# Judges

Judges is a history book.

It covers the history of IsraEl from the death of JoShua to just prior to SamuEl’s birth.

Most of it was likely written by SamuEl, with at least Judges 18:30 added after the Babylonian exile, perhaps by Ezra.

Judges is clearly a continuation of the book of JoShua, because it picks up the narrative where that book ended.

### Judges

## Chapter 1

1After the death of JoShua, the sons of IsraEl asked Jehovah:

 ‘Who’ll lead us in battle against the CanaAnites now?’

2And the Lord replied:

 ‘The Judeans must take the lead, for I’ve delivered this land into their hands!’

3Then the Judeans said to their brothers [of the tribe of] SymeOn:

 ‘Come join us, and we’ll go to war with the CanaAnites… We’ll all go together!’

So the SymeOnites joined the Judeans, 4and Jehovah delivered the CanaAnites and Pherezites into their hands… Cutting down 10,000 men at Bezek.

5For they caught up with AdoniBezek at [the city of] Bezek and fought against him, and there they cut down the CanaAnites and the Pherezites. 6However, AdoniBezek escaped, so they chased after him, and when they caught him, they cut off his thumbs and big toes… 7After which AdoniBezek said:

 ‘70 kings whose thumbs and big toes were cut off have gathered under my table.

 ‘So, God has now repaid me for the things that I did to them.’

Thereafter, they carried him to JeruSalem, and that’s where he died... 8For the sons of Judah had fought against the people of JeruSalem and captured the city, and then they cut down [all who lived there] with swords and burned it with fire.

9Then the sons of Judah went down to fight with the CanaAnites who lived in the plains, in the hill country to the south, 10and with those who lived in HebRon (formerly *KiriAth Arbo-Sepher*). There the people came out to fight with them, and that’s when they cut down SesSi, AchiMan, and TholMi (the sons of Anak).

11From there, they went on to fight the inhabitants of DabIr (formerly *KiriAth-Sepher*, or, The City of Letters).

12And Caleb said:

 ‘I’ll give my daughter Ascha to be the woman of the first one who can take and destroy The City of Letters.’

13Well, it was GothoniEl (the youngest son of Kenez, Caleb’s brother) who captured it; So Caleb gave his daughter AsCha to be GothoniEl’s woman.

14Then when he came to claim her, GothoniEl urged her to ask her father for a plot of land. So, as she was sitting on her burro, she started complaining and crying, saying:

 ‘You’re sending me away into that land in the south!’

And Caleb asked her:

 ‘What else do you want?’

15And AsCha replied:

 ‘I beg you to give me a blessing. For, since you’re sending me into a land in the south, you must also provide me with watered [land] as my ransom.’

So Caleb gave her what her heart desired as a ransom… The upper and lower [springs].

16Meanwhile, the descendants of Moses’ father-in-law (‘His Excellence’ the Kenite) had left the City of Palm Trees with the sons of Judah, and they traveled into the desert south of Judah, to the edge of Arad, where they took up living among the people there.

17Thereafter, the Judeans went with their brothers the SymeOnites, and they cut down and killed all the CanaAnites that lived in SephEth, then they renamed their city, AnaThema.

18However, the Judeans didn’t claim anything within the borders of Gaza, AshKalon, AcCaron, Azotus, or any of the lands around them as their inheritance.

19But because Jehovah was with the Judeans, they inherited all the hill country, although they weren’t able to destroy the inhabitants in the valley, because they had iron chariots.

20Then they gave HebRon to Caleb, just as Moses had instructed, and he inherited the three cities of the sons of Anak.

21The sons of BenJamin didn’t take JeruSalem from the Jebusites as their inheritance either... So the Jebusites [reinhabited the destroyed city and] still live among the sons of BenJamin in JeruSalem to this day.

22Then the sons of JoSeph went up to BethEl, and Jehovah was with them. 23So they camped there and [sent spies] into the city (which was then called Luza).

24And when the spies noticed a man leaving the city, they captured him and said:

 ‘If you’ll show us a way into the city, we’ll be merciful to you.’

25So he showed them how to get into the city, and they cut down everyone there with swords. And thereafter, they set the man and his entire family free, 26so he went to the land of ChetTin and built a city there, which he named Luza… And it’s still called that today!

27ManasSeh also failed in their drive against BethSan (in Skythia) and against its towns and suburbs, as well as against Thanac and its towns, Dor and its suburbs and towns, Balak and its suburbs and towns, MegidDo and its suburbs and towns, and JeblaAm and its suburbs and towns.

So, the CanaAnites continued living in their land.

28But after IsraEl became strong enough (although they failed to drive them out), they made the CanaAnites pay tributes to them.

29Nor did Ephraim drive out the CanaAnites that lived in GaZer. So the CanaAnites also lived in their midst, but they were forced to pay tributes [to Ephraim].

30ZebuLon too failed to drive out the inhabitants of Kedron and Domana; so the CanaAnites lived in their midst and paid tributes to them.

31Also, Asher didn’t drive out the inhabitants of AcCho (who thereafter paid tributes to them), or those of Dor, Sidon, DalAph, AsChazi, ChebDa, Nai, or EreO.

32So Asher lived in the midst of the CanaAnites, because they couldn’t drive them out.

33And because NaphTali didn’t drive out the inhabitants of BethSamus or BethAnath, NaphTali too had to live in the midst of the CanaAnites; but the inhabitants of BethSamus and BethAnath had to pay tributes to them.

34Also, the Amorites drove the sons of Dan into the mountains and kept them from moving down into the valley. 35So Dan took up living on Shell Mountain (in MyrSinon and ThalaBin), where there are bears and foxes.

Yet, the house of JoSeph [made life difficult] for the Amorites and made them pay tributes. 36So at the time, the Amorite border ran from AcraBin into the hill country.

### Judges

## Chapter 2

1Well, a messenger of Jehovah had traveled from GilGal to The Place of Tears at BethEl, to address the house of IsraEl.

There he told them:

 ‘This is what Jehovah has said:

 *‘I brought you out of Egypt and into the land that I promised to your ancestors, and I said that I’d never break the Agreement that I made with you.* 2*However, I told you not to make any agreements with [the people] who live in this land, and that you were not to worship their gods!*

 *‘Rather, [I told you to] destroy their carved images and to pull down their altars!*

 *‘However, you haven’t listened to My voice, and you’ve done [many bad] things...* 3*Therefore, just as I told you, I won’t drive them out from in front of you, so they’ll harass you, and their gods will oppress you!*’

4Well, after the messenger of Jehovah said all of this to the sons of IsraEl, the people started shouting and crying... 5And that’s why they named it The Place of Tears.

Then they offered sacrifices to Jehovah there, 6and thereafter, JoShua dismissed the people and they each returned to the lands that they were given as their inheritances.

7So the people served Jehovah [faithfully] for as long as JoShua and all the elders who knew of the great things that Jehovah had done in IsraEl were still alive... 8But then JoShua (the son of NaWeh), the servant of Jehovah, died at 110 years old, 9and they buried him along the border of his inheritance in ThamNa-Thares in the hills of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount GaAs.

10Also, the rest of that generation was laid to rest with their ancestors. So, another generation came along that didn’t know Jehovah or of the things that He had done for IsraEl. 11Therefore, the sons of IsraEl started doing evil things before Jehovah, and they started serving the BaAls!

12Yes, they left Jehovah (the God of their ancestors) who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and started following and worshiping other gods – the gods of the nations roundabout them – 13and this made Jehovah very angry… They left Him and started serving BaAl and the stars!

14Well, because Jehovah was very angry at IsraEl, He handed them over to looters who plundered them… He sold them into the hands of their enemies [who lived] roundabout them, and they were no longer able to stand against their enemies.

16Also, even though Jehovah had appointed Judges to save them from the hands of those who were looting them, they wouldn’t listen to the Judges! 17They just continued in their immoral relations with other gods by worshiping them, and they quickly turned from the way that their ancestors had walked, refusing to listen to the words of Jehovah.

18But because Jehovah had appointed those Judges, He blest them and continued to save [IsraEl] from the hands of their enemies during the entire era of the Judges; for Jehovah was moved by all their groaning about those who were attacking and looting them.

19Yet, after each Judge died, they’d just go right back to being corrupt – even worse than their ancestors – by worshiping and serving other gods... And they stubbornly refused to abandon their evil ways, 20which made Jehovah very angry with IsraEl.

So He told them:

 ‘Because this nation has broken the Sacred Agreement that I made with their ancestors and refused to listen to My voice, 21I will no longer drive away a single man from those nations among them who were allowed to stay in the land by JoShua, son of NaWeh.

 22‘[I’m doing this] to see whether IsraEl will ever choose to follow and walk in My ways, as did their ancestors.’

23So, Jehovah didn’t bother all those nations that JoShua didn’t conquer, and He didn’t drive them away.

### Judges

## Chapter 3

1These are the nations that Jehovah left [in the land] to test those in IsraEl who didn’t know about the wars in CanaAn 2(because that generation of IsraEl hadn’t fought in the wars):

 • 3The five kingdoms of the Philistines and,
 • All the CanaAnites,
 • Sidonians, and
 • Evites who lived south of Lebanon from Mount HerMon to LaboEmath.

4He used them to test IsraEl and to find out whether they’d obey the commands that He’d given their ancestors through Moses.

5So, the sons of IsraEl lived in the midst of the CanaAnites, Hittites, Amorites, Pherezites, Evites, and Jebusites, 6and they married their daughters, gave their daughters to their sons, and they started serving the gods [of these nations].

7[Of course], this was all evil in the eyes of Jehovah, for they had forgotten Jehovah their God and were serving the BaAls and the sacred poles.

8As a result, Jehovah became very angry with IsraEl and He sold them into the hands of Chushan RishaThaim, the king of Syrian MesoPotamia, and the sons of IsraEl served him for 8 years.

9It was then that the sons of IsraEl once again started calling to Jehovah, so Jehovah appointed a savior for IsraEl who delivered them… **[Judge #1] GothoniEl** (son of Kenez), Caleb’s younger brother.

10Jehovah poured His Breath upon him, and this man served as IsraEl’s Judge. Then when he went to war against Chusar Sathaim, Jehovah gave the king of Syrian MesoPotamia into his hands, and he was conquered.

11So thereafter, the land was quiet for 40 years… Until GothoniEl (son of Kenez) died.

12However, the sons of IsraEl kept doing evil things before Jehovah... So, because of their evil ways, He allowed Eglom (the king of MoAb) to grow stronger and then come against IsraEl.

13First, he brought together all the sons of AmMon and Amalec, and then he went and cut down IsraEl, capturing The City of Palm Trees. 14So, the sons of IsraEl served Eglom (the king of MoAb) for the next 18 years.

15Well, once again the sons of IsraEl called to Jehovah and He provided them a savior, **[Judge #2] Aod** (son of Gera and grandson of JeMeni), who was just as strong with his left hand as he was with his right.

And when the sons of IsraEl sent him to carry tributes to Eglom, 16Aod made himself a two-edged dagger that was 8 inches (20cm) long, which he hid on his right thigh under his robe. 17And thereafter, he went and carried the tributes to Eglom, who was a very fat man.

18So, after he had presented all the tributes, he sent those who had carried the gifts away 19(he did this after they’d all returned from the quarries at GilGal).

And he said:

 ‘I have a secret message for you O king!’

Then Eglom told him not to say anything further until he’s dismissed all of his attendants.

20So, later, Aod went to see Eglom while he was sitting in his upper summer chamber all by himself.

