

Making Promises

Part 5: The Judges

Review

- 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.
- Judges, were individual leaders the Lord raised up to save Israel from the hand of those who had harmed them.
- In the book of Judges, we see a cyclical pattern for more than three hundred years whereby the people forsake Yahweh for the gods of Canaan, Yahweh sends enemies against Israel both to punish it and to cause it to return to him, Israel repents, Yahweh raises up judges who deliver the nation and provide a period of peaceful leadership, and Israel lapses into apostasy, and the chain of events is repeated.

Scope of the Judges

- As much as any other book in the Old Testament, the book of Judges is about **leadership**. From **Judges 1:27** onward, it becomes clear that the people of Israel will respond to God's blessing with sin when they fail to drive out the Canaanites as Yahweh had commanded.
 - ◉ The book of Judges shows the tragic **downward spiral** of Israel's leaders and people. It's a sobering examination of the human condition that highlights the need for a **deliverer**.
- The book of Judges highlights six judges during this time and shows their increasing **corruption**. These judges start off fairly well (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah) but become increasingly worse (Gideon, Jephthah, Samson).
 - ◉ Beginning with Jephthah, the years of **oppression** outlast the years of **peace**. Indeed, it is not said that during the lifetimes of Jephthah and Samson that the land had rest; it only says "they led" Israel (**Judg. 10:8; 12:7; 13:1; 16:31**).

The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

- The narrator selects these Judges principally for characterization to prompt his audience to **theological reflection** on the kind of leader Israel needs. For example, he sums up Jephthah's battle against the Ammonites in just two (**Judg. 11:32–33**) of seventy verses. He devotes the most verbiage to the **morally inferior** judges.
- Israel forgets Yahweh and instead takes part in foreign worship, so the Lord sold Israel into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia, whose name means "**double wickedness.**" (**Judges 3:7-11**)
 - Following Israel's repentance, the Lord empowered **Othniel** by his Spirit (in approximately 1350 B.C.) to deliver the Israelites from oppression (**Judges 3:9-10**). Afterward, the land had rest for forty years.
- Once again, the people of Israel turned to pagan idolatry and Yahweh subsequently conquered Israel by **Eglon**, the king of **Moab** (**Judges 3:12**).
 - Unlike the oppression under Cushan-rishathaim, The oppression that came next appears to have affected a **limited area** centered on Jericho, "the City of Palms" (**Judg. 3:13**).
 - In response to the cries of his people, Yahweh raised up **Ehud** of Benjamin – a beguiling assassin – who, under the pretense of offering tribute to Eglon, assassinated him. The land had rest for eighty years.
- After Ehud's death the judgment of Yahweh was concentrated in the north, in and above the Jezreel Valley, and involved **Jabin**, king of Hazor, and his general **Sisera** of Harosheth.
 - Yahweh raises up **Deborah**, a prophetess, and **Barak** to fight against Jabin and Sisera. Sisera is eventually killed in the tent of **Jael** (**Judges 4:17-21**).
 - The following poem that celebrates deliverance through Deborah and Barak details the lack of **tribal unity**. Participating are Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali. Reuben only considered participation; Gilead (i.e., Gad) stayed beyond the Jordan; Dan was a coward; and Asher remained at home. Judah and Simeon (**Judges 5:14-18**).
 - The beginnings of **sectional rivalries** were already starting to undermine the nation.
 - After Deborah and Barak, the land had rest for **forty years**.

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Judges 10:8	and they crushed and oppressed the people of Israel that year. For eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.
Judges 12:7	Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in his city in Gilead.
Judges 13:1	And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.
Judges 16:31	Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.
Judges 11:32–33	32 So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them, and the Lord gave them into his hand. 33 And he struck them from Aroer to the neighborhood of Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keramim, with a great blow. So the Ammonites were subdued before the people of Israel.
Judges 3:7–11	7 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. 8 Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. 9 But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. 10 The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. 11 So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.
Judges 3:9–10	9 But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. 10 The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

<p>Judges 3:12</p>	<p>And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord.</p>
<p>Judges 3:13</p>	<p>He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of palms.</p>
<p>Judges 4:17–21</p>	<p>17 But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord; turn aside to me; do not be afraid.” So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 And he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. 20 And he said to her, “Stand at the opening of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, ‘Is anyone here?’ say, ‘No.’ ” 21 But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died.</p>
<p>Judges 5:14–18</p>	<p>14 From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant’s staff; 15 the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed at his heels. Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. 16 Why did you sit still among the sheepfolds, to hear the whistling for the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. 17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan, why did he stay with the ships? Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, staying by his landings. 18 Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the death; Naphtali, too, on the heights of the field.</p>