

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3

The more I read and study the Bible, the more I see the “fabric of Scripture,” that is, the connections between various parts of the Bible. Each part is saying the same thing. Plenary Verbal inspiration, the inerrant Word of God. I see the Bible as a “coherent” whole. What do I mean by coherent? Each and every part is in agreement with the rest of the Bible at the same time.

Take the example of a college classroom. Before the professor arrives, all the students are jabbering about different things. They try to talk over each other just to be heard. A terrible din. Now, assume this is a music class, voice lessons. The professor enters the room and writes on the board. In my day it was a blackboard. Today, it might be a whiteboard. She writes “Middle C.” The professor says I want everyone to sing middle “C.” The professor goes to a piano and hits the middle C key several times. Then she picks up the baton and waves it in the air. The students all at the same time with the same middle C frequency, sing. That is coherence. The same note, at the same time. Their voices are amplified by singing together.

For those scientifically inclined, a laser is coherent light. There are laser pointers all over the world now. They can be a help as a pointer, but can blind people if used incorrectly. A laser is light of a single frequency or “note” to use the musical analogy. In addition, multiple waves are kept in sync so they do not cancel each other. That is what makes them so powerful.

The Bible is like that. All the parts are in sync saying the same things. It is about Jesus Christ. Our problem is our frail brains have trouble understanding such a complex set of books as the Bible. Hence, Bible class, plus the faith dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3 Judges Chapter 6

These are my words, my way of explaining what I see.

But, there are other students of the Bible, not necessarily believers in Jesus Christ, who use a different vocabulary: typology and InterTextuality. I have mentioned both in passing, previously. I suppose you could summarize this using Herman's words, "Context, Context, Context." A word, a verse, a passage has a text that produces a context/concept which can be reused in a later text.

Do you remember the movie, the Wizard of Oz? Do you remember the line, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore?" This movie was such a popular movie that it became part of the American culture. So much so, that another movie years later a character says, "Buckle up Dorothy because Kansas is going bye bye."

If you are familiar with the Wizard of Oz, then you know right away that the second movie reference is talking about a sudden violent change of scenery. InterTextuality.

There are many famous quotes used over and over again to bring into focus the context of a previously seen movie.

"I'll be back."

"Make my day."

"Are you talking to me?"

There are thousands of those kinds of quotes. The point is, they are part of modern day American culture. We get it, easily.

Now back to the Bible. I am just a Western goy dog from a Jewish perspective. I have little knowledge of Jewish culture, especially Hebrew culture from 3,000 years ago. My understanding of the Torah is from books, not a culture in which I live. So it is difficult to understand subtle references in the text of Judges to the Torah. Some are easy to spot. The repeated references to the Exodus from Egypt. There are others I have

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

tried to point out. I am sure that the writer of the book of Judges, perhaps Samuel, was immersed in the knowledge of the Torah. He also had an intimate relationship with God. His immediate audience was composed of Hebrew sons and daughters of Israel. They were immersed in ritual reminders of who they were, where they had come from and who Yahweh is.

As a reminder:

Hebrews 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Hebrews 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world.

Hebrews 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Hebrews 1:4 having become so much better than the angels, to the extent that He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

More on this when we get to Gideon chopping down and destroying the altar of Baal and Asherah.

From Judges 6:1, remember that the sons of Israel did the evil in the sight of the Lord and He handed them over to Midian for seven years. Now another description is added to Israel's suffering, brought low.

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

Judges 6:6 So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord.

Brought very low. Two words in the Hebrew, “very” and “brought low.” No problem with “very,” that is what it means. “Brought low” is interesting.

Here is the NIV translation:

Judges 6:6 (NIV) Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.

Now the Young’s Literal Translation:

Judges 6:6 (YLT) 6 And Israel is very weak from the presence of Midian, and the sons of Israel cry unto Jehovah.

I was hoping for the Hebrew word for “poor” which doubles as the word for “humility.” That is not the one used here. (NASB) The word I associate with humility is not the one used here. It always helps if you approach God with a sense of humility. God is the almighty, all-knowing God. And we are sinful creatures with puny minds. Did the Israelites approach God with humility? Or maybe not, maybe just anguish.

The word used here means to be languid, feeble, weak, lean, powerless (Gesenius). Looking up synonyms, a possible translation might be “emaciated.” They were not getting enough to eat which led to them being weak physically. And all this because they made themselves weak spiritually. They were both physically and spiritually emaciated.

The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT) has part of a paragraph describing its use in Genesis 41:19.

