

Judges

Lesson 3

We are still in the first section of the book of Judges, for which we are calling *A Review of the Sin of the Downfall of Israel*. This section has two themes—first, *The Victories of Nation of Israel*, second, *The Failures of Nation of Israel*. In our last lesson, we had covered the victories and then moved into the failures of Israel. At this point in the story, we are looking at the failures of the tribe of Manasseh. Fraught with disappointment, Manasseh wanted more land, but Joshua would not allot more land to them. Joshua instructed Manasseh to rid the land given to the tribe of the Canaanites, and there would be plenty of land. The tribe of Manasseh left Shiloh with the same task as some of its other tribal brothers – to destroy the Canaanites. However, Manasseh will fail.

(3) The Canaanites in Manasseh (1:22-28)

(a) The New Luz (1:22-26)

The writer moves to speak of the Canaanites in Manasseh's tribal area. He begins with the taking of the old city of Luz, which was renamed Bethel by the Israelites, and mentions a Canaanite moving down the road to establish a new Canaanite city called by the old name Luz. Verse 22. *"Likewise the house of Joseph went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them."*²³ *The house of Joseph spied out Bethel (now the name of the city was formerly Luz).*²⁴ *The spies saw a man coming out of the city and they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city and we will treat you kindly."*²⁵ *So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword, but they let the man and all his family go free.*²⁶ *The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz which is its name to this day."* (1:22-26)

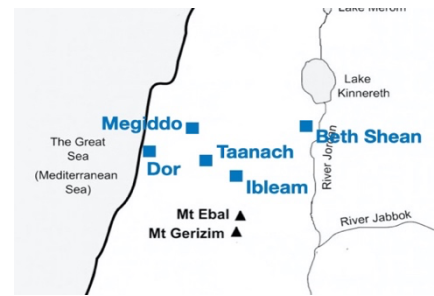
As background, in the book of Joshua, while meeting at Shiloh where the land was divided, Manasseh complained about the small portion of land that had been allotted (Joshua 17:14-18). Joshua did not relent to the complaint. Neither did Joshua give more land to Manasseh. Instead, Joshua instructed Manasseh to go on the land allotted and destroy the Canaanites as ordered by the LORD. In this passage, we learn that Manasseh returned to the land and attacked Luz, which they will rename Bethel. The king of Luz/Bethel was already dead along with many of the cities warriors because they had moved across the valley to aid the city of Ai when Joshua led Israel to attack it right after the first battle which was the conquest against Jericho. The king of Luz/Bethel died then.

In this passage, a resident of Luz/Bethel aided Manasseh in its battle against the city. However, in response, the resident simply moved to the Hittite country and established a new city with the same name. The Hittites controlled two portions of land. One section was south of Luz/Bethel, and the other was north of the Sea of Chinnereth. We do not know which section of the Hittite land the man established the new town in; however, at the time of the writing of this book, the new Luz was still in existence and Canaanite filled. Be that as it may, the location of that city has been long lost in the history of Israel.

(b) The Northwestern Section (1:27-28)

Manassah's second failure was in the northwestern section of its tribal area. Verse 27. *"But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land."*²⁸ *It came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely."* (1:27-28)

We might not recognize four of these cities, but indeed, we recognize one for sure – Megiddo. We recognize it because it is sometimes used to name the valley it looks over – the valley of Megiddo, or, as also called, the Valley of Armageddon. Manasseh failed to take these five Canaanite cities, but as the text says, later, Manasseh put the people into forced labor. What does that mean? First, we must understand that forced labor does not mean slaves. Wycliffe’s first English translation renders the verse as *“Soothly after that Israel was strengthened, he made them tributaries, either to pay tribute and would not do away them.”* Wycliffe helps us understand that these Canaanite cities became “tributaries” of the Israelites, meaning they were required to pay taxes to Israel. However, the taxes were not to be paid in money but in labor. The Hebrew uses the word *lamas*, which means *under tribute*, but it can also mean *forced tribute*. The word *labor* is not in the verse in the original.



Canaanite Cities in Manasseh Tribal Area

Nevertheless, the Hebrew word *lamas* denotes a body of men engaged in forced labor to pay a tax instead of paying the tax with money. By the time of Solomon, these towns were forced to pay their tributes in labor rather than money (1 Kings 4:12, 1 Kings 9:20-22). But the references in 1st Kings involved King Solomon, and he is much too late in time because the book of Judges was already in the Levitical hands for safekeeping long before he became king. The writer must be telling us that during the time of the Judges, the tribe of Manasseh became strong enough to force these cities to pay a tax tribute with labor on projects rather than with money.

(4) The Canaanites in Ephraim (1:29)

Now we come to the failure of the living Canaanites in Ephraim territory. Verse 29. *“Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.”* (1:29)

If you will remember, the nation of Israel did not attack Gezer to kill the people and the king. Instead, the king of Gezer went down to Lachish to help fight against Israel there. Ephraim simply failed to remove the Canaanites of Gezer and decided to live with them in their territory instead.

