



Unlocked Literal Bible

Judges

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Table of Contents

Copyrights & Licensing	1
Judges	3
Chapter 1	3
Chapter 2	4
Chapter 3	5
Chapter 4	7
Chapter 5	8
Chapter 6	10
Chapter 7	12
Chapter 8	13
Chapter 9	15
Chapter 10	17
Chapter 11	18
Chapter 12	20
Chapter 13	20
Chapter 14	21
Chapter 15	22
Chapter 16	23
Chapter 17	25
Chapter 18	26
Chapter 19	27
Chapter 20	28
Chapter 21	31

Judges

Chapter 1

¹ After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel asked Yahweh, saying, “Who first will attack the Canaanites for us, to fight against them?” ² Yahweh said, “Judah will attack. See, I have given them control of this land.” ³ The men of Judah said to men of Simeon, their brothers, “Come up with us into our territory that was assigned to us that together we may fight against the Canaanites. We will likewise go with you to the territory that was assigned to you.” So the tribe of Simeon went with them. ⁴ The men of Judah attacked, and Yahweh gave them victory over the Canaanites and the Perizzites. They killed ten thousand of them at Bezek. ⁵ They found Adoni Bezek at Bezek, and they fought against him and defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. ⁶ But Adoni Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him, and they cut off his thumbs and his big toes. ⁷ Adoni Bezek said, “Seventy kings, who had their thumbs and their big toes cut off, gathered their food from under my table. As I have done, even so God has done to me.” They brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

⁸ The men of Judah fought against the city of Jerusalem and took it. They attacked it with the edge of the sword and they set the city on fire. ⁹ After that, the men of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the Negev, and the western foothills. ¹⁰ Judah advanced against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (the name of Hebron was previously Kiriath Arba), and they defeated Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

¹¹ From there the men of Judah advanced against the inhabitants of Debir (the name

of Debir was previously Kiriath Sepher). ¹² Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kiriath Sepher and takes it, I will give him Achsah, my daughter, to be his wife.” ¹³ Othniel, son of Kenaz (Caleb’s younger brother) captured Debir, so Caleb gave him Achsah, his daughter, to be his wife. ¹⁴ Soon Achsah came to Othniel, and she urged him to ask her father to give her a field. As she was getting off her donkey, Caleb asked her, “What can I do for you?” ¹⁵ She said to him, “Give me a blessing. Since you have given me the land of the Negev, also give me springs of water.” So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

¹⁶ The descendants of Moses’ father-in-law the Kenite went up from the City of Palms with the people of Judah, into the wilderness of Judah, which is in the Negev, to live with the people of Judah near Arad. ¹⁷ The men of Judah went with the men of Simeon their brothers and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath and they completely destroyed it. The name of the city was called Hormah. ¹⁸ The people of Judah also captured Gaza and the land around it, Ashkelon and the land around it, and Ekron and the land around it. ¹⁹ Yahweh was with the people of Judah and they took possession of the hill country, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the plains because they had iron chariots. ²⁰ Hebron was given to Caleb (like Moses had said), and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak. ²¹ But the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem. So the Jebusites have lived with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

²² The house of Joseph prepared to attack Bethel, and Yahweh was with them. ²³ They sent out men to spy on Bethel (the city that was formerly called Luz). ²⁴ The

spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, "Show us, please, how to get into the city, and we will be kind to you." ²⁵ He showed them a way into the city, and so they attacked the city with the edge of the sword, but they let the man and all his family get away. ²⁶ Then the man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city and called it Luz, which is its name to this day.

²⁷ The people of Manasseh did not drive out the people living in the cities of Beth Shan and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or those who lived in Dor and its villages, or those who lived in Ibleam and its villages, or those who lived in Megiddo and its villages, because the Canaanites were determined to live in that land. ²⁸ When Israel became strong, they forced the Canaanites to serve them with hard labor, but they never drove them out completely.

²⁹ Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites continued to live in Gezer among them.

³⁰ Zebulun did not drive out the people living in Kitron, or the people living in Nahalol, and so the Canaanites continued to live among them, but Zebulun forced the Canaanites to serve them with hard labor.

³¹ Asher did not drive out the people living in Acco, or the people living in Sidon, or those living in Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. ³² So the tribe of Asher lived among the Canaanites (those who lived in the land), because they did not drive them out.

³³ The tribe of Naphtali did not drive out those who were living in Beth Shemesh, or those living in Beth Anath. So the tribe of Naphtali lived among the Canaanites (the people who were living in that land). However, the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and

Beth Anath were forced into hard labor for Naphtali.

³⁴ The Amorites forced the tribe of Dan to live in the hill country, not allowing them to come down to the plain. ³⁵ So the Amorites lived at Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the military might of the house of Joseph conquered them, and they were forced to serve them with hard labor. ³⁶ The border of the Amorites ran from the hill of Akrabbim at Sela up into the hill country.

Chapter 2

¹ The angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, "I brought you up from Egypt, and have brought you to the land I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. ² You must make no covenant with those who live in this land. You must tear down their altars.' But you have not listened to my voice. What is this that you have done? ³ So now I say, 'I will not drive the Canaanites out before you, but they will become thorns in your sides, and their gods will become a trap for you.'"

⁴ When the angel of Yahweh spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people shouted and wept. ⁵ They called that place Bochim. There they offered sacrifices to Yahweh.

⁶ Now when Joshua had sent the people on their way, the people of Israel each went to the place assigned, to take ownership of their land. ⁷ The people served Yahweh during the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him, those who had seen all of Yahweh's great deeds he had done for Israel. ⁸ Joshua son of Nun the servant of Yahweh, died at the age of 110 years old. ⁹ They buried him within the border of the land he was assigned in Tim-

nath Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰ All that generation was also gathered to their fathers. Another generation grew up after them who did not know Yahweh or what he had done for Israel.

¹¹ The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh and they served the Baals. ¹² They broke away from Yahweh, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, the very gods of the peoples who were around them, and they bowed down to them. They provoked Yahweh to anger because ¹³ they broke away from Yahweh and worshiped Baal and the Ashtoreths. ¹⁴ The anger of Yahweh burned against Israel, and he gave them to the raiders who stole their possessions from them. He sold them as slaves who were held by the strength of their enemies around them, so they could no longer defend themselves against their enemies. ¹⁵ Wherever Israel went out to fight, Yahweh's hand was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them and they were in terrible distress.

¹⁶ Then Yahweh raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who were stealing their possessions. ¹⁷ Yet they would not listen to their judges. They were unfaithful to Yahweh and gave themselves like prostitutes to other gods and worshiped them. They soon turned aside from the way their fathers had lived—those who had obeyed the commandments of Yahweh—but they themselves did not do so. ¹⁸ When Yahweh raised up judges for them, Yahweh helped the judges and rescued them from the hand of their enemies all the days the judge lived. Yahweh had pity on them as they groaned because of those who oppressed them and afflicted them. ¹⁹ But when the judge died, they would turn away and do things that

were even more corrupt than their fathers had done. They would go after other gods to serve them and worship them. They refused to give up any of their evil practices or their stubborn ways. ²⁰ The anger of Yahweh burned against Israel; he said, "Because this nation has broken the terms of my covenant that I had set in place for their fathers—because they have not listened to my voice— ²¹ I will not, from now on, drive out from before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died. ²² I will do this so that I may test Israel, whether or not they will keep the way of Yahweh and walk in it, as their fathers kept it." ²³ That is why Yahweh left those nations and did not drive them out quickly and give them into the hand of Joshua.

Chapter 3

¹ Now Yahweh left these nations to test Israel, namely everyone in Israel who had not experienced any of the wars fought in Canaan. ² (He did this to teach warfare to the new generation of the Israelites who had not known it before.) ³ These are the nations: the five kings from the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived in the Lebanon mountains, from Mount Baal Hermon to Hamath Pass. ⁴ These nations were left as a means by which Yahweh would test Israel, to confirm whether they would obey the commands he gave their ancestors through Moses. ⁵ So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁶ Their daughters they took to be their wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.

⁷ The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh and forgot Yah-

weh their God. They worshiped the Baals and the Asherahs. ⁸ Therefore, the anger of Yahweh was set on fire against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim. The people of Israel served Cushan Rishathaim for eight years. ⁹ When the people of Israel called out to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up someone who would come to help the people of Israel, and who would rescue them: Othniel son of Kenaz (Caleb's younger brother). ¹⁰ Yahweh's Spirit empowered him, and he judged Israel and he went out to war. Yahweh gave him victory over Cushan Rishathaim king of Aram. The hand of Othniel defeated Cushan Rishathaim. ¹¹ The land had peace for forty years. Then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

¹² After that, the Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and Yahweh gave strength to Eglon king of Moab to overpower the Israelites. ¹³ Eglon joined with the Ammonites and the Amalekites and they went and defeated Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. ¹⁴ The people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years.

