

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Eleven Outline: Jephthah's background before his rise to leadership, Verses 1-3. The elders of Gilead call upon the leadership of Jephthah & Jephthah's response to the leaders of Gilead. Verses 4-11. Jephthah negotiates with the King of the Ammonites, Verses 12-13. Jephthah's response to the King of the Ammonites, Verses 14-28. Jephthah gathers troops and advances courageously on Ammon and makes a rash vow, thinking it will help his cause before God, Verses 29-31. God grants Israel victory over the Ammonites, Verses 32-32. A very difficult vow to keep, Verses 34-35. Jephthah fulfills his vow to God, Verses 36-40.

Judges 11

Jephthah's background before his rise to leadership, Verses 1-3:

Verse 1

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

This brave and notable man in Israel had a clouded pedigree. His mother was a harlot, a common prostitute.

Verse 2

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.

It would seem that Jephthah was Gilead's first child (of a harlot), whom he took into his house. But then his own wife bore him children, and as they grew up the question of inheritance cropped up. One problem was that he was the firstborn (although not legally), and he certainly had a right to his father's reasonable inheritance. They, however, begrudged him even that, which was why they drove him out.

The one thing which we emphasize is that God did not count the wrong for which he was not responsible, for the disqualification. HE raised him up; HE gave him HIS Spirit; HE employed him to deliver HIS people in the hour of their need.

Verse 3

³ Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

Tob — On the north of Gilead, beyond the frontier of the Hebrew territories.

His family had rejected him, so he went out to make a name for himself in the only way he knew how.

and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him... Jephthah and his newly formed gang of men led a freebooting life, sustaining themselves by frequent raids on the Ammonites and other neighboring people, in the style of Robin Hood. Jephthah's mode of life was similar to that of David when driven from the court of Saul.

The elders of Gilead call upon the leadership of Jephthah & Jephthah's response to the leaders of Gilead. Verses 4-11:

Verse 4

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

the children of Ammon made war... They had invaded the land of Israel, and were now encamped near or in Gilead.

Verses 5 & 6

⁵And 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:

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

Sometime after Jephthah had been expelled from his father's house, he had become famous for his fighting genius and military exploits that the people and elders of Gilead were preparing for war with Ammon, and were thinking of Jephthah to be their General. They found Jephthah in Tob and asked him to lead them. Their aim was that he should be General of their fighting men and bring along his men with him.

Verse 7

⁷And 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?

Jephthah's reply demonstrates that in his time of need he had found no help from the elders. They had sided with Gilead's true born sons and had had no time for him. He had been in distress but they had been stony-faced and unwilling to help.

This expulsion of Jephthah was the act of his brethren; but he here ascribes it to the elders of Gilead; either because some of them were among these elders, as is very probable from the dignity of this family.

“If the Reader connects with this view of Jephthah, the history of Joseph with his brethren, he will discover some similarity. But if he spiritualizeth the subject with a greater than Joseph, and recollects how the Lord Jesus was despised of his brethren, of whom it is said, that neither did they believe on him, he will find a greater beauty still. John 7:3-5.” - Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary

Verse 8

⁸And 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.

There seems to be no one in Gilead with the courage to lead them against these children of Ammon. They know of his exploits, and know that he is very brave. This is who they need to lead them. They are promising to make him the ruler over them, if he will only come and help them now.

Verse 9

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, shall I be your head?

Jephthah was only will to assume leadership in the crisis if he could also remain a leader after the crisis. He didn't want to be rejected again as a worthless man.

Verse 10

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

The elders agreed to Jephthah becoming their new leader (Judge) and the elders promised this on oath.

Verse 11

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.

the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them... They ratified and confirmed what the elders had promised, and by a general unanimous vote appointed him both to be the captain of their forces, and to be the chief ruler (Judge) and governor of them.

and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh... This was a solemn meeting and the LORD was there. And, in HIS presence, Jephthah rehearsed all that passed between him and the elders of Gilead. And, no doubt, in prayer to God, desired he would signify HIS approval and ratification of their agreement, and would give HIM success in his undertakings against the children of Ammon.

Jephthah negotiates with the King of the Ammonites, Verses 12-13:

Verse 12

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?

What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?... Jephthah asked a simple question: Why are you in the land of Israel? Perhaps the whole dispute could be solved by negotiations and diplomacy instead of warfare.

Verse 13

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

And the king of the children of Ammon answered... The king demanded the return to him of lands now under the control of Israel, (the territory of Reuben and Gad), which he claimed had

once belonged to Ammon, (although Israel had taken them from the occupying Amorites, not from Ammon). But that land had never belonged to Ammon, it had belonged to Moab (Numbers 21:26).

This was a lie. Thus it is clear that the king of Ammon was here linking Moab with himself in his claims. In other words he was speaking on behalf of an Ammonite/Moabite confederacy.

And this Conflict has never ended...

Lest we forget the Land originally belonged to Abraham:

Genesis 12:1-5

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; **and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.**

-Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - patriarchs of the Jewish people and bearers of a belief in one God - Settle in the Land of Israel.

-Famine forces the Israelites to migrate to Egypt.

-Exodus from Egypt: Moses leads Israelites from Egypt, followed by 40 years of wandering in the desert.

-The Ten Commandments, received at Mount Sinai.

-Israelites resettle in the Land of Israel.

-The Arabs lay claim to the land of Israel because they too are descendants of Abraham, through Ishmael, but God was careful to cover this issue as well. In Genesis 17:18-21, Isaac, not Ishmael, was chosen of God to receive the blessing:

Genesis 17:18-21

18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Abraham honors these words of God a few chapters later when he gives all his possessions to Isaac, not Ishmael:

Genesis 25:5-6

⁵And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

⁶But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

**The land grant itself extends west to the “river of Egypt” and east to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18-21). Hammath is the boundary in the north (Ezek. 48:1), while Kadesh serves as the southern boundary (Ezek. 48:28).

Although Israel is presently living out of fellowship with God, His plan is to gather her back to her land (Amos 9:13-15, which He has been doing for over 100 years), judge her for her sins in the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:7, Mat. 24:9-51, Rev. 6-16), grant her a new birth as a nation (Isa. 66:7-8, Rom. 11:25-28), renew their marriage vows (Isa. 54:1-8), and then enjoy a 1,000 year “honeymoon” (Isa. 11:1-12, Mat. 19:28, Rev. 20:1-7).

BRIEF FACTS ON THE ISRAELI CONFLICT PAST AND PRESENT:

1. Nationhood and Jerusalem. Israel became a nation around 1312 BC, Two thousand years before the rise of Islam.
2. Arab refugees in Israel began identifying themselves as part of a Palestinian people in 1967, two decades after the establishment of the modern State of Israel.
3. Since the Jewish conquest in 1272 BC, the Jews have had dominion over the land for one thousand years with a continuous presence in the land for the past 3,300 years.
4. The only Arab dominion since the conquest in 635 AD lasted no more than 22 years.
5. For over 3,300 years, Jerusalem has been the Jewish capital Jerusalem has never been the capital of any Arab or Muslim entity. Even when the Jordanians occupied Jerusalem, they never sought to make it their capital, and Arab leaders did not come to visit.
6. Jerusalem is mentioned over 700 times in Tanach, the Jewish Bible. **Jerusalem is not mentioned once in the Koran.**
7. King David founded the city of Jerusalem. **Mohammed never came to Jerusalem**
8. **Jews pray facing Jerusalem. Muslims pray with their backs toward Jerusalem.**
9. Arab and Jewish Refugees: in 1948 the Arab refugees were encouraged to leave Israel by Arab leaders promising to purge the land of Jews. Sixty-eight percent left without ever seeing an Israeli soldier.
- 10 The Jewish refugees were forced to flee from Arab lands due to Arab brutality, persecution and pogroms.

11. The number of Arab refugees who left Israel in 1948 is estimated to be around 630,000. The number of Jewish refugees from Arab lands is estimated to be the same.

12. Arab refugees were **INTENTIONALLY** not absorbed or integrated into the Arab lands to which they fled, despite the vast Arab territory. Out of the 100,000,000 refugees since World War II, theirs is the only refugee group in the world that has never been absorbed or integrated into their own people's lands. Jewish refugees were completely absorbed into Israel, a country no larger than the state of New Jersey.

13. The Arab-Israeli Conflict: the Arabs are represented by eight separate nations, not including the Palestinians. There is only one Jewish nation. The Arab nations initiated all five wars and lost. Israel defended itself each time and won.

14. The PLO's Charter still calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. Israel has given the Palestinians most of the West Bank land, autonomy under the Palestinian Authority, and has supplied them.

15. Under Jordanian rule, Jewish holy sites were desecrated and the Jews were denied access to places of worship. Under Israeli rule, all Muslim and Christian sites have been preserved and made accessible to people of all faiths.

16. The UN Record on Israel and the Arabs: The majority of Security Council resolutions passed were directed against Israel.

17. The UN General Assembly resolutions passed, the majority voted on were against Israel.

18. The UN was silent while 58 Jerusalem Synagogues were destroyed by the Jordanians.

19. The UN was silent while the Jordanians systematically desecrated the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives.

20. The UN was silent while the Jordanians enforced an apartheid-like a policy of preventing Jews from visiting the Temple Mount and the Western Wall.



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Judges 11, Jephthah's response to the King of the Ammonites, Verses 14-28 Verse 14

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



Jephthah sends messengers to the King of Ammon to find out why he was attacking Israel.
Nicolaes Ryckmans, naar Pieter de Jode (I), 1643 Rijksmuseum

In Verse 13 the king of Ammon made it quite clear in his reply to Jephthah that nothing short of Israel's giving up the disputed lands could avert the impending war. It is to Jephthah's great credit that he effectively defended Israel's right to the disputed territory.

He did this with four very brilliant and truthful arguments:

Verse 15

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

ARGUMENT # 1

This argument was simply that Israel had not taken the disputed land away from the Ammonites; they had defeated the Amorites and had taken it away from them, not from the Ammonites, who did not originally own the land. This point was elaborated by Jephthah in Judges 11.

Jephthah's Historical-Biblical Defense and Argument Continued, Verses 16-28:

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

¹⁷ Then Israel 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.

His aim here was to put Moab in the wrong. They had refused to help Israel and had made life difficult for them, even though Israel had promised to refrain from attacking them, recognizing them as related tribes holding their land under Jehovah's good hand (Deuteronomy 2:9).

Verse 18

¹⁸ Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed 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.

Israel, he pointed out, had carefully avoided Moabite territory. Rather than seizing it they had left it alone. Thus they had treated Moab more than fairly. Why then were Ammon and Moab now attacking them?

Verses 19 & 20:

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 coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

Israel had not only been generous to Moab they had also dealt in a friendly way with Sihon and the Amorites, with their capital city at Heshbon. All they had asked to do was pass through without fighting. They had had no intention of conquest. They had just wanted to reach "their place" safely, the land which Jehovah had promised to them and which was therefore theirs. It was Sihon who insisted on fighting for the land.

Verses 21 & 22:

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

²² And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

Jephthah stressed that they had been forced to fight Sihon and the Amorites against their will. But that when they had had to do so, Jehovah had delivered it into their hands. It had thus clearly been Jehovah's intention that they should have the land. So they had divine rights to it. Then he carefully stressed that it was the Amorites who were the actual inhabitants of the country at that time, not the Moabites, so that Israel had not taken it from Moab but from its inhabitants, from the Amorites.

This is a very important paragraph, a great deal of it being a repetition, much of it verbatim, of what is written in the Books of Moses, namely in Numbers 13:26; 14:25; 20:1; 18-21; 21:21-24-42. This fact establishes every word of what Jephthah stated here as absolutely accurate and is also a glorious proof of the fact that the Pentateuch existed many, many years before the Book of Judges. Nothing is any more erroneous and ridiculous than is the radical critical pronouncement that the Pentateuch did not exist until the times of Josiah.

The summary of Jephthah's argument here is simply that Israel had not taken the land away from the Ammonites at all, but had defeated and displaced the Amorites who were originally the inhabitants of the land. It was a perfectly true and reasonable argument.

Verse 23

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

ARGUMENT # 2

This argument was simply that since the God of Israel, the true God and ruler of all lands, had given the land in question to Israel, the Israelites therefore had every right to keep it.

The argument here is that since the Ammonites do not hesitate to take whatever they claim was given to them by their god Chemosh, they should also allow that whatever Jehovah, the God of Israel, has given Israel should belong to them.

Verse 24

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.

The argument here is that since the Ammonites do not hesitate to take whatever they claim was given to them by their god Chemosh, they should also allow that whatever Jehovah, the God of Israel, has given Israel should belong to them.

The aim of both armies was to put themselves in the right and justify their claims before their deities so as to be sure of their help and to stir up their armies to support a 'righteous (in their eyes) cause'. No one fights better than the man who fights for a patriotic principle and considers that he has a grievance and that his god is with him in it. And they would want their gods to fight for them.

So Jephthah was not only trying to put the king of Ammon in the wrong, he was also demonstrating to Jehovah why He should fight for Israel, and demonstrating that Melek and Chemosh had no good reason for fighting for Ammon.

This was challenge: “If your god is mighty enough to give you the land, then let him do it. Let us see who is stronger – Jehovah or Chemosh.”

Jephthah did not see this battle as primarily between two armies, but between the God of Israel and the false god of Ammon. Jephthah showed true wisdom in seeing this as a spiritual battle **first**.

2 Corinthians 10:4

⁴(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Verse 25

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

ARGUMENT # 3

This was a political argument founded upon the fact that Moab had once claimed some of the disputed territory, but had lost it when Sihon, the king of the Ammonites had forcefully displaced Moab and occupied the land they once had. Jephthah here points out that after Israel defeated and dispossessed Sihon and occupied that strip between the Arnon and the Jabbok, that not even Moab, who once owned it, ever disputed Israel's right to possess it. That being true, who was the king of Ammon that he should lay any claim against the disputed territory?

Verse 26

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?

ARGUMENT # 4

This was what might be called an argument based upon what men call today "the statute of limitations." Israel had been in possession of Gilead (**three hundred years**) ever since the days of Moses, and, It was too late for Ammon to press her claim, since Israel had enjoyed such a long period of undisputed occupation of that territory.

Verse 27

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

This concluded Jephthah's efforts to avoid the war by diplomatic activity. The king of the children of Ammon could not answer the arguments of Jephthah and therefore made no reply whatever to Jephthah's arguments. Therefore, the war would be fought, and Jephthah's first action was to appeal to Jehovah, the Judge, as both sides of the dispute had resort to arbitration by the edge of the sword.

Jephthah then finished on a note of injured hurt. He, representing Israel, had done nothing wrong to Ammon. It was Ammon who were behaving wrongly. Thus Jehovah the righteous Judge would judge appropriately and act accordingly.

These were not the words of some frightened leader trying to bolster up his own courage, these were the words of a man of iron, who was unafraid, who was aware that Jehovah was on his side and would act for him, who was righteously indignant and who had no fear of Ammon.

Verse 28

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

Jephthah's logical, reasoned response was of no effect upon the King of Ammon. War was therefore inevitable.

Preparation of The Battle, Verse 29

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.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah... The Holy Spirit was the source of Jephthah's courage and can be the source of courage for us as well. When we are beset by fears and anxieties, we need to fill our lives with Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

This made all the difference. With Jephthah led by God's Spirit, the victory of Israel was assured. The filling of the Spirit makes us *advance*. We go forward in the sense of spiritual progress and we go forward in the sense of confronting the enemies of God.

The Vow, Verses 30-31

³⁰ And Jephthah 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.

Before going into battle Jephthah made a vow to Jehovah. He promised to offer as a whole offering to Him whoever first came to meet him from the doors of his house, to be Jehovah's forever, a precious gift to God which God could choose for Himself.

Though well intentioned, this was a foolish vow. Such vows can be attempts to manipulate God or put Him under obligation to ourselves. It is far more important to be on God's side than to try and persuade Him to be on your side.

Even a Spirit-filled man can do foolish things. The Holy Spirit does not overwhelm and control us, He guides us – and that guidance can be resisted or ignored at smaller or greater points.

Victory, Verse 32-33

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 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.

The details of the battle are brief. Jephthah had been filled with the Spirit of Jehovah and had revealed his dedication by his vow. Thus as far as the writer was concerned Jehovah fought for him and the battle was won.

A difficult vow to fulfill, Verses 34-35

³⁴ And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels 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! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.



Bon Boullogne: Jephthah's Daughter. Museum: State Hermitage, St. Petersburg

Jephthah made his foolish vow sincerely, fully intending to keep it. Yet he had not seriously considered the consequences of the vow. Therefore he was grieved when his daughter was first to greet him out of his house.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 and Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 speak of the danger of making foolish vows. This passage makes it clear that it is better to not make vows at all than to make foolish vows. This does not mean that vows are bad – they can be good. It means we must take them seriously. Christians need to take seriously the sin of broken vows, and when we see them we must either repent and keep them or repent of the foolishness in ever making the vow, and seek God's release from the vow.

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes ... The tearing of his clothes was a sign of extreme mourning. The fact that he must sacrifice his only daughter has bowed him very low. His grief is overwhelming. He had promised God and he cannot go back on the vow he made. Now he wishes he had not opened his mouth and made this rash vow, but it is too late.

Something to Study for next Sunday: What happened to Jephthah's Daughter?

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Judges 11, Jephthah fulfills his vow to God, Verses 36-40:

Verse 36

³⁶And 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.

His daughter comforted him as best she could. Jehovah had fulfilled His part in the matter, she stressed, now it was up to him to do the same. She wanted him to know that she was in full agreement with what he had to do. Her love for him flowed out through her words. She did not want anything to hurt her father. But she also revealed her trust in Jehovah.

Verse 37

³⁷And 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.

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... She desired such a space of time might be allowed her before the vow took place; and the rather she might be encouraged to expect that her request would be granted, since no time was fixed by the vow for the accomplishment of it, and since the time she asked was not very long, and the end to be answered not unreasonable

and bewail my virginity... To become a wife and a mother was the end of existence to an Israelite women.

I and my fellows... Her BFF's we're going to stay together for two months!

Verse 38

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

Jephthah granted her request immediately. And she left him and prepared herself for what was to come, on the mountains, and faced up to her coming...

Verse 39

³⁹And 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, She returned back to her Father, she remained a virgin during the two months and her father carried out the vow.

Verse 40

⁴⁰That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

- Went yearly, to a place appointed for their meeting to this end.
- To celebrate her praises, who had so willingly yielded up herself for a sacrifice.

So The Million Dollar Question Is: What Happened To Jephthah's Daughter?

What Bible Commentators Have Said:

John Wesley - Methodist

Jephthah's daughter was not sacrificed, but only devoted to perpetual virginity. This appears, **1.** From verse 37, 38, where we read, that she bewailed not her death, which had been the chief cause of lamentation, if that had been vowed, but her virginity: **2.** From this verse 39, where, after he had said, that he did with her according to his vow; he adds, by way of declaration of the matter of that vow, and she knew no man. It is probably conceived, that the Greeks, who used to steal sacred histories, and turn them into fables, had from this history their relation of Iphigenia (which may be put for Jephthah's daughter) sacrificed by her father Agamemnon, which is described by many of the same circumstances wherewith this is accompanied."

Daniel Whedon - Methodist

Did with her according to his vow — Literally, *Did to her his vow which he had vowed*. This plain and positive statement throws us back for the meaning of Jephthah's act to Judges 11:31, where the language of his vow is carefully recorded. Whatever act his vow contemplated, that certainly he did. Nothing more, nothing less. He devoutly kept his word. He had opened his mouth unto the Lord, and, notwithstanding all his anguish, he went not back from his solemn oath. So, according to the previous exposition of his language, we can understand nothing else than that he offered her for a burnt offering unto the Lord.

