

**This book contains the account
of people who delivered Israel
from their enemies. We call this
book
Judges**

The tribes of Judah and Simeon defeated the Canaanites

¹ After Joshua died, the Israeli people asked Yahweh, “Which *of our tribes* should attack the Canaan people-group first?”

² Yahweh replied, “I will enable the tribe of Judah to defeat [IDM] the Canaan people-group.”

³ The men of Judah went to their fellow Israelis, *the men* from the tribe of Simeon, and said to them, “Come and help us to fight the Canaan people-group *in order that we can take from them* the land *that Yahweh* allotted to us. If you do that, we will go with you *and help you* conquer the people in the land *that Yahweh promised to give to you.*” So the men from the tribe of Simeon went with the men of the tribe of Judah.

⁴ When the men of those two tribes attacked, Yahweh enabled them to defeat 10,000 men of the Canaan people-group and the Periz people-group [DOU] at Bezek *city*.

⁵ During the battle they found Adoni-Bezek, the leader of the city,

⁶ but he *tried to* run away. The Israelis pursued him and caught him. Then they cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

⁷ Adoni-Bezek said, “*My army captured 70 kings. We cut off their thumbs and big toes. After that, we forced those kings to eat scraps that fell from our table. Now God has ◀paid me back for/done to me like▶ what we did to them.*” Then the men of Judah took Adoni-Bezek to Jerusalem, and he died there.

⁸ The army of Judah fought against the men of Jerusalem, and they captured the city. With their swords they killed *the people who lived there* and they burned *the houses in the city*.

⁹ Later, the men of Judah went down to fight the Canaan people-group who lived in the hilly area, in the desert to the south, and in the foothills *to the west*.

¹⁰ The men of Judah also went to fight against the Canaan people-group who lived in Hebron city, which at that time was named Kiriath-Arba. They defeated *the armies of kings* Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

Springs for Caleb’s daughter

¹¹ Then they left that area and went to fight against the people living in Debir city, which was previously named Kiriath-Sepher.

¹² *Before they attacked the city*, Caleb said to them, “If one of you attacks and captures Kiriath-Sepher, I will allow him to marry my daughter.”

¹³ Othniel, who was the son of Caleb’s younger brother Kenaz, captured the city. So Caleb gave his daughter Acsah to him, to become his wife.

¹⁴ When Acsah married Othniel, she told him to ask her father to give him a field. *But she decided to ask him herself. She rode to Caleb's house on her donkey, and when she got off the donkey, Caleb could see that something was troubling her. So he asked her, "What do you want?"*

¹⁵ She replied, "I want you to do a favor for me. You have given me some land in the southern desert, *but it is very dry there*. So please also give me some *land that has* springs of water." So Caleb gave her some land on higher ground that had a spring, and some land on lower ground that also had a spring.

More fights against the Canaanites

¹⁶ The people of the Ken people-group who were descendants of Moses' father-in-law left Jericho, which was called 'The City of Palm Trees'. They went with some of the men of Judah to live with them in the southern desert area, near Arad *city*.

¹⁷ The men of Judah and their fellow Israelis from the tribe of Simeon defeated the people of the Canaan people-group who lived in Zephath *city*. They completely destroyed the city and gave it a new name, Hormah, *which means 'complete destruction'*.

¹⁸ The men of Judah also captured Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron *cities* and all the land that is near those cities.

¹⁹ Yahweh helped the men of Judah to capture the hilly area, but they could not force the people who were living in the plains to leave, because

those people had better weapons—they had iron chariots.

²⁰ Hebron city was given to Caleb because Moses had promised him that he could have that city. And Caleb forced the three clans descended from Anak to leave that area.

²¹ But the people of the tribe of Benjamin could not force the people of the Jebus people-group to leave Jerusalem. So, since that time the people of the Jebus people-group have lived in Jerusalem with the people of the tribe of Benjamin.

²² The men of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh went to fight against *the men of Bethel city*, and Yahweh helped them.

²³ They sent some spies to *find out everything that they could find out about* Bethel, which was previously called Luz.

²⁴ The spies saw a man who was coming out of the city. They said to him, “If you show us a way to get into the city, we will be kind to you *and we will not kill you.*”

²⁵ So the man showed them a way to enter the city. The men of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh entered the city and killed all the people with their swords, but they did not kill the man *who showed them how to get into the city*, and they did not kill his family.

²⁶ That man went to the area where the descendants of Heth lived, and built a city. He named the city Luz, and that is still the name of that city.

²⁷ There were people of the Canaan people-group who lived in Beth-Shan, Taanach, Dor,

Ibleam, and Megiddo *cities* and in the surrounding villages. *The men of* the tribe of Manasseh did not force those people to leave those towns, because the people of the Canaan people-group were determined to stay there.

²⁸ Later, the Israelis became ◀stronger/more numerous▶, and they forced the people of the Canaan people-group to work for them *as their slaves*, but they did not force all the people of the Canaan people-group to leave their land.

²⁹ *The men of* the tribe of Ephraim did not force the people of the Canaan people-group to leave Gezer *city*. So the people of the Canaan people-group continued to live with the people of the tribe of Ephraim.

³⁰ *The men of* the tribe of Zebulun did not compel the people of the Canaan people-group who were living in Kitron and Nahalol *cities* to leave. They stayed there and lived among the people of the tribe of Zebulun, but the people of Zebulun forced them to work for them as their slaves.

³¹ *The men of* the tribe of Asher did not force the people of the Canaan people-group who lived in Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek and Rehob *cities* to leave.

³² So the people of the tribe of Asher lived among them.

³³ *The men of* the tribe of Naphtali did not compel the people who lived in Beth-Shemesh and Beth-Anath *cities* to leave, so the people in those two cities continued to live there, but the people of the Canaan people-group were forced

to work as the slaves of the people of the tribe of Naphtali.

³⁴ The people of the Amor people-group forced the people of the tribe of Dan to live in the hills. They did not allow them to come down *and live* on the plain.

³⁵ The people of the Amor people-group were determined to stay in Heres Mountain and in Aijalon and Shaalbim *cities*. But when the Israelis became ◀stronger/more numerous▶, they forced the people of the Amor people-group to work as their slaves.

³⁶ The land where the Amor people-group lived extended from Scorpion Pass *toward the west* beyond Sela *town*, up into the hilly area.

2

Yahweh's message to Israel

¹ Yahweh *appeared in the form of* an angel and went up from Gilgal to *a place that was later called* Bokim. He said *to the Israeli people*, "I brought your *ancestors* up here from Egypt. I led them into this land that I solemnly promised to give to your ancestors. I said to them, 'The agreement that I made with you, as for me, I will never ◀break it/say that it is ended▶.

² But as for you, you must never make a peace agreement with the people who live in this land. You must tear down the altars *where they make sacrifices to idols*.' But you have not obeyed me.

³ So now, I am telling you that I will not expel *your enemies* as you advance. They will be like

thorns in your sides. And *they* will try to trap you *by making you worship* their idols.”

⁴ After he told that to all the Israelis, the people cried loudly.

⁵ They called that place Bokim, *which means ‘weeping’*. There they offered sacrifices to Yahweh.

Joshua died

⁶ After Joshua sent the Israeli people away, each group went to possess the land that had been allotted to them.

⁷ They served Yahweh as long as Joshua was alive, and as long as the elders, those who had seen all the great things that Yahweh had done for Israel, were alive.

⁸ Then Yahweh’s servant Joshua died. He was 110 years old when he died.

⁹ They buried his body in the area he had received *from Moses*, at Timnath-Serah, in the area where the descendants of Ephraim lived, north of Gaash Mountain.

The Israelis were punished for doing evil things

¹⁰ After all the people died who lived at the same time as Joshua [EUP], a group of people grew up who did not know Yahweh, and did not know what great things he had done for the Israeli people.

¹¹⁻¹³ They did things that Yahweh said were very evil. They worshiped *idols that represented the god* Baal and the goddess Astarte. They worshiped [DOU] the various gods that the people-groups around them worshiped. They

stopped worshiping Yahweh, the God their ancestors worshiped, the one who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt. That caused Yahweh to be very angry.

¹⁴ So he allowed people from other groups to raid them and steal their crops and animals. They were no longer able to resist their enemies, and Yahweh allowed all their enemies around them to defeat them.

¹⁵ Whenever the Israelis went to fight *their enemies*, Yahweh [MTY] was opposing them, and allowed their enemies to defeat them, just as he had promised he would do. So the Israelis were greatly distressed.

¹⁶ Then Yahweh gave leaders to them. These leaders rescued the Israelis from the people who were raiding them.

¹⁷ But the Israelis still would not pay attention to their leaders. Instead, they went to the idols, *acting like prostitutes who gave themselves to men who were not their husbands* [MET], and they worshiped those idols. They were not like their ancestors. Their ancestors obeyed what Yahweh commanded, but their descendants quickly stopped behaving as their ancestors had behaved.

¹⁸ Whenever Yahweh gave a leader to them, he helped that leader and enabled him to rescue the people from their enemies. He helped them like that as long as that leader was alive. Yahweh pitied them as they groaned because they were being oppressed and caused to suffer.

¹⁹ But after that leader died, the people went

back to behaving in ways even more evil than their ancestors had behaved. They worshiped other gods and bowed down to them and did all [LIT] the things that they thought those gods wanted them to do.

²⁰ So Yahweh was very angry with the Israeli people. He said, "These people have disobeyed the agreement I made with their ancestors. They have not done what I told them to do.

²¹ So I will no longer expel the people-groups that Joshua left in this land when he died.

²² I will use them to test the Israeli people to see whether they will do what I want them to do, as their ancestors did."

²³ Yahweh had allowed those people-groups to stay in that land. He did not expel them by allowing Joshua *and his men* to defeat them.

3

¹⁻² At that time there were still many people-groups in Canaan. Yahweh left them there to test the Israeli people. But many of the Israelis in Canaan were ones who had not fought in any of the wars in Canaan. So Yahweh also left those people-groups in Canaan so that the descendants of those who had not fought in any of the wars might learn how to fight.

³ *This is a list of* the people-groups that Yahweh left there: The Philistines and their five leaders, the people living in the area near Sidon *city*, the descendants of Canaan, and the descendants of Hiv who were living in the mountains of Lebanon between Baal-Hermon Mountain and Lebo-Hamath.

⁴ Yahweh left these people-groups there to test the Israelis, to see if they would obey his commands which he had told Moses to give them.

⁵ The Israelis lived among the Canaan people-group, the Hiv people-group, the Amor people-group, the Periz people-group, the Hiv people-group, and the Jebus people-group.

⁶ *Moses had told the people not to associate with any of those people.* But the Israelis took daughters of people from those people-groups *to be their own wives*, and gave their own daughters to men of those groups, to marry them. And *as a result* they started to worship the gods of those people-groups.

Othniel became their leader

⁷ The Israelis did things that Yahweh said were very evil. They forgot about Yahweh, their God, and they started to worship *the idols that represented* the god Baal and the goddess Asherah.

⁸ Yahweh became very angry with the Israelis. So he allowed king Cushan from Mesopotamia to conquer them and rule them for eight years.

⁹ But when they pleaded to Yahweh *to help them*, he gave them a leader to rescue them. He was Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz.

¹⁰ Yahweh's Spirit came upon him, and he became their leader. He *led an army that fought against the army of* Cushan, and defeated them.

¹¹ After that, there was peace in the land for 40 years, until Othniel died.

Ehud became their next leader

¹² After that, the Israelis again did things that Yahweh said were very evil. As a result, he allowed the army of King Eglon, who ruled *the Moab area*, to defeat the Israelis.

¹³ Eglon persuaded the leaders of the Ammon and Amalek people-groups to join their armies with his army to attack Israel. They captured *Jericho, which was called 'The City of Palm Trees'*.

¹⁴ Then King Eglon ruled the Israelis for eighteen years.

¹⁵ But then the Israelis again pleaded to Yahweh *to help them*. So he gave them another leader to rescue them. He was Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera, from the descendants of Benjamin. The Israelis sent him to King Eglon to give him their yearly protection money.

¹⁶ Ehud had with him a double-edged dagger, about a foot and a half long. He strapped it to his right thigh, under his clothes.

¹⁷ He gave the money to King Eglon, who was a very fat man.

¹⁸ Then Ehud started to go back home with the men who had carried the money.

¹⁹ When they arrived at the stone carvings near Gilgal, *he told the other men to go on, but he himself turned around and went back to the king of Moab. When he arrived at the palace*, he said to the king, "Your majesty, I have a secret message for you." So the king told all his servants to be quiet, and sent them out of the room.