¹⁵ When the people of Israel called out to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up someone who would help them, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjamite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent him, with their tribute payment, to Eglon king of Moab. ¹⁶ Ehud made himself a sword that had two edges, one cubit in length; he strapped it on under his clothing on his right thigh. ¹⁷ He gave the tribute payment to King Eglon of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.) ¹⁸ After Ehud had presented the tribute payment, he left with those who had carried it in. ¹⁹ As for Ehud himself, however, when he reached the place where the carved images were made near

Gilgal, he turned and went back, and he said, "I have a secret message for you, my king." Eglon said, "Silence!" So all those serving him left the room. ²⁰ Ehud came to him. The king was sitting by himself, alone in the coolness of the upper room. Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." The king got up out of his seat. ²¹ Ehud reached with his left hand and took the sword from his right thigh, and he stabbed it into the king's body. ²² The hilt of the sword also went into him following the blade. The tip of the sword came out of his back and the fat closed over it, for Ehud did not pull the sword out of his belly. ²³ Then Ehud went out on the porch and closed the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

²⁴ After Ehud had gone, the king's servants came; they saw that the doors of the upper room were locked, so they thought, "Surely he is relieving himself in the coolness of the upper room." ²⁵ They were growing more concerned until they felt they were neglecting their duty when the king still did not open the doors to the upper room. So they took the key and opened them, and there lay their master, fallen to the floor, dead.

²⁶ While the servants were waiting, wondering what they should do, Ehud escaped and passed beyond the place where there were carved images of idols, and so he escaped to Seirah. ²⁷ When he arrived, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the people of Israel went down with him from the hills, and he was leading them. ²⁸ He said to them, "Follow me, for Yahweh is about to defeat your enemies, the Moabites." They followed him and they captured the fords of the Jordan across from the Moabites, and they did not allow anyone to cross the river. ²⁹ At that time they killed about ten thousand men of Moab, and all were strong and ca-

pable men. Not one escaped. ³⁰ So that day Moab was subdued by the strength of Israel, and the land had rest for eighty years.

³¹ After Ehud the next judge was Shamgar son of Anath who killed 600 men of the Philistines with a stick used to goad the cattle. He also delivered Israel from danger.

Chapter 4

¹ After Ehud died, the people of Israel once again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh. ² Yahweh sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was named Sisera, and he lived in Harosheth of the Gentiles. ³ The people of Israel called out to Yahweh for help, because Sisera had nine hundred iron chariots and he oppressed the people of Israel with force for twenty years.

⁴ Now Deborah, a prophetess (the wife of Lappidoth), was a leading judge in Israel at that time. ⁵ She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came to her to settle their disputes. ⁶ She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali. She said to him, "Yahweh, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun. ⁷ I will draw out Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon, with his chariots and his army, and I will give you victory over him.'" ⁸ Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go, but if you do not go with me, I will not go." ⁹ She said, "I will certainly go with you. However, the road on which you are going will not lead to your honor, for Yahweh will sell Sisera

into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. ¹⁰ Barak called for the men of Zebulun and Naphtali to come together at Kedesh. Ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah went along with him.

¹¹ Now Heber (the Kenite) had separated himself from the Kenites—they were the descendants of Hobab (Moses' father-in-law)—and he pitched his tent by the oak in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

¹² When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, ¹³ Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the soldiers who were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles to the Kishon River. ¹⁴ Deborah said to Barak, "Go! For this is the day in which Yahweh has given you victory over Sisera. Is not Yahweh leading you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. ¹⁵ Yahweh made Sisera's army confused, all his chariots, and all his army. Barak's men attacked them and Sisera got down from his chariot and ran away on foot. ¹⁶ But Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth of the Gentiles, and the whole army of Sisera was killed by the edge of the sword, and not a man survived.

¹⁷ But Sisera ran away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite. ¹⁸ Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Turn aside, my master; turn aside to me and do not be afraid." So he turned aside to her and came into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. ¹⁹ He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." She opened a leather bag of milk and gave him drink, and then she covered him up again. ²⁰ He said to her, "Stand at the opening of the

tent. If someone comes and asks you, ‘Is anyone here?’, say ‘No.’” ²¹ Then Jael (the wife of Heber) took a tent peg and a hammer in her hand and went in secretly to him, for he was in a deep sleep, and she hammered the tent peg into the side of his head and it pierced through him and went down into the ground, and he died. ²² As Barak was pursuing Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, “Come, I will show you the man you are looking for.” So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera dead, with the tent peg in the side of his head.

²³ So on that day God defeated Jabin, the king of Canaan, before the people of Israel. ²⁴ The might of the people of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed him.

Chapter 5

¹ On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

² ”When the leaders take the lead in Israel,

when the people gladly volunteer for war—

we praise Yahweh!

³ Listen, you kings! Pay attention, you leaders!

I, I will sing to Yahweh;

I will sing praises to Yahweh, the God of Israel.

⁴ Yahweh, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from Edom, the earth shook, and the skies also trembled;

also the clouds poured down water.

⁵ The mountains quaked before the face of Yahweh;

even Mount Sinai quaked before the face of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

⁶ In the days of Shamgar (son of Anath), in the days of Jael, the main roads were abandoned,

and those who walked only used the winding paths.

⁷ There were few warriors in Israel, until I, Deborah, took command—

a mother took command in Israel!

⁸ When they chose new gods, there was fighting at the city gates and yet there were no shields or spears seen

among forty thousand in Israel.

⁹ My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel,

along with the people who gladly volunteered—

we bless Yahweh for them!

¹⁰ Think about this—you who ride on white donkeys

sitting on rugs for saddles,

and you who walk along the road.

¹¹ Hear the voices of those who sing at the watering places.

There they tell again of Yahweh’s righteous deeds,

and the righteous actions of his warriors in Israel.

Then the people of Yahweh went down to the city gates.

¹² Awake, awake, Deborah!

Awake, awake, sing a song!

Get up, Barak, and capture your prisoners, you son of Abinoam.

¹³ Then the survivors came down to the nobles;

the people of Yahweh came down to me with the warriors.

¹⁴ They came from Ephraim, whose root is in Amalek;

the people of Benjamin followed you.

From Machir commanders came down,

and from Zebulun those who carry an officer's staff.

¹⁵ My princes in Issachar were with Deborah;

and Issachar was with Barak

rushing after him into the valley under his command.

Among the clans of Reuben

there were great searchings of heart.

¹⁶ Why did you sit between the fireplaces,

listening to the shepherds playing their pipes for their flocks?

As for the clans of Reuben

there were great searchings of heart.

¹⁷ Gilead stayed on the other side of the Jordan;

and Dan, why did he wander about on ships?

Asher remained on the coast

and lived close to his harbors.

¹⁸ Zebulun was a tribe who would risk their lives to the point of death,

and Naphtali, also, on the field of battle.

¹⁹ The kings came, they fought;

the kings of Canaan fought at Taanach

by the waters of Megiddo.

But they took away no silver as plunder.

²⁰ From heaven the stars fought,

from their paths across the heavens they fought against Sisera.

²¹ The Kishon River swept them away, that old river, the Kishon River.

March on my soul, be strong!

²² Then the sound of horses' hooves—galloping, the galloping of his mighty ones.

²³ 'Curse Meroz!' says the angel of Yahweh.

'Surely curse its inhabitants!—

because they did not come to help Yahweh—

to help Yahweh in the battle against the mighty warriors.'

²⁴ Jael is blessed more than all other women,

Jael (the wife of Heber the Kenite),

she is more blessed than all the women who live in tents.

²⁵ The man asked for water, and she gave him milk;

she brought him butter in a dish fit for princes.

²⁶ She put her hand to the tent peg,

and her right hand to the workman's hammer;

with the hammer she struck Sisera, she crushed his head.

She smashed his skull into pieces when she pierced him through the side of his head.

²⁷ He collapsed between her feet, he fell and he lay there.

Between her feet he fell limp.

The place he collapsed is where he was violently killed.

²⁸ Out of a window she looked—

the mother of Sisera looked through the lattice and she called out in sadness,

‘Why has it taken his chariot so long to come?

Why have the hoofbeats of the horses that pull his chariots been delayed?’

²⁹ Her wisest princesses replied,

and she gave herself the same answer:

³⁰ ‘Have they not found and divided up the plunder?

—A womb, two wombs for every man;

the plunder of dyed fabric for Sisera,

the plunder of dyed fabric embroidered,

two pieces of dyed fabric embroidered for the necks of those who plunder?’

³¹ So may all your enemies perish, Yahweh!

But your friends be like the sun when it rises in its might.”

Then the land had peace for forty years.

Chapter 6

¹ The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and he gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years. ² The power of Midian oppressed Israel. Because of Midian, the people of Israel made shelters for themselves from the dens in the hills, the caves, and the strongholds. ³ It happened that any time the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people from the

east would attack the Israelites. ⁴ They would set up their army on the land and destroy the crops, all the way to Gaza. They would leave no food in Israel, and no sheep, nor cattle or donkeys. ⁵ Whenever they and their livestock and tents came up, they would come as a swarm of locusts, and it was impossible to count either the people or their camels. They invaded the land in order to destroy it. ⁶ Midian weakened the Israelites so severely that the people of Israel called out to Yahweh.

