

Free - Take One



Shaqah

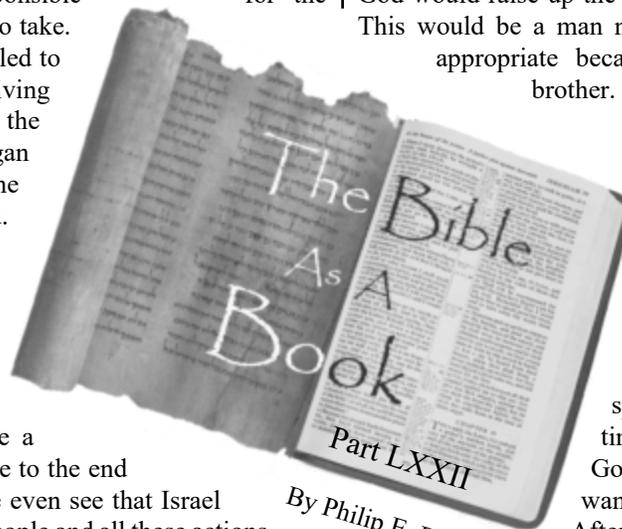
*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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In our last segment, we continued our overview of the Book of Judges. In that segment we talked about how the angel coming to scold Israel due to their lack of seeking God in driving out the remaining Canaanites from the land was an event that actually took place on down the timeline from where the next verses start. This is due to the fact the next verses return to talking about the death of Joshua and we have already been told the nation served The Lord all the life of Joshua as well as those elders that entered the land with him. This led us to discuss how it was actually the generation of Israel after those who entered the land who were responsible for the downhill slide the nation began to take. This next generation not only failed to continue to listen to God in driving out the nations who lived on the promised land but they also began corrupting themselves with the religions these people followed. These actions are what caused God to punish Israel with the fact God would no longer continue to drive out all these people from the land. Israel would have to live among them and they would always be a thorn in Israel's side. As we came to the end of what we covered last time we even see that Israel started to intermarry with these people and all these actions would cause the need for the judges whose works this book covers. In the end we made it to Judges chapter 3 verse 7 and that is where we will begin this segment.



By Philip E. Busby

Verse 7 makes it clear to us that the people of Israel had truly turned from serving The Lord and began to serve the religions of men. Due to this we are told God was very angry with them and the first people Israel finds themselves oppressed by is not a people we would call Canaanites at all. It would actually be a very foreign power that would reach out in what should be seen as a very early attempt to build an empire. That power would be the king of Mesopotamia. One should note that here in Judges this king is not called a Babylonian and that's because the events to bring to power those we knew as Babylonians had not yet taken place. However, there was at this

time a king over enough of the valley Abraham originally came from that he was known as the King of Mesopotamia. Unlike the more native people in the promised land the Mesopotamian army would not know the territory better than Israel and this would give Israel an advantage. What we see is that Israel was so out of touch with God and His delivering hand that even then they could not defend what was already theirs. They would serve this king for eight years.

Israel would eventually cry unto The Lord for help and God would raise up the first man to serve as a judge in Israel. This would be a man named Othniel and he would be very appropriate because this man was Caleb's younger brother. This same man rose to the challenge Caleb gave when they were first attacking Kirjath-sepher. Caleb told the men whoever went up to and took the city would receive Caleb's daughter for a wife. We don't know how old Othniel was when this took place but it would appear he was quite a bit younger than Caleb. Caleb was old enough to be a spy sent by Moses into Canaan at the time Israel showed their disbelief in God's power which caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. After going through that both Caleb and Joshua represented men whom God had given very long life to for them to be so active in the taking of the land much later on. However, Caleb's age likely had a lot to do with why he offered his daughter as a prize for whoever would show the guts and leadership ability to go up and take the city instead of Caleb having to lead the charge. This means Othniel was probably pretty young at the time he took Kirjath-sepher as this incident of him becoming the first judge in Israel had to be several years later.

In any case, Othniel would have success in defeating the king of Mesopotamia and we are told the land of Israel enjoyed peace for another forty years. If we assume Othniel living that much longer is the reason they saw all forty of these years of peace it's safe to assume Othniel was much younger

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than Caleb in spite of being his brother. As we already discussed, the chronology is hard to piece together and be exact but facts such as Othniel being Caleb's brother is why most will put the chronology together so that a couple of these first judges served during the life of the High Priest Eleazar. This would suggest that what we were told in chapter 2 of Judges about the people serving God all the days of Joshua and those elders of his generation, is untrue. This is also to suggest that while we are told in chapter 2 God would deliver Israel from their enemy all the days of any particular judge, God did not do that for Israel during the days of Joshua and Eleazar in general. Putting the first couple of judges chronologically before the death of Joshua and Eleazar would be contradicting facts already told to us. However, we should keep in mind Othniel was not considered one of the elders in Israel as they entered the land. So while we know Othniel was younger than Caleb, the question we can't answer with certainty is, was he enough younger to have outlived the generation of Joshua and Eleazar by these eight years of oppression as well as most of the forty years of peace that followed?

One more quick thought is the fact we are early on in the timeline following the death of Joshua and the rise of the generation who would not serve God. Othniel could easily have died long before the forty years of peace came to a close, and Israel seen many of these years because it took that long before they did evil again to the degree God allowed a new enemy to oppress them. However, we are told Israel once again turned and did evil in the sight of God following these forty years, and this time it would be people closer to the promised land who moved in to oppress Israel. This second oppression would come from those nations just to the outskirts of the tribes living on the east of Jordan. These would mainly be the descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. To be more specific it would be the two nations that came from Lot's two sons, the Moabites and the Ammonites. (Gen. 19:37-38) They, along with the Amalekites, would come and not just take back territory on the east of Jordan, much of which had been theirs before Israel arrived, but they would cross the Jordan to possess the "...city of palm trees." Judges 3:13 The city of palm trees, as best we know, is the city of Jericho which did not exist as a city by this time. To that I want to point out how much the wording in the Book of Joshua told us names of many places and then names they later were known by or known as prior to; giving us this picture of how the names of places were one thing to the Canaanites but another to Israel.

In this light we should be able to see how the reference here about possessing the city of palm trees does not have to mean Jericho had been rebuilt. Just as Jericho's destruction marked the beginning of Israel ruling in the land of Canaan, meaning that land which lay on the west of the Jordan, this reference tells us the king of Moab did in fact cross the Jordan to oppress most all of Israel not just those on the east of the Jordan. We are told this oppression lasted eighteen years and, once again, Israel would turn to cry to The Lord for help. God, once again, would rise up a judge to do just that. This would be a man named Ehud who was of the tribe of Benjamin and it is specified he was left-handed. Ehud, along with a few others from Israel, would deliver a present to the king of Moab. After the presentation Ehud would send the others on their way, but

turn to the king and tell him he had a secret mission in coming to the king. The king would tell him to be silent until they were alone and this no doubt was what Ehud was hoping for. Ehud would get the chance to approach the king as he sat comfortably in his summer parlor. Ehud told the king he had a message from God and that caused the king to rise up out of his seat. This is where the left-handed part came into play. As Ehud reached with his left hand to his right thigh in order to draw out his dagger, the king thought nothing of it because the left hand would be the unskilled weaker hand of most men. This gave Ehud the opportunity to thrust the dagger deep into the king's torso before the king had any idea of what was happening.

