

# JUDGES – An Overview

About 390 years covered, in the land of Canaan, now belonging to Israel.

1. Additional victories of Israel after Joshua's death, then disobedience to the Lord's commands.  
(Judges chapter 1, or c1)
2. Israel weeps after an angel's visit. A flashback to Joshua's day. Israel sins again. God's mercy in sending judges to lead, and the cycles of sin, remorse, judges, and freedom. (c2)
3. The nations left to prove Israel. First judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. (c3)
4. A female judge: Deborah. (c4-5)
5. An humble judge: Gideon (c6-8)
6. A self-appointed wicked king: Abimelech (c9).
7. Judges Tola, and Jair, and the disobedience of Israel brings oppression of the Ammonites. (c10)
8. An outcast judge: Jephthah, then judges Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (c11-12)
9. A strong judge: Samson (c13-16)
10. The conquest of the Zidonian town of Laish, renamed Dan, and the establishment of idolatry in Dan. (c17-18)
11. The terrible murder and dismemberment of a Levite's concubine (c19).
12. Attempted prosecution of the murderers from the tribe of Benjamin brings civil war in Israel. (c20)
13. Ungodly steps taken to restore the tribe of Benjamin (c21)

# Victories and Failures After Joshua's Death (chapter 1)

- The children of Israel took Jerusalem in the days of obedience (see verse 8) and lost it again in the days of disobedience (verse 21).
- Judah and Simeon took Hebron and Debir.
- Caleb's nephew, Othniel, was the conqueror of Debir, and thus won Caleb's daughter Achsah, as his wife. Achsah asked her father for water to go with the land he granted to her and her husband, and Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.



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- The children of Israel did not obey God to drive out some Canaanites, but kept them to pay tribute, and God was displeased.
- Israel thus failed in many subsequent efforts to take further land and occupy it.

# Disobedience of Israel, Chastisement from God (chapter 2)

- An angel of God came from Gilgal to Bochim to remind Israel of God's faithfulness, and to remind them they were not to make agreements with the Canaanites, which they had done. The people wept, and sacrificed.
- The Bible gives a memory of the time of Joshua in verses 6-9, and how good it was.
- In verse 10, the Bible says that the generation after Joshua's generation did not know of God's mighty works for Israel, and they forsook the Lord, and served false gods.
- God therefore sold the children of Israel for a time into the hand of their enemies round about them, and they would suffer in oppression, paying tribute to such enemies.
- Then, in mercy, God would raise them up a leader, called a Judge, who would deliver them from the oppression of their enemies, and often lead them to serve God again.
- After the judge was dead, Israel would turn back to disobedience and idols.
- They would again suffer defeat and oppression, until God had mercy and sent another judge.
- God therefore left many enemy nations around Israel not subdued, in order that He might prove Israel, and teach them war, so that Israel would feel their need of God.



# List of Judges (Judges 3 - I Samuel 7:2)

Name	Tribe	Enemy	Judge Yrs	Bad Yrs	Comments
Othniel	Judah	Mesopotamia	40	18	Caleb's son-in-law
Ehud	Benjamin	Moab	80	20	Left-Handed
Shamgar	?	Philistines	?	?	Slew 600 men with ox goad
Deborah	Ephraim	Hazor	40	7	w/Gen. Barak; Jael slew Sisera
Gideon	Manasseh	Midianites	40	3	Son Abimelech bad, civil war
Tola	Issachar	?	23	?	Dwelt in Mt. Ephraim
Jair	Manasseh	?	22	?	Had 30 sons
Jephthah	Manasseh	Ammonites	6	?	Made bad vow; fought civil war
Ibzan	Judah	?	7	?	30 sons & daughters-in-law
Elon	Zebulun	?	10	?	Buried in Aijalon
Abdon	Ephraim	?	8	40	40 sons and 30 nephews
Samson	Dan	Philistines	20	?	A Nazarite from birth
Eli	Levi	Philistines	40	?	Written in I Samuel, not Judges
Samuel	Levi	Philistines	20	?	Written in I Samuel, not Judges

