

Lesson 19 (Study Notes): **The Reign of the Judges**

**Class Member Reading:** Judges 2, 4, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16

Judges 2, 4, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16

### **Israel's Disobedience**

**2** Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, 'I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land that I had promised to your ancestors. I said, "I will never break my covenant with you. <sup>2</sup>For your part, do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; tear down their altars.'" But you have not obeyed my command. See what you have done! <sup>3</sup>So now I say, I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become adversaries to you, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' <sup>4</sup>When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the Israelites, the people lifted up their voices and wept. <sup>5</sup>So they named that place Bochim, and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

### **Death of Joshua**

**6** When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites all went to their own inheritances to take possession of the land. <sup>7</sup>The people worshipped the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. <sup>8</sup>Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten years. <sup>9</sup>So they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in

the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. <sup>10</sup>Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them, who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.

## **Israel's Unfaithfulness**

11 Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and worshipped the Baals; <sup>12</sup>and they abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. <sup>13</sup>They abandoned the LORD, and worshipped Baal and the Astartes. <sup>14</sup>So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. <sup>15</sup>Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them to bring misfortune, as the LORD had warned them and sworn to them; and they were in great distress.

16 Then the LORD raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them. <sup>17</sup>Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD; they did not follow their example. <sup>18</sup>Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD would be moved to pity by their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them. <sup>19</sup>But whenever the judge died, they would relapse and behave worse than their ancestors, following other gods, worshipping them and bowing down to them. They would not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. <sup>20</sup>So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel; and he said, 'Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their ancestors, and have not obeyed my voice, <sup>21</sup>I will

no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died.' <sup>22</sup>In order to test Israel, whether or not they would take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their ancestors did, <sup>23</sup>the LORD had left those nations, not driving them out at once, and had not handed them over to Joshua.

## **Deborah and Barak**

**4**The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. <sup>2</sup>So the LORD sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. <sup>3</sup>Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly for twenty years.

**4** At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. <sup>5</sup>She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgement. <sup>6</sup>She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, 'The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, "Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. <sup>7</sup>I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand." ' <sup>8</sup>Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.' <sup>9</sup>And she said, 'I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.' Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. <sup>10</sup>Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him.

**11** Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites, that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had encamped as far away as Elon-bezaananim, which

is near Kedesh.

12 When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, <sup>13</sup>Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the troops who were with him, from Harosheth-ha-goiim to the Wadi Kishon. <sup>14</sup>Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! For this is the day on which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. The LORD is indeed going out before you.' So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. <sup>15</sup>And the LORD threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, <sup>16</sup>while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-ha-goiim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.

17 Now Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite. <sup>18</sup>Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him, 'Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear.' So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. <sup>19</sup>Then he said to her, 'Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty.' So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. <sup>20</sup>He said to her, 'Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks you, "Is anyone here?" say, "No." ' <sup>21</sup>But Jael wife of Heber took a tent-peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground—he was lying fast asleep from weariness—and he died. <sup>22</sup>Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him, and said to him, 'Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.' So he went into her tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent-peg in his temple.

23 So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. <sup>24</sup>Then the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan.

## **The Midianite Oppression**

**6**The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years. <sup>2</sup>The hand of Midian prevailed over Israel; and because of Midian the Israelites provided for themselves hiding-places in the mountains, caves and strongholds. <sup>3</sup>For whenever the Israelites put in seed, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them. <sup>4</sup>They would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the land, as far as the neighbourhood of Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or donkey. <sup>5</sup>For they and their livestock would come up, and they would even bring their tents, as thick as locusts; neither they nor their camels could be counted; so they wasted the land as they came in. <sup>6</sup>Thus Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian; and the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

**7** When the Israelites cried to the LORD on account of the Midianites, <sup>8</sup>the LORD sent a prophet to the Israelites; and he said to them, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt, and brought you out of the house of slavery; <sup>9</sup>and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you, and gave you their land; <sup>10</sup>and I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not pay reverence to the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live." But you have not given heed to my voice.'

## **The Calling of Gideon**

**11** Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. <sup>12</sup>The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, you mighty warrior.' <sup>13</sup>Gideon answered him, 'But sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors

recounted to us, saying, "Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?" But now the LORD has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian.' <sup>14</sup>Then the LORD turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.' <sup>15</sup>He responded, 'But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.' <sup>16</sup>The LORD said to him, 'But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them.' <sup>17</sup>Then he said to him, 'If now I have found favour with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. <sup>18</sup>Do not depart from here until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you.' And he said, 'I will stay until you return.'

