

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Lit. and Theology, Lecture 17

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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 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 to get to all of them but we’ll see what happens.

I want to start out by reading a fairly extended passage starting in chapter two, so if you’ve got your Bibles you might want to follow along. This is the second-generation problem. Do you know this problem? It didn’t only unfold in 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 who’s grandparents and parents were, perhaps, 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, than it’s not going have any impact whatsoever, and that’s the second-generation problem.

Let’s see what happened in the book of Judges. I’m starting in verse ten of chapter 2. “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 the god as time goes on.

But that is the first problem and we’re going to see it over and over and over again, it’s a repeated cycle: Apostasy. Do you know what apostasy means? This apostasy is idolatry and they are going to serve Baals and Asherahs and just

about everything else that's around them, but what does the word itself mean? It comes from Greek and literally means, "stand away from," so there's an intentional turning away, standing away from what they should have been committed to and had their convictions. So they 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 followed and worshipped various gods of 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 who 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 to them. In other words, do you remember those covenant blessings and curses? If they were obedient then God would bless and part of those blessings had to do with geo-political security. If they were disobedient 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, they repeat the cycle over and over and over again. "They would not listen to their Judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshipped 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 turned 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.

We're going to follow the lives of four judges and watch it happen. This is basically what this books is all about, there's 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. ...from Israel's early land to teach an important lesson.

The last sentence I'm going to come back to in about fifteen minutes or so. And that is probably the book of Judges is not in chronological order. I'm going to suggest to you that the material in chapters 17-21 actually occurs early on. Now normally again I would have done that next lecture but we're going to compress it to the end of today. 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 the sort of over-arching geo-political 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 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 things to keep in mind is that this is a period of time, and again the book of Judges unfolds either in about 400 years or in about 200 years depending on when we date the Exodus. But during this time there is not a lot of power being manifested either from south in Egypt or in Mesopotamia, as it would impact Israel itself. Yes, as I note for you 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 aren't out on the coastal plains so they won't have as much impact. Instead what is taking place is oppression from Moab, Moab is right over here in this area and we're going to see some incidents with him. Philistia certainly especially toward the end 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 until Saul and David as well. And then you have those neighbors sort of pinching them on both sides but you also have people who are semi-nomadic. Midianites and Amalekites are going to come sweeping in from this side as well.

Our third bullet there as you read this narrative 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 over here for example in the time of Deborah or Barak it's the king of Hazor. It's these northern tribes are going to take that on. You don't have Judah or Simeon going up to help. So these are kind of self-contained units there is no central rule and that's going to be a really important thing.

Towards the end of the book it said over and over again "in that day everyone did what was fit in their own eyes, Israel didn't have a king." Of course, that sets 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 don't try to add up all the years that are listed in the book of Judges and figure out the time period because there's lots of overlaps here. One of the instances that will 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?

The question is "why in this period do you not have some sort of central ruler? Why does it seem that there are different entities with judge rising up to help them but no one 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. Under the theocracy they should have with the tabernacle

and Shiloh been going to Shiloh, offering their sacrifices, being in submission to the priests who would be teaching them Torah and the Levites 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 so they will find out they need a centralized authority.

There are some people who do sociological studies of the First Testament and they say that the book of Judges was the best time, the ideal time for Israel because they didn't have centralized rule with tax, it was more communitarian. What they're forgetting is the theological import of the 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? Am I saying the tribes fought each other in Israel? They banded together to fight an enemy. But your first point is true too, because there's intertribal warfare on two occasions between, Ephraim and Manasseh, or Ephraim and Gilead and Gilead is part of Manasseh. So it's actually a little bit of both but you're right, I was trying to say that they banded together wherever the problem arose to take on the foreign entity. Those attacking them.

Let's see what else we can do here. Messages of the book kind of expanding a little bit of what I said earlier. This is again part of the Deuteronomy history. So disobedience of the people brings punishment from the Lord, that was the covenant and God was faithful to the Covenant. So Israel does evil in the eyes of the Lord, these are people who are straying and are straying desperately. And God will use those folks round 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 17-19 from a literary perspective is 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. Well this is not a new theme. We know well that God and 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 some of this stuff. Well let's carry on.

