

Judges

Judah Takes the Lead

1:1 After Joshua died, the Israelites asked¹ the LORD, “Who should lead the invasion against the Canaanites and launch the attack?”² **1:2** The LORD said, “The men of Judah should take the lead.³ Be sure of this! I am handing the land over to them.”⁴ **1:3** The men of Judah said to their relatives, the men of Simeon,⁵ “Invade our allotted land with us and help us attack the Canaanites.⁶ Then we⁷ will go with you into your allotted land.” So the men of Simeon went with them.

1:4 The men of Judah attacked,⁸ and the LORD handed the Canaanites and Perizzites over to them. They killed ten thousand men at Bezek. **1:5** They met⁹ Adoni-Bezek at Bezek and fought him. They defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites. **1:6** When Adoni-Bezek ran away, they chased him and captured him. Then they cut off his thumbs and big toes. **1:7** Adoni-Bezek said, “Seventy kings, with thumbs and big toes cut off, used to lick up¹⁰ food scraps¹¹ under my table. God has repaid me for what I did to them.”¹² They brought him to Jerusalem,¹³ where he died. **1:8** The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem and captured it. They put the sword to it and set the city on fire.

1:9 Later the men of Judah went down to attack the Canaanites living in the hill country, the Negev, and the lowlands.¹⁴ **1:10** The men of Judah attacked the Canaanites living in Hebron. (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba.) They killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi. **1:11** From there they attacked the people of Debir.¹⁵ (Debir used to be called Kiriath Sepher.) **1:12** Caleb said, “To the man who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher I will give my daughter Achsah as a wife.” **1:13** When Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother,¹⁶ captured it, Caleb¹⁷ gave him his daughter Achsah as a wife.

1:14 One time Achsah¹⁸ came and charmed her father¹⁹ so she could ask him for some land. When she got down from her donkey, Caleb said to her, “What would you like?” **1:15** She answered, “Please give me a special present.²⁰ Since you have given me land in the Negev, now give me springs of water.” So Caleb gave her both the upper and lower springs.²¹

1:16 Now the descendants of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the City of Date Palm Trees to Arad

¹ **tn** The Hebrew verb translated “asked” (שָׁאַל, *sha’al*) refers here to consulting the LORD through a prophetic oracle; cf. NAB “consulted.”

² **tn** *Heb* “Who should first go up for us against the Canaanites to attack them?”

³ **tn** *Heb* “Judah should go up.”

⁴ **tn** The Hebrew exclamation הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, traditionally, “Behold”), translated “Be sure of this,” draws attention to the following statement. The verb form in the following statement (a Hebrew perfect, indicating completed action from the standpoint of the speaker) emphasizes the certainty of the event. Though it had not yet taken place, the LORD speaks of it as a “done deal.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “Judah said to Simeon, his brother.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “Come up with me into our allotted land and let us attack the Canaanites.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “I.” The Hebrew pronoun is singular, agreeing with the collective singular “Judah” earlier in the verse. English style requires a plural pronoun here, however.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “Judah went up.”

⁹ **tn** Or “found.”

¹⁰ **tn** Elsewhere this verb usually carries the sense of “to gather; to pick up; to glean,” but “lick up” seems best here in light of the peculiar circumstances described by Adoni-Bezek.

¹¹ **tn** The words “food scraps” are not in the Hebrew text, but are implied.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “Just as I did, so God has repaid me.” Note that the phrase “to them” has been supplied in the translation to clarify what is meant.

¹³ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

¹⁴ **tn** Or “foothills”; *Heb* “the Shephelah.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “they went from there against the inhabitants of Debir.” The LXX reads the verb as “they went up,” which suggests that the Hebrew text translated by the LXX read וַיַּעַל (*vayya’al*) rather than the MT’s וַיַּעֲלֶה (*vayyelekh*). It is possible that this is the text to be preferred in v. 11. Cf. Josh 15:15.

¹⁶ **tn** “Caleb’s younger brother” may refer to Othniel or to Kenaz (in which case Othniel was Caleb’s nephew; so CEV).

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Caleb) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “she”; the referent (Achshah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “him.” The pronoun could refer to Othniel, in which case one would translate, “she incited him [Othniel] to ask her father for a field.” This is problematic, however, for Achshah, not Othniel, makes the request in v. 15. The LXX has “he [Othniel] urged her to ask her father for a field.” This appears to be an attempt to reconcile the apparent inconsistency and probably does not reflect the original text. If Caleb is understood as the referent of the pronoun, the problem disappears. For a fuller discussion of the issue, see P. G. Mosca, “Who Seduced Whom? A Note on Joshua 15:18 // Judges 1:14,” CBQ 46 (1984): 18-22. The translation takes Caleb to be the referent, specified as “her father.”

²⁰ **tn** Elsewhere the Hebrew word בְּרִיחה (*v’erakhah*) is often translated “blessing,” but here it refers to a gift (as in Gen 33:11; 1 Sam 25:27; 30:26; and 2 Kgs 5:15).

²¹ **tn** Some translations regard the expressions “springs of water” (גְּלוֹת מַיִם, *gullot mayim*) and “springs” (גְּלוֹת) as place names here (cf. NRSV).

in the desert of Judah,¹ located in the Negev.² They went and lived with the people of Judah.³

1:17 The men of Judah went with their brothers the men of Simeon⁴ and defeated the Canaanites living in Zephath. They wiped out Zephath.⁵ So people now call the city Hormah.⁶ **1:18** The men of Judah captured Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and the territory surrounding each of these cities.⁷

1:19 The LORD was with the men of Judah. They conquered⁸ the hill country, but they could not⁹ conquer the people living in the coastal plain, because they had chariots with iron-rimmed wheels.¹⁰ **1:20** Caleb received¹¹ Hebron, just as Moses had promised. He drove out the three Anakites. **1:21** The men of Benjamin, however, did not conquer the Jebusites living in Jerusalem.¹² The Jebusites live with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this very day.¹³

Partial Success

1:22 When the men¹⁴ of Joseph attacked¹⁵ Bethel,¹⁶ the LORD was with them. **1:23** When the men of Joseph spied out Bethel (it used to be called Luz), **1:24** the spies spotted¹⁷ a man leaving the city. They said to him, "If you show us a secret entrance into the city, we will reward you." **1:25** He showed them a secret entrance into the city, and they put the city to the sword. But they let the man and his extended family leave safely. **1:26** He¹⁸ moved to Hittite country

and built a city. He named it Luz, and it has kept that name to this very day.

1:27 The men of Manasseh did not conquer Beth Shean, Taanach, or their surrounding towns. Nor did they conquer the people living in Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo¹⁹ or their surrounding towns.²⁰ The Canaanites managed²¹ to remain in those areas.²² **1:28** Whenever Israel was strong militarily, they forced the Canaanites to do hard labor, but they never totally conquered them.

1:29 The men of Ephraim did not conquer the Canaanites living in Gezer. The Canaanites lived among them in Gezer.

1:30 The men of Zebulun did not conquer the people living in Kitron and Nahalol.²³ The Canaanites lived among them and were forced to do hard labor.

1:31 The men of Asher did not conquer the people living in Acco or Sidon,²⁴ nor did they conquer Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphek, or Rehob.²⁵

1:32 The people of Asher live among the Canaanites residing in the land because they did not conquer them.

1:33 The men of Naphtali did not conquer the people living in Beth Shemesh or Beth Anath.²⁶ They live among the Canaanites residing in the land. The Canaanites²⁷ living in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were forced to do hard labor for them.

1:34 The Amorites forced the people of Dan to live in the hill country. They did not allow them to live in²⁸ the coastal plain. **1:35** The Amorites managed²⁹ to remain in Har Heres,³⁰ Aijalon, and Shaalbim. Whenever the tribe of Joseph was strong militarily,³¹ the Amorites were forced to do hard labor. **1:36** The border of

¹ tc Part of the Greek ms tradition lacks the words "of Judah."

² tn Heb "[to] the Desert of Judah in the Negev, Arad."

³ tn The phrase "of Judah" is supplied here in the translation. Some ancient textual witnesses read, "They went and lived with the Amalekites." This reading, however, is probably influenced by 1 Sam 15:6 (see also Num 24:20-21).

⁴ tn Heb "Judah went with Simeon, his brother."

⁵ tn Heb "it"; the referent (the city of Zephath) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁶ sn The name *Hormah* (חֶרְמָה, *khormah*) sounds like the Hebrew verb translated "wipe out" (חָרַם, *kharam*).

⁷ tn Heb "The men of Judah captured Gaza and its surrounding territory, Ashkelon and its surrounding territory, and Ekron and its surrounding territory."

⁸ tn Or "seized possession of"; or "occupied."

⁹ tc Several textual witnesses support the inclusion of this verb.

¹⁰ tn Regarding the translation "chariots with iron-rimmed wheels," see Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, 255, and the article by R. Drews, "The 'Chariots of Iron' of Joshua and Judges," *JSOT* 45 (1989): 15-23.

¹¹ tn Heb "they gave to Caleb."

¹² map For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

¹³ sn The statement to *this very day* reflects the perspective of the author, who must have written prior to David's conquest of the Jebusites (see 2 Sam 5:6-7).

¹⁴ tn Heb "house." This is a metonymy for the warriors from the tribe.

¹⁵ tn Heb "went up."

¹⁶ map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

¹⁷ tn Heb "saw."

¹⁸ tn Heb "the man."

¹⁹ map For location see Map1-D4; Map2-C1; Map4-C2; Map5-F2; Map7-B1.

²⁰ tn Heb "The men of Manasseh did not conquer Beth Shean and its surrounding towns, Taanach and its surrounding towns, the people living in Dor and its surrounding towns, the people living in Ibleam and its surrounding towns, or the people living in Megiddo and its surrounding towns."

²¹ tn Or "were determined."

²² tn Heb "in this land."

²³ tn Heb "the people living in Kitron and the people living in Nahalol."

²⁴ map For location see Map1-A1; JP3-F3; JP4-F3.

²⁵ tn Heb "The men of Asher did not conquer the people living in Acco, the people living in Sidon, Ahlab, Acco, Helbah, Aphek, or Rehob."

²⁶ tn Heb "the people living in Beth Shemesh or the people living in Beth Anath."

²⁷ tn The term "Canaanites" is supplied here both for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

²⁸ tn Heb "come down into."

²⁹ tn Or "were determined."

³⁰ tn Or "Mount Heres"; the term חָר (har) means "mount" or "mountain" in Hebrew.

³¹ tn Heb "Whenever the hand of the tribe of Joseph was heavy."

Amorite territory ran from the Scorpion Ascent¹ to Sela and on up.²

Confrontation and Repentance at Bokim

2:1 The LORD's angelic messenger³ went up from Gilgal to Bokim. He said, "I brought you up from Egypt and led you into the land I had solemnly promised to give to your ancestors.⁴ I said, 'I will never break my agreement⁵ with you, 2:2 but you must not make an agreement with the people who live in this land. You should tear down the altars where they worship.'⁶ But you have disobeyed me.⁷ Why would you do such a thing?⁸ 2:3 At that time I also warned you,⁹ 'If you disobey,¹⁰ I will not drive out the Canaanites¹¹ before you. They will enslave you¹² and their gods will lure you away.'¹³

2:4 When the LORD's messenger finished speaking these words to all the Israelites, the people wept loudly.¹⁴ 2:5 They named that place Bokim¹⁵ and offered sacrifices to the LORD there.

The End of an Era

2:6 When Joshua dismissed¹⁶ the people, the Israelites went to their allotted portions of territory,¹⁷ intending to take possession of the land. 2:7 The people worshiped¹⁸ the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and as long as the elderly men¹⁹ who outlived him remained alive. These

men had witnessed²⁰ all the great things the LORD had done for Israel.²¹ 2:8 Joshua son of Nun, the LORD's servant, died at the age of one hundred ten. 2:9 The people²² buried him in his allotted land²³ in Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. 2:10 That entire generation passed away;²⁴ a new generation grew up²⁵ that had not personally experienced the LORD's presence or seen what he had done for Israel.²⁶

A Monotonous Cycle

2:11 The Israelites did evil before²⁷ the LORD by worshiping²⁸ the Baals. 2:12 They abandoned the LORD God of their ancestors²⁹ who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods – the gods of the nations who lived around them. They worshiped³⁰ them and made the LORD angry. 2:13 They abandoned the LORD and worshiped Baal and the Ashtoreths.³¹

2:14 The LORD was furious with Israel³² and handed them over to robbers who plundered them.³³ He turned them over to³⁴ their enemies who lived around them. They could not withstand their enemies' attacks.³⁵ 2:15 Whenever they went out to fight,³⁶ the LORD did them harm,³⁷ just as he had warned and solemnly vowed he would do.³⁸ They suffered greatly.³⁹

¹ tn Or "the Ascent of Scorpions" (עֲקָרְבִים) [*aqrabbim*] means "scorpions" in Hebrew.

² tn Or "Amorite territory started at the Pass of the Scorpions at Sela and then went on up."

³ sn See Exod 14:19; 23:20.

⁴ tn Heb "the land that I had sworn to your fathers."

⁵ tn Or "covenant" (also in the following verse).

⁶ tn Heb "their altars."

⁷ tn Heb "you have not listened to my voice."

⁸ tn Heb "What is this you have done?"

⁹ tn Heb "And I also said." The use of the perfect tense here suggests that the messenger is recalling an earlier statement (see Josh 23:12-13). However, some translate, "And I also say," understanding the following words as an announcement of judgment upon those gathered at Bokim.

¹⁰ tn The words "If you disobey" are supplied in the translation for clarity. See Josh 23:12-13.

¹¹ tn Heb "them"; the referent (the Canaanites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹² tn The meaning of the Hebrew word צַדִּים (*tsiddim*) is uncertain in this context. It may be related to an Akkadian cognate meaning "snare." If so, a more literal translation would be "they will become snares to you." Normally the term in question means "sides," but this makes no sense here. On the basis of Num 33:55 some suggest the word for "thorns" has been accidentally omitted. If this word is added, the text would read, "they will become [thorns] in your sides" (cf. NASB, NIV, NLT).

¹³ tn Heb "their gods will become a snare to you."

¹⁴ tn Heb "lifted their voices and wept."

¹⁵ sn *Bokim* means "weeping ones" and is derived from the Hebrew verb בָּכָה (*bakha*), "to weep".

¹⁶ tn Or "sent away."

¹⁷ tn Heb "the Israelites went each to his inheritance."

¹⁸ tn Or "served"; or "followed."

¹⁹ tn Or perhaps "elders," which could be interpreted to mean "leaders."

²⁰ tn Heb "all the days of Joshua and all the days of the old men who outlived him, who had seen."

²¹ tn Heb "the great work of the LORD which he had done for Israel."

²² tn Heb "they"; the referent (the people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²³ tn Heb "in the territory of his inheritance."

²⁴ tn Heb "All that generation were gathered to their fathers."

²⁵ tn Heb "arose after them."

²⁶ tn Heb "that did not know the LORD or the work which he had done for Israel." The expressions "personally experienced" and "seen" are interpretive.

²⁷ tn Heb "in the eyes of."

²⁸ tn Or "serving"; or "following."

²⁹ tn Or "fathers."

³⁰ tn Or "bowed before" (the same expression occurs in the following verse).

³¹ sn The *Ashtoreths* were local manifestations of the goddess Astarte.

³² tn Or "The LORD's anger burned [or "raged"] against Israel."

³³ tn Heb "robbers who robbed them." (The verb שָׁסַח [*shasah*] appears twice in the verse.)

³⁴ sn The expression *robbers who plundered them* is a derogatory reference to the enemy nations, as the next line indicates.

³⁵ tn Heb "sold them into the hands of."

³⁶ tn The word "attacks" is supplied in the translation both for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

³⁷ tn The expression "to fight" is interpretive.

³⁸ tn Heb "the LORD's hand was against them for harm."

³⁹ tn Heb "just as he had said and just as he had sworn to them."

⁴⁰ tn Or "they experienced great distress."

2:16 The LORD raised up leaders¹ who delivered them from these robbers.² 2:17 But they did not obey³ their leaders. Instead they prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped⁴ them. They quickly turned aside from the path⁵ their ancestors⁶ had walked. Their ancestors had obeyed the LORD's commands, but they did not.⁷ 2:18 When the LORD raised up leaders for them, the LORD was with each leader and delivered the people⁸ from their enemies while the leader remained alive. The LORD felt sorry for them⁹ when they cried out in agony because of what their harsh oppressors did to them.¹⁰ 2:19 When a leader died, the next generation¹¹ would again¹² act more wickedly than the previous one.¹³ They would follow after other gods, worshiping them¹⁴ and bowing down to them. They did not give up¹⁵ their practices or their stubborn ways.

A Divine Decision

2:20 The LORD was furious with Israel.¹⁶ He said, "This nation¹⁷ has violated the terms of the agreement I made with their ancestors¹⁸ by disobeying me."¹⁹ 2:21 So I will no longer remove before them any of the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died. 2:22 Joshua left those nations²⁰

¹ **tn** Or more traditionally, "judges" (also in vv. 17, 18 [3x], 19). Since these figures carried out more than a judicial function, also serving as rulers and (in several instances) as military commanders, the translation uses the term "leaders."

² **tn** *Heb* "and they delivered them from the hand of the ones robbing them."

³ **tn** Or "did not listen to."

⁴ **tn** Or "bowed before."

⁵ **tn** Or "way [of life]."

⁶ **tn** Or "fathers."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "...walked, obeying the LORD's commands. They did not do this."

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "them"; the referent (the people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ **tn** The phrase "for them" is supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "the ones oppressing them and afflicting them." The synonyms "oppressing" and "afflicting" are joined together in the translation as "harsh oppressors" to emphasize the cruel character of their enemies.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "they"; the referent (the next generation) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹² **tn** The verb שׁוּב (*shuv*, "to return; to turn") is sometimes translated "turn back" here, but it is probably used in an adverbial sense, indicating that the main action ("act wickedly") is being repeated.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "their fathers."

sn The statement the next generation would again act more wickedly than the previous one must refer to the successive sinful generations after Joshua, not Joshua's godly generation (cf. vv. 7, 17).

¹⁴ **tn** Or "serving [them]"; or "following [them]."

¹⁵ **tn** Or "drop."

¹⁶ **tn** Or "The LORD's anger burned [or "ragged"] against Israel."

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "Because this nation."

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "my covenant which I commanded their fathers."

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "and has not listened to my voice." The expression "to not listen to [God's] voice" is idiomatic here for disobeying him.

²⁰ **tn** The words "Joshua left those nations" are interpretive. The Hebrew text of v. 22 simply begins with "to test." Some subordinate this phrase to "I will no longer remove" (v. 21).

to test²¹ Israel. I wanted to see²² whether or not the people²³ would carefully walk in the path²⁴ marked out by²⁵ the LORD, as their ancestors²⁶ were careful to do."²⁷ 2:23 This is why²⁷ the LORD permitted these nations to remain and did not conquer them immediately.²⁸ he did not hand them over to Joshua.

3:1 These were the nations the LORD permitted to remain so he could use them to test Israel – he wanted to test all those who had not experienced battle against the Canaanites.²⁹ 3:2 He left those nations simply because he wanted to teach the subsequent generations of Israelites, who had not experienced the earlier battles, how to conduct holy war.³⁰ 3:3 These were the nations:³¹ the five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath.³² 3:4 They were left to test Israel, so the LORD would know if his people would obey the

In this case the LORD announces that he has now decided to leave these nations as a test for Israel. Another possibility is to subordinate "to test" to "He said" (v. 20; see B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 111). In this case the statement recorded in vv. 20b-21 is the test in that it forces Israel to respond either positively (through repentance) or negatively to the LORD's declaration. A third possibility (the one reflected in the present translation) is to subordinate "to test" to "left unconquered" (v. 21). In this case the LORD recalls that Joshua left these nations as a test. Israel has failed the test (v. 20), so the LORD announces that the punishment threatened earlier (Josh 23:12-13; see also Judg 2:3) will now be implemented. As B. G. Webb (*Judges* [JSOTSup], 115) observes, "The nations which were originally left as a test are now left as a punishment." This view best harmonizes v. 23, which explains that the LORD did not give all the nations to Joshua, with v. 22. (For a grammatical parallel, where the infinitive construct of נָסָה [*nasah*] is subordinated to the perfect of אָזַב [*azav*], see 2 Chr 32:31.)

²¹ **tn** The Hebrew text includes the phrase "by them," but this is somewhat redundant in English and has been omitted from the translation for stylistic reasons.

²² **tn** The words "I [i.e., the LORD] wanted to see" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²³ **tn** *Heb* "they"; the referent (the people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁴ **tn** Or "way [of life]."

²⁵ **tn** "The words "marked out by" are interpretive.

²⁶ **tn** Or "fathers."

²⁷ **tn** The words "this is why" are interpretive.

²⁸ **tn** Or "quickly."

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* "did not know the wars of Canaan."

³⁰ **tn** The Hebrew syntax of v. 2 is difficult. The Hebrew text reads literally, "only in order that the generations of the Israelites might know, to teach them war – only those who formerly did not know them."

sn The stated purpose for leaving the nations (*to teach the subsequent generations...how to conduct holy war*) seems to contradict 2:22 and 3:4, which indicate the nations were left to test Israel's loyalty to the LORD. However, the two stated purposes can be harmonized. The willingness of later generations to learn and engage in holy war would measure their allegiance to the LORD (see B. G. Webb, *Judges* [JSOTSup], 114-15).

³¹ **tn** The words "These were the nations," though not present in the Hebrew text, are supplied in the translation for clarity.

³² **tn** Or "the entrance to Hamath."

commands he gave their ancestors through Moses.¹

3:5 The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. **3:6** They took the Canaanites' daughters as wives and gave their daughters to the Canaanites;² they worshiped³ their gods as well.

Othniel: A Model Leader

3:7 The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight.⁴ They forgot the LORD their God and worshiped the Baals and the Asherahs.⁵ **3:8** The LORD was furious with Israel⁶ and turned them over to⁷ King Cushan-Rishathaim⁸ of Aram-Naharaim. They were Cushan-Rishathaim's subjects⁹ for eight years. **3:9** When the Israelites cried out for help to the LORD, he¹⁰ raised up a deliverer for the Israelites who rescued¹¹ them. His name was Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.¹² **3:10** The LORD's spirit empowered him¹³ and he led Israel. When he went to do battle, the LORD handed over to him King Cushan-Rishathaim of Aram and he overpowered him.¹⁴ **3:11** The land had rest for forty years; then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

Deceit, Assassination, and Deliverance

3:12 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight.¹⁵ The LORD gave King Eglon of Moab control over Israel¹⁶ because they had done evil in the LORD's sight. **3:13** Eglon formed alliances with¹⁷ the Ammonites and Amalekites. He came and defeated Israel, and they seized the City of Date Palm Trees. **3:14** The Israelites were subject to¹⁸ King Eglon of Moab for eighteen years.

3:15 When the Israelites cried out for help to the LORD, he¹⁹ raised up a deliverer for them.

His name was Ehud son of Gera the Benjaminite, a left-handed man.²⁰ The Israelites sent him to King Eglon of Moab with their tribute payment.²¹ **3:16** Ehud made himself a sword – it had two edges and was eighteen inches long.²² He strapped it under his coat on his right thigh. **3:17** He brought the tribute payment to King Eglon of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.)

3:18 After Ehud brought the tribute payment, he dismissed the people who had carried it.²³ **3:19** But he went back²⁴ once he reached²⁵ the carved images²⁶ at Gilgal. He said to Eglon,²⁷ "I have a secret message for you, O king." Eglon²⁸ said, "Be quiet!"²⁹ All his attendants left. **3:20** When Ehud approached him, he was sitting in his well-ventilated³⁰ upper room all by himself. Ehud said, "I have a message from God³¹ for you." When Eglon rose up from his seat,³² **3:21** Ehud reached with his left hand, pulled the sword from his right thigh, and drove it into Eglon's³³ belly. **3:22** The handle went in after the blade, and the fat closed around the blade, for Ehud³⁴ did not pull the sword out of his

¹ *tn Heb* "to know if they would hear the commands of the LORD which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses."

² *tn Heb* "to their sons."

³ *tn* Or "served"; or "followed" (this term occurs in the following verse as well).

⁴ *tn Heb* "in the eyes of the LORD."

⁵ *sn* The *Asherahs* were local manifestations of the Canaanite goddess Asherah.

⁶ *tn* Or "The LORD's anger burned (or raged) against Israel."

⁷ *tn Heb* "sold them into the hands of."

⁸ *tn* Or "Cushan the Doubly Wicked."

⁹ *tn* Or "they served Cushan-Rishathaim."

¹⁰ *tn Heb* "the LORD."

¹¹ *tn* Or "delivered."

¹² *tn* "Caleb's younger brother" may refer to Othniel or to Kenaz (in which case Othniel is Caleb's nephew).

¹³ *tn Heb* "was on him."

¹⁴ *tn Heb* "his hand was strong against Cushan-Rishathaim."

¹⁵ *tn Heb* "in the eyes of the LORD" (also later in this verse).

¹⁶ *tn Heb* "strengthened Eglon...against Israel."

¹⁷ *tn Heb* "and he gathered to him."

¹⁸ *tn* Or "the Israelites served Eglon."

¹⁹ *tn Heb* "the LORD." This has been replaced by the pronoun ("he") in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁰ *tn* The phrase, which refers to Ehud, literally reads "bound/restricted in the right hand," apparently a Hebrew idiom for a left-handed person. See Judg 20:16, where 700 Benjaminites are described in this way. Perhaps the Benjaminites purposely trained several of their young men to be left-handed warriors by restricting the use of the right hand from an early age so the left hand would become dominant. Left-handed men would have a distinct military advantage, especially when attacking city gates. See B. Halpern, "The Assassination of Eglon: The First Locked-Room Murder Mystery," *BRev* 4 (1988): 35.

²¹ *tn Heb* "The Israelites sent by his hand an offering to Eglon, king of Moab."

²² *tn* The Hebrew term נִקְדָּר (*gomed*) denotes a unit of linear measure, perhaps a cubit (the distance between the elbow and the tip of the middle finger – approximately 18 inches [45 cm]). Some suggest it is equivalent to the short cubit (the distance between the elbow and the knuckles of the clenched fist – approximately 13 inches [33 cm]) or to the span (the distance between the end of the thumb and the end of the little finger in a spread hand – approximately 9 inches [23 cm]). See BDB 167 s.v.; HALOT 196 s.v.; B. Lindars, *Judges 1-5*, 142.

²³ *tn Heb* "the tribute payment."

²⁴ *tn* Or "returned" (i.e., to Eglon's palace).

²⁵ *tn* The words "when he reached" are supplied in the translation for clarification. The Hebrew text simply reads "from."

