

# Judges

Failure Under the Theocracy										
Incomplete Occupation		Deliverance by Judges							Need for Monarchy	
1:1–2:5		2:6–16:31							17–21	
Deterioration		Discipline							Depravity	
Causes of the Cycles		Curse of the Cycles							Conditions in the Cycles	
Living with the Canaanites		War with the Canaanites							Living Like the Canaanites	
Military Disobedience 1	Spiritual Disobedience 2:1-5	Intro 2:6-3:6	South 3:5-3:31	North 4:1-5:31	Central 6:1-10:2	East 10:3-12:7	North 12:8-12:15	West 13:1-16:31	Religious Depravity 17-18	Moral Depravity 19-21
Canaan										
c. 341 Years (1390-1049 BC)										

**Key Word:** Failure

**Key Verse:** “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit [what was right in his own eyes]” (Judges 21:25)

**Summary Statement:**

*Israel's failure under the theocracy due to faithless disobedience is contrasted with God's merciful care in disciplining and delivering Israel through judges to exhort submission to its new, divinely appointed kings in a righteous monarchy.*

**Applications:**

Rejecting God's lordship (incomplete obedience) plants the seeds for failure (1-2).

Following relative standards instead of God's absolute standards leads to cycles of sin (3-16).

Replacing God's wisdom with personal whims ultimately leads to idolatry (17-21).

# Judges

## Introduction

- I. **Title** The name Judges (שֹׁפְטִים *sop<sup>e</sup>tim*) refers to those who "act as law-giver, judge, governor" (BDB 1047b 1b). However, the book itself shows that the term applies not only to those who *maintain* justice and settle disputes, but also liberate or *deliver* the people first before ruling and administering justice (2:16, 18).

### II. Authorship

- A. External Evidence: The Talmud (Tractate *Baba Bathra* 14b) ascribes to Samuel the books of Judges, Ruth, and Samuel.
- B. Internal Evidence: The author is anonymous, but the Jewish tradition regarding Samuel's authorship makes good sense for several reasons:
1. The repeated phrase "in those days Israel had no king" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) places the writing between the beginning of Saul's reign and the divided monarchy, which makes the earliest possible date at 1043 BC when Saul became king.
  2. The fact that the Jebusites still inhabited Jerusalem when the book was penned (1:21) places the latest possible date of writing before 1004 BC when David conquered the city (2 Sam. 5:5-9).

While other evidence can be cited, these two factors alone place the writing during the time of Samuel when Israel had a king (#1 above) and that king was either Saul or David (#2 above). Although a contemporary of Samuel could have reported this history, the Jewish tradition and fact that Samuel was a writer (1 Sam. 10:25) provide strong evidence that he wrote the book.

### III. Circumstances

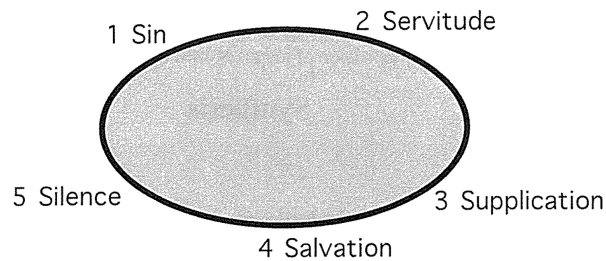
- A. Date: The information above proves that Judges was written between the coronation of Saul (1043 BC) and David's conquest of Jerusalem (1004 BC). Some critics feel this date is too early since a summation of the rules of each judge yields 410 years (too many years to fit between Joshua and Saul's times). However, due to overlapping judgeships, the events in the book span about 341 years (from about 1390 BC-1049 BC; cf. p. 96) and therefore end just before the time of the book's composition.
- B. Recipients: The early monarchy date reveals that the original readers of Judges constitute the Jews who recently experienced the change from a theocracy to a monarchy.
- C. Occasion: Judges records life in Israel during the final days of the theocracy when the nation officially operated under the rule of God. However, in reality Israel did not submit to his authority since "everyone did as he saw fit," or more literally, "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25; NASB). The oft-mentioned motto "Israel had no king" coupled with this anarchy statement shows that the book aimed to defend the monarchy for Israel to be united under the rule of a righteous king.

### IV. Characteristics

- A. In contrast to the *national* leadership of Moses and/or Joshua in the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, Judges is the OT first book to record leadership by judges who ruled Israelites on a *local* level.

B. Judges is similar to Numbers in that it also contrasts the faithful, patient love of God with the faithless, impatient ingratitude of Israel in cycles.

1. Pattern: Israel's faithlessness in a cyclical five-stage pattern from sin to servitude to supplication to salvation to silence repeats seven times:



2. The Seven Cycles of the Book of Judges (see chronology on p. 96):

Cycle	Oppressor	Location in Israel	Years of Oppression	Deliverer	Years of Peace
1 (3:7-11)	Mesopotamians	South	8	Othniel	40
2 (3:12-30)	Moabites	Southeast	18	Ehud	80
Parenthesis (3:31)	Philistines	Southwest	–	Shamgar	–
3 (chs. 4–5)	Canaanites	North	20	Deborah & Barak	40
4 (6:1–8:32)	Midianites	Northcentral (Ophrah)	7	Gideon	40
5 (8:33–9:57)	Abimelech	Central	3	Unnamed Woman	–
Parenthesis (10:1-2)	–	Central (Shamir)	–	Tola	23
Parenthesis (10:3-5)	–	East (Komon, Gilead)	–	Jair	22
6 (10:6–12:7)	Ammonites	East (Zaphon, Gilead)	18	Jephthah	6
Parenthesis (12:8-10)	–	Southeast (Bethlehem)	–	Ibzan	7
Parenthesis (12:11-12)	–	Northwest	–	Elon	10
Parenthesis (12:13-15)	–	Central (Pirathon)	–	Abdon	8
7 (chs. 13–16)	Philistines	Southwest (Zorah)	40	Samson	20
Totals			114		296

## Argument

The repeated phrase "in those days Israel had no king" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) provides the key to unlock the argument of Judges. The book chronicles the failure of the theocracy in the political and religious failure of the nation (1:1–2:5), the successive attempts of twelve judges to provide stability to the theocracy (2:6–16:31), and the complete spiritual and moral collapse of the nation (Judges 17–21). The four occurrences of the lack of a king (above) appear only in this third section of the book to show the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy explained in the first sixteen chapters. Throughout the account God's merciful care contrasts sharply with the disobedience of his wayward people. The provision of judges served as an act of God's compassion (2:16, 18).