Let's detour to the book of Hebrews again. Remember Hebrews is our catalogue of the faithful people. One of the things if we had time, we would probably spend four different lectures 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. We've seen Abraham in the book of Hebrews very clearly and some others as well. Verse 31 "By faith the prostitute Rahab because she welcomed the spies was not killed with those who were disobedient." Now verse 32, "What more shall I say? I don't have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah." Those are the four we're going to deal with Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah. And then of course he goes on to talk about David, Samuel and the prophets. Verse 33, "Who 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. So just for your own advice, my advice to you, 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 that are here.

First Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. However, having said that just make a note: there are 12 judges in all as you read through this book that's why we should probably spend more time on it and I don't want to totally ignore Othniel and Ehud, because they're kind of interesting. Ehud 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 and a

way Ehud want. It's a fascinating story and Othniel as well. But then again we don't have time for those I'll let you read those on your own.

Another thing we want to make a note of, interestingly enough in this 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 who are fairly significant. Jael,...and then there's that marvelous unnamed women who drops a millstone on the head of Abimeleck, who deserved it. There's the prominence of Micah's mother in chapter 17, she's not the best woman around but we'll talk about her as well.

The map first and then 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 a judge 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 Kedesh and Naphtali. It says in the text that people were bring their cases to Deborah for decision for judging. So she's got a good deal of prominence. You need to keep that in mind. You also need to keep in mind that when the problems arise and here it's coming from the place Hazor. We've talked about Hazor before, in fact last time we talked about it because a certain person named Jabin, who we're going to see again it seems to be a dynastic name. Jabin king of Hazor is one of the major forces Joshua and the Israelites conquered in the book of Joshua. Now we're seeing this rise again, Hazor being a very significant kingdom in that city-state in that area. At any rate, Hazor is going to make life miserable for these people that live up here and you want to just keep in mind that when Deborah gets the word down here from Barak up there, he says yes I'll do what you say. So she has a fair amount of clout in an area that had been a bunch of people who were tribally situated. Her word transcends tribal boundaries.

We need to also to notice Mount Tabor because that's going to be important in the narrative. We want to notice the Kishon Brook and of course the tribe of Naphtali. The tribe of Zebulun. Those are the key players so notice the

southern location of Deborah notice the battle itself is unfolding in this region.
Alright ready to go on?

One of the things we need to just touch on is why do you suppose that the book of Hebrews doesn't mention Deborah? 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. We've got in chapter 4 "Deborah prophetess the wife of Lappidoth." That's kind of an interesting expression by the way; the word for woman and wife is the same. *Eshet lappidoth* could either mean "the wife of a person named Lappidoth" or it possibly could mean "a woman who is well a *lappidoth*, a torch." This is a fiery woman maybe. Maybe it's a description, maybe it's not saying she's the wife of an unnamed character perhaps she's just a woman with lots of hutzpah and zest and power and so on. Possible at any rate it says, "Deborah is leading Israel at that time held court under the palm of Deborah." That basically just says she's sitting there holding court is a bit of an over translation. She sends for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said the Lord commands you go take with you 10,000 men go to Mount Tabor I'll lure Sisera the commander of Jabin's army to the Kishon river and give him into your hands. See all these things fitting on to the 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 it's the middle of a question I sort of interrupted myself and went to read the text. Because I was trying to demonstrate to you that Deborah is the major figure here. Why do you suppose the book of Hebrews doesn't mention Deborah? Isn't that interesting. She's the one who tells Barak, "You go do what the Lord tells you to do" and Barak says, "No I'm not going without you" and so she goes and then, of course, she says that the honor of killing Sisera is not going to be your it's going to belong to a woman. And of course, it does. Jael is the one who pounds a tent peg through his head. So what's the book of Hebrews doing?

