

Bible Study # 20
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Old Testament Series—Judges
(Chart at end)

I have a chronology of the book of Judges that lists all of the judges. I think this will be helpful to you as we start going through the judges that we are talking about. **Judges is an interesting and very important book because of the lessons that it contains.** Many times it is a book that people have had difficulty with because it seemed to them to be continual strife, fighting, all types of atrocities and terrible things that seemingly occurred. Many have had difficulty with that in trying to understand.

Samuel evidently wrote the book of Judges, though later editorial comments were added in, perhaps by Ezra, at the time the Old Testament was edited prior to the conclusion of the Canon. **The book of Judges certainly underlines the inability and unwillingness of Israel to keep the terms of the Covenant. Everyone was only interested in doing his own thing.**

To get the picture of what was going on in the book of Judges, I think we need to understand the analogy of our own nation's history. During the time of the book of Judges, following the death of Joshua, Israel was not really united under one central government with a centralized administration. Rather, there were twelve independent tribes loosely confederated together. This was comparable, frankly, in many ways to the U. S. under the articles of confederation after the Revolutionary War.

If you want to understand the book of Judges, you have to kind of put yourself in the picture of the settling of the frontier—the settling of the Old West with all the Indian Wars and the strife that was going on because that's really what you had. You had a "rough-and-ready" frontier type of circumstance where a new land was being settled. Some of these judges were kind of like some of the circuit judges of the "Old Judge Roy Bean" variety or the "law west of the Pecos" type of a thing.

That's really the comparable situation to Israel under the Judges. It was the kind of strife and circumstances that characterized the settling of the Old West. Remember the circumstances? There really was not a lot of organized law and order. There was a lot of strife, things going on here and there, the constant threat of some of the Indian wars, and things of that nature.

Sometimes it was difficult to separate the good guys from the bad guys. That's the kind of situation you find in the book of Judges, a period of the frontier. You had twelve independent tribes loosely confederated together, a lot of things going on that could be compared to the circumstances of the Old West.

As you note here on the chronology—let's pick it up here. We had another chronology that started with Abraham and brought it down to Moses, but this chronology basically picks it up from there—from Moses coming down to the entrance into the Promised Land under Joshua in 1403 B.C., and then six years later in 1397 B.C., Israel entered into rest. Joshua himself died about sixteen years later in 1381 B.C. There was a period of several years of the elders that outlived Joshua that brings us down to 1374 B.C. We begin a period of oppression by Mesopotamia and then the first of the judges, Othniel.

He was a younger brother of Caleb. We note him here in a lengthy period. He established a certain degree of centralized authority. What you have to realize is that, even when you had a judge ruling, it was not an organized central government in the sense that Israel had later under the kings or that we would think of in our nation today. It was still comparable to the U. S. during the period prior to the Constitution when you had the semi-independent states that were loosely confederated together. If they could agree on something, they did it; and if they couldn't agree, they didn't.

This was the circumstance, and there was not strong leadership most of the time. The judges were the ones who administered God's law, but it was more of a "circuit-rider-type" judge. People would come to him for matters to be judged. He would lead them during times of warfare. What it came down to was Israel showed unwillingness on their own, as individuals, to really submit to God and obey the laws of the Covenant. In the aftermath of every judge's death, we see what happened—Israel would begin to go after other gods.

We see this forty-year period of Othniel's judgeship ending up with Israel being oppressed by the Moabites. Then God raised up Ehud to deliver them. That went on for a period of time until the Israelites were oppressed by the Canaanites in 1228-1208 B.C. We note here, right around that time period, the birth of Eli. Now God raised up Barak and Deborah to drive out the Canaanites in 1208 B.C. Then we had the period of oppression by the Midianites, and in

the aftermath of this oppression by the Midianites, God raised up Gideon. Gideon was the last judge that exercised authority over all of the tribes until you come down to Samuel. The death of Gideon marked the collapse of centralized administration.

Eli began his high priesthood about twenty years after Gideon's judgeship began, about halfway through Gideon's judgeship. You will note on the right side of the sheet there is the part showing the judges and explanatory information; on the left hand side shows the other events going on.

At Gideon's death the nation fractured. One of Gideon's sons sought to establish himself as king. This son was half Canaanite. It didn't work. It only lasted for about three years. In the east, the Ammonites began to take over. In the north, Abimelech tried to take over. He was part Canaanite. In the south and west, the Philistines tried to take over. So you find the nation fracturing into three sections. During this time Eli was high priest.

We find during this time, in the north, Tola and later Jair fighting in the area where the Canaanites (Abimelech) had been. Then Jephthah and later Ibzan, Elon and Abdon were fighting in the east against the Ammonites. Samson was fighting in the west and in the south against the Philistines. Then it was Samuel who basically took over in the aftermath of all of that. The Philistine power collapsed when Samson pulled the temple down and destroyed the entire leadership of the Philistines. That marked the beginning of Samuel's judgeship, and there was a consolidation where Samuel basically became, after a few years, judge over all of Israel. From the time when Samuel first began his judgeship after the collapse of the Philistine power, there was a period of about forty years that brings us down to the beginning of the monarchy with the coronation of King Saul and later King David's reign.

