

The Book of Judges

Name: Hebrew: שֹׁפְטִים (Shophtim)

Greek: Κριται (Kritai)

Latin: Judicum

English: Judges

Based on the judges who served as leaders after Joshua and the elders
(see Deut. 16:18; 17:9; 19:17)

Author: Samuel in the latter days of Saul (see 1:21; 1:29; 17:6)

Key Verse: “In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.” (Judg. 17:6)

Theme: Apostasy and Restoration

Outline

I. Israel Failed to Complete the Conquest of the Land (1:1-3:6)

- A. The conquest of the territory of Judah and Simeon was incomplete (1:1-20)
- B. The conquest of the territory of Benjamin was incomplete (1:21)
- C. The conquest of the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh was incomplete (1:22-29)
- D. The conquest of the territory of the other tribes was incomplete (1:30-36)
- E. Israel was repeatedly disobedient and unfaithful to the Lord (2:1-23)
- F. The pagan nations remained in the land (3:1-6)

II. Israel Experienced Thirteen Cycles of Apostasy and Deliverance under Judges (3:7-16:31)

- A. Othniel delivered Israel from the king of Mesopotamia (3:7-11)
- B. Ehud delivered Israel from the king of Moab (3:12-30)
- C. Shamgar delivered Israel from the Philistines (3:31)
- D. Deborah delivered Israel from the king of Canaan (4:1-5:31)
- E. Gideon delivered Israel from the Midianites (6:1-8:35)
- F. Abimelech conspired against his brothers, the sons of Gideon (9:1-57)
- G. Tola judged Israel for twenty-three years (10:1-2)
- H. Jair judged Israel for twenty-two years (10:3-5)
- I. Jephthah delivered Israel from the king of Moab (10:6-12:7)
- J. Ibzan judged Israel seven years (12:8-10)
- K. Elon judged Israel ten years (12:11-12)
- L. Abdon judged Israel eight years (12:13-15)
- M. Samson delivered Israel from the Philistines (13:1-16:31)

III. Israel Experienced Periods of Tribal Disorder (17:1-21:25)

- A. The tribe of Dan lapsed into idolatry (17:1-18:31)
- B. Israel went to war against the tribe of Benjamin (19:1-21:25)

James D. Price

Israel Failed to Complete the Conquest of the Land (1:1-2:26)

Key Verse: Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ¹² and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. (Judg. 2:11-12)

Introduction: The tribes of Israel failed to completely occupy the land the Lord had given them, but left some of the Canaanite people remaining in some of their cities and territory. The Angel of the Lord rebuked them for their failure and disobedience. When the older generation died off, the new generation reverted to evil and idolatry, beginning a cycle of judgment and deliverance.

I. The Conquest of the Territory of Judah and Simeon Was Incomplete (1:1-20)

- A. The Lord chose the tribe of Judah to be first to occupy their inheritance (1:1-2)
- B. Judah invited the tribe of Simeon to help them occupy their land (1:3)
- C. The Lord delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands (1:4-20)
 - 1. They took Bezek and their king, Adoni-Bezek (1:4-7)
 - 2. They took Jerusalem and set it on fire (1:8)
 - 3. They fought against the Canaanites in the mountains, the Negev, and lowlands (1:9)
 - 4. They took Hebron, giving it to Caleb (1:10, 20)
 - 5. They took Debir under the leadership of Othniel (1:11-15)
 - 6. The Kenites helped Judah, occupying Arad (1:16)
 - 7. The tribe of Judah helped the Simeonites take Zephath (1:17)
 - 8. They took Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron (1:18)
 - 9. They could not take the lowlands (1:19-20)

II. The Conquest of the Territory of the Other tribes was Incomplete (1:21-36)

- A. The conquest of the territory of Benjamin was incomplete (1:21)
- B. The conquest of the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh was incomplete (1:22-29)
- C. The conquest of the remaining tribes was incomplete (1:30-36)
 - 1. Zebulun's conquest was incomplete (1:30)
 - 2. Asher's conquest was incomplete (1:31-32)
 - 3. Naphtali's conquest was incomplete (1:33)
 - 4. Dan's conquest was incomplete (1:34-36)

