

TTB Judges

Recap of the end of Joshua

- Joshua died when he was 110 years old
- Only one other patriarchal figure lived exactly to 110: Joseph
- And the Book of Joshua connects these two leaders in the final lines of the book
- After Joshua has already passed away and was buried, we find this in 24:32
“The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem “
- Joseph was responsible for bringing the Israelites down to Egypt
- But Joshua has led the people back to the land of Canaan, officially ending the exile and opening a new chapter in Israelite history in which the people inherit their homeland

Judges Overview

- Chapter 1 picks up at the end of the story of the conquest
- Joshua had led the nation collectively in great victories over the major enemies; the way had now been paved for each tribe to go in by faith and claim the allotted inheritance
- They had entered the land and conquered much of the Hill Country and Northern part of the area promised to them [**Slide: Map - Extent of the Conquest**], but there were still pockets of Canaanites in the plains by the Mediterranean Sea, and the Egyptians were the superpower in the area overall
- Their Promised Land was filled with many nations and many “petty kings” who ruled over smaller territories
- "Canaanite" really just means "merchant" or "trader," and there were lots of Canaanite groups in the land (thus the long list you often see). These groups were essentially city states

- God permitted the heathen nations to be left in the land for several reasons:
 - (1) to punish Israel, 2:3, 20–21
 - (2) to prove Israel, 2:22 and 3:4
 - (3) to provide Israel with experience in warfare, 3:2
 - (4) to prevent the land from becoming a wilderness, Deut. 7:20–24
- He then used these nations for His own purposes
- The Jews could have enjoyed total victory; instead, they settled for a compromise

-Just as Joshua continues the history of Israel after the death of Moses, the Book of Judges picks up the story of Israel after the death of Joshua

-Whereas the Book of Joshua is a record of united efforts, Judges records a divided nation no longer devoted to the Lord, forgetful of the covenant that they made at Sinai

-This is a book of defeat and disgrace, as we see in the key verse (17:6): *“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”*

-A few notes:

-1:6 - Nowhere else do we see the Israelites mutilating their opponents as we see them doing in chapter 1

-God had them do that as a measure-for-measure punishment for Adoni-bezek's own torture of others

-1:21 - The Jebusite inhabitants of Jerusalem took refuge in the citadel and the Benjamites were not able to extricate them/they maintained control of Jerusalem until the time of David

-2:1 - The word for "angel" is often also translated "emissary" or "messenger," as is most likely the case here, calling the people back to repentance

-We have a summary of the entire book in 2:10–19—blessing, disobedience, chastening, repentance, deliverance

Who are the Judges?

- Named in this book are twelve different judges raised up by God to defeat a particular enemy in a particular territory and give the people rest

-The Judges were local Jewish leaders who arise during this time, unify the people, convince them to repent, deal with the spiritual problems of the nation, and also deal with the physical threat

-Not all of the tribes participated in each battle, and often there was tribal rivalry

-The judges are sometimes military leaders who know how to mobilize the nation for war against an enemy, but their real power lies in their Torah knowledge and ability to adjudicate Jewish law

-That's why they are called "judges," because they brought the Jewish people back to the Torah and instituted obedience to God once again

-That God could call these “ordinary people” as judges and use them so mightily is another evidence of His grace and power

- The Spirit of God came upon these leaders for a particular work (6:34; 11:29; 13:25), though often their personal lives were not exemplary in every detail
- The several hundred years of rule under the judges prepared Israel for their request for a king (1 Sam. 8)
- It is important to note that the years of peace and tranquility outnumber the years of failure and oppression. Rashi counts only 110 out of the 400 years of the Judges when the people were living unfaithfully. God was faithful to His covenant despite the actions of His people
- According to tradition, the Book of Judges was written by the last great personality in the period of the Judges: Samuel the Prophet
- There were some pretty major sociopolitical events happening in this same time period, events that lend credence to the Biblical text and help us understand what is going on. **Let's talk about them before getting into the story.**

When Did the Judges Period Happen?

-[Timeline <https://time.graphics/line/728507>] There are two main theories about the timeline for the Exodus and therefore for the Judges

- The "**Low Chronology**" says that the Exodus happened in the middle of the 1200's BCE, during the time of Ramesses II. This theory leads to a compression of the timeline of the Judges and contests the timelines given in the Bible.

- The "**High Chronology**" places the Exodus around the year 1446 BCE, during the reign of Amenhotep II

- 1 Kings 6:1 is one of the key passages that gives us a Biblical chronology of the Exodus. It connects the Exodus to the construction of Solomon's temple.

