

# Judges

**The First 300 Years in the Promised Land** (*Halley's Bible Handbook*)  
- or - **The Monotony and Misery of Sin** (*Unger's Bible Handbook*)

<u>Oppressions by:</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Judge</u>	<u>Length of Rest</u>
Mesopotamians	8 years	Othniel	40 Years
Moabites Ammonites Amalekites	18 years	Ehud	80 Years
Philistines Canaanites	20 Years	Shamgar Deborah	40 Years
Midianites Amalekites	7 Years	Gideon, Abimelech Tola, Jair	88 Years
Ammonites	18 Years	Jephthah, Ibzan Elon, Abdon	31 Years
Philistines	40 Years	Samson	20 Years

*Taken from Halley's Bible Handbook 1965*

It has been said that the key verse for this book should be Judges 17:6 "*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit*" (NIV). As you study this book you will see repeated apostasy and deliverance. Israel begins a downward spiral from the victorious days of Moses and Joshua. Those were days of strong leadership and amazing Godly wisdom. This period serves as a stark contrast to those glorious early days, Israel begins to lose her distinctiveness, becoming ever more like the Canaanite nations surrounding her.

As you study this book, and enjoy reviewing these early days in the history of the Chosen People of God, don't be content with thinking that these awful events could not happen in our day. Instead, search your heart for signs of apostasy and drifting from fundamentals. Learn from their mistakes, because they have been provided to each of us for an example.

*Each of the following studies has many questions. Expect your Bible Study leader to focus on certain questions, while occasionally missing other questions.*

## Study I - Othniel & Ehud

*The story of declension is told in 3:5-7: compromise, intermarriage with idolaters, finally idolatry itself, serving the gods and goddesses of the Canaanites - Baals and Asherahs - worshipping the various images of the deities - Unger's Bible Handbook*

*Othniel, the hour of God - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible*

*Ehud, he that praises*

### **Read - Judges 3:1-11; Judges 3:12-29, Judges 1:12-15**

- Why were these two men chosen to be judges? Compare them and their tactics. Are there lessons we can learn about serving God?
- Would you have thought that the reason given in 3:2 was really God's first intent as a lesson for Israel to learn? According to other passages what did God want Israel to do with the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Explain (if you can) how we may experience suffering and hardship due to our disobedience and somehow God works even this, to our good.
- Note vs. 10 "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him". Why Othneil and not Ehud?
- Israel seems to forget God's blessings (usually within a generation). The reaction to Israel's sin is direct and damaging to them. Is there a similar significant reaction from God to our sin? How should this knowledge challenge you as you deal with teaching your children and your grandchildren (nephews, nieces) about the Lord?
- Othneil, Ehud & all the other Judges, to a small extent foreshadow Jesus Christ (refer to 3:15). In which ways would you agree and disagree with this statement.
- What is involved in "Crying out to the Lord"? What occasions in our church or personal life might prompt this?
- In other passages of scripture we are told to pay taxes and pray for our government. Discuss when you think that it may be necessary for a people to rebel.
- Describe the difference between Othneil's and Ehud's approach to their task. Are physical attacks ever justified today?
- Consider Ehud's left handedness (3:15) Why is this trait mentioned? How does your church use people with "unique" traits?
- What spiritual lessons can we draw from this passage?

## Study II - Deborah & Barak

*“... Deborah, the saviour of her people and the only woman in the distinguished company of the judges. In the tribal structure of Israel women normally occupied a subordinate position, but they could and did on rare occasions rise to prominence and the Old Testament witness to prominent women like Miriam (Ex. 15:20) and Huldah (2 Ki.22:14). Nothing is known of Lappidoth, the husband of Deborah, apart from the mere mention of his name, but he was not the only one to be outshone...” Judges & Ruth - Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*

