

Author - STEVEN R. DOUGLAS 2017

THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

OLD TESTAMENT

BOOK 7

JUDGES



Samson and Delilah by Anthony Van Dyck

SUMMARY

After Joshua's death, the tribes of Israel continue their conquest of the southern regions of Canaan, but they are unable to cleanse the land thoroughly of its native inhabitants. God declares that these remaining people will be an impediment to Israel's enjoyment of the promised land.

Generations pass, and the younger Israelites turn away from God, intermarrying with the Canaanites and worshipping the local deities. God threatens to abandon Israel because of the disobedience of the youth, but he selects a series of judges, or rulers, to act as temporary leaders for the people.

Throughout the lives of these judges, the narrator tells us, Israel's behavior follows a consistent pattern: the people of Israel fall into evil, God sends a leader to save them, and, once the judge dies, the people commit even greater evil.

When the Israelites' continued worship of the Canaanite gods leads to an invasion by the nation of Moab, God sends Israel a left-handed man named Ehud to be its deliverer. Ehud visits the Moabite king and offers to give the king a secret message from God. When the king dismisses his attendants, Ehud draws a sword strapped to his right thigh and plunges it into the obese king, killing him. Ehud escapes and leads the Israelites in regaining control of the Jordan River valley.

A prophet named Deborah emerges as Israel's new judge after Israel returns to evil and is invaded by a mighty army from the north. Counseling Israel's tribes under a great tree, she calls for an insurrection, and, together with God's help, the Israelites defeat the king's 900 chariots, sending the Canaanite general, Sisera, into retreat.

When Sisera seeks refuge in a local woman's tent, the owner, Jael, lures Sisera to sleep and kills him, hammering a peg into his skull. Deborah recounts the victory in a lengthy song, extolling God as a warrior and herself as the "mother in Israel".

God commissions a humble man, Gideon, to save Israel from its next invaders, the Midianites, who impoverish and scatter the people. Gideon tears down his father's altar to the god Baal, and the Israelites respond in droves to his call to fight. God demands fewer men for the battle, and, in a test, Gideon leads the men to a river to drink. Those who cup their hands to drink are sent home, and the remaining three hundred men who lap the water with their tongues are chosen for God's army.

Spying on the enemy troops at night, Gideon overhears a Midianite soldier tell his friend about a dream in which a small loaf of bread was able to knock down a large Midianite tent. The friend interprets the dream as a sign that Midian will be defeated by Israel.

Gideon and his few men surround the camps, and—with the sound of trumpets and broken jars—the Israelites emit such a clamorous war cry that the Midianites turn and slay each other. Israel attempts to make Gideon its king, but Gideon refuses, proclaiming that God alone is ruler of Israel.

Widespread worship of the god Baal plagues Israel, and Gideon's son Abimelech serves a violent three-year reign as Israel's king. His tyrannical reign ends when a woman throws a millstone on Abimelech's head.

SUMMARY Continued

Pressured by the Philistines from the east and the Ammonites from the west, Israel turns from its idol worship and God selects a new judge, Jephthah, the son of a prostitute, to challenge the Ammonites.

Jephthah promises God that, if he is victorious, he will sacrifice to God the first thing that comes out of his house the day he returns from battle. Upon devastating the Ammonites, Jephthah returns home to see his daughter emerge from his house, dancing, to greet him. Jephthah laments his promise, but his daughter encourages him to remain faithful to God, and Jephthah kills the virgin girl.

The Philistines continue to oppress Israel, and the angel of God appears to a childless Israelite couple, promising them a son who will become Israel's next deliverer. The couple raises their son, Samson, as a Nazirite—a person who symbolizes his devotion to God by never cutting his hair. God blesses Samson with exceptional abilities, and one day Samson kills a lion with his bare hands.

Contrary to his parents' urging, Samson chooses a Philistine woman to be his wife. During the wedding ceremony, he baffles the Philistines with a riddle, the answer to which they discover only when Samson's wife reveals the answer to them. Samson burns with anger and goes home without his wife, but when he returns to retrieve her, the Philistines have given her to another man.

