not drive them out"

v28--"Israel ... pressed the Canaanites into forced labor, but did not drive them out."

v29--"Neither did Ephraim drive them out ..."

v31--"Nor did Asher drive out ..."

v33--"Neither did Naphtali drive out the people ..."

v34--"The Amorites confined the Danites ..."

Chapter two gives us the climax to this scenario in verses 7 and 10.

<sup>7</sup>The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel. <sup>10</sup>All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Judg 2:7, 10

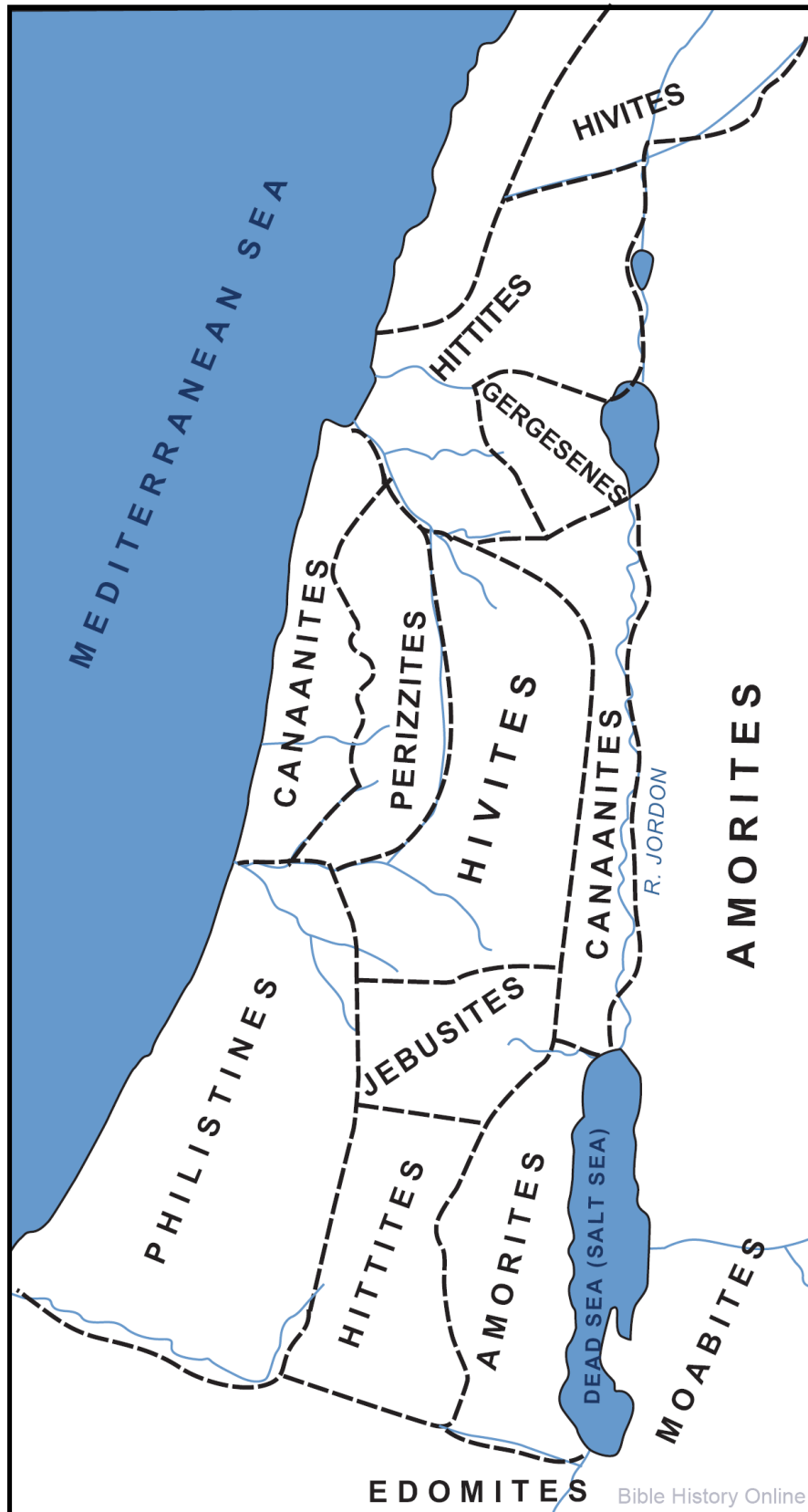
Chapter 2:11-23 previews the concept of the four part cycles of: 1) Rebellion, 2) Retribution, 3) Repentance, and 4) Restoration.