With the death of Gideon, all pretense of a centralized government collapsed. The Canaanites, Ammonites and most of the Philistines dominated Israel for most of a generation. Samuel, the final judge, restored limited centralization. His judgeship gave way to the monarchy of Saul.

Judges 3—16 form, for the most part, a continuous narrative of the history of Israel under the judges.

Judges 11:26 is essential for establishing the chronology of the book. You may have wondered how we came up with dates.

The key to the chronology of judges is Judges 11.

Judges 11:26, “While Israel dwelt in Hishbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?” From the time that Israel entered into the land until this time when Jephthah overthrew the Ammonites was a period of three hundred years. Note here that we dated from the entrance into the land under Joshua, 1403 B.C. Three hundred years later brings us down to 1103 B.C., the time that Jephthah overthrew the Ammonites. It provides a basis for dating the material. By dating Jephthah's government, we can date the others from that. We can go forward and backward and date everyone from Jephthah because with him we have a date that dates us back to the time of the entrance into the land. That ties in with the Exodus.

Judges 1—2 and 17—21 are basically inset chapters. They serve to give a flavor of life in those days. You had a situation that sometimes bordered on anarchy. That's made plain at the end of the book of Judges.

Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” That was the problem. Everyone was simply doing his own thing.

Judges 3:1, “Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan.” This explains much of the problems for Israel. The more Israel mixed and mingled with the world, the more like the world they became, even to the point that God withdrew His protection. Instead of Israel overcoming the world, they were overcome by their own carnal desires to be like the world. There is an important lesson to learn from the book of Judges.

Verse 4, “And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.” Why did God allow some of the Canaanite tribes to remain behind? They were to prove Israel by them. But notice the problem.

Verses 5-7, “So the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons: and they served their gods. So the children of Israel did

evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served Baals and Asherahs.” God made sure that they had an alternative if they chose to use it. When God calls us and begins to work with us, He does not remove all the temptations and all of the problems. We remain living in the world around us. One of the reasons we go through some of these things is to demonstrate what are our priorities, are we going to obey the Commandments of the Lord or not? What happened here? What did Israel do? They began to compromise.

I think it is important to understand the tactics of Satan the devil as he seeks to subvert the people of God. There are various tactics that we have noted throughout. One of the tactics that he is most adept to using is that of *compromise*. We are surrounded by the world, and we begin to compromise, a little thing over here, a little thing over there, and something else. We begin to mix and mingle and become part and parcel with the world until our values become watered down.

Now here we see intermarriage being a problem. We look at two aspects of it. One, the spiritual aspect and what happened when Israel began to marry other nations. You begin to involve yourself in unions that are not based and oriented in serving God. The principle here is why *God tells converted Christians that they are not to become unequally yoked* (II Corinthians 6:14). That’s the principle as to why it’s wrong to date outside the Church. It simply leads to compromise and leads to involving yourself in situations that are going to pull you down and pull your values away. So part of the problem is religious, it led them into a spirit of compromise.

Another part is not only did Israel lose their spiritual identity, but they would eventually lose their physical identity. This is a matter of concern to God because God established the separate human families. God established the identities of the various branches of the human family, and Israel began to lose their identity—physically, culturally, spiritually and in every way. If this circumstance had continued on, without God’s intervention, they would have lost their identity as a people and would have dropped from the pages of history. Well, God in His mercy allowed them to find themselves in a “jam.”

Verse 8, “Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.” Isn’t it

interesting how when hard times come, people begin to think about God? Sin is for the good times when living is easy. When the going gets rough, that’s when people begin to say, ‘Oh, God, please deliver me.’

What was the old joke they had back in World War II? —There weren’t any atheists in foxholes. About the time somebody was floating around on a life raft in the Pacific, there really weren’t any atheists out there. All of these philosophical ideas someone might have had kind of disappeared. People were making promises right and left, ‘I’ll do anything, just please get me out of here.’

We note in Judges 1:1, “Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass...” This is the setting. After the death of Joshua and the elders that outlived him died, Israel went further and further afield. They didn’t last. They lasted until the water got hot again. Remember the last thing Joshua told them. He warned them what they were going to do, and sure enough, they did it.

Verses 27-28, “However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out.”

You see, they thought they had come up with a better idea. Instead of driving them out, ‘why don’t we keep them here and make slaves of them.’ That was not what God told them to do, and it became a never-ending source of problems. It led them into various problems and compromises.

Judges 2:7, “So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.”

Verse 10, “When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.” That was the generation that had known the wandering.

Verses 12-15, “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. They forsook

the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.”

Verses 16-18, “Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. And when the Lord raised up judges for them; the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved with pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.” He delivered them out of the hand of the enemies because He felt sorry for them.

Verse 19, “And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.” This is the story over and over in the book of Judges—Israel went astray. When Joshua and the elders died, Israel went astray. They were oppressed; God allowed them to be punished and then had mercy on them and raised a judge. But they never really got the point; as soon as the judge was not around to enforce it, then away they went, over and over, the ups and downs of history. How short a time lessons are retained! Lessons don’t last very long. We see it in history and we see it here in the book of Judges.