⁷ When the people of Israel called out to Yahweh because of Midian, ⁸ Yahweh sent a prophet to the people of Israel. The prophet said to them, “This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: ‘I brought you up from Egypt; I brought you out of the house of slavery. ⁹ I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all who were oppressing you. I drove them out before you, and I gave you their land. ¹⁰ I said to you, “I am Yahweh your God; I commanded you not to worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living.” But you have not obeyed my voice.’”

¹¹ Now the angel of Yahweh came and sat under the oak in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash (the Abiezrite), while Gideon, Joash’s son, was separating out the wheat by beating it on the floor, in the winepress—to hide it from the Midianites. ¹² The angel of Yahweh appeared to him and said to him, “Yahweh is with you, you strong warrior!” ¹³ Gideon said to him, “Oh, my master, if Yahweh is with us, why then has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers told us about, when they said, ‘Did not Yahweh bring us up from Egypt?’ But now Yahweh has abandoned us and gave us into the hand of Midian.” ¹⁴ Yahweh looked at him and said, “Go in the strength you already have. Deliver Israel from the

hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"
¹⁵ Gideon said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? See, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least important in my father's house." ¹⁶ Yahweh said to him, "I will be with you, and you will defeat the entire Midianite army as one man." ¹⁷ Gideon said to him, "If you are pleased with me, then give me a sign that it is you who is speaking to me." ¹⁸ Please, do not leave here, until I come to you and bring out my gift and set it before you." Yahweh said, "I will wait until you return."

¹⁹ Gideon went and prepared a young goat and from an ephah of flour he made unleavened bread. He put the meat in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot and brought them to him under the oak tree, and presented them. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth over them." That is what Gideon did. ²¹ Then the angel of Yahweh reached out with the end of the staff in his hand. With it he touched the flesh and the unleavened bread; a fire went up out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of Yahweh went away and Gideon could no longer see him. ²² Gideon understood that this was the angel of Yahweh. Gideon said, "Ah, Lord Yahweh! For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" ²³ Yahweh said to him, "Peace to you! Do not be afraid, you will not die." ²⁴ So Gideon built an altar there to Yahweh. He called it, "Yahweh is Peace." To this day it still stands at Ophrah of the clan of Abiezer.

²⁵ That night Yahweh said to him, "Take your father's bull, and a second bull that is seven years old, and pull apart the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it." ²⁶ Build an altar to Yahweh your God on the

top of this place of refuge, and construct it the correct way. Offer the second bull as a burnt offering, using the wood from the Asherah that you cut down." ²⁷ So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as Yahweh had told him. But because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the town to do it during the day, he did it at night.

²⁸ In the morning when the men of the town got up, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull had been offered on the altar that had been built. ²⁹ The men of the city said to one another, "Who has done this?" When they talked with others and searched for answers, they said, "Gideon son of Joash has done this thing." ³⁰ Then the men of the town said to Joash, "Bring out your son so that he may be put to death, because he pulled apart the altar of Baal, and because he cut down the Asherah beside it." ³¹ Joash said to all who opposed him, "Will you plead the case for Baal? Will you save him? Whoever pleads the case for him, let him be put to death while it is still morning. If Baal is a god, let him defend himself when someone pulls his altar apart." ³² Therefore on that day they called Gideon "Jerub Baal," because he said, "Let Baal defend himself against him," because Gideon broke down Baal's altar.

³³ Now all the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the people of the east gathered together. They crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ But the Spirit of Yahweh came over Gideon. Gideon blew a trumpet, calling out the clan of Abiezer, so they might follow him. ³⁵ He sent messengers all throughout Manasseh, and they too, were called out to follow him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they

went up to meet him.

³⁶ Gideon said to God, "If you intend to use me to save Israel, as you have said—

³⁷ Look, I am putting a woolen fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that you will use me to save Israel, as you said." ³⁸ This is what happened—Gideon rose early the next morning, he pressed the fleece together, and wrung out the dew from the fleece, enough to fill a bowl with water. ³⁹

Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, I will speak one more time. Please allow me one more test using the fleece. This time make the fleece dry, and let there be dew on all the ground around it." ⁴⁰ God did what he asked for that night. The fleece was dry, and there was dew on all the ground around it.

Chapter 7

¹ Then Jerub Baal (that is, Gideon) rose up early, and all the people who were with him, and they encamped beside the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was to their north in the valley near the hill of Moreh.

² Yahweh said to Gideon, "There are too many soldiers for me to give you victory over the Midianites, so that Israel may not boast over me, saying, 'Our own power has saved us.' ³ Now therefore, proclaim in the ears of the people and say, 'Whoever is afraid, whoever trembles, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand people went away, and ten thousand remained.

⁴ Yahweh said to Gideon, "The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will make their number smaller for you there. If I say to you, 'This one will go with you,' he will go with you; but if I say, 'This one will not go with you,' he

will not go." ⁵ So Gideon brought the people down to the water, and Yahweh said to him, "Separate everyone who laps up the water, as a dog laps, from those who kneel down to drink." ⁶ Three hundred men lapped. The rest of the men kneeled down to drink water. ⁷ Yahweh said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men who lapped, I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites. Let every other man go back to his own place." ⁸ So those who were chosen took their supplies and their trumpets. Gideon sent away all the men of Israel, every man to his tent, but he kept the three hundred men. Now the Midian camp was down below him in the valley.

⁹ That same night Yahweh said to him, "Get up! Attack the camp, for I am going to give you victory over it. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, ¹¹ and listen to what they are saying, and your courage will be strengthened to attack the camp." So Gideon went with Purah his servant, down to the guard posts of the camp. ¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the people of the east settled along in the valley, as thick as a cloud of locusts. Their camels were more than could be counted; they were more in number than the grains of the sand on the seashore. ¹³ When Gideon arrived there, a man was telling a dream to his companion. The man said, "Look! I had a dream, and I saw a round loaf of barley bread tumbling into the camp of Midian. It came to the tent, and hit it so hard that it fell down and turned it upside down, so that it lay flat." ¹⁴ The other man said, "This is nothing other than the sword of Gideon (the son of Joash), the Israelite. God has given him victory over Midian and all their army."

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the retelling of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down in worship. He went back to the

camp of Israel and said, “Get up! Yahweh has given you victory over the Midian army.”¹⁶ He divided the three hundred men into three groups, and he gave them all trumpets and empty jars, with torches inside each jar.¹⁷ He said to them, “Look at me and do what I do. Watch! When I come to the edge of the camp, you must do what I do.”¹⁸ When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow your trumpets also on every side of the entire camp and shout, ‘For Yahweh and for Gideon!’”

¹⁹ So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the edge of the camp, right at the beginning of the middle watch. Just as the Midianites were changing guard, they blew the trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands.²⁰ The three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands to blow them. They shouted out, “The sword of Yahweh and of Gideon.”²¹ Every man stood in his place around the camp and all the Midianite army ran. They shouted and ran away.²² When they blew the three hundred trumpets, Yahweh set every Midianite man’s sword against his comrades and against all their army. The army fled as far as Beth Shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, near Tabath.²³ The men of Israel from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh were called out, and they went after Midian.

²⁴ Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Go down against Midian and take control of the Jordan River, as far as Beth Barah, to stop them.” So all the men of Ephraim gathered together and took control of the waters, as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan River.²⁵ They captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb.

They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They went after the Midianites, and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was on the other side of the Jordan.

Chapter 8

¹ The men of Ephraim said to Gideon, “What is this you have done to us? You did not call us when you went to fight against Midian.” Then they had a violent argument with him.² He said to them, “What have I done now compared to you? Are not the gleanings of Ephraim’s grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer?”³ God has given you victory over the princes of Midian—Oreb and Zeeb! What have I accomplished compared to you?” Their anger toward him died down when he said this.

⁴ Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over it, he and the three hundred men who were with him. They were exhausted, yet they still kept up the pursuit.⁵ He said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”⁶ Then the officials said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand? Why should we give bread to your army?”⁷ Gideon said, “When Yahweh has given us victory over Zebah and Zalmunna, I will tear your skin with the desert thorns and briers.”⁸ He went up from there to Penuel and spoke to the people there in the same way, but the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.⁹ He spoke also to the men of Penuel and said, “When I come again in peace, I will pull down this tower.”

¹⁰ Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in

Karkor with their army, about fifteen thousand men, all who remained out of the entire army of the people of the East, for there had fallen 120,000 men who were trained to fight with the sword. ¹¹ Gideon went up the road taken by tent dwellers, past Nobah and Jogbehah. He defeated the enemy army, because they were not expecting an attack. ¹² Zebah and Zalmunna fled, and as Gideon pursued them, he captured the two kings of Midian—Zebah and Zalmunna—and set their whole army into a panic.