There's 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. 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. And 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 to say God in his sovereignty wanted to use Barak and these other judges in their weaknesses despite of themselves. But there also may be something else going on and I'll just float this out there 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. Because that first century culture seems to have been somewhat different from the judges period. Now there's a lot behind that statement and 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 rather than a women in leadership. I know that raised a question didn't it? Maybe you could run that two ways she doesn't want to highlight another woman in leadership and if Priscilla is writing it and by the way this was suggested by a guy names Harnack who was well an interesting scholar. It certainly would be a minority opinion but one of the suggestions is that Hebrews is anonymous for that very reason that it was written by another woman. But it's conjecture and my suggestion is entirely conjecture as well and the two might not necessarily be at logger heads. Good observation and I appreciate Dr. Green's mentioning that.

At any rate we have to read the poem in chapter five when it gets to the point of Jael and what she does because this is terrific poetry. Sisera comes in here's the poem verse 25 "He asked for water she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles 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 milk or having yogurt really helps you. 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 Onomatopoeia 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 who of course is never going to come home--wonderful poetry.

Well, we have a battle on the Jezreel valley great battle place. As we see Old Testament history unfold the Jezreel valley is going to be here more than once. It is a classic battle ground and in fact if Har Megiddo which underlies Armageddon refers to that area it's going to be a battle ground in the future as well. At any rate that's where it unfolds the victory is celebrated poetry and the poetry is not only interesting for the death of Sisera but it also says, from the heavens the stars fought from there 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. We don't want to rule it out.

The river Kishon swept them away, the age-old river Kishon. The river Kishon is kind of small but here we seem to have some kind of flood washing away these people washing them out to sea and taking away the evil and so forth if you want to think symbolically the Kishon river 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—semi-nomadic types. Flocks and herds who've been wondering out over in here but boy 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 there so think they're like locusts all over the land. 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 at the foot of a mountain range mountain 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 shaft of the Jezreel valley called the Harod 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. You put all your grapes; this is a small one in the hill country carved out of bedrock. Put your grapes here stomp on them and squash them the juice runs through there and gathers in that vat there. Why am I showing you a wine press? What does the text say in chapter 6? The Israelites were so stressed by these people that were like a hoard of locusts coming across the land that Gideon is crushing his grain in a wine press in this little installation. This is probably three feet across. How did they normally do grain? Have you seen these movies on the Middle East and Bedouin? How do they do the grain? Well, they grind it with stone but how do they get rid of the chaff to start with? You've got all of this grain stuff your bringing, they take it to the top of the hill and there's this thing called the threshing floor. In fact, when you read the book of Ruth the threshing floor turned up there. You have all the grain there you maybe have oxen going over it you have a threshing sledge a picture we're actually going to see in a couple weeks and you break those hulls off the grain and then you take on of these winnowing forks. You throw it up in the air and the wind cause you're on the top of the hill the winds come and blows the chaff away. There are all sorts of interesting spiritual lessons in 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. After that they would take it to grind stones and make it into some sort of flour they could work with.

With that in mind let's do a quick run through Gideon. Chapter 6: "Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord." This Midianites come through, verse 4 ruin the crops all the way to Gaza. That's pretty dreadful. Verse 11 is what I was just telling you about. Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press to keep it from the Midianites. The deliverers 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, "the Angel of the Lord says, you're it basically. Gideon is 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 reacts very graciously. Because he's going to give Gideon sign after sign after sign. First of all, Gideon brings the offering that Angel of the Lord touches and it goes up in flames. That's pretty dramatic sign. But then Gideon says well you know this is really supposed to happen this way how about having the fleece that I set out be wet. And everything else is dry. It happens. How about the other way around. How about having the fleece is dry and everything else is 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 32000 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 in 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, Gideon

has been all along sort of countering the Baal worship that the people had gotten involved in too. Because he's cutting down the altars and the Asherah pole 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 one hand-jars with a light in them. What's in the other? Trumpets! Where's their sword? Down here. Their going in faith because they started blowing the trumpets and breaking the jars and the enemy starts killing each other off that's how it works. But Gods clearly demanding them to be acting 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 hoard of enemies.

