JUDGES

This is the traditional rendering of shof’tim, which, however, in the text is rendered “chieftains.” The corresponding verb shafat. is usually translated not “judged” but “ruled” or “led.”

Chapter 1

***1*** After the death of Joshua, the Israelites inquired of the Lord, “Which of us shall be the first to go up against the K’nani and attack them?”

***2*** The Lord replied, “Let [the tribe of] Judah go up. I now deliver the land into their hands.”

***3*** Judah then said to their brother-tribe Shimon, “Come up with us to our allotted territory and let us attack the K’nani, and then we will go with you to your allotted territory.” So Shimon joined them.

4 When Judah advanced, the Lord delivered the K’nani and the P’rizi into their hands, and they defeated 10,000 of them at Bezek.

5 At Bezek, they encountered Adoni-bezek, engaged him in battle, and defeated the K’nani and the P’rizi.

6 Adoni-bezek fled, but they pursued him and captured him; and they cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek said, “70 kings, with thumbs and big toes cut off, used to pick up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has requited me.” They brought him to Jerusalem and he died there.

***8*** The Judahites attacked Jerusalem and captured it; they put it to the sword and set the city on fire.

***9*** After that the Judahites went down to attack the K’nani who inhabited the hill country, the Negev, and the Shefelah.

***10*** The Judahites marched against the K’nani who dwelt in Khevron, and they defeated Sheshai, Achiman, and Talmai. (The name of Khevron was formerly Kiryat-arba.)

***11*** From there they marched against the inhabitants of D’vir (the name of D’vir was formerly Kiryat-sefer).

***12*** And Calev announced, “I will give my daughter Achsah in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiryat-sefer.”

***13*** His younger kinsman [brother?], Otniel the K’nizi, captured it; and Calev gave him his daughter Achsah in marriage.

***14*** When she came [to him], she induced him to ask her father for some property. She dismounted from her donkey, and Calev asked her, “What is the matter?”

***15*** She replied, “Give me a present, for you have given me away as Negev-land; give me springs of water.” And Calev gave her Upper and Lower Gulot.

***16*** The descendants of the Kini, the father-in-law of Moses, went up with the Judahites from the City of Palms to the wilderness of Judah; and they went and settled among the people in the Negev of Arad.

***17*** And Judah with its brother-tribe Shimon went on and defeated the K’nani who dwelt in Tz’fat. They proscribed it, and so the town was named Chormah [proscribed].

1***8*** And Judah captured Gaza [Septuagint reads “But Judah did not capture Gaza…”] and its territory, Ashkelon and its territory, and Ekron and its territory.

***19*** The Lord was with Judah, so that they took possession of the hill country; but they were not able to dispossess the inhabitants of the plain, for they had iron chariots.

***20*** They gave Khevron to Calev, as Moses had promised; and he drove the three Anakites out of there.

***21*** The sons of Binyamin did not dispossess the Y’vusi inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Y’vusi have dwelt with the sons of Binyamin in Jerusalem to this day.

***22*** The House of Joseph, for their part, advanced against Bet-El, and the Lord was with them.

***23*** While the House of Joseph were scouting at Bet-El (the name of the town was formerly Luz),

***24*** their patrols [lit. watchmen] saw a man leaving the town. They said to him, “Just show us how to get into the town, and we will treat you kindly.”

***25*** He showed them how to get into the town; they put the town to the sword, but they let the man and all his relatives go free.

***26*** The man went to the country of the Chiti. He founded a city and named it Luz, and that has been its name to this day.

***27*** Menashe did not dispossess [the inhabitants of] Bet-shean and its dependencies, or [of] Taanach and its dependencies, or the inhabitants of Dor and its dependencies, or the inhabitants of Ibl’am and its dependencies, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its dependencies. The K’nani persisted in dwelling in this region.

***28*** And when Israel gained the upper hand, they subjected the K’nani to forced labor; but they did not dispossess them.

***29*** Nor did Efrayim dispossess the K’nani who inhabited Gezer; so the K’nani dwelt in their midst at Gezer.

***30*** Z’vulun did not dispossess the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the K’nani dwelt in their midst, but they were subjected to forced labor.

***31*** Asher did not dispossess the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Tzidon, Achlav, Achziv, Chelbah, Afik, and R’chov.

***32*** So the Asherites dwelt in the midst of the K’nani, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not dispossess them.

***33*** Naftali did not dispossess the inhabitants of Bet-shemesh or the inhabitants of Bet-anat. But they settled in the midst of the K’nani inhabitants of the land, and the inhabitants of Bet-shemesh and Bet-anat had to perform forced labor for them.

***34*** The Amori pressed the Danites into the hill country; they would not let them come down to the plain.

***35*** The Amori also persisted in dwelling in Har-cheres, in Ayalon, and in Sha-albim. But the hand of the House of Joseph bore heavily on them and they had to perform forced labor.

***36*** The territory of the Amori [some Septaugint versions have Edomites] extended from the Ascent of Akrabbim—from Sela—onward.

Chapter 2

***1*** An angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim [weepers] and said, “I brought you up from Egypt and I took you into the land which I had promised on oath to your fathers. And I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you.

***2*** And you, for your part, must make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you must tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed Me—look what you have done!

***3*** Therefore, I have resolved not to drive them out before you; they shall become your oppressors, and their gods shall be a snare to you.”

***4*** As the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the Israelites, the people broke into weeping.

***5*** So they named that place Bochim, and they offered sacrifices there to the Lord.

***6*** When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites went to their allotted territories and took possession of the land.

***7*** The people served the Lord during the lifetime of Joshua and the lifetime of the older people who lived on after Joshua and who had witnessed all the marvelous deeds that the Lord had wrought for Israel.

***8*** Joshua bin Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years,

***9*** and was buried on his own property, at Timnat-cheres in the hill country of Efrayim, north of Mount Ga-ash.

***10*** And all that generation were likewise gathered to their fathers. Another generation arose after them, which had not experienced [the deliverance of] the Lord or the deeds that He had wrought for Israel.

***11*** And the Israelites did what was offensive to the Lord. They worshiped the Ba-alim

***12*** and forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples around them, and bowed down to them; they provoked the Lord.

***13*** They forsook the Lord and worshiped Ba-al and the Ashtarot [female Canaanite deities].

1***4*** Then the Lord was incensed at Israel, and He handed them over to foes who plundered them. He surrendered them to their enemies on all sides, and they could no longer hold their own against their enemies.

***15*** In all their campaigns, the hand of the Lord was against them to their undoing, as the Lord had declared and as the Lord had sworn to them; and they were in great distress.

***16*** Then the Lord raised up chieftains who delivered them from those who plundered them.

***17*** But they did not heed their chieftains either; they went astray after other gods and bowed down to them. They were quick to turn aside from the way their fathers had followed in obedience to the commandments of the Lord; they did not do right.

***18*** When the Lord raised up chieftains for them, the Lord would be with the chieftain and would save them from their enemies during the chieftain’s lifetime; for the Lord would be moved to pity by their moanings because of those who oppressed and crushed them.

***19*** But when the chieftain died, they would again act basely, even more than the preceding generation [Lit. “their fathers”]—following other gods, worshiping them, and bowing down to them; they omitted none of their practices and stubborn ways.

***20*** Then the Lord became incensed against Israel, and He said, “Since that nation has transgressed the covenant that I enjoined upon their fathers and has not obeyed Me,

***21*** I for My part will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died.”

***22*** For it was in order to test Israel by them—[to see] whether or not they would faithfully walk in the ways of the Lord, as their fathers had done—

***23*** that the Lord had left those nations, instead of driving them out at once, and had not delivered them into the hands of Joshua.

Chapter 3

***1*** These are the nations that the Lord left so that He might test by them all the Israelites who had not known any of the wars of Canaan,

***2*** so that succeeding generations of Israelites might be made to experience war—but only those who had not known the former wars:

***3*** the five principalities [Lit. “lords”] of the Philistines and all the K’nani, Tzidoni, and Chivi who inhabited the hill country of the Lebanon from Mount Ba-al-Khermon to L’vo-chamat.

***4*** These served as a means of testing Israel, to learn whether they would obey the commandments which the Lord had enjoined upon their fathers through Moses.

***5*** The Israelites settled among the K’nani, Chiti, Amori, P’rizi, Chivi, and Y’vusi;

***6*** they took their daughters to wife and gave their own daughters to their sons, and they worshiped their gods.

***7*** The Israelites did what was offensive to the Lord; they ignored the Lord their God and worshiped the Ba-alim and the Asherot.

***8*** The Lord became incensed at Israel and surrendered them to King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-naharayim; and the Israelites were subject to Cushan-rishathayim for eight years.

***9*** The Israelites cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised a champion for the Israelites to deliver them: Otniel the K’nizi, a younger kinsman [brother?] of Calev.

***10*** The spirit of the Lord descended upon him and he became Israel’s chieftain. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered King Cushan-rishathayim of Aram into his hands. He prevailed over Cushan-rishathayim,

***11*** and the land had peace for 40 years. When Otniel the K’nizi died,

***12*** the Israelites again did what was offensive to the Lord. And because they did what was offensive to the Lord, the Lord let King Eglon of Moav prevail over Israel.

***13*** [Eglon] brought the Amoni and the Amalekites together under his command, and went and defeated Israel and occupied the City of Palms.

***14*** The Israelites were subject to King Eglon of Moav for 18 years.

***15*** Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up a champion for them: the son ofjaminite Ehud ben Gera, a left-handed man. It happened that the Israelites sent tribute to King Eglon of Moav through him.

***16*** So Ehud made for himself a two-edged dagger, a gomed in length, which he girded on his right side under his cloak.

***17*** He presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moav. Now Eglon was a very stout man.

***18*** When [Ehud] had finished presenting the tribute, he dismissed the people who had conveyed the tribute.

***19*** But he himself returned from P’silim, near Gilgal, and said, “Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you.” [Eglon] thereupon commanded, “Silence!” So all those in attendance left his presence;

***20*** and when Ehud approached him, he was sitting alone in his cool upper chamber. Ehud said, “I have a message for you from God”; whereupon he rose from his seat.

***21*** Reaching with his left hand, Ehud drew the dagger from his right side and drove it into [Eglon’s] belly.

***22*** The fat closed over the blade and the hilt went in after the blade—for he did not pull the dagger out of his belly—and the filth came out.