## Synthesis

### Failure of the theocracy

<b>1:1–2:5</b>	<b>Incomplete occupation/obedience</b>
1	Military
2:1-5	Spiritual
<b>2:6–16:31</b>	<b>Deliverance by Judges</b>
2:6–3:6	Introduction
3:7–16:31	12 Judges, 7 cycles
3:7-11	Othniel
3:12-31	Ehud
3:31	Shamgar
4–5	Deborah/Barak
6:1–8:28	Gideon
8:29–9:57	Unnamed woman
10:1-2	Tola
10:3-5	Jair
10:6–12:7	Jephthah
12:8-10	Izban
12:11-12	Elon
12:13-15	Abdon
13–16	Samson
<b>17–21</b>	<b>Need for Monarchy</b>
17–18	Religious failure
17	Micah's priest
18	Danite migration
19–21	Moral failure
19	Levite concubine disaster
20	Benjamites almost destroyed
21	Wives provided
21:25	Monarchy needed

## Outline

### Summary Statement for the Book

**The reason Israelites failed under the theocracy and had to submit to their new kings was because they rejected God's lordship, followed God's deliverers instead of God's word, and replaced God's wisdom with the idolatry of personal whims.**

#### I. Israel's incomplete occupation of Canaan led to the need for judges (1:1–2:5).

- A. Israel's political-military failure to finish the conquest shows that they did not trust God to claim his promise of the entire land (Judges 1).

- B. Israel's religious-spiritual failure from the incomplete conquest shows that they would need human deliverers (2:1-5).

**II. Judges tried to stop Israel's cycles of sin to show that God's absolute standards were better than Israel's relative standards (2:6–16:31).**

- A. The introduction to the twelve judges previews God's repeated provision of judges to deliver Israel from the remaining nations even though Israel broke the covenant after Joshua's death (2:6–3:6).

- B. Israel's deliverance through twelve judges in a downward moral spiral in seven cycles shows God's mercy when they repent from idols so God cannot be blamed for the theocracy's failure (3:7–16:31).

1. **Cycle 1:** Othniel (Caleb's nephew) delivered southern Israel from the Mesopotamians as God's merciful provision after the nation turned from idols to the LORD (3:7-11).
  - a) Sin: Israel forgot the LORD and served the Baals and Asherahs (3:7).
  - b) Servitude: God punished the nation's idolatry for eight years through Cushan-Rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia (3:8).
  - c) Supplication: The nation cried out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemies (3:9a).
  - d) Salvation: Othniel (Caleb's nephew) delivered southern Israel from the Mesopotamians as God's merciful provision for the nation (3:9b-10).
  - e) Silence: The nation had peace for 40 years until Othniel died (3:11).
2. **Cycle 2:** Ehud delivered southeastern Israel from the Moabites by killing the fat King Eglon as God's merciful provision after the nation turned from idols to the LORD (3:12-30).
  - a) Sin: Israel again did evil before the LORD (3:12a).
  - b) Servitude: God punished the nation's disobedience for 18 years through King Eglon of Moab (3:12b-14).
  - c) Supplication: The nation cried out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemy (3:15a).
  - d) Salvation: Ehud delivered southeastern Israel from the Moabites by killing the fat King Eglon as God's merciful provision for the nation (3:15b-29).
  - e) Silence: The nation had peace for 80 years (3:30).
- Shamgar delivered southwestern Israel from the Philistines by killing six hundred men as God's merciful provision for the nation during the lifetime of Ehud (3:31).
3. **Cycle 3:** Deborah and Barak delivered northern Israel from the Canaanites and sang a song of victory as God's merciful provision after the nation turned from idols to the LORD (Judges 4–5).
  - a) Sin: Israel again does evil before the LORD (4:1).
  - b) Servitude: God punished the nation's disobedience for 20 years through Jabin, a king of Canaan (4:2-3a).

- c) Supplication: The nation cried out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemies (4:3b).
  - d) Salvation: Deborah and Barak delivered northern Israel from the Canaanites and sang a song of victory as God's merciful provision for the nation (4:4–5:31a).
  - e) Silence: The nation had peace for 40 years (5:31b).
4. **Cycle 4:** Gideon delivered north-central Israel from the Midianites as God's merciful provision after the nation turned from idols to the LORD (6:1–8:32).
- a) Sin: Israel again did evil before the LORD (6:1a).
  - b) Servitude: God punished the nation's disobedience through the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples who ravage the land for seven years (6:1b-6).
  - c) Supplication: The nation cried out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemies (6:7-10).
  - d) Salvation: Gideon delivered north-central Israel from the Midianites as God's merciful provision for the nation (6:11–8:27).
    - (1) The pre-incarnate Christ calls, tests, empowers, and encourages Gideon to lead Israel against the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples (6:11-40).
      - (a) God called Gideon to lead Israel (6:11-24).
      - (b) God tested Gideon whether he would obey by destroying Baal's altar (6:25-32).
      - (c) God empowered Gideon for service as the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples camped opposite Israel for war (6:33-35).
      - (d) God encouraged Gideon by confirming his call through a wet and dry fleece (6:36-40).
    - (2) Gideon delivered north-central Israel from the Midianites as God's merciful provision for Israelites by keeping his promise to protect them when they obey (7:1–8:21).
    - (3) Gideon judged the people when they made a golden ephod and worshipped it (8:22-27).
  - e) Silence: The nation experienced peace for 40 years (8:28-32).
5. **Cycle 5:** An unnamed woman delivered central Israel from Abimelech's vicious rule of fellow Israelites as God's merciful provision after the nation turned from idols to the LORD (8:33–9:57).
- a) Sin: Israel sinned against the LORD by prostituting itself before the Baals (8:33-35).
  - b) Servitude: The nation broke the covenant by oppression though one of its own—Gideon's son Abimelech—who murdered 69 of his half-brothers (9:1-49).
  - c) Supplication (Absent): Israel never asked God for deliverance from Abimelech.