And Aod said:

 ‘I have a message for you from God, O king.’

Then, as Eglom rose from his throne, 21Aod reached in with his left hand and grabbed the dagger from his right thigh, and he plunged it into [Eglom’s] belly… 22He drove it in so far that the handle went in and the fat closed over it… And he left the whole dagger inside his belly!

23Then Aod just walked out on the porch, passing the guards on the way, and he closed and locked the chamber doors as he left.

24Well when Eglom’s servants came and saw that the doors to the upper chamber were locked, they said:

 ‘Doesn’t he usually [lie undressed] in the summer chamber?’

25Then they waited so long that they finally became embarrassed. And when they saw that no one had opened the doors to the upper chamber [for a long time], they got the keys and opened them…

And that’s when they found their lord lying dead on the floor!

26Meanwhile, Aod had escaped during the confusion, for nobody had paid any attention to him. So he passed the quarries and ran to Setir Otha.

27Then when Aod got back to the land of IsraEl, he blew his horn in the hills of Ephraim, and the sons of IsraEl came down from the mountains to him.

So he he stood before them and said:

 28‘Now follow me! For Jehovah God has given our enemies the MoAbites into our hands!’

Well, they all followed him and they captured the fords of the JorDan near the land of MoAb, and they wouldn’t allow anyone to cross it.
29Thus, they cut down MoAb that day, killing about 10,000 mighty men, and no one escaped.

30As a result, MoAb was put back into the hands of IsraEl, and the land rested for the next 80 years… And Aod judged them, until he died.

31Well after him, Jehovah appointed **[Judge #3] SamEgar** (son of DiNach).
He’s the one who cut down 600 Philistines with an ox plow.

And he too delivered IsraEl.

### Judges

## Chapter 4

1But once again, after Aod died, the sons of IsraEl went back to doing evil things against Jehovah, 2so He sold them into the hands of JaBin (the king of CanaAn) who ruled from Hazor. The leader of his army was SiSara, and he lived in The Ironworks-of-the-Nations.

3Then the sons of IsraEl started calling to [Jehovah again], because [SiSara] had 900 iron chariots, which [he used to] oppress IsraEl for 20 years.

4Well, **[Judge #4] DeborAh** (the wife of LapidOth) was a Prophetess, and she was the Judge of IsraEl at the time. 5She would sit under [what came to be known as] ‘The Palm Tree of DeborAh,’ which was located between Rama and BethEl in the hills of Ephraim, and the sons of IsraEl would come to her for judgment.

6Then DeborAh sent for BarAk (son of AbiNeEm) who was in Cades of NaphTali, and she asked him:

 ‘Hasn’t Jehovah the God of IsraEl given you any instructions?

 ‘Take 10,000 men from among the sons of NaphTali and ZebuLon, and go to Mount Tabor!

 7‘There He will send SiSara (JaBin’s general) against you with his army and chariots at the Kison Wadi, and He will give them into your hands!’

8But BarAk replied:

 ‘I’ll go if you’ll go with me. But if you won’t go, I’m not going!

 ‘For I’m not sure on which day Jehovah will bless me [by sending] His messengers.’

9So she said:

 ‘Then I’ll go with you, but understand this:

 ‘You won’t be honored by this expedition, for Jehovah will give SiSara into the hands of a woman!’

As a result, DeborAh then left Cades and went with BarAk.

10He also called [for help from] ZebuLon and NaphTali there at Cades, and 10,000 men showed up who all then traveled with DeborAh.

11Now, Heber (the Kenite) had moved away from the sons of Jobab (Moses’ brother-in-law) at Cana and pitched his tent beside the Oak-of-the-Envious, which is near KaDesh.

12And when SiSara was told that BarAk (son of AbiNeEm) had left for Mount Tabor, 13he called for all his iron chariots (all 900 of them) and for all the people [who lived between] the Ironworks-of-the-Nations and the Kison Wadi.

14Then DeborAh told BarAk:

 ‘Now [get ready], for this is the day that Jehovah will give SiSara into your hands…

 ‘Yes, the Lord will travel before you!’

So BarAk descended Mount Tabor with 10,000 men, 15and because Jehovah had created problems for SiSara, his chariots, and his army, BarAk cut them down with swords.

Meanwhile, SiSara had jumped from his chariot and run away!

16Well, BarAk pursued the chariots and SiSara’s army [all the way] to Ironworks-of-the-Nations and cut them all down, leaving no survivors. 17But, SiSara had run towards the tent of JaEl, the woman of Heber the Kenite (because [Heber] was his friend, and there was peace between JaBin the king of Hazor and Heber’s family).

18So, JaEl went out to meet SiSara and said to him:

 ‘Hide in here, my lord… Come here to me and don’t be afraid.’

Therefore, he turned to her and entered her tent, then she covered him with a blanket.

19There SiSara said to her:

 ‘I’m very thirsty… Please give me some water to drink.’

So she opened a jar of milk, gave it to him to drink, and then she covered him again.

20Then SiSara said to her:

 ‘Now, stand by the entrance to the tent, and if anyone comes and asks if you’ve seen me, tell him that you haven’t.’

21Well, JaEl (Heber’s woman) thereafter grabbed a tent pin and a hammer, and she crept up to him and drove the pin through his temple… Driving it all the way into the ground!

So he passed out, everything went dark, and he died.

22And when JaEl finally saw BarAk (who was pursuing SiSara), she went out to meet him and said:

 ‘Come in here and I’ll show you the man you’re looking for.’

Then he entered [her tent] and saw SiSara lying dead with the pin through his temple!

23So God drove JaBin (the king of CanaAn) away from before the sons of IsraEl that day, 24and they kept attacking JaBin until they had finally destroyed him.

### Judges

## Chapter 5

1Well, on that day, DeborAh and BarAk (son of AbiNeEm) sang this song:

 2‘IsraEl was shown what to do,
 And the people were made willing… Praise Jah!

 3‘Hear, O you kings and listen you rulers;
 For, this is what I’ll sing…
 It’s the song that I’ll sing to Jehovah…
 A psalm to IsraEl’s Lord and their God.

 4‘O Jehovah,

 ‘You went up to SeIr…
 With You, we approached Edom’s land.
 Then the ground started shaking and the skies dripped with dew,
 And from clouds up above, poured the rain.

 5‘The ground shook before the face of Jehovah…
 SinAi [trembled] before the face of the Lord
 6In the days of SamEgar, son of Anath,
 And in the days of JaEl.

 ‘For, [IsraEl] had strayed from their way
 And followed in paths that were crooked.
 7In IsraEl, there were no more mighty men;
 They’d failed until DeborAh arose…
 A mother within IsraEl.

 8‘For, because they had chosen new gods;
 When their cities and rulers went out to fight,
 There wasn’t a spear or a shield to be seen
 Among the 40,000 of IsraEl.

 9‘But, my heart had so yearned
 For IsraEl to see order again
 Among those who still praised Jehovah…
 10To have someone mount a burro at noon,
 And go sit on the seat of judgment once more,
 For the sake of those who travel the roads…
 Someone to sit and judge on the way.

 11‘Now, you should proclaim that you’ve been saved
 From those who once brought disturbance to us.

 ‘O Lord,

 ‘May those who go out to draw water,
 Speak of the righteous things that You’ve done.
 May Your righteous deeds in IsraEl grow,
 And may Jehovah’s people return to their towns.

 12‘Awaken… Yes, wake up, O DeborAh!
 Awaken and sing us a song.
 Arise O BarAk… Lead your captives away!
 O son of AbiNeEm; lead them away.

 13‘A small group of [God’s] mighty went with him…
 These mighty ones came from among us.
 14Ephraim used them to pry Amalec’s roots,
 As BenJamin and others traveled behind.

 ‘The sons of MachIr also arrived,
 To search for the rest of our foes.
 And from ZebuLon also came those
 Who recorded it all with the pens of their scribes.

 15‘With DeborAh and BarAk, came IsSachar’s leaders.
 Then, to the valleys of ReuBen,
 BarAk made him run for his life.

 ‘With fluttering hearts, 16they then sat between pens,
 Where they heard the bleating of Ruben’s flocks,
 As each man searched through the things in his heart.

 17‘Yet, the GileAdites stayed in their tents
 On the other side of the JorDan,
 And the [men of] Dan remained in their ships.

 ‘Those of Asher just sat by the shore,
 And they stayed in their tents at the ports,
 18While ZebuLon’s men [laid] their lives [on the line],
 And NaphTali marched ‘cross the hills of their land.

 19‘Then the kings of CanaAn formed to wage war,
 And fought ThanaAch at MegidDo’s waters.
 20Yes, the stars in the heavens formed for war,
 As they traveled to beat SiSara.

 21‘So, the Kison Wadi then swept them away…
 The ancient brook Kison (my mighty soul),
 [Is what] really trampled them down.
 22For in it, the hoofs of their horses got mired,
 So those mighty men had to flee.

 23‘May you be cursed, O Meroz;
 For God’s angel then cursed all who lived there,
 Since they didn’t [fight] for Jehovah,
 And they failed to give aid to His mighty.

 24‘Bless JaEl, the woman of Heber the Kenite…
 May she be praised above female tent-dwellers.
 25For he asked for water and she gave him milk…
 In a bowl, she brought butter for a leader.

 26‘Then, she leaned with a nail in her left hand,
 And hit it with the hammer in her right.
 She cut SiSara down with a nail through his head…
 She pinned him with a nail through his temples.

 27‘Beneath her feet, he fell and he rolled.
 But after that, he just lay there…
 He bowed and fell where he bowed, lying dead.

 28‘SiSera’s mother then looked through her window…
 She looked out of her peephole and asked:

 *‘Why has his chariot been shamed…*
 *Why did the wheels of his chariots stop?’*

 29‘But, thus replied her wise ladies:

 *‘You answered yourself when you said,*

 30*‘They’ll find him dividing the loot…*
 *He’s dividing dyed clothes with his men…*
 *For SiSara, are the spoils of many dyed clothes…*
 *Embroidered dyed clothes are the spoils for his neck.’*

 31‘O Jehovah,

 ‘May Your enemies all perish this way,
 And may those who love You become just as strong
 As the journeys of the sun as it’s [crossing the skies].’

32Well after that, the land rested [for the next] 40 years.

### Judges

## Chapter 6

1However, the sons of IsraEl kept doing evil things in the eyes of Jehovah, so He put them under the hand of the MidiAnites for 7 years. 2They proved to be so strong against IsraEl that the IsraElites took up living in mountain caves, in [animal] dens, and in holes in the rocks.

3And whenever the sons of IsraEl would plant anything, the MidiAnites, AmaLechites, and sons of the east would get together 4to [fight] against them and destroy their crops.

Also in Gaza, they stole all their [cattle], leaving nothing to support life in the land.

5So [the IsraElites] moved into temporary shelters along with their livestock and camels, living like locusts, as their land was being destroyed... 6And because they’d been driven into such an impoverished state by MidiAn, 7the sons of IsraEl once again started calling to Jehovah.

8As a result, Jehovah sent a Prophet to the sons of IsraEl, who told them:

 ‘This is what Jehovah the God of IsraEl says:

 *‘I’m the One who brought you out of the land of Egypt… Out of that house of slavery!*

 9*‘Yes, I saved you from the hands of the Egyptians, then I saved you from these people who are now persecuting you… These whom I once drove away and whose land I gave to you.*

 10*‘Then I told you that because I am Jehovah your God, you shouldn’t fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live…*

 *‘But you refused to listen to Me!’*

11Well thereafter, a messenger from Jehovah came and sat down under the fir tree at EphRatha (BethLehem) in the land of JoAs (of the line of ObiEzri) where his son **[Judge #5] GideOn** was threshing wheat in a wine press, so that the MidiAnites wouldn’t notice [what he was doing].