(5) The Canaanites in Zebulun (1:30)

Then we come to two towns in Zebulun’s land where the Canaanites were not removed. Verse 30. *“Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor.”* (1:30)

As with Manasseh’s Canaanites, Zebulun followed suit and taxed the Canaanites in its two towns with forced labor instead of payment with gold or silver.

(6) The Canaanites in Asher (1:31-32)

On to the Canaanites in Asher. Verse 31. *“Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob. ³² So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.”* (1:31-32)

Six towns in the land of Asher were left in the hands of the Canaanites. Asher did not tax them. Instead, the Canaanites simply lived with the Asherites.

(7) The Canaanites in Naphtali (1:33)

Next door to Asher, we see the Canaanites in Naphtali. Verse 33. *“Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath became forced labor for them.”* (1:33)

Two towns of Canaanites were left alive. These were taxed with payment by forced labor following the trend of Manasseh and Zebulun

(8) The Canaanites in Dan (1:34-36)

Lastly, we come to the Canaanites in Dan. Verse 34. *“Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley;” yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the house of Joseph grew strong, they became forced labor.*³⁶ *The border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and upward.”* (1:34-36)

Here the Canaanites are called Amorites. They are still descendants of Canaan and, therefore, a Canaanite tribe. Dan failed. Dan was pushed back by the Amorites to the hill country. However, in time, Joseph's house, being the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, was able to tax the Amorites and have them pay with forced labor. Dan was not able to subdue them. But this, too, disappointed the LORD.

The writer identifies the length of the Amorite land. *Akrabbim* is a mountain, and the name means *scorpions*. Scorpions are prevalent in this whole area. In Numbers 34:4, this mountain is called *Maaleh-acrabbim*. Coming up from the Wilderness of Zin and the territory of the Edomites, the Scorpion Pass leads to where the land levels off in the land of the Philistines. *Sela* means *the rock*. It was a city near the Scorpion Pass and on the border of the Amorite territory, whose location is unknown today. Be that as it may, the land of the Amorites ran northward through Dan's territory.

Chapter 2

2. The Disobedience of the Tribes (2:1-5)

a) The Reprimand from the LORD (2:1-3)

(1) What the LORD had Promised (2:1)

With the opening of chapter 2, the writer adds to the story told in Joshua chapter 23. There Joshua had met with the people for the last time in Shiloh. He warned the people to fulfill the LORD's commands, or the LORD would fight against them. Here in Judges we learn of the moment when the LORD reproved the nation because of the disobedience of the tribes. It was the reprimand from the LORD referenced in Joshua. It has already occurred there just outside Shiloh, with Joshua participating in the reprimand. Here the writer states what the LORD had promised in chapter 2, verse 1. *“Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, ‘I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you,’”* (2:1).

The *angel of the LORD* is the LORD, who rested and resided above the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle. However, at times, the LORD would appear to people, and specifically members of the nation of Israel, in the form of the *angel of the LORD*. He is God. He did not leave His place in the Holy of Holies. As God, He appeared in the presence of men as the Angel of the LORD. For example, on the Plains of Moab, when the *angel of the LORD* appeared to Balaam and his donkey with a sword in His hand, the radiance of the LORD was still glowing in the Holy of Holies behind the veil in the Tabernacle. As God, He can be in two or more places at the same time. He is not limited by finite human laws of nature.

The LORD did not remain at Gilgal when the Tabernacle was moved to Shiloh. He moved from Gilgal to Shiloh with the Tabernacle. The camp of Israel was setting just outside the Tabernacle area at Shiloh. After the reprimand, the nation of Israel called their camp at Shiloh, *Bochim*. *Bochim* means *weepers*. It is where the nation of Israel wept because the LORD reprimanded the nation for not destroying all the Canaanites in the land. Here, the *angel of the LORD* has appeared to the camp to make His first point by telling the people of the promise He made and kept to bring the nation out of Egypt.

(2) What the LORD had Prescribed (2:2a)

The second point of the *angel of the LORD* was to state what the LORD had prescribed. Verse 2a. “...and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.” (2:2a)

This prescription was given by the LORD in Deuteronomy 7:1-2a and Deuteronomy 20:16-18 – all Canaanites were to be destroyed, and their holy places and objects of worship were to be torn down.

(3) What the LORD had Perceived (2:2b)

Now we come to what the LORD had perceived in verse 2b. “*But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?*” (2:2b). The LORD knew what the nation had done. It was not hidden from Him. He knew they had not fulfilled His order. The nation was going on with life in the Promised Land just as if the task was complete, but it was not – Canaanites still lived in the land.

