

## Judges and Ruth: Love in Wild Times

Like a chorus line that's repeated throughout a musical, one phrase sums up the period recorded in the book of Judges:

'In those days Israel had no king, everyone did as they saw fit.' (Judges 21v25)

Often the 'judges' were charismatic heroes who rallied makeshift armies to defend their territory against invasion. We're encouraged that people like Gideon, lacking in self-confidence, could lead a modest force of just 300 and with God's help defeat vastly outnumbering Midianite forces (chs6-7). However human weakness is never absent, as in the tragic account of hero Samson, the strong man made weak through his infatuation with the treacherous Delilah (chs13-16).

Flawed leadership contributes to a moral vacuum in which society drifts down into dangerous chaos.

The closing chapters 19-21 are not for the faint-hearted, they make sad and gruesome reading. Keeping their godly heritage at arm's length, the nation gives way to unrestrained sexual license and abuse, leading to vengeful blood feud and civil war.

And yet God's inspired Word gives us a beautiful contrast from this same period in the story of Ruth, a foreign widow who shows outstanding loyalty to her Israelite mother-in-law (Ruth 1v16-17), becomes the wife of 'kinsman-redeemer' Boaz and great grandmother to King David.

In the wildest of times qualities such as honour, kindness, faithfulness and love may yet be found, for while people often abandon God and His ways, He does not quickly abandon us. He causes flowers to bloom in the wilderness.

His grace is working, often in seemingly small, obscure lives to great and blessed ends!