

READING PLAN HANDOUT WEEK 2 (PREP FOR WEEK 3)
The Epic of Eden: Deborah, The Cycle of the Judges

Word from the Author: Our focus this week is on the twelve judges represented in the book of Judges, and the cycles of their influence on God's people. The map on the reverse side of this sheet shows the 12 judges we will be considering in this study – each representing a region of the promised land. And while there were definitely more than 12 judges in Israel's settlement period, those we will study, who are represented in the book of Judges, are the ones the author of Judges will use to explore the single story of God's people during this particular era of redemptive history.

Day #1: Read Judges 2:6-23. This is an all-too-familiar summary of the Israelites' destructive cycle [obedience, disobedience to covenant, foreign oppression, repentance and cry for deliverance, deliverance, military victory – and then obedience, as the cycle reboots]. **Read Exodus 20:2-3.** Recognize here the fundamental covenant Yahweh makes with His people. As we reflect on the generational atrophy seen in this cycle, can we see similarities in our own lives and culture? What is God's expectation of His people and how does He facilitate their ability to meet that expectation?

Day #2: Focusing in on the key turning points of the cycles experienced by Israel, **Read Judges 2:16, 18-19.** There is a clear cause-and-effect being demonstrated here. It is not without foreknowledge. **Read Joshua 23:6-8.** These words were given to those in Joshua's time (the generation preceding the judges). Within the text, Israel is told to be "strong" and "careful to obey". But clearly, that is no small feat. This kind of covenant isn't relegated to the Old Testament. In fact, we have a similar exhortation from Jesus. **Read John 14:15.** Connection to God, by virtue of our beliefs and behaviors isn't new to God's economy. Maybe give thought to Jesus' words in **John 15:1-4** and consider our own challenges to "remain in [Him]".

Day #3: Who will lead the Israelites out of their peril? We're going to look at 4 leaders or judges today in a few brief passages. **Read Judges 3:9-10.** Now **Read Judges 6:12, 14-16, 34.** Next, **Read Judges 11:1 and 11:29.** Finally, **Read Judges 13:2-9, 5, 24-25 and 15:14.** Ok, that's a bunch of snippets, but it shouldn't be too hard to find 'em. What do you notice about all these leaders; their social stature, worthiness, and so on? Now, what do you notice about the Spirit who came upon them?? Does this tell you anything about the choices God makes when He empowers people to act according to His purposes? Think now about the New Testament disciples and their empowerment after Jesus' resurrection. Does this say anything about God's modus operandi?

Day #4: Read Judges 3:12-30. Ehud is one of the most well-known judges in our book of heroes. His story is quite a grim one. Find him on the map on the reverse side of this sheet. Give thought to the circumstances of his leadership. Focus, again, on verse 15 to recall that his rise in leadership was directed by Yahweh. Where we often see coincidence or natural leadership guiding the destiny of God's people, with this week's meditations we should really begin to see the more likely influence of the Spirit of the living God in the lives of those He indwells. How does this play out for us today?