***23*** Stepping out into the vestibule, Ehud shut the doors of the upper chamber on him and locked them.

***24*** After he left, the courtiers returned. When they saw that the doors of the upper chamber were locked, they thought, “He must be relieving himself in the cool chamber.”

***25*** They waited a long time; and when he did not open the doors of the chamber, they took the key and opened them—and there their master was lying dead on the floor!

***26*** But Ehud had made good his escape while they delayed; he had passed Pesilim and escaped to Seirah.

***27*** When he got there, he had the ram’s horn sounded through the hill country of Efrayim, and all the Israelites descended with him from the hill country; and he took the lead.

***28*** “Follow me closely,” he said, “for the Lord has delivered your enemies, the Moavites, into your hands.” They followed him down and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moavites; they let no one cross.

***29*** On that occasion they slew about 10,000 Moavites; they were all robust and brave men, yet not one of them escaped.

***30*** On that day, Moav submitted to Israel; and the land was tranquil for ***8***0 years.

***31*** After him came Shamgar ben Anat, who slew 600 Philistines with an ox-goad. He too was a champion of Israel.

Chapter 4

***1*** The Israelites again did what was offensive to the Lord—Ehud now being dead.

***2*** And the Lord surrendered them to King Yavin of Canaan, who reigned in Chatzor. His army commander was Sisera, whose base was Charoshet-goyim.

***3*** The Israelites cried out to the Lord; for he had 900 iron chariots, and he had oppressed Israel ruthlessly for 20 years.

***4*** D’vorah, wife of Lappidot, was a prophetess; she led Israel at that time.

***5*** She used to sit under the Palm of D’vorah, between Ramah and Bet-El in the hill country of Efrayim, and the Israelites would come to her for decisions.

***6*** She summoned Barak ben Avinoam, of Kedesh in Naftali, and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded: Go, march up to Mount Tabor, and take with you 10,000 men of Naftali and Z’vulun.

***7*** And I will draw Sisera, Yavin’s army commander, with his chariots and his troops, toward you up to the Wadi Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hands.”

***8*** But Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go; if not, I will not go.”

***9*** “Very well, I will go with you,” she answered. “However, there will be no glory for you in the course you are taking, for then the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.” So D’vorah went with Barak to Kedesh.

***10*** Barak then mustered Z’vulun and Naftali at Kedesh; 10,000 men marched up after him; and D’vorah also went up with him.

***11*** Now Chever the Kini had separated from the other Kini [lit. “from Cain”], descendants of Chovav [Yitro], father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent at Elon-b’tza-anannim, which is near Kedesh.

***12*** Sisera was informed that Barak ben Avinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.

***13*** So Sisera ordered all his chariots—900 iron chariots—and all the troops he had to move from Charoshet-goyim to the Wadi Kishon.

***14*** Then D’vorah said to Barak, “Up! This is the day on which the Lord will deliver Sisera into your hands: The Lord is marching before you.” Barak charged down Mount Tabor, followed by the 10,000 men,

***15*** and the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and army into a panic before the onslaught of Barak [Lit. “at the edge of the sword before Barak”]. Sisera leaped from his chariot and fled on foot

***16*** as Barak pursued the chariots and the soldiers as far as Charoshet-goyim. All of Sisera’s soldiers fell by the sword; not a man was left.

***17*** Sisera, meanwhile, had fled on foot to the tent of Yael, wife of Chever the Kini; for there was friendship between King Yavin of Chatzor and the family of Chever the Kini.

***18*** Yael came out to greet Sisera and said to him, “Come in, my lord, come in here, do not be afraid.” So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

***19*** He said to her, “Please let me have some water; I am thirsty.” She opened a skin of milk and gave him some to drink; and she covered him again.

***20*** He said to her, “Stand at the entrance of the tent. If anybody comes and asks you if there is anybody here, say ‘No.’”

***21*** Then Yael wife of Chever took a tent pin and grasped the mallet. When he was fast asleep from exhaustion, she approached him stealthily and drove the pin through his temple till it went down to the ground. Thus he died.

***22*** Now Barak appeared in pursuit of Sisera. Yael went out to greet him and said, “Come, I will show you the man you are looking for.” He went inside with her, and there Sisera was lying dead, with the pin in his temple.

***23*** On that day God subdued King Yavin of Canaan before the Israelites.

***24*** The hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Yavin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Yavin of Canaan.

Chapter 5

***1*** On that day D’vorah and Barak ben Avinoam sang:

***2*** When locks go untrimmed in Israel,

When people dedicate themselves—

Bless the Lord!

***3*** Hear, O kings!

Give ear, O potentates!

I will sing, will sing to the Lord,

Will hymn the Lord, the God of Israel.

***4*** O Lord, when You came forth from Seir,

Advanced from the country of Edom,

The earth trembled;

The heavens dripped,

Yea, the clouds dripped water,

***5*** The mountains quaked—

Before the Lord, Him of Sinai,

Before the Lord, God of Israel.

***6*** In the days of Shamgar ben Anat,

In the days of Yael, caravans ceased,

And wayfarers went

By roundabout paths.

***7*** Deliverance ceased,

Ceased in Israel,

Till you arose, O D’vorah,

Arose, O mother, in Israel!

***8*** When they chose new gods,  
Was there a fighter then in the gates?  
No shield or spear was seen  
Among 40,000 in Israel!

***9*** My heart is with Israel’s leaders,  
With the dedicated of the people—  
Bless the Lord!

***10*** You riders on tawny she-asses,  
You who sit on saddle rugs,  
And you wayfarers, declare it!

***11*** Louder than the sound of archers,  
There among the watering places  
Let them chant the gracious acts of the Lord,  
His gracious deliverance of Israel.  
Then did the people of the Lord  
March down to the gates!

***12*** Awake, awake, O D’vorah!  
Awake, awake, strike up the chant!  
Arise, O Barak;  
Take your captives,  
O ben Avinoam!

***13*** Then was the remnant made victor over the mighty,  
The Lord’s people won my victory over the warriors.

***14*** From Efrayim came they whose roots are in Amalek;  
After you, your kin Binyamin;  
From Machir came down leaders,  
From Z’vulun such as hold the marshal’s staff.

***15*** And Yisachar’s chiefs were with D’vorah;  
As Barak, so was Yisachar—  
Rushing after him into the valley.  
Among the clans of Reuven  
Were great decisions of heart.

***16*** Why then did you stay among the sheepfolds  
And listen as they pipe for the flocks?  
Among the clans of Reuven  
Were great searchings of heart!

***17*** Gil’ad tarried beyond the Jordan;  
And Dan—why did he linger by the ships?  
Asher remained at the seacoast  
And tarried at his landings.

***18*** Z’vulun is a people that mocked at death,  
Naftali—on the open heights.

***19*** Then the kings came, they fought:  
The kings of Canaan fought  
At Ta-anach, by Megiddo’s waters—  
They got no spoil of silver.

***20*** The stars fought from heaven,  
From their courses they fought against Sisera.

***21*** The torrent Kishon swept them [i.e., the kings of Canaan (v. 19)] away,  
The raging torrent, the torrent Kishon.  
March on, my soul, with courage!

***22*** Then the horses’ hoofs pounded  
As headlong galloped the steeds [Lit. “From the gallopings, the gallopings of his steeds”].

***23*** “Curse Meroz!” said the angel of the Lord.  
“Bitterly curse its inhabitants,  
Because they came not to the aid of the Lord,  
To the aid of the Lord among the warriors.”

***24*** Most blessed of women be Yael,  
Wife of Chever the Kini,  
Most blessed of women in tents.

***25*** He asked for water, she offered milk;  
In a princely bowl she brought him curds.

***26*** Her [left] hand reached for the tent pin,  
Her right for the workmen’s hammer.  
She struck Sisera, crushed his head,  
Smashed and pierced his temple.

***27*** At her feet he sank, lay outstretched,  
At her feet he sank, lay still;  
Where he sank, there he lay—destroyed.

***28*** Through the window peered Sisera’s mother,  
Behind the lattice she whined:  
“Why is his chariot so long in coming?  
“Why so late the clatter of his wheels?”

***29*** The wisest of her ladies give answer;  
She, too, replies to herself:

***30*** “They must be dividing the spoil they have found:  
A damsel or two for each man,  
Spoil of dyed cloths for Sisera,  
Spoil of embroidered cloths,  
A couple of embroidered cloths  
Round every neck as spoil.”

***31*** So may all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But may His friends be as the sun rising in might! And the land was tranquil 40 years.

Chapter 6

***1*** Then the Israelites did what was offensive to the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years.

***2*** The hand of the Midianites prevailed over Israel; and because of Midian, the Israelites provided themselves with refuges in the caves and strongholds of the mountains.

***3*** After the Israelites had done their sowing, Midian, Amalek, and the K’dimi would come up and raid them;

***4*** they would attack them, destroy the produce of the land [i.e., by grazing their livestock] all the way to Gaza, and leave no means of sustenance in Israel, not a sheep or an ox or an ass.

***5*** For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, swarming as thick as locusts; they and their camels were innumerable. Thus they would invade the land and ravage it.

***6*** Israel was reduced to utter misery by the Midianites, and the Israelites cried out to the Lord.

***7*** When the Israelites cried to the Lord on account of Midian,

***8*** the Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites who said to them, “Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: I brought you up out of Egypt and freed you from the house of bondage.

***9*** I rescued you from the Egyptians and from all your oppressors; I drove them out before you, and gave you their land.

***10*** And I said to you, ‘I the Lord am your God. You must not worship the gods of the Amori in whose land you dwell.’ But you did not obey Me.”

***11*** An angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ofrah, which belonged to Yoash , the Aviezri. His son Gid’on was then beating out wheat inside a winepress in order to keep it safe from the Midianites.

***12*** The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, valiant warrior!”

***13*** Gid’on said to him, “Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all this befallen us? Where are all His wondrous deeds about which our fathers told us, saying, ‘Truly the Lord brought us up from Egypt’? Now the Lord has abandoned us and delivered us into the hands of Midian!”

***14*** The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this strength of yours and deliver Israel from the Midianites. I herewith make you My messenger.”

***15*** He said to Him, “Please, my lord, how can I deliver Israel? Why, my clan is the humblest in Menashe, and I am the youngest in my father’s household.”

***16*** The Lord replied, “I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian to a man.”

***17*** And he said to Him, “If I have gained Your favor, give me a sign that it is You who are speaking to me:

***18*** do not leave this place until I come back to You and bring out my offering and place it before You.” And He answered, “I will stay until you return.”

