

## May 25–31: Judges 2–4; 6–8; 13–16, “The Lord Raised Up a Deliverer”

### Captivity and Delivery

We notice a pattern similar to the Pride Cycle in the Book of Judges:

- The Israelites soon forget the blessings of the Lord and return to their wickedness.
- They are captured and afflicted by their enemies.
- They turn to the Lord and pray for deliverance.
- The Lord raises up a judge and blesses them to miraculously deliver Israel.

Judg 2:7-11

7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

What changed between the generation of Joshua and the next generation that led to Israel's decline?

(generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel)

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

"Despite the astonishing heavenly interventions, visitations, rescues, and miraculous victories the children of Israel witnessed during the lifetimes of Moses and Joshua, within a generation the people had abandoned the Way and began walking according to their own desires. And, of course, it did not take long before they paid the price for that behavior....

"No matter how strong our spiritual experiences have been in the past, as human beings we tend to wander. That has been the pattern from the days of Adam until now." (CR, Oct. 2021)

After Joshua died, judges ruled the Israelites. There were twelve judges between the death of Joshua and the anointing of King Saul.

Judges 2:16-17

16 Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so.

What patterns in this passage help explain why the Israelites fell into idolatry?

(they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in)

Mark E. Petersen

“In spite of their apostate ways, [the Lord] still endeavored to keep his promise to Abraham by saving this stubborn people from themselves.

“The Lord determined upon a new form of government... [and] from among the people he ‘raised up judges’ as deliverers and leaders in their battles, but also to provide some semblance of centralized authority....

”And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods...” (Three Kings of Israel, pg. 10)

Then, when the Israelites turned away from God, He would no longer help them.

Judg 2:1-3

1 And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

What does this passage teach about the consequences of Israel’s failure to obey the Lord’s command?

(And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice)

Sidney B. Sperry

“Israel’s conduct during this period had a lasting effect upon her religion and morals. For centuries Israel’s prophets and wise men referred to it and denounced her allegiance to old Canaanite practices. It is plain that Israel, during the period of the Judges, compromised her relatively high religious ideals with Canaanite practices and certain elements in her population must have apostatized completely.” (Spirit of the Old Testament, pg. 51–52)

What consequences does the Lord say will result from Israel not driving out the Canaanites?

(they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you)

Judg 2:20-22

20 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

## Deborah

In chapter 3, we read that the righteous judge Ehud was able to deliver Israel from the Moabites. After Ehud's death, the Israelites again turned to evil, so the Lord allowed them to fall under the power of the king of Canaan and his formidable force of iron chariots.

Judg 4:1-5

1 And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead.

2 And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

3 And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

What role does Deborah play in Israel during this time, and what does that tell us about her?

(Deborah, a prophetess... judged Israel at that time)

Deborah reminds general Barak of his responsibilities.

Judg 4:6-9

6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not

go with me, then I will not go.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

What command from the Lord does Deborah remind Barak of in this passage?

(Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun)

What did the Lord promise to do if Barak followed His command?

(I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon... and I will deliver him into thine hand)

The Lord caused it to rain, and the river flooded, causing all the chariots to become stuck in the mud.

Judg 5:21

The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

What condition did Barak give before he would obey the Lord's command?

(If thou wilt go with me, then I will go)

Deborah went with the army of Israel to the river, and there they met and easily defeated the Canaanite army because all their chariots were stuck in the mud. The Israelites defeated them easily and enjoyed peace for 40 years.

## Gideon

The Israelites enjoyed 40 years of peace after Deborah's defeat of the Canaanites. Not surprisingly, this peace and prosperity led them to return to their wicked ways, and soon they were once again being defeated by the innumerable armies of the Midianites and the Amalekites.

Judg 7:12

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

Gideon was commanded by an angel to save the Israelites.

Judg 6:12-16

12 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

14 And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

16 And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

In what ways did Gideon question the Lord's call, and how did the Lord respond to his concerns?

(Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?... I am the least in my father's house  
the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee)

James E. Faust

“The Lord has a great work for each of us to do. You may wonder how this can be. You may feel that there is nothing special or superior about you or your ability.... Gideon felt this when the Lord asked him to save Israel from the Midianites....

“The Lord can do remarkable miracles with a person of ordinary ability who is humble, faithful, and diligent in serving the Lord and seeks to improve himself. This is because God is the ultimate source of power.” (CR, Oct. 1995)

The Lord instructs Gideon on how to deliberately reduce the size of the Israelite army.

Judg 7:1-7

1 Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2 And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4 And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon,

Every one that lapped of the water with his tongue, as a dog lapped, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that bowed down upon his knees to drink.

6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7 And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

What lesson did the Lord intend to teach Israel by greatly reducing the size of its army?

(lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me)

Robert J. Matthews

“This is an example of the way the Lord works—not by physical or worldly force but by divine power and miracles.... We see the principle at work again in the episode of David and Goliath and in the account of Gideon's victory with his army of three hundred men, a number reduced from a larger one. The Israelites had to believe that God would deliver them, over and beyond what they could do themselves. They were not to trust in the arm of flesh. This is still the way the Lord works among the children of men today.” (A Bible! A Bible!, pg. 62)

The numerous armies of Israel's enemies fled before Gideon and his army of 300.

Judg 7:19-21

19 ¶ So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

Samson

Once again, Israel forgot the Lord and returned to its wicked ways, and it was given into bondage to the Philistines for 40 years. An angel appeared to Manoah's wife and promised that a child would be born to her, and that “he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”

Judg 13:1-5,24

1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

3 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.

What was unique about Samson's birth and calling, and what does it reveal about God's plan for Israel?

Nazarite:

An Israelite consecrated to the service of God, under vows to abstain from alcohol, let the hair grow, and avoid defilement by contact with the dead (Numbers 6).

We see that the Lord blessed him with great strength when he killed a lion.

Judg 14:5-6

5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

6 And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

According to the passage, what enabled Samson to overpower the lion?

(the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid)

He was tricked into revealing the answer to a riddle. As a result, he owed the Philistines 30 garments. To pay this debt, he killed 30 Philistines and took their garments.

Judg 14:19

19 And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

Again, what enabled Samson to have overpower strength?

(the Spirit of the Lord)

Samson told Delilah that his hair must never be cut.

Judg 16:17-20

17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

20 And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

What did Samson do that caused him to lose the strength that the Lord had blessed him with?

-He had broken his vows

Wilford Woodruff

"I have seen Oliver Cowdery when it seemed as though the earth trembled under his feet. I never heard a man bear a stronger testimony than he did when under the influence of the Spirit. But the moment he left the kingdom of God, that moment his power fell like lightning from heaven. He was shorn of his strength, like Samson in the lap of Delilah. He lost the power and testimony which he had enjoyed, and he never recovered it again in its fulness while in the flesh.... It does not pay a man to sin or to do wrong."  
(Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff, pg. 105)

It seems that Samson was able to repent of breaking his vow, and the Lord forgave him.

Judg 16:26-30

26 And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28 And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

What does Samson's final prayer and action reveal about the source of his strength at the end of his life?

Victor L. Ludlow

“As Delilah cut Samson's hair, his vow was broken, and the Lord's power departed from him.

“When a Nazarite vow or covenant was broken, it was sometimes possible to renew the vow after a period of repentance. Apparently Samson went through a period of repentance and recommitment because he again received extraordinary strength as he destroyed the Philistine temple and his own life.

“Tragedy came upon Samson because as he broke one commandment (morality) he lost the Spirit of the Lord. This led to his breaking other covenants and resulted in weakness, blindness, slavery, and death (both physical and spiritual).” (Unlocking the Old Testament, pg. 72)