¹³ Gideon, son of Joash, returned from the battle going through the pass of Heres. ¹⁴ He ran into a young man of the people of Succoth and sought advice from him. The young man described for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men. ¹⁵ Gideon came to the men of Succoth and said, “Look at Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you mocked me and said, ‘Have you already conquered Zebah and Zalmunna? We do not know that we should give bread to your army.’” ¹⁶ Gideon took the elders of the city, and he punished the men of Succoth with the desert thorns and briers. ¹⁷ Then he pulled down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of that city.

¹⁸ Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?” They answered, “As you are, so were they. Every one of them looked like the son of a king.” ¹⁹ Gideon said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As Yahweh lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not kill you.” ²⁰ He said to Jether (his firstborn), “Get up and kill them!” But the young man did not draw his sword for he was afraid, because he was still a young boy. ²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Get up yourself and kill us! For as the man is, so is his strength.” Gideon rose and killed Ze-

bah and Zalmunna. He also took off the crescent-shaped ornaments that were on their camels’ necks.

²² Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us—you, your son, and your grandson— because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian.” ²³ Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, neither will my son rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you.” ²⁴ Gideon said to them, “Let me make a request of you: that every one of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.” (The Midianites had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites.) ²⁵ They answered, “We are glad to give them to you.” They spread out a cloak and every man threw on it the earrings from his plunder. ²⁶ The weight of the golden earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold. This plunder was in addition to the crescent ornaments, the pendants, the purple clothing that was worn by the kings of Midian, and in addition to the chains that had been around their camels’ necks. ²⁷ Gideon made an ephod out of the earrings and put it in his city, in Ophrah, and all Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there. It became a trap for Gideon and for those in his house. ²⁸ So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel and they did not raise their heads up again. So the land had peace for forty years in the days of Gideon.

²⁹ Jerub Baal, son of Joash, went and lived in his own house. ³⁰ Gideon had seventy sons who were his descendants, for he had many wives. ³¹ His concubine, who was in Shechem, also bore him a son, and Gideon gave him the name Abimelech. ³² Gideon, son of Joash, died at a good old age and was buried in Ophrah in the tomb of Joash his father, of the clan of Abiezer.

³³ It came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, the people of Israel turned again

and prostituted themselves by worshiping the Baals. They made Baal Berith their god. ³⁴ The people of Israel did not remember to honor Yahweh, their God, who had rescued them from the hand of all their enemies on every side. ³⁵ They did not keep their promises to the house of Jerub Baal (that is, Gideon), in return for all the good he had done in Israel.

Chapter 9

¹ Abimelech son of Jerub Baal went to his mother's relatives at Shechem and he said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family, ² "Please say this, so that all the leaders in Shechem may hear, 'Which is better for you: to have all seventy sons of Jerub Baal rule over you, or that just one rule over you?' Remember that I am your bone and your flesh." ³ His mother's relatives spoke for him to the leaders of Shechem, and they agreed to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." ⁴ They gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Baal Berith, and Abimelech used it to hire men of lawless and reckless character, who followed him. ⁵ Abimelech went to his father's house at Ophrah, and upon one stone he murdered his seventy brothers, the sons of Jerub Baal. Only Jotham was left, the youngest son of Jerub Baal, for he hid himself. ⁶ All the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo came together and they went and made Abimelech king, beside the oak near the pillar which is in Shechem.

⁷ When Jotham was told about this, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim. He shouted and said to them, "Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, so that God may listen to you. ⁸ The trees once went out to anoint a king over them. For they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over

us.' ⁹ But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I give up my oil, which is used to honor gods and mankind, so I may go return, just to sway over the other trees?' ¹⁰ The trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and reign over us.' ¹¹ But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I give up my sweetness and my good fruit, just so I could return and sway over the other trees?' ¹² The trees said to the vine, 'Come and reign over us.' ¹³ The vine said to them, 'Should I give up my new wine, which cheers gods and mankind, and return and sway over the other trees?' ¹⁴ Then said all the trees to the thornbush, 'Come and reign over us.' ¹⁵ The thornbush said to the trees, 'If you truly want to anoint me as king over you, then come and find safety under my shade. If not, then let fire come out of the thornbush and let it burn up the cedars of Lebanon.' ¹⁶ Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and honesty, when you made Abimelech king, and if you have done well concerning Jerub Baal and his house, and if you have punished him as he deserves— ¹⁷ —and to think that my father fought for you, risked his life, and rescued you out of the hand of Midian— ¹⁸ but today you have risen up against my father's house and have killed his sons, seventy persons, upon one stone. Then you have made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the leaders of Shechem, because he is your relative. ¹⁹ If you acted with honesty and integrity with Jerub Baal and his house, then you should rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. ²⁰ But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and burn up the men of Shechem and Beth Millo. Let fire come out from the men of Shechem and Beth Millo, to burn up Abimelech." ²¹ Jotham fled and ran away, and he went to Beer. He lived there because it was far away from Abimelech, his brother.

²² Abimelech ruled over Israel for three

years. ²³ God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. The leaders of Shechem betrayed the trust they had with Abimelech. ²⁴ God did this so the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerub Baal might be avenged, and Abimelech their brother would be held responsible for murdering them, and the men of Shechem would be held responsible because they helped him murder his brothers. ²⁵ So the leaders of Shechem positioned men to lie in wait on the hilltops that they might ambush him, and they robbed all who passed by them along that road. This was reported to Abimelech.

²⁶ Gaal son of Ebed came with his relatives and they went over to Shechem. The leaders of Shechem had confidence in him. ²⁷ They went out into the field and gathered grapes from the vineyards, and they trampled on them. They held a festival in the house of their god, where they ate and drank, and they cursed Abimelech. ²⁸ Gaal son of Ebed, said, "Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerub Baal? Is Zebul not his officer? Serve the men of Hamor, Shechem's father! Why should we serve Abimelech? ²⁹ I wish that this people were under my command! Then would I remove Abimelech. I would say to Abimelech, 'Call out all your army.'"

³⁰ When Zebul, the official of the city, heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed his anger was kindled. ³¹ He sent messengers to Abimelech in order to deceive, saying, "See, Gaal son of Ebed and his relatives are coming to Shechem, and they are stirring up the city against you. ³² Now, get up during the night, you and the soldiers with you, and prepare an ambush in the fields. ³³ Then in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, rise early and make a raid on the city. When he and the people with him come out against you, do whatever you can to

them."

³⁴ So Abimelech got up during the night, he and all the men who were with him, and they set an ambush against Shechem—dividing into four units. ³⁵ Gaal son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance of the city gate. Abimelech and the men who were with him came out of their hiding place. ³⁶ When Gaal saw the men, he said to Zebul, "See, men are coming down from the hilltops!" Zebul said to him, "You are seeing the shadows on the hills like they are men." ³⁷ Gaal spoke again and said, "Look, men are coming down in the middle of the land, and one unit is coming by way of the oak of the diviners." ³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, "Where are your proud words now, you who said, 'Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?' Are these not the men you despised? Go out now and fight against them." ³⁹ Gaal went out and he was leading the men of Shechem, and he fought Abimelech. ⁴⁰ Abimelech chased him, and Gaal fled before him. Many fell with deadly wounds before the entrance to the city gate.

⁴¹ Abimelech stayed in Arumah. Zebul forced Gaal and his relatives out of Shechem. ⁴² On the next day the people of Shechem went out into the field, and this was reported to Abimelech. ⁴³ He took his people, divided them into three units, and they set an ambush in the fields. He looked and saw the people coming out from the city and he attacked and killed them. ⁴⁴ Abimelech and the units that were with him attacked and blocked the entrance to the city gate. The other two units attacked all who were in the field and killed them. ⁴⁵ Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city, and killed the people who were in it. He tore down the city walls and spread salt over it.

⁴⁶ When all the leaders of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the stronghold of the house of El Berith. ⁴⁷ Abimelech was told that all the leaders had gathered together at the tower of Shechem. ⁴⁸ Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the men who were with him. Abimelech took an ax and cut off branches. He put it on his shoulder and ordered the men with him, "What you have seen me do, hurry and do as I have done." ⁴⁹ So every one cut off branches and followed Abimelech. They piled them against the wall of the tower, and they set it on fire, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women.

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and captured it. ⁵¹ But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and women and all the leaders of the city fled to it and shut themselves in. Then they went up to the roof of the tower. ⁵² Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and he came up near to the door of the tower to burn it. ⁵³ But a woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and it cracked his skull. ⁵⁴ Then he called urgently to the young man who was his armor-bearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, so no one will say about me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his young man pierced him through, and he died. ⁵⁵ When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they went home. ⁵⁶ So God avenged the evil of Abimelech that he did to his father by murdering his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ God made all the evil of the men of Shechem turn back on their own heads and on them came the curse of Jotham son of Jerub Baal.

Chapter 10

¹ After Abimelech, Tola son of Puah son of Dodo, a man from Issachar who lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim, arose to deliver Israel. ² He judged Israel twenty-three years. He died and was buried in Shamir.

³ He was followed by Jair the Gileadite. He judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴ He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havvoth Jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. ⁵ Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

⁶ The people of Israel added to the evil they had done in the sight of Yahweh and worshiped the Baals, the Ashtoreths, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines. They abandoned Yahweh and no longer worshiped him. ⁷ Yahweh burned with anger toward Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites. ⁸ They crushed and oppressed the people of Israel that year, and for eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. ⁹ Then the Ammonites crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed.

