

Overview

The first step in studying a new book should be to read over it several times. Here are some clues for you to explore.

1. Use a Bible dictionary to find where in Israel's history the events described in Judges fall.
2. Compare 2:11-19 with later chapters.
 - (a) Do you see a repeated pattern?
 - (b) How far does it extend?
 - (c) What overall outline of the book does it suggest?
3. Use your concordance or Bible SW (or hint a) to find a repeated statement about kingship. How does the location of this statement reinforce what you found in question 2?
4. The last question contrasts the leadership structure in Judges with the one that God brought later. What structure preceded it?
5. Make a list of the judges. Locate each one on a map. How does their range of influence contrast with that of Israel's kings?
6. Another repeated expression in Judges concerns the Spirit of the Lord.
 - (a) How does he function in the book?
 - (b) How does the distribution of these references support your analysis of the overall structure of the book? Use your Bible SW or Hint b.
7. To what book in the NT is Judges most similar? consider
 - (a) the sequence of leadership structures (question 4)
 - (b) the role of the Holy Spirit (question 6)
8. Collect the chronological information scattered throughout ch. 3-16, and compare with the chronological note in 1 Kings 6:1. What difficulty do you see, and how might it be resolved?
9. Hints
 - (a) Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25
 - (b) Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 9:23; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14, 19

1:1-3:6, Prolog

1. Read over these verses several times, looking for repetitions that might suggest an overall structure to the section. For example,
 - (a) How is 2:6-10 related to 1:1?
 - (b) Does 2:20ff recall something you have read earlier in the book?
2. Can you discern a shift in focus from the first part of the prolog to the second?

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3. You might enjoy looking ahead to chapters 17-21, and see how the major themes discussed in the prolog are picked up in the epilog.

1:1-2:5, Social Fragmentation

1. How does the pattern of combat here differ from that in the book of Joshua?
1. Note the shift at 1:22.
 - (a) How does the geographical distinction between 1:1-21 and 1:22-36 reflect the later history of Israel?
 - (b) Compare the relative success of the people in these two sections.
 - (c) In light of Israel's later history, what is the significance of the contrast in the last question?

1:1-20, The Southern Tribes

1. When do the events in these chapters take place?
2. How do the people prepare for the battles in this section?
3. Why does Simeon fight with Judah rather than separately, as do the other tribes? (Recall Gen 49:7.)
4. Notice the references to Jerusalem throughout this book (1:7, 8, 21; 19:10).
 - (a) What is the status of the city?
 - (b) In light of Israel's later history, what significance does this have?
5. Who else works "with the children of Judah," 1:16? Use the Treasury (or Hint a) to reconstruct the history that leads up to this cooperation.
6. How are the cities mentioned in 1:18 significant in Israel's later history? Use the Treasury, or Hint b.
7. In v. 19, why were chariots a threat in one region but not the other?
8. Hints:
 - (a) Exodus 2-3, 18, Numbers 10.
 - (b) Read over 1 Samuel 6.

1:21-36, The Northern Tribes

1. Contrast the preparation for these battles with that in the first half of the chapter.
2. Of the twelve tribes, are any missing in Chapter 1? Can you explain why?
3. How does Benjamin's experience contrast with that of Judah?
4. Consider the experience of the house of Joseph in this section.
 - (a) How does it contrast with the other events mentioned?
 - (b) Who makes up the house of Joseph?

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- (c) How does this exception reinforce the principles that made Judah successful?
- 5. Compare the cities in this chapter with the Levitical cities in Joshua 21. How well was the Levitical presence secured in each part of the country?
- 6. This section four times mentions that the tribes brought Canaanites under tribute (forced labor). Evaluate this practice, based on Deut 20:10-18.
- 7. By the end of this chapter,
 - (a) How many of Israel's tribes have we met?
 - (b) How many of the pagan nations of Judg 3:5 have they encountered?

2:1-5, The Lord's Rebuke

- 1. The Hebrew expression here translated "an angel of the Lord" is elsewhere translated "the angel of the Lord."
 - (a) Consider the appearances of this individual in the Pentateuch (use your concordance or Hint a).
 - (b) Which book in the OT contains the most references to this individual?
 - (c) Note how often this individual speaks in the name of God. How does Micah 5:2 explain his identity?
- 2. What is the significance of the place from which the angel comes? Joshua 4
- 3. What is surprising about this place, given Josh 18:1?
- 4. Can you explain why the angel comes from Gilgal rather than Shiloh?
- 5. How do the people respond to the angel's message?
- 6. Look ahead to the next section (2:6-3:6). How sincere is their response?
- 7. Hints:
 - (a) Gen. 16; 22:; Ex. 3; Num. 22

2:6-3:6, Spiritual Deterioration

- 1. Recall the four points of alignment between the two sections in the Prolog: the death of Joshua, events of interest, warning from the Lord, and national response. Can you identify them in this section?

2:6-10, Joshua

- 1. How does this paragraph take us back to the start of ch. 1?
- 2. Compare this paragraph with Josh 24:28-31. How is the writer making use of earlier Scripture?
- 3. Meditate on other examples where people forget the Lord after the passing of a prominent leader. I thought of Ex 1:8; Deut 31:29; Acts 20:29; Jude 1:17, 18. Perhaps you can think of others.

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4. Following the general alignment we have noticed between Joshua and our present age, who would correspond to Joshua, to “the elders that outlived Joshua,” and to “another generation”?
5. Based on these examples, how successful is tradition in preserving doctrinal purity?

2:11-19, Spiritual Experiences

1. This section anticipates the cycles of Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, and Restoration in chapters 3-16, but does not present a single sequence of these elements. There is a good deal of repetition and backtracking.
 - (a) See if you can identify themes that are repeated throughout this section.
 - (b) 2:11-15a develop four themes in three cycles, adding one item to each cycle: AB, ABC, ABCD.
 - i. See if you can identify these successive additions.
 - ii. How does this presentation emphasize the causal sequence among the elements?
 - (c) 2:15b-18 appear to be organized chiasmically.
 - i. See if you can trace the pattern.
 - ii. What does the structure emphasize?
 - (d) This analysis leaves 2:19 by itself. How does this arrangement emphasize the writer’s main point throughout this section?
2. The cycle of Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, and Restoration appears in part or whole elsewhere in the Bible, describing how God deals with his people. Sometimes the cycle begins with the background of God’s gracious care for his people.
 - (a) Can you find the pattern twice in Psalm 78? What events do these cycles describe?
 - (b) Can you find seven partial instances in Psalm 106? What events are in view?
 - (c) Can you find an instance in Isaiah 63? To what events does Isaiah apply it?
 - (d) The background element of God’s gracious care is not part of the cycle in Judges. Where is that element documented for the cycles in Judges?
 - (e) How might this pattern relate to the experience of God’s people today? In particular, think about our study of Hebrews 12.

2:20-23, Warning from the Lord

1. Compare and contrast this warning with that in 2:1-3. I find it helpful to print out the two passages side by side and use colors to note related statements.
 - (a) How many phrases and ideas do they share in common?
 - (b) Are some of these ideas different in the two cases?
2. To whom is God speaking in each case, and what difference does this make?

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3. Can you find other instances where God appears to be speaking to himself? (Start with Genesis 18.)

3:1-6, National Response

1. The internal parallelism of the prolog suggests that we should read this section alongside 2:4-5. How does the nation's response here compare with 2:4-5?
2. Can you find a symmetrical ABA structure in 3:1-4?
3. This section contains two different lists of the nations whom Israel was supposed to drive out, in v. 3 and v. 5.
 - (a) What earlier Scripture does each of these call to mind? (Hint: review Gen 15:17-19 and Josh 13:1-6.)
 - (b) What lesson is connected with these earlier scriptures?
 - (c) Compare the list in Genesis 15 with later ones: Exo 3:8, 17; Deut 7:1; Jos 3:10; 9:1; 24:11. Some of the nations mentioned in Genesis 15 are missing in these later lists. Why are they omitted?
4. What direct command of the Lord does Judg 3:6 violate? (Hint: it's in the context of one of the nation lists mentioned in question 3(c) above).
5. Compare the nation's conduct here with their response to the angel's message in 2:4-5. What recurring principle does this contrast illustrate? 1 Sam 15; Isaiah 1; Jeremiah 7.

3:7-16:31, Cycles of Judges

1. Recall our discussion of the duration of the period of the judges. Note the six descriptions of the nation's rebellion that initiate the cycles (3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1).
 - (a) How do 3:7 and 6:1 differ from the others?
 - (b) What does this suggest about the chronology of these successive judges?
 - (c) Note the references to the Spirit of the Lord (concordance, or hint a). How do these further divide the judges into four groups?
2. Hints
 - (a) 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).

3:7-5:31 Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak

1. Note the location of the adversaries faced by each of these judges. What progression do you see in the location of these adversaries?

3:7-11, Othniel

1. Compare the description of Israel's apostasy in v. 7 with the summary in 2:11-13. What verbs have you seen before?

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2. Use your Bible software (or hint a) to find where the writer gets the expression “forget the Lord.”
3. In that original context of the expression,
 - (a) Why are they not to forget the Lord?
 - (b) What identifies this Lord whom they are not to forget?
 - (c) What might they do that would constitute forgetting the Lord?
4. What enabled Othniel to do his work, v. 10?
5. How does the enabling in 3:10 differ from that which we enjoy, John 14:16-17?
6. What makes the difference? Ezekiel 36.
7. Pay special attention to the phrase in v. 11 (repeated throughout the book) that “the land had rest.”
 - (a) What is the Strong’s number for this “rest”? (Bible SW or Hint b)
 - (b) The notion of rest is often associated with the New Covenant: Isa 28:12; Matt 11:28-30; Heb 4:8-11. What is the Strong’s number for “rest” in Isa 28:12? (Hint c).
 - (c) Read over other verses in the OT that contains each of these words. What difference in meaning can you discern? (Hint: the word in Isaiah is related to the one in promises such as Deut 12:10.)
 - (d) In Judges, who does receive “rest,” described using the word family used in Isaiah 28 and Deuteronomy 12? (Bible SW, or hint d)
8. Hints
 - (a) Deut 6, 8
 - (b) H8262
 - (c) H4496
 - (d) Judg 2:23; 3:1

3:12-30, Ehud

1. Why is it important for the writer to tell us that Ehud was left-handed?
2. Review the history of the three adversaries whom Israel faces in this episode.
 - (a) What previous interactions has Israel had with each of them?
 - (b) How do these adversaries illustrate Exod 20:5?
3. Use your Bible software (or hint a) to identify “the city of palm trees,” v. 13.
4. Locate the territories of the adversaries, and the City of Palm Trees, on a map.
5. What pattern do you see in the length of the periods of oppressions leading to Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah?
6. 3:19, 26 mention “the quarries that were by Gilgal.”
 - (a) Use Strong’s numbers (or Hint b) to find how this word is translated elsewhere.