²⁰ Then, as Eglon was sitting alone in the upstairs room of his summer palace, Ehud came

close to him and said, "I have a message for you from God." As the king got up from his chair,

²¹ Ehud reached with his left hand and pulled the dagger from his right thigh, and plunged it into the king's belly.

²² He thrust it in so far that the handle went into the king's belly, and the blade came out the king's back. Ehud did not pull the dagger out. *He left it there, with the handle buried in the king's fat.*

²³ Then Ehud left the room. He went out to the porch. He shut the doors to the room and locked them.

²⁴ After he had gone, King Eglon's servants came back, but they saw that the doors of the room were locked. They said, "The king must be defecating in the inner room."

²⁵ So they waited, but when the king did not open the doors of the room, after a while they were worried. They got a key and unlocked the doors. And they saw that their king was lying on the floor, dead.

²⁶ Meanwhile, Ehud escaped. He passed by the stone carvings and arrived at Seirah, in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim lived.

²⁷ There he blew a trumpet *to signal that the people should join him to fight the people of Moab.* So the Israelis went with him from the hills. They went down *toward the Jordan river*, with Ehud leading them.

²⁸ He said to the men, "Yahweh is going to allow us to defeat your enemies, the people of Moab. So follow me!" So they followed him

down to the river, and they stationed some of their men at the place where people can walk across the river, in order that they could *kill any people from Moab who tried to cross the river to escape*.

²⁹ At that time, the Israelis killed about 10,000 people from Moab. They were all strong and capable men, but not one of them escaped.

³⁰ On that day, the Israelis conquered the people of Moab. Then there was peace in their land for 80 years.

Shamgar became their next leader

³¹ After Ehud *died*, Shamgar became their leader. He rescued the Israelis *from the Philistines*. *In one battle* he killed 600 Philistines with an ◀ox goad/sharp wooden pole▶.

4

Deborah became the next leader

¹ After Ehud died, the Israelis again started doing things Yahweh said were very evil.

² So he allowed the army of Jabin, one of the kings of Canaan land, who ruled in Hazor city, to conquer the Israelis. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-Haggoyim.

³ Sisera's *army* had 900 chariots. For 20 years he oppressed the Israelis. Then they pleaded to Yahweh to help them.

⁴ At that time Deborah, who was the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophetess who had become the leader in Israel.

⁵ She would sit under her palm tree at a place between Ramah and Bethel, in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and people would come to her and ask her to settle disputes between them.

⁶ One day she summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam, when he was in Kedesh, in the area where the descendants of Naphtali lived. She said to him, "This is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelis worship, is commanding you to do: 'Take with you 1,000 men, some from the descendants of Naphtali and some from the descendants of Zebulun, and lead them to Tabor Mountain.

⁷ Yahweh will lure Sisera, the commander of King Jabin's army, to come with his chariots and his army, to the Kishon River, *a few miles away*. I will enable your men to defeat them there.' "

⁸ Barak replied, "I will go only if you go with me."

⁹ She replied, "Okay, I will go with you. But because that is what you have decided to do, Yahweh will enable a woman to defeat Sisera, and the result will be that ◀you will not be honored/people will not honor you▶ *for doing that*."

¹⁰ So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. There he summoned men from Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men came to him, and then they went together with Deborah *to Tabor Mountain*.

¹¹ At that time Heber, one of the descendants of the Ken people-group, had moved *with his wife Jael* from the area where that group lived, and set

up his tent near the big oak tree at Zaanannim, near Kedesh. Heber was a descendant of Moses' brother-in-law Hobab.

¹² Someone told Sisera that Barak had gone up on Tabor Mountain *with an army*.

¹³ So he gathered his troops with their 900 chariots, and they marched from Harosheth-Haggoyim to the Kishon River.

¹⁴ Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get ready! This is the day that Yahweh will enable your *army* to defeat the army of Sisera. Yahweh is going ahead of you!" So Barak led his men as they descended from Tabor Mountain.

¹⁵ As they advanced, Yahweh caused Sisera and all his chariots and his army to have great difficulty maneuvering/moving around. So Sisera jumped down from his chariot and ran away.

¹⁶ But Barak and his men pursued the other chariots and the enemy soldiers as far as Harosheth-Haggoyim. They killed all of the men in Sisera's army. Not one man survived.

¹⁷ But Sisera ran to Jael's tent. He did that because *his boss*, King Jabin of Hazor *city*, was a good friend of *Jael's husband* Heber.

¹⁸ Jael went out to greet Sisera. She said to him, "Sir, come into my tent! Do not be afraid!" So he went into the tent *and lay down*, and she covered him with a blanket.

¹⁹ He said to her, "I'm thirsty; can you give me some water?" So she opened a leather container of milk, and gave him a drink. Then she covered him with the blanket again.

²⁰ He said to her, “Stand in the entrance of the tent. If someone comes and asks ‘Is anyone else here?’, say ‘No.’ ”

²¹ Sisera was very exhausted, so he soon was asleep. While he was sleeping, Jael crept quietly to him, holding a hammer and a tent peg. She pounded the peg into his skull, and all the way through his head into the ground, and he died.

²² When Barak passed by Jael’s tent to look for Sisera, she went out to greet him. She said, “Come in, and I will show you the man you are searching for!” So he followed her into the tent, and he saw Sisera lying there, dead, with the tent peg through his head.

²³ On that day God enabled the Israelis to defeat *the army of* Jabin, the king of the people of Canaan.

²⁴ From that time, the Israeli people continued to become stronger, and *the army of* King Jabin continued to become weaker. Finally the Israelis were able to completely subdue the people ruled by the king of Canaan.

5

The song that Deborah sang

¹ On that day, Deborah sang this song, along with Barak:

² “When the leaders of the Israeli people really lead them, and the people follow them, *it is time to praise Yahweh!*”

³ Listen, you kings! Pay attention, you leaders!

I will sing to Yahweh. With this song I will praise Yahweh, the God we Israelis worship.

⁴ O Yahweh, when you came from Seir, when you marched from that land *better known as* Edom, the earth shook, and rain poured down from the skies.

⁵ The mountains shook when you came, just like Sinai Mountain shook when you appeared there, because you are Yahweh, the God whom we Israelis worship.

⁶ “When Shamgar was our leader and when Jael ruled us, *we were afraid to walk on the main roads; instead, caravans of travelers walked on winding less traveled roads to avoid being molested.*

⁷ People left their small villages, *and moved into the walled cities* until I, Deborah, became their leader. *I became like a mother to the Israeli people.*

⁸ When the Israeli people *abandoned Yahweh and* chose new gods, enemies attacked the gates of the cities, and then *they took away* the shields and spears from 40,000 Israeli soldiers. Not one shield or spear was left.

⁹ I am thankful for the leaders and soldiers who volunteered *to fight.* Praise Yahweh *for them!*

10 “You wealthy people who ride on donkeys,
sitting on nice padded saddles,
and you people who just walk on the road,
you all listen!

11 Listen to the voices of the singers who gather at
the places where *the animals drink* water.
They tell about how Yahweh acted right-
teously
when he enabled the Israeli warriors to
conquer *their enemies*.

“Yahweh’s people marched down to the gates of
our city.

12 The people came to my house and shouted,
‘Deborah, wake up! Wake up and start
singing!’

They also shouted,
‘Barak, son of Abinoam, get up, and capture
our enemies!’

13 Later, some of the Israeli people came down
from Tabor Mountain
with us, their leaders.

These men who belonged to Yahweh came with
me
to fight their strong enemies.

14 Some came from the tribe descended from
Ephraim.

They came from land that once belonged to
the descendants of Amalek.

And men from the tribe descended from Ben-
jamin followed them.

Troops from the group descended from
Makir also came down,

and officers from the tribe descended from Zebulun came down, carrying staffs.

¹⁵ Leaders from the tribes descended from Issachar joined Barak and me.

They followed Barak, rushing down into the valley.

But men from the tribe descended from Reuben could not decide whether or not to join us.

¹⁶ Why did you men stay at your sheep pens, waiting to hear the shepherds whistle for their flocks of sheep to come to the pens? Men in the tribe descended from Reuben could not decide whether they would join us to fight our enemies, or not.

¹⁷ Similarly, the men living in the Gilead area stayed at home, east of the Jordan River.

And the men from the tribe descended from Dan, why did they stay home?

The tribe descended from Asher sat by the seashore.

They stayed in their coves.

¹⁸ But men from the tribe descended from Zebulun risked ◀their lives/were ready to die fighting▶ on the battlefield, and men descended from Naphtali were ready to do that, also.

¹⁹ “The kings of Canaan fought us at Taanach, near the springs in Megiddo Valley.

But since they did not defeat us,
they did not carry away any silver or other treasures from the battle.

- 20 *It was as though* the stars in the sky fought for
us
and as though those stars in their paths
fought against Sisera.
- 21 The Kishon River swept them away—
that river that has been there for ages.
I will tell myself to be brave and continue
marching on.
- 22 The hooves of the horses of Sisera's *army*
pounded the ground.
Those powerful horses kept galloping along.
- 23 The angel sent by Yahweh said,
'Curse the people of Meroz *town*,
because they did not come to help Yahweh
to defeat the mighty warriors *of Canaan*.'
- 24 "But God is very pleased with Jael,
the wife of Heber from the Ken people-
group.
He is more pleased with her than with all the
other women who live in tents.
- 25 Sisera asked for some water,
but Jael gave him some milk.
She brought him some yogurt/curds in a bowl
that was suitable for kings.
- 26 Then, *when he was asleep*, she reached for a
tent peg with her left hand,
and she reached for a hammer with her right
hand.
She hit Sisera hard with it and crushed his head.
She pounded the tent peg right through his
head.
- 27 He collapsed
and fell dead at her feet.

- 28 “Sisera’s mother looked out from her window.
She waited for him to return.
She said, ‘Why is he taking so long to come home
in his chariot?
Why don’t I hear the sound of the wheels of
his chariot?’
- 29 One wise woman replied to her,
and she *kept consoling herself* by repeating
those words:
- 30 ‘Perhaps they are dividing up the things and
the people they captured after the battle.
Each soldier will get one or two women.
Sisera will get some beautiful robes,
and some beautiful embroidered robes for
me.’
- 31 But *that is not what happened!* Yahweh, I hope
that all your enemies will die as Sisera did!
And I desire that all those who love you will
be as strong as the sun when it rises!

6

Gideon became the next leader

¹ Again the Israelis did things that Yahweh said were very evil. So he allowed the people of Midian to conquer them and rule them for seven years.

² The people of Midian treated the Israelis so cruelly that the Israelis fled to the mountains. There they made places to live in caves and animal dens.

³ Whenever the Israelis planted things in their fields, the people of Midian and Amalek and other groups from the east invaded Israel.

4 They set up tents in the area, and then destroyed the crops as far south as Gaza. They did not leave anything for the Israelis' sheep or cattle or donkeys to eat.

5 They came into Israel with their tents and their livestock like a swarm of locusts. There were *so many of them that* arrived riding on their camels that no one could count them. They stayed and ruined the Israelis' crops.

6 The people of Midian took almost everything the Israelis owned. So finally the Israelis pleaded for Yahweh to help them.

7 When the Israelis pleaded with Yahweh to help them because of *what* the people from Midian *were doing to them*,

8 he sent to them a prophet, who said, "Yahweh, the God we Israelis worship, says this: 'Your ancestors were slaves in Egypt.

9 But I rescued them from the leaders of Egypt and from all the others who oppressed them. I expelled their enemies from this land, and gave it to your ancestors.

10 I told you all, "I am Yahweh, your God. You are now in the land where the descendants of Amor live, but you must not worship the gods whom they worship." But you did not pay attention to me.' "

11 One day Yahweh appeared *in the form of* an angel and sat underneath a big oak tree at Ophrah *town*. That tree belonged to Joash, who was from the clan of Abiezer. Joash's son Gideon was threshing wheat in the pit where they pressed *grapes to make* wine. He was

threshing the grain there in order to hide it from the people of Midian.

¹² Yahweh *went over* to Gideon and said to him, “You mighty warrior, Yahweh is helping you!”

¹³ Gideon replied, “Sir, if Yahweh is helping us, why have all these *bad things* happened to us? We heard about [RHQ] all the miracles that Yahweh performed for our ancestors. We heard people tell us about how he rescued them from *being slaves in Egypt*. But now Yahweh has abandoned us, and we are ruled by the people from Midian.”

¹⁴ Then Yahweh turned toward him and said, “I will give you strength to enable you to rescue the Israelis from the people of Midian. I am sending you *to do that!*”

¹⁵ Gideon replied, “But Yahweh, how can I rescue the Israelis? My clan is the least significant in the whole tribe descended from Manasseh, and I am the least significant person in my whole family!”

