

# **Doing Your Own Thing: The Book of Judges**

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# Forgetting and forsaking

After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. (Judges 2:10-12)

## **Saved from enemies**

In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist... They were in great distress. Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. (Judges 2:14-17)

## **Same old story**

Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. (Judges 2:18-19)

# **Nasty Heroes**

In the book of Judges,  
even the heroes are often  
more savage than saintly.



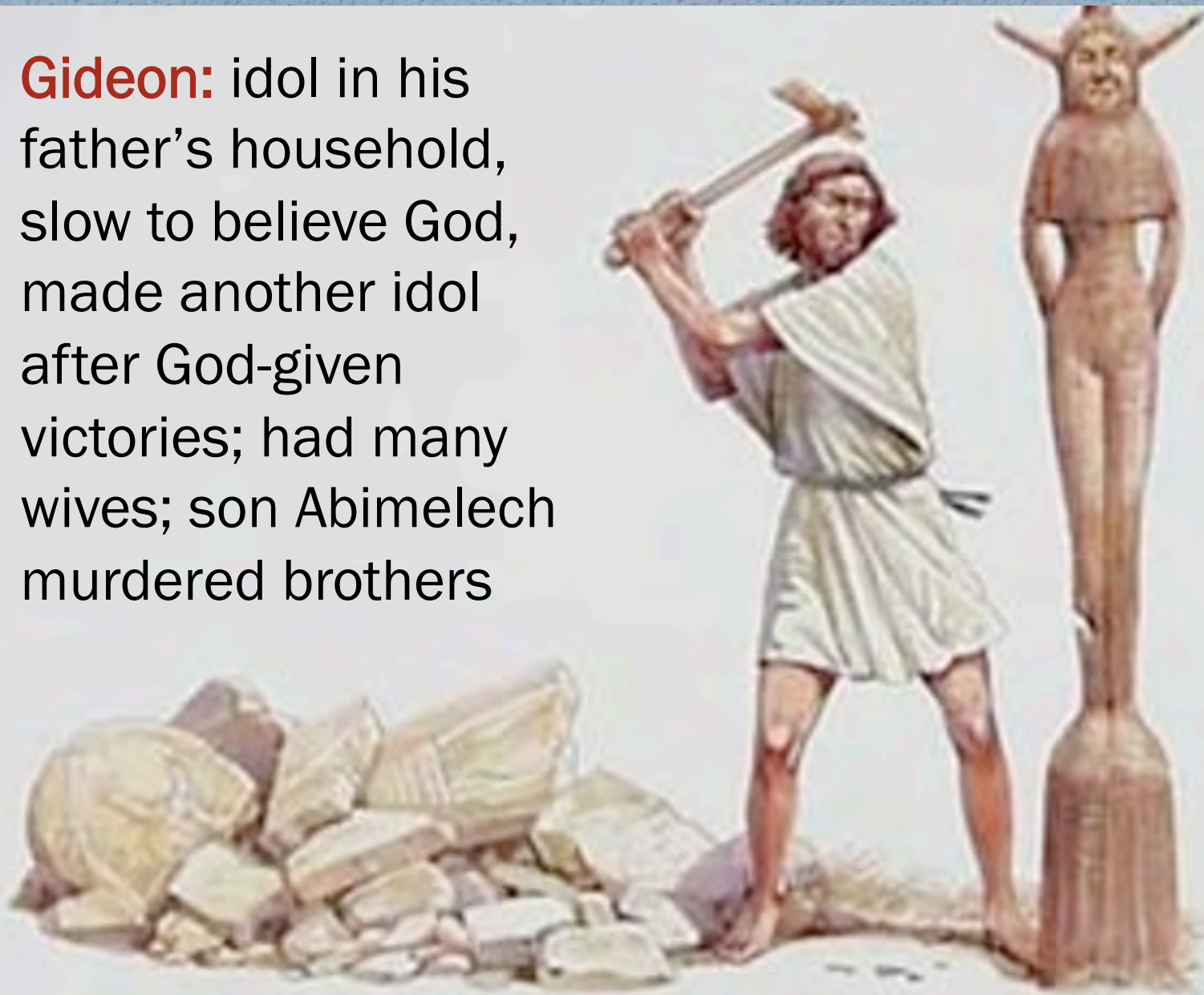
**Ehud:** comes as diplomat bringing payment, pretends to have secret message. “As the king rose from his seat, Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king’s belly.”