Now, the king was a very fat man and Ehud could not pull the dagger back out. The gaping wound would allow the king's insides to begin spilling out. It's hard to say how long it might take to die from such an injury but Ehud slipped out of the room, locking the doors behind him. When the king's servants came to check they noted the doors were locked and assumed the king had stretched out to relax in a way one wouldn't want others to walk in on them. The servants would wait for a very long time before attempting to do more. They waited so long it became embarrassing to think the king would be in such a state so long. They took a key and opened the door to find the king laying dead on the floor. They of course knew who had done this but the time had given Ehud the opportunity to get far away. Ehud would call together the men of Israel to rise against the Moabites while their leadership was in disarray. They marched right into Moabite territory and killed ten thousand of their army, which was every last one of the men there. This incident released the grip the Moabites and Ammonites had over Israel and Israel would enjoy eighty years of peace. To give you a bit of perspective on where we are chronologically, it would have been sometime during the work of Ehud that Boaz, the great-grandfather of king David, was born.

Next we are told about a judge of whom we are given very little information, but who he defends Israel against is of particular interest. This judge's name was Shamgar and he fought the Philistines. Of course, the Philistines are a people Bible students are very familiar with as in later times they were very troublesome. What's interesting here is that we are not told the Philistines had oppressed Israel in a specific way or for a specific time. All we know is that Shamgar kills six hundred of their men using, not a weapon, but a tool. An ox goad was a common tool which most farmers would have. They were a basic stick, often made of iron. They were used to poke the oxen while using the oxen to pull a plow. This would cause the oxen to move ahead and thus, the name of the tool. For this purpose the goad would have a sharp point at one end and typically a paddle on the other, used to scrape mud and the like off one's plow blade(s). Using such a common tool to kill six hundred men is sort of like something we later see the Judge Sampson do but we are also told Sampson had great strength given to him by God. We are given no indication Shamgar was such a man but whether he was or was not isn't so important because one thing is obvious - God was with him. From there we can only speculate. One thought is that the brief mention of this judge means he simply dealt with an almost constant threat the Philistines were to those of Israel in the South. It might have been the Philistines stole from Israel and caused hardship of

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we continued our look at the story of Abraham sending his servant back to Mesopotamia to bring back a wife for Isaac. In that part we discussed how Abraham explained to the servant that if the woman was not willing to come with him the servant was by no means to take Isaac to Mesopotamia. In discussing that, we covered the fact this was due to God truly making Canaan the home of this family and how important that would be to future generations of the chosen nation. Abraham also showed he totally trusted God to deal with this issue of a wife for Isaac in that if the servant did not find success in bringing back a woman, Abraham released the servant from this oath. With that we went on to talk about how the servant took the oath to do as Abraham had asked him to and wasted no time leaving to accomplish the task. From there we began talking about how the servant got to Mesopotamia and went to the city of Nahor, which as we discussed was likely named for Abraham's brother. More specifically the servant went directly to the city's well. Not only was this the best place to go in order to find out information about the women of the town and begin his search for Isaac's possible wife, the servant would not leave it all to just good planning and timing. Thus, we began talking about how the servant prayed to the God of his master Abraham, and more specifically we were looking at the words the servant prayed. All this brought us through Genesis chapter 24 verse 12, and we are ready to begin verse 13 this time.

As we talked about last time, the servant began this prayer asking that God would give him success in accomplishing the task Abraham had sent him to accomplish as well as asking for mercy for Abraham. This was due to Abraham's age combined with the fact Abraham had gotten to see so little of the promise God had made to him come to pass in any way. Abraham getting to see Isaac marry, at the very least, would surely bring great joy and maybe more importantly, peace to Abraham. I don't say this because Abraham didn't trust God would fulfill His promise no matter how little Abraham actually got to see with his own eyes, but peace in that Abraham could feel he had truly had the kind of hand in these events which any father, especially of those days, would desire to have. While many people today wish to see their children marry and desire to see grandchildren as well, we need to stop and think about what kind of sinful world we are bringing children into! We truly live in a day where children who are born will have a very hard time finding and following God. This, not just because many are called but few are chosen is an overall truth, but living in a world so deep in sin as ours has become makes it harder and harder for any true believer to walk with God in any case. (Matt. 22:14, 24:21-22)

However, in the day of Abraham things were not as bad as they are now. That said, by bringing them to Canaan God had placed the family in what could be called a "rough neighborhood." We see that effect even the very next generation of the chosen nation in that out of Jacob and Esau only one of these brothers would desire to walk with God rather than the

world around them. While Jacob went to great lengths to be married to the right women for the chosen nation's bloodline, Esau simply married women of Canaan which is something Abraham had warned this servant he was absolutely not to bring back for Isaac! After going to Mesopotamia, Jacob would long so badly to return "home" he would uproot his wives and their children from there to bring them back to Canaan. Esau, on the other hand, would move further and further south out of the land, even making what appears in later times to be heavy contact with the son of Abraham whom God had told Abraham to send away. That, of course, was Ishmael and/or his family. Both Ishmael and Esau would become a people; in other words, what we would recognize as a nation, and this long before the branch of the family that was to become the chosen nation did. They would also have land to call their home long before the family of Isaac through Jacob. This was true of those children who were born to Lot, Abraham's nephew that had followed him into Canaan. All these branches of the family would find worldly success that Jacob's line of the family would not see for a great deal of time into the future.

Thus, what likely would bring peace to Abraham more so than just the continuance of the line of his family through the chosen son of Isaac, would be the knowledge Isaac had gotten the right wife and the line of the chosen nation was secure for at least the next generation beyond Abraham. It is with all these thoughts we move into verse 13 where we see the servant begin to lay out what he wanted in order to know he was following God and getting to the right girl for Isaac, as God would have it. You see the servant had made it to Mesopotamia; he had made it to the right city as far as he could tell. With enough effort he would likely find the family of Abraham's brother at some point. However, all this meant is that there would probably be many women to choose from. Questions had to be racing through the servant's mind about how to choose the one that was right for Isaac. How would he know? He had already asked Abraham about what to do if he couldn't get a woman to come back with him, but first he had to find that woman! What we see is the servant taking a breath and taking the time to ask God's leading. However, what we see the servant ask for in these next verses is a subject of interest, or at least should be of interest, to all true believers. If you don't know what I'm talking about I'll explain. What we see the servant ask for is not just that God's will be done, or that God would generally lead him to the correct woman for Isaac. What we see the servant ask for is a very specific sign from God in that God would bring the right woman to him in a pretty specific way.

In verses 13 and 14 the servant basically asks that as women come to this well the servant had come to, he would be able to go to them and ask if they would give him a drink of water from the well. This would be a fairly common thing for most women of the day to oblige. The servant after all was a visitor to the town. He may or may not have a way to get water out of the well for himself. This might be due to anything from

simply not having a vessel to reach down in and dip water out with all the way to not having enough rope to reach down to the water of this particular well, assuming there was not a publicly available apparatus to do this work with. No matter the case of those specifics, the greater factor is in the truth it was a custom for women of any particular place of those days to do this work of retrieving water for a visitor regardless of how capable or incapable the individual was of doing it for themselves. That said, custom only obligates so much. Depending on the attitude of the woman he was to ask she may follow this custom and give him a drink for custom's sake or she might be more than happy to serve in this way. That means a simple yes to his question of being willing to give him a drink was not enough of a sign to look for. That is why he goes further in asking that the woman would not just respond by giving him a drink, but she would offer to do the work of watering the servant's camels as well.