***19*** So Gid’on went in and prepared a kid, and [baked] unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket and poured the broth into a pot, and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth. As he presented them,

***20*** the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, put them on yonder rock, and spill out the broth.” He did so.

***21*** The angel of the Lord held out the staff that he carried, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread with its tip. A fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

22 Then Gid’on realized that it was an angel of the Lord; and Gid’on said, “Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.”

***23*** But the Lord said to him, “All is well; have no fear, you shall not die.”

***24*** So Gid’on built there an altar to the Lord and called it Adonai-shalom [i.e., the Lord, all is well]. To this day it stands in Ofrah of the Aviezri.

***25*** That night the Lord said to him: “Take the young bull belonging to your father and another bull seven years old; pull down the altar of Ba-al which belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred post which is beside it.

***26*** Then build an altar to the Lord your God, on the level ground on top of this stronghold. Take the other bull and offer it as a burnt offering, using the wood of the sacred post that you have cut down.”

***27*** So Gid’on took 10 of his servants and did as the Lord had told him; but as he was afraid to do it by day, on account of his father’s household and the townspeople, he did it by night.

***28*** Early the next morning, the townspeople found that the altar of Ba-al had been torn down and the sacred post beside it had been cut down, and that the second bull had been offered on the newly built altar.

***29*** They said to one another, “Who did this thing?” Upon inquiry and investigation, they were told, “Gid’on ben Yoash did this thing!”

***30*** The townspeople said to Yoash, “Bring out your son, for he must die: he has torn down the altar of Ba-al and cut down the sacred post beside it!”

***31*** But Yoash said to all who had risen against him, “Do you have to contend for Ba-al? Do you have to vindicate him? Whoever fights his battles shall be dead by morning! If he is a god, let him fight his own battles, since it is his altar that has been torn down!”

***32*** That day they named him [Gid’on] Y’ru-baal, meaning “Let Ba-al contend with him, since he tore down his altar.”

***33*** All Midian, Amalek, and the K’dimi joined forces; they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Yizrael.

***34*** The spirit of the Lord enveloped Gid’on; he sounded the horn, and , the Aviezri rallied behind him.

***35*** And he sent messengers throughout Menashe, and they too rallied behind him. He then sent messengers through Asher, Z’vulun, and Naftali, and they came up to meet the Menashites.

***36*** And Gid’on said to God, “If You really intend to deliver Israel through me as You have said—

***37*** here I place a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If dew falls only on the fleece and all the ground remains dry, I shall know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have said.”

***38*** And that is what happened. Early the next day, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew from the fleece, a bowlful of water.

***39*** Then Gid’on said to God, “Do not be angry with me if I speak just once more. Let me make just one more test with the fleece: let the fleece alone be dry, while there is dew all over the ground.”

***40*** God did so that night: only the fleece was dry, while there was dew all over the ground.

Chapter 7

***1*** Early next day, Y’ru-baal—that is, Gid’on—and all the troops with him encamped above En-harod, while the camp of Midian was in the plain to the north of him, at Giv’at-moreh.

2 The Lord said to Gid’on, “You have too many troops with you for Me to deliver Midian into their hands; Israel might claim for themselves the glory due to Me, thinking, ‘Our own hand has brought us victory.’

***3*** Therefore, announce to the men, ‘Let anybody who is timid and fearful turn back, as a bird flies from Mount Gil’ad.’” Thereupon, 22,000 of the troops turned back and 10,000 remained.

***4*** “There are still too many troops,” the Lord said to Gid’on. “Take them down to the water and I will sift them for you there. Anyone of whom I tell you, ‘This one is to go with you,’ that one shall go with you; and anyone of whom I tell you, ‘This one is not to go with you,’ that one shall not go.”

***5*** So he took the troops down to the water. Then the Lord said to Gid’on, “Set apart all those who lap up the water with their tongues like dogs [actually, using their hands as a dog uses its tongue]; from all those who get down on their knees to drink.”

***6*** Now those who “lapped” the water into their mouths by hand numbered 300; all the rest of the troops got down on their knees to drink.

***7*** Then the Lord said to Gid’on, “I will deliver you and I will put Midian into your hands through the 300 ‘lappers’; let the rest of the troops go home.”

***8*** So [the lappers] took the provisions and horns that the other men had with them, and he sent the rest of the men of Israel back to their homes, retaining only the 300 men. The Midianite camp was below him, in the plain.

***9*** That night the Lord said to him, “Come, attack the camp, for I have delivered it into your hands.

***10*** And if you are afraid to attack, first go down to the camp with your attendant Purah

***11*** and listen to what they say; after that you will have the courage to attack the camp.” So he went down with his attendant Purah to the outposts of the warriors who were in the camp.—

***12*** Now Midian, Amalek, and all the K’dimi were spread over the plain, as thick as locusts; and their camels were countless, as numerous as the sands on the seashore.—

***13*** Gid’on came there just as one man was narrating a dream to another. “Listen,” he was saying, “I had this dream: There was a commotion—a loaf of barley bread was whirling through the Midianite camp. It came to a tent and struck it, and it fell; it turned it upside down, and the tent collapsed.” [The loaf of bread symbolizes the agricultural Israelites; the tent, the nomadic Midianites]

***14*** To this the other responded, “That can only mean the sword of the Israelite Gid’on ben Yoash. God is delivering Midian and the entire camp into his hands.”

1***5*** When Gid’on heard the dream told and interpreted, he bowed low. Returning to the camp of Israel, he shouted, “Come on! The Lord has delivered the Midianite camp into your hands!”

***16*** He divided the 300 men into three columns and equipped every man with a ram’s horn and an empty jar, with a torch in each jar.

***17*** “Watch me,” he said, “and do the same. When I get to the outposts of the camp, do exactly as I do.

***18*** When I and all those with me blow our horns, you too, all around the camp, will blow your horns and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gid’on!’”

***19*** Gid’on and the 100 men with him arrived at the outposts of the camp, at the beginning of the middle watch, just after the sentries were posted. They sounded the horns and smashed the jars that they had with them,

***20*** and the three columns blew their horns and broke their jars. Holding the torches in their left hands and the horns for blowing in their right hands, they shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gid’on!”

***21*** They remained standing where they were, surrounding the camp; but the entire camp ran about yelling, and took to flight.

***22*** For when the 300 horns were sounded, the Lord turned every man’s sword against his fellow, throughout the camp, and the entire host fled as far as Bet-shittah and on to Tz’rerah—as far as the outskirts of Avel-m’cholah near Tabbat.

***23*** And now the men of Israel from Naftali and Asher and from all of Menashe rallied for the pursuit of the Midianites.

***24*** Gid’on also sent messengers all through the hill country of Efrayim with this order: “Go down ahead of the Midianites and seize their access to the water all along the Jordan down to Bet-barah.” So all the men of Efrayim rallied and seized the waterside down to Bet-barah by the Jordan.

***25*** They pursued the Midianites and captured Midian’s two generals, Orev and Ze’eiv. They killed Orev at the Rock of Orev and they killed Ze’eiv at the Winepress of Ze’eiv; and they brought the heads of Orev and Ze’eiv from the other side of the Jordan to Gid’on.

Chapter 8

***1*** And the men of Efrayim said to him, “Why did you do that to us—not calling us when you went to fight the Midianites?” And they rebuked him severely.

***2*** But he answered them, “After all, what have I accomplished compared to you? Why, Efrayim’s gleanings are better than Aviezer’s vintage!

***3*** God has delivered the Midianite generals Orev and Ze’eiv into your hands, and what was I able to do compared to you?” And when he spoke in this fashion, their anger against him abated.

***4*** Gid’on came to the Jordan and crossed it. The 300 men with him were famished, but still in pursuit.

***5*** He said to the people of Sukkot, “Please give some loaves of bread to the men who are following me, for they are famished, and I am pursuing Zevach and Tzalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

***6*** But the officials of Sukkot replied, “Are Zevach and Tzalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your troops?”

***7*** “I swear,” declared Gid’on, “when the Lord delivers Zevach and Tzalmunna into my hands, I’ll thresh your bodies upon desert thorns and briers [i.e., throw them naked in a bed of thorns and trample them; but exact meaning uncertain]!”

***8*** From there he went up to Penuel and made the same request of them; but the people of Penuel gave him the same reply as the people of Sukkot.

***9*** So he also threatened the people of Penuel: “When I come back safe, I’ll tear down this tower!”

***10*** Now Zevach and Tzalmunna were at Karkor with their army of about 15,000; these were all that remained of the entire host of the K’dimi, for the slain numbered 120,000 fighting men.

11 Gid’on marched up the road of the tent dwellers, up to east of Novach and Yogb’hah, and routed the camp, which was off guard.

***12*** Zevach and Tzalmunna took to flight, with Gid’on in pursuit. He captured Zevach and Tzalmunna, the two kings of Midian, and threw the whole army into panic.

***13*** On his way back from the battle at the Ascent of Cheres, Gid’on ben Yoash

***14*** captured a boy from among the people of Sukkot and interrogated him. The latter drew up for him a list of the officials and elders of Sukkot, 77 in number.

***15*** Then he came to the people of Sukkot and said, “Here are Zevach and Tzalmunna, about whom you mocked me, saying, ‘Are Zevach and Tzalmunna already in your hands, that we should give your famished men bread?’”

***16*** And he took the elders of the city and, [bringing] desert thorns and briers, he punished the people of Sukkot with them.

***17*** As for Penuel, he tore down its tower and killed the townspeople.

***18*** Then he asked Zevach and Tzalmunna, “Those men you killed at Tabor, what were they like?” “They looked just like you,” they replied, “like sons of a king.”

***19*** “They were my brothers,” he declared, “the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if you had spared them, I would not kill you.”

***20*** And he commanded his oldest son Yeter, “Go kill them!” But the boy did not draw his sword, for he was timid, being still a boy.

***21*** Then Zevach and Tzalmunna said, “Come, you slay us; for strength comes with manhood.” So Gid’on went over and killed Zevach and Tzalmunna, and he took the crescents that were on the necks of their camels.

***22*** Then the men of Israel said to Gid’on, “Rule over us—you, your son, and your grandson, as well; for you have saved us from the Midianites.”

***23*** But Gid’on replied, “I will not rule over you myself, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord alone shall rule over you.”

***24*** And Gid’on said to them, “I have a request to make of you: Each of you give me the earring he received as booty.” (They [the Midianites] had golden earrings, for they were Yishmaelites.) [The author explains that the Midianites wore

earrings like the Ishmaelites, who were better known to his contemporaries.]

