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Open English Translation of the Bible

The accounts of

Various Heroes and Guides

commonly called 'Judges'

Introduction

This document commonly called '*Judges*', contains a collection of accounts of '*Various Heroes and Guides/Leaders*' who helped to rescue the Israeli people from their oppressors. It covers the times from their invasion of Kena'an through to just before their first king. Most of these heroes or guides were actually warriors. Shimshon (commonly called 'Samson') is the best-known of all of them, and his story can be read in chapters 13–16.

From this document we can learn that Yisrael ('Israel' in older English translations) prospered when they obeyed Yahweh's instructions, but when they disobeyed, then God allowed other peoples and nations to oppress them. However, God is always ready and prepared to save his people whenever they turn away from their disobedience and return again to obeying the instructions that he'd given them.

The previous book was named after the main character Yehoshua (Joshua) and the following books (Ruth and 1 Shmuel/Samuel) are named after their main characters, but this document with somewhere around a dozen important characters, has no single prominent character that it could be named after. Instead it's traditionally named 'Judges' in English because of around twenty uses of the Hebrew root '<u>שָׁפַט</u>' (shafat) often in roots normally translated as 'judged'. Despite that, there's not a single account in this document of these leaders judging the cases and conflicts of the common people. This dilemma offers two possible interpretations: 1/ that these leaders (often military leaders) did judge cases for the common people, but those details aren't recorded, or 2/ (which we've leaned more towards) that this Hebrew word has a wider range of meaning, and so we've leaned towards the English word 'guided' or 'led' in these contexts.

Main components of this account

The events up until Yehoshua's death *1:1–2:10*
The various heroes/guides of Yisrael *2:11–16:31*
Various other events *17:1–21:25*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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Readers' Version

Yehudah and Shim'on capture Adoni-Vezek

1:1 After Yehoshua's (Joshua's) death, the Israelis asked Yahweh, "Which tribe should go first to attack the Kena'anim (Canaanites)?" **2** "Yehudah (Judah) will go first," Yahweh answered. "Listen, I've already determined that they'll conquer the land."

3 Then the Yehudah leaders said to the tribe of Shim'on (Simeon), "Come with us into the region that we've been allocated and we can fight together against the Kena'anim. Then we'll do the same in your area." So the warriors from the two tribes worked together. **4** When they attacked, Yahweh gave them victory over the Kena'anim and the Perizim and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. **5** They confronted Adoni-Vezek in Bezek and fought against him (then eventually defeating the Kena'anim and the Perizim). **6** Adoni-Vezek tried to flee but they chased him and captured him, cutting off his thumbs and big toes. **7** "Seventy kings had their thumbs and big toes chopped off," Adoni-Vezek said, "and were gathering scraps of food beneath my table. Just as I have done, so God has repaid to me." Then they took him to Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and he died there.

The capture of Yerushalem and Hevron

8 The warriors from Yehudah (Judah) attacked Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and captured the city, killing the inhabitants and setting the city on fire. **9** Then they fought against the Kena'anim (Canaanites) who lived in the hill country, in the southern wilderness, and in the western foothills. **10** They also fought the Kena'anim in Kiryat-Arba (now known as Hevron) and killed Sheshay, Ahiman, and Talmay.

Otniel captures Devir[1]

11 From there they fought against Kiryat-Sefer (now known as Devir). **12** Kalev (Caleb) had said, "The one who attacks Kiryat-Sefer and captures it can marry my daughter Aksah." **13** Otniel (son of Kalev's younger brother Kenaz) captured it so Kalev gave his daughter Aksah to him to become his wife. **14** After the wedding, she urged Otniel to ask her father for a field. When she got off her donkey, Kalev asked her, "What can I do for you?" **15** "Give me a blessing," she requested. "Although you've given me land in the southern wilderness, give me some springs of water as well." So Kalev gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

The victory of descendants of Yehudah and Benyamin

16 The Keynim (descendants of Mosheh's (Moses') father-in-law), left the city of palm trees (Yeriho (Jericho)) and went with Yehudah's (Judah's) descendants to the southern wilderness near Arad and lived with the people there. **17** Then the warriors of Yehudah and Shim'on (Simeon) conquered the Kena'anim (Canaanites) living at Tsefat and destroyed the city. Now it's called Hormah (which means 'complete destruction'). **18** They also captured Azah (Gaza), Ashkelon, and Ekron and all their surrounding territories. **19** Yahweh helped Yehudah and they took possession of the hill country, although they weren't able to conquer the people living down in the plains because they had iron on their chariots. **20** They gave Hevron to Kalev (Caleb) just as Mosheh had directed, and he dispossessed the three sons of the Anak from there.[2] **21** However Benyamin's descendants didn't drive the Yevusim living in Yerushalem (Jerusalem) out, so they have lived among the Benyamites in Yerushalem to this day.[3]

Efrayim and Menasheh conquer Beyt-El

22 Also Yosef's (Joseph's) descendants attacked Beyt-El (Bethel), and Yahweh helped them. **23** They sent spies out to Beyt-El (previously called Luz) **24** and they saw a man coming out of the city and told him, "Please show us an entrance into the city, and we'll be kind to you." **25** So he showed them an entrance, and their warriors attacked and killed the inhabitants, but they let the man and his family go free. **26** The man went to the land of the Hitim and founded a city and called it Luz (which it's still called to this day).

The locals not driven out by the Israelis

27 However Menasheh's (Manasseh's) descendants didn't drive out those living in Beyt-Shean, Ta'anak, Dor, Yivleam, or Megidon, because the Kena'anim (Canaanites) were determined to keep living there.[4] **28** (Later, the Israelis became stronger and they forced the Kena'anim to work for them as their slaves, but they didn't drive them out.) **29** Nor did Efrayim's (Ephraim's) descendants drive the Kena'anim out of Gezer, so they continued to live among them.[5]

30 Zevulun's descendants didn't drive the Kena'anim out of Kitron or Nahalal, so they continued to live among them and were forced to work as slaves.

31 Asher's descendants didn't drive out those who were living in Ako, Tsidon (Sidon), Ahlav, Akziv, Helbah, Afek, or Rehov, **32** So Asher's descendants lived with the Kena'anim who still lived in the region because they didn't drive them out.

33 Naftali's (Naphtali's) descendants didn't drive out those who were living in Beyt-Shemesh (Heliopolis) or Beyt-Anat, so they continued to live among them and were forced to work as slaves.

34 The Amorim forced Dan's descendants to live in the hill country, because they didn't allow them to come down to the plains. **35** The Amorim were determined to live at Mt. Heres, in Ayalon and Sha'alvim (but when Yosef's (Joseph's) descen-

1 **RV 1:11 · Parallel** Josh. 15:13-19

2 **RV 1:20 · Cross-ref.** Josh 15:13-14.

3 **RV 1:21 · Cross-ref.** Josh 15:63; 2Sam 5:6; 1Ch 11:4.

4 **RV 1:27-28 · Cross-ref.** Josh 17:11-13.

5 **RV 1:29 · Cross-ref.** Josh 16:10.

dants became stronger, they forced the Amorim to work as slaves). 36 The Amorim border went from the Scorpion Pass through Sela and upward from there.

God's messenger comes to Bokim

2:1 Then Yahweh's messenger went from Gilgal to Bokim and told the Israelis, "I brought you all out of Mitsrayim (Egypt) and led you here to this land that I promised to your ancestors. I had said that I wouldn't ever break my agreement with you all, 2 but that you mustn't form treaties with the peoples who lived here, rather you must tear down their altars.[6] But you all haven't obeyed what I said. What have you gone and done? 3 So I'm telling you that I won't drive your enemies out ahead of you, but they'll be like thorns in your sides and you'll all end up being enslaved to their idols." 4 When Yahweh's messenger finished saying that, the people wept loudly, 5 so they called that place Bokim (which means 'weeping') and they offered sacrifices to Yahweh there.

The death of Yehoshua

6 Then Yehoshua (Joshua) dismissed the people and the tribes went to their various regions to take possession of the land. 7 The people obeyed Yahweh as long as Yehoshua and the elders who had seen the great things that Yahweh had done for Yisrael (Israel) , were alive. 8 Then Yahweh's servant Yehoshua (son of Nun) died at the age of 110 9 and they buried him in his allocated land at Timnat-Heres, inside Efrayim's (Ephraim's) hill country territory north of Mt. Ga'ash.[7]

Yisrael (Israel) turns from Yahweh

10 When all of that generation had passed away, the next generation didn't know Yahweh or even know about what he'd done for the Israelis. 11 They did things that Yahweh considered evil and worshipped Ba'al idols 12 and abandoned the god of their ancestors, Yahweh, the one who brought them out of Mitsrayim (Egypt). Instead they went after other gods—the gods of the people around them. They worshipped them and that made Yahweh angry. 13 They abandoned Yahweh and worshipped the Ba'al and Ashtarot idols. 14 So Yahweh got angry with Yisrael (Israel) so he caused raiders to come and take their property and he allowed their enemies to become more powerful so they could no longer stand against them. 15 Whenever the Israelis went into battle, Yahweh worked against them just like he'd said he would and they became very distressed.

16 Then Yahweh gave them leaders[8] to save them from the raiders. 17 However they wouldn't listen to those leaders either—continuing to prostitute themselves to other gods and bowing down to idols. They rapidly turned away from their ancestors' ways and showed no interest in obeying Yahweh's instructions. 18 Whenever Yahweh gave them a leader, he would support that leader and would save them from their enemies during that leader's life, because he pitied the people when they groaned from being tormented and oppressed. 19 But then at the death of that leader, they would turn back and behave more corruptly than their ancestors—following other gods and bowing down to idols. They didn't stop any of their evil activities or their shameless behaviour 20 so Yahweh was very angry at Yisrael and said, "This nation has broken the agreement that I made with their ancestors and haven't done what I told them to. 21 I won't keep driving the people groups away that remained when Yehoshua (Joshua) died, 22 so as to use them to test Yisrael to see whether the Israelis will obey my instructions like their ancestors did, or not. 23 So Yahweh allowed those people groups to stay on, and hence they hadn't been handed over to Yehoshua.

The remaining kingdoms in Kena'an

3:1 The following are the kingdoms which Yahweh allowed to remain so as to test the newer generations of Yisrael (Israel) who hadn't experienced the battles in Kena'an (Canaan) 2 (if only for the sake of teaching warfare to those generations who hadn't experienced it): 3 the five Pelishti rulers and the Kena'anim (Canaanites), the Tsidonim (Sidonians), the Hivim that live on Mt. Levanon between Mt. Ba'al-Hermon and Levo-Hamat.[9] 4 They were left to test Yisrael to find out if they would obey Yahweh's instructions that had been given through Mosheh (Moses) to their ancestors, 5 and so the Israelis lived among the Kena'anim, the Hitim, the Amorim, the Perizim, the Hivim, and the Yevusim. 6 They took their daughters as wives, and gave their own daughters to be married to their sons, and they worshipped their gods.

Otniel

7 So the Israelis did things considered evil by Yahweh and they forgot about their god Yahweh, instead serving the Ba'al and Asherot idols. 8 Because of that, Yahweh was very angry with Yisrael (Israel), so he handed them over to King Kushan-Rish'atayim of Aram-Naharayim. The Israelis served him for eight years 9 but when they cried out to Yahweh, he sent them a leader to rescue them: Otniel, son of Kalev's (Caleb's) younger brother Kenaz. 10 Yahweh's spirit empowered him and he led Yisrael. He led them into battle against King Kushan-Rish'atayim of Aram (Syria), and Yahweh helped them defeat him. 11 So the region had peace for forty years, and then Otniel (Kenaz's son) died.