¹⁰ Then the people of Israel called out to Yahweh, saying, "We have sinned against you, because we abandoned our God and worshiped the Baals." ¹¹ Yahweh said to the people of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, ¹² and also from the Sidonians? The Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you; you called out to me, and I delivered you from their power.

¹³ Yet you abandoned me again and worshiped other gods. Therefore, I will not keep adding to the times I deliver you. ¹⁴ Go and call out to the gods that you have worshiped. Let them rescue you when you have trouble.” ¹⁵ The people of Israel said to Yahweh, “We have sinned. Do to us whatever seems good to you. Only please, rescue us this day.” ¹⁶ They got rid of the foreign gods among them and they worshiped Yahweh. Then Yahweh could bear Israel’s misery no longer.

¹⁷ Then Ammonites gathered together and set up camp in Gilead. The Israelites came together and set up their camp at Mizpah. ¹⁸ The leaders of the people of Gilead said one to another, “Who is the man who will begin to fight the Ammonites? He will become the leader over all those who are living in Gilead.”

Chapter 11

¹ Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. Gilead was his father. ² Gilead’s wife also gave birth to his other sons. When his wife’s sons grew up, they forced Jephthah to leave the house and said to him, “You are not going to inherit anything from our family. You are the son of another woman.” ³ So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Lawless men joined Jephthah and they came and went with him.

⁴ Some days later, the people of Ammon made war against Israel. ⁵ When the people of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah back from the land of Tob. ⁶ They said to Jephthah, “Come and be our leader that we may fight with the people of Ammon.” ⁷ Jephthah said to the leaders of Gilead, “You hated me and forced me

to leave my father’s house. Why do you come to me now when you are in trouble?” ⁸ The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “That is why we are turning to you now; come with us and fight with the people of Ammon, and you will become the leader over all who live in Gilead.” ⁹ Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “If you bring me home again to fight against the people of Ammon, and if Yahweh gives us victory over them, I will be your leader.” ¹⁰ The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “May Yahweh be witness between us if we do not do as we say!” ¹¹ So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him leader and commander over them. When he was before Yahweh in Mizpah, Jephthah repeated all the promises he made.

¹² Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, saying, “What is this conflict between us? Why have you come with force to take our land?” ¹³ The king of the people of Ammon answered to the messengers of Jephthah, “Because when Israel came up out of Egypt, they seized my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, over to the Jordan. Now give back those lands in peace.” ¹⁴ Again Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, ¹⁵ and he said, “This is what Jephthah says: Israel did not take the land of Moab and the land of the people of Ammon, ¹⁶ but they came up from Egypt, and Israel went through the wilderness to the Sea of Reeds and on to Kadesh. ¹⁷ When Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, ‘Please let us pass through your land,’ the king of Edom would not listen. They also sent messengers to the king of Moab, but he refused. So Israel stayed at Kadesh. ¹⁸ Then they went through the wilderness and turned away from the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and they went along the east side of the land of Moab and they camped on the other side of the

Arnon. But they did not go into the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was Moab's border. ¹⁹ Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon; Israel said to him, 'Please, let us pass through your land to the place that is ours.' ²⁰ But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his army together and moved it to Jahaz, and there he fought against Israel. ²¹ Then Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel and they defeated them. So Israel took all the land of the Amorites who lived in that country. ²² They took over everything within the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, and from the wilderness to the Jordan. ²³ So then Yahweh, the God of Israel, has driven out the Amorites before his people Israel, and should you now take possession of their land? ²⁴ Will you not take over the land that Chemosh, your god, gives you? So whatever land Yahweh our God has given us, we will take over. ²⁵ Now are you really better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he dare to have an argument with Israel? Did he ever wage war against them? ²⁶ While Israel lived for three hundred years in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are along the banks of the Arnon—why then did you not take them back during that time? ²⁷ I have not done you wrong, but you are doing me wrong by attacking me. Yahweh, the judge, will decide today between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon." ²⁸ But the king of the people of Ammon rejected the warning Jephthah sent him.

²⁹ Then the Spirit of Yahweh came on Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed through to the people of Ammon.

³⁰ Jephthah made a vow to Yahweh and

said, "If you give me victory over the people of Ammon, ³¹ then whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the people of Ammon will belong to Yahweh, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering." ³² So Jephthah passed through to the people of Ammon to fight against them, and Yahweh gave him victory. ³³ He attacked them and caused a great slaughter from Aroer as far as Minnith—twenty cities—and to Abel Keramim. So the people of Ammon were put under the control of the people of Israel.

³⁴ Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah, and there his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. She was his only child, and besides her he had neither son nor daughter. ³⁵ As soon as he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Oh! My daughter! You have crushed me with sorrow, and you have become one who causes me pain! For I have made an oath to Yahweh, and I cannot turn back on my promise." ³⁶ She said to him, "My father, you have made a vow to Yahweh, do to me everything you promised, because Yahweh has taken vengeance for you against your enemies, the Ammonites." ³⁷ She said to her father, "Let this promise be kept for me. Leave me alone for two months, that I may leave and go down to the hills and grieve over my virginity, I and my companions." ³⁸ He said, "Go." He sent her away for two months. She left him, she and her companions, and they grieved her virginity in the hills. ³⁹ At the end of two months she returned to her father, who did with her according to the promise of the vow he had made. Now she had never slept with a man, and it became a custom in Israel ⁴⁰ that the daughters of Israel every year, for four days, would retell the story of the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

Chapter 12

¹ A call went out to the men of Ephraim; they passed through Zaphon and said to Jephthah, “Why did you pass through to fight against the people of Ammon and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down over you.” ² Jephthah said to them, “I and my people were in a great conflict with the people of Ammon. When I called you, you did not rescue me from them. ³ When I saw that you did not rescue me, I put my life in my own strength and passed through against the people of Ammon, and Yahweh gave me victory. Why have you come to fight against me today?” ⁴ Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and he fought against Ephraim. The men of Gilead attacked the men of Ephraim because they said, “You Gileadites are fugitives in Ephraim—in Ephraim and Manasseh.” ⁵ The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim. When any of the survivors of Ephraim said, “Let me go over the river,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” ⁶ then they would say to him, “Say: Shibboleth,” and if he said “Sibboleth” (for he could not pronounce the word correctly), the Gileadites would seize him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time.

⁷ Jephthah served as a judge over Israel for six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

⁸ After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem served as a judge over Israel. ⁹ He had thirty sons. He gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and he brought in thirty daughters of other men for his sons, from the outside. He judged Israel for seven years. ¹⁰ Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

¹¹ After him Elon the Zebulunite served as judge over Israel. He judged Israel for ten years. ¹² Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

¹³ After him, Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite served as a judge over Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons. They rode on seventy donkeys, and he judged Israel for eight years. ¹⁵ Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Chapter 13

¹ The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and he gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

² There was a man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was not able to become pregnant and so she had not given birth. ³ The angel of Yahweh appeared to the woman and said to her, “See now, you have been unable to become pregnant, and you have not given birth, but you will become pregnant and you will give birth to a son. ⁴ Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, and do not eat anything unclean.

⁵ Look, you will become pregnant and give birth to a son. No razor will be used upon his head, for the child will be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he will begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” ⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel of God, very terrible. I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. ⁷ He said to me, ‘Look! You will become pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. So then drink no wine

or strong drink, and do not eat any food that the law declares to be unclean, because the child will be a Nazirite to God from the time he is in your womb until the day of his death.”

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh and said, “Oh, Lord, please let the man of God you sent come again to us so that he may teach us what we are to do for the child who soon will be born.” ⁹ God answered Manoah’s prayer, and the angel of God came to the woman again when she was sitting in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her. ¹⁰ So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Look! The man has appeared to me—the one who came to me the other day!” ¹¹ Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, “Are you the man who spoke with my wife?” The man said, “I am.” ¹² So Manoah said, “Now may your words come true. What will be the rules for the child, and what will be his work?” ¹³ The angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, “She must carefully do everything that I said to her. ¹⁴ She may not eat anything that comes from the vines, and do not let her drink wine or strong drink; do not let her eat any food that the law declares to be unclean. She should obey everything I commanded her to do.”

¹⁵ Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, “Please stay for a while, to give us time to prepare a young goat for you.” ¹⁶ The angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, “Even if I stay, I will not eat your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to Yahweh.” (Manoah did not know that he was the angel of Yahweh.) ¹⁷ Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, “What is your name, so we may honor you when your words come true?” ¹⁸ The angel of Yahweh said to him, “Why do you ask my name? It is wonderful!” ¹⁹ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and of-

fered them on the rock to Yahweh. He did something marvelous while Manoah and his wife were watching. ²⁰ When the flame went up from the altar toward the sky, the angel of Yahweh went up in the flame of the altar. Manoah and his wife saw this and lay facedown on the ground.