***25*** “Certainly!” they replied. And they spread out a cloth, and everyone threw onto it the earring he had received as booty.

***26*** The weight of the golden earrings that he had requested came to 1,700 shekels of gold; this was in addition to the crescents and the pendants and the purple robes worn by the kings of Midian and in addition to the collars on the necks of their camels.

***27*** Gid’on made an ephod of this gold and set it up in his own town of Ofrah. There all Israel went astray after it, and it became a snare to Gid’on and his household.

***28*** Thus Midian submitted to the Israelites and did not raise its head again; and the land was tranquil for 40 years in Gid’on’s time.

***29*** So Y’ru-baal ben Yoash retired to his own house.

***30*** Gid’on had 70 sons of his own issue, for he had many wives.

***31*** A son was also born to him by his concubine in Shechem, and he named him Avimelech.

***32*** Gid’on ben Yoash died at a ripe old age, and was buried in the tomb of his father Yoash at Ofrah the Aviezri.

***33*** After Gid’on died, the Israelites again went astray after the Ba-alim, and they adopted Ba-al-b’rit as a god.

***34*** The Israelites gave no thought to the Lord their God, who saved them from all the enemies around them.

***35*** Nor did they show loyalty to the house of Y’ru-baal-Gid’on in return for all the good that he had done for Israel.

Chapter 9

***1*** Avimelech ben Y’ru-baal went to his mother’s brothers in Shechem and spoke to them and to the whole clan of his mother’s family. He said,

***2*** “Put this question to all the citizens of Shechem: Which is better for you, to be ruled by 70 men—by all the sons of Y’ru-baal—or to be ruled by one man? And remember, I am your own flesh and blood.”

***3*** His mother’s brothers said all this in his behalf to all the citizens of Shechem, and they were won over to Avimelech; for they thought, “He is our kinsman.”

***4*** They gave him 70 shekels from the temple of Ba-al-b’rit; and with this Avimelech hired some worthless and reckless fellows, and they followed him.

***5*** Then he went to his father’s house in Ofrah and killed his brothers, the sons of Y’ru-baal, 70 men on one stone. Only Yotam, the youngest ben Y’ru-baal, survived, because he went into hiding.

***6*** All the citizens of Shechem and all Bet-millo convened, and they proclaimed Avimelech king at the terebinth of the pillar at Shechem.

***7*** When Yotam was informed, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and called out to them in a loud voice. “Citizens of Shechem!” he cried, “listen to me, that God may listen to you.

***8*** “Once the trees went to anoint a king over themselves. They said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us.’

***9*** But the olive tree replied, ‘Have I, through whom God and men are honored, stopped yielding my rich oil, that I should go and wave above the trees?’

***10*** So the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come and reign over us.’

***11*** But the fig tree replied, ‘Have I stopped yielding my sweetness, my delicious fruit, that I should go and wave above the trees?’

***12*** So the trees said to the vine, ‘You come and reign over us.’

***13*** But the vine replied, ‘Have I stopped yielding my new wine, which gladdens God and men, that I should go and wave above the trees?’

***14*** Then all the trees said to the thornbush, ‘You come and reign over us.’

***15*** And the thornbush said to the trees, ‘If you are acting honorably in anointing me king over you, come and take shelter in my shade; but if not, may fire issue from the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!’

***16*** “Now then, if you acted honorably and loyally in making Avimelech king, if you have done right by Y’ru-baal and his house and have requited him according to his deserts—

***17*** considering that my father fought for you and saved you from the Midianites at the risk of his life,

***18*** and now you have turned on my father’s household, killed his sons, 70 men on one stone, and set up Avimelech, the son of his handmaid, as king over the citizens of Shechem just because he is your kinsman—

***19*** if, I say, you have this day acted honorably and loyally toward Y’ru-baal and his house, have joy in Avimelech and may he likewise have joy in you.

***20*** But if not, may fire issue from Avimelech and consume the citizens of Shechem and Bet-millo, and may fire issue from the citizens of Shechem and Bet-millo and consume Avimelech!”

***21*** With that, Yotam fled. He ran to B’er and stayed there, because of his brother Avimelech.

***22*** Avimelech held sway over Israel for three years.

***23*** Then God sent a spirit of discord between Avimelech and the citizens of Shechem, and the citizens of Shechem broke faith with Avimelech—

***24*** to the end that the crime committed against the 70 sons of Y’ru-baal might be avenged, and their blood recoil upon their brother Avimelech, who had slain them, and upon the citizens of Shechem, who had abetted him in the slaying of his brothers.

***25*** The citizens of Shechem planted ambushes against him on the hilltops; and they robbed whoever passed by them on the road. Word of this reached Avimelech.

***26*** Then Ga-al ben Eved and his companions came passing through Shechem, and the citizens of Shechem gave him their confidence.

***27*** They went out into the fields, gathered and trod out the vintage of their vineyards, and made a festival. They entered the temple of their god, and as they ate and drank they reviled Avimelech.

***28*** Ga-al ben Eved said, “Who is Avimelech and who are [we] Shechemites, that we should serve him? This same ben Y’ru-baal and his lieutenant Z’vul once served the men of Chamor, the father of Shechem; so why should we serve him?

***29*** Oh, if only this people were under my command, I would get rid of Avimelech! One would challenge Avimelech, ‘Fill up your ranks and come out here!’”

***30*** When Z’vul, the governor of the city, heard the words of Ga-al ben Eved, he was furious.

***31*** He sent messages to Avimelech at Tormah [called Arumah in verse 41] to say, “Ga-al ben Eved and his companions have come to Shechem and they are inciting the city against you.

***32*** Therefore, set out at night with the forces you have with you and conceal yourself in the fields.

***33*** Early next morning, as the sun rises, advance on the city. He and his men will thereupon come out against you, and you will do to him whatever you find possible.”

***34*** Avimelech and all the men with him set out at night and disposed themselves against Shechem in four hiding places.

***35*** When Ga-al ben Eved came out and stood at the entrance to the city gate, Avimelech and the army with him emerged from concealment.

***36*** Ga-al saw the army and said to Z’vul, “That’s an army marching down from the hilltops!” But Z’vul said to him, “The shadows of the hills look to you like men.”

***37*** Ga-al spoke up again, “Look, an army is marching down from Tabbur-eretz, and another column is coming from the direction of Elon-m’onenim.”

***38*** “Well,” replied Z’vul, “where is your boast, ‘Who is Avimelech that we should serve him’? There is the army you sneered at; now go out and fight it!”

***39*** So Ga-al went out at the head of the citizens of Shechem and gave battle to Avimelech.

***40*** But he had to flee before him, and Avimelech pursued him, and many fell slain, all the way to the entrance of the gate.

***41*** Then Avimelech stayed in Arumah, while Z’vul expelled Ga-al and his companions and kept them out of Shechem.

***42*** The next day, when people went out into the fields, Avimelech was informed.

***43*** Taking the army, he divided it into three columns and lay in ambush in the fields; and when he saw the people coming out of the city, he pounced upon them and struck them down.

***44*** While Avimelech and the column that followed him dashed ahead and took up a position at the entrance of the city gate, the other two columns rushed upon all that were in the open and struck them down.

***45*** Avimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and massacred the people in it; he razed the town and sowed it with salt.

***46*** When all the citizens of the Tower of Shechem learned of this, they went into the tunnel of the temple of El-b’rit [called Baal-B’rit in verse 4].

***47*** When Avimelech was informed that all the citizens of the Tower of Shechem had gathered [there],

***48*** Avimelech and all the troops he had with him went up on Mount Tzalmon. Taking an ax in his hand, Avimelech lopped off a tree limb and lifted it onto his shoulder. Then he said to the troops that accompanied him, “What you saw me do—quick, do the same!”

***49*** So each of the troops also lopped off a bough; then they marched behind Avimelech and laid them against the tunnel, and set fire to the tunnel over their heads. Thus all the people of the Tower of Shechem also perished, about 1,000 men and women.

***50*** Avimelech proceeded to Tebetz; he encamped at Tebetz and occupied it.

***51*** Within the town was a fortified tower; and all the citizens of the town, men and women, took refuge there. They shut themselves in and went up on the roof of the tower.

***5***2 Avimelech pressed forward to the tower and attacked it. He approached the door of the tower to set it on fire.

***5***3 But a woman dropped an upper millstone on Avimelech’s head and cracked his skull.

***54*** He immediately cried out to his attendant, his arms-bearer, “Draw your dagger and finish me off, that they may not say of me, ‘A woman killed him!’” So his attendant stabbed him, and he died.

***55*** When the men of Israel saw that Avimelech was dead, everyone went home.

***56*** Thus God repaid Avimelech for the evil he had done to his father by slaying his 70 brothers;

***57*** and God likewise repaid the men of Shechem for all their wickedness. And so the curse of Yotam ben Y’ru-baal was fulfilled upon them.

Chapter 10

***1*** After Avimelech, Tola ben Puah ben Dodo, a man of Yisachar, arose to deliver Israel. He lived at Shamir in the hill country of Efrayim.

***2*** He led Israel for 23 years; then he died and was buried at Shamir.

***3*** After him arose Yair the Gil’adite, and he led Israel for 22 years.

***4*** (He had 30 sons, who rode on 30 burros and owned 30 boroughs in the region of Gil’ad; these are called Chavut-yair to this day.)

***5*** Then Yair died and was buried at Kamon.

***6*** The Israelites again did what was offensive to the Lord. They served the Ba-alim and the Ashtarot, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Tzidon, the gods of Moav, the gods of the Amoni, and the gods of the Philistines; they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him.

***7*** And the Lord, incensed with Israel, surrendered them to the Philistines and to the Amoni.

***8*** That year they battered and shattered the Israelites—for 18 years—all the Israelites beyond the Jordan, in [what had been] the land of the Amori in Gil’ad.

***9*** The Amoni also crossed the Jordan to make war on Judah, Binyamin, and the House of Efrayim. Israel was in great distress.

***10*** Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord, “We stand guilty before You, for we have forsaken our God and served the Ba-alim.”

***11*** But the Lord said to the Israelites, “[I have rescued you] from the Egyptians, from the Amori, from the Amoni, and from the Philistines.

