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Lecture 17, Judges

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What do the people promise at the end of the Book of Joshua? Oh yes, we're going to be obedient. No problem, we're going to keep the covenant. That's obviously going to be important to have in mind as we start the Book of Judges.

Again, if we had more time today, we would engage some of the questions that come up because the Book of Judges raises some very, very interesting questions. I'll try to get at some of them today. I probably won't manage all of them, but we'll see what happens. I want to start out by reading a fairly extended passage starting in the middle of chapter two.

So, if you've got your Bibles, you may want to follow along. This is a second-generation problem. Do you know this problem? It didn't only unfold during the period of the judges.

It continued to unfold in the period of Israel's history, and it has a nasty way of showing up with us as well with the second-generation Christians whose perhaps grandparents and parents were vitally impacted by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gospel in their lives and the word making a radical change and transformation. But you know what? If it's not ours, then it's not going to have any impact whatsoever, and that's the second-generation problem.

Let's see what happened in the Book of Judges. I'm starting at verse 10 of chapter two. After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers.

This is the one that promised to be obedient as Joshua was renewing the covenant at the end of the Book of Joshua. Another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and they served the Baals.

We're going to have a lot more to say about Baal as a god as time goes on, but that is our first problem, and we're going to see it over and over again. It's a repeated cycle. Apostasy.

Do you know what apostasy means? I mean, this apostasy is idolatry, and they're going to serve Baals and Ashtoreths and just about everything else that's around them. But what does the word itself mean, Sarah? Yeah, and it comes from Greek, which literally means to stand away from. So, it's an intentional turning away, standing away from what they should have been committed to and had their convictions.

So did evil in the eyes of the Lord, served the Baals, verse 12. They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They worshiped and followed various gods, the peoples round about them.

They provoked the Lord to anger because they forsook him and served the Baals and Ashtoreths. We're supposed to get the point. It's saying it multiple times.

In his anger against Israel, the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them. Oppression is our second stage in the cycle. He sold them to their enemies all around whom they were no longer able to resist.

Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them just as he had sworn. In other words, do you remember those covenant blessings and promises? Sorry, blessings and curses? If they were obedient, then God would bless them. And part of those blessings had to do with geopolitical security.

If they were disobedient, guess what? God would use those enemies round about to bring chastisement to bring them back to himself. That's always the purpose. And that's what we see happening here.

It says they were in great distress. And intrinsic to that is their repentance. They come to the Lord crying out for help.

And then it says, verse 16, the Lord raised up judges who were saving them out of the hands of the raiders. So, there's deliverance. The problem is, and I'll keep reading, they repeat the cycle over and over and over again.

They would not listen to their judges, but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them unlike their fathers. They quickly turned away from the way in which their fathers had walked. Verse 18, whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived because God had compassion on them.

But when the judge died, the people returned to ways more corrupt than ever before. So, we see here in a nice little nutshell what's going on with this second-generation problem. And we're going to follow the lives of four judges and kind of watch it happen.

This is, as I indicate for you, basically what this book is all about. There are other themes that we're going to talk about in a moment, but here you see it. And believe me, it has all sorts of contemporary applications if we allow it to speak to us.

Uses incidents from Israel's early history in the land to teach an important lesson. The last sentence I'm going to come back to in about 15 minutes or so, and that is that probably the book of Judges is not in chronological order. I'm going to suggest to you that the material in chapters 17 through 21 actually occurs early on.

Now, normally, again, I would have done that next lecture, but we're going to compress it into the end of today. Okay, so far, so good? Can we march forth? All right, I know, bad, bad, bad. One of the things we're going to do is spend a lot of time returning to this map.

So you're going to see it about five times as we go through, but let's get sort of the overarching geopolitical circumstances first. I've taken this map straight out of the NIV Atlas for the Bible. It's in the reference section of the library if you want to go back and look at it again.

But in blue-green, these things are right here, and we have our major judges positioned. But as we think about them, we want to keep in mind the bigger picture. And as I note for you up here, the first thing to keep in mind is that this is a period of time. Again, the book of Judges unfolds either in about 400 years or in about 200 and some, depending on where we date the Exodus.

It's that whole issue all over again. But during this time, there is not a lot of power being manifested either from south in Egypt or from Mesopotamia, as it would impact Israel itself. Yes, as I note for you, the Hittites are fighting Egyptians, and we actually have some treaties.

If you remember reading Youngblood, you have the Hittite treaty form. That's coming out of this period. But this doesn't impact Israel as they are primarily living in the hill country.

Here's where your geography comes in handy. They're not out on the coastal plain, so it's not going to have that much impact. Instead, what's taking place is oppression from Moab.

Moab is right over here in this area, and we're going to see some incidents with Moab. Philistia, certainly, especially towards the end of the period of the Judges. If you read the Samson narrative for today, that's the Philistine plain going on right here, and the Philistines are going to make life miserable for this time period, and also, as you know, well into Saul and David as well.