12The messenger appeared to him and said:

 ‘Jehovah is with you, you mighty [man].’

13And GideOn replied:

 ‘Please be patient with me, my lord; for if Jehovah is really with us, then, why are all these bad things happening to us?

 ‘Where are all His miracles that our ancestors told us about, as when He brought them out of Egypt?

 ‘But He’s obviously rejected us now, for He’s given us into the hands of the MidiAnites!’

14Then the messenger of Jehovah turned to him and said:

 ‘Go and use your strength to save IsraEl from the hands of MidiAn...

 ‘Look! I’m sending you!’

15But GideOn replied:

 ‘Be patient with me my lord... How can I save IsraEl?

 ‘For look, even though there are thousands in [the tribe of] ManasSeh, they’re all weak… And I’m the very least one in the house of my father!’

16And the messenger of Jehovah said to him:

 ‘Because Jehovah will be with you, you’ll cut the MidiAnites down like [they’re] just one man.’

17But GideOn said:

 ‘If I’ve found mercy in your eyes and if you’re really going to do all these things that you told me about today... 18Don’t leave this place until I return with an offering and lay it before you.’

And [the messenger] replied:

 ‘I’ll stay here until you return.’

19So, GideOn went back and prepared a kid goat and a quart of fine fermentation-free flour. Then he put the [cooked] meat in a basket, poured its gravy into a jar, and he carried it to [the messenger, who was still sitting] under the fir tree.

20And God’s messenger said to him:

 ‘Now, take the meat and the fermentation-free cakes and lay them on that rock, then pour the gravy over it.’

So that’s what he did.

21Then Jehovah’s messenger stuck out the walking stick that was in his hand and touched the meat and the fermentation-free bread, and fire came out of the rock, which consumed it all!

And at that, the messenger of Jehovah vanished from his sight!

22Well, that was when GideOn realized that this [really] was a messenger from Jehovah.

So he said:

 ‘Ah… Ah… Jehovah my God!

 ‘I’ve seen a messenger from Jehovah face to face!’

23And the Lord replied:

 ‘May you have peace.

 ‘Now, don’t be afraid, for you’re not going to die.’

24And so GideOn built an altar to Jehovah there and called it, ‘The Peace of Jehovah.’ It’s still there today in EphRatha, [at the home of his] father EsDri.

25Then that night, the Lord said to him:

 ‘Now, take the [second bull] that belongs to your father, the seven year old one. And thereafter, you must destroy your father’s altar to BaAl along with his sacred poles.

 26‘Then you must build an altar to Jehovah your God on the top of this hill, and get everything ready… Then, take the calf and sacrifice it as a whole burnt offering, using the wood from the sacred poles that you are to cut down.’

27So GideOn took 10 of his servants and did just as the Lord said. However, because he was afraid of the house of his father and the men of the city, he did it at night.

28Well, when the men of the city woke up early the next morning and saw that the altar of BaAl and the nearby sacred poles had been demolished, and they saw the calf that GideOn had offered on an altar that he had built, 29they each started asking their neighbors:

 ‘Who did this?’

So after asking around, they found out that it was GideOn (son of JoAs).

30Then the men of the city went and told JoAs to send out his son so they could kill him for destroying their altar of BaAl and their sacred poles.

31But GideOn asked the men who had come for him:

 ‘Are you now pleading for BaAl, and are you trying to save him?

 ‘If so, may all those who have come to plead on his behalf die this morning!

 ‘Yes, if he’s really a god, let him plead for himself [before the one] who’s torn down his altar!’

32Well, from that day on, [they started calling GideOn] JeroBaAl [meaning, *May BaAl Plead*], since he said:

 ‘Let BaAl plead for himself [before the one] that has torn down his altar.’

33Meanwhile, all the MidiAnites, AmaLechites, and sons of the east had gathered and set up camp in the JezreEl Valley.

34Then the Breath of Jehovah came over GideOn and he blew his [battle] horn, and he called for the AbiEzerites to come with him.

35GideOn also sent messengers throughout [the lands of] ManasSeh, Asher, ZebuLon, and NaphTali, calling for them to join him.

36And GideOn said to God:

 ‘If You’re really going to use me to save IsraEl, as You said...

 37‘Look, I’ve put some wool fleece on the threshing floor.

 ‘If only this fleece is covered with dew and the ground all around it’s dry [in the morning], I’ll know that You’re going to use me to save IsraEl, as You said.’

38Well, when he got up early the next morning, he wrung out the fleece, and a full bowl of water poured from it!

39But GideOn then said to God:

 ‘Please don’t be angry, but allow me to ask for just one more thing...

 ‘So I can be sure, let the fleece be dry [in the morning], while dew is all over the ground.’

40And this is what God did that night… There was dew all over the ground, but the fleece was dry!

### Judges

## Chapter 7

1So, JeroBaAl (GideOn) got up early and camped his army at the Spring of Harad, with the camp of MidiAn to the north… [Their camp] stretched from BabaAh and ThamorAi down into the valley.

2And the Lord said to GideOn:

 ‘There are too many people with you, so I won’t deliver MidiAn into your hands; for then IsraEl would boast before Me and claim that they’d saved themselves!

 3‘So, tell the people this:

 *‘All that are nervous or afraid may now leave Mount GileAd.’*

Well, of the 22,000 that came with him, only 10,000 remained.

4Then the Lord said to GideOn:

 ‘There are still too many people!

 ‘So now, lead them all down to the water, and I’ll reduce their numbers for you. Then, whichever ones I select and say:

 *‘This one must go with you.’*

 ‘...you must take.

 ‘And those whom I tell you not to take must not go with you… Make sure that they don’t come along!’

5So GideOn led the people down to the water, and the Lord said to GideOn:

 ‘Now, I want you to set aside all those who lap the water like a dog from those who get down on their knees to drink.’

6Well, 300 men lapped water with their hands to their mouths, while all the rest got down on their knees to drink.

7Then the Lord said to GideOn:

 ‘Now I’m going to save you and give MidiAn into your hands with these 300 men who lapped the water... All the rest must leave.’

8So, they gathered the provisions from the rest of the people and took their trumpets before sending them back to their tents.

And after that, he armed the 300 and got them ready; for the army of MidiAn was camped just below them in the valley.

9And that night, the Lord told {GideOn]:

 ‘Now, get up and go down into their camp, for I’ve given it into your hands!

 10‘However, if you’re still afraid, I want you and your servant Phara to go down into their camp 11and listen to what they’re saying…

 ‘Then you won’t be afraid anymore!’

So he went down to the edge of where the companies of fifties were camped, along with his servant Phara... 12For MidiAn, Amalec, and all the sons of the east were scattered throughout the valley like locusts, and their camels were like the sands on the seashore.

13Then GideOn overheard a man telling his comrade about a dream he had, saying:

 ‘{Look} I had a dream! And in it, I saw a cake of barley bread roll into [our] camp; then, when it reached a tent, it knocked it down.

 ‘And as [the tent] fell, it turned upside down!’

14And his comrade said to him:

 ‘This was none other than the sword of GideOn, son of JoAs, an IsraElite man... For God has given MidiAn and our entire army into his hands.’

15So when GideOn heard the story of the dream and its interpretation, he thanked Jehovah.

Then he returned to the camp of IsraEl and said:

 ‘Now get up, for Jehovah has given the camp of MidiAn into our hands!’

16So he divided his 300 men into three companies, and he gave each of them trumpets, torches, and empty pitchers. He had them put their torches inside the pitchers, 17and he said:

 ‘Now, watch me and do what I do!

 ‘For I’m going down to the edge of their [camp]... 18Then I’ll blow my trumpet, and at the same time, you must each start blowing your trumpets all around their camp and shout:

 *‘For Jehovah and for GideOn!’*

19So GideOn and his company [crept] down to the edge of their army towards the start of the middle watch, and he aroused the guards by blowing his trumpet and breaking the pitcher that was in his hands.

20Then all three companies blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers, and they held the torches in their left hands as they blew their trumpets with their right hands and shouted:

 ‘A sword for Jehovah and for GideOn!’

21Well, all [that GideOn’s people] really did after that was just stand around the camp while the [MidiAnite] army sounded alarms and everyone started running about!

22For, after the 300 blew their trumpets, Jehovah caused the entire [MidiAnite] army to start attacking each other with swords! 23And then they started running away, retreating as far as BethSeEd and TagaraGatha, from AbelMeula to TaBath.

Then the men of IsraEl (those from NaphTali, Asher, and everyone from ManasSeh) also came to chase after MidiAn. 24So, GideOn sent messengers throughout the mountains of Ephraim, telling them:

 ‘Come down to join [in my fight against] against MidiAn… Take [control of] all the water and the JorDan as far as BethEra!’

Well, all the men of Ephraim started shouting, and they took control of all the water along the JorDan up to BethEra, 25where they captured the leaders of MidiAn, Oreb and Zeb.

Then they killed Oreb at Oreb’s Rock, and they killed Zeb at Zeb’s Winepress. And after they chased down MidiAn, they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeb back to GideOn from across the JorDan.

### Judges

## Chapter 8

1But then, the men of Ephraim asked GideOn:

 ‘What were you doing?

 ‘Why didn’t you call us when you went to fight against MidiAn?’

They were very angry with him.

2And he replied:

 ‘What have I done in comparison to you? For, aren’t the gleanings of Ephraim better than the full harvest of AbiEzer?

 3‘It was Jehovah who delivered the leaders of MidiAn (Oreb and Zeb) into your hands… And what did I do to compare to that?’

Well, after he said that, they calmed down.

4Then GideOn went to the JorDan and crossed it all by himself, as his 300 men (who were very hungry) lagged behind. 5He went on to SokChoth, and he said to the men there:

 ‘Please give me some bread to feed these men who are arriving after me, because they’re starting to get weak... For look! We’re in pursuit of ZebeE and SalMana, the kings of MidiAn.’

6But the leaders of SokChoth replied:

 ‘Have you already captured ZebeE and SalMana, so that we should now have to feed your army?’

7And GideOn said,

 ‘Okay then... But when Jehovah gives ZebeE and SalMana into my hands, [I will come back here] and then I’ll tear your flesh with thorns in the Desert of the Sons of Kainan.’

8Well from there, he went up to PeniEl and he made the same request of them… But they answered in the same way as did the men of SokChoth.

9So GideOn told them:

 ‘When I return in peace, I’m going to tear down your fortifications!’

10Meanwhile, ZebeE and SalMana were in CarCar with their army, but there was only about 15,000 left of their mercenary army, for 120,000 of their soldiers had already been killed.

11Then GideOn traveled past the tent dwellers east of NabAi and JegEbal, and he cut down and captured their army. 12But ZebeE and SalMana fled... So he chased after them and caught the two kings of MidiAn after he’d routed their army.

13Well, as GideOn (son of JoAs) was returning from the battle, 14he questioned a young man among the captives who was from SokChoth, and he got him to write down the names of the leaders and elders of SokChoth… All 77 men.

15Then GideOn went to those leaders of SokChoth and said:

 ‘Look! Here are ZebeE and SalMana about whom you so rudely asked:

 *‘Are ZebeE and SalMana now in your hands, so that we should have to give your hungry men bread?’*

16So thereafter, he took those elders [and had them dragged through] the thorns of the Desert of the Sons of Kainan, tearing them to pieces! 17And then from there, he went and tore down the fortifications of PhanuEl and killed all the men in that city!