²⁶ *tn* Or "idols."

²⁷ *tn* The words "to Eglon" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁸ *tn Heb* "he"; the referent (Eglon) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁹ *tn* Or "Hush!"

³⁰ *tn* Or "cool." This probably refers to a room with latticed windows which allowed the breeze to pass through. See B. Lindars, *Judges 1-5*, 144.

³¹ *tn Heb* "word of [i.e., from] God."

³² *tn* Or "throne."

³³ *tn Heb* "his"; the referent (Eglon) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁴ *tn Heb* "he"; the referent (Ehud) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

belly.¹ **3:23** As Ehud went out into the vestibule,² he closed the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

3:24 When Ehud had left, Eglon's³ servants came and saw the locked doors of the upper room. They said, "He must be relieving himself⁴ in the well-ventilated inner room."⁵ **3:25** They waited so long they were embarrassed, but he still did not open the doors of the upper room. Finally they took the key and opened the doors.⁶ Right before their eyes was their master, sprawled out dead on the floor!⁷ **3:26** Now Ehud had escaped while they were delaying. When he passed the carved images, he escaped to Seirah.

3:27 When he reached Seirah,⁸ he blew a trumpet⁹ in the Ephraimite hill country. The Israelites went down with him from the hill country, with Ehud in the lead.¹⁰ **3:28** He said to them, "Follow me, for the LORD is about to defeat your enemies, the Moabites!"¹¹ They followed him, captured the fords of the Jordan River¹² opposite Moab,¹³ and did not let anyone cross. **3:29** That day they killed about ten thousand

and Moabites¹⁴ – all strong, capable warriors; not one escaped. **3:30** Israel humiliated Moab that day, and the land had rest for eighty years.

3:31 After Ehud¹⁵ came¹⁶ Shamgar son of Anath; he killed six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad and, like Ehud,¹⁷ delivered Israel.

Deborah Summons Barak

4:1 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight¹⁸ after Ehud's death. **4:2** The LORD turned them over to¹⁹ King Jabin of Canaan, who ruled in Hazor.²⁰ The general of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim.²¹ **4:3** The Israelites cried out for help to the LORD, because Sisera²² had nine hundred chariots with iron-rimmed wheels,²³ and he cruelly²⁴ oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

4:4 Now Deborah, a prophetess,²⁵ wife of Lappidoth, was²⁶ leading²⁷ Israel at that time. **4:5** She would sit²⁸ under the Date Palm Tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel²⁹ in the Ephraimite hill country. The Israelites would come up to her to have their disputes settled.³⁰

4:6 She summoned³¹ Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali. She said to him, "Is it not true that the LORD God of Israel is commanding you? Go, march to Mount Tabor! Take with you ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun! **4:7** I will bring Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to you at the Kishon River, along with his chariots and huge army.³² I will hand him over to you." **4:8** Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I

¹ **tn** The Hebrew text has "and he went out to the [?]." The meaning of the Hebrew word פָּרְשֵׁי־דוֹנָחַ (*parshê donah*) which occurs only here in the OT, is uncertain. The noun has the article prefixed and directive suffix. The word may be a technical architectural term, indicating the area into which Ehud moved as he left the king and began his escape. In this case Ehud is the subject of the verb "went out." The present translation omits the clause, understanding it as an ancient variant of the first clause in v. 23. Some take the noun as "back," understand "sword" (from the preceding clause) as the subject, and translate "the sword came out his [i.e., Eglon's] back." But this rendering is unlikely since the Hebrew word for "sword" (חֶרֶב, *kharev*) is feminine and the verb form translated "came out" (וַיֵּצֵא, *vayyetsê*) is masculine. (One expects agreement in gender when the subject is supplied from the preceding clause. See Ezek 33:4, 6.) See B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 146-48, for discussion of the options.

² **tn** Again the precise meaning of the Hebrew word, used only here in the OT, is uncertain. Since it is preceded by the verb "went out" and the next clause refers to Ehud closing doors, the noun is probably an architectural term referring to the room (perhaps a vestibule; see HALOT 604 s.v. מַסְדֵּרִין) immediately outside the king's upper chamber. As v. 24 indicates, this vestibule separated the upper room from an outer room where the king's servants were waiting.

³ **tn** Heb "his."

⁴ **tn** Heb "covering his feet" (i.e., with his outer garments while he relieves himself).

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew expression translated "well-ventilated inner room" may refer to the upper room itself or to a bathroom attached to or within it.

⁶ **tn** The words "the doors" are supplied.

⁷ **tn** Heb "See, their master, fallen to the ground, dead."

⁸ **tn** Heb "When he arrived."

⁹ **tn** That is, "mustered an army."

¹⁰ **tn** Heb "now he was before them."

¹¹ **tn** Heb "for the Lord has given your enemies, Moab, into your hand." The verb form (a Hebrew perfect, indicating completed action from the standpoint of the speaker) emphasizes the certainty of the event. Though it had not yet taken place, the LORD speaks of it as a "done deal."

¹² **tn** The word "River" is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for clarity.

¹³ **tn** Or "against Moab," that is, so as to prevent the Moabites from crossing.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb "They struck Moab that day – about ten thousand men."

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "him"; the referent (Ehud) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ **tn** Heb "was."

¹⁷ **tn** Heb "also he"; the referent (Ehud) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **tn** Heb "did evil in the eyes of the LORD."

¹⁹ **tn** Heb "the LORD sold them into the hands of."

²⁰ **tn** Or "King Jabin of Hazor, a Canaanite ruler."

map For location see Map1-D2; Map2-D3; Map3-A2; Map4-C1.

²¹ **tn** Or "Harosheth of the Pagan Nations"; cf. KJV "Harosheth of the Gentiles."

²² **tn** Heb "he"; the referent (Sisera) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²³ **tn** Regarding the translation "chariots with iron-rimmed wheels," see Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, 255, and the article by R. Drews, "The 'Chariots of Iron' of Joshua and Judges," *JSOT* 45 (1989): 15-23.

²⁴ **tn** Heb "with strength."

²⁵ **tn** Heb "a woman, a prophetess." In Hebrew idiom the generic "woman" sometimes precedes the more specific designation. See GKC 437-38 §135.b.

²⁶ **tn** Heb "she was." The pronoun refers back to the nominative absolute "Deborah." Hebrew style sometimes employs such resumptive pronouns when lengthy qualifiers separate the subject from the verb.

²⁷ **tn** Or "judging."

²⁸ **tn** That is, "consider legal disputes."

map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

³⁰ **tn** Heb "for judgment."

³¹ **tn** Heb "sent and summoned."

³² **tn** Heb "horde"; "multitude."

will go. But if you do not go with me, I will not go.” 4:9 She said, “I will indeed go with you. But you will not gain fame⁴ on the expedition you are undertaking,² for the LORD will turn Sisera over to a woman.”³ Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. 4:10 Barak summoned men from Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. Ten thousand men followed him;⁴ Deborah went up with him as well. 4:11 Now Heber the Kenite had moved away⁵ from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses’ father-in-law. He lived⁶ near the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

4:12 When Sisera heard⁷ that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 4:13 he⁸ ordered⁹ all his chariotry – nine hundred chariots with iron-rimmed wheels – and all the troops he had with him to go from Harosheth-Haggoyim to the River Kishon. 4:14 Deborah said to Barak, “Spring into action,¹⁰ for this is the day the LORD is handing Sisera over to you!¹¹ Has the LORD not taken the lead?”¹² Barak quickly went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 4:15 The LORD routed¹³ Sisera, all his chariotry, and all his army with the edge of the sword.¹⁴ Sisera jumped out of¹⁵ his chariot and ran away on foot. 4:16 Now Barak chased the chariots and the army all the way to Harosheth Haggoyim. Sisera’s whole army died¹⁶ by the edge of the sword; not even one survived!¹⁷

4:17 Now Sisera ran away on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, for King Jabin of Hazor¹⁸ and the family of Heber the Kenite had made a peace treaty.¹⁹ 4:18 Jael came out to welcome Sisera. She said to him, “Stop and

rest,²⁰ my lord. Stop and rest with me. Don’t be afraid.” So Sisera²¹ stopped to rest in her tent, and she put a blanket over him. 4:19 He said to her, “Give me a little water to drink, because I’m thirsty.” She opened a goatskin container of milk and gave him some milk to drink. Then she covered him up again. 4:20 He said to her, “Stand watch at the entrance to the tent. If anyone comes along and asks you, ‘Is there a man here?’ say ‘No.’” 4:21 Then Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg in one hand and a hammer in the other.²² She crept up on him, drove the tent peg through his temple into the ground²³ while he was asleep from exhaustion,²⁴ and he died. 4:22 Now Barak was chasing Sisera. Jael went out to welcome him. She said to him, “Come here and I will show you the man you are searching for.” He went with her into the tent,²⁵ and there he saw Sisera sprawled out dead²⁶ with the tent peg in his temple.

4:23 That day God humiliated King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. 4:24 Israel’s power continued to overwhelm²⁷ King Jabin of Canaan until they did away with²⁸ him.²⁹

Celebrating the Victory in Song

5:1 On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this victory song:³⁰

5:2 “When the leaders took the lead³¹ in Israel,

When the people answered the call to war –
Praise the LORD!

5:3 Hear, O kings!
Pay attention, O rulers!

¹ tn Or “honor.”

² tn Heb “on [account of (?)] the way which you are walking.” Another option is to translate, “due to the way you are going about this.” In this case direct reference is made to Barak’s hesitancy as the reason for his loss of glory.

³ tn Heb “for into the hands of a woman the LORD will sell Sisera.”

⁴ tn Heb “went up at his feet.”

⁵ tn Or “separated.”

⁶ tn Heb “pitched his tent.”

⁷ tn Heb “and they told Sisera.”

⁸ tn Heb “Sisera.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁹ tn Or “summoned.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “Arise!”

¹¹ tn The verb form (a Hebrew perfect, indicating completed action from the standpoint of the speaker) emphasizes the certainty of the event. Though it had not yet taken place, the LORD speaks of it as a “done deal.”

¹² tn Heb “Has the LORD not gone out before you?”

¹³ tn Or “caused to panic.”

¹⁴ tn The Hebrew text also includes the phrase “before Barak.” This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ tn Heb “got down from.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “fell.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “was left.”

¹⁸ map For location see Map1-D2; Map2-D3; Map3-A2; Map4-C1.

¹⁹ tn Heb “for there was peace between.”

²⁰ tn Heb “Turn aside” (also a second time later in this verse).
²¹ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Sisera) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²² tn Heb “took a tent peg and put a hammer in her hand.”

²³ tn Heb “and it went into the ground.”

²⁴ tn Heb “and exhausted.” Another option is to understand this as a reference to the result of the fatal blow. In this case, the phrase could be translated, “and he breathed his last.”

²⁵ tn Heb “he went to her.”

²⁶ tn Heb “fallen, dead.”

²⁷ tn Heb “The hand of the Israelites became more and more severe against.”

²⁸ tn Heb “cut off.”

²⁹ tn Heb “Jabin king of Canaan.” The proper name and title have been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁰ tn The words “this victory song” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

³¹ tn The meaning of the Hebrew expression בַּפְּרִי בְּפִרְיָא (bi-froa’ p^{ra}’ot) is uncertain. Numerous proposals are offered by commentators. (For a survey of opinions, see B. Lindars, *Judges 1-5*, 223-27.) The next line refers to the people who responded to Barak’s summons to war, so a reference to the leaders who issued the summons would provide a natural poetic parallel. In v. 9 the leaders חֹקְקֵי (khaq^qqey) of the people and these same volunteers stand in poetic parallelism, so it is reasonable to assume that the difficult Hebrew term פְּרִיעֵי (p^{ra}’ot, v. 2a) is synonymous with חֹקְקֵי (khaq^qqey) of v. 9 (see Lindars, 227).

I will sing to the LORD!¹
 I will sing² to the LORD God of Israel!
 5:4 O LORD, when you departed³ from Seir,
 when you marched from Edom's plains,
 the earth shook, the heavens poured
 down,
 the clouds poured down rain.⁴
 5:5 The mountains trembled⁵ before the
 LORD, the God of Sinai;⁶
 before the LORD God of Israel.
 5:6 In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
 in the days of Jael caravans⁷ disap-
 peared.⁸
 travelers⁹ had to go on winding side
 roads.
 5:7 Warriors¹⁰ were scarce,¹¹
 they were scarce in Israel,
 until you¹² arose, Deborah,
 until you arose as a motherly protector¹³
 in Israel.
 5:8 God chose new leaders,¹⁴
 then fighters appeared in the city gates;¹⁵

¹ **tn** Heb "I, to the LORD, I, I will sing!" The first singular personal pronoun is used twice, even though a first person finite verbal form is employed.

² **tn** Or "make music."

³ **tn** Or "went out."

⁴ **tn** Heb "water."

⁵ **tn** Or "quaked." The translation assumes the form נָלוּ (*nazollu*) from the root נָלַל (*zallal*, "to quake"; see HALOT 272 s.v. II נָלַל). The LXX, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Targum also understood the word this way. (See Isa 63:19 and 64:2 for other occurrences of this form.) Some understand here the verb נָזַל (*nazal*, "to flow [with torrents of rain water]").

⁶ **tn** Heb "this one of Sinai." The phrase is a divine title, perhaps indicating that the LORD rules from Sinai.

⁷ **tc** The translation assumes the form נָרְדוֹת (*or^ekhot*, "caravans") rather than נָרְדוֹת (*orakhot*, "roadways") because it makes a tighter parallel with "travelers" in the next line.

⁸ **tn** Or "ceased."

⁹ **tn** Heb "Ones walking on paths."

¹⁰ **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew noun פְּרָזוֹן (*frazon*) is uncertain. Some understand the meaning as "leaders" or "those living in rural areas." The singular noun appears to be collective (note the accompanying plural verb). For various options see B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 237-38.

¹¹ **tn** Or "ceased."

¹² **tn** The translation assumes that the verb is an archaic second feminine singular form. Though Deborah is named as one of the composers of the song (v. 1), she is also addressed within it (v. 12). Many take the verb as first person singular, "I arose" (cf. NAB, NASB, NIV).

¹³ **tn** Heb "mother." The translation assumes that the image portrays Deborah as a protector of the people. It is possible that the metaphor points to her prophetic role. Just as a male prophet could be called "father," so Deborah, a prophetess, is called "mother" (B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 239).

¹⁴ **tn** Or "warriors." The Hebrew text reads literally, "He chose God/gods new." Some take "Israel" as the subject of the verb, "gods" as object, and "new" as an adjective modifying "gods." This yields the translation, "(Israel) chose new gods." In this case idolatry is the cause of the trouble alluded to in the context. The present translation takes "God" as subject of the verb and "new" as substantival, referring to the new leaders raised up by God (see v. 9a). For a survey of opinions and a defense of the present translation, see B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 239-40.

¹⁵ **tn** The translation of this difficult line is speculative because the second word, לָחֵם (*lakhem*), appears only here. The line in the Hebrew text literally reads, "Then [?] gates." Interpretations and emendations of the Hebrew text abound (see B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 239-40). The translation assumes a

but, I swear, not a shield or spear could
 be found,¹⁶
 among forty military units¹⁷ in Israel.
 5:9 My heart went out¹⁸ to Israel's leaders,
 to the people who answered the call to
 war.
 Praise the LORD!
 5:10 You who ride on light-colored female
 donkeys,
 who sit on saddle blankets,¹⁹
 you who walk on the road, pay attention!
 5:11 Hear²⁰ the sound of those who divide
 the sheep²¹ among the watering places;
 there they tell of²² the Lord's victorious
 deeds,
 the victorious deeds of his warriors²³ in
 Israel.
 Then the LORD's people went down to the
 city gates –
 5:12 Wake up, wake up, Deborah!
 Wake up, wake up, sing a song!
 Get up, Barak!
 Capture your prisoners of war,²⁴ son of
 Abinoam!
 5:13 Then the survivors²⁵ came down²⁶ to
 the mighty ones;²⁷
 the LORD's people came down to me²⁸ as²⁹
 warriors.

repointing of the form as a Qal participle לָחֵם (*lokhem*) from the verbal root לָחַם (*lakham*, "fight") and understands a substantival use ("fighter"). "Fighter" is a collective reference to the military leaders or warriors mentioned in the preceding line and in v. 9. (For other occurrences of the Qal of לָחַם, see Pss 35:1; 56:2-3.)

¹⁶ **tn** Heb "A shield, it could not be seen, nor a spear." The translation assumes that the Hebrew particle אֵין (*im*) introduces an oath of denial (see GKC 472 §149.e).

¹⁷ **tn** Traditionally "forty thousand," but this may be an instance where Hebrew term אֵלֶּף (*elef*) refers to a military unit. This is the view assumed by the translation ("forty military units").

¹⁸ **tn** The words "went out" are supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word מִדְּיָן (*middin*, "saddle blankets") in this context is uncertain.

²⁰ **tn** The word "Hear" is supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

²¹ **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain. Some translate "those who distribute the water" (HALOT 344 s.v. וְקוּ הַיַּיִן). For other options see B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 246-47.

²² **tn** Or perhaps "repeat."

²³ **tn** See the note on the term "warriors" in v. 7.

²⁴ **tn** Heb "take captive your captives." (The Hebrew text uses a cognate accusative here.)

²⁵ **tn** This probably refers to those who responded to the call for war. They were "survivors" of the Canaanite oppression (see B. Lindars, *Judges* 1-5, 250).

²⁶ **tn** The translation assumes a repointing of the verb as a perfect or imperfect/preterite form of יָרַד (*yarad*, "to go down"). The form as pointed in the MT appears to be from יָרַדָּה (*radah*, "to rule"). See GKC 188 §69.g. The same form, translated "came down," occurs in the next line as well.

²⁷ **sn** The expression *mighty ones* probably refers to the leaders of the army.

²⁸ **sn** The speaker may be Deborah here.

²⁹ **tn** The translation assumes the preposition ב (*bet*) prefixed to "warriors" has the force of "in the capacity of." For this use of the preposition, see GKC 379 §119.i.

5:14 They came from Ephraim, who uprooted Amalek,¹ they follow² after you, Benjamin, with your soldiers. From Makir leaders came down, from Zebulun came³ the ones who march carrying⁴ an officer's staff. 5:15 Issachar's leaders were with Deborah, the men of Issachar⁵ supported⁶ Barak; into the valley they were sent under Barak's command.⁷ Among the clans of Reuben there was intense⁸ heart searching.⁹ 5:16 Why do you remain among the sheepfolds,¹⁰ listening to the shepherds playing their pipes¹¹ for their flocks?¹² As for the clans of Reuben – there was intense searching of heart. 5:17 Gilead stayed put¹³ beyond the Jordan River. As for Dan – why did he seek temporary employment in the shipyards?¹⁴ Asher remained¹⁵ on the seacoast, he stayed¹⁶ by his harbors.¹⁷ 5:18 The men of Zebulun were not con-

cerned about their lives;¹⁸ Naphtali charged on to the battlefields.¹⁹ 5:19 Kings came, they fought; the kings of Canaan fought, at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo,²⁰ but²¹ they took no silver as plunder. 5:20 From the sky²² the stars²³ fought, from their paths in the heavens²⁴ they fought against Sisera. 5:21 The Kishon River carried them off; the river confronted them²⁵ – the Kishon River. Step on the necks of the strong!²⁶ 5:22 The horses'²⁷ hooves pounded the ground,²⁸ the stallions galloped madly.²⁹ 5:23 'Call judgment down on³⁰ Meroz,' says the LORD's angelic³¹ messenger; 'Be sure³² to call judgment down on³³ those who live there, because they did not come to help in the LORD's battle,³⁴

¹ **tn** *Heb* "From Ephraim their root in Amalek" (the words "they came" are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons). Because of the difficulty of the MT, many prefer to follow one of the ancient versions or emend the text. For various proposals see B. Lindars, *Judges 1-5*, 252-53. The present translation reports אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַר (*shorsham*, traditionally translated "their root") as a Piel verb form with enclitic *mem* (ם). The preposition ב (*bet*) with אֲמָלֵק (*amaleq*) introduces the object (see Job 31:12 for an example of the construction). Ephraim's territory encompassed the hill country of the Amalekites (Judg 12:15).

² **tn** The words "They follow" are supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

³ **tn** The word "came" is supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

⁴ **tn** Or possibly "who carry."

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "Issachar." The words "the men of" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

⁶ **tn** Or "were true to."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "at his feet."

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "great was."

⁹ **tc** The great majority of Hebrew MSS have "resolves of heart," but a few MSS read "searchings of heart," which is preferable in light of v. 16.

¹⁰ **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word מִשְׁפָּטִים (*mishp'atayim*) is uncertain. Some understand the word to mean "campfires."

¹¹ **tn** Or "whistling."

¹² **tn** *Heb* "listening to the pipe playing for the flocks."

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "lived" or "settled down."

sn Apparently the people of Gilead remained on the other side of the river and did not participate in the battle.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "Dan, why did he live as a resident alien, ships." The verb יָגַר (*gur*) usually refers to taking up residence outside one's native land. Perhaps the Danites, rather than rallying to Barak, were content to move to the Mediterranean coast and work in the shipyards. For further discussion, see B. Lindars, *Judges 1-5*, 262.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "lived."

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "lived" or "settled down."

¹⁷ **tn** The meaning of the Hebrew word מִפְרָצִים (*mifrats*) is uncertain, but the parallelism (note "seacoast") suggests "harbors."

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "Zebulun was a people which despised its life even unto death."

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "Naphtali was on the heights of the field."

²⁰ **map** For location see Map1-D4; Map2-C1; Map4-C2; Map5-F2; Map7-B1.

²¹ **tn** The contrastive conjunction "but" is interpretive.

²² **tn** Or "from heaven." The Hebrew term שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) may be translated "heaven(s)" or "sky" depending on the context.

²³ **tn** The MT takes "the stars" with what follows rather than with the first colon of v. 20. But for metrical reasons it seems better to move the *atnach* and read the colon as indicated in the translation.

²⁴ **tn** The words "in the heavens" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

²⁵ **tn** Possibly "the ancient river," but it seems preferable in light of the parallel line (which has a verb) to emend the word (attested only here) to a verb (קָדַם, *qadam*) with pronominal object suffix.

²⁶ **tn** This line is traditionally taken as the poet-warrior's self-exhortation, "March on, my soul, in strength!" The present translation (a) takes the verb (a second feminine singular form) as addressed to Deborah (cf. v. 12), (b) understands נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*) in its well-attested sense of "throat; neck" (cf. Jonah 2:6), (c) takes the final *yod* (י) in נַפְשֵׁי (*nafshiy*) as an archaic construct indicator (rather than a suffix), and (d) interprets הַ (ʾoz, "strength") as an attributive genitive (literally, "necks of strength," i.e., "strong necks"). For fuller discussion and various proposals, see B. Lindars, *Judges 1-5*, 270-71.

²⁷ **tc** The MT as it stands has a singular noun, but if one moves the prefixed *mem* (ם) from the beginning of the next word to the end of סוּס (*sus*), the expected plural form is achieved. Another possibility is to understand an error of scribal haplography here, in which case the letter *mem* should appear in both places.

²⁸ **tn** The words "the ground" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* "galloped, galloped." The repetition is for emphasis and is more appropriately indicated in English with an adverb.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* "Curse Meroz."

³¹ **tn** The adjective "angelic" is interpretive.

³² **tn** *Heb* "Curse, cursing." The Hebrew construction is emphatic.

³³ **tn** *Heb* "[to] curse."

³⁴ **tn** *Heb* "to the help of the Lord" (the same Hebrew phrase occurs in the following line). Another option is to read "to aid the Lord's cause."

to help in the LORD's battle against the warriors.¹

5:24 The most rewarded² of women should be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite! She should be the most rewarded of women who live in tents.

5:25 He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for a king,³ she served him curds.

5:26 Her left⁴ hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workmen's hammer. She "hammered"⁵ Sisera, she shattered his skull,⁶ she smashed his head,⁷ she drove the tent peg through his temple.⁸

5:27 Between her feet he collapsed, he fell limp⁹ and was lifeless,¹⁰ between her feet he collapsed and fell limp,

in the spot where he collapsed, there he fell limp – violently murdered!¹¹

5:28 Through the window she looked; Sisera's mother cried out through the lattice: "Why is his chariot so slow to return? Why are the hoofbeats of his chariot-horses¹² delayed?"

5:29 The wisest of her ladies¹³ answer; indeed she even thinks to herself,

5:30 "No doubt they are gathering and dividing the plunder¹⁴ – a girl or two for each man to rape!¹⁵ Sisera is grabbing up colorful cloth,¹⁶ he is grabbing up colorful embroidered cloth,¹⁷

two pieces of colorful embroidered cloth, for the neck of the plunderer!"¹⁸

5:31 May all your enemies perish like this, O LORD!

But may those who love you shine like the rising sun at its brightest!¹⁹ And the land had rest for forty years.

Oppression and Confrontation

6:1 The Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight,²⁰ so the LORD turned them over to²¹ Midian for seven years. **6:2** The Midianites²² overwhelmed Israel.²³ Because of Midian the Israelites made shelters²⁴ for themselves in the hills, as well as caves and strongholds. **6:3** Whenever the Israelites planted their crops,²⁵ the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east would attack them.²⁶ **6:4** They invaded the land²⁷ and devoured²⁸ its crops²⁹ all the way to Gaza. They left nothing for the Israelites to eat,³⁰ and they took away³¹ the sheep, oxen, and donkeys. **6:5** When they invaded³² with their cattle and tents, they were as thick³³ as locusts. Neither they nor their camels could be counted.³⁴ They came to devour³⁵ the land. **6:6** Israel was so severely weakened by Midian that the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

6:7 When the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help because of Midian, **6:8** he³⁶ sent a prophet³⁷ to the Israelites. He said to them, "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I brought you up from Egypt³⁸ and took you out of that place of slavery,³⁹ **6:9** I rescued you from Egypt's power⁴⁰ and from the power of all who oppressed you. I drove them out before you and

¹⁹ *tn* Heb "But may those who love him be like the going forth of the sun in its strength."

²⁰ *tn* Heb "in the eyes of."

²¹ *tn* Heb "gave them into the hand of."

²² *tn* Heb "the hand of Midian."

²³ *tn* Heb "The hand of Midian was strong against Israel."

²⁴ *tn* Or possibly "secret storage places." The Hebrew word occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible.

²⁵ *tn* Heb "Whenever Israel sowed seed."

²⁶ *tn* Heb "Midian, Amalek, and the sons of the east would go up, they would go up against him." The translation assumes that יָגִילוּ (y'g'alu) is dittographic (note the following יָגִילוּ, 'alayv).

²⁷ *tn* Heb "They encamped against them."

²⁸ *tn* Heb "destroyed."