And then not only do you have those neighbors sort of pinching them on both sides, sort of like a giant nutcracker, you know, but you also have people who are semi-nomadic. Midianites and Amalekites are going to come sweeping in from this side as well, so kind of keep that in mind. Our third bullet there, if you read these narratives

carefully, one of the things you see is that one tribe may get together with two or three or four others to deal with a local problem.

So, if something's going on up here, for example, in the time of Deborah and Barak, it's the king of Hazor, it's these northern tribes are going to take that on. You don't have Judah and Simeon going up to help. So these are kind of self-contained units.

There is no central rule, and that's going to be really important. Towards the end of the book, it says over and over again that in that day, everyone did what was fit in their own eyes. Israel didn't have a king.

Of course, that's setting the stage for the coming king that's going to be raised up in 1 Samuel. So, we're going to see that this is kind of a transition time for Israel. In some ways, not having a king is good, but in many ways, it's really, really bad.

And again, those last chapters of Judges set the stage for the need for the king. The other thing to keep in mind in terms of no central rule and tribal entities kind of banding together is don't try and add up all the years that are listed in the Book of Judges and figure out the whole time period because there's lots of overlap here. One of the incidents that may be taking place up north will chronologically overlap with something going on down south.

So, our years do not help us figure out a time frame. So far, so good? We've had two so far, so good so far, and there's not so far, so good. Yeah, go ahead.

Yeah, the question is, why, in this period, do you not have some sort of central ruler? Why does it seem like there are disparate entities with a judge being raised up to help them, but nobody is really centrally located? I don't know a complete answer to that, but I'll try this for you. Joshua has urged them at the end of Joshua, as we said, to be faithful to the Lord. And under the theocracy, then, they should have, with the tabernacle in Shiloh, been going to Shiloh, offering their sacrifices, being in submission to the priests who would be teaching them Torah and the Levites, supposedly, all throughout there.

But that sort of dissipates. And you see it being set up to be potentially a good situation if you had good people. But you don't have good people.

That's kind of the bottom line here. And so, they will find out that they need the centralized authority. I'll just say this really fast, but it's a big issue.

There are some people who do sociological studies of the First Testament, the Old Testament, and they say, this fascinates me, they say that the book of Judges was the best time. It was the ideal time for Israel, because they didn't have centralized rule with tax, et cetera, et cetera. It was more communitarian.

What they're forgetting is the theological import of what Judges said, and that is, everyone did what was right in their own eyes, and the spiral goes down and down and down. Probably a longer answer than you wanted. Sarah, what was your question? Are you saying that the tribes fought? Good question. Am I saying that the tribes fought each other in Israel? They banded together to fight an enemy.

But your first point is true, too, because there's inter-tribal warfare on two occasions between, interestingly enough, Ephraim and Manasseh. Or Ephraim and Gilead, and Gilead's part of Manasseh. So it's actually a little bit of both.

But you're right, thank you. I was trying to say that they banded together wherever the problem arose to take on the foreign entity that was attacking them. Anything else? Okay, let's see what else we can do here. The messages of the book are kind of expanding a little bit on what I said earlier.

This is, again, part of the Deuteronomistic history, right? So, disobedience of the people brings punishment from the Lord. That was the covenant. And God is faithful to the covenant.

So, Israel does evil in the eyes of the Lord. These are people who are straying, and they're straying desperately, and God will use those folks around them to bring them back. I've already suggested this as well, especially towards the end of the book in its thematic arrangement.

We are seeing the fact that this people needs a king. They need a king. Now, of course, the king, generally speaking, is not going to be a whole lot better than anybody else, but at least there's going to be centralized rule.

Interestingly enough, we do see, again, towards the end of the book, chapters 17 through 19, from a literary perspective, it's the end of the period, and it's preparing us to think about the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Judah is really prominent in the end of the book, and we'll look at that in a bit as well. Well, this is not a new theme.

We know well that God, in his providential oversight, his sovereignty, his directing all of these events, is indeed going to do what needs to be done with these people, and he uses flawed human beings, just like you and me. Each one of these judges has significant weaknesses, and we're going to look at some of those as we unfold this stuff, okay? Well, let's carry on. A quick detour to the book of Hebrews again.

Remember, Hebrews is our catalog of the faithful people. One of the things if we had time, we would probably spend about four different lectures or four hours on the book of Judges to do the whole thing, but I'm going to let the rubric in Hebrews chapter 11 shape the judges that we're going to talk about. All right, so here we go.

We've seen Abraham in the book of Hebrews very clearly, and some others have been as well. Verse 31 says, by faith, the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. Now, in verse 32, what more shall I say? I don't have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah; those are the four we're going to deal with, okay? Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and then, of course, he goes on to talk about David, Samuel, and the prophets.

