

## JUDGES

“After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the Lord, ‘Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?’ The Lord answered, ‘Judah is to go; I have given the land into their hands.’ Then the men of Judah said to the Simeonites their brothers, ‘Come up with us into the territory allotted to us, to fight against the Canaanites. We in turn will go with you into yours.’ So, the Simeonites went with them and attacked Jerusalem also and took it.” (Judges 1:1-3)

“Several tribes did not drive out the idol worshipers. Therefore, the angel of the Lord asked why have you disobeyed me? Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be [thorns] in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.” (Judges 2:3)

“After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. In his anger against Israel the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them.” (Judges 2:10-11, 13-15)

Comment: “Another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord” appears to be repeated throughout the history of Israel. Was this also true from the first century? What about the present generation?

“Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them.” (Judges 2:16-17)

“But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.” (Judges 2:19)

“The Lord said because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations, Joshua left when he died. I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord.” (Judges 2:20-22)

Comment: Are we aware of evil with which God allows to be test?

### Othniel

“The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram for eight years then they cried out to the Lord. ... The Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into his hand.” (Judges 3:5-8, 10)

“Once again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. ... So, the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin, commander of his army was Sisera who oppressed them for twenty years.” (Judges 3:12; 4:1-3)

### Deborah

“Deborah, a prophetess was leading Israel at that time sent for Barak and said to him, ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’” (Judges 4:4, 6-7)

“Ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah also went with him. At Barak’s advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot. Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim. All the troops of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left. Sisera, however, fled on foot to the tent of Jael. ... Jael picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died. Then the land had peace forty years.” (Judges 4:10, 15-17; 5:31)

### Gideon

“Again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. ... Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.” (Judges 6:1, 6)

“The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak where Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.’ ‘But sir,’ Gideon replied, ‘if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said’, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.’ The Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?’” (Judges 6:11-13, 14)

‘So, Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord is Peace. That same night the Lord said to him, ‘Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.’” (Judges 6:24-26)

“Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime. In the morning when the men of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! They asked each other, ‘Who did this?’ When they carefully investigated, they were told, ‘Gideon son of Joash did it.’ The men of the town demanded of Joash, ‘Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.’ But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, ‘Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.’” (Judges 6:27-31)

“Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them. Gideon said to God, ‘If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor.

If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.’ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew — a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, ‘Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew.’ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.” (Judges 6:33-40)

“Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. The Lord said to Gideon, ‘You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead’ So, twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained. But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go.’ So, Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place.’ So, Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.” (Judges 7:1-8)

Comment: Man’s victories in life are from God not man.

“Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. They shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.” (Judges 7:19-21)

“The army and its two kings of Midian, fled, but he pursued them and captured them, routing their entire army.” (Judges 8:12)

“The Israelites said to Gideon, ‘Rule over us — you, your son and your grandson — because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian.’ But Gideon told them, ‘I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.’ ... During Gideon's lifetime, the land enjoyed peace forty years. No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals.” (Judges 8:22-23, 28, 33)

Abimelech

“Abimelech son of Gideon murdered his seventy brothers. ... The people of Shechem made him king and during his reign he killed many while destroying cities. ... After Abimelech had governed Israel three years, God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, who acted treacherously against Abimelech.” (Judges 9:1, 5, 22-23)

“Gaal led out the citizens of Shechem and fought Abimelech. Abimelech chased him, and many fell wounded in the flight. ... The next day the people of Shechem went out to the fields where Abimelech had set an ambush. All that day Abimelech pressed his attack against the city until he had captured it and killed its people. Then he destroyed the city and scattered salt over it.” (Judges 9:39-40, 42-45)

“Abimelech went to Thebez and besieged it and captured it. Inside the city, however, was a strong tower, to which all the men and women — all the people of the city — fled. They locked themselves in and climbed up on the tower roof. Abimelech went to the tower and stormed it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull. . . . Thus, God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers.” (Judges 9:50-53, 56)

“After the time of Abimelech, a man of Issachar, Tola rose up to save Israel. He lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim. He led Israel twenty-three years; then he died, and was buried in Shamir. He was followed by Jair of Gilead, who led Israel twenty-two years. . . . When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon.” (Judges 10:1-5)

“Again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, and the gods of the Ammonites and Philistines. Because the Israelites forsook the Lord and no longer served him, he became angry with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, who that year shattered and crushed them. For eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel. Then Israel cried out to the Lord. . . . So, they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord, and he became impatient over the misery of Israel.” (Judges 10:6-8, 10-11, 16)

#### Jephthah

“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. . . . Consequently, his brothers drove him out. So, he fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob, and worthless fellows collected around Jephthah and went out with him.” (Judges 11:1, 3)

“When the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah and said, ‘Come and be our leader, that we may fight with the Ammonites.’” (Judges 11:5-6)

“Then Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king with the question: ‘What do you have against us that you have attacked our country?’ The king of the Ammonites answered ‘When Israel came up out of Egypt, they took away my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, all the way to the Jordan. Now give it back peaceably.’ Jephthah sent back messengers to the Ammonite king, saying Israel did not take the land of Moab or the land of the Ammonites. But when they came up out of Egypt, Israel went through the desert to the Red Sea and on to Kadesh. Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, ‘Give us permission to go through your country,’ but the kings of Edom and Moab would not listen - they refused. So, Israel stayed at Kadesh.” (Judges 11:12-17)