- d) Salvation: Though not specifically designated a judge, an unnamed woman of Thebez delivered Israel from Abimelech by killing him with a millstone in Shechem (9:50-57).
  - e) Silence (Absent): Since no judge delivered Israel from Abimelech, no time period of peace is recorded and the account continues with Tola.
    - Tola delivered central Israel from unknown oppressors as God's merciful provision (10:1-2).
    - Jair led eastern Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation (10:3-5).
6. **Cycle 6:** Jephthah delivered eastern Israel from the Ammonites as God's merciful provision after the nation turned from idols to the LORD (10:6–12:7).
- a) Sin: Israel sinned against the LORD by serving the gods of many nations (10:6).
  - b) Servitude: The nation's breaking of the covenant in Gilead led to oppression by the Philistines and Ammonites for 18 years (10:7-9).
  - c) Supplication: The people cried out to God in repentance and rid themselves of idols (10:10-16).
  - d) Salvation: Jephthah delivered eastern Israel from Ammonites in God's mercy but fulfilled a foolish vow by executing his daughter and 42,000 Ephraimites for their jealousy (10:17–12:6).
    - \* For views on the fate of Jephthah's daughter, see page 183.
  - e) Silence: Jephthah ruled the land for six years (12:7).
    - Izban led southeastern Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation (12:8-10).
    - Elon led northwest Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation (12:11-12).
    - Abdon led central Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation (12:13-15).
7. **Cycle 7:** Samson delivered southwestern Israel from the Philistines as God's merciful provision for the nation even though it never turned from evil to God (Judges 13–16).
- a) Sin: Israel again did evil before the LORD (13:1a).
  - b) Servitude: God punished the nation's disobedience through the Philistines for 40 years (13:1b).
  - c) Supplication (Absent): Israel never cried out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemy.
  - d) Salvation: Samson delivered southwestern Israel from the Philistines as God's merciful provision for the nation (13:2–16:31).
    - (1) Samson's miraculous birth identifies him as God's merciful provision for Israel (13:2-25).
    - (2) Samson killed 30 Philistines after being deceived at his sinful wedding feast with a Philistine woman as God's agent for vengeance against the Philistines (Judges 14).

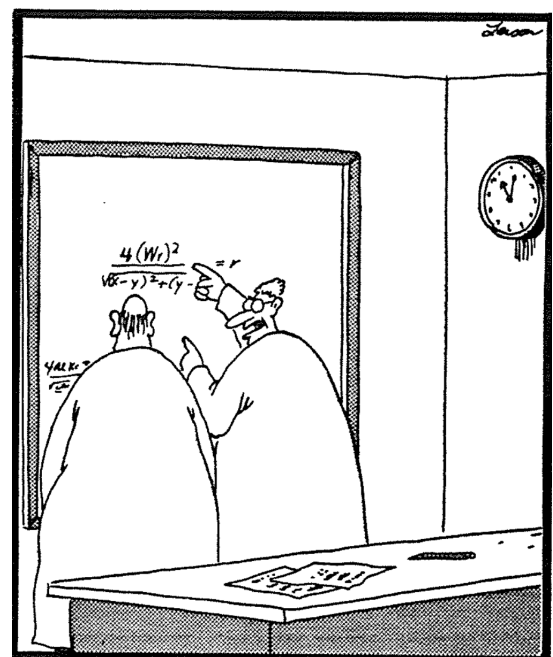
- (3) Samson burned Philistine fields for giving his wife to his wedding attendant and killed 1000 Philistines after the murder of her and her father as God's vengeance (Judges 15).
- (4) Samson's downfall by succumbing to Delilah's nagging leads to death with 3000 Philistines as his final act of vengeance on Israel's enemy (Judges 16).

e) Silence (Absent): Israel lacked a time of peace after Samson's 20-year rule.

### III. Israel's religious and moral failures showed they needed a righteous king instead of their relativism (Judges 17–21).

- A. Israel's religious failure in a Levite priest who blessed Dan's ungodly migration shows they needed a godly king (Judges 17–18).
  1. Micah's idolatry and hiring of a Levite as pagan priest exemplifies the personal religious apostasy in Israel to show that a righteous monarchy must replace the failed theocracy (Judges 17).
  2. The Levite's pagan blessing upon the godless Danite migration plan reveals the tribal religious apostasy in Israel to show that a righteous monarchy must replace the failed theocracy (Judges 18).
- B. Israel's moral failure in the Benjamite murder of a concubine and national retaliation shows they needed a godly king (Judges 19–21).
  1. Benjamites in Gibeah rape and kill a traveling Levite's concubine, whose body pieces are sent to each tribe in Israel to show the rampant immorality in the failed theocracy (Judges 19).
  2. The 400,000 warriors of the other eleven tribes destroy 26,100\* of the 26,700 Benjamites as well as all the women and children, and thus nearly destroy the entire tribe except 600 men who fled into the desert (Judges 20).
 

\* The 25,100 killed (20:35) exclude 1000 Benjamites killed on days 1 & 2 of the battle.
  3. Israelites preserve the Benjamite tribe by providing wives for the 600 living Benjamites by killing everyone in Jabesh Gilead except 400 virgins and stealing 200 virgins at a festival at Shiloh—both godless attempts to undo their wrong (21:1-24).
  4. The closing statement of relativism as the people's ethical standard reiterates the moral failure of the people to show the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy (21:25).



"Yes, yes, I know that, Sidney ... everybody knows that! ... But look: Four wrongs squared, minus two wrongs to the fourth power, divided by this formula, do make a right."