Verse 33, who had faith, conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised. So even though we can't do all the judges, we're going to learn these four, these four major judges. So, just for your own advice, my advice to you is to know the major incidents in terms of each one of these four judges, what their weaknesses were, and how God used them in spite of themselves.

There are going to be a lot of lessons here. First of all, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. However, having said that just to make a note, there are 12 judges in all as you read through this book.

That's why we should probably spend a little more time on it. And I don't want to totally ignore Othniel and Ehud because they're kind of interesting. Ehud's the left-handed judge from the tribe of Benjamin who goes in and just shoves his sword into this king, who is so corpulent that the fat just kind of closes around the sword in a way Ehud runs.

It's a fascinating story. Othniel as well, but you know, again, we don't have time for those. I'll let you read them all on your own and enjoy those narratives.

Another thing we just want to make a note of, interestingly enough, in this particular time period, we see more prominence for women. Now, obviously, Deborah is our major figure, as we always think of, because she's a judge, and we'll talk about her in a moment. But there are other women involved that are fairly significant.

Can you think of any of them? Yeah, Jael, or Ya-el, I'll be pronouncing it Ya-el, but we're talking about J-A-E-L in English here. And then there's that marvelous unnamed woman who drops a millstone on the head of Abimelech, right? Who deserved it? So there's a prominence, and Micah's mother in chapter 17, she's not necessarily the best woman around, but you know, we'll talk about her as well.

Whoops, I didn't mean to do that. Let's back it up. Here we go. The map first, and then, as soon as I find my pointer, we'll talk about some of the details of the story.

I want you to notice one thing from the start. Here we have, and our text tells us, that Deborah is judging between Bethel and Ramah. So, here's Deborah's location.

She's located under a tree between Bethel and Ramah. Barak, on the other hand, is from Kadesh and Naphtali. That's up here.

It says in the text that people bring their cases to Deborah for decisions, for judging. So, she's got a good deal of prominence. You need to kind of keep that in mind.

You also need to keep in mind that when problems arise here, they come from the place of Hazor. Now, we've talked about Hazor before. In fact, last time we talked about Hazor, because a certain person named Jabin, whom we're going to see again.

It seems to be a dynastic name. Jabin, king of Hazor, is one of the major forces that Joshua and the Israelites conquered in the book of Joshua. Now we're seeing this rising up again, Hazor being a very, very significant kingdom in that city-state, in that area.

At any rate, Hazor is going to make life miserable for these people who live up here. And you want to just keep in mind that when Deborah gives the word from down here to Barak up there, he says, yes, I'll do what you say. So she's got a fair amount of clout in an area that had been a bunch of people that, again, were kind of tribally situated.

Her word transcends tribal boundaries, let's just put it that way. We need also to notice Mount Tabor because that's going to be important in the narrative. That's right here.

We want to notice the Kishon Brook, which heads out into the Jezreel Valley. It's going to drain out this way. And then, of course, the tribe of Naphtali in this area and the tribe of Zebulun right about down here.

Those are the key players. So, notice the southern location of Deborah. Notice that the battle itself is unfolding in this region.

Okay, ready to go on? Now let's just do a couple of the details of the narrative. One of the things we need to just sort of touch on, albeit briefly, is why do you suppose that the Book of Hebrews doesn't mention Deborah, but instead mentions Barak. After all, she's the major figure here, isn't she? Or at least she certainly seems to be as we read the narrative. Let me get back to Judges.

We've got, in chapter four, I'm stalling for time while I turn pages. Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidot. That's kind of an interesting expression, by the way.

The word for wife and woman is the same. Eshet Lappidot could either mean the wife of a person named Lappidot, or it possibly could mean a woman who is, well, a lapid is a torch. This is a fiery woman, baby.

Maybe it's a description. Maybe it's not saying she's the wife of an unnamed character, Lappidot. Perhaps she's just a woman with lots and lots ofchutzpah and zest and power and so forth and so on, possibly.

At any rate, it says, Deborah, leading Israel at that time, held court under the palm of Deborah. That's basically just saying she's sitting there, holding court is a little bit of an over-translation. She sent for Barak, son of Abinoam, from Kadesh and Naphtali and said, the Lord commands you, go, take with you 10,000 men, go to Mount Tabor, all lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, to the Kishon River and give them into your hands.

See all these things that are fitting onto that map? Israel had apostatized, not new. Jabin, king of Hazor, is a name you want to know. Sisera is his general.

We've just read about it. The deliverers are Deborah and Deborah, who commands Barak. Now, I was in the middle of a question.

I sort of interrupted myself and went and read the text because I was trying to demonstrate to you that Deborah's the major figure here. Why do you suppose the book of Hebrews doesn't mention Deborah? Isn't that interesting? I mean, she's the one who tells Barak, you go do what the Lord tells you to do, and Barak says, well, no, I'm not going without you. And so she goes, and then of course, she says, but the honor of dealing with Sisera is not going to be yours, it's going to belong to a woman.

