

## LESSON 23

### Judges

#### OVERVIEW:

(When Joshua and the leaders of Israel who served under him died, the national spirit of Israel also died. Tribal loyalty replaced national unity. Each tribe began to look to its own resources without giving help or asking aid from their fellow Israelites. Joshua's generation remained faithful to the Lord (see Joshua 24:31), but spiritual apostasy soon occurred in the following generation. "And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. Institute Manual, 251)

A period of time covering between 159 and 319 years. From the death of Joshua until the prophet Samuel. Israel is not united. Judges rule much like among the Nephites. There were 12 judges, although only one was actually a judge. They were more like heroes or leaders. But the book of Judges is not a history of Israel during this time, but rather stories that show the cycle of apostasy and repentance among the Israelites. Some of those mentioned are "types" of how Israel was. And some were called to deliver Israel during their times of repentance. Some of the judges lived at the same times as others. Some judges were only to certain localities, and were not to Israel as a whole.

The twelve judges and their victories spoken of in the book of Judges were as follows:

1. Othniel of Judah: victory against Cushan-rishathaim.
2. Ehud of Benjamin: victory against Eglon of Moab.
3. Shamgar: victory against the Philistines.
4. Deborah (Ephraim) and Barak (Naphtali): victory over Jabin and Sisera.
5. Gideon of Manasseh: victory over the Midianites and Amalekites.
6. Tola of Issachar.
7. Jair of Gilead:
8. Jephthah of Gilead: victory over the Ammonites.
9. Ibzan of Bethlehem.
10. Elon of Zebulun.
11. Abdon of Ephraim.
12. Samson of Dan: victory against the Philistines.

Old Testament Student Manual, p. 253.

(These judges were not judges in the legal sense, but heroes upon whom rested the spirit of God and who led single tribes or groups of tribes in military campaigns to free Israel from periodic foreign oppression. The rule of each judge was temporary and in no case did these leaders receive the allegiance of all the tribes. Only in the case of Deborah is there any hint of a judicial function among the activities of a Judge-savior. Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Why is there not much detail of the history during this time period? The history is primarily that of the Kingdom of God and only secondarily that of individuals or periods. We don't have any record at all of five of the judges. The mission of the judges was local and temporary. God raising up an individual in a time of special need.

The main message of Judges is that when Israel keeps the commandments they prosper, when they don't they are defeated and put in bondage.

The book of Ruth also happens during this time period.

Numbers 33:53, 55 – Israel had been commanded to get rid of everyone in their boundaries, or they would be a problem to them later. It's the parents that did not do their duty of driving out the inhabitants of the land that proved a problem to their children, to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generations.

The book repeats 7 times the phrase: “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.” Keep in mind that prior to this time, the Israelites were nomads, with no permanent structures. They learned from those that lived around them of farming, construction, and craftsmanship. But they also adopted some of their pagan ways. Like shopping on Sunday, going to sporting events on Sunday, not reading their scriptures or having family devotionals daily.

## SCRIPTURES:

### THE BOOK OF JUDGES CHAPTER 1

*Judah, Simeon, and Joseph continue to conquer Canaanites—Remnants of Canaanites remain in lands of Judah, Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.*

(This account is a repetition of the story found in the last half of the book of Joshua. The following information is of special interest in understanding the other historical books of the Bible: 1. Judah was able to control the inland hill country of southern Canaan but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the Shephelan and the coastal plain (the Philistines), apparently because of the chariots of iron which the Philistines introduced (see Judges 1:19). The real reason for their failure, however, was that they had lost the power of the Lord through their lack of faith and by their disobedience. 2. The holy area around Bethel was captured and controlled by the house of Joseph (see Judges 1:22–26). 3. Even though the Israelites were supposed to drive out all the heathen inhabitants of their promised land, they failed to do so. Numerous unconquered cities remained (see Judges 1:27–36), and the presence of these people and their gods proved to be a thorn in the side of Israel for centuries to come (see Judges 2:3; This account is a repetition of the story found in the last half of the book of Joshua. The following information is of special interest in understanding the other historical books of the Bible: 1. Judah was able to control the inland hill country of southern Canaan but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the Shephelan and the coastal plain (the Philistines), apparently because of the chariots of iron which the Philistines introduced (see Judges 1:19). The real reason for their failure, however, was that they had lost the power of the Lord through their lack of faith and by their disobedience. 2. The holy area around Bethel was captured and controlled by the house of Joseph (see Judges 1:22–26). 3. Even though the Israelites were supposed to drive out all the heathen inhabitants of their promised land, they failed to do so. Numerous unconquered cities remained (see Judges 1:27–36), and the presence of these people and their gods proved to be a thorn in the side of Israel for centuries to come (see Judges 2:3; Institute Manual, 251)

- 1 NOW after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?
- 2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.
- 3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.
- 4 And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek <sup>a</sup>ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek said, <sup>a</sup>Threescore and ten kings (or Seventy kings), having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. (Why cut off thumbs and toes? This was so they could not wield a sword or march to battle.)

8 Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

9 ¶ And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before *was* Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher:

12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

14 And it came to pass, when she came *to him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the <sup>a</sup>nether springs.

16 ¶ And the children of the <sup>a</sup>Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the <sup>b</sup>city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

17 And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the <sup>a</sup>coast (Heb border) thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

19 And the LORD was with <sup>a</sup>Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants of* the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had <sup>b</sup>chariots of iron.

20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

21 And the children of Benjamin did not <sup>a</sup>drive out the <sup>b</sup>Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the <sup>c</sup>Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

22 ¶ And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the LORD *was* with them.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el. (Now the name of the city before *was* Luz.)

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.

25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the <sup>a</sup>man and all his family.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which *is* the name thereof unto this day.

27 ¶ Neither did Manasseh <sup>a</sup>drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to <sup>a</sup>tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

29 ¶ Neither did Ephraim drive out the <sup>a</sup>Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 ¶ Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

31 ¶ Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:

32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

33 ¶ Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became tributaries unto them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

36 And the coast of the Amorites *was* from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

## CHAPTER 2

*An angel rebukes Israel for not serving the Lord—A pattern of future events: A new generation arises that forsakes the Lord and serves Baal and Ashtaroth—The Lord is angry with Israel and ceases to preserve them—He raises up judges to guide and lead them—Canaanites left in land to prove Israel.*

(“When discussing the political and religious conditions in Palestine at the time of the Israelite conquest (between 1250 and 1200 B.C.), we should note that the whole Near East had boiled with turmoil during the preceding century. The power of Egypt’s ally in Mesopotamia, Mitanni, had collapsed. Egypt herself first lost and then regained power over much of the eastern Mediterranean area. The Hurrian and Aryan peoples had pressed down from the north almost as far as Palestine, Assyria had begun to rise as a world power, and the old Hittite Empire of Asia Minor and Egypt had reached a standoff for control of the Near East. “In Palestine, Egypt was nominally in control. The land of Canaan was made up of numerous city-states, each independently governed, which paid tribute to Egypt whenever they were forced to do so. Other Hebrew tribes, distant relatives of the Israelites, comprised a modest part of the population in Canaan. It is also worth noting that prior to Israel’s settlement, the Canaanites had developed a linear alphabet, which later passed from Phoenicia to Greece, thus becoming the ancestor to our own. “The material culture and international trade of the Canaanites was highly advanced, but their religious ways stood diametrically opposed to Israel’s. Based on the fertility cults led by the god Baal, the Canaanite religion was an extraordinarily immoral form of paganism, including . . . prostitution, homosexuality, and other orgiastic rites. “The population of Canaan was mixed. In addition to the Canaanites near the sea and a few Hebrew clans, the Amorites are mentioned often in the Old Testament. Abraham descended from this Semitic people. Many of the other peoples listed in the Bible as inhabitants of the land (Hittites, Hivites, Horites, Jebusites, etc.) represent Canaan’s non-Semitic elements, although their tribal names preserve their distant origins. These people fully adopted the Canaanite religion and way of life by the time of the Israelite invasion.” (S. Kent Brown, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, p. 58.) Institute Manual, 252)

1 AND an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never <sup>a</sup>break my <sup>b</sup>covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no <sup>a</sup>league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye

have not <sup>b</sup>obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? (Don't make strategic alliances to protect you, trust in the Lord for your protection.)

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a <sup>a</sup>snare unto you.

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD. (An angel appears and rebukes Israel for not keeping the commandment of getting rid of the inhabitants of the land.)

6 ¶ And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people <sup>a</sup>served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of <sup>a</sup>Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which <sup>a</sup>knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. (Israel went to their inheritances by tribes. The people were faithful while Joshua lived. The next generation did not know the Lord.)

11 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: (“The Book of Judges makes clear that Israel did not conquer all of Canaan when first she entered it. . . . For a long time during the days of the Judges many of the Israelites were essentially ‘hillbillies’ [see Judges 6:2], hemmed in by their enemies on every side. After the generations of Israelites who had been acquainted with Joshua passed away, the effects of Canaanite morals and religion began to be apparent upon the younger generation. For long periods of time the Canaanites conquered Israel and this fact alone would tend to disrupt her settled religious life and practice. Times were rough and banditry was rampant. As the record itself states: ‘In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes’ [Judges 17:6]. All of this seems to have taken place because Israel did not drive the Canaanites completely out. The Lord said to the Israelites: ‘Ye have not hearkened to My voice; what is this ye have done? Wherefore I also said: I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be unto you as snares, and their gods shall be a trap unto you.’ [Judges 2:2–3.] . . . Israel’s conduct during this period had a lasting effect upon her religion and morals. For centuries Israel’s prophets and wise men referred to it and denounced her allegiance to old Canaanite practices. It is plain that Israel, during the period of the Judges, compromised her relatively high religious ideals with Canaanite practices and certain elements in her population must have apostatized completely.” (Sperry, *Spirit of the Old Testament*, pp. 51–52.)