Depending on what you know about camels this may or may not be that impressive of an ask, in your mind. However, those who know camels will tell you, this was no small task. Also keep in mind the servant had brought ten camels for this journey, and it's logical to assume at least the majority, if not all ten, were still with him! It would be clear to any woman the servant asked this of that this man had just gotten here and likely from a long travel. If nothing else, this means the camels would be thirsty! If you know anything about large animals such as horses or cattle you get a bit of the picture of how big a task this might turn into. I remember being young and watching our family milk cow come in from grazing in the field on a hot day. She would come to the water tub and as she began to slurp up the water one could literally watch the water level of the tub fall. For this reason we had a hydrant right across the fence from the tub and an ever present hose so we could easily refill the tub at any point we noted it being down. Now that's just to speak of a large animal in general, but a camel is in a class all their own! One of the main reasons camels were the animal of choice for travelers in the "old world," as well as in most parts of the Eastern world even today, is that camels have the ability to store water inside their bodies.

While the fun older thought on how they do this was that they literally stored water in that distinctive hump(s) on their backs, it's actually an amazing mechanism which God built into these animals. In truth, camels store water in their fatty tissue. As this fat is metabolized the excess water is there to be used by the process. Camels can receive more than one gram of water for every gram of fat they metabolize. They get energy from processing the fat and release moisture into the lungs which brings in oxygen needed to continue processing more fat. This system works so well camels can go up to ten days without drinking water! They can also lose up to 30 percent of their body mass to this process. God even gave camels red blood cells that differ in shape from that of a normal mammal, and this makes it easier for camels to actually suffer dehydration to a degree other mammals would die from. All this means, when a camel comes in from a long journey they are likely going to be far, far beyond what other mammals could even think of as thirsty. Any woman this servant found who actually offered to water his camels was, as we say, going the extra mile!

In saying that, Bible students should be reminded that

what the servant is asking for, is to see a demonstration of this woman having the kind of heart Jesus tells us all true believers in God should exhibit. Jesus explains in Matthew chapter 5 verses 38 through 42 that the Law asks the bare minimum out of the chosen nation, but if we get the real point the Law is turning us to which as always is about growing in the grace and knowledge of our God's Nature, we will do more than that. Jesus tells us not to resist evil. In other words we don't fight fire with fire. Instead, when evil strikes us on the cheek, we should be able to hold our temper and be willing to give the person another chance. If a person sues us for our coat, we should be willing to give our cloak as well. If someone asks us to walk with them a mile, we should go the extra mile and walk with them for two. Jesus is making clear that those who grow don't make hard rules about righteousness as the Pharisees and especially the Sadducees did. Growing to be more like God is not about saying, I was asked to go this far and I've done that so I have fulfilled my duty and am a good Christian. No, being a good Christian is learning to grow in the fruits of the spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23)

We should not just love, we should grow to be more loving. This brings joy and expands it further for both yourself as well as others. If at least most all the people of this world would strive for this, we would see greater peace in our world which would lead to even more ability to be longsuffering with one another; to have gentleness, goodness, greater faith in God! All that would bring more meekness and temperance to each of us as individuals. These things all feed off each other to continue a growth cycle that expands each of them. If we would strive for these things it would make for a better life for us and a better world for everyone living in it. That fact is why there is no legitimate law made against these things. Such things are what we continually need to gain and in turn they cause the things of degradation, which laws do have to be made to put a stop to at some level, from even having a place in our lives and world. I keep saying our lives and world because the key most do not understand is that these are two separate things. In II Corinthians 11:2 Paul speaks of a "...godly jealousy:..." I propose to you, as amazing as it may seem, there is also a "Godly selfishness." It can be nice that we do things for others, but if that becomes too much of our motivating factor it becomes easy for us to believe that if no one else seems to care, why should we? If we think just a little along the lines that we are doing this for ourselves and our relationship with God, we won't take that stance. What we think of others and their actions isn't relevant to what we want in that case. Jesus assured us others can judge us in the here and now but in no way does that matter in any real way. (Luke 6:31-38) We need to trust there is benefit in following the ways of God no matter who else is or is not!

I could go on and on, but getting back to what the servant wanted, we find he wanted to see if the woman he asked had the heart of a servant. This was not just for the sake of being a good wife as in she would serve her husband well but in that she would be the mother of the chosen nation of God. As much as Abraham and Sarah were the beginnings of all this, Abraham was also the father of Ishmael and six more sons he would have with another wife after Sarah passed away. Sarah, while only being the biological mother of Isaac, was the one who wanted Abraham to use Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, as the surrogate to

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XLVI

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

In our last segment, we continued to look at the history of the Jews following the destruction of the temple as well as the failure of the three main wars the Jews had with the Romans overall. We talked again about the Oral Torah and in many ways wrapped up the main discussion about it. That is in no way to say the Oral Torah won't get mentioned over and over as we move forward, it is only to point out the fact our discussions from here on will not really be based on it. As I have said, these segments of the study have and can look like we are studying the religion of Judaism, and while that is the intent, it is not my intent to turn this study to being that. We simply keep talking about the religion because we must be clear on the fact that what happened to the Jews, leading up to and in many ways during our "modern times," is only really understood by understanding how much Judaism turned from being about what God had said in the Law concerning the priesthood and temple to being more of a pure religion constructed by men. I certainly do not say that as an indictment against Jews or to put a bad spin on the things they believe in any way. It's simply not my place to judge. However, the facts are the facts, and one of the main facts we talked about last time was that the Pharisees specifically wanted to free the Jewish people and/or the religion of Judaism from the prison of the "Aaronite Priesthood."

As we talked about last time, this is a very important point because it is what formed the Jews into what we know today. One of the main reasons we talked so much about religion in this part of the study is that religion is formed by men, and it is done to shape a culture or at least the segment that prescribes to that religion. In past cultures the religion of the culture was the culture more often than not. We see this deep rooted into people the world over, even in our modern times. This was exactly what God was forming in choosing a people to be His nation and giving them a Law to follow. The Law of Moses would form the culture of Israel. This was easy to do in that God calling Abraham out of his homeland broke this branch of the family away from the solid connection they had to the culture of Mesopotamia. God specifically led Abraham to the land of Canaan in order to put him and his family among a culture they would not really be tempted to take part in or absorb. God further isolated the family by not developing Abraham into a big family group, and even making Abraham wait until he was quite old before Isaac was ever born. Isaac, of course, would not marry a Canaanite woman but yet another member of the family who came from Mesopotamia. She would be transplanted to this land, and again there would be just this couple serving The One True God in a strange land.

They would have two sons who would totally grow up in this land knowing they were not of the people who lived here.

When the rift happened between Jacob and Esau, Jacob would go back to Mesopotamia. However, Jacob would find himself as much a stranger there as any of the family had ever felt they were in Canaan. Jacob would marry two women of the family left in Mesopotamia and have many children by both them and their handmaidens. This would be the first real growth of the family beyond just being a couple with one or two children. All these wives and children would see Mesopotamia as more of their home, but Jacob would not. He would break away and return his family to Canaan where they would once again be strangers in a strange land. This generation of the family, that would become the chosen nation, would not pass before the entire family would move to Egypt where they lived side by side with a culture that considered herdsmen to be unclean. For that reason Israel would not live directly among the Egyptians but be given the land of Goshen, which was a land very near the northeast border of Egypt. There Israel would begin to develop into their own culture based on the beliefs of their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

When the leadership in Egypt changed, God would allow the family, which by that point had truly grown to be the people of Israel, to become slaves to the Egyptians. This would further deepen the divide between Israel's culture and that of the Egyptians. It would also serve to wipe the slate clean in a way so that when the day came God freed Israel from Egypt, Israel would be without much of a culture at all. About the only thing this group of people could hold onto was the past, and their past once again had to do with being the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God would take Israel into the wilderness where there were few people and little culture to adopt. God would also move quickly to show Himself to Israel and give the Law which would put the nation to work building the tabernacle and all its needed elements. God would swiftly move them on to the promised land, where if it had not been for their disbelief they would have begun a clean out of the south end of Canaan to live on the land with their own cultures already having been defined by God's Law.