III. Israel Was Repeatedly Disobedient and Unfaithful to the Lord (2:1-23)

- A. The Angel of the Lord rebuked Israel for their incomplete occupation (2:1-3)
- B. The people wept because of the rebuke at Bochim (2:4-5)
- C. Joshua dismissed the people to return to their territory (2:6)
- D. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders (2:7)
- E. Joshua died and was buried at Timnath Heres (2:8-9)
- F. The new generation forsook the Lord, did evil, and served pagan gods (2:10-13)
- G. The Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies (2:14-15)
- H. The Lord appointed judges to deliver them from their enemies (2:16)
- I. The people repeated reverted back to disobedience and idolatry (2:17-23)

Conclusion: Even though the Israelites repeatedly turned away from the Lord, the Angel of the Lord was with them to raise up Judges to deliver them from their enemies because of His pity for them. He allowed their enemies to remain in the land to test their obedience and faith. Sadly they repeatedly failed the test.

Othniel Ehud, and Shamgar, Judges of Israel (Judges 3)

Key Verse: When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. (Judges 3:9)

Introduction: Because Israel failed to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, the Lord let them remain in the land as a test of Israel's obedience and loyalty. Israel failed the test repeatedly, thus began a sequence of rebellion, judgment, and deliverance under the hand of divinely appointed judges.

I. Othniel Delivered Israel from Cushan-Rishathaim King of Mesopotamia (3:1-11)

- A. Israel rebelled against the Lord (3:1-7)
 - 1. The Lord left some pagan nations in the land of Israel to test their loyalty (3:1, 4)
 - 2. The Lord left them there that they may learn to know war (3:2)
 - 3. These nations were left: the Philistines, Canaanites, Sidonians, and Hivites (3:3)
 - 4. These nations were also left: the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, and Jebusites (3:5)
 - 5. The Israelites intermarried with the pagans (3:6)
 - 6. The Israelites served their gods (3:6-7)
- B. The Lord sold Israel into the hands of their enemy (3:8)
 - 1. The Lord sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia (3:8)
 - 2. The Israelites served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years (3:8)
- C. The Lord raised up Othniel as a deliverer (3:9-11)
 - 1. The Israelites cried out to the Lord for deliverance (3:9)
 - 2. The Lord raised up Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother as the deliverer (3:9)
 - 3. Othniel defeated Cushan-Rishathaim with the Lord's help (3:10)
 - 4. The land had rest for forty years (3:11)

II. Ehud Delivered Israel from Eglon King of Moab (3:12-30)

- A. The Israelites again did evil in the sight of the Lord (3:12)
- B. The Lord gave Israel into the hand of Eglon king of Moab (3:12)
 - 1. The Ammonites and the Amalekites joined Eglon in defeating Israel (3:13)
 - 2. They took possession of the City of Palms (3:13)
 - 3. The Israelites served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years (3:14)
- C. The Lord raised up Ehud as a deliverer (3:15-30)
 - 1. The Israelites cried out to the Lord for deliverance (3:15)
 - 2. The Lord raised up Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, as the deliverer (3:15)
 - 3. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab (3:15)
 - 4. After delivering the tribute, Ehud assassinated Eglon (3:16-22)
 - 5. Ehud escaped to Seirah undiscovered (3:23-26)
 - 6. Ehud led Israel in defeating Moab at the fords of the Jordan (3:27-29)
 - 7. The land had rest for eighty years (3:30)

III. Shamgar the Son of Anath Delivered Israel from the Philistines (3:31)

Conclusion: The Lord fulfilled His covenant with Israel by chastening them when they rebelled and delivering them when they cried out for deliverance. He used appointed judges as deliverers, but brought deliverance in some unusual ways.

Deborah, the Judge of Israel (Judges 4-5)

Key Verse: Most blessed among women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents. (Judges 5:24)

Introduction: After the days of Shamgar, Israel again reverted to rebellion and idolatry. So the Lord again gave them over to the hands of their enemy. This time the enemy was Jabin king of Canaan in Hazor. On this occasion the Lord raised women as the deliverers.