"And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign ... he began to build the house of the Lord."

- Solomon's reign is universally recognized to date to the middle of the 10th century BCE, usually the specific date of 967 BCE

- So, 480 years before 967 places the Exodus in 1446 BCE and the entrance into Canaan in 1406 BCE

- (As the article from the AIBA states: Other Biblical evidence includes Judges 11:26, which states that at the time of the judge Jephthah—around 1100 BCE—the Israelites had dwelt in the land of

Canaan for about “three hundred years,” along with the priestly Aaronic genealogical information documented in 1 Chronicles 5 that lists 19 generations from the Exodus to the construction of Solomon’s temple. This is an impossibly large number to fit inside a 13th-century Ramesside reign, yet it fits neatly within the time frame of a 15th-century Exodus during the Thutmosid Dynasty)

-Some very interesting archaeological discoveries confirm this dating:

-**[Slide] The Soleb inscription:** Amenhotep III built a temple to honor the god Amun-Ra at Soleb in Nubia around 1400 BCE. In that temple, a column drum was found that lists different enemies, including one from the “the land of the Shasu (nomads) of HaShem” (it uses the Tetragrammaton, Y-H-V-H)

-**[Slide] The Amarna Letters:** Hundreds of clay tablets, found in the Egyptian city of Amarna, were written by Canaanite rulers complaining to the Pharaoh about their cities being attacked by the "Habiru."

-**[Slide] The Berlin Pedestal:** The Berlin Inscription might be the earliest reference to Israel in the Archaeological record. The inscription is now housed in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. According to the Museum's records, the block, most likely part of a statue base, was acquired in 1913 by Ludwig Borchardt from an Egyptian merchant

-The inscription is comprised of three name rings superimposed on carvings depicting prisoners, the rightmost of which is only partly preserved due to substantial damage, probably incurred when the block was removed from its original context. Above the heads of the prisoners is a partial band of hieroglyphs which reads '...one who is falling on his feet...'

-The first two names are easily read—Ashkelon and Canaan. Two German scholars point out that the names Ashkelon and Canaan largely were written consonantly and thus are closer to Eighteenth Dynasty examples from the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, than to those from the times of Ramesses II and Merenptah

-The third name in the inscription presents difficulties because the right side of the inscription is broken off. A detailed examination of the relief, however, allowed scholars to reconstruct the name as *Y3-šr-il* ('Ishrael'), a name very close to Biblical *ysr'el* ('Israel'). Egyptian

scribes were not consistent in their usage of the hieroglyphs for 'sh' and 's', and quite often interchanged them

-So, these three archaeological finds, all from the late 15th/early 14th centuries BCE, help us date the time of the Judges and the conquests to that time period

The Bronze Age Collapse

-One of the most important historical points about this time period is the Bronze Age Collapse

-The century between 1250 and 1150 BCE (and especially the latter half of that time period) saw the cultural collapse of the Mycenaean kingdoms in Greece (sending Greece into a Dark Age), the Kassites in Babylonia, the Hittite Empire in Turkey and Syria, and the New Kingdom of Egypt, as well as the destruction of the important city of Ugarit and the Amorite states in Israel, and more. This period is called the Bronze Age Collapse.

(Interesting video here: <https://youtu.be/B965f8AcNbw>)

-Not a lot is really known about the cause of the Bronze Age Collapse except that it was likely a perfect storm of negative issues: famine, plague, and especially wars and attacks brought on by unknown outside forces

-These cities and states were destroyed seemingly without warning, and many were never rebuilt

-The effect of this was that the larger empires like Egypt and the Hittites contracted back in on themselves and were not as interested in gaining territory in Israel and other places outside their own homelands

-This power vacuum allowed the growth of the nation of Israel and eventually led to the golden age under David and Solomon

-It was only after the split of the nation at Solomon's death that we see the power of the outside forces start to grow again

-Joshua will cover the story of the Philistines more in his teaching on 1 Samuel in a few weeks, but for now, it is probably enough to just mention that the Philistines we see coming into the story in the Book of Judges were not the same "Philistines" mentioned in Genesis or even in the time of Moses

-This new people group were usurpers from Crete who became a thorn in the side of Israel for hundreds of years

Enter the Judges

-In the Book of Joshua, there was one leader and God was with the whole nation; but in Judges, there are many leaders, and God is with these leaders only, not with the entire nation (2:18)

-Several minor judges are listed here whose ministries we can only study briefly

Othniel

-Joshua died & the people were led by the elders who had served with Joshua

-But when all of them were gone, the people fell away from God and into idolatry, following the gods of the Canaanites

-Othniel was Caleb's nephew -- the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother

-Othniel means "God is might" and he lived up to his name

-3:11 -- "**Then the land was at rest for forty years.**" Note that there is nothing else said here, this was a time when the nation upheld the Torah and lived righteous lives.