Samson captures three hundred foxes and ties torches to each of their tails, setting the Philistine crops ablaze. When the Philistines pursue Samson, the Israelites hand him over to his enemies, bound at the wrist. With God's power, Samson breaks his bindings and uses the jaw-bone of a donkey to kill a thousand Philistine men.

Again, Samson falls in love with a Philistine woman, Delilah. The Philistine officials urge Delilah to discover the secret of Samson's strength. Three times, Delilah asks Samson the source of his power, and Samson lies to her each time, duping the officials in their attempts to subdue him.

After a while, Samson tells her the truth, informing her that his long hair is the source of his strength. While Samson is asleep, Delilah has his hair cut and alerts the officials, who capture him and gouge out his eyes.

In prison, Samson's hair begins to grow again, and, during a Philistine religious festival, the blind Samson is brought out to entertain the crowds. Samson asks his servant to guide him to the pillars of the arena, and—crying out to God—Samson knocks down the pillars of the temple, killing the Philistine rulers.

Without a judge, Israel becomes even more corrupt. One day, a man and his concubine are accosted while spending the night in the Israelite tribe of Benjamin. When a gang of Benjamite men demand to have sex with the man, he offers them his concubine instead, and the men rape her repeatedly throughout the night until she dies. Enraged, the man brings the concubine home and cuts her into twelve pieces, sending a piece to each of the twelve tribes of Israel as a symbol of Israel's corruption.

The rest of Israel rallies together in opposition to the tribe of Benjamin, and, with God's help, the united tribes kill more than 25,000 Benjamites. Israel grieves for its lost tribe and helps the remaining Benjamites repopulate their land.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 13:3** And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.
- 13:4** Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean.
- 13:24** So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.
- 13:25** And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

CHARACTER Definitions

SAMSON - Samson lived in the land that God had given to the Israelites. But there were still other people who either inhabited the land or attacked the Israelites. God used men (and one woman) called Judges to lead and protect the people of Israel during this time before they had a king. One of these judges was Samson. Though we probably think of Samson as being a wicked man, God still used Samson to accomplish His purposes.

God had planned a special life for Samson. God visited Samson's parents through an angel to tell them that Samson would be a Nazarite from birth. The vow of a Nazarite was typically for a set period of time and was voluntary. Yet, in Samson's case, he was to be a Nazarite all his life and it was a calling by God, not a choice that Samson made personally.

This special vow put restrictions on his life. This included the food that Samson was to eat, that he was not to cut his hair with a razor, nor to be near a dead body. In exchange for these limitations, God endowed Samson with exceptional strength. Sadly, Samson violated all these restrictions during his life which brought him to a tragic end.

Samson met a woman from the Philistines. These were the enemies of the people of God. Samson's parents tried to convince him to choose an Israelite woman to be his wife, but he refused their guidance. Even though Samson's desires were carnal, God used this choice to accomplish His plan.

On Samson's way to visit the woman he had chosen to be his wife, he met a young lion along the way. He was able to kill the lion with his bare hands. Apparently this was the first time the great strength from God appeared in his life. The Bible says that he did not even tell his parents about this event.

When Samson returned home from visiting the woman who was to become his wife, a swarm of bees inhabited the dead body of the lion. Samson took honey from the lion's carcass—in violation of the Nazarite vow to avoid dead bodies. This event of the death of the lion and subsequent inhabitation by bees became the basis for a riddle he later told.

CHARACTERS Continued

When preparing for the wedding feast a group of Philistine men, who apparently wanted to cause trouble, came to Samson. Samson proposed a challenge to them. He gave them a riddle that they had to answer within the week of the feast.

If they answered correctly he would give sheets and clothing for each of the 30 men. Or, they would do the same for him if they could not figure out the riddle.

The riddle was, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The Philistine men were not able to answer the riddle on their own. They threatened the lives of Samson's wife and her family to get her to discover the riddle from Samson. She pleaded with Samson for the answer during the feast. Samson finally revealed the answer to her.

The Philistine men came to Samson with the answer, "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" To obtain the clothing he needed to pay off the debt of the riddle, Samson went and slew 30 men from Ashkelon.