18Well, after that, he asked ZebeE and SalMana:

 ‘Who were those men whom you killed in Tabor?’

And they replied:

 ‘They looked like you… Like the sons of a king!’

19And GideOn said:

 ‘Those were my brothers… The sons of my mother.

 ‘So, as Jehovah lives, if you’d left them alive, I wouldn’t have to kill you!’

20Then he said to JeTher (his firstborn):

 ‘Take them out and kill them!’

But the young man wouldn’t draw his sword, because he was young and afraid.

21And ZebeE and SalMana said:

 ‘If you’re a man, then why don’t you kill us yourself?’

So GideOn got up and killed ZebeE and SalMana... Then he took all the round ornaments that were hung around the necks of their camels.

22Well thereafter, the men of IsraEl [came to him] and said to GideOn:

 ‘Our lord; become our ruler… You, your sons, and the sons of their sons, for you’ve saved us from the hands of MidiAn.’

23But GideOn replied:

 ‘I’m not going to rule over you, nor will any of my sons; for Jehovah alone must be your ruler!’

24And GideOn added:

 ‘All I ask from you is one thing: I want each man to give me an earring from his loot.’

[He asked this] since [the people they’d conquered] were IshMaElites, [and] he knew they all had gold earrings.

25And they replied:

 ‘Yes we’ll give them to you.’

So he unfolded his robe and each man tossed one of the ear rings that they’d looted into it.

26Well, the weight of these gold earrings that he’d asked for amounted to about 40 pounds (18kg)… So he had this in addition to the purple robes of the kings of MidiAn and the collars that were around the necks of their camels!

27Then GideOn took the ornaments and robes and made a sacred vest, which he then placed in his city of Ophrah. However, later on, all IsraEl came and committed immoral acts before it there. So it became a snare to GideOn and to his house.

28Meanwhile, MidiAn had been so shamed by the sons of IsraEl that they were couldn’t even raise their heads! And everything was peaceful in IsraEl during the 40 years that GideOn [judged the land].

29JeroBaal (GideOn), son of JoAsh, lived in his own home, 30and 70 sons came from him, because he’d taken many women. 31In addition, he also had a son born to his concubine in SheChem, whom he named AbiMelech.

32Well eventually, GideOn (son of JoAsh) died (with a good head of grey hair), and he was entombed with his father JoAsh in Ophrah of the AbiEzerites.

33And after GideOn died, the sons of IsraEl turned around and started having immoral relations with the BaAls once again, agreeing that [a] BaAl would be their god. 34So the sons of IsraEl forgot their God Jehovah who’d saved them from the hands of their neighbours who had oppressed them. 35And they no longer treated the house of JeroBaAl (GideOn) well, despite all the good things that he’d done for them.

### Judges

## Chapter 9

1Well, [one day], AbiMelech son of JeroBaAl [or GideOn] went to see his mother’s brothers in ShiKima, and he spoke to them and all his relatives in his grandfather’s house, saying:

 2‘Please speak to all the men of ShiKima and ask them:

 *‘Which is better for you... To have 70 men –all the sons of JeroBaAl– rule over you, or just one man?*

 *‘And remember that I’m your own flesh and [blood]!’*

3So his uncles spoke about him to all the men of ShiKima and told them all the things that he said. And this moved their hearts [to follow] AbiMelech... For they said that he was their brother.

4Then they gave him 70 silver coins from the [temple] of BaAl Berith, which AbiMelech thereafter used to hire some vain and cowardly men to be his followers.

5So, he went to the house of his father in EphRatha and killed all of the legitimate sons of JeroBaAl [or Gideon], his own brothers, on a rock… That is, all except JoAtham the youngest, because he ran away and hid!

6So after that, all the men of ShiKima and the house of BethMaAlo got together and appointed AbiMelech to be their king at the Oak of Sedition in ShiKima. 7But when [GideOn’s surviving son] JoAtham heard about this, he went and stood on top of Mount GiriZim and shouted to them:

 ‘Listen to me, you men of ShiKima; for God is listening also!

 8‘The trees once went out to anoint a king over them, and they asked the olive tree to be their ruler.

 9‘But the olive tree replied:

 *‘Must I now give up my oil that men use to glorify God in order to be promoted over the [rest of the] trees?’*

 10‘Then they said to the fig tree:

 *‘Come rule over us!’*

 11‘But the fig tree replied:

 *‘Must I leave all my sweetness and good fruit to be promoted over the [rest of the] trees?’*

 12‘Then they said to the [grape] vine:

 *‘Come rule over us!’*

 13‘And the vine replied:

 *‘Must I leave my wine that brings happiness to God and to men just to be promoted over the [rest of the] trees?’*

 14‘And finally, all the trees said to the brier bush:

 *‘Come rule over us!’*

 15‘And the brier bush replied:

 *‘If you’ll really anoint me to be your king, [all of you] must come and stand under my shadow. But if you refuse to do this, I’ll send out fire that’ll burn down the cedars of Lebanon!’*

 16‘Now, [judge for yourselves whether] what you’ve done was the right thing when you made AbiMelech your king!

 ‘And ask if you’ve been fair with JeroBaAl and his house… Whether you’ve given him the reward that he deserves...

 17‘Even though my father fought for you and put his life on the line when he saved you from the hands of MidiAn, 18you’ve risen against the house of my father today and you’ve murdered his sons, who had [once] numbered 70 men, on a stone!

 ‘Then you made this AbiMelech, son of his slave [woman], the king over the men of ShiKima, just because he’s your brother!

 19‘Now, if you think that you’ve dealt with JeroBaAl and his house faithfully and righteously, then find joy in AbiMelech, and may he rejoice over you!

 20‘But if you don’t do that, may fire come from AbiMelech to devour the men of ShiKima and the house of BethMaAlo… And may fire come from the men of ShiKima and the house of BethMaAlo to devour AbiMelech!’

21Thereafter, JoAtham ran away and lived at BaeEr, to get way from his brother AbiMelech.

22Well, it turned out that AbiMelech reigned over IsraEl for just 3 years, 23for God created a bad relationship between AbiMelech and the men of ShiKima, and the men of ShiKima started dealing treacherously with the house of AbiMelech… 24[Which is what he was due] for the bad things that he’d done to the 70 sons of JeroBaAl [or Gideon].

[God] had laid the blood of his brothers upon AbiMelech who’d murdered them, as well as on the men of ShiKima, since they were the ones who had empowered him to kill his brothers.

25So the men of ShiKima made trouble for [AbiMelech] by sending highwaymen into the mountains, where they robbed everyone who passed that way… And all of this was reported to King AbiMelech.

26Well, GaAl (a son of JoBel) and his brothers had moved to ShiKima. And because the men of ShiKima trusted him, 27they all went into his field where they gathered grapes and had a good time pressing them [into wine].

Then they brought the [wine] into the temple of their god, where they ate, drank, and cursed AbiMelech.

28It was GaAl (son of JoBel) that asked:

 ‘Just who’s this AbiMelech? Just who is this son of ShiKima that we should serve him?

 ‘Isn’t he JeroBaAl’s son, and isn’t ZeBul his steward EmMor’s son? Why should we be serving him?

 29‘If these people would [start serving] me, I’d remove AbiMelech… I’d say to him:

 *‘Gather your army and come here!’*

30Well, when ZeBul (the ruler of the city) heard what GaAl (son of JoBel) said, it made him very angry. 31So he sent messengers to AbiMelech secretly, who said:

 ‘Look! GaAl (son of JoBel) and his brothers have come to ShiKima and they [are stirring up] the city against you!

 32‘So, come here tonight with your army and lie in wait for them in the fields... 33Then at sunrise, approach the city; and when he and his people come out to confront you, you can do whatever you wish to him…

 ‘That is, if you’re mighty enough!’

34Therefore, AbiMelech and his army marched by night and formed an ambush against ShiKima with 4 companies. 35And when GaAl (son of JoBel) went out and stood before the city gate, AbiMelech’s army came to attack him.

36Well, when GaAl saw them coming, he said to ZeBul:

 ‘Look, there are people coming down from the tops of the mountains!’

And ZeBul replied:

 ‘You’re just seeing the shadows on the mountains [and thinking that they’re] men.’

37But GaAl kept talking. He said:

 ‘Look, there are people coming from the west, near the middle of the land, and another group is coming down the road from Helon-MaOnenim.’

38And ZeBul asked him:

 ‘Just what were you thinking when you said:

 *‘Who is AbiMelech that we should serve him?’*

 ‘These men whom you showed so much disdain for, are now coming! So we’d better get ready and form battle lines!’

39So at that, GaAl gathered the men of ShiKima and set up battle lines to fight AbiMelech. 40But AbiMelech attacked and killed many people all the way up to the city gate! And GaAl had to retreat.

41Then AbiMelech returned to AreMa.

But, ZeBul thereafter drove GaAl and his brothers out of ShiKima.

42Then the next day, when the people [of ShiKima unlocked the gates] and went out into their fields, someone reported this to AbiMelech. 43So he gathered his army and divided them into three companies, then he once again formed an ambush out in the fields.

And when he saw the people leaving the city, he attacked them and cut them down.

44Meanwhile, AbiMelech and his generals rushed up and attacked the city gate, as the other two companies were outside attacking the people in the fields. 45So AbiMelech fought against the city all that day and captured it.
Then he killed all the people, [burned] the city, and poured salt over its land.

46However, when the men in ShiKima’s citadel saw what was happening, they all gathered inside the temple of their god, [BaAl] Berith.

47And when AbiMelech heard that all the men in the citadel had gathered in one place, 48he took his army up Mount SelMon. Then he grabbed an axe, cut off a tree branch and laid it on his shoulders, and he told his troops:

 ‘Now, do the same thing I’m doing as quickly as you can!’

49So they each cut a branch off of a tree and they followed AbiMelech... Then they laid the [branches] against the temple and set them on fire, burning it and killing all the people in the citadel of ShiKima (about 1,000 men and women).

50And after that, AbiMelech left the temple of Berith and then he attacked TheBez, and captured it. 51It also had a citadel in the middle of the city, and all the people ran there and locked the door, then they climbed to the top of the citadel.

52Well, AbiMelech attacked the citadel and laid siege to it; and when he got close to the door, he set it on fire... 53But as he was doing this, a woman dropped a piece of a millstone on his head, fracturing his skull!

54So he quickly called to the young man who was his armor bearer and said:

 ‘Draw your sword and kill me, for I don’t want anyone to say that I was killed by a woman!’

Therefore, the young man ran him through with a sword, and he died.

55Then when the men of IsraEl saw that AbiMelech was dead, they all just went back to their homes. 56And that’s how God paid AbiMelech back for the bad things that he’d done against his father, and for murdering his 70 brothers.

57It’s also how He paid back the men of ShiKima… God brought their guilt down on their heads, and the curse of JoAtham (son of JeroBaAl [or Gideon]) came true.

### Judges

## Chapter 10

1Well, after AbiMelech [died], **[Judge #6] Thola** (son of Phua) arose to save IsraEl. He was from the family of IshSachar and he lived in SamIr in the mountains of Ephraim. 2He judged IsraEl for 23 years, and then he died and was buried in SamIr.

3And after him, there was **[Judge #7] JaIr from GileAd**; he judged IsraEl for 22 years.