²⁹ *tn* Heb "the crops of the land."

³⁰ *tn* Heb "They left no sustenance in Israel."

³¹ *tn* The words "they took away" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

³² *tn* Heb "came up."

³³ *tn* Heb "numerous."

³⁴ *tn* Heb "To them and to their camels there was no number."

³⁵ *tn* Heb "destroy." The translation "devour" carries through the imagery of a locust plague earlier in this verse.

³⁶ *tn* Heb "the LORD"; the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun ("he") in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁷ *tn* Heb "a man, a prophet." Hebrew idiom sometimes puts a generic term before a more specific designation.

³⁸ *tc* Some ancient witnesses read "from the land of Egypt." מִצְרַיִם (me'eres, "from the land [of]") could have been accidentally omitted by homoiocartan (note the following מִצְרַיִם [mimmisrayim, "from Egypt"].)

³⁹ *tn* Heb "of the house of slavery."

⁴⁰ *tn* Heb "hand" (also a second time later in this verse).

¹ *tn* Or "along with the other warriors."

² *tn* Or "blessed."

³ *tn* Or "for mighty ones."

⁴ *tn* The adjective "left" is interpretive, based on the context. Note that the next line pictures Jael holding the hammer with her right hand.

⁵ *tn* The verb used here is from the same root as the noun "hammer" in the preceding line.

⁶ *tn* Or "head."

⁷ *tn* The phrase "his head" (an implied direct object) is supplied in the translation for clarification.

⁸ *tn* Heb "she pierced his temple."

⁹ *tn* Heb "he fell." The same Hebrew expression occurs two more times in this verse.

¹⁰ *tn* Heb "and he lay."

¹¹ *tn* Or "dead, murdered."

¹² *tn* Heb "chariots."

¹³ *tn* Or "princesses."

¹⁴ *tn* Heb "Are they not finding, dividing the plunder?"

¹⁵ *tn* Heb "a womb or two for each man." The words "to rape" are interpretive. The Hebrew noun translated "girl" means literally "womb" (BDB 933 s.v. לַרְחֵם), but in this context may refer by extension to the female genitalia. In this case the obscene language of Sisera's mother alludes to the sexual brutality which typified the aftermath of battle.

¹⁶ *tn* Heb "the plunder of dyed cloth is for Sisera."

¹⁷ *tn* Heb "the plunder of embroidered cloth."

¹⁸ *tn* The translation assumes an emendation of the noun ("plunder") to a participle, "plunderer."

gave their land to you. **6:10** I said to you, “I am the LORD your God! Do not worship¹ the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are now living!” But you have disobeyed me.”²

Gideon Meets Some Visitors

6:11 The LORD’s angelic messenger³ came and sat down under the oak tree in Ophrah owned by Joash the Abiezrite. He arrived while Joash’s son Gideon⁴ was threshing⁵ wheat in a winepress⁶ so he could hide it from the Midianites.⁷ **6:12** The LORD’s messenger appeared and said to him, “The LORD is with you, courageous warrior!” **6:13** Gideon said to him, “Pardon me,⁸ but if the LORD is with us, why has such disaster⁹ overtaken us? There are all his miraculous deeds our ancestors told us about? They said,¹⁰ ‘Did the LORD not bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian.” **6:14** Then the LORD himself¹¹ turned to him and said, “You have the strength.¹² Deliver Israel from the power of the Midianites!¹³ Have I not sent you?” **6:15** Gideon¹⁴ said to him, “But Lord,¹⁵ how¹⁶ can I deliver Israel? Just look! My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my family.”¹⁷ **6:16** The LORD said to him, “Ah, but¹⁸ I will be with you! You will strike down the whole Midianite army.”¹⁹ **6:17** Gideon²⁰ said to him, “If you

really are pleased with me,²¹ then give me²² a sign as proof that it is really you speaking with me. **6:18** Do not leave this place until I come back²³ with a gift²⁴ and present it to you.” The LORD said, “I will stay here until you come back.”

6:19 Gideon went and prepared a young goat,²⁵ along with unleavened bread made from an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. He brought the food²⁶ to him under the oak tree and presented it to him. **6:20** God’s messenger said to him, “Put the meat and unleavened bread on this rock,²⁷ and pour out the broth.” Gideon did as instructed.²⁸ **6:21** The LORD’s messenger touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of his staff.²⁹ Fire flared up from the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened bread. The LORD’s messenger then disappeared.³⁰

6:22 When Gideon realized³¹ that it was the LORD’s messenger, he³² said, “Oh no!³³ Master, LORD!³⁴ I have seen the LORD’s messenger face to face!” **6:23** The LORD said to him, “You are safe!³⁵ Do not be afraid! You are not going to die!” **6:24** Gideon built an altar for the LORD there, and named it “The LORD is on friendly terms with me.”³⁶ To this day it is still there in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Gideon Destroys the Altar

6:25 That night the LORD said to him, “Take the bull from your father’s herd, as well as a second bull, one that is seven years old.³⁷ Pull

¹ tn Heb “Do not fear.”

² tn Heb “you have not listened to my voice.”

³ tn The adjective “angelic” is interpretive.

sn The LORD’s angelic messenger is also mentioned in Judg 2:1.

⁴ tn Heb “Now Gideon his son....” The Hebrew circumstantial clause (note the pattern vav [ו] + subject + predicate) breaks the narrative sequence and indicates that the angel’s arrival coincided with Gideon’s threshing.

⁵ tn Heb “beating out.”

⁶ sn *Threshing wheat in a winepress*. One would normally thresh wheat at the threshing floor outside the city. Animals and a threshing sledge would be employed. Because of the Midianite threat, Gideon was forced to thresh with a stick in a winepress inside the city. For further discussion see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 63.

⁷ tn Heb “Midian.”

⁸ tn Heb “But my lord.”

⁹ tn Heb “all this.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “saying.”

¹¹ sn Some interpreters equate the LORD and the messenger in this story, but they are more likely distinct. In vv. 22-23 the LORD and Gideon continue to carry on a conversation after the messenger has vanished (v. 21).

¹² tn Heb “Go in this strength of yours.”

¹³ tn Heb “the hand of Midian.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Gideon) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ tn Note the switch to אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*, “Lord”). Gideon seems aware that he is speaking to someone other than, and superior to, the messenger, whom he addressed as אֲדֹנָי (*adoniy*, “my lord”) in v. 13.

¹⁶ tn Heb “with what.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “in my father’s house.”

¹⁸ tn Or “certainly.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “You will strike down Midian as one man.” The idiom “as one man” emphasizes the collective unity of a group (see Judg 20:8, 11). Here it may carry the force, “as if they were just one man.”

²⁰ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Gideon) has been specified in

the translation for clarity.

²¹ tn Heb “If I have found favor in your eyes.”

²² tn Heb “perform for me.”

²³ tn The Hebrew text adds “to you,” but this has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁴ tn Heb “and I will bring out my gift.” The precise nuance of the Hebrew word מִנְחָה (*minkhah*, “gift”) is uncertain in this context. It may refer to a gift offered as a sign of goodwill or submission. In some cases it is used of a gift offered to appease someone whom the offerer has offended. The word can also carry a sacrificial connotation.

²⁵ tn Heb “a kid from among the goats.”

²⁶ tn The words “the food” are not in the Hebrew text (an implied direct object). They are supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

²⁷ tn Heb “Take the meat...and put [it] on this rock.”

²⁸ tn Heb “and he did so.”

²⁹ tn Heb “extended the tip of the staff which was in his hand and touched the meat and unleavened bread.”

³⁰ tn Heb “went from his eyes.”

³¹ tn Heb “saw.”

³² tn Heb “Gideon.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³³ tn Or “Ah!”

³⁴ tn The Hebrew text reads אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה (*adonay yehviah*, “Lord [the same title used in v. 15], LORD”).

³⁵ tn Heb “Peace to you.” For a similar use of this idiom to introduce a reassuring word, see Gen 43:23.

³⁶ tn Heb “The LORD is peace.” Gideon’s name for the altar plays on the LORD’s reassuring words to him, “Peace to you.”

³⁷ tn Or “Take a bull from your father’s herd, the second one, the one seven years old.” Apparently Gideon would need the bulls to pull down the altar.

down your father's Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole. **6:26** Then build an altar for the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold according to the proper pattern.¹ Take the second bull and offer it as a burnt sacrifice on the wood from the Asherah pole that you cut down." **6:27** So Gideon took ten of his servants² and did just as the LORD had told him. He was too afraid of his father's family³ and the men of the city to do it in broad daylight, so he waited until nighttime.⁴

6:28 When the men of the city got up the next morning, they saw⁵ the Baal altar pulled down, the nearby Asherah pole cut down, and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar. **6:29** They said to one another,⁶ "Who did this?"⁷ They investigated the matter thoroughly⁸ and concluded⁹ that Gideon son of Joash had done it. **6:30** The men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, so we can execute him!"¹⁰ He pulled down the Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole." **6:31** But Joash said to all those who confronted him,¹¹ "Must you fight Baal's battles?¹² Must you rescue him? Whoever takes up his cause¹³ will die by morning!¹⁴ If he really is a god, let him fight his own battles!"¹⁵ After all, it was his altar that was pulled down."¹⁶ **6:32** That very day Gideon's father named him Jerub-Baal,¹⁷ because he had said, "Let Baal fight with him, for it was his altar that was pulled down."

Gideon Summons an Army and Seeks Confirmation

6:33 All the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east¹⁸ assembled. They crossed the Jordan River¹⁹ and camped in the Jezreel Valley. **6:34** The LORD's spirit took control of²⁰ Gideon. He blew a trumpet,²¹ summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.²² **6:35** He sent messengers throughout Manasseh and summoned them to follow him as well.²³ He also sent messengers throughout Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet him.

6:36 Gideon said to God, "If you really intend to use me to deliver Israel,²⁴ as you promised, then give me a sign as proof."²⁵ **6:37** Look, I am putting a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece, and the ground around it²⁶ is dry, then I will be sure²⁷ that you will use me to deliver Israel,²⁸ as you promised." **6:38** The LORD did as he asked.²⁹ When he got up the next morning, he squeezed the fleece, and enough dew dripped from it to fill a bowl.³⁰ **6:39** Gideon said to God, "Please do not get angry at me, when I ask for just one more sign.³¹ Please allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make only the fleece dry, while the ground around it is covered with dew."³² **6:40** That night God did as he asked.³³ Only the fleece was dry and the ground around it was covered with dew.

Gideon Reduces the Ranks

7:1 Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and his men³⁴ got up the next morning and camped near the spring of Harod.³⁵ The Midianites,³⁶ were camped north of them near the hill of Moreh in the valley. **7:2** The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to hand Midian over

¹ tn Possibly "in a row" or "in a layer," perhaps referring to the arrangement of the stones used in the altar's construction.

² tn Heb "men from among his servants."

³ tn Heb "house."

⁴ tn Heb "so he did it at night."

⁵ tn Heb "look!" The narrator uses this word to invite his audience/readers to view the scene through the eyes of the men.

⁶ tn Heb "each one to his neighbor."

⁷ tn Heb "this thing."

⁸ tn Heb "they inquired and searched." The synonyms are joined to emphasize the care with which they conducted their inquiry.

⁹ tn Heb "and said." Perhaps the plural subject is indefinite. If so, it could be translated, "they were told."

¹⁰ tn Heb "and let him die." The jussive form with vav after the imperative is best translated as a purpose clause.

¹¹ tn Heb "to all who stood against him."

¹² tn Heb "Do you fight for Baal?"

¹³ tn Heb "fights for him."

¹⁴ sn Whoever takes up his cause will die by morning. This may be a warning to the crowd that Joash intends to defend his son and to kill anyone who tries to execute Gideon. Then again, it may be a sarcastic statement about Baal's apparent inability to defend his own honor. Anyone who takes up Baal's cause may end up dead, perhaps by the same hand that pulled down the pagan god's altar.

¹⁵ tn Heb "fight for himself."

¹⁶ tn Heb "for he pulled down his altar." The subject of the verb, if not Gideon, is indefinite (in which case a passive translation is permissible).

¹⁷ tn Heb "He called him on that day Jerub-Baal." The name means, at least by popular etymology, "Let Baal fight!"

¹⁸ tn Heb "Midian, Amalek, and the sons of the east."

¹⁹ tn The words "the Jordan River" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁰ tn Heb "clothed."

²¹ tn That is, "mustered an army."

²² tn Heb "Abiezer was summoned after him."

²³ tn Heb "and he also was summoned after him."

²⁴ tn More literally, "you are about to deliver Israel by my hand."

²⁵ tn The words "then give me a sign as proof" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁶ tn Heb "all the ground."

²⁷ tn Or "know."

²⁸ tn Heb "you will deliver Israel by my hand."

²⁹ tn Heb "And it was so."

³⁰ tn Heb "dew dripped from the fleece – a bowl full of water."

³¹ tn Heb "Let your anger not rage at me, so that I might speak only this once."

³² tn Heb "let the fleece alone be dry, while dew is on all the ground."

³³ tn Heb "God did so that night."

³⁴ tn Heb "and all the people who were with him."

³⁵ sn The name *Harod* means, ironically, "trembling."

³⁶ tn Heb "Midian." The LXX reads "and Amalek" (cf. v. 12; 6:33).

to you.¹ Israel might brag,² ‘Our own strength has delivered us.’³ 7:3 Now, announce to the men,⁴ ‘Whoever is shaking with fear⁵ may turn around and leave Mount Gilead.’⁶ Twenty-two thousand men⁷ went home,⁸ ten thousand remained. 7:4 The LORD spoke to Gideon again, ‘There are still too many men.⁹ Bring them down to the water and I will thin the ranks some more.¹⁰ When I say, ‘This one should go with you,’ pick him to go;¹¹ when I say,¹² ‘This one should not go with you,’ do not take him.’¹³ 7:5 So he brought the men¹⁴ down to the water. Then the LORD said to Gideon, ‘Separate those who lap the water as a dog laps from those who kneel to drink.’¹⁵ 7:6 Three hundred men lapped;¹⁶ the rest of the men¹⁷ kneeled to drink water. 7:7 The LORD said to Gideon, ‘With the three hundred men who lapped I will deliver the whole army¹⁸ and I will hand Midian over to you.¹⁹ The rest of the men should go home.’²⁰ 7:8 The men²¹ who were chosen²² took supplies²³ and their trumpets. Gideon²⁴ sent all the men of Israel back to their homes;²⁵ he kept only three

hundred men. Now the Midianites²⁶ were camped down below²⁷ in the valley.

Gideon Reassured of Victory

7:9 That night the LORD said to Gideon,²⁸ ‘Get up! Attack²⁹ the camp, for I am handing it over to you.’³⁰ 7:10 But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with Purah your servant 7:11 and listen to what they are saying. Then you will be brave³¹ and attack the camp.’ So he went down with Purah his servant to where the sentries were guarding the camp.³² 7:12 Now the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east covered the valley like a swarm of locusts.³³ Their camels could not be counted; they were as innumerable as the sand on the seashore. 7:13 When Gideon arrived, he heard a man telling another man about a dream he had.³⁴ The man³⁵ said, ‘Look! I had a dream. I saw³⁶ a stale cake of barley bread rolling into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent so hard it knocked it over and turned it upside down. The tent just collapsed.’³⁷ 7:14 The other man said,³⁸ ‘Without a doubt this symbolizes³⁹ the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God is handing Midian and all the army over to him.’

Gideon Routs the Enemy

7:15 When Gideon heard the report of the dream and its interpretation, he praised God.⁴⁰ Then he went back to the Israelite camp and said, ‘Get up, for the LORD is handing the Midianite army over to you!’ 7:16 He divided the three hundred men into three units.⁴¹ He gave them all trumpets and empty jars with torches inside them.⁴² 7:17 He said to them, ‘Watch me

¹ *tn* Heb “the people who are with you are too numerous for me to give Midian into their hand.”

² *tn* Heb “might glorify itself against me.”

³ *tn* Heb “my hand has delivered me.”

⁴ *tn* Heb “call into the ears of the people.”

⁵ *tn* Heb “afraid and shaking.”

⁶ *tc* Many interpreters reject the MT reading “and leave Mount Gilead” for geographical reasons. A possible alternative, involving rather radical emendation of the Hebrew text, would be, “So Gideon tested them” (i.e., thinned the ranks in this manner).

⁷ *tn* Heb “people.” The translation uses “men” because warriors are in view, and in ancient Israelite culture these would be only males. (This is also the case in vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.)

⁸ *tn* Or “turned around, back.”

⁹ *tn* Heb “too many people.”

¹⁰ *tn* Heb “test them for you there.”

¹¹ *tn* Heb “he should go with you.”

¹² *tn* Heb also has “to you.”

¹³ *tn* Heb “he should not go.”

¹⁴ *tn* Heb “the people.”

¹⁵ *tn* Heb “Everyone who laps with his tongue from the water, as a dog laps, put him by himself, as well as the one who gets down on his knees to drink.”

¹⁶ *tc* The Hebrew text adds, “with their hands to their mouths.” This makes no sense in light of v. 5, which distinguishes between dog-like lappers (who would not use their hands to drink) and those who kneel (who would use their hands). It seems likely that the words “with their hands to their mouths” have been misplaced from v. 6. They fit better at the end of v. 5 or v. 6. Perhaps these words were originally a marginal scribal note which was later accidentally inserted into the text in the wrong place.

¹⁷ *tn* Heb “the people.”

¹⁸ *tn* Heb “you.” The Hebrew pronoun is masculine plural, probably referring to the entire army.

¹⁹ *tn* The Hebrew pronoun here is singular.

²⁰ *tn* Heb “All the people should go, each to his place.”

²¹ *tn* Heb “The people.”

²² *tn* The words “who were chosen” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²³ *tn* The Hebrew text has “in their hands.”

²⁴ *tn* Heb “he”; the referent (Gideon) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ *tn* Heb “tents.”

²⁶ *tn* Heb “Midian.”

²⁷ *tn* The Hebrew text adds “him” (i.e., Gideon).

²⁸ *tn* Heb “him”; the referent (Gideon) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁹ *tn* Heb “Go down against.”

³⁰ *tn* The Hebrew verbal form is a perfect, emphasizing the certainty of the promise.

³¹ *tn* Heb “your hands will be strengthened.”

³² *tn* Heb “to the edge of the ones in battle array who were in the camp.”

³³ *tn* Heb “Midian, Amalek, and the sons of the east were falling in the valley like locusts in great number.”

³⁴ *tn* Heb “And Gideon came, and, look, a man was relating to his friend a dream.”

³⁵ *tn* Heb “he”; the referent (the man mentioned in the previous clause) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁶ *tn* Heb “Look!” The repetition of this interjection, while emphatic in Hebrew, would be redundant in the English translation.

³⁷ *tn* Heb “It came to the tent and struck it and it fell. It turned it upside down and the tent fell.”

³⁸ *tn* Heb “answered and said.”

³⁹ *tn* Heb “This can be nothing but.”

⁴⁰ *tn* Heb “he bowed down” or “worshiped.”

⁴¹ *tn* Heb “heads.”

⁴² *tn* Heb “the jars.” The noun has been replaced by the pronoun (“them”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

sn They hid the torches inside the earthenware jars to disguise their approach and to keep the torches from being extinguished by the breeze.

and do as I do. Watch closely!¹ I am going to the edge of the camp. Do as I do! 7:18 When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, you also blow your trumpets all around the camp. Then say, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon!’”

7:19 Gideon took a hundred men to the edge of the camp² at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guards. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars they were carrying.³ 7:20 All three units blew their trumpets and broke their jars. They held the torches in their left hand and the trumpets in their right.⁴ Then they yelled, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” 7:21 They stood in order⁵ all around the camp. The whole army ran away; they shouted as they scrambled away.⁶ 7:22 When the three hundred men blew their trumpets, the LORD caused the Midianites to attack one another with their swords⁷ throughout⁸ the camp. The army fled to Beth Shittah on the way to Zererah. They went⁹ to the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. 7:23 Israelites from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh answered the call and chased the Midianites.¹⁰

Gideon Appeases the Ephraimites

7:24 Now Gideon sent messengers throughout the Ephraimite hill country who announced, “Go down and head off the Midianites.¹¹ Take control of the fords of the streams¹² all the way to Beth Barah and the Jordan River.”¹³ When all the Ephraimites had assembled,¹⁴ they took control of the fords¹⁵ all the way to Beth Barah and the Jordan River. 7:25 They captured the two Midianite generals, Oreb and Zeeb.¹⁶ They exe-

cuted Oreb on the rock of Oreb and Zeeb¹⁷ in the winepress of Zeeb. They chased the Midianites¹⁸ and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was now on the other side of the Jordan River.¹⁹

8:1 The Ephraimites said to him, “Why have you done such a thing to us? You did not summon us²⁰ when you went to fight the Midianites!” They argued vehemently with him. 8:2 He said to them, “Now what have I accomplished compared to you? Even Ephraim’s leftover grapes²¹ are better quality than Abiezer’s harvest!²² 8:3 It was to you that God handed over the Midianite generals, Oreb and Zeeb! What did I accomplish to rival that?”²³ When he said this, they calmed down.²⁴

Gideon Tracks Down the Midianite Kings

8:4 Now Gideon and his three hundred men had crossed over the Jordan River, and even though they were exhausted, they were still chasing the Midianites.²⁵ 8:5 He said to the men of Succoth, “Give²⁶ some loaves of bread to the men²⁷ who are following me,²⁸ because they are exhausted I am chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.” 8:6 The officials of Succoth said, “You have not yet overpowered Zebah and Zalmunna. So why should we give²⁹ bread to your army?”³⁰ 8:7 Gideon said, “Since you

¹⁷ tn The Hebrew text repeats the verb “executed.” This has not been repeated in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁸ tn Heb “Midian.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “beyond the Jordan.” The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text but has been supplied in the translation for clarity (also in 8:4).

²⁰ tn Heb “by not summoning us.”

²¹ tn Heb “gleanings.”

²² sn Ephraim’s leftover grapes are better quality than Abiezer’s harvest. Gideon employs an agricultural metaphor. He argues that Ephraim’s mopping up operations, though seemingly like the inferior grapes which are missed initially by the harvesters or left for the poor, are actually more noteworthy than the military efforts of Gideon’s family.

²³ tn Heb “What was I able to do compared to you?”

²⁴ tn Heb “Then their spirits relaxed from against him, when he spoke this word.”

²⁵ tn Heb “And Gideon arrived at the Jordan, crossing over, he and the three hundred men who were with him, exhausted and chasing.” The English past perfect (“had crossed”) is used because this verse flashes back chronologically to an event that preceded the hostile encounter described in vv. 1-3. (Note that 7:25 assumes Gideon had already crossed the Jordan.)

²⁶ tn Or perhaps, “sell.”

²⁷ tn Heb “people.” The translation uses “men” because these were warriors and in ancient Israelite culture would have been exclusively males.

²⁸ tn Heb “who are at my feet.”

²⁹ tn Or perhaps, “sell.”

³⁰ tn Heb “Are the palms of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give to your army bread?” Perhaps the reference to the kings’ “palms” should be taken literally. The officials of Succoth may be alluding to the practice of mutilating prisoners or enemy corpses (see R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 155).

sn The officials of Succoth are hesitant to give (or sell) food to Gideon’s forces because they are not sure of the outcome of the battle. Perhaps they had made an alliance with the Midianites which demanded their loyalty.

¹ tn Or “look.”

² tn Heb “Gideon went, along with the hundred men who were with him, to the edge of the camp.”

³ tn Heb “that were in their hands.”

⁴ tn The Hebrew text adds, “in order to blow [them].” This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ tn Heb “each in his place.”

⁶ tn Or “fled.”

⁷ tn Heb “the LORD set the sword of each one against his friend.”

⁸ tc MT has “and throughout the camp,” but the conjunction (“and”) is due to dittography and should be dropped. Compare the ancient versions, which lack the conjunction here.

⁹ tn The words “they went” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

¹⁰ tn Heb “Midian.”

¹¹ tn Heb “to meet Midian.”

¹² tn Heb “capture before them the waters.”

¹³ tn The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarification (also later in this verse).

¹⁴ tn Heb “And all the men of Ephraim were summoned.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “they captured the waters.”

¹⁶ sn The names Oreb and Zeeb, which mean “Raven” and “Wolf” respectively, are appropriate because the Midianites had been like scavengers and predators to Israel.

will not help,¹ after the LORD hands Zebah and Zalmunna over to me, I will thresh² your skin³ with⁴ desert thorns and briers.” **8:8** He went up from there to Penuel and made the same request.⁵ The men of Penuel responded the same way the men of Succoth had.⁶ **8:9** He also threatened⁷ the men of Penuel, warning,⁸ “When I return victoriously,⁹ I will tear down this tower.”

8:10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Kar-kor with their armies. There were about fifteen thousand survivors from the army of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand sword-wielding soldiers had been killed.¹⁰ **8:11** Gideon went up the road of the nomads¹¹ east of Nobah and Jogbehah and ambushed the surprised army.¹² **8:12** When Zebah and Zalmunna ran away, Gideon¹³ chased them and captured the two Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. He had surprised¹⁴ their entire army.

8:13 Gideon son of Joash returned from the battle by the pass¹⁵ of Heres. **8:14** He captured a young man from Succoth¹⁶ and interrogated him. The young man wrote down for him the names of Succoth’s officials and city leaders – seventy-seven men in all.¹⁷ **8:15** He approached the men of Succoth and said, “Look what I have!¹⁸ Zebah and Zalmunna! You insulted me, saying, ‘You

have not yet overpowered Zebah and Zalmunna. So why should we give bread to your exhausted men?’”¹⁹ **8:16** He seized the leaders²⁰ of the city, along with some desert thorns and briers; he then “threshed” the men of Succoth with them.²¹ **8:17** He also tore down the tower of Penuel and executed the city’s men.

8:18 He said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “Describe for me²² the men you killed at Tabor.” They said, “They were like you. Each one looked like a king’s son.”²³ **8:19** He said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. I swear,²⁴ as surely as the LORD is alive, if you had let them live, I would not kill you.” **8:20** He ordered Jether his firstborn son, “Come on!²⁵ Kill them!” But Jether was too afraid to draw his sword,²⁶ because he was still young. **8:21** Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon,²⁷ “Come on,²⁸ you strike us, for a man is judged by his strength.”²⁹ So Gideon killed³⁰ Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent-shaped ornaments which were on the necks of their camels.

Gideon Rejects a Crown but Makes an Ephod

8:22 The men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us – you, your son, and your grandson. For you have delivered us from Midian’s power.”³¹ **8:23** Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you.” **8:24** Gideon continued,³² “I would like to make one request. Each of you give me an earring from the plunder you have taken.”³³ (The Midianites³⁴ had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites.) **8:25** They said,

¹ tn Heb “Therefore.”