**Deborah**, word; thing; a bee - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible

**Barak**, thunder, or in vain

### Read Judges 4:1 - 5:31

- Draw a word picture of Deborah and Barak.
- Commander Sisera depended on the strength of his army for security. Israel was never to trust in it's military technology or military strength for security. What do you rely on and what does your assembly rely on in times of uncertainty?
- Deborah the wife of Lappidoth was leading Israel and presents us with some unique problems. It would seem from the majority of scriptural references that usually men are asked to lead. Are there times for women to exercise the gifts of leadership which they possess? Were there limitations on that leadership in Deborah's time? How about in ours? What scenario do you think occurred to induce Deborah to become a judge?
- In which ways did Deborah exhibit wise leadership?
- It seems clear that Deborah was God's messenger, what was Barak's response to the message? Try to explain his reaction.
- Discuss how Deborah, Barak and Jael demonstrated faith. What did each of these people rely on?
- What lessons can we learn from this passage? What can be learned by Deborah's reaction (v. 9 ) to Barak's reluctance? What did God think? Does reluctance to respond positively to God's call today also result in lack of blessing? How does God deal with our failures and our lack of faith and willingness to serve Him? Do you ever see a lack of willingness to serve in your local assembly? How would that lack be experienced? How would you seek to change that attitude?
- Read the Song of Chap. 5, again: Are the opening words referring to what should be or what was? Describe conditions in Israel according to Vs. 6 - 9;
- Try to suggest a purpose for this song. Do any of our songs serve this purpose?

### Study III - Gideon (Study I)

*The Midianites, The Amalekites, and other peoples of the east were Bedouin raiders. These desert people overran the territory of Israel for seven years. Their use of camels enabled them to take waterless journeys of several days, which earlier nomads using donkeys were unable to do. - The New Unger's Bible Handbook (1984)*

**Gideon**, he that bruises or breaks; a destroyer - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible  
**Jerubbaal**, he that defends Baal, let Baal defend his cause

#### **Read Judges 6:1-39**

A common theme in the Judges is "Israel did evil" and "Israel cried unto the Lord". What caused this change in attitude? While we don't face a Midian invasion today, what methods does God use to change our sinning into supplication?

Why does God use a prophet here rather than the direct approach as in the previous occasions (6:7-10)? Ideally what ministries and what successes do prophets enjoy? Explain the introduction of the "Angel of the Lord"? Who is the Angel?

What was Gideon's reaction to the Angel's greeting and why? Can we learn anything about the Angel and Gideon from vs. 14 - 18? Why did the Angel of the Lord "toast" Gideon's gift? Why would Gideon feel led to make such a gift to a 'man'?

How difficult was the Angel's second command vs.25 - 26? Why was this the next step?

Is 'putting out fleece' a conclusive way to discern God's will? Have you tried to discern God's will by putting out some kind of fleece? What results did you observe?

Scientifically what was wrong with Gideon's original Fleece Test? - Is Gideon testing God... or God's will?

Do you see much in Gideon that seems to make him useful for God? Why did God choose him?

Explain why Gideon acted at night, was it fear? Have you ever been afraid about obeying God? What effect did Gideon's action have on his Family? Could this be an expected result from our obedience to the Lord's command about our family idols?

We usually don't want to think of our leaders as having a fear of Public Opinion. Why is Gideon actually an excellent role model for those who may be used of the Lord?

Read Deut 13:6-11. What is Israel told to do? What does the role reversal that we see in 6:30 indicate regarding Israel's spiritual state? What was the spiritual state of Gideon's family? Today, does God sometimes ask us to go against common beliefs and family values to serve Him? Give an example. Describe the condition in Israel in your own words.

#### Study IV - Gideon (Study II)

*Too many - For my purpose; which is, so to deliver Israel, that it may appear to be my own act, that so I may have all the glory, and they may be the more strongly obliged to serve me. This may help us to understand those providences, which sometimes seem to weaken the church of Christ. Its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by. God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be exalted in his own strength. - Wesley*

#### **Read Judges 7:1 - 8:35**

What affect would the arrival of the Midianites have had on local agriculture (see 6:3-6)?

Explain the purpose of the Lord's command in 7: 1 - 8 ? Does the number of the fearful compared to the willing surprise you? In any combat there is fear, why does God excuse the fearful?