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- (b) What is surprising about finding such things at Gilgal, given the history of this location in Joshua?
- (c) How does Ehud's return to Eglon from Gilgal support his claim in v. 20?
- 7. Contrast Ehud's treatment of the Moabites in 3:27-30 with the Lord's instructions to Israel during the Exodus in Deuteronomy 2. What justifies Ehud's actions in this case? Compare the general policy in Deuteronomy 20.
- 8. Compare Ehud's assassination of Eglon with Joab's murders of Abner (2 Sam 3:27) and Amasa (2 Sam 20:8-10).
 - (a) What similarities are there between Ehud's actions and Joab's?
 - (b) How is Ehud's situation different from Joab's? You may want to think about who Abner and Amasa were, what David was trying to accomplish in his discussions with them, and what Joab's motives were for killing them.
 - (c) How does a comparison with Ehud back up David's condemnation of Joab in 1 Kings 2:5 and Solomon's condemnation of him in 1 Kings 2:31-32?
- 9. Hints:
 - (a) Deut 34:3; 2 Chr 28:15
 - (b) Deut. 7:5, 25; 12:3; 2 Kings 17:41; 2 Chr. 33:19, 22; 34:3-4, 7; Psa. 78:58; Is. 10:10; 21:9; 30:22; 42:8; Jer. 8:19; 50:38; 51:47, 52; Hos. 11:2; Mic. 1:7; 5:13

3:31, Shamgar

1. Look up the name Anath on the web.
 - (a) To whom does it refer?
 - (b) What does this suggest about Shamgar's origins?
 - (c) How do his actions here associate him with the Kenites and the Kennizites?
2. What later judge does he anticipate, given his unconventional weapon?

ch. 4-5, Deborah and Barak

1. Read over these two chapters, and compare chapters 4 and 5.
 - (a) How are they similar?
 - (b) How do they differ?
 - (c) Why might the author choose this double presentation?
2. Read over other examples of songs that follow biblical events (Exodus 14-15; 1 Samuel 1-2; 1 Sam 18:6-7; Judg 11:34).
 - (a) Who is usually responsible for composing these memorials?
 - (b) How is this custom reflected in Psalm 68:11? (Consult a commentary.)
 - (c) How does Judges 5:12 reflect the division of labor?

ch. 4, The Prose Account

1. What adversary did the Lord raise up against Israel this time?
2. Compare Joshua 11. How might you explain the reappearance of Jabin? Compare the occurrences of names such as “Pharaoh” or “Abimelech” elsewhere in the Bible.
3. How long did this oppression last? Compare it to the previous two. What pattern do you see?
4. How do the circumstances of Deborah’s judgeship (4:4) differ from those of Othniel’s judgeship (3:10)? What does this suggest about people’s desire for leadership?
5. How do Deborah’s judgeship and Barak’s attitude illustrate the situation described in Isaiah 3?
6. Review what we learned about the Kenites (v. 11) in Judges 1.
 - (a) What is their connection with Israel?
 - (b) Heber “severed himself from the Kenites.” Where were the rest of them located?
7. Contrast the military technology available to the forces of Sisera and those of Barak. What was Sisera’s advantage, and where would it be most useful to him?
8. Find a map of Mount Tabor and the surrounding area.
 - (a) Why would it make sense for Barak to muster his troops on Mount Tabor?
 - (b) Why would it not make sense for him to go down from Mount Tabor to the Valley of Jezreel?
9. Can you explain how the Israelites were able to overcome the army of Sisera in the plain?
 - (a) How does the poetic account of the battle help?
 - (b) What hint is there in the prose account of the means by which God defeated Sisera’s army?
10. Note the contrast between vv. 15 and 16. What does this suggest about Barak’s competency?
11. How does Jael’s destruction of Sisera recall Ehud’s assassination of Eglon?
12. Unlike other judges, there is some ambiguity about just who delivers Israel in this chapter.
 - (a) Who appears to be the deliverer in each of these verses? 4, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 21.
 - (b) Compare vv. 15 and 23. Who is the deliverer?
 - (c) How does the pattern in this chapter illustrate the principle in Isa 59:16?

ch. 5, The Poetic Account

In Hebrew, this poem is extremely difficult, because (like much poetry) it uses many rare words and elliptical constructions. These questions will draw your attention to some of the main themes. In the exposition, I will point out some insights that are not accessible from an English translation.

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5:1-14, Summary of the Context

These verses form an alternation, ABC-ABC, blessing the Lord for those who served, celebrating the victory, and noting the mixed involvement of Israel.

1. Recall the conclusion of ch. 4 on who the deliverer really is. How is this reflected in the song?
2. Note the repeated expression in vv. 2, 9.
 - (a) How do vv. 14-18 amplify this expression?
 - (b) What exceptions to this commendable attitude do we find in the song?
 - (c) How might we either follow or resist this attitude today?
3. Compare vv. 4-5, 21. Do these give you a clearer picture of just how “the Lord discomfited Sisera” (4:15)?
4. How do vv. 6-8 characterize the situation that led to the battle?
 - (a) Contrast Shamgar and Jael (6a) with the last clause in this section. What does condition does this reflect?
 - (b) What led to this problem, according to v. 8?
5. Compare the opening exhortations of 3-5 and 10-13.
 - (a) Who is being addressed in each case?
 - (b) What is being heard or spoken?
 - (c) Why is one group being told only to hear, while the other is invited to speak? (Hint: what countries had kings at this time?)
6. Review the response of the various tribes in vv. 14-18.
 - (a) You will recognize most of the names here as tribes of Israel, but two are unfamiliar: Machir and Gilead. To what do they refer?
 - i. Use your concordance (or Hint a) to find the people who had these names.
 - ii. Did Manasseh have any sons other than Machir?
 - iii. To what does the name “Gilead” also refer? Again, your concordance (or Hint b) will help.
 - iv. What was distinctive about the territory of Manasseh? Num 32:33
 - v. To whom was the territory of Gilead assigned among the tribes? Josh 13:24-31.
 - vi. To whom do Machir and Gilead refer in Judges 5?
 - (b) Which tribes supported the battle? Which ones held back?
 - i. How does Deborah organize the list of tribes in vv. 14-18?
 - ii. In 4:6, Barak was only told to take Naphthali and Zebulun to the battle, but here four tribes are described as supporting the war. Can you explain this difference? (Recall 4:24.)

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- iii. Deborah was particularly appreciative of the participation of “governors” (v. 9). Which tribes did she specifically have in mind, based on 14-15a?
 - iv. Why is so much space devoted to the absence of Reuben? Hint: recall from Genesis 29-30 which sons of Jacob were born to which mothers. To whom is Reuben most closely related, and what was their role in the battle?
 - v. Why are Zebulun and Naphthali singled out for special attention?
- (c) What tribes are not mentioned either positively or negatively, and why?

5:19-31, Outcomes and Consequences

1. In 19-22, how could “the stars” join in the battle?
 - (a) What do stars sometimes represent metaphorically? Compare Deut 4:19; Job 38:4-7.
 - (b) Review Daniel 9 for the spiritual backdrop behind human conflict.
2. How does v. 19 anticipate 28-30?
3. Compare the contrast in 23-27 with the contrast in 31.
 - (a) How are they different?
 - (b) How are they similar?
4. 5:23 is the second appearance of the Angel of the Lord in Judges. The others are in chapters 2, 6, and 13.
 - (a) To which of these other appearances is this one most similar?
 - (b) Compare the references to the Angel of the Lord during the Exodus, in Exodus 23 and 32-33. What do these references, and others in Judges, suggest about the conduct of Meroz?
5. A major theme of the song is the willingness of God’s people to participate in the battle. Can you think of other examples in the Bible where people faced a similar choice? Hint c contains some that I found.
6. Hints
 - (a) Gen. 50:23; Num. 26:29
 - (b) Genesis 31
 - (c) Exod 32:26; Josh 24:15; Matt 12:30

Echoes in Later Scripture

We will consider how Judges 4-5 are reflected later in the Bible.

Psalm 68

1. The most extensive allusions are in Psalm 68. Review our earlier study on this Psalm (https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/psalms/notes/Ps_61thru72.pdf) to recall the likely setting and overall structure. (Our comparison with Judges 4-5 will lead to some minor changes in our analysis of the structure of the Psalm.)

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2. Read through the Psalm and make a list of all the places where David quotes or alludes to the battle against Sisera.
3. How do some of David's allusions differ from the record of the battle?
4. Can you explain these variations in light of David's purpose in the Psalm?
5. Recall the ambiguity in Judges over who is the deliverer, and the final resolution. How does this ambiguity make the events in Judges an appropriate text for David, given his objective in the Psalm?

Ephesians 4:8

1. What is the theme of the context in Eph 4:7-12? In particular, what does Paul mean by "gifts" in this paragraph?
2. Trace the parallels between Eph 4:8 and Ps 68:18.
3. Can you find any other parallels with Judges 4-5 or Psalm 68 in the surrounding verses?
4. How does Paul modify the verse in the Psalm, and why? (You may want to consult the notes on Psalm 68, which also discuss the parallel in Ephesians.)

Hebrews 11:32

1. Barak is one of the four judges cited in Heb 11:32 as an example of faith. Can you suggest why the writer of Hebrews selected him, in spite of his obvious shortcomings?

6:1-16:32, From Gideon through Samson

1. Compare the beginning of Gideon's cycle (6:1) with 3:12; 4:1; 10:6; and 13:1. What does this suggest to you about the overall chronology of the judges?
2. Skim through this section, looking for the marks of the repeated cycle that identifies the judges (Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, and Restoration).
 - (a) Which individuals are marked in this way?
 - (b) What exceptions do you find? We will give them special attention.

ch. 6:1-9:57

1. What marks this section off from the following one?
2. How many judges does it describe, and who are they? (This question should lead you to recognize one of the leading individuals discussed in this section as anomalous.)

6:1-8:35, Gideon

1. Read over Gideon's history a few times.
 - (a) First, look for the standard four sections (Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, and Restoration).
 - i. How is this pattern altered in this case?

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- ii. Recall how ch. 2 began. Might this alteration reinforce the chronological observation we made above?
- (b) Now look for smaller sections. Keep in mind the usual structural markers for narrative:
 - i. Changes in scene (change in characters, place, or time)
 - ii. Within a scene, reintroducing a character by name

6:1-6, Rebellion, Retribution, and Repentance

1. What do we know about the Midianites from the previous references to them in the Bible?
 - (a) Use your concordance or Bible software (or Hint a).
 - (b) In Genesis 37, what other term is used to describe them?
 - (c) How can you reconcile these two terms? Compare Exod 2:15; 4:19
2. Who was allied with Midian in these raids? Where have we seen them before?
3. Compare and contrast Midian's oppression with that of the previous adversaries whom the Lord used to chasten Israel.
4. Compare the description of Israel's condition under Midian with that in the previous cycles. Do you see a progression?
5. Hints:
 - (a) Gen 37; Num 10, 25, 31.

