

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 24 – Part 2

Judges – Authorship and Focus

I have frequently asked my friend Dr. David Egilman for medical advice. One phrase he has told me more than once is, “To a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” His point in a medical context is that a surgeon would frequently see the answer to a problem in terms of surgery, a clinician in clinical terms, a radiologist in terms of radiology.

Dr. Egilman’s phrase urges people to take a multitude of opinions from several different angles or fields. He thinks that a specialist both inherently and by training, naturally analyzes problems through his/her own area of expertise. Once you read it, this seems logical, or what some would call a “no-brainer.”

I am convinced that this view is a basic human trait that goes beyond the field of medicine here. We all tend to view things through the lens of our experiences and areas of specialty. This applies across the board. It is one reason that brainstorming and group thought sometimes produces ideas and solutions that one person alone, regardless of brilliance, has difficulty discerning.

This problem certainly rears its head in the area of biblical studies, as we will see in this study on the authorship and composition of Judges. For centuries, scholars have considered the authorship and composition of Judges. Reading the analysis and assessments of these scholars, the hammer/nail idea is pervasive.

Authorship is no easy question because no human author is identified internally in the book. No one is able to give 100 percent certainty on what human wrote the book of Judges. For some, that might resolve any need to discuss this further. Some will accept that Judges is in the Bible, and disregard questions of authorship as unimportant.

Therefore, a fair first question is: why do we care who wrote it? The answer lies, in part at least, in recognizing that *whom* the author is (at least in function if not in name) might help in understanding *why* the book of Judges was written. When we discern the purpose behind the book, we should understand much better how to read and understand the book. For example, is Judges an historical account of the hand of God among his people? Or, is it a non-historical collection of stories and legends that served the writer and his age? In 20th century speak, is it *A History of World War II* or is it *The Chronicles of Narnia*? Does the book contain valid history or it is merely a collection of legends or teaching stories?

Then, we ask *who* wrote Judges and *what* their purpose likely was. From these answers, we can better understand what we are reading and how it fits into the overall scheme of God's revelation in scripture. While we may never know the human name of the author, learning the author's role and the time period of writing, should be a priority in study.

A first step in assessing authorship, then, is trying to assess *when* the book was likely written. This can relate directly to why Judges was written. For example, if the book was written to explain why the Israelites needed a king, then it narrows down the time frame for likely authorship. On the other hand, if the book was written to explain why Israel (the Northern tribes as opposed to Judah) lost the favor of the Lord and were conquered before Judah, then the timing of authorship would likely be later.

Another way to determine clues to authorship is to focus on the *way* in which the book was written. Was it a composite of many different oral traditions? Was it written and rewritten by a number of different people who each took written stories and melded them into one book? Does the book contain vocabulary that helps identify dating issues, at least for sections? For example, a writing that refers to the Internet must be written after the invention or concept of the Internet.

Scholars have used these approaches and more in an effort to narrow down their opinions. The nice thing about studying this in 2011 is that we have centuries of writings to consider as we watch the ebb and flow of opinions on these matters. As we consider the assessment of scholarship on the authorship and *purpose* of Judges, as well as the method of composition, we run straight into the hammer and nail problem. For it seems that often scholars determine those answers that align with their previous areas of expertise. Each hammer sees the problem as a nail.

IEWS OF AUTHORSHIP

Early Jewish and Christian commentators considered Judges the work of the prophet Samuel. That is not because the book makes such a claim, but rather the historical timing of the book makes it in the era of Samuel, the last "judge" before the monarchy began in Israel. By the mid-1800's, some placed the writing later than Samuel, considering either a writer under King Hezekiah or perhaps even someone as late as Ezra as the author. The later dating was considered a logical understanding of Judges 18:30:

And the people of Dan set up the carved image for themselves, and Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Danites *until the day of the captivity of the land.*

These writers thought the reference to “captivity” meant the Babylonian captivity that deported the Jews from Jerusalem in 587 BC. Later writers dispelled that understanding for several reasons. Notably, both 1 Samuel 4:11 and Psalm 78:60, 61 indicate the land was “captive” long before the ultimate conquest of the Northern tribes and the Babylonian captivity of Judah.¹

In the 19th century, a scholastic movement that had roots in German scholasticism quickly spread in academic circles asserting that the first five books of the Old Testament (the “Pentateuch”) were not written by Moses or another single author, but were constructed from constituent parts, which were assembled together by a later editor.