What is the significance of the next step in selecting the army (*after the afraid ones left*)? What does this tell us about God? Is there a lesson in this for us? Are any excused from the Lord's battle today, if so why?

Why did God ask Gideon to use so few men? Why is this important to God? Is it *always* important to Him?

Why are the "lappers" chosen (those who weren't on their knees)? What does their position at the water's edge demonstrate?

Why do you think that God allows Gideon to overhear the soldiers (7:13,14)

Can you think of any reason for the elaborate plan of attack here compared with those considered so far? Is there a lesson about God to be learned by the whole affair?

Try to draw a word picture of Gideon, explaining his desire, fear, reluctance and actions.

How are we like him?

Does God still help us when we are afraid? How has He given you courage to move forward in spite of fear? How is faith strengthened in trying times? Discuss whether Gideon had to make the first step of faith before God helped him?

Gideon seems to have been provided with "on the job" training as a judge. Consider his response to Ephraim and his response at Succoth and Penuel.

Suggest reasons why Gideon made the Ephod. What were his motives?

What is God trying to teach Israel and us about Himself and ourselves in this record?

## Study V - Jephthah

*He has been described as "a wild, daring, Gilead mountaineer, a sort of warrior Elijah." After forty-five years of comparative quiet Israel again apostatized, and in "process of time the children of Ammon made war against Israel" (11:5). In their distress the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob, to which he had fled when driven out wrongfully by his brothers from his father's inheritance (2), and the people made him their head and captain. The "elders of Gilead" in their extremity summoned him to their aid, and he at once undertook the conduct of the war against Ammon. Twice he sent an embassy to the king of Ammon, but in vain. War was inevitable. The people obeyed his summons, and "the spirit of the Lord came upon him."*

**Jephthah** - whom God sets free, or the breaker through - Easton's Bible Dictionary

### Read Judges 10:6-12:7

- Once again, as in Judges 3: 8, we are told ‘ The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so He sold them’. What is implied by “ he sold them”. Is there a similarity between Chap. 10 and 3: 8?
- Compare 10:10, with 3:9, 3:15, 4:3, and 6:6, note the different response in 11-14, why? Read vs. 15 & 16, how is this second appeal different and why is it more effective?
- Does it matter how we ask God for help? Is there a special formula, or is how we ask less important than other things? What things?
- What factors influence God when he decides to choose a leader? What factors influence us in choosing our political leadership? What did the Gileadites think of Jephthah? If he was running for a combination “Political, Legal, Military & Religious” role today in our country, what factors would influence your support of him?
- Was the selection of Jephthah expediency or were the leaders directed by the Lord. If not, what verse in the passage suggests that the Lord was on His side? What does Jephthah’s “history lesson” tell us about him, what was the response. What value has history to us?
- How did Jephthah train as a military leader. How does he fare in your eyes as a diplomat (12:1-6)?
- Why did Jephthah make his vow? Was it a necessary part of his commission? What about vows, check some of the verses related to vowing. Is a Christian today wise to consider making a vow? Why or why not? Have you ever said something rashly, only to wish after the fact that you never opened your mouth? What do the Proverbs and James teach us about the use of the tongue? What does Proverbs teach us about making oaths?
- Consider his homecoming. Did God deliver Israel because of the vow or inspite of it? Whether the vow was right or wrong, what does the reaction of the daughter tell us about her?
- What’s up with Ephraim? They seem to always complain (after the fact) of missing important battles. How do you handle individuals who wish to be included after the work is done?
- Jephthah is considered an example of faith (see Hebrews 11:32). If you were the author of Hebrews would you have included Jephthah? Explain your rationale.