**Jael:**

welcomes General Sisera,  
lulls him to sleep, pounds  
a spike through his head



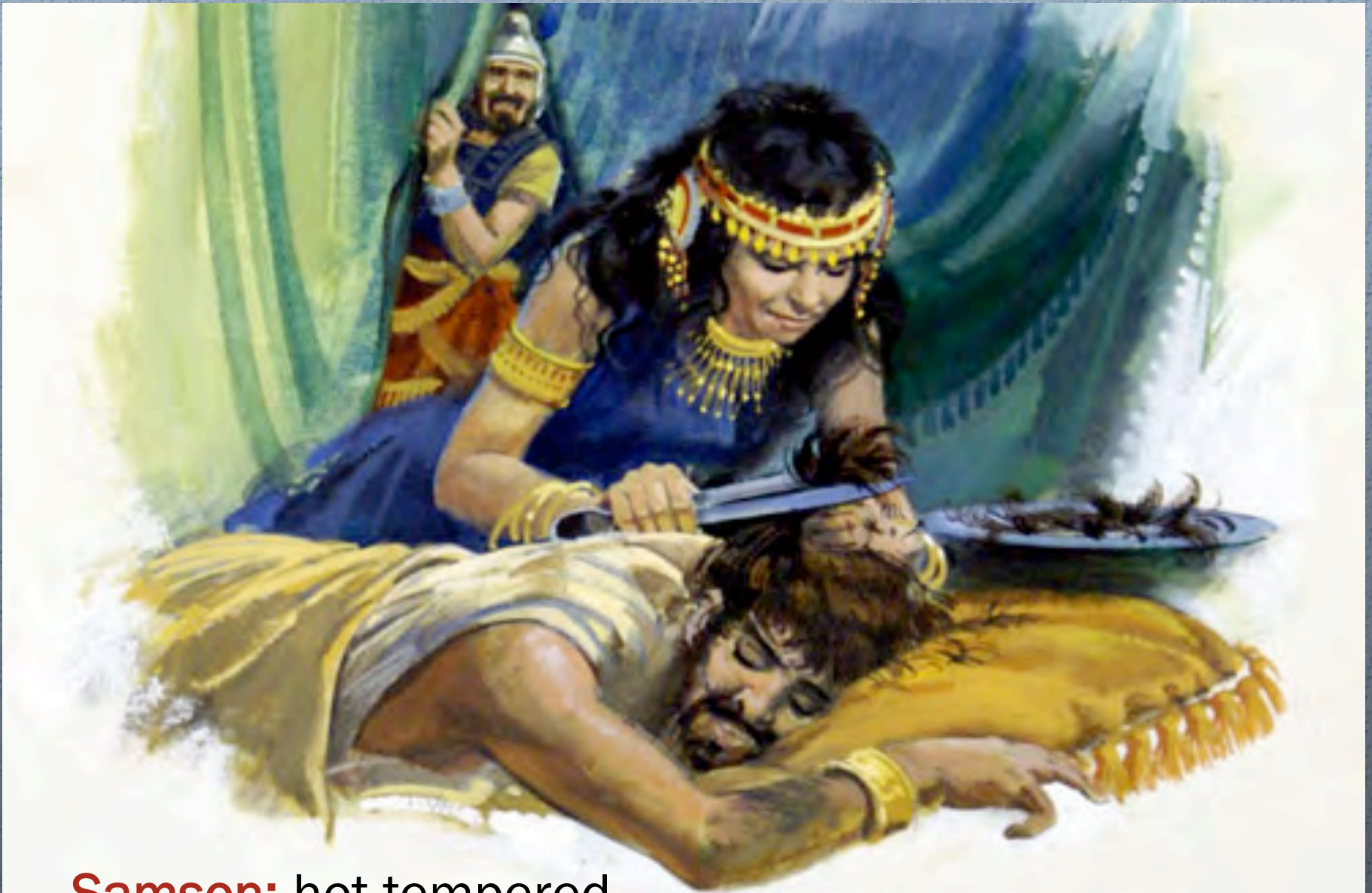
**Gideon:** idol in his father's household, slow to believe God, made another idol after God-given victories; had many wives; son Abimelech murdered brothers







**Jephthah:** prostitute's son, outlaw chieftain, sacrificed his only child to keep a foolish vow



**Samson:** hot-tempered,  
vengeful, fell for prostitutes and pagan women

# Nasty Heroes

- In the book of Judges, even the heroes are often more savage than saintly.
- The Lord used flawed believers to carry out his plans.
- This was a wild, lawless time.

# **Spiritual amnesia**

After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD ... In his anger against them, the Lord... sold them to their enemies all around... Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them... Yet they would not listen to their judges. (Judges 2:10-17)

# Facing the Enemy



# Doing Your Own Thing

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6)

In those days Israel had no king. (18:1)

In those days Israel had no king. (19:1)

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25)

# Free from all authority

- Homemade religion
- Rent-a-priest
- Rash curses and oaths
- Live-in lovers and unfaithfulness
- Perversion, gang rape, chopping up corpses
- Civil war and multiple massacres
- Courtship by killing or kidnapping

# Homemade Religion

When Micah returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, she said, “I solemnly consecrate my silver to the LORD for my son to make a carved image and a cast idol. I will give it back to you.”

Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some idols and installed one of his sons as his priest. In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. (Judges 17:3-6)



# Prosperity Religion

Then Micah said to the Levite, "Live with me and be my father and priest, and I'll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes and your food." So the Levite agreed to live with him... Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house. And Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest." (17:10-13)

## Positive Preaching

The Levite told the spies from Dan what Micah had done for him, and said, "He has hired me and I am his priest."

Then they said to him, "Please inquire of God to learn whether our journey will be successful." The priest answered them, "Go in peace. Your journey has the LORD's approval." (18:4-6)

## **Moving Up in Ministry**

When these men went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the other household gods and the cast idol, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" They answered him, "Be quiet! Don't say a word. Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn't it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man's household?" Then the priest was glad. He took the ephod, the other household gods and the carved image and went along with the people. (18:18-20)



# Claiming the Blessing

Then they took what Micah had made, and his priest, and went on to Laish, against a peaceful and unsuspecting people. They attacked them with the sword and burned down their city... The Danites rebuilt the city and settled there... There the Danites set up for themselves the idols... They continued to use the idols Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh. (18:27-31)



## Romance Without Rules (ch. 19)

- Minister with a mistress
- The live-in has an affair; moves out, then back
- Gibeah acts like Sodom
- Giving woman to wolves
- Mr. Sensitive: “Get up; let’s go.”
- Mass mailing gory details

# Civil War

The Benjamites came out of Gibeah and cut down twenty-two thousand Israelites on the battlefield that day... the second day... they cut down another eighteen thousand Israelites... On [the third] day twenty-five thousand Benjamite swordsmen fell... The men of Israel went back to Benjamin and put all the towns to the sword, including the animals and everything else they found. All the towns they came across they set on fire. (Judges 20:20-48)

# Creative Courtship

- 600 Benjamite warriors survived, but no Benjamite women survived.
- “Who gives this woman to this man?”  
“I don’t!”
- **Option #1: Whose families can we kill?**  
Slaughter everyone in Jabesh Gilead except 400 virgins.
- **Option #2: What girls can we kidnap?**  
Steal 200 girls from the Shiloh dance.





# Not Just Ancient History

- 60 million died in World War II; death camps; bombing cities; using nuclear weapons
- AIDS in South Africa: over half of *pastors* have been unfaithful, averaging 5 affairs.
- Births out of wedlock in Britain went from 4% in 1960 to 40% in 2000.
- In America: “Religion up; morality down.”
- Prosperity preachers
- Consumers: “the church of your choice.”

# Forgetting and forsaking: Two strategies

1. **Deny that God is real:** “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1).
2. **Make up your own god:** “You thought I was altogether like you” (Ps. 50:21).

**Downside:** “Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue” (Ps. 50:22).

# **A Cosmic Authority Problem**

“I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God... It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that... I have a cosmic authority problem.” (Thomas Nagel)

# Sigh of Relief

Scholars use “evolutionary biology to explain everything about life, including everything about the human mind.” These explanations often defy common sense, but at least they eliminate God. “Darwin enabled modern secular culture to heave a great collective sigh of relief, by apparently providing a way to eliminate purpose, meaning, and design as fundamental features of the world.” (Thomas Nagel)

# Imagine

Imagine there's no Heaven. It's easy if you try. No Hell below us, above us only sky. Imagine all the people living for today... Imagine there's no countries. It isn't hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for and no religion too. Imagine all the people living life in peace... You may say that I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one. (John Lennon)

# Believing in Myself



I don't believe in Bible...  
I don't believe in Hitler,  
I don't believe in Jesus...  
I don't believe in  
Buddha ... I don't  
believe in Beatles. I just  
believe in me, Yoko and  
me, that's reality.

(John Lennon)

## Pick Your Favorite Lie



“Everything is a lie—pick the lie you like best, and I hope mine is the best.”

“We hate love, we love hate.”

“Kill God, Kill Your Mom and Dad, Kill Yourself.”

(Marilyn Manson)



## **Our own views and needs**

Religion is a choice. There is no such thing as a true religion. I will say there is no true religion; we each have our own views and needs as far as religion is concerned. (email from a Wiccan)



# Starting Young

Favorite word:

**Mine!**

Favorite sentence:

**I do it myself!**

Three favorite people:

**Me, Myself, & I**

## **What causes fights?**

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? (James 4:1-4)

# Freedom Under King Jesus

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)

“I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” (John 18:37)

# **The Great Law Giver**

Human rights and freedoms may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the institutes of [Jesus] the great Law Giver and Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament. (Samuel Adams)

# **There Is No Other**

"I am the Lord, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness... I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right... There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." (Isaiah 45:19, 21-22)