²¹ The angel of Yahweh did not appear again to Manoah or his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of Yahweh. ²² Manoah said to his wife, “We are sure to die, because we have seen God!” ²³ But his wife said to him, “If Yahweh wanted to kill us, he would not have received the burnt offering and the grain offering we gave him. He would not have shown us all these things, nor at this time would he have let us hear such things.” ²⁴ Later the woman gave birth to a son, and called his name Samson. The child grew up and Yahweh blessed him. ²⁵ Yahweh’s Spirit began to stir him in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Chapter 14

¹ Samson went down to Timnah, and there he saw a woman, one of the daughters of the Philistines. ² When he returned, he told his father and mother, “I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines. Now get her for me to be my wife.” ³ His father and mother said to him, “Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people? Are you going to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for when I look at her, she pleases me.” ⁴ But his father and his mother did not know that this matter came from Yahweh, for he desired to create a conflict with the Philistines (for at that time the Philistines were ruling Israel).

⁵ Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and his mother, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And, look, there one of the young lions came up and was roaring at him. ⁶ Yahweh's Spirit suddenly came on him, and he tore the lion apart as easily as he would have torn apart a small goat, and he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. ⁷ He went and spoke with the woman, and when he looked at her, she pleased Samson. ⁸ A few days later when he returned to marry her, he turned aside to look for the carcass of the lion. And, look, there was a swarm of bees and honey in what was left of the lion's body. ⁹ He scraped up the honey in his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and his mother, he gave some to them, and they ate. But he did not tell them he had taken the honey out of what was left of the lion's body.

¹⁰ Samson's father went down to where the woman was, and Samson gave a feast there, for this was the custom of the young men. ¹¹ As soon as her relatives saw him, they brought him thirty of their friends to be with him. ¹² Samson said to them, "Let me now tell you a riddle. If one of you can find it out and tell me the answer during the seven days of the feast, I will give out thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes. ¹³ But if you cannot tell me the answer, then you will give me thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes." They said to him, "Tell us your riddle, so we may hear it." ¹⁴ He said to them,

"Out of the eater was something to eat;
out of the strong was something sweet."

But his guests could not find the answer in three days.

¹⁵ On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Trick your husband so that he may

tell us the answer to the riddle, or we will burn up you and your father's house. Did you invite us here in order to make us poor?" ¹⁶ Samson's wife started to weep in front of him; she said, "All you do is hate me! You do not love me. You have told a riddle to some of my people, but you have not told me the answer." Samson said to her, "Look here, if I have not told my father or my mother, should I tell you?" ¹⁷ She cried during the seven days that their feast lasted. On the seventh day he told her the answer because she pressured him very much. She told the answer to the relatives of her people. ¹⁸ Before the sun went down on the seventh day the men of the city said to him,

"What is sweeter than honey?

What is stronger than a lion?"

Samson said to them,

"If you had not plowed with my heifer,
you would not have found the answer
to my riddle."

¹⁹ Then Yahweh's Spirit suddenly came on Samson with power. Samson went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men. He took their plunder, and he gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he went up to his father's house. ²⁰ Samson's wife was given to his best friend.

Chapter 15

¹ After some days, during the time of wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat and went to visit his wife. He said to himself, "I will go to my wife's room." But her father would not allow him to go in.

² Her father said, "I really thought you hated her, so I gave her to your friend. Her younger sister is more beautiful than she

is, is she not? Take her instead.”³ Samson said to them, “This time I will be innocent in regard to the Philistines when I hurt them.”⁴ Samson went and caught three hundred foxes and he tied together each pair, tail to tail. Then he took torches and tied them in the middle of each pair of tails.⁵ When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and they set fire to both the stacked grain and the grain standing in the field, along with the vineyards and the olive orchards.⁶ The Philistines asked, “Who did this?” They were told, “Samson, the Timnite’s son-in-law, did this because the Timnite took Samson’s wife and gave her to his friend.” Then the Philistines went and burned up her and her father.⁷ Samson said to them, “If this is what you do, I will get my revenge against you, and after that is done, I will stop.”⁸ Then he cut them to pieces, hip and thigh, with a great slaughter. Then he went down and lived in a cave in the cliff of Etam.

⁹ Then the Philistines came up and they prepared for battle in Judah and set up their army in Lehi.¹⁰ The men of Judah said, “Why have you come up to attack us?” They said, “We are attacking so we may capture Samson, and do to him as he has done to us.”¹¹ Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cave in the cliff of Etam, and they said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this you have done to us?” Samson said to them, “They did to me, and so I have done to them.”¹² They said to Samson, “We have come down to tie you up and give you into the hands of the Philistines.” Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves.”¹³ They said to him, “No, we will only tie you with ropes and hand you over to them. We promise we will not kill you.” Then they tied him up with two

new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting as they met him. Then Yahweh’s Spirit came on him with power. The ropes on his arms became like burnt flax, and they fell off his hands.¹⁵ Samson found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and he picked it up and killed a thousand men with it.¹⁶ Samson said,

”With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps,

with the jawbone of a donkey I have killed a thousand men.”

¹⁷ When Samson finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone, and he called the place Ramath Lehi.¹⁸ Samson was very thirsty and called on Yahweh and said, “You have given this great victory to your servant. But now will I die of thirst and fall into the hands of those who are uncircumcised?”¹⁹ God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi and water came out. When he drank, his strength returned and he revived. So he called the name of that place En Hakkore, and it is at Lehi to this day.²⁰ Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years.

Chapter 16

¹ Samson went to Gaza and saw a prostitute there, and he went to bed with her.² The Gazites were told, “Samson has come here.” The Gazites surrounded the place and in secret, they waited for him all night at the city gate. They kept silent all night. They had said, “Let us wait until daylight, and then let us kill him.”³ Samson lay in bed until midnight. At midnight he got up and he took hold of the city gate and its two posts. He pulled them up out of the

ground, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the hill, in front of Hebron.

⁴ After this, Samson came to love a woman who lived in the Valley of Sorek. Her name was Delilah. ⁵ The rulers of the Philistines came up to her, and said to her, “Trick Samson to see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him in order to humiliate him. Do this, and each one of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver.” ⁶ Then Delilah said to Samson, “Please, tell me how is it that you are so strong, and how could anyone bind you, so you might be controlled?” ⁷ Samson said to her, “If they tie me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I will become weak and be like any other man.” ⁸ Then the rulers of the Philistines brought up to Delilah seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied Samson up with them. ⁹ Now she had men hiding in secret, staying in her inner room. She said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he broke the bowstrings like a thread of yarn when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

¹⁰ Then Delilah said to Samson, “This is how you have deceived me and told me lies. Please, tell me how you can be overpowered.” ¹¹ He said to her, “If they tie me up with new ropes which have never been used for work, I will become weak and like any other man.” ¹² So Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them, and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” The men lying in wait were in the inner room. But Samson tore off the ropes from his arms like they were a piece of thread.

¹³ Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have deceived me and told me lies. Tell me how you may be overpowered.” Sam-

son said to her, “If you weave seven locks of my hair into a fabric on a loom, and then nail that to the loom, I will be like any other man.” ¹⁴ While he slept, Delilah wove seven locks of his hair into the fabric on the loom and nailed it to the loom, and she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” He woke from his sleep and he pulled out the fabric and the pin from the loom.

¹⁵ She said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you do not share your secrets with me? You have mocked me these three times and have not told me how you have such great strength.” ¹⁶ Every day she pressed him hard with her words, and she pressured him so much that he wished he would die. ¹⁷ So Samson told her everything and said to her, “I have never had a razor cut the hair on my head, for I have been a Nazirite for God from my mother’s womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like every other man.”

¹⁸ When Delilah saw that he had told her the truth about everything, she sent and called for the rulers of the Philistines, saying, “Come up again, for he has told me everything.” Then the rulers of the Philistines went up to her, bringing the silver in their hands. ¹⁹ She had him fall asleep in her lap. She called for a man to shave off the seven locks of his head, and she began to subdue him, for his strength had left him. ²⁰ She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” He woke up out of his sleep and said, “I will get out like the other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that Yahweh had left him. ²¹ The Philistines captured him and put out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. He turned the millstone at the prison house. ²² But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

Chapter 17

²³ The rulers of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. They said, “Our god has conquered Samson, our enemy, and put him in our grasp.” ²⁴ When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, “Our god has conquered our enemy and given him to us—the destroyer of our country, who killed many of us.” ²⁵ When they were celebrating, they said, “Call for Samson, that he may make us laugh.” They called for Samson out of the prison and he made them laugh. They made him stand between the pillars. ²⁶ Samson said to the boy who held his hand, “Permit me to touch the pillars on which the building rests, so that I can lean against them.” ²⁷ Now the house was full of men and women. All the rulers of the Philistines were there. There were on the roof about three thousand men and women, who were looking on while Samson was entertaining them.