***12*** The Tzidoni, Amalek, and Maon also oppressed you; and when you cried out to Me, I saved you from them.

***13*** Yet you have forsaken Me and have served other gods. No, I will not deliver you again.

***14*** Go cry to the gods you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress!”

***15*** But the Israelites implored the Lord: “We stand guilty. Do to us as You see fit; only save us this day!”

***16*** They removed the alien gods from among them and served the Lord; and He could not bear the miseries of Israel.

***17*** The Amoni mustered and they encamped in Gil’ad; and the Israelites massed and they encamped at Mitzpah.

***18*** The troops—the officers of Gil’ad—said to one another, “Let the man who is the first to fight the Amoni be chieftain over all the inhabitants of Gil’ad.”

Chapter 11

***1*** Yiftach [Jephthah] the Gil’adite was an able warrior, who was the son of a prostitute. Yiftach’s father was Gil’ad;

***2*** but Gil’ad also had sons by his wife, and when the wife’s sons grew up, they drove Yiftach out. They said to him, “You shall have no share in our father’s property, for you are the son of an outsider [lit. “another woman”].”

3 So Yiftach fled from his brothers and settled in the Tov country. Men of low character gathered about Yiftach and went out raiding with him.

***4*** Some time later, the Amoni went to war against Israel.

***5*** And when the Amoni attacked Israel, the elders of Gil’ad went to bring Yiftach back from the Tov country.

***6*** They said to Yiftach, “Come be our chief, so that we can fight the Amoni.”

***7*** Yiftach replied to the elders of Gil’ad, “You are the very people who rejected me and drove me out of my father’s house. How can you come to me now when you are in trouble?”

***8*** The elders of Gil’ad said to Yiftach, “Honestly, we have now turned back to you. If you come with us and fight the Amoni, you shall be our commander over all the inhabitants of Gil’ad.”

***9*** Yiftach said to the elders of Gil’ad, “[Very well,] if you bring me back to fight the Amoni and the Lord delivers them to me, I am to be your commander.”

***10*** And the elders of Gil’ad answered Yiftach, “The Lord Himself shall be witness between us: we will do just as you have said.”

***11*** Yiftach went with the elders of Gil’ad, and the people made him their commander and chief. And Yiftach repeated all these terms before the Lord at Mitzpah.

***12*** Yiftach then sent messengers to the king of the Amoni, saying, “What have you against me that you have come to make war on my country?”

***13*** The king of the Amoni replied to Yiftach’s messengers, “When Israel came from Egypt, they seized the land which is mine, from the Arnon to the Yabok as far as the Jordan. Now, then, restore it peaceably.”

***14*** Yiftach again sent messengers to the king of the Amoni.

***15*** He said to him, “Thus said Yiftach: Israel did not seize the land of Moav or the land of the Amoni.

***16*** When they left Egypt, Israel traveled through the wilderness to the Sea of Reeds and went on to Kadesh.

***17*** Israel then sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, ‘Allow us to cross your country.’ But the king of Edom would not consent. They also sent a mission to the king of Moav, and he refused. So Israel, after staying at Kadesh,

***18*** traveled on through the wilderness, skirting the land of Edom and the land of Moav. They kept to the east of the land of Moav until they encamped on the other side of the Arnon; and, since Moav ends at the Arnon, they never entered Moavite territory.

***19*** “Then Israel sent messengers to Sichon king of the Amori, the king of Cheshbon. Israel said to him, ‘Allow us to cross through your country to our homeland.’

***20*** But Sichon would not trust Israel to pass through his territory. Sichon mustered all his troops, and they encamped at Yahatz; he engaged Israel in battle.

***21*** But the Lord, the God of Israel, delivered Sichon and all his troops into Israel’s hands, and they defeated them; and Israel took possession of all the land of the Amori, the inhabitants of that land.

***22*** Thus they possessed all the territory of the Amori from the Arnon to the Yabok and from the wilderness to the Jordan.

***23*** “Now, then, the Lord, the God of Israel, dispossessed the Amori before His people Israel; and should you possess their land?

***24*** Do you not hold what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So we will hold on to everything that the Lord our God has given us to possess.

***25*** “Besides, are you any better than Balak ben Tzipor, king of Moav? Did he start a quarrel with Israel or go to war with them?

***26*** “While Israel has been inhabiting Cheshbon and its dependencies, and Aroer and its dependencies, and all the towns along the Arnon for 300 years, why have you not tried to recover them all this time?

***27*** I have done you no wrong; yet you are doing me harm and making war on me. May the Lord, who judges, decide today between the Israelites and the Amoni!”

***28*** But the king of the Amoni paid no heed to the message that Yiftach sent him.

***29*** Then the spirit of the Lord came upon Yiftach. He marched through Gil’ad and Menashe, passing Mitzpeh of Gil’ad; and from Mitzpeh of Gil’ad he crossed over [to] the Amoni.

***30*** And Yiftach made the following vow to the Lord: “If you deliver the Amoni into my hands,

***31*** then whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me on my safe return from the Amoni shall be the Lord’s and shall be offered by me as a burnt offering.”

***32*** Yiftach crossed over to the Amoni and attacked them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands.

***33*** He utterly routed them—from Aroer as far as Minnih, 20 towns—all the way to Avel-cheramim. So the Amoni submitted to the Israelites.

***34*** When Yiftach arrived at his home in Mitzpah, there was his daughter coming out to meet him, with timbrel and dance! She was an only child; he had no other son or daughter.

***35*** On seeing her, he rent his clothes and said, “Alas, daughter! You have brought me low; you have become my troubler! For I have uttered a vow to the Lord and I cannot retract.”

***36*** “Father,” she said, “you have uttered a vow to the Lord; do to me as you have vowed, seeing that the Lord has vindicated you against your enemies, the Amoni.”

***37*** She further said to her father, “Let this be done for me: let me be for two months, and I will go with my companions and lament upon the hills and there bewail my maidenhood.”

***38*** “Go,” he replied. He let her go for two months, and she and her companions went and bewailed her maidenhood upon the hills.

***39*** After two months’ time, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed. She had never known a man. So it became a custom in Israel

***40*** for the maidens of Israel to go every year, for four days in the year, and chant dirges for the daughter of Yiftach the Gil’adite.

Chapter 12

***1*** The men of Efrayim mustered and crossed [the Jordan] to Tzafon. They said to Yiftach, “Why did you march to fight the Amoni without calling us to go with you? We’ll burn your house down over you!”

***2*** Yiftach answered them, “I and my people were in a bitter conflict with the Amoni; and I summoned you, but you did not save me from them.

***3*** When I saw that you were no saviors, I risked my life and advanced against the Amoni; and the Lord delivered them into my hands. Why have you come here now to fight against me?”

***4*** And Yiftach gathered all the men of Gil’ad and fought the Efrayimites. The men of Gil’ad defeated the Efrayimites; for they had said, “You Gil’adites are nothing but fugitives from Efrayim—being in Menashe is like being in Efrayim.”

***5*** The Gil’adites held the fords of the Jordan against the Efrayimites. And when any fugitive from Efrayim said, “Let me cross,” the men of Gil’ad would ask him, “Are you an Efrayimite?”; if he said “No,”

***6*** they would say to him, “Then say shibolet [shibboleth]”; but he would say “sibolet,” not being able to pronounce it correctly. Thereupon they would seize him and slay him by the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Efrayimites fell at that time. [NOTE: A shibboleth is a custom, principle, or belief distinguishing a particular class or group of people, especially a long-standing one regarded as outmoded or no longer important. Synonyms include tradition, practice, mode, mores, manner, way, form, usage, procedure, convention, formality, observance, ceremony, ritual, ordinance, fashion, sacred cow, unwritten rule, way of doing things.]

***7*** Yiftach led Israel six years. Then Yiftach the Gil’adite died and he was buried in one of the towns of Gil’ad.

***8*** After him, Ivtzan of Bet-lechem led Israel.

***9*** He had 30 sons, and he married off 30 daughters outside the clan and brought in 30 girls from outside the clan for his sons. He led Israel seven years.

***10*** Then Ivtzan died and was buried in Bet-lechem.

***11*** After him, Elon the Z’vulunite led Israel; he led Israel for 10 years.

***12*** Then Elon the Z’vulunite died and was buried in Ayalon, in the territory of Z’vulun.

***13*** After him, Avdon ben Hillel the Piratonite led Israel.

***14*** He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, who rode on 70 jackasses. He led Israel for eight years.

***15*** Then Abdon ben Hillel the Piratonite died. He was buried in Piraton, in the territory of Efrayim, on the hill of the Amalekites.

Chapter 13

***1*** The Israelites again did what was offensive to the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for ***4***0 years.

***2*** There was a certain man from Tzorah, of the stock of Dan, whose name was Manoach. His wife was barren and had borne no children.

***3*** An angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “You are barren and have borne no children; but you shall conceive and bear a son.

***4*** Now be careful not to drink wine or other intoxicant, or to eat anything unclean.

***5*** For you are going to conceive and bear a son; let no razor touch his head, for the boy is to be a nazirite to God from the womb on. He shall be the first to deliver Israel from the Philistines.”

***6*** The woman went and told her husband, “A man of God came to me; he looked like an angel of God, very frightening. I did not ask him where he was from, nor did he tell me his name.

***7*** He said to me, ‘You are going to conceive and bear a son. Drink no wine or other intoxicant, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy is to be a nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death!’”

***8*** Manoach pleaded with the Lord. “Oh, my Lord!” he said, “please let the man of God that You sent come to us again and let him instruct us how to act with the child that is to be born.”

***9*** God heeded Manoach’s plea, and the angel of God came to the woman again. She was sitting in the field and her husband Manoach was not with her.

***10*** The woman ran in haste to tell her husband. She said to him, “The man who came to me before has just appeared to me.”

***11*** Manoach promptly followed his wife. He came to the man and asked him: “Are you the man who spoke to my wife?” “Yes,” he answered.

***12*** Then Manoach said, “May your words soon come true! What rules shall be observed for the boy?”

***13*** The angel of the Lord said to Manoach, “The woman must abstain from all the things against which I warned her.

***14*** She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, or drink wine or other intoxicant, or eat anything unclean. She must observe all that I commanded her.”

***15*** Manoach said to the angel of the Lord, “Let us detain you and prepare a kid for you.”

***16*** But the angel of the Lord said to Manoach, “If you detain me, I shall not eat your food; and if you present a burnt offering, offer it to Lord”—For Manoach did not know that he was an angel of the Lord.

***17*** So Manoach said to the angel of the Lord, “What is your name? We should like to honor you when your words come true.”