I. Israel Was Again Conquered for Rebellion against the Lord (4:1-3)

- A. After Ehud's death, Israel again sinned against the Lord (4:1)
- B. The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan (4:2-3)
- C. Then the children of Israel cried out to the Lord (4:3)

II. The Lord Raised Up Deborah as the Deliverer (4:4-9)

- A. The prophetess Deborah was judging Israel then in the mountains of Ephraim (4:4-5)
- B. She sent Barak the son of Abinoam to deploy 10,000 troops at Mount Tabor (4:6)
- C. Barak was to attack and destroy Sisera and his troops at the River Kishon (4:7)
- D. Barak refused to go unless Deborah went with him (4:8)
- E. Deborah foretold that a woman would get the glory for the victory (4:9)

III. The Lord Gave Israel Victory Over the Enemy (4:10-24)

- A. Barak and Deborah mustered 10,000 troops at Kadesh (4:10)
- B. Meanwhile, Heber the Kenite had previously relocated to Zaanaim beside Kedesh (4:11)
- C. Sisera mustered his troops and chariots at the River Kishon (4:12-13)
- D. The Lord routed Sisera's army and chariots at the River Kishon (4:14-16)
- E. However, Sisera fled to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite (4:17)
- F. Jael killed him with a tent peg through the temple while he slept (4:18-20-22)
- G. Thus God subdued Jabin king of Canaan (4:23-24)

IV. Deborah and Barak Sang a Song of Victory that Day (5:1-31)

- A. Bless the Lord for the willing volunteers who serve Him (5:2)
- B. I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel to kings and princes (5:3)
- C. The Lord delivered Israel in the days of Sinai (5:4-5)
- D. After Shamgar, the people were suppressed until Deborah arose as judge (5:6-8)
- E. Bless the Lord for the willing volunteers who serve Him (5:9)
- F. Let the judges summons the troops by recounting God's righteous acts (5:10-11)
- G. Deborah and Barak mustered the troops from the tribes (5:12-18)
- H. The Canaanite kings were defeated from heaven and by the torrent of Kishon (5:19-22)
- I. The cowardly tribes were cursed (5:23)
- J. Jael was blessed for her courageous deed (5:24-27)
- K. Sisera's mother waited vainly for his victorious return (5:28-30)
- L. Thus let the Lord's enemies perish and those who love Him flourish (5:31)
- M. So the land had rest for forty years (5:31)

Conclusion: It is interesting to notice that the Lord raised up godly women as leaders on the occasion of spineless and faithless male leaders.

Gideon, Israel's Judge (Judges 6-7)

Key Verse: And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." (Judges 7:15)

Introduction: Again Israel rebelled and sinned against the Lord. Again the Lord gave them into the hands of their enemies; this time they were the Midianites. And again the Lord raised up a judge deliver His people from their enemies; this time it was Gideon, a weak and fearful man from Ophrah in the tribe of Manasseh.

I. Again Israel Sinned and Was Delivered into the Hands of Their Enemies (6:1-10)

- A. The Lord delivered sinful Israel into the hands of the Midianites (6:1)
- B. The Midianites plundered sinful Israel yearly for seven years (6:1b-5)
- C. Impoverished Israel cried out to the Lord for deliverance (6:6-7)
- D. The Lord sent a prophet to rebuke Israel for their disobedience (6:8-10)

II. The Angel of the Lord Commissioned Gideon as the Delivering Judge (6:11-23)

- A. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon in Ophrah (6:11)
- B. Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress to hide from the Midianites (6:11)
- C. The Angel of the Lord sent him to shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites (6:12-14)
- D. Gideon gave ineffective excuses for not going (6:15-16)
- E. Gideon asked for a sign which the Angel of the Lord provided (6:17-21)
- F. The Angel of the Lord assured Gideon he would not die for seeing Him (6:22-23)

III. Gideon Brought an End to His Father's Worship of Baal (6:24-32)

- A. Gideon built an altar to the Lord called "The-Lord-Is-Peace" (6:24)
- B. The Lord commanded Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal (6:25)
- C. Gideon was to offer his father's bull on the altar to the Lord (6:26)
- D. Gideon did so at night because of fear (6:27)
- E. The men of Ophrah wanted to kill Gideon for destroying his father's altar (6:28-30)
- F. Gideon's father challenged Baal to take his own vengeance on Gideon (6:31-32)