And she knew no man — This fact the sacred writer adds as that alone which, in the estimation of that age, was the sting of death to the heroic maiden. It is very natural that those expositors who seek to show that Jephthah's daughter was not put to death at all, should regard these words as indicating the manner in which he fulfilled his vow. Why else, they ask, is this fact of her virginity again mentioned? If she was sacrificed, they affirm, the record would have been: "He did to her his vow which he had vowed, *and offered her for a burnt offering.*" Such an addition, we reply, was not necessary, and, after the full and careful statement of his vow in Judges 11:31, would have been superfluous. But if, as we have shown above, and as most modern scholars are constrained

to admit, he contemplated a human sacrifice, and if, instead of offering her as a burnt offering, he devoted her to a life of celibacy, then plainly he did NOT according to his vow which he had vowed, but contrary to it; and the mere addition, *she knew no man*, would be a most inexplicably strange way of informing us that Jephthah failed to keep his word. The sacred historian uses no needless word, nor does he attempt to picture the sad spectacle of the sacrifice; but he records, not as the manner in which Jephthah fulfilled his vow, but as the most fearful knell that, in the ears of her father and companions, sounded over that daughter's funeral pile, and sent its lingering echo into the after-times — *she knew no man*.

It was a custom in Israel — What was a custom in Israel? For fathers to sacrifice daughters, after the example of Jephthah? This no one will pretend. To offer human sacrifices to Jehovah? No; for such a custom never prevailed to any considerable extent in Israel, and least of all was it occasioned by Jephthah's example. To consecrate young maidens to perpetual virginity? There is not a particle of evidence that such a custom prevailed after this time more than before, and no certain evidence that it was ever a custom in Israel. On the contrary, the whole tendency of Hebrew laws and civilization was against a forced celibacy on the part of either sex. — What custom, then, sprang up in Israel on this occasion? Clearly, the custom described in the next verse, of the yearly celebration of Jephthah's daughter. The Hebrew is, *She became a custom in Israel*; that is, her heroism and sublime submission to be sacrificed made such an impression on the daughters of Israel that they instituted a yearly celebration of her memory.

Joseph Benson – Methodist

Did with her — That Jephthah's daughter was not sacrificed, but only devoted to perpetual virginity, appears, 1st, From 11:37-38, where we read that she bewailed, not her death, which had been the chief cause of lamentation, if that had been vowed, but *her virginity*; 2d, From this verse, where, after the sacred writer had said, that *he did with her according to his vow*; he adds, by way of declaration of the matter of that vow, *and she knew no man*.

E.W. Bullinger - Anglican

He did not offer her as a burnt offering; for Jehovah could not accept *that*. Therefore Jephthah must have *dedicated* her to the LORD by a perpetual virginity. Such a vow was provided for in Lev 27. See note on Judges 11:31.

Though Jephthah was one of the Israelite judges, he was chosen for the position because of his bravery and might, not because of his Torah scholarship—indeed, he was woefully ignorant.⁶ And though he was not bound whatsoever by the vow he made—as it clearly transgressed the rules of the Torah—he ignorantly went ahead and offered his daughter as a sacrifice.

Rabbi Naftali Silberberg, Chabad.org Editorial Team – Jewish

Had he only consulted with Phinehas, the learned high priest of the time, he would have been informed of his error. But that didn't happen. Jephthah was too arrogant to travel to Phinehas to receive guidance: "I am the general of the Israelite forces, and I should go to him?!" And Phinehas was too proud to unilaterally go to Jephthah to advise him: "He needs me; why should I make the trip?"

The hubris demonstrated by these two leaders cost an innocent girl her life. According to the Midrash⁷ both were punished. Phinehas lost the divine spirit that had hitherto rested upon him. Jephthah became ill, and he lost many of his limbs. Because his limbs were buried in many locations, the Bible says that Jephthah was “buried in the cities of Gilead.”

James Burton - Church of Christ

We are very aware of the dogmatic assertions of many commentators that Jephthah offered his daughter as a burnt-offering, but we simply cannot accept such assertions as truth. We shall not bother to cite that type of comments. Those who prefer that interpretation are welcome to seek out those comments for themselves. We shall be content with stating our reasons for the conviction that Jephthah's fulfillment of this vow was not that of offering her up as a burnt-offering, but a dedication of her to the service of God in the tabernacle located in those days at Shiloh.

(1) Jephthah was a man who had the Spirit of God, and that alone would never have allowed him to offer his daughter as a burnt-offering.

(2) Jephthah was thoroughly familiar with the Book of the Law of Moses and the laws governing sacrifices. In that Law, the first-born, who were required to be "offered" to Jehovah, were never offered as a burnt-offering, but they were "redeemed" by the offering of a lamb instead. This applied even to the first-born of a donkey! It is simply inconceivable that Jephthah would have been ignorant of this principle, or that he would have failed to take advantage of it on behalf of his daughter.

(3) **"It shall be Jehovah's"** (Judges 11:31). "This should be understood in terms of what Hannah meant when she said of her unborn child, "I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life (1 Samuel 1:11)."^[17]Hannah gave up Samuel for temple services under Eli the High Priest.

(4) "The Hebrew word for burnt-offering does not carry with it the idea of death, but of something offered completely unto God. Of course, this was carried out in animal sacrifice, but the word would also accurately describe a young woman giving herself completely to the Lord as a temple servant."^[18]

(5) **"Let me alone for two months ... that I may bewail my virginity"** (Judges 11:37). This cannot mean, "Let me bewail my untimely death." It was her dedication to the tabernacle as a life-long servant, during which she would not be permitted to marry. That is what she bewailed, not her death. Those who want to affirm that she was offered as a burnt-offering will have to find it somewhere else; it is not in the text.

(6) **"He did with her according to his vow"** (Judges 11:39). And what was that? The same verses tell us what it was:

"And she knew not a man." Does that mean that she became a burnt-offering? Certainly not. She was dedicated as a perpetual virgin servant of the tabernacle.

(7) **"The daughters of Israel went yearly to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite"** (Judges 11:40). Where did those daughters of Israel go? To the tabernacle, of course. Why? That is where Jephthah's daughter was. If she had become a burnt-offering, the yearly celebration would not have involved any "going" at all.

(8) We have already noted that Jephthah's name is listed in the roster of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, along with David and Samuel, and due to the fact of human sacrifice having been forever and always an abomination to the Lord, it is impossible to believe that Jephthah would have been so favorably mentioned in the N.T. if indeed he had offered up a human sacrifice in the person of his daughter. Such a thing simply cannot fit what is written.

(9) Let it be supposed, for a moment, that Jephthah would have attempted to offer his daughter as a burnt-offering. No priest would have allowed it; the people of Israel would simply not have tolerated it.

(10) There is not a word in this narrative that declares any "burnt-offering" to have been offered. Furthermore, if Jephthah had actually intended to offer up a human being as a burnt-offering, as a number of commentators affirm, can we believe that God would have allowed the victory to go to a man thus in open rebellion against what is everywhere revealed in the Bible as God's will?

This writer is fully convinced that Jephthah's loving daughter was dedicated to a life of service in the tabernacle and that that action was indeed the complete fulfillment of his vow.

"I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back" (Judges 11:37). We dare not close this discussion without taking note of this magnificent line. The nobility of Jephthah is enshrined in this attitude. What a pity it is that countless alleged "Christians" today entertain no such thoughts of loyalty to promises made to God."

David Guzik - Evangelical

"Some think that Jephthah did really offer his daughter as a burnt offering. If he did, this was clearly an example of misguided zeal for God, because God never asked him to make such a foolish vow or to fulfill it so foolishly."

Peter Pett - Baptist

Obedient to her calling and to her father's vow, she returned, and he took her to the central sanctuary and there she served Yahweh at the door of the Tabernacle, possibly even as a prophetess. The only thing that bound her was her father's vow and her gratitude to Yahweh for the victory he had given to her father. She was a lifelong Nazirite (Numbers 6:2). The same would later be true of Samuel. It was such people who kept faith alive in the darkest days.

Chuck Smith - Evangelical

Now, number one, God had forbidden human sacrifice. There is a question of whether or not he actually killed her. The burnt offering sacrifice was actually a sacrifice of consecration unto God. And there are some commentators who teach that he gave her to God to perpetual virginity. In other words, to keep her from ever marrying and she was consigned to a life of celibacy because of the vow her father had made. That is possible, it isn't probable but it is possible. From the apparent reading of the text he did this awful thing and actually sacrificed his daughter unto the Lord. However, I am convinced that God did not require it of him nor would God require it of him. Under the law where your first child actually was to be given to God, God made provisions for the redemption of the first child with an animal. And I'm certain that God would have allowed Jephthah to make a substitution for his daughter in this case.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Twelve Outline: Jephthah's story concluded, verses 1-7, Three Minor Judges, verses 8-15.

Judges 12 Overview: This chapter relates a clash between Jephthah and the Ephraimites, which was fatal to Ephraim. The period of Jephthah's judging of Israel; his death and burial, and then briefly makes reference to three more judges of Israel, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.

Jephthah's story concluded, verses 1-7:

Verse 1

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.

And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah... It is highly probable that there were no less than 50,000 of them; for 42,000 of them were slain, Judges 12:6.

and didst not call us to go with thee?... The tribe of Ephraim felt slighted by Jephthah and his victory over the Ammonites, and was angry that they did not have a central and prestigious role in the victorious battle over the Ammonites. There is a tendency within all of us to not want to do a job unless we receive credit. It is evident that the people of the tribe of Ephraim were more concerned with getting the credit than with seeing a job done.

Why should the Ephraimites complain about a victory accomplished **through God's intervention for the benefit of all the tribes?** It was a strange jealousy that spurred on Ephraim.

This seems to be a consistent problem with the people of the tribe of Ephraim; they gave a similar response to Gideon in Judges 8:1-3. Then Gideon answered the complaining men of Ephraim with tact and diplomacy. Jephthah was a very different sort of man.

we will burn thine house upon thee with fire... The people of Ephraim also backed up their anger with a threat. They threatened to burn down Jephthah's house with him in it. Burning appears as a mode of capital punishment Genesis 38:24; Joshua 7:25, and as a mode of desperate warfare (Judges 1:8; Judges 20:48; Joshua 8:8, Joshua 8:19, etc.).

This clearly again reveals the sad disintegration of the nation. The consciousness of the unity of the people seems largely to have been lost. This leads to a Civil War. Sound familiar?

Verse 2

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

It seems he had called them to assist in driving the enemy out of their borders when there, and they refused to help him

Verse 3

³ And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my 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?

And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand... Jephthah's idea was clear. God won a great victory through him when the Ephraimites stood by, though they had the opportunity to help. In this he pointed out the essentially unjust character of their complaint.

wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?... The people of Ephraim here seem to be simply chronic complainers. When they had a chance to step out boldly for God they did not do it. Yet when the work was done and God was glorified, they complained that they didn't get to participate.

The fact that a victory had been gained over their common enemy appears to have been overlooked. Accusation and counter-accusation followed in bewildering succession; the claim that they had been passed over was met by the charge that an appeal had been made to them to which they had not responded.

Verse 4

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.

and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim... Apparently the men of Ephraim were better at talking than fighting, because the men of Gilead seemed to defeat them in battle easily.

Verses 5 & 6

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 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.

And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites... Having defeated Ephraim Jephthah moved swiftly and set strong guards at the fords that led back over the Jordan, to prevent the Ephraimites escaping. Jephthah was a great general, but he was not as merciful or tactful as Gideon. He was determined to destroy Ephraim's whole army, and did not consider the future. This inter-tribal fighting, though forced on Jephthah, would weaken the whole Jewish tribal

confederation, and more so when he dealt with his enemy with such severity. But he had been deeply insulted and was a hard man.

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 Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right...

The Gileadites were merciless. They had a simple test for whether a man was an Ephraimite. The Ephraimites pronounced their 'sh' like an 's'. So when they were asked to say 'shibboleth', they said 'sibboleth' and few could disguise it. And when they did that they killed them. This demonstrates how Ephraim kept themselves to themselves, so much so that over time they had developed different pronunciations and ways of speaking which they were unable to immediately adjust, and that only happens over a long time. The confederacy was not in a good state.

Shibboleth means 'a stream in flood'. It was probably considered a good joke by the Gileadites. When the Ephraimites could not pronounce it they were 'swept away by a flood' rather than being able to cross the ford.

It is said that during the Second World War, the German soldiers sometimes identified Russian Jews by the way they pronounced the word for corn: "*kookoorooza*." Their distinctive pronunciation revealed their ethnic background. So it was for these men of Ephraim. The Ephraimites were betrayed by their speech; so was Peter many years afterward (Matthew 26:73).

The term **shibboleth** therefore came into the English language as something which determines which side you are one. In modern English usage a shibboleth is the same as an "acid test."

At the same time, How thankful we should be, that our admission to the privilege of the Kingdom of God does not depend upon our pronunciation; that the reality of the new-birth is not tested by the accuracy with which we utter the creed; that we shall not be excluded from the gates of Heaven because we fail in the utterance of an 'h'!"

and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand... A bloody battle! Thus pride went before destruction.

Verse 7

⁷ And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Jephthah 'judged Israel' for six years. That is was responsible for acting as God's representative over a part of Israel for six years. All who judged a part of Israel were seen as 'judging Israel'. He may have died from wounds, or disease, for his life was short. And he never received acceptance by his family for there was no room for him in the family grave. He was buried 'somewhere in Gilead'. To man he was an outcast to the end. **But he was accepted by God.**

"Six years." In view of the seven years of Ibzan and the ten of Elon, this may indicate a life cut short, falling short of the seven.

Three Minor Judges, verses 8-15: Verse 8

⁸ And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel.

And after him Ibzan... This means after Jephthah, the preceding judge. Ibzan means “swift horse.”

Verse 9

⁹ And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters... This identifies Ibzan as a polygamist. No specific reason is given for his seeking spouses for his sixty offspring from "abroad." He might have been striving to build up his influence with other tribes of Israel.

Verse 10

¹⁰ Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem.

He died at the end of his seven years of government, and was buried in his native place; nothing memorable having happened during his being judge; this is all that is recorded of him.

Verses 11 & 12

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.

Elon, a Zebulonite... He is also from a different tribe from the past few judges from before him. God called leaders from various tribes, instead of from one tribe only. The tribe of Zebulun had shown its bravery, patriotism, and prowess in the time of Barak Judges 4:10; Judges 5:18.

Elon means “tree” or “oak tree”.

and he judged Israel ten years... We have no record of his particular acts.

He died at the end of his seven years of Judging, and was buried in his native place.

Verse 13

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

Abdon... This name means “service.”

a Pirathonite... This identifies the residence of this judge as Pirathon in the territory of Ephraim.

Verse 14

¹⁴ And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

And he had forty sons... Again polygamy. This was a demonstration of the wealth, prestige, and influence of this brief eight year rein as Judge.

Verse 15

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.

It seemed he lived and served as Judge 8 years, and died after a very quiet, peaceful life. He was buried in his hometown of Pirathon.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Thirteen Outline: The rise of the Philistines, verse 1, The birth of Samson, verses 2-24, The Holy Spirit moves upon Samson, verse 25.

Judges 13 Overview: The cycle of sin, bondage, repentance, deliverance, blessing, and sin again continued in the history of Israel. Into these times was born the next judge of Israel, Samson. Chapters 13-16 deal with the life of Samson. In this sense Samson was truly a man of his times. He was a study in contrasts; a man of great strengths and great weaknesses. In this, he was a picture of Israel's history both during this period and generally; a picture of great heights and deep lows.

The rise of the Philistines, Verse 1

1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD... The sad story of Israel's failure was again repeated here. It reminds us how little men learn from history or from what happens to others. For Israel was not unique in this failure. The nations continually did evil in the sight of The LORD, but Israel was the more blameworthy because they had received the revelation of The LORD, and had become HIS own people bound by the covenant of Sinai.

and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years... Notice it is the LORD who delivered them into the hands of the Philistines.

The number "40" means times of testing. Perhaps this is why this period was for 40 years. They seem to never learn. Over and over they fall back into sin. Usually that sin is idolatry or spiritual adultery.

The Philistines:

In the history of Israel, the Philistines appeared very early as an obstacle in the way of what Israel desired to do. When Moses led Israel out of Egypt, the Philistines were spread out along the coastal strip between Egypt and Gaza, causing Moses to detour inland to avoid "the way of the land of the Philistines" (Exodus 13:17).

In the times of the Judges, which we are studying, the Philistines were strong enough to be a continual threat to Israel. Shamgar had opposed them earlier, but the defeat of the powerful Ephraimites by Jephthah had effectively removed any significant opposition to the Philistines. They dominated Israel for a long period of time reaching down through the judgeship of Samuel, the kingship of Saul, and until the times of David who completely subdued them.

However, not even the victories of David removed the Philistines from their five cities, which they retained until the times of Nebuchadnezzar who found them allied with Egypt in the battle of

Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar stamped out any remaining sparks of Philistine independence, deporting both the rulers and the people around 604 B.C. The religion of the Philistines was a constant threat to the Israelites. The Philistines, of course, had in a large measure adopted the Baalim cults of the ancient Middle East. There were temples of Dagon in Gaza and Ashdod, one of Ashtoreth in Ashkelon according to Herodotus and one to Baalzebub in Ekron. Some of these existed as late as the times of the Maccabees. The tragedy was that Israel even adopted these gods of the Philistines (Judges 10:6-7).

The birth of Samson, verses 2-24: The Angel of the Lord appears to Manoah's wife, verses 2& 3:

Verse 2

²And 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.

Manoah means "rest" as similar in meaning to Noah.

The town of **Zorah** is about 14 miles west of Jerusalem. It was in the land of the tribe of Dan.

and his wife was barren, and bare not... Manoah's could not bare children.

Verse 3

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

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman... From the rest of the chapter, we see that we should regard this Angel as no mere Angel. As seen before in the Book of Judges (Judges 2:1-5 and Judges 6:11-24), this was **Jesus** on a special mission, appearing as a man.

This annunciation to the wife of Manoah was similar to the annunciations to Hannah, Elizabeth, and the Virgin Mary, except that this annunciation was made by the Angel of The LORD (Jesus), whereas the annunciation to Mary was by the angel Gabriel. The author of this account is careful to let the reader know from the first the true identity of the Angel of The LORD, although Manoah does not catch on to this until later in the narrative.

Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son... This promise came as a great blessing to this woman burdened by childlessness.

Several persons were born of women that had been barren, as Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, and John the Baptist. And it is remarkable, that the strongest man that ever was born of such a woman, Samson!

Special instructions regarding the child to come, verses 4 & 5:

Verse 4

⁴Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

Manoah's wife also had to share in the Nazirite vow during the time she carried Samson.

Verse 5

⁵For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

The child that was to be born would be dedicated to God from the womb. He was to be a permanent Nazirite. Thus his mother was to abstain from wine and strong drink, and be especially careful of unclean food. Nor was his hair to be cut. For he was to be God's initial weapon in preparing to deal with the Philistine threat.

for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God... Numbers 6:1-21 describes the vow of a Nazirite. When under the vow, people regarded themselves as specially devoted to God, leaving their hair uncut, drinking no wine and eating no grape products, and avoiding any contact with anything dead.