4He had 32 sons, they had 32 burros, and they ruled over 32 cities in the area of GileAd… Which are still called JaIr’s cities to this day. 5And when JaIr died, he was buried in RhamNon.

6Then the sons of IsraEl once again started doing evil things in the eyes of Jehovah, and they [turned to the worship of] BaAl Im, the Ashtar Oths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of MoAb, the gods of the sons of AmMon, and the gods of the Philistines.

So they abandoned Jehovah and no longer served Him.

7As a result, Jehovah became enraged with IsraEl and He gave them into the hands of the Philistines and the sons of AmMon. 8During this time (some 18 years), they had totally broken and crushed the sons of IsraEl who lived on the other side of the JorDan [in the east] in the land of the Amorites and in GileAd.

9And after that, the AmMonites crossed the JorDan to battle with Judah, BenJamin, and the house of Ephraim. So they made life exceedingly difficult for all the sons of IsraEl.

10And the sons of IsraEl started crying out to Jehovah once again, saying:

 ‘We sinned against You when we abandoned our God and started serving BaAl Im!’

11But this time, the Lord said to the sons of IsraEl:

 ‘Haven’t I [already] delivered you from the oppression of Egypt, and from the Amorites, the sons of AmMon, the Philistines, 12the Sidonians, the AmaLechites, and the MidiAnites?

 ‘When you called out to Me, didn’t I save you from them?

 13‘But you still left Me and served other gods! So I won’t be saving you anymore... 14Go and call to the gods that you’ve chosen for yourselves and let *them* save you whenever you’re in trouble!’

15And at that, the sons of IsraEl said:

 ‘We have sinned!

 ‘Therefore, do whatever You find good in Your eyes… But just save us today!’

16Then they got rid of all their other gods and they started serving Jehovah once again! And before long, [God] became impatient over all the wailing of IsraEl.

17Meanwhile, the sons of AmMon went and camped around GileAd, so the sons of IsraEl got together and camped on the hill just above them.

18Then the leaders of the people of GileAd asked each other:

 ‘Who will lead us in battle against the sons of AmMon?’

And they decided:

 ‘Whoever is willing to do so will become the head over all who live in GileAd!’

### Judges

## Chapter 11

1Well, **[Judge #8] JephThah** (the GileAdite) was a mighty man who was the son of GileAd by a whore. 2Meanwhile, GileAd’s wife had also given birth to sons, and when they grew up, they drove JephThah out of the house, saying:

 ‘You aren’t going to receive an inheritance in the house of our father, because you’re the son of [his] mistress.’

3So JephThah left his brothers and went to live in the land of Tob, where a lot of worthless men started following him and traveling with him.

4Then later, when the sons of AmMon were preparing to fight against IsraEl, 5the elders at GileAd sent [messengers] to call JephThah from the land of Tob, 6saying:

 ‘Come and lead us in our fight against the sons of AmMon.’

7And JephThah replied:

 ‘Aren’t you the ones who disliked me, drove me out of my father’s house, and banished me? So, why are you calling for me now?’

8And the elders of GileAd said:

 ‘Well, we’re turning to you because we’re asking you to lead us in our war against the sons of AmMon. If you’ll do this, you can be the head over all the inhabitants of GileAd.’

9So JephThah told the elders of GileAd that if they’d bring him back to fight against the sons of AmMon, and if Jehovah would hand them over to him, he would become their leader.

10And the elders of GileAd replied:

 ‘Jehovah is our witness that we’ll do just as you said.’

11As a result, JephThah returned to GileAd, and the elders made him the head [of their army and their] ruler.

Well, JephThah first prayed to Jehovah about this (at MasSepha). 12And after that, he sent messengers to the king of the sons of AmMon to ask:

 ‘What have I done to you that you’ve come to fight against me and against my land?’

13And the king of the AmMonites told JephThah’s messengers:

 ‘[We’re doing this because] IsraEl took all our land from the Arnon, to the JaBoc, and to the JorDan after they came from Egypt.

 ‘But now, if you’ll return it peacefully, we’ll withdraw.’

14Then JephThah sent messengers to the king of AmMon again, who told him:

 15‘JephThah says that IsraEl didn’t just take the land of MoAb or the land of the sons of AmMon. 16For when we left Egypt, IsraEl traveled through the desert along the Red Sea until we got to Cades. 17And there, IsraEl sent messengers to the king of Edom and asked if [he’d let us] to pass through their land. But the king of Edom wouldn’t let us do that.

 ‘And IsraEl asked the same thing of the king of MoAb, and he wouldn’t allow us [to cross his land] either; so, we stayed in Cades.

 18‘Thereafter, we traveled through the desert and went around the lands of Edom and MoAb. Then when we got to the east side of MoAb, we camped in the country on the other side of the Arnon; So, we never crossed the borders of MoAb (for the Arnon is their border).

 19‘Then IsraEl sent messengers to SeOn (the king of the Amorites and the king of HeshBon) to say:

 *‘Please allow us to cross your land so that we may get to our land.’*

 20‘But SeOn didn’t trust IsraEl to just pass through his land, so he gathered all of his people, then he set up camp at Jasa and formed battle lines against IsraEl... 21However, IsraEl’s God Jehovah gave SeOn and all of his people into the hands of IsraEl, and they cut them all down.

 ‘Thereafter, we inherited all the land of the Amorites that lived there, 22from the Arnon to the JaBoc, and from the desert to the JorDan. 23So, now that Jehovah the God of IsraEl has removed the Amorites [and given their land to] His people IsraEl, are you trying to take it back?

 24‘Why not accept the land that your god CheMosh has given to you as your inheritance and allow us to inherit all the land that our God Jehovah has taken from you?

 25‘Are you any better than Balak (the son of SepPhor) the king of MoAb… Didn’t he start a war and fight with IsraEl? 26And after IsraEl had been living in HeshBon and its suburbs, and in AroEr and its suburbs, as well as in the cities around the JorDan for some 300 years… What [land] did he recover then?

 27‘So, I haven’t sinned against you, and you’re doing me wrong by preparing to war against me. Therefore, may Jehovah serve as the judge between the sons of IsraEl and the sons of AmMon today!’

28Nevertheless, the king of the sons of AmMon refused to listen to the words that JephThah had sent to him… 29And then the Breath of Jehovah came over JephThah, so he went up to GileAd (in ManasSeh), passed by its watchtower and the sons of AmMon, and he went to the other side of the city.

30There he made a vow to Jehovah. He said:

 ‘If you’ll give the sons of AmMon into my hands, 31whoever is the first to come out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in peace after [conquering] the sons of AmMon must belong to Jehovah… I’ll offer him as a whole burned offering!’

32So thereafter, JephThah advanced to meet the sons of AmMon in battle, and Jehovah gave them into his hands. 33He cut them down all the way from AroEr to the Arnon… 20 of their cities as far as Ebel Charmim.

It was a huge destruction and the sons of AmMon were conquered by the sons of IsraEl.

34Well, when JephThah returned to his home in MasSepha, it was his daughter whom he first saw coming out to meet him, dancing and shaking a tambourine! [She was] his only child… He didn’t have any other sons or daughters.

35And when he saw her, he ripped his clothes and shouted:

 ‘Oh no, my daughter! You’ve ruined me!

 ‘I’m so sad, because I made a promise about you to Jehovah, and now I can’t change it.’

36But she said:

 ‘Father, do to me whatever you’ve promised to Jehovah, for He’s given you vengeance on our enemies, the sons of AmMon.’

37And she went on to say:

 ‘Father, I know that you must do this thing, so allow me to have 2 months with my friends as we travel through the mountains to wail over my virginity.’

38And he replied:

 ‘Then go.’

So he allowed her to leave for 2 months, as she and her friends went into the mountains to weep over her virginity. 39And after 2 months, she returned to her father so that he could keep his vow concerning her… And she never [had sex with] a man.

40As a result, it became a rule for the daughters of IsraEl to go and cry over the daughter of JephThah (the GileAdite) for 4 days each year.

### Judges

## Chapter 12

1Well after that, the men of Ephraim got together and traveled north to see JephThah, and they asked him:

 ‘Just why did you go over to fight with the sons of AmMon and not call for us to go with you?

 ‘Because you did that, we’re going to burn down your house with you in it!’

2And JephThah said to them:

 ‘My people and I were very busy fighting the sons of AmMon, and when I called for you, you didn’t come to save me from their hands.

 3‘So, when I saw that you weren’t going to be any help, I put my life in my own hands and attacked the sons of AmMon… And Jehovah gave them to me.

 ‘So now, just why are you coming against me today?’

4Well, JephThah gathered all the men of GileAd and fought against Ephraim, and the men of GileAd cut them down.

However, those who escaped warned him:

 ‘[Don’t forget that your town] GileAd is right in the middle of [the territory of] Ephraim and ManasSeh!’

5So the GileAdites took the fords of the JorDan River before the Ephraimites could get there, and when they tried to cross [to get back home], the men of GileAd asked each one:

 ‘Are you an Ephraimite?’

And when they said:

 ‘No.’

6They then told them to say ‘Stachys’ (for the Ephraimites couldn’t pronounce it properly). Then [if they couldn’t say it right,] they killed them there at the fords of the JorDan, and 40,000 men of Ephraim died that day!

7Well, JephThah (the GileAdite) judged IsraEl for 6 years, and then he died and was buried in his city of GileAd.

8Thereafter, **[Judge #9] Papa IbSan from BethLehem** judged IsraEl.

9He had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He [married off his 30 daughters to men outside of his land], and he brought in 30 [women] for his sons from [outside of their land].

He judged IsraEl for 7 years, 10then Papa IbSan died and they buried him in BethLehem.

11After him, **[Judge #10] AiLom from ZebuLon** judged IsraEl for 10 years. 12Then AiLom died and was buried in [the town of] AiLom in the land of ZebuLon.

13Thereafter, **[Judge #11] AbDon** (son of ElLel the PhaRathonite) judged IsraEl.

14He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons that rode upon 70 young burros. He judged IsraEl for 8 years. 15Then AbDon (son of ElLel the PhaRathonite) died, and he was buried in PhaRathon, in the land of Ephraim on Mount Amalec.

### Judges

## Chapter 13

1But then, the sons of IsraEl started sinning against Jehovah again; so He handed them over to the Philistines for the next 40 years. 2Well, during that time, a man [from the town of] SaraAh named ManoEh (of the family of Dan) who had a woman who hadn’t given birth to any sons 3was approached by a messenger from Jehovah, that said to her:

 ‘I see that you have never given birth to a son.

 4‘Now, you must be very careful not to drink any wine or liquor, or to eat anything that’s unclean... 5For {Look!} you’re now pregnant and you’ll give birth to a son, upon whose head an iron [razor] may never [be used].

 ‘This child will be dedicated to God, a Nazarite, from the time that he’s born, and he will start saving IsraEl from the hands of the Philistines.’

6Well at that, the woman went back inside and said this to her husband:

 ‘A man of God just came to me who looked very impressive… Like a messenger of God. So, I didn’t dare to ask him where he came from, and he didn’t tell me his name.

 7‘But he said to me:

 *‘{Look!} You’re now pregnant and you’ll give birth to a son, upon whose head an iron [razor] may never [be used]. This child will be dedicated to God, a Nazarite, from the day he’s born until the day that he dies.’*

8So ManoEh prayed to Jehovah and said:

 ‘I wish to beg You, O Jehovah my Lord, concerning the man of God who you just sent. Let him come to us once again and teach us what we must do concerning this child that’s to be boon soon.’

