

# Seven Bible Studies 2017

## History

### February 7: Judges 1-6 (Nick Hermon)

HISTORY: Judges

The book of Israel's Failures.

The name "Judges" comes from the types of leaders Israel had during this period. They're not exactly like typical "judges" we think of today, but more like tribe leaders. Their stories are most often of going into battles and doing great (or terrible) things.

Chp. 1 starts off with the death of Joshua

Remember, Israel was doing well during the time of Joshua, but that's about to come crashing down when the Israelites start falling away and intermarrying with the Canaanites (which explains why it says God instructed them to "completely destroy" them throughout the book of Joshua).

Chp. 2 gives kind of an overview of the whole book

Israel starts off in sin which (as Joshua warned them) leads to oppression, they repent and ask God for a deliverer (a "judge") who leads to peace, but then they fall right back into the cycle of sin again.

Chp. 3-5 the first four judges: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar and Deborah, seem to be good leaders. They conquer the Canaanites resulting in:

40yrs peace through Othniel

80yrs peace through Ehud (whose sword was engulfed in Eglon because he was so fat... what a fun children's class story!)

Shamgar striking down 600 Philistines with an oxgoad (which kind of looks like a combination of a shepherd's crook and spear)

40yrs peace through Deborah

Then comes Gideon out of the tribe of Manasseh and the least in his family. He surprised and thankful to God for giving him this task. God tells him he's been chosen to take down the Midianites... so at first it seems like he's going to be an ok judge... but we'll see where he goes from here... [cliff hanger]

### Comment:

Marc Hermon:

Deborah was the first woman judge but Jael took a stab at it.

## Comment:

Marc Hermon:

"After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel." 2:10 #1 priority of a father: Teach your children about the Lord!

## Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Nick Hermon. I don't know of any children songs made about Ehud & Eglon, a lefty & a fat man. I do remember some giggles back in the day during children's class, however! :-) I still remember the mnemonic that we created to help remember the Judges' names back when Marc & I were in college. "Oh Ephramites! Some Day The Great Judge Jephthah Is Eventually Asking Shibboleth!" O= Othneil, E=Ehud, S=Shamgar, D=Deborah, G=Gideon, T=Tola, J=Jair, J=Jephthah, I=Ibzan, E=Elon, A=Abdon, S=Samson. (There are more judges but these are the ones in the book of Judges) I think we should start making a list of all the unique weapons that were improvised during the occasion of need. So far oxgoad & tent peg. Coming up jars & torches, woman's millstone, and eventually a donkey's jawbone.

## Replies:

Charles Fry:

Do you know the Judges song, to the tune of "Reuben, Reuben"?

Ginger Hermon:

No, Charles Fry! Please share. :-) P.S. I had to google "Reuben, Reuben!"

Ginger Hermon:

I apologize. On the PHill website I see we do have a song of judges. I just didn't learn it myself. We're grateful Jamie Ingle and her Evans cousins blessed us with these songs!  
<http://www.pleasanthillchurchofchrist.org/songbook.php>

Charles Fry:

That's it, except we do sing the names a bit differently, including Barak with Deborah, but omitting Abimelech, who was not called to be a judge.

To the tune of Reuben, Reuben:

Othniel, Ehud, Shangar, Deborah, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair; Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon; Samson, Eli, Samuel.

(repeat tune) God set judges over Israel, one brave woman, 14 men. They helped Israel fight their battles, brought them back to God again.

Ginger Hermon:

Excellent. Thanks for sharing!

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

So much to ponder in these chapters! I especially appreciate in the song, chapter 5, the references to the excellence of those who volunteered, as in Judges 5:2 (NIV)

"When the princes in Israel take the lead,  
when the people willingly offer themselves—  
praise the Lord!"

Similarly in v.9 and the list of volunteers in 11-15, but then in Reuben, there was a lot of thinking about it, but not volunteering, and several others who failed to answer the call are

verbally flailed, v15b-17, and especially the nearby city of Meroz in v23, which was in a position to be a great help, but refused to help. By not helping Barak and Israel, they did not help the Lord, and so were cursed. Then there is that grand contrast between Jael, the tent dwelling woman, and the mother of Sisera waiting for more booty to finance her lavish lifestyle, booty that would never come.