As we know that's not how the story goes, and so Israel goes back out into the wilderness to allow the generation which came out of Egypt to die off. Even over the passing of these four decades Israel would move often until the day came God was ready to lead a new generation of Israel on to the east side of Jordan, where they would begin to see God's mighty hand clearing native people off the land for them. We could go on and on with this, but I hope we can simply see the point. God created, not just a group of people to take as His chosen nation, but in keeping them from ever really being able to connect to a land and develop a man-made religion of their own, they were a people seeking a culture. We see that in the story where Moses is up in the mountain speaking to God and the people believe he had been gone so long he must be dead. In an attempt to figure out what to do in that case, they turn to Aaron and demand a

religion to follow. What they specifically asked for were gods to follow and worship. (Gen. 32:1) This should stand as a pinnacle example of how religion is made by men. That is furthered by looking at what happened. Aaron didn't have a cultural religion to return the people to. There were no traditional gods which Israel served, and that's also why the people asked for one to be made. No one in Israel knew what to worship at that point, so Aaron has them give him some of the gold they had gotten from Egypt and he molds a golden calf. This calf Israel begins to worship, and by worship I mean, they found it to be a good excuse to throw a big party which turned very carnal indeed!

Moses would come down from the mountain and deal with putting a quick end to this stupidity as well as many of the people who had taken part. However, this entire story shows us the truth God's plan had worked. Israel was in a sense a blank culture into which God could infuse His Law. Thus, what we see is that Israel would have a culture centered around the tabernacle and later temple. They would eventually have a land to connect this culture to by going into and possessing the land where their forefathers had sojourned. All the elements for a culture were set, and even as we watch the centuries pass in Israel, bringing with them more and more corruption to their following of the Law of God, God shows us how amazing He is. God had said if Israel followed Him always, they would always have peace, but if they turned from Him they would find great troubles. This clearly means if Israel had followed the Law as God intended, the truth of the Law defining them as a culture would just deepen and deepen. However, if they failed, which is the path we see they took, the turmoil they would find themselves in would cause some to fade into the rest of the world as they simply gave up being part of the nation while others would grasp even more so to the Law, or the culture it created, as a way to maintain their identity.

What we see in Israel's struggle during the centuries following the Jewish-Roman wars is not really anything new but one that Israel had faced almost from day one! As Israel found themselves in captivity in Babylon we see the beginnings of figuring out how to be Jewish without the temple. In returning to rebuild the temple we see Israel struggle between the issue of returning fully to the Law as it was followed in the days of Moses or holding onto what they had become accustomed to in figuring out how to be Jewish without the temple. What we see they did was have both, and that set the stage for what we see by the time Jesus walks among them in the flesh. To boil this down to its simplest form, we see a religious leadership group in the Sadducees who were so about the temple they could see nothing else, and another group in the Pharisees who had so little control over the temple they pushed for a philosophy that downplayed the temple's importance. While all this looks bad at first glance, we see the hand of God at work in the same way we saw it from the first of Israel's journey. God would use man's weakness to continue His work on this earth, and it is at this point I hope we can see how far after the coming of The Messiah we are.

Why is this important? Because if Jesus' coming was really meant to form or resulted in the need to form a church that would take the place of the chosen nation, there would be no need for this dynamic to continue. God could easily have swept the chosen nation aside at the point of history we are discussing right now. Instead, what we see is a time when the church which

believed in Jesus as The Messiah was growing greatly among the non-Jewish populations, especially the true Gentiles, which are the people who lived more directly around the chosen nation. However, God was continuing to use the same mode He used from the beginning of the chosen nation to maintain who they were and what they held. In spite of the religious leadership's refusal to accept Jesus as The Messiah, in spite of Israel's failure to remain in the Law well enough to be granted God's peace for the nation, we see God still using them. They would lose the temple and most all control over the promised land. The land part would get so bad that as time moved forward it would be hard for Jews in any number to even maintain a presence on the land due to discrimination against them. However, God would use men's thoughts to accomplish His work and maintain the nation, and along with them, the oracles He had committed to Israel. (Rom. 3:1-8)

We can argue all we want about the question of why God would do this when the church that believed upon Jesus was growing by leaps and bounds, but it's all based on an arrogant thought pattern. As I have pointed to time and time again, it matters not how pure we believe the church was at that time or how pure it remained into much of the centuries immediately following, the church did not remain that way. What started as the apostolic church was seized by men who would fail to serve God just as badly and worse than anything the Jews ever did! The non-Jewish church would find itself under siege by men who believed the best way forward for Christianity was to turn it into a universal religion. Unlike the Jews who would emphasize the learning of the Scripture, these men would attempt to the best of their ability to hide the Word of God away from the common man. This was done so they could totally control what called itself the church of Jesus Christ to the greatest degree it was possible to do among a world of people not united. The not united part is exactly why God confounded man's language at the Tower of Babel. For all the bad things this division of men may have caused it was necessary for such crucial times as these in man's history!

The universal church, or Catholic as it is better known, would work so hard to engulf the world it actually began persecuting people to the point of even putting people to death when they attempted to teach contrary to its doctrine. In this we clearly see there was no mechanism built into the world at large which would maintain the oracles of God on this earth. The only place that mechanism had been deployed is within the chosen nation. What we see among the non-Jewish believers in Christ is a struggle that even caused bloodshed before the common man had the ability to once again read the Word of God for themselves. It is many centuries of oppression among the non-Jews before we see what we call the Protestant movement gain some ground and enough freedom to teach things not in the Catholic doctrine. However, as I have pointed out over and over, the Protestant apple did not fall far from the Catholic tree! What we mostly see in the organized religion of Christianity is a hodgepodge of Catholic doctrine and variations there of. Why? Because even the Protestant churches did not bind together in a move to see God's Word freed for the common man to read for himself. It was one king, who was also suppose to be the leader of his particular culture's church, who was largely responsible for ensuring God's Word was available to the common man, among many of the non-Jews.

Why do I say non-Jews? Because through all this craziness of what happened to and in what calls itself Christianity, the Jews were walking a totally different path. This is where, after talking about all the evil of religion and how that led to what the Pharisees wanted to do post temple and Jewish-Roman wars, we really see how God's Law still led the Jews to a better place than men at large across the world went to. This in spite of the Jews generally not accepting Jesus as The Messiah versus a church whose whole existence is said to be based on the acceptance of Jesus Christ as God! If we look at where the Jews actually went in following the ideas the Pharisees wanted, we find it led to what we know as Rabbinic Judaism. While there is not much at the core of the ideas behind this which come from the Law itself, the simple fact the Jews had a heritage of Godly culture to look back to which the church did not, means it still came out having great value. The core idea of Rabbinic Judaism is why we have talked about the Oral Torah as much as we have. If you remember what I said early on in discussing the Oral Torah, you'll recall that some believe it dates all the way back to the giving of the written Law we know as just the Torah.

