

14.18c Thirteenth Judge – Samson: Foxes and a Jawbone (Judges 15:1–20)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- Beka Flash-a-Cards for Judges are recommended.
- If possible, a jawbone of a cow, horse, or donkey. (I actually have one, but I live in rural Colorado!)
- Thread; rope
- Print two copies of the page showing 150 foxes found below to show the 300 foxes Samson caught.
- Find the pages below showing 1000 men. Print three copies of the light blue visual of 1000 men to show the 3000 men of Judah who came to Samson. Print one copy of the dark blue visual to show the 1000 Philistines slain by him.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- (none for this lesson)

Scripture: (ESV)

Judges 15:1 After some days, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife with a young goat. And he said, “I will go in to my wife in the chamber.” But her father would not allow him to go in. 2 And her father said, “I really thought that you utterly hated her, so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead.” 3 And Samson said to them, “This time I shall be innocent in regard to the Philistines, when I do them harm.” 4 So Samson went and caught 300 foxes and took torches. And he turned them tail to tail and put a torch between each pair of tails. 5 And when he had set fire to the torches, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines and set fire to the stacked grain and the standing grain, as well as the olive orchards. 6 Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?” And they said, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.” And the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire. 7 And Samson said to them, “If this is what you do, I swear I will be avenged on you, and after that I will quit.” 8 And he struck them hip and thigh with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

9 Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah and made a raid on Lehi. 10 And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” They said, “We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he did to us.” 11 Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?” And he said to them, “As they did to me, so have I done to them.” 12 And they said to him, “We have come down to bind you, that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines.” And Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not attack me yourselves.” 13 They said to him, “No; we will only bind you and give you into their hands. We will surely not kill you.” So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. 15 And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men. 16 And Samson said, “With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey have I struck down a thousand men.” 17 As soon as he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi.

18 And he was very thirsty, and he called upon the Lord and said, “You have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant, and shall I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” 19 And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came out from it. And when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore the name of it was called En-hakkore; it is at Lehi to this day. 20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Introduction/Review:

Describe a Nazarite. [One dedicated to God. He could not eat anything from grapes, touch a dead body, or cut his hair.]

Remember the two aspects describing God’s will? What are they? [His revealed will and His secret will.] Please explain. [God’s revealed or shown will is what the Bible commands us to do. The second aspect is God’s secret will, which is His accomplishing His desires, even through our disobedience. It is the events that come to pass.]

Story:

Visiting the wife

We left Samson angry—angry enough to leave his new wife and go home to Mama and Daddy. But after a while, in wheat harvest time, ✓he got to missing his bride. So instead of buying her roses and candy as a “let’s-make-up” gift, he got something better—a young goat. ✓He came knocking on her father’s door. (Knock, knock.)

✓Fearfully perhaps, her father answered, “Oh! Hello, Samson.”

“Let me go see my wife,” demanded Samson.

“Uh, Uh, you can’t,” replied the father.

“I can’t? Why not?” asked Samson.

“Well, I really thought you thoroughly hated her,” said the father, “so I let her marry the best man at your wedding. But, hey, I have an idea. You can marry my younger daughter. She’s beautiful and a better catch anyway. Please, take her for your wife.”

Burning the fields

✓Maybe Samson thought, “When I destroyed those thirty men for thirty shirts and thirty robes, it was just because of a riddle. Now, though, I have good reason to harm the Philistines.”

This is what he did: He caught three hundred live foxes. (My, that is a feat!) Then he tied all the foxes together by twos. He put a lit torch between each pair of foxes’ tails¹ and let the foxes loose into the grain fields, the stacked grain, and the olive orchards. What happened to all these things? Of course, they burned up.

The Philistines demanded, “Who did this!?”

The answer was, “Samson because his father-in-law gave his wife to Samson’s best man.”

✓These vicious Philistines had no conscience; they killed Samson’s bride and her father by burning them.

“Now I *really* have a reason to go against the Philistines—just this time; then I will stop,” said Samson. He attacked and slaughtered many Philistines (the Bible doesn’t give us a number) “hip and thigh.”² Then Samson went to live in a cave-like place in a rock called Etam [pronounced “AY tawm”] [locate], two miles southwest of Bethlehem.

Giving up Samson

All of Samson’s attacks provoked the Philistines enough to make them raid Judah at a place called Lehi

[locate; not listed on map below but likely near Beth Shemesh]. The name *Lehi* means jawbone. This is significant as you will see in a minute.

The men who lived in Lehi asked the Philistines, “Why are you raiding us?”

The Philistines answered, “We’ve come to arrest Samson to do to him what he did to us.”

Three thousand of the men of Judah approached Samson at Etam with betrayal in their minds. “Don’t you know that the Philistines rule over us? What kind of trouble are you making for us?” they asked Samson.

“I’m just paying them back for what they’ve done to me,” responded Samson.

“Well, we’ve come to arrest you and give you up to the Philistines,” said the three thousand men of Judah.

“That’s okay, but promise me you won’t kill me yourselves,” answered Samson.

Judah agreed. “We won’t kill you, but we will tie you up and take you to the Philistines.” So they tied him with two new ropes.

When they brought Samson to Lehi, the Philistines came out, shouting against Samson. The Spirit of the Lord came on him mightily: the ropes broke as if they were a thin flax plant being burned. Look at the picture [found below] of a flax plant. Notice how very thin and fragile the stems of this plant are.