## February 12: Judges 7-11 (Nick Hermon)

History Study: Judges 7-11

As mentioned last week, Gideon starts off as a coward of a man but eventually comes to trust that God CAN SAVE Israel through him. Chp 7 starts off with an incredible story how God tells Gideon that there are TOO MANY men to battle with. Of the 32,000 men, 22k left after Gideon told those who were afraid to turn away. Of the 10k men left, God told Gideon to take them to the river and narrow it down even more. 300 lapped water like dogs from the river and God told Gideon to use those soldiers (which makes it even more impressive since these are the men who let their guard down showing they are not alert of their surroundings).

Gideon takes these 300 men and defeats a HUGE army of Midianites with only three hundred men carrying torches and clay pots.

But Gideon has a nasty temper and murders a bunch of fellow Israelites for not helping him in his battle and then it all goes downhill from there.

He makes an idol from the gold that he won in his battles and then after he dies all Israel worships the idol as a god and the cycle begins again.

In Chp 9, Abimelech becomes a self-appointed ruler. I like how the NIV words that he took 70 shekels of silver and hired "reckless scoundrels, who became his followers". In another story of woman's triumph over evil, as Abimelech approached a city to set it on fire, a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head cracking his skull.

After a few more rulers, Jephthah, the son of Gilead and a prostitute, comes into power at the request of the elders. Jephthah was a very effective leader, winning lots of battles against the Ammonites but he was so unfamiliar with the God of Israel he treats him like a Canaanite god-vowing to sacrifice whatever walks through the door of his house... which ultimately results in him sacrificing his only child- a daughter.

This tragic story it shows just how far Israel has fallen and how they no longer know the character of their own God, which leads to murder and to false worship.

Next up: the story of a strong man with long hair 🤪

### Comment:

Marc Hermon:

Not sure I have the same take on the 300 as you but this passage has always been a little confusing to me so here is my "talk out loud" paraphrase version to demonstrate where my interpretation has landed.

"Separate those who drink the water as a dog laps with his tongue, (quickly and on the run) as opposed to those who remove their armor and kneel down and take their time to drink. Three

hundred men quickly lapped with their hands to their mouths but everyone else settled in down on their knees to drink."

I do admit I interpret it this way based on some strange need on my part for there to be a battle-strategic reason for God to choose them. He whittled down those who were afraid and then those that weren't vigilant.

Perhaps there is no reasoning for either drinking method and the Lord just chose the smaller number, "in order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her."

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

A good compassionate Father..."And He could bear Israel's misery no longer." 10:16

### **Comment:**

LuAnn Woody:

Tom could have said this- what I remember is the ones who drank hand to mouth were more vigilant and watchful- can't sneak up on someone who has their head up.

### **Replies:**

Lowell Hermon:

That is how I understood it too..

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

I've heard various theories about alertness and preparedness in the selection of the 300. My notion is that God wanted a small but useful number to do the job, knew how many would do what, and selected a test that would produce the number he wanted, regardless of their individual characteristics.

I appreciate that God offered Gideon the assurance of another sign if he wanted it before the attack, didn't chide him for his previous hesitation, but willingly encouraged him to finish the job he had been selected for. I also appreciate that the sign was nothing spectacular or obviously miraculous, but rather the words of a stranger.

And I admire how Gideon reasoned with the hostile Ephraimites, rather than going to battle with them as Jephthah later did.

The upper millstone, in the Abimelech story, would have been about the size and shape of a loaf of French bread. Rubbed back and forth over the flat lower millstone. A prized kitchen tool, or a head bonker as needed. Same kind of grinding when we get that far in the Samson story. Hard, menial labor.

In terms of literary structure, the story of Gideon-Abimelech is the center of the book, and there is parity between Deborah-Barak and Jephthah, and parity between Ehud and Samson.

## February 21: Judges 12-16 (Nick Hermon)

History Study: Judges 12-16

Much like Peter's accent gave him away, Judges chp. 12 tells the story of the men of Gilead recognizing individuals by their speech. If people wanted to cross the river and could not say "Sibboleth" correctly, they would be killed because they knew they were the enemy resulting in 42,000 deaths!