## II. Israel's Woes (Chapters 3-16) – Six Cycles of Subjection

Some people divide this into seven sections if the civil war that came between the fourth (Midianite) and fifth (Ammorite) captures is counted. Since this was a civil war, we will not count it as a true "cycle."

Remember, because of their disobedience, God said, "I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become as thorns in your sides and their gods shall be a snare to you." (2:3) That is exactly what happened. Chapter three starts by giving us two reasons why God did not drive all their enemies out: 1) First, to train the young Israelites, who were not battle savvy, in the art and science of war (Some had not fought because they were too young and some had not because of disobedience v1, 2) and 2) Second, to test the obedience of the people to His commands.

## MAP OF CANAANITE NATIONS



They failed miserably, living among their enemies, trading with them, marrying them, and even serving their gods (v4-7). This brought God's wrath and the first "cycle" had begun. **Look at Terry Riley's chronology information.**

## 1. Mesopotamians (3:7-11)

<sup>7</sup>The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. Judg 3:7

The Israelites settled among the Syrian nations and sought *peace through integration*. Slowly but surely they came under the domination of a man called Cushan-rishathaim (Cushan of double-wickedness) who was King of Mesopotamia. For eight years, things got worse and worse until the people realized they had left the only hope of victory and freedom, the God of Moses and Joshua.

<sup>9</sup>When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. <sup>10</sup>The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. Judg 3:9-10

Othniel was an experienced fighter (see Joshua 15) and he went to war and won. Israel then experienced 40 years of peace and prosperity (3:11).

## 2. Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalukites (3:12-30)

<sup>12</sup>Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD So the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. Judg 3:12

Eglon, King of Moab, shown in this account as a fat, repulsive little man, established a provincial capital in Jerusalem and made treaties with the Ammonites and Amalekites in order to subdue and enslave Israel. He did! This time Israel was in bondage and paying tribute for 18 years (v 14).

But when the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. Judg 3:15a

Why is it important that he was left-handed? Ehud assassinated King Eglon, escaped and led the nation in a successful rebellion defeating their enemies and bringing 80 years of peace (3:30).

After Ehud came Shamgar who fought against the Philistines. He personally killed 600 with an oxgoad (v31).

## 3. Canaanites (4 and 5)

<sup>1</sup>Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. <sup>2</sup>And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jaban king of Canaan. Judg 4:1-2a

Just when you think things cannot get any worse, they got worse. Jaban has some special forces including nine hundred of those dreaded iron chariots and led by the famous General Sisera. Because of their military might, the Canaanites ruled Israel for 20 years in a reign of terror (“severely oppressed”) that caused the Israelites to call out to God.

During this time, a prophetess named Deborah was leading her people as a civil servant and settler of disputes (v4-5). Obviously, she was a true prophet since God told her what Israel needed to do to throw off the yoke of oppression. She called Barak to lead an army of ten thousand men to meet Sisera at God's appointed spot, the River Kishon. Of course, since God is now with the armies of Naphtali and Zebulun, the Israeli army routs Sisera despite his chariots. Sisera ran to Kadesh where he planned to hide in the home of Jael, whose husband was a friend of Jabin's. BIG MISTAKE! She drove her point home, effectively ending his career.

Both prose (4) and poetry (5) are used to describe the feats of Deborah and Barak. The song however turns to the glory of God, the true source of the great victory. Just so, no one could mistake His hand in it; the stanzas in v19-23 describe the river miraculously sweeping away the mighty chariots.

This victory brought a period of 40 years of peace and rebuilding (5:31).

#### **4. Midianites (6-8)**

<sup>1</sup>Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian for seven years. Judg 6:1

Now we meet one of the two most famous judges, Gideon. He and Samson are presented in more detail and their personal exploits are presented. Midian caused a slightly different problem for Israel. They raided their farms and brought all their own livestock and camped on their land, depleting it and causing the Israelites to live in caves in the mountains and starve. Their suffering brought them to cry out to the Lord and He chose a young farmer to be their new Judge (leader).