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3 Judges Chapter 6

Rather than quote some technical Hebrew, let me paraphrase. The “poor cows” in pharaoh’s dream and Joseph’s interpretation, in antithesis to the fat sleek cows “are characterized more precisely by expressions like “ugly in appearance (gaunt) and “lean in flesh” (thin).” “In connection with these terms, the meaning “impoverished, emaciated,” is an apt one...”

Remember that previously I made a comparison of the seven bad years in Judges 6:1 to Pharaoh’s dream of seven fat cows and seven ill cows which Joseph interpreted as seven good years and seven ill years (Genesis 41).

Gideon is Joseph’s descendant through Manasseh, Joseph’s first born. The ill of the cows in the Genesis passage comes from the same root as the “evil” the children of Israel did in the book of Judges. At one point in Genesis 41:19, Pharaoh describes the ill cows as “poor” or brought low cows, the same word here in Judges 6 as a description of the children of Israel.

The result of Israel’s evil is that there were good years prior to the evil years but they did not take advantage and prepare for them.

So, if you asked the question in Genesis 41, what if Pharaoh had not put Joseph in charge and prepared during the seven good years? You see what happened in Judges chapter 6: they were brought low, they were emaciated.

All through the book of Judges there are threads of the fabric of Scripture. This word, emaciated, is a candidate.

Because. This is the word that literally means from the faces of. As I mentioned before, translating it “because,” is OK, but obscures the raw concreteness of the Hebrew. The Young’s Literal Translation is closer, “from the presence of.”

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

Cried out. Here is another repeated word in the book of Judges (3:9; 3:15; 4:10, 13). As previously mentioned, it was used of the sons of Israel in Exodus:

Exodus 2:23 Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage ascended to God.

When they got in trouble because of their unfaithfulness, God disciplines them to get their attention. Then they call out to Him. From the TDOT: “The major emphasis of the basic meaning of the root s’q/z’q falls on the loud and agonized “crying” of someone in acute distress, calling for help and seeking deliverance with this emotion-laden utterance.”

Perhaps another candidate for an intertextual reference.

Judges 6:6 (Revised Translation) And Israel is emaciated from the presence of Midian and the sons of Israel screamed agonizingly to Yahweh (the Lord).

Perhaps a bit of hyperbole, but you perhaps get a better sense of the situation they found themselves in because of many bad decisions on the parts of many people. Kind of like what is happening in the United States today.

Judges 6:7 Now it came about, when the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord on account of Midian,

There are no issues with this translation which leads into verse 8.

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

Cried out. Same word used in verse 6. Repetition. That means emphasis. Or based upon our translation of this word in that verse, an emphatic emphasis.

Judges 6:8 that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: ‘It was I who brought you up from Egypt, and brought you out of the house of slavery.’

Sent. The LXX translates this with ek-apostello. God sent the prophet on a mission from God to the sons of Israel. He is a man with a message. God must keep on reminding them of His actions to remove them from slavery in Egypt and establish them as a nation.

Prophet. God empowers a person with a message from Him to the people. Who this prophet was, his name, where he was from is not stated and not important in this context. God commissioned a man, possibly empowered with the Holy Spirit as a credential, validating him as one sent by God.

Some have likened the mission of a prophet as a man that “foretells” (prophecy) and forthtells. Here, the prophet is merely someone who is pointing to history, forthtelling. God already did something amazing. Essentially, he is saying, have the priests read the book of Exodus to you if you forgot.

Judges 6:9 And I rescued you from the hands of the Egyptians, and from the hands of all your oppressors, and I drove them out from you and gave you their land,

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

Judges 6:10 and I said to you, “I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live.” But you have not obeyed Me.”

Really? That is all He said? It is like getting to the end of a movie and it just stops without answering key questions, without tying up all the loose strings. Something like the end of Genesis 34.

But, God pointed them to an existing set of instructions. The idea is, it is in the Word of God (Torah) your priests already have. It is in the tradition about the conquest of the land under Joshua. Obviously you haven't been going to Bible class. I did not find an exact quote like this from God in the Torah. But this concept is throughout the Torah and Joshua. This brings us to the fabric of Scripture, typology and something called “intertextuality.”

Before I get into those topics, let me briefly say that a quote like this can be a compilation of quotes combined to communicate a principle.

Joshua 10:5 So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they with all their armies, and camped by Gibeon and fought against it.

Joshua 10:6 Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, “Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country have assembled against us.”

Joshua 10:7 So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the valiant warriors.