I think, brethren, we had better do well to take heed to ourselves. Understand! God inspired these examples for a reason. God has allowed us to learn certain lessons in this age, today in His Church. We kid ourselves if we think that lessons are permanently implanted. The tendency of human nature is to forget the lesson. And if we forget the lesson, we repeat the mistakes. It is important that we continue to take heed to ourselves, to go back and to learn from the lessons that God has allowed us to experience.

We note here as we did in Judges 1:28 what Israel did in regard to the Canaanites in the land. They made tributaries of them. They didn’t

totally drive them out, and they were a source of trouble ever after. What did God say the results of Israel’s treatment of the Canaanites would be?

Judges 2:2, ““And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?””

Verse 3, ““Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’”” God said, ‘Look, you didn’t listen to what I said, and therefore I am not going to entirely drive them out. They are going to be here as thorns in your side.’ The result was going to be strife, and the idolatry of the Canaanites would serve as a snare.

Verses 16-19, “Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.”

These four verses summarize the history of the rest of the book of Judges. When you read vv. 16-19 of Judges 2, you have the summary of the whole story. God would raise a judge and deliver them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. They wouldn’t listen to the judge, and they would soon enough go into idolatry again. When the judge was dead, they went all the way and corrupted themselves. This cycle is repeated over and over and over. Now we find that God allowed the Mesopotamians to come in and oppress them for eight years—and then God raised up the first judge.

We read in Judges 3: 9-11, “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. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-

Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.” Again notice what happened. They learned the lesson for how long? –For about a generation. Othniel, the first judge, was the nephew of Caleb; he was the son of Kenaz who was Caleb’s younger brother. He judged Israel for this period. Israel had rest, we are told, for forty years.

We emphasize, going through the book of Judges, this point of entering into God’s rest. *Obedience leads to rest.* Entering into God’s rest, God gave them rest from the inhabitants around. This term “rest” is important because the Apostle Paul, back in Hebrews, uses it. It applies to the Sabbath and to the Millennium, of which the Sabbath is a type. It is all tied in together. Realize that what God gave Israel was a physical type of what we have in store for us.

As we come through the story, we find that the children of Israel did evil.

Judges 3:12-14, “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. Then he gathered to himself the people of Amon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the city of palms. So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.” He gathered together allies; he smote Israel and oppressed them for a period of eighteen years.

Verses 15-24, “And when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh. So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now, Eglon was a very fat man.) And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. But he himself turned back from the stone images that were at Gilgal, and said, ‘I have a secret message for you, O king.’ He said, ‘Keep silence!’ And all who attended him went out from him. And Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber). Then Ehud said, ‘I have a message from God for you.’ So he arose from his seat. Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for

he did not draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out. Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. When he had gone out, Eglon’s servants came to look, and to their surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, ‘He is probably attending to his needs [KJV, “covers his feet”] in the cool chamber.’”

Ehud managed to get right in there where he was. He told Eglon he had a message for him and stabbed him. We are told that Eglon was fat and couldn’t get the dagger out. Eglon was a pretty good-sized fellow. Ehud left him in there and escaped. Since he closed the door, they were figuring he was going to the bathroom. That’s what the term “cover his feet” means. That is a King James euphemism for “going to the toilet.” So they figured that was what must be going on.

Verse 25, “So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room. Therefore they took the key and opened them. And there was their master, fallen dead on the floor.” Finally they got worried about him and decided to go in, and when they came in, he was dead.

You read these stories. That’s why I said at the beginning, to understand it you have to put yourself in the circumstance of the Wild West, the shootouts and all of the kinds of things that were going on back and forth. You had an absence of strong law and order enforced. You had champions; you had heroes who kind of rose up, came in, stepped out and took action. God would utilize that individual to restore a certain amount of independence or law and order, but it never really solved the problem.

I think it is interesting that recently there was a circumstance where the modern nation of Israel launched an attack against one of the leaders of the PLO over in North Africa. They marched right in, assassinated him and left. You have to understand that from their standpoint, they literally read the book of Judges for strategy. They didn’t read it for spiritual lessons; they read it for strategy. They considered themselves in the same circumstances, and they read it for strategy. See what they did, they went in and did the same thing. They read it strictly from a carnal standpoint. What works? Obviously it does work from that standpoint because it suits God’s purpose. We find the same things over and over and over. The book of Judges is the bloodiest book of the whole Bible.

The bottom line of the book of Judges is the end of the book, the last verse. This is the bottom line. This is why the book of Judges reads the way it does.

Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” *That’s the key to understanding the whole book.* Everybody did his own thing. God saved Israel in spite of themselves. God had a job, a purpose and a promise He had made to Abraham. He utilized individuals who did all kinds of things.

Verse 30, “So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.”

Judges 4:1-3, “When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he harshly oppressed the children of Israel.”

Verses 4-5, “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountain of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.” She was a prophetess. God gave revelation through her.

Verses 6-8, “Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, ‘Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, “Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?”’ And Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.’”

Let’s understand. “Barak,” whose name meant “lightning,” was the son of “Abinoam,” whose name meant “the son of sweetness.”