The story of Gideon is a story of a struggle with fear. The Lord came to Gideon and challenged him to lead Israel like a "valiant warrior." (6:12). Gideon passed the first test by tearing down the altar of Baal that belonged to his father (v25-32). Then, after a fleece test proving God was with him (6:36-40), he gathered 32,000 soldiers, but God had other ideas. God would guarantee He would alone get the credit by reducing the size of the army, first to ten thousand who were not afraid, then to three hundred who watched while they drank. With three companies of just one hundred men each, Gideon launched a surprise attack with trumpets and covered torches, causing panic and self-annihilation in the camp of the Midianites. No longer afraid, he defeated city after city and executed the Midianite kings. The Israelites were so grateful, they offered to make Gideon king. His answer was, "the Lord shall rule over you." (8:23)

He was not perfect and chapter eight accounts his weaknesses, but he was a man of faith (see Hebrews 11) and he believed God would keep his promise. His leadership brought 40 years of peace and prosperity (8:28) but the people began to slide, becoming idolaters, even in the context of following God.

#### **Intermission (9:1-10:5)**

What some people consider the fifth cycle was really a Civil War. Gideon had a son by one of his concubines, Abimelech, and he was "the man who would be king." He mounted a campaign to become just that. He got the citizens of Shechen to make him king and kill his brothers, eliminating his competition. Only Jothan escaped and contested against him. The battle that ensued lasted over three years until a woman dropped a millstone on Abimelek's head as he was storming a city.

Tola (23 years) and Jair (22 years) then led Israel for about 45 years and seemed to lead well since rebellion was only reported after they died.

#### **5. Ammorites (10:6-12)**

<sup>6</sup>Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him. Judg 10:6

The list of idols Israel was following seemed endless. This seems to be their deepest period of sin and disobedience. It led them into an eighteen-year oppression and affliction under the Philistines in the west and the Ammonites in the east. The Israelites under Ammonite control called out to the Lord, "We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals." (v10) Deliverance came this time through Jephthah, one cast out by the Gileadites because he was born of a harlot. He sent a delegation to the Ammonites to argue Israel's right to the land but they refused (11:12-28). The Spirit of the Lord empowered him and he moved against them. That was all he needed, but ... To secure favor with God he vowed to offer the first thing to come out of his house as a burned offering (11:29-31). He won and he met his only daughter coming from his house at his return (11:32-40). The great debate is, what happened to the girl?

From <http://valleybible.net/Adults/ClassNotes/BibleDifficulties/BibleDifficulties.pdf>

### **6. How could God allow Jephthah to offer his daughter up as a burnt offering and how could he be regarded as a man of faith in Hebrews 11:32 (Judges 11:29-40)?**

While many take this to mean Jephthah offered his daughter's life, it is better to understand this as an offering to remain a virgin for life and not become a human sacrifice. Several reasons lead to this conclusion:

- a. The text does not say he killed his daughter in a sacrificial offering.
- b. We too are offered to God as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), not dead ones.
- c. It was a great sacrifice for his daughter to be set apart for temple service and not marry and continue the lineage through his only child. Jephthah acted honorably by being faithful to this vow even though it would mean he would have no descendants.
- d. The daughter's response to the vow was to weep over her virginity for two months, not to weep over her death (11:38). There would be no reason to mourn her virginity if she were to die in two months for she may have sought to marry during this time.
- e. The conclusion of this story is that she had no relations with a man (11:39). This is a pointless statement if she were put to death.
- f. It would be murder to Jephthah to kill his daughter because of a vow he took.

In chapter 12, Jephthah is accosted by the Ephraimites. They are indignant because they had not been asked to participate in the battle. Jephthah points out that they knew that he was in danger and did not come to help (12:1-3). The disagreement leads to civil war between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites. The Ephraimites lose 42,000 men (see 12:5-6 for testing based on pronunciation). Jephthah judged Israel for six years (12:7).

Since the other three judges mentioned: Ibzan (7 years), Elon (10 years), and Abdon (8 years) are not discussed in detail, it seems likely they were civil leaders but did not engage in any military activity. Though it appears that Israel followed the Lord during these years.