Ehud

-This time the Lord used Moab to chasten Israel, along with Ammon and Amalek, the old enemies of Israel

-The Israelites served as slaves for eighteen years until Ehud delivered them and gave them rest for eighty years

-God used the fact that he was left-handed to deceive the enemy, for the king would not have known what Ehud would be drawing out from his garments on the right side (3:21)

-The Benjamites seemed to be gifted with left-handed men (Jud. 20:16; 1 Chron. 12:2)

-Once the enemy king was slain, Ehud was able to muster his army and drive out the invaders

Shamgar

-Shamgar was a judge for only a few months

-He is mentioned briefly here (3:31) and again in Deborah's song (5:6)

-Apparently he lived during the time of Deborah but we are not told a lot about him

Deborah and Barak

-Deborah is famous for sitting under a palm tree where anyone could seek her advice, and from where she issued battle orders

-Deborah is the first judge to be described as a prophet, as well (4:4)

- "the wife of Lappidoth" in Hebrew could also be translated as either "a woman who makes wicks" (Rashi [Rabbi Shlomo Yitzḥaḳi, 1040-1105] says she made wicks for the menorah in the Tabernacle) or "a fiery, energetic woman" (Ralbag [Levi ben Gershon, 1288–1344])

Some say that Lappidoth (which literally means "torches") was another name for Barak, which literally means "flash."

- First Deborah called Barak to deliver the nation (4:1–7), and she even gave him the battle plan from the Lord

- Usually the Kishon River was dry, but God was going to send a great storm that would flood the river-bed and trap the chariots of iron (see 4:3 and 5:20–22)

- Though Barak is listed as a man of faith in Heb. 11:32, we see him here as a man who had to depend upon Deborah for victory

- In fact, God used two women to deliver the Jews—***Deborah the prophetess and Jael*** (vv. 18–24)

- You are by now familiar with God's joy of breaking social norms, in a male dominated culture he is now bringing deliverance through two women

- Barak led 10,000 men from Mt. Tabor, trusting the promise of God given by His servant, Deborah

- Whatever may have been Barak's weaknesses, God still honored him for his faith. (5:16–17)

- Also in this story is Jabin (the Canaanite king of Hazor) which means "one who is intelligent" or "discerning."

- The term may have been a title to describe the king of Hazor, not his actual name (like Pharaoh)

- The story describes the Canaanite army as having 900 iron chariots/debate about iron being literal (see this article about iron chariots)

<https://armstronginstitute.org/812-iron-chariots-a-biblical-impossibility>

- While the text does not explicitly say that the Israelites destroyed the city of Hazor, there is a destruction layer in the city from around 1205 BCE, which matches the timeline perfectly

- Judges 4:24 -- "And the hand of the sons of Israel pressed harder and harder upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had eliminated Jabin the king of Canaan."

- It is helpful to note that Deborah and Barak were fighting the king of Hazor in Northern Israel around the same time that Gideon was fighting the Midianites in the Hill Country and Southern Israel.

See pp 8-11: https://creation.com/images/pdfs/tj/j01_1/j01_1_141-158.pdf

-A logical sequence of events would be as follows:

-Jabin first conquered Israel north of the mountain range (see Fig. 13 again)

-Toward the end of this period the Amalekites and their cousins the Midianites moved up from the south where they lived (see Fig. 15 again)

-The Amalekites and Midianites advanced northward to conquer Israel and to check the rising power of Jabin

-Later God called Deborah, who moved northward to call Barak, and they together waged war in the north against Jabin and defeated him

-Very soon afterwards, almost certainly in a matter of months, the Midianites and the Amalekites poured over the mountain range into the valley of Jezreel

-At the same time God called Gideon, who issued a proclamation for the army to come together

-God used only 300 of the 32,000 men who gathered around Gideon

-These 300 men ascended northward to the valley of Jezreel to do the battle against the Midianites and the Amalekites

