

# Old Testament History

Lesson #11

Judges 8:1-1 Samuel 2:11

## Outline

### I. ***Cycles Of Apostasy, Judgment, And Deliverance (Judges 2:6-16:31)***

- A. Failure of the judges to maintain Israel's faithfulness (3:7-16:31).
  - 1. Gideon (6:1-9:57).
    - a) The conquests of Gideon (7:1-8:35).
    - b) Abimelech's murder of his brothers (9:1-9:57).
  - 2. Tola (10:1-2).
  - 3. Jair (10:3-5).
  - 4. Jephthah (10:6-12:7).
  - 5. Ibzan (12:8-10).
  - 6. Elon (12:11-12).
  - 7. Abdon (12:13-15).
  - 8. Samson (13:1-16:31).
- B. The extent of Israel's depravity (17:1-21:24).
  - 1. Idolatry among the Danites (17:1-18:31).
  - 2. Civil war: Israel against Benjamin (19:1-20:24).
- C. Summary of the condition of Israel (21:25).

### II. ***The Story Of Ruth (Ruth 1:1-4:22)***

- A. Naomi loses a family (1:1-5).
- B. Naomi returns from Moab (1:6-22).
  - 1. Ruth pledges to go with Naomi (1:6-18).
  - 2. Naomi's bitter return to Bethlehem (1:19-22).
- C. Ruth goes to work in the fields of Boaz (2:1-23).
  - 1. Ruth begins work (2:1-7).
  - 2. Ruth and Boaz meet (2:8-16).
  - 3. Ruth returns to Naomi (2:17-23).
- D. Ruth visits Boaz at the threshing floor (3:1-18).
  - 1. Naomi's instructions (3:1-5).
  - 2. Boaz's pledge to redeem Ruth (3:6-15).
  - 3. Ruth returns to Naomi (3:14-18).
- E. Boaz redeems Ruth (4:1-12).
  - 1. The close relative decides not to redeem (4:1-6).
  - 2. The marriage of Ruth and Boaz (4:7-12).
- F. Naomi gains a family (4:13-17).
- G. The genealogy of Boaz (4:18-22).

### III. **Before The Monarchy (1 Samuel 1:1-7:17)**

#### A. Samuel's rise and Eli's decline (1:1-4:1).

##### 1. Samuel's birth and Hannah's song (1:1-2:11).

## **Notes**

### ***Judges 8:1-9:57***

- The reply of Gideon to the Ephraimites sounded much more like Oriental diplomacy than the straightforward speech of a warrior of God (cf. Proverbs 15:1). Their attitude provoked Gideon and he promised to avenge himself. This seems to have been the beginning of his backsliding, for God would have certainly dealt with them in His own way.
- It seems as if Gideon might have spared the princes of Midian if they had not personally taken part in the slaughter of his brothers.
- It was natural that as the people failed to recognize the direct agency of God, they exalted Gideon as a great national hero. Gideon had sufficient spiritual discernment and strength to resist the temptation to make him a leader. He knew that the rule they wanted of him could not be hereditary.
- Gideon took gold ornaments from the people and made an ephod and started an unlawful worship. It is sad to see the man who overthrew Baal's altar now setting up an idol of his own. After Gideon's death, matters changed immediately and the people returned to the worship of Baal. Having forsaken God, they turned their ingratitude toward their earthly deliverer.
- Shechem was probably the center of Baal worship. Abimelech seems to have possessed all the courage, strength, and energy of his father. However, these good traits were coupled with restless ambition, reckless unethical behavior, and daring ungodliness. All but one of Gideon's sons were killed. Jotham did not speak as a prophet, but his language was prophetic.
- Abimelech died by a woman casting a millstone down upon his head. He died as he had lived. He had himself run through by the sword of his armor bearer to avoid the reproach of dying at the hand of a woman.

### ***Judges 10:1-12:15***

- The sudden and tragic end of Abimelech apparently awakened repentance among the people. His name is mentioned in connection with three judges who ruled successively in the north.
- These 45 years of comparative rest conclude the second period in the history of the judges. The third, which commences with new apostasy on the part of Israel, includes the contemporaneous rule of Jephthah

and his successors -- Ibzan, Elon and Abdon -- in the north and east, and Samson in the south and west.

- As Eli's high priestly administration, which in a general sense is designated as "judging Israel," lasted forty years (1 Samuel 6:1; 7:2), it is evident that the first twenty years of Eli's administration were contemporary with Jair in the east, while the last twenty were marked by the Philistine oppression, which continued forty years. In that case, Samson must have been born and have grown up during the high priesthood of Eli, and most of his exploits as a judge of Israel for twenty years taken place under Samuel.
- Judges 10:6-18 forms a general introduction to the history of Jephthah and his successors, along with Samson. The Israelites put away their "strange gods" when there was no immediate prospect of divine help.
- Few finer or nobler characters are revealed in scriptures than Jephthah. He is introduced to us as "a mighty man of valor" -- the same terms in which the angel had first addressed Gideon (6:12). But he must first learn to conquer his own spirit. His history is a close contrasting parallel of Abimelech's.
- Before Jephthah went to war, he made a solemn vow. This vow is probably the most difficult part of Jephthah's history. The vow was not one of human sacrifice (cf. Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10), but of vowing the virginity of his daughter (cf. Leviticus 20:20; Psalm 78:63).