Samson's wife was taken from him and he was not allowed by his father-in-law to have her. The father offered Samson a younger sister instead. Samson was not pleased with the idea of a substitute. As a punishment for taking away his wife Samson tied 300 foxes together by their tails in pairs and lit a torch between them. The foxes ran through the corn fields of the Philistines destroying their crops.

The Philistines retaliated against Samson by burning Samson's wife and her household. Samson singlehandedly went to war against the Philistines. We are not told how many people Samson slew at that first battle, but apparently an impressive number. He then retreated to a mountain.

The men of the Philistines came to take Samson by force. But the men of Israel did not want their country destroyed because of this war. They knew the Philistines were mightier than Israel. Therefore, 3,000 Israelites came to Samson to ask him to turn himself in. He allowed them to bind him with ropes and deliver him to the Philistines.

When he arrived in the camp of the Philistines, Samson broke the ropes and again fought the men of the land. This time he battled with a donkey's jawbone. He killed 1,000 Philistines before the fight was over. But, he was dying of thirst. God provided water for him from the jawbone.

This single-man war against the Philistines started a 20 year reign of Samson over the Philistines. Samson did not always obey God or His plan, yet God used Samson to lead and protect Israel. Therefore he is one of the many judges in the Bible that God used.

At one point Samson was surrounded by the Philistines in Gaza to capture him. He rose in the middle of the night and tore the gates of the city from their hinges. Then he carried them up to the top of a hill near Hebron. His great strength was demonstrated again and again.

Samson had a woman problem. The reason he was in Gaza previously was to be with a prostitute. Later he was in the Valley of Sorek with Delilah, who was not his wife. Delilah was a Philistine.

CHARACTERS Continued

The leaders of the land each promised to pay her 1,100 pieces of silver for her help in discovering Samson's strength and for bringing him into captivity.

Through various attempts and pleading, which you can read about in the story of Samson and Delilah, she was able to uncover his weakness. Samson was taken prisoner with the help of Delilah.

Samson's hair had been cut and his eyes gouged out. He was taken to the grinding wheel of the Philistines. Samson was publicly humiliated. I don't believe Samson's strength was wrapped up in the length of his hair. His strength was something that was given to him by God for a purpose.

We see that the Spirit of God moved upon Samson to give him his strength (Judges 14:6). When Samson continually disregarded the vow, or calling, that God bestowed upon him, that is when his strength was taken away from him.

Samson was placed in front of the prison house to be humiliated once again. He asked the young boy that led him out (presumably like a dog on a leash) to place his hands on the pillars of the building. Though blinded and humiliated—or maybe because he was finally humbled.

Samson prayed that God would allow him to do a work on behalf of Israel once again. God granted him the strength to knock down the building. The Bible says that Samson slew more in his death under the rubble of the building than he did in his life.

DEBORAH - The account of Deborah and Barak is found in Judges 4 and 5 in the Old Testament. The Israelites had been under the control of the Canaanite king Jabin and the commander of his army, Sisera. The Canaanites had 900 chariots of iron and ruled over Israel for 20 years.

A prophetess named Deborah judged or made rulings for the people of Israel under a palm tree during that time. One of Deborah's judgments was to instruct Barak to summon 10,000 men and attack Jabin's army.

Likely fearful to comply with such a command, Barak told Deborah, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go". She replied, "Certainly I will go with you, But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman."

Deborah and Barak then gathered 10,000 troops and attack Sisera and his army. Barak's troops won. All Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. Sisera himself fled to the tent of a Hebrew woman named Jael. She gave him milk to drink and covered him with a blanket in the tent. Then, Jael picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

Following this battle, God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him. Deborah's prophecy was fulfilled: Barak won, Sisera was killed by a woman, and the Israelites were freed from their enemies.

CHARACTERS Continued

Judges chapter 5 then records the song of Deborah and Barak, written to rejoice in God's victory over the Canaanites. The lyrics encourage the actions of Deborah and Barak, saying, "Wake up, wake up, Deborah!, Wake up, wake up, break out in song! Arise, Barak! Take captive your captives, son of Abinoam". Jael's role is also heralded: "Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women".