6:7-10, Rebuke

1. What is unusual about this section, as part of the cycle?
2. Compare and contrast it with the rebukes in 2:1-3 and 10:11-16.
 - (a) Who is the messenger in each case?
 - (b) See if you can align the contents of the three messages.
 - (c) How do the parallels between the messages help explain each element?

6:11-24, The Call of Gideon

1. The discussion that follows is structured in two ways.
 - (a) The angel of the Lord makes two statements in v. 12. How does Gideon respond to each of them? (You might enjoy looking up the two names in v. 11, "Abiezer" and "Gideon," to see how they anticipate the angel's statements and Gideon's responses.)
 - (b) This section is one of several places in the Bible where God calls someone to undertake a mission; others include Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. These commissioning narratives follow a regular pattern that includes the following elements. See if you can identify them in the case of Gideon.
 - i. *Divine confrontation*, where the Lord appears to the person.

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- ii. An *introductory word* from the Lord.
 - iii. The actual *commission*, describing what the person is to do.
 - iv. An *objection* by the person being commissioned
 - v. The Lord's *reassurance* answering the objection.
 - vi. A *sign* to confirm that God has indeed given the commission.
- (c) Think about each element of the commissioning pattern in terms of our obedience to the Lord. How can this pattern guide us as we walk before the Lord?
2. Note changes in how Gideon's visitor is identified as you read through the section.
 - (a) What do these changes suggest about the true identity of the angel of the Lord?
 - (b) The angel of the Lord also appears in Genesis 16, 22, Exodus 3, Judges 2, 13. Read over each of these accounts and see if you can find shifts in identification comparable to the one in Gideon's encounter.
 3. How does the description of Gideon's offering to his visitor recall Abraham's experience in Genesis 18, and anticipate Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18?
 4. Note the sequence of events in vv. 21-23.
 - (a) How do they reflect Gideon's growth in faith?
 - (b) How does Gideon's fear in v. 22 show some knowledge of the law of Moses?
 5. How does the mention of "Ophrah of the Abiezrites" close off the call section?
 6. How do Gideon's actions in v. 24 contrast with those at the start of the call section?
 7. v. 24 mentions an altar that Gideon builds on his own initiative, that is remembered years later. In the next section, God commands him to build an altar, that is mentioned only in passing. Think about the relation between these two altars. Are there really two, or is there another explanation?

6:25-32, Internal Revival

1. What do we learn about Gideon's family from this episode?
2. How does this background suggest a parallel between Gideon's actions and those of Abraham in Gen 12:1?
3. How does the story show that Gideon's faith is a work in progress?
4. How does Joash's defense of his son's actions anticipate Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18?
5. How can the Lord command Gideon to offer sacrifice at a local altar, in light of the command in Deut 12:10-14? Compare Samuel's actions in 1 Sam 7:9; ch. 9; 10:8; 13:8ff.

6:33-7:15, Preparation for Battle

1. 6:33-34 contrast the enemy host with the Spirit of the Lord. How many contrasts between these two verses can you find?

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2. What tribes responded to Gideon's call for support (6:35)? Consult a map of the tribes (such as the one I showed you when we started this study, or one in your Bible) to think about the next two questions?
 - (a) Given v. 33, why would these tribes be responsive?
 - (b) What tribe's absence is surprising?
 - (c) How might you explain this absence?
3. How does Gideon's request at the end of ch. 6 contrast with the attitude of these tribes?
4. In 6:36-40, Gideon "tests" the Lord (v. 39, "prove") with the fleece. Contrast Num 14:22-23, where Israel is also said to "test" the Lord (KJV "tempt"). Why does the Lord tolerate Gideon's test, but not that posed by the nation in the wilderness?
5. Where were the two forces located (7:1)?
6. How does Ps 83:9, 10 make Midian's position more explicit? You might look at a Bible atlas to see where En Dor is.
7. In 7:2, the Lord compares the sizes of the two armies.
 - (a) How many men did Gideon have (7:3)?
 - (b) How many did Midian have (6:5; 7:12)?
 - (c) Why does the Lord think Gideon's army is too large?
8. Use the Treasury or your center references (or Hint a) to learn the basis for v. 3.
9. Why is the reference to Mount Gilead in v. 3 puzzling? (Consult Genesis 31 and Deuteronomy 3 to find the location of Mount Gilead.) I will discuss this anomaly in the exposition.
10. In 7:5-7, can you think why the Lord would prefer the lappers to the bowers?
11. In 7:9-11, what choice does the Lord give Gideon?
 - (a) Which option does he select?
 - (b) What does this say about his continued state of mind?
 - (c) Why does the Lord deal differently with his fear (v. 10) than with the fearful in 7:3?
12. Hints:
 - (a) Read the Lord's instructions for holy war in Deuteronomy 20.

7:16-8:21 The Defeat of Midian

7:16-22 *The Battle at the Camp*

1. Notice the difference between the battle cry of Gideon (v. 18) and that uttered by the people (v. 20). (Pay attention to the italics.)
 - (a) What did Gideon's original cry (without the italics) mean? (The preposition translated "of" can also mean "for.")
 - (b) What is noteworthy about the people's cry?

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- (c) Why might they have made this addition?
 - (d) Where in the story do we see the working of “the sword of the Lord”?
 - (e) Where do we see Gideon’s sword used?
2. Notice the dense concentration of references to trumpets in this episode.
- (a) Use your Bible software (or Hint a) to see where this term appears in Joshua and Judges. Is it generally distributed, or is it representative of only a few incidents?
 - (b) What does this distribution suggest about Gideon’s reasons for choosing this mode of attack?
3. Hints:
- (a) Josh. 6:4–6, 8–9, 13, 16, 20; Judg. 3:27; 6:34; 7:8, 16, 18–20, 22

7:23-8:21 The Rout

1. This section describes three follow-on engagements between Israel and Midian, distinguished by which Israelites are fighting and what Midianites are being overcome.
 - (a) Identify these three engagements.
 - (b) What spiritual strengths or weaknesses do they illustrate?

7:23-8:3 Opportunists and Ephraim

1. Whose swords actually slay the Midianites in v. 22?
2. Use the Treasury (or Hint a) to see where this happens in Israel’s later history.
3. Note the broader participation of Israel in routing the Midianites in 7:23.
 - (a) Have we seen these people before?
 - (b) Why are they so eager to participate now that Midian is on the run? (Read ahead through ch. 8 to find the answer.)
4. Use a Bible atlas, and the references to Abelmeholah (7:22), Succoth (8:5), and Penuel (8:8) to describe the direction in which the Midianites fled.
5. Why does Gideon invite the Ephraimites, remote from the Valley of Jezreel, to participate (7:24)?
6. Why were the Ephraimites angry with him (8:1)? Compare your answers to question 5 above.
7. How does the place reference in 7:25 form a fitting conclusion to this episode?
8. Hints:
 - (a) 2 Chronicles 20; 1 Samuel 14

8:4-21 Gideon’s Revenge and Greed

1. How is the opening of a new scene at 8:4 emphasized? Pay attention to
 - (a) How Gideon is introduced;
 - (b) the flow of time in the narrative (compare 7:25-8:1).

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2. What subsections can you distinguish, and how would you characterize them? (Hint: they form an alternation, ABAB.)
3. Where do Succoth and Penuel (Peniel) appear earlier in Israel's history? (Hint a)
4. What does this earlier history tell you about how people used this region?
5. What nation's people occupied these cities? (Hint b)
6. How are those whom Gideon pursues in this section distinguished from those slain by Ephraim in the previous section?
7. What does Gideon request from the men of Succoth and Penuel?
8. Explain their response. How supportive are they of his mission?
9. Contrast Gideon's treatment of Succoth and Penuel with his treatment of Ephraim. What shift can we see?
10. What motives for Gideon's actions can you discern in 8:18-21?
11. Hints:
 - (a) Genesis 32-33
 - (b) Josh 13:27; 1 Ki 12:25

8:22-28, The Perils of Victory

1. What temptation does Gideon successfully avoid in 8:22-28?
2. What sin does he commit?
 - (a) Consult a Bible dictionary (e.g., <https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/dictionary/viewtopic.cfm?topic=IT0003139>) to see what an ephod is.
 - (b) Look at other instances of "ephod" in Judges (Hint a). How is this article used in this other setting?
 - (c) What expression characterizes the people's sin in this case?
3. How might he have excused his sin in the light of 6:26?
4. How does 8:24 help you understand Gen 37:28, 36; 39:1?
5. Hints:
 - (a) Jud 17:5; 18:14-20

8:29-9:57, Abimelech

8:29-32, Connection of Gideon and Abimelech

1. How might Gideon's conduct in this paragraph and the previous one explain his reluctance to become king? Compare Deut 17:17.
2. What ambivalence does he express in the name he gives the son of his concubine?

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8:33-35, Rebellion

1. The name “Baalberith” means “Baal of the Covenant.” How does this name emphasize the seriousness of the nation’s sin?
2. How does this paragraph fit into the standard cycle (Rebellion, Retribution, Rebuke, Repentance, Restoration, Rest) that describes many of the judges?
3. Skim through the rest of ch. 8-9. To what extent is this cycle echoed here? How is it modified?

9:1-5, Retribution

1. Use Strong’s numbers (or Hint a) to explore the word translated “men (of Shechem).” What is surprising about the term used?
2. In each of the other cycles, the enemy who brings God’s retribution for apostasy is a political unit. What is that unit here?
3. Compare Abimelech’s ambition in 9:1-2 with Gideon’s attitude in 8:22-23. How does his behavior anticipate the behavior of Gehazi in 2 Kings 5?
4. What valuation does Abimelech place on his brethren?
5. How does this compare with other values that are placed on people in the OT (Gen 37:28; Ex 21:32)?
6. What location does Abimelech choose for his coronation?
7. What significance might this location have, in light of Gen 12:6-7; 35:4; Josh 24:25-26? (NB: “plain” in Gen 12:6; Judg 9:6 should be translated “tree”).
8. Skim over the rest of the chapter. How is it summarized in 9:56-57?
9. Hints:
 - (a) The word is בעל, H1167, which means “lord, master, husband,” and is the name of the Canaanite God of thunder. We will discuss the relation of this term to 8:33; 9:4; and Gen 14:13.

9:7-21, Rebuke

1. Use your Bible dictionary or atlas to find the relation between Mount Gerizim and Shechem.
2. What kind of message does Jotham give from Mount Gerizim?
3. How does it compare with the message proclaimed there when the nation entered the land under Joshua? Deut 11:29; 27:12; Josh 8:33.
4. How can you account for the change?
5. What role does Jotham’s message play in the cycle we have seen regularly in Judges? Compare 2:1-3; 6:8-10; 10:11-13.
6. How might the end of 9:7 reflect a missing part of this cycle?
7. Meditate on Jotham’s parable.
 - (a) Each of the first three trees rejects the position of king.

