

# Judges 2:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

## Analysis

**And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.**

This verse occurs in the crucial second chapter establishing the covenant lawsuit and cyclical pattern of apostasy. The Angel of the LORD's covenant lawsuit exposes Israel's violation of covenant obligations despite God's faithfulness. The cyclical pattern introduced here—sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, silence—repeats seven times through Judges, demonstrating both human depravity and divine mercy.

The theological significance includes understanding God's character as both just judge and merciful deliverer. When Israel sins through idolatry and covenant breaking, God's justice demands judgment, bringing foreign oppression. Yet when Israel cries out in repentance, God's mercy provides deliverance through judges. This cycle reveals human inability to maintain faithfulness (the need for divine grace) and God's patience in dealing with persistent rebellion.

The phrase "the generation that knew not the LORD" (2:10) emphasizes the critical importance of intergenerational discipleship. Joshua's generation served the LORD, but failed to adequately pass on covenant faithfulness to their children. This failure resulted in spiritual amnesia—the next generation forgot both God's mighty acts and covenant requirements. Application to modern believers is clear: faithful transmission of biblical truth to the next generation is essential for maintaining covenant faithfulness.

## Historical Context

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**Historical Setting:** The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

**Cultural Context:** This passage relates to the covenant lawsuit and cyclical pattern of apostasy. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1 Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of

apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does this passage about the covenant lawsuit and cyclical pattern of apostasy reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

## Interlinear Text

but they went a whoring	after	gods	other	and bowed	לְפָנֶים	בְּשִׁפְתּוֹן	אֶחָרֶם	אֱלֹהִים	אֶחָרִי	זָהָב
H2181	H310	H430	H312	H7812	H0					

בָּלָכְנִי אֲשֶׁר בְּזַעַם מִן מִהָּרָה שָׁרֵךְ וְאֶתְּנָהָרָה  
walked in **out of the way** **H834** **H1870** **H4480** **H4118** **H5493** **themselves unto them they turned**

כִּי: בָּאָה  
H3651      but they did  
                  H6213

## Additional Cross-References

**Deuteronomy 9:12** (References Lord): And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image.

**Galatians 1:6** (Parallel theme): I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

**Judges 2:7** (References Lord): And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.