The story of Samson— an angel appeared to a woman unable to give birth and told her she would bear a son whose head should not be touched by a razor since he is to be a Nazirite. She was told he would deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

He had impressive feats of physical strength such as killing a lion with his bare hands, but the recklessness of marrying Philistine women caused issues.

Chp. 15 tells the fascinating story of his revenge from his first marriage on the Philistines by burning down areas with torches tied to foxes and killing a thousand people with a donkey's jawbone.

But once again, Samson makes the same mistake of falling in love with ANOTHER Philistine woman, named Delilah.

Like his first marriage, she presses him to tell her something he's keeping secret. He reveals his hair is the source of his strength and while he is sleeping, Delilah called for someone to shave the seven braids of his hair.

He is taken into captivity and brought in front of three thousand Philistines. He asks to be taken to a pillar so he can lean on it. Then he knocks down the two central pillars in the Philistine temple killing even more when he died than when he lived (v. 30).

Probably the biggest takeaway from these passages (in my opinion) is the importance of choosing your spouse. Not only can it lead to physical death as in Samson's case, but it can also put you in spiritual danger.

### Comment:

Wendy Range:

Thanks, Nick! I also like how Manoah and his wife were so dedicated to raising their son correctly. Prior to his birth, he hounded (in a good way) the angel in order to get as much information as possible on how to raise this son that the Lord had promised. It makes me think of the parent that is constantly seeking out the latest research in child development and diet. You can tell they were still watching obsessively (again, in a good way) when he became a man and decided he wanted to marry a woman not "of his people", disregarding their objections. It's easy to see why God chose them as Samson's parents, and they took on a great deal of suffering for the Lord by accepting the blessing of this son.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

Interesting side note (to me, anyway), a couple of Philistine temple ruins have been excavated by archaeologists, and have the common feature of a roof supported by two central pillars. The pillars in each were about six feet apart. That suggests to me that Samson probably had a large and imposing physical presence with a long reach.

[https://ferrelljenkins.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/tell-es-safi\\_view-of-philistine-temple-with-pillar-bases-t.jpg](https://ferrelljenkins.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/tell-es-safi_view-of-philistine-temple-with-pillar-bases-t.jpg)



## Comment:

Marc Hermon:

"She cried the whole seven days of the feast"

## Replies:

Ginger Hermon:

I'm surprised no one has yet referenced, "If you had not plowed with my heifer..."

Marc Hermon:

I am well pleased with my heifer so I didn't want to sound offensive. :)

Ginger Hermon:  
Better to be called a heifer than a dripping faucet I suppose. ;-)

### Comment:

Marc Hermon:  
"With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death"

### Comment:

Charles Fry:  
Samson was a deeply flawed individual, but used by God to accomplish things no one else in his generation was willing to take on. As with several other Biblical characters, there are intriguing foreshadows of the deliverer who was to come in the record of Samson. It's been a long time since I taught this lesson...

#### Samson's Riddle

Judges 13-14

Parallels to Jesus Christ:

Set aside from birth	Luke 1:35, Galatians 4:4
The angel told the mother first	Luke 1:26ff, Matthew 1:18-21
Came seeking a wife	Ephesians 5:25-27, John 1:10-13
Came looking for a fight	1 John 3:8
Passing through the vineyard parables	Isaiah 5:7; Revelation 14:17-20, various
Confronting a lion	1 Peter 5:8; John 12:30-33
The might of the Spirit	Luke 3:21-22, 4:1, 18-19; Acts 10:38
The defeat of the lion	Hebrews 2:14-15
Safe passage secured for all	Hebrews 10:19-22
The shame (uncleanness) of the dead body	Hebrews 12:2
The joy (sweetness) of the honey	Hebrews 12:2
Who the family really is	Luke 8:19-21
Therefore doers of the word share in the honey of the victory, along with God the father and Jesus the victor	1 Corinthians 15:56-58
But the world finds it a mysterious riddle	1 Corinthians 1:18-25
And tries to corrupt the bride	2 Corinthians 12:1-4, 1 Peter 3:13-17

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Samson broke the gates, Judges 16:3-4

Matthew 16:18

Samson fought alone

Hebrews 13:12

His own people betrayed him, Judges 15:11-15

John 1:11

His biggest victory was in his death, Judges 16:30 1 Corinthians 15:20-21

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

Also interesting, that clearly one of Samson's weaknesses was looking upon and desiring women and what did Jesus say about this?