² sn I will thresh. The metaphor is agricultural. Threshing was usually done on a hard threshing floor. As farm animals walked over the stalks, pulling behind them a board embedded with sharp stones, the stalks and grain would be separated. See O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 63-65. Gideon threatens to use thorns and briers on his sledge.

³ tn Or “flesh.”

⁴ tn This is apparently a rare instrumental use of the Hebrew preposition אִתְּ (‘et, note the use of אִתְּ [bet] in v. 16). Some, however, argue that אִתְּ more naturally indicates accompaniment (“together with”). In this case Gideon envisions threshing their skin along with thorns and briers, just as the stalks and grain are intermingled on the threshing floor. See C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 229-30.

⁵ tn Heb “and spoke to them in the same way.”

⁶ tn Heb “The men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth answered.”

⁷ tn Heb “said to.” The translation “threatened” is interpretive, but is clearly indicated by the context.

⁸ tn Heb “saying.”

⁹ tn Or “safely.” Heb “in peace.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “About fifteen thousand [in number] were all the ones remaining from the army of the sons of the east. The fallen ones were a hundred and twenty thousand [in number], men drawing the sword.”

¹¹ tn Heb “the ones living in tents.”

¹² tn Heb “and attacked the army, while the army was secure.” The Hebrew term בִּטְחָה (vetakh, “secure”) probably means the army was undefended (see R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 156), not suspecting an attack at that time and place.

¹³ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Gideon) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ tn Or “routed”; Heb “caused to panic.”

¹⁵ tn Or “ascent.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “from the men of Succoth.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “wrote down for him the officials of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “Look!” The words “what I have” are supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ tn Heb “Are the palms of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give to your exhausted men bread?”

²⁰ sn Gideon changes their actual statement (see v. 6) by saying *exhausted men* rather than “army.” In this way he emphasizes the crisis his men were facing and highlights the insensitivity of the men of Succoth.

²¹ tn Heb “elders.”

²² tc The translation follows the reading of several ancient versions (LXX, the Syriac Peshitta, and Vulgate) in assuming the form וַיַּדָּשׁ (vayyadash) from the verb דָּשׂ (dosh, “thresh”) as in v. 7. The MT reads instead the form וַיַּדֹּד (vayyoda, “make known”), a Hiphil form of יָדַע (yadah). In this case one could translate, “he used them [i.e., the thorns and briers] to teach the men of Succoth a lesson.”

²³ tn Heb “Where are?”

²⁴ tn Heb “each one like the appearance of sons of the king.”

²⁵ tn The words “I swear” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁶ tn Or “Arise!”

²⁷ tn Heb “did not draw his sword for he was afraid.”

²⁸ tn The words “to Gideon” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁹ tn Or “Arise.”

³⁰ tn Heb “for as the man is his strength.”

³¹ tn Heb “arose and killed.”

³² tn Heb “hand.”

³³ tn Heb “said to them.”

³⁴ tn Heb “Give to me, each one, an earring from his plunder.”

³⁵ tn Heb “they”; the referent (the Midianites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

“We are happy to give you earrings.”¹ So they² spread out a garment, and each one threw an earring from his plunder onto it. **8:26** The total weight of the gold earrings he requested came to seventeen hundred gold shekels.³ This was in addition to the crescent-shaped ornaments, jewelry,⁴ purple clothing worn by the Midianite kings, and the necklaces on the camels.⁵ **8:27** Gideon used all this to make⁶ an ephod,⁷ which he put in his hometown of Ophrah. All the Israelites⁸ prostituted themselves to it by worshipping it⁹ there. It became a snare to Gideon and his family.

Gideon's Story Ends

8:28 The Israelites humiliated Midian; the Midianites' fighting spirit was broken.¹⁰ The land had rest for forty years during Gideon's time.¹¹ **8:29** Then Jerub-Baal son of Joash went home and settled down.¹² **8:30** Gideon fathered seventy sons through his many wives.¹³ **8:31** His concubine,¹⁴ who lived in Shechem, also gave him a son, whom he named Abimelech.¹⁵ **8:32** Gideon son of Joash died at a very¹⁶ old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash located in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

¹ **tn** *Heb* “We will indeed give.”

² **tc** In the LXX the subject of this verb is singular, referring to Gideon rather than to the Israelites.

³ **sn** Seventeen hundred gold shekels would be about 42.7 pounds (19.4 kilograms) of gold.

⁴ **tn** Or “pendants.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “the ornaments which were on the necks of their camels.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “made it into.”

⁷ **sn** In Exod 28:4-6 and several other texts an *ephod* is described as a priestly or cultic garment. In some cases an ephod is used to obtain a divine oracle (1 Sam 23:9; 30:7). Here the ephod is made of gold and is described as being quite heavy (70-75 lbs?). Some identify it as an idol, but it was more likely a cultic object fashioned in the form of a garment which was used for oracular purposes. For discussion of the ephod in the OT, see C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 236-43, and R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 349-52.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “Israel” (a collective singular).

⁹ **tn** The words “by worshipping it” are supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “Midian was humbled before the Israelites, and they no longer lifted their heads.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “in the days of Gideon.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “went and lived in his house.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “Gideon had seventy sons who went out from his thigh, for he had many wives.” The Hebrew word יָרֵךְ (*yarekh*, “thigh”) is a euphemism here for the penis.

¹⁴ **sn** A *concubine* was a slave woman in ancient Near Eastern societies who was the legal property of her master, but who could have legitimate sexual relations with her master. A concubine's status was more elevated than a mere servant, but she was not free and did not have the legal rights of a free wife. The children of a concubine could, in some instances, become equal heirs with the children of the free wife. After the period of the Judges concubines may have become more of a royal prerogative (2 Sam 21:10-14; 1 Kgs 11:3).

¹⁵ **sn** The name *Abimelech* means “my father is king.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “good.”

Israel Returns to Baal-Worship

8:33 After Gideon died, the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They made Baal-Berith¹⁷ their god. **8:34** The Israelites did not remain true¹⁸ to the LORD their God, who had delivered them from all the enemies who lived around them. **8:35** They did not treat¹⁹ the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) fairly in return for all the good he had done for Israel.

Abimelech Murders His Brothers

9:1 Now Abimelech son of Jerub-Baal went to Shechem to see his mother's relatives.²⁰ He said to them and to his mother's entire extended family,²¹ **9:2** “Tell²² all the leaders of Shechem this: ‘Why would you want²³ to have seventy men, all Jerub-Baal's sons, ruling over you, when you can have just one ruler? Recall that I am your own flesh and blood.’”²⁴ **9:3** His mother's relatives²⁵ spoke on his behalf to²⁶ all the leaders of Shechem and reported his proposal.²⁷ The leaders were drawn to Abimelech;²⁸ they said, “He is our close relative.”²⁹ **9:4** They paid him seventy silver shekels out of the temple of Baal-Berith. Abimelech then used the silver to hire some lawless, dangerous³⁰ men as his followers.³¹ **9:5** He went to his father's home in Ophrah and murdered his half-brothers,³² the seventy legitimate³³ sons of Jerub-Baal, on one stone. Only Jotham, Jerub-Baal's youngest son, escaped,³⁴ because he hid. **9:6** All the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo assembled and then went and made Abimelech king by the oak near the pillar³⁵ in Shechem.

¹⁷ **sn** *Baal-Berith* was a local manifestation of the Canaanite storm god. The name means, ironically, “Baal of the covenant.” Israel's covenant allegiance had indeed shifted.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “remember.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “did not do loyalty with,” or “did not act faithfully toward.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “brothers.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “to all the extended family of the house of the father of his mother.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “Speak into the ears of.”

²³ **tn** *Heb* “What good is it to you?”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “your bone and your flesh.”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “brothers.”

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “into the ears of.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and all these words.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “Their heart was inclined after Abimelech.”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “our brother.”

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “empty and reckless.”

³¹ **tn** *Heb* “and they followed him.”

³² **tn** *Heb* “his brothers.”

³³ **tn** The word “legitimate” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarification.

³⁴ **tn** *Heb* “remained.”

³⁵ **tc** The translation assumes that the form in the Hebrew text (מִצֵּבָה, *mitsav*) is a corruption of an original מַצְבֵּה (*matsevah*, “pillar”). The reference is probably to a pagan object of worship (cf. LXX).

Jotham's Parable

9:7 When Jotham heard the news,¹ he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim. He spoke loudly to the people below,² "Listen to me, leaders of Shechem, so that God may listen to you!

9:8 "The trees were determined to go out³ and choose a king for themselves.⁴ They said to the olive tree, 'Be our king!'⁵ 9:9 But the olive tree said to them, 'I am not going to stop producing my oil, which is used to honor gods and men, just to sway above the other trees!'⁶

9:10 "So the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and be our king!'⁷ 9:11 But the fig tree said to them, 'I am not going to stop producing my sweet figs, my excellent fruit, just to sway above the other trees!'⁸

9:12 "So the trees said to the grapevine, 'You come and be our king!'⁹ 9:13 But the grapevine said to them, 'I am not going to stop producing my wine, which makes gods and men so happy, just to sway above the other trees!'¹⁰

9:14 "So all the trees said to the thornbush, 'You come and be our king!'¹¹ 9:15 The thornbush said to the trees, 'If you really want to choose¹² me as your king, then come along, find safety under my branches!¹³ Otherwise¹⁴ may fire blaze from the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!'

9:16 "Now, if you have shown loyalty and integrity when you made Abimelech king, if you have done right to Jerub-Baal and his family,¹⁵ if you have properly repaid him¹⁶ – 9:17 my father fought for you; he risked his life¹⁷ and delivered

¹ *tn Heb* "And they reported to Jotham." The subject of the plural verb is indefinite.

² *tn Heb* "He lifted his voice and called and said to them."

³ *tn Heb* "Going they went, the trees." The precise emphatic force of the infinitive absolute ("Going") is not entirely clear. Perhaps here it indicates determination, as in Gen 31:30, where one might translate, "You have insisted on going away."

⁴ *tn Heb* "to anoint [with oil] over them a king."

⁵ *tn Or* "Rule over us!"

⁶ *tn Heb* "Should I stop my abundance, with which they honor gods and men, and go to sway over the trees?" The negative sentence in the translation reflects the force of the rhetorical question.

⁷ *tn Or* "and rule over us!"

⁸ *tn Heb* "Should I stop my sweetness and my good fruit and go to sway over the trees? The negative sentence in the translation reflects the force of the rhetorical question.

⁹ *tn Or* "and rule over us!"

¹⁰ *tn Heb* "Should I stop my wine, which makes happy gods and men, and go to sway over the trees?" The negative sentence in the translation reflects the force of the rhetorical question.

¹¹ *tn Or* "and rule over us!"

¹² *tn Heb* "are about to anoint [with oil]."

¹³ *tn Heb* "in my shade."

¹⁴ *tn Heb* "If not."

¹⁵ *tn Heb* "house."

¹⁶ *tn Heb* "if according to the deeds of his hands you have done to him."

¹⁷ *tc Heb* "threw his life out in front," that is, "exposed himself to danger." The MT form מִיְנֶגֶד (*minneged*, "from before") should probably be read as מִיְנֶגְדוֹ (*minnegdo*, "from before him"); haplography of *vav* has likely occurred here in the MT.

you from Midian's power.¹⁸ 9:18 But you have attacked¹⁹ my father's family²⁰ today. You murdered his seventy legitimate²¹ sons on one stone and made Abimelech, the son of his female slave, king over the leaders of Shechem, just because he is your close relative.²² 9:19 So if you have shown loyalty and integrity to Jerub-Baal and his family²³ today, then may Abimelech bring you happiness and may you bring him happiness!²⁴ 9:20 But if not, may fire blaze from Abimelech and consume the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo! May fire also blaze from the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo and consume Abimelech!" 9:21 Then Jotham ran away²⁵ to Beer and lived there to escape from²⁶ Abimelech his half-brother.²⁷

God Fulfills Jotham's Curse

9:22 Abimelech commanded²⁸ Israel for three years. 9:23 God sent a spirit to stir up hostility²⁹ between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. He made the leaders of Shechem disloyal³⁰ to Abimelech. 9:24 He did this so the violent deaths of Jerub-Baal's seventy sons might be avenged and Abimelech, their half-brother³¹ who murdered them, might have to pay for their spilled blood, along with the leaders of Shechem who helped him murder them.³²

¹⁸ *tn Heb* "hand."

¹⁹ *tn Heb* "have risen up against."

²⁰ *tn Heb* "house."

²¹ *tn* The word "legitimate" is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarification.

²² *tn Heb* "your brother."

²³ *tn Heb* "house."

²⁴ *tn Heb* "then rejoice in Abimelech, and may he also rejoice in you."

²⁵ *tn Heb* "fled and ran away and went."

²⁶ *tn Heb* "from before."

²⁷ *tn Heb* "his brother."

²⁸ *tn* The Hebrew verb translated "commanded" (שָׂרַר, *sarar*), which appears only here in Judges, differs from the ones employed earlier in this chapter (מָשַׁל [mashal] and מָלַךְ [malakh]).

²⁹ *sn* Abimelech commanded Israel. Perhaps while ruling as king over the city-state of Shechem, Abimelech also became a leader of the Israelite tribal alliance (see R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 175).

²⁹ *tn Heb* "an evil spirit." A nonphysical, spirit being is in view, like the one who volunteered to deceive Ahab (1 Kgs 22:21). The traditional translation, "evil spirit," implies the being is inherently wicked, perhaps even demonic, but this is not necessarily the case. The Hebrew adjective רָעָה (*ra'ah*) can have a nonethical sense, "harmful; dangerous; calamitous." When modifying רִיחַ (*ruakh*, "spirit") it may simply indicate that the being in view causes harm to the object of God's judgment. G. F. Moore (*Judges* [ICC], 253) here refers to a "mischief-making spirit."

³⁰ *tn Heb* "The leaders of Shechem were disloyal." The words "he made" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

³¹ *tn Heb* "their brother."

³² *tn Heb* "so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerub-Baal might come, and their blood might be placed on Abimelech, their brother, who murdered them, and upon the leaders of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to murder his brothers."

9:25 The leaders of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech by putting¹ bandits in² the hills, who robbed everyone who traveled by on the road. But Abimelech found out about it.³

9:26 Gaal son of Ebed⁴ came through Shechem with his brothers. The leaders of Shechem transferred their loyalty to him.⁵ 9:27 They went out to the field, harvested their grapes,⁶ squeezed out the juice,⁷ and celebrated. They came to the temple⁸ of their god and ate, drank, and cursed Abimelech. 9:28 Gaal son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelech and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerub-Baal, and is not Zebul the deputy he appointed?⁹ Serve the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem! But why should we serve Abimelech?”¹⁰ 9:29 If only these men¹¹ were under my command,¹² I would get rid of Abimelech!” He challenged Abimelech,¹³ “Muster¹⁴ your army and come out for battle!”¹⁵

9:30 When Zebul, the city commissioner, heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, he was furious.¹⁶ 9:31 He sent messengers to Abimelech, who was in Arumah,¹⁷ reporting,

¹ tn Heb “set against him bandits.”

sn Putting bandits in the hills. This piracy certainly interrupted or discouraged trade, and probably deprived Abimelech of tariffs or tribute. See C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 277; G. F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC), 253.

² tn Heb “on the tops of.”

³ tn Heb “It was told to Abimelech.”

⁴ sn The name *Gaal* derives from, or at least sounds like, a Hebrew verb meaning “to abhor, loathe.” His father’s name, *Ebed*, means “servant.” Perhaps then this could be translated, “loathsome one, son of a servant.” This individual’s very name (which may be the narrator’s nickname for him, not his actual name) seems to hint at his immoral character and lowly social status.

⁵ tn Heb “trusted in him.” Here the verb probably describes more than a mental attitude. It is likely that the Shechemites made an alliance with Gaal and were now trusting him for protection in return for their loyalty (and probably tribute).

⁶ tn Heb “vineyards.”

⁷ tn Heb “stomped” or “trampled.” This refers to the way in which the juice was squeezed out in the wine vats by stepping on the grapes with one’s bare feet. For a discussion of grape harvesting in ancient Israel, see O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 110-14.

⁸ tn Heb “house.”

⁹ tn Heb “and Zebul his appointee.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “him”; the referent (Abimelech) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹¹ tn Heb “people.”

¹² tn Heb “in my hand.”

sn If only these men were under my command. One might assume from v. 26b that the men were already at his disposal, but perhaps that was not one of the terms of the agreement. Another possibility is that v. 26 is a general summary statement, with vv. 27-29 then detailing how the alliance with Gaal came about.

¹³ tn Heb “said to Abimelech.” On the other hand, the preposition ל (lamed) prefixed to the proper name may be vocative (see R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 178). If so, one could translate, “He boasted, ‘Abimelech....’”

¹⁴ tn Heb “Make numerous.”

¹⁵ tn Heb The words “for battle” are interpretive.

¹⁶ tn Heb “his anger burned.”

¹⁷ tn Heb The form בְּרָמָה (b^ʿramah) in the Hebrew text, which occurs only here, has traditionally been understood to mean “secretly” or “with deception.” If this is correct, it is derived from רָמָה (ramah, “to deceive”). Some interpreters object,

“Beware!”¹⁸ Gaal son of Ebed and his brothers are coming¹⁹ to Shechem and inciting the city to rebel against you.²⁰ 9:32 Now, come up²¹ at night with your men²² and set an ambush in the field outside the city.²³ 9:33 In the morning at sunrise quickly attack the city. When he and his men come out to fight you, do what you can to him.”²⁴

9:34 So Abimelech and all his men came up²⁵ at night and set an ambush outside Shechem – they divided into²⁶ four units. 9:35 When Gaal son of Ebed came out and stood at the entrance to the city’s gate, Abimelech and his men got up from their hiding places. 9:36 Gaal saw the men²⁷ and said to Zebul, “Look, men are coming down from the tops of the hills.” But Zebul said to him, “You are seeing the shadows on the hills – it just looks like men.”²⁸ 9:37 Gaal again said, “Look, men are coming down from the very center²⁹ of the land. A unit³⁰ is coming by way of the Oak Tree of the Diviners.”³¹ 9:38 Zebul said to him, “Where now are your bragging words³² ‘Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?’ Are these not the men³³ you

pointing out that this would imply Zebul was trying to deceive Abimelech, which is clearly not the case in this context. But this objection is unwarranted. If retained, the phrase would refer instead to deceptive measures used by Zebul to avoid the suspicion of Gaal when he dispatched the messengers from Shechem. The present translation assumes an emendation to “in Arumah” (בְּאַרְמָה, ba^ʿrumah), a site mentioned in v. 41 as the headquarters of Abimelech. Confusion of *alef* and *tav* in archaic Hebrew script, while uncommon, is certainly not unimaginable.

¹⁸ tn Heb “Look!”

¹⁹ tn The participle, as used here, suggests Gaal and his brothers are in the process of arriving, but the preceding verses imply they have already settled in. Perhaps Zebul uses understatement to avoid the appearance of negligence on his part. After all, if he made the situation sound too bad, Abimelech, when he was informed, might ask why he had allowed this rebellion to reach such a stage.

²⁰ tn The words “to rebel” are interpretive. The precise meaning of the Hebrew verb יָזַר (*tsur*) is unclear here. It is best to take it in the sense of “to instigate; to incite; to provoke” (see Deut 2:9, 19 and R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 178).

²¹ tn Heb “arise.”

²² tn Heb “you and the people who are with you.”

²³ tn The words “outside the city” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁴ tn Heb “Look! He and the people who are with him will come out to you, and you will do to him what your hand finds [to do].”

²⁵ tn Heb “and all the people who were with him arose.”

²⁶ tn Heb “four heads.” The words “they divided into” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁷ tn Heb “the people” (also in vv. 38, 43, 48). These were warriors, so “men” has been used in the translation, since in ancient Israelite culture soldiers would have been exclusively males.

²⁸ tn Heb “the shadow on the hills you are seeing, like men.”

²⁹ tn Heb “navel.” The background of the Hebrew expression “the navel of the land,” see R. G. Boling, *Judges* (AB), 178-79.

³⁰ tn Heb “head.”

³¹ tn Some English translations simply transliterated this as a place name (*Heb* “Elon-meonenim”); cf. NAB, NRSV.

³² tn Heb “is your mouth that says.”

³³ tn Heb “the people.”

insulted²¹ Go out now and fight them!” 9:39 So Gaal led the leaders of Shechem out² and fought Abimelech. 9:40 Abimelech chased him, and Gaal³ ran from him. Many Shechemites⁴ fell wounded at the entrance of the gate. 9:41 Abimelech went back⁵ to Arumah; Zebul drove Gaal and his brothers out of Shechem.⁶

9:42 The next day the Shechemites⁷ came out to the field. When Abimelech heard about it,⁸ 9:43 he took his men⁹ and divided them into three units and set an ambush in the field. When he saw the people coming out of the city,¹⁰ he attacked and struck them down.¹¹ 9:44 Abimelech and his units¹² attacked and blocked¹³ the entrance to the city’s gate. Two units then attacked all the people in the field and struck them down. 9:45 Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and killed all the people in it. Then he leveled¹⁴ the city and spread salt over it.¹⁵

9:46 When all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem¹⁶ heard the news, they went to the stronghold¹⁷ of the temple of El-Berith.¹⁸ 9:47 Abimelech heard¹⁹ that all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem were in one place.²⁰ 9:48 He and all his

men²¹ went up on Mount Zalmon. He²² took an ax²³ in his hand and cut off a tree branch. He put it²⁴ on his shoulder and said to his men, “Quickly, do what you have just seen me do!”²⁵ 9:49 So each of his men also cut off a branch and followed Abimelech. They put the branches²⁶ against the stronghold and set fire to it.²⁷ All the people²⁸ of the Tower of Shechem died – about a thousand men and women.

9:50 Abimelech moved on²⁹ to Thebez; he besieged and captured it.³⁰ 9:51 There was a fortified³¹ tower³² in the center of the city, so all the men and women, as well as the city’s leaders, ran into it and locked the entrance. Then they went up to the roof of the tower. 9:52 Abimelech came and attacked the tower. When he approached the entrance of the tower to set it on fire, 9:53 a woman threw an upper millstone³³ down on his³⁴ head and shattered his skull. 9:54 He quickly called to the young man who carried his weapons,³⁵ “Draw your sword and kill me, so they will not say,³⁶ ‘A woman killed him.’” So the young man stabbed him and he died. 9:55 When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they went home.³⁷

9:56 God repaid Abimelech for the evil he did to his father by murdering his seventy half-brothers.³⁸ 9:57 God also repaid the men of Shechem for their evil deeds. The curse spoken by Jotham son of Jerub-Baal fell³⁹ on them.

¹ tn Or “despised.”

² tn Heb “So Gaal went out before the leaders of Shechem.”

³ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Gaal) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁴ tn The word “Shechemites” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for clarification.

⁵ tc Heb “stayed.” Some scholars revise the vowel pointing on this verb from that of the MT, resulting in the translation “and he returned to.” The Lucianic recension of the LXX understands the word in this way.

⁶ tn Heb “drove...out from dwelling in Shechem.”

⁷ tn Heb “the people”; the referent (the Shechemites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁸ tn Heb “And they told Abimelech.”

⁹ tn Heb “his people.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “And he saw and, look, the people were coming out of the city.”

¹¹ tn Heb “he arose against them and struck them.”

¹² tn Or possibly, “the unit that was with him.”

¹³ tn Heb “stood [at].”

¹⁴ tn Or “destroyed.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “sowed it with salt.”

^{sn} The spreading of salt over the city was probably a symbolic act designed to place the site under a curse, deprive it of fertility, and prevent any future habitation. The practice is referred to outside the Bible as well. For example, one of the curses in the Aramaic Sefire treaty states concerning Arpad: “May Hadad sow in them salt and weeds, and may it not be mentioned again!” See J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (BibOr), 15, 53. Deut 29:23, Jer 17:6, and Zeph 2:9 associate salt flats or salty regions with infertility and divine judgment.

¹⁶ sn Perhaps the Tower of Shechem was a nearby town, distinct from Shechem proper, or a tower within the city.

¹⁷ tn Apparently this rare word refers here to the most inaccessible area of the temple, perhaps the inner sanctuary or an underground chamber. It appears only here and in 1 Sam 13:6, where it is paired with “cisterns” and refers to subterranean or cave-like hiding places.

¹⁸ sn The name *El-Berith* means “God of the Covenant.” It is probably a reference to the Canaanite high god El.

¹⁹ tn Heb “and it was told to Abimelech.”

²⁰ tn Heb “were assembled.”

²¹ tn Heb “his people.”

²² tn Heb “Abimelech.” The proper name has been replaced with the pronoun (“he”) due to considerations of English style.

²³ tn The Hebrew text has the plural here.

²⁴ tn Heb “he lifted it and put [it].”

²⁵ tn Heb “What you have seen me do, quickly do like me.”

²⁶ tn The words “the branches” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁷ tn Heb “they kindled over them the stronghold with fire.”

²⁸ tn Or “men,” but the word seems to have a more general sense here, as the conclusion to the sentence suggests.

²⁹ tn Or “went.”

³⁰ tn Heb “he camped near Thebez and captured it.”

³¹ tn Or “strong.”

³² tn Or “fortress.” The same Hebrew term occurs once more in this verse and twice in v. 52.

³³ sn A hand mill consisted of an upper stone and larger lower stone. One would turn the upper stone with a handle to grind the grain, which was placed between the stones. An upper millstone, which was typically about two inches thick and a foot or so in diameter, probably weighed 25-30 pounds (11.4-13.6 kg). See G. F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC), 268; C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 288.

³⁴ tn Heb “Abimelech’s.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun “his” in the translation in keeping with conventions of English narrative style.

³⁵ tn The Hebrew text adds, “and said to him.” This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁶ tn The Hebrew text adds, “concerning me.” This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁷ tn Heb “each to his own place.”

³⁸ tn Heb “seventy brothers.”

³⁹ tn Heb “came.”

Stability Restored

10:1 After Abimelech's death,¹ Tola son of Puah, grandson² of Dodo, from the tribe of Issachar,³ rose up to deliver Israel. He lived in Shamir in the Ephraimite hill country. **10:2** He led⁴ Israel for twenty-three years, then died and was buried in Shamir.

10:3 Jair the Gileadite rose up after him; he led Israel for twenty-two years. **10:4** He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys and possessed thirty cities. To this day these towns are called Havvoth Jair⁵ – they are in the land of Gilead. **10:5** Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

The Lord's Patience Runs Short

10:6 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight.⁷ They worshiped⁸ the Baals and the Ash-toreths,⁹ as well as the gods of Syria, Sidon,¹⁰ Moab, the Ammonites, and the Philistines.¹¹ They abandoned the LORD and did not worship¹² him. **10:7** The LORD was furious with Israel¹³ and turned them over to¹⁴ the Philistines and Ammonites. **10:8** They ruthlessly oppressed¹⁵ the Israelites that eighteenth year¹⁶ – that is, all the Israelites living east of the Jordan in Amorite country in Gilead. **10:9** The Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight with Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim.¹⁷ Israel suffered greatly.¹⁸

¹ **tn** The word "death" has been supplied in the translation for clarification.