Notice Judges 5:7, “...until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel.” Deborah arose as a mother in Israel. Notice the state of things. Israel had sunk to the place that God said, ‘You are like a bunch of little kids.’ It was in a sense to shame the men of the nation who had so abdicated their responsibility that God said, ‘I am going to raise a woman as a mother in Israel, to take you by the hand and lead you because you are acting like a bunch of little kids, a bunch of little Momma’s

boys. You need Momma to come and take you by the hand because you are not acting like men.’

Here was Barak who was raised up to do a job and Barak said, ‘Oh, I don’t know; I’m not going to go up unless you are going to go up with me. If you’ll go up and hold my hand, I guess I’ll go.’ Deborah was so disgusted.

Judges 4:9, “So she said, ‘I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.’ Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.” ‘If you are that much of a weakling,’ she said, ‘you’re not going to get any honor out of it. You’re not going to kill the enemy general; he’s going to die at the hands of a woman.’

This is a picture of the state of things in Israel. The nation had sunk to a point where there was no proper masculine leadership, and it is to the shame of the nation that they were in that state. This is what happens when you get away from God. There wasn’t the kind of courage, boldness and proper kinds of masculine leadership that should have been there.

God said, ‘All right, I’ll show you. I’ll raise a righteous woman who is the everlasting shame of the men involved. A woman who will exemplify more courage and trust in Me than any of you men. I will use her like a mother to take you by the hand and lead you up there.’ It was to evidence the state of things. It shows God used Deborah like a mother to Israel.

As we go through the story, Jael (a woman) was the one who actually killed the general Sisera (vv. 17-21).

Judges 5 is the song of Deborah.

Judges 5:31, “Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him, be like the sun when it comes out in full strength. So the land had rest for forty years.” Undoubtedly there were lessons learned in some of this.

We find Barak listed in Hebrews 11:32 as one of the men of faith. He didn’t start off as a man of faith. That’s one of the things to understand.

Many of those you find listed in Hebrews 11 as men and women of faith didn’t start off as men and women of faith. They started off fearful, cowardly and timid, with all kinds of apprehension, all kinds of things. God worked with them and brought them to a point where they came to trust Him and to walk with Him.

Again there is a lesson there. Sometimes we read the story of these individuals and think they were just born walking tall, born heroes. The heroes of Hebrews 11 were not born heroes. *They were*

made heroes through the working of God in their lives.

God worked with Barak. Obviously, there was a lot of change that took place in Barak from the time that he was so timid that he said, 'Not me, no way, unless you hold me by the hand and take me up there.' Can you imagine a successful general saying that? Think of generals that have led the armies of this nation; can you imagine them telling their mother or some woman, 'If you take me by the hand and lead me up there, if you will stand there next to me, I guess I'll go and fight the enemy.' That's ridiculous. Can you imagine General Patton doing something like that or General MacArthur or various ones.

This is the state of things. God took people who didn't have what it takes naturally, and He supplied their needs. Hebrews 11 tells us many of these individuals, out of weakness, were made strong. God didn't take them because they were the strongest, most bold and courageous people around. Sometimes He took them because they were the weakest, and He showed what He could do.

Things lasted and the land had rest for forty years.

Judges 6:1, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. [Kind of like a broken record, put it on and play it back every chapter.] So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years." The Midianites would wait until the Israelites had sown a crop and the crop was about ready to harvest, then they would come up with the Amalekites and the children of the East. They just came up and harvested the crop (vv. 2-5).

These were terrorist raids. Again, go back to the situation and think of some of the Indian raids in the Old West. The settlers would come in and have their little community, and the Indians would come down on the warpath to terrorize the place, burn it down and send everybody scurrying for cover. This is basically what was going on, and frankly, some of these people they were fighting against were very much akin to some of the Indians. In fact, some of the North American Indians are actually descended from the Hittites. So you find a number of similarities. You find the same people in the same situation doing the same kinds of things.

We find that Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and they cried out to the Eternal (v. 6).

Verses 7-10, "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet to the

children of Israel, who said to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you, 'I am the Lord your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed My voice.'""

Verse 11, "Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites." So Gideon is back here hiding behind the winepress with a little dab of wheat, kind of beating it out, looking around, afraid the Midianites would come down and discover what he was doing.

Verse 12, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!'" And Gideon said, 'WHO, ME?'

Verse 13, "And Gideon said to him, 'O, my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles, which our fathers told us about, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.'"

'If the Lord is with us, why has all of this befallen us, and where are all the miracles we heard about?'

Verses 14-15, "Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?' So he said to him, 'O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house.'"

He said, 'My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. Not me, you got me mixed up with somebody else. I can't do it.'

Verse 16, "And the Lord said to him, 'Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.'" God said, 'Look, I am going to be with you.'

Verse 17, "Then he said to Him, 'If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me.'"

So Gideon offered a sacrifice and brought out the sacrifice and the fire came out of the rock and consumed the flesh (vv. 18-21).