“Then the Lord, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his men into Israel's hands, and they defeated them. Israel took over all the land of the Amorites who lived in that country, capturing all of it from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the desert to the Jordan.” (Judges 11:21-22)

“For three hundred years Israel occupied Heshbon, Aroer, the surrounding settlements and all the towns along the Arnon. I have not wronged you, but you are doing me wrong by waging war against me. Let the Lord, the Judge, decide the dispute this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites.’ The king of Ammon, however, paid no attention to the message Jephthah sent him. Therefore, Jephthah crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites. And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: ‘If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will

sacrifice it as a burnt offering.’ Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into his hands. He devastated twenty towns from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abel Keramim. Thus, Israel subdued Ammon. When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, ‘Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break.’ Jephthah led Israel six years.” (Judges 11:26-35)

### Samson

“Again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was sterile and remained childless. The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, "You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:1-5)

“Manoah prayed to the Lord: "O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born." God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again the angel of the Lord answered, ‘Your wife must do all that I have told her. She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her.’” (Judges 13:6, 9, 13-14)

Comment: A Nazirite vow - a period of separation to the Lord for some purpose by either man or woman. They must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins and no razor may be used on his head. (Num 6:2-5)

“The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh. Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, ‘I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.’ But Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me. She's the right one for me.’” (Judges 13:24-25; 14:1-3)

Comment: One should choose a spouse to help him obtain eternal life.

“Now his father went down to see the woman. Samson made a feast there, as was customary for bridegrooms. When he appeared, he was given thirty companions. ‘Let me tell you a riddle,’ Samson said to them. ‘If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. If you can't tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes.’ ‘Tell us your riddle,’ they said. ‘Let's hear it.’ He replied, ‘Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet.’ (Unable to solve the riddle they threatened Samson's wife and family. After much begging, pleading and nagging Samson revealed the secret of his strength. Then they gave him the answer to his riddle.) Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of their belongings and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he went up to his father's house.” (Judges 14:4, 10-19)

“Tamnah’s father said to Samson ‘I was so sure you thoroughly hated her,’ so I gave her to your friend. In anger Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves. When the Philistines determined it was Samson, they burned her and her father to death. Samson said to them, ‘Since you’ve acted like this, I won’t stop until I get my revenge on you.’ He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam.” (Judges 15:1-8)

“Sometime later, he fell in love with Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, ‘See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver.’ So, many times Delilah said to Samson, ‘Tell me the secret of your great strength.’” (Judges 16: 4-6)

“Finally, with such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. So, he told her everything. ‘No razor has ever been used on my head,’ he said, ‘because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.’ When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, ‘Come back once more; he has told me everything.’ So, the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him. Then she called, ‘Samson, the Philistines are upon you!’ He awoke from his sleep and thought, ‘I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.’ But he did not know that the Lord had left him. Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, “Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.” When the people saw him, they praised their god.” (Judges 16:7-24)

“While they were in high spirits, they shouted, ‘Bring out Samson to entertain us.’ So, they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, ‘Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.’ Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, ‘O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.’ Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus, he killed many more when he died than while he lived. Then his brothers and his father’s whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years.” (Judges 16:25-31)

#### The Levite and His Concubine

“Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But she was unfaithful to him. She left him and went back to her father’s house in Bethlehem, Judah. After she had been there four months, her husband went to her to persuade her to return. . . . The man left and went toward Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine. When they

were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, 'Come, let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night.' His master replied, 'No. We won't go into an alien city, whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah.' He added, 'Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places.' So, they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them into his home for the night. That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was living in Gibeah (the men of the place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the fields. When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, "Where are you going? Where did you come from?" (Judges 19:1-3, 10-17)

"You are welcome at my house," the old man said. 'Let me supply whatever you need. Only don't spend the night in the square.' So, he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink. While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, 'Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.' The owner of the house went outside and said to them, 'No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this disgraceful thing. Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don't do such a disgraceful thing.' But the men would not listen to him. So, the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight." (Judges 19:20-26)

"He said to her, 'Get up; let's go.' But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and set out for home. When he reached home, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel." (Judges 19:28-29)

"Then all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came out as one man and assembled before the Lord in Mizpah. The leaders of all the people of the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand soldiers armed with swords. (The Benjamites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the Israelites said, 'Tell us how this awful thing happened.' So, the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, said, 'I and my concubine came to Gibeah in Benjamin to spend the night. During the night the men of Gibeah came after me and surrounded the house, intending to kill me. They raped my concubine, and she died. I took my concubine, cut her into pieces and sent one piece to each region of Israel's inheritance, because they committed this lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. Now, all you Israelites, speak up and give your verdict.' All the people rose as one man, saying, 'None of us will go home.'" (Judges 20:1-8)

"Then the tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, 'What about this awful crime that was committed among you? Now surrender those wicked men of Gibeah so that we may put them to death and purge the evil from Israel.' But the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow Israelites. From their towns they came together at Gibeah to fight against the Israelites. . . . On that day twenty-five thousand Benjamite swordsmen fell, all of them valiant fighters. But six hundred men turned and fled into the desert to the rock of Rimmon, where they stayed four months. The men of Israel went back to Benjamin and put all the towns to the sword, including the animals and everything else they found. All the towns they came across they set on fire." (Judges 20:12-16, 46-48)