***18*** The angel said to him, “You must not ask for my name; it is unknowable!”

***19*** Manoach took the kid and the meal offering and offered them up on the rock to the Lord; and a marvelous thing happened while Manoach and his wife looked on.

***20*** As the flames leaped up from the altar toward the sky, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flames of the altar, while Manoach and his wife looked on; and they flung themselves on their faces to the ground.

***21*** The angel of the Lord never appeared again to Manoach and his wife. Manoach then realized that it had been an angel of the Lord.

***22*** And Manoach said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen a divine being.”

***23*** But his wife said to him, “Had the Lord meant to take our lives, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and meal offering from us, nor let us see all these things; and He would not have made such an announcement to us.”

***24*** The woman bore a son, and she named him Shimshon [Samson]. The boy grew up, and the Lord blessed him.

***25*** The spirit of the Lord first moved him in the encampment of Dan, between Tzorah and Eshtaol.

Chapter 14

***1*** Once Shimshon went down to Timnah; and while in Timnah, he noticed a girl among the Philistine women.

***2*** On his return, he told his father and mother, “I noticed one of the Philistine women in Timnah; please get her for me as a wife.”

***3*** His father and mother said to him, “Is there no one among the daughters of your own kinsmen and among all our people, that you must go and take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” But Shimshon answered his father, “Get me that one, for she is the one that pleases me.”

***4*** His father and mother did not realize that this was the Lord’s doing: He was seeking a pretext against the Philistines, for the Philistines were ruling over Israel at that time.

***5*** So Shimshon and his father and mother went down to Timnah. When he came to the vineyards of Timnah [for the first time], a full-grown lion came roaring at him.

***6*** The spirit of the Lord gripped him, and he tore him [the lion] asunder with his bare hands as one might tear a kid asunder; but he did not tell his father and mother what he had done.

***7*** Then he went down and spoke to the woman, and she pleased Shimshon.

***8*** Returning the following year to marry her, he turned aside to look at the remains of the lion; and in the lion’s skeleton he found a swarm of bees, and honey.

***9*** He scooped it into his palms and ate it as he went along. When he rejoined his father and mother, he gave them some and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scooped the honey out of a lion’s skeleton.

***10*** So his father came down to the woman, and Shimshon made a feast there, as young men used to do.

***11*** When they [the people of Timnah] saw him, they designated 30 companions to be with him.

***12*** Then Shimshon said to them, “Let me propound a riddle to you. If you can give me the right answer during the seven days of the feast, I shall give you 30 linen tunics and 30 sets of clothing;

***13*** but if you are not able to tell it to me, you must give me 30 linen tunics and 30 sets of clothing.” And they said to him, “Ask your riddle and we will listen.”

***14*** So he said to them: “Out of the eater came something to eat, out of the strong came something sweet.” For three days they could not answer the riddle.

***15*** On the seventh day [Septuagint and Syriac read “fourth”], they said to Shimshon’s wife, “Coax your husband to provide us with the answer to the riddle; else we shall put you and your father’s household to the fire; have you invited us here in order to impoverish us?”

***16*** Then Shimshon’s wife harassed him with tears, and she said, “You really hate me, you don’t love me. You asked my countrymen a riddle, and you didn’t tell me the answer.” He replied, “I haven’t even told my father and mother; shall I tell you?”

***17*** During the rest of the seven days of the feast she continued to harass him with her tears, and on the seventh day he told her, because she nagged him so. And she explained the riddle to her countrymen.

***18*** On the seventh day, before the sunset, the townsmen said to him: “What is sweeter than honey, And what is stronger than a lion?” He responded: “Had you not plowed with my heifer, you would not have guessed my riddle!”

***19*** The spirit of the Lord gripped him. He went down to Ashkelon and killed 30 of its men. He stripped them and gave the sets of clothing to those who had answered the riddle. And he left in a rage for his father’s house.

***20*** Shimshon’s wife then married one of those who had been his wedding companions.

Chapter 15

***1*** Sometime later, in the season of the wheat harvest, Shimshon came to visit his wife, bringing a kid as a gift. He said, “Let me go into the chamber to my wife.” But her father would not let him go in.

***2*** “I was sure,” said her father, “that you had taken a dislike to her, so I gave her to your wedding companion. But her younger sister is more beautiful than she; let her become your wife instead.”

***3*** Thereupon Shimshon declared, “Now the Philistines can have no claim against me for the harm I shall do them.”

***4*** Shimshon went and caught 300 foxes. He took torches and, turning [the foxes] tail to tail, he placed a torch between each pair of tails.

***5*** He lit the torches and turned [the foxes] loose among the standing grain of the Philistines, setting fire to stacked grain, standing grain, vineyards, [and] olive trees.

***6*** The Philistines asked, “Who did this?” And they were told, “It was Shimshon, the son-in-law of the Timnite, who took Shimshon’s wife and gave her to his wedding companion.” Thereupon the Philistines came up and put her and her father to the fire.

***7*** Shimshon said to them, “If that is how you act, I will not rest until I have taken revenge on you.”

***8*** He gave them a sound and thorough thrashing [lit. “He smote them leg as well as thigh, a great smiting”]. Then he went down and stayed in the cave of the rock of Eitam.

***9*** The Philistines came up, pitched camp in Judah and spread out over Lechi.

***10*** The men of Judah asked, “Why have you come up against us?” They answered, “We have come to take Shimshon prisoner, and to do to him as he did to us.”

***11*** Thereupon 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cave of the rock of Eitam, and they said to Shimshon, “You knew that the Philistines rule over us; why have you done this to us?” He replied, “As they did to me, so I did to them.”

***12*** “We have come down,” they told him, “to take you prisoner and to hand you over to the Philistines.” “But swear to me,” said Shimshon to them, “that you yourselves will not attack me.”

***13*** “We won’t,” they replied. “We will only take you prisoner and hand you over to them; we will not slay you.” So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

***14*** When he reached Lechi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Thereupon the spirit of the Lord gripped him, and the ropes on his arms became like flax that catches fire; the bonds melted off his hands.

***15*** He came upon a fresh jawbone of an ass and he picked it up; and with it he killed 1,000 men.

***16*** Then Shimshon said: “With the jaw of an ass, mass upon mass! with the jaw of an ass I have slain 1,000 men.”

***17*** As he finished speaking, he threw the jawbone away; hence that place was called Ramat-lechi.

***18*** He was very thirsty and he called to the Lord, “You Yourself have granted this great victory through Your servant; and must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?”

***19*** So God split open the hollow, which is at Lechi, and the water gushed out of it; he drank, regained his strength, and revived. That is why it is called to this day “Ein-hakoreh [Jawbone Heights] of Lechi.”

***20*** He led Israel in the days of the Philistines for 20 years.

Chapter 16

***1*** Once Shimshon went to Gaza; there he met a whore and slept with her.

***2*** The Gazites [learned] that Shimshon had come there, so they gathered and lay in ambush for him in the town gate the whole night; and all night long they kept whispering to each other, “When daylight comes, we’ll kill him.”

***3*** But Shimshon lay in bed only till midnight. At midnight he got up, grasped the doors of the town gate together with the two gateposts, and pulled them out along with the bar. He placed them on his shoulders and carried them off to the top of the hill that is near Khevron.

***4*** After that, he fell in love with a woman in the Wadi Sorek, named Delilah.

***5*** The lords of the Philistines went up to her and said, “Coax him and find out what makes him so strong, and how we can overpower him, tie him up, and make him helpless; and we’ll each give you 1,100 shekels of silver.”

***6*** So Delilah said to Shimshon, “Tell me, what makes you so strong? And how could you be tied up and made helpless?”

***7*** Shimshon replied, “If I were to be tied with seven fresh tendons that had not been dried, I should become as weak as an ordinary man.”

***8*** So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh tendons that had not been dried. She bound him with them,

***9*** while an ambush was waiting in her room. Then she called out to him, “Shimshon, the Philistines are upon you!” Whereat he pulled the tendons apart, as a strand of tow comes apart at the touch of fire. So the secret of his strength remained unknown.

***10*** Then Delilah said to Shimshon, “Oh, you deceived me; you lied to me! Do tell me now how you could be tied up.”

***11*** He said, “If I were to be bound with new ropes that had never been used, I would become as weak as an ordinary man.”

***12*** So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, while an ambush was waiting in a room. And she cried, “Shimshon, the Philistines are upon you!” But he tore them off his arms like a thread.

***13*** Then Delilah said to Shimshon, “You have been deceiving me all along; you have been lying to me! Tell me, how could you be tied up?” He answered her, “If you weave seven locks of my head into the web.”

1***4*** And she pinned it with a peg and cried to him, “Shimshon, the Philistines are upon you!” Awaking from his sleep, he pulled out the peg, the loom, and the web.

***15*** Then she said to him, “How can you say you love me, when you don’t confide in me? This makes three times that you’ve deceived me and haven’t told me what makes you so strong.”

***16*** Finally, after she had nagged him and pressed him constantly, he was wearied to death

***17*** and he confided everything to her. He said to her, “No razor has ever touched my head, for I have been a nazirite to God since I was in my mother’s womb. If my hair were cut, my strength would leave me and I should become as weak as an ordinary man.”

***18*** Sensing that he had confided everything to her, Delilah sent for the lords of the Philistines, with this message: “Come up once more, for he has confided everything to me.” And the lords of the Philistines came up and brought the money with them.

***19*** She lulled him to sleep on her lap. Then she called in a man, and she had him cut off the seven locks of his head; thus she weakened him and made him helpless: his strength slipped away from him.

***20*** She cried, “Shimshon, the Philistines are upon you!” And he awoke from his sleep, thinking he would break loose and shake himself free as he had the other times. For he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

***21*** The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and shackled him in bronze fetters, and he became a mill slave in the prison.

***22*** After his hair was cut off, it began to grow back.

***23*** Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and to make merry. They chanted, “Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy Shimshon.”

***24*** When the people saw him, they sang praises to their god, chanting, “Our god has delivered into our hands The enemy who devastated our land, and who slew so many of us.”

***25*** As their spirits rose, they said, “Call Shimshon here and let him dance for us.” Shimshon was fetched from the prison, and he danced for them. Then they put him between the pillars.

***26*** And Shimshon said to the boy who was leading him by the hand, “Let go of me and let me feel the pillars that the temple rests upon, that I may lean on them.”