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to <sup>a</sup>anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served <sup>a</sup>Baal and Ashtaroth. (The people begin to worship idols. Baal and Ashtaroth. Baal was the supreme male god and Ashtaroth was the supreme female deity.)

14 ¶ And the <sup>a</sup>anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of <sup>b</sup>spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the <sup>a</sup>hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. (The Lord is angry with Israel for not keeping their covenants.)

16 ¶ Nevertheless the LORD raised up <sup>a</sup>judges, which <sup>b</sup>delivered them out of the hand of those that

spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a <sup>a</sup>whoring after other <sup>b</sup>gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned <sup>c</sup>quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge (:) for ~~it~~ ~~are~~ ~~repented~~ (the Heb root means ‘to be sorry,’ ‘moved to pity,’ or ‘have compassion.’) the LORD (hearkened) because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and <sup>b</sup>vexed (Heb crushed) them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their <sup>a</sup>fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their <sup>b</sup>stubborn way. (Judges were called to deliver Israel. They were mostly military leaders or heroes.)

20 ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22 That through them I may <sup>a</sup>prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to <sup>b</sup>walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not. But what of us today? Surrounded by the Canaanites, how will we do?

President George Q. Cannon said: “We will show the world that we have principles that can stand the test of time and can withstand all the evil influences that can be brought against us. If we must rear our children in the midst of these, then let them rise superior to them. We cannot enclose our children in glass houses. We cannot exempt our children from the temptations of the world. They have to rise above them. I am looking forward for such a development of wisdom, strength and skill and power that the development and training of our children will be a matter almost of perfect safety in the midst of all hostile influences. Still, we have to contend against these wicked things, the literature of the age and all the evils that abound – we have to contend against these and to teach our children to shun them.”

(Gospel Truth, p. 302)

23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua. (Other nations were left to afflict and try Israel. Much like the Lamanites to the Nephites. These verses explain what this historical record, the book of Judges, reveals. First, the people chose evil by worshipping heathen gods, and the Lord allowed them to fall into the hands of their enemies. Judges were then raised up by the Lord to deliver them. At such times, as it is more clearly stated in the JST, “the Lord hearkened because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.” But as soon as the judge was dead, Israel turned to the other gods, and the cycle began again. A strikingly similar cycle of righteousness and apostasy occurred among the people of the Book of Mormon and is graphically described in Helaman 12. Old Testament Student Manual, p. 253)

### CHAPTER 3

*Israel intermarries with Canaanites, worships false gods, and is cursed—Othniel judges Israel—Israel serves Moab and is delivered by Ehud, who slays Eglon.*

1 NOW these *are* the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even* as many *of Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;

3 *Namely*, <sup>a</sup>five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

5 ¶ And the children of Israel <sup>a</sup>dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and <sup>a</sup>gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

7 And the children of Israel did <sup>a</sup>evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and <sup>b</sup>served <sup>c</sup>Baalim (Heb asherah; fertility cult goddesses) and the <sup>d</sup>groves.

8 ¶ Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a <sup>a</sup>deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

10 And the <sup>a</sup>Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against <sup>b</sup>Chushan-rishathaim.

11 And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

12 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon *was* a very fat man.

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

19 But he himself turned again from the quarries that *were* by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret <sup>a</sup>errand (or message) unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat.

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:

22 And the <sup>a</sup>haft (or handle) also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the <sup>a</sup>parlour (Heb upper, or roof, chamber) upon him, and locked them.

24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour *were* locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.

25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened *them*: and, behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth.

26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

27 And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.

28 And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all <sup>a</sup>lusty, (Heb fat or hardy) and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man.

30 So <sup>a</sup>Moab was <sup>b</sup>subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest <sup>c</sup>fourscore (or eighty) years.

31 ¶ And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.

## CHAPTER 4

*Deborah, a prophetess, judges Israel—She and Barak deliver Israel from Canaanites—Jael, a woman, slays Sisera the Canaanite.*

1 AND the children of Israel again did <sup>a</sup>evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

2 And the LORD <sup>a</sup>sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host *was* Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred <sup>a</sup>chariots of iron; and twenty years he <sup>b</sup>mightily (Heb forcibly, violently) <sup>c</sup>oppressed the children of Israel. (Israel oppressed by Canaanites. Israelites fought on foot.)

4 ¶ And Deborah, a <sup>a</sup>prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

5 And she <sup>a</sup>dwelt (Heb used to sit, or remain) under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

6 And she sent and called <sup>a</sup>Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. (Deborah is a judge and a prophetess. She has Barak go to defeat their enemy. Barak says he won't go unless Deborah is with him. She goes. She had the gift of prophecy.)

10 ¶ And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, *which was* of the children of Hobab the father in law of Moses, (The Kenites were descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law.) had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which *is* by Kedesh.

12 And they shewed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

13 And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.

14 And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this *is* the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out <sup>a</sup>before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

15 And the LORD <sup>a</sup>discomfited (or panicked, put to flight) <sup>b</sup>Sisera, (Discomfited means to throw into confusion.) and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet.

16 But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; *and* there was not a man left.

17 Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. (The enemy is destroyed, all but Sisera, the leader, who ran away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite. Kenites

were descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses.)

18 ¶ And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a <sup>a</sup>mantle. (Heb rug, thick coverlet, or blanket)

19 And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

21 Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the <sup>a</sup>nail into his <sup>b</sup>temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

22 And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her *tent*, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail *was* in his temples.

23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

24 And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan. (Jael pretends to be a friend of Sisera and invites him into her tent. While Sisera is asleep, Jael drives a tent stake through his temples and kills him. Why didn't Jael kill him with a sword? Women usually were the ones who pitched the tents, so she would have been very used to using a tent stake. Also, Deuteronomy 22:5 prohibits the use of weapons by women. The woman shall not <sup>a</sup>wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.)

## CHAPTER 5

*Deborah and Barak sing a song of praise because of deliverance of Israel from Canaanite bondage.*

1 THEN <sup>a</sup>sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

2 Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel.

4 LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou <sup>a</sup>marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

5 The mountains <sup>a</sup>melted (or quaked) from before the LORD, *even* that <sup>b</sup>Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the <sup>a</sup>highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways.

7 *The inhabitants* of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a <sup>a</sup>mother in Israel.

8 They chose new <sup>a</sup>gods; then *was* war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?

9 My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.

10 Speak, ye that ride <sup>a</sup>on white asses, (ie on animals used by rich merchants, leaders) ye that sit <sup>b</sup>in judgment, (Heb meaning uncertain; perhaps 'on rich cloths, carpets) and walk by the way.

11 <sup>a</sup>They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, *even* the righteous acts *toward the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates. (Heb by the voices of archers down

among the watering places, there they rehearse the righteousness of Jehovah, even the righteousness of his rulers in Israel. Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.)

12 Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

13 <sup>a</sup>Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty. (Heb Then a remnant descended against the nobles; the people of the LORD descended for me against the mighty.)

14 Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of <sup>a</sup>Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that <sup>b</sup>handle the pen of the <sup>c</sup>writer. (Heb hold the scepter of the muster-officer, the marshal's staff)

15 And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great thoughts of heart.

16 Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

18 Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

19 The kings came *and* fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.

20 They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

21 The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, <sup>a</sup>thou hast trodden down strength. (Heb (perhaps) tread (them) down with might.)

22 <sup>a</sup>Then were the horsehoofs broken (or Then did the horsehoofs stamp) by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.

23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they <sup>a</sup>came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

24 Blessed above <sup>a</sup>women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

25 He asked water, *and* she gave *him* milk; she brought forth <sup>a</sup>butter (Heb curds, curdled milk) in a <sup>b</sup>lordly dish. (Heb bowl of nobles)

26 She put her hand to the <sup>a</sup>nail, (Heb tent peg or pin) and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his <sup>b</sup>temples.

27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

28 The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

29 Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

30 <sup>a</sup>Have they not sped? have they *not* divided the prey; (Heb Are they not finding, dividing the spoil.) to every man a damsel *or* two; to Sisera <sup>b</sup>a prey of divers colours, (or a spoil of dyed stuffs) a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, *meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil?

31 So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

## CHAPTER 6

*Israel is in bondage to Midianites—An angel appears to Gideon and calls him to deliver Israel—He overthrows altar of Baal, the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him, and the Lord gives him a sign to show he is called to deliver Israel.*

1 AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

3 And *so* it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the <sup>a</sup>east, even they came up against them;

4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the <sup>a</sup>increase of the earth (or produce), till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; *for* both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD. (Israel in bondage to Midian. Midianites overrun Israel and they are forced to live in caves. For seven years, the Midianites and Amalekites would descend on Israel and steal their grain and livestock.)