And of course, it does. Yael's the one who pounds the tent peg through his head. So what's the book of Hebrews doing? There are two possibilities here.

One is, in the book of Hebrews, that passage I read to you, it says, in spite of their weaknesses, God used them. Well, we see a weakness in Barak, don't we? It's his lack of courage. And Deborah has to rebuke him and has to be there.

Then, of course, the honor is taken away from him, but nevertheless, they are successfully victorious. That might be part of it. Maybe the author of Hebrews wants to structure this so as to point out that God, in his sovereignty, used Barak and these other judges whose weaknesses we're also going to look at in spite of themselves.

But there also might be something else going on, and I'll just lob this out here and then we'll go on. This might be an illustration of how the authors are sensitive to their cultures in terms of whether or not they're going to talk about women in leadership. Maybe.

Maybe. Because that first century culture seems to have been somewhat different from the judges' period. Now, there's a lot behind that statement, and I need to, we should have a long time to unpack it.

But it seems to be possible that perhaps the author of Hebrews is mentioning Barak for that very reason. The reading audience would have much more appreciated the mention of a man as opposed to the mention of a woman in leadership, possibly Susanna. I know that raised a question, didn't it? Yeah, I just, it made me think about who was a woman in leadership.

Possibly Priscilla has been suggested. So, it's making things more complex. Yeah, maybe, maybe not.

You could run that one of two ways. She doesn't want to highlight another woman in leadership. And if Priscilla is writing it, by the way, this was suggested by a guy named Harnack who was, well, an interesting scholar.

And it certainly would be a minority opinion. But one of the suggestions is that Hebrews is anonymous for that very reason that maybe it was written by a woman. But it's conjecture.

And my suggestion is entirely conjecture as well. And the two might not necessarily have to be at loggerheads. Okay, good observation.

And I appreciate Dr. Green's mentioning that. And anyway, we have to read the poem in chapter five when it gets to the point of Yael and what she does. Because this is terrific poetry, right? Sisera comes in.

Here's the poem, verse 25. He asked for water, she gave him milk. In a bullfight for noble, she brought him curdled milk, the very best thing.

But, of course, it puts him to sleep. Those of you who have insomnia know that drinking or drinking milk or having yogurt really helps you, right? She knows her stuff. Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer.

She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. These are words in Hebrew that are very harsh words. I mean, this is onomatopoeic if it ever was.

All crushing and shattering stuff. At her feet he sank, he fell. There he lay, at her feet he sank, he fell.

Where he sank, there he fell, dead. It's a powerful poem. And then it goes on to Sisera's mother waiting for Sisera, who, of course, is never going to come home.

Wonderful poetry. Well, we have a battle in the Jezreel Valley. Great battle place.

As we see Old Testament history unfold, the Jezreel Valley's going to be here more than once. It is a classic battleground. In fact, if Har Megiddo, which underlies Armageddon, refers to that area, it's going to be a battleground in the future as well.

At any rate, that's where it unfolds. The victory is celebrated in poetry. The poetry is not only interesting for the death of Sisera, but it also says, from the heavens, the stars fought.

From their courses they fought against Sisera, suggesting maybe, unless this is all just symbolic poetry, that there are some supernatural forces involved in this process, aiding the Israelites. Don't want to rule it out. The River Kishon swept them away, the age-old river, the River Kishon.

The River Kishon is somewhat small, but here we seem to have some kind of a flood that's just washing away these people, washing them out into the sea, taking away the evil and so forth, and so on, if you want to think symbolically. The Kishon Brook is going to show up again in one of the narratives we're going to do in about three weeks. All right, enough on Deborah and Barak.

Let's move on to Gideon. Again, let's get him on the map. Here's Gideon, he's from the tribe of Manasseh, lives up in this area.

The people that are a problem this time are going to be sweeping in from the east, okay? Semi-nomadic types, flocks and herds who've been wandering around over in here, but boy, you know, they see those nice little plums that are in the hill country of Israel, the place where there's grapes and olives and figs and dates and all this grain stuff that we've been talking about when we talked about geography. So they're going to make their way, and it says at one point, if you read the text, they swept all the way down to Gaza. Get the picture? They're even described as locusts.

They're so thick, and they're like locusts all over the land. And I'm going to read a passage and then look at something in a moment. So they're coming all across here, making life miserable.

When Gideon takes them on, finally, again, we have some geography that we want to make a note of. The spring of Herod is right here. It's at the foot of a mountain range, Mount Gilboa, right there.

And these hordes of Midianites and Amalekites are camped at Mount Moreh. So, it's, again, close to the Jezreel Valley. Here's our Jezreel Valley.

Here's sort of the arrow shaft of the Jezreel Valley. It's called the Herod Valley coming down there. And that's where this particular battle is going to unfold.

Now, let me just take a look at a picture. This is a wine press, obviously. Here's how it works.

