

- Recap: The Israelites are finally in the Promised Land, gaining victory after victory and accumulating land, so much so that people are afraid because they know that God is with them just as God told them would happen in [Deuteronomy 30:1](#). Their longtime leader Joshua has died and was given a hero's burial [Joshua 24: 29-33](#). Before he dies, Joshua reminds the Israelites to be faithful to God's command and warns them against living amongst the people they find in the land. [Joshua 23:6-26](#) They don't listen and sure enough, they started serving the gods of the people they married. [Judges 3:1-6](#) A cycle ensues where God will raise up a judge who will bring Israel back to the right ways. Then when the judge dies Israel starts into idolatry again. [Judges 2:16-23](#)
- Eventually God runs out of patience and gives them over into the hands of the Midianites for 7 years. [Judges 6:1](#) We have talked about one of the reasons we study the Old Testament is to know God's nature. It never changes, even today. The whole reason God is giving Israel over to the Midianites is because he loves them and wants to save them. It is the same reason parents sometimes have to punish their children. That is still in God's nature today. [Hebrews 12:6-11](#)
- The Midianites hide in caves in the mountains then swoop down on Israel, and there are a lot of people and camels. There were so many they were compared to grasshoppers. [Judges 6:2-5](#)
- The people of Israel cry out to God. God hears them, and appears to a person named Gideon who was actually a younger son of a poor family in the tribe of Manasseh, and says "You will lead the Israelites to defeat the Midianites" and Gideon answers "why me, I am the youngest son in a poor family?" and "I need a sign from You." [Judges 6:6-18](#). Remember we talked about how God sometimes uses the weak things of this world to humble the strong. [1 Corinthians 1:27](#)
- Gideon brings back a lamb, some bread, and some broth. An angel appears to him and orders him to put the lamb and the bread on the altar and pour the broth on it. Then fire appears and burns up the whole thing. Then the angel is gone. [Judges 6:19-21](#)
- Gideon worries that since he saw the angel face to face he might die. But God said "no you not die." [Judges 6:22-23](#)
- Gideon not only builds an altar to the Lord, he tears down the altar to Baal, the god that the Midianites worshipped. He does it at night so he can get away with it, but people are pretty mad the next day. They figure out it was Gideon and go to actually get him. Gideon's father named Joash calms everyone down by essentially saying "if he is really a god let him defend himself." [Judges 6:24-32](#)
- Gideon asks God another sign. He wants to put some wool outside his tent on the ground and if the wool is wet with dew and the ground around it is all dry he says that he will take it as a sign from God that he can defeat the Midianite army. When it happens, he says "God don't be mad at me, but tonight can you do the exact opposite?" It happens that way. [Judges 6:33-40](#)
- So Gideon takes an army of 32,000 to fight against Midian. God said, "that is too many, anyone who is scared should be allowed to go home." 22,000 people went home and only 10,000 people were left. Also important to note that his name is also Jerubbaal. [Judges 7:1-3](#)
- God says that is still too many people. He orders a test of how the army members drink water from a stream. Those that put their heads to the water are out, and those that drink with their hands so they can stay alert get to stay. That number turns out to be 300 out of the 10,000! [Judges 7:4-8](#)
- God says to Gideon that if he is still afraid he should take his servant Phurah to check out the armies camped against them. He does so and the implication is the Gideon is still scared. Again the armies are compared to grasshoppers and their numerous camels are noted. A Midianite has a dream

about some bread smashing over a tent of Midian and tells Phurah who is able to interpret that dream as saying they would be victorious. [Judges 7:9-15](#)