7 ¶ And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, 8 That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

10 And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; <sup>a</sup>fear (Heb (also) do not reverence, honor) not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not <sup>b</sup>obeyed my voice. (A prophet is sent to Israel and chastised them. “The Midianites and the Amalekites were the children of the desert who, through their roving habits which begot naturally a desire for plunder, led them into a systematic practice of robbing the Israelites. During the seasons of harvest they came from the deserts on the south and the east like great swarms of locusts and carried away the corn [grain] and the live-stock upon which the Israelites subsisted. “For seven years Israel was thus impoverished, and adopted every means at their command to conceal their property and to hide themselves from the dangers of slaughter by the Midianites. In that period, through southern Palestine, they made caverns in the earth that may still be seen. In time, however, they came to feel so deeply their suffering and humiliation that they appealed to Jehovah, the God they had forsaken in their worship. He was their last refuge, their last means of escape from the awful bondage of those times.” (Tanner, *Old Testament Studies*, 1:288–89.))

11 ¶ And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that <sup>a</sup>pertained (or belonged) unto Joash the Abi-ezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat <sup>b</sup>by the winepress (Heb in the winepress), to hide *it* from the Midianites.

12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his <sup>a</sup>miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy <sup>a</sup>might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the <sup>a</sup>least in my father's house.

16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be <sup>a</sup>with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found <sup>a</sup>grace in thy sight, then shew me a <sup>b</sup>sign that thou talkest with me.

18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set *it* before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. (Gideon is called by an angel to deliver Israel from the Midianites. What is Gideon's response? I am the least in my poor family of Manasseh. He asks a sign of the angel to verify that he is truly called to deliver Israel. Verse 12 – What does the angel call Gideon? The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. The angel immediately gains Gideon's trust because he bares his feelings to him. (13))

19 ¶ And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*.

20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay *them* upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. (Gideon makes angel food cake)

21 ¶ Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up <sup>a</sup>fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

22 And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an <sup>a</sup>angel of the LORD face to <sup>b</sup>face.

23 And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it <sup>a</sup>Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites. (Gideon makes some food for the angel. The angel asks him to put it on a rock. The angel touches it with his staff and it lights on fire the food and the angel disappears. “When Gideon asked for a ‘sign’ he seemed only to want a sign that the messenger was a bona fide emissary of the *Lord* (v. 17). On this point, note that messengers may sometimes be from the wrong source and discernment is important. (See, e.g., D&C 129; see another consideration of the problem in II Corinthians 11:13–15; I Corinthians 12:10; and I John 4:1–2.) (Signs *may be* given, based upon man's faith and the will of God. D&C 63:10.) “When Gideon made a meal of meat, cakes and broth, and the angel turned it into a miraculous burnt offering, this ‘sign’ quite overwhelmed Gideon. But the *Lord* kindly gave him comfort and peace, and Gideon gratefully named the monument he built there ‘*Lord of Peace*.’” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:150.))

25 ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of <sup>a</sup>Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the <sup>b</sup>grove (Heb *asherah* – a pole or tree representing a fertility goddess) that *is* by it:

26 And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this <sup>a</sup>rock, (Heb *stronghold*) in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and *so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night. (Gideon is commanded to throw down the altar of Baal and he takes ten men and does so. The altar had been built by his father.)

28 ¶ And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built.

29 And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

30 Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will

plead for him, let him be put to death <sup>a</sup>whilst *it is yet morning* (or before morning): if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

32 Therefore on that day he called him <sup>a</sup>Jerubbaal, (Gideon's other name) saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar. (The people demand that Gideon be brought out, but his father says that Baal can handle his own affairs. Gideon's father, Joash, owned a grove and an altar dedicated to the false god Baal. Groves of trees played a prominent part in ancient heathen worship. Since it was thought wrong to shut up the gods with walls, groves of trees were often used as natural temples. Within the groves the immoral rites of the heathen religions were performed. Gideon and ten other men followed the Lord's commandments to tear down the grove and the altar and in their place erect an altar to Jehovah. The men of the city cried for Gideon's death, but Joash defended his son's actions. Joash named Gideon *Jerubbaal*, "let Baal plead," meaning that if Baal was upset by Gideon's actions Baal could defend his own cause. The name Jerubbaal remained with Gideon on some occasions thereafter. Institute Manual, 255.)

33 ¶ Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. (Gideon sends messengers throughout Israel to gather an army to defeat the Midianites. They go to Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali.)

36 ¶ And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine <sup>a</sup>anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me <sup>b</sup>prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground. (Gideon asks the Lord for a sign to show that the Lord was with him in this endeavor. The symbolical meaning of the sign is plain. Israel was like that fleece of wool, spread on the wide extent of the nations. But, whereas all the ground around was dry, Israel was filled with the dew, as a symbol of the Divine blessing. And the second sign meant that it was equally of God, when during Israel's apostasy, the ground all around was wet, and the fleece of Jehovah's flock alone left dry. Alfred Edershiem, Bible History: Old Testament, 3: Chapter 16.)

## CHAPTER 7

*Gideon's army is reduced to 300—They frighten Midianite armies with trumpets and lights—Midianites fight among themselves, flee, and are defeated by Israel.*

("Though only the tribes from the north—Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali—joined his campaign, these were more than enough for the purposes of the Lord at the time. Eventually the 32,000 were reduced to 300, that the 'help of the Lord' might be apparent to Israel. . . . "Against the formidable might of camel-mounted marauders, strategy and the help of the Lord gave the Israelites success where hand to hand combat would have been disastrous. It is now known that the use of camels for military purposes by the nomadic desert riders was only beginning to be common in those times—12th to 10th

centuries B.C., and of course, the first tribes to use them had the advantage.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:151.))

1 THEN Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* <sup>a</sup>fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from <sup>b</sup>mount Gilead (or Mount Gilboa). And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* <sup>a</sup>many; bring them down unto the water, and I will <sup>b</sup>try (or test) them for thee there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

6 And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

8 So the people took <sup>a</sup>victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. (The army of 32,000 is too many to fight against the 135,000 (Judges 8:10) Midianites. It is reduced to 300. Why reduced? To show that Jehovah delivered them. The army is given a test: All who lapped the water with the tongue out of their hands (out of the hollow hand) as a dog lappeth water, were to go with Gideon. Why the lapping? It indicated the bravest and most ardent warriors, who would not stoop to kneel, but hastily quenched their thirst out of the hollow of the hands, in order to hasten to battle. But Jewish tradition assigns another and deeper meaning to it. It declares that **the practice of kneeling was characteristic of the service of Baal, and hence that kneeling down to drink when exhausted betrayed the habit of idolaters. Thus the three hundred would represent those in the host of Israel – “all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal”** (1 Kings 19:18). They who had been selected now took victuals from the people in their hands and the trumpets, the rest were sent away. Alfred Edershiem, *Bible History: Old Testament*, 3: Chapter 16.)

9 ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

11 And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host.

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

13 And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a <sup>a</sup>dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the <sup>b</sup>host (Heb camp) of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that <sup>c</sup>the tent lay along. (ie the tent lay flat)

14 And his fellow answered and said, This *is* nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. (Gideon is commanded to go down and spy on the Midianites and see their camp and listen to what they say. A dream is had by a Midianite. The dream was that Gideon would overthrow them. It was spread throughout the whole camp. The 300 are divided into three companies. It is not the naked sword they grasp, for in that night not Israel, but Jehovah is to fight. In one hand each man holds a trumpet, in the other concealed in a pitcher, a burning torch. Each is to do exactly as the leader. Silently they creep round to three different parts of Midian's camp. The guard has just been relieved, and the new watchers have settled quietly by the watch-fire. Suddenly a single trumpet is heard, then three hundred – here, there everywhere the sound of war is raised. The night is peopled with terrors. Now with loud crash three hundred pitchers are broken, three hundred torches flash through the darkness; three hundred voices shout: "The sword for Jehovah and for Gideon!" Then is the enemy all around the camp! No one can say in what numbers. Again and again rings the trumpet sound; wave the torches. The camp is roused. Men, women, children, camels rush terror-stricken through the dark night. No one knows but that the enemy is in the very midst of them, and that the neighbor whom he meets is an Israelite, for all around still sounds the war-trumpet, flash the torches, and rises the war-cry. Each man's sword is turned against his neighbor. Multitudes are killed or trampled down, and their cries and groans increase the terror of that wild night. A hopeless panic ensues, and ere morning light, the site of the camp and the road of the fugitives towards Jordan are strewn with the slain. Alfred Edershiem, Bible History: Old Testament, 3: Chapter 16.)

15 ¶ And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

16 And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword* of the LORD, and of Gideon.

19 ¶ So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; (Ancient Israel divided the twelve hours of the night into three watches. The middle watch would have been from 10:00 P.M. until 2:00 A.M. After the dispersion of Israel, the Jews continued the practice (see Exodus 14:24; 1 Samuel 11:11; Psalms 63:6; 90:4; 119:48; Lamentations 2:19). In New Testament times the Romans divided the night into four watches (see Matthew 24:43). Institute Manual, 255) and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his <sup>a</sup>fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the <sup>a</sup>Midianites.