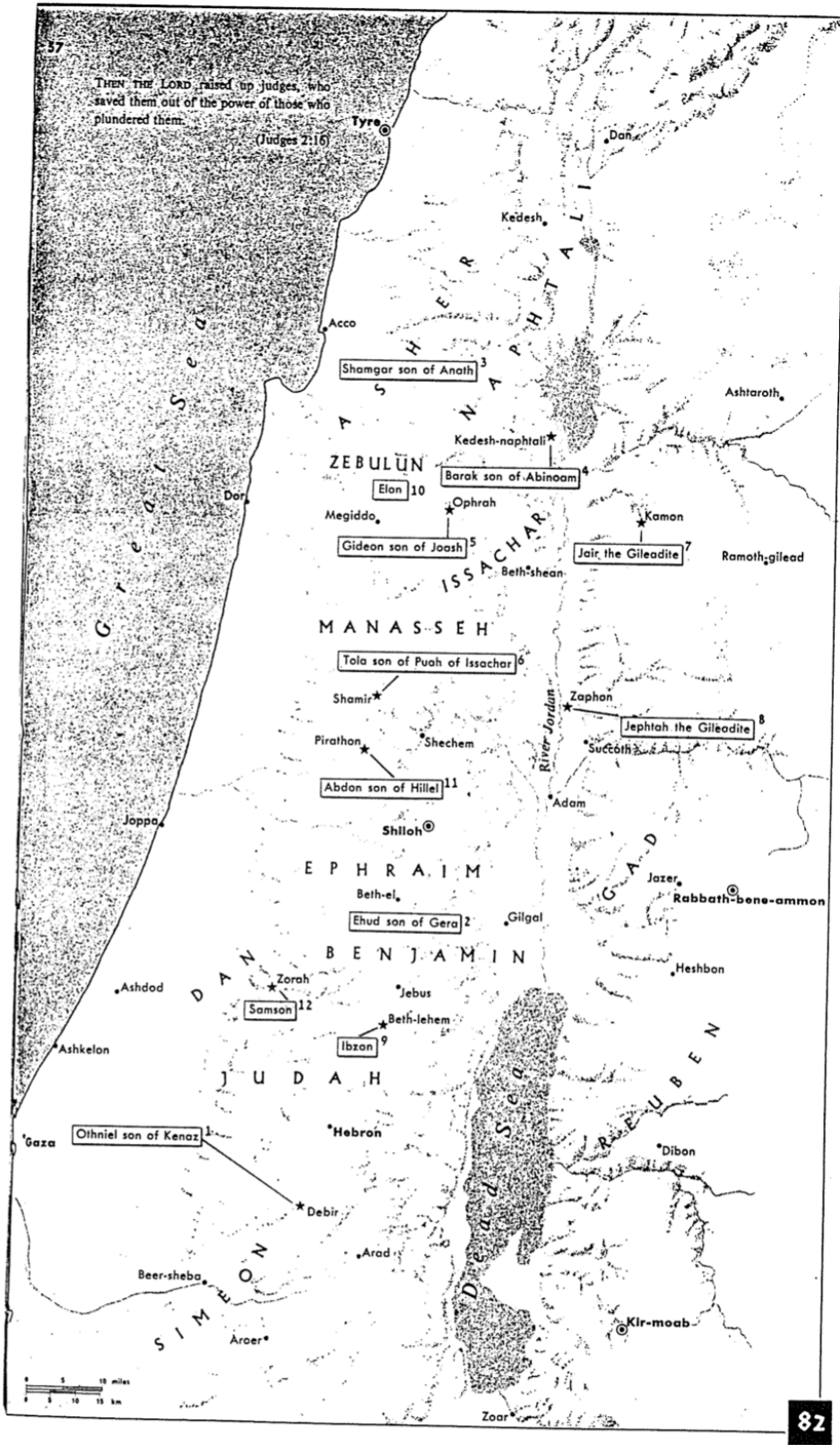
## Joshua and Judges Contrasted

Based on Thomas L. Constable, "A Theology of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (ed. Roy B. Zuck), 107, and *TTTB*, 61

	<b>Joshua</b>	<b>Judges</b>
<b><i>Leadership Transition</i></b>	Moses disciplined Joshua	Joshua disciplined No-one
<b><i>Tone</i></b>	Positive	Negative
<b><i>People's Faith to God</i></b>	Faithfulness	Faithlessness
<b><i>People's Obedience</i></b>	Obedience	Disobedience
<b><i>Battle Results</i></b>	Victory	Defeat
<b><i>Overall Results</i></b>	Success	Failure
<b><i>Growth</i></b>	Progress	Retrogression
<b><i>God's Attributes</i></b>	Hatred of Sin	Grace towards Sinners
<b><i>Idolatry</i></b>	Destroyed Idols	Worshipped Idols
<b><i>Community</i></b>	Unity	Tribal Hostility
<b><i>Response to the Law</i></b>	Regard	Abandonment (18:24-25)
<b><i>Values</i></b>	Transmitted	Didn't know the LORD (2:10)
<b><i>Authority for Living</i></b>	Absolute	Relative (17:6; 21:25)
<b><i>Morality</i></b>	Objective	Subjective
<b><i>Slavery</i></b>	Freedom	Bondage
<b><i>Servitude</i></b>	Served God (24:31)	Served Self (21:25)
<b><i>Attitude towards Sin</i></b>	Judged	Tolerated
<b><i>Theocracy</i></b>	Strengthened	Declined
<b><i>Pattern of Life</i></b>	Linear & Upward	Cycles leading Downward

# The Judges According to Their Tribes

Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*, 57



THE JUDGES ACCORDING TO THEIR TRIBES  
12TH-11TH CENTURIES B.C.



Decorated Philistine jug

BESIDES the great Judges of deliverance, the Book of Judges also mentions several "minor Judges" (Judg. 10:1-5; 12:8-15), who judged the people from their native cities. Their wealth is usually emphasized in the Scriptures, and no tradition concerning wars under their leadership has come down to us. The tribal league (or possibly two leagues) may have been led by Judges, the position passing from tribe to tribe in rotation. In times of peace, their authority was quite limited. Five "minor Judges" are given and it may be more than incidental that the total number of Judges mentioned in the Book of Judges is twelve, a Judge for each tribe. It is doubtful whether these were the only "minor Judges"; their names may have been chosen on the basis of their tribal affiliations, in order to provide each tribe with a Judge, even if not a deliverer.

# The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges

J. Paul Tanner, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (April-June 1992): 146-61 (1 of 2)

J. Paul Tanner, The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges 151

nearly every narrative block within the main body. These stereotyped formulae suggest that a narrator skillfully wove the accounts together for the purpose of making a theological point.