These scholars were struggling to understand why there seemed to be two different accounts of some stories in Scripture. For example, Genesis 7 gives multiple references or accounts to Noah taking his family into the ark. Likewise, the Ten Commandments are given in Exodus 20 and then given again with slightly different wording in Deuteronomy 5. Some saw Genesis providing two different creation accounts. Similarly perplexing for these scholars was why some passages referred to God as *Yahweh* while others even in the same chapter called him *Elohim*.

To linear/Western thinkers and writers, these passages cried out for some explanation. They certainly were not written as a modern person would write history! What legitimate history book tells the same story twice, with differing details the second time? So, the theory seized upon and rapidly expanded was one that is termed “redaction criticism.” It means that redactors or editors took various documentary sources (whether oral or written) and edited them into multiple new documents that were subsequently edited into another generation, *etc.*, until the current scriptures were set.²

The scholars gave abbreviations to these different sources, asserting that they came from different movements within Israel and Judaism. Typically, these parts were designated as the “Yahwest” or “Jehovah” part (designated by capital “J”); the “Elohists” part (“E”); the Deuteronomist part (“D”); and the Priestly part (“P”). This critical approach to sources is often called the “Documentary Hypothesis.”

¹ See discussion by Bush, George, *Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Judges*, (Saxton & Miles 1844) at v.

² The initial step is actually termed “source criticism” where critical analysis on the origination of the text is made by evaluating and determining different original sources. The theory that analysis of supposed subsequent editorial work on these sources would produce our known biblical texts is termed “redaction criticism.”

Although different scholars placed these sources in various times, the general consensus was that J was the earliest source, dating perhaps as early as 950 BC. E was generally cited as a Northern Kingdom source that dated around 750 BC. D was seen as a Southern Kingdom source dating about 650 BC or later. The Priestly interests were assigned a date after the fall of Israel in 587 BC. The final weaving of these sources into the five books of Moses was generally thought to be by editors about 400 BC.³

As this critical thought approached the 20th century, scholars began to apply the same analysis and conclusions to the book of Joshua as well (calling the first six books the “Hexateuch”). The rationale for believing these independent sources were edited into a single text (multiple names of God, multiple accounts of stories, etc.) was found in other parts of the Old Testament. By the mid 1930’s, this critical theory was used to explain the composition of Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Scholars trained and versed in this approach were, in “Dr. Egilman speak,” hammers that saw a lot of nails in their studies! In fairness, we should add that in life there are in fact nails, so the hammer is not always wrong, but we get to examine these scholars with the hindsight and follow-up scholarship that history affords. As we do so, we find that perhaps some of their reasoning was not on target.

In 1943, this critical approach reached a point of prominence in the study of Judges from German Old Testament scholar Martin Noth (1902-1968). Noth published two independent studies under one title that considered the “Dtr” or “Deuteronomist’s history” he believed present in the books Joshua-Kings (study 1) and Chronicles-Nehemiah (study 2).⁴ Noth’s work on Judges was deemed groundbreaking in its depth and conclusions.⁵ Noth thought that Judges was written during Judah’s exile in Babylon.

The next 40 years saw a number of scholars trained in Noth’s thinking analyzing his work and making various changes and modifications, setting apart certain parts as written by one Deuteronomistic historian while other parts were written by

³ See, for example, Anderson, Bernhard W., *Understanding the Old Testament*, Prentice-Hall 1957) at 12ff.

⁴ Noth’s first study is now available in English: *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Press 1981); republished by Wipf and Stock in 2005.