¹⁶ Yahweh said to him, “I will help you. So you will defeat the army of Midian *as easily* as if you were fighting only one man!”

¹⁷ Gideon replied, “If you are truly pleased with me, do something which will prove that you who are speaking to me are really Yahweh.

¹⁸ But do not go away until I go and bring back an offering to you.”

Yahweh answered, “Okay, I will stay here until you return.”

¹⁹ Gideon hurried to his home. He *killed* a young goat *and* cooked *it*. Then he took ◀a half a

bushel/18 liters► of flour and baked some bread without yeast. Then he put the cooked meat in a basket, and put the broth *from the meat* in a pot, and took it to Yahweh, who was sitting under the tree.

²⁰ Then Yahweh said to him, “Put the meat and the bread on this rock. Then pour the broth on top of it.” So Gideon did that.

²¹ Then Yahweh touched the meat and bread with the walking stick that was in his hand. A fire flamed up from the rock and burned up everything that Gideon had brought! And then Yahweh disappeared.

²² When Gideon realized that it was really Yahweh *who had appeared in the form of an angel and talked with him*, he exclaimed, “O, Yahweh, I have seen you face-to-face *when you had the form of an angel!* So I will surely die!”

²³ But Yahweh called to him and said, “Do not be afraid! You will not die *because of seeing me!*”

²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar to *worship* Yahweh there. He named it ‘Yahweh gives us peace’. That altar is still there in Ophrah town, in the land that belongs to the descendants of Abiezer.

²⁵ That night Yahweh said to Gideon, “Take the second-best/oldest bull from your father’s herd, the bull that is seven years old. *Kill it.* Then tear down the altar that your father built to *worship* the god Baal. Also cut down the pole for worshipping *the goddess* Astarte that is there beside it.

²⁶ Then build a *stone* altar to worship me, your God Yahweh, here on this hill. Take the wood from the pole you cut down and make a fire to

cook the meat of the bull as a burnt offering to me.”

²⁷ So Gideon and his servants did what Yahweh commanded. But they did it at night, because he was afraid what the other members of his family and the other men in town would do to him if they found out that he had done that.

²⁸ Early the next morning, as soon as the men got up, they saw that the altar to Baal had been torn down, and the pole for worshipping Astarte was gone. They saw that there was a new altar there, and on it was what remained from the bull they had sacrificed.

²⁹ The people asked each other, “Who did this?” After they investigated, someone told them that it was Gideon, the son of Joash, *who had done it*.

³⁰ They went to Joash and said to him, “Bring your son out here! ◀He must be executed/ We must kill him▶, because he destroyed our god Baal’s altar and cut down the pole for our goddess Astarte!”

³¹ But Joash replied, “Are you trying to defend Baal? Are you trying to argue his case? Anyone who tries to defend Baal should be executed by tomorrow morning! If Baal is truly a god, he ought to be able to defend himself, and to get rid of the person who tore down his altar!”

³² From that time, people called Gideon Jerub-Baal, which means ‘Baal should defend himself’, because he tore down Baal’s altar.

³³ Soon after that, the armies of the people of Midian and of Amalek and the people from the east gathered together. They crossed the Jordan

River to attack the Israelis. They set up their tents in Jezreel Valley.

³⁴ Then Yahweh's Spirit took control of Gideon. He blew a ram's horn to summon the men to prepare to fight. So the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him.

³⁵ He also sent messengers throughout the tribes descended from *the four tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to tell their soldiers to come*, and all of them came.

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to enable me to rescue the Israeli people as you promised,

³⁷ confirm it by doing this: Tonight I will put a dry wool fleece on the ground where I thresh the grain. Tomorrow morning, if the fleece is wet with dew but the ground is dry, then I will know that I am the one you will enable to rescue the people of Israel as you promised."

³⁸ And that is what happened. When Gideon got up the next morning, he picked up the fleece, and squeezed out a whole bowlful of water!

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me ask you to do one more thing. Tonight I will put the fleece out again. This time, let the fleece remain dry, while the ground is wet with the dew."

⁴⁰ So that night, God did what Gideon asked him to do. The next morning the fleece was dry, but the ground was covered with dew.

7

Gideon and his men defeated the army from

Midian

¹ The next morning, Gideon and his men got up early and went as far as Harod Spring. The army of Midian was camped north of them, in the valley near Moreh Hill.

² Yahweh said to Gideon, “You have too many soldiers with you. If I allow all of you to fight the army of Midian, *if your army defeats them*, they will boast to me that they defeated their enemies by themselves, *without my help*.”

³ So tell the men, ‘Whoever among you is timid or afraid may leave us and go home.’ ” So *after Gideon told that to them*, 22,000 of them went home. Only 10,000 men were left there.

⁴ But Yahweh told Gideon, “There are still too many men! Take them down to the spring, and there I will choose from among them, which ones will go with you and which ones will not go.”

⁵ When Gideon took the men down to the spring, Yahweh told him, “When they drink, put into one group the ones who scoop the water into their hands, and then lap it up like dogs do. Put into another group the ones who kneel down *and bend over* and drink with their mouths in the water.”

⁶ So when they drank, only 300 men drank from their hands. All the others drank with their mouths down in the water.

⁷ Then Yahweh told Gideon, “The 300 men who lapped the water from their hands will be your army! I will enable them to defeat the Midian army. Let all the others go home!”

⁸ So Gideon's 300 men collected the food and rams' horns from all the other men, and then he sent them home.

The men of Midian were camping in the valley below Gideon.

⁹ That night, Yahweh said to Gideon, "Get up and go down to their camp, *and you will hear something that will convince you that I will enable your men to defeat them.*

¹⁰ But if you are afraid to attack them by yourself, take your servant Purah with you.

¹¹ Go down and listen to what some of the Midian soldiers are saying. Then you will be very encouraged, and you will be ready to attack their camp." So Gideon took Purah with him, and they went down to the edge of the enemy camp.

¹² The armies of the people of Midian and Amalek and from the east had set up their tents and looked like a swarm of locusts. It seemed that their camels were as impossible to count as the grains of sand on the seashore.

¹³ Gideon crept closer and heard one man telling a friend about a dream. He said, "I just had a dream, and in the dream I saw a round loaf of barley bread tumble down into our Midian camp. It struck a tent so hard that the tent turned upside down and collapsed!"

¹⁴ His friend said, "Your dream can mean only one thing. It means that God will enable Gideon, the man of Israel, to defeat all of the armies that are here with us men from Midian."

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the *man tell about his dream* and the meaning of that dream, he thanked God. Then he *and Purah* returned to the

Israeli camp, and he shouted to the men, “Get up! Because God is enabling you to defeat the men from Midian!”

¹⁶ He divided his men into three groups. He gave each man a ram’s horn and an empty clay jar. He also gave each of them a torch *that they lit*.

¹⁷ Then he said to them, “Watch me. When we come close to the enemy camp, *spread out to surround the camp*. Then do exactly what I do.

¹⁸ As soon as I and the men with me blow our ram’s horns, you men in the other two groups surrounding the camp blow your horns and shout, ‘*We are doing this for Yahweh and for Gideon!*’ ”

¹⁹ A while before midnight, just after a new group of Israeli guards took the places of the previous group, Gideon and the 100 men with him arrived at the edge of the Midian camp. Suddenly they all blew their horns, and broke their jars.

²⁰ Then the men in all three groups blew their horns and smashed their jars. They held the torches high with their left hands, and held up the horns with their right hands and alternatively blew them and shouted, “*We have swords to fight for Yahweh and for Gideon!*”

²¹ Each of Gideon’s men stood in his position around the enemy camp. As they watched, all the Midian men started running around and shouting in a panic.

²² While the 300 Israeli men kept blowing their horns, Yahweh caused their enemies to start

fighting each other with their swords/daggers. Some of them killed each other. The rest fled. Some fled south to Beth-Shittah. Some fled to Zerarah *village*, near Tabbath.

²³ Then Gideon sent messages to the soldiers in the areas where the descendants of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh lived, to tell them to come and pursue the army of Midian.

²⁴ He also sent messengers throughout the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim lived, saying, "Come down to attack the army of Midian. Come down to the Jordan River, to the place where people can wade across, to prevent enemy troops from crossing it! Station men as far south as Beth-Barah."

So the men of Ephraim did what Gideon told them to do.

²⁵ They also captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two generals of the Midian army. They killed Oreb at *the big rock which is now called the rock of Oreb*, and they killed Zeeb at *the place where people crush grapes that is now called the winepress of Zeeb*. Afterwards, the Israelis cut off the heads of Oreb and Zeeb and brought them to Gideon, while he was near the Jordan River.

8

Gideon killed Zebah and Zalmunna

¹ Then the descendants of Ephraim said to Gideon, "Why have you acted toward us like this? When you went out to fight against the people of Midian, why did you not summon us *to help you?*" They rebuked Gideon severely.

² But Gideon replied, "I have done [RHQ] very little compared with what you have done! My small clan of descendants of Abiezer only started the battle, but *your very large group of descendants of Ephraim helped me to finish the task very well. It is like* the final grapes of the harvest being much better than the first grapes that are picked.

³ God enabled you to defeat Oreb and Zeeb, the generals of the army from Midian. That is [RHQ] much more important than what I did!" After Gideon told them that, they no longer resented what he had done.

⁴ Then Gideon and his 300 men *went east and* crossed the Jordan River. Although they were very tired, they continued to pursue their enemies.

⁵ When they arrived at Succoth town, Gideon said to the town leaders, "Please give my men some food! They are very tired. We are pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

⁶ But the leaders of Succoth replied, "You have not caught [RHQ] Zebah and Zalmunna yet. So why should we give food to your troops *now? Catch them first, and then we will give you food.*"

⁷ Gideon replied, "*Because you said that, after Yahweh enables us to defeat Zebah and Zalmunna, we will return. And then we will make whips from thorns from the desert, and with them we will rip the flesh off your bones!*"

⁸ From there, Gideon *and his 300 men* went to Peniel and asked for food there, but the people gave him the same answer.

⁹ So he said to the men of Peniel, "After I defeat those kings, I will return and tear down this tower!"

¹⁰ By that time, Zebah and Zalmunna had gone to Karkor *town* with 15,000 troops. They were all that were left of the armies that had come from the east. 120,000 of their men had already been killed.

¹¹ Gideon *and his men* went east along the road on which caravans travel. They went past Nobah and Jogbehah *villages* and arrived at the enemy camp by surprise.

¹² Zebah and Zalmunna fled, but Gideon's men pursued them and captured them and all their warriors.

¹³ After that, Gideon and his men *took Zebah and Zalmunna with them* and started to return, going through Heres Pass.

¹⁴ There he captured a young man from Succoth, and demanded that he write down the names of all of the leaders in the town. The young man wrote down seventy-seven names.

¹⁵ Then Gideon and his men returned to Succoth and said to those leaders, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. When we were here before, you made fun of me and said 'You have not [RHQ] caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet! After you catch them, we will give your exhausted men some food.' "

¹⁶ Then Gideon's men took the town leaders and whipped them with whips made from briars from the desert, to teach them *that they deserved to be punished for not giving them any food.*

¹⁷ Then *they went to* Peniel and tore down the tower, and killed all the men in the town.

¹⁸ Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “The men you killed near Tabor *Mountain*, what did they look like?”

They replied, “They were like you; they all looked like they were sons of a king.”

¹⁹ Gideon replied, “They were my brothers! Just as surely as Yahweh lives, I would not kill you if you had not killed them.”

²⁰ Then he turned to his oldest son, Jether. He said to him, “Kill them!” But Jether was only a boy, and he was afraid, so he did not pull out his dagger *to kill them*.

²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, “Do not ask a young boy to do the work that a man should do!” So Gideon killed both of them. Then he took the gold ornaments from the necks of their camels.

Gideon refused to be their king

²² Then a group of Israeli men *came to* Gideon and said to him, “You be our ruler! *We want* you and your son and your grandsons *to be* our rulers, because you rescued us from the Midian army.”

²³ But Gideon replied, “No, I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you.”

²⁴ Then he said, “I request only one thing. I request that each of you give me one earring from the things you captured after the battle.”

[All the men descended from Ishmael wore gold earrings.]

²⁵ They replied, “We will be glad to give earrings to you!” So they spread a cloth *on the ground*, and each man threw on it one gold earring that he had taken *from a man he had killed in the battle*.

²⁶ The weight of all the earrings was ◀43 pounds/19.4 kg▶. That did not include other things *that they gave to Gideon*—the other ornaments or the pendants or the clothes that the kings of Midian wore or the gold chains that were on the necks of their camels.