9Well, Jehovah listened to the voice of ManoEh and He sent His messenger to the woman again. But at the time, she was sitting in a field… ManoEh (her man) wasn’t with her.

10So she ran home and said:

 ‘Look! The man who came the other day has appeared to me again!’

11Then ManoEh got up and followed his woman, and when they got to him, ManoEh asked:

 ‘Are you the person who spoke to my woman?’

And the messenger replied:

 ‘I am.’

12Then ManoEh said:

 ‘May [your] words come to pass… But tell us how we must raise the child and how we must deal with him.’

13And the messenger of Jehovah said to ManoEh:

 ‘Your woman will remember all that I’ve told her…

 14‘She must not eat anything that comes from the vine, or drink any wine or liqueur, or eat anything that’s unclean… She must follow all of these [instructions] that I’ve given to her.’

15Then ManoEh said to the messenger of Jehovah:

 ‘Please stay here for a while and let us prepare a young goat as a meal for you.’

16And the messenger of Jehovah said to ManoEh:

 ‘If you want me to stay, I won’t eat your bread.

 ‘But if you wish to sacrifice a whole burnt offering to Jehovah, you should do it.’

Well, because ManoEh didn’t realize that [this person] was really a messenger [from God], he said:

 17‘Tell us your name, so that when your words come true, we can come to you and bow before you.’

18And the messenger of Jehovah replied:

 ‘Why do you ask my name? It’s just too wonderful.’

19So ManoEh then took a kid goat along with its grain offering, and he offered it to Jehovah on a rock. And that’s when the messenger did something that was very unusual, as ManoEh and his woman looked on...

20Suddenly, the flames on the altar rose high into the sky, and the messenger of Jehovah flew away in the flames!

And when ManoEh and his woman saw this, they both fell with their faces to the ground.

21Well, the messenger never appeared to ManoEh and his woman again. But after ManoEh realized that it was a messenger of Jehovah, 22he said to his woman:

 ‘We’re going to die, because we’ve seen God!’

23However, his woman replied:

 ‘If Jehovah wanted to kill us, He wouldn’t have accepted our whole burnt offering and food offering, nor would He have revealed and let us hear all these things.’

24Well thereafter, the woman did give birth to a son whom she named Samson – and Jehovah blest him as he grew. 25For the Breath of Jehovah entered him there in the camp of Dan between [the towns of] SaraAh and EsthaOl.

### Judges

## Chapter 14

1[Then several years later], **[Judge #12] Samson** went down to ThamNatha, and he noticed a woman there that was the daughter of one of the Philistines.

2So he went and told his father and mother:

 ‘I saw a girl in ThamNatham, a daughter of one of the Philistines, whom I want you to take to be my woman!’

3And his parents asked:

 ‘Aren’t there enough daughters among our brothers or any women among all our people? Why do you want to take a woman from among the uncircumcised Philistines?’

And Samson replied:

 ‘Take her, because she really appeals to me.’

4Well, what his father and mother didn’t realize is that this [action] had come from Jehovah... For He wanted to bring His vengeance upon the Philistines that were dominating IsraEl at the time.

5So, Samson traveled with his father and mother down to ThamNatha, and when he got to the vineyard there, a young lion roared and ran out to meet him! 6Well, the Breath of Jehovah came over him in a powerful way, and he crushed the lion as though it were a kid goat, leaving nothing in his hands!

However, he didn’t tell his father and mother what he’d done, 7for they were off speaking to the woman whom Samson had found so attractive.

8Well, sometime later, as he was returning to take the girl, he went back to look at the carcass of the lion, and he noticed that a swarm of bees had taken up living in its mouth... 9So, he took some of the honey and traveled on. He ate part of it, then he went and offered the rest to his father and mother.

They also ate it, because he didn’t tell them that he’d taken the honey out of a lion’s mouth.

10Well thereafter, his father went [and took] the woman [for Samson], and Samson held a wedding banquet in that place that lasted 7 days (which was customary for young men to do at the time), 11to which 30 [local] guests were invited, and that stayed with him.

12Then Samson said to them:

 ‘Let me tell you a riddle, and if you can answer it correctly during the next 7 days of the banquet, I’ll give [each of you] a wrap and a new set of clothes.

 13‘But if you can’t answer it, you must each give me a wrap and a new set of clothes.’

And they replied:

 ‘Okay, tell us your riddle.’

14Then he told them this:

 ‘The eater came for the meat, but sweetness came from the strong one.’

Well, they tried to solve the riddle for three days, but they couldn’t figure it out... 15Then on the 4th day, they went to Samson’s woman and said:

 ‘We want you to fool your husband. For, unless you make him explain that riddle to you, we’re going to burn down your father’s house with you in it!

 ‘Surely you didn’t invite us here just to [rob] us?!’

16So Samson’s woman went to him and started crying, saying:

 ‘You don’t really care for me…

 ‘You don’t love me, because you haven’t given me the answer to the riddle that you posed to the sons of my people!’

And Samson asked her:

 ‘If I haven’t given the answer to my own father and mother, why should I tell it to you?’

17Well, she just kept on crying in front of him throughout their banquet; so on the 7th day he gave her the answer, because she kept bothering him…

And then she told it to the [guests].

18So before sunrise on the 7th day, the [guests] (who were from the city) came to him and answered:

 ‘What’s sweeter than *honey*, and what’s stronger than *a lion*?’

Then Samson said to them:

 ‘If you hadn’t been plowing with my heifer, you would have never figured out my riddle!’

19And at that, the Breath of Jehovah came over him and he went down into the city and destroyed 30 men, then he took their clothes and gave them to the ones who had answered the riddle. And after that, Samson was so angry that he just went back to the house of his father.

20Meanwhile, [her father] gave Samson’s wife to his best man… To one of his friends!

### Judges

## Chapter 15

1Well, sometime later (during the wheat harvest), Samson went to visit his wife, bringing along a kid goat.

And he said:

 ‘I want to go in to my woman… Into her bedroom.’

2But her father spoke to him and said:

 ‘Because I felt that you must surely hate her, I gave her to one of your friends. Now, isn’t her sister better than her? Let her [sister] become yours instead!’

3And Samson said:

 ‘Well, I finally have a good reason to harm the Philistines, and no one can blame me.’

4So Samson trapped 300 foxes. He paired the foxes and tied each pair’s tails together, and tied torches to their tails... 5Then he lit the torches and released the foxes into the Philistine’s grain fields, and everything that they owned (their threshing floors, their fields of grain, their vineyards, and their olive groves) was burned.

6Well, when the Philistines asked:

 ‘Who did this?’

They were told:

 ‘It was Samson, the son-in-law of the Thamnite… Because he gave [Samson’s] woman to one of his friends!’

As a result, the Philistines went and burned down the house of Samson’s father-in-law, with his woman inside it.

7Then Samson went to them and said:

 ‘Because you did this to her, I’m going to get even… For, only then will I be satisfied!’

8So he cut off all of their legs to their thighs and left… And he went down and lived in a cave in The Rock of Etam.

9Well, sometime thereafter, the Philistines went into Judah and set up camp all around Lechi. 10And when the men of Judah asked why they were getting ready to attack them, the Philistines replied:

 ‘We’ve come here to capture Samson; for we want to deal with him in the same way that he dealt with us!’

11So, 3,000 men of Judah went down to the Hole in The Rock of Etam and said to Samson:

 ‘Don’t you know that the Philistines rule this country… What have you done to us?’

And Samson replied:

 ‘I’ve just treated them the way that they’ve treated me.’

12And they said:

 ‘Well, we’ve come here to take you and hand you over to the Philistines.’

Then Samson told them:

 ‘Swear to me that you won’t do anything bad to me yourselves.’

13And they promised:

 ‘No, we’ll just tie you up and hand you over to them… We won’t kill you.’

So they tied him up with two new ropes and led him away from the Rock.

14Well, when they reached [the place that he later called] ‘The Jaw,’ the Philistines started shouting and they all ran to meet him. Then the Breath of Jehovah came down upon him and the ropes became like burned hemp in his arms… They just melted away!

15And noticing the jawbone of a burro that had been tossed aside, he reached down and picked it up, and he [used it to] strike down 1,000 men.

16Then Samson [sang this song]:

 ‘With a burro’s jaw, I destroyed them…
 A thousand men, I cut down
 With the bone of a burro.’

17Thereafter, he threw the jawbone away… And that’s when he started calling that place,

 ‘Destroyed by the Jaw.’

18Meanwhile, he’d become extremely thirsty; so he called to Jehovah and said:

 ‘Although it has pleased You to use Your servant’s hands to bring about this great deliverance; must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?’

19That’s when God broke open a hole in the ground [near] that jawbone, from which water started flowing! So he drank it, his spirit was renewed, and he regained his strength. Then he named that spring, ‘The Well of the Calling,’ which is still in Lechi today.

20Well, after that, [Samson] Judged IsraEl for 20 years (during the period of Philistine [domination]).

### Judges

## Chapter 16

1Sometime later, Samson went to Gaza, and there he [met up with] a prostitute and [had sex] with her.

2Well, when this was reported to the Gazites (when they were told that Samson was there), they surrounded [the house] and quietly waited for him all night long inside the city gates... [Their plan] was to wait until he left at dawn, then [catch him] and kill him. 3However, Samson only slept there until midnight.

For he got up and went out to the city gate, and [because it was locked], he pulled its two posts [out of the ground], lifted them (along with the locked gate) onto his shoulders, and he climbed to the top of the mountain in front of HebRon and left them there!

4Well after this, he fell in love with a woman who lived by the river at Sorech, whose name was DeliLah. 5So the leaders of the Philistines came to her and said:

 ‘Seduce him and find out where he gets all his great strength (what the real source of his strength is), so we can take him, bind him up, and humble him!

 ‘[If you’ll do this], we’ll give you 1,100 silver coins.’

6So DeliLah said to Samson:

 ‘Please tell me where you get all your strength… Is there any way that you could be tied up, captured, and imprisoned?’

7And Samson replied:

 ‘Yes; if I were tied up with 7 ropes that have been soaked in water, I’d be as weak as any ordinary man.’

8So the leaders of the Philistines brought her 7 wet ropes and she used them to tie him up, 9as their men hid in her bedroom.

Then she shouted:

 ‘The Philistines are coming, Samson!’

And he broke the ropes as though they were burned threads; for no one realized how strong he really was.

10And then DeliLah said to Samson:

 ‘You’ve misled me and lied to me!

 ‘Now, tell me how you can really be held.’

11And he said to her:

 ‘I would have to be tied up with new ropes, not with ropes that have been used for work… Then I’d be as weak as any other man.’

12So DeliLah took new ropes and tied him up, as the men who were waiting in her bedroom [prepared themselves to] run out when she shouted:

 ‘The Philistines are here Samson!’

But he broke the [ropes] off his arms like threads.

13And again, DeliLah said to Samson:

 ‘Look, you’ve deceived me and lied to me!

 ‘Now, please tell me how you can be held.’

And he said to her:

 ‘If the 7 locks on my head were woven together into a braid and then nailed to a wall, I’d be as weak as any other man.’

14So after he fell asleep, DeliLah took the 7 locks on his head and braided them, then she nailed them to the wall and shouted:

 ‘The Philistines are here, Samson!’

But when he woke up, he just jerked the nail that held the braids out of the wall... 15And DeliLah asked Samson:

 ‘How can you say that you love me when your heart doesn’t belong to me?

 ‘This is the third time that you’ve deceived me! For you haven’t really told me where you get all your strength.’