### **6. Philistines (13-16)**

<sup>1</sup>Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. Judg 13:1

The other of the two worst famous Judges was Samson. His story is even better known than Gideon's is. It is certainly the most puzzling and confusing – Samson is an enigma. How can a man be a judge of God when he is so spiritually bankrupt? His heritage was perfect: his parents followed an angel's instruction and raised him as a Nazirite (Num 6). His mother was so righteous that she even took the vow herself (parents can only do so much).

He was empowered by the Holy Spirit: the Spirit was active in his life as He empowered him to do supernatural things for Israel. He is a jock, physically strong but morally weak. He is dumb, unable to make wise decisions or listen to wise counsel. He is out of control, unable to harness his passions or his emotions. He is carnal, ignoring his spiritual position and heritage.

As we look at the entire book of Judges and we see that, as the cycles of subjection continues, the people of God seemed to get less and less resistant to sin and their failings become more and more heinous. Likewise, the judges, starting with the upright and heroic Othniel, moving through Deborah and Gideon, seem also to be representative of that slide. Their heritage as well as their faith, consistency, and commitment seem less as time passes. Samson is the consummate example.

The Samson story:

- The marriage to Timnath, a Philistine woman, against his parent's wise advice. (14:1-4)
- The killing of the lion and violation of his vow by getting and eating honey. (14:5-9)
- The riddle to Timnath's people, their treacherous act, and his response. (14:10-19)
- The giving of Timnath to another causing him to tie torches to foxes. (14:20-15:6)
- The giving over of Samson to Philistines and killing of 1000 men with jawbone. (15:7-20)
- The capture in Gaza lusting for prostitute, removing gates. (16:1-3)
- The battle of strength and wits with Delilah and her people. (16:4-17)
- The capture and humiliation of Samson and his explosive death. (16:18-31)
- The Philistines succeeded in oppressing Israel for forty years including the twenty years of Samson and the leadership of the Judge/Prophet Samuel. The Philistines were not truly subjugated until David, recorded in 2 Sam 5.

Samson judged Israel twenty years (15:20).

### **III. Israel's Ways (Chapters 17-21)**

The final section of Judges gives us three prime examples of Israel's moral defection. Sin permeates the religious, moral, and political life of the nation. The period of the judges is characterized by compromise, corruption, confusion.

#### **A. Religious Apostasy / Idolatry (17-18)**

"Now there was a man in the hill country whose name was Micah." The account of Micah, his theft of money from his mother, the way he restored the money only to make an idol of silver from part of it is a weird story. Micah set up a false religion, based on the worship of his idol and made his son the priest until persuading a passing Levite to take over. He really thought he was pleasing God with his shrine and priest.

His idol was stolen by some passing adventurers from the tribe of Dan and, a wise Levite opportunist who became priest to their tribe. Micah's priest, Jonathan, was a true Levite, a direct descendant of Moses (18:30). This episode illustrates how low even the true spiritual leadership of the nation had gone, setting up rival sanctuaries (with idols) in a land meant to have the Tabernacle and worship the true God.

#### **B. Immorality (19)**

The second account is of a Levite who retrieves a runaway concubine and is returning home in Ephraim. Night falls and he seeks shelter in Gilbea because it is inhabited by Israelites, rather than pagans like Jerusalem. Wrong choice. In shades of Sodom and Gomorra, the men of the town come to have sexual relations with the Levite. His host, to avoid this breach of his protection, pushed the concubine out to them instead. They ravaged her and left her for dead. The Levite cut her body into twelve pieces and sent one to each of the tribes of Israel.



This could be the most gruesome story ever related in Scripture. Why is it here? The answer is here for us in verse 30.

<sup>30</sup>All who saw it said, "Nothing like this has ever happened or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel and speak up!" Judg 19:30

This episode illustrates how low the children of Israel could go, even in the treatment of their own people and was a call to clean up their act.

### **C. Political Anarchy (20-21)**

Covenant law required that the tribes punish the guilty among them or they would all be punished (Remember Ai). Since Benjamin refused to turn over the guilty, civil war ensued, all Israel vs. the Tribe of Benjamin. There were numerous wars, with numerous casualties ending with, only 600 Benjamite survivors. In finding wives for the survivors to reestablish the tribe, Israel went to surrounding peoples again and intermarried with all the inherent problems. The result was that the Nation broke up into tribes (21:24) and this brought a sad ending to the tale.