²⁷ Gideon made/decorated a sacred vest from the gold, and later he put it in his hometown, Ophrah. But soon the Israeli people started to worship the vest. So it became like a trap [MET] for the people, *causing them to worship it instead of worshiping only God*.

Gideon died

²⁸ That is how the Israelis defeated the people from Midian. The people of Midian did not become strong enough to attack Israel again. So while Gideon was alive, there was peace in the land for 40 years.

²⁹ Gideon went back home to live there.

³⁰ He had many wives, and they bore him seventy sons.

³¹ He also had a slave wife in Shechem *town*, who bore him a son whom he named Abimelech.

³² Gideon died when he was very old. They buried his body in the grave where his father Joash was buried, at Ophrah, in the land belonging to the descendants of Abiether.

³³ But as soon as Gideon died, the Israelis *stopped worshiping God and started worshiping the images of the god Baal, like [MET] adultresses leave their husbands and go to sleep with other men.* They made a *statue of a new god called Baal-Berith.*

³⁴ They forgot about Yahweh, the one who had rescued them from all their enemies that surrounded them.

³⁵ And even though Gideon had done many good things for the Israelis, they were not kind to Gideon's family.

9

Abimelech became king in Shechem

¹ Gideon's son Abimelech went to *talk with his mother's brothers in Shechem city.* He said to them and to all his mother's relatives,

² "Ask all the leaders of your city: 'Do you *think it would be good for all 70 of Gideon's sons to rule over you? Or would it be better to have only one of his sons, me, to rule over you?*' And do not forget that I am your relative! [MTY]"

³ So Abimelech's mother's brothers spoke to all the leaders of Shechem about what Abimelech had said. They said to each other, "We should allow Abimelech to rule over us, because he is our relative."

⁴ So the leaders of Shechem took from the temple of *their god Baal-Berith* ◀almost 2 pounds/0.8 kg▶ of silver and gave it to Abimelech. With that silver he paid some worthless troublemakers to help him, and they went with Abimelech wherever he went.

⁵ They went to Ophrah, his father's town, and murdered 69 of his 70 brothers, the sons of his father Gideon. They killed all those men on one huge rock. But Gideon's youngest son Jotham hid *from Abimelech and his men*, and he escaped.

⁶ Then all the leaders of Shechem and Beth-Millo gathered under the big sacred tree in Shechem. There they appointed Abimelech to be their leader.

⁷ When Jotham heard about that, he climbed up Gerizim Mountain. He stood at the top of the mountain and shouted to the people *down below*, "You leaders of Shechem, listen to me, in order that God will listen to you!

⁸ One day the trees decided to appoint a king to rule over all of them. So they said to the olive tree, 'You be our king!'

⁹ "But the olive tree said, 'No! *I will not be your king* Men and gods enjoy the oil from my fruit. I will not [RHQ] stop producing *olives from which we make* that oil, in order to rule over you other trees!'

¹⁰ "Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and be our king!'

¹¹ "But the fig tree replied, 'No! I do not want to [RHQ] stop producing my good sweet fruit, and rule over you other trees!'

¹² "Then the trees said to the grapevine, 'Come and be our king!'

¹³ "But the grapevine replied, 'No! *I will not be your king* The new wine *that is made from my grapes* causes people and gods *who drink it* to become very happy. I do not want to stop

producing grapes and rule over you other trees!' [RHQ]

¹⁴ "Then all the trees said to the thornbush, 'Come and be our king!'

¹⁵ "The thornbush replied, 'If you truly want to appoint me to be your king, come into the shade of my *tiny branches*. But if you do not want to do that, I hope/desire that fire will come out from me and burn up all the huge cedar trees in Lebanon country!'"

¹⁶ "After Jotham finished telling them this parable, he said, "So now I ask you, were you being completely honest and sincere when you appointed Abimelech to be your king [RHQ]? And have you treated Gideon and his family [RHQ] fairly? Have you rewarded Gideon by honoring him as he deserved *because of all the good things he did for you?* No!

¹⁷ "Do not forget that my father fought a battle for you, and he was willing to die for you *if that had been necessary*, to save you from the Midian people-group.

¹⁸ But now you have rebelled against my father's family, and you have killed 69 of his sons on one huge rock. And you have appointed Abimelech—who is the son of my father's slave girl, *not the son of his wife*—to be the king who will rule you people of Shechem. You have done that only because he is one of your relatives!

¹⁹ So, if today you have truly acted fairly and sincerely toward Gideon and his family, I hope/desire that he will cause you to be happy and that you will cause him to be happy.

²⁰ But if what you did was not right, I wish/desire that Abimelech will burn up all of you leaders of Shechem and Beth-Millo with fire! And I also hope/desire that the leaders of Shechem and Beth-Millo will cause fire to burn up Abimelech!”

²¹ *After Jotham finished saying that, he escaped from them and ran away to Beer town. He stayed there because he was afraid that his brother Abimelech would try to kill him.*

Abimelech and his men killed the people of Shechem

²² Abimelech *became the leader of all the people of Israel. He ruled them for three years.*

²³ Then God sent an evil spirit *to cause trouble* between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, with the result that the leaders of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech.

²⁴ The leaders of Shechem had previously helped Abimelech to kill 69 of Gideon’s sons, who were his brothers. So now God sent the evil spirit to punish all of them.

²⁵ The leaders of Shechem ◀set an ambush/sent men to hide▶ on the hilltops to ambush Abimelech. Those men robbed everyone who passed by. But someone told Abimelech about it, *so he did not go near them.*

²⁶ There was a man named Gaal, the son of Ebed, who moved into Shechem city, along with his brothers. Soon the leaders of Shechem started to trust him.

²⁷ They went out *of the city* to their vineyards and picked some grapes. They pressed the grapes

to make juice, and then they made wine. Then they had a feast in the temple of their god, and they ate *a lot of food* and drank *a lot of wine*. Then they cursed Abimelech.

²⁸ Gaal said, “◀Why should we allow Abimelech to rule over us?/We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us!▶ [RHQ] He is only one of Gideon’s sons *so he really does not belong to us* [RHQ]! And he appointed Zebul, the governor of our city, to be his deputy! We should ◀serve/be loyal to▶ *one of the descendants of Hamor, the founder of our city*, and let him be our leader, not Abimelech [RHQ]!

²⁹ If you would appoint me to be your leader, I would get rid of Abimelech. I would say to him, ‘Get your army ready, *and then come to fight us!*’ ”

³⁰ When someone told Zebul what Gaal said, he was very angry.

³¹ He secretly sent some messengers to Abimelech. They told him, “Gaal and his brothers have come here to Shechem, and they are causing *the people of the city* to rebel against you.

³² You and your men should get up during the night and go and hide in the fields outside the city.

³³ As soon as the sun rises in the morning, get up and attack the city. When Gaal and his men come out to fight against you, you can do to them whatever you want to.”

³⁴ So Abimelech and all the men who were with him got up during the night. They *divided into four groups, and hid in the fields* near Shechem.

³⁵ *The next morning*, Gaal went out and stood at the entrance to the city gate. While he was standing there, Abimelech and his soldiers came out of their hiding places *and started walking toward the city*.

³⁶ When Gaal saw the soldiers, he said to Zebul, "Look! There are people coming down from the hills!"

But Zebul said, "You are seeing only the shadows *of trees* on the hills. *They are not people; they only resemble people.*"

³⁷ But Gaal *looked again and* said, "Look! There are people coming down from the top of the sacred mountain! There is a group of them coming down from where the tree is where people talk with the spirits of dead people!"

³⁸ Zebul said to Gaal, "Now ◀what good is your bragging?/ your bragging is worthless!▶ [MTY, RHQ] You said, '◀Why should we serve Abimelech/We should not allow Abimelech to rule over us▶?' You made fun of these men. So now go out and fight them!"

³⁹ So Gaal led the men of Shechem outside *the city* to fight Abimelech *and his men*.

⁴⁰ Abimelech and his men pursued them, and they killed many of Gaal's men before they could return *safely* inside the city gate.

⁴¹ Abimelech then stayed at Arumah, *about five miles away from Shechem*, and Zebul's men forced Gaal and his brothers to leave Shechem.

⁴² The next day, the people of Shechem *got ready to leave the city and work* in their fields. When someone told Abimelech about that,

⁴³ he divided his men into three groups, and told them to hide in the fields. So they did that. And when they saw the people coming out of the city, they jumped up and attacked them.

⁴⁴ Abimelech and the men who were with him ran to the city gate. The other two groups ran out to the people in the fields and attacked them.

⁴⁵ Abimelech and his men fought all day. They captured the city and killed all the people. They tore down all the buildings, and then they threw salt over the ruins *in order that nothing would grow there again.*

They killed the people in the fortress

⁴⁶ When the leaders who lived in the tower/fortress outside of Shechem heard what had happened, they ran and hid inside the *fortress, which was also a temple of their god El-Berith.*

⁴⁷ But someone told Abimelech that all the leaders had gathered there.

⁴⁸ So he and all the men who were with him went up Zalmon Mountain *which is near Shechem.* Abimelech cut some branches of trees with an axe, and put them on his shoulders. Then he said to all the men who were with him, “Quickly, do what I have just done!”

⁴⁹ So his men all cut branches *then carried them down the mountain,* following Abimelech. They went to the fortress and piled the branches against its walls. Then they kindled a fire, and the fire burned down the fortress and killed all the people who were inside. So all the people who were inside the fortress—about 1,000 men and women—died.

Abimelech was killed

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech and his men went to Thebes city. They surrounded it and captured it.

⁵¹ But there was a strong tower inside the city. So all the men, women, and leaders of the city ran to the tower. When they were all inside, they locked the door. Then they climbed up to the roof of the tower.

⁵² Abimelech and his men came to the tower and tried to get in the door, *but they could not*. Then Abimelech prepared to light a fire to burn down the door.

⁵³ But when Abimelech came near the doorway, a woman *who was on the roof* dropped a big grinding stone on his head, and crushed his skull.

⁵⁴ Abimelech quickly called to the young man who carried Abimelech's weapons, and said, "Pull out your sword and kill me with it! I do not want people to say 'It was a woman who killed Abimelech.'" So the young man thrust his sword into Abimelech, and Abimelech died.

⁵⁵ When the Israeli soldiers saw that Abimelech was dead, they all returned to their homes.

⁵⁶ In that way God punished Abimelech for the evil things that he had done to his father and especially for killing all 69 of his brothers.

⁵⁷ God also punished the men of Shechem for the evil things that they had done. And when those things happened, it fulfilled what Gideon's son Jotham said when he cursed *Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem*.

10

Tola ruled the Israelis

¹ After Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah and grandson of Dodo became the leader to rescue the Israeli people *from their enemies*. He belonged to the tribe of Issachar, but he lived in Shamir *city* in the hilly area where the descendants of Ephraim live.

² He ruled the Israeli people for 23 years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

Jair ruled the Israelis

³ After Tola died, Jair, from *the Gilead region*, became the Israelis' leader, and he ruled them for 22 years.

⁴ He had thirty sons, and each of them had his own donkey to ride on. They each controlled a different town in *the Gilead region*. That region is still named 'The Towns of Jair'.

⁵ When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon *city*.

The Ammon people-group oppressed the Israelis

⁶ Again the Israelis did things that Yahweh said were wrong/evil. They worshiped *the idols of their god* Baal and *their goddess* Astarte. They also worshiped the gods of the Aram, Sidon, Moab, and Ammon people-groups, and the gods of the Philistia people-group. They abandoned Yahweh and stopped worshipping him.

⁷ So Yahweh was very angry with them, and he allowed the Philistia and Ammon people-groups to defeat [IDM] the Israelis.

⁸ In that same year, those people started to oppress the Israelis who lived in *the Gilead region* on the east side of the Jordan River. That was where the Amor people-group also lived. They caused the Israelis who lived in that region to suffer for 18 years.

⁹ Then the people of the Ammon people-group crossed the Jordan River to fight against the people of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. They caused the Israelis' lives to be very miserable.

¹⁰ So the Israelis cried out to Yahweh, saying "We have sinned against you. We have abandoned you, and we have been worshiping *the idols of their god Baal.*"

¹¹ Yahweh answered them, saying, "When the people of Egypt, and the Amor and Ammon and Philistia people-groups

¹² and the Sidon and Amalek and Maon people-groups were cruel to you, you cried out to me, and then I rescued you.

¹³ But now you have abandoned me again, and you have been worshiping other gods. So I will not rescue you again.

¹⁴ You have chosen those gods *to be the ones that you worship.* So call to them to help you. Allow them to rescue you when you have a lot of trouble!"

