

# Read Through the Old Testament

Daily Bible Reading Guide with Devotional Thoughts-and Prayer Starters © Pastor Frank Eckert

## GET INTO IT ANYWAY YOU CAN!

**JULY, YEAR A**

(Recommended: READ summary BEFORE reading the Bible verses!)

### ☐ July 1 Judges 7: 1-25

**Proverbs 13:1-8**

Reflect: Gideon becomes an effective general, leading in to battle a company of 300 men reduced by the Lord from an army of 32,000. Why did the Lord shrink the army? To make clear that the victory achieved is God's doing, not the result of Israel's strength. Employing clever scare tactics and the advantage of surprise, Israel wins the battle against the Midianites.

*Prayer: Lord God, even greater than Gideon's victory is the victory of Christ. Help us to live in the power of His resurrection. Amen.*

### ☐ July 2 Judges 8: 4-35

**Proverbs 13: 9-17**

Reflect: Gideon continues to pursue the Midianites eastward. The people were so impressed with Gideon's leadership abilities that they suggested he be made King of Israel. "The Lord will rule over you", expresses the traditional action that choosing human kings would violate the Lord's kingship. Gideon made an idol but this leads to the destruction of Gideon's family

*Prayer: Lord, we look to You to rule over us. Move us daily to serve only You. Amen.*

### ☐ July 3 Judges 9: 1-15

**Proverbs 13: 18-25**

Reflect: Gideon's half-Canaanite son, Abimelech comes to a disastrous end when he tries to make himself king. In his lust for power, he had killed 70 of his half-brothers in cold blood. In Jotham's parable: The olive and the fig tree and the vine were the noblest trees while the bramble was a useless shrub. His kinsman, as Jotham predicted, was a bramble fire of short duration. After a period of civil war, Abimelech dies a tragic death as punishment for his evil.

*Prayer: Holy Father, help us to learn from the terrible warnings of Your Word not to follow the path of evil, but in the power of Your grace, to walk in Your ways of obedience. Amen.*

### ☐ July 4 Judges 10: 1-18

**Proverbs 14: 1-3**

Reflect: The sin-punishment-repentance-deliverance cycle occurs again. Two minor judges, Tola and Jair, rose up to deliver Israel, but mostly such judges had no military role, rather they were guardians of traditional law. A catalogue of gods they worshipped emphasises the ingratitude of Israel's unfaithfulness.

*Prayer: Gracious God, we turn in repentance to You, for the times we have worshipped modern idols instead of You. Amen.*

### ☐ July 5 Judges 11: 1-40

**Proverbs 14: 4-9**

Reflect: The Lord chooses an unlikely hero to save them: Jephthah, a Robin-Hood-like leader of an outlaw gang. He later makes a foolish vow to sacrifice whoever was first to come out of his house doors upon his return from a successful battle. Because no greater disgrace could befall a Hebrew woman than to die childless, his daughter mourned her virginity.

*Prayer: O God, protect us from making rash and foolish promises. Enable us to keep all promises that are rightful. Amen.*

### ☐ July 6 Judges 13: 1-24

**Proverbs 14: 10-18**

Reflect: Samson, probably the best known of the judges, seems an odd choice for a biblical hero. God raised him up so that Israel could defeat the Philistines. His birth is the result of divine intervention. He is the only judge whose birth is announced by an angel, the sign of divine favour and great destiny. Before his birth he was made a Nazirite, dedicated to God.

*Prayer: Lord God, even as Samson finally delivered his people, so in a greater way Your Son Jesus Christ delivered us from death, our worst enemy. Amen.*

### ☐ July 7 Judges 14: 1-20

**Proverbs 14: 19-27**

Reflect: Samson married a woman of the Philistines even though it was contrary to God's laws which forbade mixed marriages. The Spirit of the Lord who gave other judges the ability to be military leaders, infused Samson with enormous physical strength. Because his wife betrayed him, God's Spirit allowed him to avenge himself on the Philistines.

*Prayer: O Holy Spirit, fill us with Your Word and zeal to fight against all forms of sin. Amen.*

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☐ **July 8 Judges 15: 1-15**

**Proverbs 14: 28-35**

Reflect: Because his Philistine father-in-law had given his wife to another man, Samson took revenge in a fierce combat. Ironically, the men of Judah captured Samson, bound him with ropes and gave him over to the Philistines. But with great strength, he broke the new ropes and slew a thousand men with a donkey's jawbone.

*Prayer Almighty God, give us of Your power, to keep fighting the good fight of faith. Amen.*

☐ **July 9 Judges 16: 1-31**

**Proverbs 15: 1-9**

Reflect: Samson is a man of excesses. He is repeatedly and tragically controlled by his sexual passions. Samson's downfall was brought about by his inability to say "No" to a woman. Delilah finally betrayed him. But Samson's defeat became an opportunity for the Lord to gain victory over the Philistines. Samson died with a prayer on his lips to God.