⁵ Oxford scholar E. W. Nicholson wrote in the English introduction to Noth’s work, “This is a ‘classic’ work in the sense that it still remains the fundamental study of the corpus of literature with which it is concerned, and still provides, as far as the majority of scholars are concerned, the basis and framework for further investigation of the composition and nature of this corpus.” *Ibid.* at ix.

another Deuteronomistic historian. Which specific parts were Deuteronomistic and which were not were debated from one paper to another.

This approach fractioned the book of Judges and left it with little to no historical value. It paved the way for works by others who ascribed fairy tale status to a number of the judges, seeing Samson and other judges as flawed fictional heroes not unlike Robin Hood is seen today.

We should note that there were always a contingent of scholars who challenged the methods and conclusions of this critical approach to scripture. Notwithstanding, the critical movement was, and to some extent still is, pervasive in certain scholastic circles. Anyone who did not understand or acknowledge the fundamental idea behind this critical approach was deemed either “uneducated” or a “fundamentalist” who tight-fistedly held onto superficial beliefs, even when the weight of academia was overwhelming.

Then in the 1970’s, the tide of scholarship began a monumental change of direction. Rather than more scholars debating over which verse was written by which Deuteronomistic historian, some scholars began considering the book of Judges as a complete book, actually written by an author, rather than cobbled together from a number of other works, oral and written.⁶ The first major foray into this from an academic perspective came in 1967 from the pen of Old Testament scholar John Lilley.⁷

After noting the disagreement among the scholars trying to divide Judges into various documentary sources (“In Judges, the old-fashioned documentary analysis meets its Waterloo...[it] seems to have lost all touch with reality.”⁸), Lilley argued that Judges is better considered “substantially a single piece of historical writing.”⁹

With Lilley’s article, an apparent dam burst and a torrent of articles came out arguing for a structural integrity of Judges. Some of the articles and books set out similar words and phrasings throughout the book. Others attacked the apparent problems that accompanied earlier critical school of thought.

⁶ The ground for this new/old approach was laid by the inability of the experts to land on what sources were really behind Judges. Each new scholar brought out problems in the divisions of the last scholars as well as the “new” solution. Reading through these articles and books almost gets you to a laughing point as the parsing never reaches a satisfactory conclusion. Consider the synopsis in Butler, Trent, *Word Biblical Commentary: Judges*, (Thomas Nelson 2009) at xlfff.

⁷ Lilley, J. P. U., “A Literary Appreciation of the Book of Judges.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967) 94-102.

⁸ *Ibid.* at 94.

⁹ *Ibid.* at 101.

In this sense, one of the concerns of the critical scholars was the way that the first part of Judges had two sections, followed by a body of writing on various characters and ending with a final part that seemed totally unrelated to the earlier sections.¹⁰ Scholars began to see in these distinct parts a solid argument *for a* single author. One line of thought that we are following in today's lesson is that which asserts that Judges, like much of old literature, was written in "chiasmus."

CHIASMUS AND JUDGES

As we consider the hammer/nail analogy further, we must recognize how it might impact most everyone who reads this lesson or studies these issues in Judges. Within the first few weeks of my commencement of life as a lawyer, the big firm where I worked gave me a book by Cornell University English Professor William Strunk (1869-1946) and the author of *Charlotte's Web*, E. B. White (1899-1985). The book was *The Elements of Style*, and it gave basic rules for proper writing of English compositions.

While the book is not without its critics, most everyone recognizes that modern writing in western cultures assumes a certain style. We expect thoughts to flow logically one to another. We use spaces to separate words, periods and capitals to separate sentences, and paragraphs and chapters to separate thoughts. The most important points or themes are generally placed early ("Don't bury your lead!") and papers generally proceed in a very linear and logical fashion.