¹⁵ But the Israeli people said to Yahweh, "Truly we have sinned. Punish us in whatever way you wish to, but please rescue us now!"

¹⁶ Then the Israelis threw away the *idols of the gods* that belonged to other people-groups,

and they worshiped Yahweh again. He saw that they were suffering very much, and he felt sorry [IDM] for them.

¹⁷ The Ammon people-group gathered to fight *against the Israelis*, and they set up their tents in *the Gilead region*. The Israeli men also gathered and set up their tents at Mizpah, *which was a city in Gilead*.

¹⁸ The Israeli leaders said, “Who will lead our soldiers to attack the Ammon people-group? The one who will lead us will become the leader of all us who live in this *Gilead region*.”

11

Jephthah was chosen to be their leader

¹ *There was a man from the Gilead region* named Jephthah. He was a great warrior. His father was also named Gilead. But his mother was a prostitute.

² Gilead’s wife gave birth to several sons. When they grew up, they forced Jephthah to leave home, saying to him, “You are the son of a prostitute, *not the son of our mother*. So *when our father dies*, you will not receive any of his property.”

³ So Jephthah ran away from his brothers, and he went to the Tob region. While he was there, some worthless men started to spend a lot of time with him.

⁴ Some time later, the Ammon people-group started to fight against the Israelis.

⁵ When that happened [DOU], the leaders of the *Gilead region* went to Jephthah to bring him back from the Tob region *to their area*.

⁶ They said to him, “Come *with us* and lead our army, and *help us to* fight against the men from the Ammon people-group!”

⁷ But Jephthah replied, “You hated me [RHQ] previously! You forced me to leave my father’s house! So why are you coming to me now, *asking me to help you* when you are experiencing trouble?”

⁸ The leaders from Gilead replied, “Yes, *we are having trouble*, and that is the reason that we have come to you now. If you come with us and *help us to* fight against the Ammon people-group, *after we defeat them*, we will appoint you to be the leader of all us people in the *Gilead region*.”

⁹ Jephthah replied, “If I go back to Gilead with you to fight against the Ammon people-group, and if Yahweh helps us to defeat them, will you truly appoint me to be your leader?”

¹⁰ They replied, “Yahweh is listening to everything that we say. *So he will punish us* if we do not do everything that you tell us to do.”

¹¹ So Jephthah went with them back to the *Gilead region*, and the people appointed him to be their leader and the commander of their army. And Jephthah solemnly promised to Yahweh there at Mizpah *to serve him well*.

Jephthah’s message to the king of the Ammon people-group

¹² Jephthah sent some messengers to the king of the Ammon people-group. They asked the king, “What have we *done to make you angry, with the result* that your army is coming to fight *against the people* in our land?”

¹³ The king replied, “*We have come to fight against you Israelis because* you took our land when you came here from Egypt. You took all our land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River *in the south* to the Jabbok River *in the north*. So if you now give it back to us, there ◀will be peace between us/we will not fight against you▶.”

¹⁴ *The messengers returned to Jephthah and told him what the king had said.* So Jephthah sent the messengers to the king again.

¹⁵ They said to him, “This is what Jephthah says: ‘It is not *true* that we Israelis took the land from the Moab people-group and the Ammon people-group.’”

¹⁶ When the Israeli people came out of Egypt, they walked through the desert to the Red Sea, and then *walked across it and traveled to Kadesh town at the border of the Edom region.*

¹⁷ They sent messengers to the king of the Edom people-group, to say to him, “Please allow us Israelis to walk across your land.” But the king of the Edom people-group refused. Later we sent the same message to the king of the Moab people-group, but he also refused to allow the Israelis to go through his land. So the Israelis stayed at Kadesh *for a long time.*

18 Then the Israelis went into the desert and walked outside the borders of the Edom and Moab regions. They walked east of the Moab region, east of the Arnon River; *which is the eastern border of the Moab region*. They did not cross that river to enter *the Moab region*.

19 ‘Then the Israelis sent a message to Sihon, the king of the Amor people-group, who lived in Heshbon city. They asked him, “Will you please allow us Israeli people to cross through your land to arrive at the land to which we *are going*.”

20 But Sihon did not trust the Israelis; *he thought that they would steal some of the things in his land*. So he gathered all his troops and they set up their tents at Jahaz village and then they attacked the Israelis.

21 But Yahweh, the God whom we Israelis *worship*, enabled the Israeli army to defeat [IDM] Sihon and his army. Then they ◀took possession of/started to live in▶ all the land where the Amor people-group had lived.

22 The Israelis took all the land that belonged to the Amor people-group, from the Arnon River *in the south* to the Jabbok River *in the north*, and from the desert *in the east* to the Jordan River *in the west*.

23 ‘It was Yahweh, the God whom we Israelis *worship*, who forced the Amor people-group to leave as the Israelis advanced. So do you now think that you can force the Israelis to leave [RHQ]?’

24 You take the land that your god Chemosh has given to you. And we will live in the land that Yahweh our God has given to us!

25 ◀You are no/Are you▶ better than Zippor's son Balak, who was the king of the Moab people-group? He never [RHQ] quarreled with the Israeli people, and he never started to fight against us [RHQ]!

26 For 300 years the Israeli people have lived in Heshbon and Aroer *cities in your region*, and in the surrounding towns, and in all the cities along the Arnon River. Why have you people of the Ammon people-group not taken back those cities during all those years [RHQ]?

27 We have not sinned against you, but you are sinning against me by attacking me *and my army*. I trust that Yahweh, the great judge, will decide whether we Israelis are right, or whether you people of the Ammon people-group are right.' "

28 But the king of the Ammon people-group did not pay attention to that message from Jephthah.

29 Then the Spirit of Yahweh took control of Jephthah. Jephthah went through *the Gilead region* and through the area where the tribe of Manasseh lived, *to enlist/gather men for his army*. *He finally gathered them together* in Mizpah city in *the Gilead region* to fight against the Ammon people-group.

30 There Jephthah made a solemn promise to Yahweh. He said, "If you will enable my army to defeat [IDM] the Ammon people-group,

31 when I return from the battle, I will sacrifice to you the first person who comes out of my house *to greet me*. It will be a sacrifice that will be completely burned *on the altar*."

³² Then Jephthah *and his men* went from Mizpah to attack the Ammon people-group, and Yahweh enabled his army to defeat them.

³³ Jephthah and his men killed them, from Aroer *city* all the way to the area around the city of Minnith. They destroyed 20 cities, as far as *the city of* Abel Keramim. So the Israelis *completely* defeated the Ammon people-group.

³⁴ When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, his daughter was the first one to come out of the house to meet him. She was *joyfully* playing a tambourine and dancing. She was his only child; he had no sons and no other daughters.

³⁵ When Jephthah saw his daughter, he tore his clothes *to show that he was very sad about what he was going to do*. He said to her, "My daughter, you have caused me to become very sad [DOU] because I made a solemn promise to Yahweh *to sacrifice the first one who came out of my house*, and I must do what I promised."

³⁶ His daughter said, "My father, you made a solemn promise to Yahweh. So you must do to me what you promised, because *you said that you would do that if* Yahweh helped you to defeat our enemies, the Ammon people-group."

³⁷ Then she also said, "But allow me to do one thing. ◀First/before you do what you promised▶, allow me to go up into the hilly area and wander around for two months. Since I will never be married *and have children*, allow me and my friends to go and cry together."

³⁸ Jephthah replied, "All right, you may go." So she left for two months. She and her friends stayed in the hills and they cried for her because she would never be married.

³⁹ After two months, she returned to her father Jephthah, and he did to her what he had vowed. So his daughter never was married.

Because of that, the Israelis now have a custom.

⁴⁰ Every year the young Israeli women go *into the hills* for four days to remember *and cry about what happened* to the daughter of Jephthah.

12

Jephthah's army defeated the tribe of Ephraim

¹ The men of the tribe of Ephraim summoned their soldiers, and they crossed *the Jordan River to the town of Zaphon to talk with Jephthah*. They said to him, "◀Why did you not ask us for help?/You should have requested us▶ to help your army fight the Ammon people-group. So we will burn down your house while you are in it."

² Jephthah replied, "The Ammon people-group were oppressing us greatly. When we were prepared to start to attack them, I requested you to come and help us, but you refused. My men and I defeated the Ammon people-group, but you did not help us.

³ When I saw that you would not help us, I was willing to be killed in the battle against the Ammon people-group. But Yahweh helped us to defeat them. *You did not help us when we requested it before*, so ◀why have you come here

today to fight against me?/you should not have come here today to fight against me.►” [RHQ]

⁴ Then Jephthah summoned the men of *the Gilead region* to fight *against the men of the tribe of Ephraim*. The men of the tribe of Ephraim said, “You men from *the Gilead region* are men who deserted us. Long ago you left us and moved to the area between our tribe and the tribe of Manasseh.” *Because of their saying that*, the men of *the Gilead region* attacked the men of the tribe of Ephraim.

⁵ The men of Gilead captured that ◀ford/place where people can walk across▶ at the Jordan River to go to the land where the tribe of Ephraim live. Whenever one of the soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim came to the ford to try to escape, he would say, “Let me cross the river.” Then the men of Gilead would ask him, “Are you from the tribe of Ephraim?” If he said “No,”

⁶ they would say to him, “Say the word ‘Shibboleth’.” The men of Ephraim could not pronounce that word correctly. So if the person from the tribe of Ephraim said ‘Sibboleth’, *they would know that he was lying and that he was really from the tribe of Ephraim, and they would kill him there at the ford.*

So the men of Gilead killed 42,000 people from the tribe of Ephraim at that time.

⁷ Jephthah, the man from *the Gilead region*, was a leader of the Israeli people for six years. Then he died and was buried in a town in *the Gilead region*.

Ibzan became their leader

⁸ After Jephthah died, a man named Ibzan, from Bethlehem, became the leader of the Israeli people.

⁹ He had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He forced all his daughters to marry men who were not in his clan, and brought women from outside his clan to marry his sons. He was the leader of the Israeli people for seven years.

¹⁰ When he died, he was buried in Bethlehem.

Elon became their leader

¹¹ After Ibzan died, a man named Elon, from the tribe of Zebulun, became the leader of the Israeli people. He was their leader for ten years.

¹² Then he died and was buried in Aijalon city in the area where the tribe of Zebulun lives.

Abdon became their leader

¹³ After Elon died, a man named Abdon who was the son of Hillel, from Pirathon city, in the area where the tribe of Ephraim live became the leader of the Israeli people.

¹⁴ He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons. Each of them had his own donkey on which to ride. Abdon was the leader of the Israeli people for eight years.

¹⁵ When Abdon died, he was buried in Pirathon, in the hilly area where the descendants of Amalek lived previously, *but now it is the area where the tribe of Ephraim lives.*

13

Samson was born

¹ Again the Israeli people did things that Yahweh said were very evil. So Yahweh enabled the people of Philistia to conquer them. They ruled over the Israelis for 40 years.

² There was a man named Manoah from the descendants of Dan who lived in Zorah *town*. His wife was unable to become pregnant, so they had no children.

³ One day, Yahweh appeared to Manoah's wife in the form of an angel, and said to her, "Even though you have not been able to give birth to any children until now, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son.

⁴ *From now until he is born*, you must not drink any wine or other alcoholic/fermented drink, and you must not eat any food that will make you unacceptable to God.

⁵ After you give birth to your son, you must never allow his hair to be cut. He must be dedicated to God from the day he is born until the day he dies. He is the one who will rescue *many of the Israeli people from the people of Philistia.*"

⁶ The woman ran and told her husband, "A prophet came to me. He looked awesome, like an angel from God. I did not ask where he came from, and he did not tell me his name.

⁷ But he told me, 'You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. Until then, you must not drink any wine or any alcoholic/fermented drink, and you must not eat any food that would make you unacceptable to God. Your son must be dedicated to God from the day he is born until the day he dies.' "

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh, saying, “O Yahweh, I plead with you, allow that prophet whom you sent to us to come again, and teach us how we should raise the boy who will be born to us.”

⁹ God did what Manoah asked, and Yahweh again appeared to his wife in the form of an angel, while she was out in the field. But again her husband Manoah was not with her.

¹⁰ So she quickly ran and said to her husband, “The man who appeared to me a few days ago has come back again!”

¹¹ Manoah ran back with his wife, and asked, “Are you the man who talked with my wife a few days ago?” He replied, “Yes, I am.”

¹² Manoah asked him, “When what you promised occurs *and my wife gives birth to a son*, what rules must he obey, and what work will he do *when he grows up*?”