IV. The Spirit of the Lord Empowered Gideon for the Impending Battle (6:33-38)

- A. The Midianites and their allies again gathered together to plunder Israel (6:33)
- B. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon to muster Israel's troops for battle (6:34-35)
- C. Gideon asked for the sign of the wet fleece which was granted (6:36-38)
- D. Gideon asked for the sign of the dry fleece which was granted (6:39-40)

V. The Lord Gave Gideon Victory over the Midianites (7:1-25)

- A. The Lord commanded Gideon to reduce the size of his troops (7:1-2)
- B. Twenty-two thousand fearful were sent home (7:3)
- C. Of the ten-thousand remaining troops three hundred were retained (7:4-8)
- D. Gideon was given the sign of the tumbling barley loaf (7:9-15)
- E. Gideon divided his 300 troops into three companies with trumpets, pitchers, and torches (7:16)
- F. Gideon struck the Midianites with a surprise attack just before midnight (7:17-20)
- G. The whole Midianite army ran and cried out and fled (7:21-22)
- H. The men of Israel assisted Gideon in the pursuit of the Midianites (7:23-24)
- I. They captured and killed two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb (7:25)

Conclusion: This account provides an example of a hundred putting ten thousand to flight (Lev. 26:6; see also Deut. 32:30). In God's hands, fearful man with little faith can accomplish great feats. The key ingredient is obedience.

The Last Days of Gideon (Judges 8-9)

Key Verse: Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon. (Judges 8:28)

Introduction: Following Gideon's defeat of the Midianites, the land had peace for forty years. But Gideon became negligent and the people began to spiritually decline. Upon his death the people reverted back to idolatry and his son Abimelech became a murderous tyrant.

I. Gideon Completed the Conquest of the Midianites (8:1-21)

- A. Gideon appeased the anger of the Ephraimites (8:1-3; cf. 7:24-25)
- B. Gideon pursued the Midianites eastward beyond the Jordan (8:4)
- C. The men of Succoth refused to help Gideon (8:5-6)
- D. Gideon promised retaliation when he returns in victory (8:7)
- E. The men of Penuel refused to help Gideon (8:8)
- F. Gideon promised retaliation when he returns in victory (8:9)
- G. Gideon overtook and destroyed the remaining Midianite army (8:10-11)
- H. Gideon captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna (8:12)
- I. Upon his victorious return, Gideon scourged the elders of Succoth (8:13-16)
- J. Gideon tore down the tower of Penuel and executed its people (8:17)
- K. Gideon executed Zebah and Zalmunna (8:18-21)

II. Israel Declined Spiritually in Gideon's Latter Years (8:22-35)

- A. Gideon refused to be made king over Israel (8:22-23)
- B. Gideon made an ephod from the enemies gold earrings (8:24-27)
- C. The Israelites worshipped Gideon's ephod (8:27)
- D. Israel had peace for 40 years (8:28)
- E. Gideon had 70 sons and many wives (8:29-31)
- F. When Gideon died, Israel reverted back to idolatry (8:32-35)

III. The Rise and Fall of Gideon's Son Abimelech (9:1-57)

- A. Gideon's son Abimelech conspired to become king of Shechem by murder (9:1-6)
 - 1. Abimelech offered to be king of Shechem, the hometown of his mother (9:1-3)
 - 2. Abimelech killed all his brothers except Jotham who escaped (9:4-5)
 - 3. The men of Shechem made Abimelech king (9:6)
- B. Abimelech was cursed by his brother Jotham and died shamefully (9:7-57)
 - 1. Jotham cursed Shechem and Abimelech from Mount Gerizim (9:7-21)
 - 2. After three years, the Lord turned the men of Shechem against Abimelech (9:22-25)
 - 3. Gaal the son of Ebed led Shechem's fight against Abimelech (9:26-29)
 - 4. Abimelech defeated Gaal and the men of Shechem (9:30-49)
 - 5. Abimelech fought against Thebez and took it (9:50)
 - 6. The people of Thebez fled to the strong tower in the city (9:51)
 - 7. Abimelech went to the side of the tower to burn it with fire (9:52)
 - 8. A woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, crushing his skull (9:53-55)
 - 9. Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech and Shechem (9:56-57)

Conclusion: A victorious Christian life must be maintained with spiritual diligence. Without it power and popularity may lead to spiritual decline and tragic consequences.