- One night, Gideon divides up the three hundred into three groups. He gives each person a trumpet and a pitcher with a lamp in it, and says “follow my lead.” The three companies of a hundred surround the camp, take the lamp out of the pitcher and hold it up while blowing the trumpet and pausing only to shout out “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” This causes mass chaos in the encampment of the opposing armies and they get routed. [Judges 7:16-35](#)
- Gideon continues his pursuit of what is left of the Midianite army and along the way also punishes people who will not feed his army. [Judges 8:1-21](#)
- After the defeat of the Midianite army, the Israelites try to get Gideon to rule over them, but he refuses telling them that God will rule over them. [Judges 8:22-23](#)
- But Gideon does make an ephod (a kind of sleeveless garment worn by priests) out of Gold and displays it and it becomes a “snare” for even Gideon and his house and even all of Israel. [Judges 8:24-27](#) Notice that people will worship anything. The same is true today, anything we put ahead of God can be a trap for even the best of us.
- The Israelites are living on their own for another 40 years. Gideon dies. A new generation of Israelites come up who do not know God and started worshipping Baal, a god of the Midianites. [Judges 8:28-35](#)
- There were 70 sons of Gideon. One of them, Abimelech, gets his wife to talk with the people in a nearby city (Shechem, a big city in the land of the tribe of Ephraim), and gets himself made ruler. Then he kills off all his brothers except the very youngest one, Jotham, who gets away. [Judges 9:1-6](#) Remember they had tried to make his dad ruler and he had refused.
- Jotham uses an analogy to tell the men of Shechem the danger of what they are doing. He uses an analogy of trees asking to be ruled, first by another tree, then by bushes, finally by brambles who make as their condition the destruction of a lot of trees. Then he tells them that if they have a clear conscience in dealing with Abimelech great but if not they will all be destroyed as a result. [Judges 9:7-21](#)
- God sends an evil spirit between Abimelech and Shechem so that they are not friends anymore but become enemies. The men of Shechem devise a plan to ensnare Abimelech but he outsmarts them and destroys them. [Judges 9:22-49](#)
- Abimelech then goes to a town called Thebez to capture it. He gets a bunch of people holed up in a tower and a woman throws down a millstone (a pretty heavy piece of stone equipment) and it hits Abimelech and he is hit and dying. He has his swordsman kill him because he doesn’t want people to say a woman killed him. Without Abimelech, the people return home and to their evil ways. [Judges 9:49-57](#)
- In Judges 10, the cycle of worshipping God and being blest, then doing evil in his sight and being overrun, continues. The chapter ends with the Ammonite army camped around the area called Gilead, and the Israelites camped a place called Mizpeh. [Judges 10:1-18](#)
- A man named Jephthah was born of a prostitute and was threatened by his brothers so he fled away from his family. When the war starts between the two camps (see above), the elders of Gilead call for Jephthah to come back and be the captain of the army. He even says, “why are you calling me now after you kicked me out, once I am successful can I reign over you?” They agree. [Judges 11:1-10](#)

- Jephthah sends notes back and forth with the Ammonites trying to avoid war. Ultimately it is not successful. [Judges 11:11-29](#)
- Jephthah makes a vow before God that if he is successful he will sacrifice the first thing he sees when he gets home. He is successful. Unfortunately, his young daughter is the first thing he sees when he gets home. He explains and she surprisingly understands and urges him to keep his oath. She only asks for two months. That event spawned an observance among Jewish women. [Judges 11:30—40](#) It is important to keep vows one makes to God. In fact, it is always better not to make such a vow. [Ecclesiastes 5:4-5](#)
- Animosity spills over between the Gileadites (remember this was where Jephthah was from) and the rest of Ephraim. The Gileadites prevail and want to stop the escape of those who fought for Ephraim. Apparently this tribe could not pronounce the SH in the word “Shibboleth” (which was the word for “river” or “ear of corn”). The Gileadites made this a password and if someone said “Sibboleth” instead of “Shibboleth” they were killed. 42,000 people died this way! Then Jephthah and others pass away. [Judges 12:1-15](#)
- The Israelites fall away into another cycle and are taken by the Philistines. An angel of the Lord comes in a vision to a person named Manoah and his wife (who has never been able to have kids) and tells them that they are going to have a child to deliver Israel and he will have to adhere to a Nazarite vow. The word of the angel of the Lord comes true and the chapter closes with the birth of their child named Samson. [Judges 12:1-15](#)
- The Nazarite vow is not a small thing. It involves a lot of ceremony in addition to some lifelong commitments – not to drink alcohol, not to shave, not to come near dead bodies (when not fighting obviously). [Numbers 6:1-21](#)
- Samson grows up and takes a wife from among the Philistines even though his parents know this is not what God intended. [Judges 14:1-4](#)
- Samson in going to her place finds a lion and rips it apart easily because he is very strong. When he goes back later he finds a bunch of bees inhabiting the lion carcass, so he takes their honey and eats it. [Judges 14:5-9](#)
- Samson makes up a riddle based on this experience. It is “out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came something sweet.” He then bets 30 Philistines that they can’t figure out a riddle in 30 days. [Judges 14:10-14](#)
- His wife manipulates him into telling her the answer to the riddle and then tells the men who were trying to figure it out. [Judges 14:15-18](#)
- Samson is furious and kills 30 other Philistines and takes their goods to pay off the original 30 men. Then he goes home. His wife is given to one of those men. [Judges 14:19-20](#)
- Samson tried to get his wife back. Her dad refuses and offers her younger sister instead. Samson is again enraged. This time he catches 300 foxes, ties them in 150 pairs tail to tail, puts a torch in the middle, and then sets them loose in the cornfields of the Philistines. The Philistines wonder who would do such a thing and why. When they find out, they burn up Samson’s wife and her father. Samson is again enraged and kills them. [Judges 15:1-10](#)
- Three thousand men of Judah come and find Samson, bind him up, and give him back to the Philistines. [Judges 15:11-13](#)
- When Samson gets among the Philistines, he breaks loose, picks up a donkey’s jawbone, and uses that to kill 1,000 people. [Judges 15:14-16](#) Note: the number 1,000 is used as a metaphor by Bible authors to mean “a lot.” [Psalms 50:10](#)