Now what are the tensions that result? Well see some very sad indications that the tribes are not all together here. As they try and cross 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 8 midway through it. What's Gideon's other weakness? I've mentioned maybe, doubt, but you know what I'm not sure doubt is a weakness. We all suffer from doubt from time to time 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 says "I wouldn't think of being king not a chance" but notice that he names the son of his concubine Abimeleck what does Abimeleck mean?—"My father is king." Isn't that interesting. Names mean something you know. And he's named this son of the concubine "my father's king." And by the way if you read chapter 9 and I hope you will because we're not going to have time to deal with it Abimeleck 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? 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 the men 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? At the end of chapter 8 where does it say this Gideon made the gold Ephod? In verse 27 "All Israel Prostituted themselves by worshipping it there and it became a snare to Gideon and his family. So that, I would suggest, is his weakness this pride that 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 settled there Gad, Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh are over there.

Okay, now why have I showed you this? I didn't even have a label on it. It's a bunch of rocks right? Rocks and order. Have I ever told you my story about when I brought my sister on an archeological tour in Israel? She's a musician, 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." I knew we had done some things wrong at any rate here are rocks. This is a four room house, a classic Israelite four room house from this particular time period. Interestingly enough you can see here's 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 done by the way it provides a source of heat when it gets a little chilly in the winter and rainy seasons 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 the first floor, why is that important? What's the obvious answer? What is Jephthah say? Jephthah 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 burnt offering to you." 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. We'll talk a little more about that in a moment but this helps us maybe understand this just a little bit better. At any rate Jephthah severe, severe apostasy let me read it for you because it's pretty appalling. "They serve Baals, Ashtoreth's, gods of Aram, gods of Sidon, gods of Moab, gods of Ammonites and gods of the Philistines." Kind of the whole panoply is there and the Israelites have forsaken God entirely and worshipped 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 the 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 the letter that he sends to negotiate with the Ammonites and part of that of course, is 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, and it doesn't work. So verse 29 chapter 11 "Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead".... Jephthah 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, 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 the 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, 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 and she was a virgin but I would suggest to you that Jephthah in a fairly maybe superstitious intent to keep his vow because he made the new the importance of vow keeping Numbers 3 does say that’s significant. He’s going to go so far as to take the human life of his own daughter because it says in the text and “he did to her as he had vowed.” Which then raises the ugly specter of human sacrifice and 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 breaks out in earnest. The Ephraimite against the Manassehites notice that they are both sons of Joseph, so there are some special friction there.

But we need to move right along to Samson and our map again. First couple of incidents up here up north. Jephthah over here, now Samson is going to take on Philistines so here’s our Samson location. Let me just make a couple of observations in this regard. Samson is from the tribe of Dan, and Dan originally receives his inheritance as you learned last time in this area right here. In about two 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 wilds of women repeatedly. So as he heads out to Timnah notice it's not very far away from Zorah and Eshtaol that's where he starts out but it is Philistine territory. So he's moving in that direction from the start. He's going to land up in Ashkelon at some point and then finally in Gaza as well.

The other thing I want you to notice in terms of the map. There's this fascinating story about Samson's night in Gaza. Took a prostitute as usual and you know they're coming to get him, what does he do? He takes the gate pillars of the gate and rips them out of their settings, carries them on his shoulders up to Hebron and believe me that is not a level ascent. 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 2600 ft. above sea level. As he's hauling these things up so you have another indication of the power that he had by the power of the Holy Spirit and his Nazirite vow.

Remember Nazirite vows? I know we did them really fast the point of the Nazirite vow was setting somebody apart to accomplish the purposes that God had set for them to do. Samson's a Nazirite even though his rebellions Nazirite. God had things for Samson to do so he's a Nazirite judge.