The song of Deborah and Barak also gives some more detail about the victory over the Canaanites: "The earth shook, the heavens poured, / the clouds poured down water". Evidently, God used a flood to disable the iron chariots of Sisera. The victory was supernatural.

Chapter 5 concludes with the statement, "And the land had peace forty years." This impressive time of peace lasted until Midian took control of Israel, necessitating Gideon's rise.

JAEL - Jael in the Bible was the wife of a man named Heber, who was a Kenite. The Kenites were related to the Midianites. Jael features in the book of Judges as a heroic woman who killed Sisera, the leader of King Jabin's Canaanite army. Jabin was trying to conquer Israel, which was at that time under the leadership of Deborah, a prophetess and the only female to judge the nation of Israel.

When Sisera and his army came against Israel, Deborah sent word to Barak of the tribe of Naphtali that he was to fight the Canaanites and deliver Israel from Jabin's hand. Barak was unwilling to go into battle without Deborah by his side. Deborah agreed to go with him but told him that, because of his reticence, a woman would get the honor of killing Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army.

As the Israelites were winning the battle, as prophesied by Deborah, Sisera left his decimated army at the Kishon River and fled on foot. He came to Heber's property and sought refuge there, knowing that Heber was in alliance with King Jabin.

Heber's wife, Jael, welcomed Sisera with the words "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid". She brought Sisera into her tent, covered him with a blanket, and gave him some milk to drink. Jael was kind and hospitable, but she had an ulterior motive.

After Sisera had eaten well and was asleep, Jael took a tent peg and a mallet and sneaked up on Sisera. She placed the tent peg's point on his temple and hit the peg with the mallet, driving it through his temple with such force that it stuck in the ground on the other side of his head. Thus Sisera died.

Deborah's prophecy was fulfilled: the honor of killing the captain of Jabin's army went to a woman. That woman was Jael. As Barak pursued Sisera, he came to Heber's settlement. Jael went to meet him and brought him into the tent to show him what she had done. Sisera's body was lying there with a tent peg in his temple. Later, Barak and Deborah sang a song of the battle, and in the song they honored Jael by name.

CHARACTERS Continued

EHUD - Ehud served as the second judge of Israel following Othniel. After Othniel's death, the people of Israel sinned and fell to the king of Moab, serving him for 18 years. When the Israelites cried out for help, God sent Ehud to serve as judge.

Facts about Ehud include that he was the son of Gera and belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. He was also noted as a left-handed man. This detail would become important to the success of his mission.

Beginning in Judges 3:16, we read that Ehud made himself a small sword (about 16 inches long) and strapped it to his right thigh under his clothes—had Ehud been right-handed, he would have carried the sword on his left side. Next, he visited the Moabites' King Eglon under pretense of paying a tribute. When Ehud was checked for weapons, his small sword was apparently missed as it was in an unexpected location.

Following the presentation of his tribute, Ehud said that he had a secret message for the king. Everyone left the room except Ehud and King Eglon. Ehud then pulled out his sword and stuck it into the king's stomach. The king was obese, and the sword disappeared inside his belly. Ehud left the sword and escaped through a porch opening.

When Eglon's servants later found the king dead, Ehud had already escaped and rallied the people of Israel. Going to the town of Seraiah, located in Ephraim, Ehud sounded a horn or shofar. The Israelites cut off the Moabites at the Jordan River. Judges 3:29 records that about 10,000 Moabites were killed in the battle.

Once free from Eglon's rule, the Israelites enjoyed 80 years of peace, the longest peaceful period recorded during the time of the judges. While this account is one of the more graphic scenes in Scripture, it is also very insightful. The original readers would have seen the power of God in this story for a variety of reasons.

First, a lone man walked into the king's palace, assassinated the king, and walked out without being captured. This was a highly unexpected event that involved great risk.

Second, one battle changed the next 80 years of Israel's history. Ehud's story involves more than removing a wicked leader; it includes a change in national history for an entire generation.

Third, Ehud's success is a story of freedom. Just as God had redeemed Israel from Pharaoh and the land of Egypt when they cried out for help, God redeemed Israel from their bondage under King Eglon when they turned to Him.