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- i. Study the reason that each gives. Can you find other Bible verses that explain each of the functions that they claim?
 - ii. Explore the general meaning of the word translated “promote,” by searching the OT for other instances of this Strong number (H5128) (or see Hint a). What characteristic of the royal role does it convey?
- (b) What two options does the bramble offer the other trees, once they offer him the position of king?
 - (c) How does Jotham’s conclusion to his parable connect verbally to the options presented by the bramble?
 - (d) To which of the trees does Abimelech correspond?
 - (e) How does Jotham’s prophecy anticipate the rest of the story in Judges 9?
8. Hints
- (a) For example, Gen. 4:12, 14; Ex. 20:18; Num. 32:13; 2 Sam. 15:20; 2 Kings 19:21; 23:18; Job 16:4; Psa. 22:7; 59:11, 15; 107:27; 109:10, 25; Prov. 5:6; Is. 6:4; 7:2; 19:1; 24:20; 29:9; 37:22; Jer. 14:10; Lam. 2:15; 4:14–15; Amos 4:8; 8:12; 9:9; Nah. 3:12; Zeph. 2:15

9:22-55, Restoration

1. Read over this section a few times.
 - (a) What two major events does it describe?
 - (b) Can you correlate each of these with one element of Jotham’s curse?
2. How do vv. 22-24 set the stage for both of the following sections?

9:25-49, Judgment on Shechem

1. How would you divide this section into scenes? Recall that a scene changes when either the time, the location, or the actors change.
2. What is distinctive about 9:23, in light of the use of “spirit” elsewhere in Judges?
3. What stimulates the rebellion in 9:26-29?
4. What does the text suggest about Gaal’s origins?
5. How do the warnings in Matt 7:15 and Acts 20:28-30 relate to Gaal’s activity?
6. How is Gaal like Absalom in 2 Samuel 15?
7. Where is Abimelech’s base of operations during this episode, and who is supporting him? (Cf. 9:41, 55). Can you reconstruct his political machinations?
8. What is surprising about the attack in 9:42-49, in light of v. 41?
9. Note the repeated references to “the entering of the gate.” What is significant about this part of a city, elsewhere in the OT? Compare Josh. 8:29; 20:4; 1 Kings 22:10; 2 Kings 23:8; Prov. 1:21; Jer. 1:15; 19:2
10. How does the destruction of the people of Shechem literally fulfill Jotham’s curse?

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9:50-55, Judgment on Abimelech

1. How does Abimelech's death recall the history of Sisera?
2. What is surprising about the description of Abimelech's army in 9:55?

9:56-57, Chiastic Summary

1. How do the clauses of this paragraph summarize the Rebuke and Restoration sections of Abimelech's history?

ch. 10-12

1. Contrast the descriptions of minor judges like Tola and Jair with those of the major judges. (The others are Shamgar, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.)
 - (a) How do their episodes compare with the cycles that characterize the other judges?
 - (b) How are they introduced?
 - (c) How is the period of their activity characterized?

10:1-5, Tola and Jair

1. Where did each of these judges serve?
2. Tola is said to "defend" Israel.
 - (a) Use Strong's numbers (or Hint a) to find where else in Judges this verb is used.
 - (b) Against what danger or adversary is he defending Israel?
3. Jair is not the first man of Manasseh with this name.
 - (a) Use your Bible SW or Hint b to learn when the earlier Jair lived.
 - (b) How did this Jair extend the achievements of his predecessor?
4. Hints:
 - (a) Judg. 2:16, 18; 3:9, 31; 6:14-15, 31, 36-37; 7:2, 7; 8:22; 10:1, 12-14; 12:2; 13:5
 - (b) Num. 32:41; Deut. 3:14; Josh. 13:30; 1 Chr. 2:22-23

10:6-8a

1. Compare 10:6 with 10:11-12. What is ironic about Israel's submission to these gods, in light of her history?
2. What two adversaries does the Lord use to chastise Israel for the apostasy in v. 7?
3. Compare these two adversaries with the histories of Jephthah in ch. 10-12 and Samson in 13-16, respectively.
 - (a) What is the function of v. 7?
 - (b) What does this suggest about the chronological relation of 10-12 and 13-16?

Study Questions on Judges

10:8b-12:7, Jephthah

1. Read over the story. How many of the traditional components of the cycle (Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, Rebuke, Restoration, Rest) can you find?

10:8b-9, Continuation of Retribution

1. Look up “Ammonites” and “Philistines” in a Bible dictionary. Pay special attention to where each group is based.
 - (a) Which group is in view in this verse, and why?
 - (b) What is striking about v. 9?
 - (c) What later episode in the story reflects Ammon’s behavior in 10:9?

10:10-16, Repentance and Rebuke

1. This is the third instance of divine rebuke we have seen in Judges. The others are in 2:1-3 and 6:6-10. Compare and contrast the three instances.
 - (a) What common sections appear in more than one of these rebukes?
 - (b) Who delivers each one?
 - (c) Where does Israel’s cry come with respect to the body of the rebuke in each case?
2. Compare Israel’s confession with v. 6.
3. Compare the Lord’s description of his past deliverance with the nation’s rebellion in 10:6. How does it make their rebellion all the more heinous?
4. What earlier challenge in Judges does the Lord’s challenge in v. 14 recall?
5. What does the verb “grieved” mean in v. 16? Use Strong’s numbers, or look at the instances in Num 21:4; Judg 16:16; Job 21:4; Zech 11:8.

10:17-12:7, Restoration

1. Compare and contrast how Jephthah comes to lead the Gileadites against Ammon, with how Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, and Abimelech began their periods of influence.
2. How might this change reflect the final statement of v. 16?

11:1-3, Historical Background

1. How is Jephthah’s background similar to that of Abimelech? How is it dissimilar?
2. Use the Treasury, or Hint a, to see how Jephthah’s activities during this period anticipate David’s.
3. Hints:
 - (a) 1 Samuel 22

11:4–11, Election of Jephthah

1. How does Gilead’s appeal to Jephthah resemble the nation’s cry to the Lord in 10:10-16?
2. How does their spiritual condition, reflected in 10:13-14, explain the need to reach so far for a competent leader? Recall Isa 3:1-3.

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3. What is the point of the promise that Jephthah elicits in 11:9-10?
4. Contrast Jephthah's response to the invitation with that of the bramble in Jotham's fable in 9:15.
5. Read through the end of Jephthah's history. Did the elders follow through on their promise?

11:12-28, Negotiation with Ammon

1. Compare Jephthah's initial approach to the king of Ammon with his interactions with the elders of Gilead in 11:5-11, and his response to Ephraim in 12:1-6. What admirable quality does he exhibit?
2. How does Jephthah's negotiation with Ammon follow the example of Moses' actions as he describes them in 11:14-20?
3. What region does Ammon claim?
4. Compare Moses' account in Numbers 20-21 and Deuteronomy 2 with Jephthah's account.
 - (a) Where do they agree?
 - (b) Where do they disagree?
 - (c) How might Num 21:14 account for some of the differences?
5. What is the purpose of Jephthah's statement in 11:22? (Compare your answer to #3)
6. What is the history of this region, in the light of Num 21:26-31, and how does it support Jephthah's position?
7. Note the concentration of the verb "pass over" or "pass through" (Strong H56764). What does it describe throughout this section?
8. Compare 11:24 with 1 Kings 11:33.
 - (a) What is unusual about 11:24?
 - (b) In light of the preceding narrative, why might Jephthah refer to Chemosh here instead of Milcom?
9. Review Numbers 22-24 for background to Judg 11:25.
 - (a) Why does the writer here preserve Balak's name but not that of the king of Ammon? Compare Deut 25:6; Ruth 4:1, 6; Psa 9:5.
 - (b) What two possible actions might Balak have taken against Israel? Use Strong's numbers (or Hint a) to understand the meaning of "strive."
 - (c) Did Balak fight against Israel (Num 22:3)? Why or why not?
 - (d) In what sense might Balak's engagement of Balaam be considered "striving," and what was the outcome?
10. What does Jephthah's negotiation with Ammon show about his knowledge of the Mosaic documents?
11. What lessons about dealing with those who challenge us can we learn from Jephthah's negotiations with the king of Ammon?

Study Questions on Judges

12. Hints

- (a) “Strive” in 11:25 is ריב, H7378, which includes the notion of a lawsuit.

11:29-31, Preparation for Battle

1. Contrast 11:29, 32 with 10:13-14. How might you explain the difference?
2. How does 11:29 recall the history of Israel as Jephthah recounted it in vv. 14-22? Pay attention to the distinctive vocabulary.
3. Review Numbers 20-21.
 - (a) What evidence do we have that Jephthah is acquainted with this portion of Scripture?
 - (b) Can you suggest from these chapters why Jephthah may have felt that he should make a vow in the face of the threat posed by the king of Ammon?
4. Pay special attention to Jephthah’s vow. We will explore it more when we study 11:34-40.
 - (a) What evidence does it give that he anticipates a human may be involved?
 - (b) What does the law of Moses say about human sacrifice? Lev 18:21; Deut 18:10.
 - (c) In light of 11:12-28, do you think Jephthah would know about these restrictions?
 - (d) In light of 11:29, what do you think his attitude would be toward them?
 - (e) Consult these verses to learn more about what it means for a person to “be the Lord’s”: Ex 13:11-12; Num 3:11-13, 45; 8:14; Mal 3:17
 - (f) What two alternative outcomes does Jephthah’s vow anticipate, and how does he propose to handle each of them?

11:32-33, The Battle

1. Compare 11:32 with 10:13. How is the Lord’s action here compatible with his resolve there?
2. Note the subjects of the verbs in 11:32-33. What kind of army did Jephthah have for this conflict? (Recall 11:3)

11:34-40, Performing the Vow

1. What is particularly poignant about the description of Jephthah’s daughter in 11:34? Recall Jephthah’s own condition (11:1, 2). What hopes might he have placed on her?
2. How does her knowledge of Scripture compare with her father’s? Compare 11:36 with Num 30:1, 2

12:1-6, Negotiation with Ephraim

1. Trace the role of Ephraim in each of the cycles we have seen so far.
 - (a) Do any judges so far come from Ephraim?
 - (b) At what point in the battle do the Ephraimites usually show up?
2. What other judge had difficulty with the men of Ephraim? (Recall ch. 8)
3. What does Jephthah have in common with that judge?

