

**The Reign of the Judges**

Judges 2; *An angel rebukes Israel for not serving the Lord—A pattern of future events: A new generation arises that forsakes the Lord and serves Baal and Ashtaroth—The Lord is angry with Israel and ceases to preserve them—He raises up judges to guide and lead them—Canaanites left in land to prove Israel.*

Judges 4; *Deborah, a prophetess, judges Israel—She and Barak deliver Israel from Canaanites—Jael, a woman, slays Sisera the Canaanite.*

Judges 6; *Israel is in bondage to Midianites—An angel appears to Gideon and calls him to deliver Israel—He overthrows altar of Baal, the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him, and the Lord gives him a sign to show he is called to deliver Israel.*

Judges 7; *Gideon's army is reduced to 300—They frighten Midianite armies with trumpets and lights—Midianites fight among themselves, flee, and are defeated by Israel.*

Judges 13; *Israel in Philistine bondage for forty years—An angel comes to Manoah's wife and promises a son who shall begin to deliver Israel—The angel comes again; he ascends in a flame from the altar—Samson is born, and the Spirit of the Lord moves upon him.*

Judges 14; *Samson slays a young lion with his bare hands—He marries a Philistine wife, propounds a riddle, is deceived by his wife, and slays thirty Philistines.*

Judges 15; *Samson burns corn of Philistines—They burn his wife and father-in-law—Samson slays a thousand Philistines at Lehi with jawbone of an ass.*

Judges 16; *Samson carries away doors of gate of Gaza—He loves Delilah, who delivers him to Philistines—He destroys building, killing himself and 3000 others.*

**Supplemental  
Holy Land and  
Jewish  
insights:**

**Who Where the Judges?** The information about the Judges of Israel may, at best, be incomplete. Their positions are generally considered local and did not seem to be responsible to or for the entire nation of Israel. Jewish sources identify them more as local military leaders who were God inspired. "These Judges were not judges in the legal sense, but heroes upon whom "rested the spirit of God" . . . Only in the case of Deborah is there any hint of a judicial function among the activities of a Judge-savior." (*Encyclopedie Judaica Jr.*)

**Defense Minister, Mr. Lightning:** The most famous story of Deborah is the conquering of the Canaanites. Barak ('lightning' in Hebrew), the military leader of Israel, was hesitant to follow her prophetic instruction to engage the enemy. He acquiesced after she agreed to accompany him. (There may have been fewer wars if presidents and prime ministers had accompanied their young soldiers to battle.)

**Kenites:** Modern archaeology has discovered Kenite temples that are identical to Israelite temples. Jael, Heber's, wife, of the Kenite people, apparently was a descendant of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. Jethro taught and ordained Moses. "And the sons of Moses, according to the Holy Priesthood which he received under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro;" (*Doctrine & Covenants 84:6*) "Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, slew the Canaanite general Sisera in the war of Deborah and Barak against the Canaanite king Jabin of Hazor (Judges 4-5) . . . she . . . killed him while he slept, using a hammer and a tent pin rather than a sword, in accordance with the biblical command prohibiting the use of weapons by women (Deuteronomy 22:5). The murder thus fulfilled Deborah's prophecy to Barak that God would "sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (4:9) "Jael was blessed by Deborah (Judges 5:24-27) and was considered even greater than the matriarchs Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah." (*Encyclopedie Judaica Jr.*)

**Spiritual Blindness:** Samson was "blind" to his gift from the Lord—his strength. The scripture writer called his gift "The Spirit of the Lord," which Samson abused to seek selfish revenge. Samson, a Nazarite, covenanted to abstain from anything that would draw him away from the Spirit of the Lord and would have nothing to do with the dead other than the firstborn, unblemished sacrifices at the appointed Altar of the Lord. Blind to his covenant, he slew an unclean carnivorous lion (not Kosher) with his bare hands but did not tell his parents. He later ate honey from the carcass of that lion and gave it to his priestly parents. In those acts Samson was triple non-kosher!

**Blindness Opened Spiritual Vision:** In other Biblical accounts, physical blindness actually aided spiritual vision. Paul was struck blind and was told that he would open the eyes of the Jews and Gentiles. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (*Acts 26:18*)

**Blindness in Israel:** To some, modern miracles are like Biblical ones, blindness is an example. "Because Israel is a country whose inhabitants have immigrated from all parts of the world, including many backward nations, there is a larger percentage of blind people in Israel than in other Western countries. Nevertheless, in Israel today, blind people can lead a normal life thanks to the fine educational institutions and numerous agencies . . . which aid in their job placement . . . rehabilitation . . . they can enjoy a vast amount of literature, biblical, secular, Hebrew and foreign . . . printed in Hebrew Braille. (Strangely, Hebrew Braille is written from left to right, like English writing)." "Moreover, Israel has developed two machines to further aid blind people. The Transicon is a type of computer that electronically photographs printed material, and converts it into Braille script. The second machine, the Philapbraille, is a typewriter which produces whatever is typed both in ordinary script and Braille, so the blind person typing may check his own work." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Not All Jews Accept Miracles at Their Face Value:** ". . . Judaism believes that after creating the world God is very interested in what happens in the world and particularly in how people conduct themselves. . . . God not only follows the course of human events, but He also interferes in them and in the natural world, over and above the fact that it was He who originally laid down the laws of nature. This means that God on occasion changes the normal course of the world for some specific purpose." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Rejected "Miracle Performers:"** "The rabbis rejected, however, the belief in "miracle performers" as bearers of religious truth. Once the Torah had been revealed to man, it was no longer "in heaven." It could not be altered by extraordinary means, but only by a natural process of development which was purely in the hands of ordinary human beings. And although the rabbis emphasized the miraculous aspect of the story of Hanukkah, they generally believed that by their time the age of miracles had ceased, since only in biblical times were people "willing to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of the Name of God."

**Pre-planned Miracles:** "In the Middle Ages, the biblical miracles posed a great problem for Jewish philosophers. They could not be explained in terms of contemporary science and they flew in the face of the philosophers' strong belief in the existence of an unchanging order to the universe. As a solution, many of the medieval philosophers adopted the Talmudic position outlined above which attempted to "naturalize" the miracles by seeing them as having been woven into the order of nature from the very beginning; their miraculous nature stemmed from the fact that they were expressed at the key moment in history when they were most needed."

**Explanations:** "In modern times, some people have attempted to offer scientific explanations for several of the biblical miracles, such as the parting of the Red Sea. Others have "relativized" them by viewing them as natural occurrences which were recorded as if extraordinary and supernatural, because of the crucial role they played at the particular time." "Having been created by God, the universe is also totally subject to His control. As a result, God can impose His will upon the workings of the natural world as He pleases (the miracles of the Bible) but He can also transfer some of His controlling power to others. This God did when He created and blessed man. Although part of the natural world, man was given dominion over it, and told that the natural world was to serve his greater interests." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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