Joshua 10:8 And the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not fear them (the Amorites), for I have handed them over to you; not one of them will stand against you.”

Numbers 21:21-26, 32-34 //Deuteronomy 2:24-3:11

Deuteronomy 2:24 ‘Arise, set out, and pass through the Valley of Arnon. Look! I have handed over to you Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land; start taking possession and plunge into battle with him.

Deuteronomy 2:25 This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the faces of people everywhere, who, when they hear the news of you, will tremble and be in anguish because of you.’

God sent this unnamed prophet to Israel prior to commissioning Gideon. It does not tell us how the prophet got his message out. Did he walk around the territory in sackcloth screaming his message? Did he go to the location of the Tabernacle and give his message to the high priest who then sent the message through a network of priests? The text does not tell us that. The focus is on his simple message, “after all I did for you.” Now

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

this is one of those phrases a child does not want to hear from his parents. God needs to point them back to the Torah to passages like Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Essentially, walk by faith and you will be blessed. Refuse to walk by faith and you will be discipline.

In the last apostasy “episode,” Deborah was both judging and a prophetess. God spoke through her. She got people, Barak in particular, moving in the right direction. Now we have an unnamed prophet giving the message. But he does not get the ball rolling. So, enter the second person of the Trinity, the Angel of the Lord.

Judges 6:11 Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

Interesting that the Angel of the Lord sat under the oak or terebinth tree. Deborah sat under a palm tree.

When I last talked about the Angel of the Lord, I don’t think I addressed the line of reasoning that identifies the Angel of the Lord as God. Let’s look at a passage to help convince you that this is in fact the second person of the Trinity.

Let’s look at Hagar who we did mention previously:

Genesis 16:7 Now the angel of the Lord found her (Hagar) by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

Genesis 16:8 He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s slave woman, from where have you come, and where are you going?” And she said, “I am

fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

Genesis 16:9 So the angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.”

Here, the Angel of the Lord finds Hagar and talks to her. The narrative identifies the speaker as the Angel of the Lord. I’ll skip over the rest of the dialogue and go to Hagar’s identification of the Angel of the Lord.

Genesis 16:13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees me”; for she said, “Have I even seen Him here and lived after He saw me?”

The name of the Lord. It is really frustrating to see “the Lord” used to translate “Yahweh.” “Lord” could in some instances be used to translate the Hebrew “adoni” which could mean Lord or just “sir.” But in this text, “Lord” is “Yahweh” which is clearly God. So the narrative calls the Angel of the Lord, Yahweh. Then Hagar says you are a God (El) who sees me. She identified Him as God. She is surprised that she survived the encounter.

Judges 6:12 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, valiant warrior.”

Angel of the Lord. He continues his presence.

Valiant warrior. Is this divine humor? Gideon is anything but a valiant warrior. He is not a warrior but a scared “kid” hiding from the Midianites. He sought confirmation from God that He really meant what He said. Hardly valiant. And we will see, he seeks confirmation from

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

God that God really wants him to confront the Midianites. Last week Othniel was presented as the true valiant warrior. He was truly a warrior. And he demonstrated he was valiant. And we know that Jesus Christ, when He returns at the end of the Tribulation will be a valiant warrior.

Appeared to him. Appeared is a word for to see. Gideon actually saw the Angel of the Lord. This is a visual manifestation of the second person of the Trinity.

Judges 6:13 Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did the Lord not bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian.”

My lord. Here the word is indeed “adonai” Lord or sir.

The Lord has abandoned us. This word is not the same one used in Judges chapter 2 when Israel abandons God.

How rich the humor. God abandoned Israel, in the eyes of Gideon. Why? Because they abandoned God. As we will see next week or the week after, not only did Israel abandon God, they became hostile to any challenge to Baal and Asherah. Here is a comment from the TDOT: “Abandoning something (or not doing so) can therefore imply a moral imperative. Since abandoning generally involves a deliberate, intentional act (as is always true in the case of Yahweh), the one who abandons something bears responsibility for the act. When Israel abandons Yahweh, it is negligent and therefore sinful (Dt. 32:15ff.). When Yahweh abandons Israel, Israel’s transgressions justify his actions (e.g., 2 K. 21:14f). To abandon Israel means deliberately letting Israel fall into the hands of its enemies (Jer. 12:7).”

Judges Chapter 6 Part 3
Judges Chapter 6

Gideon is aware of the history of the sons of Israel. But he does not understand the importance of walking by faith.

Judges 6:14 And the Lord looked at him and said, “Go in this strength of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?”