Now, I've made it clear I don't prescribe to that belief, but that matters not to the fact Rabbinic Judaism is largely based on that idea, and this is where the belief about the Oral Torah holding the same sway as the written Torah, or at least close to it, comes into importance, so bear that in mind as we continue our discussion. Simply put, the man-made idea of the religion of Judaism within this system comes out a lot better than the man-made idea that took over Christianity. God wanted and still wants us all to understand our individual responsibility to walk with Him. While the church had many leaders in its beginnings, people like Paul made it clear that respect for such leaders was about respecting the knowledge God had given them as it pertained to the Gospel. Throughout Paul's letters to the churches you'll find a humbleness at every point you could say he is any bit arrogant in being a leader of the church. I also like to go to Paul's words to Timothy as an example of him understanding there was only so much the ministers within the church could do. Paul tells Timothy, who was still a young minister at the time Paul was growing quite old, that Timothy should make full proof of his ministry because there was coming a time when the people of the church would literally heap to themselves false ministers who would tell them what they wanted to hear. (II Tim. 4:1-8)

Paul would call this problem, "itchy ears"! The people would have itchy ears to hear from someone who would tell them something that gave them a life in this world far more comfortable than the tribulation filled life a real Christian lives. Jesus warned Christians while He walked on this earth that in Him we could have peace but in this world we will still have tribulation. (John 16:33) Jesus told us as this happened to remember the world hated Him before it hated us, and the real root of the world's hatred of a true Christian is not based on a hatred of us but of Jesus. (John 15:18-21) This is important not just as a comfort to us who attempt to hold onto the truth but in our understanding of seeing why we can so easily be accepted back into the world if we let go of the truth! Now there's another one of those points I can't stress enough! The world hates the Jews because they hold onto the Word of God. The Gospel of John opens by telling us right up front Jesus is The Word! (John 1:1-5) The Jews may have rejected the man Jesus Christ as The

Messiah but in general they hold fast to The Word of God like few who call themselves Christians ever have! I'm using a lot of exclamation points here because sentence after sentence I write are things I wish to shout to all the church!

Getting back to my point about Paul's words concerning leadership, we find that by Paul's words we are informed the ministers of the Gospel are gifts, sent out among men by God. (Eph. 4:1-16) Why are ministers of the Gospel described this way? The answer to that goes back to the individual responsibility we each have to find and follow God for ourselves. The Torah was a gift to the world which the Jews were established and commanded to enact and maintain. God so loved the world, He gave us His son Jesus Who willingly gave His life for us. (John 3:16, 10:14-18) When Jesus ascended back to The Father He prayed His Father not leave us comfortless and God gave us The Holy Ghost. (John 14:15-17) As if that is not enough, human propensity to listen more to things physical than spiritual also caused God to give us another gift. That gift was what we call the fivefold Ministry. God has called specific people to be prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. You will note in the very way this is laid out there is no hierarchy to this system. It's right there in the words of Ephesians chapter 4 that this is true. It's why it comes out in English as Paul repeating the word, "some" over and over. Among the population of this world there walks some men who were/are called to be prophets. There also are some who were/are called to be apostles. Along with these two ministries there walks among us some who were/are called to be evangelists as well as some who were/are called to be pastors. There are also some men who were/are called to be teachers.

You see in English how repetitive that gets? However, if we have to string it out like that to get the point across, and I'm afraid we have to, then I will use a lot of space to do it! After the corruption of Catholicism the church just never has returned to looking at the people called into full-time ministry correctly. We don't look at them as gifts from God whose authority is in the preaching of God's Word, the specific sharing of the Gospel, and as it is with teachers, explaining how to see God's Word from the right perspective. I can't tell you all of what God wants from you, but as a teacher of God's Word I can help you understand the dynamics of what God is looking for overall. You should always look to God's Word to see if what I'm telling you lines up with what you truly see there and not simply try to mesh it with what you've already been taught by men. That point there is exactly why an Oral Torah cannot be authoritative in and of itself. All things must line up with God's written Word! When you find it does not, you have a problem. Why? Because no Oral Torah which is derived by men, whether with good-intention or not, along with any words of men in the fivefold ministry are gifts from God to help us, but only God's written Word is authoritative. Why? Because many false teachers and preachers have and do live in our world. Their desires are selfish and you will see that in what they teach. They desire to give you what is comfortable and thus, popular, not purely what is true!

What the Catholic thinking gave us was a pagan way of doing things. That is to say a human way of doing things. Men who seek power for themselves, no matter what their intentions for doing so, will turn to corrupt you with human thinking. Words of a true minister of God are God's gift to help you

through all the chatter humanistic thinking creates. That chatter's volume is very loud and becomes even louder the more people desire it. That desire can be for a pure humanistic way of life or for something ordained as "Christian," but it's still chatter because when men who were not driven by the Laws of God set out to create what they thought was the best way to organize the church, they based their thinking and doing on human understanding in a very pure way! It was to say, the best way to get people into the church is not to attempt to pull them from the world but to Christianize worldly things. In such a system people can keep on doing the same things they are doing but just use different words. For example, we no longer pray to a statue of Zeus or Jupiter but we still pray to a statue; we just say it's a statue of Jesus. We no longer look to our honored dead for help from above, we trust in "Saints," people who in their lives proved themselves through good works to be "good Christians."

We say as Protestants, we no longer go for those fallacies! No, but you still hold onto many others that are just not as obvious but need to be rooted out of your life nonetheless. Some of these fallacies come from the Catholic root, others come from our own draw of cultural religion and thought patterns based even just on what's popular in our day. Protestants may have gained the freedom to believe what is right, but that doesn't mean we did/do it! I have to laugh a bit at myself in seeing my own calling in what I end up filling these pages with. I keep wanting to teach you Jewish history but find myself over and over pulled back to warning Christians about the dangers we face. However, I do say all that to help us understand how much Christians reach back to a pagan heritage that teaches us to organize our churches with men over men; not in that some hold the authority to preach God's Word among the churches, but literally the authority to set the do's and don'ts that make you a "good Christian." Things like telling you what day to go to church, when God made it clear we can and should worship Him always. With my dying breath I will tell you it does not matter on what day you go to church, the question is, are you remembering the Sabbath God created or are you replacing it with church?

That is a perfect issue to take us back to talking about the Jews. As we already covered above, God did not give Israel time to develop a culture which worshiped the sun as its primary god and which we see cultures the world over did and do. Due to that, it was not hard for God to make it a religious statute in Israel that they worship on the seventh day just as God created it and affirmed it with cycles like the coming of manna in the wilderness. Later it would be due to the fact God established the Sabbath as a heritage among Israel that recognizing the seventh day would easily become one the definitions in the religion of Judaism as to how to be a good Jew! The church still holds the high holy day of the pagans as special. When men of the world attempted to create a universal religion they also had to incorporate the long held tradition among pagans to drink the blood of the animals they killed in order to thank the animal and/or animal's spirit for giving their life so men could have flesh to eat. The way to do this was simple. Redefine the meal Jesus had with His disciples the night He was arrested as "The Last Supper," and what Jesus did during that meal as not the ultimate explanation of Passover as showing us what Jesus was about to

do on the cross, but a ritual where one truly drinks the blood of Christ and eats His flesh.