## Study VI - Samson (Study I)

*His parents had been long childless. Many eminent persons were born of such mothers. Mercies long waited for, often prove signal (Unique & Special - GJI) mercies; and by them others may be encouraged to continue their hope in God's mercy. The angel notices her affliction. God often sends comfort to his people very seasonably, when they feel their troubles most. This deliverer of Israel must be devoted to God. - Matthew Henry (1662 - 1714)*

**Manoah**, rest; a present - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible

**Samson**, his sun; his service; there the second time

### Read Judges 13:1-24

- Summarize the events that occur in this chapter.
- Describe Manoah's wife's feelings about her encounter with the Angel of the Lord? In other instances of infertility in the Bible (Abraham and Issac) the announcement about the birth came to the man, why do you think it is different here?
- Discuss the character traits of Manoah and his wife. Which spouse seems the mostly spiritually aware? Why do you think so? Try to describe Manoah. What was his main concern about the upcoming birth of a son? Compare Manoah's experience with Gideon's. What is similar and what is different?
- Discuss possible explanations of why God desired Samson to be so unique in scripture.
- Investigate the Nazarite vow Num. 6: 2 - 21. Does this prediction about Samson mean he had no choice in the matter?
- Are there other references to people being commissioned before they were born? How does this relate to freewill? How successful were your examples in fulfilling their commission?
- What place should prayers like vs.8 and vs.12 have in our family situations today?
- Note vs. 24, a successful conclusion to the prophesy. What do you think the statement "*The Lord blessed him and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him*". What does this mean?
- Consider going for over forty years without leadership. Why was strong leadership necessary in Israel (point to some cases when this was, and wasn't true). How important is strong leadership in our government and in our assembly?
- What key role(s) does a leader/judge play in the book of Judges?

## Study VII - Samson (Study II)

*"The marriage, which Samson believed himself to have contracted was of the ancient type in which the husband came only periodically to visit his wife, who continued to reside at her parents home. The kid apparently was a customary gift for sexual intimacy (Gen 38:17). The 300 foxes (jackals) with torches tied to their tails let loose in the grain and vineyards of the Philistines were apparently pure revenge, not led of the Spirit of God. Samson's trouble was of his own making, as contamination by Philistinism always is" - The New Unger's Bible Handbook (1984)*

**Timnath, image; figure; enumeration** - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible

### Read Judges 14:1 - 15:20

- From the present passage, Chap's 14-15, how would you describe Samson's approach to life and his predestined mission in Israel?
  
- What was correct and incorrect regarding Samson's desire for a wife? Consider the response of his parents and how he replied to them. What does this demonstrate of how Samson viewed his parents (Note 14:4,6,19)? Discuss Biblical injunctions which Samson should have considered regarding his wife and his parents.
  
- What is your reaction to the methods he used in overcoming the Philistines (Note 15:14, 18,19)? Could these sequence of statements be taken as proof of God's approval of his tactics. Is there some other explanation, as you notice Samson's actions seem to be personal, vengeful and reactive?
  
- Does Samson exemplify the life of a typical man of God? Defend your response by describing in which ways he did or didn't seem to meet the standard. Look back through what we have studied so far, note the great differences between the Judges, their call, qualifications, methods and successes, what can we learn from this about God's methods of accomplishing His work?
  
- Consider Samson's prayer in 15:18. From what you remember about prayer; classify his prayer in terms of normal components of healthy/ quality prayers.
  
- Review the various references to God: The Angel of the Lord, 6:11 - 12, 13: 3, 6, 9, etc., The Lord 6: 14, 15, 16, 19, etc., The Spirit of the Lord, 3: 10, 6: 34, 11: 29, 13: 25, etc., The Lord God of Israel, 4: 6, 6: 18, etc., The Angel of God, 6: 20, 22, 26, 36, etc. Why are these variety of titles used and what is to learned from them?
  
- Can you think of examples in the N.T. which illustrate God's working in such a variety of ways. Should we be looking for more uniformity? Can our battles for God be as personal as Samson's were, is their any place for vengeance?