Verse 22, "Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, 'Alas, O

Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face.” Just about that time it dawned on him that not everybody reached out his staff and fire came up out of the rock. About this time it was kind of impressive. So he got scared again. ‘Oh, no, I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.’

Verse 23, “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.’” He was told he wasn’t going to die.

Verses 24-25, “So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Shalom. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, ‘Take your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it.’” God told him to take his father’s young bullock and use it to pull down that altar of Baal and cut down the grove.

Verses 26-30, “and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down.’ So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared his father’s household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built. So they said to one another, ‘Who has done this thing?’ And when they had inquired and asked, they said, ‘Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.’ Then the men of the city said to Joash, ‘Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it.’” They said, ‘Bring out your son because we want to kill him.’

Verse 31, “And Joash said to all who stood against him, ‘Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!’”

Joash said, ‘Why would you plead for Baal? Let him take care of himself. If he’s a god, let him plead for himself. Somebody threw his altar down; let him take care of it himself.’

Verse 32, “Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, ‘Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.’” Gideon was

nicknamed “Jerubbaal,” which meant “let Baal plead.”

Verses 33-34, “Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.” He said, ‘Now what have I gotten myself into?’

Verse 36, “Then Gideon said to God, ‘If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said....’” ‘Give me a sign.’

Verses 37-38, “look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.’ And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.”

He put out a fleece and there was going to be dew just on the fleece and everything else was going to be dry. Well, God worked that miracle to encourage him, and then Gideon looked at it and thought, ‘Maybe that was an accident. Let’s try it again.’

Verses 39-40, “Then Gideon said to God, ‘Do not be angry with me, and let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.’ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.” He said, ‘This time let’s let the fleece be dry and everything around it be wet.’ It happened.

Judges 7:1-2, “Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, “My own hand has saved me.”’”

God told Gideon to get the people together. Gideon got them together and God told him the people were too many. ‘You have too many, too big an army.’ Now Gideon didn’t think he had one big enough, but God said, ‘I think your army is a little big.’

Verse 3, “Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, “Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand

remained.” God told him to get them all together and tell anybody who is scared to go home, so twenty-two thousand left and ten thousand remained. The ten thousand that stayed were the ones that were too scared to admit they were scared. Two-thirds of his army left. Now he thought the army was a little on the small side; but when two-thirds of them got up and left, it’s kind of like when Travis drew the line at the Alamo and nobody stepped over. You kind of get the state of things. When Gideon drew the line, two-thirds of them left. This would tend to make you a little nervous.

Verses 4-6, “And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, “This one shall go with you,” the same shall go with you; “This one shall not go with you,” the same shall not go.’ So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.’ And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.”

God told Gideon he thought he still had too many. So he brought them down to the water. When they got down there to drink, God told him to separate them. All of those that got down and lapped water like a dog put them on one side and put the others on the other side. So when they put them together, they had nine thousand seven hundred that drank water like people and three hundred that lapped water like a dog.

Verse 7, “Then the Lord said to Gideon, ‘By the tree hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.’” God told him, ‘By the three hundred that have lapped will I save you. Take the three hundred that lapped water like a dog and stick them over here. That’s your army. Send the others home.’ So they left. Gideon, needless to say, was a little on the nervous side.

Verses 10-11, “‘But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, and you shall hear what they say; and afterward, you hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.’ Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were there.”

Verses 13-14, “And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his

companion. He said, ‘I have just had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.’ Then his companion answered and said, ‘This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.’”

God had him go down to the valley where the Midianites were to eavesdrop. When he eavesdropped on the Midianites, he was shocked because he found they were more scared of him than he was of them because they had been having dreams.

Verse 12, “Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all of the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.” Gideon saw these guys, and it looked like a bunch of grasshoppers covering the hillside. He thought, ‘Oh, no, I have three hundred that lap water like a dog. God sent the other thirty-one thousand seven hundred home, and He left me with three hundred that lap water like a dog. And I have this bunch out here that I am supposed to take care of.’

Verse 15, “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.’” Gideon was encouraged; God was really going to take care of this.

Verse 16, “Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.” God had him divide the three hundred into three companies.

Verses 18-19, “‘When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.”’ So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.”

When Gideon blew the trumpet, they broke the pitchers, and all these lamps looked like a campfire. It looked like the Midianites were surrounded by three hundred companies of men, but it was just three hundred men—not three hundred companies of men, just three hundred scattered around. All of a sudden just out of nowhere, when they broke the pitcher, the

Midianites saw lights and it was like, 'Oh no, we are being attacked.'

Verse 20, "Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'"

Verses 21-22, "And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to..." God sent a spirit of confusion in the ranks. The Midianites and Amalekites fell on top of each other and began to butcher away until they wound up virtually wiping themselves out. God gave Gideon three hundred men to defeat the whole Midianite empire. It shows what God can do. God wanted Israel to realize He was delivering them.

As we come down, we find the elders of Succoth whose attitude had been rotten to Israel.

Judges 8:4-6, "When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who were with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. Then he said to the men of Succoth, 'Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.' And the leaders of Succoth said, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?'"

Verse 16, "And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with the he taught [disciplined] the men of Succoth." When Gideon came back, he gave them a little "frontier justice." He gave them a whipping with thorn switches. They got the point when it was all over.