-From there they drove the enemy southeastward across the Jordan River at Bethbarah and into eastern Israel “by the waters of Megiddo” where the Kishon River flowed down from Mt. Tabor

-Sisera and his army thought their chariots of iron (TERRIFYING SIGHT) would give them victory, but it was the chariots that led to their defeat

-God sent a great storm (5:4–5 and 20–22) that turned the plain into a swamp, and the enemy could not attack

-Israel won a great victory that day, and Sisera was killed by another woman, Jael

-The Kenites were a people friendly to Israel (Jud. 1:16) because of their connection with Moses’ family (Jud. 4:11), but they were also friendly to Jabin, the Canaanite king

-Usually a man in the cultures of the East will not enter a woman’s tent, but Jael persuaded Jabin, made him comfortable, and then killed him

-The “nail” was likely a wooden tent peg

-Her deed is praised in Deborah’s song (5:24–27), although some people find it difficult to understand this deed

-Certainly Sisera would have been slain when Barak’s troops caught up with him, and he was the enemy of the Lord (5:31), not of Jael personally

-She was helping Israel fight the battles of the Lord

-Two women rejoiced in victory (Deborah and Jael), but one woman (the mother of Sisera) wept in sorrow (5:28–30)

Two noteworthy passages:

- 5:6-8 is a description of the terrible state of society in Israel at that time.
 - The people were so fearful they moved from the villages into the walled cities, and it was not safe for people to travel on the highways
 - A decline in the social and moral life of the nation was the inevitable consequence of the nation's spiritual decline
- Psalm 83 where these two battles are brought together in the same Psalm

Gideon

- Hebrews 11:32 puts **Gideon at the head of the list of judges**
- Though he sometimes wavered in his faith, he was still a "man of faith" who dared to trust the Word of God
- When we realize that he was a farmer, not a trained warrior, we see how wonderful his faith was
- Midian was oppressing Israel for 7 years
- Seven years of bondage under the Midianites had brought Israel to its lowest level
- Midianites were incredibly cruel and the people were hiding in caves and mountains and were starving
- God's prophet (vv. 7–10) reminded the people of their unbelief and sin; then God's Angel—Christ Himself—visited Gideon to prepare him for his victory
- When the Angel called Gideon a "mighty man of valor" (v. 12), it seemed a mockery, yet God was only anticipating what Gideon would become by faith
- Gideon (though needing a lot of confirmation) responds to God's call
- of the 32,000 men who showed up to fight Midian, only 300 were chosen
- Even though Gideon had received miraculous signs that the victory would happen, God wanted to make sure they knew it was His victory
- victory in a war of 32,000 vs. 135,000 was still technically doable with a solid strategy, but 300 was miraculous
 - 7:5 -- Rashi says that anyone who knelt down with their face in the water was practiced at kneeling before idols and had to be excluded from the army
- Gideon and his 300 men pursued the two kings of Midian, but the men of Succoth and Peniel would not assist him
- Their attitude provoked Gideon and he promised to avenge himself
- This seems to have been **the beginning of his backsliding**, for God certainly would have dealt with these rebellious men in His own way

-The army took the host of Midian by surprise when the kings were feeling confident (8:11), and on his return march, Gideon punished the men of Succoth and Penuel with thorns and briers (8:16–17)

He then slew the two kings who had themselves slain Gideon's brethren

-After winning a great victory, we must always beware of the temptation to sin, for Satan attacks us subtly when we least expect it

-The nation asked Gideon to become their king and to establish a dynasty; but this he refused "The Lord shall rule over you!"

-However, Gideon used this opportunity to ask for "a lesser thing"—all their earrings and ornaments

-This seemed like a fitting gift for a great deliverer, but keep in mind that these **golden trinkets were associated with idol worship**

-Ornaments in v. 21 is actually "crescents"; these items were connected with moon-worship

-Gideon made an idolatrous "ephod" (or image) with the seventy pounds of gold he collected

-What the Midianites could not do by means of swords, Satan accomplished with earrings

-It is sad to see the man who overthrew Baal's altar now setting up an idol of his own

-Unfortunately, the whole nation forsook God and worshiped the new god (v. 27)

-When Gideon died, the nation went right back to Baal worship (v. 33)

-The subsequent history of Gideon's family is not encouraging

-He had many sons and daughters by his "many wives" (v. 30), but these were all slain (with the exception of Jotham) by the son of Gideon's concubine, a man named Abimelech (v. 31; Jud. 9:1–6)

