

LESSON 19
“The Reign of the Judges”
Judges 2; 4; 6-7; 13-16

OVERVIEW:

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

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

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

Old Testament Student Manual, p. 253.

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

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

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

The book of Ruth also happens during this time period.

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

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

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF JUDGES CHAPTER 2

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

1 AND an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never ^abreak my ^bcovenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no ^aleague with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not ^bobeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

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

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

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

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

7 And the people ^aserved the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of ^aNun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

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

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

11 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

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

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served ^aBaal and Ashtaroth. (The people begin to worship idols. Baal and Ashtaroth. Baal was the supreme male god and Ashtaroth was the supreme female deity.)

14 ¶ And the ^aanger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of ^bspoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

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

16 ¶ Nevertheless the LORD raised up ^ajudges, which ^bdelivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a ^awhoring after other ^bgods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned ^cquickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge (:) for ~~it~~ ~~repented~~ the LORD (hearkened) because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and ^bvexed them.

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

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

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

22 That through them I may ^aprove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to ^bwalk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not. But what of us today? Surrounded by the Canaanites, how will we do?

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

(Gospel Truth, p. 302)

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

CHAPTER 4

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

1 AND the children of Israel again did ^aevil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

2 And the LORD ^asold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host *was* Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred ^achariots of iron; and twenty years he ^bmightily (Heb forcibly, violently) ^coppressed the children of Israel. (Israel oppressed by Canaanites.)

4 ¶ And Deborah, a ^aprophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the ^anail into his ^btemples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and

wearied. So he died.

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

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

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

CHAPTER 6

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

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

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

3 And *so* it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the ^aeast, even they came up against them;

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

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

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

7 ¶ And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,

8 That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

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

10 And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; ^afear (Heb (also) do not reverence, honor) not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not ^bobeyed my voice. (A prophet is sent to Israel and chastised them.)

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

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

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

14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy ^amight, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the ^aleast in my father's house.

16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be ^awith thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found ^agrace in thy sight, then shew me a ^bsign that thou talkest with me.

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

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

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

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

22 And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an ^aangel of the LORD face to ^bface.

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

24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it ^aJehovah-shalom: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites. (Gideon makes some food for the angel. The angel asks him to put it on a rock. The angel touches it with his staff and it lights on fire the food and the angel disappears.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death ^awhilst *it is yet* morning (or before morning): if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

32 Therefore on that day he called him ^aJerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar. (The people demand that Gideon be brought out, but his father says that Baal can

handle his own affairs.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine ^aanger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me ^bprove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

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

CHAPTER 7

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

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

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

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* ^afearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from ^bmount Gilead (or Mount Gilboa). And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

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

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

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

7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver

the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 ¶ So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

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

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

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

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the ^aMidianites.

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

25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew ^aOreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan. (The Midianites are destroyed. When the rest of the Midianites flee, Gideon summons help and they are destroyed.)

CHAPTER 13

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

1 AND the children of Israel did ^aevil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the ^bhand of the Philistines forty years. (Israel in bondage to the Philistines.)

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

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

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

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

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

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong

drink, neither eat any unclean *thing*: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. (An angel appears to Manoah's wife telling her that she will have a son that will be a Nazarite. A Nazarite (Numbers 6) was separated from others by a special vow of self-dedication to Jehovah. Abstain from wine, from any cutting of the hair, and any contact with the dead.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 14

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

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

2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the

daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 ¶ So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a ^afeast; for so used the young men to do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 15

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

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

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

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

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

5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and ^aburnt up both the shocks, and also the standing ^bcorn, (or grain) with the vineyards and ^colives. (ie olive trees) (When Samson hears that his wife was given to another, he burns up the Philistines' corn.)

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

7 ¶ And Samson said unto them, ^aThough ye have done this (or if you act in this way), yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 ¶ And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands ^aloosed from off his hands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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^a money in their hand.

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

20 And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he^a wist (or knew) not that the LORD was departed from him. (He meets and falls in love with Delilah. The Philistines get her to find out the reason for his great strength. After three times, 1. If he is bound with 7 green withs that were never dried; 2. bound with new ropes that were never occupied; 3. weave the locks of his head with the web. And then he says it's because of his hair. His hair is cut and he is captured. He breaks the vows of a Nazarite as well as the law of chastity. He failed to heed the counsel to "let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God." (D&C 121:45) The Philistine princes have learned that force cannot defeat Samson, but sin can. His defeat is not that his hair is cut, but that he did not keep his Nazarite vow and in thinking he was the source of his strength and not the Lord.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life. (Bible scholars believe that the lad was probably a Hebrew, and after placing Samson in between the pillars, left the temple to tell Samson's brethren what happened.)

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel

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

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

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