

Episode: Promised Land Series No. 19

Narrator: Eli

Primary Scriptures: Judges 17-21; 1 Samuel 1-4

Story Summary: The judges following Samson, including Eli

Location: Canaan

Time: c. 1406 BC The Israelites enter Canaan

c. 1209-1169 BC The rule of Deborah

c. 1075-1055 BC The rule of Samson

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Judges 18:31; 21:25

Judges 17-21 tell stories that are, let's say, peculiar. They are about events in Israel toward the end of the period of the judges, but are not about judges themselves.

In the first story, an Ephraimite, Micah, steals 1100 shekels of silver from her mother. He later tells her that he did so and they celebrate by making 200 of the shekels into an idol. They make worship implements similar to that at the tabernacle, made a son a priest, and began to worship. Micah becomes friend with a Levite, who also becomes a priest for the idol. Five hundred men from the tribe of Dan steal the idol, conquer some land, and set up the idol for worship.

The next story involves a man and his unfaithful concubine. They travel through Gibeah, in Benjamin, where they spend the night. The men of the city ravage the concubine until she dies. The man cuts her up into twelve pieces, and sends each piece to the tribes of Israel. They punish the men of Gibeah and their fellow tribesmen by killing most of them. The survivors eventually have to find wives or the tribe will vanish. The wives are found in Jabesh Gilead, a city who had not followed the Lord in a matter. So, the tribe of Benjamin survives.

Overall, the last line of the book of *Judges* is a solemn judgment on the period: "In those days, Israel had no king, and everyone did as they saw fit."

The last person who was solely a judge was Eli. His story is told in 1 Chronicles 1-4. Following Eli was Samuel, but Samuel was also a prophet. The stories of Eli and Samuel are intertwined.

Eli was a judge who had two evil sons. Eli rebuked his sons for their actions, but they paid no attention to him. Eventually, God declared that both sons would die on the same day, and the authority of the office would transfer to another person.

When the Israelites and Philistines went to battle, the two sons took the ark of the covenant into battle as a good luck charm. They battle was lost, and the Philistines captured the ark. Both sons died in the battle, and Eli died upon hearing the bad news.

For many years, Eli had been raising Samuel as his own son. Samuel takes over from Eli. When Samuel takes over, it is the beginning of the end of the period of the judges. That doesn't mean it will get better.

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain Judges 17:6 in light of Judges 17:5. When you read Judges 17:13, does it sound like Micah is worshiping God, or is he acting through superstition?
 2. Explain Judges 18:1-2.
 3. Do you see some inconsistencies of the Israelites' behavior in Judges 21?
2. The Danites had lost their land to the Philistines. They must have thought it was easier to take land from their brothers in Ephraim than to go battle the Philistines.

Application Questions:

1. Give some possible explanations about the meaning of Judges 21:25. Do you ever choose to do as you want even though God is supposed to be the king over your life?
2. 1 Samuel 1:6 plainly says the Lord kept Hannah from having children. What do you think about that? Do you think the Lord still does such things today? If so, how would you know whether it is of the Lord?
3. In 1 Samuel 1:11, Hannah tries to make a deal with God in order for her to have a child. Have you ever tried to make a deal with God? How did that work out? 1 Samuel 2:21 indicates the Lord blessed Hannah for fulfilling her side of the bargain she made with God, which was sending her son away. How do you feel about that?
4. 1 Samuel 4:3 indicates the Israelites wanted to use the Ark of the Covenant as a good luck charm instead of for worshiping God. According to 1 Samuel 4:10-11, how did that work out? Do you ever try to use a Bible verse or a prayer as a good luck charm?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Judges 21:25. What do you think the outcome will be for a society where everybody does what they want? Does that partially describe the modern American society?
2. In 1 Samuel 1:28, Hannah permanently sends her son away as a dedication to the Lord. This is an Old Testament story. Do you think the New Testament would support that kind of an worshipful action or not? What would you think if your parents sent you away as a dedication to God?
3. 1 Samuel 2:17 describes one reason that Samuel's sons were evil. 1 Samuel 2:22-25 describe other ways they did evil. How would you describe their family dynamics according to those verses? Would you expect that dynamic to work out well? According to 1 Samuel 4:12-22, did it?