### Study VIII - Samson (Study III)

*The Philistines were by this time held in such contempt by their victor that he went openly into the city of Gaza, where he seems to have suffered himself weakly to be drawn into the company of a woman of loose character, the yielding to whose enticements exposed him to the most imminent peril ... falling in love with a woman of Sorek, named Delilah, he became so infatuated by his passion that nothing but his bodily strength could equal his mental weakness.*

*-Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature M'Clintock & Strong (1880)*

*- **Delilah**, poor; small; head of hair, **Gaza**, strong; a goat, **Sorek**, vine; hissing; a color inclining to yellow - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible*

### Read Judges 16:1-31

- Review your comments about the Nazarite vow in Samson study 1 (Numbers 6:1-6), does Samson actually fulfill it with any sincerity? How would you explain the discrepancy? What commands does a Nazarite follow? Did Samson have any extra requirements?
- How would you describe Samson's attitude and relationship with women in his office as a Judge in Israel?
- What is Samson's relationship with Delilah? Why do you believe he continues his association with her in spite of her scheming (you may wish to consider Prov.16:18)?
- Note, 16:21-31, what were the results of his betraying his secret to Delilah?
- Samson prays again in 16:28. Discuss how this prayer compares to his prayer in 15:18. God responds to simple prayers (*remember me*) what are some similarities between this prayer and the thief on the cross?
- Was what happened to Samson in Chap. 16, inevitable? For Samson it was a game but the Philistines were dead serious, are we always aware of the earnestness of Satan to overthrow us, what methods does he use?
- Is it true that Samson's lifestyle interfered with his ability to serve God? Did he fulfill his commission? What things can interfere with our fulfilling our commission, site some N.T. references which illustrate the characteristics God wants to see in His N.T. servants.
- Why does God choose to work through this man? What is the importance of personal purity in leaders? Discuss the importance of personal purity (in thought and deed) in our daily walk with the Lord.
- Did Samson really ever free Israel from the Philistines, was his mission a success or a failure? Why is he listed as a man of faith in Hebrews 11:32?

## Study IX - Samuel (Study I)

*Samuel was of Levitical parents. All honor to his mother, Hannah. A noble example of motherhood, her son turned out to be one of the noblest and purest characters in history. - Halley's Bible Handbook (1965)*

**Eli**, the offering or lifting up, **Elkanah**, God the zealous; the zeal of God, **Hannah**, gracious; merciful; he that gives - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible

### Read 1 Samuel 1-2:11

Compare chap.1:1-2, with 1Chron. 6:1 & 22-29, what was Elkanah's position in Israel?

Consider some of the characters in this account. Discuss how Elkanah, Hannah and Eli demonstrate their knowledge of:

God's Existence

His Sovereign Purpose

His ability to respond to prayer

What complications are obvious in Elkanah's household? What are the weaknesses in multiple marriages? Does Elkanah's problems support God's original marriage plan of one man and one woman? Where in the Bible is the first multiple marriage recorded? Review other polygamous relationships in scripture for additional insights.

Read 1 Sam. 7:15 - 17, and 7: 6, also note 1 Sam. 3:20 & 12:10, with Heb. 11:32. Samuel was clearly a judge in Israel. What was Samuels ministry? In contrast to the other judges we have studied do you see him as much as a military leader or something else?

What is Shiloh and why is it a significant place in Israel?

Compare the miraculous events surrounding Samson & Samuel's births. Note the similarities and differences relating to the births of these two boys.

Why do think that Eli mistook Hannah prayer for the babbling of a drunk? What caused the change in Hannah noted in vs.18?

Pause and review Elkanah's statement in 1:23. "*Only the Lord establish His word* (KJV) -or- *may the Lord make good His word* (NIV). From what you know about God; do you think that this should be a problem? Back yourself up scripturally with a discussion surrounding God's immutability.

How reasonable is Hannah's vow? Put verses 25-28 in your own words.

Note Hannah's prayer, what was she referring to when she speaks of her "*bitterness of soul*" and "*I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief*"? What kind of experiences in our lives would produces this type of prayer?

What is the central theme of Hannah's prayer? Is their any similarity with Mary's in Luke 2:46 - 55? How does it compare with Deborah's song?

What underlying key components (other attributes of God) are in Hannah's prayer? Why would she focus on some of God's attributes and not discuss others?