19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them. <sup>20</sup>The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth.' And he did so. <sup>21</sup>Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. <sup>22</sup>Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the LORD; and Gideon said, 'Help me, Lord GOD! For I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.' <sup>23</sup>But the LORD said to him, 'Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die.' <sup>24</sup>Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it, The LORD is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

25 That night the LORD said to him, 'Take your father's bull, the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred pole that is beside it; <sup>26</sup>and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, in proper order; then take the second bull, and offer it as a burnt-offering with the wood of the sacred pole that you shall cut down.' <sup>27</sup>So Gideon took ten of his servants, and did as

the LORD had told him; but because he was too afraid of his family and the townspeople to do it by day, he did it by night.

### **Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal**

28 When the townspeople rose early in the morning, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the sacred pole beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. <sup>29</sup>So they said to one another, 'Who has done this?' After searching and inquiring, they were told, 'Gideon son of Joash did it.' <sup>30</sup>Then the townspeople said to Joash, 'Bring out your son, so that he may die, for he has pulled down the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred pole beside it.' <sup>31</sup>But Joash said to all who were arrayed against him, 'Will you contend for Baal? Or will you defend his cause? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been pulled down.' <sup>32</sup>Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, 'Let Baal contend against him', because he pulled down his altar.

33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east came together, and crossing the Jordan they encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. <sup>34</sup>But the spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon; and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. <sup>35</sup>He sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them.

### **The Sign of the Fleece**

36 Then Gideon said to God, 'In order to see whether you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said, <sup>37</sup>I am going to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing-floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said.' <sup>38</sup>And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. <sup>39</sup>Then Gideon

said to God, 'Do not let your anger burn against me, let me speak one more time; let me, please, make trial with the fleece just once more; let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew.'<sup>40</sup> And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

## **Gideon Surprises and Routs the Midianites**

**7** Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops that were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was north of them, below the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

**2** The LORD said to Gideon, 'The troops with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Israel would only take the credit away from me, saying, "My own hand has delivered me."<sup>3</sup> Now therefore proclaim this in the hearing of the troops, "Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home." ' Thus Gideon sifted them out; twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained.

**4** Then the LORD said to Gideon, 'The troops are still too many; take them down to the water and I will sift them out for you there. When I say, "This one shall go with you", he shall go with you; and when I say, "This one shall not go with you", he shall not go.'<sup>5</sup> So he brought the troops down to the water; and the LORD said to Gideon, 'All those who lap the water with their tongues, as a dog laps, you shall put to one side; all those who kneel down to drink, putting their hands to their mouths, you shall put to the other side.'<sup>6</sup> The number of those that lapped was three hundred; but all the rest of the troops knelt down to drink water. **7** Then the LORD said to Gideon, 'With the three hundred that lapped I will deliver you, and give the Midianites into your hand. Let all the others go to their homes.'<sup>8</sup> So he took the jars of the troops from their hands, and their trumpets; and he sent all the rest of Israel back to their own tents, but retained the three hundred. The camp of Midian was

below him in the valley.

9 That same night the LORD said to him, 'Get up, attack the camp; for I have given it into your hand. <sup>10</sup>But if you fear to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah; <sup>11</sup>and you shall hear what they say, and afterwards your hands shall be strengthened to attack the camp.' Then he went down with his servant Purah to the outposts of the armed men that were in the camp. <sup>12</sup>The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along the valley as thick as locusts; and their camels were without number, countless as the sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup>When Gideon arrived, there was a man telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, 'I had a dream, and in it a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell; it turned upside down, and the tent collapsed.' <sup>14</sup>And his comrade answered, 'This is no other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel; into his hand God has given Midian and all the army.'

15 When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped; and he returned to the camp of Israel, and said, 'Get up; for the LORD has given the army of Midian into your hand.' <sup>16</sup>After he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them, and empty jars, with torches inside the jars, <sup>17</sup>he said to them, 'Look at me, and do the same; when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. <sup>18</sup>When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets around the whole camp, and shout, "For the LORD and for Gideon!" '

19 So Gideon and the hundred who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. <sup>20</sup>So the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, 'A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!' <sup>21</sup>Every man stood in his place all around the camp, and all the men in camp ran; they cried out and fled. <sup>22</sup>When they blew the three hundred trumpets,

the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah towards Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. <sup>23</sup>And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh, and they pursued after the Midianites.