Ehud

12 Once again the Israelis started doing things considered evil by Yahweh, so because of that, he

6 **RV 2:2 · Cross-ref.** Exo 34:12-13; Deu 7:2-5.

7 **RV 2:9 · Cross-ref.** Josh 19:49-50.

8 **RV 2:16 · Note** Traditionally called 'judges' in most English translations, but that modern term doesn't fit their various functions in this account at all well. ('Leaders' isn't perfect either but it's generic enough to cover most of their roles.)

9 **RV 3:3 · Note** Or, 'the entrance to Hamat'.

strengthened King Eglon of Moav (Moab) against Yisrael (Israel). 13 King Eglon enlisted warriors from the Amonim and the Amalekim, and they attacked Yisrael and captured Yeriho (Jericho), the city of palm trees, 14 so the Israelis served him for eighteen years.

15 But the Israelis cried out to Yahweh, he sent them a leader to rescue them: the left-hander Ehud, son of Gera the Benyamite. The Israelis sent him to carry the tribute payment to King Eglon of Moav. 16 Now Ehud had made himself a double-edged sword—a short one about half a metre long—and he strapped it to his right thigh beneath his clothes. 17 Then he presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moav, who was a very fat man, 18 and after leaving for home, he sent off the people who'd actually carried it all. 19 Then from the stone quarries that they'd reached near Gilgal, he returned and told the king that he had a private message for him. The king told his attendants to be quiet then sent them out of the room.

20 So Ehud approached where the king was sitting alone in the coolness of his upper room and told him, "I have a message for you from God." The king stood up from his seat 21 and then Ehud reached with his left hand and pulled the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. 22 Even the handle went in after the blade and the fat closed up over the handle because Ehud didn't pull the sword out of his belly. Then he went out to the passage[10] 23 and closed and locked the rooms of the upper room and exited through the porch.[11] 24 After he'd left, the servants came and found the doors locked, so they thought the king must be relieving himself in there. 25 They waited until they became worried that he hadn't opened the doors, so they got a key and opened them, only to find their master lying dead on the floor.

26 While the servants had been waiting, Ehud had escaped and passed beyond the quarries, then fleeing to Se'irah. 27 When he got there, he blew a trumpet throughout the Efrati hill country, and so the Israelis assembled under his direction down in the valley. 28 "Follow after me," he told them, "because Yahweh will enable you all to defeat your enemies, the Moavim." So they followed him down to the Yarden (Jordan) river and captured the fords opposite Moav (Moab), thus preventing anyone from crossing. 29 Then they attacked Moav and killed around ten thousand men—all strong and capable yet none of them escaped. 30 So Moav was subdued that day by the Israelis, and there was peace in the region for eighty years.

31 After Ehud came Shamgar (Anat's son), and he rescued Yisrael (Israel) by killing six hundred Pelishtim with a cattle prod.

Shamgar

4:1 After Ehud died, the Israelis again started doing things considered evil by Yahweh, 2 so he handed them over to King Yavin of Kena'an (Canaan) who reigned in Hatsor. Sisera was the commander of his army, and he lived in Haroshet-Hagoyim. 3 The Israelis cried out to Yahweh because Sisera had nine hundred chariots with iron on them, and he cruelly oppressed them for twenty years.

Deborah and Barak

4 Now the prophetess Deborah (Lapidot's wife) was leading Yisrael (Israel) at that time. 5 She would sit under the palm tree between Ramah and Beyt-El (Bethel) (in the Efrati hill country), and people would come to her to have their disputes settled. 6 One day she summoned Barak (Avinoam's son from Kedesh in Naftali (Naphtali)) and told him, "Yisrael's god, Yahweh commands you to draft ten thousand men from Naftali and Zevulun and assemble at Mt. Tavor. 7 Yahweh will lure King Yavin's army commander, Sisera bring his warriors and chariots to the Kishon river, and Yahweh will enable you to defeat them there."

8 "I'll go if you'll come with me," replied Barak, "but if you won't come with me, I won't go."

9 "I'll certainly go with you," she said, "but it won't be you that's honoured afterwards, but rather Yahweh will use a woman to defeat Sisera." So Deborah accompanied Barak to Kedesh. 10 There he summoned warriors from Zevulun and Naftali and ten thousand men came, and they all went together with Deborah to Mt. Tavor.

11 Now Hever had moved with his wife Ya'el and their family away from the other Keynim (and from Mosheh's (Moses') father-in-law Hovav's descendants) and set up his tent by the oak tree at Tsa'ananim near Kedesh.

12 When Sisera was told that Barak (Avinoam's son) had gone to Mt. Tavor, 13 he assembled his warriors and their nine hundred chariots (with iron on them) and went from Haroshet-Hagoyim to the Kishon riverbed.

14 "Get going," Deborah told Barak, "because it's today that Yahweh has gone ahead of you and will help you defeat Sisera." So Barak led his ten thousand warriors down from Mt. Tavor. 15 Then Yahweh caused Sisera and all his warriors and chariots to be confused as Barak advanced, so Sisera jumped down from his chariot and took off on foot. 16 Barak pursued the men and chariots as far as Haroshet-Hagoyim and they killed them all—not a single one survived.

17 But Sisera had fled on foot and ran to Ya'el's tent (Hever the Keyni's wife) because there was peace between King Yavin of Hatsor and the house of Hever the Keyni. 18 Ya'el went out to meet Sisera and told him, "Stop and rest, my master. Stop and rest here. Don't be afraid." So he turned and went into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

19 "I'm thirsty," he said. "Could you get me a little water to drink." Ya'el opened a goatskin container and gave him milk

10 **RV 3:22 · Note** The meaning of the last word in the Hebrew here is uncertain, so other translations might differ.

11 **RV 3:23 · Note** Again, the Hebrew meaning of the last word here is uncertain, so other translations might differ.

Readers' Version

to drink, then she covered him again. **20** "Stand at the tent doorway," he said, "and if anyone comes and asks you if you've seen a man, say, 'No.' "

21 Then Hever's wife Ya'el got a hammer and a tent peg and crept in silently, driving the peg through his temple and pounding it into the ground,. He'd been tired and was sleeping soundly, and it killed him. **22** Meanwhile Barak had been searching for Sisera, and Ya'el went out to meet him. "Come in here," she told him, "and I'll show you the man you've been searching for." He followed her into the tent and wow—Sisera was lying there dead with the peg still through his temple.

23 So that day God defeated Kena'ani (Canaanite) King Yavin's army in front of the Israelis, **24** and as they became stronger against him, they destroyed King Yavin of Kena'an (Canaan).

Deborah and Barak sing together

5:1 That day, Deborah and Barak sang this song:

2 "When the leaders take the lead in Yisrael (Israel),
when the people offer themselves willingly,
Yahweh be blessed.
3 Listen you kings.
Pay attention you rulers.
I will sing to Yahweh, yes, even me.
I will make music for Yisrael's god Yahweh.
4 Yahweh, you left Se'ir.
You marched out of the Edom region.
The earth quaked.
The heavens also dropped.
And the clouds poured down rain.
5 Mountains melted in Yahweh's presence,
Yes, Mt. Sinay shook in front of Yisrael's god, Yahweh.[12]
6 In the days of Anat's son Shamgar,
in the days of Ya'el,
main roads were abandoned,
and travellers walked twisting trails.
7 Israeli villages were abandoned.
No one lived there until I, Deborah, became their leader.
I became one of Yisrael's (Israel's) mothers.
8 When Yisrael chose new gods,
then enemies attacked the city gates.
No shield or spear could be found
among forty thousand in Yisrael.
9 I'm thankful to Yisrael's commanders
who volunteered to help the people.
Yahweh be blessed.
10 You riders of white donkeys,
you who sit on saddle blankets,
you who are walking on the road,
tell about this.
11 From the sounds of conflict over the watering places
they recount ≈Yahweh's righteousness
and about his righteous warriors in Yisrael (Israel).
Then Yahweh's people went down to the city gates.
12 Wake up, Deborah, wake up.
Wake up, wake up, sing a song.
Barak, get moving and capture your prisoners,
you son of Avinoam.
13 Then the survivor went down to the leading citizens.
Yahweh's people went down to the mighty. ???
14 From Efrayim (Ephraim) their root was with Amalek.
After you, Benyamin, among your people.
From Makir (in Menasheh's (Manasseh's) tribe), the commanders came down.
And from Zevulun, those who march carrying an officer's staff.
15 My princes in Yisakar (Issachar) were with Deborah.
And Yisakar was also with Barak.
He was sent into a valley on his heels.
There was intense heart searching among the clans of Re'uven.
16 Why did you sit between the sheep pens?
To hear the whistling for the flocks?
There was intense heart searching among the clans of Re'uven.
17 Gilead settled east of the Yarden (Jordan).
But, Dan, why does he stay on ships?
Asher stayed at the sea coast
and lives by his jetties.
18 Zevulun were a tribe that devotedly risked losing their lives.
And Naftali (Naphtali) was at their heights on the battlefield.
19 Kings came and made war.
Then the Kena'ani (Canaanite) kings fought at Ta'anak,
at the Megidon springs.
But they weren't able to plunder any silver.
20 From the sky, the stars battled.
From their courses, they fought against Sisera.
21 The Kishon river swept them away.
An ancient river that Kishon river.
March on with strength, my soul.
22 Then the horses' hooves struck.
His galloping stallions charging.
23 'Curse that Meroz place,' said Yahweh's messenger.
'You shall certainly curse its inhabitants
because they didn't come and help Yahweh—
to help Yahweh against the mighty ones.'
24 Ya'el will be an honoured woman.
The wife of Hever the Keyni.
She deserves the most praise out of all women who live in tents.

12 RV 5:5 · Cross-ref. Exo 19:18.

Readers' Version

25 He asked for water—she gave him milk,
Yogurt in a bowl suitable for the leading citizens.
26 Her hands reached out for the tent peg,
and her right hand for the workman's hammer.
She hammered Sisera—shattering his head—
shattering and piercing his temple.
27 He bowed down between her feet—he fell—he lay down.
He bowed down between her feet—where he bowed down,
there he fell—destroyed.
28 Sisera's mother looked out the window.
She peered through the lattice, crying out,
'Why is his chariot so slow to return?
Why are the hoofbeats of his chariots delayed?'
29 Her wise ladies answered her.
Indeed, she keeps telling herself
30 'Won't they be gathering and dividing the plunder?
A woman or two for each warrior to bear children.
Finding some colourful material for Sisera.
Taking some embroidered fabrics.
Dyed scarves as plunder.'
31 May all your enemies perish like that, Yahweh.
But may those who love you shine like the sun rising in its strength."
Then that region had peace for forty years.

Gid'on

6:1 The Israelis did things that Yahweh considered evil so he handed them over to the Midyan for seven years 2 and the Midyanites oppressed them badly. It was so bad that the Israelis made dens for themselves up in the hills, in caves, and in small, fortified settlements. 3 Whenever the Israelis planted a crop, the Midyanites or the Amalekim, or eastern groups would attack them. 4 They would set up their camps around them and destroy the crops as far away as Azah (Gaza)—they left nothing for the Israelis to eat, and no sheep, cattle, or donkeys. 5 It was like a swarm of locusts when they'd all come with their tents and their livestock—you couldn't even count their camels! They entered the region to totally ravage it. 6 Thus Yisrael (Israel) was severely weakened by Midyan, and the Israelis cried out to Yahweh.