This is a small one. It's in the hill country. It's carved out of the bedrock.

Put your grapes and stuff here, stomp on them, squash them. The juice runs through that and kind of gathers into that little vat right there. Why am I showing you a wine press? What does the text say in chapter six? The Israelites were so stressed by these people that were like a horde of locusts coming across the land that Gideon is crushing his grain in a wine press in this little installation.

This is probably, oh, three feet across. How do they normally do grain? Have you seen these movies in the Middle East, Bedouin, and so forth? How do they do the grain? Go ahead, Becca. Well, they do grind it in stones, but how do they get rid of the chaff to start with? You've got all this grain stuff that you're bringing.

You take it up to the top of a hill, okay? And there's a whole thing called a threshing floor. In fact, when you read the book of Ruth, the threshing floor showed up there. You have all the grain there.

You may have oxen going over it. You have a sledge, a threshing sledge, a picture of which we're actually going to see in a couple of weeks. And you break those hulls off the grain, and then you take one of these winnowing forks.

Remember pictures of this somewhere? I should have brought pictures of this too. You throw it up in the air. And the wind, because you're on the top of the hill, that's where the winds come.

And the wind blows that chaff away. It's all sorts of interesting spiritual lessons built into this. Blows the chaff away, and the good grain falls down on the ground.

Now, of course, if you're doing that on the top of a hill and your enemies are all around you, what do they see? Oh, good, easy grain. That's why Gideon is not doing it in that public place where you normally would thresh grain. It would be stolen.

So, what's he going to do? He's working in his little wine press here so that they can at least have enough to subsist on. And then you're right, after that, they would take

it to grindstones and make it into some sort of flour that they could work with. Well, with that in mind, let's do a quick run through Gideon.

Chapter six. Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord. The Midianites come through.

Verse four ruined the crops all the way to Gaza. That's pretty dreadful. Verse 11, what I was just telling you about.

Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press to keep it from the Midianites. The deliverer is Gideon himself, tribe of Manasseh. He says, oh, how can I possibly do this? I'm from such a small little tribe.

And the Lord says, or the angel of the Lord says, you're it, basically. Gideon's a little skeptical and we could probably say that the first of Gideon's weaknesses is perhaps his uncertainty. Maybe his doubt.

I'm going to suggest that's not his major weakness. And it's interestingly enough, one that the Lord meets very graciously because he's going to give Gideon sign after sign after sign. First of all, Gideon brings the offering.

The angel of the Lord touches it, and it goes up in flames. That's a pretty dramatic sign. But then Gideon says, well, you know if this is really supposed to happen this way, how about having the fleece that I set out be wet? And everything else be dry? Voila, happens.

How about the other way around? How about having the fleece be dry and everything around wet? God does it. And then God makes him cut down the armed forces that he has down to how many men? 300, right, from 32,000 to start with. And at that point, Gideon is still in need of a sign and God gives him a dream.

Sorry, that's not true. He goes and overhears a dream that some of the enemy have with this barley loaf coming down and knocking down one of their tents. And the interpretation is given to him as well.

Oh, that's Gideon. And so, he's got some confirmation at every step of the way that God, indeed, is going to use him to bring about this deliverance. Well, let's see what else happens here.

We do indeed have a victory. And by the way, you know, Gideon has been all along sort of countering the bail worship that the people had gotten involved in, too, because he's cutting down the altars and the Asherah poles, and that's extremely important. Gideon defeats these folks.

Notice how he does it. I hope you were using your imagination carefully. What's in one hand? 300 guys, right? What's in the other? Jars with a light in them.

What's in the other? I heard it. Trumpets. Where's their sword? Down here.

They're going in faith because they start blowing the trumpets and breaking the jars, and the enemy starts killing each other off. That's how it works. But God's clearly demanding them to act in faith according to what he tells Gideon to tell them to do, and they do it.

And then God is victorious as he brings about this complete overthrow of this horde of enemies. Now, what are the tensions that result? Well, we see some very sad indications that the tribes are not all together here as they try to cross the valley, for example, the Jordan River. Get over to the other side of the Jordan.

The people of Sukkot are not exactly happy to help them out. And so we have some tensions that are going to get even worse in chapter 12. This, by the way, is in chapter eight, midway through it.

What's Gideon's other weakness? I've mentioned that there may be doubt, but I'm not sure doubt is a weakness. We all suffer from this from time to time. And as I said, God meets that in Gideon right along the way.

But what's Gideon's real weakness that shows up at the end of this story? What does he do? They say, please be king over us. And he goes, I wouldn't think of being king. Not a chance.

But notice that he names the son of his concubine Abimelech. What does Abimelech mean? My father is king. Isn't that interesting? Names mean something, you know.

And he's named the son of the concubine, my father is king. And by the way, if you read chapter nine, and I hope you will because we're not going to have time to deal with it, Abimelech is a really awful person. And some terrible things happen as a result of that.