24 Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, 'Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.' So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they seized the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan. <sup>25</sup>They captured the two captains of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the wine press of Zeeb, as they pursued the Midianites. They brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan.

## **The Birth of Samson**

**13** The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children. <sup>3</sup>And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Although you are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son. <sup>4</sup>Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean, <sup>5</sup>for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.'<sup>6</sup>Then the woman came and told her husband, 'A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel of God, most awe-inspiring; I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name; <sup>7</sup>but he said to me, "You shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a

nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death.” ’

8 Then Manoah entreated the LORD, and said, 'O LORD, I pray, let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we are to do concerning the boy who will be born.' <sup>9</sup>God listened to Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. <sup>10</sup>So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, 'The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.' <sup>11</sup>Manoah got up and followed his wife, and came to the man and said to him, 'Are you the man who spoke to this woman?' And he said, 'I am.' <sup>12</sup>Then Manoah said, 'Now when your words come true, what is to be the boy's rule of life; what is he to do?' <sup>13</sup>The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, 'Let the woman give heed to all that I said to her. <sup>14</sup>She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine. She is not to drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. She is to observe everything that I commanded her.'

15 Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, 'Allow us to detain you, and prepare a kid for you.' <sup>16</sup>The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, 'If you detain me, I will not eat your food; but if you want to prepare a burnt-offering, then offer it to the LORD.' (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.) <sup>17</sup>Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, 'What is your name, so that we may honour you when your words come true?' <sup>18</sup>But the angel of the LORD said to him, 'Why do you ask my name? It is too wonderful.'

19 So Manoah took the kid with the grain-offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to him who works wonders. <sup>20</sup>When the flame went up towards heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar while Manoah and his wife looked on; and they fell on their faces to the ground. <sup>21</sup>The angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>And Manoah said to his wife, 'We shall surely die, for we have seen God.' <sup>23</sup>But his wife said to him, 'If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt-offering and a grain-offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such

things as these.'

24 The woman bore a son, and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD blessed him. <sup>25</sup>The spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

## **Samson's Marriage**

**14** Once Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw a Philistine woman. <sup>2</sup>Then he came up, and told his father and mother, 'I saw a Philistine woman at Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.' <sup>3</sup>But his father and mother said to him, 'Is there not a woman among your kin, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?' But Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, because she pleases me.' <sup>4</sup>His father and mother did not know that this was from the LORD; for he was seeking a pretext to act against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

**5** Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah. When he came to the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion roared at him. <sup>6</sup>The spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as one might tear apart a kid. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. <sup>7</sup>Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson. <sup>8</sup>After a while he returned to marry her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. <sup>9</sup>He scraped it out into his hands, and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

**10** His father went down to the woman, and Samson made a feast there as the young men were accustomed to do. <sup>11</sup>When the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. <sup>12</sup>Samson said to them, 'Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will

give you thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments. <sup>13</sup>But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments.' So they said to him, 'Ask your riddle; let us hear it.' <sup>14</sup>He said to them, 'Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.' But for three days they could not explain the riddle.

<sup>15</sup> On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, 'Coax your husband to explain the riddle to us, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?' <sup>16</sup>So Samson's wife wept before him, saying, 'You hate me; you do not really love me. You have asked a riddle of my people, but you have not explained it to me.' He said to her, 'Look, I have not told my father or my mother. Why should I tell you?' <sup>17</sup>She wept before him for the seven days that their feast lasted; and because she nagged him, on the seventh day he told her. Then she explained the riddle to her people. <sup>18</sup>The men of the town said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, 'What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?' And he said to them, 'If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle.' <sup>19</sup>Then the spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and he went down to Ashkelon. He killed thirty men of the town, took their spoil, and gave the festal garments to those who had explained the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house. <sup>20</sup>And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.