7 When the Israelis cried out to Yahweh concerning Midyan, 8 Yahweh sent a prophet to them and he told them, "Yisrael's god Yahweh says, 'I myself brought you all out of slavery in Mitsrayim (Egypt)— 9 rescuing you from the Mitsrim (Egyptians) who were oppressing you all. I drove them out when you all entered and I've certainly given their land to you. 10 I told you all that I'm your god Yahweh and that when you live in the Amori regions, you all mustn't worship their gods. But you didn't listen to what I said.' "

11 One day Yahweh's messenger came and sat beneath the oak tree in the town of Ofrah. (The tree belonged to the Aviezri, Yoash.) Yoah's son Gid'on was beating wheat down in a wine-pressing pit to hide it from the Midyanites 12 when Yahweh's messenger appeared to him and said, "Yahweh is with you, you powerful warrior."

13 "With me, my master?" Gid'on asked. "If Yahweh is with us, then why's all of this happened to us? Where are all of the miracles that our ancestors told us about, saying, 'Didn't Yahweh bring us up out of Mitsrayim?' But now Yahweh has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midyanites."

14 Then Yahweh turned to him and said, "Use your strength to set Yisrael (Israel) free from the grasp of Midyan. Haven't I sent you to do that?"

15 "Please, my master," Gid'on replied, "how could *I* save Yisrael? Look, my clan is the weakest in Menasheh (Manasseh) and on top of that, I'm the youngest in my family."

16 "I'll help you," said Yahweh, "and you'll strike down all the Midyanites as easily as battling just one man."

17 "If indeed I've found favour in your eyes," Gid'on requested, "then show me a miracle so I'll know that it's God speaking to me. 18 Please wait here while I go and prepare my gift for you and bring it back here for you."

"Okay, I'll stay here until you get back," he said.

19 Then Gid'on went a prepared a young goat and unrisen bread. He put the meat in a basket and the soup in a pot and brought them out to the oak tree and offered them to him. 20 Then God's messenger said, "Take the meat and the flat bread and put them on this rock, then pour the soup out over it." So Gid'on did that 21 and Yahweh's messenger stretched out the staff that he was holding and touched the meat and bread with the end of it. A fire flamed up from the rock and burnt up the meat and bread, then Yahweh's messenger went out of his sight.[13]

22 When Gid'on realised that it really had been Yahweh's messenger, he was upset and said, "Oh no, my master Yahweh, what will happen now that I've seen Yahweh's face to face?" 23 But Yahweh replied to him, "Peace to you. Don't be afraid—you won't die." 24 So Gid'on built an altar there to sacrifice to Yahweh and named it 'Yahweh is peace'. (It still stands there at Ofrah of the Aviezri to this day.)

25 That same night, Yahweh told him, "Take the young bull that belongs to your father, and the second bull seven years old. Break the altar of Ba'al into pieces that belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah pole that's beside it. 26 Build a regular altar to your god Yahweh on top of this fortress, then take the second bull and offer a whole burnt offering using the Asherah pole that you cut down for firewood." 27 So Gid'on took ten of his servants and did what Yahweh had instructed him to, but he did it at night because he was afraid to do it in the daytime—fearing the anger of his father's household and the men of the city.

28 When the men of the city got up early the next morning, wow, the Ba'al's altar had been torn down, the Asherah pole

13 **RV 6:21 · Note** It's unclear from the text, whether he just got up and walked away, or if he vanished in a more miraculous fashion.

Readers' Version

that was beside it had been cut down, and the second bull had been offered on a new altar that had been built. 29 So people started asking each other, "Who did this?" After some investigation, they said, "Yoash's son Gid'on did it." 30 Then the men of the city told Yoash, "Bring your son out here to be executed, because he tore down the Ba'al's altar and cut down the Asherah pole that was beside it."

31 "Are you all really fighting Ba'al's battle for him?" Yoash replied to those standing against him. "Are you all really helping him? Anyone who fights on his behalf should be put to death while it is still the morning. If Ba'al is a god, then let him stand up for himself when someone tears down his altar." 32 So after that, he called Gid'on 'Yeruba'al' to say 'Let Ba'al defend himself,' because he had torn down Ba'al's altar.

33 Meanwhile all the Midyanite and Amaleki warriors and others from the east, assembled together. Then they crossed the Yarden (Jordan) and set up camp in the Yizre'el (Jezreel) valley. 34 But Yahweh's spirit enabled Gid'on, and he blew a trumpet and called the men of Aviezer to follow him. 35 Then he sent messengers throughout all of the regions of Menasheh (Manasseh), Asher, Zevulun, and Naftali (Naphtali), and summoned their warriors to come and join with them.

36 Then Gid'on said to God, "If it's really you rescuing Yisrael (Israel) through me like you said, 37 I'll put this woollen fleece on the threshing floor tonight. If there's dew on the fleece in the morning, but it's dry around it, then I'll know that you'll rescue Yisrael through me just as you said." 38 And that's what happened—he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece and wrung out a bowl full of water from the dew. 39 Then Gid'on said to God, "Don't be angry with me, but can I ask one more thing. Let me put the fleece out this time, and let the fleece be dry, but wet all around it with dew." 40 So God did it that night, and the next morning only the fleece was dry, but everywhere around was covered with dew.

Gid'on defeats the Midyanites

7:1 Then Gid'on (also known as Yeruba'al) and the warriors with him got up early and went to Harod spring. The Midyanite camp was north of them in the valley below the Moreh hill.

2 Then Yahweh told Gid'on, "You've got too many warriors with you for me to give victory over the Midyanites, because what if Yisrael (Israel) takes the glory for themselves thinking that their own strength saved them. 3 So tell the men that anyone who's afraid or trembling can leave Mt. Gilead and go back home."[14] Twenty-two thousand of them went back, leaving only ten thousand.

4 "That's still too many," Yahweh told Gid'on. "Bring them down to the spring and I'll short-list them there. Anyone I tell you to go with you, can do so, but anyone that I say won't go with you, won't go." 5 So he took them down to the water and Yahweh told him, "Separate out those who lap up the water with their tongues like a dog would, along with those who kneel down to drink." 6 It turned out that only three hundred men used their hands to bring water to their mouths, and all the rest knelt down to drink the water. 7 "I'll rescue you all from Midyan with the three hundred men who lapped the water from their hands," Yahweh told Gid'on. "Let all the others go back to their homes." 8 Then the three-hundred warriors collected the food and ram's horns from the others before Gid'on sent the others back to their own homes.

The Midyan camp was below them down in the valley 9 and during the night Yahweh told Gid'on, "Get ready and lead them down into the camp, because I have made you victorious. 10 But if you're afraid to attack, take your servant Purah down to their camp 11 and you'll hear what they're saying, then you'll have the courage to go down and attack the camp." So Gid'on and his servant Purah went quietly down to the unit at the edge of the camp.

12 The Midyanites and Amalekim and others from the east covered the valley like a swarm of locusts. Even their camels were as numerous as sand grains on the beach. 13 When Gid'on got close, a man was telling his companion about his dream. "Listen," he said, "I had a dream and wow, a round loaf of barley bread was tumbling into our camp. It came as far as the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, and collapsed completely."

14 "That could only be the sword of Yoash's son Gid'on from Yisrael (Israel)," the other man replied. "The true God has caused Midyan and all of the camp to be defeated by him."

15 When Gid'on heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he thanked God, then they returned to their camp and commanded, "Get ready to go because Yahweh has given you all victory over the Midyanite camp." 16 Then he divided the three hundred men into three units, and gave each of them rams' horns and clay jars with burning torches inside them, 17 and instructed them, "Watch me and do what I do. See, when I get to the edge of their camp, do the same as me. 18 When I blow the ram's horn trumpet, all of you with horns should blow them and everyone will shout, 'For Yahweh and for Gid'on!' "

19 When Gid'on and the hundred men with him got to the edge of the camp, it was the beginning of the middle night-watch and the fresh guards had just gotten into their places. Gid'on and his unit blew their trumpets and smashed the jars that they were carrying. 20 Then all three units blew the trumpets and smashed their jars. They held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands, and they shouted out, "A sword for Yahweh and for Gid'on." 21 Then everyone stood in their place around the camp, but

14 RV 7:3 · Cross-ref. Deu 20:8.

the Midyanite army cried out in alarm and took off. 22 When the three hundred ram's horns sounded, Yahweh caused the Midyanite army to start fighting each other with their swords, and the army fled as far as Beyt-Hashitah (towards Tsererah) and towards the border of Avel-Meholah (towards Tabat).

23 Then the warriors from Naftali (Naphtali), Asher, and from all of Menasheh (Manasseh) were summoned to help with pursuing the Midyanites. 24 Gid'on also sent messengers through Efrayim's (Ephraim's) hill country to tell them, "Go down to the Yarden (Jordan) river opposite Midyan and take control of the crossings to capture them between as far as Beyt-Barah." So all the men of Efrayim were summoned and they commandeered the Yarden crossings as far as Beyt-Barah. 25 They chased after the Midyanites and captured their two princes, Orev and Ze'ev. They killed Orev at the rock now called 'Orev's rock', and they killed Ze'ev in a wine-pressing pit now called 'Ze'ev's wine-press', and they brought their heads back across the Yarden to Gid'on.

The final defeat of the Midyanites

8:1 But then the Efrati men challenged Gid'on, "Why have you side-tracked us? Why didn't you call us when you went to battle against the Midyanites?" And they severely rebuked him.

2 "What have I achieved compared to you guys?" answered Gid'on. "Aren't the seconds of Efrayim's (Ephraim's) grapes better than the whole grape harvest of Aviezer? 3 God helped you all defeat Orev and Ze'ev, the princes of Midyan.[15] What did I do compared to that?" After he said that, they all calmed down again.

4 Then Gid'on and his three hundred warriors crossed the Yarden (Jordan) going east. They were all exhausted, but continued the pursuit. 5 When they arrived at the town of Sukot, Gid'on asked the leaders, "Please give my men some bread to eat because they're exhausted, but we're chasing Zevah and Tsalmuna, the Midyanite kings."

6 However, the Sukot officials asked cautiously, "Do you already have Zevah and Tsalmuna in your grasp that we should give food to *your* army?"

7 "Let me assure you all," Gid'on responded, "that when Yahweh has helped us capture Zevah and Tsalmuna, I will rip off your flesh with the wilderness thorns and briers."

8 From there they climbed up to Penuel, and he asked them for food in a similar manner, and the leaders there responded similarly to the leaders of Sukot. 9 So he said to the men of Penuel as well, "When I return safely, I'll tear down this tower."

10 Now Zevah and Tsalmuna were in Karkor with around fifteen thousand warriors—all that remained out of all of that allied Midyanite camp of eastern people, because one hundred and twenty thousand of their warriors had already been killed. 11 Gid'on approached them unexpectedly via the caravan route east of Novah and Yagebehah, and struck their camp when they were feeling secure. 12 Zevah and Tsalmuna fled, but they chased after those two Midyanite kings and captured them, thus defeating their entire army.