The Mosaic Law concerning Nazarites is found in Numbers 6, but the rules given there apply to persons taking the Nazarite vow for a limited number of days or weeks. These were called 'Nazarites of days.' A Nazarite for life was called a perpetual Nazarite, of which class Samuel, Samson and John the Baptist are mentioned in the Bible. It is of interest that Paul became a Nazarite of days (Acts 21:26).

Manoah's wife reports the appearance of the Angel of the LORD to her husband, Verses 6 & 7:

Verse 6

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

A man of God came unto me... This indicates that the Angel of the Lord appearing to Manoah's wife appeared to be a Man; yet His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God.

Countenance = A person's face or facial expression.

but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name... This shows the profound impact the appearance of the Man of God had upon Manoah's wife. He was very awesome; so much so that she did not ask questions about where He was from or what His name was.

Verse 7

⁷But 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.

She's repeating her encounter with The Angel of The LORD (verse 5) to her husband.

The Angel of The LORD reconfirms the words spoken before, Verses 8-14:

Verse 8

⁸Then 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.

He shows himself ready to obey God's will, and therefore desires to know more.

Verse 9

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.

And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah... God heard his prayer and answered it.

and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her... The angel appeared to the woman again, because she would know him to be the same. Whereas had he appeared to Manoah, especially alone, he could not have known whether he was the same or not. This clause is observed for the sake of what follows.

Verse 10

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.

Immediately she ran back home to find her husband to tell him that the Man whom she had previously described to him had returned.

Verse 11

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.

This chapter appears as one of the most significant in the entire O.T., because of what is said here of the Angel of The LORD. Back in Judges 13:11, when Manoah asked if "the man" was the same one who had earlier appeared to his wife, the answer was, "I AM." These very words were often used by Jesus Christ himself as his identification, as in John 8:58; Mark 14:62; John 18:5, etc. This strongly supports the belief that the Angel of The LORD was none other than the pre-incarnate Son of God.

Verse 12

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

Manoah desires to have the information repeated.

How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?... Manoah sought The LORD'S will and sought further guidance on the bringing up of the child. How were they to bring him up? What was his future work to be?

“The supreme question which parents should ask.—A question which God permits to be put to himself.—God alone can know the true way of training a human life.—It is in vain to ask God's guidance after the foundations of the life have been laid and its policy has been determined upon. The child is to be trained up from its earliest moment.—There is a sense in which there is no time of unconsciousness to the child: we are making impressions even when those impressions are not accompanied by acts of intelligence.—Surely blessed is that child who has never seen anything in father or mother that is not true, beautiful, and good.—It would seem the easiest thing in the world to train a child; in reality it is the most difficult.—Every child has its own peculiar psychology.—Every child has its own peculiar motive, impulse, vision of things, and purpose.—The very

wisdom of God is required in the right training of children.—But the child cannot be trained aright until the parent has a correct conception of life itself.—If life is a question of this world, of immediate health, wealth, and enjoyment, then the policy of child-training is easy and simple enough; but if life here is but the beginning of real life, if the present state of existence is but a gate opening upon true destinies and illimitable spheres of action, then light from above is needed, and guidance and comfort from the Father of all men.—Let parents be encouraged to consult God about child-training.—Let every child be the subject of special prayer.—Let the parent be able to say, should occasion arise, to each child, "I have prayed for thee," as Christ said to Simon Peter."— Joseph Parker

Verses 13 & 14

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.

The Angel of The LORD is again repeating HIS instructions to Manoah as HE had previously explained to his wife.

Care instructions, Why? For her child's sake. And generally, that mother that would have a holy child, must herself be holy and temperate: for "Partus sequitur ventrem", the birth usually follows the belly, the child taketh after the mother.

Verse 15

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.

Manoah sought to extend hospitality to him. This was a natural reaction in those days when travelers were dependent on hospitality for provision. Manoah desired to honour Him fully. Compare Gideon (Judges 6:18).

Verse 16

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.

The Angel of The LORD replied that He would not eat food even if it were brought. He then suggested that instead he should prepare a burnt offering for The LORD, as a sign of worship, dedication and obedience. His gratitude was due to Jehovah. We can compare with this where Gideon prepared a meal but it became a burnt offering (Judges 6:20-21).

Verse 17

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?

Manoah still desired to pay due respect to the messenger. He wanted to be able to give due credit to the prophet once his prophecy came to fulfilment, or even send him some present to express his gratitude.

Verse 18

¹⁸ And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

Both Jacob (Genesis 32:27) and Moses (Exodus 3:13) had earlier sought to know God's name. Like Jacob, HE asked Manoah why he wanted to know it. To Moses was revealed the full significance of the name **I AM That I AM**, that He was what He would be.

Verse 19

¹⁹ So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wonderously; and Manoah and his wife **looked on**.

Here the Angel of the Lord shows Himself to be Jesus, in taking the name wonderful (Isaiah 9:6).

Verse 20

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.

The text mentions the fact twice that Manoah and his wife "**looked on**" (Judges 13:19-20), and we may be very sure that this final action of the Angel of The LORD removed any doubts that they might have had concerning the heavenly identity of their visitor. What a wonderful day it had been for them!

And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground...No wonder this happened. Only a very few favored persons were ever permitted to see the Angel of Jehovah: Moses, Gideon, Joshua, Zechariah and Manoah and his wife were among those so blessed.

Verse 21

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.

For as the fire burned, consuming the burnt offering, the Angel of The LORD seemed to merge with the sacrificial flames and ascended upwards, disappearing from sight. He had returned to The LORD to whom the offering was offered. Such was the mystery of it that both man and wife fell on their faces to the ground in awe and wonder.

Verse 22

²² And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

This appeared to Manoah as a very logical deduction, because God had stated through Moses that, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20).

Verse 23

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.

The good sense of Manoah's wife prevailed here and removed their fears. She pointed out that if The LORD had intended to kill them HE would not have sought or accepted their burnt offering,

nor would He have revealed such wonderful things to them, nor would He have promised them a son.

Verse 24

²⁴And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

Samson grew up under his godly father and mother, for we can have little doubt that the visitation had changed their whole lives. They knew now that they were an essential part of the covenant of The LORD through which He intended good towards His people. And as he grew they taught him in the way of The LORD, and The LORD blessed him, especially in giving him a strong body which, especially when inspired by His Spirit, was able to accomplish mighty things.

The birth of Samson is the only birth of a Judge detailed in Judges (but compare Samuel in 1 Samuel 1 who achieved what Samson failed to do).

Verse 25

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

This is the source of the great strength we see in Samson later. We usually think of Samson as a man with huge, rippling muscles; but others couldn't figure out why he was so strong. It is reasonable to think that he did not look very strong. Whether he looked strong or not, it was the Spirit of God who made him strong.

Concluding Thoughts:

A comparison between Jephthah and Samson is significant. The former was a bastard son of a prostitute, rejected and cast out by his family and countrymen, but disciplining his life, shaping his own future (although we cannot doubt that God had a hand in it), and rising to become a great deliverer and dedicated man of God, who gave his own daughter fully to the service of God and died respected and honored.

The latter forecast by the Angel of The LORD, wonderfully born, brought up in a godly home, provided with a good background, given a strength beyond that of normal men, but finally led astray by a woman, and succumbing to her wiles. Yet eventually he would come good in his death, the death of one who was pitifully blind, in the face of much mockery, but triumphant in the end through the grace of God. If only he had had Jephthah's faith and strength of purpose, what a man he might have been.

This reminds us that God uses all types of people from all kinds of backgrounds. Jephthah provides hope to all who come from unpromising beginnings. But the message of Samson comes home especially to those who find themselves weak, and failing again and again, those who struggle with their sexual desires and almost despair. It gives them hope that the God who used a Samson, can also use them if only they repent when they have sinned, and constantly return to Him. He is the God of the weak as well as the strong (and Samson was possibly basically weak). Not all are of the stuff of giants.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Fourteen Outline: Samson demands a Philistine wife, Verses 1-3, God's will behind the scenes of Samson's desire to marry a Philistine woman, Verse 4, Samson slays a lion and eats some wild honey, Verse 5-9, Samson hosts a "bachelor party" for Philistine friends, Verses 10-11, Samson poses a riddle concerning the lion and the honey, Verses 12-14, Samson's Philistine wife extracts the answer to the riddle from Samson and tells it to the Philistines, Verses 15-18, Samson's anger and revenge, Verses 19-20.

Chapter 14 Overview: This chapter deals with the commencement of Samson's life's work, with his courtship and marriage of a Philistine woman, his meeting with a young lion as he went courting, his killing of it with his bare hands, and afterwards of his finding honey in it. It speaks of a riddle which he framed out of this incident and put to his companions at his pre-marriage feast to solve as a bet, giving them seven days to solve it; of their solving it by means of his wife, who extracted the secret from him, which led him to slay thirty Philistines in order to make good his promise of thirty linen cloths and changes of raiment, and then to leave his newly married wife for a while, only to discover that she was then given to his companion.

Judges 14, Samson demands a Philistine wife, Verses 1-3:

Verse 1

1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

and saw a woman in Timnath... This seemed to be a case of "love at first sight" for Samson. He saw this woman and he instantly wanted to marry her. Here was the first of many foolish mistakes this hero made. He chose a wife, contrary to the Word of God, contrary to the pleadings of his father and mother, and did so solely upon the basis of seeing a woman, with whom he had never even had a conversation!

There can be no doubt that Samson was to some extent a womanizer, something which he had to battle with all his life. He found it difficult to leave women alone. (Most men of his day married the woman chosen for them by their parents). Timnah was in Judah (Joshua 15:57), in the lowlands, but was under the control of the Philistines, and on a trip there he saw a Philistine woman who took his fancy. The woman would be fairly high born for she was of the ruling class; the Philistines. Thus in seeking occasion against the Philistines he was able to combine business with pleasure.

Verse 2

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.

now therefore get her for me to wife... In demanding a Philistine wife, Samson showed a sinful disregard for his parents and for God's will (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). Bound by romantic feelings, there are many people who still demand from God a mate out of God's will.

Deuteronomy 7:3-4

³Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

⁴For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

It was the custom of the Hebrew families that the father of the groom to be and the father of the bride to be would make the transaction for marriage. The father of the groom would pay the dowry to the father of the bride.

Verse 3

³Then 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 wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren... Samson's parents were astounded that their son would break the Law of Moses, which absolutely forbade an Israelite to marry a foreigner (Deuteronomy 7:1-4). Another way of saying "**for she pleaseth me well**" is "she looks good to me", anticipating the time when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (17:6), rather than "what is right and good in the sight of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:18).

And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well... What Samson really cared about was how things looked to **himself**, not how they looked to the Lord.

By extension, a Christian should never date a non-Christian. Those who do run a serious risk of falling in love with someone they have no business falling in love with.

If someone goes against God's plan and marries an unbeliever or if someone becomes a Christian before their spouse, there are specific commands applying to their situation. The Apostle Paul clearly wrote that this one must do all that is possible to stay in the marriage, and be the best spouse they can be (1 Corinthians 7:10-16).

God's will behind the scenes of Samson's desire to marry a Philistine woman, Verse 4:

Verse 4

⁴But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

In accomplishing this purpose, God did not make a reluctant Samson pursue the Philistine woman for marriage. God allowed Samson to do what he wanted to do, though the act itself was sinful. God allowed it for reasons in both Samson's life and for reasons on a larger scale.

As the rest of the chapter shows, some good ultimately came out of this ungodly marriage. Many Philistines were killed and they were kept off balance in their attempts to dominate the Israelites.

However, none of that justified Samson's actions. Though God can make even the evil of man to serve His purposes, it never justifies the evil that man does.

Samson slays a lion and eats some wild honey, Verse 5-9:

Verse 5

⁵Then 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.

and came to the vineyards of Timnath:... Samson was dedicated to God with a lifelong vow of a Nazirite (Judges 13:4-5). Nazirites were to have nothing to do with grape products in any form (Numbers 6:3-4). Samson was dangerously close to significant compromise.

and, behold, a young lion roared against him... A young Lion in his prime ready to attack, kill and eat its victim.

Verse 6

⁶And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, 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.

Though Samson flirted with compromise – both with his impending marriage and **the vineyards of Timnah** – he still had miraculous strength because **the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him.**

And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him... A remarkable supernatural quickening and strengthening of his physical powers, which enabled him to perform a feat beyond the measure of his ordinary strength. Observe that here the expression does not imply any great sanctity or moral purity in Samson, and is therefore not to be confounded with the New Testament gift of the Holy Ghost.

and he rent him as he would have rent a kid... Samson exerted his strength against the man-eater and with no weapon in his hand seized it and broke its neck as though it had been a young goat. It was his life or the lion's. From now on he knew that Jehovah was with him and would be his strength.

Samson's strength was clearly an unusual phenomenon. We need not doubt that he was of strong build, and even stronger than most men. David also was a type, when he slew the lion and the bear. 1 Samuel 17:36

“If that roaring lion, that goes about continually seeking whom he may devour, find us alone among the vineyards of the Philistines, where is our hope? Not in our heels, he is swifter than we: not in our weapons, we are naturally unarmed: not in our hands, which are weak and languishing; but in the Spirit of God, by whom we can do all things. If God fight in us, who call resist us? There is a stronger lion in us than that against us.” (Spurgeon)

The Holy Spirit of God wants to come upon us and give us power but power for something far more important than ripping apart lions. The Holy Spirit comes upon us for the empowering to live for God as we should and for the power to tell others about Jesus effectively.

but he told not his father or his mother what he had done... The spirit of the LORD filled Samson and strengthened him so greatly, that he killed this lion with his bare hands. He did not tell anyone. They probably would not have believed him anyway. This was to show Samson himself, how strong he was with the power of God in him. He also didn't tell anyone because later he would use this event for his riddle.

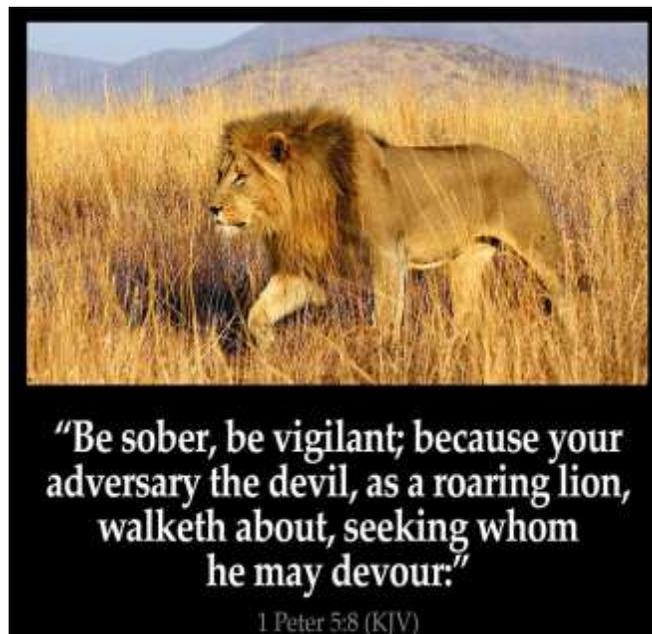


The young lion, roaring against Samson, is a figure of the accursed rage of the devil, against all the spiritual seed of Jesus. No sooner is a soul awakened from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, but Satan roars. While the young man in the gospel was coming to Christ, the Devil threw him down, and did tare him. Luke 9:42.

Luke 9:42

⁴²And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

Peter concludes his first epistle by drawing a word picture of Satan as a lion constantly on the move, prowling around and roaring each time a careless Christian falls victim to his deception.



Verse 7

⁷ And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

Prior to Judges 14:1, Samson had only seen the woman, and, apparently, this reference is to the first time that he had an opportunity to talk with her (probably about marriage). Samson continued to be very pleased with his choice.

Verse 8

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.

And after a time he returned to take her... All the preliminaries being settled between the parents, he returned to Timnath to take his bride by the same road which he and his parents had travelled by before. And remembering his killing the lion, very naturally turned aside to see what had become of the carcass.

The picture that emerges here requires us to understand that a considerable time-frame is necessary to encompass all that is recorded here. The swarm of bees in the body of the lion and the amount of time needed for them to produce what appears to be quite a bit of honey means that weeks or even months might have elapsed before the wedding feast, the propounding of the riddle, etc. "And after a time" here can mean a relatively longer period of time.

Verse 9

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.

Eating Honey is not a sin, but when Samson gathered honey from the dead carcass of a lion, he expressly violated his Nazirite vow, which stipulated that a Nazirite should never touch a dead body or carcass (Numbers 6:6-7). The parents would not have eaten this honey, had they known it came from a carcass of a lion. He and his parents ate this honey.

Significantly, Samson did this after he was remarkably filled with the Holy Spirit. This shows that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit does not automatically make a person godlier. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit gives one the resources to be godlier, but it doesn't "do it to" them. A person can be wonderfully gifted by the Holy Spirit and yet very spiritually immature.

In the killing of the lion and the sharing of the honey, Spurgeon saw a spiritual picture of the work of Jesus Christ for us: "And what a type we have here of our Divine Lord and Master. Jesus, the conqueror of death and hell. He has destroyed the lion that roared upon us and upon him... I see our triumphant Lord laden with sweetness, holding it forth to all his brethren, and inviting them to share in his joy." (Spurgeon)

In the same way, Samson *shared* the sweetness of his victory over the lion with others. Spurgeon pointed out that this is, by analogy, a pattern for the way we should share the gospel.

- Samson brought the honey first to those nearest to him.
- Samson brought the honey in his hands, in the simply way available to him.

- Samson actually gave them some of the honey to taste.
- Samson brought the honey modestly, not boasting about killing the lion.

Verses 10-20: Samson had a motive for vengeance against the Philistines: They solved his riddle by seducing his wife, and he had to pay them what he had promised. So under the power of “the spirit of the LORD, he killed 30 Philistines who were the enemies of God, and plundered what he needed to pay his debt.

Samson hosts a “bachelor party” for Philistine friends, Verses 10-11:

Verse 10

¹⁰ So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a 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.

His father then continued on to meet the woman to assist with preparations for the wedding, while Samson arranged a pre-marriage feast for the young men. This would seem to have been a feast for men only, taking place before the marriage. It lasted seven days. The fact that it was arranged by Samson himself indicates that it was not the wedding-feast.

The Philistines were seemingly quite content for one of their daughters to marry a wealthy Israelite. The Philistines may have seen this powerful young man as somebody who could be useful to them and therefore as someone to be encouraged. He was after all, almost becoming one of them. And they brought a full complement of young men to share his pre-marriage feast. This suggests that he had gained recognition and respectability among the Philistines. They would be his daily companions while the wedding was in final preparation, for the feasting for the wedding that followed would also last seven days. In view of what follows (they were clearly no friends of the girl’s family) it may be that they were professional ‘companions’, hired for such an occasion.



Samson and the Lion Saint Petersburg, Russia

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Judges 14, Samson poses a riddle concerning the lion and the honey, Verses 12-14: Verse 12

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 sheets and thirty change of garments:

The pre-feast being in process, and some already being somewhat tipsy, Samson offered a riddle. This was quite a common feature of such feasts in order to pass the time, especially once the drink had flowed. Whether Samson broke his Nazirite vow by drinking wine and strong drink we are not told. It is not being reasonable to suggest that because he was at a wedding feast he necessarily did so. Many a godly person has been at such a celebration without breaking vows about drinking. He may well have explained it along with his long hair, which no doubt also caused comment. There is no suggestion that he did wrong at the feast. His real problem was with women, not with strong drink.