## **Samson Defeats the Philistines**

**15** After a while, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, bringing along a kid. He said, 'I want to go into my wife's room.' But her father would not allow him to go in. <sup>2</sup>Her father said, 'I was sure that you had rejected her; so I gave her to

your companion. Is not her younger sister prettier than she? Why not take her instead?' <sup>3</sup>Samson said to them, 'This time, when I do mischief to the Philistines, I will be without blame.' <sup>4</sup>So Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took some torches; and he turned the foxetail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. <sup>5</sup>When he had set fire to the torches, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves. <sup>6</sup>Then the Philistines asked, 'Who has done this?' And they said, 'Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken Samson's wife and given her to his companion.' So the Philistines came up, and burned her and her father. <sup>7</sup>Samson said to them, 'If this is what you do, I swear I will not stop until I have taken revenge on you.' <sup>8</sup>He struck them down hip and thigh with great slaughter; and he went down and lived in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

<sup>9</sup> Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah, and made a raid on Lehi. <sup>10</sup>The men of Judah said, 'Why have you come up against us?' They said, 'We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he did to us.' <sup>11</sup>Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and they said to Samson, 'Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then have you done to us?' He replied, 'As they did to me, so I have done to them.' <sup>12</sup>They said to him, 'We have come down to bind you, so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines.' Samson answered them, 'Swear to me that you yourselves will not attack me.' <sup>13</sup>They said to him, 'No, we will only bind you and give you into their hands; we will not kill you.' So they bound him with two new ropes, and brought him up from the rock.

<sup>14</sup> When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him; and the spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. <sup>15</sup>Then he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached down and took it, and with it he killed a thousand men. <sup>16</sup>And Samson said, 'With the jawbone of a donkey,

heaps upon heaps,  
with the jawbone of a donkey  
I have slain a thousand men.'

<sup>17</sup>When he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and that place was called Ramath-lehi.

<sup>18</sup>By then he was very thirsty, and he called on the LORD, saying, 'You have granted this great victory by the hand of your servant. Am I now to die of thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?' <sup>19</sup>So God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came from it. When he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore it was named En-hakkore, which is at Lehi to this day. <sup>20</sup>And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years.

## **Samson and Delilah**

**16**Once Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute and went in to her. <sup>2</sup>The Gazites were told, 'Samson has come here.' So they encircled the place and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate. They kept quiet all night, thinking, 'Let us wait until the light of the morning; then we will kill him.' <sup>3</sup>But Samson lay only until midnight. Then at midnight he rose up, took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

<sup>4</sup>After this he fell in love with a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. <sup>5</sup>The lords of the Philistines came to her and said to her, 'Coax him, and find out what makes his strength so great, and how we may overpower him, so that we may bind him in order to subdue him; and we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.' <sup>6</sup>So Delilah said to Samson, 'Please tell me what makes your strength so great, and how you could be bound, so that one could subdue you.' <sup>7</sup>Samson said to her, 'If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that are not dried out, then I shall become weak, and be like anyone else.' <sup>8</sup>Then the lords of the Philistines

brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not dried out, and she bound him with them. <sup>9</sup>While men were lying in wait in an inner chamber, she said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he snapped the bowstrings, as a strand of fibre snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, 'You have mocked me and told me lies; please tell me how you could be bound.' <sup>11</sup>He said to her, 'If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak, and be like anyone else.' <sup>12</sup>So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' (The men lying in wait were in an inner chamber.) But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

13 Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Until now you have mocked me and told me lies; tell me how you could be bound.' He said to her, 'If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and make it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak, and be like anyone else.' <sup>14</sup>So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web, and made them tight with the pin. Then she said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

15 Then she said to him, 'How can you say, "I love you", when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me three times now and have not told me what makes your strength so great.' <sup>16</sup>Finally, after she had nagged him with her words day after day, and pestered him, he was tired to death. <sup>17</sup>So he told her his whole secret, and said to her, 'A razor has never come upon my head; for I have been a nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, then my strength would leave me; I would become weak, and be like anyone else.'

18 When Delilah realized that he had told her his whole secret, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, 'This time come up, for he has told his whole secret to me.' Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and brought the money in their

hands. <sup>19</sup>She let him fall asleep on her lap; and she called a man, and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. He began to weaken, and his strength left him. <sup>20</sup>Then she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' When he awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the LORD had left him. <sup>21</sup>So the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles; and he ground at the mill in the prison. <sup>22</sup>But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

### **Samson's Death**

23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, and to rejoice; for they said, 'Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.' <sup>24</sup>When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, 'Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.' <sup>25</sup>And when their hearts were merry, they said, 'Call Samson, and let him entertain us.' So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. They made him stand between the pillars; <sup>26</sup>and Samson said to the attendant who held him by the hand, 'Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, so that I may lean against them.' <sup>27</sup>Now the house was full of men and women; all the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about three thousand men and women, who looked on while Samson performed.