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- (a) To what tribe did that judge belong (6:15)?
 - (b) Jephthah's father was named "Gilead" (11:1, 2). To which tribe did the original Gilead belong (Num 26:29)?
4. What was the relation between Ephraim and Manasseh?
- (a) How are they related to each other (Gen 41:50-52)?
 - (b) Which one was dominant (Gen 48:13-19)?
 - (c) How might this relation explain Ephraim's interference with these two judges, and not with others?
 - (d) How does Ephraim's taunt recorded in 12:4 reflect this tribal history?
 - (e) What might have led some Ephraimites to become fugitives in Gilead? Compare the history of Ruth 1:1, about this same time.
5. Contrast Jephthah's comments to the men of Ephraim (12:2-3) with his speech to the king of Ammon. Note the pronouns he uses. Where is his focus here?
6. How does Jephthah's spiritual condition in this episode compare with what we have seen so far?
7. How do the experiences of Gideon (compare ch. 7 with 8), David (compare 2 Sam 6-10 with 11), and Elijah (compare 1 Kings 18 with 19) resemble this shift?
8. What lesson can we draw from these and similar examples?
9. Contrast the description of Jephthah's battle with the Ammonites (11:32-33) with his battle with the men of Ephraim (12:4).
- (a) How does his army differ?
 - (b) How might that explain the brutal treatment of Ephraim in 12:6?
10. Use Strong's numbers to compare "escaped" in 12:5 with "fugitives" in 12:4. What are the Gileadites trying to do in vv. 5-6?

12:7, A Leader Lost

1. How extensive was Jephthah's influence after the defeat of Ephraim?
2. Compare the account of Jephthah's burial with that of other people in Judges (look up "buried" in your concordance or Bible SW, or see Hint a).
 - (a) How does Jephthah's account differ from that of the others?
 - (b) How does it resemble the account of Moses' burial (Deut 34:6)?
3. Hints:
 - (a) Joshua (2:9), Gideon (8:32), Tola (10:2), Jair (10:5), Jephthah (12:7), Ibzon (12:10), Elon (12:12), Abdon (12:15), and Samson (16:31)

12:8-15

1. Locate each of these judges on a map of Israel.
2. Compare the descriptions of the five minor judges (10:1-5; 12:8-15)

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- (a) with each other. What common pattern do they follow?
- (b) with the pattern of the major judges. How do the patterns of the major and minor judges differ? What elements do you see in one group that do not appear in the other?
3. Compare the descriptions of Gideon (8:30), Jair (10:1-5), Ibzan, and Abdon with Deut 17:14-17. What ambition, and what error, does their conduct suggest?
4. Jair and Abdon are preoccupied with ass colts. What is the significance of riding on asses? Cf. Jdg 5:10.
5. How do the three forbidden categories of Deut 17:14-17 relate to:
 - (a) the three facets of the world identified in 1 John 2:16?
 - (b) the three ways that we are to love the Lord in Deut 6:5 (the last should be translated “all your abundance”)? See <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/DoctrinalStudies/ThreeChoices/ThreeChoices.pdf>

ch. 13-16 Samson

1. Read the history of Samson over a few times.
 - (a) Which of the R’s of the standard cycle of the judges (Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, Rebuke, Restoration) can you find? Which are missing?
 - (b) Divide the history into scenes. Remember that a scene is defined by continuity of time, place, and characters.
 - (c) Keep an eye open for repetitions that may be a clue to the overall structure of the history
2. Note the place names mentioned in the history, and see if you can find them on a map. Use a Bible atlas, the BibleMapper software, or www.bibleatlas.org.

13:2-24, *Setting and Birth*

Context

1. How do verses 2 and 24 identify this as a distinct section?
2. The angel tells Manoah and his wife that her son shall be a Nazarite.
 - (a) Review the Nazarite vow as described in Numbers 6.
 - (b) How is this Nazarite different from ordinary Nazarites?
 - (c) Can you think of other Nazarites in the Bible who share this distinctive characteristic?
3. This is the third time that the angel of the Lord appears in Judges (cf. ch. 2 and 6).
 - (a) Compare and contrast these appearances.
 - (b) What evidence do chapters 6 and 13 give for the identity of this character?
4. Samson is a contemporary of Samuel. Compare the story of Samson’s birth with that of Samuel in 1 Samuel 1. How are they similar? How are they different?

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5. We saw that Samson's work prepares for Samuel's, which suggests a comparison between Samson's relation to Samuel and John the Baptist's relation to our Lord. Compare the story of Samson's birth with that of John the Baptist in Luke 1.

Details

1. Notice the pattern of interaction among Manoah, his wife, and the Lord.
 - (a) Can you think of other biblical episodes that give examples of these important relationships within a family? For example, Gen 25:21-23; Matthew 1; Luke 1.
 - (b) How does the conduct of Manoah's wife remind you of Deborah's dealings with Barak in Judges 4?
 - (c) What lessons are there here for us as families today?
2. Contrast Manoah's response to the angel with that of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, in Luke 1:8-20.
3. Compare this divine visit with those to Abraham (Genesis 18) and Gideon (Judges 6). Here are some features to keep in mind.
 - (a) In each case, what degree of understanding does the host have into the identity of the visitor? In the case of Abraham and Gideon, look at the Strong numbers for the expression "my Lord" that appears in Gen 18:3; Judg 6:13, 15, or see hint a.
 - (b) How does the dinner invitation that Manoah offers his guest differ from that given by Abraham and Gideon?
 - (c) How does the response of the guest to the invitation differ? Can you think why it would, based on your answer to (a)?
 - (d) Contrast how the guest departs in each case.
4. Use the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (or hint b) to understand better the meaning of the Angel's response in v. 18:
 - (a) What earlier biblical event should it have brought to Manoah's mind?
 - (b) What would that event have told him about the identity of his visitor?
 - (c) To whom else do later writers assign this name?
5. What is the basis for Manoah's fear in 13:22? Use the Treasury, or hint c.
6. How does our understanding of the identity of the Angel of the Lord reconcile the tension between 13:22 and 13:23?
7. Hints
 - (a) In Gen 18:3 and Judg 6:15, the speaker uses Strong H0136 (as does Manoah in addressing God in 13:8). Judg 6:13 is H0113, which simply means "sir."
 - (b) Gen 32:29; Isa 9:6
 - (c) Gen 32:30; Exo 33:20; Deu 5:26

13:24-15:19, The Woman of Timnah

1. There is a major break between this history and that in 15:20-16:31. You might want to read over these chapters and see if you can identify features that distinguish the two major sections from one another.
2. What is the relation between the statements that “the Lord blessed him” (13:24) and “the Spirit of the Lord began to move him” (13:25)? Recall the relation we saw between Luke 24:50 and Acts 1:8.
3. Use Strong’s numbers (or Hint a) to study the use of the Hebrew verb here translated “move.”
 - (a) What kind of feeling does it suggest?
 - (b) Would Samson have perceived this action of the Spirit as a blessing?
 - (c) How does Samson’s initial awareness of the work of the Spirit compare with Samuel’s experience as a child (1 Sam 3)?
4. See if you can find internal parallels within 14:1-15:19 that divide it into multiple sections. The first two sections will have very similar components, but you’ll have to think hard about the third.
5. Note the references to going down or going up throughout this passage. What do these suggest about the writer’s attitude toward the Philistines and their territory?
6. Hints:
 - (a) The verb also appears in Gn 41:8; Ps 77:4 (MT 5); Da 2:1, 3

14:1-20, The Slaughter in Ashkelon

1. Use the Treasury (or hint a) to see why Samson’s parents are so upset about his choice of a bride.
 - (a) Does Samson’s choice strictly violate the terms of the Scriptural injunction?
 - (b) Does it violate the underlying intent expressed in the passage?
2. How does the writer explain Samson’s choice?
3. Use the Treasury (or hint b) to find other examples of the principle set forth in 14:4.
4. Use Strong’s numbers (or hint c) to examine other uses of the word “riddle” in the OT.
 - (a) What were some of the functions of riddles?
 - (b) What is the function of Samson’s riddle?
5. The reward for the contest is suits of clothing.
 - (a) How do 2 Kings 5:5 and Jos 7:21 help you understand what was at stake in the contest?
 - (b) How might Samson’s mission of killing Philistines motivate his challenge?
6. Contrast the attitude of Samson’s wife toward her husband with that of his mother toward Manoah.

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7. How does Samson seek to refresh himself after this episode?
8. Use Strong's numbers (or hint d) to find where else the word for "companion" (14:20) appears in Judges.
 - (a) When and where did he first meet this companion?
 - (b) How has that companion's conduct already showed the depth of his commitment to Samson?
 - (c) How does this word for "companion" compare, for example, with the word for the companions who mourned with Jephthah's daughter at the end of Judges 11?
9. How might Prov 18:24 provide a commentary on this episode?
10. Hints:
 - (a) Deuteronomy 7
 - (b) Exod. 7:3, 4; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20
 - (c) Num. 12:8; 1 Kings 10:1; Ezek. 17:2; Hab. 2:6; Psa. 49:4; 78:2; Prov. 1:6; Dan. 8:23; 2 Chr. 9:1
 - (d) Judg. 14:11, 20; 15:2, 6

15:1-8, Revenge for Timnah

1. How many parallels can you trace between this episode and the previous one (14:1-20)?
2. In v. 2, Samson's father-in-law disregards the marriage covenant. What earlier paragon of ungodliness in Israel's history does this attitude reflect?
3. Why do you think Samson attacks the entire Philistine community (vv. 3-5) for the offense that his in-laws have committed against him?

15:9-19, The Battle of Lehi

1. What is surprising about the attitude of the Israelites in 15:9-12 toward the Philistines, and toward Samson?
2. How does their attitude reflect the first scene in each of the previous two episodes?
3. How does Samson's experience in vv. 11-13 anticipate later individuals in biblical history? Compare or contrast 1 Samuel 22; Matthew 26.
4. Samson does not overcome a wild animal in 15:12-13, but how does this scene reflect his power?
5. How do 15:14-17 align with the corresponding scene in the previous two episodes (the wedding, and the slaughter at Timnah)?
6. Compare Samson's action in 15:18 with the actions of the other judges we have considered. (Use Strong's numbers or hint a to find other judges who call on the Lord for help.)
 - (a) How is he unique?
 - (b) How might this distinction motivate his inclusion in Heb 11:32?

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- (c) How does each phrase in his prayer reflect on his attitude toward the Lord?
7. The other cycles in Judges 2-16 include Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance (at least a cry for help to the Lord), Restoration, and sometimes a Rebuke.
- (a) Which of these elements are present at the national level in the Samson cycle?
- (b) How many of them can you identify in Samson's personal experience?
8. What progress can you trace in Samson's relation to the Lord over the course of the three episodes in chapters 14-15? How might this progress explain Heb 11:32?
9. Hints:
- (a) The word Hebrew word translated "call" (H7121) appears in Judg. 1:17, 26; 2:5; 4:6; 6:24, 32; 7:3 ("proclaim"), 20 ("cried"); 8:1; 9:7 ("cried"), 54; 10:4; 12:1; 13:24; 14:15; 15:17-19; 16:18-19, 25, 28; 18:12, 23, 29; 21:13.

Samson, the Servant of the Lord

Recall the hourglass shape we used to summarize Isaiah's description of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 44-66 (see notes at <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/isaiah/notes/Isaiah53.pdf>). The idea is that the term sometimes describes the entire nation Israel (top of the hourglass), sometimes the unique promised deliverer (the neck of the hourglass), and sometimes the redeemed people of God (bottom of the hourglass).