For the Jew that last supper Jesus had was clearly a Passover Seder. There is simply no reason to argue that point unless you want to defend and excuse the pagan ritual man created for the church. Jesus was showing them that in drinking from the Passover cup, which held not wine as we think of it today but pure new juice of the vine's fruit, not spoiled and corrupted in anyway, they had been showing the fact The Messiah would one day shed His blood. They had been representing what only God could do in truth. Jesus took the bread, which was unleavened just like the juice, and broke it. This He explained was them representing His body which would be broken for us all! He tells them as they have done and as they will as Jewish men continue to do, they represent the work Jesus was about to accomplish. (Luke 22:7-20, I Cor. 11:23-25) We do not represent the purity of Jesus by drinking fermented juices we call wine. We do not represent the purity of Christ by eating leavened bread, and we do not thank The Lord for His sacrifice by partaking in what the church calls communion, even if the juice and bread are unleavened. Why? Because Passover is not about taking of the body and blood of Christ to purify our sin or even just as thankful worship. Passover is limited to those who take on the full representational responsibilities of the Law, and it reminds both those who take it as well as those who watch those who celebrate Passover, how much we need God when our blood one day stops flowing and our bodies stop functioning. It shows us how much Jesus was, in fact, The Messiah and God in that He fulfilled, in truth, what the God given feast of Passover could only represent, and the understanding of that good news is the Gospel the church is suppose to stand for!

Rabbinic Judaism may not be the pure following of the Law God directly gave to the chosen nation and through them unto the world, but the history of the Jews shows us it is not possible among men to maintain even a small nation, much less a large one, that does such a thing. If the chosen nation would not do it, surely we can't be so arrogant as to believe we could do it or that there is a way to do it but God just didn't use us or it. So what we see in Rabbinic Judaism is exactly the truth we are told in I Corinthians 1:25, the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. To put it another way, our weakness limits the things God can accomplish among men without forcing us to do things, but God's wisdom and strength is so great, if we can have even a sliver of it in this world it will be more than enough to maintain the knowledge of God in a world that more and more wants to wipe it from the minds of all mankind!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 4

give birth to Ishmael. I don't say that to throw blame on Sarah, it is simply to point out she had a hand in a child coming from her and Abraham's marriage other than Isaac. All this would make Abraham and Sarah the progenitors of many nations, but Isaac the only chosen son to be the father of the chosen nation of God. One can point to the fact Esau did not become part of the chosen nation, instead becoming a nation of his own, but that was Esau's choosing, not because he was excluded from the line as Ishmael clearly was. This means the true parents of the chosen nation would be Isaac and the woman this servant found to be his wife. The servant knew just by looking at his own part in Abraham's life how much all this required a servant's heart. As wealthy as Abraham was he was first and foremost a servant of God, and he shows us this on many occasions. How can we expect anything less from Isaac and his wife?

What I wish to turn to now is that point I eluded to much earlier on in this discussion about how these specifics the servant asked God for should be of interest to any true believer. It's not really the specifics this servant asked for I'm talking about here, but the fact he asked for something specific. The reason why this is of interest is because in general I believe the Bible tells us not to do this. At the very least that is in a big way something I teach often. However, I think this is due more to the fact I teach so much against the very popular prosperity teaching and its basic thoughts that have snaked their way into almost all those who call themselves Christians in so many parts of the world. It is not up to us to tell God what He should do and expect that because we are "serving" Him He should do it for us. Even Jesus Himself as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane asked His Father, if it were possible to accomplish what His death on the cross was to accomplish, Jesus preferred The Father take that other path. Nonetheless, Jesus goes on to make it clear it was not His will He wanted done but The Father's. (Matt. 26:38-39) In all we pray there should be the understanding that we might not be totally on track with what God wants to do. That's why Jesus told us if we asked anything in His name it would be granted, but many people still take these very words as meaning we do have the power to just ask what we want and get it. (John 14:12-15)

What Jesus was really pointing out to us is that we need to be asking things of God following the example Jesus set for us. As we just covered, we see the peak of that example as Jesus, in great agony, speaks to The Father the night He was arrested and begins the entire process He came to this earth to do. Staying with the words of Jesus I'd like to point out that Jesus did, in fact, know what The Father wanted Him to do. Jesus was willing to yield to whatever choice The Father made in spite of the fact Jesus had asked the cup pass from Him, but again, that's because Jesus already knew the road The Father had set for Him to travel. What we should see in all this is where we need to be before any naming and claiming kind of effect might come into play when talking with God. Just as Jesus knew what it was The Father had sent Him to do, this servant of Abraham knew what his master sent him to do. As we talked about a couple segments ago, Abraham showed a growth in his relationship with God by this point compared to the time he agreed to take Hagar as a surrogate to give birth to the son he felt he needed in order to be what God said he would be. In the case of having a son both

Abraham and Sarah felt they needed to do something to fulfill the promise of God, and yes, they did need to do something. The problem was, what they needed to do was in spite of their advanced age they needed to keep trying to have a child because God had said they would have one! What they chose to do was look for a way around what they saw as impossible in order to make having a son possible.

By the time Abraham sends for his servant and begins laying out what he needed to do in an attempt to get a wife for Isaac, we see a man more confident in the power of God to accomplish what seems at least improbable. The logical way for Isaac to find a wife was for him to take one out of the daughters of Canaan. While we look at that from our perspective and see it as a vile thing to do, even the servant of Abraham might have had this thought. Abraham did, in fact, have good friends in this land. The family of Heth for example, and the man who lived among them who insisted Abraham take the land he owned in order to bury Sarah when she died. (Gen. 23) There had to be any number of very eligible women among these people whom Isaac would be attracted to and who would make excellent wives. Still, that was not God's will, and so Abraham warns his servant not to bring back, now or ever, a wife for Isaac out of the people of Canaan. That said, if Mesopotamia was the place to find the right woman the next logical thing was for Isaac to go there and find her but Abraham sends his servant instead. The servant definitely had this thought as he asks if he should take Isaac back should he fail to return with a wife for Isaac. However, Abraham makes it crystal clear that was not to happen!

The point is, unlike the situation of having a son where it seemed impossible for it to happen literally using Sarah and Abraham but not many ways to do it otherwise, there were many logical and seemingly reasonable ways for Isaac to find a wife. What we see is that Abraham, without any big event, mistake, etc. already knew what the right thing was to do in spite of all these possibilities that would seem right unto a man. This came from Abraham's faith, not in that he named how it should happen and expected it to no matter the odds against it because he was a servant of God. It was not because faith is blind belief and Abraham had been told to take a leap there of! No, Abraham's relationship with God, his faith, had led him to understand where God was going and what God wanted. By being in step with God Abraham knew what had to happen, and this is why he tells the servant with confidence that if the woman will not return to Canaan the servant is simply freed from the task of finding Isaac a wife. Abraham felt it was God's will he take this step of sending his servant to Mesopotamia. Abraham knew many details about what the wrong thing was to do and ordered the servant to take none of those paths. Exactly who the servant would find to bring back was an unknown to both Abraham and the servant, but they knew what qualities she had to have.

With that, let's return to the direct words of the servant's prayer in verses 13 and 14. The servant's words are a beautiful prayer of humility, and the first words of verse 13 bring tears to my eyes. He says simply, "God, here I stand asking for your guidance." I know that's not a real quote of his words, but it's the spirit within them. He says, I stand by this well of water. This is him saying, "Lord, I've done all I can do.