Slaying with a jawbone

Samson found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, took it, and killed one thousand Philistines with it. He made up a poem about his victory. Here it is: “With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey have I struck down a thousand men.” Now do you see why the name *Lehi*, meaning jawbone, was significant?

After his accomplishment, Samson threw the jawbone away, renamed the place “Jawbone Height,” and then realized he was *very* thirsty.³

With no water in sight, Samson called to the Lord: “You, Lord, gave this great victory to me. Am I going to die of thirst now and let the Philistines get me as I die of thirst?”

God split a hollow place at Lehi, and water came out. Samson drank and was revived, naming that place “Spring of the Caller,” for the spring had formed when Samson called upon God.

All these activities of Samson show us how, as He had promised Samson’s parents, God was beginning to subdue the Philistines through Samson.

¹Tying their tails together, gave “them room enough to run about, as such creatures do, not forward, but in a crooked, flexuous manner, here and there” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-15-4.html>).

²“Either smote them on their hips and thighs with his hands . . . or smote them with his legs on their thighs . . . or the meaning of the proverbial expression is, he laid on them at a great rate, and smote them here and there, and anywhere” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-15-8.html>).

³“Which Josephus thinks came upon him as a rebuke unto him, for ascribing the victory he had obtained to his own strength, and not to the Lord, whereby he was shown his own weakness, and how easily his strength could be reduced” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-15-18.html>).

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

The men from Judah “declared they would not fall upon him themselves and slay him; nor would the Jews put Christ to death themselves, though they were virtually his betrayers and murderers (John

18:31)” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-15-13.html>).

The men from Judah said they would bind Samson and deliver him to the Philistines just “as the Jews did Christ . . . to the high priest [and] also to the Roman governor (Matthew 27:2)” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-15-13.html>).

“It may also be observed, that it was so ordered in Providence, that he might in this be a type of the Messiah, who on the cross, as he was spoiling principalities and powers, and triumphing over them in it, said, ‘I thirst’ (John 19:28)” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/judges-15-18.html>).

Activities:

- Play dough: fox, torches, donkey’s jawbone
- Snack: Olympic Torch Cupcake Cones found at <http://sweetology101.blogspot.com/2012/07/olympic-torch-cupcakes.html>.
- Before doing this activity, be sure to get permission from students or even parents, and assure the students that you will release them. Bind students’ arms with one or two strands of string to show how difficult it is to break out of string to say nothing of ropes.
- Sing the names of the judges to the tune, “Ten Little Indians.”

Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah,
Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair,
Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon,
Samson, Eli, Samuel.

- Review questions: (Game: Print two copies of the fox clipart found below. Back with paper towel and cut out as pairs. For each correct answer a student may place a pair of foxes on the flannel board. Or give students who answer correctly a chance to break thread with their bare hands.)
 1. What did Samson learn when he went to visit his wife? [She had married his best man.]
 2. Tell about what Samson did with foxes. [Captured 300 foxes; tied their tails together in pairs; put a torch between each pair; loosed them to burn wheat fields, and olive trees.]
 3. How did the Philistines respond after their fields were burned? [Slew Samson’s wife and father.]
 4. Why did 3000 men from Judah come to Samson? [Because they were going to bind him and give him over to the Philistines who were raiding their land.]
 5. What happened to the ropes binding Samson when he was given over to the Philistines? [He broke them as easily as if they had been burned flax.]
 6. What weapon did Samson use to slay 1000 Philistines? [The jawbone of a donkey.]
 7. After his victory over 1000 Philistines, what problem did Samson have? [He was thirsty.]
 8. How did God provide water? [God split open a hollow place in the rock.]

Memory Verse[s]: [ESV]

- Judges 13:5—[Samson] shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

Handwork:

- Print fox pairs found below (used in the review-question game) on cardstock so that each student has one pair. Also print torches and words. Students cut out the foxes without cutting the pairs apart. Fold (mountain fold) between the two foxes. Cut apart and glue the words to the back of the foxes. Paper clip or glue a torch near the fold between the foxes so that it extends above the tails.

Samson

Judges 13-16

1118-1078 BC, 40 Years

- Zorah + Ashtaol: home
- Timna: wants woman
- Zorah: home
- Timna: riddle
- Ashkelon: kills 30, pay off debt
- Zorah: home
- Timna: Burns crops
- Etam: 1000 jawbone ass
- Gaza: harlot
- Hebron: Gaza gates
- Valley of Sorek: Delilah
- Gaza: blinded, jailed
- 3000 killed
- Zorah + Ashtaol: buried

Ashkelon

Philistine Empire
 Five capital cities:
 Ashdod, Ashkelon, Lachish
 Gaza, Ekron, Gath