Within the main body of the book, seven major narrative blocks can be noted. Moreover, there are certain parallel features between these narratives so that the entire book reflects a carefully worked symmetrical pattern.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore this pattern has as its focal point the Gideon narrative in 6:1-8:32.<sup>11</sup>

- A Introduction, Part I (1:1-2:5)
- B Introduction, Part II (2:6-3:6)
- C Othniel Narrative (3:7-11)
- D Ehud Narrative (3:12-31)
- E Deborah-Barak Narrative (4:1-5:31)
- F Gideon Narrative (6:1-8:32)
- E Abimelech Narrative (8:33-10:5)
- D' Jephthah Narrative (10:6-12:15)
- C Samson Narrative (13:1-16:31)
- B' Epilogue, Part I (17:1-18:31)
- A' Epilogue, Part II (19:1-21:25)

This arrangement suggests that the Gideon narrative has a unique contribution to make to the theological development of the book. As the nation went from one cycle of discipline to the next, there was a continual deterioration. Also there was a shift in the "quality" of the judges themselves as the book advances. The Gideon narrative seems to mark a notable turning point.

## The Structure of the Gideon Narrative

An examination of the Gideon narrative reveals 20 episodes. They yield no significant evidence of inner-episodal textual patterning, but there is ample evidence of inter-episodal textual patterning that is, patterning based on relationships between the episodes.<sup>12</sup> The episodes tend to group together in clusters in which two or three

episodes share a bonding between them on the basis of a common motif, a repeated phrase, an inclusio, or some other grammatical or syntactical feature that tends to set them off from other episodes. This technique of *episode bonding* is found throughout the narrative, resulting in eight episode clusters. Furthermore, when these clusters are examined from an even broader perspective, a pairing of episode clusters can be discerned. The result is that for the four episodes in 6:11-32, an alternation pattern of the type A B A' B' is found. For the six episodes in 6:33-7:18, a concentric pattern of the type A B C C' B' A' is found. For the six episodes in 7:19-8:21, an alternation pattern of the type A B C A' B' C' is noted.

The result is an overall division of the Gideon narrative into five primary sections. Furthermore, though these sections are derived on the basis of textual patterning, they accord perfectly with the contents of the narrative. The first section (6:1-10) provides the introduction and setting before Gideon's debut, the second section (6:11-32) gives the commissioning of Gideon as deliverer of Israel, the third section (6:33-7:18) presents the preparation for the battle, the fourth section (7:19-8:21) recounts the defeat of the Midianite army, and the fifth section (8:22-32) records the conclusion to Gideon's life after the victory over Midian. Yet thematic parallels exist between the first and fifth sections and between the second and fourth sections, thus giving the whole narrative a symmetrical pattern:<sup>13</sup>

- A 6:1-10
- B 6:11-32
- C 6:33-7:18
- B' 7:19-8:21
- A' 8:22-32

Sections A and A' have thematic connections with one another, and both have a simple A B pattern. Sections B and B' have thematic connections, and both have an alternation pattern. The remaining section C has a unique structure of its own with a concentric arrangement. Thus the overall structural pattern for the Gideon narrative highlights the middle section, 6:33-7:18.

## Implications of the Structural Pattern of Judges

### THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE OF SYMMETRY

Examining the Book of Judges through the structural approach of textual patterning leads to two observations. The first is that the book as a whole is structured in a symmetrical inversion pattern with

<sup>10</sup> Credit goes to D. W. Gooding, "The Composition of the Book of Judges," *Eretz Israel* 16 (1982): 70-79, for the identification of this overall scheme (though this writer disagrees with the structure Gooding suggests for the Gideon narrative). For elaboration of the paralleling themes and motifs, see Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading*, JSOT Supplement Series 46 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> For a different concept of the structure of Judges, see Dale Sumner DeWitt, "The Jephthah Traditions: A Rhetorical and Literary Study in the Deuteronomistic History" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987). DeWitt locates the center of the book with the Jephthah narrative, partly by reason of the lists of "minor judges" that frame the Jephthah narrative. For a discussion and refutation of this position, see this writer's "Textual Patterning," 222-28.

<sup>12</sup> See Tanner, "Textual Patterning," 147-99, for a detailed analysis of Judges 6-8.

<sup>13</sup> For documentation, see Tanner, "Textual Patterning," 188-99.

**The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges**  
 J. Paul Tanner, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (April-June 1992): 146-61 (2 of 2)

tween these two extremes and represents the primary turning point from the "better" judges to the "weaker" ones.<sup>16</sup>

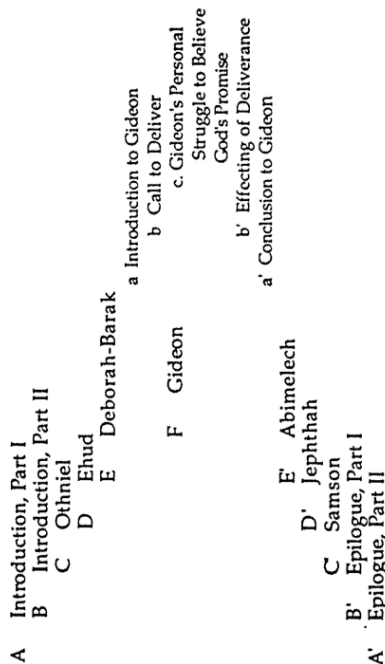
*The Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah-Barak narratives.* Othniel, the first judge, delivered Israel from Cushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia. This is recorded in a concise, straightforward manner (3:7-11). The text neither mentions nor hints at flaws in his character, and the passage seems to illustrate perfectly the divine principle for dealing with the theocratic nation that had been delineated in the second introduction in 2:11-23. Furthermore Othniel came on the scene already a hero figure, because he had been previously introduced in 1:11-15 as a relative of the valiant Caleb who captured Debir (also known as Kiriath-sepher). Of possible significance is the fact that Othniel arose from the tribe of Judah. The second judge, Ehud, was left-handed and a man of the tribe of Benjamin and is seen in a positive light. Barak was a valiant warrior and led Israel to a mighty triumph over the forces of Jabin, king of Canaan, but his record is slightly tainted by his hesitation to follow the divine orders given through Deborah, a mistake for which he was deprived of the honor of capturing the enemy commander in battle (4:8-9).