This writing is ingrained in most post-Middle Age cultures of Western Civilization. It is part of how we write and part of how we read. When we come across something that is written from an entirely different set of rules, especially if we do not know that it is written from a different perspective, it is natural that we first try to figure it out from our own experience and training. I suggested earlier this is one reason the critical movement worked so hard to dissect various documentary sources for scripture.¹¹ Reading the duplicative stories and the

¹⁰ Consider the 1979 work of Italian scholar Soggin, J. Alberto, *The Old Testament Library: Judges*, (Westminster 1979) at 5: "Until recently it was thought that the two episodes [the two parts that end the book] were free of Dtr [abbreviation for "Deuteronomist"] revisions; however, recent studies...have made it very probable that such revisions are to be found even here, though they may have been made in a more subtle way than in the 'main body.' This was probably an earlier phase of the Dtr redaction, DtrH [abbreviation for "Deuteronomist Historian, an allegedly second type of Deuteronomist to compile the book], and perhaps in the case of the second episode, of an anti-monarchical revision of the work by DtrN [abbreviation for the Deuteronomist narrator, an alleged third level of compiler]." This also shows the state of affairs Lilley termed out of touch with reality!

¹¹ Other aspects of the age certainly were relevant to the documentary conclusion. These scholars were trained in Hegelian synthesis, seeing things with inherent contradictions evolving into a higher-level product. Of course, the influence of Darwin and integration of an evolutionary process was also likely an influencing cause.

sometimes insensible organization seemed to mandate some unusual explanation of how that writing came to be.

The last century – and really the last five decades – have done much to change the scholastic perception on this subject. Orthodox professor John Breck wrote in 1994,

A quiet revolution is presently under way in the field of biblical studies. For the past several decades, small numbers of scholars have been exploring the *shape* or literary structure of scriptural passages in order to determine more precisely and more fully the author's intended *meaning*.¹²

Breck was speaking of “*chiasmus*.”

The word “chiasmus” gives a clue to its meaning. It comes from the Greek word *chi*, which is the word for the Greek letter χ . Like a western alphabet X, the *chi* takes a structured shape that reaches a termination point and then reciprocally reproduces itself in reverse. In other words, $>$ then becomes $<$. The two form the $><$ or Greek X (χ).

Scholars had earlier found chiasms in Hebrew poetry. Many passages expressed ideas that progressed and then balanced out by reversing the ideas. Psalm 3:7, 8 for example (each line is labeled with a capital letter going into the chiasm and coming out the reciprocal line gets the proper capital letter with an apostrophe):

Arise, O LORD! (A)

Save me, O my God! (B)

For you strike all my enemies on the cheek (C)

You break the teeth of the wicked (C')

Salvation belongs to your people (B')

Your blessing is upon your people! (A')

¹² Breck, John, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1994) at 1.

In those two verses, the center lines each compliment/echo each other (“you strike all my enemies on the cheek” and “you break the teeth of the wicked”). Similarly, the “B” lines balance each other (“Save me” with “Salvation belongs to your people”), and the A lines work together (when God arises, his blessing is upon his people!).

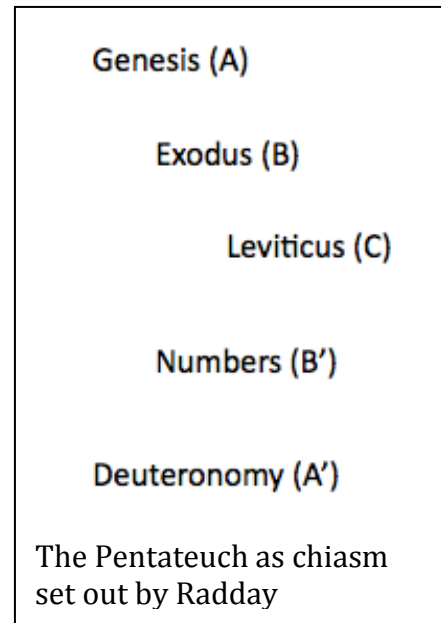
The last four decades have seen a growing recognition by scholars that chiasmus is found not only in lines of Hebrew poetry, but also in large blocks of biblical prose. Writing the introduction to a scholastic collection of essays on chiasm, Law Professor (and classical scholar) J. W. Welch wrote,

In antiquity, however, chiasmus was widely used with equal fluency in both prose and poetry.¹³

The essays collected and edited by Welch include some of the top linguistic scholars writing in this era. Hebrew professor and scholar David Noel Freedman (1922-2008) served as general editor for the Anchor Bible Series (1956-2008), producing over 300 scholarly books in his lifetime. He explained the growing understanding among the scholastic community that chiasms were no longer simply understood as a part of poetry.

