

# UNIT SEVEN

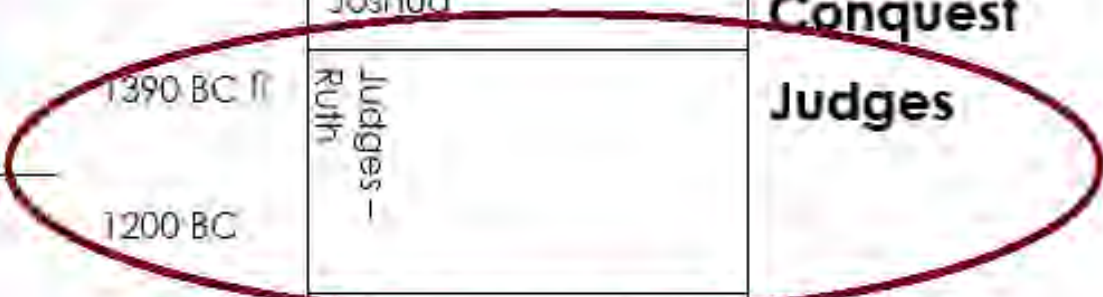
## THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES



Bronze Age

Iron Age

(3000 BC)	Genesis 1 – 11	<b>Pre-Abrahamic</b>
2166 BC (†)	Genesis 12 – 50	<b>Patriarchal</b>
1804 BC (†)	Exodus – Deuteronomy	<b>Egypt–Exodus</b>
1404 BC (†)	Joshua	<b>Conquest</b>
1390 BC (†)	Judges – Ruth	<b>Judges</b>
1200 BC		
1050 BC (†)	1 Samuel – 1 Kings 11	<b>United</b>
931 BC (†)	1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17	<b>Divided Kingdom</b>
722 BC (†)	2 Kings 18 – 25	<b>Southern Kingdom</b>
586 BC (†)		<b>Exile</b>
536 BC (†)	Ezra – Nehemiah	<b>Restoration</b>
400 BC (†)		





# INTRODUCTION

## COVENANTAL SETTING AT THE BEGINNING OF JUDGES

- ▶ Blessing & Cursing: Deuteronomy 28-29
- ▶ Restoration: Deuteronomy 30
- ▶ Covenant reaffirmation: Joshua 8

# BACKGROUND

- ▶ **Theme:** God rewards **faithfulness** with peace and prosperity, but punishes **faithlessness** with oppression and subjugation
- ▶ **Key word:** **Failure** (Israel's covenant failure to live up to her God-given obligation)
- ▶ **Key verse:** In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right **in his own eyes**. (17.6; 21.25)

# OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Chapter 1:** Israel's failure to drive the Canaanites from the land
- ▶ The individual tribes were to conquer & occupy their respective allotted territories
  - ▶ not one tribe succeeded
  - ▶ the descriptions of their failures show that they were reasonably successful in the hill country, but could not occupy the valleys (1.17-19)

# OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Chapter 2:** consequent fall into Canaanite Baal worship (2.1-3, 7-11)
- ▶ **Chapters 3-16:** cycles of oppression as God's punishment, followed by judges raised up by God upon the people's repentance
  - ▶ the foreign oppressors were not major national powers of the day, but peoples of the area of Palestine
  - ▶ Mesopotamians → Moabites → Canaanites → Midianites → Ammonites → Philistines

# OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Chapters 17-21:** Judges concludes with two illustrations of the depths of religious, moral and political depravity that generally characterized the period of the judges
- ▶ “Judges”
- ▶ The story of Ruth, set during this period, shows that some in Israel still regarded the Law and their relationship with Yahweh as important



Judge	Oppressor	Reference
Othniel	Mesopotamians	3.7-11
Ehud	Moabites	3.12-30
Shamgar	Philistines?	3.31
Deborah (with Barak)	Canaanites	4 – 5
Gideon	Midianites	6 – 8
Tola		10.1, 2
Jair		10.3-5
Jephthah	Ammonites	10.6 – 12.7
Ibzan		12.8-10
Elon		12.11, 12
Abdon		12.13-15
Samson	Philistines	13 – 16
Samuel	Philistines	1 Samuel