*Prayer: Gracious Father, we praise You for lifting up Your children out of their transgressions.*

*Strengthen us to endure in the faith until our end. Amen.*

☐ **July 10 Judges 17: 1-13**

**Proverbs 15: 12-21**

Reflect: It was a peculiar blindness that caused Micah to look for blessings to Jehovah against whom he was sinning with his image worship. Also, the Levite did wrong in allowing himself to be hired as a priest to Micah.

*Prayer: Lord God, protect us from all forms of idolatry so prevalent today. Amen.*

☐ **July 11 Judges 18: 1-30**

**Proverbs 15: 22-27**

Reflect: The pressure of the Philistines forces the tribe of Dan from the southwest to the far north. Spies are sent to locate a favourable place for Dan to settle. The tribe of Dan moves in there, and on the way, steals Micah's priest and his images, to establish their own shrine.

*Prayer: Father God, guard us against the spread of false worship. Amen.*

☐ **July 12 Judges 20: 1-36**

**Proverbs 16: 6-17**

Reflect: The tribes assemble to take counsel to avenge crime that needed punishing. After two initial defeats, the tribes conquer the Benjaminites by a ruse. This was a campaign of extermination much more savage than any undertaken against any of the heathen nations. The holiness of God cannot bear the abominations that were perpetrated!

*Prayer: O God, seeing the fierceness of Your wrath, we praise You for Your grace. Amen.*

☐ **July 13 Judges 21: 1-25**

**Proverbs 16: 18-24**

Reflect: After intense fighting, all but 600 Benjaminite men are slaughtered. The Israelites had taken an oath not to give any of their daughters in marriage to the surviving Benjaminites. But because they wanted to prevent the tribe from disappearing, the men of Israel decide to find wives elsewhere for the survivors.

*Prayer: Lord God, You act decisively for those who are oppressed, so that what does not conform to Your will, ultimately fails. Give us greater compassion toward others. Amen.*

☐ **July 14 Ruth 1:1 -22**

**Proverbs 17: 1-10**

Reflect: Naomi, a Hebrew woman, who had settled with her family in Moab, by death loses her husband and her two sons. One of her sons was the husband of Ruth, the other the husband of Orpah, both Moabite women. Naomi refuses to let Ruth and Orpah suffer with her. Ruth will not abandon Naomi. Ruth becomes the mediator of God's love for Naomi.

*Prayer: O Gracious God, You are behind all the good that happens. May we be Your instruments to channel Your love to others. Amen.*

☐ **July 15 Ruth 2: 1-23**

**Proverbs 17:13-17**

Reflect: God's hand guides Ruth to glean in the fields part owned by Boaz, a prominent relative of Naomi. He allows her to gather a large quantity of barley. Boaz presented himself as a selfless, honourable man, as good to her as she had been to her mother-in-law.

*Prayer: O God, our great Provider, help us in love to show kindness to those in need. Amen.*

☐ **July 16 Ruth 3: 1-18**

**Proverbs 17:22-28**

Reflect: Naomi instructs Ruth how to show her love for Boaz. She wins the assent of Boaz. The next of kin had the right and obligation to protect the property and honour of his kinsman and to maintain his family line. Boaz indicates his interest to her to become engaged.

*Prayer: Loving Father, enable us so to love that we will protect the rights of others. Amen.*

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## ☐ July 17 Ruth 4:1-22

## Proverbs 18: 1-11

Reflect: Boaz tells his rival he cannot legally acquire the property without also marrying Ruth. The kinsman refuses to accept the property on these conditions. Boaz lays formal claim to the property and to Ruth. He marries Ruth and they have a son, Obed, the grandfather of David.

*Prayer: Lord of our lives, You measure out joy as well as sorrow. Even as Your compassion never runs out, so let our trusting You never waver. Amen.*

## ☐ July 18 1 Samuel 1: 1-28

## Proverbs 18: 12-24

Reflect: First and Second Samuel record the reigns of the first two kings of Israel--- Saul and David as God allows them to change from a theocracy to a monarchy. Hannah, late in life, prayed to God for a son. God gave her Samuel. She dedicated him to God's service.

*Prayer: Lord of the Church, we pray for parents who will dedicate a son or a daughter to the service of the Church if they are willing to serve You in this way. Amen.*

## ☐ July 19 1 Samuel 2: 1-36

## Proverbs 19: 1-8

Reflect: Hannah's beautiful psalm reminds us of Mary's Magnificat in the New Testament. It glorifies God and points to the Messiah to come. Samuel was left at the sanctuary to minister to the Lord in Eli's presence. Eli's line will soon end because his sons are wayward.

*Prayer: O God, Rock of our salvation, we come to You with our sins to find grace. Amen.*

## ☐ July 20 1 Samuel 3: 1-21; 4: 1a

## Proverbs 19: 9-14

Reflect: Samuel's special role in God's plan is highlighted by his call as God's chosen servant. Reared as a priest, he is later given a prophetic ministry as well. He would also be a military leader, a judge, Israel's last and finest. He will anoint Israel's first two kings.