16Well, she kept nagging him and complaining all night long, until he was exasperated to the point of dying. 17So he told her all the things that were in his heart, saying:

 ‘A razor must never touch my head; for I have been a person dedicated to God since [I came from] my mother’s belly... So if [my hair] should be shaved, my strength would leave me and I’d become as weak as any other man.’

18DeliLah realized that what he said this time came from his heart, so she sent for the Philistine rulers and said:

 ‘Come here one more time, for he’s told me what’s in his heart.’

And as a result, all the Philistine rulers came there and laid the silver in her hands.

19So then DeliLah allowed Samson to fall asleep on her knees, and she [motioned to] a man who cut the 7 locks off his head… And his strength left him.

20As a result, when DeliLah shouted:

 ‘The Philistines are here, Samson!’

...he woke up thinking, ‘I’ll just shake myself free and leave, as I’ve done before.’ However, he didn’t know that Jehovah had left him.

21So the Philistines captured him, put his eyes out, bound him in brass fetters, and took him down to Gaza, where they locked him in a dungeon.

22However, during the time he was there, his hair started to grow back again… And soon it became as long as it had been before.

23Well thereafter, the leaders of the Philistines assembled to offer a big sacrifice to their god Dagon and to celebrate what they claimed their god had done by giving their enemy Samson into their hands... 24So when the people saw him, they started singing praises to their god, saying:

 ‘You’ve given our enemy who destroyed our land and who killed many of our people into our hands!’

25And after everyone had been worked into a joyful frenzy, they said:

 ‘Now, bring in Samson and have him [act the fool] before us.’

So they sent for Samson, and he was brought from the dungeon to stand as a fool before them. They led him by the hand and stood him between the [temple] columns.

26And Samson said to the young man who was holding his hand:

 ‘Please let me feel the columns that support the building, so I can steady myself on them.’

27Well, the building was filled with men and women, including all the leaders of the Philistines, and almost 3,000 more people had perched themselves on the roof (they’d all come to watch and to make fun of Samson).

28Then Samson called to Jehovah and said:

 ‘O Jehovah, my Lord,

 ‘Please remember me and give me strength just one last time, O God, so that I can make the Philistines pay for the loss of my eyes.’

29And at that, he braced his hands against the two columns that supported the building and pushed – one with his right hand and the other with his left.

30And Samson said:

 ‘Let my woman also die along with the Philistines!’

So he bent over and shoved, and the temple collapsed, killing the leaders and all the people in it! And in his death, Samson killed more than he’d killed during the rest of his lifetime.

31Well thereafter, his brothers and the rest of his father’s house went there and recovered his body, then they buried it between SaraAh and EsthaOl, in the tomb of his father ManoEh.

For he had Judged IsraEl for 20 years.

### Judges

## Chapter 17

1Then there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim named MicaYas. 2He had said this to his mother:

 ‘Do you remember those 1,100 silver coins that you once had and which you cursed me for taking?

 ‘Well, here they are, for I did in fact take them.’

And his mother said:

 ‘May Jehovah bless you, my son.’

3So he returned her 1,100 silver coins, and his mother said:

 ‘I had dedicated this money to the Lord and set it aside for [you], my son, to make a molded and carved image… So it’s yours anyhow.’

4However, he went on and gave the money back to his mother. Then his mother took 200 of the silver coins and gave them to a silversmith, who used them to mold and carve an idol for the house of MicaYas.

5So, the house of MicaYas was thereafter used as the temple to his god. Then [MicaYas] made a sacred vest and a religious emblem, and he anointed one of his sons to be his priest. 6For back in those days, there was no king in IsraEl and everyone did whatever seemed right in his own eyes.

7Well, there was a young Levite from BethLehem of Judea who happened to be passing by one day... 8He’d left BethLehem in Judea, heading towards whatever place he might find. And when he got to the hills of Ephraim and to the house of MicaYas, his journey ended.

9For MicaYas asked him:

 ‘Where have you come from?’

And he replied:

 ‘I’m a Levite from BethLehem of Judah, and I’m traveling to any place that I may find.’

10So MicaYas said to him:

 ‘Then, live with me!

 ‘If you’ll become a father and a priest to me, I’ll give you 10 silver coins every year, as well as a change of clothing, and I’ll also provide you free room-and-board.’

11So the Levite lived there with MicaYas and became like one of his sons, 12for he’d anointed the Levite to serve as his priest, and from then on, he lived in MicaYas’ home.

13MicaYas said:

 ‘Now I know that the Lord will treat me well, because a Levite has become my priest!’

### Judges

## Chapter 18

1Well, there was no king over IsraEl back then, and the tribe of Dan was looking for its own land to inherit, because they hadn’t received an inheritance among the tribes of the sons of IsraEl.

2So, the sons of Dan selected 5 mighty men from among their families and sent them to spy in the land around SaraAh and EsthaOl, in order to find a land [that they could inherit]. Then when they reached the hills of Ephraim and the house of MicaYas, they spent the night there... 3For, because they’d recognized the voice of the young Levite man, they stopped and asked him questions such as:

 ‘Who brought you here? What do you do here?’

And:

 ‘Do you enjoy [living] here?’

4Then he explained how MicaYas had taken him in and hired him to be his priest.

5So they said:

 ‘Please use your powers to ask God whether the direction we’re headed in will be blest.’

6And the priest told them:

 ‘Go your way in peace, for the direction you’re heading is the direction of the Lord.’

7Well thereafter, the men traveled on, and when they got to LaiSha, they saw that the people there lived peacefully and leisurely (like the Sidonians). For there was no crime or violence in the land or any robbery, because they were a long way from the Sidonians, and they were quite isolated.

8So then the 5 men returned to their brothers at SaraAh and EsthaOl and they said:

 ‘Why are you just sitting here? 9Let’s get up and attack these people, for we’ve looked at their land and found it to be very good!

 ‘Don’t be silent and don’t restrain yourselves from going there and inheriting their land, 10for we’ve found a place where the people are living in security and where the land is large enough for all of us, and God has given it into your hands…

 ‘It’s a place where the ground produces everything that we need!’

11So thereafter, the families of Dan sent 600 armed troops to SaraAh and EsthaOl. 12First they went and camped in KiriAth JaiRim in Judah (that’s why that place is still called ‘The Camp of Dan’ to this day. Look, it’s there behind KiriAth JaiRim.

13Then they marched on to the mountains of Ephraim, and when they reached the house of MicaYas, 14the 5 men who had come as spies into the land of LaIsha told their brothers:

 ‘There’s a sacred breast piece, a religious emblem, and a molded and carved image in this place. So, let’s think about what we should do next.’

15Well, they stopped there and they went up to the house of the young Levite man (which was really the house of MicaYas), and they asked him how things were going. 16But meanwhile, the 600 armed men of the sons of Dan were standing just outside of the gate!

17Then the 5 men who had come as spies in the land [forced their way into] the house of MicaYas where the priest was standing 18and they grabbed up the image, the breast piece, and the religious emblem... And when the priest asked them what they were doing, they said:

 19‘Put your hand over your mouth and be quiet, for we want you to come with us to serve as *our* father and priest!

 ‘After all, which would be better for you, to be the priest of the house of one man, or to be the priest of a whole tribe and to become a house among the families of IsraEl?’

20Well, this sounded good to the heart of the priest, so he went along with the men who had taken the sacred breast piece, the religious emblem, and the molded and carved image.

21Now, these men had brought all their sons, all their property, and all their baggage with them. 22So even after they’d gone some distance from MicaYas’ house, MicaYas and his neighbors (who had seen them in his house) were able to catch up with them and they started shouting at them.

23But the sons of Dan then turned and faced MicaYas, and asked:

 ‘What’s the matter with you? Why are you shouting at us?’

24And MicaYas replied:

 ‘Because you’ve taken the image that I made and my priest!

 ‘So, what have you left for me… Why do you think I’m shouting at you?’

25And the sons of Dan said:

 ‘Stop shouting or you’ll make us angry and our men will kill you and your entire household.’

26Well thereafter, the sons of Dan traveled on... For MicaYas realized that they were more powerful that he was, so he just went back to his home 27and let them carry off the things that MicaYas had made along with his priest (who went with them).

Then from there, the army traveled on to LaiSha, where the people had been living peacefully and securely, and they attacked them with their broadswords and burned down their city.

28No one came to their aid, because the city was so far from Sidon that there was no way to communicate with the people there (it was located in a valley near the house of ReHob). Then [the sons of Dan] rebuilt the city and took up living there, 29renaming it, ‘the City of Dan’ (after their ancestor, the son of IsraEl), although it used to be called LaiSha.

30And it was there that the sons of Dan erected the carved image for themselves.

So from then on, JoNathan (son of GerSon and grandson of ManasSeh) and his sons continued to be the priests of the tribe of Dan until the time that the nation was captured and carried away.

31Also, the carved image that MicaYas made remained there for as long as the House of God was in ShiLoh; because back then, there was no king in IsraEl.

### Judges

## Chapter 19

1Now, there was a Levite that had been staying in the hills of Ephraim, and there he took a concubine for himself who was from BethLehem of Judah.

2However, his concubine got angry and left him, returning home to her father in BethLehem. Then after 4 months, 3he went there (along his servant and a pair of burros) to plead with her to come back to him... So she let him into her father’s house, and she and her father met with him (for she was really very happy to see him).

4Then his father-in-law (the father of the young woman) urged him to stay there for three days; so, they all ate, drank, and stayed together there. 5Then on the 4th day, when he got up early in the morning to leave, the girl’s father said to his son-in-law:

 ‘Have a bite to eat before you go.’

6So the two of them sat down together and ate and drank once again.

Thereafter, the girl’s father said to her man:

 ‘Stick around for a while; spend another night and enjoy yourself!’

7And when the man got up to leave, his father-in-law wouldn’t allow him to go, so he spent another night there.

8Then when he got up early the next morning (on the 5th day) and got ready to leave, the girl’s father said:

 ‘Stop acting like a soldier… Stay here and build your strength until later in the day.’

So the two [sat down to] eat.

9And when the man, his concubine, and his servant got ready to go, his father-in-law said to him:

 ‘Look, it’s almost evening… Spend the night and let’s enjoy ourselves!

 ‘You can leave early tomorrow morning and start your trip back home then.’

10But he didn’t want to spend another night there, so he got up and left… He saddled his burros and set off with his concubine... 11Well, they got as far as Jebus (JeruSalem) and it was getting very late.

So the servant said to his master:

 ‘Let’s stop here in this Jebusite city and spend the night.’

12But his master replied:

 ‘We don’t want to stay in a city of foreigners; for there are no sons of IsraEl here. 13Let’s just continue on and spend the night in GibeAh.’

14So they traveled on and arrived at BabaAh (in the tribe of BenJamin) later that night.

15Well, when they got to BabaAh, they prepared to stay in the street, because no one had invited them in to spend the night in their home. 16But then an old man came in from working in the fields. He was from the mountains of Ephraim, but at the time he was living in BabaAh among the sons of BenJamin.

17And when he saw the travelers sitting in the street, the old man asked them:

 ‘Where have you come from? And where are you heading?’

18And [the Levite] replied:

 ‘We’re coming from BethLehem of Kudag, and we’re heading towards the side of Mount Ephraim. I live there, and I’ve gotten this far from BethLehem in my journey home… But no one has invited us into his house.

 19‘We have enough straw and food for our burros, and enough bread and wine for me, the girl, and my servant; so your servants really won’t be deprived of anything.’

20Then the man brought them into his home, provided a place for their burros, washed their feet, 21fed them, and gave them something to drink.