24 ¶ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew <sup>a</sup>Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb

and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan. (The Midianites are destroyed. When the rest of the Midianites flee, Gideon summons help and they are destroyed. President James E. Faust: “The Lord has a great work for each of us to do. You may wonder how this can be. You may feel that there is nothing special or superior about you or your ability. Perhaps you feel or have been told that you are stupid. Many of us have felt that, and some of us have been told that. Gideon felt this when the Lord asked him to save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon said, ‘My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.’ He had only three hundred men, but with the help of the Lord, Gideon defeated the armies of the Midianites. “The Lord can do remarkable miracles with a person of ordinary ability who is humble, faithful, and diligent in serving the Lord and seeks to improve himself. This is because God is the ultimate source of power” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1995; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 47).)

## CHAPTER 8

*Gideon pursues and destroys Midianites—He frees Israel but refuses their invitation to reign as king over them—Gideon dies and Israel returns to idolatry.*

1 AND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.

2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?*

3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

4 ¶ And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.

5 And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after <sup>a</sup>Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

6 ¶ And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?

7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

8 ¶ And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*.

9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

10 ¶ Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

11 ¶ And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was <sup>a</sup>secure.

12 And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

13 ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,

14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.

15 And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are weary*? (While Ephraim occupied "the waters" and the fords of the Jordan, Gideon himself had crossed the river at the spot where Jacob of old had entered Canaan on his return from Padan-Aram. "Faint yet pursuing," the band reached Succoth; but its "princes" refused even the most

useful provisions to Gideon's men. The people of the neighboring Penuel acted in the same heartless manner - no doubt from utter lack of interest in the cause of God, from cowardice, and, above all, from scorn for the small band of 300, with which Gideon had gone in pursuit of the flower of Midian's army. They had calculated the result by the outward means employed, but were destined soon to feel the consequences of their folly. Making a detour eastwards, through the wilderness, Gideon advanced on the rear of Midian, and fell unexpectedly upon the camp at Karkor, which was held by 15,000 men under the command of Zebah and Zalmunna ("sacrifice" and "protection refused"). The surprise ended in defeat and flight, the two Midianite leaders being made prisoners and taken across Jordan. On his way, Gideon "taught the men of Succoth," by punishing their rulers - seventy-seven in number, probably consisting of either seven, or else five "princes," and of seventy or else seventy-two elders - while in the case of Penuel, which seems to have offered armed resistance to the destruction of its citadel, "the men of the city" were actually slain. Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 17)

16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. (As they pursued the remnants of the Midianite army, Gideon's valiant little band of three hundred grew faint from hunger and sought food from the people of Succoth, a town of Gad (Gilead), which lay on the east side of the Jordan not far from Jericho. The Succothites refused to give Gideon's men the food they needed because they had not yet actually conquered the Midianite kings. The people of Penuel (the place where Jacob had stopped many years before and wrestled with God's messenger [see Genesis 32:31]), also refused aid. Perhaps they were afraid that Gideon would fail to capture and subdue the fleeing kings and that later the Midianites would return and punish them for aiding Gideon. Whatever the reason, these events illustrate the tragic fragmentation of apostate Israel. Since the Midianites lived in the deserts of Arabia, Gad and the other tribes east of the Jordan were most vulnerable to their marauding raids. Yet instead of joining Gideon in his attempt to eliminate the threat once and for all, these Gadites flatly refused to get involved. Gideon was furious and promised that once he finished with the Midianites he would return to deal with these traitors. In the case of Succoth, Gideon promised to return and "tear"—the Hebrew literally means "thresh"—their flesh with briers and thorns (v. 7) (see Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "tear," p. 440). Yet when Gideon did return, the record says, he "taught" them with briers and thorns (v. 16). Many of the ancient manuscripts show this change to be a scribal error: "Instead of . . . *he taught*, Houbigant reads . . . *he tore*; and this is not only agreeable to what Gideon had threatened, ver. 7, but is supported by the *Vulgate, Septuagint, Chaldec, Syriac, and Arabic*. The Hebrew text might have been easily corrupted in this place by the change of . . . *shin* into . . . *ain*, letters very similar to each other." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:137.) This punishment was probably a figurative term and not necessarily an actual whipping with thorn branches. "What this punishment consisted in I cannot say; it must mean a severe punishment: as if he had said, I will thresh your flesh with briers and thorns, as corn is threshed out with threshing instruments; or, Ye shall be trodden down under the feet of my victorious army, as the corn is trodden out with the feet of the ox." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:136.) Such harsh punishment was justified because in their refusal to help Gideon's army, Succoth and Penuel threatened the whole nation of Israel. Their act was thus equivalent to high treason. Institute Manual, 255)

17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

18 ¶ Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou *art*, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king.

19 And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: *as* the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

20 And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is*, so *is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

22 ¶ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not <sup>a</sup>rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall <sup>b</sup>rule over you. (These verses give proof of Gideon's great faith and righteousness. The people sought to make him king because of his greatness in victory. Had he consented, Gideon would have been lending support to the idea that through his own power he had won the battle. By refusing their request, Gideon reminded them where the real source of their victory lay and whom they should view as their king. Institute Manual, 256)

24 ¶ And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

25 And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

26 And the weight of the <sup>a</sup>golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred <sup>b</sup>shekels of gold; (Heb for shekels implied but not expressed here.) beside <sup>c</sup>ornaments, (Heb crescents, and pendants) and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

27 And Gideon made an <sup>a</sup>ephod (ie probably here a medallion of gold to adorn the priest's ephod. Later it was at times revered) thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a <sup>b</sup>snare unto Gideon, and to his house. ("An unfortunate anticlimatic development arose due to Gideon's mistaken zeal in making a new ephod (part of the garment of the chief Priest in Israel) out of some of the precious things gathered from the smitten soldiers of the enemy. When the text says Israelites 'went a whoring after it' the idiom means they looked upon it as if it were an idol, and idol worship is often condemned in these terms as infidelity to God." (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:151.) Gideon's intention was to use the spoils of war to make a fitting memorial honoring God's part in the victory, but the Israelites were quick to turn to false gods and viewed the ephod as though it were an idol. Institute Manual, 256)

28 ¶ Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

29 ¶ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

31 And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

32 ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

33 And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god.

34 And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

## CHAPTER 9

*Gideon's son Abimelech is made king—He slays his seventy brothers—Jotham tells a parabolic fable of trees choosing a king—Shechemites conspire against Abimelech—He is slain at Thebez.*

(Jotham was the only one of the seventy sons of Gideon to escape the mass fratricide of Abimelech. Jotham had hid himself (see v. 5). Upon the eight-hundred-foot high Mount Gerizim, Jotham delivered to the men of Shechem a very interesting parable, one of the few parables recorded in the Old Testament. In the parable there were trees (leaders of Israel) who wanted a king among them (Gideon

was offered the chance to become king). None of the faithful trees (sons of Gideon) would accept the crown because they felt there should be equality among the trees and one should not rule over the rest. Finally, the kingmakers asked the miserable bramble bush (Abimelech, son of a concubine wife) to reign over the trees. The bramble bush consented, providing the trees would put their complete trust in him and obey his every command. If they did not obey, he would send fire to consume all of them. Jotham then prophesied that the people would eventually desire to destroy Abimelech (see v. 20). For the details of how completely Jotham's prophecy was fulfilled, see Judges 9:22–57. Institute Manual, 256)

1 AND Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I *am* your bone and your flesh.

3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He *is* our brother.

4 And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech <sup>a</sup>hired <sup>b</sup>vain (Heb empty (or idle) and reckless (or violent)) and light persons, which followed him.

5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the <sup>a</sup>plain of the pillar (Heb terebinth tree) that *was* in Shechem.

7 ¶ And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount <sup>a</sup>Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

8 The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

9 But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour <sup>a</sup>God and man, (Heb gods and men; ie in ritual services) and go to be promoted over the trees?

10 And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

11 But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

12 Then said the trees unto the <sup>a</sup>vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my <sup>a</sup>wine, (Heb tirosh-fresh or new wine) which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

14 Then said all the trees unto the <sup>a</sup>bramble, (or thistle) Come thou, *and* reign over us.

15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let <sup>a</sup>fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands;

17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:

18 And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he *is* your brother;)

19 If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:

20 But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.

21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to <sup>a</sup>Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

22 ¶ When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,

23 Then God <sup>a</sup>sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

24 That the cruelty *done* to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren.

25 And the men of Shechem set <sup>a</sup>liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech.

26 And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes*, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.

28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *is not he* the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of <sup>a</sup>Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?

29 And would to God ~~this~~ **(these)** people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.

30 ¶ And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and, behold, they <sup>a</sup>fortify **(Heb (probably) incite the city)** the city against thee.

32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that *is* with thee, and lie in wait in the field:

33 And it shall be, *that* in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

34 ¶ And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

35 And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him, from lying in wait.

36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men.

37 And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by <sup>a</sup>the plain of Meonenim. **(Heb the oak of the diviners)**

38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where *is* now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who *is* Abimelech, that we should serve him? *is not this* the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.

39 And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown *and* wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate.

41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.

43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people *were* come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them.

44 And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two *other* companies ran upon all *the people* that *were* in the fields, and slew them.

45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and beat down the city, and <sup>a</sup>sowed it with salt. (ie covered the soil with salt, supposed to ensure desolation)

46 ¶ And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith.