*The Gideon Narrative.* With Gideon, the accounts of the judges become more complex. Whereas the Othniel account is very brief, the next two (Ehud and Deborah-Barak) are progressively longer. In comparison, the Gideon narrative is significantly longer, and this remains the governing principle for the rest of Judges.<sup>17</sup> The Gideon narrative also reflects greater complexity in that there is more elaboration on him as a person and more negative notes in the account. At the same time, the Gideon narrative marks a shift in the deteriorating condition of the nation in its relationship to Yahweh, in that He dealt more firmly with the nation. Though the familiar refrain "the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" is given in 6:1, the Gideon narrative is not simply one more cycle of apostasy on par with the previous ones. The nation's apostasy had reached a lower point, and this is underscored by the additional fact that the Lord sent an unnamed prophet to rebuke them (6:7-10) before

<sup>16</sup> Exum has made a similar observation: "Although no neatly progressive pattern emerges, a turning-point occurs with Gideon. Gideon and the important figures after him reveal disturbing weaknesses, if not serious faults" ("The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges," 412). In chapter 7 of his dissertation, L. G. Stone has demonstrated how "compared with the Othniel account, the judges following him form a clear three-step decline from triumphant judges (3:12-5:31) through a transitional figure, Gideon (6:1-8:28), to the 'tragic' judges (10:6-16:31)" (see abstract of "From Tribal Confederation to Monarchic State: The Editorial Perspective of the Book of Judges" [PhD diss., Yale University, 1988]).

<sup>17</sup> The Abimelech account is somewhat of an exception to this trend, though the principle is still true if it is recognized that Abimelech is an extension in one sense of the Gideon narrative.

its focal point being the Gideon narrative in chapters 6-8. The second is that the Gideon narrative itself is also structured in a symmetrical inversion pattern, with its focal point being 6:33-7:18. Significantly the same type of structuring technique that characterizes the book as a whole characterizes the Gideon narrative itself. Associations between sections based on thematic parallels constitute the organizing principle for the symmetrical arrangements. The patterns underlying these two observations can be superimposed as follows:



GIDEON AS THE TURNING POINT IN JUDGES

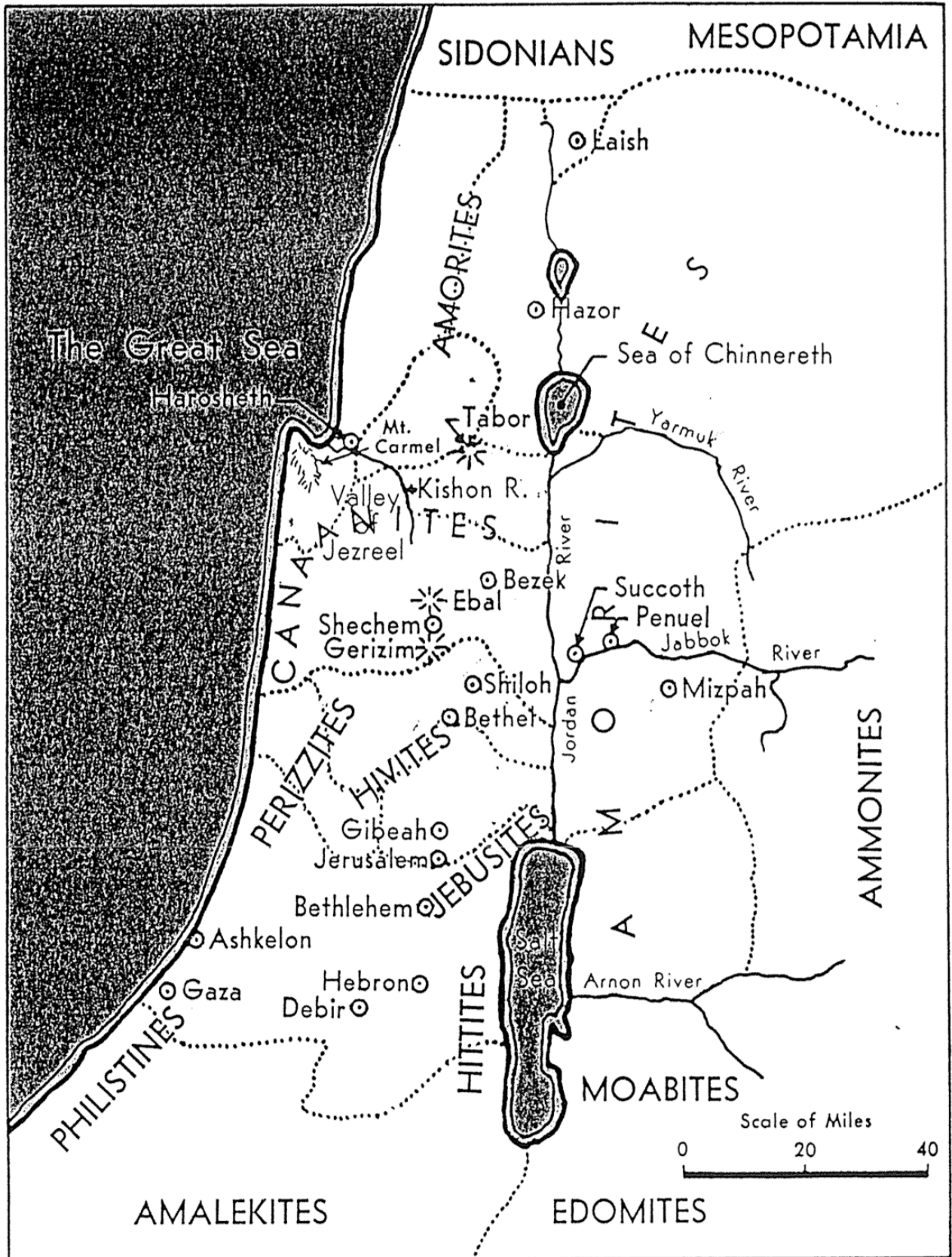
In relation to the book as a whole, Gideon receives attention as the focal point because he represents a significant shift in the "quality" of the judges that served Israel. A progressive deterioration begins with Othniel and continues through Samson.<sup>14</sup> Othniel was almost an idealized judge, and Samson was a debauched self-centered individual. God used each judge, whether strong or weak, to accomplish His sovereign will and effect deliverance for the theocratic nation.<sup>15</sup> Gideon, on the other hand, stands somewhere be-

<sup>14</sup> Jobling has also noticed that judgeship initially appears positive but then becomes more and more negative. "The section begins with the judge-system in place and working (Othniel). Then, and with increasing pervasiveness, problems with the system are permitted to appear: rule by the judges fails to conform to expectations" (*The Sense of Biblical Narratives: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible II*, 60). Jobling then lists four evidences of this negative trend. J. Cheryl Exum also observes that all the judges except Othniel make for unlikely heroes and that some of these leaders exhibit highly questionable behavior ("The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 [July 1990]: 412). Cf. Webb, *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading*, 157-58, 170-71.