Gaza

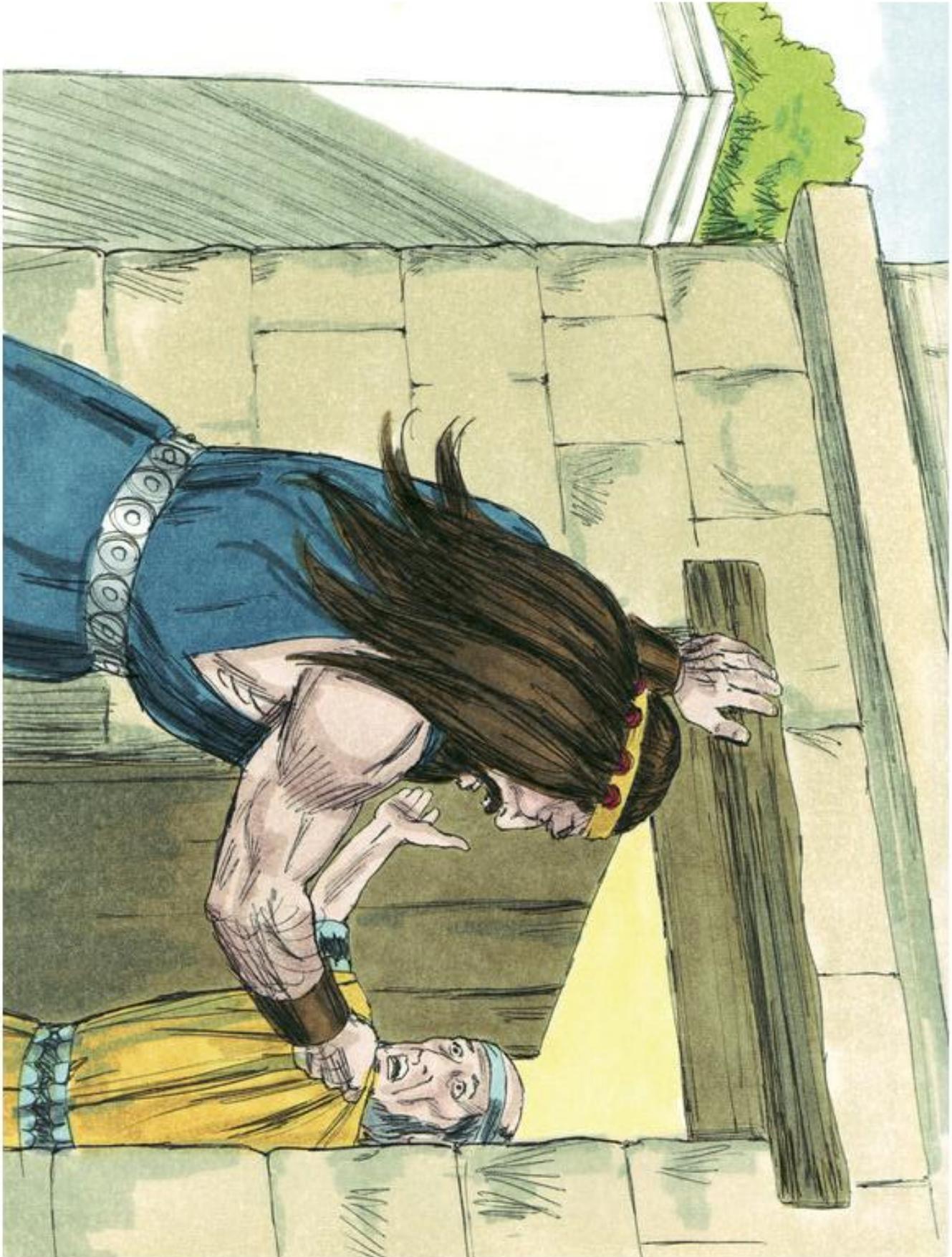


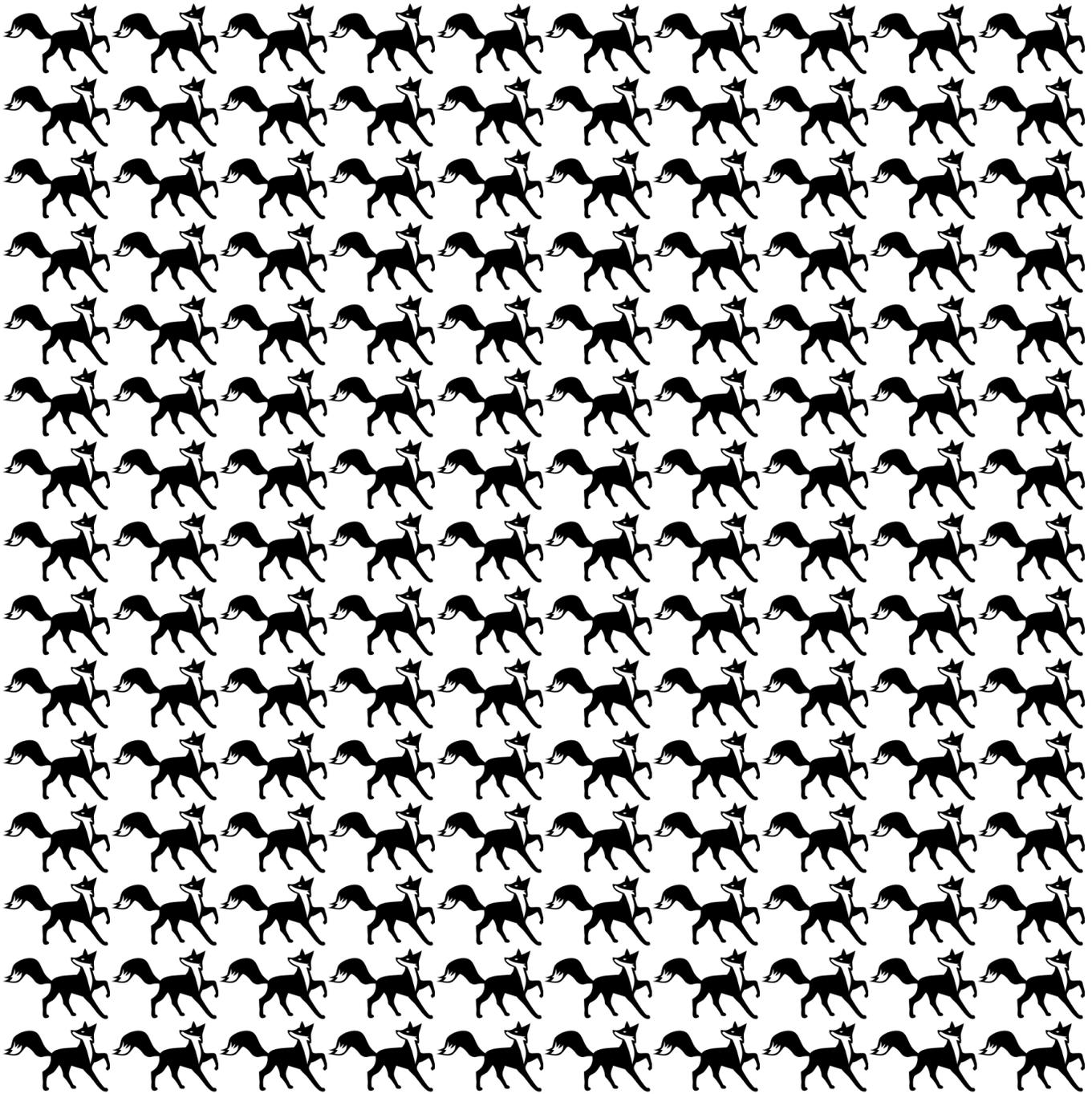
Steve Rudd

www.bible.ca/maps

Key

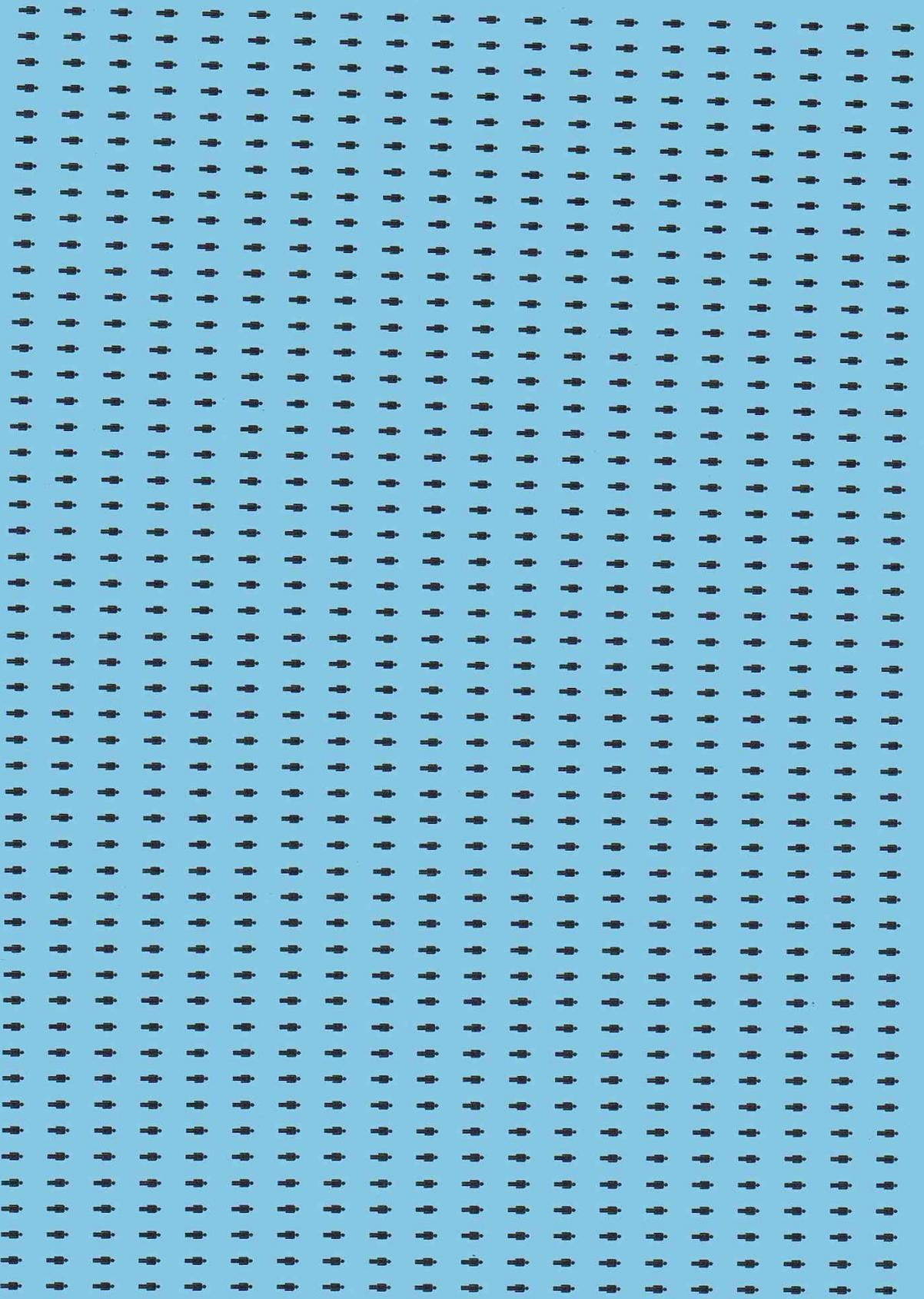
- ▲ Amorite capital city 1400 BC
- City of refuge 1380 BC
- Philistine capital city 1200 BC
- Levitical City
- City of special significance
- ▲ Mountain