Tola, Jair, and Jephthah: Judges of Israel (Judges 10-12)

Key Verse: And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it.” (Judges 11:35)

Introduction: Following the days of Gideon and Abimelech, Israel was led by Tola and then by Jair. Afterward the Ammonites oppressed Israel for eighteen years, so the Israelites appointed Jephthah, a social outcast and outlaw, as leader. The Lord enabled him to lead them to victory over the Ammonites, in spite of a rash vow.

I. Tola, an Issacharite, Judged Israel for Twenty-Three Years (c. 1140-1126 BC; 10:1-2)

II. Jair, a Gileadite, Judged Israel for Twenty-Two Years (c. 1126-1105 BC; 10:3-5)

- A. He had 30 sons (10:4)
- B. They had 30 towns (10:5; Num. 32:41; Deut. 3:14)

III. Israel Was Again Judged for their Return to Idolatry (10:6-16)

- A. Israel again reverted to idolatry (10:6)
- B. The Lord sold them into the hands of Philistine and Ammonite oppressors for 18 years (10:7-9)
- C. Confessing their sins, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for deliverance (10:10)
- D. The Lord rebuked Israel for their repeated rebellion (10:11-14)
- E. The Israelites put away their idols, confessing their sins (10:15:16)

IV. Jephthah, a Gileadite, Judged Israel for Six Years (c.1087-1081 BC; 10:17-12:7)

- A. Upon another Ammonite threat, the Israelites took counsel to appoint a leader (10:17-18)
- B. They appointed Jephthah as their leader (11:1-10)
 - 1. Jephthah was a social outcast and leader of an outlaw band (11:1-3)
 - 2. The Gileadites invited Jephthah to be their commander (11:4-6)
 - 3. Jephthah agreed if they made him their permanent leader (11:7-10)
- C. Jephthah appealed to the Ammonites for a peace negotiation (11:11-28)
 - 1. The Ammonites claimed Gilead as their territory (11:11-13)
 - 2. Jephthah countered with four reasons why Gilead was Israel’s territory (11:14-26)
 - a. Israel confiscated the land from the Amorites by the hand of the Lord (11:14-23)
 - b. Ammon’s god Chemosh did not give them Gilead (11:24)
 - c. The Ammonites are not better than the Moabites (11:25)
 - d. Israel has occupied Gilead 300 years without Ammon’s challenge (11:26-27)
 - 3. The Ammonites rejected the peace negotiations (11:28)
- D. The Lord gave Jephthah victory over the Ammonites (11:29-40)
 - 1. Jephthah rashly vowed a burnt offering for victory (11:30-31)
 - 2. Jephthah defeated the Ammonites (11:32:33)
 - 3. Jephthah fulfilled his vow to the Lord (11:34-40)
 - a. Regrettably Jephthah’s only daughter was the unexpected object of his vow (11:34-35)
 - b. His daughter submitted to the consequences of his vow (11:36-38)
 - c. Jephthah carried out his vow (11:39-41)
- E. The Ephraimites retaliated against the Gileadites unsuccessfully (12:1-7)
 - 1. The Ephraimites went to war with the Gileadites for being overlooked (12:1)
 - 2. Jephthah’s explanation failed to appease them (12:2-3)
 - 3. The Gileadites killed 42,000 Ephraimites at the fords of Jordan (12:4-7)
 - 4. Because the Ephraimites failed the “Shibboleth” password (12:6)

Conclusion: The Lord is longsuffering and patient with His people, but allows them to experience the consequences of their sins. He sometimes uses ignoble people to accomplish His purposes. It is better not to vow than to vow rashly.

The Early Days of Samson, Israel's Last Judge (Judges 13-14)

Key Verse: So the men of the city said to 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 to them: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!" (Judges 14:18)

Introduction: After the eight-year judgeship of Abdon, Israel again did evil before the Lord resulting in a forty year servitude to the Philistines. Again they called out to the Lord for deliverance and He raised up Samson, a life-time Nazirite endowed with mighty physical strength.