# EXCURSUS ON CANAANITE RELIGIONS

## EI

- ▶ Father of the gods
- ▶ Defeated by his son, Baal
- ▶ However, he continues to rule “at the mouth of the rivers,” giving permission for activities the other gods
- ▶ Father of 70 sons (gods)

# CANAANITE RELIGIONS

## Baal

- ▶ Storm god → god of heaven and earth → fertility god
- ▶ Chief god of Philistines (Sea Peoples)
- ▶ Common in religious myths of others
- ▶ Sometimes considered the son of Dagon
- ▶ “Baal” can be used as a synonym for “lord”

# CANAANITE RELIGIONS

## Mot

- ▶ Name means “death”
- ▶ The god of the underworld
- ▶ Defeated Baal, becoming king of gods
- ▶ Baal is subsequently delivered by Anath and subdues Mot
- ▶ This narrative is repeated, leading to the cycle of seasons (life/fertility ↔ death/dry season)

# FEMALE DEITIES

## Asherah

- ▶ wife of El
- ▶ a goddess of fertility
- ▶ associated with Jezebel (her prophets defeated at Mt. Carmel)

## Ashtoreth (Ashtaroth)

- ▶ a goddess of fertility
- ▶ frequently associated with Baal

## Anath

- ▶ a goddess of war and fertility
- ▶ sister & consort of Baal
- ▶ cult prostitution was part of worship of the female deities

# LOCAL DEITIES

## Molech (Milcom?)

- ▶ Ammon's chief god
- ▶ child sacrifice

## Chemosh

- ▶ Moab's chief god
- ▶ ~ also Ammonites (Judges 11.24)
- ▶ "Destroyer": human sacrifice (defeated enemies)

# THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

## CYCLES OF OPPRESSION AND DELIVERANCE



# PERIOD OF MESOPOTAMIAN OPPRESSION (JUDGES 3.8-11)

- ▶ Circa 1360 BC
- ▶ The only oppressors from distance away from Palestine
  - ▶ From Aram Naharaim (“Aram of the Two Rivers”)
- ▶ Oppressed Israel for eight years

## 1. Othniel

- ▶ Defeated the Mesopotamians
- ▶ Forty years of peace until his death
- ▶ Danite migration and the outrage in Gibeah over the Levite’s concubine also during this period (ch 17-21)



# PERIOD OF **MOABITE** OPPRESSION (JUDGES 3.12-30)

- ▶ Moabites (+/- Ammonites, Amalekites)
- ▶ circa 1300 BC
- ▶ Eglon, King of Moabites
- ▶ Oppress Israel for 18 years

## ▶ 2. Ehud

- ▶ Deliverance
- ▶ Eighty years of peace
- ▶ renewed activity of the Egyptians in this area
  - ▶ Seti I (1316 BC);  
Ramses II (1304 BC)

# INTERLUDE (JUDGES 3.31)

## 3. Shamgar

- ▶ struck down 600 Philistines with an ox goad
- ▶ “he also *saved* Israel”
  - ▶ he was not called a judge, but “*came* after him [Ehud]”
  - ▶ was he a judge?

# PERIOD OF CANAANITE OPPRESSION (JUDGES 4 – 5)

Jabin, King of Hazor

- ▶ north, in the land of Naphtali
- ▶ his forefather had been conquered by Joshua (Joshua 11)
- ▶ oppressed Israel for 20 years
- ▶ circa 1220 BC



# CANAANITE OPPRESSION

## Sisera

- ▶ the commander of Jabin's army
- ▶ from northern Palestine as his name would suggest
- ▶ 900 chariots of iron



Naphtali & Zebulun

# CANAANITE OPPRESSION

## 4a. Deborah

- ▶ only female judge
- ▶ only one to act as judge prior to delivering the people
- ▶ called a prophetess
- ▶ an Ephraimite
- ▶ from between Ramah and Bethel

## 4b. Barak

- ▶ summoned by Deborah
- ▶ from tribe of Naphtali
- ▶ he demanded that Deborah go with him
- ▶ assembled an army as commanded from Naphtali and Zebulun

# CANAANITE OPPRESSION

## Deliverance

- ▶ Sisera drawn to area of Mount Tabor
- ▶ utterly defeated
- ▶ chariots bogged down in overflowing Kishon River
- ▶ Sisera escaped
- ▶ Jael
- ▶ Forty years of peace