## Study X - Samuel (Study II)

*Samuel... was from a child employed about the sanctuary in the services he was capable of. As he did this with a pious disposition of mind, it was called ministering unto the Lord. He received a blessing from the Lord. Those young people who serve God as well as they can, he will enable to improve, that they may serve him better. Eli shunned trouble and exertion. This led him to indulge his children, without using parental authority to restrain and correct them when young. He winked at the abuses in the service of the sanctuary till they became customs, and led to abominations; and his sons, who should have taught those that engaged in the service of the sanctuary what was good, solicited them to wickedness. Their offence was committed even in offering the sacrifices for sins, which typified the atonement of the Saviour! Sins against the remedy, the atonement itself, are most dangerous, they tread under foot the blood of the covenant. Eli's reproof was far too mild and gentle. In general, none are more abandoned than the degenerate children of godly persons, when they break through restraints. Matthew Henry (1662-1714)*

**Hophni**, he that covers; my fist - *Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible*

**Phinehas**, bold aspect; face of trust or protection

### Read I Samuel 2:12 - 4:1

- Do you think Hannah realized what kind of environment she was putting her son into? What characteristics in her allowed her to fulfill her vow? How did Samuel feel? What were the yearly reunions like?
- What sins did Eli's sons commit? Why do you think that the New Testament, forcibly emphasizes, that a leader must have God-fearing children?
- Are parents always the best judges of their children's well-being? Is it possible that parents can be too concerned about their children's environment and miss the opportunity to expose them to the protection of God?
- God continues to use Godly women in the lives of many Judges. In what ways were other women in Judges, role models? What do you think of the men?
- Having already warned Eli, why does God repeat the message through Samuel?
- What is the meaning of the message of the Man of God? How does Eli respond to it? Does God level a curse against a family easily? Explain God's reasoning.
- Note Chap. 3: 10 - 11, why does Samuel not follow Eli's instructions?
- What can be learned about God's communication system through His contacts with Samuel? Describe how God speaks to you. Is your experience similar to Samuel's or different?
- Note 3:19-21, how do these verses help confirm the rightness of Hannah's action?

## Study XI - Samuel (Study III)

*The judge - prophet issued a general call to genuine repentance in turning away from Canaanite idolatry. The Baals were images of the great northwest Semitic fertility diety Baal (lord), and the Ashtareth were replicas of Astarte, goddess of sexual love and fertility... Samuel made the mistake of appointing his sons as judges... tragically ironic since Samuel was chosen by God as a result of Eli's son's failure to follow in their father's footsteps.- The New Unger's Bible Handbook (1984)*

**Abiah**, the Lord is my father, **Joel**, he that wills or commands- - Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible

### Read 1 Samuel 7-8:22, 12:1-25

- What causes a revival? What key aspect of revival often seems to be forgotten?
- Take a look at Samuel's sons Joel and Abiah. What turned them away from the Lord? Was this similar to the lure that attracted Hophni and Phinehas? Is there a recipe that successful Christian men need to follow to raise successful Christian children?
- The appearance of the Philistines causes great fear, what did the people request and what two things does Samuel do? Why the pillar? What pillars does the N.T. give to assure God's people?
- What is Samuel's solution for the plight of Israel? What was the result? Are these solutions relevant for God's people today?
- Was Samuel wise to appoint his sons as Judges? Why did he do it? It appears that Samuel's family became the excuse for seeking a king, is this legitimate? What was Samuel's reaction? What was God's reaction? Why did they want a king vs.19-20.
- Change is difficult, was Samuel just reacting to change or was his opposition for other reasons? How can we know whether changes will be a help or a hindrance? In the big picture was the request for a king a surprise to God? How do you know?
- According to Samuel's list (8:10), what will a king do to Israel. Is this a form of taxation or much worse.
- Think about Samuel's integrity. Why did his own son's not follow this key aspect of Godly Character?
- What is Samuel trying to accomplish by his farewell speech?
- Why does Samuel review history at this point? What does the past have to do with Israel's request for a king?
- Explain what Samuel wants to accomplish in the closing verses of Chap. 12. Put verse 23 in your own words? How can failure to pray for someone be sin against God?