² **tn** *Heb* "son."

³ **tn** *Heb* "a man of Issachar."

⁴ **tn** Traditionally, "judged."

⁵ **sn** The name *Havvoth Jair* means "tent villages of Jair" in Hebrew.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "they call them Havvoth Jair to this day – which are in the land of Gilead."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "in the eyes of the LORD."

⁸ **tn** Or "served;" or "followed."

⁹ **sn** The *Ashtoreths* were local manifestations of the goddess Astarte.

¹⁰ **map** For location see Map1-A1; JP3-F3; JP4-F3.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines."

¹² **tn** Or "serve;" or "follow."

¹³ **tn** Or "the LORD's anger burned [or "ragged"] against Israel."

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "sold them into the hands of."

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "shattered and crushed." The repetition of similar sounding synonyms (רָצַץ [ratsats] and רָצַץ [ratsats]) is for emphasis; רָצַץ appears in the Polel, adding further emphasis to the affirmation.

¹⁶ **tn** The phrase שְׁמֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה (*shemoneh 'esreh shanah*) could be translated "eighteen years," but this would be difficult after the reference to "that year." It is possible that v. 8b is parenthetical, referring to an eighteen year long period of oppression east of the Jordan which culminated in hostilities against all Israel (including Judah, see v. 9) in the eighteenth year. It is simpler to translate the phrase as an ordinal number, though the context does not provide the point of reference. (See Gen 14:4-5 and R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 191-92.) In this case, the following statement specifies which "Israelites" are in view.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "the house of Ephraim."

¹⁸ **tn** Or "Israel experienced great distress." Perhaps here the verb has the nuance "hemmed in."

10:10 The Israelites cried out for help to the LORD: "We have sinned against you. We abandoned our God and worshiped¹⁹ the Baals."

10:11 The LORD said to the Israelites, "Did I not deliver you from Egypt, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, **10:12** the Sidonians, Amalek, and Midian²⁰ when they oppressed you?²¹ You cried out for help to me, and I delivered you from their power.²² **10:13** But since you abandoned me and worshiped²³ other gods, I will not deliver you again. **10:14** Go and cry for help to the gods you have chosen! Let them deliver you from trouble!"²⁴ **10:15** But the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned. You do to us as you see fit,²⁵ but deliver us today!"²⁶ **10:16** They threw away the foreign gods they owned²⁷ and worshiped²⁸ the LORD. Finally the LORD grew tired of seeing Israel suffer so much.²⁹

An Outcast Becomes a General

10:17 The Ammonites assembled³⁰ and camped in Gilead; the Israelites gathered together and camped in Mizpah. **10:18** The leaders³¹ of Gilead said to one another, "Who is willing to lead the charge³² against the Ammonites? He will become the leader of all who live in Gilead!"

11:1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a brave warrior. His mother was a prostitute, but Gilead was his father.³³ **11:2** Gilead's wife also gave³⁴ him sons. When his wife's sons grew up, they made Jephthah leave and said to him, "You are not going to inherit any of our father's wealth,³⁵ because you are another woman's

¹⁹ **tn** Or "served"; or "followed."

²⁰ **tc** The translation follows the LXX which reads "Midian"; the Hebrew text has "Maon."

²¹ **tn** The words "Did I not deliver you" are interpretive. The Hebrew text simply reads, "Is it not from Egypt...when they oppressed you?" Perhaps the incomplete sentence reflects the LORD's frustration.

²² **tn** *Heb* "hand."

²³ **tn** Or "served"; or "followed."

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* "in your time of trouble."

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* "according to all whatever is good in your eyes."

²⁶ **sn** *You do to us as you see fit, but deliver us today.* The request seems contradictory, but it can be explained in one of two ways. They may be asking for relief from their enemies and direct discipline from God's hand. Or they may mean, "In the future you can do whatever you like to us, but give us relief from what we're suffering right now."

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* "from their midst."

²⁸ **tn** Or "served"; or "followed."

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* "And his spirit grew short [i.e., impatient] with the suffering of Israel." The Hebrew noun נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*) also appears as the subject of the verb קָצַר (*qatsar*) in Num 21:4 (the Israelites grow impatient wandering in the wilderness), Judg 16:16 (Samson grows impatient with Delilah's constant nagging), and Zech 11:8 (Zechariah grows impatient with the three negligent "shepherds").

³⁰ **tn** Or "were summoned;" or "were mustered."

³¹ **tn** *Heb* "the people, the officers."

³² **tn** *Heb* "Who is the man who will begin fighting?"

³³ **tn** *Heb* "Now he was the son of a woman, a prostitute, and Gilead fathered Jephthah."

³⁴ **tn** *Heb* "bore."

³⁵ **tn** *Heb* "in the house of our father."

son.” 11:3 So Jephthah left¹ his half-brothers² and lived in the land of Tob. Lawless men joined Jephthah’s gang and traveled with him.³

11:4 It was some time after this when the Ammonites fought with Israel. 11:5 When the Ammonites attacked,⁴ the leaders⁵ of Gilead asked Jephthah to come back⁶ from the land of Tob. 11:6 They said,⁷ “Come, be our commander, so we can fight with the Ammonites.” 11:7 Jephthah said to the leaders of Gilead, “But you hated me and made me leave⁸ my father’s house. Why do you come to me now, when you are in trouble?” 11:8 The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “That may be true,⁹ but now we pledge to you our loyalty.¹⁰ Come with us and fight with the Ammonites. Then you will become the leader¹¹ of all who live in Gilead.”¹² 11:9 Jephthah said to the leaders of Gilead, “All right¹³ If you take me back to fight with the Ammonites and the LORD gives them to me,¹⁴ I will be your leader.”¹⁵ 11:10 The leaders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “The LORD will judge any grievance you have against us,¹⁶ if we do not do as you say.”¹⁷ 11:11 So Jephthah went with the leaders of Gilead. The people made him their leader and commander. Jephthah repeated the terms of the agreement¹⁸ before the LORD in Mizpah.

Jephthah Gives a History Lesson

11:12 Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king, saying, “Why have¹⁹ you come against me to attack my land?” 11:13 The Ammonite king said to Jephthah’s messengers, “Because Israel stole²⁰ my land when they²¹ came up from Egypt – from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and as far west as the Jordan.²² Now return it²³ peaceably!”

11:14 Jephthah sent messengers back to the Ammonite king 11:15 and said to him, “This is what Jephthah says, ‘Israel did not steal²⁴ the land of Moab and the land of the Ammonites. 11:16 When they left²⁵ Egypt, Israel traveled²⁶ through the desert as far as the Red Sea and then came to Kadesh. 11:17 Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, ‘Please allow us²⁷ to pass through your land.’” But the king of Edom rejected the request.²⁸ Israel sent the same request to the king of Moab, but he was unwilling to cooperate.²⁹ So Israel stayed at Kadesh. 11:18 Then Israel³⁰ went through the desert and bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab. They traveled east of the land of Moab and camped on the other side of the Arnon River,³¹ they did not go through Moabite territory (the Arnon was Moab’s border). 11:19 Israel sent messengers to King Sihon, the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon, and said to him, “Please allow us to pass through your land to our land.”³² 11:20 But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. He³³ assembled his

1 tn Or “fled from.”
 2 tn Heb “brothers.”
 3 tn Heb “Empty men joined themselves to Jephthah and went out with him.”
 4 tn Heb “When the Ammonites fought with Israel.”
 5 tn Or “elders.”
 6 tn Heb “went to take Jephthah.”
 7 tn Heb “to Jephthah.”
 8 tn Heb “Did you not hate me and make me leave?”
 9 tn Heb “therefore”; “even so.” For MT לַכֶּחֶן (*lakhen*, “therefore”) the LXX has an opposite reading, “not so,” which seems to be based on the Hebrew words לֹא כֶּחֶן (*lo’ khen*).
 10 tn Heb “we have returned to you.” For another example of שׁוּבָה (*shuv’ el*) in the sense of “give allegiance to,” see 1 Kgs 12:27b.

11 sn *Then you will become the leader.* The leaders of Gilead now use the word רֹאשׁ (*ro’sh*, “head, leader”), the same term that appeared in their original, general offer (see 10:18). In their initial offer to Jephthah they had simply invited him to be their קָצִין (*qatsin*, “commander”; v. 6). When he resists they must offer him a more attractive reward – rulership over the region. See R. G. Boling, *Judges* (AB), 198.
 12 tn Heb “leader of us and all who live in Gilead.”
 13 tn “All right” is supplied in the translation for clarification.
 14 tn Heb “places them before me.”
 15 tn Some translate the final statement as a question, “will I really be your leader?” An affirmative sentence is preferable. Jephthah is repeating the terms of the agreement in an official manner. In v. 10 the leaders legally agree to these terms.
 16 tn Heb “The LORD will be the one who hears between us.” For the idiom שָׁמַע בֵּין שְׁנַיִם (*shama’ bayin*, “to hear between”), see Deut 1:16.
 17 sn *The LORD will judge...if we do not do as you say.* The statement by the leaders of Gilead takes the form of a legally binding oath, which obligates them to the terms of the agreement.
 18 tn Heb “spoke all his words.” This probably refers to the “words” recorded in v. 9. Jephthah repeats the terms of the agreement at the LORD’s sanctuary, perhaps to ratify the contract or to emphasize the Gileadites’ obligation to keep their part of the bargain. Another option is to translate, “Jephthah conducted business before the LORD in Mizpah.” In this case, the statement is a general reference to the way Jephthah

ruled. He recognized the LORD’s authority and made his decisions before the LORD.
 19 tn Heb “What to me and to you that...?”
 20 tn Or “took”; or “seized.”
 21 tn Heb “he” (a collective singular).
 22 tn Heb “from the Arnon to the Jabbok and to the Jordan.” The word “River” has been supplied in the translation with “Arnon” and “Jabbok,” because these are less familiar to modern readers than the Jordan.
 23 tc The translation assumes a singular suffix (“[return] it”); the Hebrew text has a plural suffix (“[return] them”), which, if retained, might refer to the cities of the land.
 24 tn Or “take”; or “seize.”
 25 tn Heb “For when they went up from.”
 26 tn Or “went.”
 27 tn Heb “me.” (Collective Israel is the speaker.)
 28 tn Heb “did not listen.”
 29 tn Heb “Also to the king of Moab he sent, but he was unwilling.”
 30 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Israel; the pronoun in the Hebrew text represents a collective singular) has been specified in the translation for clarity.
 31 tn The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.
 32 tn Heb “to my place.”
 33 tn Heb “Sihon.” The proper name (“Sihon”) has been replaced in the translation by the pronoun (“he”) because of English style; a repetition of the proper name here would be redundant in English.

whole army,¹ camped in Jahaz, and fought with Israel. **11:21** The LORD God of Israel handed Sihon and his whole army over to Israel and they defeated them. Israel took² all the land of the Amorites who lived in that land. **11:22** They took all the Amorite territory from the Arnon River on the south to the Jabbok River on the north, from the desert in the east to the Jordan in the west.³ **11:23** Since⁴ the LORD God of Israel has driven out⁵ the Amorites before his people Israel, do you think you can just take it from them?⁶ **11:24** You have the right to take what Chemosh your god gives you, but we will take the land of all whom the LORD our God has driven out before us.⁷ **11:25** Are you really better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he dare to quarrel with Israel? Did he dare to fight with them?⁸ **11:26** Israel has been living in Heshbon and its nearby towns, in Aroer and its nearby towns, and in all the cities along the Arnon for three hundred years! Why did you not reclaim them during that time? **11:27** I have not done you wrong,⁹ but you are doing wrong¹⁰ by attacking me. May the LORD, the Judge, judge this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites!¹¹ **11:28** But the Ammonite king disregarded¹² the message sent by Jephthah.¹²

¹ **tn** Heb “all his people” (also in the following verse).

² **tn** That is, took as its own possession.

³ **tn** Heb “from the Arnon to the Jabbok, and from the desert to the Jordan.” The word “River” has been supplied in the translation with “Arnon” and “Jabbok,” because these are less familiar to modern readers than the Jordan.

⁴ **tn** Heb “Now.”

⁵ **tn** Or “dispossessed.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “will you dispossess him [i.e., Israel; or possibly “it,” i.e., the territory]?” There is no interrogative marker in the Hebrew text.

⁷ **tn** Heb “Is it not so that what Chemosh your god causes you to possess, you possess, and all whom the LORD our God dispossesses before us we will possess?” Jephthah speaks of Chemosh as if he is on a par with the LORD God of Israel. This does not necessarily mean that Jephthah is polytheistic or that he recognizes the LORD as only a local deity. He may simply be assuming the Ammonite king’s perspective for the sake of argument. Other texts, as well as the extrabiblical Mesha inscription, associate Chemosh with Moab, while Milcom is identified as the god of the Ammonites. Why then does Jephthah refer to Chemosh as the Ammonite god? Ammon had likely conquered Moab and the Ammonite king probably regarded himself as heir of all territory formerly held by Moab. Originally Moab had owned the disputed territory (cf. Num 21:26-29), meaning that Chemosh was regarded as the god of the region (see R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 203-4). Jephthah argues that Chemosh had long ago relinquished claim to the area (by allowing Sihon to conquer it), while the LORD had long ago established jurisdiction over it (by taking it from Sihon and giving it to Israel). Both sides should abide by the decisions of the gods which had stood firm for three hundred years.

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew grammatical constructions of all three rhetorical questions indicate emphasis, which “really” and “dare to” are intended to express in the translation.

⁹ **tn** Heb “sinned against you.”

¹⁰ **tn** Or “evil.”

¹¹ **tn** Heb “did not listen to.”

¹² **tn** Heb “Jephthah’s words which he sent to him.”

A Foolish Vow Spells Death for a Daughter

11:29 The LORD’s spirit empowered¹³ Jephthah. He passed through Gilead and Manasseh and went¹⁴ to Mizpah in Gilead. From there he approached the Ammonites.¹⁵ **11:30** Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, saying, “If you really do hand the Ammonites over to me, **11:31** then whoever is the first to come through¹⁶ the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from fighting the Ammonites – he¹⁷ will belong to the LORD and¹⁸ I will offer him up as a burnt sacrifice.” **11:32** Jephthah approached¹⁹ the Ammonites to fight with them, and the LORD handed them over to him. **11:33** He defeated them from Aroer all the way to Minnith – twenty cities in all, even as far as Abel Kera-mim! He wiped them out!²⁰ The Israelites humiliated the Ammonites.²¹

11:34 When Jephthah came home to Mizpah, there was his daughter hurrying out²² to meet him, dancing to the rhythm of tambourines.²³ She was his only child; except for her he had no son or daughter. **11:35** When he saw her, he ripped his clothes and said, “Oh no! My daugh-

¹³ **tn** Heb “was on.”

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “passed through.”

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “From Mizpah in Gilead he passed through [to] the Ammonites.”

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “the one coming out, who comes out from.” The text uses a masculine singular participle with prefixed article, followed by a relative pronoun and third masculine singular verb. The substantival masculine singular participle הַיֹּצֵא (hayyotse’, “the one coming out”) is used elsewhere of inanimate objects (such as a desert [Num 21:13] or a word [Num 32:24]) or persons (Jer 5:6; 21:9; 38:2). In each case context must determine the referent. Jephthah may have envisioned an animal meeting him, since the construction of Iron Age houses would allow for an animal coming through the doors of a house (see R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 208). But the fact that he actually does offer up his daughter indicates the language of the vow is fluid enough to encompass human beings, including women. He probably intended such an offering from the very beginning, but he obviously did not expect his daughter to meet him first.

¹⁷ **tn** The language is fluid enough to include women and perhaps even animals, but the translation uses the masculine pronoun because the Hebrew form is grammatically masculine.

¹⁸ **tn** Some translate “or,” suggesting that Jephthah makes a distinction between humans and animals. According to this view, if a human comes through the door, then Jephthah will commit him/her to the LORD’s service, but if an animal comes through the doors, he will offer it up as a sacrifice. However, it is far more likely that the Hebrew construction (vav [v] + perfect) specifies how the subject will become the LORD’s, that is, by being offered up as a sacrifice. For similar constructions, where the apodosis of a conditional sentence has at least two perfects (each with vav) in sequence, see Gen 34:15-16; Exod 18:16.

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “passed over to.”

²⁰ **tn** Heb “with a very great slaughter.”

²¹ **tn** Heb “The Ammonites were humbled before the Israelites.”

²² **tn** Heb “Look! His daughter was coming out.”

²³ **tn** Heb “with tambourines and dancing.”

ter! You have completely ruined me!¹ You have brought me disaster!² I made an oath to the LORD, and I cannot break it.”³ **11:36** She said to him, “My father, since⁴ you made an oath to the LORD, do to me as you promised.⁵ After all, the LORD vindicated you before⁶ your enemies, the Ammonites.” **11:37** She then said to her father, “Please grant me this one wish.⁷ For two months allow me to walk through the hills with my friends and mourn my virginity.”⁸ **11:38** He said, “You may go.” He permitted her to leave⁹ for two months. She went with her friends and mourned her virginity as she walked through the hills.¹⁰ **11:39** After two months she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed. She died a virgin.¹¹ Her tragic death gave rise to a custom in Israel.¹² **11:40** Every year¹³ Israelite women commemorate¹⁴ the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days.¹⁵

Civil Strife Mars the Victory

12:1 The Ephraimites assembled¹⁶ and crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, “Why did you go and fight¹⁷ with the Ammonites without asking¹⁸ us to go with you? We will burn your house down right over you!”¹⁹

12:2 Jephthah said to them, “My people and I were entangled in controversy with the Ammonites.²⁰ I asked for your help, but you did not deliver me from their power.²¹ **12:3** When I saw that you were not going to help,²² I risked my life²³ and advanced against²⁴ the Ammonites, and the LORD handed them over to me. Why have you come up²⁵ to fight with me today?” **12:4** Jephthah assembled all the men of Gilead and they fought with Ephraim. The men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because the Ephraimites insulted them, saying,²⁶ “You Gileadites are refugees in Ephraim, living within Ephraim’s and Manasseh’s territory.”²⁷ **12:5** The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan River²⁸ opposite Ephraim.²⁹ Whenever an Ephraimite fugitive³⁰ said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead asked³¹ him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” **12:6** then they said to him, “Say ‘Shibboleth!’”³² If he said, “Sibboleth” (and could not pronounce the word³³ correctly), they grabbed him and executed him right there at the fords of the Jordan. On that day forty-two thousand Ephraimites fell dead. **12:7** Jephthah

¹ **tn** *Heb* “you have brought me very low,” or “you have knocked me to my knees.” The infinitive absolute precedes the verb for emphasis.

² **tn** *Heb* “You are among [or “like”] those who trouble me.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “I opened my mouth to the LORD and I am not able to return.”

⁴ **tn** The conjunction “since” is supplied in the translation for clarification.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “you opened your mouth to the LORD, do to me according to [what] went out from your mouth.”

⁶ **tn** Or “has given you vengeance against.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “Let this thing be done for me.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “Leave me alone for two months so I can go and go down on the hills and weep over my virginity – I and my friends.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “he sent her.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “on the hills.” The words “as she walked” are supplied.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “She had never known a man.” Some understand this to mean that her father committed her to a life of celibacy, but the disjunctive clause (note the *vav* + subject + verb pattern) more likely describes her condition at the time the vow was fulfilled. (See G. F. Moore, *Judges* [ICC], 302-3; C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 324.) She died a virgin and never experienced the joys of marriage and motherhood.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “There was a custom in Israel.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “From days to days,” a Hebrew idiom for “annually.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “go to commemorate.” The rare Hebrew verb *תָּנָה* (*tanah*, “to tell; to repeat; to recount”) occurs only here and in 5:11.

¹⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text adds, “in the year.” This is redundant (note “every year” at the beginning of the verse) and has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “the men of Ephraim were summoned [or “were mustered”].”

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “cross over to fight.”

¹⁸ **tn** Or “calling”; or “summoning.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “Your house we will burn over you with fire.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* A man of great strife I was and my people and the Ammonites.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “hand.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “you were no deliverer.” Codex Alexandrinus (A) of the LXX has “no one was helping.”

²³ **tn** *Heb* “I put my life in my hand.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “crossed over to.”

²⁵ **tn** The Hebrew adds “against me” here. This is redundant in English and has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “because they said.”

²⁷ **tc** *Heb* “Refugees of Ephraim are you, O Gilead, in the midst of Ephraim and in the midst of Manasseh.” The LXX omits the entire second half of the verse (beginning with “because”). The words *כִּי אָמְרוּ פְּלִיטֵי אֶפְרַיִם* (*ki ‘amru p’litye ‘efrayim*, “because they said, ‘Refugees of Ephraim’”) may have been accidentally copied from the next verse (cf. *כִּי יִאָמְרוּ פְּלִיטֵי אֶפְרַיִם*, *ki yo’m’ru p’litye ‘efrayim*) and the following words (“you, O Gilead..Manasseh”) then added in an attempt to make sense of the verse. See G. F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC), 307-8, and C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 327. If the Hebrew text is retained, then the Ephraimites appear to be insulting the Gileadites by describing them as refugees who are squatting on Ephraim’s and Manasseh’s land. The present translation assumes that “Ephraim” is a genitive of location after “refugees.”

²⁸ **tn** The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁹ **tn** Or “against Ephraim,” that is, so as to prevent Ephraim from crossing.

³⁰ **tn** The Hebrew text has a plural form here.

³¹ **tn** *Heb* “say to.”

³² **sn** The inability of the Ephraimites to pronounce the word *shibboleth* the way the Gileadites did served as an identifying test. It illustrates that during this period there were differences in pronunciation between the tribes. The Hebrew word *shibboleth* itself means “stream” or “flood,” and was apparently chosen simply as a test case without regard to its meaning.

³³ **tn** *Heb* “and could not prepare to speak.” The precise meaning of *יָכִין* (*yakhin*) is unclear. Some understand it to mean “was not careful [to say it correctly]”; others emend it to *יָכֹל* (*yakhol*, “was not able [to say it correctly]”) or *יָבִין* (*yavin*, “did not understand [that he should say it correctly]”), which is read by a few Hebrew mss.

led⁴ Israel for six years; then he² died and was buried in his city in Gilead.³

Order Restored

12:8 After him Ibzan of Bethlehem⁴ led⁵ Israel. **12:9** He had thirty sons. He arranged for thirty of his daughters to be married outside his extended family,⁶ and he arranged for thirty young women to be brought from outside as wives for his sons.⁷ Ibzan⁸ led⁹ Israel for seven years; **12:10** then he¹⁰ died and was buried in Bethlehem.

12:11 After him Elon the Zebulunite led¹¹ Israel for ten years.¹² **12:12** Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

12:13 After him Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite led¹³ Israel. **12:14** He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel for eight years. **12:15** Then Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Samson's Birth

13:1 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight,¹⁴ so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines for forty years.

13:2 There was a man named Manoah from Zorah, from the Danite tribe. His wife was infertile and childless.¹⁵ **13:3** The LORD's angelic¹⁶ messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, "You¹⁷ are infertile and childless,¹⁸ but you will conceive and have a son. **13:4** Now be careful! Do not drink wine or beer, and do not eat

any food that will make you ritually unclean.¹⁹ **13:5** Look, you will conceive and have a son.²⁰ You must never cut his hair,²¹ for the child will be dedicated to God²² from birth. He will begin to deliver Israel from the power²³ of the Philistines."

13:6 The woman went and said to her husband, "A man sent from God²⁴ came to me! He looked like God's angelic messenger – he was very awesome.²⁵ I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name. **13:7** He said to me, 'Look, you will conceive and have a son.²⁶ So now, do not drink wine or beer and do not eat any food that will make you ritually unclean.²⁷ For the child will be dedicated²⁸ to God from birth till the day he dies.'"

13:8 Manoah prayed to the LORD,²⁹ "Please, Lord, allow the man sent from God³⁰ to visit³¹ us again, so he can teach³² us how we should raise³³ the child who will be born." **13:9** God answered Manoah's prayer.³⁴ God's angelic messenger visited³⁵ the woman again while she was sitting in the field. But her husband Manoah was not with her. **13:10** The woman ran at once and told her husband,³⁶ "Come quickly,³⁷ the man who visit-

¹⁹ tn Heb "eat anything unclean." Certain foods were regarded as ritually "unclean" (see Lev 11). Eating such food made one ritually "contaminated."

²⁰ tn Another option is to translate, "you are already pregnant and will have a son." The earlier reference to her being infertile (v. 3) suggests that her conception is still future, but it is possible that the earlier statement only reflects her perspective (as far as she is concerned, she is infertile). According to this interpretation, in v. 5 the angel reveals the truth to her – actually she has recently conceived and is now pregnant (see the translation in R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 217). Usage favors this interpretation. The predicate adjective נָרָה (*harah*, "[be/become] pregnant") elsewhere has a past (1 Sam 4:19) or present (Gen 16:11; 38:25; 2 Sam 11:5) translation value. (The usage in Isa 7:14 is debated, but a present translation is definitely possible there.) A final, but less likely possibility, is that she miraculously conceived during the angel's speech, sometime between his statements recorded in vv. 3 and 5.

²¹ tn Heb "a razor should not go up on his head."

²² tn Or "set apart to God." Traditionally the Hebrew term נָזִיר (*nazir*) has been translated "Nazirite." The word is derived from the verb נָזַר (*nazar*, "to dedicate; to consecrate; to set apart").

²³ tn Heb "hand."

²⁴ tn Heb "The man of God."

²⁵ tn Heb "His appearance was like the appearance of the messenger of God, very awesome."

²⁶ tn See the note on the word "son" in 13:5, where this same statement occurs.

²⁷ tn Heb "eat anything unclean." Certain foods were regarded as ritually "unclean" (see Lev 11). Eating such food made one ritually "contaminated."

²⁸ tn Traditionally "a Nazirite."

²⁹ tn The Hebrew text adds "and said." This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁰ tn Heb "the man of God."

³¹ tn Heb "come to."

³² tc The LXX has "enlighten," understanding the Hebrew to read וְיָאֲרִינֵנוּ (*v'i'irenu*, "to give light") rather than the reading of the MT, וְיִוְרֵנֵנוּ (*v'yorenu*, "to teach").

³³ tn Heb "what we should do for."

³⁴ tn Heb "God listened to the voice of Manoah."

³⁵ tn Heb "came to."