13 The Gid'on (Yoash's son) and his warriors returned from battle, going through the Heres pass. 14 He captured a young man from Sukot and questioned him—writing down the names of the seventy-seven leaders and elders of Sukot. 15 Then he returned to Sukot and told them, "Look here at Zevah and Tsalmuna—the ones you taunted me about when you asked, 'Do you already have Zevah and Tsalmuna in your grasp that we should give food to your weary men.' " 16 He took the city elders and had them punished with wilderness thorns and briers to teach them a lesson, 17 then they went to Penuel and tore down the tower and executed the city leaders.

18 Then Gid'on asked Zevah and Tsalmuna, "What were the men like that you killed at Tavor?"

"They were just like you," they replied. "They seemed like they could have been a king's sons."

19 "They were my brothers—the sons of my mother," he said. "As Yahweh lives, if only you had let them live, I wouldn't have killed you." 20 Then he ordered Yeter, his oldest son, "Go and kill them." But Yeter didn't pull out his sword because he was afraid—he was still a youth.

21 Then Zevah and Tsalmuna said, "Come and kill us yourself—be a man and use your own strength." So Gid'on went over and killed Zevah and Tsalmuna, and then he took the crescent-shaped ornaments that were on their camels' necks.

22 Then a group of Israeli men said to Gid'on, "We want you and your sons and your future descendants to rule over us, because you have saved us from the Midyanites."

23 But Gid'on answered, "No, I won't rule over you myself, nor will my son rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you." 24 However, he continued, "Let me ask you all for something: that each man give me the earrings from his spoil." (The enemies had gold earrings because they were Yishmaelim (Ishmaelites).)

25 "We can certainly do that for you," they replied. So they spread out a garment and each man threw the earrings from his spoil onto it. 26 Now the weight of the gold earrings of gold came to twenty kilograms, and then there were the crescent-shaped ornaments, the pendants, the dyed purple garments that the Midyanite kings had been wearing, as well as the collars that had been around their camels' necks. 27 Then Gid'on made the gold into an idol[16] and placed it in his home city of Ofrah, and the Israelis prostituted them-

15 **RV 8:3-5 · Cross-ref.** Psa 83:11.

16 **RV 8:27 · Note** We don't really know what 'efod' means in this context. (It was also used to refer to priestly clothing.)

selves to it there, and so it became like a trap for Gid'on and his household.

28 So Midyan was kept under control by the Israelis and they didn't continue to oppress the people, and there was peace in the region for forty years during Gid'on's time.

The death of Gid'on

29 Then Gid'on (Yoash's son, also known as Yeruba'al) went back and lived in his house, 30 and he fathered seventy sons because he had many wives. 31 He also had a mistress in Shekem—she also bore him a son that he named Avimelek. 32 Gid'on died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Yoash his father, at Ofrah of the Abiezerites.

33 However after Gid'on had died, the Israelis turned away again from Yahweh and prostituted themselves to the Baals—making Ba'al-Berit for themselves as a god. 34 They forgot about their god Yahweh—the one who had rescued them from the clutch of all of their enemies all around. 35 They didn't show lasting loyalty to Gid'on's family, despite all the good that he'd done within Yisrael (Israel).

Avimelek snatches the kingship

9:1 Now Gid'on's son Avimelek went to Shekem to his mother's brothers and spoke to those uncles and to all the extended family of his mother's father, saying, 2 "Please ask around all the citizens of Shekem: 'What is better for you: Gid'on's seventy sons ruling over you, or having a single man in charge?' Remember that I'm your flesh and bone." 3 So his uncles working on his behalf, passed that onto all the citizens of Shekem, and they became convinced in Avimelek, because they said, "He's our brother." 4 Then they gave him seventy silver coins from the temple of Ba'al-Berit, and Avimelek used them to entice some rough lay-abouts to work for him. 5 Then they went to his father's house at Ofrah, and he killed his seventy half-brothers (Gid'on's sons) there on one stone. But Gid'on's youngest son Yotam (Jotham) survived because he had hidden from them. 6 Then all of the prominent citizens of Shekem and all of Beyt-Milo assembled themselves, and they went and installed Avimelek as king beside an oak tree near the standing pillar[17] that was in Shekem.

Yotam's tree parable

7 When they told Yotam (Jotham), he went and stood on the top of Mt. Gerizim and shouted out to them all in a loud voice, "Listen to me, citizens of Shekem, so God will listen to all of you. 8 Once the trees went about in order to appoint a king for themselves, So they said to the *olive tree*, 'Reign over us.' 9 But the olive tree replied to them, 'Have I stopped producing my valuable oil used to honour gods and men, that I should go to sway above the other trees?' 10 So the trees said to the *fig tree*, 'You come and reign over us.' 11 But the fig tree answered them, 'Have I stopped producing my sweetness and my good fruit, that I should go to sway above the other trees?' 12 Then the trees said to the grapevine, 'You come and reign over us.' 13 But the vine replied, 'Have I stopped producing my new wine, which cheers gods and man, that I should go to sway over the other trees?' 14 Then all the trees said to the thornbush, '*You* come and reign over us!' 15 The thornbush told the trees, 'If you all are really wanted to anoint me as king over you, come and take refuge in *my* shade. But if you all don't, may the thornbush send out fire to burn up Levanon's cedar forests.'

16 "Therefore did you all act with honesty and integrity when you installed Avimelek as king? Did you all treat Gid'on's family well, and did you all repay him appropriately for what he did for you all? 17 My father fought on your behalf, and even risked his life out front when he rescued you all from the Midyanites, 18 but today you've all risen up against my father's family and killed his sons—seventy men on one stone. Then you've installed Avimelek, the son of his female servant, as king over the citizens of Shekem because he's your brother. 19 Now if you've all acted with honesty and integrity with towards Gid'on and his family today, be happy with Avimelek, and he'll also be happy with all of you, 20 but if not, then fire will come out of Avimelek and destroy the citizens of Shekem and Beyt-Milo. Fire will also come out from the Shekem's citizens and from Beyt-Milo, and it'll destroy Avimelek." 21 Then Yotam (Jotham) fled away and escaped and went to Be'er and settled there away from the presence of his half-brother Avimelek.

22 Avimelek ruled over Yisrael (Israel) for three years, 23 then God sent an evil spirit between him and the citizens of Shekem, so the citizens there dealt treacherously with Avimelek. 24 The violent treatment of Gid'on's seventy sons kept getting brought up, and by it was all blamed on their brother Avimelek who had killed them, and on those of Shekem's citizens who assisted him in the killing of his brothers. 25 So the Shekem citizens placed men in ambush along the tops of the hills to get him, but they robbed everyone who went passed them along the road, and so it was reported to Avimelek.

26 Then Ga'al (Eved's son) came along with his brothers and moved into Shekem, and the citizens there began to trust them. 27 They went out into the field, and they picked grapes from their vineyards and pressed them. They celebrated harvest festivals and they went into the house of their gods, then they ate and drank, and they cursed Avimelek. 28 Then Ga'al (Eved's son) said, "Who's Avimelek, and who's Shekem, that we should serve him? Isn't Avimelek Gid'on's son, and Zevul is his deputy? Serve the descendants of Shekem's father Hamor, but why should we serve Avimelek? 29 Who will fight with me to defeat those people and depose Avimelek? Then he said to Avimelek, 'Gather your army and come and fight.' "

30 When Zevul, the prince of the city, heard what Ga'al (Eved's son) had said, he got very angry 31 and he sent mes-

17 **RV 9:6 · Note** Likely connected with idol worship.

sengers to Avimelek in secret, saying, "Listen, Eved's son Ga'al and his brothers are coming to Shekem, and wow, they're inciting the city against you. **32** You and the people who are with you should go out at night and lie in ambush in the countryside. **33** Then when the sun rises in the morning, you all should set out early and spread out in an attack against the city. Keep watch, then when Ga'al and the people with him are coming out toward you to fight, then you can overpower them and treat him however you think fit."

34 So Avimelek and all the people with him went out in the night and they set up four units in an ambush against Shekem. **35** In the morning, Ga'al (Eved's son) went out and he stood at the entrance of the city gate. Then Avimelek and his men stood up from their hiding places. **36** When Ga'al saw the people, he said to Zevul, "Look, a group of people is coming down from the tops of the hills!"

"You are seeing the shadow of the hills as men," Zevul responded.

37 But Ga'al said again, "Look, groups of people are coming down from beside the top of the hill, and another group is coming from the way of the 'oak of the diviners'."

38 Then Zevul said to him, "Well, you were the one who said, 'Who is Avimelek that we should serve him?' Aren't these the people who you were scorning? Indeed now, go out and fight against them." **39** So Ga'al went out in front of Shekem's citizens and fought against Avimelek. **40** Avimelek pursued him, and he had to flee away from him. Many of their men fell fatally wounded as far as the entrance of the city gate. **41** Then Avimelek settled in Arumah, but Zevul drove Ga'al and his brothers away from living in Shekem.

42 Now it so happened that the next day, the people of Shekem went out into the countryside, and it was reported to Avimelek. **43** So he took his men and split them into three units. Then he waited in ambush in the countryside. When he saw and wow, the people were going out of the city, then he attacked and killed them. **44** Avimelek and the units that were with him had spread out and they stood at the entrance of the city gate, and two units spread out against everyone who was in the field and killed them. **45** Avimelek spent that whole day attacking Shekem. He captured the city and they killed the people who were in it. Then he tore it down, and scattered salt on the land.

46 When all the lords of the tower of Shekem heard, they went into the citadel of the temple for El-Berit, **47** but it was reported to Avimelek that all the lords of the Shekem tower had gathered there. **48** So Avimelek and all the people with him, went up to Mt. Tsalmon. He took axes and cut a branch down from the trees, then lifted it onto his shoulder and said to the people who were with him, "What I just did, you all quickly do the same." **49** So all the people also each cut off a branch and then followed Avimelek. They piled them on top of the underground chamber, and that's how they burnt out the underground chamber. As a result, all the distinguished people in the tower of Shekem also died—about a thousand men and women.

50 Then Avimelek went to Tevets and set up camp around the city and captured it. **51** But there was a strong tower in the middle of the city, so all of the men and the women and all the prominent citizens fled to it. Once they were all in, they barricaded it up and they went up onto the tower roof. **52** Then Avimelek and his men approached the tower and fought against it, and he came in as close as the tower entrance in order to set fire to it, **53** but a woman threw an upper millstone down onto Avimelek's head and it crushed his skull.[18] **54** Then he cried out hurriedly to the young man bearing his armour, "Draw out your sword and put me to death, because I don't want it to be said afterwards that I was killed by a woman." So his young man stabbed him so that he died. **55** When the Israeli warriors saw that Avimelek was dead, they all returned to their own homes.

56 Thus God avenged the evil of Avimelek that he had done to his father Gid'on by killing his seventy brothers, **57** and God caused all the evil done by Shekem's men to return back onto their own heads, and the curse of Gid'on's youngest son Yotam (Jotham), came true on them.

Tola

10:1 Now after Avimelek, Tola (the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, from the tribe of Yisakar (Issachar)) came on the scene to rescue Yisrael (Israel). He settled in Shamir, in the hill country of Efrayim (Ephraim). **2** He led Yisrael for twenty-three years, then he died and was buried in Shamir.