I. The Lord Raised up Samson as Israel's Last Judge (13:1-25)

- A. Because of doing evil, Israel was delivered into the hands of the Philistines forty years (13:1)
- B. The Angel of the Lord foretold the birth of Samson to the wife of Manoah, a Danite (13:2-5)
 - 1. She was barren (13:2)
 - 2. The Angel of the Lord told her she will be the mother of Israel's next deliverer (13:3-5)
 - a. She will bear a Nazirite son (13:3-5; Num. 6:1-21)
 - b. He will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (13:5)
- C. She told her husband about the Angel's announcement (13:6-7)
- D. Manoah prayed for further instructions about the child (13:8)
- E. The Angel of the Lord appeared again with additional instruction (13:9-14)
 - 1. The Angel appeared to the woman (13:9)
 - 2. She ran and brought Manoah to the Angel (13:10-11)
 - 3. Manoah asked Him for instructions for raising the child (13:12)
 - 4. The Angel said that both the woman and their son were to be Nazirites (13:13-14)
- F. Manoah offered an offering to the Angel of the Lord (13:15-23)
 - 1. Manoah asked the Angel to wait and receive an offering (13:15-16)
 - 2. Manoah asked the Angel for His name (13:17-18; Isa. 9:6; Exod. 15:11)
 - 3. Manoah offered the offering on the rock (13:19)
 - 4. The Angel of the Lord did a wondrous thing, ascending in the flame (13:19-21)
 - 5. Manoah feared death because they had seen God (13:22-23)
- G. The woman bore a son, calling him Samson (13:24)
- H. The Spirit of the Lord began moving upon Samson in Camp of Dan (13:25; 18:12)

II. Samson Posed a Riddle at His Wedding Feast (14:1-20)

- A. The Lord permitted Samson to marry a Philistine woman (14:1-7)
 - 1. Samson found a Philistine woman he wanted to marry at Timnah (14:1)
 - 2. Samson asked his parents to arrange the marriage (14:2-4)
 - 3. On the way with his parents to arrange the marriage Samson privately killed a lion (14:5-6)
 - 4. The marriage arrangements were successful (14:7)
- B. Later Samson and parents returned to Timnah for his wife and the wedding feast (14:8-10)
 - 1. On the way Samson privately inspected the lion's carcass, finding a bee hive there (14:8)
 - 2. He returned to his parents with some honey for them (14:9)
 - 3. Samson gave a wedding feast in Timnah (14:10)
- C. The wedding feast was terminated by a riddle with murderous consequences (14:11-20)
 - 1. The Philistines assigned thirty young men as his companions (14:11)
 - 2. Samson bet the companions that they could not solve his riddle (14:12-14)
 - 3. With a death threat they forced Samson's bride-to-be to get them the solution (14:15)
 - 4. She badgered Samson until he told her the solution (14:16-17)
 - 5. The companions presented Samson with the solution to his riddle (14:18)
 - 6. Samson murdered and robbed thirty Philistines to pay off the debt of his wager (14:19)
 - 7. Samson angrily went home without his wife (14:19)
 - 8. Samson's bride-to-be was given to his best man (14:20)

Conclusion: The Lord can use the faults of one of His servants, such as fear, anger, pride, and zeal, to accomplish His purposes.

Samson Defeated the Philistines in Their Attempts on His Life Judges 15-16)

Key Verse: Then Samson said: “With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!” (Judges 15:16)

Introduction: After his revenge on the Philistines for bribing his bride for the secret of his riddle, he again avenged them for killing her. He then killed 1,000 more in their attempt to execute him. He also was able to escape an ambush, but he was captured when he foolishly revealed the secret of his strength to Delilah. When his strength returned, he killed 3,000 Philistines, causing their temple to collapse on them and himself.