³⁶ tn Heb "and said to him." This phrase has not been translated for stylistic reasons.

³⁷ tn Heb "Look."

¹ tn Traditionally, "judged."

² tn Heb "Jephthah the Gileadite." The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun ("he") in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ tc The Hebrew text has "in the cities of Gilead." The present translation has support from some ancient Greek textual witnesses.

⁴ map For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

⁵ tn Traditionally, "judged."

⁶ tn Heb "thirty daughters he sent off outside." Another option is to translate, "He arranged for his thirty daughters..." It is not clear if he had more than the "thirty daughters" mentioned in the text.

⁷ tn Heb "and thirty daughters he brought for his sons from the outside."

⁸ tn Heb "He"; the referent (Ibzan) has been specified in the translation for clarity and for English stylistic reasons.

⁹ tn Traditionally, "judged."

¹⁰ tn Heb "Ibzan." The pronoun "he" is used in the translation in keeping with English style, which tends to use a proper name first in a sentence followed by a pronoun rather than vice versa.

¹¹ tn Traditionally, "judged."

¹² tn Heb "...led Israel. He led Israel for ten years."

¹³ tn Traditionally, "judged."

¹⁴ tn Heb "in the eyes of."

¹⁵ tn Heb "and had not given birth."

¹⁶ tn The adjective "angelic" is interpretive (also in vv. 6, 9).

¹⁷ tn Heb "Look, you."

¹⁸ tn Heb "and have not given birth."

ed¹ me the other day has appeared to me!” **13:11** So Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he met² the man, he said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to my wife?”³ He said, “Yes.”⁴ **13:12** Manoah said, “Now, when your announcement comes true,⁵ how should the child be raised and what should he do?”⁶ **13:13** The LORD’s messenger told⁷ Manoah, “Your wife should pay attention to everything I told her.⁸ **13:14** She should not drink⁹ anything that the grapevine produces. She must not drink wine or beer, and she must not eat any food that will make her ritually unclean.¹⁰ She should obey everything I commanded her to do.” **13:15** Manoah said to the LORD’s messenger, “Please stay here awhile,¹¹ so we can prepare a young goat for you to eat.”¹² **13:16** The LORD’s messenger said to Manoah, “If I stay,¹³ I will not eat your food. But if you want to make a burnt sacrifice to the LORD, you should offer it.” (He said this because Manoah did not know that he was the LORD’s messenger.)¹⁴ **13:17** Manoah said to the LORD’s messenger, “Tell us your name, so we can honor you when your announcement comes true.”¹⁵ **13:18** The LORD’s messenger said to him, “You should not ask me my name, be-

cause you cannot comprehend it.”¹⁶ **13:19** Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock to the LORD. The LORD’s messenger did an amazing thing as Manoah and his wife watched.¹⁷ **13:20** As the flame went up from the altar toward the sky, the LORD’s messenger went up in it¹⁸ while Manoah and his wife watched. They fell facedown¹⁹ to the ground.

13:21 The LORD’s messenger did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. After all this happened Manoah realized that the visitor had been the LORD’s messenger.²⁰ **13:22** Manoah said to his wife, “We will certainly die, because we have seen a supernatural being!”²¹ **13:23** But his wife said to him, “If the LORD wanted to kill us, he would not have accepted the burnt offering and the grain offering from us.²² He would not have shown us all these things, or have spoken to us like this just now.”

13:24 Manoah’s wife²³ gave birth to a son and named him Samson.²⁴ The child grew and the LORD empowered²⁵ him. **13:25** The LORD’s spirit began to control him²⁶ in Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtao.

Samson’s Unconsummated Marriage

14:1 Samson went down to Timnah, where a Philistine girl caught his eye.²⁷ **14:2** When he got

1 tn Heb “came to.”

2 tn Heb “came to.”

3 tn Heb “the woman.”

4 tn Heb “[I] [am].”

5 tn Heb “Now, [when] your word comes [to pass].”

6 tn Heb “what will be the child’s rule [i.e., way of life] and his work?”

7 tn Or “said to.”

8 tn Heb “To everything I said to the woman she should pay attention.” The Hebrew word order emphasizes “to everything,” probably because Manoah’s wife did not tell her husband everything the angel had said to her (cf. vv. 3-5 with v. 7). If she had, Manoah probably would not have been so confused about the child’s mission.

9 tn Heb “eat.”

10 tn Heb “eat anything unclean.” Certain foods were regarded as ritually “unclean” (see Lev 11). Eating such food made one ritually “contaminated.”

11 tn Heb “Please allow us to detain you.”

12 tn Heb “so we can prepare before you a young goat of the goats.”

13 tn Heb “If you detain me.”

14 tn The words “he said this” are supplied in the translation for clarification. Manoah should have known from these words that the messenger represented the LORD. In the preceding narrative the narrator has informed the reader that the visitor is the LORD’s messenger, but Manoah and his wife did not perceive this. In vv. 5 and 7 the angel refers to “God” (אֱלֹהִים, *’elohim*), not the LORD (יְהוָה, *’yhwh*). Manoah’s wife calls the visitor “a man sent from God” and “God’s messenger” (v. 6), while Manoah prays to the “Lord” (אֲדֹנָי, *’adonay*) and calls the visitor “a man sent from God” (v. 8).

15 tn Heb “Who your name? For [when] your word comes [to pass], we will honor you.” Manoah apparently gets tongue-tied and uses the wrong pronoun (“who” instead of “what”). He starts to say, “Who are you?” But then he switches to “your name” as if he began the sentence with “what.” See R. G. Boling, *Judges* (AB), 222.

16 tn Heb “Why do you ask for my name, for it is incomprehensible?” The Hebrew adjective פִּלְאִי (*pile’iy*, “wonderful, incomprehensible”) refers to what is in a category of its own and is beyond full human understanding. Note the use of this word in Ps 139:6, where God’s knowledge is described as incomprehensible and unattainable.

17 tc Heb “Doing an extraordinary deed while Manoah and his wife were watching.” The subject of the participle is missing. The translation assumes that the phrase “the LORD’s messenger” was lost by homoioteleuton. If the text originally read לַיהוָה מַלְאָךְ יָהוּדָה (*layhavah mal’akh y’hvah*), the scribe’s eye could have jumped from the first יהוה to the second, accidentally omitting two of the three words. Later the conjunction ו (*shurek*) would have been added to the following מַלְאָךְ (*mafl’i*) for syntactical reasons. Another possibility is that a pronominal subject (הוּא, *hu’*) has been lost in the MT due to haplography.

18 tn Heb “in the flame from the altar.”

19 tn Heb “on their faces.”

20 tn Heb “Then Manoah knew that he was the LORD’s messenger.”

21 tn Or “seen God.” Some take the Hebrew term אֱלֹהִים (*’elohim*) as the divine name (“God”) here, but this seems unlikely since v. 21 informs us that Manoah realized this was the LORD’s messenger, not God himself. Of course, he may be exaggerating for the sake of emphasis. Another option, the one followed in the translation, understands Manoah to be referring to a lesser deity. The term אֱלֹהִים (*’elohim*) is sometimes used of an individual deity other than the LORD (see BDB 43 s.v. 2.a). One cannot assume that Manoah was a theologically sophisticated monotheist.

22 tn Heb “our hand.”

23 tn Heb “the woman.” For clarity this has been specified in the translation as “Manoah’s wife.”

24 tn The name appears to mean “sun-like” or “solar.”

25 tn Traditionally, “blessed.”

26 tn Or “move him to action”; or “stir him.”

27 tn Heb “and he saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines.”

home,¹ he told his father and mother, “A Philistine girl in Timnah has caught my eye.² Now get her for my wife.” **14:3** But his father and mother said to him, “Certainly you can find a wife among your relatives or among all our³ people! You should not have to go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines.”⁴ But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me,⁵ because she is the right one for me.”⁶ **14:4** Now his father and mother did not realize this was the LORD’s doing,⁷ because he was looking for an opportunity to stir up trouble with the Philistines⁸ (for at that time the Philistines were ruling Israel).

14:5 Samson went down to Timnah. When he approached⁹ the vineyards of Timnah, he saw a roaring young lion attacking him.¹⁰ **14:6** The LORD’s spirit empowered¹¹ him and he tore the lion¹² in two with his bare hands¹³ as easily as one would tear a young goat. But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

14:7 Samson continued on down to Timnah¹⁴ and spoke to the girl. In his opinion, she was just the right one.¹⁵ **14:8** Some time later, when he went back to marry¹⁶ her, he turned aside to see the lion’s remains. He saw¹⁷ a swarm of bees in the lion’s carcass, as well as some honey.

14:9 He scooped it up with his hands and ate it as he walked along. When he returned¹⁸ to his father and mother, he offered them some and they ate it. But he did not tell them he had scooped the honey out of the lion’s carcass.¹⁹

14:10 Then Samson’s father accompanied him to Timnah for the marriage.²⁰ Samson hosted a party²¹ there, for this was customary for bridegrooms²² to do. **14:11** When the Philistines saw he had no attendants, they gave him thirty groomsmen who kept him company.²³ **14:12** Samson said to them, “I will give you a riddle. If you really can solve it during the seven days the party lasts,²⁴ I will give you thirty linen robes and thirty sets²⁵ of clothes. **14:13** But if you cannot solve it,²⁶ you will give me thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes.” They said to him, “Let us hear your riddle.”²⁷ **14:14** He said to them,

“Out of the one who eats came something to eat;
out of the strong one came something sweet.”

They could not solve the riddle for three days.

14:15 On the fourth²⁸ day they said to Samson’s bride, “Trick your husband into giving the solution to the riddle.²⁹ If you refuse,³⁰ we will burn up³¹ you and your father’s family.³² Did

¹ tn Heb “and he went up.”

² tn Heb “I have seen a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines.”

³ tn Heb “my.” The singular may seem strange, since the introduction to the quotation attributes the words to his father and mother. But Samson’s father apparently speaks for both himself and his wife. However, the Lucianic recension of the LXX and the Syriac Peshitta have a second person pronoun here (“you”), and this may represent the original reading.

⁴ tn Heb “Is there not among the daughters of your brothers or among all my people a woman that you have to go to get a wife among the uncircumcised Philistines?”

⁵ tn “Her” is first in the Hebrew word order for emphasis. Samson wanted this Philistine girl, no one else. See C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 357.

⁶ tn Heb “because she is right in my eyes.”

⁷ tn Heb “this was from the LORD.”

⁸ tn Heb “for an opportunity he was seeking from the Philistines.”

⁹ tc The MT reads, “Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah. When they approached....” Verse 6b states that Samson did not tell his parents about his encounter with the lion (vv. 5b-6a), but v. 5a gives the impression they would have seen the entire episode. One could assume that Samson separated from his parents prior to the lion’s attack, but the Hebrew text does not indicate this. It seems more likely that the words “with his father and his mother” were accidentally copied into the text, perhaps under the influence of v. 4a, where the same phrase appears. An original singular verb (“he approached”) may have been changed to the plural form (“they approached”) after the words “his father and his mother” were accidentally added to the text.

¹⁰ tn Heb “and look, a young lion of the lions was roaring to meet him.”

¹¹ tn Heb “rushed on.”

¹² tn Heb “him” or “it”; the referent (the lion) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ tn Heb “and there was nothing in his hand.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “He went down.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “She was the right one in the eyes of Samson.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “get.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “and look, a swarm of bees....”

¹⁸ tn Heb “went.” Samson apparently went home to his parents before going to Timnah for the marriage. Seeing and tasting the honey appears to encourage Manoah to go with his son to Timnah. Perhaps both Samson and his father viewed the honey as a good omen of future blessing. Possibly Samson considered it a symbol of sexual pleasure or an aphrodisiac. Note the use of honey imagery in Song 4:11 and 5:1.

¹⁹ sn Touching the carcass of a dead animal undoubtedly violated Samson’s Nazirite status. See Num 6:6.

²⁰ tn Heb “And his father went down to the woman.”

²¹ tn Or “[wedding] feast.”

²² tn Heb “the young men.”

²³ tn Heb “When they saw him, they gave him thirty companions and they were with him.” Instead of בְּרֵאִיתָם (*kir’otam*, “when they saw”) some ancient witnesses (e.g., some MSS of the LXX) assume the reading בְּרֵאִיתָם (*bey’ir’otam*, “because they feared”).

²⁴ tn Heb “If you really can tell it to me [during] the seven days of the feast and you find [its answer].”

²⁵ tn Heb “changes.”

²⁶ tn Heb “you are unable to tell me.”

²⁷ tn Heb “Give your riddle so we can hear it.”

²⁸ tc The MT reads “seventh.” In Hebrew there is a difference of only one letter between the words רְבִיעִי (*rēvī’i*, “fourth”) and שְׁבִיעִי (*shēvī’i*, “seventh”). Some ancient textual witnesses (e.g., LXX and the Syriac Peshitta) read “fourth,” here, which certainly harmonizes better with the preceding verse (cf. “for three days”) and with v. 17. Another option is to change רְבִיעִי (*rēvī’i*, “three”) at the end of v. 14 to שֵׁשֶׁת (*sheshet*, “six”), but the resulting scenario does not account as well for v. 17, which implies the bride had been hounding Samson for more than one day.

²⁹ tn Heb “Entice your husband so that he might tell us the riddle.”

³⁰ tn Heb “lest.”

³¹ tn The Hebrew text expands the statement: “burn up with fire.” The words “with fire” are redundant in English and have been omitted from the translation for stylistic reasons.

³² tn Heb “house.”

you invite us here¹ to make us poor?”² **14:16** So Samson’s bride cried on his shoulder³ and said, “You must⁴ hate me; you do not love me! You told the young men⁵ a riddle, but you have not told me the solution.” He said to her, “Look, I have not even told my father or mother. Do you really expect me to tell you?”⁶ **14:17** She cried on his shoulder⁷ until the party was almost over.⁸ Finally, on the seventh day, he told her because she had nagged him so much.⁹ Then she told the young men the solution to the riddle.¹⁰ **14:18** On the seventh day, before the sun set, the men of the city said to him,

“What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?”

He said to them,

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,¹¹
you would not have solved my riddle!”

14:19 The LORD’s spirit empowered him. He went down to Ashkelon and murdered thirty men. He took their clothes¹² and gave them¹³ to the men who had solved the riddle. He was furious as he went back home.¹⁴ **14:20** Samson’s bride was then given to his best man.¹⁵

Samson Versus the Philistines

15:1 Sometime later, during the wheat harvest,¹⁶ Samson took a young goat as a gift and went to visit his bride.¹⁷ He said to her father,¹⁸ “I want to have sex with my bride in her bedroom!”¹⁹ But her father would not let him enter.

15:2 Her father said, “I really thought²⁰ you absolutely despised²¹ her, so I gave her to your best man. Her younger sister is more attractive than she is. Take her instead!”²² **15:3** Samson said to them,²³ “This time I am justified in doing the Philistines harm!”²⁴ **15:4** Samson went and captured three hundred jackals²⁵ and got some torches. He tied the jackals in pairs by their tails and then tied a torch to each pair.²⁶ **15:5** He lit the torches²⁷ and set the jackals loose in the Philistines’ standing grain. He burned up the grain heaps and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves. **15:6** The Philistines asked,²⁸ “Who did this?” They were told,²⁹ “Samson, the Timnite’s son-in-law, because the Timnite³⁰ took Samson’s³¹ bride and gave her to his best man.” So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father.³² **15:7** Samson said to them, “Because you did this,³³ I will get revenge against you before I quit fighting.”³⁴ **15:8** He struck them down and defeated them.³⁵ Then he went down and lived for a time in the cave in the cliff of Etam.

15:9 The Philistines went up and invaded³⁶ Judah. They arrayed themselves for battle³⁷ in Lehi. **15:10** The men of Judah said, “Why are

¹ **tc** The translation assumes the Hebrew form הָלַם (*halom*, “here,” attested in five Hebrew mss and supported by the Targum), instead of the inexplicable הָלָה (*halo*), a negative particle with interrogative particle prefixed to it.

² **tn** For discussion of this difficult form, see C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 364.

³ **tn** Heb “on him.”

⁴ **tn** Heb “only”; or “simply.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “the sons of my people.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “Should I tell you?”

⁷ **tn** Heb “on him.”

⁸ **tn** Heb “the seven days [during] which they held the party.” This does not mean she cried for the entire seven days; v. 15 indicates otherwise. She cried for the remainder of the seven day period, beginning on the fourth day.

⁹ **tn** Heb “because she forced him.”

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “she told the riddle to the sons of her people.”

¹¹ **sn** *Plowed with my heifer*. This statement emphasizes that the Philistines had utilized a source of information which should have been off-limits to them. Heifers were used in plowing (Hos 10:11), but one typically used one’s own farm animals, not another man’s.

¹² **tn** Heb “equipment”; or “gear.”

¹³ **tn** Heb “changes [of clothes].”

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “he went up to his father’s house.”

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “to his companion who had been his attendant.”

¹⁶ **sn** The wheat harvest took place during the month of May. See O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 37, 88.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “Samson visited his wife with a young goat.”

¹⁸ **tn** The words “to her father” are supplied in the translation (see the end of the verse).

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “I will go to my wife in the bedroom.” The Hebrew idiom בָּיָהּ (bo’el, “to go to”) often has sexual connotations. The cohortative form used by Samson can be translated as indicating resolve (“I want to go”) or request (“let me go”).

²⁰ **tn** Heb “saying, I said.” The first person form of אָמַר (*amar*, “to say”) sometimes indicates self-reflection. The girl’s father uses the infinitive absolute for emphasis.

²¹ **tn** Heb “hating, you hated.” Once again the girl’s father uses the infinitive absolute for emphasis.

²² **tn** Heb “Is her younger sister not better than her? Let her [i.e., the younger sister] be yours instead of her [i.e., Samson’s ‘bride’].”

²³ **tc** Codex Alexandrinus (A) of the (original) LXX has the singular “to him.”

²⁴ **tn** Heb “I am innocent this time from the Philistines when I do with them harm.”

²⁵ **tn** Traditionally, “foxes.”

²⁶ **tn** Heb “He turned tail to tail and placed one torch between the two tails in the middle.”

²⁷ **tn** Heb “He set fire to the torches.”

²⁸ **tn** Or “said.”

²⁹ **tn** Heb “and they said.” The subject of the plural verb is indefinite.

³⁰ **tn** Heb “he”; the referent (the Timnite) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³¹ **tn** Heb “his”; the referent (Samson) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³² **tn** The Hebrew text expands the statement with the additional phrase “burned with fire.” The words “with fire” are redundant in English and have been omitted from the translation for stylistic reasons. Some textual witnesses read “burned...her father’s house,” perhaps under the influence of 14:15. On the other hand, the shorter text may have lost this phrase due to haplography.

³³ **tn** The Niphal of נָקַם (*naqam*, “to avenge, to take vengeance”) followed by the preposition בְּ (*bet*) has the force “to get revenge against.” See 1 Sam 18:25; Jer 50:15; Ezek 25:12.

³⁴ **tn** Heb “and afterward I will stop.”

³⁵ **tn** Heb “He struck them, calf on thigh, [with] a great slaughter.” The precise meaning of the phrase “calf on thigh” is uncertain.

³⁶ **tn** Or “camped in.”

³⁷ **tn** Or “spread out.” The Niphal of נָטַשׁ (*natash*) has this same sense in 2 Sam 5:18, 22.

you attacking¹ us?” The Philistines² said, “We have come up to take Samson prisoner so we can do to him what he has done to us.” **15:11** Three thousand men of Judah went down to the cave in the cliff of Etam and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? Why have you done this to us?” He said to them, “I have only done to them what they have done to me.” **15:12** They said to him, “We have come down to take you prisoner so we can hand you over to the Philistines.” Samson said to them, “Promise me³ you will not kill⁴ me.” **15:13** They said to him, “We promise!⁵ We will only take you prisoner and hand you over to them. We promise not to kill you.” They tied him up with two brand new ropes and led him up from the cliff. **15:14** When he arrived in Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they approached him. But the LORD’s spirit empowered⁶ him. The ropes around his arms were like flax dissolving in⁷ fire, and they⁸ melted away from his hands. **15:15** He happened to see⁹ a solid¹⁰ jawbone of a donkey. He grabbed it¹¹ and struck down¹² a thousand men. **15:16** Samson then said,

“With the jawbone of a donkey
I have left them in heaps;¹³
with the jawbone of a donkey
I have struck down a thousand men!”

15:17 When he finished speaking, he threw the jawbone down¹⁴ and named that place Ramath Lehi.¹⁵

15:18 He was very thirsty, so he cried out to the LORD and said, “You have given your servant¹⁶ this great victory. But now must I die of thirst and fall into hands of the Philistines?”¹⁷

1 tn Or “come up against.”

2 tn Heb “they”; the referent (the Philistines) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

3 tn Or “swear to me.”

4 tn Heb “meet [with hostility]”; “harm.” In light of v. 13, “kill” is an appropriate translation.

5 tn Heb “No,” meaning that they will not harm him.

6 tn Heb “rushed on.”

7 tn Heb “burned with.”

8 tn Heb “his bonds.”

9 tn Heb “he found.”

10 tn Heb “fresh,” i.e., not decayed and brittle.

11 tn Heb “he reached out his hand and took it.”

12 tn The Hebrew text adds “with it.” This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

13 tn The precise meaning of the second half of the line (חֲמוֹרֵי חַמּוֹרָתַיִם, *khamor khamoratayim*) is uncertain. The present translation assumes that the phrase means, “a heap, two heaps” and refers to the heaps of corpses littering the battlefield. Other options include: (a) “I have made donkeys of them” (cf. NIV; see C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 373, for a discussion of this view, which understands a denominative verb from the noun “donkey”); (b) “I have thoroughly skinned them” (see HALOT 330 s.v. IV עָךְ, חָמַר, which appeals to an Arabic cognate for support); (c) “I have stormed mightily against them,” which assumes the verb חָמַר (*khamar*, “to ferment; to foam; to boil up”).

14 tn Heb “from his hand.”

15 sn The name *Ramath Lehi* means “Height of the Jawbone.”

16 tn Heb “you have placed into the hand of your servant.”

17 tn Heb “the uncircumcised,” which in context refers to the Philistines.

15:19 So God split open the basin¹⁸ at Lehi and water flowed out from it. When he took a drink, his strength¹⁹ was restored and he revived. For this reason he named the spring²⁰ En Hakkore.²¹ It remains in Lehi to this very day. **15:20** Samson led²² Israel for twenty years during the days of Philistine prominence.²³

Samson’s Downfall

16:1 Samson went to Gaza. There he saw a prostitute and went in to have sex with her.²⁴ **16:2** The Gazites were told,²⁵ “Samson has come here!” So they surrounded the town²⁶ and hid all night at the city gate, waiting for him to leave.²⁷ They relaxed²⁸ all night, thinking,²⁹ “He will not leave³⁰ until morning comes;³¹ then we will kill him!” **16:3** Samson spent half the night with the prostitute; then he got up in the middle of the night and left.³² He grabbed the doors of the city gate, as well as the two posts, and pulled them right off, bar and all.³³ He put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of a hill east of Hebron.³⁴

16:4 After this Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the Sorek Valley. **16:5** The rulers of the Philistines went up to visit her and said to her, “Trick him! Find out what makes him so strong and how we can subdue him and humiliate³⁵ him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred silver pieces.”

16:6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me what makes you so strong and how you can be subdued and humiliated.”³⁶ **16:7** Samson said to

18 tn The word translated “basin” refers to a circular-shaped depression in the land’s surface.

19 tn Heb “spirit.”

20 tn Heb “named it”; the referent (the spring) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

21 sn The name *En Hakkore* means “Spring of the one who cries out.”

22 tn Traditionally, “judged.”

23 tn Heb “in the days of the Philistines.”

24 tn Heb “and he went in to her.” The idiom בּוֹא אֵל (*bo’ el*, “to go to”) often has sexual connotations.

25 tc Heb “To the Gazites, saying.” A verb is missing from the MT; some ancient Greek witnesses add “it was reported.”

26 tn Heb “And they surrounded.” The rest of the verse suggests that “the town” is the object, not “the house.” Though the Gazites knew Samson was in the town, apparently they did not know exactly where he had gone. Otherwise, they would could have just gone into or surrounded the house and would not have needed to post guards at the city gate.

27 tn Heb “and they lay in wait for him all night in the city gate.”

28 tn Heb “were silent.”

29 tn Heb “saying.”

30 tn The words “He will not leave” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

31 tn Heb “until the light of the morning.”

32 tn Heb “And Samson lay until the middle of the night and arose in the middle of the night.”

33 tn Heb “with the bar.”

34 tn Heb “which is upon the face of Hebron.”

35 tn Heb “subdue him in order to humiliate him.”

36 tn Heb “how you can be subdued in order to be humiliated.”

her, "If they tie me up with seven fresh⁴ bowstrings² that have not been dried, I will become weak and be just like any other man." **16:8** So the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings which had not been dried and they tied him up with them. **16:9** They hid³ in the bedroom and then she said to him, "The Philistines are here,⁴ Samson!" He snapped the bowstrings as easily as a thread of yarn snaps when it is put close to fire.⁵ The secret of his strength was not discovered.⁶

16:10 Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you deceived⁷ me and told me lies! Now tell me how you can be subdued." **16:11** He said to her, "If they tie me tightly with brand new ropes that have never been used,⁸ I will become weak and be just like any other man." **16:12** So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are here,⁹ Samson!" (The Philistines were hiding in the bedroom.)¹⁰ But he tore the ropes¹¹ from his arms as if they were a piece of thread.

16:13 Delilah said to Samson, "Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies. Tell me how you can be subdued." He said to her, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair¹² into the fabric on the loom¹³ and secure it with the pin, I will become weak and be like any other man." **16:14** So she made him go to sleep, wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric on the loom, fastened it with the pin, and said to him, "The Philistines are here,¹⁴ Samson!"¹⁵ He woke

up¹⁶ and tore away the pin of the loom and the fabric.

16:15 She said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you will not share your secret with me?¹⁷ Three times you have deceived me and have not told me what makes you so strong." **16:16** She nagged him¹⁸ every day and pressured him until he was sick to death of it.¹⁹ **16:17** Finally he told her his secret.²⁰ He said to her, "My hair has never been cut,²¹ for I have been dedicated to God²² from the time I was conceived.²³ If my head²⁴ were shaved, my strength would leave me; I would become weak, and be just like all other men." **16:18** When Delilah saw that he had told her his secret,²⁵ she sent for²⁶ the rulers of the Philistines, saying, "Come up here again, for he has told me²⁷ his secret."²⁸ So the rulers of the Philistines went up to visit her, bringing the silver in their hands. **16:19** She made him go to sleep on her lap²⁹ and then called a man in to shave off³⁰ the seven braids of his hair.³¹ She made him vulnerable³² and his strength left him. **16:20** She said, "The Philistines are here,³³ Samson!" He woke up³⁴ and thought,³⁵ "I will do as I did before³⁶ and shake myself free." But he did not realize that the

eye jumped from the first instance of "with the web" to the second, causing him to leave out inadvertently the intervening words.