And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you:... A Riddle is a question or statement intentionally phrased so as to require ingenuity in ascertaining its answer or meaning. A riddle is a puzzle or joke in which you ask a question that seems to be nonsense but which has a clever or amusing answer.

if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out,... They got seven days to answer the riddle.

then I will give you thirty sheets... 30 Bedsheets made of fine linen.

and thirty change of garments:... This literally describes a fine suit of clothes one would wear to an important occasion; therefore 30 fine suits were wagered. Like most betting, this "friendly wager" would turn into something not quite so friendly.

Verse 13

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.

But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments... The Bet: If they can't answer the riddle, they owe Samson thirty sheets and thirty change of garments

And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it... They accept Samson's challenge.

Samson feels safe that they will not be able to give him the solution to the riddle. It is interesting that there were 30 guests and the challenge was for 30 change of garments. Perhaps it was one for each person there. They have agreed, and want to hear the riddle.

Verse 14

¹⁴And 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.

And he said unto them,... This was a clever riddle, and Samson showed that even if he was weak morally he was not weak intellectually.

Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness... Riddles were generally put in a poetical form, and so here the two parts of the riddle are made to form a distich. Out of the carcass of a lion, a ravenous and devouring beast, Samson had taken food which both he and his parents had eaten; and out of the strong beast, for the lion is a symbol of strength, had he taken the sweet honey. One would not look into the body of the strong lion to find sweetness. This was a riddle which surpassed the ordinary powers of man to solve, for the facts on which it was built were unknown to anyone but Samson. To solve it would be like interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream when the dream itself was not made known.

And they could not in three days expound the riddle... Though they had tried their utmost, and tired their wits, and well-nigh cracked their heads together, yet they could not unriddle it. **And** as little can carnal people comprehend the gospel, which therefore they reprehend, and persecute the professors thereof.

They at first, in their merry state, probably thought that it would soon be solved, but after a few days they became alarmed. No solution that they propounded was correct. The riddle was not only a riddle. Samson probably intended by it amusing mockery. He was thinking that from the 'devouring' Philistines he would gain both a marriage feast and wealth, and from the 'strong' Philistines he would obtain the sweetest of all, a wife.

Samson's Philistine wife extracts the answer to the riddle from Samson and tells it to the Philistines, Verses 15-18:

Verse 15

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

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle... That is, persuade him to tell the meaning of it to her, that she might declare it to them. Time passed by. It passed not only a 'three day' period but a 'seven day' period and fear had set it that they would lose the bet. The men began to panic

and the situation turned ugly. They could not bear the thought of losing their fine and expensive clothing to an Israelite.

lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?... So they pressured Samson's 'wife', warning her that if she did not entice the answer out of him by the time the wedding feast was over they would burn her father's house with her inside it (compare Judges 12:1. This was clearly considered a standard punishment by powerful men offended. See also Judges 15:6). These were not pleasant men and their pride was hurt. And they were the warrior ruling class. They accused her of bringing them there with the intention of taking their fine clothes. The threat was real, compare Judges 15:6. We see here the typical Philistine male, proud, aggressive and unyielding, and with a contempt for all others.

It would appear that it was customary in a Philistine marriage for the wife to continue living in her father's house, being regularly visited by the husband who would bring a gift when he visited (see Judges 15:1 where she was still there even though she had married another and would thus have been otherwise expected to have moved in with him). This was probably because regularly the husbands would be away on army duty, and it was therefore safer for their wives to be in her family home.

Verse 16

¹⁶And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a 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?

And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not:... Samson's Philistine wife knew how to manipulate the situation and how to make herself a burden to her husband until she got what she wanted from him.



And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?... Samson didn't even tell his parents about the riddle.

Verse 17

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 lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted:... She began to beg him with tears, on the first day of the feast, to impart the secret to her for her own satisfaction. And then, after the men had urged her on the fourth day to persuade her husband to it, she continued pressing him more earnestly with tears unto the seventh day.

Unraveling the tangled narrative, we see that:

- (1) From the first, Samson's wife, anxious to have her husband confide in her, tearfully attempted to find out the riddle, pressing her request with emotional manipulation.
- (2) The young men tried for three days to solve the mystery, and being unable to do it they began to tamper with Samson's wife.
- (3) On the seventh day, they were desperate, and threatened to burn her and her father's house unless she extracted the secret and made it known to them.
- (4) Under that awful threat, she extorted the secret from Samson and made it known to her countrymen.

In the end Samson gave way. He did not want the last day of the feast and the final consummating of the marriage to be spoiled by his wife's weeping. And greatly relieved she passed on the solution to the men in order to save her family.

The willingness of Samson's Philistine wife to side with her people against Samson shows a fundamental weakness in their marriage. She did not fulfill the idea essential to marriage of leaving one's father and mother to be joined in a one flesh relationship to their spouse (Genesis 2:24). Yet this also shows why it was wrong for Samson to marry a Philistine. We cannot expect someone who does not love the God of Israel to build a marriage on God's principles.

However, we can see that the reason Samson's wife cooperated against her husband was also somewhat complicated. She acted out of fear because of their threat (**lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire**). If she told Samson about the threats, he could have more than handled the situation. She apparently did not feel safe with Samson, but he was her best safety.

Verse 18

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.

They try to give the answer in a way to make it appear that they had guessed it. Samson saw at once that she had betrayed him.

If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle... Samson's answer was abrupt and very vivid. They had put the yoke on his woman to plough up the secret. It indicated both the unfair pressure they had exercised and the foulness of their behaviour. In his view this was both an insult to him, and an act of aggression in retaliation.

Verse 19

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.

And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him... The Spirit of the Lord did not come upon Samson to avenge the hurt feelings of a husband. God's strategy was larger: He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines (Judges 14:4). Therefore He used this occasion to pour out His Spirit on Samson to fight against the Philistines.

Time would need to be given to him to provide the clothing for all would recognize that he would not have thirty changes of clothing with him. They would certainly have expected to wait until after the consummation of the marriage. But the matter had become too bitter, and he left the marriage feast without consummating the marriage and disappeared. No wonder the father thought that he wanted nothing further to do with his daughter. Nevertheless he paid Samson a great insult by giving his wife to someone else.

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... He took the spoil from the thirty he killed and gave it to those who had answered the riddle. His anger was against the Philistines, and against his wife for the treachery his wife had done to please them.

Samson travelled the twenty three miles to the major Philistine city of Ashkelon and sought out thirty Philistine warriors, killing them and taking their clothing. We are given no details about how this was accomplished, but it is noteworthy that no repercussions resulted.

Verse 20

²⁰ But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

The Philistine father had no reason to assume that Samson would not be back, nor had Samson given word about not returning. He, as a Philistine, did not want his daughter marrying the enemy.

Her parents probably thought that Samson would no longer want her as a wife, and gave her to Samson's best man at the wedding. It seemed that Samson's friend also had been a Philistine. It could even have been the one she told the riddle to.

Samson was at fault for not guarding his heart against falling in love with a woman he had no business falling in love with. He was at fault for not founding the marriage on God's principles. He was also at fault for not responding to his wife's manipulations with love, free from anger.

At the same time, Samson's wife was at fault for siding with others against her husband. She was at fault for not telling her husband what the real problem was. And she was at fault for manipulating her husband by being such a bother until she got her way. Most of all, she was at fault for *giving up on the marriage*. Samson didn't leave her; she left him. No matter what the problems in a relationship, what God commands us most of all is to not give up on the marriage.

We might rightly say with Charles Spurgeon: "Samson himself is a riddle. He was not only a riddle-maker; but he was himself an enigma very difficult to explain." (Spurgeon)

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Fifteen Outline: Samson's rage at discovering that his wife is given to another, verses 1-3. Samson strikes out against the Philistines by burning their crops using 300 Foxes, verses 4-5. The Philistines retaliate by killing Samson's wife and family, verses 6-7. Samson repays the Philistines for the murder of his wife, verse 8. Judah surrenders Samson to the Philistines, verses 9-13. Samson uses the jawbone of a donkey to kill a thousand Philistines, verses 14-17. God provides for Samson miraculously, verses 18-20.

Chapter 15 Overview: Samson At The Height of His Success.

This chapter goes on to relate how Samson, being denied his wife, gained his revenge by burning the corn fields, vineyards, and olives of the Philistines, as a result of which they burned his wife and his father-in-law in return, and how, because of their burning of her and her father, he indulged in great slaughter among them. This brought the Philistines against the men of Judah, who took Samson and bound him, to deliver him to the Philistines. Whereupon he, freeing himself, slew a thousand of them with the jaw bone of an ass, and being thirsty, was wonderfully supplied with water by God.

Judges 15, Samson's rage at discovering that his wife is given to another, verses 1-3:

Verse 1

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.

As far as Samson was concerned he was now legally married to the Philistine woman, and once his anger had subsided and he had had time to get over her betrayal, he went to see his wife taking her a present, intending to consummate his marriage. But understandably the father would not allow him to go in, for she had been given to another and had consummated a marriage with him. It may even be that the husband was there with her. This no doubt came as a great shock to Samson who seems to have been genuinely fond of the girl.

in the time of wheat harvest,... Some time had passed. It seems never to have occurred to Samson that he was a bit late with this attempt to consummate his marriage.

Verse 2

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.

And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her... Samson had every right to hate her, because she tricked him into telling her the riddle and then told those he had challenged. That was an act of treachery. Her dad knew that Samson should be angry with her, and

he thought Samson would want no more to do with her so he gave her to Samson's Philistine friend. He did offer Samson her younger sister instead. Samson did not want her sister.

The father was not antagonistic to Samson, indeed was probably a little afraid of him, and pressed on him his offer of her more beautiful younger sister to replace what he had lost.

Verse 3

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

Samson now determined on revenge. Previously he had killed ‘innocent’ men (chapter 14), although as Philistines occupying his country they were not blameless. Yet he had clearly felt a certain sense of guilt. But now he felt that his ensuing actions would be more than fully justified and deserved, because they had stolen his wife from him.

Samson strikes out against the Philistines by burning their crops using 300 Foxes, verses 4-5:

Verse 4

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.

It must have taken a while to catch so many foxes and to keep them penned and fed until the number reached 300. **three hundred foxes ...** It is noticeable throughout the account that ‘three’ is predominant in numbering men and animals, and that there is progression as his impact increases. Thirty companions (Judges 14:11), thirty men slain in Ashkelon (Judges 14:19), three hundred foxes released among their crops, three thousand men of Judah who arrested him (Judges 15:11) followed by three thousand men and women on the roof of the Temple where Samson died (Judges 16:27). The stress is on completeness of judgment and God’s progression towards that completeness.



Verse 5

⁵And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.

Apparently he tied them in pairs with a slow-burning torch, sending the pairs down the hills into fields thrashing with fire, igniting all the standing grain so dry at harvest. This was a loss of great proportion to the Philistine farmers.

The standing corn waiting to be harvested in the fields was burned, the shocks already gathered were destroyed by the fire, and the olive orchards too were set on fire causing great damage. Setting fire to standing corn was a regular way of retaliating against someone who had caused offence, compare 2 Samuel 14:30. The harvests of Timnah would be bare that year.



The Philistines retaliate by killing Samson's wife and family, verses 6-7:

Verse 6

⁶Then 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 burnt her and her father with fire.

This is the very thing they told her they would do, if she did not find out about the riddle for them. You see it did her no good at all to be disloyal, and tell the riddle to the Philistines. She came to the same fate anyway. Burning with fire was judicial punishment with the Hebrews, but these were Philistines that did this. They were afraid to attack Samson personally.

Verse 7

⁷And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

Samson is saying: "I will not cease till I have taken vengeance upon you."

Samson repays the Philistines for the murder of his wife, verse 8:

Verse 8

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.

And he smote them hip and thigh... This is a proverbial expression for a cruel, unsparing slaughter. Samson was a one-man army against the Philistines.



**...AND HE SMOTE THEM HIP AND THIGH
WITH A GREAT SLAUGHTER**

Judah surrenders Samson to the Philistines, verses 9-13:

Verses 9 & 10

⁹ Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

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.

The leading men of Judah sent messages to the Philistine camp to ask the purpose of this invasion by such a force. As far as they were aware they had paid all necessary tribute. The reply came back that they wanted Samson delivered up to them in order that he might be tried and punished for

what he had done to the Philistines. They felt that what he had done went far beyond justifiable revenge, and he should have remembered that they were the masters.

That the Philistines sent a thousand men (Verse 16) on this mission is an indication of their fear of Samson and their determination to take him. They were willing to declare war on Judah if Judah insisted on protecting Samson.

Verse 11

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 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.

Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?... Samson didn't want to hear this or recognize it. As far as he was concerned, the Philistines should not rule over the people of God.

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... They had burnt his wife and her father with fire, and he had slain many of them. At least this was what he thought fit to say in his own vindication. He taking what was done to them as done to himself, the chief magistrate and judge of Israel.

Verse 12

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.

They were perfectly willing to betray a brother into the hands of the enemy, instead of rallying to his defense. Nevertheless, there was a high-minded streak in Samson, because he consented to be bound at the request of his brethren, first making them swear that **THEY THEMSELVES** would not slay him.

Verse 13

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.

They were caught helplessly between two options. The one to fight the Philistines, the other to fight Samson. They did not like the idea of either. But they hoped that Samson might be reasonable for the sake of his countrymen.

It seems that Samson submitted to this. Assuming this was true; it showed great faith on Samson's part. He was willing to put himself in a difficult position and to trust God to take care of him.

The fact that soldiers from the tribe of Judah gave up Samson to the Philistines shows just how much they were under the oppression of the Philistines. They would rather please their oppressors than support their deliverer.

This is a strangely common phenomenon. Often, when someone stands up to evil, people are angrier at the one who stood up to the evil than they are angry at the evil itself.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



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Samson uses the jawbone of a donkey to kill a thousand Philistines, verses 14-17:

Verse 14

¹⁴And 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 loosed from off his hands.

And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him... On seeing this fierce man, who had killed so many of them, bound and helpless, the Philistines let out a shout of triumph and gloating. Now they could exact their revenge. He was theirs for the taking.

and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him... Once again Jehovah acted through him, and he burst the ropes that held him which seemed to melt away in front of them. Then he seized a new jawbone of an ass, its newness ensuring that it was solid and effective, not brittle, and used it as an effective weapon. With it he effectively destroyed a whole large military unit, presumably the one that had come to receive him from the hands of the men of Judah.

Verse 15

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

Samson was unique among the judges because he was a "one-man army" against the Philistines. Other Judges of Israel led armies against their enemies, but Samson fought alone.

Note: But the seizing of the jawbone was a careless act, for as a Nazirite he was under a vow not to come into contact with dead things. Perhaps this was a sign that he was becoming careless with regard to his vow. He was beginning to feel that he was above restriction.

A five-point sermon on the jawbone of an ass, likening it to the weapon of the Gospel:

- *It was a novel weapon*
- *It was a most convenient weapon*
- *It was a simple weapon*
- *It was a ridiculous weapon*
- *It was a successful weapon*

Verse 16

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.

And Samson said... Samson exulted in his victory with a war song. He was an educated man and enjoyed composing verses (Judges 14:14; Judges 14:18).



Verse 17

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 Ramathlehi.

and called that place Ramathlehi... This name essentially means “Jawbone Hill.” It was an obviously appropriate name for this place of Samson’s great victory.

God provides for Samson miraculously, verses 18-20:

Verse 18

¹⁸ And he was sore athirst, 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?

And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD... Samson needed this thirst to remind himself of his own weakness and need right after such a great victory. After a great victory we need to remember our mortality and how we must call upon the LORD in our time of need.

Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant... The fact of Samson's reference to himself in this line as God's servant reveals the true heart of the man. In spite of his stupid mistakes, his lustful and sensual life, and his bitter revenge against his enemies, he nevertheless loved the Lord. After all, Samson's enemies were also the enemies of the Lord.

Verse 19

¹⁹But God clave an hollow place 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 Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.

God opened up a hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En Hakkore (which means the spring of one who cries out to God). And it is still there in Lehi. (15:19)

This is an example of the principle that God's work, done God's way, will always be provided for by God. Here the Lord showed His faithfulness to Samson by supplying the needs of His servant.

Samson's prayer for relief from his thirst is one of two prayers of Samson recorded, the other one on the occasion of his death. Therefore, this seems to have been the high point in Samson's life.

Verse 20

²⁰And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

It would appear that the Philistines did not attempt to interfere with Samson's judgeship during that twenty years, except near the end of it, at which time there probably occurred the events of Judges 16.

Some Things To Think About:

Samson And Jesus:

Samson was rejected by his countrymen. Jesus was rejected by his countrymen.

Samson was arrested by his own people. Jesus was arrested by his own people.

Samson was handed over to certain death. Jesus was handed over to die.

Samson didn't resist his own people when they betrayed him. Jesus said not a word to those who attacked him. Samson's hands were bound with cords. Jesus' hands were bound as he went off to trial.

Samson broke the cords which bound him. Jesus in his resurrection broke the cords of death.

Samson in his mighty victory put the army of the Philistines to flight. Jesus in his victorious resurrection from the dead defeated Satan and the demons and all the powers of the devil. He disarmed the devil and made a public spectacle of all the demons. He led captivity captive when he ascended on high.

Samson in his victory delivered his people. And Jesus in his victory delivered his people.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Sixteen Outline: Samson and the Harlot at Gaza, Verses 1-3. Samson and Delilah, Verses 4-20. Samson's Capture and Death, Verses 21-31.

Chapter 16 Overview: Samson's Decline, Downfall and Final Triumph.

By including Judges 15:20 the writer deliberately divided his story into two halves. The first part was, as we have seen, a story mainly of triumph against the odds, the second will be one of triumph in the face of disaster. The account begins with his going in to a harlot in Gaza, and his subsequent removal of the gates of Gaza, followed by his dalliance with Delilah who tempts him to divulge the secret of his strength. This is followed by his subsequent arrest and blinding, and his being committed to hard labour in the prison mill. But the regrowth of his hair strengthens his faith and he finally destroys a packed Philistine Temple killing many of the enemy hierarchy.

Judges 16, Samson and the Harlot at Gaza, Verses 1-3:

Verse 1

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

Samson was in obvious sin here. This is a clear example of how a man so used of God can also sin and sin blatantly. He went to a harlot...

Samson wanted to be used by God, but he also yielded to sin. He kept the external features of his Nazirite vow zealously, while at the same time sinning blatantly with a prostitute.

Verse 2

2 And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they 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.

The leading men of Gaza learned that Samson was there. Possibly he had been spotted, or perhaps the prostitute had sent a message informing them of his presence, hoping for a reward. He may well have boasted about who he was, for he had lost his humility. Either way they decided that they would wait until morning, when approaching him might be less dangerous because then they could see what they were doing.

They knew that there was only one way out of the walled city, through the huge city gates, and those would not be opened until the morning. And so they knew that they had him safe. They knew that they would be able to take him when they wanted and in a place where they themselves had set an ambush.

Verse 3

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, however, probably had a good idea of the situation, and took them by surprise. He finished his ‘adventures’ at midnight and then he left the house where he was and made for the city gates.

Despite his sin, God still gave Samson supernatural strength to escape from the Philistines. God did this because God’s purpose was bigger than Samson himself, and because God used Samson despite Samson’s sin, not because of it.



Note: His activities with the prostitute, following his connection with death through the use of the jaw of the ass, serves to demonstrate that his dedication as a Nazirite was waning. Pride and arrogance had taken over. All that was left of his vow was his long hair. That would go next.