²⁸ Samson called to Yahweh and said, “Lord Yahweh, call me to mind! Please strengthen me only this once, God, so that I may have revenge in one blow on the Philistines for taking my two eyes.” ²⁹ Samson held on to the two middle pillars on which the building rested, and he leaned against them, one pillar with his right hand, and the other with his left. ³⁰ Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” He stretched out with his strength and the building fell on the rulers and on all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed when he died were more than those he killed during his life. ³¹ Then his brothers and all the house of his father came down. They took him, brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burial place of Manoah, his father. Samson had judged Israel for twenty years.

¹ There was a man in the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Micah. ² He said to his mother, “The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you spoke a curse, and which I heard—look here! I have the silver with me. I stole it.” His mother said, “May Yahweh bless you, my son!” ³ He restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother and his mother said, “I set apart this silver to Yahweh, for my son to make carved and cast metal figures. So now, I restore it to you.” ⁴ When he restored the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave them to a metal worker who made them into carved and cast metal figures, and they were placed in the house of Micah. ⁵ The man Micah had a house of idols and he made an ephod and household gods, and he hired one of his sons to become his priest. ⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

⁷ Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite. He stayed there to fulfill his duties. ⁸ The man left Bethlehem in Judah to go and find a place to live. As he journeyed, he came to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim. ⁹ Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?” The man said to him, “I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am traveling to find a place where I might live.” ¹⁰ Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest. I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and your food.” So the Levite went into his house. ¹¹ The Levite was content to live with the man, and the young man became to Micah like one of his sons. ¹² Micah set apart the Levite for sacred duties, and the young

man became his priest, and was in Micah's house. ¹³ Then Micah said, "Now I know that Yahweh will do good for me, because this Levite has become my priest."

Chapter 18

¹ In those days there was no king in Israel. The tribe of the descendants of Dan was looking for a territory to live in, for up to that day they had not received any inheritance from among the tribes of Israel. ² The people of Dan sent five men from the whole number of their tribe, men who were experienced warriors from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to scout the land on foot, and to look it over. They said to them, "Go and look over the land." They came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and they spent the night there. ³ When they were near Micah's house, they recognized the speech of the young Levite. So they stopped and asked him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? Why are you here?" ⁴ He said to them, "This is what Micah has done for me: He has hired me to become his priest." ⁵ They said to him, "Please seek the advice of God, so we may know whether the journey we are going on will be successful." ⁶ The priest said to them, "Go in peace. Yahweh will lead you in the way you should go."

⁷ Then the five men left and came to Laish, and they saw that the people were living in safety, in the same way the Sidonians lived, undisturbed and secure. There was no one who conquered them or who oppressed them in any way in the land. They lived far away from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone. ⁸ They returned to their tribe in Zorah and Eshtaol. Their relatives asked them, "What is your report?" ⁹ They said, "Come! Let us attack

them! We have seen the land and it is very good. Are you doing nothing? Do not be slow to attack and conquer the land. ¹⁰ When you go, you will come to a people who think they are secure, and the land is wide! God has given it to you—a place that does not lack anything in the land."

¹¹ Six hundred men of the tribe of Dan, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol. ¹² They went up and camped at Kiriath Jearim, in Judah. This is why people called that place Mahaneh Dan to this day; it is west of Kiriath Jearim. ¹³ They went away from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

¹⁴ Then the five men who had gone to scout the country of Laish said to their relatives, "Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod, household gods, a carved figure, and a cast metal figure? Decide now what you will do." ¹⁵ So they turned in there and came to the house of the young Levite, at the house of Micah, and they greeted him. ¹⁶ Now the six hundred Danites, armed with weapons of war, stood at the entrance of the gate. ¹⁷ The five men who had gone to scout out the land went there and they took the carved figure, the ephod, the household gods, and the cast metal figure, while the priest stood by the opening of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war. ¹⁸ When these went into Micah's house and took the carved figure, the ephod, the household gods, and the cast metal figure, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" ¹⁹ They said to him, "Be quiet! Put your hand on your mouth and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest for the house of one man, or to be priest for a tribe and a clan in Israel?" ²⁰ The priest's heart was glad. He took the ephod, the household gods, and

the carved figure, and went along with the people.

²¹ So they turned and went away. They put the small children in front of themselves, as well as the cattle and their possessions. ²² When they were a good distance from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house were called together, and they caught up with the Danites. ²³ They shouted to the Danites, and they turned and said to Micah, "Why have you been called together?" ²⁴ He said, "You stole the gods that I made, you have taken my priest, and you are leaving. What else do I have left? How can you ask me, 'What is bothering you?'" ²⁵ The people of Dan said to him, "You should not let us hear you say anything, or some very angry men will attack you, and you and your family will be killed." ²⁶ Then the people of Dan went their way. When Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

²⁷ The people of Dan took what Micah had made, as well as his priest, and they came to Laish, to a people who were undisturbed and secure and they killed them with the sword and burned the city. ²⁸ There was no one to rescue them because it was a long way from Sidon, and they had no dealings with anyone. It was in the valley that is near Beth Rehob. The Danites rebuilt the city and lived there. ²⁹ They named the city Dan, the name of Dan their ancestor, who was one of Israel's sons. But the name of the city used to be Laish. ³⁰ The people of Dan set up the carved figure for themselves. Jonathan son of Gershom, son of Moses, he and his sons were priests for the tribe of the Danites until the day of the land's captivity. ³¹ So they worshiped Micah's carved figure that he made as long as the house of God was at Shiloh.

Chapter 19

¹ In those days, when there was no king in Israel, there was a man, a Levite, living for a while in the most remote area of the hill country of Ephraim. He took for himself a woman, a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. ² But his concubine was unfaithful to him; she left him and went back to her father's house in Bethlehem of Judah. She stayed there for four months. ³ Then her husband got up and went after her in order to persuade her to come back. His servant was with him, and a pair of donkeys. She brought him into her father's house. When the girl's father saw him, he was glad. ⁴ His father-in-law, the girl's father, persuaded him to stay for three days. They ate and drank, and they spent the night there. ⁵ On the fourth day they got up early and he prepared to go, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Strengthen yourself with a bit of bread, then you may go." ⁶ So the two of them sat down to eat and drink together. Then the girl's father said, "Please be willing to spend the night and have a good time." ⁷ When the Levite got up to leave, the father of the young woman urged him to stay, so he changed his plan and spent the night there again. ⁸ On the fifth day he woke up early to leave, but the girl's father said, "Strengthen yourself, and wait until the afternoon." So the two of them had a meal. ⁹ When the Levite and his concubine and his servant rose up to depart, his father-in-law, the girl's father said to him, "See, now the day is advancing toward evening. Please stay another night, and have a good time. You can get up early tomorrow and go back home."

¹⁰ But the Levite was not willing to spend the night. He got up and left. He went toward Jebus (that is Jerusalem). He had a pair of saddled donkeys—and his concu-

bine was with him. ¹¹ When they were near Jebus, the day was nearly over, and the servant said to his master, "Come, let us turn aside to the city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it." ¹² His master said to him, "We will not turn aside into a city of foreigners who do not belong to the people of Israel. We will go on to Gibeah." ¹³ The Levite said to his young man, "Come, let us go to one of those other places, and spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah." ¹⁴ So they went on, and the sun set as they came near to Gibeah, in the territory of Benjamin. ¹⁵ They turned aside there to spend the night in Gibeah. They went and sat down in the city square, but no one took them into his house for the night.

¹⁶ But then an old man was coming from his work in the field that evening. He was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was staying for a while in Gibeah. But the men living in that place were Benjamites. ¹⁷ He raised his eyes and saw the traveler in the city square. The old man said, "Where are you going? Where are you coming from?" ¹⁸ The Levite said to him, "We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to the most remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, which is where I come from. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to the house of Yahweh, but there is no one who will take me into his house. ¹⁹ We have straw and feed for our donkeys, and there is bread and wine for me and your female servant here, and for this young man with your servants. We lack nothing." ²⁰ The old man greeted them, "Peace be with you! I will take care of all your needs. Only do not spend the night in the square." ²¹ So the man brought the Levite into his house and gave feed to the donkeys. They washed their feet and ate and drank.

²² While they were making their hearts

glad, some men of the city, worthless men, surrounded the house, beating on the door. They spoke to the old man, the master of the house, saying, "Bring out the man who came into your house, so we can have sex with him." ²³ The man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, please do not do this evil thing! Since this man is a guest in my house, do not do this wicked thing! ²⁴ See, my virgin daughter and his concubine are here. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them whatever you like. But do not do such a wicked thing to this man!" ²⁵ But the men would not listen to him, so the man seized his concubine and brought her out to them. They seized her, raped her, and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. ²⁶ At dawn the woman came and she fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, and she lay there until it was light.

²⁷ Her master rose up in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way. He could see his concubine lying there at the door, with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ The Levite said to her, "Get up. Let us go." But there was no answer. He put her on the donkey, and the man set out for home. ²⁹ When the Levite came to his house, he took a knife, and he took hold of his concubine, and cut her up, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent the pieces everywhere throughout Israel. ³⁰ All who saw this said, "Such a thing has never been done or seen from the day the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt to this present day. Think about it! Give us advice! Tell us what to do!"