Verses 22-23, "Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, 'Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.' But Gideon said to them, 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord God shall rule over you.'" He said, 'I am not going to do it.'

Verse 28, "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 9:1-2, "And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 'Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: "Which is better for you, that

all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?'" Remember that I am your own flesh and bone."

After Gideon's death, his son Abimelech tried to take over. He wanted to be king. It was at the death of Gideon that marked the collapse of centralized administration. Abimelech tried to take over in the area where the Canaanites were. This lasted for a few years until they were overthrown.

Verses 56-57, "Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal."

Judges 10:1-3, "After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah ...He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir. After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years." Following Abimelech's overthrow, you had Tola and Jair.

Judges 11:1-3, "Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. Gilead's wife bore sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, 'You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman.' Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob: and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him."

We read of Jephthah. He was an individual who had a rough life. He was an illegitimate son and was not accepted by the others in the family. He fled from his brethren. It was kind of a bandit crowd—Jesse James and his band of men—that's what you had. You have to really get the picture of the book of Judges. That is what you had. You had a breakdown of law and order and centralized administration of authority. You had shootouts and gangs and Indian wars. That's what you had all the way through the book of Judges.

Verses 4-8, "Now it came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. And so it was, when the people of Ammon, made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. Then they said to Jephthah, 'Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon.' So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, 'Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?' And the

elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, 'That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.'

Jephthah put things together. He was going to fight against the Ammonites who were oppressing Israel. This would be the area on the east side of the Jordan River. Then we read of his foolish vow.

Verses 30-32, "And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, 'If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.' So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands."

He smote them throughout this whole area and subdued them (v. 33).

Verse 34, "When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing, and she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter." About this time he realized what a stupid thing he had vowed.

The statement is made, as we read down, of exactly what happened.

Verse 39, "And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man..." On the basis of Jewish tradition is the fact that she actually never married. She was basically shut up after this period of time.

Verses 39-40, "...And it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite."

Verse 37, "Then she said to her father, 'Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I.'" The indication was that she was not literally put to death, but in the figurative sense, she never married. This is at least the traditional Jewish understanding of it. Whether that is exactly what happened or not, it simply leaves it as an unclear statement. But I think it demonstrates the state of things in some of the individuals. You read about Jephthah and the problems that existed.

Judges 12:4, "Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim..." They even had civil war.

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

In the aftermath of this, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon judged for a short period of time (vv. 8-15). On the one hand, Israel was fighting the Canaanites, and on the other hand, they were fighting the Ammonites.

Judges 13:1, "Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years." The Philistines were in the south and the west. Israel fell under Philistine power for forty years, which would be from the death of Gideon until the death of Samson.

Verses 2-5, "Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat any unclean thing. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.'"

We pick up the story of Samson. Samson's story contains quite a bit up to chapter 16. Samson was a Nazarite from his mother's womb and was given the power of supernatural strength as a result of that. This was the basis; Samson was to be under a Nazarite vow, and God gave him a gift of supernatural strength. Samson may have been the strongest man.

Samson liked riddles. I could give you a riddle: who was both the strongest and the weakest of the men that you read of? It would have to be Samson. He, on the one hand, was very strong, and in other ways, he was very, very weak. He was very weak in character. His great weakness, of course, was his affinity and lust for Gentile women.

Judges 14:1-3, "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.' Then his father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your

brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?’ And Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she pleases me well.’”

“She pleases me well.” The Hebrew is, “She is right in my own eyes.” Remember, that’s the whole story of Judges, “every man did that, which was right in his own eyes.”

His father said, ‘Look, can’t you find someone of your own people?’ And Samson told him, ‘No, she’s the one that’s right in my own eyes. She’s the one that I want.’ With this kind of attitude, Samson was an individual whom God had to deal with to bring him to a certain point. Samson was a big brawling Irishman, a Danite. Samson had a problem; the problem was this affinity that he had for these women.

You find that, up until the end of his life, the only time Samson fought against the Philistines was when he avenged himself. One of the lessons that we need to learn is that *God can sometimes use people in spite of themselves*. God sometimes uses carnal individuals to accomplish His work. They do it for the wrong reasons and motives, but God has a result that he wants to come out. God was going to deliver Israel. He utilized Samson and worked to teach Samson a lesson in the meantime. Samson ultimately learned that lesson. Samson trusted his strength. Yet, in reality, in the things that were really important, Samson was very, very weak. He kept going back to this weakness time after time.

Samson got mad because he wanted this woman. She was obviously not the kind of person he should have married, but Samson wanted her. He saw her and he liked her. Samson proposed a riddle. He put a contest with these Philistine men. They wanted to win; so they put pressure on his wife to tell them what the riddle was.

Judges 14:16, “Then Samson’s wife wept on him, and said, ‘You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me.’ And he said to her, ‘Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?’”

She wept before him and said, ‘You don’t love me.’ She nagged away until he told her (v. 17). She explained the riddle to the Philistine men, and they won the bet.

Verse 18, “... And he said to them: ‘If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!’” He knew what his wife had been up to.