<sup>15</sup> Abimelech is obviously an exception in that he did not deliver the Israelites from a foreign power. Yet as a leader, he demonstrates the dangers of dynastic kingship when power is placed in the hands of an ungodly individual.

### Enemies in Canaan During the Judges

Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, 155



# Five Cities of the Philistines and Gideon's Battles

The Bible Visual Resource Book, 49

## Judges

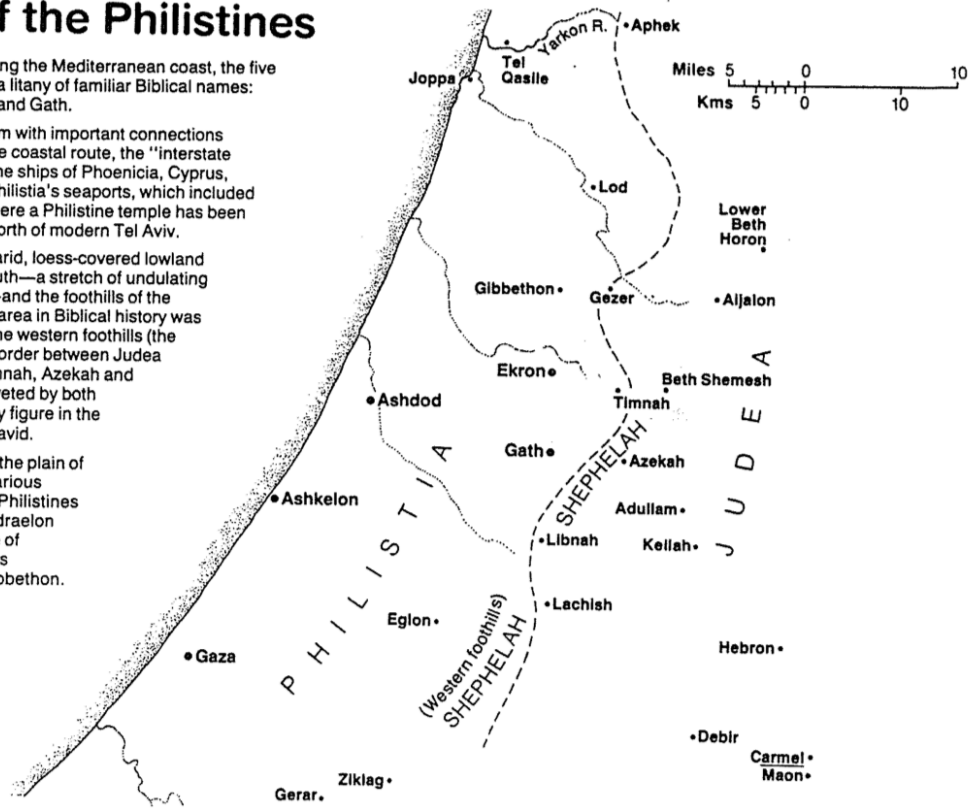
### Five Cities of the Philistines

Like a string of opulent pearls along the Mediterranean coast, the five cities of the Philistines comprise a litany of familiar Biblical names: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath.

Each was a commercial emporium with important connections reaching as far as Egypt along the coastal route, the "interstate highway" of the ancient world. The ships of Phoenicia, Cyprus, Crete and the Aegean called at Philistia's seaports, which included a site today called Tell Qasile, where a Philistine temple has been found, on the Yarkon River just north of modern Tel Aviv.

The Philistine plain itself was an arid, loess-covered lowland bordering on the desert to the south—a stretch of undulating sand dunes adjacent to the sea—and the foothills of the Judahite plateau on the east. No area in Biblical history was more frequently contested than the western foothills (the Shephelah region), lying on the border between Judea and Philistia. Beth Shemesh, Timnah, Azekah and Ziklag were among the towns coveted by both Israelites and Philistines, and they figure in the stories of Samson, Goliath and David.

The area to the north of Philistia, the plain of Sharon, was also contested at various periods: During Saul's reign the Philistines even held Beth Shan and the Esdraelon valley. Later, from about the time of Baasha on, a long border war was conducted by the Israelites at Gibbethon. Originally a part of Judah's tribal allotment, the coastal area was never totally wrested away from the Philistines who may have begun their occupation as early as the time of Abraham.



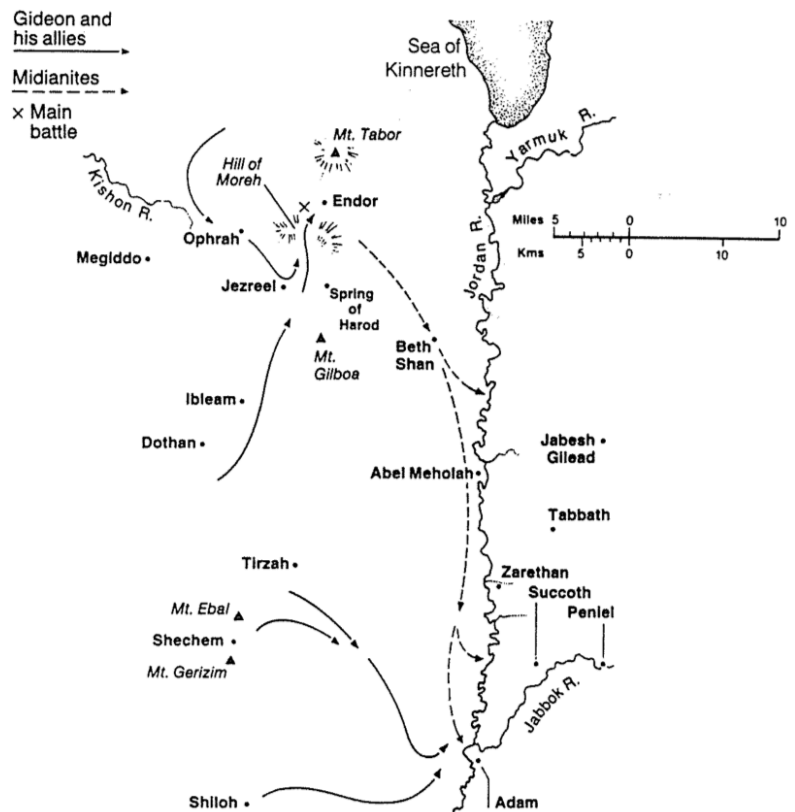
### Gideon's Battles

The story of Gideon begins with a graphic portrayal of one of the most striking facts of life in the Fertile Crescent: the periodic migration of nomadic people from the Aramean desert into the settled areas of Palestine. Each spring the tents of the *bedouin* herdsmen appear overnight almost as if by magic, scattered on the hills and fields of the farming districts. Conflict between these two ways of life (herdsmen and farmers) was inevitable.