¹³ Yahweh replied, “Your wife must obey all the instructions I gave her.

¹⁴ *Before the baby is born*, she must not eat grapes, or drink wine or any other alcoholic/fermented drink, or eat anything that would make her unacceptable to God.”

¹⁵ Then Manoah said, “Please stay here until we can kill and cook a young goat for you.”

¹⁶ Yahweh replied, “I will stay here, but I will not eat anything. However, you may kill an animal and sacrifice it as a burned offering to Yahweh.” (Manoah did not realize that the *man he thought was an angel* was really Yahweh.)

17 Then Manoah asked him, “What is your name? When what you have promised happens, we want to honor you.”

18 Yahweh replied, “◀Why do you ask me my name?/You should not ask me my name.▶ [RHQ] It is ◀wonderful/it cannot be understood▶.”

19 Then Manoah killed a young goat and burned it on a rock, along with a grain offering, as a sacrifice to Yahweh. And Yahweh did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched.

20 Flames from the altar blazed up toward the sky, and Yahweh ascended in the flames. When Manoah and his wife saw that, they prostrated themselves on the ground.

21 Although Yahweh did not appear in the form of an angel to Manoah and his wife again, Manoah realized that the *man they thought was an angel* was really Yahweh.

22 So he said, “Now we will die, because we have seen God!”

23 But his wife said, “No, we will not die, because if Yahweh intended to kill us, he would not have accepted the burned offering and the grain offering. And he would not have appeared to us and told us the wonderful thing that would happen to us, and he would not have performed this miracle.”

24 When their son was born, they named him Samson. Yahweh blessed him as he grew up.

25 And while he was in Mahaneh-Dan, which is between Zorah and Eshtaol towns, Yahweh’s Spirit began to control him.

14

Samson's riddle

¹ One day when Samson was in Timnah town, he saw a young Philistine woman there.

² When he returned home, he told his mother and father, "I saw a young Philistine woman in Timnah, and I want you to get her for me so I can marry her."

³ His mother and father objected very strongly. They said, "Is there no woman from our tribe, or from the other Israeli tribes, that you could marry? Why must you go to the heathen Philistines to get a wife?"

But Samson told his father, "Get her for me! She is the one I want!"

⁴ His mother and father did not realize that Yahweh was arranging this. He was preparing a way for *Samson to defeat* the Philistines, who were ruling over Israel at that time.

⁵ So, as Samson was going down to Timnah, followed by his mother and father, a young lion attacked Samson near the vineyards close to Timnah.

⁶ Then Yahweh's Spirit came upon Samson powerfully, with the result that he tore the lion apart with his hands. He did it *as easily* as if it were a young goat. But he did not tell his mother and father about it.

⁷ When they arrived in Timnah, Samson talked with the young woman, and he liked her very much. *And his father made arrangements for the wedding.*

⁸ Later, when Samson returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to see the carcass of the lion. He discovered that *after other creatures had eaten all the flesh*, a swarm of bees had made a hive in the skeleton and had made some honey.

⁹ So he scooped some of the honey into his hands and ate some of it as he was walking along. He also gave some of it to his mother and father, but he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the skeleton of the lion, *because anyone dedicated to God was not to touch any corpse*.

¹⁰ As his father was making the final arrangements for the marriage, Samson gave a party *for the young men in that area*. That was the custom for men to do when they were about to be married.

¹¹ Thirty young men were invited to the party.

¹² Samson said to them, "Allow me to tell you a riddle. If you tell me the meaning of my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give each of you a linen robe and an extra set of clothes.

¹³ But if you cannot tell me the meaning, you must each give me a linen robe and an extra set of clothes." They replied, "All right. Tell us your riddle."

¹⁴ So he said,
"From the thing that eats came something to eat;
out of something strong came something
sweet."
But for three days they could not tell him the meaning of the riddle.

15 On the fourth day, they said to Samson's bride, "Ask your husband to tell you the meaning of the riddle. If you do not do that, we will burn down your father's house, with you inside it! Did you invite us here only to make us poor *by forcing us to buy a lot of clothes for your husband?*"

16 So Samson's wife came to him, crying, and said to him, "You do not really love me. You hate me! You have told a riddle to my friends, but you have not told me the meaning of the riddle!"

He replied, "I have not told the meaning of the riddle even to my mother and father, so why should I tell it to you?"

17 She continued to cry every time she was with him, all during the rest of the celebration. Finally, on the seventh day, because she continued to nag him, he told her the meaning of the riddle. Then she told it to the young men.

18 So, before sunset on the seventh day, the young men came to Samson and said to him, "What/Nothing is sweeter than honey [RHQ].

What/Nothing is stronger than a lion [RHQ]!"

Samson replied, "*You should not force a heifer to plow a field [MET].*

Similarly, if you had not forced my bride to ask me about the riddle [MET], you would not have known the answer to my riddle!"

19 Then Yahweh's Spirit powerfully took control of Samson. He went down to *the coast at Ashkelon town*, and killed 30 men. He took their clothes *and went back to Timnah* and gave them to the men who had told him the meaning of the

riddle. But he was very angry about what had happened, so he went back home to live with his mother and father.

²⁰ So ◀Samson's wife was given/the bride's father gave Samson's wife▶ to the man who had been Samson's best man at the wedding, *but Samson did not know that.*

15

Samson got revenge on the Philistines

¹ During the time that they harvested wheat, Samson took a young goat to Timnah as a present for his wife. He planned to sleep with [EUP] his wife, but her father would not let him go into *her room.*

² He said to Samson, "I really thought that you hated her. So I gave her to the man who had been your best man at the wedding, and she married him. But look, her younger sister is [RHQ] more beautiful than she is. You can marry her!"

³ Samson replied, "No! And this time I have a right to get revenge on you Philistines!"

⁴ Then he went out *into the fields* and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together, two-by-two. He fastened torches to each pair of tails.

⁵ Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the fields of the Philistines. The fire *from the torches* burned all the grain to the ground, including the grain that had been cut and piled in bundles. The fire also burned down their grapevines and their olive trees.

⁶ The Philistines asked, "Who did this?" Someone told them, "Samson did it. He married a

woman from Timnah, but then his father-in-law gave her to the man who was Samson's best man at the wedding, and she married him." So the Philistines went *to Timnah* and got the woman and her father, and burned them to death.

⁷ Samson *found out about that, and he* said to them, "Because you have done this, I will not stop until I get revenge on you!"

⁸ So he attacked the Philistines furiously, and killed many of them. Then he went *to hide* in a cave in the large rock at a place called Etam.

⁹ The Philistines *did not know where he was, so they* went up to where the descendants of Judah lived, set up their tents near Lehi *town and then raided the town.*

¹⁰ The men there asked the Philistines, "Why have you attacked us?"

The Philistines replied, "We have come to capture Samson. We have come to get revenge on him for what he did to us."

¹¹ *Someone there knew where Samson was hiding.* So 3,000 men from Judah went down to get Samson at the cave in the rock where he was hiding. They said to Samson, "Do you not realize that the people of Philistia are ruling over us? Do you not realize what they will do to us?"

Samson replied, "The only thing I did was that I got revenge on them for what they did to me."

¹² But the men from Judah said to him, "We have come to tie you up and put you in the hands of the Philistines."

Samson said, "All right, but promise me that you yourselves will not kill me!"

13 They replied, “We will just tie you up and take you to the Philistines. We will not kill you.” So they tied him with two new ropes, and led him away from the cave.

14 When they arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came toward him, shouting *triumphantly*. But Yahweh’s Spirit came upon Samson powerfully. He snapped the ropes on his arms as easily as if they were stalks of burned flax, and the ropes fell off his wrists.

15 Then he saw a donkey’s jawbone lying on the ground. It was fresh, *so it was hard*. He picked it up and killed about 1,000 Philistine men with it.

16 Then Samson wrote this poem:
“With the jawbone of a donkey
I have made them like a heap of *dead*
donkeys.

With the jawbone of a donkey
I killed 1,000 men.”

17 When he finished killing those men, he threw the jawbone away, and later that place was called Jawbone Hill.

18 Then Samson was very thirsty, so he called out to Yahweh, “You have given me strength to win a great victory. So now must I die because of being thirsty, with the result that those heathen Philistines will take away my body *and mutilate it?*”

19 So God caused water to gush out of a depression in the ground at Lehi. Samson drank from it and soon felt strong again. He named that place “The spring of the one who called out”. That spring is still there at Lehi.

²⁰ Samson was the leader of the Israeli people for 20 years, but during that time the Philistines *were the ones who really ruled over the land.*

16

Samson removed the gate at Gaza

¹ One day Samson went to Gaza *city in the Philistia area.* He spent some time with a prostitute.

² People soon found out that Samson was there, so the men of Gaza gathered together at the city gate and waited all night. They said to themselves, “When it dawns tomorrow morning, we will kill him *when he tries to leave the city.*”

³ But Samson did not stay there all night. At midnight, he got up. He went to the city gate, he took hold of its two posts, and he lifted it up out of the ground, with its *connecting cross bar* still attached. He put it on his shoulders and carried it *many miles* uphill to Hebron.

⁴ Later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, *and started to live with her.* She lived in Sorek Valley *in the Philistia area.*

⁵ The Philistine leaders went to her and said, “Find out from Samson what makes him so strong. And find out how we can subdue him and tie him up securely. If you do that, each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver.”

⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me what makes you so strong, and tell me how someone can subdue you and tie you up.”

⁷ Samson said, "If someone ties me with seven new bowstrings, ones that are not dry yet, I will become as weak as other men."

⁸ So *after Delilah told that to the Philistine leaders*, they brought seven new bowstrings to Delilah.

⁹ Then she hid the men in one of the rooms in her house. Then *while Samson was sleeping*, she tied him up with the bowstrings. Then she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come here to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as easily as though they were strings that had been singed in a fire. So the Philistines did not find out what made Samson so strong.

¹⁰ Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have deceived me and lied to me! Now tell me *the truth*, how someone can tie you up securely."

¹¹ Samson replied, "If someone ties me with new ropes, ones that have never been used, I will be as weak as other men."

¹² So again, *she told the Philistine leaders, and they came and hid in the room as they had done before*. And again, while Samson was sleeping, she took the new ropes and tied him up with them. Then she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the ropes on his arms as easily as if they were threads.

¹³ Then Delilah said, "You have deceived me and lied to me *again!* Please tell me how someone can tie you up securely!" Samson replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the threads you are weaving on the loom, and then fasten those threads with the pin

that makes the threads tight, then I will be as weak as other men.”

So again, while Samson was sleeping on her lap, Delilah held the seven braids of his hair, and wove them into the threads on the loom,

¹⁴ and she tightened them with the pin. Then she called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!” But Samson woke up and pulled out the pin, and pulled his hair from the threads on the loom.

¹⁵ Then Delilah said to him, “How can you say that you love me when you do not tell me the truth about yourself? You have deceived me three times, and you still have not told me what really makes you so strong!”

¹⁶ Day after day she nagged him like that. He thought he would die from her nagging [IDM].

¹⁷ Finally Samson told her the truth. He said, “I have been set apart for God since the day I was born. And because of that, my hair has never been cut. If my hair were shaved off, my strength would be gone, and I would be as weak as other men.”

¹⁸ Delilah realized that this time he had told her the truth. So she summoned the Philistine leaders again, saying, “Come back one more time, because Samson has really told me everything *about why he is so strong*”. So the Philistine leaders returned and brought to Delilah the money *that they promised to give her*.

¹⁹ Again she lulled Samson to sleep, with his head in her lap. Then she called one of the Philistine men to come and shave off Samson’s

hair. As he did that, Samson began to get weaker. And finally his strength was all gone.

²⁰ Then *after she tied him up*, she called out, “Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!”

He woke up and thought, “I will do as I did before. I will shake *these ropes* off myself and be free!” But he did not realize that Yahweh had left him.

²¹ So the Philistine men seized him and gouged out his eyes. Then they took him to Gaza. There they put him in prison and bound him with bronze chains. They made him *turn a millstone to grind grain every day*.

²² But his hair started to grow again.

Samson killed many thousands of Philistines when he died

²³ *Several months later* the Philistine leaders celebrated a big festival. During the festival they offered sacrifices to their god Dagon. They praised him, saying, “Our god has enabled us to defeat our great enemy Samson!”

²⁴ And when the other people saw Samson, they also praised their god Dagon, saying, “Samson ruined our crops and killed many of our people,
but our god has put our enemy into our hands.

Our god helped us to capture the one who has killed so many of us!”

²⁵ By that time the people were half-drunk. They shouted, “Bring Samson out of the prison! Bring him here so that he can entertain us!”