I've come to this place I was told to find. I have come to the specific spot my best guess tells me is a good place to start." It's not exactly an, "end of my strength" kind of prayer but again, it's the same spirit! We don't have to be at the end of our rope, desperate, weak, afraid or any of those things before we cry out to God. In truth, not being to that point is actually best. It shows we are really depending on God, not just because we don't see any other options but because we simply want Him to direct our every step. The servant says, I stand here having taken all the steps I knew had to be taken. I've put in the effort I knew would need to be put in and I'm willing to go forward with what lay beyond, but I don't want that to be my will but thine be done oh God!

The servant had made choices and that's why he was at this well. It's so simplistic, he points it out. This well is where the daughters of the men of this city will come. Unless there is something the servant isn't aware of which makes this city different from all other cities or the specific woman he is looking for different from most all other common women of a city, standing here the servant will get a chance to come face to face with all the eligible women of all the men who live here. He was looking for women of a specific house if he could find them, but he didn't know for certain if that would be the case. What he did know is that he had come to the right place for God to simply point out which woman was the right one for him to take back to Isaac. We see this clearly in later words of the servant after he finds this right woman, in that he marvels a bit that right out of the gate God had led him to a woman of the exact house he was looking for. He didn't ask woman after woman for water before he found her, God sent her straight to him! However, that's getting ahead of the story.

Going into verse 14 directly we see how much the servant did not expect this first woman he talked to thing to happen. He asks God to let it come to pass that not just any damsel who he asks for a drink would offer to water his camels also, but that only the specific damsel who was right for Isaac would respond in that manner. Clearly this did not have to be the first woman or only woman he asked. The servant's request left it open for him to ask all the women who came to the well if need be. All he wanted was for God to take it out of the heart of any woman who was the wrong woman that she offer to water his camels as well. Who knows, maybe there were many virtuous women in this place who would all have been more than happy to water his camels for him. There may have been several with a servant's heart that would have replied in the right way, but any such woman would be the kind of woman God could speak to. This is not to say they were servants of The Most High God necessarily, but simply that they were tenderhearted enough for God to reach and it would be easy enough for God to impress upon them that this was a man they needed to walk away from. They might have walked away with nothing more than the funniest sense of not understanding why they felt they should not offer. They might say, I can't put my finger on it I just knew walking away was somehow the right thing to do. Simply not being the one who offered to go the extra mile would be enough for the servant to know God was directing him to someone else.

In all this we see the servant being in step with God in a similar way Jesus shows us in the garden. The servant had no doubt felt the leading of God's hand all this time. He might have started out asking questions of his master Abraham, but now he stood out at this well all by himself because he alone had let God guide his path. What he asks for might seem a lot like Gideon's fleeing before The Lord, but it is very different. (Judg. 6:33-40) Gideon had been told what God wanted him to do, but Gideon did not really trust he was hearing the voice of God. Gideon doubted in a very similar way to the way we so often do when God asks us to do something, especially something we are not happy about doing. God did answer Gideon's request on both occasions and Gideon went out to fight the battles he was to fight, but God would rather Gideon had been a man who had simply said, yes Lord here I am, send me. This servant of Abraham did not doubt his task or hesitate from it in any way. The servant knew God had sent him here. The servant knew coming to this well was the right place to be. All this was a result of him knowing and accepting God's will in this matter just as Jesus had come to the garden knowing. The real difference between he and what Jesus showed us is that the servant did not know the whole picture ahead. He only knew God had not brought him this far only to leave him stranded now. The servant wanted to be sure he was not acting on his own instinct or was affected by his own thoughts on which girl to choose. Thus, in a manner of speaking, the servant was asking that God put a blindfold over his eyes. Without making any judgment calls that were his own, the servant would ask each woman who came to the well for a drink, and in doing so he wanted God to be The One Who pointed out the right woman.

The fact the servant was not here to do his will was a huge factor in his mind. He was not here to do his will but the will of his master in the same way Jesus came telling us He was here to do His Father's will. (John 14:23-24) For that reason we see at the end of verse 14 the servant brings the prayer back around to the point about God showing mercy to Abraham. For all the thoughts I pointed out above, this is the same and yet different. The servant wanted something good for his master, but more so than that he wanted to come again to the thought that what he did here was not about accomplishing something for himself but for his master and, of course, this was for Isaac. What we see in this is a trinity that is so much God using this story to show us something Jesus puts in the framework of family when explaining the Nature of God to us. Jesus called Himself The Son of God and referred constantly to God The Father. Then Jesus also tells us of The Holy Ghost, Who would not come to do His own will at all. The Holy Ghost would also do The Father's will by comforting us and leading us, reminding us of all the words Jesus had given us. The Holy Ghost would bring us through the dark days and nights of this life to be joined to God as the bride of Christ and so shall we ever be with The Lord! (John 14:25-26, I Thess. 4:16-17, Rev. 19:6-9)

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

many kinds and Shamgar was simply a man who believed in the promise of God that the land belonged to Israel.

Maybe a little like David when he went out to face Goliath, Shamgar didn't believe these uncircumcised Philistines had any right be taking, destroying, or hurting anyone in Israel. With that thought, the six hundred men he slew might have been the cumulative result of killing Philistines that came into the community to do such things. His lone example of faith and success in defending Israel might have caused the Philistines to stop such activities. Another possibility is that since we are told he used a tool common to most all farmers, it might have been that Shamgar took a stand and called the men of his community together to go out and fight the Philistines. Having only their ox goads for weapons these men followed Shamgar in killing six hundred men and setting the Philistines back from invading the south of Israel for at least a time. Either scenario would go right along with what we know the Philistines to be like as we see them antagonizing Israel later on. It would also make sense in that chapter 4 begins with the information that Ehud dies and Israel, once again, does evil in the sight of The Lord. Shamgar was likely used of God to subdue the Philistines during Ehud's life or during the time just after Ehud and before Israel had turned from God to once again find themselves outside God's protection. One way or the other, Shamgar is credited with delivering Israel just as all the other judges are credited.

As we go into chapter 4 we see the next enemy Israel is oppressed by is more likely than not a direct result of Israel failing to totally wipe out specific populations of Canaanites God had wanted them to right from the start. We are told a man name Jabin held the title, "King of Canaan" or, since it's the same name as what we see used for the man Joshua killed, maybe that's what Jabin means. One way or the other, this Jabin also reigned in Hazor which was a city Joshua specifically defeated and burned to the ground. (Josh. 11:10-14) Over the years these Canaanites had rebuilt right under Israel's nose, and now that fact was causing trouble as God allowed Israel to be oppressed directly by Canaanites. If there is anything Israel should have seen as more deflating I can't think of what it would be. If they had read the records of the earlier days when God miraculously delivered these Canaanites into the hands of Israel for destruction, they would have known just how much it was their failure to serve God that led Israel to be overcome by an already defeated foe. We also see this king had iron chariots which seemed of particular concern to Israel anytime they saw them. (Josh. 17:14-18) It would seem Israel submitted themselves to this Canaanite king and he would oppress them for twenty long years before Israel cried to God and received deliverance.