# PERIOD OF MIDIANITE OPPRESSION (JUDGES 6.1 – 8.35)

- ▶ Midianites, with Amalekites and “sons of the east” wreaked havoc on crops and livestock
- ▶ Circa 1180 BC
- ▶ God’s warning through a prophet (6.7ff)
  - ▶ Apparently, prophets were unusual during this period
  - ▶ Yet, recall Deborah as prophetess

# MIDIANITE OPPRESSION



## 5. Gideon's call (6.11 ff)

- ▶ Tribe of Manasseh (lived in Ophrah of Issachar)
- ▶ *Angel of Yahweh* came (11) . . . And *Yahweh* looked at him and said (14)
- ▶ Altar: “Yahweh Shalom”
- ▶ God's instructions



# MIDIANITE OPPRESSION

Gideon's first act of heroism


- ▶ Altars destroyed
- ▶ People's reaction
- ▶ Joash's response (6.31-32)
  - Gideon → Jerubaal ("let Baal contend")

# MIDIANITE OPPRESSION

Deliverance from the Midianites

- ▶ *Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali*
- ▶ 32,000 vs. 135,000
- ▶ Divine reassurance
- ▶ 32,000 → 10,000 → 300
- ▶ Additional reassurance

# MIDIANITE OPPRESSION

- The “battle”: nighttime surprise
  - Pursuit of the Midianites and Amalekites
  - Gideon's later years
    - People call on Gideon to be king
    - Makes an ephod
  - Forty years of peace
  - The story of Ruth probably took place during the time of Gideon's judgeship
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# INTERVAL OF ABIMELECH, TOLA AND JAIR (9.1 – 10.5)

Abimelech, son of Gideon

- ▶ Circa 1160
- ▶ He killed all but one of the sons
- ▶ Set himself up as renegade king & “reigned” three years from Shechem (his mother’s home)
- ▶ Killed by woman who dropped a millstone on his head

# TOLA AND JAIR (10.1-5)

The two were contemporaneous  
(circa 1140 BC)

## 6. Tola

- ▶ From Shamir of Ephraim
- ▶ Son of Issachar
- ▶ “arose to save Israel”
- ▶ “judged” for 23 years

## 7. Jair

- ▶ Gileadite
- ▶ 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys
- ▶ judged 22 years

# PERIOD OF AMMONITE AND PHILISTINE OPPRESSION (JUDGES 10.6 – 16.31)

Escalating apostasy → 18 years of  
oppression from Ammon and Philistia  
simultaneously (10.6ff)

- ▶ circa 1120 BC
- ▶ Judges does not have the whole story (10.12)
- ▶ word of LORD when they first repented (10.10,13-16)
- ▶ God could “bear the misery of Israel no longer”

# AMMONITE OPPRESSION

10.16 – 11.40

## Deliverance

### 8. Jephthah

- Gileadite
- Illegitimate birth
- cast out by half-siblings
- leader of roving band (cf. David)

- called on to defeat Ammonites
- agreed if he would be recognized as leader afterwards
- tried to reach settlement with Ammonite king
- enabled by the Spirit to conquer Ammonites

# JEPHTHAH

Jephthah's infamous vow (11.30-31)

- ▶ presentation to the LORD promised
- ▶ daughter was first to appear
- ▶ was she sacrificed?
- ▶ Jephthah does not appear to be one who would perform human sacrifice (none recorded until time of Ahaz)
- ▶ He would most likely to have thought a human would come out to meet him
- ▶ Daughter allowed to bewail “her virginity” (11.38-39)
- ▶ Israel commemorated her
- ▶ Jephthah judged Israel six years



# JEPHTHAH

Ephraimite complaint, again (12.1-7)

- ▶ Complained that Jephthah did not include them in the battle
- ▶ They fought against Jephthah and were defeated
- ▶ History of Ephraim

# IBZAN, ELON, ABDON (12.8-15)

## 9. Ibzan (12.8-10)

- ▶ Bethlehemite (**Judah**: southern)
- ▶ Judged Israel seven years

## 10. Elon (12.11, 12)

- ▶ From Aijalon (**Zebulunite**: northern)
- ▶ Judged ten years

## 11. Abdon (12.13-15)

- ▶ Of **Ephraim** (central)
- ▶ Judged for eight years