What else happens? That's just one thing. What else does he do? Oh, I won't be your king. But you know what? Why don't you give me all these nice little things that you got from the Midianites? The plunder.

And I just will make them into an ephod. And what do the people do with the ephod? They worship it. And so, it says it became a snare to them, right? End of chapter eight.

Where does it say this? Gideon made the gold, I'm in verse 27, into an ephod. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family. So that, I would suggest, is his weakness.

This pride makes him set himself up in some ways in conjunction with an ephod. Remember the perceived powers that ephod had. This is not the last we're going to see of them.

All right, enough on Gideon for now, anyway. Jephthah. Now, we're going to move across the Jordan River.

Jephthah is going to be right in here. It says he's from Gilead, and that's a whole region in this area just to the east of the Jordan River. Jephthah the Gileadite.

He's got a deal with Ammonites, and you can see them right along the edge of the map there. So, everything's unfolding on the east side of the Jordan. The two and a half tribes that settled there, Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, are over there.

Okay, now, why have I shown you this? I don't even have a label on it. It's a bunch of rocks, right? Rocks in order. Have I ever told you my story about when I brought my sister on an archeological tour in Israel? She's a wonderful musician.

But after we got to about our 16th site, she said as she got out of the car, rocks, just more rocks. So, I knew we'd done some things wrong. At any rate, here are rocks.

This is a four-room house. This is a classic Israelite four-room house from this particular time period. And interestingly enough, you can see here's kind of one long room, probably used for storage back here.

Two, three, four entrances out here, kind of a court area out there. In the four-room houses, many of which had second stories, the animals were often kept on the first floor, ground floor, if you will. And this is not dumb, by the way.

It provides a source of heat when it gets a little chilly in the winter season, in the rainy season, if the animals are living down below. Now, we think, kind of odiferous, but they didn't get bothered by those things quite as much. But this is important.

Why is it important for the Jephthah story to think in terms of animals living on a first floor, in a first floor? Why is it important? What's the obvious answer? What does Jephthah say? Katie? Right, Jephthah says, makes a vow. Oh, Lord, if you'll give me victory over the Ammonites, the first thing that comes out of the house I will offer as a burnt offering to you. Well, what's he expecting? He's expecting an animal to come out because that's kind of where they were.

But of course, what comes out? Who comes out? His one and only daughter, yeah. And we'll talk a little bit more about that in a moment, but this helps us maybe understand this just a little bit better. At any rate, Jephthah, severe, severe, severe apostasy.

Let me read it for you, because it's pretty appalling. They served Baals, Ashtoreths, gods of Aram, gods of Sidon, gods of Moab, gods of the Ammonites, and gods of the Philistines. Kind of the whole panoply is there, and the Israelites have forsook God entirely, and worshiped all these others.

Philistines and Ammonites are oppressing, but it's Jephthah's task to take on the Ammonites, and so that's where we see the deliverance taking place. He's called, interestingly enough, he's not your most savory character to start with, because he too is a son of a concubine, and his brothers have kind of expelled him from the family. And yet, when the going gets tough, they go get him and say, we'd really like to have you help us out.

Jephthah does what he's supposed to do in terms of following the regulations for going to war. I won't read it, but chapter 11 gives us the text of a letter that he sends to negotiate with the Ammonites. Part of that, of course, is that we've been living here for 300 years, which again gives us a little indication in terms of maybe some dating of the exodus.

But our point now is that he tries to negotiate doesn't work, so verse 29, chapter 11, Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah, crossed Gilead, Manasseh, passed through Mitzvah of Gilead, makes a vow, the one I just cited to you, whatever comes out the door of my house, when I return, I'll offer as a burnt offering. He comes back victorious, and his daughter comes out. He tore his clothes and said, oh my daughter, you've made me miserable and wretched because I've made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break.

Now, there is a huge question: does he fulfill the vow? Some people say no because they would say, well, she asks to go and weep because she would never marry and spends two months weeping in the hills. And so, they say, this whole business about offering as a burnt offering, Jephthah didn't do that. It just was that she was preserved or kept from marrying, ever.

She remains a virgin. And the text goes on to say that she was a virgin. But I would suggest to you that Jephthah, in a fairly, maybe superstitious, intent to keep his vow because he may, maybe, know the importance of vow keeping.

After all, Numbers 30 does say that's significant. He's going to go so far as to take the human life of his own daughter because it does say in the text, and he did to her as

he had vowed, which then raises the ugly specter of human sacrifice into this whole picture, which may have been shaped as well by some of the cultures round about them. If we have all these horrible things going on that we're going to learn when we read 2 Kings in terms of infanticide, then maybe the culture around has shaped his thinking more than the Torah had shaped his thinking.

Just a suggestion. Well, here again, as I said earlier, we had intertribal warfare. Here it breaks out in earnest.