# Othniel (chapter 3)

- God left these nations to prove Israel by war: Philistines, Sidonians, Hivites, Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, and Jebusites.
- The children of Israel forgot the Lord their God, and began to serve Baalim, and the groves.
- God gave them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia (near Iraq), who they had to serve for 8 years.
- Then they cried out unto the Lord their God.
- God raised up a judge: Othniel, the son of Kenaz. Othniel was Caleb's nephew and son-in-law.
- Othniel prevailed over Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia, and Israel had 40 years of rest.
- Othniel died.



# Ehud (chapter 3)

- The children of Israel did evil again, displeasing the Lord.
- The Lord gave them into the hand of Eglon, king of the Moabites (near Jordan), with the children of Ammon and the Amalekites, and oppressed the Israelites for 18 years.
- The children of Israel cried out to the Lord, who raised up a judge named Ehud, who was a left-handed Benjamite.
- Ehud made a dagger, which he strapped to his right thigh, and took a present to Eglon.
- After giving the present, Ehud said he had a secret errand to Eglon.
- Eglon took Ehud into his parlor alone, and Ehud said he had a message from God to Eglon, and drew forth his dagger and stabbed the king in his belly.
- Ehud then went out from the parlor and locked the doors as he escaped.
- By the time Eglon's servants discovered he was dead, Ehud blew a trumpet, and led the Israelites to battle. They won, and the land had rest for 80 years.





## Deborah (chapters 4-5)



- The children of Israel did evil after Ehud died.
- God gave them into the hand of Jabin, king of Hazor (near Syria), who had a famous general named Sisera and had many chariots of war, who oppressed the Israelites for 20 years.
- God raised up a woman prophet named Deborah to judge Israel.
- Deborah was married to a man name Lapidoth, and Israel came to her home for judgment.
- Deborah, by God's word, directed Barak the son of Abinoam to take 10,000 men of Naphtali and Zebulun to Mt. Tabor, and that God would draw Sisera and his army to the river Kishon to fight.
- Barak said he would obey if Deborah would go with him, but not otherwise. Deborah said she would go, but that the honor of the victory would go to a woman, and not to him.
- They went forth, and Sisera fought and lost.

- His army destroyed, Sisera fled, and hid in the tent of a woman named Jael.
- When Sisera fell asleep, Jael drove a nail through his temples, and revealed this to Barak.
- Deborah and Barak sang a song of victory.
- The children of Israel had rest for 40 years.

# Gideon (chapters 6-7)



- Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord again, and he sold them into the hand of the Midianites (near Arabia) and Amalekites for 7 years of oppression and poverty.
- The Lord sent a prophet to rebuke Israel.
- Then the Lord sent an angel to Gideon, who said he was very small.
- Gideon offered a sacrifice to God. God told him to destroy the grove of Baal.
- Gideon obeyed, and his own people wanted to kill him! But his dad spoke up for him, and said Baal should plead for himself. Gideon was called “Jerubaal” thereafter.
- The forces of Midian and Amalek encamped in Israel, and the Spirit of God came upon Gideon, who blew a trumpet to assemble the Israelites.
- Gideon asked God to bring dew upon a fleece with dry ground around one morning, and a dry fleece with wet ground around the next, and God gave him both signs.
- The men of Israel gathered together a force of 32,000 men –still far fewer than the enemy.
- God told Gideon his men were too many, for the Israelites would take credit for any victory themselves. Dismissing the fearful, the army dropped to 10,000 men.
- God said that was still too many, and the army was to go to the water to drink. Those that knelt down to drink were many, but 300 men took up the water in their hand and lapped it like a dog. God told Gideon that those 300 were his army to go into battle.