In the Biblical period, the vast numbers and warlike practice of the herdsmen reduced the village people to near vassalage. Gideon's answer was twofold: (1) religious reform, starting with his own family; and (2) military action, based on a coalition of northern Israelite tribes. The location of Gideon's hometown, "Ophrah of the Abiezrites," is not known with certainty, but probably was ancient Aper (modern Afula) in the Valley of Jezreel.

The battle at the spring of Harod is justly celebrated for its strategic brilliance. Denied the use of the only local water source, the Midianites camped in the valley and fell victim to the small band of Israelites, who attacked them from the heights of the hill of Moreh.

The main battle took place north of the hill near the village of Endor at the foot of Mount Tabor. Fleeing by way of the Jordan Valley, the Midianites were trapped when the Ephraimites seized the fords of the Jordan from below Beth Shan to Beth Barah near Adam.



## Views on Jephthah's Daughter (Judg. 12)

John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OT*, 2d ed., 104

DEDICATED	SACRIFICED
1. Being a judge, Jephthah must have been God-fearing, so he would not have violated Law	<b>1. Promise of a simple animal sacrifice would hardly be a convincing vow in this situation</b>
<b>2. The Spirit of the Lord comes on Jephthah and he is mentioned in Heb. 11 so he would not have violated Law</b>	2. The mention of something coming out of the house implies that human sacrifice was intended
3. Daughter bewails her virginity and 11:39 makes comment that "she knew not a man"	<b>3. The burnt offering ('olah) involves death in all 286 O.T. occurrences</b>
<b>4. Evidence of women in service of tabernacle—Ex. 38:8; I Sam. 2:22</b>	4. If it was frequent practice to have women enter tabernacle service, why the commemoration?
5. Human sacrifice would have been clearly understood as a violation of God's Law, and public opinion would have disallowed it even if Jephthah wanted to proceed	<b>5. Human sacrifice is seen as a last ditch effort in battle (2 Kings 3:27)</b>
<b>6. Lev. 27:1-8 allows for redemption of humans vowed for sacrifice</b>	6. The conjunction in 11:31 is one of apposition: "will be the Lord's, that is I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering"
7. The conjunction in 11:31 should be rendered or, showing Jephthah considered various situations	<b>7. There is little evidence of Jephthah's spirituality or knowledge of the Law</b>

## What is Sin?

Huang Sabin, Singapore Bible College (based on *Moody Monthly*)

<b>WHAT IS SIN?</b>	
<b>Man calls it ...</b>	<b>God calls it ....</b>
an accident	an abomination
a blunder	a blindness
a defect	a disease
a chance	a choice
an error	an enmity
a fascination	a fatality
an infirmity	an iniquity
a luxury	a leprosy
liberty	lawlessness
a trifle	a tragedy
a mistake	a madness
a weakness	a willfulness

*Moody Monthly 1980*



## Judges vs. Kings

Adapted and Expanded much from Paul Benware, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 88

While God used both judges and kings to lead Israel in their respective time periods, several differences distinguish these two groups of leaders.

	<b>Judges</b>	<b>Kings</b>
<b>Period</b>	Theocracy	Monarchy
<b>Dates</b>	1373-1020 BC	1043-586 BC
<b>Length</b>	353 years	457 years
<b>Persons</b>	Othniel to Samuel (13 men, 2 women)	Saul to Zedekiah (39 kings, 1 queen)
<b>Power</b>	Limited (could not tax people or keep standing army)	Extensive (taxed subjects and kept standing armies)
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Geographically small (typically over a few tribes of Israel)	Ruled over all the land (united kingdom) or half of it (divided kingdom)
<b>Heredity</b>	Came from various tribes (p. 180a)	Came from various tribes in Israel, but Judah had descendants of David only
<b>Succession</b>	No lineage from father to son, gaps between judges during periods of oppression when no judge ruled	Continuous succession, generally from father to son (Judah, p. 237) though Israel had nine dynasties (p. 236)
<b>Reason Needed</b>	Because Israel refused to live in obedience under the theocracy	Because Israel needed a model of godliness due to rejecting God as king
<b>Basic Responsibility</b>	To deliver Israel from their oppressors	To exemplify God's rule to the Israelites

## OT Book Word Search

Adapted from Heng Siang Hoon (SBC student)

Be a judge yourself! Now that you are half way through this volume, it's time to look back and look ahead at the whole OT. Among the mass of letters below is the name of each of the Old Testament books. Can find all 39 books? They are hidden in every direction.

D U G J H V E S W K M Y V E J K B F D K  
 E L D R L A M E N T A T I O N S Z I T Q  
 C G E N E S I S 2 E J O E L E D 2 S E U  
 C Z U V R H Y O T S O E J O H E Z A Z T  
 L H T G I K T 2 J O B J O E E N E I R H  
 E A E I X T A S W N A H U M M I C A H P  
 S I R H E X I S E G D U J R I M H H P R  
 I M O C Q W R C Z O I W U M A L A A S O  
 A E N A U C H R U F A T A A H 2 R L A V  
 S R O L J O N A H S H A G G A Z I E L E  
 T E M A M 1 C H R O N I C L E S A I M R  
 E J Y M I C A Z S L S G N I K 2 H K S B  
 S W S U D O X E R O J O M N U M B E R S  
 H A G G A I A S A M O S O M 1 C L Z E E  
 K U K K A B A H J O S H U A K S E E M G  
 F O A V Z E P H A N I A H 2 I Z U E N D  
 Q W N H C O G H G G A V A B N A M N O U  
 Z E 1 S A M U E L 2 I N G S G C A E R J  
 Y B N M H 2 M D A N I E L K S H S G H E  
 A C G S I S S E L C I N O R H C 2 I C D