Scholars now recognize...chiasms which involve passages of verse or prose ranging in length from a few sentences to hundreds of thousands of words.¹⁴

Once scholars began to unlock this method of writing, many of the passages that earlier scholars did not understand, which seemed to include redundancies, suddenly made sense. Hebrew scholar Yehuda Radday wrote an essay on “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative.” In the article, he noted that not only was chiasm present in many of the Pentateuch’s stories that were originally thought to be haphazard redundancies, but that the Pentateuch itself seemed to be the work of one hand in a chiasm form, with Genesis and Deuteronomy being the bookends. Genesis is the prologue to the covenant and Deuteronomy the epilogue recapitulating the covenant. Exodus and Numbers scholars have long been recognized to be very similar in approach, and



¹³ Welch, John W., ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (Research Press at BYU 1981) at 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* at 7.

Leviticus stands out as the center focal point on its own. This understanding also helps one realize that the text is not always in “chronological order.” There are changes in chronological order to fit the internal structures of chiasmic style. Of course, there are also numerous other layers of chiasm throughout the material in the Pentateuch. We pointed out, for example, the significant chiasm in our lesson on Babel.¹⁵

Chiasm fulfilled a number of functions in ancient writing. It served as a memory aid in an era when writing was rare. It also served to mark off sections, as opposed to the more modern invention of chapters and paragraphs. In this sense it gave order to the writing, albeit an altogether different order than that found in Western writing.

An even more significant function of chiasm lies in its place of emphasis. While modern communication stresses the need to place significant points in the beginning and ending of pieces (“primacy and recency”), chiasm places the point of emphasis in the middle. It is the mid section around which the entire structure pivots. This is the section containing the focal point.

We should note that our understanding of the ancient use of chiasmus stems not simply from Biblical writings. The discovery and translations of numerous writings that date to the second and third millennium BC have shown chiasms in both small poetic passages as well as large textual stories and “books” in other Ancient Near Eastern writings.¹⁶

How does chiasmus writing relate to our study of Judges? Paul Tanner wrote his doctoral dissertation on chiasms in Judges (using the alternate term of “textual patterning”) in 1990 at the University of Texas.¹⁷ Tanner found that Judges produced,

Certain parallel features between these narratives so that the entire book reflects a carefully worked symmetrical pattern.¹⁸

Tanner set out these sections separately in his diagram:

¹⁵ That lesson and others in this series are available at www.Biblical-Literacy.com.

¹⁶ Examples of chiasms in Sumero-Akkadian and Ugaritic are now well known. See *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, at 17-49.

¹⁷ Tanner subsequently published a condensed assessment, “The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges.” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 149 (1992) at 146.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* at 150.

- A Introduction, Part I (1:1-2:5)
 - B Introduction, Part II (2:6-3:6)
 - C Othniel Narrative (3:7-11)
 - D Ehud Narrative (3:12-31)
 - E Deborah/Barak Narrative (4:1-5:31)
 - F Gideon Narrative (6:1-8:32)
 - E' Abimelech Narrative (8:33-10:5)
 - D' Jephthah Narrative (10:6-12:15)
 - C' Samson Narrative (13:1-16:31)
 - B' Epilogue, Part I (17:1-18:31)
 - A' Epilogue, Part II (19:1-21:25)

Most all scholars had long agreed that Judges contains a two-part introduction, a set of narratives, and a two-part conclusion. Tanner took previously recognized sections and showed how they fit in chiasmic structure together.