47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that *were* with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid *it* on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, *and* do as *I have done*.

49 And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

50 ¶ Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

51 But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut *it* to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.

52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon <sup>a</sup>Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull.

54 Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour (-)bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that (the) men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.

56 ¶ Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:

57 And all the <sup>a</sup>evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

## CHAPTER 10

*Tola and then Jair judge Israel—Children of Israel worship false gods, are forsaken by the Lord, and distressed by their enemies—Israel repents and importunes the Lord for deliverance.*

1 AND after Abimelech there arose to <sup>a</sup>defend (Heb deliver, save) Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

3 ¶ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead.

5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

6 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served (him) not him.

7 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he <sup>a</sup>sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead.

9 Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

10 ¶ And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have <sup>a</sup>sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I <sup>a</sup>deliver you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?

12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will <sup>a</sup>deliver you no more.

14 <sup>a</sup>Go and cry unto the <sup>b</sup>gods which ye have <sup>c</sup>chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your <sup>d</sup>tribulation.

15 ¶ And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.

16 And they <sup>a</sup>put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was <sup>b</sup>grieved for the misery of Israel. (Heb at the end of patience, exasperated)

17 Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.

18 And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, What man *is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

## CHAPTER 11

*Jephthah chosen captain of armies of Israel—Ammonites assail Israel in war—Jephthah is guided by Spirit and defeats Ammon with a great slaughter—He makes a rash vow which leads to sacrifice of his only daughter.*

1 Now <sup>a</sup>Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he *was* the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

2 And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou *art* the son of a strange woman.

3 Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered <sup>a</sup>vain men (Heb empty, idle, worthless) to Jephthah, and went out with him.

4 ¶ And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.

5 And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:

6 And they said unto <sup>a</sup>Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

7 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?

8 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

9 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, <sup>a</sup>shall I be your head? (Heb I shall be your head)

10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

12 ¶ And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?

13 And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my <sup>a</sup>land, when they came up out of Egypt, from <sup>b</sup>Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those *lands* again peaceably.

14 And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon:

15 And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of <sup>a</sup>Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon:

16 But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh;

17 Then Israel <sup>a</sup>sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab: but he would not *consent*: and Israel abode in Kadesh.

18 Then they went along through the wilderness, and <sup>a</sup>compassed (Heb went around) the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon *was* the border of Moab.

19 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place.

20 But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his <sup>a</sup>coast: (Heb border(s)) but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

21 And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they <sup>a</sup>smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

22 And they possessed all the <sup>a</sup>coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

23 So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it?

24 Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.

25 And now *art* thou any thing better than <sup>a</sup>Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them,

26 While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that time?

27 Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD the <sup>a</sup>Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.

28 Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

29 ¶ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over *unto* the children of Ammon.

30 And Jephthah <sup>a</sup>vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

32 ¶ So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.

33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to <sup>a</sup>Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

34 ¶ And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his <sup>a</sup>daughter came out to meet him with <sup>b</sup>timbrels (ie small hand drums) and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! <sup>a</sup>thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: (Heb thou hast indeed brought me to my knees, and thou art one bringing trouble to me) for I have <sup>b</sup>opened my mouth unto the LORD, (ie made a promise) and I cannot go back.

36 And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

40 *That* the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year. (Many have supposed that Jephthah offered his daughter as a human sacrifice, and a literal reading of the text may support that view. But if that is true, some difficult questions are raised.

Jephthah was regarded as a great hero and deliverer of Israel, and even his sacrifice of his daughter is treated in a way that suggests the author of Judges viewed it as a commendable act. In Hebrews 11:32–35 Jephthah is used as one of the examples of great faith. Would this case be true if he had engaged in human sacrifice, an act viewed as one of the greatest of abominations in ancient Israel? Why does Jephthah’s daughter “bewail her virginity” (Judges 11:37) rather than mourn the approaching loss of her life? After Jephthah had fulfilled his vow of sacrificing his daughter, the text states that “she knew no man” (v. 39). Bible scholars have suggested an explanation that adequately answers these questions.

“Jephthah was compelled by his vow to dedicate his daughter to Jehovah in a lifelong virginity. . . . The entreaty of the daughter, that he would grant her two months’ time, in order that she might lament her virginity upon the mountains with her friends, would have been marvellously out of keeping with the account that she was to be put to death as a sacrifice. To mourn one’s virginity does not mean to mourn because one has to die a virgin, but because one has to live and remain a virgin. But even if we were to assume that mourning her virginity was equivalent to mourning on account of her youth. . . . ‘it would be impossible to understand why this should take place *upon the mountains*. It would be altogether opposed to human nature, that a child who had so soon to die should make use of a temporary respite to forsake her father altogether. It would no doubt be a reasonable thing that she should ask permission to enjoy life for two months longer before she was put to death; but that she should only think of bewailing her virginity, when a sacrificial death was in prospect, which would rob her father of his only child, would be contrary to all the ordinary feelings of the human heart. Yet, inasmuch as the history lays special emphasis upon her bewailing her virginity, this must have stood in some peculiar relation to the nature of the vow. . . .’ (P. Cassel, p. 473). And this is confirmed by the expression, to bewail her virginity ‘*upon the mountains*.’ ‘If life had been in question, the same tears might have been shed at home. But her lamentations were devoted to her virginity, and such lamentations could not be uttered in the town, and in the presence of men. Modesty required the solitude of the mountains for these. . . .’ (P. Cassel, p. 476). And so, again, the still further clause in the account of the fulfilment of the vow, ‘and she knew no man,’ is not in harmony with the assumption of a sacrificial death. This clause would add nothing to the description in that case, since it was already known that she was a virgin. The words only

gain their proper sense if we connect them with the previous clause, he 'did with her according to the vow which he had vowed,' and understand them as describing what the daughter did in fulfilment of the vow. The father fulfilled his vow upon her, and she knew no man; *i.e.* he fulfilled the vow through the fact that she knew no man, but dedicated her life to the Lord, as a spiritual burnt-offering, in a lifelong chastity. . . . And the idea of a spiritual sacrifice is supported not only by the words, but also most decisively by the fact that the historian describes the fulfilment of the vow in the words 'he did to her according to his vow,' in such a manner as to lead to the conclusion that he regarded the act itself as laudable and good. But a prophetic historian could never have approved of a human sacrifice." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:1:392–93.) Compare the wording of Jephthah's vow (see vv. 30–31) to Hannah's vow (see 1 Samuel 1:11). Institute Manual, 256-57. We are now approaching what to many will appear the most difficult part in the history of Jephthah - perhaps among the most difficult narratives in the Bible. It appears that, before actually going to war, Jephthah solemnly registered this vow: "If thou indeed givest the children of Ammon into mine hand - and it shall be, the outcoming (one), that shall come out from the door of my house to meet me on my returning in peace from the children of Ammon, shall be to Jehovah, and I will offer that a burnt offering." We know that the vow was paid. The defeat of the Ammonites was thorough and crushing. But on Jephthah's return to his house the first to welcome him was his only daughter - his only child - who at the head of the maidens came to greet the victor. There is a terrible irony about those "timbrels and dances," with which Jephthah's daughter went, as it were, to celebrate her own funeral obsequies, while the fond father's heart was well-nigh breaking. But the noble maiden was the first to urge his observance of the vow unto Jehovah. Only two months did she ask to bewail her maidenhood with her companions upon the mountains. But ever after was it a custom for the maidens in Israel to go out every year for four days, "to praise\* the daughter of Jephthah." \* This is the correct rendering, and not "lament," as in our Authorized Version. There was a curious custom in Israel in the days of our Lord. Twice in the year, "on the 15th of Ab, when the collection of wood for the sanctuary was completed, and on the Day of Atonement, the maidens of Jerusalem went in white garments, specially lent them for the purpose, so that rich and poor might be on an equality, into the vineyards close to the city, where they danced and sung" (see my [Temple: its Services and Ministry at the time of Jesus Christ](#), p. 286). Could this strange practice have been a remnant of the maidens' praise of the daughter of Jephthah? Such is the story; but what is its meaning? What did Jephthah really intend by the language of his vow; and did he feel himself bound by it in the literal sense to offer up his daughter as a burnt sacrifice? Assuredly, we shall make no attempt either to explain away the facts of the case, or to disguise the importance of the questions at issue. At the outset we are here met by these two facts: that up to that period Jephthah had both acted and spoken as a true worshipper of Jehovah, and that his name stands emblazoned in that roll of the heroes of the faith which is handed down to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews (11:32). But it is well-nigh impossible to believe that a true worshipper of Jehovah could have either vowed or actually offered a human sacrifice - not to speak of the sacrifice being that of his own and only child. Such sacrifices were the most abhorrent and opposed to the whole spirit and letter of the Law of God (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10), nor do we find any mention of them till the reigns of the wicked Ahaz and Manasseh. Not even Jezebel had ventured to introduce them; and we know what thrill of horror ran through the onlookers, when the heathen king of Moab offered his son an expiatory sacrifice on the walls of his capital (2 Kings 3:26, etc.). But the difficulty becomes well-nigh insuperable, when we find the name of Jephthah recorded in the New Testament among the heroes of the faith. Surely, no one guilty of such a crime could have found a place there! Still, these are considerations which, though most important, are outside the narrative itself, and in any truthful investigation the latter should, in the first place, be studied by itself. In so doing we must dismiss, as irrelevant and untruthful, such pleas as the roughness of those times, the imperfectness of religious development, or that of religious ignorance on the part of the outlaw Jephthah, who had spent most of his life far from Israel. The Scripture sketch of Jephthah leaves, indeed, on the mind the impression of a genuine, wild, and daring Gilead