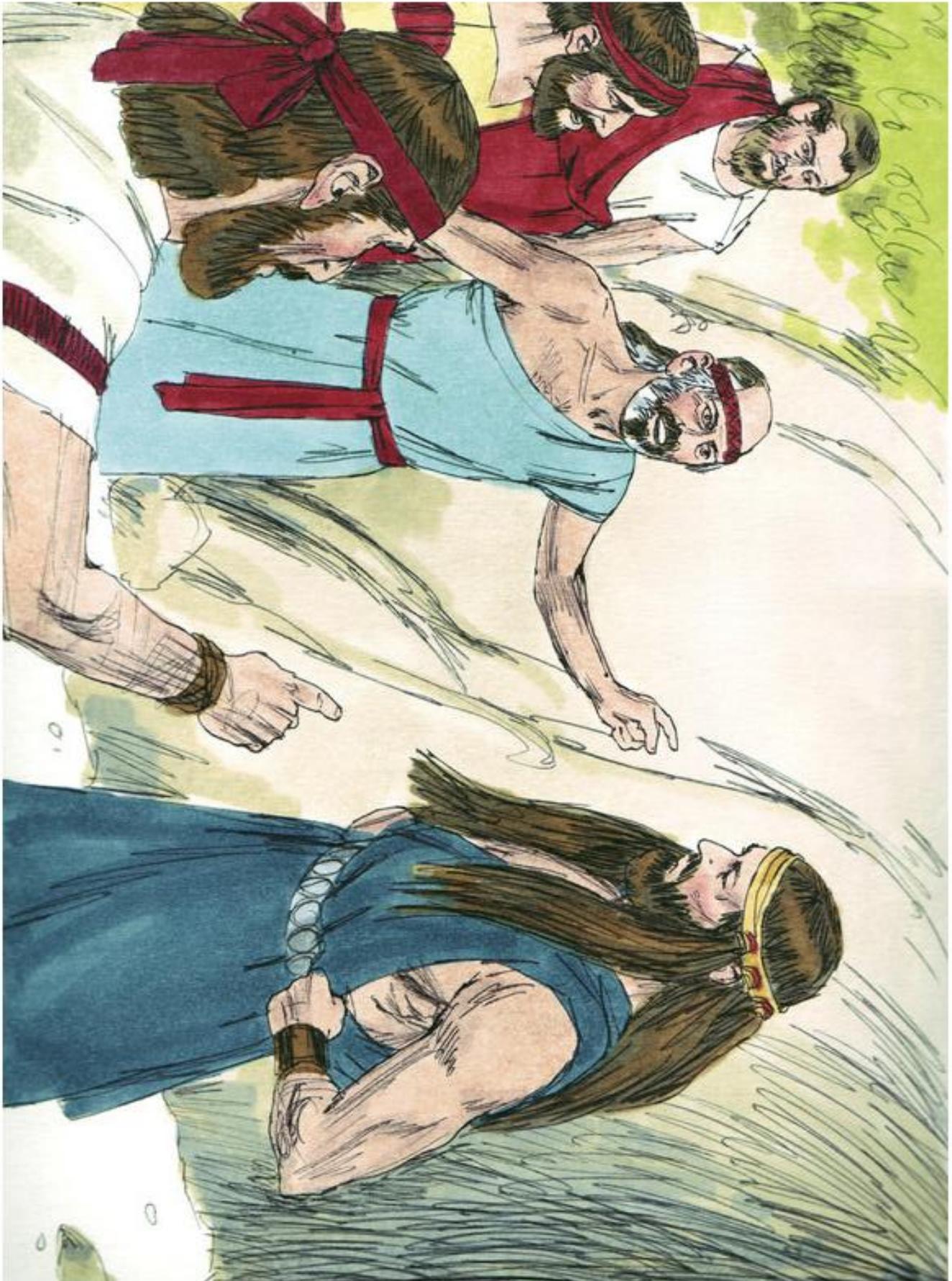






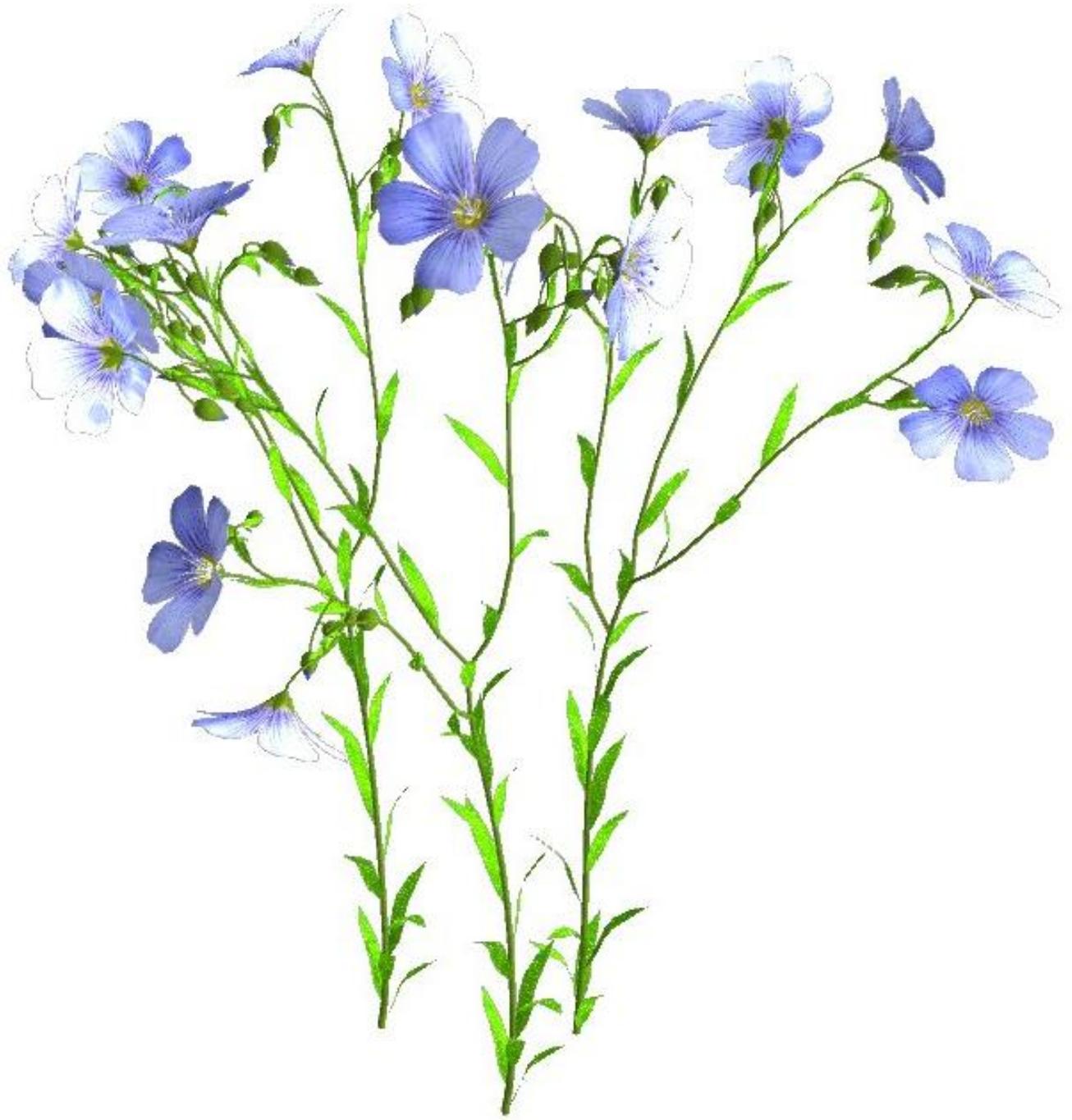


3,000 Israclites