This brings us to the next judge, who was a woman, and her name was Deborah. We are specifically told she was a prophetess which takes us back to what I was saying about these judges doing the work of prophets. Deborah lived in that middle ground of the promised land in the territory of Ephraim. She is specified as being a judge because people came to her to ask for judgment. This was because the people knew she was in tune with God and could help them know what to do. One day she calls for a man named Barak who lived up by what we later

know as the Sea of Galilee. She frames what she has to say to him in the form of a question as if God had already told this man to gather up a fighting force of no less than ten thousand men out of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun to go against the king of Canaan. She tells him the entire battle plan and that God would deliver the Canaanites into his hand. To this Barak replies that he would go if she would go with him, but he wouldn't if she didn't. Barak likely wants her to go with him because he fears the men he needs to call for won't follow if he alone tells them God had sent him. Deborah agrees to go but makes it clear the victory would not be credited to him. In the end the person credited with this victory would be a woman.

A small fact we are told is that a descendant of the family that Moses' wife came from (who were not of the children of Israel) had taken his tent, and presumably his animal herds, out to the plains area of this North country; meaning he was out away from the more heavily inhabited areas of the land and close to where this battle would take place. His name was Heber. Barak had gathered the ten thousand men and taken them to a hill overlooking the plains. This would give him a strong position that would be difficult for the captain of the Canaanite army, a man named Sisera, to come against. When Sisera was told that Israel had an army up on the hill, he took his nine hundred chariots of iron and marched out into the plains below. Deborah would instruct Barak to do something he probably would not have done without her which was to give up this high ground and go down to fight Sisera in the plains. Barak would follow her instructions and just as Deborah had said, Israel would have the victory, defeating the Canaanite army so greatly Sisera jumped out of his chariot and ran away. Barak would drive hard after the remaining army of Sisera and what was left of them would be killed to the last man.

However, the true last man would be Sisera himself who in fleeing found himself near the tent(s) of Heber. Heber's wife, a woman named Jael, would call for Sisera to come hide from the army of Israel in her tent. He totally believed he'd be welcome because as much as Heber's family was suppose to be friends of Israel, they had made a peace agreement with the Canaanites. Jael takes Sisera inside and covers him up with what we might call a heavy shawl. Sisera asks for a drink of water so she opens a bottle of milk and gives him a drink. Then Sisera implores her to stand at the door of the tent as if she's just going about her normal day. Because he knew the men of Israel would be looking for him, he wants her to tell any man who comes that there is no one in her tent. He no doubt believes this will work because it would be very against the custom of the day to push past a woman and go into her tent uninvited. Sisera hoped Israel would just move on but it was not Israel he should have been worried about. With this confidence Sisera fell asleep and when he did Jael got one of the spikes used to hold a tent in the ground. With a hammer she sneaks over and drives the spike into Sisera temple; all the way through his head and into the ground!

It goes without saying this killed Sisera, and when Barak finally comes along looking for him, Jael goes out and calls to Barak. She tells Barak to come with her and she would show him the man he was looking for. Barak would go into her tent to find Sisera laying dead with that tent spike through his head. Just as Deborah had prophesied, a woman was responsible

for the ultimate victory over the king of Canaan. With Sisera dead, along with his army, the king of Canaan would lose his strength to oppress Israel any longer. Israel would prosper and increase while this king of the Canaanites would not. In fact, the people of Israel who lived in the North would become so strong this king not only ceased to be a threat, in time, Israel totally destroyed him and his kingdom! This initial victory would cause Deborah and Barak to sing praises to The Lord which is what we see beginning in chapter 5. Verse 2 of this praise says something very interesting. It speaks of God avenging Israel when the people willingly offered themselves. One can take this as being the fact Israel was willing to go out to battle against an army it would seem they had no chance against but there is another way to see these words. We are told this king, of a people Joshua had already defeated long before this time, mightily oppressed Israel for twenty years before Israel cried out to God. Thus, one can say Israel willingly submitted themselves to this king. Why would they do such a thing? We see that answer later when the last judge in Israel has to deal with the fact Israel demands they be given a king as other nations have a king! (I Sam. 18)

Israel was warned that a king would take their daughters for handmaids; their sons for his army; their horses; their cattle; and who knows what all in what we would call "taxes." Nonetheless, Israel still wanted their king! It's not really hard to imagine that when this "King of Canaan" rose up there were things about serving him that might have been appealing to Israel at first but as time drug on and taxes increased they wanted their freedom back. The problem was, this king had better armament than the common man in Israel, and it was the chariots of iron that are specified as the reason Israel finally cries out to God. The verse also speaks of Israel being avenged. Thus, one might ask, if Israel gave themselves to this king willingly, how was Israel avenged by God? The answer to that is in something I emphasize over and over in my writings. Anything God attempts to do He could simply do without looking for willingness from anyone of us but that's not how God operates; it's not how He created this world to work. God will always respect our free will, all the way to allowing us to perish without Him. (II Pet. 3:9) However, when it comes to God's chosen nation Israel, it was to them God gave the Law. It was to Israel God sent The Messiah. It will be to Israel The Messiah will return to take the reigns of this earth and rule for over a thousand years. (Rev. 20)

God has done and will do mighty things using His chosen nation, but not because all the people of that nation do God's will. God has and will continue to accomplish His work through them in spite of the number of individuals who fail to follow God with their true heart. At the time of Deborah the people of Israel just might have willingly done something God would never have wanted them to do and that was serve a Canaanite king. However, nature took its course and the king oppressed Israel to the point they cried unto God. God then stepped in and showed the world how easy it is for Him to defeat a mighty army with chariots of iron, using only a few simple men of His nation and a woman who lived among them!

Let's stay in God's Word!

Step Into the Springs!

Since we have not had a Step Into the Springs segment for sometime now, there are a couple of topics I would like to discuss. First, I have some sad news. With all that is/has transpired over the last year to year-in-a-half, as I am sure you have noticed, we are struggling like never before to get caught up. Correspondence, orders, and even our publication have been very late, but not all of this is bad news. One very positive reason we have fallen behind is the overwhelming response to our materials that we have seen over the last year. It has been so great to see and hear the wonderful and encouraging words and responses we have received. The unfortunate part is, as we mentioned before, we are falling behind. Due to this fact, we wanted to inform all of you, there will be no true pre-order season for the 2022 calendar. While we did make the calendars available for pre-order on our online resource shop, we will not be able to have the pre-order white cards out with this issue of Shaqah. What this means to everyone is when the 2022 calendar is available, we will start going down the list of those who have sent in yellow cards; we will then follow that with specific orders for the 2022 calendar, and then all the remaining subscribers' calendars will go out with the Nov./Dec. issue of Shaqah. In the end, it is our hope everyone gets their calendar in as timely a manner as possible.

Secondly, I would like to inform everyone of a wonderful opportunity. I have people all the time ask "How can I help or donate to Living Springs?" Well, do you or do family and friends have a King Soopers loyalty card? Then here is a simple and easy way to donate. Just sign into your King Soopers account on the web or in the App. Then look for "Community Rewards program." There you can search for "LIVING SPRINGS." Be sure to type our name exactly that way because there are a lot of organizations with very similar names. By choosing "LIVING SPRINGS" as your organization, we receive a small portion as a donation when you shop at King Soopers. It's that easy. If you have any questions or need help, just e-mail me at editor@shaqah.com or call me at 970-593-9468 and ask for Kandi. We are hoping to have more detailed information about this on our website, but as mentioned above it could take some-time.

We are very thankful for all of you and we pray each day that God will lead and guide each and everyone of you. Even though we may get behind in our responses to you, we want you to know you are all very dear to us and God.

Thank you,
Kandi Busby

**The 2022 Calendar
is
Coming soon!**