### ***Judges 13:1-15:20***

- There are two periods in Samson's history. The first was when he acted under the influence of the Spirit and the second was when, yielding to his lusts, he fell into sin and unfaithfulness to his calling.
- The history of the judges had run its course to the end. The result had been general disorganization, an almost complete disintegration of the tribes, and decay of the tabernacle.
- Samson's strength lay in being a Nazarite; his weakness in yielding to his lusts, and thereby becoming unfaithful to his calling. In both respects he was not only a type of Israel, but a "mirror" in which Israel could see itself and its history. If the period of the judges reached its highest point in Samson the Nazarite, it also sunk to its lowest in Samson the man of carnal lusts, who told his secret to Delilah. The spirit of the strength of God bestowed on the judges for the deliverance of their people was overcome by the power of the flesh lusting against the Spirit.
- Samson's activity probably started one or two years before the disastrous battle in which the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines, and in which Eli died (1 Samuel 4:18).

- “Samson went down ...” was true both spiritually and geographically. Note that he told his parents; he did not ask them. When they reminded him of God’s law, he defied them. Samson’s desire to marry a Philistine was contrary to God’s will (Exodus 34:16; Deuteronomy 7:3). The marriage was never completed, but the seeds of sin had already been planted in his heart. Whenever Samson consciously subordinated his will and wishes to national and divine purposes, he acted “by faith” as a Nazarite; whenever national and divine purposes were made subservient to his lusts, he failed and sinned.
- The deliverance of Samson by the Philistines had been given by God. He had fought and conquered by faith as a true Nazarite. Apart from his mention in Hebrews 11:32 for his faith, little can be said on his behalf (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:12).

### ***Judges 16:1-31***

- Samson went down to Gaza, one of the fortified strongholds of the Philistines, not compelled by the Spirit, but for self-indulgence, confident and boastful in what he could do by his own strength. The Valley of Sorek was near his home, but Samson’s heart was already far from God. Samson had ceased to be a Nazarite in heart before he ceased to be one outwardly (cf. Proverbs 7:21-27).
- Samson could only be deprived of his strength by an act of unfaithfulness. It is the same story as that of Israel and its sin with Baal-Peor. He did not know that God had left him. Samson illustrates people who have the power to conquer others, but they cannot conquer themselves.
- In this contrast between his conceit about his own strength and the fact that it was due to the presence of God, lies the heart of the matter. The superhuman strength of Samson lay not in the fact of his uncut hair, but that God was with him. But God was with him only so long as he kept his Nazarite vow. Sin is a hard taskmaster, and our failures always teach us best.
- Dagon was the fish-god, the protector of the sea. This image, that less than twenty years before had fallen and been broken before the ark of God (1 Samuel 5:4), now stood once more proudly defying the God of Israel.
- Samson is remembered for what he tore down, not for what he built up. Samson’s life ends the period of the judges. Samson could have had no successor -- he closed an epoch. At Shiloh a different reformation was already beginning; and with different weapons will Israel, under Samuel, fight against the Philistines and prevail.

### **Ruth 1:1-4:22**

- The story of Ruth is a pleasant contrast compared to Judges, a time when Israel was a divided and defeated nation. Jewish life in Ruth gives us an intense feeling of relief, and we see in it what kind of morality Israel was capable of fostering.
- There were a number of objectives of the Book of Ruth: (1) To present a supplement contrasting the Book of Judges; (2) to show the true spirit of Israel; (3) to demonstrate the nebulous connection between Israel and the Gentiles; and, (4) to trace the genealogy of David, who came from the union of Boaz and Ruth -- symbolic of Israel and the Gentile world.
- The fact that the two Hebrew youths married Moabite wives is not condemned in this instance because the passages often cited in the scriptures refer to the marriage of Hebrews in the land of Israel, not to those who reside outside its borders.
- There must have been peace between Judah and Moab or Elimelech and his family would not have been able to move there. Furthermore, Ruth must have lived a very subtle life, since Boaz had to ask the identity of the Moabite woman.
- Boaz explained that Naomi, who had returned from Moab, was selling a piece of land that belonged to Elimelech. We are not told why she was selling it or what her legal claim to it was. According to the Law of Moses, land passed from a man to his son or to his kinsmen; property could pass from father to daughter if there was no son, but the law did not make any specific provision for passing an inheritance from husband to wife.
- It was important in Israel that land remain within the family (cf. Leviticus 25:23-28; Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-12; Deuteronomy 19:14; 1 Kings 21; Jeremiah 32). Boaz urged the kinsman to make his intentions known before the people and before the elders who were witnessing the exchange. Boaz immediately agreed to redeem the property; there must have been some advantage to buying it.
- However, there was a condition he must satisfy to redeem the land. He must marry Ruth to bear children to restore the name of Elimelech to his inheritance in accordance with levirate law (cf. Deuteronomy 25:5-9). The firstborn son of their marriage would legally be Mahlon's son and eventually own the land.
- The bargain was ratified according to the ancient custom in Israel by a symbolical act, of which we find a modification in Deuteronomy 25:9. Among all ancient nations the "shoe" was a symbol either of departure (Exodus 12:11), or of taking possession (cf. Psalm 60:8).

### **1 Samuel 1:1-2:11**

- The period of the judges had run its course, and brought no deliverance to Israel. The case of Samson showed how even the most direct aid by God could be negated by the self-indulgence of man. A new beginning had to be made. With Eli, there is a revival of interest in the priesthood. Samuel also introduces the true commencement of the Old Testament prophetic order.
- Hannah did not "bargain" with the Lord; she proved her spirituality by willingly offering God her best -- her firstborn son. God was preparing another Nazarite, voluntarily devoted to God by his mother, who would not prevail because of his own strength, but would prevail by the power of prayer, and by the influence of the message which he brought from God. The world of Samson ended in self-indulgence, failure, and death; Samuel opened into the royalty of David, Israel's great king.
- It is evident that prayer to God was rare in Shiloh, and that the sacrificial feasts were often desecrated by sin, as shown by Eli interrupting Hannah's prayer when he thought she was drunk.