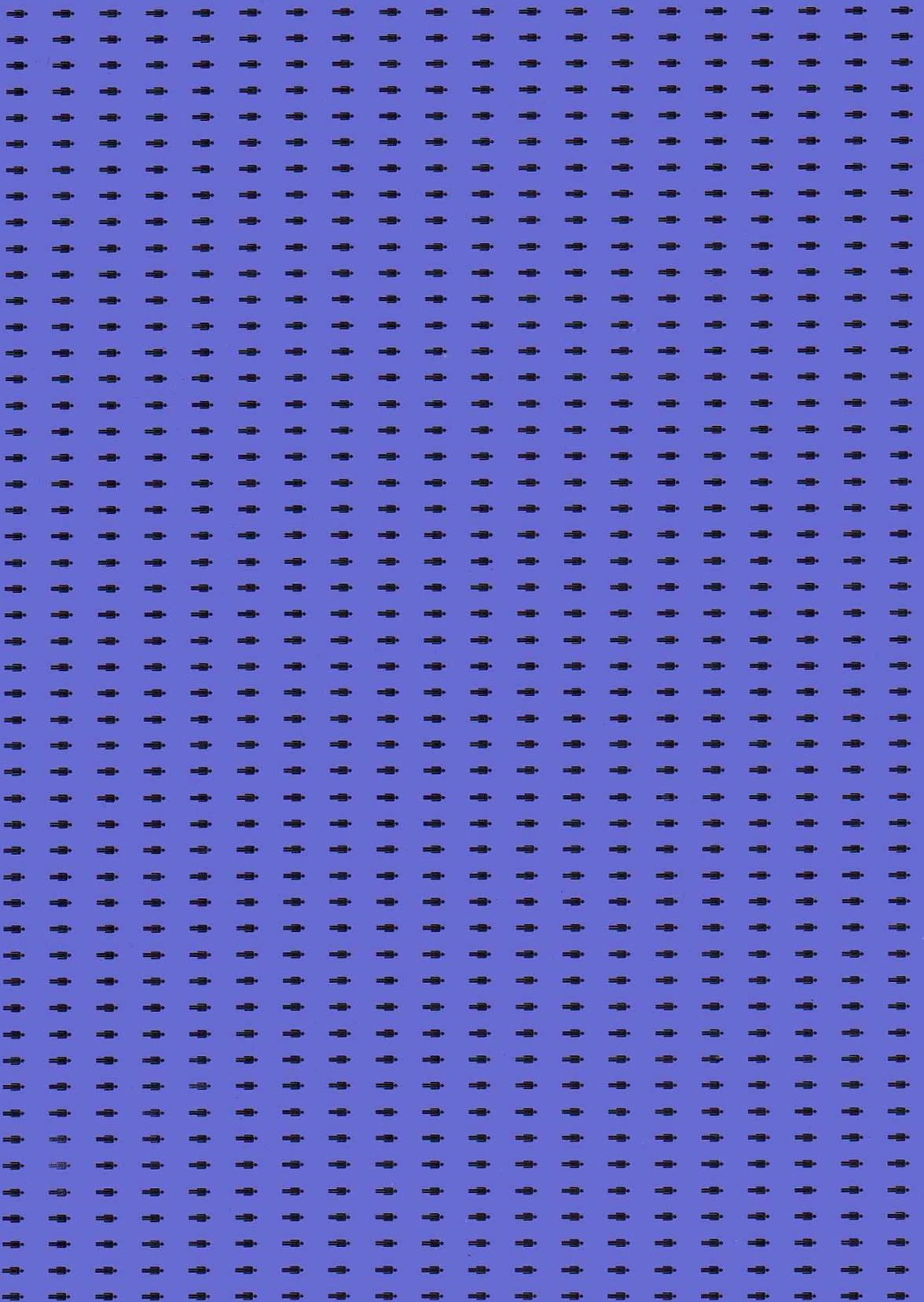


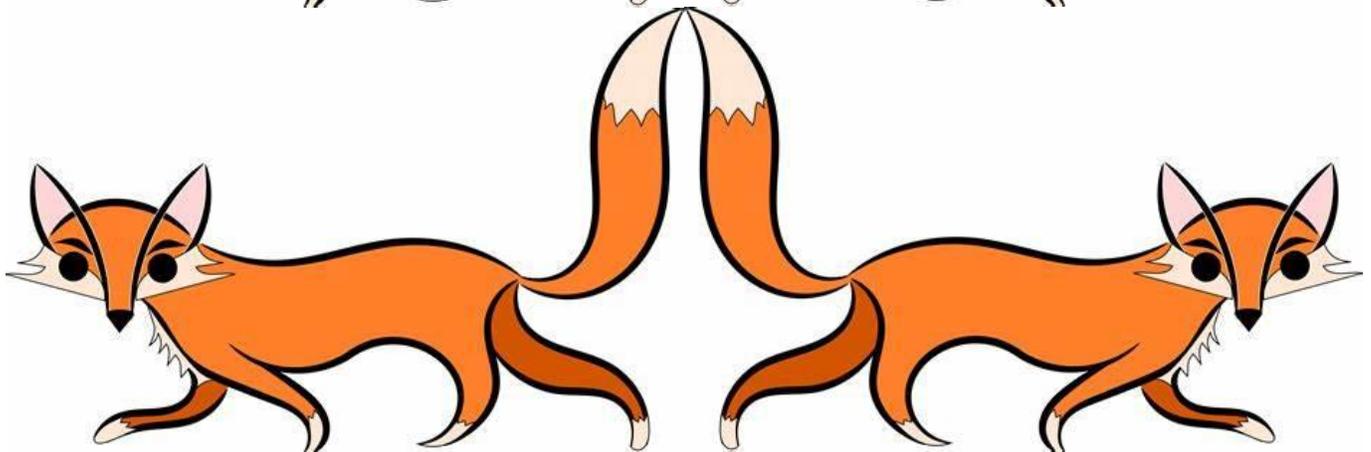
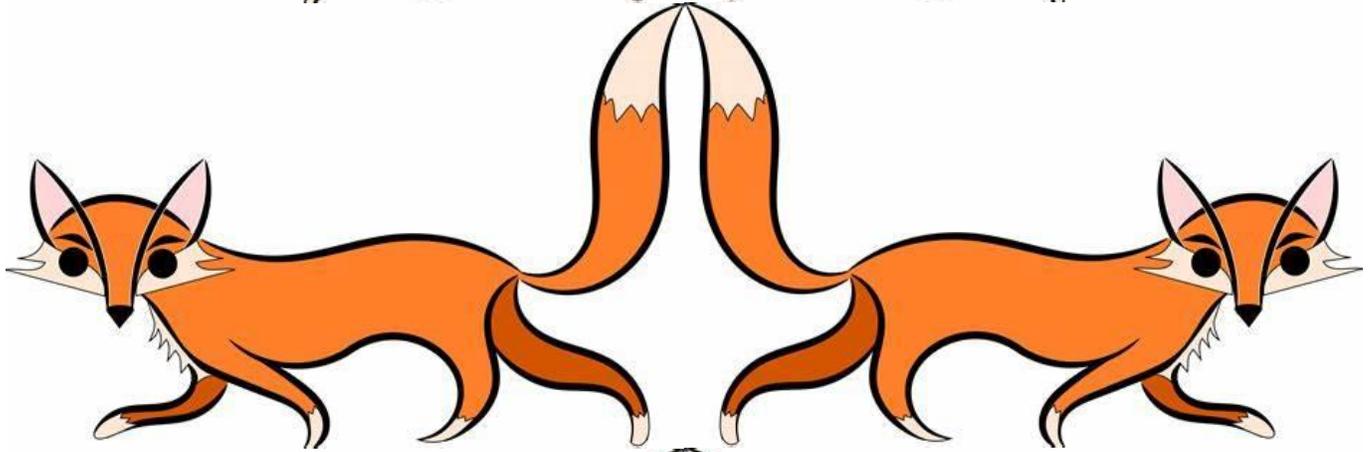