-Furthermore, before Gideon's family was slain, they were not treated kindly by the nation (v. 35)

A few judges with not a lot to note:

Abimelech

-Abimelech the son of Gideon, killed all of his brothers to solidify his control over Shechem and had himself crowned a king

-Read 9:28 -- note the reference back to Hamor the father of Shechem from Genesis 34:2

-God punished him for murdering his 70 brothers and God punished Shechem

Tola

-judged for 23 years/lived in Shamir

Jair

-His name is pronounced *Ya-eer* in Hebrew

-owned 30 towns in Gilead/the strip of land East of the Jordan river

-he judged for 22 years

Ibzan, Elon, Abdon

Jephthah

-Israel again abandons God so He turned them over to the Philistines and Ammonites and they were oppressed for 18 years

-10:10 "FINALLY they cried out to the Lord for help"

-Jephthah was from Gilead, mother was a prostitute so his brothers mistreated him

-later they begged him for help (he was a great warrior)

-Jephthah (with the Spirit of the Lord on him) led a great victory, crushing the Ammonites (devastating 20 towns)

-He is also known for his foolish vow

-The Talmud (Ta'anit 4b) says that Jephthah acted improperly in his vow

-We have talked about Vows and Oaths before (and will again when we get to Samuel)

-[Slide] **Oath:** שְׁבוּעָה *shevu'ah*, is a solemn and formal declaration or promise, typically appealing to a higher source of authority

- o "May the Lord deal with me severely if I don't do such and such."

-[Slide] **Vow:** נֶדֶר *neder*, originally was a type of oath whereby someone would bind themselves to bring a sacrifice or dedicate something to the temple service. It was often stated conditionally, "If such and such happens, I will dedicate this thing."

-A vow is an obligation or prohibition that someone takes upon themselves.

-"If I don't die from this tornado, I will never drink coffee again."

-"If my crops succeed this year, I will dedicate an extra 10% of my produce to the Temple service."

-A vow can be taken without an oath, but if the oath is added, and it calls on God as a witness, more weight is added to the vow and it becomes much more serious.

-Judges 11:30–31 -- And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will indeed hand over to me the sons of Ammon, then whatever comes out the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

- Judges 11:37 -- And she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me, refrain from me two months, and I shall go, and wail upon the mountains, and I shall cry over my virginity, I and my companions."

-In an anecdotal interpretation, Rabbi Tanchuma explains "Upon the mountains" as referring to her presenting the case before the Sanhedrin, with the hope that perhaps they could find an opening to Jephthah's vow.

- Judges 11:39 - And it was at the end of two months, that she returned to her father, and he did to her his vow which he had vowed; and she had not known any man, and **it was a statute in Israel.**

-Rashi says that this means they decreed that no one should offer a human being ever again.

-If Jephthah had gone to Phinehas the High Priest or vice versa, Phinehas would have helped Jephthah nullify his vow.

-However, they were both too concerned with their own positions of honor and were unwilling to be the one to go to the other and put an end to this whole thing.

-As a result the daughter was killed.

-Consequently, both men were punished. Phinehas, by the Divine presence leaving him as it is stated in 1 Chronicles 9:20, "Previously God was with him," so we see subsequently God was not with him.

-The Midrash says that Jephthah was afflicted with boils and his limbs atrophied and fell off one by one, as it is stated in Judges 12:7, "And he was buried in the cities [pl.] of Gilead," meaning his limbs were buried in the various cities he was in at the time.

-Chapter 12 -- Origin of the concept of a "Shibboleth" -- This is also a sign of how diverse the different tribes could be at this time, not really feeling like one united nation. The civil war also shows just how far the people had fallen in their spiritual state.

Samson

-the Philistines had been oppressing Israel for 40 years

(Interesting article: Was Hercules, the Greek hero of ancient lore, actually Samson? <https://armstronginstitute.org/793-was-hercules-samson>)

-Samson is a Nazirite (see Numbers 6)

-Samson's Nazirite status is unusual in that he is a Nazirite from birth and remains one his entire life

-In addition, his obedience in keeping his long hair, keeping his Nazirite vow, is what gave him super-human strength. (Samuel was also a Nazirite from birth.)

