

## The Story

### Chapter 8 – A Few Good Men and Women

Judges 2-4, 6-8, 13-16

#### Major Events:

- God appoints judges to rule the Israelite people – 12 in total during this transitional time in Israel’s history to bring the people back to worshipping God by defeating foreign armies
- Israelites cycle through times of peace and conflict with neighboring people; times of faithfulness to God and time of worshipping idols & other gods
- Deborah, with the help of Barak, defeats Sisera & Canaanites
- God chooses Gideon as next judge who defeats the Midianites
- Samson, the Nazirite, rules as judge, marries Delilah and battles to defeat the Philistines

#### Major Stories:

These are episodic stories told more for their local color and morals than historical significance:

##### Deborah

- Why does God choose a woman, a prophetess, rather than a military hero like the other judges?
- The cunning of Jael (a non-Israelite) in killing Sisera – her actions in violating a guest would have been considered unethical, yet her opportunism benefited Israel. Does that then justify her actions in the eyes of the Biblical text?

##### Gideon

- God continues to raise up the weak and least likely to be leaders
- Gideon needs God to prove God’s power with signs – bread on stone, wool fleece, the size of the army. What about not putting the Lord your God to the test though?

##### Samson & Delilah

- A Nazarite (never cut his hair or drank wine) whose birth is announced by an angel. This follows a tradition of miraculous birth stories (ie: Sarah and later Mary) in the Bible.
- Legendary brute strength
- What is Samson’s fatal flaw and how does this allow him to be manipulated by Delilah?
- What is the moral lesson from Samson’s story? What does it say about trust and betrayal?

\*In contemporary America, we are currently concerned with issues of strong leadership in difficult times. What characteristics do you find in these leaders of Israel? Why does God choose them? Are they “good” or “bad” leaders? Why or why not? Does the Bible intend us to emulate them in any way or do the stories have another purpose? If so, what?

#### Details to be aware of:

- Note that the introductory overview at the beginning of the chapter and the commentary surrounding each episode are the voice of the Deuteronomistic editor.
- Note the refrain of the book of Judges, “In that day there were no kings in Israel, so the people did what was right in their own eyes.” What happens in a society without strong leadership?
- What is the role of remembering in maintaining the faith traditions or identity of a community? During the 40 years (a generation) of peace the Israelites seem to forget over and over again about following the commandments of Yahweh. Do we become more complacent about our faith in relative times of peace? Why doesn’t the Bible tell us more about these peaceable years?

*What do these chapters tell us about God? About humanity? About the relationship between God and humanity?*