It is not accidental that the incident of the jaw bone when he came in contact with dead matter, his behaviour with the prostitute, and the shaving of his hair come in sequence. **They were the downward steps he took**, resulting finally in the destruction of his consecration to The LORD.

First he was careless about touching dead matter, then he sank into sexual misconduct and finally he played fast and loose with his 'holy' hair. He had become complacent.

Samson and Delilah, Verses 4-20:

Verse 4

⁴ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

Delilah: Means either "flirtatious" or "devotee," the latter designation suggestion religious prostitution as her profession. The fact that she was also apparently of high social status and actually honored by the lords of the Philistines by their employment of her in their efforts to take Samson also support the idea that she was a temple prostitute attached to the temple of Dagon.

Verse 5

⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, 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 eleven hundred pieces of silver.

Entice... Entice means: Attract or tempt by offering pleasure or advantage. As men themselves they knew the impact of a beautiful woman and what she could learn from a man, especially in bed.

Delilah was also deeply in love; but she was in love with money, not Samson. 1,100 shekels made up more than 140 pounds of silver.

1 Timothy 6:10

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Delilah, of course, needed no further inducement. The money smothered all thoughts of love or friendship, and she went to work on Samson at once with the purpose of betraying him. One may only pity the foolish willingness of Samson in allowing himself to be deceived and betrayed by Delilah.

Verse 6

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.

And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth... The source of Samson's strength was not obvious. This means that he probably was not a large, heavily muscled man like a modern day bodybuilder as depicted in Bible pictures. He may have looked like an average man, and unlikely to have such strength.

and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee... Samson could have easily seen Delilah's heart by the way she immediately tried to bind him with what he deceptively said he could be bound with. The fact that he did not tell her the truth proved that he knew she had a dangerous intention.



Samson and Delilah by Jose Etxenagusia, 1887.

Verse 7

⁷ And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

Samson said... The truth is that Samson is guilty both of the sin of lying, and of great foolishness in encouraging her enquiries, which he should at first have checked: but as he had forsaken God, so God had now forsaken him.

THE THREE FALSE "SECRETS"

There were three times that Samson pretended to confide in Delilah, without, in any sense, revealing the real secret of his strength:

(1) BINDING HIM WITH SEVEN GREEN WITHS (FRESH BOWSTRINGS):

Verse 8

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.

and she bound him with them... When Samson came to see her he was probably amused to see that she had some fresh withes in her room. Little did he realise that they had been supplied by the Philistine Tyrants. And as they lay and made love and caressed she probably playfully bound them round him and let him sleep, joking that he was her captive. Or she may have done it while he was asleep. It says something for the fear that they had of him that the Philistines did not attempt to have their strongest men do it for her.

Verse 9

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.

So his strength was not known... It is clear that Delilah played it as a game. The Philistines dared not enter until they were sure the method would work, and thus Samson never knew of their presence, but rather Delilah cried out that the Philistines were there, to see his reaction and the result. This first time he may well have thought she meant it so he broke the withes but found no one there. And she no doubt laughed as though it were a game. But underneath her heart was beating rapidly and she was afraid. And she knew that he had not told her his secret, and that she did not know in what his strength lay.

Delilah was only pretending in this exclamation in order to find out if Samson had really told her the truth. The liars-in-wait were not called until she knew that she had Samson in her power. Samson was only playing games with her, but it was a deadly game that eventually cost him his eyesight and his life.

Verse 10

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

On another visit Delilah tried the same tack, although this time ‘lovingly’ pretending to be a little hurt and chiding him. Now she urged him, if he loved her, really to tell her the truth. She pretends to be embarrassed at what Samson has done to get him to tell her the real reason for his great strength.

Verse 11

THE THREE FALSE "SECRETS": (2) BINDING HIM WITH NEW ROPES:

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.

new ropes that never were occupied... These were large twisted ropes. If anything will hold him, they should.

By now Samson in his innocence was probably enjoying himself as he thought out new ways by which to make gentle fun of his beloved mistress. This time he suggested that new ropes would do what she wanted.

Verse 12

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

Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith... Samson allowed this bondage because he refused to escape the situation. Many today are in similar places of sin, compromise, and bondage – and refuse to escape the situation.

And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber... The Philistine men were lying in wait to jump out, and attack him the minute they find where his strength comes from.



Verse 13

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 web.

THE THREE FALSE "SECRETS": (3) WEAVING THE LOCKS OF HIS HAIR IN THE LOOM.

This time, Samson had come nearer to the truth than in the two previous occasions of his lies to Delilah. The meaning is, that she should weave his seven braids of hair fast into the warp of the cloth which was upon her loom.

Verse 14

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.

While he was asleep Delilah carried out the process he had described, finally fastening his hair to the beam with the pin. Then she gave him warning of the presence of Philistines and he woke up and freed his hair, possibly breaking the loom in the process. He thought it was all part of the continuing game.

Verse 15

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

And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?... Tragically, Samson's heart was with Delilah. Her accusation was a manipulative projection of her own heart, which was not with Samson. It would seem that romantic attraction made Samson lose all sense. There was no good or rational reason Samson continued this relationship with Delilah or entertained her prying into the secret of his strength. Samson is a good example of how an ungodly relationship can warp thinking.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Sixteen Outline: Samson and the Harlot at Gaza, Verses 1-3. Samson and Delilah, Verses 4-20. Samson's Capture and Death, Verses 21-31.

Samson and Delilah, Verses 4-20, Continued:

Verse 16

¹⁶ And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death;

Earlier Samson gave into the nagging of his Philistine wife (Judges 14:15-18). Now he yielded to the nagging of Delilah. She certainly sinned by using such terrible manipulation, but Samson also sinned by yielding to that manipulation.

Verse 17

¹⁷ That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a 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.

That he told her all his heart... At last he divulged his secret. His strength lay in the fact that he was a **Nazirite**, dedicated to The LORD. Samson could be bought for a price, and Delilah paid it. Compare Esau selling his birthright (Genesis 25:29-33) and Judas denying Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16).

Samson's treason here was in betraying state secrets and the tragic squandering of his great strength.

he told her all his heart, and said unto her... When Samson did this, it was a very sad scene. He had to know what was to come. He faced the choice between faithfulness to his God and continuing an ungodly relationship.

There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb... Samson's hair itself had no mystical strength, but Samson was "a Nazarite unto God", and his long hair was an outward symbol of dedication to the Lord (Numbers 6:5). This dedication is what enabled Samson to do his mighty deeds. What a sad commentary on Samson's character that he gave in to a woman who he knows would use her knowledge against him.

Yet there are grounds for thinking that he had become so arrogant in his strength that he did not really believe it. Consider the facts. Each time he had suggested some method to her he had woken to find that she had tried it out, whether with withes, with ropes or with loom. Could he then doubt that she would also cut his hair? Possibly then he was fondly aware of what she would do but did

not think that it would matter. His vow had become so unimportant to him, and his strength so natural, that he did not think that the vow mattered.

This is confirmed by the fact that when he woke up with his head shaven, and he must surely have realized the fact immediately, he still did not believe that The LORD would have left him (Judges 16:20). After all, using the jawbone of the ass had done no harm, and sleeping with a prostitute in Gaza had done no harm, both acts contrary to his vows, why then should the cutting off of his hair? We must beware of treating God's patience as an excuse for further sin.

Verse 18

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 money in their hand.

Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand... This time Delilah realized that he had really bared his heart, and she felt justified in again calling the Philistine Tyrants for one last attempt. And she convinced them too, for they came bringing the promised reward with them (and brought money in their hand).

Verse 19

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.



Here was the height of treachery. This woman who had pretended to love him lulled him to sleep on her knees, then she called for a man (the Philistines had probably brought a barber with them) and directed him to shave off Samson's seven locks of hair while he slept. The seven locks of hair symbolized the divine perfection of his vow. Now he would lose all that it had meant to him. He was no longer a Nazirite.

“The devil is cleverer far than even the skillful-barber; he can shave the believer's locks while he scarcely knows it.” – Charles Spurgeon

Verse 20

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 wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

Histories tell us of Hercules, that he was miserably enslaved and abused by his mistress, Omphale Queen of Lydia. Antony befooled by Cleopatra and so here Samson...

Again she alerted him to the Philistine presence, and again he was unconcerned. What did it matter if they were there or not? He realized that his hair had been cut off, but what had changed? A quick shake and all would be well. What he failed to recognize was that he had lost not only his hair but his consecration. In a sense it had already been happening, slowly, but his readiness to allow her to shave his locks was the final fall. He was no longer Jehovah's man. He no longer had the extra strength provided by Jehovah.

And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him... The final departure of Jehovah from his life. This was what his sin, and his continuing arrogance and his final contempt for his vow had brought him to. He had exchanged God for a deceitful woman. But it was really the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13; 2 Corinthians 6:18-18; 2 Timothy 2:21-22). And why did he not realize it? Because he was now so self-sufficient that he did not look to Him for empowering. It was not that he sought but did not find. It was that he no longer sought. It was not only his hair that he had lost, but his whole attitude of consecration. That is why he had not been bothered about his hair.

Samson's life was a mirror of what had happened to Israel. They too had been dedicated to Jehovah under the covenant. They too had been separated to a holy life. They too had known the Spirit of Jehovah working through them. They too had slowly declined and allowed themselves to drift from the covenant. They had whored after false goddesses. And that was why they were as they were this day, tributaries and servants instead of being the masters.

Sadly someone who reads these words might be in the same situation. Once wholly dedicated to God, and separated to a holy life, experiencing the work of the Spirit, but now having declined, and even having reached rock bottom, being totally enslaved by sin or indolence.

"In the opinion of some persons Samson looked much improved when his matted hair was gone. He was more presentable; more fit for good society. And so in the case of churches, the notion is that they are all the better for getting rid of their peculiarities." (Spurgeon)

Quick Overview of Samson and Women:

Samson married a Philistine and then she was killed by the Philistines,

Samson then went to a harlot, another thing which God forbids,

He then marries Delilah, and she finds out through trickery about Samson's strength which then leads to the downfall and imprisonment of Samson,

Instead of honoring his vow to God, Samson chased after strange women.

The Philistines recognized his sexual weakness and got a woman named Delilah to seduce him and learn the secret of his great strength. Samson told her it was in his long hair.

They cut his hair, gouged out his eyes, and made Samson a slave. After a long time of grinding grain, Samson was put on display during a feast to the Philistine god Dagon. As he stood in the crowded temple, Samson positioned himself between two key pillars.

He prayed to God to give him strength for one final act. It had never been Samson's long hair that was the source of his power; it had always been the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him. God answered his prayer. Samson pushed the pillars apart and the temple crashed down, killing himself and 3,000 enemies of Israel.

However, despite all of Samson's weaknesses, he did turn back to God before he died (Judges 16:28–30). God in His sovereignty used Samson to fulfill His purpose.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we learn is that God would rather forgive than judge. In the final analysis, God saw Samson as a man of faith. This is evidenced by the fact that he's listed among those in the Hall of Faith.

Hebrews 11:32-33

³² And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of **Samson**, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

³³ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

Similarities between Samson and Jesus:

1. Their births was divinely preannounced to his parents by an Angel.

Samson's Mother was Barren. Mary was a Virgin.

2. Samson means "sunshine".

Jesus is The SUN!

Malachi 4:2

² But unto you that fear my name shall the **Sun of righteousness** arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

3. Both had a Calling to Save.

Judges 13:5

⁵ For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

Matthew 1:21

²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

4. Samson Marries a Gentile Bride and Jesus Marries a Gentile Bride-The Church.

5. Samson prepares a Wedding Feast, Judges 14:10 and Jesus prepares a Wedding Feast (The Marriage Supper of The Lamb) – Revelation 19:7-10.

6. Both were Rejected by The Nation of Israel.

Judges 15:11-12

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 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.

John 1:11

¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

7. The Middle Years of both Samson and Jesus are not recorded in The Bible.

8. Both were betrayed for Silver.

Judges 16:5

⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, 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 eleven hundred pieces of **silver**.

Matthew 26:15

¹⁵ And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of **silver**.

9. Both were Mocked by their enemies.

Samson had his eyes gouged out.

Judges 16:25

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.

Jesus's eyes were blindfolded.

Luke 22:64

⁶⁴ And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?

10. Samson died between two Pillars. Jesus died between two men.

11. Both gave up their lives.

12. Samson killed a lion and Jesus has defeated the roaring lion-Satan!

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Sixteen Outline: Samson and the Harlot at Gaza, Verses 1-3. Samson and Delilah, Verses 4-20. Samson's Capture and Death, Verses 21-31.

Samson's Capture and Death, Verses 21-31:

Verse 21

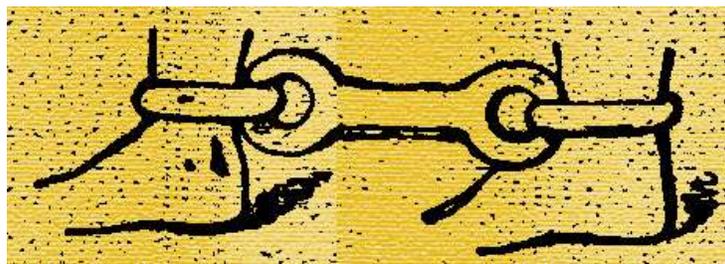
²¹ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes... It was fitting that Samson was first blinded in his imprisonment. He was attracted to ungodly relationships **through his eyes**. Thus was the lust of the eye, in looking after and gazing on strange women, punished.

Sin has its wages, and this was Samson's payday. His sin left him blind, in bondage, and a slave. Before Samson's blindness, bondage, and slavery were only inward, but they eventually became evident outwardly.

and brought him down to Gaza... Gaza, because it was the chief city of the nation, and far removed from the vicinity of Israelites who might seek to rescue him, and there was their great State prison.

and bound him with fetters of brass... Every clink of the metal was a reminder of what he had lost. And they were very painful causing chafing, wounds and sores (Psalms 105:18).



and he did grind in the prison house... The shame and humiliation of Israel's Superhuman Judge reached its terrible climax.

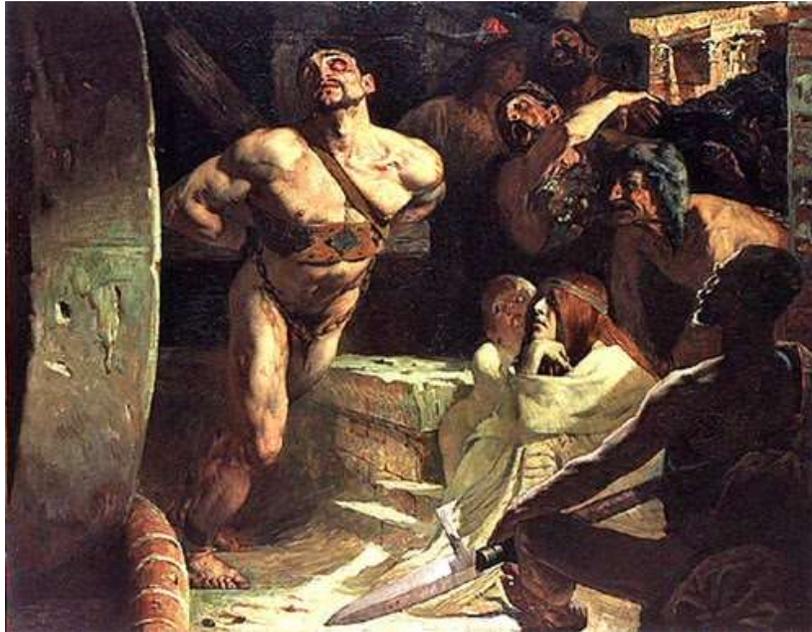
It is interesting that in Scripture sexual activity is spoken of in terms of the grinding of grain.

Job 31:9-10

⁹ If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door;

¹⁰ Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her.

This may thus be seen as a suitable punishment for one who had sinned like Samson had. Does he like ‘grinding’ with the Gazite prostitute and with Delilah? Samson is now grinding in the prison house.



Verse 22

²² Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

God had not forgotten either the sinful Judge or his Chosen People of Israel. The fact stated here is an indication that there was yet a final episode to be related in the remarkable story of Samson.

God gave Samson hope in the midst of a prison. His hair began to return and we can suppose that his heart also began to return.

“I wonder why these Philistines did not take care to keep his hair from growing to any length. If cutting his hair once had proved so effectual, I wonder that they did not send in the barber every morning, to make sure that not a hair grew upon his scalp or chin. But wicked men are not in all matters wise men: indeed, they so conspicuously fail in one point or another that Scripture calls them fools.” (Spurgeon)

“When Samson’s hair began to grow, what did it prophesy? Well, first, it prophesied hope for Samson. I will be bound to say that he put his hand to his head, and felt that it was getting bristly, and then he put his hand to his beard, and found it rough. Yes, yes, yes, it was coming, and he thought within himself, ‘It will be all right soon. I shall not get my eyes back. They will not grow again. I am an awful loser by my sin, but I shall get my strength back again, for my hair is growing. I shall be able to strike a blow for my people and for my God yet.’” (Spurgeon)

When a person breaks a Nazarite vow, he can start all over again keeping it and be restored in his vow. That is what is symbolized by the hair growing again. He has gone back into covenant with God. The hair symbolizes the presence of the Nazarite vow. His strength would come back, because he is filled with the power of God again. We call this **REPENTANCE!**

Samson is mocked by his enemies, Verses 23-25:

Verse 23

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

The taking of Samson was seen as a cause for great celebration. So at their next great festival at which great sacrifices would normally be offered to Dagon, the god that they had adopted from the Canaanites, they declared a celebration. He it was, they believed, who had handed Samson over to them.

Verse 24

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.

Their god can do nothing. He is a false god. Samson had done this to himself.

which slew many of us... Thirty men at Ashkelon, more at Timnath, and 1000 with the jawbone of an ass at Lehi.

Verse 25

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.

Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house... Samson was the object of their sport and scorn, and he bore it patiently. Their cruel mocking, buffeting, and spitting; in which he was a type of Christ. It was entertainment to them to see him in his rattling chains, groping, and blundering along from post to pillar. One perhaps giving him a box in the ear, or a slap of the face, another plucking him by his nose or beard, and another spitting in his face. And others taunting at him, and reproaching him.

and they set him between the pillars... Drunk with wine and success they brought Samson out, dirty and in rags, blind and fettered, with hair beginning to grow unnoticed, led by a small boy. How they must have cheered as they made a mockery of him in the courtyard in front of the sanctuary. We do not know what sport they had with him but the great jester had become the laughingstock, a butt for humor and probably a target for rubbish and spittle. Now mocking Samson was their sport. Then they set him between the two main supporting pillars where all could see him, apart from those on the roof, especially the nobles in the covered section directly under the roof.

Verse 26

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.

Since Samson was blind, they had to lead him everywhere. He tells the young man who was leading him, to take him to the pillars which held up the house that he might lean upon them. The

Philistines continued to mock Samson. At this large demonstration, they used a boy to guard him. Being, as he might at least pretend to be, weary, as Josephus says.

Verse 27

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.

This was a special occasion and it is stressed that the temple was dangerously packed. The crowded roof, with the crowds peering over to watch Samson, was probably already affecting the temple's structure, especially when he was led to the pillars and they had to lean over to see him. Everyone was there to see him...

Now the house was full of men and women... The mixing of the sexes like this was not a Jewish custom, but was well accepted in Philistines culture.

Verse 28

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.

And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee... Samson's end was both bitter and sweet. God answered his last prayer, and he achieved his greatest victory against the Philistines at the cost of his own life.

Verse 29

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.