Yair

3 After him, Yair the Giladi led Yisrael (Israel) for twenty-two years. **4** He had thirty sons that rode on thirty donkeys. There were thirty cities for them in the Gilead region which they call Yair's villages to this day. **5** Then Yair died and he was buried in Kamon.

The making again of bad of Israelis

6 The Israelis continued to do what Yahweh considered evil: they worshipped the Ba'als, the Ashtarot, the gods of Aram (Syria), the gods of Tsidon (Sidon), the gods of Moav (Moab), the gods of the sons of Amon, and the gods of the Pelishtim. They forsook Yahweh and didn't serve him. **7** Yahweh was very angry with Yisrael (Israel), so he allowed the Pelishtim and the Amonim to harass them. **8** They shattered and oppressed the Israelis that year, but it went on for eighteen years for all the Israelis who were on the opposite side of the Yarden (Jordan) in the land of the Amorim, which is in the Gilead. **9** Then the Amonim also crossed over the Yarden to fight against Yehudah (Judah), against Benyamin, and against the half-tribe of Efrayim (Ephraim).

This caused incredible distress for the Israelis **10** so they cried out to Yahweh, "We have sinned against you, because

18 RV 9:53 · Cross-ref. 2Sam 11:21.

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we have abandoned our god and we have served the Ba'als."
11 "Wasn't it from the Mitsrim (Egyptians)," Yahweh responded, "from the Amorim, from the Amonim, from the Pelishtim, **12** the Tsidonim (Sidonians) and Amalek and Maeon, when they oppressed you that you cried out to me, and I rescued you all from them? **13** Yet you've all abandoned me and served other gods. Therefore, I won't not continue to rescue you. **14** Go and cry out to the gods that you've all chosen for yourselves. They should deliver you all at the time of your distress."
15 Then the Israelis said to Yahweh, "We've sinned. You do to us according to all that is good in your eyes. Only please rescue us today." **16** They removed the foreign gods from among them, and they worshipped Yahweh and so he became concerned with Yisrael's (Israel's) suffering.
17 Now the Amonim had assembled and were camped in Gilead. So the Israelis gathered together and they camped at Mitspah. **18** Then the princes of Gilead said to each other, "Who will lead us to fight against the Amonim? He can become the leader over all of us who live in Gilead."
11:1 Now Yiftah (Jephthah) the Giladi **Yiftah** was a fierce warrior, but he was a prostitute's son and his father was Gilead. **2** Gilead's wife also gave birth to sons for him, and when those sons of the wife grew up, they drove Yiftah out and told him, "You won't get any inheritance from our father's estate because you're a son of another woman." **3** So Yiftah fled from the presence of his half-brothers and he settled in the Tov region. Unprincipled men associated around Yiftah and went around with him.
4 Some time later, the Amonim battled against Yisrael (Israel). **5** and that was when the elders of Gilead went to summon Yiftah from the Tov region. **6** Then requested Yiftah, "Come and be our commander so we can fight against the Amonim."
7 "Don't you all hate me? Yiftah asked them. "Didn't you yourselves drive me out of my father's house? So why have you all come to me now when you have troubles?"
8 "Well, true," the Gilead elders replied, "But now we've turned back to you. So join with us and fight against the Amonim, and you'll become commander over all of who lives in Gilead."
9 "If you bring me back to fight against the Amonim," Yiftah asked them, "and if Yahweh helps me defeat them, is it correct that I'll actually become your leader?"
10 "Yahweh will be a witness between us," the Gilead elders responded, "that we'll most certainly do what you just said."
11 So Yiftah went with the Gilead elders, and the people set him as commander and leader over themselves. (Yiftah had spoken all those words before Yahweh at Mitspah.)
12 Then Yiftah sent messengers to the Amoni king, demanding, "What's happened with respect to me and to you, that you've come against me to fight over my land?"
13 The Amoni king responded to Yiftah's messengers, "Because the Israelis seized my land when they came out of Mitsrayim (Egypt). It went from the Arnon river up to the Yabok river, and over to the Yarden (Jordan) river. Now return the land peaceably."
14 Then Yiftah sent messengers back to the Amoni king **15** to tell him, "Yiftah wants you to know that Yisrael (Israel) didn't take land from Moav (Moab) nor from you Amonim. **16** However in their coming up from Mitsrayim, Yisrael went through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea until arriving at Kadesh. **17** When Yisrael sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, 'Please may we pass through your land,' the king of Edom wouldn't listen.[19] Yisrael likewise sent to the king of Moav, but he wasn't willing either, so Yisrael stayed at Kadesh. **18** Then we went through the wilderness and turned away from the land of Edom[20] and the land of Moav, then went the long way around the eastern border of Moav. They camped on the other side of the Arnon river, but they didn't go within Moav's borders, because the Arnon was the border of Moav. **19** Yisrael sent messengers to the Amori King Sihon, the king of Heshbon and asked him, 'Please, let us pass through your land as far as our place.'[21] **20** But King Sihon didn't trust Yisrael passing through within his border, so he assembled all of his people together and they camped at Yahats, and he battled with Yisrael. **21** Then Yisrael's god, Yahweh, handed King Sihon and all his people over to Yisrael and we defeated them. Thus Yisrael took possession of all of the land of the Amorim inhabiting that region— **22** everything within the Amori territory from the Arnon river to the Yabok, and from the wilderness as far as the Yarden (Jordan).
23 So since it was Yisrael's god Yahweh that expelled the Amorim out of the presence of his people Yisrael, do you actually think that you can take it now? **24** Wouldn't you take possession if your god Kemosh, allowed you to? So too all that our god Yahweh has dispossessed ahead of us, we'll possess that. **25** Are you really better now than Tsipor's son, King Balak of Moav?[22] Did he dare contend with Yisrael or did he ever wage war against them? **26** Yisrael lived in Heshbon and in its villages for three hundred years, and in Aroer and in its villages, and in all the cities that are along the banks of the Arnon—so why didn't you repossess them during that time? **27** I haven't done anything wrong to you, but you're doing wrong in dealing with me by fighting against me. Yahweh, the judge, will decide today between the Is-

19 **RV 11:17 · Cross-ref.** Num 20:14-21.
20 **RV 11:18 · Cross-ref.** Num 21:4.
21 **RV 11:19-22 · Cross-ref.** Num 21:21-24.
22 **RV 11:25 · Cross-ref.** Num 22:1-6.

raelis and the Amonim." 28 But the Amoni king didn't take any notice of Yiftah's message to him.

29 Then Yahweh's spirit empowered Yiftah (Jephthah), and he passed through the Gilead and Menasheh (Manasseh), and through Mitspah of Gilead, and from there he passed through the Amoni region, 30 and he made a promise to Yahweh, "If you really give me victory over the Amonim, 31 then whoever's the first person to come out of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the battle against the Amonim, that person will belong to Yahweh, and I will offer him up as a whole burnt offering." 32 So Yiftah went to the Amoni territory to fight against them, and Yahweh enabled them to defeat them. 33 Then he attacked them from Aroer and as far as the entrance to Minit, twenty cities, and then up to Avel-Keramim, slaughtering a huge number. So the Amonim were subdued by the presence of the Israelis.

Yiftah's daughter

34 When Yiftah (Jephthah) got back to his house in the Mitspah area, look, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. She was their only child—he didn't have any son or daughter apart from her. 35 When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Oh no! My daughter! Indeed, you've made me bow in grief, and you're among those who cause me pain, because I made a vow to Yahweh and I can't go back on it."

36 Then she said to him, "My father, you've made a vow to Yahweh. Do to me whatever you promised, after what Yahweh has done for you—total vengeance against your Amoni enemies." 37 But she asked her father, "Just do this one thing for me: release me for two months, so I can go away and take some companions. I'll fall prostrate on the hills and I'll weep because I'll never have a chance to marry." 38 He agreed and then sent her away for two months. She went with some companions, and she wept on the hills because she'd never be a mother. 39 Then at the end of the two months, she returned to her father and he carried out his vow with respect to her so indeed she never had a chance to marry.

After that, it became a custom in Yisrael (Israel) 40 that the young women of Yisrael go to commemorate the daughter of Yiftah the Giladi for four days during the year.

Yiftah and the Efrayimim

12:1 Now the men of Efrayim (Ephraim) were summoned and they passed northward and they said to Yiftah (Jephthah), "Why did you pass through in order to fight against the Amonim, but you didn't call us to go with you? We're going to burn your house down over you!"

2 "I've been involved in very intense disputes—my people against the Amonim," Yiftah told them. "When I summoned you all, you didn't come and rescue me from them. 3 When I could see that you weren't coming to assist, I took my life into my own hands. I advanced against the Amonim, and Yahweh gave me victory over them. So why then have you all come here to fight against me today?" 4 Then Yiftah assembled all of the men of Gilead and they battled against Efrayim. The men of Gilead struck Efrayim because they had said, "You Gilead people are just fugitives from Efrayim—living here in the middle of Efrayim, in the middle of Menasheh (Manasseh)." 5 The Giladim captured the crossing places of the Yarden (Jordan) along Efrayim. Then when any of the survivors from Efrayim would say, "May I cross over," the men of Gilead would ask, "Are you an Efrati?" If he said, "No," 6 then they'd demand, "Now say: Shibboleth." But if he said "Sibboleth" because he didn't have time to think to pronounce it correctly, they would seize him and would slaughter him at those crossing places of the Yarden. Forty-two thousand from Efrayim fell at that time.

7 Yiftah the Giladi led Yisrael (Israel) for six years, then he died and was buried among the cities of Gilead.

Ivtsan, Eylon, and Avdon

8 Then after him, Ivtsan of Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) led Yisrael (Israel). 9 Now he had thirty sons. He gave away thirty daughters to be married to outsiders, and he brought in thirty daughters for his sons from the outside. Ivtsan led Yisrael for seven years, 10 and when he died, he was buried in Beyt-Lehem.

11 After him, Eylon the Zevuluni led Yisrael for ten years. 12 When he died, he was buried in Ayalon in the land of Zevulun. 13 After him, Avdon, the son of Hilel the Pireatoni led Yisrael. 14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young male donkeys. He led Yisrael for eight years. 15 Then Avdon (the son of Hilel the Pireatoni) died, and he was buried in Pireaton in the land of Efrayim (Ephraim), in the hill country of the Amalekim.

Shimshon's birth

13:1 The Israelis continued to do what Yahweh considered as evil, so he allowed the Pelishtim to oppress them for forty years. 2 Now there was a man named Manoah from Tsor'ah, of the families of the Danim. His wife was barren so they had no children. 3 One day, Yahweh's messenger appeared to the wife and told her, "Listen, please, you are barren and have never given birth, but you will conceive and have a son. 4 Now take care that you surely don't drink wine or strong drink, and that you don't eat anything prohibited by our rules, 5 because you'll definitely become pregnant and will give birth to a son. His hair must never be cut because he'll be a Nazirite to God from his conception.[23] He will begin to rescue Yisrael (Israel) from the oppression of the Pelishtim."