mountaineer - a sort of warrior-Elijah. But, on the other hand, he acts and speaks throughout as a true worshipper of Jehovah. And his vow, which in the Old Testament always expresses the highest religious feeling (Genesis 28:20; 1 Samuel 1:11; Psalm 116:14; Isaiah 19:21), is so sacred because it is made to Jehovah. Again, in his embassy to the king of Ammon, Jephthah displays the most intimate acquaintance with the Pentateuch, his language being repeatedly almost a literal quotation from Numbers 20. He who knew so well the details of Scripture history could not have been ignorant of its fundamental principles. Having thus cleared the way, we observe: 1. That the language of Jephthah's vow implied, from the first, at least the possibility of some human being coming out from the door of his house, to meet him on his return. The original conveys this, and the evident probabilities of the case were strongly in favor of such an eventuality. Indeed, Jephthah's language seems to have been designedly chosen in such general terms as to cover all cases. But it is impossible to suppose that Jephthah would have deliberately made a vow in which he contemplated human sacrifice; still more so, that Jehovah would have connected victory and deliverance with such a horrible crime. 2. In another particular, also, the language of Jephthah's vow is remarkable. It is, that "the outcoming (whether man or beast) shall be to Jehovah, and I will offer that a burnt-offering." The great Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages have, in opposition to the Talmud, pointed out that these two last clauses are not identical. It is never said of an animal burnt-offering, that it "shall be to Jehovah" - for the simple reason that, as a burnt-offering, it is such. But where human beings are offered to Jehovah, there the expression is used, as in the case of the first-born among Israel and of Levi (Numbers 3:12, 13). But in these cases it has never been suggested that there was actual human sacrifice. 3. It was a principle of the Mosaic law, that burnt sacrifices were to be exclusively males (Leviticus 1:3). 4. If the loving daughter had devoted herself to death, it is next to incredible that she should have wished to spend the two months of life conceded to her, not with her broken-hearted father, but in the mountains with her companions. 5. She bewails not her "maiden age," but her "maidenhood" - not that she dies so young, but that she is to die unmarried. The Hebrew expression for the former would have been quite different from that used in Scripture, which only signifies the latter.\* But for an only child to die unmarried, and so to leave a light and name extinguished in Israel, was indeed a bitter and heavy judgment, viewed in the light of pre-Messianic times. Compare in this respect especially such passages as Leviticus 20:20 and Psalm 78:63. The trial appears all the more withering when we realize, how it must have come upon Jephthah and his only child in the hour of their highest glory, when all earthly prosperity seemed at their command. The greatest and happiest man in Israel becomes in a moment the poorest and the most stricken. Surely, in this vow and sacrifice was the lesson of vows and sacrifices taught to victorious Israel in a manner the most solemn. \* The Hebrew expression is *bethulim*. If it meant maiden age it would probably, as Keil remarks, have been *neurim* (comp. Leviticus 21:13). 6. It is very significant that in 11:39 it is only said, that Jephthah "did with her according to his vow" - not that he actually offered her in sacrifice, while in the latter case the added clause, "and she knew no man," would be utterly needless and unmeaning. Lastly, we may ask, Who would have been the priest by whom, and where the altar on which, such a sacrifice could have been offered unto Jehovah? On all these grounds - its utter contrariety to the whole Old Testament, the known piety of Jephthah, the blessing following upon his vow, his mention in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but especially the language of the narrative itself - we feel bound to reject the idea of any human sacrifice. In what special manner, besides remaining unmarried,\* the vow of her dedication to God was carried out, we do not feel bound to suggest. Here the principle, long ago expressed by Clericus, holds true: "We are not to imagine that, in so small a volume as the Old Testament, all the customs of the Hebrews are recorded, or the full history of all that had taken place among them. Hence there are necessarily allusions to many things which cannot be fully followed out, because there is no mention of them elsewhere." \* In general, the Mishnah condemns in unmeasured terms female asceticism (*Sotah* iii. 4). But in the Talmud (*Sotah* 22a) one instance at least is recorded with special praise, in which a virgin wholly devoted herself to prayer. See Cassel in Herzog's Encyclo.

6 p. 475, note.12 Shibboleth means stream, which the Ephraimites pronounced Sibboleth. Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 18)

## CHAPTER 12

*Gileadites slay 42,000 Ephraimites—Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon each in turn judge Israel.*

1 AND the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.

2 And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great <sup>a</sup>strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.

3 And when I saw that ye delivered *me* not, I put my <sup>a</sup>life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?

4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, *and* among the Manassites.

5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so*, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;

6 Then said they unto him, Say now <sup>a</sup>Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of the cities of Gilead*. (Six years of rest - "then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead." We know not the locality, nor yet the precise place where he had lived, nor the city in which his body was laid. No father's home had welcomed him; no child was left to cheer his old age. He lived alone, and he died alone. Truly, as has been remarked, his sorrow and his victory are a type of Him Who said: "Not my will, but Thine be done." It almost seems as if Jephthah's three successors in the judgeship of the eastern and northern tribes were chiefly mentioned to mark the contrast in their history. Of Ibzan of Bethlehem,\* of Elon the Zebulonite, and of Abdon the Pirathonite, we know alike the dwelling and the burying-place. They lived honored, and died blessed - surrounded, as the text emphatically tells us, by a large and prosperous number of descendants. But their names are not found in the catalogue of worthies whom the Holy Ghost has selected for our special example and encouragement. Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 18)

8 ¶ And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel.

9 And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, *whom* he sent <sup>a</sup>abroad, (or outside the family (as in marriage) and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem.

11 ¶ And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years.

12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

13 ¶ And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.

14 And he had forty sons and thirty <sup>a</sup>nephews, (Heb grandsons) that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites. (The following counsel, given by President Joseph F. Smith to leaders of the Church, applies to you in a very real sense. Consider it carefully. "One of the highest qualities of all true leadership is a high standard of courage. When we speak of courage and leadership we are using

terms that stand for the quality of life by which men determine consciously the proper course to pursue and stand with fidelity to their convictions. There has never been a time in the Church when its leaders were not required to be courageous men; not alone courageous in the sense that they were able to meet physical dangers, but also in the sense that they were steadfast and true to a clear and upright conviction. “Leaders of the Church, then, should be men not easily discouraged, not without hope, and not given to forebodings of all sorts of evils to come. Above all things the leaders of the people should never disseminate a spirit of gloom in the hearts of the people. If men standing in high places sometimes feel the weight and anxiety of momentous times, they should be all the firmer and all the more resolute in those convictions which come from a God-fearing conscience and pure lives. Men in their private lives should feel the necessity of extending encouragement to the people by their own hopeful and cheerful intercourse with them, as they do by their utterances in public places. It is a matter of the greatest importance that the people be educated to appreciate and cultivate the bright side of life rather than to permit its darkness and shadows to hover over them. “In order to successfully overcome anxieties in reference to questions that require time for their solution, an absolute faith and confidence in God and in the triumph of his work are essential. “The most momentous questions and the greatest dangers to personal happiness are not always met and solved within oneself, and if men cannot courageously meet the difficulties, and obstacles of their own individual lives and natures, how are they to meet successfully those public questions in which the welfare and happiness of the public are concerned?” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 155.))

## CHAPTER 13

*Israel in Philistine bondage for forty years—An angel comes to Manoah’s wife and promises a son who shall begin to deliver Israel—The angel comes again; he ascends in a flame from the altar—Samson is born, and the Spirit of the Lord moves upon him.*

1 AND the children of Israel did <sup>a</sup>evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the <sup>b</sup>hand of the Philistines forty years. (Israel in bondage to the Philistines.)

2 ¶ And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren, and bare not.

3 And the <sup>a</sup>angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou *art* <sup>b</sup>barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and <sup>a</sup>drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any <sup>b</sup>unclean *thing*:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no <sup>a</sup>razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite (A Nazarite was one who was separated from others by a special vow of self-dedication to Jehovah. The term “set apart” is used to mean that one has been given a special calling or position and is thus separated from others. Old Testament Student Manual, p. 259) unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to <sup>b</sup>deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

6 ¶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance *was* like the countenance of an <sup>a</sup>angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he *was*, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean *thing*: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. (An angel appears to Manoah’s wife telling her that she will have a son that will be a Nazarite. A Nazarite (Numbers 6) was separated from others by a special vow of self-dedication to Jehovah. Abstain from wine, from any cutting of the hair, and any contact with the dead. )

8 Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day.

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I *am*.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?

13 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

14 She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe.

15 ¶ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?