JEPHTHAH - Jephthah served as a judge over Israel for six years following the leadership of Jair. His account is recorded in Judges 11:1—12:7.

First, Jephthah was a Gileadite but was born of a prostitute. Though a mighty warrior, he was driven away from the family as an adult because he was considered an illegitimate child. Verse 3 records that he moved to the land of Tob and lived among a gang of scoundrels.

CHARACTERS Continued

Later, the Ammonites came against Israel in war. The Israelites sent for Jephthah, asking for his help. The elders of Gilead offered to serve Jephthah if he helped them defeat their enemy. Jephthah accepted their offer and then sent a message to the Ammonite king in an attempt to avoid war.

The Ammonite king rejected Jephthah's message, and war was inevitable. Jephthah made a vow to God, saying, "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering". Jephthah then defeated the Ammonites and returned home to Mizpah.

When Jephthah arrived at home, his daughter, an only child, was the first to come out of his house. Jephthah evidently expected an animal to exit, but this unexpected event caused him to tear his clothes in mourning.

When he told his daughter of his vow, she surprisingly accepted the consequences, only asking for two months to mourn beforehand. The event was so well-known among the Israelites that it became a custom for the daughters of Israel to mourn the event each year for four days.

After Jephthah's actions to defeat the Ammonites, the people of Ephraim were angry with him for attacking without their help. They threatened to burn his house over him with fire. This led to a battle between the tribes of Ephraim and Gilead. Gilead won, killing 42,000 Ephraimites.

ABIMELECH - Abimelech (also spelled Abimelek), one of Gideon's sons, served as a judge of Israel following the judgeship of Gideon. He is first mentioned in Judges 8:30–31 where we read, "[Gideon] had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelek."

Gideon was of the tribe of Manasseh and had led Israel to victory despite humanly impossible odds. After this victory, he became wealthy and had several wives, including a concubine in Shechem who became the mother of Abimelech.

Abimelech sought to rule over Shechem by eliminating all his opposition—namely, by killing all of the other sons of Gideon. All were killed except Gideon's youngest son, Jotham. Abimelech then became king of Shechem.

After leading Shechem for three years, a conspiracy arose against Abimelech. Civil war broke out, leading to a battle at a town called Thebez. Abimelech cornered the leaders of the city in a tower and came near with the intention of burning the tower with fire.

The text then notes, "A woman [in the tower] dropped an upper millstone on [Abimelech's] head and cracked his skull. Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can't say, A woman killed him. So his servant ran him through, and he died. When the Israelites saw that Abimelek was dead, they went home.

An "upper millstone" was a large rock approximately 18 inches in diameter, and this is what landed on Abimelech's head. Though he survived the crushing blow, Abimelech knew he would not live long.

CHARACTERS Continued

He commanded his young armor-bearer to finish him off for the sake of his reputation (a practice seen in other places in the Old Testament). The young man did as commanded, and the battle ended in the defeat of Abimelech's forces.

GIDEON - The account of Gideon's life is recorded in Judges 6:11-8:32. The backdrop for Gideon's biography begins with the Israelites being ravaged by the Midianites as a consequence of their disobedience to God.

For seven years they faced invasions from the Midianites, Amalekites, and Eastern foreigners who ruined their crops and destroyed their cattle. Although they had been unfaithful to God by worshipping the gods of the Amorites, they cried out to God for His help without realizing why this was happening to them.

And so God sends them a prophet to remind them of how the one true God had provided for them in the past and yet how quickly they had forsaken Him.

God hears their cries and graciously intervenes by sending an angel to Gideon to call him into service. Gideon, whose name means "cutter" or "cutter of trees," belonged to an undistinguished family of the Abiezrites, but from the angel's greeting we can assume that Gideon had already proved to be a mighty warrior.

Though Gideon was a willing servant of God, he needed assurance that it was, in fact, God calling him to this divine service. In accomplishing the mission set before him by God, Gideon proves himself to be faithful, a mighty warrior, a strong leader of men, and a diplomat. Gideon was the fifth judge and renowned as the greatest of Israel.

The highlights of Gideon's life include his victorious battle against Israel's enemies. However, we mustn't overlook his amazing faith, by which he carried out God's mission and which was first put to the test and confirmed when he destroyed the Baal idols his father and the community had been worshipping.