6 Then the woman went and explained to her husband, "A man of God came to me. He looked like one of God's messengers—extremely terrifying—so I didn't like to ask him where he'd come from, and he didn't tell me his name. 7 Then he told me, 'You're definitely pregnant and you'll give birth to a son. So now, you mustn't drink wine or strong drink, and you

23 **RV 13:5 · Cross-ref.** Num 6:1-5.

mustn't eat anything prohibited by our rules, because the boy will be a Nazirite to God from conception until the day of his death.' "

8 Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh, "Oh please, my master, please let the man of God that you sent before, come back to us again so he can instruct us about what we must do for this boy who's going to be born." **9** The true God listened to Manoah's request, and God's messenger came to the woman again when she was sitting out in the field, but her husband Manoah wasn't with her, **10** so she quickly ran and told her husband, "Look. The man has appeared again who came to me that day." **11** So Manoah followed his wife, and when he came to the man, he asked him, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife before?"

"Yes, it was me," he replied.

12 "Now may your words come true," said Manoah. "How should we bring up the boy, and what will his work be?"

13 "Your wife must carefully follow everything I told her," Yahweh's messenger replied. **14** "She mustn't eat or drink anything that comes from the grapevine. She mustn't drink wine or strong drink, and she mustn't eat anything prohibited by our rules. She must do everything that I've instructed her."

15 "Please stay a little longer," Manoah asked Yahweh's messenger, "so that we can prepare a meal of tender goat meat to honour your presence."

16 "Even if I stayed longer, I wouldn't eat your food," Yahweh's messenger replied. "But if you wanted to prepare a burnt offering for Yahweh, you may offer it." (Because Manoah didn't know that the messenger had come from Yahweh.) **17** "What's your name," Manoah asked, "so that we can honour you when your words come true?"

18 "Why are you asking about my name," Yahweh's messenger replied. "You simply couldn't understand."

19 Then Manoah got their young goat and the other requirements for the offering, and he presented a sacrifice to Yahweh on the rock. Then an amazing thing happened[24] while Manoah and his wife watched— **20** when the flames went up into the sky from the altar, Yahweh's messenger went up in the flames while Manoah and his wife were watching. When they saw that, they quickly bowed right down to the ground. **21** After that, Manoah and his wife never saw him again, but now Manoah knew that he was Yahweh's messenger.

22 Manoah said to his wife, "We'll definitely die now because we've seen God!"

23 But his wife replied to him, "If Yahweh had wanted to kill us, he wouldn't have accepted the entire burnt offering and the grain offering. He wouldn't have shown us all those things, and he wouldn't have given us those instructions."

24 In due course, the woman gave birth to a son and she named him Shimshon (Samson). The boy grew up and Yahweh blessed him, **25** and then Yahweh's spirit began to stir him when he was in Mahaneh Dan—between Tsor'ah and between Eshtaol.

Shimshon and the woman from Timnah

14:1 One time when Shimshon (Samson) went to Timnah, he noticed a young, Pelishti woman there, **2** and he went back home and he reported to his parents, "I saw a Pelishti woman in Timnah that I'd like you to get for me as my wife."

3 "Isn't there a woman among your relatives?" his parents asked him, "Or among all of our people? Why take a wife from the uncircumcised Pelishtim?"

"Get her for me," Shimshon said to his father, "because I feel she's right for me."

4 Now his parents didn't know that Yahweh was arranging this, because he was seeking an opportunity against the Pelishtim who were oppressing Yisrael (Israel) at that time.

5 Then Shimshon went to Timnah with his parents and when they got to the vineyards there, wow, a young lion roared when it saw him. **6** Yahweh's spirit rose up in Shimshon, and he tore the lion to pieces with his bare hands like butchering a young goat, but he didn't mention to his parents what he'd done.

7 Then he continued on and talked with the woman, and he really liked her. **8** Some time later when he returned for the wedding, he turned off the path to look for the lion's carcass, and to his surprise, a swarm of bees had nested in the carcass and there was honey there. **9** He filled his cupped hands with honey, and continued along—walking and eating as he went to where his parents were. He even gave some to them to try, but he didn't tell them that he had scooped it out of the carcass of a dead lion. **10** Then his father went to visit the woman, and in the custom of the young men of the time, Shimshon held a party there. **11** When they saw him, they brought thirty close friends to join him.[25] **12** Shimshon said to them, "Let me suggest a riddle for you all. If you're able to explain it to me during the seven days of the party and you've worked it out correctly, I'll give you all thirty linen coats and thirty sets of clothes. **13** But if you all can't explain it to me, then you yourselves must give me thirty linen coats and thirty sets of clothes."

"Okay, we're listening. Tell us the riddle." they answered.

14 So he said,

"Food came out of the eater,

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24 **RV 13:19 · Note** We've changed this to a passive construction here, because it's not specified whether it was Yahweh himself or his messenger who did the miracle.

25 **RV 14:11 · Note** Although we can understand the words here, we're not certain of the implications, or perhaps the cultural traditions. Did Shimshon appear too alone? Too intimidating? Or was it just bringing more friends for good food and drink?

Readers' Version

and sweetness came out of the strong one."
But three days later, they still couldn't solve his riddle.
15 Then on the seventh day,[26] they pressured Shimshon's
wife, "Get your husband to tell you the answer of the riddle,
otherwise we'll burn down your father' house and you as
well. Did you invite us to the party just to impoverish us?"
16 Then Shimshon's wife put on a crying act and said, "You
must hate me—you don't love me because you've created a
riddle for my relatives, yet you haven't even told me the an-
swer."
"Listen," he replied, "I haven't even told my own parents.
Should I tell you?" 17 She continued to cry beside him
throughout the seven-day party, and then finally on the sev-
enth day, he gave in and told her because she kept nagging
him, so in the end she was able to reveal the answer to her
relatives. 18 Then the men of the city said to Shimshon be-
fore the sun went down on the seventh day,
"What is sweeter than honey?
And what's stronger than a lion?"
So he said to them,
"If you all hadn't ploughed with my heifer,
you wouldn't have been able to solve my riddle."
19 Then Yahweh's spirit rose up in him, and he went to
Ashkelon and killed thirty men there. He took their posses-
sions, and he gave the changes of clothes for the riddle. But
he was very angry, so he went back to his parent's home.
20 Then (unknown to Shimshon), his wife was given to the
man who'd been his close friend and companion.
15:1 Some days later during the wheat harvest, Shimshon
visited his wife with a young goat as a present for the family,
because he said, "I'll go into the bedroom with my wife." But
her father wouldn't allow him to go in, 2 and pleaded, "Truly,
I thought that you must hate her, so I gave her to your close
friend. But wouldn't her younger sister be better anyway?
Please, would you take her instead."
3 Shimshon responded, "This time I'm blameless concern-
ing the Pelishtim when I cause trouble for them." 4 Then he
went and captured three hundred foxes and tied them in
pairs—tail to tail. He took torches, and tied one torch be-
tween the tails of each pair. 5 He lit the torches and let the
foxes loose into the grain crops of the Pelishtim. As a result,
he burnt both the standing grain plants and also the har-
vested stacks of sheaves, and even a vineyard and an olive
orchard. 6 So the Pelishtim asked, "Who did this?"
"Shimshon," they replied, "the son-in-law of the man from
Timnah, because he took Shimshon's wife and gave her to
his close friend." As a result, the Pelishtim went to Timnah
and they burnt both the woman and her father. 7 Then
Shimshon told them, "Since you actually did that horrible
thing, I certainly won't stop until I've avenged myself against
you all." 8 Then he attacked the Pelishtim and crippled many
of them, before going to Eytam's rock where he lived in a
cave.

Shimshon defeats the Pelishtim

9 However, the Pelishti warriors
went and camped in Yehudah (Judah),
and spread out around the town of Lehi. 10 But the men of
Yehudah asked them, "Why have you all come here to attack
us?"
"We've come to capture Shimshon (Samson)," they replied.
"To give him some of his own back." 11 Then three thousand
men from Yehudah went down to the crevice in Eytam's
rock, and told Shimshon, "Don't you realise that the Pelish-
tim are ruling over us? Why are you causing more trouble for
us?"
"Just as they've done to me," he replied, "so I've done to
them."
12 "We've come here to tie you up so we can hand you over
to the Pelishtim," they said.
"Okay," Shimshon responded. "But promise me that you all
won't injure me yourselves."
13 "No, however, we'll certainly tie you up," they replied,
"and we'll hand you over to them. But truly we won't kill
you." Then they tied him up with two new ropes and brought
him up from the rocks.
14 When they'd taken him as far as Lehi, the Pelishtim
shouted triumphantly when they saw him. Then Yahweh's
spirit rose in Shimshon and the ropes around his arms just
seemed as weak as burnt flax stalks when he simply snapped
them off him. 15 He saw a fresh donkey's jawbone lying on
the ground, and he reached out his hand and grabbed it, and
he slaughtered a thousand Pelishti men with it. 16 Then
Shimshon declared,
"With a donkey's jawbone, one heap, two heaps,
with a donkey's jawbone, I've slaughtered a thousand
men."
17 When he finished reciting that, he hurled the jawbone
away, and he called that place 'Ramat-Lehi' (which means
'jawbone hill').
18 Then he was very thirsty and cried out to Yahweh, "You
yourself have given your servant this great victory, but now
must I die with this thirst and get captured by those uncir-
cumcised Pelishtim?" 19 So God split open the little hollow
that's at Lehi, and water came out of it. When he drank, his
strength returned and he revived. Because of that, he called
it 'Eyn-Hakore' (which means 'the fountain of the one who
called out'), which is in Lehi to this day. 20 And so Shimshon
led Yisrael (Israel) for twenty years at the time of the Pelishti
oppression.

Shimshon carries away the gates

16:1 Shimshon (Samson) went to Azah
(Gaza) city and he saw a prostitute

26 RV 14:15 · Note The Greek Septuagint translation says 'the *fourth* day', which perhaps might fit better into the narrative, but 'seventh' is in the Hebrew that we have and not necessarily incorrect.

Readers' Version

woman there so he went in to spend the night with her. 2 But the Gazim passed around the news, "Shimshon's in town." So they encircled the city gate and they laid in wait for him all night. They stayed quiet the whole night, saying, "We'll kill him when it gets light." 3 Shimshon stayed with her until the middle of the night, then he got up. He picked up both the gates including the cross-bar and their posts, and hoisted them up onto his shoulders, and he carried them up to the top of the hill which is in front of Hevron.

Shimshon and Dililah

4 Sometime after that, Shimshon (Samson) fell in love with a Pelishti woman named Dililah who lived in the Sorek valley. 5 The Pelishti leaders came to her and requested, "Make him open up. Find out what makes him strong, and how we can beat him, so that we can tie him up to keep him in our power. Then we'll each give you one thousand one hundred silver coins."

6 So Dililah asked Shimshon, "Please, tell me what makes you so strong, and how could someone tie you up to keep you in their power?"

7 "If they'd tie me up with seven green cords that haven't been dried," he replied, "then I'd become weak and be just like any other man."

8 So the Pelishti leaders brought her seven green cords that hadn't been dried, and she tied him up with them. 9 Now she had an ambush group ready in the next room when she said to him, "The Pelishtim are here to get you, Shimshon!" But he tore the cords to shreds just like a strip of flax fiber is torn to shreds when the fire reaches it, thus they didn't find out the secret of his strength. 10 Then Dililah said to him, "Listen, you deceived me and lied to me. Now tell me, please, how could someone tie you up?"

11 "Actually, if they would tie me with new ropes which have never been used," he replied, "I'd become weak and be just like any other man."