- In his prayer of 15:18, Samson calls himself "thy [God's] servant."
 - How many other characters in the book of Judges have this title?
 - Use Strong's numbers (or hint a) to review the use of this term in the second half of Isaiah. How does the use of the term there recall Samson's role within the book of Judges?
- Summarize the parallels between Samson and our Lord Jesus that we saw in our study of the Battle of Lehi (Judges 15:9-19).
- Recall how Samson's experience recapitulates the presents the entire nation's experience in Judges 2-12 of Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance (at least a cry for help to the Lord), Restoration, and sometimes a Rebuke. What parts of the hourglass does his experience illustrate?
- What two central figures in human history represent the entire human race, and what did they achieve by this role? Read Rom 5:12-21, and compare 1 Cor 15:21-22.
- Hints:
 - Is. 41:8-9; 42:1, 19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3, 5-7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11; 54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8-9, 13-15; 66:14

15:20-16:31, The Death of Samson

- Find other passages in Judges that, like 15:20, summarize a judge's life with a time period (either "the land had rest X years" or "he judged Israel X years").
 - What statement inevitably follows these notes?

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- (b) How does this observation make 15:20 anomalous?
- (c) The notice is repeated in 16:30. What structural role does this repetition play?
- (d) Given the anomaly noted in question (b) above, what may be one function of ch. 16?

16:1-3, Spying in Gaza

1. Gaza was the southernmost of the five main cities of the Philistines (the others being Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron). Its name probably means “the strong city.”
 - (a) Where does it appear earlier in Judges?
 - (b) What is significant about the fact that the Philistines control it at the time of Samson?
 - (c) Why might it attract Samson’s attention after his victory at Lehi?
2. Read over Joshua 2.
 - (a) How many points of similarity can you find between Samson’s visit to Gaza and that of the spies to Jericho?
 - (b) Why do you think Samson went to Gaza?
3. How does the climax of Samson’s experience in Gaza (Judg 16:30) resemble the climax of the Jericho campaign (Josh 6:20)?

16:4-20, Delilah

1. The opening of the episode gives some clues as to Delilah’s nationality.
 - (a) Notice the verb of movement in v. 5, and compare 14:1, 2, 5, 10, 20. Does she live in Philistine or Israelite territory?
 - (b) Compare the Philistines’ request in v. 5 with that in 14:15. How are they similar? How are they different? How can you explain the difference?
2. A key word throughout this story is “strength” (חֵזק H3581). This term appears eight times in Judges, seven of them in this episode. The only other instance is in 6:14. Study that other use of the term.
 - (a) How does chapter 6 define strength?
 - (b) How does that definition illustrate Samson’s misunderstanding in ch. 16?
3. The story unfolds in four very similar scenes. In such cases, the writer often makes his point by the variations among the scenes.
 - (a) Identify the similarity among the scenes by finding a sequence of events that appear in most or all of them.
 - (b) Identify the similarities and differences in each event across all four scenes. Hint: you might construct a table in your word processor with a column for each scene and a row for each event, and paste in the Bible text for each cell, then color and highlight it to help discover the similarities and differences.
 - (c) Note the lengths of the four scenes.
 - i. What progression do you see in the first three scenes?

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- ii. What happens in the fourth scene, and why?
4. Compare Delilah's requests to Samson in each scene with the question posed to her by the Philistines (16:5). How does the focus shift?
5. How does the form of Delilah's request change from the second to the third scene, and from the third to the fourth?
6. The Philistines have men waiting to capture Samson in the first two scenes? Can you think why they are not there in the third?
7. Does Samson really believe what he tells Delilah in 16:17? Compare v. 20.
8. What parallels can you find between Samson's experience with Delilah and Adam's experience in Gen 3:1-6?
9. Compare the ends of the first and last scenes in the account of Delilah. How does the use of "strength" in ch. 6 explain the shift?

16:21-31, Binding and Victory in Gaza

1. In the light of 16:22, how could the fetters of brass hold Samson?
2. Why is the capture of Samson significant, in the minds of the Philistines (v. 23-24)?
3. The name "Dagon" is derived from the Semitic word meaning "grain." How might that contribute to the Philistine's explanation in vv. 23-24?
4. In 16:26, how did blind Samson know that the entire temple was supported by two pillars close enough together for him to touch them both at once?
5. Compare Samson's prayer in 16:28 with his earlier prayer in 15:18.
 - (a) In what respect does it show deeper piety than the earlier prayer?
 - (b) Why must he ask for strength, in light of v. 22?

Revisiting Heb 11:32-33

1. Of the six major judges, Heb 11:32 selects four (omitting Othniel and Ehud) as heroes of faith.
 - (a) What do these four have in common that sets them apart from the other two?
 - (b) Which elements of Heb 11:33 do these four judges specifically highlight?

17:1-21:25, Epilog

1. Read over these last four chapters a few times, looking for signs of their internal structure (for example, changes in characters, location, and time).
 - (a) How many stories are related here?
 - (b) Note the repeated refrain about a "king in Israel."
 - i. What consequence of this situation does the author note?
 - ii. How is the expression related to each of the stories?

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- iii. How do the first and last instances of the refrain differ from those in between?
- (c) What important Israelite institution, in the shadows for most of the book, comes into focus in these final chapters?
 - i. Where is the sanctuary during these chapters?
 - ii. Each story concerns a Levite, Compare and contrast these two characters.
- (d) Note the emphasis on Mount Ephraim and Bethlehem in both stories. Bethlehem is not mentioned elsewhere in Judges, but (Mount) Ephraim is (Hint a). What tendency does the tribe show over the course of the book?

2. Hints

- (a) References to Ephraim in Judges: Judg. 1:29; 2:9; 3:27; 4:5; 5:14; 7:24; 8:1–2; 10:1, 9; 12:1, 4–6, 15; 17:1, 8; 18:2, 13; 19:1, 16, 18

17:1-18:31, Spiritual Weakness

1. How would you divide this story into scenes, based on changes in characters, location, and time?
2. How does the refrain about no king in Israel reinforce your divisions?

17:1-5, An Irregular Sanctuary

This scene uses an interesting rhetorical strategy. It starts out building a very positive picture of Micah and his home, only to dismantle it.

1. Positive developments:
 - (a) What is the meaning of Micah's name? Use your Bible dictionary (or Hint a). What does this suggest about the family in which he is raised?
 - (b) 17:2 summarizes a series of previous events: a theft, a curse, and a confession. Can you think why Micah might have confessed the theft? What does this suggest about his spiritual sensitivity?
 - (c) How does his mother's response to the confession further enhance the family's reputation?
 - (d) What was her purpose in the first half of v. 3, and what does it tell you about her?
2. Negative unrolling
 - (a) Use your concordance, Bible SW, or hint b to find the previous place where "a graven image and a molten image" is mentioned in the OT. Should she have been aware of the Lord's attitude toward images?
 - (b) In the minds of Micah's family, what is the relation between Jehovah and idols?
 - (c) What is unusual about the size of the image that is made in v. 4? What parallels can you trace with Acts 5?
 - (d) Was her fascination with an idol an isolated incident, in light of v. 5?
 - (e) How does this episode help illuminate Judg 6:25ff?

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3. Hints

- (a) New Bible Dictionary: “Who is like Yah?” (“Yah” is a short form of “Yahweh” or “Jehovah”)
- (b) Deuteronomy 27

What is the House of God?

1. What form does God’s sanctuary take today?
 - (a) Where did early believers worship the Lord? Acts 2:46; 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5; Col 4:15; Phm 1:2; Acts 19:9)
 - (b) What is the temple of God, according to 1 Corinthians 3?
2. Read over the account of the sinful brother in 1 Corinthians 5.
 - (a) What action does Paul recommend in this case?
 - (b) In the light of 3:17, why does he make this recommendation?
3. How does 1 Cor 6:15-20 reinforce your understanding of the Christian’s sanctuary? (Note carefully the difference between 6:15 and 6:19.)
4. How does Ephesians 2 extend this image? How can the foundation be both Christ (1 Cor 3:11) and the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20)?
5. How does 1 Peter 2 further extend it? What is the difference between the “chief corner stone” and “the head of the corner”?
6. How does this understanding of the temple of God today motivate our personal conduct?

17:6, First Instance of the Refrain

Note the second clause of the refrain, present here and in the last occurrence in 21:25.

1. How does this clause recall Deuteronomy 12?
2. How is the reference to Deuteronomy 12 particularly appropriate to the history of 17:1-5?
3. How does this clause recall the central portion of the book? In particular,
 - (a) Notice how each episode of Israel’s sin is described.
 - (b) Recall Samson’s attitude early in his life (see sermon notes or KJV Margin on 14:3)
4. Meditate on Prov 14:12 = 16:25 and Isa 53:6 as comments on this tendency.
5. Who should have warned Micah and other Israelites against this tendency?
6. How does your answer to the previous question lead naturally to the next episode?

17:7-13, An Irregular Levite

1. Recall the cities assigned to Levi in Joshua 21, and recall the ancestry of this particular Levite (18:30).
 - (a) What is irregular about his association with Bethlehem of Judah?

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- (b) In which tribes should he have lived?
 - (c) Is his trip, recorded in this episode, a return to his proper home town? Study the word “sojourn” (Strong H1481).
2. What is the Levite’s motivation throughout this story? Compare Micah 3:11.
 3. Was it appropriate for a Levite to seek other employment, in light of Num 3:11-13?
 4. How were the Levites to be supported? Note Josh 21:2.
 5. Consider Paul’s instructions to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-38.
 - (a) The various titles applied to leaders of a local church throughout the NT are elder, overseer or bishop, and pastor. How many of these can you find in this account? (Pay attention to the Strong’s note on the verb “feed,” and the related noun, or Hint a.)
 - (b) How does 1 Pet 5:1-3 reinforce these instructions?
 - (c) Why is 1 Cor 9 not an exception to these instructions?
 - (d) What is the meaning of “double honor” in 1 Tim 5:17? (compare 5:3 and 6:1)
 - (e) What is the nature of the reward anticipated in the two quotations in 1 Tim 5:18? (See Hint b for references)
 6. What does Micah (in Judges 17) think is the secret to the Lord’s blessing?
 7. How is Micah’s action in making the Levite a priest in violation of Num 18:6-7 (compare Heb 5:4)?
 8. Hints:
 - (a) feed = G4165. ποιμαίνω poimaino, poy-mah’-ee-no; from 4166; to tend as a shepherd of (figuratively, supervisor): — feed (cattle), rule. G4166: ποιμήν poimen, poy-mane’; of uncertain affinity; a shepherd (literally or figuratively): — shepherd, pastor.
 - (b) Ox: Deut 25:4. Labourer: Lk 10:7 (note that 1 Tim 5:18 calls this “Scripture”!)