Gideon's battle triumph is preceded by God's anointing. It was no small feat that Gideon managed to enlist his tribesmen, the Abiezrites, to go into battle with him. These were the men whose idols he had destroyed and who had renamed him "Jerub-Baal".

Before entering battle, Gideon's troops number 32,000, but in obedience to God he reduces them by 22,000. Again in obedience to God he decreases the remaining 10,000 by a further 9,700, leaving him with just 300 men.

This was against an enemy that is described as thick as locusts with camels as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. With the battle finally won, the people suggest that Gideon rule over them as their king, but he declines their accolades and tells them the Lord will rule over them.

Gideon had proved his faithfulness to God, and his obedience had required him to take a stand against his own father and tribe. And, although he feared his own people, from the three requests he made for the Lord's confirmation of His will, it is evident he feared God much more.

CHARACTERS Continued

In battle he took on far greater odds than were realistic to mere mortals. When the Israelites wanted to honor him as their king for triumphing over their enemies and restoring Israel's pride, Gideon, recognizing God as the real victor in the battle, declines their request and affords the rightful sovereignty to God.

This was a great test of Gideon's faithfulness, when he could so easily have succumbed to pride by accepting the people's honor. So, it is with great surprise that we see Gideon go on to compromise his faith by requesting they all contribute gold from the plunder of the battle so he could create an "ephod," a breastplate or mask used in cultic worship. And, as we see it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

MICAH - Judges 17 and 18 record the story of a man named Micah who built a shrine and worshiped human-made idols. (This man should not to be confused with the prophet Micah.) Obviously, what Micah did was wrong. The author of the Book of Judges includes the story in order to teach us some lessons.

First, it is clear that worshiping idols stands in opposition to God's commands. The first of the Ten Commandments reads, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

Second, external religious actions are not enough; faith in the true God is required. Micah was certainly zealous. He built a shrine, made an ephod to use in religious activities, and fashioned some household idols. He was excited to have hired his own, personal priest: "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest". However, Micah's actions were not based on the teachings of God's Word. He sought to serve God the way he wanted, not the way God had commanded.

Third, false beliefs lead to false teachings. When the people of Dan inquired concerning a place to settle, Micah's priest told them what they wanted to hear: "Go in peace. Your journey has the LORD's approval". Yet the Danites' journey was a violent one that resulted in the destruction of a peaceful town.

Fourth, sinful actions by one person can have a long-term impact. The closing verses of this account leave us with these words: The Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land.

They continued to use the idol Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh. Micah's false gods led to false worship among an entire tribe of Israel for several generations. We may not think our sinful actions hurt others, yet they do. They can even leave a long-term negative impact on entire communities for years to come.

LEVITE & CONCUBINE - The concluding chapters of Judges highlight the fact that everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The account of the Levite and his concubine begins in Judges 19.

The Levite's concubine had run away and been unfaithful to him. From the start, there is the problem of a Levite (from the priestly tribe) having a concubine, and then there is the problem of the woman being involved in a sexual relationship with someone else.

CHARACTERS Continued

As he travelled to bring the woman back to his home, the Levite stopped for the night in Gibeah, a town of the Benjamites. An older man insisted they stay at his home instead of in the town square. As they were at the man's home, Some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house.

Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him. The host tried to reason with them, but they would not listen. To spare himself, the Levite sent his own concubine outside. The mob abused her that night. When the man opened the door in the morning, the concubine's dead body was there at the entrance.

The Levite placed her body on his donkey and traveled home. He then cut her body into 12 pieces—one for each tribe of Israel—and sent the pieces throughout the land. The striking response was, Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Just imagine! We must do something! So speak up!

The tribes of Israel (minus Benjamin) came together and decided to have the men who killed the concubine put to death. But when they confronted the people of Benjamin, the Benjamites refused to turn the guilty men over for their crimes. A civil war erupted, with the tribe of Benjamin eventually being defeated. All but 600 men of Benjamin were killed.