The Ephraimites against the Manassites. Notice they're the sons of Joseph, all right? So there's some special friction there. But we need to move right along to Samson and our map again.

Okay, the first couple of incidents up here, up north. Jephthah over here. Now Samson is going to take on Philistine.

So, here's our Samson location. Let me make a couple of observations in this regard. Samson is from the tribe of Dan, and Dan originally receives its inheritance, as you learned last time, in this area right out here. In about two minutes, we're going to talk—well, in five minutes, we're going to talk about part of the tribe of Dan trekking up north, but not yet.

They're down here. Samson has a very interesting weakness, and part of it is this lure of cosmopolitan culture as it is wrapped up in women. Samson's always going to the Philistine culture, which is more advanced.

It's like going into Boston or going down to New York because you leave your nice, safe, secure little home, and you want the big city. This is Samson over and over and over again. You see it right from the get-go.

Even though he's raised as a Nazirite, he breaks his Nazirite vows, and he certainly gives in to the wiles of women repeatedly. So, as he heads out to Timna, notice it's not very far away from Zora and Eshtaol, that's where he starts out, but it is Philistine territory. So, he's moving in that direction right from the get-go.

He's going to land up in Ashkelon at some point, and then finally in Gaza as well. Other thing I want you to notice in terms of the map, there's this fascinating story about Samson's night in Gaza. He's with a prostitute, as usual, and they're coming to get him.

What does he do? He takes the gate and the pillars of the gate, rips them out of their settings, and carries them on his shoulders up to Hebron. Believe me, that is not a level ascent. Well, you can't have a level ascent anyway. It's not an easy ascent, it's not level ground.

He's going from sea level up to about 2,600 feet above sea level as he's hauling these things up. So, yet another indication of the power that he had by the power of the Holy Spirit and his Nazirite vow. Remember Nazirite vows? I know he did them really fast, but the point of the Nazirite vow was setting somebody apart to accomplish the purposes that God had set for them to do.

And Samson's a Nazirite, even though he's a rebellious Nazirite, God had things for Samson to do, and so he's a Nazirite judge. Well, the narrative. Starting with chapter 13, evil in the eyes of the Lord, he delivers him to the hands of the Philistines.

By the way, chapter 13 is fascinating for many reasons, in terms of the angel of the Lord appearing to Samson's mother, the wife of Manoah. And I wish we had time to deal with it, but let me just do one thing in conjunction with this. You know, the angel of the Lord tells her what she's supposed to do.

Her husband, Manoah, is skeptical enough that he goes back out there and wants to ask the thing all over again, and so the angel of the Lord tells them what to do. And then Samson's father says, what's your name? The answer is verse 18 of chapter 13. Why do you ask my name? It's beyond understanding.

The world beyond understanding is wonderful. It's wonderful. It's the same word that shows up in Isaiah chapter nine, verse six, which you know.

Unto us, a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called wonderful. Interesting, same word here. So, we're getting some little hints as to who this is.

At any rate, we talk about Samson and his weaknesses, as well as the Philistine women. He goes down in Timnah. He sees a Philistine woman.

He wants her. He tells his parents to get her. Verse four, parentheses.

His parents didn't know this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines. Well, that narrative unfolds, and then as you know, he goes, and repeatedly, by the way, do I say this? Yeah, the spirit of vengeance. It's not only women, but it's his intent always to get revenge.

He gets revenge against the people in Timnah who trick him because they get his wife to figure out what this riddle is. He gets revenge against the Philistines right at the end of his life by knocking down the pillars of the temple, and what does he say as he's pushing his hands on those pillars? What does he say? For my eyes, Lord, give me this one last burst of strength, and he pushes it down, and all these Philistines die. Samson gets used by God.

Those weaknesses get used by God in these narratives, and again, know the details of the narratives. They're going to be significant for you. So, a series of victories in spite of character flaws, and we are racing right along.

We'll see what we can do in the next 10 minutes. I'm going to take a little break. This would normally be the end of the first lecture, and I'd say goodbye, have a great spring break, but guess what? We now have to introduce the next lecture, and here's where I want to do a little bit of thinking about the thematic arrangement of the Book of Judges because as I suggested earlier, chapters 17 through 21 are probably events that are chronologically earlier.

That's the whole point. They're probably chronologically earlier, and I've given some reasons in terms of why this is most likely the case. I'm not going to read these passages, but go back and review them just a little bit.

Two people are mentioned. Grandson of Moses probably, there's a textual issue here, but seems to be that at the end of chapter 18 where we have the indication that this whole panoply of stuff is moving up to Dan. I'm going to say more about that in a moment.

There's a person mentioned who is the son of somebody, the son of Moses. That sounds like it's probably early on in the period of the Judges, not 300 years later, unless we're simply going to use the term descendant. Likewise, we have mentioned Aaron's son.