I. Samson Avenged the Breach of Promise of His Future Father-in-law (15:1-8)

- A. Samson went to Timnah to claim his Philistine wife (15:1)
- B. Her father had given her to another man (15:2)
- C. Samson set fire to their crop fields using 300 foxes (15:3-5)
- D. The Philistines discovered Samson did it for being deprived of his wife (15:6a)
- E. The Philistines burned to death the woman and her father (15:6b)
- F. Samson slaughtered many Philistines and hid in a mountain cleft (15:7-8)

II. Samson Defeated the Philistines in Their Attempt at Revenge (15:9-20)

- A. The Philistines sent an army to Lehi to arrest and execute Samson (15:9-10)
- B. The Judeans sent 3,000 troops to get Samson for them (15:11-13)
 - 1. They promised not to kill Samson while delivering him to the Philistines (15:11-12)
 - 2. They delivered Samson to the Philistines at Lehi bound in two new ropes (15:13)
- C. The Philistines pounced on him for the kill (15:14a)
- D. The Spirit of the Lord empowered him to break the ropes (15:14b)
- E. Samson killed a thousand with the jawbone of a donkey (15:15-17)
- F. God brought water from a rock at Lehi to quench Samson’s intense thirst (15:18-19)
- G. Samson judged Israel twenty years (15:20)

III. Samson Escaped a Philistine Ambush (16:1-3)

- A. Samson visited a Philistine harlot in Gaza (16:1)
- B. The Philistines set an ambush to kill him in the morning (16:2)
- C. At midnight he escaped taking the city gate to the hilltop by Hebron (16:3)

IV. Samson Foolishly Revealed the Secret of His Strength (16:4-22)

- A. Samson fell in love with Delilah of the Sorek Valley (16:4)
- B. The Philistine lords offered her a huge reward to discover the secret to Samson’s strength (16:5)
- C. Delilah enticed Samson to reveal the secret of his strength (16:6-20)
 - 1. He falsely told her he would be powerless if bound with seven fresh bowstrings (16:6-9)
 - 2. He falsely told her he would be powerless if bound with new unused ropes (16:10-12)
 - 3. He falsely told her he would be powerless if his hair were woven into a loom (16:13-14)
 - 4. He truthfully told her that shaving his head would make him powerless (16:15-20)
- D. The Philistines shaved his head, blinded his eyes, and put him in prison (16:21)
- E. In prison Samson’s hair grew back (16:22)

V. Samson Gave His Life for Vengeance on the Philistines (16:23-31)

- A. The Philistines held a great feast to celebrate Samson’s defeat at the temple of Dagon (16:23-24)
- B. They brought Samson to the temple to laugh at his condition (16:25a)
- C. Samson was between the two main support pillars of the temple (16:25b-26)
- D. The temple was full of about 3,000 Philistines watching Samson from the roof (16:27)
- E. Samson pushed down the pillars, collapsing the temple on himself and the people (16:28-30)
- F. His family buried him in his father’s tomb (16:31)

Conclusion: Pride will cause God’s man to lose his power and destroy himself.

Danite Settlers Migrated North and Took Possession of Laish (Judges 17-18)

Key Verse: And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly *was* Laish. (Judges 18:29)

Introduction: The tribe of Dan acquired their initial inheritance during the days of Joshua (Josh. 19:40-48) and sometime later they expanded their territory by conquering the northern city of Laish (Leshem in Josh. 19:48). These chapters describe that later conquest and the spiritual condition of Israel at that time.

I. Micah, a Typical Israelite, Set Up His Own Idol Shrine (17:1-5)

- A. Micah, an Ephraimite, returned the silver he stole to his mother (17:1-2)
- B. She had dedicated the stolen silver to make idols to the Lord (17:3)
- C. Micah had a molten image and a carved image made from the silver (17:4)
- D. Micah dedicated his son as a priest in his idol shrine (17:5)

II. A Migrant Judean Levite Became Micah's Priest (17:8-13)

- A. A Judean Levite migrated to Ephraim, stopping at Micah's estate (17:8)
- B. Micah offered the Levite the position of priest at his shrine (17:9-10)
- C. The Levite accepted the position as resident priest (17:11)
- D. Micah consecrated the Levite as his shrine priest (17:12)
- E. Micah anticipated the Lord's blessing because of the Levite priest (17:13)

III. The Tribe of Dan Sought Additional Territory in the North (18:1-6)

- A. The Danites sent five spies to find more territory for them (18:1-2)
- B. The spies stopped over at Micah's estate on the way (18:2)
- C. The spies asked the Levite priest to inquire of the Lord about their mission (18:3-5)
- D. The Levite promised the Lord's presence on their journey (18:6)