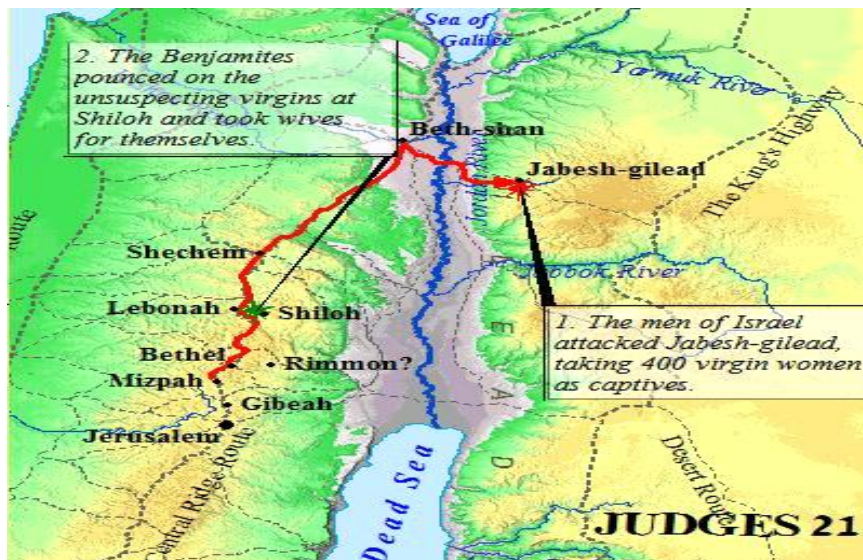
Judges 21 records the aftermath of this war. After a period of mourning, the nation's leaders sought to find a way to keep the tribe of Benjamin alive. Their answer was to punish the city of Jabesh-Gilead, who did not respond to the call to gather against the Benjamites. The punishment was that the 600 Benjamite men were allowed to steal young women from Jabesh-Gilead to take as their wives.

The Days of the Judges

Judge	Tribe	Enemy Defeated	Years of	
			Oppression	Rest
Othniel	Judah	Mesopotamia	8 yrs	40 yrs
Ehud	Benjamin	Moabites	18 yrs	80 yrs
Shamgar	?	Philistines	?	?
Deborah	Ephraim	Canaanites	20 yrs	40 yrs
Gideon	Manasseh	Midianites	6 yrs	40 yrs
Tola	Issachar	?		23 yrs
Jair	Manasseh	?		22 yrs
Jephthah	Manasseh	Ammonites	18 yrs	6 yrs
Ibzan	Judah	?		7 yrs
Elon	Zebulun	?		10 yrs
Abdon	Ephraim	?		8 yrs
Samson	Dan	Philistines	40 yrs	20 yrs

BIBLE TIMELINE

1375 BC	Micah's Idolatry	Judges 17
1375 BC	Danites Settle in Laish	Judges 18
1375 BC	A Levite's Concubine Degraded	Judges 19
1375 BC	Israelites Defeat the Benjamites	Judges 20
1375 BC	Wives for the Benjamites	Judges 21
1374 BC	Israelites Capture Jerusalem, Hebron	Judges 1
1374 BC	Israel Rebuked and Defeated	Judges 2
1374 BC	Israel's idolatry and Servitude; Othniel	Judges 3
1334 BC	Eglon	Judges 3:12
1316 BC	Ehud	Judges 3:15
1235 BC	Deborah and Barak	Judges 4
1235 BC	The Song of Deborah and Barak	Judges 5
1169 BC	Gideon and the Midianites	Judges 6 - 8
1129 BC	Abimelech Conspires to Become King	Judges 9
1126 BC	Plot against Abimelech	Judges 9:22
1126 BC	Abimelech is Slain	Judges 9:50
1118 BC	Tola, Jair	Judges 10
1097 BC	Jephthah's Covenant with the Gileadites	Judges 11
1090 BC	Jephthah, Ephraim, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon	Judges 12
1090 BC	Israel Oppressed by the Philistines	Judges 13
1075 BC	Samson's Marriage and Riddle	Judges 14
1075 BC	Samson Burns the Philistine Crops	Judges 15
1075 BC	Samson and Delilah	Judges 16



MAP REFERENCES