28 Then Samson called to the LORD and said, 'Lord GOD, remember me and strengthen me only this once, O God, so that with this one act of revenge I may pay back the Philistines for my two eyes.' <sup>29</sup>And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. <sup>30</sup>Then Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines.' He strained with all his might; and the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed during his

life. <sup>31</sup>Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel for twenty years.

Additional Reading: [“Judges, The”](#) and [“Judges, Book of,”](#) Bible Dictionary

### [“Judges, The”](#)

This name was given to a period of history between Joshua and Saul, extending over some 200 years, and marked by disorder, idolatry, and foreign oppression. The judge was more than a civil officer. He was generally a military leader as well, and his right to lead rested on the fact that in the eyes of the people he was the strongest and best man for the purpose. Faith in God was always the secret of success; but as a rule the judge was more of a fighter than a preacher.

### [“Judges, Book of”](#)

This book and Ruth contain all the Jewish history that has been preserved to us of the times between the death of Joshua and the birth of Samuel. Judges consists of three parts: (1) an introduction ([Judg. 1:1–3:6](#)); (2) the history of the Twelve Judges, which falls into a succession of periods of rebellion against God, and the oppressions and deliverances by which they were followed ([3:7–16:31](#)); (3) two narratives, which specially show the tendency to idolatry and lawlessness ([Judg. 17–21](#)).

The book was compiled long after the events it records; in [18:30](#) there is a reference to the captivity of the ten tribes. The compiler would have had available earlier writings that he worked into his book, such as the Song of Deborah, the parable of Jotham, and some of the utterances of Samson. There is much difficulty in deciding the chronology of the period, as the compiler generally gives his figures in round numbers. In some cases the influence of a judge only extended over part of the land, so that two judges might hold office at the same time. The following table will indicate roughly the succession of events during the period of the Twelve Judges:

Oppression by Cushanrishathaim ([3:8](#))

Rest under OTHNIEL (3:11)	40
Oppression by Eglon, king of Moab (3:14)	18
Rest under and after EHUD (3:30)	80
SHAMGAR overcomes the Philistines (3:31)	—
Oppression by Jabin, king of Canaan (4:3)	20
Rest after DEBORAH and Barak's victory (5:31)	40
Midianite oppression (6:1)	7
Quietness under GIDEON (8:28)	40
ABIMELECH's rule (9:22)	3
TOLA's judgeship (10:2)	23
JAIR's judgeship (10:3)	22
Oppression by the Ammonites and Philistines (10:8)	18
Judgeship of JEPHTHAH (12:7)	6
Judgeship of IBZAN (12:9)	7
Judgeship of ELON (12:11)	10

Judgeship of ABDON (12:13)	8
Philistine oppression (13:1)	40
Judgeship of SAMSON (15:20; 16:31)	20
<p>The book of Judges helps us to understand the development of the house of Israel after the settlement in Canaan. During the period that the book covers, the Israelites formed a confederation of tribes rather than a compact nation. The tribes were united by their recognition of a common descent and still more by their common worship of Jehovah; but, except when the approach of a formidable enemy compelled them to act together, their unity seldom found practical expression and was often overborne by local jealousies. It was only in time of war that a single leader became indispensable and was invested by general consent with something of kingly authority. At the beginning of this period the Ark seems to have been at Bethel, while at its close it was at Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:3), but it is only mentioned expressly in Judg. 20:27. The worship of Jehovah was in no way restricted to the precincts of the sanctuary of the Ark. There were various local sanctuaries, sometimes in private hands, as in the case of Micah, sometimes common to a whole family or community, as in the case of Ophrah. Their furniture consisted of a sacred pillar (9:6) and an ephod or some sacred image (8:27). Much importance was attached to the presence of a duly qualified priest, familiar with the traditions of the priestly order (17:9-10). The lack of unity is vividly called to the reader's attention in the closing sentence of the book (Judg. 21:25): "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."</p>	
Other Reading: Look over the rest of Judges	