So they brought Samson from the prison and made fun of him. Then they made him stand in the center of the temple. They made him stand between the two pillars that held up the roof.

²⁶ Samson said to the servant who was leading him by his hand, "Place my hands against the two pillars. I want to rest against them."

²⁷ At that time the temple was full of men and women. All the Philistine leaders were also there. And there were about 3,000 people on the roof, watching Samson and making fun of him.

²⁸ Then Samson prayed, saying, "Yahweh, my Lord, think about me again! Please give me strength one more time, so that I may get revenge on the Philistines for gouging out my eyes!"

²⁹ Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars of the temple. He put his right hand on one pillar and his left hand on the other pillar.

³⁰ Then he shouted *to God*, "Let me die with the Philistines!", and he pushed with all his strength. *The pillars collapsed*, and the temple crashed down on the Philistine leaders and all the other Philistine people, *and they all died*. So Samson killed more people when he died than he had killed all during his life.

³¹ Later his brothers and their relatives went down *from Zorah to Gaza* to get his body. They took it back home and buried it between Zorah and Eshtaol, at the place where Samson's father Manoah was buried. Samson had been Israel's leader for 20 years.

17

Micah made idols and hired a priest

¹ There was a man named Micah who lived in the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim live.

² One day he said to his mother, "I heard you curse whoever stole ◀1,100 pieces/28 pounds/13 kg.▶ of silver from your house. I am the one who took the silver, and I still have it." His mother replied, "My son, I pray that Yahweh will bless you *for admitting that you took it.*"

³ Micah gave all the silver back to his mother. Then she said *to herself*, "I will give *some of* this silver to Yahweh." And she said to her son, "My son, I want you to make an idol and a statue *from this silver*. So I will give *some of* this silver back to you *for making these things.*"

⁴ So when he gave all the silver to his mother, she took ◀200 pieces/about 5 pounds/1.6 kg.▶ of it to a ◀silversmith/man who made things from silver▶. With the silver that man made an idol and a statue, *and gave them to Micah*. Micah put them in his house.

⁵ He had in his house a special ◀shrine/place for putting sacred things▶. He made a sacred vest and some small idols *and put them in this shrine along with the big idol and the statue*. Then Micah chose one of his sons to become his priest.

⁶ At that time, the Israeli people did not have a king. So *Micah and everyone else* did whatever they considered to be the right thing to do.

⁷ There was a young man who had been living in Bethlehem in the area where the tribe of Judah

lives. He *wanted to work as a priest because he* was a member of the tribe of Levi.

⁸ So he left Bethlehem to find another place to live *and work*. He came to Micah's house in the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim live.

⁹ Micah asked him, "Where are you from?"

He replied, "I come from Bethlehem. I am from the tribe of Levi, and I am looking for a place to live *and work as a priest*."

¹⁰ Micah said to him, "Stay with me, and you can become like a father *to counsel me*, and be my priest. Each year I will give to you ten pieces of silver and some *new* clothes. And I will provide food for you."

¹¹ So the young man agreed to live with Micah. He became like one of Micah's own sons.

¹² Micah appointed him to be a priest, and he lived in Micah's house.

¹³ Then Micah said, "Now I know that Yahweh will do good things for me, because I have a man from the tribe of Levi to be my priest."

18

The tribe of Dan took Micah's priest and his idols

¹ At that time the Israelis had no king.

Also at that time, the tribe of Dan was still searching for some land where they could live. The other Israeli tribes had *been able to ◀capture/ take possession of▶* the land that had been allotted to them, but the tribe of Dan had not been able to do that.

² So they chose five soldiers from their clans, men who lived in Zorah and Eshtaol *cities*, to go

through the land and explore it *and try to find some land where their tribe could live.*

They came to Micah's house in the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lived, and they stayed there that night.

³ While they were in his house and they heard the young man who had become Micah's priest talking, they recognized from ◀his accent/the way that he talked▶ *that he was from the southern part of Israel.* So they went to him and asked him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing here? Why did you come here?"

⁴ He told them the things that Micah had done for him. And he said, "Micah ◀has hired me/is paying me to work for him▶, and I have become his priest."

⁵ So they said to him, "Please ask God if we will succeed *in what we are trying to do* on this journey."

⁶ The young man replied, "Things will go well for you. Yahweh will go with you on this journey."

⁷ *The next day* the five men left. When they came to Laish city, they saw that the people there lived safely, like the people in Sidon city did. The people there thought that they were safe/protected *from any enemies*, and they had plenty of *good fertile land*. They lived very far from the people of Sidon, *so the people of Sidon would not be able to help defend/protect them*. They had no other ◀allies/groups nearby that would help them in battles▶.

⁸ When those five men returned to Zorah and Eshtaol, their relatives asked them “What did you find out?”

⁹ They replied, “We have found some land, and it is very good. We should go and attack the people *who live there*. Why are you staying here and doing nothing [RHQ]? Do not wait any longer! We should go immediately and take possession of that land!

¹⁰ When you go there, you will see that there is plenty of land, and it has everything *that we will need*. The people there are not expecting anyone to attack them. Surely God is giving that land to us.”

¹¹ So 600 men from the tribe of Dan left Zorah and Eshtaol, carrying their weapons.

¹² On their way they set up their tents near Kiriath-Jearim *city in the area where the tribe of Judah lives*. That is why the area west of Kiriath-Jearim was named ‘Camp of Dan’, and that is still its name.

¹³ From there, they went to the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lives. And they arrived at Micah’s house.

¹⁴ The five men who had explored the land near Laish said to their fellow Israelis, “Do you know that in one of these houses there is a sacred vest, several idols, and a statue? *We think that you know what you should do.*” [RHQ]

¹⁵ So they went to the house where the man from the tribe of Levi lived, which was the house where Micah lived, and they greeted the young man from the tribe of Levi *who had become Micah’s priest*.

¹⁶ The 600 men of the tribe of Dan stood outside the gate of the house, carrying their weapons.

¹⁷ The five men who had explored the land went into Micah's house, and took all the idols, the sacred vest, and the statue. While they did that, the 600 men stood outside the gate, *talking* with the priest.

¹⁸ When the priest saw them bringing out the idols and the sacred vest and the statue, he said to them, "What are you doing?"

¹⁹ They replied, "Be quiet! Do not say anything! You come with us and be *like* a father to us and a priest for us. Is it better for you to *stay here and* be a priest for the people in the house of one man, or to be a priest for a clan, and a priest for a whole tribe of Israelis?" [RHQ]

²⁰ The priest liked what they were suggesting. So he took the sacred vest and the idols, and he *prepared to go* with the men from the tribe of Dan.

²¹ They all put their little children and their animals and everything else that they owned in front of them.

²² After they had gone a little distance from Micah's house, Micah *saw what was happening*. He quickly summoned the men who lived near him, and they ran and caught up with the men from the tribe of Dan.

²³ They shouted at them. The men of the tribe of Dan turned around and said to Micah, "What is the problem? Why have you gathered these men *to pursue us*?"

²⁴ Micah shouted, "You took the silver idols that were made for me! You also took my priest! I do

not have anything left [RHQ]! So why do you ask me, 'What is the problem?'"

²⁵ The men from the tribe of Dan replied, "You should not shout loudly like that! One of our angry men might attack you and kill you and your family!"

²⁶ Then the men from the tribe of Dan continued walking. Micah realized that there was a very large group of them, *so that it would be useless for him to try to fight them*. So he turned around and went home.

²⁷ The men of the tribe of Dan were carrying the things that had been made for Micah, and they also took his priest, and they continued traveling to Laish. They attacked the people who were peacefully living there, and killed them with their swords, and then they burned everything in the city.

²⁸ Laish was far from *the city of Sidon, so the people of Sidon could not rescue the people of Laish*. And the people of Laish had no other allies. Laish was in a valley near Beth-Rehob town.

The people of the tribe of Dan rebuilt the city and started to live there.

²⁹ They gave to the city a *new* name, Dan, in honor of their ancestor Dan, who was one of the sons of Jacob.

³⁰ The people of the tribe of Dan set up *in the city* the idols *that had been made for Micah*. Jonathan, who was the son of Gershom and the grandson of Moses, was appointed to be their priest. His descendants continued to be priests

until the Israelis were captured and taken *to Assyria*.

³¹ After the people of the tribe of Dan set up the idols that had been made for Micah, *they worshiped those idols, even though* the Sacred Tent *where they had been commanded to worship* God, was at Shiloh.

19

A Levite and his concubine

¹ At that time the Israeli people had no king.

There was a man from the tribe of Levi who lived in a remote place in the hilly area where the tribe of Ephraim lives. He had previously taken as a wife a woman who was a slave. She was from Bethlehem, in the area where the tribe of Judah lives.

² But she started to sleep with other men also. Then she left him and returned to her father's house in Bethlehem. She stayed there for four months.

³ Then her husband took his servant and two donkeys and went to Bethlehem. He went to ask her to come back to live with him again. When he arrived at her father's house, she invited him to come in. Her father was happy to see him.

⁴ The woman's father asked him to stay. So he stayed there for three days. During that time he ate and drank and slept there.

⁵ On the fourth day, they all got up early in the morning. The man from the tribe of Levi was preparing to leave, but the woman's father said to him, "Eat something before you go."

⁶ So the two men sat down to eat and drink together. Then the woman's father said to him, "Please stay another night. Relax/Rest and have a joyful time."

⁷ The man from the tribe of Levi wanted to leave, but the woman's father requested him to stay one more night. So he stayed again that night.

⁸ On the fifth day, the man got up early and prepared to leave. But the woman's father said to him again, "Have something to eat. Wait until this afternoon, *and then leave.*" So the two men ate together.

⁹ In the afternoon, when the man from the tribe of Levi and his slave wife and his servant got up to leave, the woman's father said, "It will soon be dark. The day is almost over. Stay here tonight and have a good/joyful time. Tomorrow morning you can get up early and leave for your home."

¹⁰ But the man from the tribe of Levi did not want to stay for another night. He put saddles on his two donkeys, and started to go with his slave wife *and his servant* toward Jebus city, which is *now named* Jerusalem.

¹¹ Late in the afternoon, they came near to Jebus. The servant said to his master, "We should stop in this city where the Jebus people-group live, and stay here tonight."

¹² But his master said, "No, it would not be good for us to stay here where foreign people live. There are no Israeli people here. We will go on to Gibeah city."

¹³ He said to his servant, "Let's go. It is not far to Gibeah. We can go there, or we can go a bit further to Ramah. We can stay in one of those two cities tonight."

¹⁴ So they continued walking. When they came near Gibeah, where people from the tribe of Benjamin live, the sun was setting.

¹⁵ They stopped to stay there that night. They went to the public square of that city and sat down. But no one *who passed by* invited them to stay in their house for that night.

¹⁶ Finally, in the evening, an old man came by. He had been working in the fields. He was from the hilly area of the tribe of Ephraim, but at that time he was living in Gibeah.

¹⁷ He realized that the man from the tribe of Levi was only traveling and did not have a home in that city. So he asked the man, "Where have you come from? And where are you going?"

¹⁸ He replied, "We are traveling from Bethlehem to my home in the hilly area where people of the tribe of Ephraim live. I went from there to Bethlehem, but now we are going to *Shiloh* where Yahweh's Sacred tent (OR, my house) is. No one here has invited us to stay in their house tonight.

¹⁹ We have straw and food for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me and the young woman and my servant. We do not need anything else."

²⁰ The old man said, "I wish that things will go well for you, but I would like to provide what you need. Do not stay here in the square tonight."

²¹ Then the old man took them to his house. He gave food to the donkeys. He *gave water to the man and the woman and the servant* to wash their feet. And he gave them something to eat and drink.

²² While they were having a good/joyful time together, some wicked men from that city surrounded the house and started to bang on the door. They shouted to the old man, "Bring out to us the man who has come to your house. We want to have sex with him."

²³ The old man went outside and said to them, "Friends, I will not do that. That would be a very evil thing. This man is a guest in my house. You should not do such a terrible/disgraceful/shameful thing!

²⁴ Look, my daughter is here. She is *still* a virgin. And this man's slave wife is here. I will bring them out to you now. You may do to them whatever you wish, but do not do such a terrible/disgraceful/shameful thing to this young man!"

²⁵ But the men did not pay attention to what he said. So the man from the tribe of Levi took his slave wife and sent her to them, outside the house. They raped [EUP] her and abused her all night. Then at dawn, they allowed her to go.

²⁶ She returned to the old man's house, where her husband was staying, but she fell down at the doorway and lay there all night.

²⁷ In the morning, when the man from the tribe of Levi got up, he went outside of the house to continue his journey. He saw his slave wife lying there at the doorway of the house. Her hands were on the doorsill.