***27*** Now the temple was full of men and women; all the lords of the Philistines were there, and there were some 3,000 men and women on the roof watching Shimshon dance.

***28*** Then Shimshon called to the Lord, “O Lord God! Please remember me, and give me strength just this once, O God, to take revenge of the Philistines, if only for one of my two eyes.”

***29*** He embraced the two middle pillars that the temple rested upon, one with his right arm and one with his left, and leaned against them;

***30*** Shimshon cried, “Let me die with the Philistines!” and he pulled with all his might. The temple came crashing down on the lords and on all the people in it. Those who were slain by him as he died outnumbered those who had been slain by him when he lived.

***31*** His brothers and all his father’s household came down and carried him up and buried him in the tomb of his father Manoach, between Tzorah and Eshtaol. He had led Israel for 20 years.

Chapter 17

***1*** There was a man in the hill country of Efrayim whose name was Michiyahu.

***2*** He said to his mother, “The 1,100 shekels of silver that were taken from you, so that you uttered an imprecation [Cursing anyone who knew the whereabouts of the silver and did not disclose it] which you repeated in my hearing—I have that silver; I took it.” “Blessed of the Lord be my son,” said his mother [in order to nullify the imprecation].

3 He returned the 1,100 shekels of silver to his mother; but his mother said, “I herewith consecrate the silver to the Lord, transferring it to my son to make a sculptured image and a molten image. I now return it to you.”

***4*** So when he gave the silver back to his mother, his mother took 200 shekels of silver and gave it to a smith. He made of it a sculptured image and a molten image, which were kept in the house of Michah.

***5*** Now the man Michah had a house of God; he had made an ephod and teraphim and he had inducted one of his sons to be his priest.

***6*** In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did as he pleased.

***7*** There was a young man from Bet-lechem of Judah, from the clan seat of Judah; he was a Levite and had resided there as a sojourner.

***8*** This man had left the town of Bet-lechem of Judah to take up residence wherever he could find a place. On his way, he came to the house of Michah in the hill country of Efrayim.

***9*** “Where do you come from?” Michah asked him. He replied, “I am a Levite from Bet-lechem of Judah, and I am traveling to take up residence wherever I can find a place.”

***10*** “Stay with me,” Michah said to him, “and be a father and a priest to me, and I will pay you 10 shekels of silver a year, an allowance of clothing, and your food.” The Levite went.

***11*** The Levite agreed to stay with the man, and the youth became like one of his own sons.

***12*** Michah inducted the Levite, and the young man became his priest and remained in Michah’s shrine.

***13*** “Now I know,” Michah told himself, “that the Lord will prosper me, since the Levite has become my priest.”

Chapter 18

***1*** In those days there was no king in Israel, and in those days the tribe of Dan was seeking a territory in which to settle; for to that day no territory had fallen to their lot among the tribes of Israel.

***2*** The Danites sent out five of their number, from their clan seat at Tzorah and Eshtaol—valiant men—to spy out the land and explore it. “Go,” they told them, “and explore the land.” When they had advanced into the hill country of Efrayim as far as the house of Michah, they stopped there for the night.

***3*** While in the vicinity of Michah’s house, they recognized the speech [lit. voice; the men could tell by his dialect that he came from Judah and was therefore a former neighbor of the Danites] of the young Levite, so they went over and asked him, “Who brought you to these parts? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?”

***4*** He replied, “Thus and thus Michah did for me—he hired me and I became his priest.”

***5*** They said to him, “Please, inquire of God; we would like to know if the mission on which we are going will be successful.”

***6*** “Go in peace,” the priest said to them, “the Lord views with favor the mission you are going on.”

***7*** The five men went on and came to Laish. They observed the people in it dwelling carefree, after the manner of the Tzidoni, a tranquil and unsuspecting people, with no one in the land to molest them and with no hereditary ruler. Moreover, they were distant from the Tzidoni and had no dealings with anybody.

***8*** When [the men] came back to their kinsmen at Tzorah and Eshtaol, their kinsmen asked them, “How did you fare?”

***9*** They replied, “Let us go at once and attack them! For we found that the land was very good, and you are sitting idle! Don’t delay; go and invade the land and take possession of it,

***10*** for God has delivered it into your hand. When you come, you will come to an unsuspecting people; and the land is spacious and nothing on earth is lacking there.”

***11*** They departed from there, from the clan seat of the Danites, from Tzorah and Eshtaol, 600 strong, girt with weapons of war.

***12*** They went up and encamped at Kiryat-y’arim in Judah. That is why that place is called “the Camp of Dan” to this day; it lies west of Kiryat-y’arim.

***13*** From there they passed on to the hill country of Efrayim and arrived at the house of Michah.

***14*** Here the five men who had gone to spy out the Laish region remarked to their kinsmen, “Do you know, there is an ephod in these houses, and teraphim, and a sculptured image and a molten image? Now you know what you have to do.”

***15*** So they turned off there and entered the home of the young Levite at Michah’s house and greeted him.

***16*** The 600 Danite men, girt with their weapons of war, stood at the entrance of the gate,

***17*** while the five men who had gone to spy out the land went inside and took the sculptured image, the ephod, the teraphim, and the molten image. The priest was standing at the entrance of the gate, and the 600 men girt with their weapons of war,

***18*** while those men entered Michah’s house and took the sculptured image, the molten image, the ephod, and the household gods. The priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

***19*** But they said to him, “Be quiet; put your hand on your mouth! Come with us and be our father and priest. Would you rather be priest to one man’s household or be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?”

***20*** The priest was delighted. He took the ephod, the household gods, and the sculptured image, and he joined the people.

***21*** They set out again, placing the children, the cattle, and their household goods in front.

***22*** They had already gone some distance from Michah’s house, when the men in the houses near Michah’s mustered and caught up with the Danites.

***23*** They called out to the Danites, who turned around and said to Michah, “What’s the matter? Why have you mustered?”

***24*** He said, “You have taken my priest and the gods that I made, and walked off! What do I have left? How can you ask, ‘What’s the matter’?”

***25*** But the Danites replied, “Don’t do any shouting at us, or some desperate men might attack you, and you and your family would lose your lives.”

***26*** So Michah, realizing that they were stronger than he, turned back and went home; and the Danites went on their way,

***27*** taking the things Michah had made and the priest he had acquired. They proceeded to Laish, a people tranquil and unsuspecting, and they put them to the sword and burned down the town.

***28*** There was none to come to the rescue, for it was distant from Tzidon and they had no dealings with anyone; it lay in the valley of Bet-rechov. They rebuilt the town and settled there,

***29*** and they named the town Dan, after their ancestor Dan who was Israel’s son. Originally, however, the name of the town was Laish.

***30*** The Danites set up the sculptured image for themselves; and Yonatan ben Gershom ben Menashe, and his descendants, served as priests to the Danite tribe until the land went into exile.

***31*** They maintained the sculptured image that Michah had made throughout the time that the House of God stood at Shiloh.

Chapter 19

***1*** In those days, when there was no king in Israel, a Levite residing at the other end of the hill country of Efrayim took to himself a concubine from Bet-lechem in Judah.

***2*** Once his concubine deserted him, leaving him for her father’s house in Bet-lechem in Judah; and she stayed there a full four months.

***3*** Then her husband set out, with an attendant and a pair of donkeys, and went after her to woo her and to win her back. She admitted him into her father’s house; and when the girl’s father saw him, he received him warmly.

***4*** His father-in-law, the girl’s father, pressed him, and he stayed with him three days; they ate and drank and lodged there.

***5*** Early in the morning of the fourth day, he started to leave; but the girl’s father said to his son-in-law, “Eat something to give you strength, then you can leave.”

***6*** So the two of them sat down and they feasted together. Then the girl’s father said to the man, “Won’t you stay overnight and enjoy yourself?”

***7*** The man started to leave, but his father-in-law kept urging him until he turned back and spent the night there.

***8*** Early in the morning of the fifth day, he was about to leave, when the girl’s father said, “Come, have a bite.” The two of them ate, dawdling until past noon.

***9*** Then the man, his concubine, and his attendant started to leave. His father-in-law, the girl’s father, said to him, “Look, the day is waning toward evening; do stop for the night. See, the day is declining; spend the night here and enjoy yourself. You can start early tomorrow on your journey and head for home.”

***10*** But the man refused to stay for the night. He set out and traveled as far as the vicinity of Y’vus—that is, Jerusalem; he had with him a pair of laden donkeys, and his concubine was with him.

***11*** Since they were close to Y'bus, and the day was very far spent, the attendant said to his master, “Let us turn aside to this town of the Y’vusi and spend the night in it.”

***12*** But his master said to him, “We will not turn aside to a town of aliens who are not of Israel, but will continue to Giv’ah.

***13*** Come,” he said to his attendant, “let us approach one of those places and spend the night either in Giv’ah or in Ramah.”

***14*** So they traveled on, and the sun set when they were near Giv’ah of Binyamin.

***15*** They turned off there and went in to spend the night in Giv’ah. He went and sat down in the town square, but nobody took them indoors to spend the night.

***16*** In the evening, an old man came along from his property outside the town. (This man hailed from the hill country of Efrayim and resided at Giv’ah, where the townspeople were Binyaminites.)

***17*** He happened to see the wayfarer in the town square. “Where,” the old man inquired, “are you going to, and where do you come from?”

***18*** He replied, “We are traveling from Bet-lechem in Judah to the other end of the hill country of Efrayim. That is where I live. I made a journey to Bet-lechem of Judah, and now I am on my way to the House of the Lord, and nobody has taken me indoors.

***19*** We have both bruised straw and feed for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me and your handmaid [concubine], and for the attendant with your servants. We lack nothing.”

***20*** “Rest easy,” said the old man. “Let me take care of all your needs. Do not on any account spend the night in the square.”

***21*** And he took him into his house. He mixed fodder for the donkeys; then they bathed their feet and ate and drank.

***22*** While they were enjoying themselves, the men of the town, a depraved lot, had gathered about the house and were pounding on the door. They called to the aged owner of the house, “Bring out the man who has come into your house, so that we can be intimate with him.”

***23*** The owner of the house went out and said to them, “Please, my friends, do not commit such a wrong. Since this man has entered my house, do not perpetrate this outrage.

***24*** Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. Let me bring them out to you. Have your pleasure of them, do what you like with them; but don’t do that outrageous thing to this man.”

***25*** But the men would not listen to him, so the man seized his concubine and pushed her out to them. They raped her and abused her all night long until morning; and they let her go when dawn broke.