Verses 19-20, “Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to

Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father’s house. And Samson’s wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.” He was mad and didn’t go back; so they gave his wife to someone else.

Judges 15:1-2, “And after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, ‘Let me go in to my wife, into her room.’ But her father would not permit him to go in. Her father said, ‘I really thought that you thoroughly hated her, therefore I gave her to your companion....’”

A little while later, Samson decided he was going to go and make up, and he found out that his wife was now living with somebody else. A really fine situation he’d gotten himself involved with. So now he’s mad again. When he got mad, he was ready to take vengeance. So he caught three hundred foxes, took firebrands and tied these foxes’ tails together. He put a firebrand in the midst of the two tails and turned them loose (vv. 4-5). They burned up all the corn of the Philistines, and the Philistines were mad. So you have this kind of strife going back and forth.

Verse 15, “He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it.”

Verse 20, “And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.”

Judges 16:1, “Then Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.” This was the way he was.

Verses 2-3, “When the Gazites were told, ‘Samson has come here!’ they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, ‘In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.’ And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.” So he tears the gates off when they try to lock him in. You know the story.

Then he meets up with delightful Delilah, and again the same old thing. She, of course, betrays him and he’s taken prisoner. His hair is cut, and now God allows him to learn a lesson.

Judges 16:21, “Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.” They took Samson and put out his eyes. For a period of

time, they tied him up to a gristmill like an ox to push this thing around and grind the grain. While he was in that state, undoubtedly, he had a lot of time to think. He couldn't even look at anything. He was blind and was tied up. All he could do was walk in a circle all day long, pushing this big heavy stone around and around.

If you've ever seen these old gristmills, they had a grinding stone, one on top of another. They would have a post attached to it and would usually have an ox that would simply walk around and around. Well, they had Samson tied to it, and all he could do was walk around and around in a circle, grinding grain, blind—day in and day out, month in and month out. He had a lot of time to think.

Finally they brought him in and were going to make sport of him (v. 25). All the leadership of the Philistines was there in this temple (v. 27).

Verse 28, "Then Samson called to the Eternal, saying, 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes.'" Samson had come to a point of repentance. God gave him the strength, and he collapsed the temple. He pushed the two center supports out, and when they collapsed, the whole roof fell in and everybody there was slaughtered (vv. 29-30). This put a stop, temporarily, to the power of the Philistines.

That really runs the story, in terms of chronology, through Samson who was contemporary with Samuel. We will pick up that story in Samuel.

Joshua chapters 17—21 give us some insets.

Joshua 17 talks about a man from Mount Ephraim whose name was Micah. He decided he was going to hire a priest. He met up with this fellow (v. 9).

Joshua 17:10, "Micah said to him, 'Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance.' So the Levite went in." He was going to hire a preacher for himself. It shows you the situation. 'Boy, I am going to be in good shape now; I am going to have a Levite being my priest.'

Verse 5, "The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest." He had made some little idols. He had his sons doing the job, but when he saw a real live Levite come along, he thought, 'Well, I'll hire one of those.'

Joshua 18:1, "In those days there was no king in Israel..." So they came along and met up with this priest and said, 'Hey, come with us.'

Verses 19-20, "And they said to him, 'Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?' And the priest's heart was glad..." He said, 'Boy, I have a better job.' He got a calling to a little better church.

Kind of reminds you, if you have ever associated with some of the Protestant churches, you can always tell when the preachers knew that God was calling them. That was when they got a bigger church with a better salary offered to them. They could always hear the Lord's voice then. They knew He was calling when the salary went up and the church was a little bit bigger. They knew He must be in it. That was the situation here.

The tribe of Dan went into idolatry right at the very beginning. This was the situation.

Verses 30-31, "Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priest to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." This was the situation.

The term "Manasseh" in v. 30, if you look it up in any of the commentaries, is not Manasseh in the original. It is Moses. Gershom was Moses' son. This is Moses' grandson. The Jews were so embarrassed about that, they added a little "n" up at the top, not as a part of the word, but just as like an addendum. So when they read it in the synagogue, they would read Manasseh instead of Moses. They preserved in the text Moshe, but they inserted the letter up above the word. When they read it, they read it as Manasseh because they felt like it was an embarrassment to Moses to have his grandson be the first one to go into idolatry. So they decided to amend it. But if you go back and check the genealogy, Gershom was Moses' son, and any of the commentaries will bring that out.

Judges 19:1, "And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel..." You find this situation. It describes the religious state of things. The Levites weren't doing their job. That is made plain in chapters 17—19.

In Judges 20, you had serious problems of homosexuality that had become apparent, and

almost the whole tribe of Benjamin was wiped out because of that.

