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The Relevance of the Book of Judges Today

Spiritual idolatry is spiritual suicide.

The writer to the **Hebrews** had a profound and universal influence on the history of the Church's interpretation of the book of **Judges**. With a method of interpretation that tends to read the TaNaKh in light of the B'rit Chadashah, to this day many readers understand the book as a collection of stirring stories about the exploits of truly honorable heroes. These people are held up as models after whom we should pattern our lives. It is indeed true that all believers are called to a life of faith and that without faith nothing can be accomplished for **ADONAI**, but this evaluation of **Judges** is way too positive, especially when we allow **the judges** to speak for **themselves**. The primary significance of the book for us today, especially in the West, lies in quite a different direction.

Earlier I mentioned that one of the three themes of the book of **Judges** is the Canaanization of **Isra'el** (**to see link click Ac – Judges from a Messianic Perspective: Themes**); how **the Israelites** became more and more like **the Canaanites** and less and less like **a Covenant people**. This is the key to the relevance of this ancient book for us today. For like **the Israelites** of the

settlement period, we have largely forgotten the covenant **Lord**, and have come to take for granted **His** gracious redemptive work on our behalf. Like **the** ancient **Israelites**, we are being squeezed into the mold of the ancient world around us. Evidences of the "Canaanization" of the Church are everywhere: our preoccupation with material prosperity, which turns our faith into a fertility religion; our worship that prioritizes feelings over biblical truth and waters down sound theology; our refusal to **ADONAI's** call to separate from **the world (John 2:15-15)**; our divisiveness and competitiveness; our moral compromises (see the commentary on **Revelation Bb – The Church at Pergamum**), as a result believers and non-believers are often indistinguishable; our willingness to stand up and defend agents of evil instead of justice. These and many other lessons can be drawn from the pages of this fascinating book as we proceed.

But the book of **Judges** teaches us important positive messages as well, especially about **God**. First, **ADONAI** calls **His** people to a covenant relationship with **Himself**. This relationship is the highest privilege imaginable, and when the recipients of grace hold **Him** in contempt by abandoning **Him** for other "gods," **the God** of grace is zealous for our attention. Second, **Ha'Shem** tolerates no rivals (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bl – Have No Other Gods**). We cannot serve **Him** and commit spiritual adultery at the same time. To do so is to trample **His** grace underfoot. However, third, **ADONAI** is still gracious, often treating **His people** not according to what they deserve, but mercifully giving us what we don't deserve. Fourth, if anything positive is ever accomplished in the Church, it is the work of **God**. Human leaders have a profound tendency to disappoint and to exploit the church for their own purposes. Fifth, in the words of **Yeshua, God** will build **His** Church, and **the gates of hell will not prevail against it** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Fx – On This Rock I Will Build My Church**). The book of **Judges** presents a picture of a nation called **the people of God**, but seemingly determined to negate the title if not destroy itself. But **ADONAI** will not let that happen. **He** has chosen **them** to be **a blessing** to **the world** (see the commentary on **Genesis Dt – I Will Bless Those Who Bless You and Whoever Curses You I Will Curse)**; **He** has rescued **them** from Egypt; **He** has entered into an eternal covenant with **them**; and **He** has delivered **the land of Canaan** into **their** hands as an eternal possession (which many refuse to recognize today). In the final analysis, **God** cannot, and will not, abort **His** plan. The mission of grace to the world depends upon the preservation of **His people (Jeremiah 31:31-34)**. Therefore, against all odds, and certainly against **Isra'el's** desires, **the nation** survived the dark days of **the judges**. The true hero in the book is **ADONAI** . . . and **ADONAI**

alone.[4]