***26*** Toward morning the woman came back; and as it was growing light, she collapsed at the entrance of the man’s house where her husband was.

***27*** When her husband arose in the morning, he opened the doors of the house and went out to continue his journey; and there was the woman, his concubine, lying at the entrance of the house, with her hands on the threshold.

***28*** “Get up,” he said to her, “let us go.” But there was no reply. So the man placed her on the donkey and set out for home.

***29*** When he came home, he picked up a knife, and took hold of his concubine and cut her up limb by limb into 12 parts. He sent them throughout the territory of Israel.

***30*** And everyone who saw it cried out, “Never has such a thing happened or been seen from the day the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt to this day! Put your mind to this; take counsel and decide.”

Chapter 20

***1*** Thereupon all the Israelites—from Dan to Be’er-shevah and [from] the land of Gil’ad—marched forth, and the community assembled to a man before the Lord at Mitzpah.

***2*** All the leaders of the people [and] all the tribes of Israel presented themselves in the assembly of God’s people, ***4***00,000 fighting men on foot.—

***3*** The sons of Binyamin heard that the Israelites had come up to Mitzpah [this sentence is continued in verse 14 below].—The Israelites said, “Tell us, how did this evil thing happen?”

***4*** And the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, replied, “My concubine and I came to Giv’ah of Binyamin to spend the night.

***5*** The citizens of Giv’ah set out to harm me. They gathered against me around the house in the night; they meant to kill me, and they ravished my concubine until she died.

***6*** So I took hold of my concubine and I cut her in pieces and sent them through every part of Israel’s territory. For an outrageous act of depravity had been committed in Israel.

***7*** Now you are all Israelites; produce a plan of action here and now!”

***8*** Then all the people rose, as one man, and declared, “We will not go back to our homes, we will not enter our houses!

***9*** But this is what we will do to Giv’ah: [we will wage war] against it according to lot.

***10*** We will take from all the tribes of Israel 10 men to 100, 100 to 1,000, and 1,000 to the 10,000 to supply provisions for the troops—to prepare for their going to Geva in Binyamin for all the outrage it has committed in Israel.”

***11*** So all the men of Israel, united as one man, massed against the town.

***12*** And the tribes of Israel sent men through the whole tribe of Binyamin, saying, “What is this evil thing that has happened among you?

***13*** Come, hand over those scoundrels in Giv’ah so that we may put them to death and stamp out the evil from Israel.” But the sons of Binyamin would not yield to the demand of their fellow Israelites.

***14*** So the sons of Binyamin gathered from their towns to Giv’ah in order to take the field against the Israelites.

***15*** On that day the sons of Binyamin mustered from the towns 26,000 fighting men, mustered apart from the inhabitants of Giv’ah; ***7***00 picked men

***16*** of all this force—***7***00 picked men—were left-handed. Every one of them could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

***17*** The men of Israel other than Binyamin mustered 400,000 fighting men, warriors to a man.

***18*** They proceeded to Bet-El and inquired of God; the Israelites asked, “Who of us shall advance first to fight the sons of Binyamin?” And the Lord replied, “Judah first.”

***19*** So the Israelites arose in the morning and encamped against Giv’ah.

***20*** The men of Israel took the field against the sons of Binyamin; the men of Israel drew up in battle order against them at Giv’ah.

***21*** But the sons of Binyamin issued from Giv’ah, and that day they struck down 22,000 men of Israel.

***22*** Now the army—the men of Israel—rallied and again drew up in battle order at the same place as they had on the first day.

***23*** For the Israelites had gone up and wept before the Lord until evening. They had inquired of the Lord, “Shall we again join battle with our kinsmen the sons of Binyamin?” And the Lord had replied, “March against them.”

***24*** The Israelites advanced against the sons of Binyamin on the second day.

***25*** But the sons of Binyamin came out from Giv’ah against them on the second day and struck down 1***8***,000 more of the Israelites, all of them fighting men.

***26*** Then all the Israelites, all the army, went up and came to Bet-El and they sat there, weeping before the Lord. They fasted that day until evening, and presented burnt offerings and offerings of well-being to the Lord.

***27*** The Israelites inquired of the Lord (for the Ark of God’s Covenant was there in those days,

***28*** and Pinchas ben Eleazar ben Aaron the priest ministered before Him in those days), “Shall we again take the field against our kinsmen the sons of Binyamin, or shall we not?” The Lord answered, “Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hands.”

***29*** Israel put men in ambush against Giv’ah on all sides.

***30*** And on the third day, the Israelites went up against the sons of Binyamin, as before, and engaged them in battle at Giv’ah.

***31*** The sons of Binyamin dashed out to meet the army and were drawn away from the town onto the roads, of which one runs to Bet-El and the other to Giv’ah. As before, they started out by striking some of the men dead in the open field, about 30 men of Israel.

***32*** The sons of Binyamin thought, “They are being routed before us as previously.” But the Israelites had planned: “We will take to flight and draw them away from the town to the roads.”

***33*** And while the main body of the Israelites had moved away from their positions and had drawn up in battle order at Ba-al-tamar, the Israelite ambush was rushing out from its position at Ma-areh-geva.

***34*** Thus 10,000 picked men of all Israel came to a point south of Giv’ah, and the battle was furious. Before they realized that disaster was approaching,

***35*** the Lord routed the sons of Binyamin before Israel. That day the Israelites slew 2***5***,100 men of Binyamin, all of them fighting men.

***36*** Then the sons of Binyamin realized that they were routed. Now the Israelites had yielded ground to the sons of Binyamin, for they relied on the ambush which they had laid against Giv’ah.

***37*** One ambush quickly deployed against Giv’ah, and the other ambush advanced and put the whole town to the sword.

***38*** A time had been agreed upon by the Israelite men with those in ambush: When a huge column of smoke was sent up from the town,

***39*** the Israelite men were to turn about in battle. Binyamin had begun by striking dead about 30 Israelite men, and they thought, “They are being routed before us as in the previous fighting.”

***40*** But when the column, the pillar of smoke, began to rise from the city, the sons of Binyamin looked behind them, and there was the whole town going up in smoke to the sky!

***41*** And now the Israelites turned about, and the men of Binyamin were thrown into panic, for they realized that disaster had overtaken them.

***42*** They retreated before the men of Israel along the road to the wilderness, where the fighting caught up with them; meanwhile those from the towns were massacring them in it.

***43*** They encircled the sons of Binyamin, pursued them, and trod them down [from] M’nuchah to a point opposite Giv’ah on the east.

***44*** That day 1***8***,000 men of Binyamin fell, all of them brave men.

***45*** They turned and fled to the wilderness, to the Rock of Rimmon; but [the Israelites] picked off another ***5***,000 on the roads and, continuing in hot pursuit of them up to Gidom, they slew 2,000 more.

***46*** Thus the total number of Binyaminites who fell that day came to 2***5***,000 fighting men, all of them brave.

***47*** But ***6***00 men turned and fled to the wilderness, to the Rock of Rimmon; they remained at the Rock of Rimmon four months.

***48*** The men of Israel, meanwhile, turned back to the rest of the sons of Binyamin s and put them to the sword—towns, people, cattle—everything that remained. Finally, they set fire to all the towns that were left.

Chapter 21

***1*** Now the men of Israel had taken an oath at Mitzpah: “None of us will give his daughter in marriage to a Binyaminite.”

***2*** The people came to Bet-El and sat there before God until evening. They wailed and wept bitterly,

***3*** and they said, “O Lord God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel, that one tribe must now be missing from Israel?”

***4*** Early the next day, the people built an altar there, and they brought burnt offerings and offerings of well-being.

***5*** The Israelites asked, “Is there anyone from all the tribes of Israel who failed to come up to the assembly before the Lord?” For a solemn oath had been taken concerning anyone who did not go up to the Lord at Mitzpah: “He shall be put to death.”

***6*** The Israelites now relented toward their kinsmen the sons of Binyamin, and they said, “This day one tribe has been cut off from Israel!

***7*** What can we do to provide wives for those who are left, seeing that we have sworn by the Lord not to give any of our daughters to them in marriage?”

***8*** They inquired, “Is there anyone from the tribes of Israel who did not go up to the Lord at Mitzpah?” Now no one from Yavesh-Gil’ad had come to the camp, to the assembly.

***9*** For, when the roll of the troops was taken, not one of the inhabitants of Yavesh-Gil’ad was present.

***10*** So the assemblage dispatched 12,000 of the warriors, instructing them as follows: “Go and put the inhabitants of Yavesh-Gil’ad to the sword, women and children included.

***11*** This is what you are to do: Proscribe every man, and every woman who has known a man carnally.”

***12*** They found among the inhabitants of Yavesh-Gil’ad 400 maidens who had not known a man carnally; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan [west of the Jordan, whereas Yavesh-Gil’ad is east of the Jordan].

***13*** Then the whole community sent word to the sons of Binyamin who were at the Rock of Rimmon, and offered them terms of peace.

***14*** Thereupon the sons of Binyamin returned, and they gave them the girls who had been spared from the women of Yavesh-Gil’ad. But there were not enough of them.

***15*** Now the people had relented toward Binyamin, for the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

***16*** So the elders of the community asked, “What can we do about wives for those who are left, since the women of Binyamin have been killed off?”

***17*** For they said, “There must be a saving remnant for Binyamin, that a tribe may not be blotted out of Israel;

***18*** yet we cannot give them any of our daughters as wives,” since the Israelites had taken an oath: “Cursed be anyone who gives a wife to Binyamin!”

***19*** They said, “The annual feast of the Lord is now being held at Shiloh.” (It lies north of Bet-El, east of the highway that runs from Bet-El to Shechem, and south of L’vonah.)

***20*** So they instructed the sons of Binyamin as follows: “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards.

***21*** As soon as you see the girls of Shiloh coming out to join in the dances, come out from the vineyards; let each of you seize a wife from among the girls of Shiloh, and be off for the land of Binyamin.

***22*** And if their fathers or brothers come to us to complain, we shall say to them, ‘Be generous to them for our sake! We could not provide any of them with a wife on account of the war, and you would have incurred guilt if you yourselves had given them [wives].’”

***23*** The sons of Binyamin did so. They took to wife, from the dancers whom they carried off, as many as they themselves numbered. Then they went back to their own territory, and rebuilt their towns and settled in them.

***24*** Thereupon the Israelites dispersed, each to his own tribe and clan; everyone departed for his own territory.

***25*** In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did as he pleased.