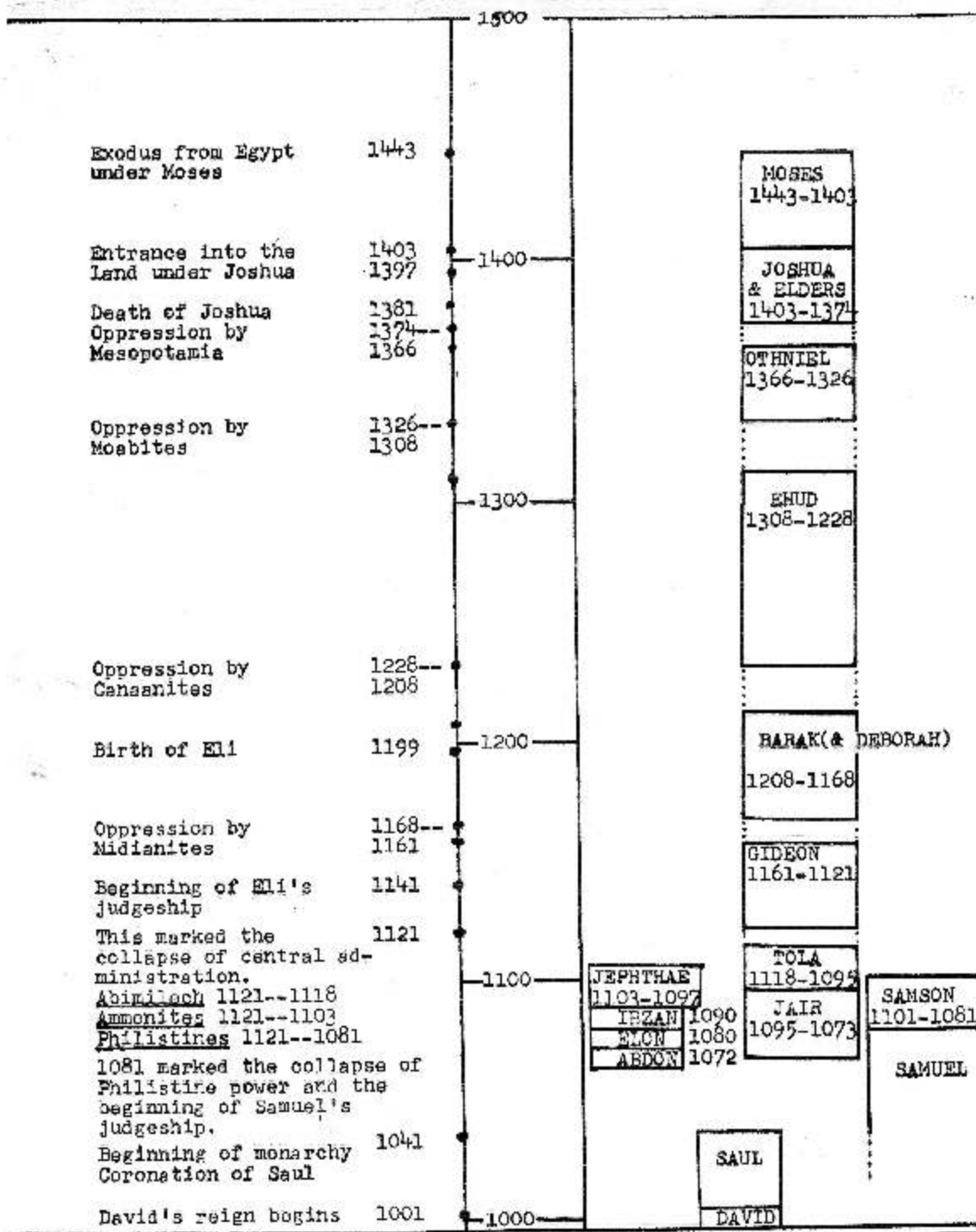
You find, in Judges 21, a kind of conclusion to the story; the survivors of the Benjamite raid were allowed to go down and take wives. There was just the confusion, the strife and anarchy, all of the problems that existed in the nation.

The summary of the whole thing was Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” People were simply doing their own thing. They did what pleased them. They were not out to please God; they were out to please themselves. That kind of state of things describes the confusion and strife of the book of Judges over and over.

There are lessons that we have to learn, lessons of government. What happens, what are the results, when there isn’t strong leadership? There is anarchy and things tend to fall apart. There are lessons of human nature, history, many, many lessons that are to be derived from the book of Judges.

To really get the picture, you have to put yourself back in the concept of the Wild West, the frontier, because that’s what it was. It was the settling of a nation, the time of the pioneers. It was the time of the carving out of a nation. It was analogous to the time early in the history of this country when the settlers were coming in, fighting the Indian wars and all of the strife and turmoil that went on among and between them. That’s the story of the book of Judges. They were people who had not learned the lesson that God had for them, and God allowed certain things to become apparent.

With this we have now completed the five books of the law and the books of Joshua and Judges. We will now go through Samuel, Kings and Chronicles in kind of a harmonized version. Samuel and Kings are chronological; the story starts in I Samuel and continues through the end of II Kings. Chronicles parallels Samuel and Kings and tells the story from a different vantage point. As we go through, we are going to go through by sections. The first portion will deal with the first nine chapters of Chronicles and the first fifteen chapters of I Samuel which is basically the history of Israel between the end of the book of Judges and, let’s say, the time of Eli and Samuel, and on up to just prior to David’s kingship. So it will give us—as we begin to go through that section and over the course of the next few Bible studies that we will complete—an overview of the historical survey of the Old Testament.



Chronology of Judges