IV. Six Hundred Danite Families Began Migration to Laish (18:7-12)

- A. The spies found good and safe territory at Laish (18:7)
- B. The spies returned home with encouragement to take Laish and its territory (18:8-10)
- C. Six hundred Danite families went on their way to Laish, armed for conquest (18:11)
- D. They encamped at Kirjath Jearim, calling its name Mahaneh Dan (18:12)

V. On the Way the Danites Stole Micah's Shrine Idols and Priest (18:13-26)

- A. The Danites came to Micah's estate and took his idols, ephod, and the Levite priest (18:13-21)
- B. Micah, with his armed men and neighbors, overtook the Danites to recover his property (18:22-24)
- C. The Danites threatened to attack Micah and his men (18:25)
- D. Micah and his men backed down and returned home (18:26)

VI. The Danites Conquered Laish and Set Up an Idol Shrine There (18:27-31)

- A. The Danites conquered the city of Laish, burning it with fire (18:27)
- B. They rebuilt the city renaming it Dan (18:28-29)
- C. They set up an idol shrine to the Lord at Dan (18:30-31)
- D. Jonathan the Levite and his sons were the priests until the captivity (18:30; 1 Chron. 26:4)

Conclusion: When people do what is right in their own eyes, they quickly stray from the Lord and end up in spiritual chaos.

A Civil War Among the Tribes of Israel (Judges 19-21)

Key Verses: Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, ³ and said, “O LORD God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe *missing* in Israel?” (Judges 21:2-3)

Introduction: During the time of the judges the spiritual and moral condition of the people of Israel declined such that crime and immorality were tolerated, even to the point of defending rape and murder, at least in one tribe. These chapters report a civil war that resulted because of such an incident, resulting in the near extinction of the tribe of Benjamin.

I. A Levite Reunited with His Unfaithful Concubine (19:1-14)

- A. A Levite from Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem (19:1)
- B. She was unfaithful and went back home (19:2)
- C. After four months the Levite went to bring her back (19:3)
- D. The woman’s father persuaded the Levite to stay four nights (19:4-7)
- E. On the fifth day the Levite left for home with his concubine (19:8-10)
- F. They did not lodge at Jerusalem because of the pagan Jebusites (19:11-14)

II. The Levite’s Concubine Was Brutally Murdered at Gibeah of Benjamin (19:15-30)

- A. They stopped at the Benjamite city of Gibeah but found no place to lodge (19:15)
- B. An old Ephraimite sojourner there took them into his house to lodge (19:16-21)
- C. At evening a Benjamite mob demanded to know the Levite carnally (19:22)
- D. They gave the mob his concubine instead (19:23-25a)
- E. The mob abused the woman all night, leaving her dead at the doorstep (19:25b-27)
- F. Taking her corpse home, the Levite sent a part of her body to each tribe (19:28-30)

III. The Crime Triggered a Civil War Between Israel’s Tribes (20:1-48)

- A. The armies of eleven tribes assembled at Mizpeh to investigate the incident (20:1-3)
- B. The Levite reported the Gibeonite crime to Israel’s leaders (20:4-7)
- C. The Benjamites refused to surrender the criminals to Israel (20:8-13)
- D. The Benjamite army assembled to protect the criminal Gibeonites (20:14-17)
- E. The Israelites attacked the Benjamites, losing 22,000 troops (20:18-21)
- F. The Israelites again attacked them, losing 18,000 troops (20:22-25)
- G. The Israelites set an ambush, killing 25,100 Benjamites (20:26-46)
- H. Only 600 Benjamites survived but with no families (20:47-48)

IV. The Israelites Provided Wives for the 600 Surviving Benjamites (21:1-25)

- A. The Israelite had sworn not to give their daughters to the Benjamites (21:1)
- B. The Israelites mourned that the 600 Benjamites had no wives (21:2-7)
- C. They found that the men of Jabesh Gilead failed to help in the war (21:8-9)
- D. The Israelites destroyed Jabesh Gilead, sparing only their 400 virgins (21:10-12)
- E. The Israelites gave the 400 virgins to the Benjamites for wives (21:13-15)
- F. They gave the 200 Benjamites permission to kidnap wives at Shiloh (21:16-25)

Conclusion: Unrestrained tolerance can lead to intolerable consequences.