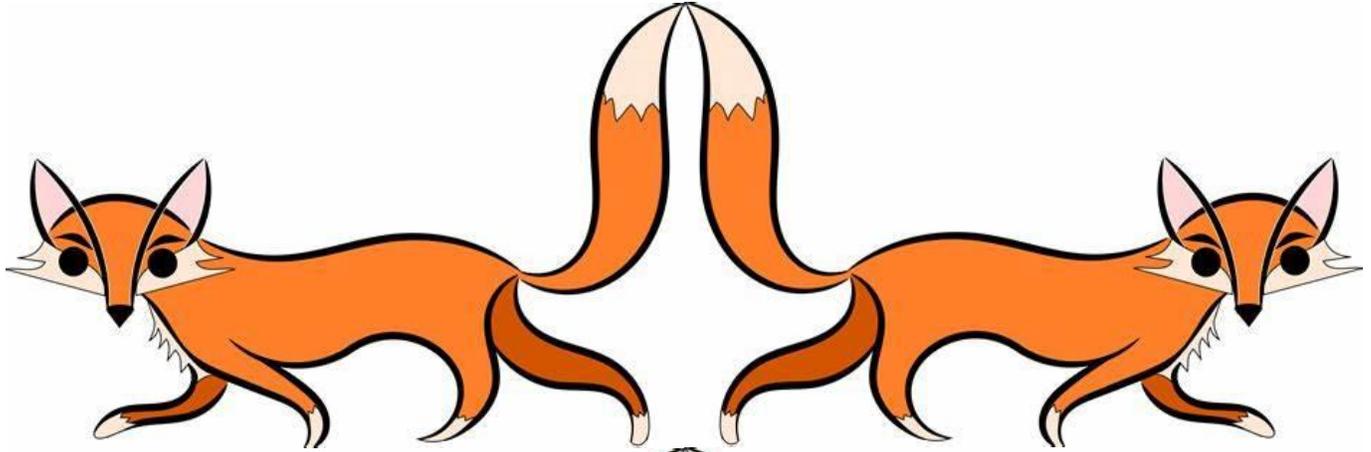
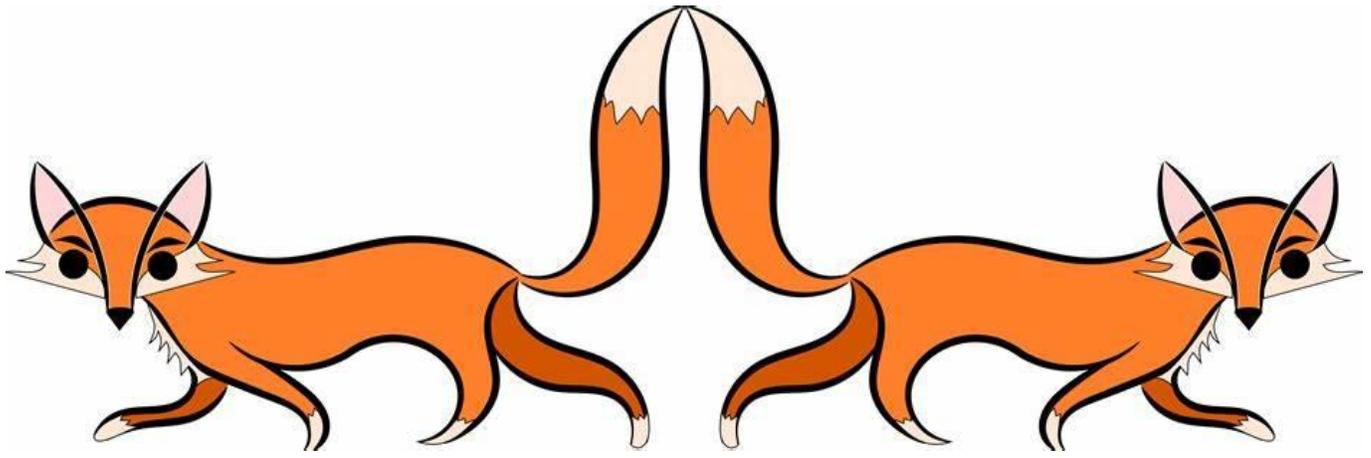




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1,000 Men of Philistia







Samson began to subdue the Philistines.

Samson began to subdue the Philistines.