18 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* <sup>a</sup>secret? (“The angel does not say that it [his name] was *secret*, but . . . *hu peli*, it is WONDERFUL; the very character that is given to Jesus Christ [see Isaiah 9].” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:159.) It is doubtful that the angel was the Lord Himself, but rather was one who spoke in the name of the Lord by divine authority, as in Revelation 22:1–9. Certainly the experience of Manoah and his wife is one of the most remarkable instances of angelic visitation recorded in all of scripture. And that fact heightens all the more the tragedy of Samson’s life. Heralded by an angel, born of a barren woman, blessed with tremendous gifts from the Lord, Samson should have lived one of the greatest lives in scriptural record. Instead, his life was one of self-indulgence, immorality, selfish seeking for revenge, and violation of the covenant. Samson’s life is truly one of the great tragedies of history. Institute Manual, 259, 60)

19 So Manoah took a kid with a <sup>a</sup>meat <sup>b</sup>offering, (Heb gift, or offering; actually this part was made of meal) and offered *it* upon a rock unto the LORD: and *the angel* did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and fell on their faces to the ground.

21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have <sup>a</sup>seen God.

23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these. (They receive more instructions from the angel.)

24 ¶ And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: (Or rather (in the Hebrew) Shimshon. The name has been variously interpreted. By the Rabbis it is rendered "sunlike," in allusion to Psalm 84:11. Others render it "mighty," "daring," or "he who lays waste." Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 19) and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol. (Samson is born.)

## CHAPTER 14

*Samson slays a young lion with his bare hands—He marries a Philistine wife, propounds a riddle, is deceived by his wife, and slays thirty Philistines.*

1 AND Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.  
2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a <sup>a</sup>wife of the <sup>b</sup>uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

4 But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* of the <sup>a</sup>LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had <sup>b</sup>dominion over Israel. (Samson wants to marry a Philistine woman. His parents try to counsel him otherwise.)

5 ¶ Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

6 And the <sup>a</sup>Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, (Samson's gift was strength, and each time he used that gift in a remarkable manner, the writer of the scripture gave credit to the Lord, the true source of the gift, by saying, "the Spirit of the Lord" came mightily upon him. Old Testament Student Manual. P. 260) and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. (He kills a lion with his hands. The writer gave credit to the Lord for Samson's great strength. Killing the lion, which was considered unclean, was against his Nazarite vow of not being around the dead.)

8 ¶ And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.

9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion. (He finds honey in the dead lion's carcase.)

10 ¶ So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a <sup>a</sup>feast; for so used the young men to do.

11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

12 ¶ And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty <sup>a</sup>sheets (Heb linen garments or tunics) and thirty change of garments:

13 But if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, <sup>a</sup>Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we <sup>b</sup>burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it* not *so*?

16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a <sup>a</sup>riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee?

17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she <sup>a</sup>lay sore (ie pressed him hard) upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What *is* sweeter

than honey? and what *is* stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle. (He gives a riddle to the wedding party for them to figure out during the feast. After seven days, they threaten Samson's wife for the answer. She gets Samson to tell her and she tells the men.)

19 ¶ And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

20 But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, whom he had used as his friend. (Samson kills 30 men and spoils them and gives the spoil to the 30 men from the wedding feast. Samson leaves, and his wife is given to his best man.)

## CHAPTER 15

*Samson burns corn of Philistines—They burn his wife and father-in-law—Samson slays a thousand Philistines at Lehi with jawbone of an ass.*

1 BUT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: *is* not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

3 ¶ And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and <sup>a</sup>burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing <sup>b</sup>corn, (or grain) with the vineyards and <sup>c</sup>olives. (ie olive trees) (When Samson hears that his wife was given to another, he burns up the Philistines' corn.)

6 ¶ Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and <sup>a</sup>burnt her and <sup>b</sup>her father with fire. (Septuagint, Syriac, and many Heb manuscripts: her father's house) (The Philistines burn his wife and her family.)

7 ¶ And Samson said unto them, <sup>a</sup>Though ye have done this (or if you act in this way), yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam. (Samson kills many of the Philistines and he goes to Etam in Judah.)

9 ¶ Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. (Lehi of the Book of Mormon lived 500-600 years after Samson.)

10 And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines *are* <sup>a</sup>rulers over us? what *is* this *that* thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock. (Judah captures Samson and delivers him to the Philistines.)

14 ¶ And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came

mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands <sup>a</sup>loosed from off his hands.

15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

16 And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi. (Samson kills 1,000 with the jawbone of an ass.)

18 ¶ And he was <sup>a</sup>sore athirst (or very thirsty), and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

19 <sup>a</sup>But God clave an hollow place (or But God opened up the basin that was at Lehi) that *was* in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof <sup>b</sup>En-hakkore, (ie The spring of him who calls) which *is* in Lehi unto this day.

20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years. (Samson is thirsty so the Lord commands water to come from a rock. The word Lehi means jaw.)

## CHAPTER 16

*Samson carries away doors of gate of Gaza—He loves Delilah, who delivers him to Philistines—He destroys building, killing himself and 3000 others.*

1 THEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.

2 And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they <sup>a</sup>compassed *him* in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.

3 And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that *is* before Hebron. (Samson goes in with a harlot. The Gazites find him there and wait for him to come out of the city. He takes the gate and posts to the top of a nearby hill.)

4 ¶ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah. ("the weak" or "longing one". Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 20)

5 And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, <sup>a</sup>Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us <sup>b</sup>eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.

6 ¶ And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven <sup>a</sup>green withs (or new cords; e.g. fresh or moist *sinews from animals*) that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

9 Now *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

10 And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast <sup>a</sup>mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

11 And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

12 Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And *there were* <sup>a</sup>liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

13 And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the <sup>a</sup>web. (ie the web of the loom)

14 And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

15 ¶ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast <sup>a</sup>mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*.

16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him <sup>a</sup>daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was <sup>b</sup>vexed unto death;

17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a <sup>a</sup>razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought <sup>a</sup>money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

20 And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he <sup>a</sup>wist (or knew) not that the LORD was departed from him. (He meets and falls in love with Delilah. The Philistines get her to find out the reason for his great strength. After three times, 1. If he is bound with 7 green withs that were never dried; 2. bound with new ropes that were never occupied; 3. weave the locks of his head with the web. And then he says it's because of his hair. His hair is cut and he is captured. He breaks the vows of a Nazarite as well as the law of chastity. He failed to heed the counsel to "let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God." (D&C 121:45) The Philistine princes have learned that force cannot defeat Samson, but sin can. His defeat is not that his hair is cut, but that he did not keep his Nazarite vow and in thinking he was the source of his strength and not the Lord. At last it has come. He has opened all his heart to Delilah, and she knows it. But Scripture puts the true explanation of the matter before us, in its usual emphatic manner, yet with such manifest avoidance of seeking for effect, that only the careful, devout reader will trace it. The facts are as follows: When Samson betrays his secret to Delilah, he says (16:17): "If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me," whereas, when the event actually takes place, Scripture explains it: "He wot not that Jehovah was departed from him." In this contrast between his fond conceit about his own strength and the fact that it was due to the presence of Jehovah, lies the gist of the whole matter. As one writes: "The superhuman strength of Samson lay not in his uncut hair, but in this, that Jehovah was with him. But Jehovah was with him only so long as he kept his Nazarite vow." Or, in the words of an old German commentary: "The whole misery of Samson arose from this, that he appropriated to himself what God had done through him. God allows his strength to be destroyed, that in bitter experience he might learn, how without God's presence he was nothing at all. And so our falls always teach us best." But, as ever, sin proves the hardest taskmaster. Every indignity is heaped on fallen Samson. His eyes are put out; he is loaded with fetters of brass, and set to the lowest prison work of slaves. And here, also, the history of Samson finds its parallel in that of blinded Israel, with the judgment of bondage, degradation, and suffering, consequent upon their great national sin of casting aside their Nazarite vow. Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 20)

21 ¶ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. (But, blessed be God, neither the history nor its parallel stops here. For "the gifts and callings of God are without repentance." The sacred text expressly has it: "And the hair of his head began to grow, as it was shorn" - that is, so soon as it had been shorn. Then began a period of godly sorrow and repentance, evidenced both by the return of God to him, and by his last deed of faith, in which for his people he sacrificed his life; herein also following the great Antitype, though "afar off." We imagine, that "the lad" who led him to the pillars on which the house of Dagon rested was a Hebrew, cognizant of Samson's hopes and prayers, and who, immediately after having placed him in the fatal position, left the temple, and then carried the tidings to Samson's "brethren" (16:31). Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 20)

23 Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto <sup>a</sup>Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

25 And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26 And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28 And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life. (Bible scholars believe that the lad was probably a Hebrew, and after placing Samson in between the pillars, left the temple to tell Samson's brethren what happened. It is a high day in Gaza. From all their cities have the princes of the Philistines come up; from all the country around have the people gathered. The temple of the god Dagon - the fish-god, protector of the sea - is festively adorned and thronged. Below, the lords of the Philistines and all the chief men of the people are feasting at the sacrificial meal; above, along the roof, the gallery all around is crowded by three thousand men and women who look down on the spectacle beneath. It is a feast of thanksgiving to Dagon, of triumph to Philistia, of triumph against Jehovah and His people, and over captive Samson. The image of Dagon - the body of a fish with the head and hands of a man - which less than twenty years before had fallen and been broken before the ark of Jehovah (1 Samuel 5:4), stands once more proudly defying the God of Israel. And now the mirth and revelry have reached their highest point: Samson is brought in, and placed in the middle of the temple, between the central pillars which uphold the immense roof and the building itself. A few words whispered to his faithful Hebrew servant, and Samson's arms encircle the massive pillars. And then an unuttered agonizing cry of repentance, of faith from the Nazarite, once more such, who will not only subordinate self to the nation and to his calling, but surrender life itself! Blind Samson is groping for a new light - and the brightness of another morning is already gilding his horizon. With all his might he bows himself. The pillars reel and give way. With one terrible crash fall roof and gallery, temple and image of Dagon; and in the ruins perish with Samson the lords of the Philistines and the flower of the people. Edersheim, Vol 3, Ch 20)