-14:5 -- As a Nazirite he could not even walk through a vineyard, so he went the long way around and was separated from his parents

-Few accounts in the Bible are as tragic as Samson's

-Hebrews 11:32 cites him for his faith in God's Word, but apart from this, very little can be said on his behalf

-Note the steps that led to Samson's sin and tragic end:

-He Despised His Heritage

-Samson was born into a godly home, to parents who believed in prayer. He was God's special gift to them and to the nation

-God gave to Samson a special endowment of the Holy Spirit that made him a conqueror

-Instead of putting himself in God's hands to accomplish his God-given task, he chose to live to please himself

-He Defied His Parents

-One evidence of spiritual decline can be the way we get along with our loved ones.

-“Samson went down ...” (14:1) is true both spiritually and geographically. Instead of staying in the borders of Israel, he went into enemy territory and fell in love with a heathen woman. s defying godly parents who know God's Word

-He Defiled His Body

-When Samson found honey in the carcass of the lion he ate it even though Numbers 6:6–9 tells us that a Nazirite was never to touch a dead body

-Samson deliberately defiled himself for the sake of the honey

-He Deliberately Played with Sin

-Samson had already gotten into trouble with one woman, but now he tried again, this time going deep into enemy territory to Gaza

- Delilah came into his life and led him to his doom
- The Valley of Sorek was near his home, but Samson's heart was already far from God
- Three times Delilah enticed Samson, and three times he lied to her, apparently not realizing (or not caring about) the danger he was in
- From v. 20 on, Samson does nothing but lose:
 - his hair, the symbol of his Nazarite dedication
 - his strength, but he is ignorant of it until he is overpowered
 - his sight, the Philistines put out his eyes
 - his freedom, for they bind him with fetters of brass
 - his usefulness to the Lord, for he ends up grinding corn instead of fighting God's battles
 - his "testimony" ...he became the laughingstock of the Philistines
- Their fish-god Dagon, not the God of Israel, was given all the glory

- Apparently Samson repented of his sin, for God gave him one more chance to act by faith
- His hair had begun to grow and Samson asked God for strength to win one more victory over the enemy
- God answered his prayer, but in defeating others, Samson took his own life.
- in all Samson judged Israel for 20 years
- The Temple of Dagon comes into play in this story. We will see the rebuilt temple again in the time of Samuel.

Next noteworthy part of Judges: The Tribe of Dan Moves North

- Rashi says that these events in chapters 17-21 took place at the beginning of the Judges period and are not chronologically placed
- Note 17:6, 18:1, 19:1 and 21:25 point out that "there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." The lack of true authority is what led to these issues
- [SLIDE]** 18:1 -- Joshua 19:47–48 says that the Danites were given a tribal allotment on the coast. However, problems with the Philistines made it impossible for them to have security, so they decided to look elsewhere.
- This whole episode is connected to the later idolatry of the Northern Tribes under Rehoboam, including the idolatry in the city of Dan.

We conclude the bleak book of Judges with the grim story of the concubine

-Again, this is chronologically out of order, and happened at the beginning of the Judges period

-That is also more logical anyway, as Saul, the first King of Israel, was a Benjamite, and it would have taken a while for them to rebuild their families after this incident

-This story sounds eerily and awfully familiar to a story in Genesis (angelic guests of Lot in Genesis 19)

-19:3 -- He went to persuade her to come back—whatever caused her to leave, the Levite took the initiative to win her back

-when the men were beating at the door to have sex with the Levite man, the host of the home offers his daughters...but they wouldn't listen, so the Levite pushed his concubine out the door

-From *The Early Prophets*, by Everett Fox:

-we see the “callous and self-centered behavior of the Levite himself. Despite his quest to get his concubine back at the beginning of the chapter, once he arrives at his father-in-law’s house he rarely acknowledges her existence; he is contemptuous of foreigners, and so declines to stay in Jebus for the night; he is complicit in the rape by pushing his concubine outside; and he never bothers to check if the violated body on the threshold is dead or alive. In contrast to the text’s mention of “refresh/humor the heart” multiple times in describing his father-in-law’s and his later host’s hospitality, the Levite is a man virtually without a heart. In the end we are left with a descendant of Aaron who, in a parody of priestly sacrificial behavior, “sections” (see Lev. 1:6) the abused woman whose bed he shared.”

-In the end, the deeds done to the concubine are so vile that the writer feels compelled to break into a poetic rhetoric: “Never has there been, / never has been seen [anything]” like this act in all of Israelite history (v.30)

-It **signals the collapse of societal standards**, violating at one swoop the rules of hospitality and the proper sexual treatment of both men and women

-the dismembering of the concubine ultimately suggests the level to which Israel has degraded

-Judges ends reminding us that “in those days, Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes”