This insight Tanner set out was similar to one that was previously published by D. W. Gooding. Gooding noted that the A/A' sections both deal with the disintegration of the tribes. The B/B' sections concern the rampant idolatry. The C/C' sections show the problem of foreign women (with Othniel, this goes back to the problem cited in Judges 3:6 that the Israelites were taking foreign women as their wives). The D/D' sections show foreign kings at the fords of the Jordan. The E/E' narratives both have heroic women ending the war.¹⁹

¹⁹ Gooding, D. W., "The Composition of the Book of Judges." *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982) 70-79. More recently, Butler has argued that Joshua and Judges function as a two-part chiasm themselves, with Judges written in a sense in contrast to Joshua. Butler at lviii writes, "The thesis can be argued, I believe persuasively, that the content, themes, and structure of the Judges narrative together reflect a conscious effort to reverse the content, themes, and structure of the Joshua narrative." If Butler is right, then not only does Judges reflect the singular authorship of one writer, but it was written at a time and place to compliment the previous work of Joshua.

Within this framework, the lower half of the symmetry is in a sense a negative aspect of the start. Othniel, the first narrated Judge is pristine in the text. He carries no negative comments and no flaws. The text simply sets out that God raised him up and used him to win the war. On the opposite side, however, we have Samson. Samson is so flawed, that there is almost nothing redeeming in him. As the chiasm progresses to level D/D', Ehud the left-handed, is also portrayed positively, although he does win through a bit of deception. His counterpart Jephthah is not as bad as Samson, although he was born to a prostitute, and only comes to help once he is promised a place in the community. The E/E' narratives have Barak as a warrior, good, but unwilling to fight without Debra the woman present. He loses the prize to another woman who kills the opposing general. Abimelech, on the other hand, takes kingship his father refused, and is a bad example who ultimately loses his own life because of the actions of a woman.

This chiastic structuring shows the center of Judges, the Gideon narrative, to be the focal point of the book. It is in the story of Gideon that we see the author's main purpose explored and explained.

CHIASMUS AND GIDEON

Scholars work to differentiate chiasmus from coincidence. To be truly chiastic,

The inverted parallel orders...must be evidenced in the text itself and not imposed upon the text.²⁰

In making more certain of a chiastic interpretation of large sections of prose, one of the markers sought is a usage of chiasmus in smaller sections of the prose. The idea is that if an author is showing the usage of this technique in certain places, it is more likely present in others.

As we look at the focal story of Gideon, therefore, it is not surprising that the story itself is written in a chiastic structure.

The basic chiastic structure of the Gideon narrative is well set out by K. L. Younger.²¹ A synopsis of Younger's reading produces the following chart:

²⁰ Welch at 13.

²¹ Younger, K. L., Jr., *Judges, Ruth: NIV Application Commentary*, (Zondervan 2002) at 167-168.

A Prologue (6:1-10)

B God plan of delivering through Gideon – a story of two altars (6:11-32)

C Gideon's personal faith struggle (6:33-7:18)

B' God's deliverance from the Midianites – a story of two battles (7:19-8:21)

A' Epilogue to Gideon (8:22-8:32)

The clear focal point of this Gideon story becomes the personal faith struggle Gideon experiences as written in 6:33-7:18.²² Gideon, like Israel itself, seems unable to rely upon God's word and past deeds. The LORD clearly spoke to Gideon of his work to be done. Gideon did not have confidence it was a message from the LORD at first, but after a miraculous consumption of a sacrificial meal, Gideon was convinced. He was so convinced that he risked family and community reprisal by destroying two altars.

Yet once God is ready to deliver the Israelites from the Midianites, Gideon's faith and confidence fled, replaced by fear and hesitancy. This was Israel's story. Israel would give God regard as long as his works were fresh in their mind and history. But once the freshness was gone, the unbelief returned.