22Well, as they were sitting there enjoying themselves, some men from the city (sons of criminals) surrounded the house and started banging on the door.
Then they shouted at the old man who owned the house:

 ‘Send out the man who came into your house, so we can [have sex] with him!’

23But [the old man] stepped outside and said to them:

 ‘No brothers; please don’t do him any harm, for he’s a guest in my home! Don’t do such a terrible thing!

 24‘Look, here’s my daughter who’s a virgin, and here’s the man’s concubine... I’ll bring them out to you and you can treat them however you wish… But, don’t mistreat this man!’

25However, because the men wouldn’t listen to him, he grabbed the concubine and brought her outside to them, and they raped and abused her all night long, releasing her in the morning.

26After that, she came and fell at the door of the house where her man [had hidden] himself. 27And when her man got up and opened the door to continue his journey the next morning, he found her lying there by the door with her hands on the threshold.

28So he spoke to her and said:

 ‘Get up, let’s go!’

But she didn’t answer, because she was dead.

Then he lifted [her body] onto his burro and he returned home.

29Well, [when he got home], he took his sword and cut his concubine’s body into 12 parts and sent them to [all the tribes] of IsraEl.

30And everyone who saw this said:

 ‘We’ve never seen such a day, nor has anyone seen such a day since the sons of IsraEl left the land of Egypt!

 ‘So, let’s assemble and decide what we must do.’

### Judges

## Chapter 20

1Thereafter, the whole gathering of the sons of IsraEl (from Dan to Beer SheBah) assembled to meet before Jehovah at MasSepha in the land of GileAd. 2They all stood there before Jehovah as an assembly of the people of God… 400,000 sword-carrying men!

3Meanwhile, the sons of BenJamin learned that they had gathered there.

Well, after everyone had arrived, they asked:

 ‘Where did this terrible thing happen?’

4And the Levite (the owner of the woman who was killed) said:

 ‘My concubine and I had gone into BabaAh of BenJamin to spend the night.

 5‘Then men who lived there came and surrounded the house during the night, for they wanted to kill me. But they abused and raped my concubine instead, until she was dead.

 6‘So I picked her up and cut her into pieces, and I sent them to all the inheritances of the sons of IsraEl… For these men have done a lewd and disgusting thing in IsraEl!

 7‘Look, all you sons of IsraEl... Think about what happened and then discuss it among yourselves.’

8Well, all the people agreed and said:

 ‘None of us will return to our tents or houses 9until this thing that was done in BabaAh [is settled]. Let’s hold a lottery to choose who’ll go to fight against that city… 10We’ll choose 10 men from among every 100 of all the tribes of IsraEl, 100 out of every 1,000, and 1,000 out of every 10,000.

 ‘Then we’ll gather enough provisions and send [these men] to BabaAh of BenJamin to pay them back for the disgusting things that they’ve done in IsraEl.’

11Well, all the men of IsraEl agreed, and they prepared to march on the city. 12So thereafter, they sent messengers throughout the whole tribe of BenJamin to say:

 ‘What’s this wicked thing that has been done among you?

 13‘Now, surrender those sons of criminals that are in BabaAh, and we’ll execute them to purge their wickedness from IsraEl.’

However, the sons of BenJamin refused to listen to the voices of their brothers, the sons of IsraEl, 14and [men from] all of their cities gathered at BabaAh to fight against the rest of IsraEl. 15The sons of BenJamin sent 23,000 soldiers, along with 700 of the best men from BabaAh, all of whom were capable of fighting with both hands… 16They could sling a stone at a hair and not miss!

17Meanwhile, the army of IsraEl (those other than the tribe of of BenJamin) numbered 400,000 men of war. 18But [before they went to battle], they went to BethEl to ask God:

 ‘Who must lead us in the fight against the sons of BenJamin?’

And Jehovah replied:

 ‘Judah must go first and serve as your leader.’

19So the next morning, the sons of IsraEl went and camped around BabaAh, 20and the battle began!

21Well, the sons of BenJamin came out of BabaAh and attacked, cutting down 22,000 men of IsraEl. 22So the men of IsraEl sent for reinforcements and got ready to fight in the same place where they’d fought on the previous day.

23[But first] they went and spent the day crying before Jehovah; and in the evening, they asked Him:

 ‘Should we go to fight against our brothers the sons of BenJamin again?’

And Jehovah said:

 ‘Go and fight them.’

24So the sons of IsraEl advanced against the sons of BenJamin on the 2nd day. 25And again the sons of BenJamin came out of BabaAh to meet them, and they killed 18,000 more of [IsraEl’s] soldiers.

26Then, all the sons of IsraEl (the people and their troops) went to BethEl and just sat there crying before Jehovah, fasting all day long until the evening, as they offered whole burnt offerings and perfect sacrifices to Jehovah. 27For back then, the [Sacred Chest] of Jehovah God was there [in BethEl]. 28And PhineAs (son of EliEzer and grandson of Aaron) would go and stand in front of the chest whenever the sons of IsraEl wanted to ask Jehovah for anything.

So they again went to him and asked:

 ‘Must we go once more to fight with our brothers, the sons of BenJamin?’

And Jehovah’s reply was:

 ‘If you go there in the morning, I’ll give them into your hands.’

29Therefore, the sons of IsraEl [went back] and encircled BabaAh; [but this time], they set up an ambush. 30And when the sons of IsraEl went to fight the sons of BenJamin on the 3rd day, it looked like they were planning to attack BabaAh much as they had done before.

31So the sons of BenJamin once again came out to meet them and they started cutting them down in the middle of the road that leads from BabaAh to BethEl, and they killed about 30 men… But this drew them all outside of the city, 32as the sons of BenJamin were shouting:

 ‘They’re falling before us the same as they did before!’

However, the sons of IsraEl had planned their retreat to draw everyone out of the city and into the roads… And that’s what they did. 33For all the men who came to fight had assembled at BaAl Thamar, while the rest of IsraEl hid in MaraAgabe.

34So, as 10,000 of IsraEl’s best men were attacking BabaAh, and [BenJamin’s] troops were fighting them fiercely, they didn’t realize that they were doomed.
35For Jehovah allowed the sons of IsraEl to cut down BenJamin that day.

All together, the sons of IsraEl destroyed 25,000 of BenJamin’s soldiers.

36For when the sons of BenJamin thought that they were winning, the men of IsraEl turned around and attacked them, because they trusted in the ambush that they’d prepared against BabaAh. 37[The plan was that] when they pulled back, those who were hiding were to get up and attack BabaAh and cut down [everyone who was left in] the city with swords.

38The sons of IsraEl had also arranged for a battle signal from those who’d been hiding… When they captured the city, they were to send up a smoke signal. 39And when the sons of IsraEl saw that they’d taken BabaAh, that’s when they turned and attacked.

For by then, the sons of BenJamin had started killing the wounded among the men of IsraEl (about 30 of them), and they were saying:

 ‘Surely they’re going to fall again as they did in the first [two] battles.’

40But then the [smoke] signal started to arise, and it kept growing into a huge column of smoke rising into the sky.

Well, when the men of BenJamin looked behind them, they saw that their city was being destroyed. 41So when the men of IsraEl turned back and attacked, the men of BenJamin started running, because they saw that something bad had happened.

42Then they retreated all the way into the desert before the sons of IsraEl, who soon overtook them, and even people from the [surrounding] cities came to fight them… 43They chased the men of BenJamin from Nua to GibeAh in the east, 44and some 18,000 mighty men of BenJamin fell that day.

45Well, the rest [of BenJamin’s army] then turned and ran through the desert to the Rock of RemMon, where the sons of IsraEl picked off 5,000 of them; and then they chased the remaining ones as far as GeDan, where they cut down 2,000 more men.

46So, BenJamin lost 25,000 of their finest soldiers, 47and the rest (about 600 of them) turned and ran through the desert to the Rock of RemMon, where they hid out for 4 months.

48Meanwhile, the sons of IsraEl returned to the territory of BenJamin and cut down [everyone] in the cities around MethLa, including their cattle, burning all the cities and everything that they found there in a fire.

### Judges

## Chapter 21

1Now, while they were in MasSephath, the sons of IsraEl all swore not to give their daughters as wives to the BenJaminites. 2Then they all went to BethEl and sat before God until that evening, calling out to Him and crying:

 3‘O Jehovah the God of IsraEl,

 ‘Why should one tribe of IsraEl now be missing?’

4Well, the next morning, the people got up early and built an altar there, upon which they sacrificed whole burnt offerings and peace offerings.

5And the sons of IsraEl started asking:

 ‘Who among the tribes of IsraEl failed to come here and assemble with the rest of gathering of Jehovah?’

For, they’d all sworn an oath that those who didn’t come to Jehovah at MasSephath would be put to death.

6The sons of IsraEl also grieved over their brothers of [the tribe of] BenJamin, saying:

 ‘Today, one tribe has been cut off from IsraEl.

 7‘So, what must we do to provide wives for those [among BenJamin] who have survived, since we’ve all sworn by Jehovah not to give them our daughters as their wives?’

8Then they again asked:

 ‘Are there any among the tribes of IsraEl who failed to come to Jehovah at MasSephath?’

And they found that no one had come there from JabIsh in GileAd 9(they counted all the people who were there and found that no one had come from [that city]).

10So the gathering sent 12,000 of their mightiest men to JabIsh of GileAd, giving them the orders to take their swords and kill everyone there. 11They told them to kill every man – and every woman who’s [had sex] with a man, but not to kill the virgins… And that’s what they did.

12And among the inhabitants of JabIsh GileAd, they found 400 young virgins that had never [had sex] with a man, and they brought them back to ShiLoh in the land of CanaAn.

13Then the entire gathering agreed to send [ambassadors] to speak to the remaining sons of BenJamin at the Rock of RemMon and invite them to make peace. 14As a result, [the tribe of] BenJamin returned to the sons of IsraEl that day, and they gave them the women whom they hadn’t killed among the daughters of JabIsh GileAd… And they were satisfied.

15The reason why the people made this concession to BenJamin was because Jehovah had allowed this breakup among the tribes of IsraEl.

16Then the elders of the gathering asked,

 ‘What must we do to provide more women for those of BenJamin that are still alive, since all their women have been destroyed?’

17For they all agreed that the BenJaminites that escaped must be allowed an inheritance so that a tribe wouldn’t be destroyed from IsraEl. 18However, they couldn’t give them their daughters as wives, because the whole gathering had sworn that anyone who gave a woman to those of BenJamin would be cursed.

19Then they said:

 ‘Look, there’s a feast of Jehovah that’s held each year in ShiLoh.’

Now, this is a town located north of BethEl, east of the road between BethEl and ShiKima, and south of Lebona.

20And they told the sons of BenJamin this:

 ‘You may go and hide in the vineyards there and watch.

 21‘Then, whenever you see any of the daughters of the people in ShiLoh come out to dance, you should each run from the vineyards and grab a woman and carry her back to the land of BenJamin.

 22‘And if their fathers or brothers should come to argue the matter with you, you should tell them:

 *‘You must give them to us freely, for we haven’t taken them from you in battle. Rather, we’ve taken them to keep you from sinning against the oath that you made.’*

23And that’s what the sons of BenJamin did... They went and took women from among the dancers and brought them back to their inherited land, where they rebuilt their cities and lived in them.

24Well thereafter, all the sons of IsraEl returned home to their own tribes, families, and inheritances. 25For back in those days (since there was no king in IsraEl), every man did whatever he thought was right.