So, again, seems to suggest those events are early on in this period of the Judges. Mahaneh-Dan, chapter 18, talks about naming that place, and yet when you read the thing we've just read about Samson, Samson, narrative unfolds at Mahaneh-Dan, already named, even though it gets its name in chapter 18. So a suggestion that chapter 18 is earlier.

And then finally, the Philistines, as we've just seen are the major enemies for Samson, and this will continue to be the case right on into 1 Samuel. So for those reasons, the suggestion, chapter 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 record earlier events. The main point is to see in these chapters something that's setting the stage for what is about to come.

And what's about to come in 1 Samuel? Well, the transition to having a king. And what tribes are important? It's going to be Judah and Benjamin. Judah, David's tribe.

Benjamin, who's from Benjamin? First king, starts with S, A-U-L. Okay, yeah, Saul's the real first king here, and he's from the tribe of Benjamin. No accident that these are getting high profile at this point.

And then, of course, Ephraim's up there as well because Ephraim's going to be an important tribe as we have further events unfolding. Probably the most important tribe in what comes to be the northern kingdom. So, significant tribes.

I've mentioned this already, and this is the drumbeat theme throughout this last section. And it's that push that says, these people need a king. So, it's setting the stage.

No moral leadership. Says it over and over again in those passages. The idolatry gets worse and worse and worse and worse.

One of my favorite words is egregious. If you don't like it, substitute something else. You also see here that Levites, interestingly enough, are not stellar characters.

In fact, the narrative in chapter 19 is a sordid affair. And a Levite is a major figure in that narrative. So, we see some weaknesses in Levites as well.

Okay, how are we doing? Racing? Incidents in chapters 17 through 21. Well, chapter 17's fascinating, and I've called this spiritual illiteracy, which is of course putting two things together that don't really fit very well. But, let me try it on you.

A man named Micah, he steals money. His mother utters a curse about whoever stole it. He's scared because he knows the impact of blessings and curses.

And so he says, hey, you know, I took that money. And she says, the Lord bless you, because she's now trying to counter the effect of the curse, right? And so he turns it back, and she says, I'm going to give to the Lord my silver to make a carved image and an idol. It is not exactly the best thing to do, to the Lord, to make a carved image.

So they do, he makes a shrine. It's a Beit Elohim, house of God. That's verse five.

Ephod idols make one of his son's priest. There are some real problems here. Do you catch them? There are some real problems.

But here's what's interesting: at the end of the chapter, after he takes his son away from being a priest and installs a roaming Levite who just happens by, then he says, now I know the Lord's going to be good to me since this Levite has become my priest. Do you see that he's got an extremely superficial sense of what God requires? Sort of like us. Most people in the church today have a really superficial sense of God's word.

And if you don't believe me, just go out and start asking around. And we're all guilty of this. And that leads into horrible problems.

We see these horrible problems unfold in the rest of this narrative. At any rate, part of the tribe of Dan decides that they're tired of being pinched by Philistines on the one hand and the tribe of Judah on the other. They decide to move north.

And as you know, they send people up to look up north. And what do they find? They find water, luxuriant growth, and all sorts of beautiful, wonderful things. So they move up there.

And I would suggest only part of the tribe moves. The rest of it stays down. And Samson's part of the tribe, the part of the tribe that stayed in the location of Dan.

When they move up there, they stop past Micah's house, grab his shrine, grab his Levite, and move the whole thing up and set it up in Dan. And the end of chapter 18 tells us about that. It says that they worshiped there until the time of the exile.

Now keep that in mind, because Dan's going to show up again. So put that one on your back burner. Dan, as a place of false worship, is going to show up again.

So this move is one of those tragic significances. In chapter 19, another awful incident. The Levite, who's supposed to be good, you know, first of all, he's heading back down to Bethlehem, tribe of Judah, to fetch his concubine who ran away.

As they come back, they're on their way home. They don't want to stop in Jebus. That's the irony.

Jebus is a foreign city. They want to go to one of their own kind. Where do they go? Well, they go to Gibeah, city in Benjamin.

And what happens in Gibeah? Well, it's a rerun of Genesis 19, and the horrors of Sodom. And here's the thing. The Levite, we learn as we read that narrative, grabs his concubine.

Doesn't just take. The NIV says took. The Hebrews, he grabs his concubine and shoves her out the door.

And, of course, she's abused all night and lands up dead on the threshold. So he takes her home, cuts her into 12 pieces, and sends a message around to the tribes of Israel that something's got to be done to the tribe of Benjamin. And because we're out of time, there's warfare against the tribe of Benjamin.

They're also almost wiped out. But of course, then they're really perplexed. We've almost lost a tribe.

What are we going to do? And so, chapter 21 involves two legal fictions. Find the legal fiction in chapter 21 that allows them to restore the tribe of Benjamin. Now, this was horrible.

We just did two hours worth in one hour. Read these chapters and enjoy them. I know the last four aren't very enjoyable, but learn from them.

And have a wonderful spring break. Go safely.