Gideon seeks confirmation that the message he is hearing is in fact divine, and receives his requested miracle (morning dew was found on a fleece, but not the rest of the ground). Rather than accept the Lord's word at that point, Gideon seeks a do-over. He wants further verification and authentication of God's involvement in the mission! The next morning Gideon gets his new requested sign. Appropriately enough in this chiasm, the sign is the inverted parallel of his first sign. This time the fleece is dry, but the ground is covered in morning dew.

Is Gideon's faith struggle finished? No! Gideon has enough faith to gather an army and prepare for battle, but once God comes to whittle down the army, Gideon's fears take center stage. Interestingly, Gideon believes the Lord enough

²² This section also exists in chiasm. See Tanner at 157; Younger at 167-168; and cites in Butler at 194.

to send home all but 300 men for battle. But as God presses Gideon to engage the enemy, God points out Gideon's fear:

Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. But *if you are afraid to go down*, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. And you shall hear what they say, and afterwards your hand will be strengthened to go down against the camp (Jdg. 7:9-11).

In an amazing statement, God says, "I am giving you the enemy, but if you are afraid, don't take my word for it, hear the words of the enemy!" What is even more amazing, is after the LORD says, "if you are too afraid, then go down..." Gideon says, at least by his actions, "Yes, I am too afraid! I will take the word of my enemy to quell my fears, rather than the word of my LORD!"

In the Gideon story, the focus of Judges, we see Gideon himself exemplifying the struggle of the Israelites for consistency in faith and reliance on the Lord.

CONCLUSION

There is a lot of new material for many in this lesson. There is no need to get lost in it. A lot of the detail is provided for those with a good bit of working experience in Old Testament study. Here is the point in a nutshell:

Older scholars used to dismiss any claim of historical authenticity and age appropriate dating of Judges. They thought the book was a composite effort of many scholars working from their agendas and ideologies 500 years after the events portrayed. Recent scholarship has indicated that such an impression does not fairly reflect the evidence or understanding. There is solid evidence that Judges reflects the time and history recorded within its pages.

What is more, this insight has helped understand the pivotal story of Gideon within the narrative. This challenges and encourages the believer now, just as much as it would have the believer then. It prepares the history for Israel to receive a king, and to see if an earthly king, in place of a heavenly king, can stir greater consistent devotion and belief in the people, inuring God's protection in the process.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“Arise, go down against the camp...”* (Jdg. 7:9).

God’s instructions...what do you and I do with them? Is he both God and Lord? In other words, do we take his instructions to heart and seek to faithfully follow them? Take a long, hard personal inventory and answer that simple question: Do you (I) take God’s instructions to heart and seek to follow them (him)?

2. *“...if you are afraid to go down...”* (Jdg. 7:10).

If (when) you choose not to follow God’s instructions, ask yourself another question: Why? Is it fear of the consequences? Fear of what God might do or not do? Fear of what God might allow to happen? Remember Paul’s admonition to Timothy, “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love (2 Tim. 1:7). God himself, his love for us, a love that nothing can separate us from, a love that gave his own Son in redemptive death, a perfect love that casts out all fear (1 Jn 4:18), needs to speak to us.

3. *“...go down to the camp...hear what they say, and afterwards your hand will be strengthened”* (Jdg. 7:10-11).

What a patient and loving God we serve. He sees us for who we are with our fears, our inadequacies, our shortcomings, and he loves us anyway. He still seeks a way to bring us into his will and supply us with what we need to accomplish his desires. Notice he did not say to Gideon, If you are afraid, I will send someone else.” At this point, he kindly gave Gideon the additional courage needed to accomplish God’s tasks. If you find yourself unable to do as God is instructing, then please take a first step. Prayerfully confess to him your inadequacies and ask for his help at strengthening you for the tasks he has set ahead. He will honor your prayer, you will grow, and his name will be exalted!

Next week, we look at the archaeological issues raised by Judges. Get ready and bring a guest!

WANT MORE?

Find someone in whom you can confide. Get a prayer partner. If you have no one to pray with or to pray for you, email us areas where we can pray for you at wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com. We will be honored to pray for you (and obviously keep all emails confidential).