And thus he stood with his arms stretched out, as Jesus on the cross, of whom he was a type, as often observed...

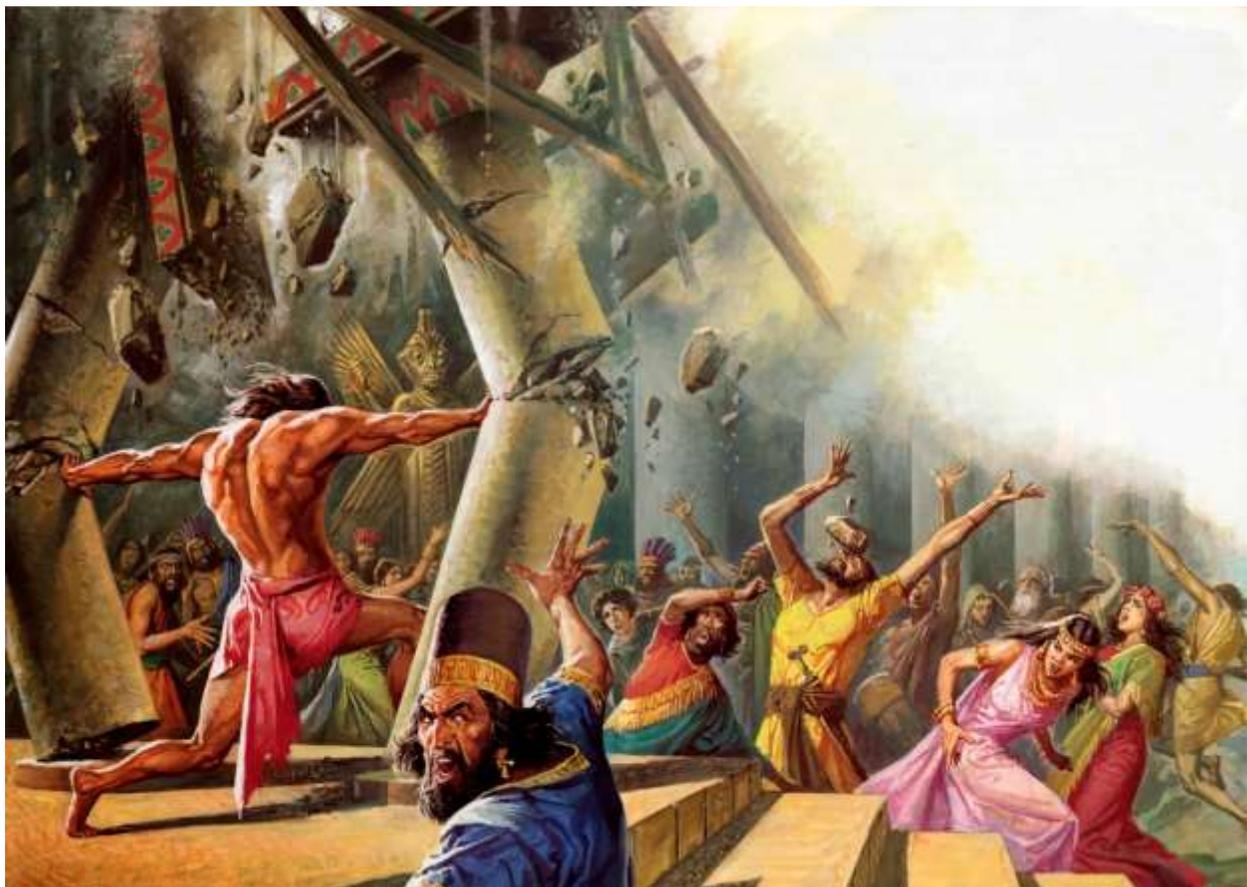
Verse 30

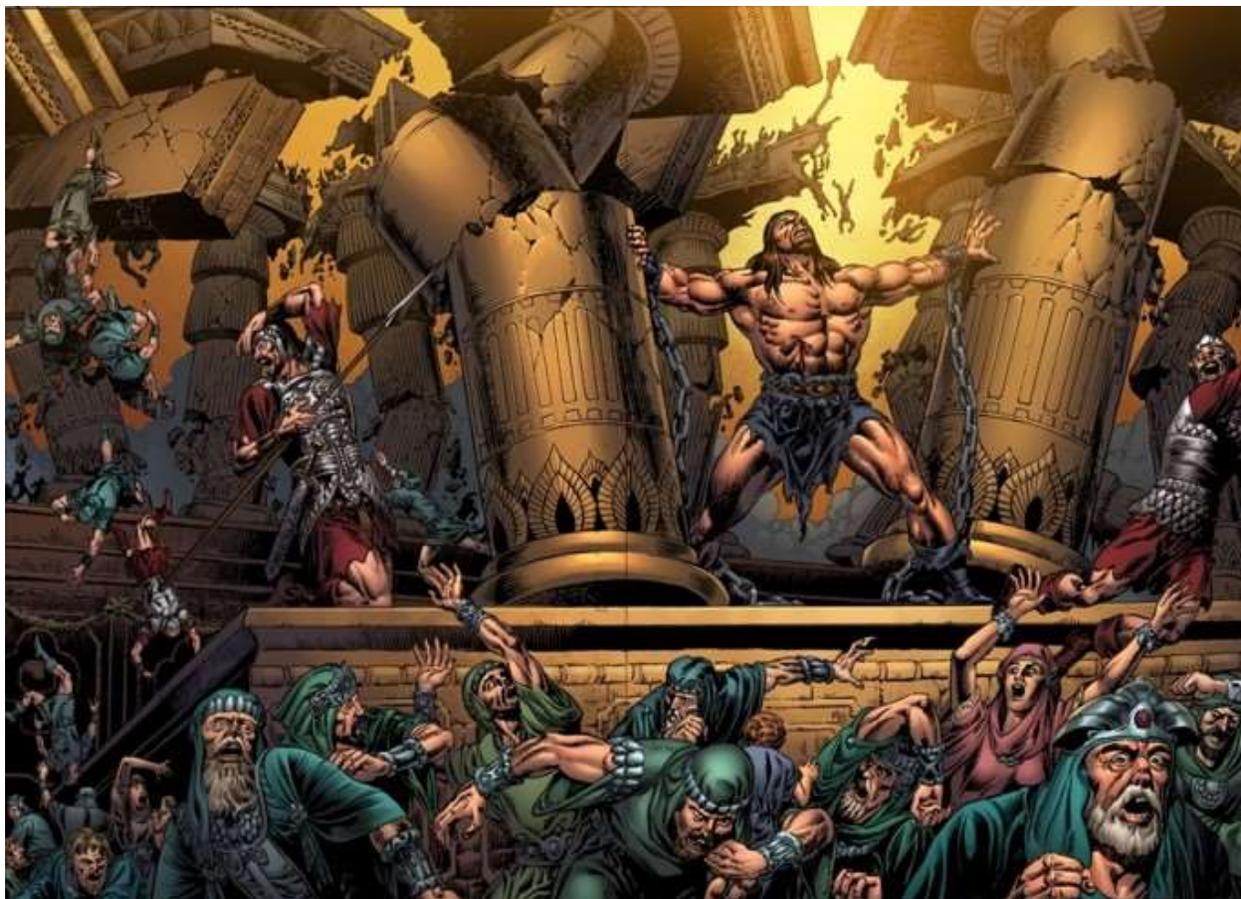
³⁰ And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

It was an act of war and revenge. He gave his life to destroy the Philistine power. For by dragging the pillars off their bases, with part of the roof, already unstable because of the hundreds of people on it, collapsing on those below, the weight of the people would bring down further parts of the roof, especially as many desperately tried to scramble for safety before falling to their deaths, crushing also those hopelessly seeking safety below.

Was Delilah among those whom Samson "liquidated" by this feat? Probably... Would the lords of the Philistines have staged such a tremendous celebration of their victory over Samson, in which their favorite prostitute had played such an important part, without inviting her? Certainly not! There sat Delilah with her benevolent "customers," the lords of the Philistines; and when the slain

were removed, that Delilah dead body, along with the lords who bribed her, received the just reward of her deeds.





This was suicide, but different from suicide in the strict sense in that his purpose really wasn't to kill himself, but to kill as many Philistines as he could. There is a sense in which Samson was like modern suicide-bombers.

Verse 31

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 body was collected by his near kin and was given a respectable burial, and he was gathered to his fathers in the family tomb. It was to the Philistines credit that his body was released. Possibly it was due to the great respect that they had for him as a notable enemy once he was dead. Or it may have been due to the chaos while new Tyrants were appointed.

And he judged Israel twenty years... Repeated from Judges 15:20 this summed up his life, cut short in its prime.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Seventeen Outline: Micah, an Ephraimite, sets up household idols Verses 1-6, Micah hires his own priest Verses 7-13.

This chapter (Judges 17) is actually a preliminary introduction to Judges 18, explaining the origin of a Danite shrine. It tells of the founding of an illegal center of worship in the hill-country of Ephraim. A part of God's Old Covenant with Israel was the restriction of the worship of God to the authorized tabernacle. What Micah did in this chapter was a gross violation of God's commandments.

The bad character of Micah, as well as that of his mother, contrast sharply with the righteousness of Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson.

Judges 17, Micah, an Ephraimite, sets up household idols, Verses 1-6:

Verse 1

1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

Micah, from the tribe of Ephraim, stole 1,100 shekels of silver from his mother and then returned them. His mother **blessed** her son for returning the money, even though he had originally taken it.

This account reveals a lot about the character of Micah, his mother, and the general spiritual state of Israel during this period.

Verse 2

²And 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, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son.

His story begins with his admission that he was a thief. It would seem that he was moved to confess by the fact that she had put a curse on the silver, so that in order to avoid the curse he admitted his wrongdoing and returned the silver. His mother was clearly an old woman for Micah himself was a father of grown up sons. It speaks volumes of Micah that he felt able to steal from his aged mother.

And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son... On his owning up his mother reversed the curse, turning it into a blessing.

Verse 3

³And 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 graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.

Some believe this was an image of a false god (such as Baal or Ashtoreth). Others believe that it was an image representing Jehovah. Either way, God strictly forbade such an image, whether it was meant to represent the true God or not.

The gold calf that Aaron made was actually meant to represent Jehovah (Exodus 32:4-5). But this violated the Second Commandment:

Exodus 20:4-5

⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Verse 4

⁴Yet 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.

At the mother's request two hundred pieces of silver were turned into a graven image and a molten image. These were then placed in Micah's house. It should be noted that she dedicated the silver to Jehovah for the purpose of making these two images.

Verse 5

⁵And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

A counterfeit shrine and personal idols with a private priest is being set up within the tribe of Ephraim (verse 1), whereas God's priests were of the tribe of Levi.

It appears, this mother wanted her son to be protected by the gods. These graven images were just an addition to all the other things in her son's house. An ephod is what a high priest wears in the carrying out of his duties in the temple. It also appears this woman and her son wanted all the blessings of God. They just had some of the false gods around, to make sure they had the power of all of them. Their faith was not in the One True God. As far as they were concerned, he was one of many. All of this is speaking of keeping just the portion of the law that suited them, and dropping all the rest. Their desire was to soon have their own personal priest that they could control. They did not want to go to the place that God had chosen for worshipping Him. The worship of Jehovah was done here, but it had a corrupt side to it with the idols.

Micah established an order of priesthood among his choosing. In each of these, Micah did everything he could to set up a rival religion in Israel.

All of this came from Micah and not from God. This was a completely man-originated and man-centered religion. Therefore the purpose of the shrine, the beautiful ephod, the attractive idols, and the established priesthood was to serve and please man, not God. This pattern of man-pleasing religion continues to be common with many religions and churches today.

Verse 6

⁶In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

In those days there was no king in Israel ... There was, in fact, a king in Israel – Israel should have recognized the Lord God as their King. But since Israel rejected God as King, they were without any good and effective leadership.

but every man did that which was right in his own eyes... This refers to the radical individualism that marked the time of the Judges. People looked to *self* for their guide to morality and ethics. The people genuinely felt that they **did that which was right**, but they measured it only by their **own eyes**.

Here is now the reason for their questionable behavior. It was because in Israel every man did what was right in his own eyes. This in the writer's view was the sad state of things. The first stress here was that the people were lawless and acknowledged no one over them. They did what they wanted and they ignored their true King Who was Jehovah (Deuteronomy 33:5). They did not submit to HIS Kingship or seek to know HIS laws. So it was their attitude of heart which was in question, not the lack of One to rule over them. Because of this they were not submissive to the central sanctuary and to the covenant and to the religious authorities appointed by HIM. The theocracy was failing because of the unresponsiveness of the people. And this was seen as illustrated by Micah.

This is very much like the modern, “follow-your-heart” or “let-your-heart-be-your-guide” thinking. Modern culture regards this as the ideal state of society. Yet the Bible and common sense tell us that this kind of moral, spiritual, and social anarchy brings nothing but destruction.

- It seemed **right** to the **eyes** of Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, but God said it was wrong.
- It seemed **right** to the **eyes** of the sons of Jacob to sell Joseph into slavery, but God said it was wrong.
- It seemed **right** to the **eyes** of Nadab and Abihu to offer strange fire before the Lord, but God said it was wrong.
- It seemed **right** to the **eyes** of King David to commit adultery with Bathsheba and cover it with murder, but God said it was wrong.
- It seemed **right** to the **eyes** of Judas to betray Jesus, but God said it was wrong.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12). When man follows his own instincts — apart from the redeemed nature of the converted person — it leads to ruin. We need to follow God's way, not our own.

Micah hires his own priest, Verses 7-13:

Verses 7 & 8

⁷ And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.

⁸ And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place... The Levite went about the country seeking for some employment, for the Levites had no inheritance: besides, no secure residence could be found where there was no civil government.

and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed... This explains how this particular Levite and Micah crossed paths.

Verse 9

⁹ And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place.

Micah inquires of him where he is going, and the man tells him he is looking for a new home. He also explains that he is of the tribe of Levi, and had been living in Beth-lehem.

The Levites were scattered throughout the whole of Israel and ‘adopted’ into their various tribes, but only as sojourners.

Micah would be providing hospitality and thus politely enquired as to where the man had come from as a fellow Israelite. And when he learned that the man was a Levite, and was looking for an opportunity to exercise his ministry, he recognized that here was an opportunity to make his house of God more significant.

Verse 10

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 apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.

Ten pieces of silver, a suit of clothing and keep each year was probably a very satisfactory wage for such a position. Certainly the Levite thought so. The clothing may have been of a priestly nature, although such clothing may have been provided separately, along with the ephod, as belonging to his house of God.

Micah wanted this Levite to stay with him and work as a priest for him. He did this because he wanted to legitimize his personal shrine by having an officially recognized priest serving there. Deep down he knew that his idolatry was false and meaningless and he hoped that this would make it legitimate.

Verse 11

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

The Levite accepted the offer and was welcomed into the household at the level of a son of the house. Thus he was well treated and shown due respect. He had no reason for showing anything other than loyalty in return.

Verse 12

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

The Levite was installed as priest in Micah's house of God. Strictly of course he should have pointed out where Micah was going amiss, but instead he appears to have gone along with the arrangements, thus confirming to Micah's satisfaction that Micah was on the right lines.



Verse 13

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

Micah's confidence was just as false as his consecration was. They were both based on superstition, not on God's Word.

Concluding Thoughts:

We can say Micah was sincere – but totally wrong. Sincerity is nice, but gets you nowhere if it is not coupled with truth.

This shows the futility of a man-made religion. It also shows the uselessness of worshipping, if you do not worship the One True God and Him alone. A minister should not accept a job as a leader of a church for just the monetary benefits. A minister should be consecrated by God, and not by his people he is to minister to.

“Micah was attempting to maintain his relationship with God by violating the commands of God. The Levite degenerated into an attempt to secure his own material comfort by compromise.” – G. Campbell Morgan

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Eighteen Outline: The Danites seek an inheritance, Verses 1-12. Their robbery, Verses 13-26. Laish taken and idolatry consummated, Verses 27-31.

This chapter describes how the Danites, being unsuccessful in their allotted inheritance, sent out spies to search the land, and discover if they could find a better place to settle and expand. These spies returned and reported that Laish was such, and encouraged the Danites to go with them and possess it. For that purpose they sent six hundred men to capture it, who on their way called at the house of Micah, and stole his priests and his gods. Having captured Laish, they set up Micah's graven image there.

Judges 18: The Danites seek an inheritance, Verses 1-12:

Verse 1

1In those days there was no 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.

Judges Chapters 17-21 will use two incidents in order to demonstrate the uncertain state of Israel during this time. Its theme is **'in those days there was no king in Israel'** (Judges 17:6; Judges 18:1; Judges 19:1; Judges 21:25). There was no King in Israel because they ignored Jehovah their true King.

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... The tribe of Dan had land apportioned to them, but they found their own land too hard to conquer.

Verse 2

²And 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.

The five men each probably represented a clan. They were specially picked men of outstanding ability and courage sent out to find an area where they might conveniently settle, where there were no Philistines or Amorites, and where they would have no difficulty in establishing themselves.

who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there... Looking for easier land to conquer and make their own, the Danites came to the land of the tribe of Ephraim and the house of Micah.

Verse 3

³When 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?

They wanted to know how he had got there, what he was doing there, and whether he had an advantageous position. He then probably introduced them to Micah who generously offered them hospitality.

It may be that the spies from the tribe of Dan knew the traveling Levite personally. It is also possible that they simply recognized his accent as being from the southern part of Judea.

Verse 4

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

The Levite explained to his friends how fortunate he had been, with the result that he had been employed and made a priest in a private house of God.

Verses 5 & 6

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

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

This shows what a spiritually confused time this was in Israel. These Danites on a sinful mission met with a sinful Levite, and wanted to know from a righteous God if their mission would be successful. Then the sinful Levite sent the sinning men on their way with God's (his) blessing.

Verse 7

⁷Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, 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.

The Danites found a city nearby that was not occupied by Israelites, but by a colony of the Zidonians. This was a group that God told Israel to drive out of the land of Canaan (Joshua 13:4).

and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure... The Zidonians were a peaceable, prosperous, quiet and non-violent people, occupying what they no doubt considered to be an isolated part of the earth where no one would bother them.

In his sermon titled *The Danger of Carnal Security*, Charles Spurgeon used the description of the Zidonians in Judges 18:7, 27-28 as a description of the false security of the carnal believer. They are, like the Zidonians:

- Free from all internal struggles or conflicts.
- Free from rulers such as the governor of conscience.
- Free from ties and concerns to other people.

· Free from the fear of invasion.

We must remark here that God did not authorize the brutal and murderous assault of the Danites against this helpless village. God had given them their land in another part of Israel, and the false words of the idolatrous Levite assuring the Danites that God was with them cannot take away the shame of this merciless land-grab on the part of the Danites.

Verse 8

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

The spies came back to Eshtaol and Zorah, and gave their report of what they had seen.

Verse 9

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 still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land.

Seeing that the land was good and the city was not heavily defended, the Danites believed this would be a good city to conquer and take as their own territory.

Verse 10

¹⁰ When ye go, ye shall come unto a people 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.

The people have a large fertile land, and they have want of nothing. They are living the easy life, not expecting anyone to come against them. The 5 spies believe it will be very easy to take them

Verse 11

¹¹ And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

So confident were they of victory that they took along with them, as appears from Judges 18:21, their little ones, and their cattle and precious things. This entire expedition was a fulfilling of Jacob's prophetic words: "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." Genesis 49:17. So, too, Moses likens Dan to a young lion of Bashan that leaps forth suddenly from his ambush upon the prey, Deuteronomy 33:22.