18:1-31 An Irregular Tribe

1. Divide this chapter into scenes. Recall the criterion for a change of scene: change in characters, location, or time.

18:1-10, Spying Out the Land

1. How do Jdg 1:34 and Josh 19:47 clarify the time reference in v. 1?
2. How does the date of the Danite migration clarify the history of Samson?
3. What earlier stories in Israel’s history does v. 2 recall? (Hint a)
4. In v. 3, how might they have recognized the voice of the Levite?
5. Compare the questions that the men of Dan ask of the Levite with his answers.
 - (a) How did he answer each question?
 - (b) How should he have answered?

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- (c) Think about what they would have said, if he asked them the same questions.
6. How does their request echo Judges 1?
 7. Does the priest's answer in v. 6 assure them of God's blessing? What does it mean for their way to be "before the Lord"? Compare Gen 17:1; Prov 5:21.
 8. Why do you think he answered in this way? Compare Isa 30:9-11; 2 Ti 4:3.
 9. How many places called "Dan" were there in Israel? 2 Sam 24:2, 6 (where one is called "Dan-Jaan").
 10. Look at a map of the tribes of Israel, such as the one in the charts on the first part of ch. 10-12 (https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/judges/notes/Judg_10a_Charts.pdf). Note that the town called "Dan" is within the tribe of Naphthali. Is this likely to be where the tribe settled? Why or why not? We will suggest that this is the "Dan-Jaan" of 2 Sam 24:6, and that Laish was much farther north.
 11. In the light of Deuteronomy 20, how should the men of Dan have approached the people of Laish?
 12. Compare and contrast the response of the spies with that of Joshua and Caleb in Numbers 13-14.
 13. Hints:
 - (a) Compare Numbers 13-14; Joshua 2 and 7.

18:11-26, Stealing a Cultus

1. Contrast the behavior of the spies with respect to Micah, and the behavior of Joshua's spies with respect to Rahab in Jericho (Joshua 2).
2. Consider 18:14. Contrast what the men of Dan "have to do" in the light of Deuteronomy 13, with what they actually did.
3. How does the priest's behavior reflect his true priorities?
4. The next several questions explore the nature of the idols that Micah maintained.
 - (a) 17:3, 4 is ambiguous whether the "graven image and molten image" are one item (carved, then overlaid with precious metal) or two. How do 18:17, 18 clarify this?
 - (b) What does "molten image" (Strong's H4541) often describe elsewhere in the OT? (Hint a)
 - (c) The calf was the icon for Baal in Canaanite worship. With what other god was he often associated? Jdg 2:13; 3:7 (where "groves" is Asherah); 10:6.
 - (d) In the light of 17:3, whom does Micah's mother think she is representing?
 - (e) Which of the two items does she intend to represent the Lord?
 - (f) What is remarkable about the items listed in priest's action in v. 20 and the summary in 18:31?
5. How does 18:24 highlight the futility of worshiping false gods?
6. Read Isaiah 44-46 for a satirical critique of idols. How does Isaiah show their impotence?

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7. Hints:

(a) Ex 32:4, 6; 2 Ki 17:16

18:27-31, Stealing a Territory

1. Compare v. 28 with v. 7. Why does the author repeat this note?
2. How does the Danites' conquest of Laish and subsequent settlement (vv. 27, 28) differ from the conquest of most of the cities that Joshua subdued?
 - (a) What was one of the purposes God intended from the conquest, according to Deut 6:10-12?
 - (b) How many cities did Joshua burn, and what were they?
 - (c) How does Josh 11:13 summarize his policy? (NB: this statement applied specifically to the northern campaign.)
3. Note the special attention given to Dan's tribal origin in v. 29. Review what Jacob (in Genesis 49) and Moses (in Deuteronomy 33) predicted about Dan. How do those descriptions anticipate the character of the tribe?
4. How does 18:30 help us date a) the time when these events occurred, and b) the actual writing of Judges?
5. What is missing in the Danites' sanctuary (v. 31)?
6. When was this part of the sanctuary restored? 1 Ki 12:28, 29; 2 Ki 17:16
7. Keep in mind when these events occurred (question 4). What events that we have already studied in Judges 3-16 reflect the weaknesses and failings we observe in ch. 17-18?

19:1-21:25, Social Fragmentation

1. Read over these chapters a few times to get an overview of the flow of the story. The structure here is not as clear as in the previous episode, but see if you can divide it into scenes (based on changes in the place, time, or people involved).
2. It has been observed that the two stories in the epilog (17-18, 19-21) correspond to chapters 1 and 2.
 - (a) Which one corresponds with which?
 - (b) What theme establishes the correspondence in each case?
3. Compare these themes with the history of Gideon, who is the central hero in the main part of the book. How does Gideon's life sum up these themes?
4. Notice the three different terms used to describe the Israelites in this section (e.g., 20:11-13): sons or children (H1121) of Israel, tribes (H7626) of Israel, men (literally "man," H0376).
 - (a) I will suggest that the distribution of these various terms marks different parts of the story. See if you can associate them with different scenes or events.

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- (b) How does 1 Cor 5:3-5 mark the importance of the difference between Israel gathered as their tribal representatives, and simply the children of Israel?
- (c) How do 1 Cor 16:13 and 2 Tim 2:3 highlight the difference between a man of Israel and simply the children of Israel?

19:1-29, A Family Drama

1. What two cities are contrasted in ch. 19?
2. What famous characters in Israel's later history come from them?
3. How does the contrast here reflect on those later characters?

19:1-2, Background to the Story

1. What is unusual about a Levite taking a wife from Bethlehem?
2. What is the difference between a concubine and a wife? Recall the histories of Abraham and Jacob.
3. Consider the concubine's actions in v. 2.
 - (a) What should have been the consequences, based on Deuteronomy 22?
 - (b) Can you suggest why the Levite does not pursue this course?

19:3-9, In Bethlehem

1. Why does the Levite want to depart "on the fourth day" (v. 5)? Keep in mind the Sabbath rules.
2. Note the repetition of the two expressions, "comfort thine heart" and "let thine heart be merry."
 - (a) The first appears elsewhere in Gen 18:5. What is the purpose of this activity there and in this passage?
 - (b) The second expression is much more common. Examples are at Jdg 19:22, Ruth 3:7, and 1 Ki 21:7. What is the purpose of this activity?
 - (c) Contrast the meanings of these two expressions.
 - (d) How might Eccl 10:17 be a commentary on these events?
3. Note the concentration of references to the heart in these verses. (There is another in v. 3, where "speak friendly" is literally "speak to the heart"). The only similar concentration of such references is in ch. 16.
 - (a) What point may the writer be making by setting up this correspondence?
 - (b) How does Prov 4:23 alert us to the dangers in view?
4. What parallels can you draw between the behavior of the father-in-law toward the Levite in Judges 19 and the behavior of Laban toward Jacob in Genesis 29-30?
5. Why did Laban want to retain Jacob?
6. Can you suggest why the father-in-law might want to detain the Levite?

19:10-15, *Traveling Home*

1. Review the history of Jerusalem as recorded in ch. 1. How does the Levite's concern align with what we learned there?
2. Why does he prefer Gibeah over Jerusalem?
3. To what tribes do Bethlehem (19:1, 2) and Gibeah (19:14) belong?
4. Use your center references or the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (or Hint a) to learn what the standard of behavior was toward strangers in Bible times.
5. Hints:
(a) Gen 18:2-8; 19:2-3; Job 31:32

19:16-28, *A Hospitable Stranger in a Hostile City*

1. Compare and contrast the events in these verses and the account in Genesis 19.
2. What was God's purpose in sending the two angels to Sodom? (Gen 18:20-22).
3. What do Lot and the old man in Judges 19 have in common?
4. What message is the writer trying to convey by emphasizing the parallels between these two stories?
5. How does the woman's conduct in v. 26 suggest that she has corrected her previous attitude toward her husband?
6. How does his conduct in v. 27 reflect his behavior in Bethlehem?
7. How does 1 Sam 11:7 illustrate the Levite's practice in v. 29?
8. How ought the Levite have appealed to the tribes, according to Deuteronomy 13?

20:1-48, *War with Benjamin*

1. Consider the two principles that we studied in Proverbs 25 (vv. 8, 9) for resolving conflict. How does the conduct of the Levite and of the nation in dealing with Benjamin align with each of these?

20:1-10, *The Council of Tribes*

1. Why does the writer introduce the term "the tribes of Israel" in v. 2?
2. Find other places where the expression "as one man" appears in the OT (or use Hint a).
 - (a) What sorts of things does Israel do "as one man"?
 - (b) How does Israel's conduct in the earlier portions of the book compare with this pattern?
 - (c) In what sense is the church today "one man," and what are the implications for our conduct?
3. Compare the Levite's account of events in Gibeah with what actually happened.
4. Hints:

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- (a) Num. 14:15; Judg. 6:16; 20:1, 8, 11; 1 Sam. 11:7 (“with one consent”); 2 Sam. 19:14; Ezra 3:1; Neh. 8:1

20:11-17, The Ultimatum to Benjamin

1. What is the significance of the appearance of the expression “men of Israel” for the first time at 20:11?
2. Why are the correspondents in v. 12 described as “the tribes of Israel” and “the tribe of Benjamin,” rather than the more common “children of Israel,” “children of Benjamin” (cf. vv. 13, 14)?
3. How does the message delivered to Benjamin (20:13) differ from the Levite’s report in vv. 4-5? Use Strong’s numbers or Hint a to compare the words translated “men” in each verse.
4. Consider the origin of the expression in v. 13, “put away evil from Israel” (Bible sw or Hint b). How should the problem of “evil in Israel” have been addressed?
5. Compare Benjamin’s reaction in v. 13 with 19:25 (the only two instances of this expression in Judges). What common error does the tribe share with the men of Gibeah? Can you think of Bible verses warning against this error?
6. Compare the sizes of the fighting force of Benjamin (20:15) and the rest of the nation (20:2, 17) with the census at the end of the Exodus (Numbers 26).
 - (a) How has Israel fared in the years since they entered the land?
 - (b) Can you suggest a reason for this change?
7. Hints:
 - (a) In 20:5 “men” is H1167, “bah'-al: a master; hence a husband, or (figuratively) owner.” In 20:13 it is the much more common term H376, “eesh; a man as an individual or a male person.”
 - (b) Deuteronomy 22

20:18-48, The Battles

1. The account of each battle begins with an inquiry to the Lord. In all three cases the Lord appears to encourage Israel’s attack, though in the first two cases the outcome is disastrous for Israel. Try to understand in each case why the Lord does not warn them.

20:18-21, The First Battle

1. In v. 18 what are the children of Israel asking, and what do they assume as given?
2. In 20:9, the tribes said that they would “go up by lot against” Benjamin. Now they are asking the Lord. Did they change their mind? Compare Josh 7:16-18.
3. Recall the total size of the Israelite force (v. 17) and the Lord’s instruction in v. 18. How severe is the defeat in v. 21?
4. Can you think why the Lord might have singled out Judah for this initial defeat?

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20:22-25, The Second Battle

1. Are the children of Israel sincere in the question they ask on the second day, v. 23? (Compare v. 22.)
2. Contrast the description of the Israelite army in vv. 24-25 with the description on the first and third days. Why the difference?
3. What is the outcome of the second battle?