<sup>25</sup>In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Judg 21:25

This episode illustrates that no man can live without a king. They will serve God or a man. They will move into anarchy and chaos.

### **Three Theological and Ethical Lessons from Judges:**

1. The God of history uses whoever and whatever He needs to test or correct his errant people. God's ultimate goal, however, is to save, bless and aid His people as they live in close personal relationship to Him.
2. The God of history is able to choose whoever He wants as His instrument: weak, strong, man, woman, highborn, lowborn, righteous, or unrighteous.
3. The God of history often ordains government to punish sinners and protect the righteous.

### **Homework**

1. Reread Judges and read Ruth.

## The Timeline of Joshua and Judges (from Terry Riley's OT Chronology)

### The Conquest & Division of the Land of Canaan

The Scriptural record of the Conquest of the Land is found in Joshua 1-12, while the dividing up of the land among the 12 tribes is recorded for us in Joshua 13-24. The length of the Conquest can be determined based off the chronological material furnished in Joshua 14:7-10 regarding the age of Caleb.

<sup>7</sup>"I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart. <sup>8</sup>"Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully. <sup>9</sup>"So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.' <sup>10</sup>"Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. Josh 14:7-10

It appears that at this point, Caleb is 85 years old (v. 10). At the time they were sent out to spy the land he was 40 years old (v. 7). So 45 years have passed since that time (v. 10). Since Israel spent about 38 years wandering after their refusal to enter the land (Deuteronomy 2:14), then the Conquest of Canaan must have taken about 7 years. Thus the dates for the Conquest can be dated about 1406 BC to 1399 BC.

<b>Chronological Considerations for the Conquest of Canaan:</b>		
Caleb was 85 years old at this point.	Josh 14:10	85 years
Caleb was 40 years old when he spied out the land at Kadesh-Barnea.	Josh 14:7	-40 years
The time that had elapsed between these two events.	Josh 14:7	45 years
Israel had wandered in the wilderness for about 38 years.	Deut 2:14	-38 years
Leaving about 7 years for the actual Conquest of the Land.		7 years left

The following is an overview of the events of this time period:

<b>Events in Joshua: Conquering and Dividing the Land</b>		
Entering The Land	Conquering The Land	Dividing The Land
- Nation crosses the Jordan, camps at Gilgal, and celebrates the Passover	1-Central Campaign (6-8) 2-Southern Campaign (9-10) 3-Norther Campaign (11)	- Assignment of the Land to the Twelve Tribes - Joshua's final charge & death
Joshua 1-5	Joshua 6-12	Joshua 13-24
1406 BC	1406 BC-1399 BC	1399 BC-?

Note: The seven years of the conquest only take us through the first half of the book of Joshua. The problem is that there is no specific indication as to the time that elapsed between the end of the Conquest (1399 BC) and the first oppression during the time of the Judges (Judges 3:8). However there are some general indications of time given:

1. According to Joshua 24:31, Israel did serve the Lord all the days that Joshua lived and all the days of the elders (cf. Judges 2:7).

2. In Judges 11:13-27 Jephthah has set out to destroy the Ammonites. He remonstrates them for contesting Israel's right to land, which they have held for 300 years. In fact Jephthah explicitly dates those 300 years from the initial entrance into Canaan. [see event 17 in chart on p. 23]. It is likely that event, which Jephthah is referring to and thus begins the 300 years until the time of the Ammonite Oppression of Judges 10:8. The point is that there is a great deal of material to fit into this 300 year period so the time period between the division of the land, and the death of Joshua and the elders could not be too long.
  
3. By the same token, there is a great deal of material to fit into the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1. Thus the time period of righteousness during the life of Joshua and the surviving elders was probably not any longer than necessary. However it is at this point that it is impossible to determine the exact length of time that passes. All we can do is speculate. However, one clue might be found in Joshua 15:17. Shortly after Caleb captured the cities given him, he gave his daughter as wife to Othniel. This would have been around 1399 BC immediately after the division of the land. Later on according to Judges 3:11, Othniel judged for 40 years following an 8 year oppression by the King of Mesopotamia (Judges 3:8).

