

# Making Promises

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## Part 5: The Judges

### Intro

- The children of Israel have made it into the promised land and have divided the land in accordance with their tribal allotments.
- Most conservative scholarship sees 1360/50-1084 as a reasonable date for the transition between Joshua and the judges to the end of the period of the judges.
- In the period 1360–1085 Israel remained almost completely untouched by international affairs. We see here the providential and sovereign hand of God at work to incubate his people during this critical period of their development.

### Blessing and Sin

- Judges, were **individual leaders** the Lord raised up to save Israel from the hand of those who had harmed them (**Judges 2:16**).
- Judges, the second of the Old Testament's twelve historical books, describes twelve leaders God raised up in Israel: **Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson.**
  - The book of Judges begins with a retrospective on Joshua's remaining years after the land was settled. The Lord was **continuing** to give the land into the hands of the Israelites.
  - Shortly into the narrative, the author illustrates the failure of the children of Israel to **drive out** the inhabitants of the land (**Judges 1:27-36**).
  - Israel's failure to drive out the inhabitants angers the Lord, and the Lord allows the inhabitants of the land to remain so that they might act as instruments whereby Yahweh could **discipline** Israel (**Judges 2:1-3**).
  - After the death of Joshua, the author of Judges makes it clear that Israel is headed back into **slavery** to false gods (**Judges 2:10**).
- Then, in 2:11 through 3:6, the author introduces the **cyclical pattern** around which was structured the account of Israel's history for more than three hundred years.
  - After the passing of Joshua's generation, the people began to forsake Yahweh for the gods of Canaan. This angered Yahweh, and so he sent enemies against Israel both to punish it and to cause it to **return to him**.
  - When Israel repented, Yahweh raised up judges who delivered the nation

and provided a period of **peaceful leadership**.

- Again, however, Israel lapsed into **apostasy**, and the chain of events just described was repeated (**Judges 2:16-23**).

## Canaanite Idolatry

- Canaanite religion pervaded all levels of Israelite life and thought from the period of the judges to at least the time of the **Babylonian exile**.
  - The religion of Canaan was based on the assumption that the **forces of nature** are expressions of divine presence and activity and the only way one can survive and prosper is to identify the gods responsible for each phenomenon and by proper ritual encourage them to bring to bear their respective powers.
    - ▶ **El** is the head of the pantheon of gods. He is impersonal, a transcendent, powerful, benevolent father figure with little or no interest in human affairs.
    - ▶ **Asnherah** is the wife of El. Goddess of fertility, through which she provides vitality for the whole earth.
    - ▶ **Baal** is the master of the land. He is the storm god of Canaan – the god of rain, thunder, and lightning. In the myth, Baal took Asherah from El and eventually achieved supremacy and dominated both the pantheon and the cult of Canaanite religion.
  - The rainfall attributed to Baal was thought to represent his semen dropping to earth to **fertilize** and **impregnate** the earth with life just as he impregnated Asherah.
    - ▶ Canaanite religion was thus grossly sensual and even perverse because it required the services of both male and female **cultic prostitutes** as the principal actors in the drama.
    - ▶ Unlike the requirement in Israel, Baal could be worshiped wherever there was a place. These places were originally on hills called **high places**, but later could be found in valleys or even within the cities and towns. Each site would be marked by a pole, a pillar, or some other symbol of the cult.
- The book of Judges sets the stage for the narratives to follow, in which Israel will be repeatedly oppressed by the surrounding and remaining peoples (**Judges 3:1–5**).
  - A book that begins with the tribes cooperating in conquest (**Judges 1:1**) will end with the tribes united against one of their own (chaps. 20–21).

**Part 5: The Judges**

<p><b>Judges 2:16</b></p>	<p>Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.</p>
<p><b>Judges 1:27–36</b></p>	<p>27 Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages, for the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. 28 When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely. 29 And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. 30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol, so the Canaanites lived among them, but became subject to forced labor. 31 Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon or of Ahlab or of Achzib or of Helbah or of Aphik or of Rehob, 32 so the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out. 33 Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, so they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to forced labor for them. 34 The Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the plain. 35 The Amorites persisted in dwelling in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph rested heavily on them, and they became subject to forced labor. 36 And the border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and upward.</p>
<p><b>Judges 2:1–3</b></p>	<p>1 Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, 2 and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? 3 So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you."</p>
<p><b>Judges 2:10</b></p>	<p>And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.</p>

<p><b>Judges 2:16–23</b></p>	<p>16 Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. 17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so. 18 Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. 19 But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. 20 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he said, “Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, 21 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, 22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did, or not.” 23 So the Lord left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.</p>
<p><b>Judges 3:1–5</b></p>	<p>1 Now these are the nations that the Lord left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. 2 It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before. 3 These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. 4 They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. 5 So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.</p>
<p><b>Judges 1:1</b></p>	<p>After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”</p>