20:26-48, The Third Battle

1. Recall from our study of 20:18 that “the house of God” (20:26) probably refers to the city “Bethel,” on the border of Ephraim and Benjamin, rather than the tabernacle at Shiloh. If this is the case, what later episode in Israel’s history does the presence of the ark and of Phinehas anticipate? (Hint a)
2. How does Israel’s third inquiry differ from the first two?
3. How is the Lord’s response different from the first two responses?
4. Can you think of how this more detailed response might have been given?
5. Why does the Lord finally encourage, and bless, Israel’s attack on Benjamin?
6. Can you think of a previous biblical episode that might inspire Israel’s tactics in this battle? If you can’t, consult Hint b.
7. How many parallels can you identify between the two episodes? Are these accidental, or the result of deliberate imitation? (In comparing the two, it may help to recognize that in both cases, the writer uses frequent flashbacks, so you will see certain elements repeated within the story.)
8. Compare Israel’s campaign against Benjamin with Gideon’s campaign against the Midianites (Judges 7-8).
 - (a) How much of the campaign was necessary to accomplish the objective of the mission?
 - (b) At what point may the victors have gone beyond their divine mandate to indulge fleshly objectives?
9. What lessons for spiritual warfare can you derive from these episodes?
 - (a) First, how can Israel’s experience (and Joshua’s as well) encourage us after our sin against the Lord leads to spiritual defeat?
 - (b) Second, consider how Satan might use similar tactics against us. Can you think of any biblical examples of spiritual ambushes? How can we guard against them?
10. Why might Israel have thought of this tactic now, rather than in the earlier two battles?
11. Hints:
 - (a) 1 Samuel 4
 - (b) Joshua 8.

Summary of the Battles

Compare Israel's interaction with the Lord in each of the three battles.

1. What errors in earlier interactions do they correct in later ones?
2. What lessons can you learn from this sequence about how we should engage the Lord in prayer?

21:1-24, Rebuilding Benjamin

1. Note the repeated phrase in vv. 6 and 15. What is in common between the two sections that it introduces?
2. What two oaths, sworn at the first tribal assembly, are mentioned here for the first time?
3. What is the difference between an oath (the form of promise used here) and a vow (what Jephthah did in Judges 11)? Use your concordance or Bible software to study the nouns and verbs involved (Vow H5087 a vow H5088, swear H7650 an oath H7621). To whom is each kind of promise typically made? What is being promised in each case? What is being requested?
4. We justified Jephthah's vow as an imitation of Numbers 21. Can you find a similar motivation for these two oaths?

1-5, The Tribal Assembly

1. Compare 21:1 with Deut 7:1-3. How does this oath reflect a perversion that pervades this story?
2. What hints are there in 21:1, 2 that Israel still does not appreciate their covenant relation with God?
3. The expression in v. 2, "lifted up their voices and wept," appears elsewhere in Judges only in 2:4. Compare and contrast the two episodes in which it appears. How do they illumine each other?
4. Note the repetition of "Israel" in v. 3. What are they implying by the title they give the Lord?
5. 20:4 says that they "built ... an altar."
 - (a) What does this tell you about the location of this meeting?
 - (b) What is unusual about this location?
6. Compare the oath mentioned in v. 5 with how Deborah and Barak responded to the varied participation of the tribes in a national effort in ch. 4-5.

6-14, The Rape of Jabesh Gilead

1. Compare the events of this paragraph with chapter 19. What is ironic about Israel's action?
2. Here and in the next section, the Israelites use their oath as an excuse not to solve the problem of wives for Benjamin themselves.

Study Questions on Judges

- (a) What alternative was available to them, according to the example of Genesis 24?
- (b) Can you think what their real motive might have been for not wanting to intermarry with Benjamin?

15-24, Subverting the Feast of the Lord

1. Compare this section with 21:6-14.
 - (a) What parallels can you find?
 - (b) Why might the writer have emphasized these parallels?
 - (c) How do both events show Israel's attempt to evade their own responsibility for what has happened, and blame the Lord?
2. What annual "feast of the Lord" was especially prominent in Israel? Compare Dt 16:16; 31:10; 1 Ki 8:2.
3. The tribes are concerned that "there is one tribe cut off from Israel" (21:6). If they were really interested in reintegrating Benjamin into the nation, how should they have encouraged Benjamin with regard to the feast of the Lord?
4. Recall our discussion of what happened to Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11. (We compared Ex 38:8 and 1 Sam 2:22.) Who are these girls of Shiloh likely to be?
5. How does this final action confirm Israel's attitude toward their covenant with the Lord? (Note especially Deut 16:16.)
6. Compare the reasoning in 21:22 with that exemplified by the Jewish leaders in the time of Christ, and cited by our Lord in Matthew 15 and 23.
 - (a) What error do we see in both places?
 - (b) How is this error captured in the contrast between Isa 66:2 and 2 Pet 3:16?
7. Compare v. 24 with Josh 24:28 and Judg 2:6.
 - (a) How does this expression further emphasize the irony that pervades ch. 19-21?
 - (b) How does it further reinforce our conclusion about the time at which these events occur?
8. How many ways can you find that the epilog (Judg 17-21) describes an anti-conquest, a parody of how Israel ought to have taken over the land?

21:25, Conclusion

1. Review the antecedents to each phrase in v. 25 in the Pentateuch: Deut 13:18; Exod 15:18; Num 23:21; Deut 33:5.
2. What king is in view? Recall Exod 15:18; Num 23:21; Deut 33:5.

Review of the Epilog

1. How many features can you find that the two stories (Judges 17-18, 19-21) share?
2. How does the role of the Levite differ in the two stories?

Study Questions on Judges

3. What cities do these stories introduce?
 - (a) How are these cities significant in Israel's later history?
 - (b) What do these stories teach about the character of each of these cities?
4. We have suggested that the two stories in the epilog (ch. 17-18, 19-21) correspond to the two parts of the prolog (1:1-2:5; 2:6-3:6).
 - (a) Review the prolog, recalling the parallel structure we discussed when we studied this section in detail:
 - i. Death of Joshua: 1:1a; 2:6-10
 - ii. Experience: 1:1b-36; 2:11-19
 - iii. Warning from God: 2:1-3, 20-23
 - iv. National response: 2:4-5; 3:1-6
 - (b) Which half of the epilog corresponds to each half of the prolog?
 - (c) How would you characterize each matching pair?
 - (d) Each part of the prolog concludes with the national response to a warning from God.
 - i. Compare and contrast these responses (2:4-5; 3:1-6).
 - ii. How do these responses anticipate Israel's attitude in each of the two stories in the epilog?

Review of Judges

1. Note how the book begins (1:1; 2:8) and ends (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).
 - (a) How do these features characterize the age in which we live?
 - (b) How is the leadership of God's people in Judges like that in our current age, and different from what we expect after the Lord's return?
2. Review the central section of Judges (3:7-16:31).
 - (a) How many major leaders are described?
 - (b) How many instances can you find of the cycle of Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, Rebuke, Restoration, and Rest? (Some instances may not have all the parts.)
 - (c) Can you find any symmetric arrangement among these different cycles?
3. Consider the central cycle (Gideon). How does its inner arrangement mirror the themes of the prolog and epilog?
4. Lund's second law of chiasmic structure suggests that we look for a shift at the center of a chiasm, a change in theme from the first half to the second half. Can you detect such a shift before and after Gideon? Consider
 - (a) the amount of space devoted to each cycle;
 - (b) the number of years covered by each judge;

Study Questions on Judges

- (c) how these periods of time are described.

Judges and Hebrews

We studied Judges partly to discover why Hebrews singles out Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson as heroes of faith. These questions will explore what distinguishes these four (or if you will, why it doesn't include Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, or any of the minor judges).

1. Think about how each of these four starts out:
 - (a) What does Deborah's question in Jdg 4:6 imply about God's call of Barak?
 - (b) What does 4:8 show us about Barak's attitude at the outset of the story?
 - (c) Where do we find Gideon in Jdg 6:11?
 - (d) What is ironic about the angel's greeting in 6:12?
 - (e) What makes Jephthah an unlikely leader of God's people (Jdg 11:2)?
 - (f) What kind of attitude does Samson show in Jdg 14:1-3?
2. Review Othniel, Ehud, and the minor judges. Does any of them start off with the kinds of weaknesses we see in these four?
3. Think about how the Lord brought each of the four to the point that they could do the work he had for them.
 - (a) What did the Lord do to overcome Barak's hesitancy in ch. 4?
 - (b) How did the Lord make Gideon more courageous? Read over his story and see how many encouraging steps the Lord gave him.
 - (c) How did the Lord overcome Jephthah's rejection by his brethren?
 - (d) What does Jdg 14:19 suggest about how Samson recovered from the disappointment of ch. 14?
 - (e) What progression do we see in his prayers of 15:18 and then 16:28?
 - (f) Recall our explanation of 16:1-3. What is encouraging about Samson's actions in these verses?
4. A major message of Hebrews is warning believers not to draw back after their past victories (Heb 10:32-39).
 - (a) Do any of these four heroes illustrate this danger?
 - (b) Does Othniel, Ehud, or any of the minor judges illustrate this danger?
5. How does Abimelech differ from both other groups of leaders (Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson on the one hand, and Othniel, Ehud, and the minor judges on the other)?

1 Samuel 1-7

1. Read over 1 Samuel 7.

Study Questions on Judges

- (a) How does it suggest we should include Samuel among the judges? You might read on into ch. 8.
 - (b) How does 1 Sam 12:11 reinforce this conclusion? “Bedan” is probably a variant of “Barak.”
 - (c) How does 1 Samuel 7 provide a fitting conclusion to the cycle of Samson in Judges 13-16? Look for elements of the cycle (Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, Rebuke, Restoration, Rest) that are missing in Judges 13-16 but present in 1 Samuel 7
2. Read through 1 Samuel 1-7 to identify the major scenes. Remember that a scene in narrative is marked by a change in characters, time, or location.
 3. Compare Samuel’s story in these chapters with the history of Samson in Judges 13-16. How are they similar to one another?
 4. The Philistines do not disappear as a foe of Israel after chapter 7. How does this observation qualify our understanding of the meaning of chapter 7, and its application to our experience?

1:1-4:1a, The Preparation of Samuel

1. What major shift in location and characters marks the major break in this section?

1:1-2:11, Samuel’s Birth and Dedication

1. How would you subdivide this section? What is the major marker—change in characters, or change in location?
2. What parallels can you detect between Hannah’s first visit to Shiloh (1:1-19) and her second (1:24-2:11a)?

1:1-19, Hannah’s First Pilgrimage and Prayer

1:1-8, Hannah’s Family and Misery

1. What can you learn about Elkanah’s tribal affiliation by comparing 1:1 with 1 Chronicles 6?
2. What history in Genesis does the family dynamics in 1:2-8 bring to mind? See how many parallels you can find between the two stories?