The point: If much time is allowed for the period of righteousness in Judges 2:7, then Othniel must have been awfully old when he began to judge. The likely conclusion based on a careful chronology of the judges is that there may have been as few as 11 years for the period of righteousness in Judges 2:7.

Division of The Land	Othniel maries (about age 15)	The Period of Righteousness	First Oppression Begins	Othniel Begins To Judge
1399 BC	1399 BC	1399-1388 BC	1388 BC	1380 BC

### **The Period of the Judges**

As stated above the period of the Judges likely followed the time period of Joshua and the elders rather closely due to the chronological notations of Judges 11:26 and 1 Kings 6:1. Judges 11:26 states that there were 300 years between the time when Israel captured Ammon (Fall of 1407 BC) and the time when Ammon reclaimed the area (thus, about 1107 BC). The problem exists in how best to reconcile the rules of the various Judges and allow for a time of righteousness (Judges 2:7) before the first oppression. The following is an attempt to put the various Judges into some sort of a chronology. It is necessary to note that not all of the Judges were national Judges. Some of the Judges were only over a particular region. With this understanding, it becomes evident that there might be a bit of overlapping taking place.

<b>A Chronology of The Period of the Judges:</b>			
Event:	Reference:	Years:	Projected Date:
Oppression by Mesopotamians	Judg 3:8	8	1388-1380 BC
Deliverance & Rest under Othniel	Judg 3:10-11	40	1380-1340 BC
Oppression of Eglon of Moab	Judg 3:14	18	1340-1322 BC
Deliverance and Rest under Ehud	Judg 3:30-31; 4:3	80	1322-1242 BC
* Note that it is during the 80 year deliverance and rest under Ehud that the Judgeship of Shamgar and the 20 year oppression of Jabin take place. It is at this point that there appears to be some Overlapping.			
Deliverance & Rest under Deborah/Barak	Judg 5:31	40	1242-1202 BC
Oppression by Midian	Judg 6:1	7	1202-1195 BC
Deliverance & Rest under Gideon	Judg 8:28-33	40	1195-1155 BC
Usurpation of Abimelech	Judg 9:22	3	1155-1152 BC
Judgeship of Tola	Judg 10:1-2	23	1152-1129 BC
Judgeship of Jair	Judg 10:3-5	22	1129-1107 BC
* Note it is at this point that Jephthah refers to the 300 years in Judges 11:26. If you take the number of the preceding years of the oppression and Judges (281), plus 7 years for the conquest and 1 year in the Transjordan before Israel crossed the Jordan then the remaining 11 years of the 300 must have been the period of righteousness mentioned in Judges 2:7.			
Oppression by the Ammonites	Judg 10:8	18	1107-1089 BC
Oppression by the Philistines	Judg 10:6-7; 13:1	40	1088-1048 BC
* Note that it is during this 40-year Philistine oppression that the following events take place and also that Samuel arrives on the scene as the last Judge.			
Deliverance and Rest under Jephthah	Judg 12:7	6	1089-1083 BC
The Judgeship of Ibzan	Judg 12:8-10	7	1083-1076 BC
The Judgeship of Elon	Judg 12:11-12	10	1076-1066 BC
The Judgeship of Abdon	Judg 12:13-15	8	1066-1058 BC
The Judgeship of Samson	Judg 16:31	20	?
The Judgeship of Samuel			
Samuel Anoints Saul as first King			1051 BC

In conclusion, the period of the Conquest and Division of the Land along with the rule of Joshua and the elders apparently ended sometime around 1389-1388 BC just prior to the first oppression by the King of Mesopotamia (Judges 3:8). Thus the period of the Judges begins with this first oppression around 1388 BC and ends with the anointing of Saul as King and the beginning of the United Monarchy of Israel around 1051 BC. The following chart gives an overview of this period:

<b>THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES</b>														
Josh 24:3	Judg 1-21											1 Sam 1-8	1 Sam 9	
Death of Joshua's generation.	OTHNIEL	EHUD	SHAMGAR	DEBORAH	GIDEON	TOLA	JAIR	JEPHTHAH	IBZAN	ELON	ABDON	SAMSON	Samuel leads the nation of Israel.	Samuel anoints Saul as Israel's first King.
About 1389-1388 BC														1051 BC