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years. (Samson's eyes are put out. His hair grows back. They make sport of him and he destroys

their temple, killing 3,000 including himself. He could still have done much to deliver Israel, but instead he sought for vengeance. “The character of this building is illustrated by discoveries at Gezer and Gaza. The roof was supported by wooden pillars set on stone bases. It was flat, consisting of logs of wood stretching from one wall to beams supported by the pillars and from these beams to other beams or to the opposite wall. The temple at Gezer had a forecourt leading into a paved inner chamber, separated from it by four circular stones, on which the wooden pillars stood. Samson, probably stood between the two central pillars, if there were more than two. The Philistine lords and ladies were in the inner chamber; the crowd watched from the roof. Samson made sport, in the forecourt, and then asked the boy to lead him to the central pillars to rest against them. Then, putting an arm round each, and bending forward so as to force them out of the perpendicular, he brought the roof down. The weight of people on the roof may have made the feat all the easier.” (Guthrie, Bible Commentary, p. 272) Samson did not at any time attempt to organize the forces of Israel for their liberation, as the Lord had called him to do. (Judges 13:5) Samson fought less for Israel than for himself. The whole meaning of Samson’s history is that he was a Nazarite. His strength lay in being a Nazarite, his weakness in yielding to his carnal lusts, and thereby becoming unfaithful to his calling. In both respects he was not only a type of Israel, but, so to speak, a mirror in which Israel could see itself and its history. Alfred Edershiem, Bible History: Old Testament, 3: Chapter 16.

## CHAPTER 17

*Micah has a house of gods (images) and consecrates his own priests.*

1 AND there was a man of <sup>a</sup>mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver *is* with me; I took it. And his mother said, <sup>a</sup>Blessed *be thou* of the LORD, my son.

3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a <sup>a</sup>graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.

4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an <sup>a</sup>ephod, and <sup>b</sup>teraphim, (ie domestic idols, perhaps in size and shape of a man) and consecrated one of his sons, who became his <sup>c</sup>priest.

6 In those days *there was no* <sup>a</sup>king in Israel, *but every man did that which was* <sup>b</sup>right in his <sup>c</sup>own eyes.

7 ¶ And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there.

8 And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah to <sup>a</sup>sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a <sup>a</sup>Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place*.

10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of <sup>a</sup>apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.

11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.

12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to *my* priest.

## CHAPTER 18

*Danites send men to seek an inheritance—They take Micah's images and priest, win Laish, and set up idolatry.*

1 **IN those days there was no <sup>a</sup>king in Israel:** and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

3 When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place*? and what hast thou here?

4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

7 ¶ Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt <sup>a</sup>careless, (**Heb inactive, quiet**) after the manner of the Zidonians, <sup>b</sup>quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye?

9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good: and *are* ye <sup>a</sup>still? be not <sup>b</sup>slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people <sup>a</sup>secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth.

11 ¶ And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men <sup>a</sup>appointed (**Heb girded**) with weapons of war.

12 And they went up, and pitched in <sup>a</sup>Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place <sup>b</sup>Mahaneh-dan (**ie Camp of Dan**) unto this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjath-jearim.

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

14 ¶ Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even* unto the house of Micah, and <sup>a</sup>saluted him. (**Heb asked him concerning his welfare**)

16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war.

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the <sup>a</sup>teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine <sup>a</sup>hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a <sup>b</sup>priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

22 ¶ *And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, What aileth thee?

25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

27 And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at <sup>a</sup>quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

28 And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they had no business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city *was* Laish at the first.

30 ¶ And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of <sup>a</sup>Manasseh, (Heb Moses, altered to Manasseh) he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the <sup>a</sup>house of God was in <sup>b</sup>Shiloh.

## CHAPTER 19

*A Levite concubine plays the harlot and returns to her father—Her husband takes her back, and they lodge overnight in Gibeah—The men of Gibeah abuse his concubine and she dies—The Levite cuts her into twelve pieces and sends them to the tribes of Israel.*

1 AND it came to pass in those days, when *there was no king in Israel*, that there was a certain <sup>a</sup>Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.

2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

4 And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

5 ¶ And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, <sup>a</sup>Comfort (or sustain) thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

6 And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.

7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

8 And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.

9 And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which *is* Jerusalem; and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him.

11 And when they *were* by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

12 And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that *is* not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah.

13 And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah.

14 And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by <sup>a</sup>Gibeah, which *belongeth* to <sup>b</sup>Benjamin.

15 And they turned aside thither, to go in *and* to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that took them into his house to lodging.

16 ¶ And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he <sup>a</sup>sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place *were* Benjamites.

17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?

18 And he said unto him, We *are* passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence *am* I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I *am now* going to the house of the LORD; and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house.

19 Yet there is both straw and <sup>a</sup>provender (or food, of fodder) for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing.

20 And the old man said, Peace *be* with thee; howsoever *let* all thy wants *lie* upon me; only lodge not in the street.

21 So he brought him into his house, and gave <sup>a</sup>provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

22 ¶ Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may <sup>a</sup>know him.

23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not *so* wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

24 Behold, *here is* my <sup>a</sup>daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

26 Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light.

27 And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold.

28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. (She was dead) Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

29 ¶ And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and <sup>a</sup>sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

30 And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak *your minds*.

## CHAPTER 20

*All Israel arises against Benjamin, who refuse to deliver up the men of Gibeah—Benjamites are smitten and destroyed.*

1 THEN all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in <sup>a</sup>Mizpeh.

2 And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.

3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell *us*, how was this wickedness?

4 And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into <sup>a</sup>Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge.

5 And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, *and* thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they <sup>a</sup>forced, (ie assaulted) that she is dead.

6 And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and <sup>a</sup>folly (or disgrace, wantonness) in Israel.

7 Behold, ye *are* all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel.

8 ¶ And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any *of us* go to his tent, neither will we any *of us* turn into his house.

9 But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* by lot against it;

10 And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch <sup>a</sup>victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.

11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, <sup>a</sup>knit together (or united) as one man.

12 ¶ And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness *is* this that is done among you?

13 Now therefore deliver *us* the men, the children of <sup>a</sup>Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:

14 But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.

15 And the children of Benjamin were <sup>a</sup>numbered (Heb mustered) at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.

16 Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men <sup>a</sup>lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair *breadth*, and not miss.

17 And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these *were* men of war.

18 ¶ And the children of Israel arose, and went up to <sup>a</sup>the house of God, (or Bethel) and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah *shall go up* first.

19 And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and <sup>a</sup>encamped against Gibeah.

20 And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah.

21 And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

22 And the people the men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

23 (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)

24 And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

25 And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

26 ¶ Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the <sup>a</sup>house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

27 And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days,

28 And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.

29 And Israel set <sup>a</sup>liers in wait round about Gibeah.

30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times.

31 And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, *and* were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the people, *and* kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

32 And the children of Benjamin said, They *are* smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways.

33 And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, *even* out of the meadows of Gibeah.

34 And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was <sup>a</sup>sore: (or heavy, hard) but they knew not that evil *was* near them.

35 And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword.

36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.

37 And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew *themselves* along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword.

38 Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city.

39 And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite *and* kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as *in* the first battle.

40 But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven.

41 And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil *was* come upon them.

42 Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them which *came* out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.

43 *Thus* they inclosed the Benjamites round about, *and* chased them, *and* <sup>a</sup>trode them down with ease (Heb overtook) over against Gibeah toward <sup>b</sup>the sunrising. (ie the east)

44 And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valour.

45 And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they <sup>a</sup>gleaned (ie killed the fugitives) of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.

46 So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valour.

47 But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock (of) Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

48 And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of *every* city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

## CHAPTER 21

*The people bewail the desolation of Benjamin—Inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead destroyed for not engaging in the war with Benjamin—Wives provided for remnant of Benjamin.*

1 NOW the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

2 And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore;

3 And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel?

4 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

5 And the children of Israel said, Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel that <sup>a</sup>came not up with the <sup>b</sup>congregation unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?

8 ¶ And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

11 And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.

12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan.

13 And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

16 ¶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?

17 And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.

18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed *be* he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

19 Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly *in a place* which *is* on the north side of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and <sup>a</sup>lie in wait in the vineyards;

21 And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to <sup>a</sup>dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that* ye should be <sup>a</sup>guilty.

23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

24 And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance.

25 In those days *there was* no <sup>a</sup>king in Israel: every man did *that which was* <sup>b</sup>right in his own eyes.

The message of Judges: That the Lord is unchanging in His faithfulness to his children, He has unfailing pity and loving kindness toward us and that if we but repent, He will fight our battles and deliver us from evil. Alfred Edershiem, Bible History: Old Testament, 3: Chapter 16.