Well, the narrative, starting with chapter 13, "everyone does evil in the eyes of the Lord, he delivers him to the hands of the Philistines." By the way chapter 13 is a fascinating chapter for lots of reasons in terms of the angel of the Lord appearing to Samson's mother the wife of Manoah I wish we had time to deal with it but let me just do one thing in conjunction with this. The Angel of the Lord tells her what she is supposed to do. Her husband Manoah is skeptic enough that he goes back out there and wants to ask the thing all over again and so the angel of the Lord tells him what to do. And then Samson's father says, what's your name? The answer is in verse 18:13, "why do you ask my name that's beyond understanding?" The word "beyond understanding" is "wonderful,"--it's

wonderful. It's the same word that shows up on Isaiah 9:6. But you know, "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and His name shall be called wonderful." Interesting, it is the same word here, so we are getting some little hints to who this is. At any rate, we talk about Samson and his weaknesses Philistine woman He goes down and tonight he sees a Philistine woman he wants her, he tells his parents to get her. Verse 4, "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 yes he's got a 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. What does he say as he's pushing his hands on those pillars? "For my eyes Lord give me this one last burst of strength." And he pushed them 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. So there are a series of victories despite of character flaws and we are racing right along.

Going to take a little break this would normally be the end of the first lecture, and I'd say goodbye and 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 a thinking of the thematic arrangement of the book of Judges because as I suggested earlier chapter 17-21 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, a 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 clan 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 Judges not 300 years later. Unless we're simply going to use the term descendant. Likewise we have mention of a son of Aaron as well. So again it seems to suggest those events are early on in this period of judges. Chapter 18 talks about naming Mahaneh Dan and yet when you read the thing we've just read about Samson, Samson narrative unfolds at Mahaneh Dan already named (Jud. 13:24). Even though it gets its name in chapter 18 (vs. 12) so the suggestion of chapter 18 is earlier.

Then finally the Philistines as we've just seen are the major enemies Samson and this continues 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 as something that is 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 an "S," Saul's the real first king here and he's from the tribe of Benjamin. It is no accident that these are getting high profile at this point. And then of course, Ephraim up there as well because Ephraim is going to be an important tribe as we have further events unfolding. Probably the most important in what comes to be the Northern Kingdom. So these are significant tribes.

I've mentioned this already and this is the drum beat theme throughout this last section. It's that push that says: these people need a king. So it's setting the stage no moral leadership. It says it over and over again in those passages the idolatry gets worse and worse one of my favorite words is "egregious" though I could 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 the 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 17-21. Well chapter 17 is fascinating and I've called

this spiritual literacy 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 and 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" cause she's now trying to counter the effect of the curse. 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" not exactly the best thing to the Lord, so they do. He makes a shrine it's a big Elohim house of god that's verse 5. Ephod idols makes fun of his son's priest there's some real problems here do you catch them? Here's what's interesting at the end of the chapter after he takes his son away from being 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. 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 their 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 and luxurious growth and all sorts of beautiful wonderful things. So they move up there and I would suggest that only part of the tribe moves. The rest of them stays down and Samson is part of the tribe that stayed in the location of Dan. When they move up there they stop at Micah's house they grab his shrine. They grab his Levite and they move the whole thing on up and set it up in Dan. And the end of chapter 18 tells us about that and it says and they worshipped there until the time of the exile. Now keep that in mind cause Dan's going to show up again so put that one on your back burner. Dan is 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 first of all he's heading back down to Bethlehem in the tribe of Judah to fetch his concubine who ran away. As they come back there 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? So they go to Gibeah city in Benjamin. And what happens in Gibeah? Well it's a re-run 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 Hebrew is "he grabs his concubine and shoves her out the door." And of course, she's abused all night and ends up dead on the threshold so he takes her home, cuts her into pieces, sends the message around to the tribes of Israel that something has to be done to the tribe of Benjamin. 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. So chapter 21 involves two legal fictions that allow them to restore the tribe of Benjamin. No this was horrible, we just did two hours-worth in one hour. Read these chapters enjoy them. I know the last four aren't very enjoyable but learn from them. And have a wonderful Spring Break.

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