Chapter 20

¹ Then all the people of Israel came out as

one man, from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead also, and they assembled together before Yahweh at Mizpah. ² The leaders of all the people, of all the tribes of Israel, took their places in the assembly of the people of God—400,000 men on foot, who were ready to fight with the sword. ³ Now the people of Benjamin heard that the people of Israel had gone up to Mizpah. The people of Israel said, “Tell us how this wicked thing happened.” ⁴ The Levite, the husband of the woman who had been murdered, answered, “I came to Gibeah in the territory that belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. ⁵ During the night, the leaders of Gibeah attacked me, surrounding the house and intending to kill me. They seized and raped my concubine, and she died. ⁶ I took my concubine and cut her body into pieces, and sent them into each region of Israel’s inheritance, because they have committed such wickedness and outrage in Israel. ⁷ Now, all you Israelites, give your advice and counsel here.”

⁸ All the people arose together as one man, and they said, “None of us will go to his tent, and none of us will return to his house! ⁹ But now this is what we must do to Gibeah: we will attack it as the lot directs us. ¹⁰ We will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and one hundred of a thousand, and one thousand of ten thousand, to get provisions for these people, so that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may punish them for the wickedness they committed in Israel.” ¹¹ So all the soldiers of Israel assembled against the city, as one man.

¹² The tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this wickedness that was done among you? ¹³ Therefore, give us those wicked

men of Gibeah, so we may put them to death, and so we will completely remove this evil from Israel.” But the Benjamites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the people of Israel. ¹⁴ Then the people of Benjamin came together out of the cities to Gibeah to get ready to fight against the people of Israel. ¹⁵ The people of Benjamin brought together from their cities to fight on that day twenty-six thousand soldiers who were trained to fight with the sword. In addition, there were seven hundred of their chosen men from the inhabitants of Gibeah. ¹⁶ Among all these soldiers were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed. Each of them could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

¹⁷ The people of Israel, not counting the number from Benjamin, numbered 400,000 men, who were trained to fight with the sword. All of these were men of war. ¹⁸ The people of Israel arose, went up to Bethel, and asked for advice from God. They asked, “Who first will attack the people of Benjamin for us?” Yahweh said, “Judah will attack first.”

¹⁹ The people of Israel got up in the morning and they moved their camp near Gibeah. ²⁰ The people of Israel went out to fight against Benjamin. They set up their battle positions against them at Gibeah. ²¹ The people of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and they killed twenty-two thousand men of the army of Israel on that day. ²² But the people of Israel strengthened themselves and they formed the battle line in the same place where they had taken positions on the first day. ²³ Then the people of Israel went up and they wept before Yahweh until evening, and they sought direction from Yahweh. They said, “Should we go again to fight against our brothers, the people of Benjamin?” Yahweh said, “Attack them!”

²⁴ So the people of Israel went against the

soldiers of Benjamin the second day. ²⁵ On the second day, Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah and they killed eighteen thousand men from the people of Israel. All were men who trained to fight with the sword. ²⁶ Then all the soldiers of Israel and all the people went up to Bethel and wept, and there they sat before Yahweh and they fasted that day until the evening and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh. ²⁷ The people of Israel asked Yahweh—for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸ and Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron, was serving before the ark in those days—“Should we go out to battle once more against the people of Benjamin, our brothers, or stop?” Yahweh said, “Attack, for tomorrow I will help you defeat them.”

²⁹ So Israel set men in secret places around Gibeah. ³⁰ The people of Israel fought against the people of Benjamin for the third day, and they formed their battle lines against Gibeah as they had done before. ³¹ The people of Benjamin went and fought against the people, and they were drawn away from the city. They began to kill some of the people. There were about thirty men of Israel who died in the fields and on the roads. One of the roads went up to Bethel, and the other went to Gibeah. ³² Then the people of Benjamin said, “They are defeated and they are running away from us, just as at first.” But the soldiers of Israel said, “Let us run back and draw them away from the city to the roads.” ³³ All the people of Israel rose up out of their places and formed themselves into lines for battle at Baal Tamar. Then the soldiers of Israel who had been hiding in secret places ran out from their places from Maareh Gibeah. ³⁴ There came out against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the fighting was fierce, but the Benjamites did not know

that disaster was close to them. ³⁵ Yahweh defeated Benjamin before Israel. On that day, the soldiers of Israel killed 25,100 men of Benjamin. All these who died were those who had been trained to fight with the sword.

³⁶ So the soldiers of Benjamin saw they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to Benjamin, because they were counting on the men they had placed in hidden positions outside Gibeah. ³⁷ Then the men who were hiding got up and hurried and they rushed into Gibeah, and with their swords they killed everyone who lived in the city. ³⁸ The arranged signal between the soldiers of Israel and the men hiding in secret would be that a great cloud of smoke would rise up out of the city. ³⁹ When the signal was sent the soldiers of Israel would turn from the battle. Now Benjamin began to attack and they killed about thirty men of Israel, and they said, “It is sure that they are defeated before us, as in the first battle.” ⁴⁰ But when a pillar of smoke began to rise up out of the city, the Benjamites turned and saw the smoke rising to the sky from the whole city. ⁴¹ Then the people of Israel turned against them. The men of Benjamin were terrified, for they saw that disaster had come on them. ⁴² So they ran away from the people of Israel, escaping on the way to the wilderness. But the fighting overtook them. The soldiers of Israel came out of the cities and killed them where they stood. ⁴³ They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them and trampled them down at Nohah, all the way to the east side of Gibeah. ⁴⁴ From the tribe of Benjamin, eighteen thousand people died, all of them men who were distinguished in battle. ⁴⁵ They turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon. The Israelites killed five thousand more of them along the roads. They kept going after them, following them closely all the way to Gidom,

and there they killed two thousand more. ⁴⁶ All the soldiers of Benjamin who fell that day were twenty-five thousand—men who were trained to fight with the sword; all of them were distinguished in battle. ⁴⁷ But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness, toward the rock of Rimmon. For four months they stayed at the rock of Rimmon. ⁴⁸ The soldiers of Israel turned back against the people of Benjamin and attacked and killed them—the entire city, the cattle, and everything that they found. They also burned down every town in their path.

Chapter 21

¹ Now the men of Israel had made a promise at Mizpah, “None of us will give his daughter to marry a Benjamite.” ² Then the people went to Bethel and sat there before God until the evening, and with loud voices they wept bitterly. ³ They called out, “Why, Yahweh, God of Israel, has this happened to Israel, that one of our tribes should be missing today?” ⁴ The next day the people got up early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. ⁵ The people of Israel said, “Which of all the tribes of Israel did not come up in the assembly to Yahweh?” For they had made an important promise concerning anyone who did not come up to Yahweh at Mizpah. They said, “He would certainly be put to death.” ⁶ The people of Israel had compassion for their brother Benjamin. They said, “Today one tribe has been cut off from Israel. ⁷ Who will provide wives for those who are left, since we have made a promise to Yahweh that we will not let any of them marry our daughters?”

⁸ They said, “Which of the tribes of Israel did not come up to Yahweh at Mizpah?”

It was found that no one had come to the assembly from Jabesh Gilead. ⁹ For when the people were set out in an orderly manner, behold, none of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were there. ¹⁰ The assembly sent twelve thousand of their bravest men with instructions to go to Jabesh Gilead and attack them, and kill them, even the women and children. ¹¹ “Do this: you must kill every male and every woman who has slept with a man.” ¹² The men found among those living in Jabesh Gilead four hundred young women who had never slept with a man, and they took them to the camp at Shiloh, in Canaan.

¹³ The entire assembly sent a message and told the people of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon that they were offering them peace. ¹⁴ The Benjamites returned at that time and they were given the women of Jabesh Gilead, but there were not enough women for all of them. ¹⁵ The people were sorry for what happened to Benjamin, because Yahweh made a division between the tribes of Israel.

¹⁶ Then the leaders of the assembly said, “How will we arrange wives for the Benjamites who are left, since the women of Benjamin have been killed?” ¹⁷ They said, “There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, so that a tribe is not destroyed from Israel. ¹⁸ We cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the people of Israel had made a promise, ‘Cursed be anyone who gives a wife to Benjamin.’” ¹⁹ So they said, “You know there is a feast for Yahweh every year at Shiloh (which is north of Bethel, east of the road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah).” ²⁰ They instructed the men of Benjamin, saying, “Go and hide in secret and wait in the vineyards. ²¹ Watch for the time when the girls from Shiloh come out to dance, then rush out of the vineyards and each one of you should

grab a wife from the girls of Shiloh, then go back to the land of Benjamin. ²² When their fathers or their brothers come to protest to us, we will say to them, ‘Show us favor! Let them remain because we did not get wives for each man during the war. You are innocent, since you did not give your daughters to them.’” ²³ The people of Benjamin did so. They took the number of wives that they needed from the girls who were dancing and they carried them off to be their wives. They went and returned to the place of their inheritance. They rebuilt the towns and lived in them. ²⁴ Then the people of Israel left that place and went home, each one to his own tribe and clan, and each one to his own inheritance. ²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.