- God nourishes Samson with water from a hollow place in a place called Lehi, and he reigns over Israel 20 years while they were still being enslaved by the Philistines. [Judges 15:17-20](#)
- Samson goes to see a prostitute and the folks hear he is in town and say they will kill him in the morning. But he leaves at midnight and takes the city gates with him. [Judges 16:1-3](#)
- Finally, he falls in love with a woman named Delilah, but he doesn't know she is trying to trick him because she gets a big payoff from the Philistines. Three times she asks him about the secret to his strength and three times he tells her the wrong thing (use 7 ropes, use new ropes, braid the hair). Each one of these three times she tries it, and it doesn't work. [Judges 16:4-16](#)
- Then she says "you don't love me because you keep lying to me" and kept after him so much he finally told her that the secret was in the hair length. Sure enough, she brings in the folks to shave his head and the Lord leaves him. [Judges 16:15-20](#)
- The Philistines put his eyes out, force him to grind grain in the prison house, and ask to have him brought before them at a feast. Samson asks the guys guiding him to show him to the two main pillars in the house that he may rest on them and he prays to God to give him one last burst of strength so he can die with the Philistines. He pulls down the house and the number of people who die there are more than he killed in his whole life. [Judges 16:21-31](#)
- Judges 17 and 18 tell about a man named Micah who built a bunch of icons out of silver and even hired a priest of Levi to live there. The tribe of Dan is the only one that still doesn't have an inherited land so they go and take the things Micah built and the priest and use it for their own, even though the house of God was actually in a different place. [Judges 17:1- 18:1-31](#)
- In these days there was no King and everyone was doing whatever they thought was right. [Judges 17:6](#)
- Judges 19 is the sordid story of a Levite who goes back to get one of his concubines back. On the way home they are taken in for lodging by an old man in a city called Gibeah of the tribe of Benjamin. The men of the city come to the house and demand to bring the man out so they can have sex with him. The man offers his concubine instead so they end up killing her. He carves her into twelve pieces and sends each piece in different directions as a warning to the people of Israel. [Judges 19:1-30](#)
- In Judges 20, the other 11 tribes gang up on Benjamin, who have a formidable army known for its accuracy with the slingshot. The battle takes three days and the Israelites lose a lot of people. God does tell them they will prevail on the third day, it takes quite a few tactics, but they finally win and destroy the city of Gibeah. [Judges 19:1-48](#)
- In Judges 21 the Israelites vow to cut off the tribe of Benjamin and not intermarry with them. They find that no one from the town of Jabesh-Gilead has attended the meeting and so they go and destroy the town with everyone in it except the women of marrying age with they then give to Benjamin. Still not enough woman, so they go up to Shiloh to catch some more girls to take as wives. [Judges 20:1-24](#)
- And in those days there was still no king in Israel so everyone was going what he thought was right in his own eyes. [Judges 20:25](#)

#### Questions

1. How does God punish Israel in Judges chapter 6?
2. Why does God deliver Israel to its enemies when it is not following God's commands?

3. Where did the Midianites hide to launch their surprise attack on Israel?
4. To what animal was the Midianite army compared?
5. Why does God choose Gideon?
6. What did Gideon do in the middle of night and why did he do it then?
7. Who defends Gideon when it is discovered what he has done?
8. How does Gideon use wool and dew to get a sign from God?
9. How big was the army Gideon originally assembled against Midian?
10. How many people went home because they were scared?
11. What test did God devise to get Gideon's army reduced from 10,000 men?
12. What is another name for Gideon?
13. How big was the final army that Gideon led against the Midianites?
14. Who was Phuras and what did he interpret?
15. How does Gideon defeat the Midianite army?
16. What things can become a snare to us today?
17. Who was Baal?
18. Who was Abimelech and what did he do?
19. Who was Abimelech's youngest brother and what did he do?
20. Who was Jephthah and what was his vow?
21. What was the password that the Gileadites used?
22. How many people were killed because they didn't know the password?
23. What is a Nazirite vow?
24. Where does Samson find honey?
25. What was the riddle Samson made up?
26. What does Samson do when people answer his riddle?
27. What does Samson do with foxes? Why?
28. How many Philistines did Samson kill with a donkey's jawbone?
29. What was the secret to Samson's great strength?
30. What was the name of the woman who betrayed Samson?
31. How did Samson die?
32. What was the name of the city that was destroyed for the way it treated a woman so wickedly?
33. What tribe was cut off from the other tribes of Israel?