Verse 12

¹² And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjathjearim.

It seems the army stopped here to rest, before going the entire way. "Kirjath-jearim" means city of forests. Perhaps, that is why they stopped here, so they would not be out in the open. "Mahanehdan" means camp of Dan.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



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Judges 18: Their robbery, Verses 13-26:

Verse 13

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

Coming to the house of Micah was no doubt by deliberate design of the five guides. But this was a breach of hospitality. They had eaten at Micah's table which was a profession of friendship. Later they be betraying him. All decency had ceased because every man was doing what was right in his own eyes as we'll see...

Verse 14

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.

The five spies had previously taken full note of the situation and had recognized that they would need a Sanctuary when they established themselves in a new home. And they had realized that here was a God-given opportunity to provide for it fully, even with a priest thrown in, and a priest who had (or so they thought) prophesied their success.

Verse 15

¹⁵ And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

So they made a diversion and came to Micah's house and pretended that they had come to see the young Levite. Micah would happily receive them They had eaten at his table, thus he knew them to be friends. Once they were with the Levite, they asked him how he was faring. His reply would determine their next move.

Verse 16

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.

Curiously, they assembled an army of 600 men to fight for the city of Laish in the land of the tribe of Ephraim; yet they could not fight for the land of their own tribal allotment. For some reason (to them and often to us) a distant battle seemed easier than a close battle.

Verse 17

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.

On their way to Laish, the army of 600 men take Micah's shrine for themselves.

The five men then went up to the house of God and entered it and stole the ephod, the teraphim, the graven image and the molten image. They have taken these things by force. The priest could do nothing but look on, because there are 600 armed men there to see that the five got what they want.

Verse 18

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

This is speaking of the five spies. The priest protested, to no avail. This is stealing of the worst sort. Micah had befriended them when they came through the first time, and now they are stealing from him.

Verse 19

¹⁹ And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a 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?

They are speaking to the priest, and offering him the opportunity to go with them and minister to their new community. He is priest to just one man here. If he goes with them, he will be priest to the whole family that these 600 represent.

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?... Suggesting, that it must be much more honorable for him, and more to his advantage, to officiate as a priest to a large body of people.

Verse 20

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.

The Levite did not care about Micah, only for the pay and status that he might get by being the priest for a whole tribe instead of a mere family.

So The Priest and the Spies steal the **ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image.**

Verse 21

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

We see from this verse that, the wives and children of the 600 fighting men were with them. They put them and the carriage which had the ephod and the other things they had stolen in front. They were expecting Micah to attack them from the rear.

Verse 22

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.

Once Micah discovered that his sacred religious objects had been stolen he gathered as many of his servants and neighbors as he could and gave chase. He did not know for certain how many were in the party who had stolen them and carried off his priest. When he overtook them he probably had a very unpleasant surprise. He had not been expecting such a large force. He would gradually overtake them because they were hindered by their families and flocks and herds.

Verse 23

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?

When they got near enough to the Danites Micah's force called out to them. The Danites then sent representatives to find out their purpose, pretending total innocence. They wished to give the impression that they could not understand why anyone should wish to challenge them. Their question was, what should such an obviously confrontational group want with them? What was their problem?

Verse 24

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?

How sad that an Israelite should assume that he could make a god; and how strange that a man should have to rescue his god!

Verse 25

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.

To paraphrase this: "Look Bud, stop whining or you'll make our army mad and they will kill you and your family."

Verse 26

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.

At least, Micah and his men went home with their lives. They were disappointed, but alive.

Laish taken and idolatry consummated, Verses 27-31:

Verse 27

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 quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

This is written in a way meant to make us at least a little sympathetic for the people of Laish. The people of Israel were instructed to take the land from the Canaanites, but this seemed like an unprincipled attack from wicked men of the tribe of Dan.

These cruel men of Dan came in, and brutally killed these quiet people of Laish. They burned the city as well. They are a violent, ruthless people.

Verse 28

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 Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man... There is a strong hint here of the importance of the covenant relationship. This too was why Israel were having such problems, because they neglected the tribal confederacy. Let them learn a lesson from these people. Without allies they were vulnerable.

Verse 29

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.

This is speaking of the new city that they built on the sight of the old city. Laish was renamed Dan.

Verse 30

³⁰ And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

We learn here who the Levite was who had been installed as priest by Micah. His name was Jonathan and he claimed direct descent from Moses. In view of the shortness of the time that had passed this could probably be verified. Thus the Danite sanctuary claimed Moses as the source of their priesthood. It was a sad reflection on the state of things when a descendant of Moses could behave as he had done, setting up as a priest, contrary to the Law of Moses, aiding the theft of the religious objects, and deserting his benefactor.

Verse 31

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

This was the beginning of *established* idolatry in Israel in the Promised Land. There was *individual* idolatry in Israel long before this, but this is *official* idolatry.

Through a strange chain of events, this began with a son stealing 1,100 shekels from his mother (Judges 17:1-2). It ended with an entire tribe of Israel led into established idolatry.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Nineteen Outline: The sad story of The Levite and his concubine, Verses 1-30.

Overview: This chapter gives an account of the sad story of a Levite and his concubine, and of the evil consequences following it. It describes how she played the whore, and went away from him to her father's house, to which he followed her. There he was hospitably entertained by her father for several days, and then set out on his journey back to his own country. And passing by Jebus or Jerusalem, he came to Gibeah, and could get no lodging, but was taken in by an old man, an Ephraimite.

But the house where he was enjoying hospitality was harassed by some evil men in Gibeah, with the same intent with which the men of Sodom surrounded the house of Lot (Genesis 19:1-11). And after some argument between the old man and them, the concubine was brought out to them and abused by them until she died. On this the Levite her husband cut her into twelve pieces, and sent the pieces into all the borders of Israel, as a shocking message to Israel of what had been done in their midst.

Why should such a story have been included in the sacred record? The first reason was because it demonstrated how far the people of Israel had fallen from what they once were. How they had been contaminated by the inhabitants of the land, with their sexually perverted ways, in which they had come to dwell. They no longer obeyed the commandments in the covenant, especially 'you shall not commit adultery' and 'you shall not kill'. Secondly it demonstrated that the leadership of Israel were failing, and that their attitudes of heart were wrong. **Every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6; Judges 21:25)**. The tribes were not as tightly bound in the covenant as they should have been, although this incident greatly contributed to the cementing of that unity. Thirdly it demonstrated that when the right occasion came along they could act together as Jehovah had intended. And fourthly it stressed the sanctity of Levites. We note that the man's name is never mentioned. That is because in a sense he represented all Levites. They were holy and not to be treated lightly.

Judges 19, Verse 1

1 And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel... The idea is that there was no central authority to ensure the administration of justice, and the Kingship of Jehovah was being ignored.

who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah... In this sense a concubine was a legal mistress. Many prominent men in the Old Testament had concubines. Examples include Abraham (Genesis 25:6), Jacob (Genesis 35:22), Caleb (1 Chronicles 2:46), Saul (2 Samuel 3:7), David (2

Samuel 5:13), Solomon (1 Kings 11:3 + 300 concubines), and Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:21). Significantly, we never see this kind of family life blessed by God.

Note: The New Testament makes it clear that from the beginning God's plan was one man and one woman to be one flesh forever (Matthew 19:4-6), and each man is to be a "one-woman man" (1 Timothy 3:2).

Verse 2

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

She should have been killed as the law required and could have been if there was devotion to holiness and obedience to Scripture (compare Leviticus 20:10). Yet, he made little of her sin and separation and sought her back sympathetically (verse 3).

Leviticus 20:10

¹⁰ And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Verse 3

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.

We see that the Levite has made a special effort to come and get his concubine. There possibly had been some trouble before, because he seems to be speaking friendly words to her here. The father of the damsel seems to be pleased, that the Levite has made this effort to come and make peace with his concubine-wife.

Verse 4

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.

This was a time of fellowship with the girl's father. It was almost like a celebration, now that they have gone back together. The father loves his daughter, and seems to be fond of the son-in-law as well. This three days was like an extended vacation.

Verse 5

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, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

The father-in-law wants to be with them the last minute he can. He insists on them having breakfast before they go.

Verse 6

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.

They enjoyed their conversation together over breakfast and the father-in-law convinces them to stay another day.

Verse 7

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

It seems the father-in-law is having trouble letting them leave. One more night!

Verse 8

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.

They visited all day, again, even until late in the afternoon, before they began their journey. They have been here 5 days, and the father still wants them to stay, but they feel they must go home. The son-in-law is probably enjoying this nearly as much as the girl's father.

Verse 9

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.

Interestingly this is the first indication that we know that the concubine had agreed to go back with him, although the hospitality shown did suggest it. Night was now approaching and he wanted to be on his way as quickly as possible.

Verse 10

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.

This time he was determined on his journey. He saw that this could go on forever, and realized that his father-in-law would continue to seek to keep him there. It definitely seemed as though his wife was very reluctant to go with him. So, come what may, he was determined to go.

and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem... They arrived just outside Jebus. This was Jerusalem, then popularly known as Jebus, because inhabited by the Jebusites.

Verse 11

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.

The servant suggested that as night was approaching it might be wise to find lodging for the night. This could be in an inn or it may have been through seeking hospitality at the gate of the city (Genesis 19:1), from some worthy citizen. In those days inns were few and hospitality was regularly offered to travelers at the gate of the city. It was looked on by the worthy as a sacred responsibility, and once a man was under your roof you were looked on as having sacred obligations towards him.

Verse 12

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.

We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel...

It is stressed that the city was not one that belonged to Israel. It is ironic. The city had once been captured by the Israelites (Judges 1:8) but was retaken when they moved on to more victories. And from then on the fortress had proved invulnerable (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21). The Jebusites continued to live among the people of Judah and Benjamin, safe in their fortified city

The Levite is a little reluctant to go into a strange city, where there are no Israelites. He knows that many of these people are evil. He wants to go on to Gibeah. Gibeah was of the tribe of Benjamin, and is about two and a half more hours down the road.

Verse 13

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.

So he decided to set off to one of the nearby Israelite towns, either Gibeah or Ramah, which were close to each other, about two miles apart. Fatally Gibeah was the nearest.

Verse 14

¹⁴ And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin.

The choice was made for them by the time of day when they reached Gibeah, for the sun set, and night came on. Instead of going forward, and passing by Gibeah to make for Ramah, they turned off the road, and went into the city to seek a lodging there.

Verse 15

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.

for there was no man that took them into his house to lodging... Normally someone would welcome strangers at the gate of the city. Inns were mainly on the roads between towns and hospitality in towns was dependent on the inhabitants. But here there was no welcome. In a way this was ominous. Not only did it demonstrate that the people were unusually inhospitable, it raised the question as to why. For hospitality was considered extremely important.

Verse 16

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 sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites.

This old man seems to be living in this city, but he has come from Mount Ephraim. It appears, he has just stopped work for the night, and headed to his house to rest.

Verse 17

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?

and whence comest thou?... The meaning of the questions is, what place he was travelling to, and from where he last came from.

The old man stops to ask of the welfare of the Levite and his concubine. He has more compassion than the others who live in this city.

Verse 18

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

He is going to the tabernacle, which is located at Shiloh at this time. He explains that he is from mount Ephraim, and has been to Bethlehem in Judah. He also explains that no one offered to take them in.

Verse 19

¹⁹ Yet there is both straw and provender 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.

He now explains to the man that they are not beggars. They have their own straw and provender for their animals. They even have their own food and drink. They have need of nothing, but a place to lay their heads for a while.

Verse 20

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

Peace be with thee... A regular polite greeting between two people, denoting acceptance, still regularly offered today.

The old man knew the danger of such a place at night. The old man takes them in off the street. They have found one person who had compassion on them.

Verse 21

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

and gave provender unto the asses... Notice that the donkeys were first taken care of then the people.

and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink... This was the second thing they did, for they would be wearing sandals and the roads would be dusty, and their feet sweaty. Then they settled down to eat. Everything was seemingly going well after all, and they no doubt felt greatly relieved....

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Nineteen Outline: The sad story of The Levite and his concubine, Verses 1-30.

Overview: This chapter gives an account of the sad story of a Levite and his concubine, and of the evil consequences following it. It describes how she played the whore, and went away from him to her father's house, to which he followed her. There he was hospitably entertained by her father for several days, and then set out on his journey back to his own country. And passing by Jebus or Jerusalem, he came to Gibeah, and could get no lodging, but was taken in by an old man, an Ephraimite.

But the house where he was enjoying hospitality was harassed by some evil men in Gibeah, with the same intent with which the men of Sodom surrounded the house of Lot (Genesis 19:1-11). And after some argument between the old man and them, the concubine was brought out to them and abused by them until she died. On this the Levite her husband cut her into twelve pieces, and sent the pieces into all the borders of Israel, as a shocking message to Israel of what had been done in their midst.

Why should such a story have been included in the sacred record? The first reason was because it demonstrated how far the people of Israel had fallen from what they once were. How they had been contaminated by the inhabitants of the land, with their sexually perverted ways, in which they had come to dwell. They no longer obeyed the commandments in the covenant, especially 'you shall not commit adultery' and 'you shall not kill'. Secondly it demonstrated that the leadership of Israel were failing, and that their attitudes of heart were wrong. **Every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6; Judges 21:25)**. The tribes were not as tightly bound in the covenant as they should have been, although this incident greatly contributed to the cementing of that unity. Thirdly it demonstrated that when the right occasion came along they could act together as Jehovah had intended. And fourthly it stressed the sanctity of Levites. We note that the man's name is never mentioned. That is because in a sense he represented all Levites. They were holy and not to be treated lightly.

Judges 19, Verse 22

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 know him.

sons of Belial... Means "worthless fellows".

beat at the door... Indicates that there was an increasingly loud pounding on the door. This was in no way a polite or casual request.

Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him... Their request was the same made by the homosexuals who surrounded the house of Lot in Sodom ([Genesis 19:5](#)). The picture is clear: During the time of the Judges, Israel was as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah.

There was hardly ever a more tragic episode than this. In this narrative the Lord has given us a picture of the true nature of the homosexual. He is an unqualified beast, willing to sacrifice any human being whomsoever upon the altar of his own selfish lust. We are astounded that some in our age are willing to apologize and even seek grounds of justification for this type of perversion! It has even been described as an **ACCEPTABLE** modern lifestyle. Ridiculous! The example before us occurred shortly after the conquest of Canaan in 1,400 B.C., and there was also the despicable example of the sodomites of Sodom and Gomorrah centuries earlier in the times of Abraham and Lot (Genesis 19).

The Holy Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the disapproval of God frowns upon all such activity, and an apostle has declared that impenitent practitioners of this shameful vice (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

The resemblance of this narrative to that of Genesis 19 suggests that the Israelites by their contact with the Canaanites had themselves been reduced to the level of the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah, and it shows the wisdom of God in commanding that such workers of abomination should have been destroyed. A society that is willing to put up with this type of immorality is placing a celestial order for its own destruction.

The prophet Hosea (Hosea 9:9) made allusion to 'the days of Gibeah' as a time of notorious moral depravity.

Hosea 9:9

⁹They have deeply corrupted themselves, **as in the days of Gibeah**: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

Verse 23

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.

He argues from the law of hospitality, which ought not to be infringed. A man being obliged to protect a stranger under his roof. The old man pleads for the Levite's safety.

Verse 24

²⁴ Behold, here is my 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.

Though the perverted men of Gibeah were clearly guilty, so were the Levite and the host of the home. They clearly should have been willing to sacrifice themselves before their daughters and companions.

Each person in this sordid drama was guilty, **except of course for the concubine herself!**

- The wicked men of Gibeah who were more like men of Sodom and Gomorrah than men of Israel.
- The master of the house who was willing to sacrifice his own daughter.
- The Levite who cared nothing for his concubine.

Verse 25

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.

When describing the full meaning of the original Hebrew, Bible Commentator Adam Clarke, due to modesty, did not translate the meaning into English. He left it in Latin so only the learned could understand the full implications of the wickedness and perversion of the men of Gibeah.

Verse 26

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.

This type of horrible sin nearly always occurs under the cover of darkness. They brought her back at daylight, and left her at the door.



Verse 27

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.

She was finally allowed to leave, and she painfully and broken-heartedly made her way, using the last ounce of her ebbing strength to gain what she hoped would be a place of safety, but she fell dead upon the doorstep in the chill of the early morning.

Verse 28

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

He thought that she was sleeping and spoke to her to wake her and let her know that they were leaving this dreadful place.

But, when he finally checked on her the next morning, she was dead. Her posture suggests that she had almost made it. Her hands were on the very threshold. She had come back for help to the house where her husband was, but he was too cowardly to help her. It seemed as if he had very little feelings for her. He had slept through her ordeal.

Verse 29

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 sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

This is one piece for each of the tribes of Israel, to let them see the terrible degraded society they lived in.



Verse 30

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.

This was a call for action and judgment in legal jargon. They were to weigh up the situation, discuss the matter together and then come to a decision.

The whole episode demonstrates how low morals in Israel had fallen. The Levite's attitude to his concubine wife, his failure to protect her, the lack of hospitality from anyone except the old man, the behaviour of the men of Gibeah, all reflected the level to which society had fallen.

This account is just another example (although an extreme one) of instances throughout the book of Judges in which Israel forsook God after the death of Joshua.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Twenty Outline: The nation gathers at the Levite's request and The Levite describes the abuse and murder of his concubine, verses 1-7. Preparations for war made, verses 8-11. Benjamin's help sought and not given, verses 12-17. The long Battle between Israel and Benjamin, verses 18-48.

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When this also is rejected they go in to do it themselves. In order, in their view, to avoid the wrath of God, the tribal confederacy seek to enforce their decree. This results in a tribal war which is evidence of a serious breach of covenant on behalf of Benjamin, and eventually, after two setbacks, they defeat the children of Benjamin with God's backing, and exact the vengeance which The Law required and the near extermination of Benjamin.

The nation gathers at the Levite's request and The Levite describes the abuse and murder of his concubine, verses 1-7:

Judges 20, Verse 1:

1 Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpeh.

Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man... It was a positive sign to see Israel gather for such a reason. This showed that they were willing to deal with the problem of sin in their midst.

The reason for the assembly here was that, it was in three miles from Gibeah, in the heart of Benjamite territory.

Verse 2

²And 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.

And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God... All except the tribe of Benjamin. A 400,00 Man Army!

Verse 3

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?

Israel had asked The Children of Benjamin about the murder of the Concubine. The children of Benjamin wanted to know about why they had assembled at Mizpeh, and if they could do something about the prior outrage.

Verse 4

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

He stood up before the judges in order to testify to the hearing the facts of the case.

Seven times the Levite used the pronouns, "I," "me" and "my" along with very slight mention of the concubine in the next few verses. Furthermore, he failed to report that it was his own shameful cowardice that handed the concubine over to her abusers. Also, the text does NOT say that the men of Gibeah attempted to kill him; they wanted to abuse him homosexually. The Levite's report aroused all Israel to a state of frenzied wrath, by one man telling half the truth.

Verse 5

⁵And 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 forced, that she is dead.

The Levite spun the story to his own advantage. What he said was true, but he didn't mention the cruel and callous way he abandoned his concubine to the mob in Chapter 19.

Verse 6

⁶And **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 folly in Israel.

This is saying they wanted to abuse the Levite, but instead they abused his concubine all night long until they killed her. He sent the portions of her body to them to get them to take action against this evil city. He especially wanted the men who did this terrible crime to be punished by death.