12 So Dililah took new cords and tied him up with them. She said to him, "The Pelishtim are here to get you, Shimshon!" with the ambush group staying in the next room. But he flicked them off his arms like they were just thread.

13 Then Dililah said to Shimshon, "So far you've just been deceitful to me and told me lies. Now Tell me how you can be tied up."

So he told her, "It's if you just weave seven locks of my hair into the loom."

14 So she did it and fastened it with the pin, and called out, "The Pelishtim are here to get you, Shimshon!" Then he woke up and ripped out the pin, the loom, and his hair from the fabric.

15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart isn't with me? You've been deceitful to me three times now, and you haven't revealed to me the secret of your amazing strength." 16 Day after day she nagged and pestered him until he was sick to death of hearing it. 17 So finally he told her his secret, "My hair has never been cut because I've been a Nazirite to God since my birth. If my head would be shaved, then my strength would leave me, and I'd become weak—I'd be just like any other man."

18 When Dililah perceived that he'd told her his deepest secret, she summoned the Pelishti leaders, "Come here one more time, because he's told me his secret." So the Pelishti leaders came, bringing the silver coins with them. 19 Then she made him fall asleep on her knees, and she called in a man to shave off his seven locks of hair, causing him to start to weaken, and his additional strength left him. 20 Then she said, "The Pelishtim are here to get you, Shimshon!" He woke up and thought to himself, "I'll escape like all the other times and I'll shake myself loose." But he didn't know that Yahweh had left him. 21 So the Pelishtim seized him, and they gouged out his eyes. They brought him to Azah (Gaza) and chained him with a pair of bronze shackles, then they put him to work in prison grinding grain. 22 However, over time his hair began to grow back again.

Shimshon's death

23 Some time later, the Pelishti leaders gathered together for a celebration and to offer a large sacrifice to their god Dagon, saying, "Our god has helped us capture our terrible enemy, Shimshon (Samson)." 24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has helped us capture our enemy—the devastator of our region who killed so many of us." 25 Later in the celebration when the drink had liberated their thinking, they said, "Call for Shimshon so he can entertain us." So they brought Shimshon in from the prison and taunted him to get them all laughing. They made him stand among the pillars of the building 26 and he asked the servant who was guiding him by the hand, "Place my hands against the two pillars holding up the building so I can lean on them." 27 The building was full of the men and the women, including the Pelishti leaders. On the roof there were about three thousand men and women watching the entertainment with Shimshon.

28 Then Shimshon called out to Yahweh, "My master Yahweh, please remember me. Strengthen me please, just this time, oh God, so that I can avenge myself by one last act of vengeance on the Pelishtim to make them pay for my two eyes." 29 Then he took hold of the two centre pillars on which the building depended, and pressed out against them—one in his right hand and one in his left. 30 Then he exclaimed, "Let me die with the Pelishtim!" He stretched out with his strength and the building fell on their leaders and all of the people in it. So he killed more people at his death than he had killed during his life.

31 Then his brothers and all his father's household went to Azah (Gaza) and carried his body back. They buried him between Tsor'ah and Eshtaol in the burial place of his father Manoah. He had helped Yisrael (Israel) for twenty years.

Readers' Version

The false gods of Mikiyas

17:1 Now there was a man named Mikah from the hill country of Efrayim (Ephraim) **2** who admitted to his mother, "Those eleven hundred silver coins that were taken from you—when you made a curse, and even said it when I was listening, well listen, I've got it all—I took it myself."

His mother said, "May Yahweh bless you, my son." **3** Then he brought back the eleven hundred silver coins to his mother and she declared, "I will certainly consecrate the money to Yahweh for my son's benefit. Take it and we'll use it to have one statue carved and another cast." **4** So after the money had been returned, his mother gave two hundred silver coins to a silversmith. He made a carved figure and one cast from a mould, and they were placed in Mikah's house.

5 Now that Mikah had a shrine with gods in it, he made some priestly robes and some household gods, and consecrated one of his sons as his priest. **6** In those days, Yisrael (Israel) didn't have a king—each person would do whatever seemed right to them.

7 Now there was a young Levite man from the family of Yehudah (Judah)[27] who'd been staying in Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) (in Yehudah). **8** He left Beyt-Lehem to find another place to say, and on his way, he ended up arriving at Mikah's place in the Efrati hill country. **9** "Where have you come from?" Mikah asked him.

"I'm a Levite from Beyt-Lehem in Yehudah," he replied, "and I'm trying to find a good place to stay a while."

10 "Stay with me," said Mikah, "and be like a father and a priest to me. I'll give you ten silver coins a year as well as board and clothing." So the Levite man went in **11** and agreed to stay with Mikah, eventually becoming like one of Mikah's own sons. **12** Mikah ordained the Levite, and the young man became like a priest to him, and lived in his house. **13** "Now I know that Yahweh will make everything go well for me," Mikah said, "because I have this Levite as a priest."

The Danim settle in Layish

18:1 In those days, Yisrael (Israel) didn't have a king. The tribe of Dan was looking for land to settle in, because up until then, they hadn't been able to claim their allocated region among the Israeli tribes. **2** So the Danim sent out five capable men (from Tsor'ah and from Eshtaol) to scout out the region and explore it. They had told them, "Go and explore the area." They came to the Efrati hill country, as far as Mikah's house, and spent the night there. **3** They'd been near Mikah's house when they recognized the voice of the young Levite man. So they'd gone in there and they asked him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you get here?"

4 Then he told them what Mikah had done for him, and how he'd hired him to be like his priest.

5 So they asked him, "Please find out from God if we'll have success on this expedition we're on."

6 "Continue on in peace," the priest said. "Yahweh has prepared everything ahead of you all."

7 Then the five men left and went on to Layish. They saw that the people there were living in confidence just like the Tsidonim (Sidonians) were—peacefully and feeling secure. No one in the region was causing trouble for them and they were very settled. They were far away from the Tsidonim and didn't interact with others. **8** Then they went back to their relatives in Tsor'ah and Eshtaol, who asked them, "How did it go?" **9** "Get ready immediately," they said, "so that we can go to battle against them! Because we've seen the land and listen, it's incredibly good. Don't just stay still here—you all need to take action to go in to take possession of the land.

10 When you go, you'll all come to a people living without suspicion of attack, and the land is spacious in all directions, because God will hand it over to you—a place where there's no lack of anything that's on the earth."

11 So six hundred Dani warriors left Tsor'ah and Eshtaol, carrying their weapons. **12** They set off and camped at Kiryat-Yearim in Yehudah (Judah). That's why they call that place Mahaneh-Dan (meaning 'Dan's camp') to this day—it's back behind Kiryat-Yearim. **13** From there, they crossed over into the Efrati hill country, eventually arriving near Mikah's house.

14 Then the five men who had been here previously scouting out the land said to their group, "Do you know that there's a house here with a gear for priests, family idols, a carved image, and a cast image? So now, consider what you should do." **15** So they turned off the main path and they came to the place with the young Levite man in Mikah's house, and they asked about his welfare. **16** The six hundred Dani men stayed outside at the gate, holding their weapons.

17 The five men who'd gone to scout out the land went in around the back. They took the carved image, the priest's gear, the family idols, and the cast image, while the priest was standing at the entrance of the gate along with the six hundred armed men. **18** When the priest saw them bringing out all the religious objects, he demanded, "What's going on?"

19 "Stay quiet," they told him. "Put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be like a father and a priest for us. Is it better to be a priest for only one household, or to be a priest for a whole related tribe in Yisrael (Israel)?" **20** The priest liked that idea, so he went along with them—taking the priestly gear and the household idols, and the carved image.

21 Then they went back to the main path and continued on their way with the children, animals, and those carrying the valuable property going in front. **22** When they'd already gone quite some distance from Mikah's house, Mikah and his

27 RV 17:7 · Note Maybe one parent was from the tribe of Levi and one from Yehudah?

Readers' Version

neighbours gathered together, then the men ran in a group and caught up with the Danim. 23 They called out to the Danim who turned around to face them and asked Mikah, "What's the matter? Why has this group come together?" 24 "You all took my gods that I made," Mikah replied, "And the priest. Then you disappeared and I had nothing left. So how can you all ask me what the matter is!"

25 "I wouldn't say too much if I was you," he was told. "Otherwise some of our more fiery men might start to get a bit hostile, then you'd bring about your own death, and that of your companions!" 26 Then Mikah realised that they were too strong for them, so they turned back around and went home.

So the Danim continued onward, 27 taking with them the things that Mikah had made, as well as his priest. They came to Layish where the unsuspecting people were living peaceably, and they slaughtered them with their swords and burnt down the city. 28 No one came to rescue them because it was a long way from Tsidon (Sidon) and they did have much involvement with them anyway. (Layish was in the valley near Beyt-Rehov.) They rebuilt the city and then moved into it. 29 They named the rebuilt city Dan (instead of Layish) in honour of their ancestor Dan who was one of Yisrael's (Israel's) sons. 30 The Danim mounted the carved image for themselves to worship. Yonatan (Jonathan) (Gereshom's son from Menasheh (Manasseh)) became the priest for the Danim (and then his descendants until when the people were eventually exiled from the region). 31 So they set up the carved image that Mikah had made and worshipped it the whole time that God's tent was at Shiloh.

The Levite and his slave-wife

19:1 In those days when there was no king over Yisrael (Israel), there was a Levite man who was staying in the remotest parts of the hill country of Efrayim (Ephraim). He took a slave-wife for himself from Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) in Yehudah (Judah). 2 However, she started sleeping around, and then she left him and went to her father's house in Beyt-Lehem where she ended up staying for four months. 3 Then her husband got organised and went after her—to sweet-talk her and persuade her to return with him. He took a young servant man and a team of donkeys. She invited her husband into her father's house, and when her father saw him, he was glad to meet him. 4 His father-in-law (her father) insisted on offering hospitality, so they ate and drank, and he stayed the night, and ended up staying for three days. 5 Then on the fourth day, they got up early and the Levite prepared to leave, but his father-in-law urged him to eat before they left.

6 So the two of them ate and drank together, and then the woman's father said, "Please stay another night. Relax and have a good time."

7 The man got ready to leave, however his father-in-law persisted, so he stayed another night there. 8 He got up early in the morning on the fifth day to get ready to leave, but the father of the young woman said, "Get some energy first." So they waited until later in the day, and then the two of them ate.

9 When the man stood up to go with his slave-wife and his young man, his father-in-law said, "Listen, the day's coming to an end soon. Please stay the night. See, it'll be getting dark soon. Spend the night here and be happy. Then make an early start tomorrow for your journey home."

10 But the man from the tribe of Levi didn't want to stay another night. He put saddles on his two donkeys, and started to go with his slave-wife and his servant toward Yevus city (now called Yerushalem (Jerusalem)).

11 They got close to Yevus and the daylight had mostly gone, so the young man said to his master, "Come, please, we should turn aside into this city of the Yevusim so we can spend the night there." 12 "We won't go into a city of foreigners," his master replied. "There's no Israelis there. Better to keep going until we reach Giveah." 13 Then he added, "Yes, let's keep going to reach either Giveah or Ramah to spend the night in." 14 So they passed Yevus and went on, but the sun went down as they neared Giveah (in Benyamite territory) 15 so they went into Giveah to spend the night there. They went and sat in the open plaza of the city, but no one invited them into their home for the night.