*Prayer: Jesus, Bread of Life, after spiritual drought You gave Your Word in rich measure through Samuel, so now in our day, stir us to proclaim Your Gospel in its fullness. Amen.*

## ☐ July 21 1 Samuel 4: 1b-22

## Proverbs 19: 15-20

Reflect: When Eli heard the Philistines had defeated Israel and captured the Ark of the Covenant, he died of shock. The wife of Eli's son, Phinehas, hears the news, and gives birth to a son, calling his name Ichabod, meaning, "Glory has departed". She then died suddenly.

*Prayer: O God our Father, even as the Ark was a symbol of Your presence in Israel, so let us treasure Your Word and Sacraments for bringing Your presence to us. Amen.*

## ☐ July 22 1 Samuel 5: 1-12

## Proverbs 19: 21-29

Reflect: Though the Philistines defeated Israel and took the Ark of the Covenant, the Lord was superior to Dagon, a Philistine god. Not only did their god Dagon fall over on two successive nights, but the Philistines were afflicted with boils and tumours as a punishment from God.

*Prayer: All-Powerful God, reveal Your might over the enemies of Your Kingdom. Amen.*

## ☐ July 23 1 Samuel 6:1-21; 7:1

## Proverbs 20: 1-7

Reflect: The Philistines attribute the plague of boils to the presence of the Ark, and make arrangements to return it to Israel. Seven months of the Ark was enough! So the Philistines took it back to the Israelites at Kiriath Jearim, with golden replicas of tumours and mice!

*Prayer: O Living God, You are more powerful than all the gods of human making. Amen.*

## ☐ July 24 1 Samuel 7: 2-17

## Proverbs 20: 8-15

Reflect: Samuel reappears now, as a military leader, leading the fight against the Philistines. But the Philistines are not completely conquered until David's reign. God can choose even the lowliest to bring His people to victory. They do not really need a king!

*Prayer: O God of grace, to this moment, You have helped us. We praise You for our "Ebenezers", the places where we remember special victories You have given us. Amen.*

## ☐ July 25 1 Samuel 8: 1-22

## Proverbs 20: 16-21

Reflect: Chapters 8-12 contain three accounts of Saul's being chosen King that have been bound together editorially along with Samuel's convocations of the people. Samuel dislikes the request for a king. After seeking God's will he finds he must yield.

*Prayer: O Lord of wisdom and mercy, help us when You grant certain things we demand, and then learn they are full of problems for us. Amen.*

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☐ **July 26 1 Samuel 9: 1-27; 10: 1-16**

Reflect: One of the stories about Saul being made king tells that Saul's father, Kish, lost some donkeys and Saul goes looking for them. Ironically Saul is looking for asses and ends up with a crown. Samuel anoints Saul in a private ceremony. God gives Saul a new heart.

*Prayer: O Unchanging God, even as You gave Saul a changed heart, so transform us. Amen.*

☐ **July 27 1 Samuel 10: 17-27**

**Proverbs 20: 22-31**

Reflect: The secret choice and the anointing of Saul as king are confirmed by the casting of lots and by the help of an oracle. The responsibilities of king and people are set out.

*Prayer: O God, our King, touch our hearts daily that we may follow and obey You. Amen.*

☐ **July 28 1 Samuel 11: 1-15**

**Proverbs 21: 1-11**

Reflect: Samuel showed prudence in remaining silent to the criticism of worthless rabble. But Saul the warrior proves his ability to save Israel, by defeating the Ammonites. The people greatly rejoiced over the victory. Saul was now proclaimed king, publicly.

*Prayer: Lord God Almighty One, we praise You and we rejoice that when after a seemingly impossible predicament, You give us the victory. Amen.*

☐ **July 29 1 Samuel 12: 1-25**

**Proverbs 21: 12-21**

Reflect: Samuel paved the way for prophets to take on greater importance. Prophets will teach them what is right, will exhort them to worship the Lord alone, will warn them of punishment when they disobey. Prophets will be checks and balances to the power of the king.

*Prayer: Compassionate Father, we praise You for all You've done for our salvation. Amen.*

☐ **July 30 1 Samuel 13: 1-23**

**Proverbs 21: 22-31**

Reflect: Beginning with Saul, clashes between prophet, priest and king continued throughout the history of the monarchy. At Gilgal, Saul took matters in his own hands to offer the sacrifice, disobeying God. Saul's rule would therefore soon end.

*Prayer: O God our Refuge, when we are in distress, enable us to accept Your will and cling patiently to Your Word and promises, for Your timing is always right. Amen.*

☐ **July 31 1 Samuel 14: 1-45**

**Proverbs 22: 1-6**

Reflect: Saul leads a successful battle but a rashly-made decision threatens the safety of the army. Saul orders his army to fast on the day of the battle, causing hardship. Not knowing his father's orders, Jonathan breaks the fast. Though guilty of death, his life is spared.

*Prayer: Lord God, help us to consult You often, so that our decisions will be wise. Amen.*