(4) What the LORD had Pronounced (2:3)

Therefore, we come to what the LORD had pronounced. Verse 3. “*Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.*” (2:3). The LORD was not going to fight for Israel unless Israel was willing to fight the Canaanites. As we have seen in the stories in Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and now Judges, where Israel kept the orders of the LORD, the LORD fought for Israel. When Israel did not, the LORD would not fight, and He would allow the enemy to win against Israel.

b) The Response from the People (2:4-5)

(1) With Crying and Weeping (2:4-5a)

With the reprimand from the LORD, we see the response from the people – with crying and weeping. Verse 4. “*When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. So they named that place Bochim;*” (2:4-5a).

The place where they were camping when this interchange happened was called Shiloh. The people had named it Shiloh. But now, because of the reprimand of the LORD and the weeping of the people, the people gave the place a second name, a nickname as we might call it – Bochim, *weeping*. The nation named many places with two or more names after coming out of Egypt. The first time we recognized it was at Rephidim, where Moses struck the rock and water came forth. The Midianites called the place Horeb. The Israelites called it Rephidim. It had two names. It was there that the Amalekites attacked the nation on the side of Mount Sinai (Ex 17:9–13). Moses sent Joshua to fight. Moses lifted his arms. As long as his arms were up, Israel prevailed. When his arms went down, Amalek prevailed. The workaround was to brace Moses’ arms with supports. When it was all over, Israel gave Horeb/Rephidim (which means *resting place*) two more names, two nicknames, because of what happened there – Massah (which means *tested*) and Meribah (which means *strife*). And so, Shiloh was given the nickname of *Bochim* after the LORD’s reprimand.

(2) With Offerings (2:5b)

The nation of Israel repented with offerings. Verse 5b. “...and there they sacrificed to the LORD.” (2:5b).

The writer did not choose to tell us the kind of offering Israel made at this time. However, it was indeed a *sin offering* because of their disobedience.

C. The Delay of the Sin of the Downfall (2:6-10)

1. Until the Death of Joshua (2:6-7a)

One would think that the people would get it right now. They had been reprimanded, and they had wept, and they made an offering. But the history of the sin of the downfall, which led to the disobedience of the sin of the downfall, has now led to the delay of the sin of the downfall. It was

delayed until the death of Joshua. Verse 6. *“When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.”*⁷ *The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua,”* (2:6-7a)

To begin with, the people would do their best to be good, but it would last only until the death of Joshua.

2. Until the Death of Joshua’s Elders (2:7b)

Next, the people would attempt to be good until the death of Joshua’s elders. Verse 7b. *“...and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.”* (2:7b)

But we see a catch with the elders. The people would be good until the deaths of the elders who *“had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.”* Indeed, by the time of the death of Joshua, there were younger elders who had not seen the great work of the LORD.

3. The Start of the Sin of the Downfall (2:8-10)

a) Upon the Death of Joshua (2:8-9)

And now, the writer moves to the start of the sin of the downfall of Israel upon the death of Joshua. Verse 8. *“Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.”*⁹ *And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash”* (2:8-9).

The writer told us Joshua died at the end of the book of Joshua. He told us Joshua died at the beginning of the book of Judges. Now he tells us that Joshua died in verse 8. Has Joshua died three times? Absolutely not. The writer of Joshua and Judges is simply telling the story three times and giving a little more detail with each pass. Joshua was buried on the special land that was given to him at the dividing of the Promised Land.

b) Upon the Death of that Generation (2:10a)

Joshua had died. The people were good until his death. But the start of the downfall of Israel also began upon the death of that generation. Verse 10a. *“All that generation also were gathered to their fathers;”* (2:10a)

After sending all the tribes to live on their allotments of land, Joshua lived about forty-five more years. Many of those who experienced the crossing of the Jordan River, the battles for the Promised Land, and the dividing of the land had surely died during the last forty-five years of Joshua’s life. Soon they were all gone. Soon, all the elders who saw the miracles of the work of the LORD were gone. Soon that generation was gone.

c) Upon the Rise of a New Generation (2:10b-c)

(1) Who Did Not Know the LORD (2:10b)

Who came next into the leadership of Israel? Upon the rise of a new generation, there came leaders who did not know the LORD. Verse 10b. *“...and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD,”* (2:10b)

One would think that the nation's history with its close relationship to the LORD would have been passed down, taught to the children and their children’s children – but not so. A generation in Israel was raised that did not know the LORD.

(2) Who Did Not Know the Work of the LORD (2:10c)

Not only did the new generation fail to know the LORD, but the generation also arose who did not know the work of the LORD. Verse 10c. *“...nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.”* (2:10c)

The new generation arose who had not seen the work of the LORD; therefore, they did not believe in the past work of the LORD. Oh, how quickly each new young generation dismisses the history of the past generations. Oh, how quickly each new young generation wants to wipe from the pages the events of the past generations. Oh, how quickly each new young generation will make the

same mistakes of the past generation if they do not learn the lesson from the past and take a new path in the future.