16 But then in late evening, an old man came in from his work in the field. He was from the Efrati hill country but currently staying in the Giveah area where the residents were Benyamites. 17 He looked up and noticed them in the open plaza of the city and asked the man, "Where are you going, and where have you come from?"

18 "We're passing through from Beyt-Lehem (Bethlehem) in Yehudah (Judah)," the Levite replied. "Going to the remote parts of the Efrati hill country where I'm from. I went to Beyt-Lehem, and I'm going to Shiloh where Yahweh's house is. However, no one here has invited us into their home. 19 We have our own food and straw for our donkeys, and enough food and wine for the three of us so we don't need anything else.

20 "Peace to you all," said the old man. "Let me supply everything you need—only don't spend the night here in the square." 21 Then he took them to his house and fed their donkeys. They washed their feet, and they all ate and drank. 22 They were having a good time, but suddenly the men of the city—wicked men—had surrounded the house—pounding repeatedly on the door. They called out to the old man who owned the house, "Hey, bring out the man who came to your place, so we can have fun with him."[28][29] 23 The man

28 **RV 19:22 · Note** Of course, everyone understood that their aim was to sodomise him.

29 **RV 19:22-24 · Cross-ref.** Gen 19:5-8.

who owned the house went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, please you mustn't act wickedly. That man is a guest in my house—you all mustn't do this disgraceful thing. 24 My virgin daughter and his slave-wife are here. Please let me bring *them* out so you can ravish them and do whatever you want to them. But don't do that wicked thing to that man." 25 But the men weren't willing to listen to him, so the man pushed his slave-wife out to them and they raped her and abused her the whole night until the morning, when they discarded her as it began to dawn.

26 The woman managed to get herself back to the house where her master was, and collapsed at the entrance until it got light. 27 When her master got up and he opened the door to go and continue on his trip, look, his slave-wife had fallen at the entrance and her hands were on the threshold. 28 "Get up," he told her. "Let's go." But she didn't answer, so he put her on his donkey and headed home. 29 When he arrived, he got a knife and hacked his wife's body into twelve pieces (including the bones), and he sent them to various places spread across all of Yisrael's (Israel's) territory. 30 Then everyone who saw a piece said, "Nothing has ever happened like this before—we've never seen anything like this from the time that the Israelis left Mitsrayim (Egypt) until now. What do we need to do about it? Speak up and make a plan."

The preparation of Israelis of war

20:1 Then all the Israelis from Dan in the north to Be'er-Sheva (Beersheba) in the south, and even from Gilead across the Yarden (Jordan), came and assembled before Yahweh at Mitspah with one single, united purpose. 2 The leaders of all the Israeli tribes also came out to show their agreement with the assembly of the people of the true God: four hundred thousand warriors all carrying swords.

3 Meanwhile, the Benyamites had heard that the Israelis had gathered at Mitspah, and everyone asked, "Explain how this wicked thing came to happen."

4 So the Levite man (the husband of the woman who had been murdered) answered, "I went to the Giveah region (in Benyamin) with my slave-wife to spend the night. 5 The citizens of Giveah conspired together against me. They surrounded the house at night because of me, intending to kill me. Instead, they assaulted and abused my slave-wife so that she died. 6 I took my slave-wife's body back home and cut her in pieces, and I sent them out into every section of the territory that God gave Yisrael (Israel), because they've committed a heinous crime, and a disgrace to Yisrael. 7 Listen, all of you Israelis, what's your advice? What should we do about it?."

8 All the people agreed together and started saying, "We won't go back to our families. We won't return to our houses. 9 rather this is what we must do to Giveah: choose by lot who will fight against them. 10 Choose a tenth of our men to go and get supplies for the other warriors to travel to Giveah in Benyamin after what they did that outraged Yisrael. 11 So all Yisrael was united together against that city.

12 Then the Israeli tribes sent men across the Benyamite region to ask, "What's this evil thing that's been done among you? 13 So now, hand over those worthless men from the Giveah region so that we can put them to death and purge Yisrael of that evil." But the Benyamites weren't willing to take the advice of their Israeli relatives. 14 They came out of their cities and assembled at Giveah to the battle against the Israelis. 15 The Benyamites mobilised together twenty-six thousand men from their cities on that day, all carrying swords. In addition, seven hundred chosen men had been mobilised from the Giveah region. 16 Among all of those people were seven hundred chosen left-handers, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair without missing. 17 The Israelis (excluding Benyamites) mustered up for themselves four hundred thousand men—all expert warriors and all carrying swords.

The war to punish the Benyamites

18 The Israelis got ready and went to Beyt-El (Bethel) and asked God, "Who should lead us into battle with the Benyamites?"

"It should be Yehudah (Judah) out front," Yahweh responded.

19 So the Israelis set out in the morning and made camp near Giveah. 20 Then they went out to battle against the Benyamites—setting themselves up for the battle against them at Giveah.

21 But the Benyamites led a surprise attack out of Giveah and killed twenty-two thousand of the Israeli warriors. 22 However the Israelis strengthened themselves and they continued to set up for battle the next day at the same place.

23 Then the Israelis assembled and wept before Yahweh until evening. They asked him, "Should we continue to attack and battle against our cousins the Benyamites?"

"Go back against them," Yahweh replied. 24 So the Israelis went back to battle against the Benyamites again on the second day. 25 Again the Benyamites came out from Giveah, and this time they killed eighteen thousand Israeli swordsmen. 26 Then the Israeli warriors and all the people went back to Beyt-El (Bethel). They wept, and they sat there before Yahweh. They fasted that day until the evening, then they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to Yahweh. 27 They asked Yahweh (because the box containing the agreement with the true God was there in those days 28 and Pinhas (son of Aharon's (Aaron's) son Eleazar) was serving before it in those days), "Should we continue to go to the battle once more against the our cousins the Benyamites, or should we stop?"

"Go back again, because tomorrow I'll give you victory over them," Yahweh responded.

29 So the Israelis placed groups of warriors in ambush all around Giveah. 30 Then they took their positions now for the third day against the Benyamites in Giveah. 31 When the Benyamites came out from the city, they were lured away as

they began to strike down their enemies like the time before. Around thirty Israelis were killed on the two roads—one going to Beyt-El and the other to Giveah through the countryside. 32 Then the Benyamites said, "We're starting to defeat them, just like before."

But the Israelis had said, "Let's flee so that we can draw them away from the city and onto the roads." 33 Then the main group of Israelis retreated and set up battle lines at Ba'al-Tamar, as the ones hiding in ambush made a surprise attack from their places in Ma'areh-Geva. 34 Ten thousand chosen Israeli warriors came out in the sight of the Giveah region, and the battle was fierce, but the Benyamites hadn't yet realised that disaster was about to hit them. 35 Yahweh helped the Israelis to defeat the Benyamites that day, and over twenty-five thousand Benyamite swordsmen were killed 36 and they saw that they were defeated.

The Israelis had given ground to the Benyamites because they had relied on the ambush placed around Giveah. 37 Then the group hiding in ambush had rushed out and spread out around Giveah, then had gone in and attacked the entire city with their swords. 38 Then they started a fire as the prearranged signal was to be the rising column of smoke up out of the city.

39 Meanwhile the main Israeli force had retreated, and the Benyamites had attacked and killed around thirty men, thinking that they were winning like they'd done twice before. 40 But when the pillar of smoke began to rise from the city, the Benyamites looked behind them and were shocked to see their city going up in smoke. 41 Then the main Israeli force stopped retreating and turned back to attack again. The Benyamites were horrified because they now saw that disaster had struck them. 42 They retreated away from the Israelis into the wilderness, but the battle overtook them, plus the Israelis were coming back out of the cities getting right in amongst them to fight. 43 They surrounded the Benyamites as they tried to flee, and easily ran them down as they tried to escape from the Giveah region towards the east. 44 Eighteen thousand strong Benyamite warriors were killed, 45 and the rest turned and fled into the wilderness towards the Rimon rock. Another five thousand men were killed along the trails. They chased them all the way to Gideom, and killed another two thousand men, 46 so the total number of Benyamite swordsmen who were killed came to twenty-five thousand—all strong warriors.

47 But six hundred men made it to Rimon rock, and they stayed there for four months. 48 Meanwhile, the Israelis went back to the Benyamite region and killed the people with their swords—entire cities including cattle and everything else—then the cities were set on fire.

Wives for the Benyamites

21:1 Now back in Mitspah, the Israeli men had promised never to allow their daughters to marry a Benyamite man. 2 But now the Israelis went to Beyt-El (Bethel) and sat there before God until evening—calling out and crying loudly, 3 asking, "Oh Yahweh, God of Yisrael (Israel), why has this happened to Yisrael—for one tribe to be missing from Yisrael now?"

4 The next day, the people got up early and built an altar there, and they offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5 Then the Israelis asked, "Among all the Israeli tribes serving Yahweh, was there any group who didn't join the battle?" (They asked that because they had previously decided that anyone who didn't go to Mitspah to fight for Yahweh would be put to death.) 6 Now the Israelis felt sorry for their Benyamite cousins, saying, "An entire tribe has been hacked off Yisrael today. 7 How can we find wives for any Benyamite men that are left because we've promised to Yahweh not to give our daughters to them to marry?

8 So they asked, "Is there any from our tribes who didn't show up for Yahweh at Mitspah?" Then listen, no one from Yavesh-Gilead had joined their assembly there. 9 (When the people had checked around themselves, they'd realised that no one from Yavesh-Gilead was there.) 10 So the Israelis sent twelve thousand warriors there, commanding them to use their swords to kill the inhabitants of Yavesh-Gilead, including married women and children— 11 specifically they had to kill every male, and every woman who's slept with a male. 12 That way they discovered four hundred young virgin women among the inhabitants of Yavesh-Gilead, and brought them back to their camp at Shiloh (in the Kena'an (Canaan) region).

13 Then the entire assembly sent a message to the Benyamites at Rimon rock, saying that they were now ready for peace. 14 So the Benyamites returned and were given the young women from Yavesh-Gilead, but there wasn't enough of them.

15 The people still felt sorry for the Benyamites, because Yahweh had caused a gap among Yisrael's (Israel's) tribes, 16 so the leaders asked, "How can we provide wives for the remaining Benyamite men since the other Benyamite women were wiped out?" 17 Because they said, "They must be able to procreate so that an entire Israeli tribe isn't blotted out. 18 But we can't be the ones to give our daughters to them to marry because we made an oath that anyone who did that would be cursed."

19 They said, "Listen, there's a celebration for Yahweh from time to time at Shiloh, which is on the north of Beyt-El (Bethel), east of the road that goes from Beyt-El uphill to Shekem, and on the south of Levonah." 20 So they told the Benyamites, "Go and hide in those vineyards 21 and watch. When the Shiloh girls come out to perform in the dances, come out of the vineyards and you can each catch a wife for yourselves, then go back home to Benyamin. 22 When their fathers or brothers complain to us, we'll tell them, "Let them have them since we didn't find you for them. And you all won't be guilty of giving them to the Benyamites because they stole them.

Readers' Version

23 So that's what the Benyamites did—they grabbed
enough dancing girls to be their wives, then they returned to
their allocated land and rebuilt their cities and lived in them.

24 The other Israelis went back to their tribes and their families in the areas that had been allocated to them.

25 In those days, there was no king in Yisrael (Israel)—everyone would just do what seemed right to them.[30]

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30 RV 21:25 · Cross-ref. Jdg 17:6.