Verse 7

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

This was probably an official way of ending testimony. He requested the court to consider the facts and give their verdict on behalf of the whole confederation, in the light of the covenant of God made with Israel through Moses.

Preparations for war made, verses 8-11:

Verse 8

⁸And 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.

The unanimous decision was to put to death the guilty men of Gibeah. This intention to put to death the guilty men of Gibeah was fully in accordance with God's will. The Law of Moses designated such a crime as the rape of the concubine a capital offense and commanded the execution of the death penalty upon the perpetrators (Deuteronomy 22:22). It is to the credit of

Israel, however, that they moved first toward a simple resolution of the matter through negotiations.

Verses 9 & 10

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

Verse 10

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 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.

Ten men were to provide food for ninety, and one hundred men for nine hundred, and 1000 men for 9000, in all 40,000, for 360,000.

1 out of 10 will be chosen to furnish food for this large group. There will be 40,000 who will round up the food for the rest of them to eat. The lot will choose who will have charge of the food.

Verse 11

¹¹ So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

The army was gathered as agreed, and they were all one in their aims.

Benjamin's help sought and not given, verses 12-17:

Verse 12

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

The other tribes of Israel did the right thing in asking the tribe of Benjamin to deliver up the men who committed this crime. They sought to justly resolve the crisis without full war. But the tribe of Benjamin committed a great sin by putting loyalty to their tribe before obedience to God's Law.

Verse 13

¹³ Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of 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.

The first phrase was intended to make them consider the position and was presumably accompanied by the details of the case. The second was a demand that the guilty men be handed over to be put to death.

Note: What they should have done was ensured that the children of Benjamin were included in the deliberations, then things might have turned out differently. But men are naturally arrogant, especially when they think they have the truth, and their anger was aroused. What they wanted was right. It was the way they went about it that was wrong. It is not wise to make important decisions in anger. Many a church has been divided by such heavy-handed tactics.

Modern Christians can make the same mistake today when they put the interests of their own nation before the interests of the Kingdom of God. It is important for Christians to remember that they are citizens of the Kingdom of God first.

Philippians 3:20

²⁰For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Verse 14

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

Contrary to the Law of Moses, Benjamin would not consent to the execution of the homosexual rapists who had abused to death the concubine of the Levite, deciding, instead, to go to war against the whole nation of their brethren, rather than to consent to it. This meant that the entire tribe of Benjamin had departed from God.

This response of the Benjamites was deplorable. Rather than surrender a few guilty persons to justice, they suddenly decided on an armed defense of the murderers, thus bringing about a judgment against their whole tribe and the near-extirpation of it. It is bad enough to commit a grievous sin, but worse to defend it! Like many today, however, Benjamin was unwilling to accept reproof. They would learn the hard way, that:

Proverbs 29:1

1 He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Verse 15

¹⁵And the children of Benjamin were numbered 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.

The children of Benjamin were numbered for battle and their numbers came to twenty six military units, compared with the four hundred military units of the tribal confederacy. They also had the men of Gibeah who would fight to the death for their city. There were seven hundred of them and they were 'chosen men', powerful fighters.

Verse 16

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

The slings of ancient armies were deadly weapons, and it appears that the Benjamites were unusually skillful in their use. It was with such a weapon that David slew Goliath of Gath. It has been estimated that stones weighing up to one pound could be projected with uncanny accuracy at speeds up to 90 miles per hour.

Verse 17

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

After the 40,000 were sent to get food, there were 360,000 fighting men.

War was inevitable...

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The long Battle between Israel and Benjamin, verses 18-48:

Judges 20, Verse 18:

¹⁸ And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, 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.

The same question that was asked when they went to battle against the Canaanites, (Judges 1:1,) and the same answer was given. They felt that all preparations for battle were incomplete until they had received a communication from God; but it was a grievous mistake in them not to have asked counsel of the Lord before declaring war against their brother Benjamin, and for this neglect and their self-confidence they pay dearly before the war is over.

Verse 19

¹⁹ And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.

Formed a camp near Gibeah of 360,000 men, enough to have stormed and taken that city at once, one would think...

Verse 20

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.

The battle is ready to begin...

Verse 21

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.

This was a staggering severe loss in the first battle of this small civil war. After this first day of battle it seemed that single tribe of Benjamin might successfully resist the other tribes of Israel.

Verse 22

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.

They were terribly defeated the first day, but they have reasoned why this happened. Now, they will try another time to defeat the army of Benjamin.

Verse 23

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.)

This shows a humbling of themselves. They have just suffered a terrible loss in battle, and that in itself was humbling to them. They are aware that God must be with them, if they are to win this battle. They have done all they know to do by going to the LORD, before they go into battle. They are now, going into battle with the permission of the LORD.

Verse 24

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

After a first day of heavy losses, they children of Israel were willing to keep fighting.

Verse 25

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.

The loss on the second day of battle was also severe. This shows that even though the tribes of Israel sought the Lord and fought in a just cause, it was still a very difficult struggle. There was a great cost for them to pay in doing what was right.

Verse 26, Repentance:

²⁶ Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the 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.

God used this to humble the whole nation. They had to understand that the horror of the crime at Gibeah was not merely the result of the sin of one group of men, or one city, or even one tribe. The whole nation had to be humbled because they first thought that the sin problem was only in Benjamin. Israel had to see that that nation as a whole had a sin problem.

After the first failure, Israel was sorry and wept. But it was only after the second failure that they put their repentance into action by fasting and made a sacrifice for sins. Sorrow and weeping are

not enough if they are not matched by real repentance and taking care of the sin problem through sacrifice – the sacrifice of the cross.

Part of their demonstration of humility was in *fasting*. In 1827, Adam Clarke wrote about fasting: “At present it is but little used; a strong proof that *self-denial* is wearing out of fashion.” Clarke thought this was true of his day; he would probably think it all the more true of modern times.

Verse 27

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

This is the only reference to the “ark of the covenant” in the Book of Judges. This reflects how seldom the Israelites consulted God during this time.

Verse 28

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.

Phinehas was the grandson of Aaron. He also, was the son of Eleazar. He was the high priest in the tabernacle, when all of this was happening. The high priest is the only one who could go before the ark, and inquire of the LORD. He asks if the Lord would be with them, if they went again. The LORD promises to deliver them into the hands of the Israelites in the next battle.

The mention of Phinehas as high priest means that this was fairly early in the days of the Judges (Numbers 25:7, 11).

Verses 29-48: Despite how far Israel had fallen away from their faith, Jehovah still orchestrated their battle and brought justice against “Benjamin”.

Verses 29-48 Third day of battle – victory for Israel over Benjamin and Gibeah.

A description of the Battle:

Verse 29

²⁹ And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah.

liers = Using Men to set an ambush, in a horizontal position.

Their previous tactics had not worked, probably because of the slingers. Now they decided that they must draw the children of Benjamin out of the city allowing the liers in wait to come in from behind and capture the city. These may well have been put in place at night. The tactics followed those of Joshua at Ai (Joshua 8).

Verse 30

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.

This was the third day of battle not the third day in succession. There were three memorable days of battle. This was the third of them. The number three is the number of completeness and this indicated to them that God’s perfect plan was coming to completion.

Verse 31

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.

The children of Israel went into retreat drawing the Benjaminites after them into the highways in the open country going towards Bethel. The Benjaminites, reveling in this further success, followed them leaving Gibeah relatively undefended. And they killed thirty men of Israel.

Verse 32

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.

And the children of Benjamin said... This was their view of the position. They were overconfident and became careless, forgetting that their previous victories had been due to the slingers and the massed ranks of their enemies coming towards them.

But the children of Israel said... This was the strategy of the children of Israel, to draw the Benjaminites away from the city by pretending to be afraid of them and not able to face them. So they fled along the highways which enabled them to move at speed without becoming too disorganized, followed by the hotly pursuing Benjaminites.

Verse 33

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

As the fleeing Israelites came towards them, followed by the overjoyed Benjaminites, they rose up and drew up in battle formation at Baaltamar, a place on the route.

and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places... Totally unknown to the Benjaminites a hidden force began to advance on Gibeah from the rear. The writer is building up the picture of the battle as it progressed.

Verse 34

³⁴ And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was near them.

These are the men who had been liers in wait. They were a select group out of the larger army. They attacked Gibeah, while the Benjaminites were fighting the other Israelites. This is speaking of the people of Gibeah being caught unaware.

Verse 35

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

It appears, that 25,100 of the fighters for the tribe of Benjamin died this day in their battle against Israel. They started with 26,700 fighting men so this leaves just a remnant. Only 1,600 men remain. Some of them could have died the first two days of battle.

Verse 36

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.

A summary of the situation. Benjamin now became aware that their end was near.

Verse 37

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.

The weakly defended city, with only one fighting unit available, was unable to stem the onset and succumbed, and all were put to the sword for they were seen as sharing the guilt of Gibeah.

Verse 38

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.

The smoke would alert their fellow soldiers that the city had been taken...

Verse 39

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.

This time the children of Israel only lost thirty men.

Verse 40

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.

Fire being set to it by the liers in wait, who had entered it, and who made a large fire. Which caused a vast pillar of flame and smoke to arise, which might be seen a great way off.

This handful of Benjamites suddenly realized they had lost the battle, when they looked behind them and saw the city burning.

Verse 41

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

At this strange and sudden change of things, at the sight of the flame of their city behind them, and at the Israelites turning back to fight them.

Verse 42

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.

After the Benjamites killed the 30 Israelites, the Israelites turned on them in attack. The Benjamites, knowing all was lost, turned and ran to the woods. The Israelites followed them into the woods and killed them.

Verse 43

⁴³ Thus they inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sunrising.

This describes the pursuit. The Benjaminites were surrounded on all sides, for the confederation dwelt in lands all round, and men would come from all sides to wreak vengeance on Benjamin. The pursuit was so fierce that as soon as Benjaminites stopped exhausted for a rest they would be overtaken and slaughtered.

Verse 44

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

A bad day for Benjamin...

Verse 45

⁴⁵ And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.

The picture is dreadful, but vivid. One by one the men of Benjamin were picked off as they used the highways to try to reach Rimmon, a whole five units of men. Two units managed to reach Gidom, but there they had to make a stand and were defeated.

Verse 46

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.

Twenty five of the twenty six military units were destroyed in battle and pursuit.

Verse 47

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

Of the army that started out only six hundred identifiable men remained!

Verse 48

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.

This is speaking of an almost annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin. This is a ruthless act upon the part of the Israelites. The Benjamites were their relatives. They burned their cities, and killed their people.

Pastor Hank's Notes on: The Book of Judges



Chapter Twenty-one Outline: The remorse of Israel, Verses 1-7. The destruction of JABESH-GILEAD, Verse 8-12. Reconciliation with Benjamin, Verse 13-15. The Plan for getting 200 more wives, Verses 16-21. Benjamin takes their wives, Verses 22-24. Final Comment, Verse 25.

The remorse of Israel, Verses 1-7:

Judges 21

Verse 1

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

There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife... Considering their anger against Benjamin, this probably seemed like the right thing to do. But this foolish oath had unforeseen consequences. Justice not only brings punishment to evildoers, but it also guards against punishment that is too harsh.

Israel who had spared the Canaanites in many places, who were devoted to destruction by Divine command (finding countless excuses for doing so), could not find in their hearts the willingness to spare their own brothers who had been devoted to destruction, not by God's command, but by their own rash and irresponsible oath.

Verses 2 & 3:

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

³And 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?

Having carried out their dreadful massacre the people suddenly realized the consequences of what they had done, they had destroyed a Tribe in Israel. This struck them so vividly that they went **to the house of God** to seek God's guidance on the matter.

They cried out to God, almost as if it was His responsibility that the tribe of Benjamin was on the edge of extinction. The question, "**why has this come to pass?**" was easily answered: Because of the excessive vengeance of the tribes of Israel against the tribe of Benjamin.

that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel?... Down to almost only 600 men – and those men unable to marry because of the curse pronounced in **Judges 21:1** – the tribe of Benjamin was almost extinct.

Verse 4

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

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar... The day after their fasting and prayer, and a sense of their present case and circumstances being deeply impressed upon their minds. They rose early in the morning to acts of devotion, and exercises of religion.

and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings... Both to atone for the sins they had been guilty of in the prosecution of the war, and to return thanks for victory given, and to implore fresh favors to be bestowed upon them.

They are thankful the war is over, and this terrible sin has been removed from their people, but they are sad for the loss of the tribe of Benjamin.

Verse 5

⁵ And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the 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.

And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD?... When they were summoned to come to Mizpeh, to consult together about the affair of the Levite's concubine.

Included in the oath made at Mizpeh was that any who did not respond to the call of the tribal confederacy would be put to death. (These solemn oaths remind us how seriously they took their tribal covenant). Now was the time for giving account.

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... In a very awful and solemn manner, with a curse annexed to it, as that about not giving a wife to Benjamin (Judges 21:18).

Verse 6

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

Benjamin had nearly been destroyed and they were thinking how they could restore them.

Verse 7

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?

They had decided on mercy for the six hundred holed up in the Rock, but the problem now was how to find wives for them without breaking their solemn oath to The LORD.

The destruction of JABESH-GILEAD, Verse 8-12:

Verses 8 & 9

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 Jabeshgilead to the assembly.

⁹ For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead there.

A check was made of the tribes and sub-tribes and it was discovered that the people of Jabeshgilead had failed to respond. They were seen as having directly refused to obey The LORD. Such a failure rendered them liable to The Ban in accordance with the oath taken at the assembly.

Verses 10 & 11

¹⁰ And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead 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.

The carrying out of the same procedure on Jabeshgilead as on the Benjaminites demonstrates how seriously this campaign and the stain of the actions of the men of Gibeah were taken. It was seen as a sacred crusade to eradicate deep sin in the tribal confederacy. And those who would not partake were considered to be tainted with the sin of the men of Gibeah. They were traitors to the covenant, and the penalty for that was death

Verse 12

¹² And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead 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.

The Ban was carried out and four hundred virgins spared who **‘had known no man by lying with any male’**.

Reconciliation with Benjamin, Verse 13-15:

Verses 13

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.

Israel was trying to make peace with the remnant of 600 men of Benjamin. They did not want to kill the Benjamites. Instead, they were trying to find them wives, so the tribe of Benjamin could live on.

Verse 14

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

In doing which they supposed they had not violated their oath, since though they had sworn that they would not give their own daughters. They had not sworn they would not give the daughters of others. And besides, as the men of Jabeshgilead were not at Mizpeh when the oaths were made, they had taken none. And so their daughters might be given in marriage to the Benjamites, notwithstanding that oath.

Verse 15

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

The LORD had caused a division among Benjamin and the other tribes. All of the other tribes were wanting the tribe of Benjamin to again, be part of the 12 tribes.

The Plan for getting 200 more wives, Verses 16-21:

Verse 16

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?

Thus the problem was how to obtain wives for the two hundred still without them. There were 600 men and 400 Jabeshgilead young virgins. They need 200 more wives!

Verse 17

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.

The inheritance promised by Jacob and Moses, and given by Joshua to the tribe of Benjamin.

Verse 18

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.

Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

The repetition of the former (Judges 21:1; Judges 21:7) was to remind the hearers of the narrative when it was read, and may also indicate their continual repetition to themselves because of the headache they had caused themselves.

Verse 19

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 Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

All Israel would gather to the central sanctuary for the feast to celebrate the harvest and it would provide opportunity for their plan to work. The position of Shiloh was carefully described. It was an important site to Israel, and it would seem that the Tabernacle had again returned there.

Verse 20

²⁰ Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;

The two hundred men of the tribe that wanted wives; they ordered them as follows, and which they spake with authority, being the elders of the congregation.

Verse 21

²¹ And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to 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.

That is, let each man of the two hundred Benjamites seize and carry off a woman, whom he is, from that hour, to consider as his wife.

How to give Benjamin 200 wives without violating the curse, Verses 22-24:

Verse 22

²²And 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 guilty.

They would kidnap themselves wives, and take them home with them to the land of Benjamin. This was a prepared encounter. The fathers could not give their daughters to them, without being cursed. The Benjamites could kidnap them, and the father would not be held accountable.

Verse 23

²³And 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.

They answered the problem of wives for the remaining Benjaminites by creating a little drama where the Benjaminites were allowed to “kidnap” women (who were no doubt willing), so that the marriages could be arranged without “official” approval.

Verse 24

²⁴And 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.

In this, the tribe of Benjamin was sufficiently restored and later to provide Israel with its first king (Saul).

Final Comment, Verse 25:

Verse 25

²⁵In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21:25 concludes the story of the atrocity of the men of Gibeah and the Benjamites (Chapters 19-21). This second vignette from the period of the judges began and ends with the same statement (cf. Judges 19:1). It reflects the failure of Israel in this event in its history to acknowledge the sovereignty of Jehovah in a practical way.

Judges 19-21 gives us the ugliest story in the Bible. The key to it is that, at every stage, men were acting on the basis of what was right in their own eyes. As far as the men of Gibeah were concerned, rape was all right. To the farmer and the Levite in the house, homosexual rape was unthinkable, but other rape was acceptable. The men of Benjamin thought it was right to overlook sin and to defend evil men. To Israel, revenge and retaliation would be justified, and to solve their problems about marriage for the Benjamites, the massacre of innocent people and kidnapping could be condoned.

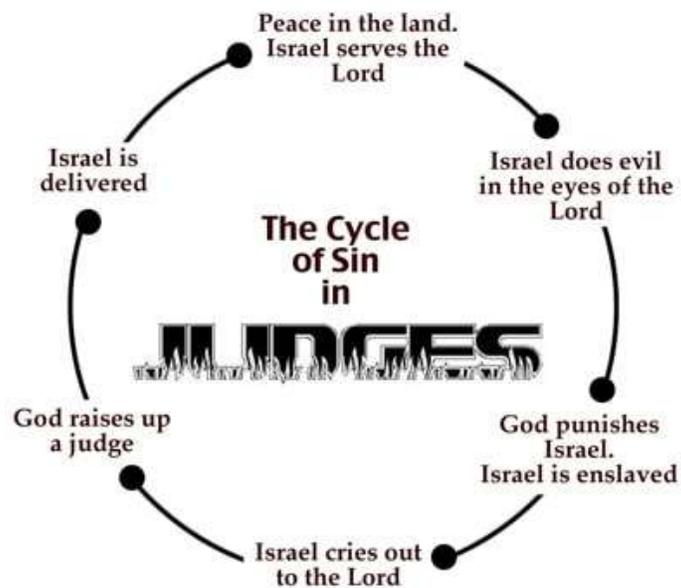
Fast Forward Today: What’s Fueling Our Lawless Generation?

When we alter the definition of right from wrong then we create a society where there are no absolutes. Abortion, assisted suicide, drug use, pornography, gender identity, the definition of

marriage and many other practices which were not accepted before have now become socially acceptable and even fashionable.

Educators, politicians and even many in the clergy are now teaching that morality needs to evolve and keep up with the times. Western society has accepted the premise that there is no absolute truth. This is the prevailing philosophy of Hollywood and the entertainment industries. This kind of thinking is destroying our families and leading to the racial and social problems we are seeing.

There are heinous crimes being perpetuated that violate God's moral law. These crimes do not violate what society today has accepted as moral relativism. Yet this concept and ideology that teaches one to do what is right in your own eyes is responsible for the looting, rioting and anarchy that prevails today.



Praise God We Finished Another Book Of The Bible!
It Is A Privileged And An Honor, Pastor Henry T. Anderson