¹ tn Or "moist."

² tn The word refers to a bowstring, probably made from animal tendons. See Ps 11:2; Job 30:11.

³ tn Heb "And the ones lying in wait were sitting for her." The grammatically singular form *וַיִּחְבְּאוּ* (*v'ha' orev*) is collective here, referring to the rulers as a group (so also in v. 16).

⁴ tn Heb "are upon you."

⁵ tn Heb "when it smells fire."

⁶ tn Heb "His strength was not known."

⁷ tn See Gen 31:7; Exod 8:29 [8:25 HT]; Job 13:9; Isa 44:20; Jer 9:4 for other uses of this Hebrew word (*וַיִּלְלֵהוּ*, *talal*), which also occurs in v. 13.

⁸ tn Heb "with which no work has been done."

⁹ tn Heb "are upon you."

¹⁰ tn Heb "And the ones lying in wait were sitting in the bedroom."

¹¹ tn Heb "them"; the referent (the ropes) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹² tn Heb "head" (also in the following verse). By metonymy the head is mentioned in the Hebrew text in place of the hair on it.

¹³ tn Heb "with the web." For a discussion of how Delilah did this, see C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 381, and G. F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC), 353-54.

¹⁴ tn Heb "are upon you."

¹⁵ tc The MT of vv. 13b-14a reads simply, "He said to her, 'If you weave the seven braids of my head with the web.' And she fastened with the pin and said to him." The additional words in the translation, "and secure it with the pin, I will become weak and be like any other man." **16:14** So she made him go to sleep, wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric on the loom," which without doubt represent the original text, are supplied from the ancient Greek version. (In both vv. 13b and 14a the Greek version has "to the wall" after "with the pin," but this is an interpretive addition that reflects a misunderstanding of ancient weaving equipment. See G. F. Moore, *Judges* [ICC], 353-54.) The Hebrew textual tradition was accidentally shortened during the copying process. A scribe's

¹⁶ tn The Hebrew adds, "from his sleep." This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ tn Heb "when your heart is not with me."

¹⁸ tn Heb "forced him with her words."

¹⁹ tn Heb "and his spirit was short [i.e., impatient] to the point of death."

²⁰ tn Heb "all his heart."

²¹ tn Heb "a razor has not come upon my head."

²² tn Or "set apart to God." Traditionally the Hebrew term *נָזִיר* (*nazir*) has been translated "Nazirite." The word is derived from the verb *נָזַר* (*nazar*, "to dedicate; to consecrate; to set apart").

²³ tn Heb "from the womb of my mother."

²⁴ tn Heb "I." The referent has been made more specific in the translation ("my head").

²⁵ tn Heb "all his heart."

²⁶ tn Heb "she sent and summoned."

²⁷ tc The translation follows the *Qere*, *לִי* (*li*, "to me") rather than the *Kethib*, *לָהּ* (*lah*, "to her").

²⁸ tn Heb "all his heart."

²⁹ tn Heb "on her knees." The expression is probably euphemistic for sexual intercourse. See HALOT 160-61 s.v. *בְּרִיךְ*.

³⁰ tn Heb "she called for a man and she shaved off." The point seems to be that Delilah acted through the instrumentality of the man. See J. A. Soggin, *Judges* (OTL), 254.

³¹ tn Heb "head." By metonymy the hair of his head is meant.

³² tn Heb "She began to humiliate him." Rather than referring to some specific insulting action on Delilah's part after Samson's hair was shaved off, this statement probably means that she, through the devious actions just described, began the process of Samson's humiliation which culminates in the following verses.

³³ tn Heb "are upon you."

³⁴ tn The Hebrew adds, "from his sleep." This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁵ tn Heb "and said."

³⁶ tn Heb "I will go out as before."

LORD had left him. **16:21** The Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him in bronze chains. He became a grinder in the prison. **16:22** His hair¹ began to grow back after it had been shaved off.

Samson's Death and Burial

16:23 The rulers of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate. They said, "Our god has handed Samson, our enemy, over to us." **16:24** When the people saw him,² they praised their god, saying, "Our god has handed our enemy over to us, the one who ruined our land and killed so many of us!"³

16:25 When they really started celebrating,⁴ they said, "Call for Samson so he can entertain us!" So they summoned Samson from the prison and he entertained them.⁵ They made him stand between two pillars. **16:26** Samson said to the young man who held his hand, "Position me so I can touch the pillars that support the temple.⁶ Then I can lean on them." **16:27** Now the temple⁷ was filled with men and women, and all the rulers of the Philistines were there. There were three thousand men and women on the roof watching Samson entertain. **16:28** Samson called to the LORD, "O Master, LORD,⁸ remember me! Strengthen me just one more time, O God, so I can get swift revenge⁹ against the Philistines for my two eyes!" **16:29** Samson took hold of the two middle pillars that supported the temple¹⁰ and he leaned against them, with his right hand on one and his left hand on the other. **16:30** Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He pushed hard¹¹ and the temple collapsed on the rulers and all the people in it. He killed many more people in his death than he had killed during his life.¹² **16:31** His brothers and all his family¹³ went down and brought him back.¹⁴ They buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the

tomb of Manoah his father. He had led¹⁵ Israel for twenty years.

Micah Makes His Own Religion

17:1 There was a man named Micah from the Ephraimite hill country. **17:2** He said to his mother, "You know¹⁶ the eleven hundred pieces of silver which were stolen¹⁷ from you, about which I heard you pronounce a curse? Look here, I have the silver. I stole¹⁸ it, but now I am giving it back to you."¹⁹ His mother said, "May the LORD reward²⁰ you, my son!" **17:3** When he gave back to his mother the eleven hundred pieces of silver, his mother said, "I solemnly dedicate²¹ this silver to the LORD. It will be for my son's benefit. We will use it to make a carved image and a metal image."²² **17:4** When he gave the silver back to his mother, she²³ took two hundred pieces of silver²⁴ to a silversmith, who made them into a carved image and a metal image. She then put them in Micah's house.²⁵ **17:5** Now this man Micah owned a shrine.²⁶ He made an ephod²⁷ and some personal idols and hired one of his sons to serve as a priest.²⁸ **17:6** In those days Israel had no king. Each man did what he considered to be right.²⁹

¹⁵ tn Traditionally, "judged."

¹⁶ tn The words "You know" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

¹⁷ tn Heb "taken."

¹⁸ tn Heb "took."

¹⁹ tn In the Hebrew text the statement, "but now I am giving it back to you," appears at the end of v. 3 and is spoken by the mother. But v. 4 indicates that she did not give the money back to her son. Unless the statement is spoken by the woman to the LORD, it appears to be misplaced and fits much better in v. 2. It may have been accidentally omitted from a manuscript, written in the margin, and then later inserted in the wrong place in another manuscript.

²⁰ tn Traditionally, "bless."

²¹ tn Heb "dedicating, I dedicate." In this case the emphatic infinitive absolute lends a mood of solemnity to the statement.

²² tn Heb "to the LORD from my hand for my son to make a carved image and cast metal image." She cannot mean that she is now taking the money from her hand and giving it back to her son so he can make an image. Verses 4-6 indicate she took back the money and used a portion of it to hire a silversmith to make an idol for her son to use. The phrase "a carved image and cast metal image" is best taken as referring to two idols (see 18:17-18), even though the verb at the end of v. 4, וַיַּהֲרֵי (vay'phi, "and it was [in the house of Micah]"), is singular.

²³ tn Heb "his mother." The pronoun ("she") has been substituted for the noun ("mother") in the translation because of English style.

²⁴ tn The Hebrew text has "and gave it." The referent (the pieces of silver) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ tn Heb "and it was in Micah's house."

²⁶ tn Heb "house of God."

²⁷ sn Here an ephod probably refers to a priestly garment (cf. Exod 28:4-6).

²⁸ tn Heb "and he filled the hand of one of his sons and he became his priest."

²⁹ tn Heb "Each was doing what was right in his [own] eyes."

¹ tn Heb "the hair of his head."

² tn Most interpret this as a reference to Samson, but this seems premature, since v. 25 suggests he was not yet standing before them. Consequently some prefer to see this statement as displaced and move it to v. 25 (see C. F. Burney, *Judges*, 387). It seems more likely that the pronoun refers to an image of Dagon.

³ tn Heb "multiplied our dead."

⁴ tn Heb "When their heart was good."

⁵ tn Heb "before them."

⁶ tn Heb "the pillars upon which the house was founded."

⁷ tn Heb "house."

⁸ tn The Hebrew has יהוה יְהוֹוִי ('*adonay yehovih*, "Lord Yahweh").

⁹ tn Heb "so I can get revenge with one act of vengeance."

¹⁰ tn Heb "the pillars upon which the house was founded."

¹¹ tn Heb "he stretched out with strength."

¹² tn Heb "And the ones whom he killed in his death were many more than he killed in his life."

¹³ tn Heb "and all the house of his father."

¹⁴ tn Heb "and lifted him up and brought up."

Micah Hires a Professional

17:7 There was a young man from Bethlehem¹ in Judah. He was a Levite who had been temporarily residing among the tribe of Judah.² 17:8 This man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah to find another place to live. He came to the Ephraimite hill country and made his way to Micah's house.³ 17:9 Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I am looking for a new place to live."⁴ 17:10 Micah said to him, "Stay with me. Become my adviser⁵ and priest. I will give you ten pieces of silver per year, plus clothes and food."⁶ 17:11 So the Levite agreed to stay with the man; the young man was like a son to Micah.⁷ 17:12 Micah paid⁸ the Levite; the young man became his priest and lived in Micah's house. 17:13 Micah said, "Now I know God will make me rich,⁹ because I have this Levite as my priest."¹⁰

The Tribe of Dan Finds an Inheritance

18:1 In those days Israel had no king. And in those days the Danite tribe was looking for a place¹⁰ to settle, because at that time they did not yet have a place to call their own among the tribes of Israel.¹¹ 18:2 The Danites sent out from their whole tribe five representatives,¹² capable men¹³ from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and explore it. They said to them, "Go, explore the land." They came to the Ephraimite hill country and spent the night at Micah's

house.¹⁴ 18:3 As they approached¹⁵ Micah's house, they recognized the accent¹⁶ of the young Levite. So they stopped¹⁷ there and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?"¹⁸ 18:4 He told them what Micah had done for him, saying,¹⁹ "He hired me and I became his priest." 18:5 They said to him, "Seek a divine oracle for us,²⁰ so we can know if we will be successful on our mission."²¹ 18:6 The priest said to them, "Go with confidence."²² The LORD will be with you on your mission."²³

18:7 So the five men journeyed on²⁴ and arrived in Laish. They noticed that the people there²⁵ were living securely, like the Sidonians do,²⁶ undisturbed and unsuspecting. No conqueror was troubling them in any way.²⁷ They lived far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone.²⁸ 18:8 When the Danites returned to their tribe²⁹ in Zorah and Eshtaol, their kinsmen³⁰ asked them, "How did it go?"³¹ 18:9 They said, "Come on, let's attack them,³² for³³ we saw their land and it is very good. You seem lethargic,³⁴ but don't hesitate³⁵ to invade and conquer³⁶ the land. 18:10 When you invade,³⁷ you will encounter³⁸ unsuspecting people. The land

¹ map For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

² tn Heb "There was a young man from Bethlehem of Judah, from the tribe of Judah, and he was a Levite, and he was temporarily residing there."

³ tn Heb "He came to the Ephraimite hill country, to Micah's house, making his way."

⁴ tn Heb "And I am going to reside in a place I can find."

⁵ tn Heb "father." "Father" is here a title of honor that suggests the priest will give advice and protect the interests of the family, primarily by divining God's will in matters, perhaps through the use of the ephod. (See R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 257; also Gen 45:8, where Joseph, who was a diviner and interpreter of dreams, is called Pharaoh's "father," and 2 Kgs 6:21; 13:14, where a prophet is referred to as a "father." Note also 2 Kgs 8:9, where a king identifies himself as a prophet's "son." One of a prophet's main functions was to communicate divine oracles. Cf. 2 Kgs 8:9ff.; 13:14-19).

⁶ tn The Hebrew text expands with the phrase: "and the Levite went." This only makes sense if taken with "to live" in the next verse. Apparently "the Levite went" and "the Levite agreed" are alternative readings which have been juxtaposed in the text.

⁷ tn Heb "the young man became like one of his sons."

⁸ tn Heb "filled the hand of."

⁹ tn Heb "do good for me."

¹⁰ tn Heb "an inheritance."

¹¹ tn Heb "because there had not fallen to them by that day in the midst of the tribes of Israel an inheritance."

¹² tn Heb "The Danites sent from their tribe five men, from their borders."

¹³ tn Heb "men, sons of strength."

¹⁴ tn Heb "They came to the Ephraimite hill country, to Micah's house, and spent the night there."

¹⁵ tn Or "When they were near."

¹⁶ tn Heb "voice." This probably means that "his speech was Judahite [i.e., southern] like their own, not Israelite [i.e., northern]" (R. G. Boling, *Judges* [AB], 263).

¹⁷ tn Heb "turned aside."

¹⁸ tn Heb "What [is there] to you here?"

¹⁹ tn Heb "He said to them, 'Such and such Micah has done for me.'" Though the statement is introduced and presented, at least in part, as a direct quotation (note especially "for me"), the phrase "such and such" appears to be the narrator's condensed version of what the Levite really said.

²⁰ tn Heb "Ask God."

²¹ tn Heb "so we can know if our way on which we are going will be successful."

²² tn Heb "in peace."

²³ tn Heb "In front of the LORD is your way in which you are going."

²⁴ tn Or "went."

²⁵ tn Heb "who were in its midst."

²⁶ tn Heb "according to the custom of the Sidonians."

²⁷ tn Heb "and there was no one humiliating anything in the land, one taking possession [by] force."

²⁸ tc Heb "and a thing there was not to them with men." Codex Alexandrinus (A) of the LXX and Symmachus read "Syria" here rather than the MT's "men." This reading presupposes a Hebrew Vorlage אַרָם ('aram, "Aram," i.e., Arameans) rather than the MT reading אָדָם ('adam). This reading is possibly to be preferred over the MT.

²⁹ tn Heb "They came to their brothers."

³⁰ tn Heb "brothers."

³¹ tn Heb "What you?"

³² tn Heb "Arise, and let us go up against them."

³³ tc Codex Alexandrinus (A) of the LXX adds "we entered and walked around in the land as far as Laish and."

³⁴ tn Heb "But you are inactive."

³⁵ tn Or "be lazy."

³⁶ tn Heb "to go"; "to enter"; "to possess."

³⁷ tn Heb "When you enter."

³⁸ tn Heb "you will come to."

is wide!¹ God is handing it over to you – a place that lacks nothing on earth!²

18:11 So six hundred Danites, fully armed, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol.³ **18:12** They went up and camped in Kiriath Jearim in Judah. (To this day that place is called Camp of Dan.⁴ It is west⁵ of Kiriath Jearim.) **18:13** From there they traveled through the Ephraimite hill country and arrived at Micah's house. **18:14** The five men who had gone to spy out the land of Laish⁶ said to their kinsmen,⁷ "Do you realize that inside these houses are an ephod, some personal idols, a carved image, and a metal image? Decide now what you want to do." **18:15** They stopped⁸ there, went inside the young Levite's house (which belonged to Micah),⁹ and asked him how he was doing.¹⁰ **18:16** Meanwhile the six hundred Danites, fully armed, stood at the entrance to the gate.¹¹ **18:17** The five men who had gone to spy out the land broke in and stole¹² the carved image, the ephod, the personal idols, and the metal image, while the priest was standing at the entrance to the gate with the six hundred fully armed men.¹³ **18:18** When these men broke into Micah's house and stole¹⁴ the carved image, the ephod, the personal idols, and the metal image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" **18:19** They said to him, "Shut up! Put your hand over your mouth and come with us! You can be our adviser¹⁵ and priest. Wouldn't it be better to be a priest for a whole Israelite tribe than for just one man's family?"¹⁶ **18:20** The priest was happy. He took the ephod, the personal idols, and the carved image and joined the group.¹⁷

18:21 They turned and went on their way, but they walked behind the children, the cattle,

and their possessions.¹⁸ **18:22** After they had gone a good distance from Micah's house, Micah's neighbors¹⁹ gathered together and caught up with the Danites. **18:23** When they called out to the Danites, the Danites²⁰ turned around and said to Micah, "Why have you gathered together?" **18:24** He said, "You stole my gods that I made, as well as this priest, and then went away. What do I have left? How can you have the audacity to say to me, 'What do you want?'"²¹ **18:25** The Danites said to him, "Don't say another word to us, or some very angry men²² will attack you, and you and your family will die."²³ **18:26** The Danites went on their way; when Micah realized²⁴ they were too strong to resist,²⁵ he turned around and went home.

18:27 Now the Danites²⁶ took what Micah had made, as well as his priest, and came to Laish, where the people were undisturbed and unsuspecting. They struck them down with the sword and burned the city.²⁷ **18:28** No one came to the rescue because the city²⁸ was far from Sidon²⁹ and they had no dealings with anyone.³⁰ The city³¹ was in a valley near Beth Rehob. The Danites³² rebuilt the city and occupied it. **18:29** They named it Dan after their ancestor, who was one of Israel's sons.³³ But the city's name used to be Laish. **18:30** The Danites worshiped³⁴ the carved image. Jonathan, descendant³⁵ of

¹ *tn* *Heb* "broad of hands," an idiom meaning "wide on both sides."

² *tn* *Heb* "a place where there is no lack of anything that is in the earth."

³ *tn* *Heb* "They journeyed from there, from the tribe of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men, equipped with weapons of war."

⁴ *tn* Or "Mahaneh Dan"; the Hebrew term "Mahaneh" means "camp [of]." Many English versions retain the transliterated Hebrew expression, but cf. CEV "Dan's Camp."

⁵ *tn* *Heb* "behind."

⁶ *tc* Codex Alexandrinus (A) of the LXX lacks the phrase "of Laish."

⁷ *tn* *Heb* "brothers."

⁸ *tn* *Heb* "turned aside."

⁹ *tn* *Heb* "Micah's house."

¹⁰ *tn* *Heb* "they asked him concerning peace."

¹¹ *tn* *Heb* "And the six hundred men, equipped with the weapons of war...from the sons of Dan."

¹² *tn* *Heb* "went up, went in there, took."

¹³ *tn* *Heb* "six hundred men, equipped with the weapons of war."

¹⁴ *tn* *Heb* "These went into Micah's house and took."

¹⁵ *tn* See the note on the word "adviser" in 17:10.

¹⁶ *tn* *Heb* "Is it better for you to be priest for the house of one man or for you to be priest for a tribe, for a clan in Israel?"

¹⁷ *tn* *Heb* "and went into the midst of the people."

¹⁸ *tn* *Heb* "They turned and went and put the children, the cattle, and the possessions in front of them."

¹⁹ *tn* *Heb* "the men who were in the houses near Micah's house."

²⁰ *tn* *Heb* "they"; the referent (the Danites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ *tn* *Heb* "What is this you say to me, 'What to you?'"

²² *tn* *Heb* "bitter in spirit." This phrase is used in 2 Sam 17:8 of David and his warriors, who are compared to a bear robbed of her cubs.

²³ *tn* *Heb* "and you will gather up your life and the life of your house."

²⁴ *tn* *Heb* "saw."

²⁵ *tn* *Heb* "they were stronger than he."

²⁶ *tn* *Heb* "they"; the referent (the Danites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁷ *tn* The Hebrew adds "with fire." This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons, because it is redundant in English.

²⁸ *tn* *Heb* "it." The Hebrew pronoun is feminine singular here, referring to the "city" (a grammatically feminine singular noun) mentioned in v. 27.

²⁹ *map* For location see Map1-A1; JP3-F3; JP4-F3.

³⁰ *tn* *Heb* "and a thing there was not to them with men."

³¹ *tn* *Heb* "it." The Hebrew pronoun is feminine singular here, referring to the "city" (a grammatically feminine singular noun) mentioned in v. 27.

³² *tn* *Heb* "They"; the referent (the Danites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³³ *tn* *Heb* "They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who had been born to Israel."

³⁴ *tn* *Heb* "erected for themselves."

³⁵ *tn* *Heb* "son."

Gershom, son of Moses,¹ and his descendants² served as priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the exile. **18:31** They worshiped³ Micah's carved image⁴ the whole time God's authorized shrine⁵ was in Shiloh.

Sodom and Gomorrah Revisited

19:1 In those days Israel had no king. There was a Levite⁶ living temporarily in the remote region of the Ephraimite hill country. He acquired a concubine⁷ from Bethlehem⁸ in Judah. **19:2** However, she⁹ got angry at him¹⁰ and went home¹¹ to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah. When she had been there four months, **19:3** her husband came¹² after her, hoping he could convince her to return.¹³ He brought with him his servant¹⁴ and a pair of donkeys. When she brought him into her father's house and the girl's father saw him, he greeted him warmly.¹⁵ **19:4** His father-in-law, the girl's father, persuaded him to stay with him for three days, and they ate and drank together, and spent the night there. **19:5** On the fourth day they woke up early and the Levite got ready to leave.¹⁶ But the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Have a bite to eat for some energy,¹⁷ then you can go." **19:6** So the two of them sat down and had a meal together.¹⁸ Then the girl's father said to the man, "Why not stay another night and have a good time!"¹⁹ **19:7** When the man got ready to leave,²⁰ his father-in-law convinced him to stay another night.²¹ **19:8** He woke up early in the morning on the fifth day

so he could leave, but the girl's father said, "Get some energy.²² Wait until later in the day to leave!"²³ So they ate a meal together. **19:9** When the man got ready to leave²⁴ with his concubine and his servant,²⁵ his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look! The day is almost over!²⁶ Stay another night! Since the day is over,²⁷ stay another night here and have a good time. You can get up early tomorrow and start your trip home."²⁸ **19:10** But the man did not want to stay another night. He left²⁹ and traveled as far as³⁰ Jebus (that is, Jerusalem).³¹ He had with him a pair of saddled donkeys and his concubine.³²

19:11 When they got near Jebus, it was getting quite late³³ and the servant³⁴ said to his master, "Come on, let's stop at³⁵ this Jebusite city and spend the night in it." **19:12** But his master said to him, "We should not stop at a foreign city where non-Israelites live.³⁶ We will travel on to Gibeah." **19:13** He said to his servant,³⁷ "Come on, we will go into one of the other towns³⁸ and spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah." **19:14** So they traveled on,³⁹ and the sun went down when they were near Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin.⁴⁰ **19:15** They stopped there and decided to spend the night⁴¹ in Gibeah. They came into the city and sat down in the town square, but no one invited them to spend the night.⁴²

19:16 But then an old man passed by, returning at the end of the day from his work in the field.⁴³ The man was from the Ephraimite hill country; he was living temporarily in Gibeah. (The residents of the town were Benjaminites.)⁴⁴ **19:17** When he looked up and saw the traveler⁴⁵ in the town square, the old man said, "Where are you heading? Where do you come from?"

¹ **tc** Several ancient textual witnesses, including some LXX MSS and the Vulgate, support the reading "Moses" (מֹשֶׁה, *mōsheh*) here. Many Hebrew MSS have a nun (נ) suspended above the name between the first two letters (מֹנִישֶׁה), suggesting the name Manasseh (מְנַשֶּׁה, *m'nasheh*). This is probably a scribal attempt to protect Moses' reputation. For discussion, see G. F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC), 401-2.

² **tn** Heb "sons."

³ **tn** Heb "they set up for themselves."

⁴ **tn** Heb "the carved image that Micah had made."

⁵ **tn** Heb "the house of God."

⁶ **tn** Heb "a man, a Levite."

⁷ **sn** See the note on the word "concubine" in 8:31.

⁸ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

⁹ **tn** Heb "and his concubine." The pronoun ("she") has been used in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁰ **tn** Or "was unfaithful to him." Many have understood the Hebrew verb *vattizneh* (וַתִּזְנֶה) as being from *zanah*, "to be a prostitute"), but it may be derived from a root meaning "to be angry; to hate" attested in Akkadian (see HALOT 275 s.v. ו.ז.נ.).

¹¹ **tn** Heb "went from him."

¹² **tn** Heb "arose and came."

¹³ **tn** Heb "to speak to her heart to bring her back."

¹⁴ **tn** Or "young man."

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "he was happy to meet him."

¹⁶ **tn** Heb "and he arose to go."

¹⁷ **tn** Heb "Sustain your heart [with] a bit of food."

¹⁸ **tn** Heb "And they sat and ate, the two of them together, and they drank."

¹⁹ **tn** Heb "Be willing and spend the night so that your heart might be good."

²⁰ **tn** Heb "and the man arose to go."

²¹ **tn** Heb "his father-in-law persuaded him and he again spent the night there."

²² **tn** Heb "Sustain your heart." He is once more inviting him to stay for a meal.

²³ **tn** Heb "Wait until the declining of the day."

²⁴ **tn** Heb "the man arose to go."

²⁵ **tn** Or "young man."

²⁶ **tn** Heb "the day is sinking to become evening."

²⁷ **tn** Or "declining."

²⁸ **tn** Heb "for your way and go to your tent."

²⁹ **tn** Heb "and he arose and went."

³⁰ **tn** Heb "to the front of."

³¹ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

³² **tc** Some ancient witnesses add "and his servant."

³³ **tn** Heb "and the day was descending greatly."

³⁴ **tn** Or "young man."

³⁵ **tn** Heb "turn aside" (also in the following verse).

³⁶ **tn** Heb "who are not from the sons of Israel."

³⁷ **tn** Or "young man."

³⁸ **tn** Heb "we will enter one of the places."

³⁹ **tn** Heb "and they passed by and went."

⁴⁰ **tn** Heb "which belongs to Benjamin."

⁴¹ **tn** Heb "they turned aside there to enter to spend the night."

⁴² **tn** Heb "and he entered and sat down, and there was no one receiving them into the house to spend the night."

⁴³ **tn** Heb "And look, an old man was coming from his work, from the field in the evening."

⁴⁴ **tn** Heb "And the men of the place were Benjaminites."

⁴⁵ **tn** Heb "the man, the traveler."