"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."  
Matt. 5:29

Quite literally in Samson's case.

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

One more interesting bit. Not evidence as such, but interesting.

<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/artifacts-and-the-bible/lion-seal-from-beth-shemesh-sparks-samson-discussion/>

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Nick! I love all 7 days of Bible studies but History is one of my favorites. Thanks for keeping us on track and guiding our conversations. It's so nice to have everyone's perspective. Really appreciated Wendy's thoughts on Manoah and his wife being determined to raise their son in the Lord. Although Samson displayed weaknesses he finished strong and is listed in the hall of faith (Hebrews 11:32).

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Two sets of questions: 1.) who all were Nazirites? Aside from Samson I can think of Samuel and John the Baptist. 2.) how many births were divinely announced? I can think of Isaac, Samson, Jesus, John the Baptist. Just curious if there are more in either situations. Thanks, all!

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

Ginger, most Nazirites took the vow for a set limited period of time. The only one specifically called a Nazirite from birth is Samson, but Hannah's vow of dedication including no razor for Samuel sounds like a Nazirite vow, and the command that John drink no wine or fermented drink also sounds like a Nazirite vow. I have wondered if Elijah might have been a Nazirite, partly from 2 Kings 1:7-8, depending on which translation one follows. If any others were lifelong Nazirites, I'm unaware.

## Replies:

Ginger Hermon:  
Thanks, Charles!

## February 28: Judges 17-21 (Nick Hermon)

### HISTORY:

“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit”

This is how chapter 17 starts and how it ends in the very last verse of Judges.

Chapter 17-21 shows how bad things have gone for the Israelites. At this point, you can't even tell them apart from the Caananites anymore.

There are two tragic stories in these passages: the story of Micah and the Levite & his concubine.

Micah built a private temple to an idol and gets plundered by a private army sent by the tribe of Dan. They come and steal everything and then they go and burn down the peaceful city of Laish murdering all of its inhabitants.

The final story of the book is even worse. It is a shocking tale of sexual abuse which leads to violence and Israel's first civil war.

It's very disturbing and that's the point.  
These stories are meant to serve as a warning.

The line “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit” is repeated four times in the final chapters of this book and for good reason.

It goes to show that when we do what we see fit, we are going to be in the wrong. Bad things happen when we follow our own choices instead of the laws God has purposefully given us.

How different things would have been if they simply followed the final words of Joshua!

But as with the pattern of Israel, after their low-points, they eventually come back around... and this lack of a king sets the stage to the origins of King David.

Next week's study—> Ruth! 👍

## Comment:

Steven Wright:

Yes "tragic" is the right word. A lot of important instruction here though. When the kingdom divides, there is already a false priesthood in place in the North that has been there since the time of the judges. (18:30). When I teach the Book of Judges I always teach these last chapters first. Together with this statement that we find early in the book about there was no judge in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own minds etcetera to show how things were at the time. Chronologically chapters 18 through 21 belong at the beginning of the story. So looking forward to the Book of Ruth!

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

The account of the sin and decimation of the tribe of Benjamin is an important epilogue, linking us forward to the first king of Israel, his family, his connection to Jabesh Gilead, and his method of rallying his first army.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Nick! Throughout Judges the fundamental issue is the lordship of God in Israel and acknowledging His rule and Kingship. Unfortunately, Israel rejected this over & over. Only by the mercy of God was Israel not overwhelmed and absorbed by pagan nations. I'm looking forward to studying David's great grandmother! :-) History of redemption.

### **Replies:**

Joanne Caffie:

You make some good points Ginger and they remind me that we are a modern day Israel that continues to reject God AND His Son

### **Comment:**

Joanne Caffie:

Nick why would the tribe of Dan burn down and murder the inhabitants of a "peaceful" city?