²⁸ He said to her, "Get up! Let's go!" But she did not answer, *because she had died*. He put her body on the donkey and traveled to his home.

²⁹ When he arrived home, he took a knife and cut the body of the slave woman into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece to each area of Israel, *along with a message telling what had happened*.

³⁰ Everyone who saw a piece of the body and the message said, "Nothing like this has ever happened before. Not since our ancestors left Egypt *have we heard of such a terrible thing*. We need to think carefully about it. Someone should decide what we should do."

20

The war between the tribe of Benjamin and the other tribes of Israel

¹ All the Israelis, from Dan *city in the north* to Beersheba *city in the south*, and even from the Gilead *region on the east side of the Jordan River*, *heard what had happened*. So they they gathered together at Mizpah, *at the place where they worshiped Yahweh*.

² The leaders of *eleven of the tribes of Israel* stood in front of the people who gathered there. There were 400,000 men with swords who were there.

³ The people of the tribe of Benjamin heard that the other Israelis had gone up to Mizpah, *but none of the men from their tribe went to the meeting there*.

The Israelis who had come to Mizpah asked about the evil thing that had happened.

⁴ So the husband of the woman who had been killed replied, "My slave wife and I came to Gibeah city, wanting to stay there that night.

⁵ That evening, the men of Gibeah came to attack me. They surrounded the house *where I was staying* and wanted to *have sex with me and then kill me*. They *raped and* abused my slave wife *all night*, and she died.

⁶ I took her body home and cut it into pieces. Then I sent one piece to each area of Israel, *because I wanted you all to know about this wicked and disgraceful/shameful thing that has been done here in Israel*.

⁷ So now, all you Israeli people, speak, and tell me what you think should be done!"

⁸ All the people stood up, and in unison said, "None of us will go home! Not one of us will return to his house!

⁹ This is what we must do to *the people of Gibeah*. First, we will ◀cast lots/throw marked stones▶ *to determine which group should attack them*.

¹⁰ We will choose ◀one tenth/one from every ten▶ of the men from all the Israeli tribes. Those men will go and find food for the men who will go to attack the people of Gibeah. Then the other men will go to Gibeah to ◀pay the people back/punish them▶ for this terrible thing that they have done *here* in Israel."

¹¹ And all the Israeli people agreed *that the people of Gibeah should be punished*.

12 Then the Israeli men sent messengers throughout the tribe of Benjamin. They demanded, "Do you realize that some of your men have done a very evil thing?"

13 Bring those wicked men to us, in order that we can execute them. *By doing that*, we will be doing what should be done because of this evil thing that has happened in Israel."

But the *people of the* tribe of Benjamin did not pay attention to their fellow Israelis.

14 The men of the tribe of Benjamin left their cities and gathered at Gibeah to fight the *other* Israelis.

15 In that one day the men of the tribe of Benjamin recruited 26,000 soldiers who knew how to fight using swords. They also chose/recruited 700 men from Gibeah.

16 From all those soldiers there were 700 men who were left-handed, and each of them could sling a stone at *a target that was very small and as narrow as a hair*, and the stone always hit the target!

17 There were 400,000 men from the other Israeli tribes who had swords.

18 Those other Israelis went up to Bethel and asked God, "Which tribe should be the first to attack the men from the tribe of Benjamin?"

Yahweh answered, "*The men from the tribe of Judah should go first.*"

19 The next morning, the Israeli men went and set up their tents near Gibeah.

²⁰ Then they went to fight against *the men from the tribe of Benjamin*, and stood in their positions for fighting a battle, *facing Gibeah*.

²¹ The men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and fought against them, and they killed 22,000 Israeli men on that day.

²²⁻²³ *Late that afternoon*, the *remaining* Israeli men went to the place of worship and cried until the sun set. Then they asked Yahweh, “Should we attack the men of the tribe of Benjamin again, even though they are our fellow Israelis?”

Yahweh replied, “Yes, attack them again.” So the Israeli men encouraged each other.

²⁴ The next day they again stood in their positions for fighting, just like they had done on the previous day.

²⁵ The men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and attacked the Israelis, and killed 18,000 more of their men.

²⁶ *In the afternoon*, all the people of Israel *who had not been killed* again went to Bethel. There they sat down and cried to Yahweh, and they ◀fasted/abstained from eating food▶ until it was evening. They brought some offerings which they burned completely *on the altar*, and they also brought some offerings to maintain fellowship with Yahweh.

²⁷⁻²⁸ At that time, the Sacred Chest that contained the stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments was there at Bethel. A priest named Phinehas, the son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron, often stood in front of that chest *and talked with Yahweh*. While he stood

there on that day, he asked Yahweh, “Shall we go again to fight against our fellow Israelis from the tribe of Benjamin, or shall we stop fighting against them?”

Yahweh answered, “Go again tomorrow, because tomorrow I will enable you to defeat them.”

²⁹ So *the next day*, 10,000 of the Israeli men ◀set up ambushes/went to hide▶ *in the fields* around Gibeah.

³⁰ The *other* Israeli men went and stood in their positions for fighting a battle just like they had done on the previous days.

³¹ When the men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of the city to fight against them, the Israeli men retreated away from the city, and the men of the tribe of Benjamin pursued them. The men of the tribe of Benjamin killed many Israelis, like they had done before. They killed about 30 Israelis. They killed some in the fields, and they killed some on the road that went to Bethel and on the road that went to Gibeah.

³² The men of the tribe of Benjamin said, “We are defeating them like we did before!” But then Israeli men did what they had planned. The main group of Israeli men retreated a short distance from the city, to *trick* the men of Gibeah and cause them to pursue the Israeli men along the roads outside the city.

³³ The main group of Israeli men left their positions and retreated, and then they stood in their battle positions again at a place named Baal-Tamar.

³⁴ Then *while the men of Gibeah were running out of the city toward them*, the other 10,000 Israelis came out from the places where they had been hiding, west of Gibeah. They were men who had come from all parts of Israel. There was a very big battle. But the men of the tribe of Benjamin did not know that they were about to suffer a disastrous defeat.

³⁵ Yahweh enabled the Israeli men to defeat the men of the tribe of Benjamin. They killed 25,000 of them, even though they all were using swords.

This is what happened:

³⁶⁻³⁸ The main group of Israeli men arranged with the men who would be hiding that they should send up a smoke signal to enable the main group of soldiers to know when they should attack. Then the main group of Israeli men retreated for a short distance, because they knew that the other Israeli men who had been hiding on the other side of Gibeah would attack the people of the tribe of Benjamin by surprise. So *after the main group of Israeli men retreated a little distance*, the men who had been hiding rushed out and ran into Gibeah and used their swords to kill everyone in the city. *Then they started to burn the buildings.*

³⁹ By that time, the men of the tribe of Benjamin said, "We are winning the battle, as we did before!"

⁴⁰ But then smoke *from the burning buildings* began to rise up from the city. The men of the tribe of Benjamin turned around and saw that the whole city was burning.

⁴¹ Then the main group of Israeli men *also saw the smoke, and they knew that the smoke signaled that they should* turn around and begin to attack. The men of the tribe of Benjamin were very afraid, because they realized that they were about to suffer a disastrous defeat.

⁴² So the men of the tribe of Benjamin tried to run away toward the desert to escape from the Israeli men, but they were not able to escape, because the Israeli men who had burned the two cities came out of those cities and killed many of them.

⁴³ They surrounded *some of* the men of the tribe of Benjamin, and pursued the others to the area east of Gibeah.

⁴⁴ They killed 18,000 strong soldiers of the tribe of Benjamin.

⁴⁵ Then the rest of the men of the tribe of Benjamin realized that they had been defeated. They ran toward the desert to Rimmon Rock, but the Israeli men killed 5,000 more men of the tribe of Benjamin along the roads. They pursued the rest of them to Gidom, and they killed 2,000 more men of the tribe of Benjamin there.

⁴⁶ Altogether, there were 25,000 men of the tribe of Benjamin who were killed, all of whom had swords.

⁴⁷ But 600 men of the tribe of Benjamin ran to Rimmon Rock in the desert. They stayed there for four months.

⁴⁸ Then the Israeli men went back to the land belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and killed the people in every city. They also killed all the animals, and destroyed everything else that they

found there. And they burned all the cities that they came to.

21

They found wives for the men of the tribe of Benjamin

¹ When the Israeli men gathered at Mizpah *before the battle started*, they vowed, “None of us will ever allow one of our daughters to marry any man from the tribe of Benjamin!”

² But now the Israelis went to Bethel and they cried loudly to Yahweh all day, until the sun went down.

³ They kept saying, “Yahweh, God of us Israeli people, *it is as though* one of the tribes of us Israelis does not exist any more! ◀Why has this happened to us?/It is terrible that this has happened to us!▶” [RHQ]

⁴ Early the next morning the people built an altar. Then they completely burned some sacrifices *on the altar*, and also offered other sacrifices to maintain fellowship with God.

⁵ Then, because they had vowed that anyone who did not meet with them at Mizpah *to help fight the men of the tribe of Benjamin* would be killed, they asked among themselves, “Were there any of the tribes of Israel who did not come to Mizpah to meet with us in the presence of Yahweh?”

⁶ The Israelis felt sorry for their fellow Israelis from the tribe of Benjamin. They said, “Today one of our Israeli tribes ◀has disappeared/no longer exists▶.

⁷ Yahweh heard us solemnly declare that we would not allow any of our daughters to marry any man from the tribe of Benjamin. What can we do to make certain that the men of the tribe of Benjamin who were not killed will have wives?"

⁸ Then *one of* them asked, "What group from any of the tribes of Israel did not send any men here to Mizpah?"

⁹ *They realized that* when the soldiers were counted, there was no one from Jabesh-Gilead city who had come there.

¹⁰ So all the Israelis decided to send 12,000 very good soldiers to Jabesh-Gilead to kill the people there with their swords, even to kill the married women and children.

¹¹ *They told this to those men:* "This is what you must do: You must kill every man in Jabesh-Gilead. You must also kill every married woman. *But do not kill the unmarried women.*"

¹² So those soldiers *went to Jabesh-Gilead and killed all the men, married women, and children. But they found 400 unmarried young women there. So they brought them to their camp at Shiloh, in Canaan, across the river from the Gilead area that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.*

¹³ Then all the Israelis *who had gathered* sent a message to the 600 men who were at Rimmon Rock. They said that they would like to make peace with them.

¹⁴ So the men came back from Rimmon Rock. The Israelis gave to them the women from Jabesh-Gilead whom they had not killed. But there were *only 400 women. But there were not*

enough women *for those 600 men*.

¹⁵ The Israelis *still* felt sorry for the men of the tribe of Benjamin, because Yahweh had ◀decimated/almost wiped out▶ one of the Israeli tribes.

¹⁶ The Israeli leaders said, “We have killed all the married women of the tribe of Benjamin. Where can we get women to be wives of the men who are still alive?”

¹⁷ These men must have wives to give birth to children, in order that their families will continue. If that does not happen, all the people of one of the tribes of Israel will die.

¹⁸ But we cannot allow our daughters to marry these men, because we vowed that Yahweh will curse anyone who gives one of his daughters to become a wife of any man of the tribe of Benjamin.”

¹⁹ Then *one of* them ◀had an idea/thought of something that they could do▶. He said, “Every year there is a festival to honor Yahweh at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel and east of the road that extends from Bethel to Shechem, and it is south of Lebonah city.”

²⁰ So the Israeli leaders told the men of the tribe of Benjamin, “*When it is the time for that festival*, go to Shiloh and hide in the vineyards.

²¹ Keep watching for the young women to come out of the city to dance. *When they come out*, all of you should run out of the vineyards. Each of you can seize one of the young women of Shiloh. Then you can all return to your homes *with those women*.

²² If their fathers or brothers come to us and complain *about what you have done*, we will say to them, 'Be kind to the men of the tribe of Benjamin. When we fought them, we did not leave any women alive to become their wives, and you did not give those young women to the men from the tribe of Benjamin. *They stole them*. So you will not be guilty, *even though you said that you would not allow any of your daughters to marry one of them.*' "

²³ So that is what the men of the tribe of Benjamin did. *They went to Shiloh at the time of the festival*. And when the young women were dancing, each man caught one of them and took her away and married her. Then they took their wives back to the land that God had given to them. They rebuilt their cities *that had been burned down*, and they lived there.

²⁴ The other Israelis went to their homes in the areas where their tribes and clans lived, the areas that God had allotted to them.

²⁵ At that time, the Israeli people did not have a king. Everyone did what they themselves thought was right.

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