19:18 The Levite¹ said to him, “We are traveling from Bethlehem² in Judah to the remote region of the Ephraimite hill country. That’s where I’m from. I had business in Bethlehem in Judah, but now I’m heading home.³ But no one has invited me into their home. 19:19 We have enough straw and grain for our donkeys, and there is enough food and wine for me, your female servant,⁴ and the young man who is with your servants.⁵ We lack nothing.” 19:20 The old man said, “Everything is just fine!⁶ I will take care of all your needs. But don’t spend the night in the town square.” 19:21 So he brought him to his house and fed the donkeys. They washed their feet and had a meal.⁷

19:22 They were having a good time,⁸ when suddenly⁹ some men of the city, some good-for-nothings,¹⁰ surrounded the house and kept beating¹¹ on the door. They said to the old man who owned the house, “Send out the man who came to visit you so we can have sex with him.”¹² 19:23 The man who owned the house went outside and said to them, “No, my brothers! Don’t do this wicked thing! After all, this man is a guest in my house. Don’t do such a disgraceful thing! 19:24 Here are my virgin daughter and my guest’s¹³ concubine. I will send them out and you can abuse them and do to them whatever you like.¹⁴ But don’t do such a disgraceful thing to this man!” 19:25 The men refused to listen to

him, so the Levite¹⁵ grabbed his concubine and made her go outside.¹⁶ They raped¹⁷ her and abused her all night long until morning. They let her go at dawn. 19:26 The woman arrived back at daybreak and was sprawled out on the doorstep of the house where her master¹⁸ was staying until it became light.¹⁹ 19:27 When her master²⁰ got up in the morning, opened the doors of the house, and went outside to start on his journey, there was the woman, his concubine, sprawled out on the doorstep of the house with her hands on the threshold. 19:28 He said to her, “Get up, let’s leave!” But there was no response. He put her on the donkey and went home.²¹ 19:29 When he got home, he took a knife, grabbed his concubine, and carved her up into twelve pieces.²² Then he sent the pieces throughout Israel.²³ 19:30 Everyone who saw the sight²⁴ said, “Nothing like this has happened or been witnessed during the entire time since²⁵ the Israelites left the land of Egypt!²⁶ Take careful note of it! Discuss it and speak!”

Civil War Breaks Out

20:1 All the Israelites from Dan to Beer Sheba²⁷ and from the land of Gilead²⁸ left their homes²⁹ and assembled together³⁰ before the LORD at Mizpah. 20:2 The leaders³¹ of all the people from all the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of God’s people, which

¹ *tn* Heb “he”; the referent (the Levite) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² *map* For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

³ *tn* Heb “I went to Bethlehem in Judah, but [to] the house of the LORD I am going.” The Hebrew text has “house of the LORD,” which might refer to the shrine at Shiloh. The LXX reads “to my house.”

⁴ *tn* By calling his concubine the old man’s “female servant,” the Levite emphasizes their dependence on him for shelter.

⁵ *tc* Some Hebrew mss and ancient witnesses read the singular, “your servant,” which would refer to the Levite. If one retains the plural, then both the Levite and his wife are in view. In either case the pronominal suffix emphasizes their dependence on the old man for shelter.

⁶ *tn* Heb “Peace to you.”

⁷ *tn* Heb “ate and drank.”

⁸ *tn* Heb “they were making their heart good.”

⁹ *tn* Heb “and look.”

¹⁰ *tn* Heb “the men of the city, men, the sons of wickedness.” The phrases are in apposition; the last phrase specifies what type of men they were. It is not certain if all the men of the city are in view, or just a group of troublemakers. In 20:5 the town leaders are implicated in the crime, suggesting that all the men of the city were involved. If so, the implication is that the entire male population of the town were good-for-nothings.

¹¹ *tn* The Hitpael verb form appears to have an iterative force here, indicating repeated action.

¹² *tn* Heb “so we can know him.” On the surface one might think they simply wanted to meet the visitor and get to know him, but their hostile actions betray their double-talk. The old man, who has been living with them long enough to know what they are like, seems to have no doubts about the meaning of their words (see v. 23).

¹³ *tn* Heb “his”; the referent (the visiting Levite) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ *tn* Heb “what is good in your eyes.”

¹⁵ *tn* Heb “he”; the referent (the Levite) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ *tn* Heb “and he caused [her] to go outside to them.”

¹⁷ *tn* Heb “knew,” in the sexual sense.

¹⁸ *tn* The Hebrew term here translated “master,” is plural. The plural indicates degree here and emphasizes the Levite’s absolute sovereignty over the woman.

¹⁹ *tn* Heb “The woman came at the turning of the morning and fell at the door of the house of the man where her master was until the light.”

²⁰ *tn* The Hebrew term here translated “master,” is plural. The plural indicates degree here and emphasizes the Levite’s absolute sovereignty over the woman.

²¹ *tn* Heb “And the man took her on the donkey and arose and went to his place.”

²² *tn* Heb “he carved her up by her bones into twelve pieces.”

²³ *tn* Heb “and he sent her through all the territory of Israel.”

²⁴ *tn* The words “the sight” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁵ *tn* Heb “from the day.”

²⁶ *tc* Codex Alexandrinus (A) of the (original) LXX has the following additional words: “And he instructed the men whom he sent out, ‘Thus you will say to every male Israelite: “There has never been anything like this from the day the Israelites left Egypt till the present day.””

²⁷ *sn* Dan was located in the far north of the country, while Beer Sheba was located in the far south. This encompassed all the territory of the land of Canaan occupied by the Israelites.

²⁸ *sn* The land of Gilead was on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

²⁹ *tn* Heb “went out.”

³⁰ *tn* Heb “and the assembly was convened as one man.”

³¹ *tn* Heb “the cornerstones”; or “the supports.” The word is used of leaders in only three other texts – 1 Sam 14:38; Isa 19:13; Zech 10:4.

numbered¹ four hundred thousand sword-wielding foot soldiers. **20:3** The Benjaminites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah. Then the Israelites said, “Explain how this wicked thing happened!” **20:4** The Levite,² the husband of the murdered woman, spoke up, “I and my concubine stopped in³ Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin⁴ to spend the night. **20:5** The leaders of Gibeah attacked me and at night surrounded the house where I was staying.⁵ They wanted to kill me; instead they abused my concubine so badly that she died. **20:6** I grabbed hold of my concubine and carved her up and sent the pieces⁶ throughout the territory occupied by Israel,⁷ because they committed such an unthinkable atrocity⁸ in Israel. **20:7** All you Israelites,⁹ make a decision here!”¹⁰

20:8 All Israel rose up in unison¹¹ and said, “Not one of us will go home!¹² Not one of us will return¹³ to his house! **20:9** Now this is what we will do to Gibeah: We will attack the city as the lot dictates.¹⁴ **20:10** We will take ten of every group of a hundred men from all the tribes of Israel (and a hundred of every group of a thousand, and a thousand of every group of ten thousand) to get supplies for the army.¹⁵ When they arrive in Gibeah of Benjamin they will punish them for the atrocity which they committed in Israel.”¹⁶ **20:11** So all the men of Israel gathered together at the city as allies.¹⁷

20:12 The tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe¹⁸ of Benjamin, saying, “How could such a wicked thing take place?¹⁹ **20:13** Now,

hand over the good-for-nothings²⁰ in Gibeah so we can execute them and purge Israel of wickedness.”²¹ But the Benjaminites refused to listen to their Israelite brothers. **20:14** The Benjaminites came from their cities and assembled at Gibeah²² to make war against the Israelites. **20:15** That day the Benjaminites mustered from their cities twenty-six thousand sword-wielding soldiers, besides seven hundred well-trained soldiers from Gibeah.²³ **20:16** Among this army²⁴ were seven hundred specially-trained left-handed soldiers.²⁵ Each one could sling a stone and hit even the smallest target.²⁶ **20:17** The men of Israel (not counting Benjamin) had mustered four hundred thousand sword-wielding soldiers, every one an experienced warrior.²⁷

20:18 The Israelites went up to Bethel²⁸ and asked God,²⁹ “Who should lead the charge against the Benjaminites?”³⁰ The LORD said, “Judah should lead.” **20:19** The Israelites got up the next morning and moved³¹ against Gibeah. **20:20** The men of Israel marched out to fight Benjamin; they³² arranged their battle lines against Gibeah. **20:21** The Benjaminites attacked from Gibeah and struck down twenty-two thousand Israelites that day.³³

20:22 The Israelite army³⁴ took heart³⁵ and once more arranged their battle lines, in the same place where they had taken their positions the day before. **20:23** The Israelites went up and wept before the LORD until evening. They asked the LORD, “Should we³⁶ again march out to fight³⁷ the Benjaminites, our brothers?”³⁸ The LORD said, “Attack them!”³⁹ **20:24** So the Israelites marched toward⁴⁰ the Benjaminites the next

¹ tn The words “which numbered” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

² tn Heb “The man, the Levite.”

³ tn Heb “came to.”

⁴ tn Heb “which belongs to Benjamin.”

⁵ tn Heb “arose against me and surrounded against me the house at night.”

⁶ tn Heb “her”; the referent is more naturally stated in English as “the pieces.”

⁷ tn Heb “throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel.”

⁸ tn Heb “a wicked and disgraceful [thing].”

⁹ tn Heb “Look, all of you sons of Israel.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “give for yourselves a word and advice here.”

¹¹ tn Heb “as one man.”

¹² tn Heb “to his tent.”

¹³ tn Or “turn aside.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “against her by lot.” The verb “we will go up” (נָאֲלֶהָ, *na'aleh*) has probably been accidentally omitted before “against her” (אֶלֶהָ, *'aleha*).

¹⁵ sn As the lot dictates. The Israelite soldiers intended to cast lots to determine which tribe would lead the battle charge (see v. 18).

¹⁶ tn Or “people.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “to do at their arrival in Geba of Benjamin according to all the disgraceful [thing] which he [collective = “Benjamin”] did in Israel.” Here “Geba” must be an error for “Gibeah.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “gathered at the city as one man, united.”

¹⁹ tc The MT reads the plural, but surely the singular (which is supported by the LXX and Vulgate) is preferable here.

²⁰ tn Heb “What is this wicked thing which happened among you?”

²⁰ tn Heb “the men, sons of wickedness.”

²¹ tn Heb “and burn away wickedness from Israel.”

²² tn Heb “assembled from the cities at Gibeah.”

²³ tn Heb “besides from the ones living in Gibeah they mustered seven hundred choice men.”

²⁴ tn Heb “And from all this people.”

²⁵ tn Heb “seven hundred choice men, bound/restricted in the right hand.” On the significance of the idiom, “bound/restricted in the right hand,” see the translator’s note on 3:15.

²⁶ tn “at a single hair and not miss.”

²⁷ tn Heb “a man of war.”

²⁸ map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

²⁹ tn Heb “They arose and went up to Bethel and asked God, and the Israelites said.”

³⁰ tn Heb “Who should go up for us first for battle against the sons of Benjamin?”

³¹ tn Heb “encamped.”

³² tn Heb “the men of Israel.” The noun phrase has been replaced by the pronoun (“they”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³³ tn Heb “The sons of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and they struck down in Israel that day twenty-two thousand men to the ground.”

³⁴ tn Heb “The people, the men of Israel.”

³⁵ tn Or “encouraged one another.”

³⁶ tn Heb “I” (collective singular).

³⁷ tn Heb “approach for battle.”

³⁸ tn Heb “my brother” (collective singular).

³⁹ tn Heb “Go up against him” (collective singular).

⁴⁰ tn Heb “drew near to.”

day. **20:25** The Benjaminites again attacked them from Gibeah and struck down eighteen thousand sword-wielding Israelite soldiers.¹

20:26 So all the Israelites, the whole army,² went up to³ Bethel.⁴ They wept and sat there before the LORD; they did not eat anything⁵ that day until evening. They offered up burnt sacrifices and tokens of peace⁶ to the LORD. **20:27** The Israelites asked the LORD (for the ark of God's covenant was there in those days; **20:28** Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, was serving the LORD⁷ in those days), "Should we⁸ once more march out to fight the Benjaminites our brothers,⁹ or should we¹⁰ quit?" The LORD said, "Attack, for tomorrow I will hand them¹¹ over to you."

20:29 So Israel hid men in ambush outside Gibeah. **20:30** The Israelites attacked the Benjaminites the next day,¹² they took their positions against Gibeah just as they had done before. **20:31** The Benjaminites attacked¹³ the army, leaving the city unguarded.¹⁴ They began to strike down their enemy¹⁵ just as they had done before. On the main roads (one leads to Bethel,¹⁶ the other to Gibeah) and in the field, they struck down¹⁷ about thirty Israelites. **20:32** Then the Benjaminites said, "They are defeated just as before." But the Israelites said, "Let's retreat¹⁸ and lure them¹⁹ away from the city into the main roads." **20:33**²⁰ All the men of Israel got up from their places and took their positions at Baal Tamar, while the Israelites hiding in ambush jumped out of their places west of Gibeah. **20:34** Ten thousand men, well-trained soldiers from all Israel, then made a frontal assault against Gibeah – the battle was fierce.²¹ But the Benjaminites did not realize that disaster was at their door-

step.²² **20:35** The LORD annihilated Benjamin before Israel; the Israelites struck down that day 25,100 sword-wielding Benjaminites.²³ **20:36** Then the Benjaminites saw they were defeated.

The Israelites retreated before²⁴ Benjamin, because they had confidence in the men they had hid in ambush outside Gibeah. **20:37** The men hiding in ambush made a mad dash²⁵ to Gibeah. They²⁶ attacked²⁷ and put the sword to the entire city. **20:38** The Israelites and the men hiding in ambush had arranged a signal. When the men hiding in ambush²⁸ sent up a smoke signal from the city, **20:39** the Israelites counterattacked.²⁹ Benjamin had begun to strike down the Israelites;³⁰ they struck down³¹ about thirty men. They said, "There's no doubt about it! They are totally defeated as in the earlier battle." **20:40** But when the signal, a pillar of smoke, began to rise up from the city, the Benjaminites turned around and saw the whole city going up in a cloud of smoke that rose high into the sky.³² **20:41** When the Israelites turned around, the Benjaminites panicked³³ because they could see that disaster was on their doorstep.³⁴ **20:42** They retreated before the Israelites, taking the road to the wilderness. But the battle overtook³⁵ them as men from the surrounding cities struck them down.³⁶ **20:43** They surrounded the Benjaminites, chased them from Nohah,³⁷ and annihilated³⁸ them all the way to a spot east of Geba.³⁹ **20:44** Eighteen thousand Benjaminites, all of them capable warriors, fell dead. **20:45** The rest⁴⁰ turned and ran toward the wilderness, heading toward the cliff

²² tn Heb "And they did not know that touching against them was disaster."

²³ tn Heb "And the sons of Israel struck down in Benjamin that day 25,100 men, all of these wielding the sword."

²⁴ tn Heb "gave place to."

²⁵ tn Heb "hurried and put off [their hiding place]."

²⁶ tn Heb "the men hiding in ambush."

²⁷ tn Or "deployed." The verb normally means "to lead" or "to draw."

²⁸ tn Heb "they"; the referent (the men hiding in ambush) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁹ tn Heb "turned in the battle."

³⁰ tn Heb "And Benjamin began to strike down wounded ones among the men of Israel."

³¹ tn The words "they struck down" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

³² tn Heb "Benjamin turned after him and, look, the whole city went up toward the sky."

³³ tn Or "were terrified."

³⁴ tn Heb "disaster touched against them."

³⁵ tn Heb "clung to"; or "stuck close."

³⁶ tn Heb "and those from the cities were striking them down in their midst."

³⁷ tc The translation assumes the reading בְּנוּחָה (*min-nokhah*, "from Nohah"; cf. 1 Chr 8:2) rather than the MT's בְּנוּחָה (*in^enukhah*, "resting place").

³⁸ tn Heb "tread down, walk on."

³⁹ tn Heb "unto the opposite of Gibeah toward the east." Gibeah cannot be correct here, since the Benjaminites retreated from there toward the desert and Rimmon (see v. 45). A slight emendation yields the reading "Geba."

⁴⁰ tn Heb "they"; the referent (the rest [of the Benjaminites]) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹ tn Heb "And Benjamin went out to meet them from Gibeah the second day, and they struck down among the sons of Israel eighteen thousand men to the ground, all of these were wielding the sword."

² tn Heb "and all the people."

³ tn Heb "went up and came [to]."

⁴ map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

⁵ tn Traditionally, "fasted."

⁶ tn Or "peace offerings."

⁷ tn Heb "standing before him."

⁸ tn Heb "I" (collective singular).

⁹ tn Heb "my brother" (collective singular).

¹⁰ tn Heb "I" (collective singular).

¹¹ tn Heb "him" (collective singular).

¹² tn Heb "the third day."

¹³ tn Heb "went out to meet."

¹⁴ tn Heb "and they were drawn away from the city."

¹⁵ tn Heb "from the army wounded ones."

¹⁶ map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

¹⁷ tn The words "they struck down" are supplied in the translation for clarification.

¹⁸ tn Or "run away."

¹⁹ tn Heb "him" (collective singular).

²⁰ sn Verses 33-36a give a condensed account of the battle from this point on, while vv. 36b-48 offer a more detailed version of how the ambush contributed to Gibeah's defeat.

²¹ tn Heb "heavy"; or "severe."

of Rimmon. But the Israelites¹ caught² five thousand of them on the main roads. They stayed right on their heels³ all the way to Gidom and struck down two thousand more. **20:46** That day twenty-five thousand⁴ sword-wielding Benjaminites fell in battle, all of them capable warriors.⁵ **20:47** Six hundred survivors turned and ran away to the wilderness, to the cliff of Rimmon. They stayed there four months. **20:48** The Israelites returned to the Benjaminite towns⁶ and put the sword to them. They wiped out the cities,⁷ the animals, and everything they could find. They set fire to every city in their path.⁸

600 Brides for 600 Brothers

21:1 The Israelites had taken an oath in Mizpah, saying, “Not one of us will allow his daughter to marry a Benjaminite.” **21:2** So the people came to Bethel⁹ and sat there before God until evening, weeping loudly and uncontrollably.¹⁰ **21:3** They said, “Why, O LORD God of Israel, has this happened in Israel?” An entire¹¹ tribe has disappeared from Israel today!”

21:4 The next morning the people got up early and built an altar there. They offered up burnt sacrifices and tokens of peace.¹² **21:5** The

¹ *tn* Heb “and they”; the referent (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² *tn* Heb “gleaned.” The word is an agricultural term which pictures Israelites picking off the Benjaminites as easily as one picks grapes from the vine.

³ *tn* Heb “stuck close after them.”

⁴ *sn* The number given here (twenty-five thousand sword-wielding Benjaminites) is an approximate figure; v. 35 gives the more exact number (25,100). According to v. 15, the Benjaminite army numbered 26,700 (26,000 + 700). The figures in vv. 35 (rounded in vv. 44-46) and 47 add up to 25,700. What happened to the other 1,000 men? The most reasonable explanation is that they were killed during the first two days of fighting. G. F. Moore (*Judges* [ICC], 429) and C. F. Burney (*Judges*, 475) reject this proposal, arguing that the narrator is too precise and concerned about details to omit such a fact. However, the account of the first two days’ fighting emphasizes Israel’s humiliating defeat. To speak of Benjaminite casualties would diminish the literary effect. In vv. 35, 44-47 the narrator’s emphasis is the devastating defeat that Benjamin experienced on this final day of battle. To mention the earlier days’ casualties at this point is irrelevant to his literary purpose. He allows readers who happen to be concerned with such details to draw conclusions for themselves.

⁵ *tn* Heb “So all the ones who fell from Benjamin were twenty-five thousand men, wielding the sword, in that day, all of these men of strength.”

⁶ *tn* Heb “to the sons of Benjamin.”

⁷ *tc* The translation is based on the reading *me’ir m’im*, “from a city of men,” i.e., “an inhabited city”), rather than the reading *me’ir m’otom*, “from a city of soundness”) found in the Leningrad Codex (L).

⁸ *tn* Heb “Also all the cities that were found they set on fire.”

⁹ *map* For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

¹⁰ *tn* Heb “and they lifted up their voice[s] and wept with great weeping.” Both the cognate accusative (*bekhi*, “weeping”) and the attributive adjective *gadol*, “great”) emphasize their degree of sorrow.

¹¹ *tn* Heb “one.”

¹² *tn* Or “peace offerings.”

Israelites asked, “Who from all the Israelite tribes has not assembled before the LORD?” They had made a solemn oath that whoever did not assemble before the LORD at Mizpah must certainly be executed.¹³ **21:6** The Israelites regretted what had happened to¹⁴ their brother Benjamin. They said, “Today we cut off an entire¹⁵ tribe from Israel! **21:7** How can we find wives for those who are left?¹⁶ After all, we took an oath in the LORD’s name not to give them our daughters as wives.” **21:8** So they asked, “Who from all the Israelite tribes did not assemble before the LORD at Mizpah?” Now it just so happened no one from Jabesh Gilead had come to the gathering.¹⁷ **21:9** When they took roll call,¹⁸ they noticed¹⁹ none of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were there. **21:10** So the assembly sent 12,000 capable warriors²⁰ against Jabesh Gilead.²¹ They commanded them, “Go and kill with your swords²² the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, including the women and little children. **21:11** Do this:²³ exterminate every male, as well as every woman who has had sexual relations with a male.²⁴ But spare the lives of any virgins.” So they did as instructed.²⁵ **21:12** They found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young girls who were virgins – they had never had sexual relations with a male.²⁶ They brought them back to the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan.

21:13 The entire assembly sent messengers to the Benjaminites at the cliff of Rimmon and assured them they would not be harmed.²⁷ **21:14** The Benjaminites returned at that time, and the

¹³ *tn* Heb “A great oath there was concerning the one who did not go up before the LORD at Mizpah, saying, ‘He must surely be put to death.’”

¹⁴ *tn* Or “felt sorry for.”

¹⁵ *tn* Heb “cut off one.”

¹⁶ *tn* Heb “What should we do for them, for the remaining ones, concerning wives?”

¹⁷ *tn* Heb “Look, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly.”

¹⁸ *tn* Or “when the people were mustered.”

¹⁹ *tn* Heb “and look.”

²⁰ *tn* Heb “men, sons of strength.”

²¹ *tn* Heb “there.”

²² *tn* Heb “the edge of the sword.”

²³ *tn* Heb “And this is the thing that you will do.”

²⁴ *tn* Heb “every woman who is familiar with the bed of a male.”

²⁵ *tc* Some Greek witnesses (notably Codex Vaticanus [B]) add the words, “But the virgins you should keep alive.” And they did so.” These additional words, which probably represent the original Hebrew text, can be retroverted: *וְאֵת־בְּתוּרָהּ בְּן לֹת תְּהִי וַיְעַשׂוּ בָן וְיָתָהּ (v^e’et-habb^e’ulot l^ekhayu v^eya’asu khen)*. It is likely that a scribe’s eye jumped from the *vav* (ו) *וְיָתָהּ* (v^e’et) to the initial *vav* of v. 11, accidentally leaving out the intervening letters. The present translation is based on this reconstruction.

²⁶ *tn* Heb “who had not known a man with respect to the bed of a male.”

²⁷ *tn* Heb “And all the assembly sent and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the cliff of Rimmon and they proclaimed to them peace.”

Israelites¹ gave to them the women they had spared from Jabesh Gilead. But there were not enough to go around.²

21:15 The people regretted what had happened to³ Benjamin because the LORD had weakened⁴ the Israelite tribes. **21:16** The leaders⁵ of the assembly said, “How can we find wives for those who are left?⁶ After all, the Benjaminites women have been wiped out. **21:17** The⁷ remnant of Benjamin must be preserved. An entire Israelite tribe should not be wiped out.⁸ **21:18** But we can’t allow our daughters to marry them,⁹ for the Israelites took an oath, saying, ‘Whoever gives a woman to a Benjaminites will be destroyed!’¹⁰ **21:19** However, there is an annual festival to the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel¹¹ (east of the main road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem) and south of Lebonah.” **21:20** So they commanded the Benjaminites, “Go hide in the vineyards, **21:21** and keep your eyes open.¹² When you see¹³ the daughters of Shiloh coming out to dance in the celebration,¹⁴ jump out from the vineyards. Each one of you, catch yourself a wife from among the daughters of Shiloh and then go home to the land of Benjamin. **21:22** When their fathers or brothers come and protest to us,¹⁵ we’ll say to them, “Do us a favor and let them be,¹⁶ for we

could not get each one a wife through battle.¹⁷ Don’t worry about breaking your oath!¹⁸ You would only be guilty if you had voluntarily given them wives.”¹⁹

21:23 The Benjaminites did as instructed.²⁰ They abducted two hundred of the dancing girls to be their wives.²¹ They went home²² to their own territory,²³ rebuilt their cities, and settled down.²⁴ **21:24** Then the Israelites dispersed from there to their respective tribal and clan territories. Each went from there to his own property.²⁵ **21:25** In those days Israel had no king. Each man did what he considered to be right.²⁶

1 tn Heb “they”; the referent (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

2 tn Heb “but they did not find for them enough.”

3 tn Or “felt sorry for.”

4 tn Heb “had made a gaping hole in.” The narrator uses imagery that compares Israel to a wall that has been breached.

5 tn Or “elders.”

6 tn Heb “What should we do for the remaining ones concerning wives?”

7 tn The Hebrew text has “and they said” at the beginning of the verse. For stylistic reasons the translation treats v. 17 as a continuation of the remarks of the leaders in v. 16.

8 tn Heb “An inheritance for the remnant belonging to Benjamin, and a tribe from Israel will not be wiped away.” The first statement lacks a verb. Some prefer to emend the text to read, “How can an inheritance remain for the remnant of Benjamin?”

9 tn Heb “But we are not able to give to them wives from our daughters.”

10 tn Heb “is cursed.”

11 map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

12 tn Heb “and look.”

13 tn Heb “and look, when.”

14 tn Heb “in the dances.”

15 tc The (original) LXX and Vulgate read “to you.”

16 tn The words “and let them be” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

17 tn Heb “for we did not take each his wife in battle.”

sn *Through battle.* This probably refers to the battle against Jabesh Gilead, which only produced four hundred of the six hundred wives needed.

18 tn This sentence is not in the Hebrew text. It is supplied in the translation to clarify the logic of the statement.

19 tc Heb “You did not give to them, now you are guilty.” The MT as it stands makes little sense. It is preferable to emend לֹא (‘lo’, “not”) to לִי (‘li’, “if”). This particle introduces a purely hypothetical condition, “If you had given to them [but you didn’t].” See G. F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC), 453-54.

20 tn Heb “did so.”

21 tn Heb “And they took wives according to their number from the dancing girls whom they abducted.”

22 tn Heb “went and returned.”

23 tn Heb “inheritance.”

24 tn Heb “and lived in them.”

25 tn Heb “his inheritance.”

26 tn Heb “Each was doing what was right in his [own] eyes.”

sn *Each man did what he considered to be right.* The Book of Judges closes with this note, which summarizes the situation of the Israelite tribes during this period.