## Gideon (chapters 7-8)



- Gideon's 300 came unto a huge multitude of Midianites and Amalekites.
- God encouraged Gideon by having him sneak down to the enemy camp and hear a soldier telling a dream about Gideon's victory.
- Gideon placed his men in 3 groups around the enemy camp with lamps covered by pitchers, and trumpets.
- At Gideon's signal, his men broke their pitchers, shone their lamps, and blew their trumpets.
- The enemy went into complete chaos and slew one another in their fear and confusion.
- As the enemy fled, tribes of Israel began to pursue them, and were victorious.
- The men of Ephraim were angry at Gideon that they were not asked to fight, but Gideon complimented them and pacified them.
- As Gideon pursued the enemy, he asked for food from the Israelite towns of Succoth and Penuel, and they refused him. He said he would return to discipline them.
- Gideon caught up with the remainder of the enemy army and had a great victory over them, and slew their kings. He returned to discipline the greedy towns who refused help.
- The men of Israel tried to anoint Gideon as king, but Gideon refused the crown.
- Gideon did ask for the gold earrings of the enemy. With these, he made a golden ephod, which became a snare to Gideon and his family. Gideon had many wives and 70 sons.
- Israel had 40 years peace, but then forgot God, and were not kind to Gideon's family.

# Abimelech, the Fratricide King (chapters 9)



- Gideon had 70 sons, including an illegitimate one named Abimelech.
- The people of Israel turned again to Baal.
- Abimelech persuaded the men of his hometown, Shechem, to give him money to gain power.
- With the money, he hired mercenaries and slew all of his brothers, except for one, Jotham, who escaped the slaughter.
- Jotham got into a place where he could safely address Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and spoke “the parable of the trees”, and bade Abimelech and the men turn on one another.
- The words of Jotham, the parable of the trees, came to pass after 3 years of his reign.
- God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and they began to act like bandits rather than loyal subjects.
- The men of Shechem began to follow a man named Gaal. Abimelech launched a military campaign against Shechem, fought against Gaal in the field, and won.
- Gaal and the people of Shechem fled into the city, and went up into a larger tower.
- Abimelech told his men to cut branches and set them near the tower. They lit them on fire, and burned about 1000 people in the tower to conquer the city.
- Abimelech went to subdue the town of Thebez, and drew near their tower to burn it.
- A woman tossed out a millstone from the tower, and it hit Abimelech, who died.

# Jephthah, the Outcast (chapters 10-12)



- Tola, son of Puah, of the tribe of Isaachar, judged Israel for 23 years.
- Jair, of Gilead, judged Israel 22 years.
- The children of Israel turned from God and began to serve many gods of other lands.
- God delivered them into the hands of the Philistines, and the Ammonites.
- The Ammonites oppressed the tribes east of Jordan for 18 years, and gathered an army and marched over Jordan to take more land.
- The children of Israel cried unto God, who rebuked them. Then they put away their idols and cried to God again.
- God raised up Jephthah, an outcast illegitimate son of Gilead, and the Gileadites agreed to follow him.

- Jephthah wrote the king of Ammon to defend the cause of Israel, but was rejected.
- The Spirit of God came upon him, and he led his men forth and defeated the Ammonites.
- He had sworn to offer the first creature that came out his door, but it was his daughter.
- The men of Ephraim rose up against him, jealous of his victory without them.
- They began a civil war between Ephraim and Manasseh, and 42,000 Israelites died.



# Samson, the Nazarite (chapters 13-14)

- The children of Israel did evil against the Lord again, and the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years.
- Manoah was from the tribe of Dan, and his wife was barren.
- An angel of the Lord (maybe the Lord Himself) visited, and told them that she should not drink alcohol or eat anything unclean, for she would bear a son who would be a Nazarite unto the Lord from birth, and begin to deliver Israel.
- Samson was born a Nazarite, who must not touch dead bodies, consume anything of the vine, nor cut his hair. God's Spirit moved him.
- Samson fell in love with a Philistine girl.
- On the way to see her, he slew a lion, and later took honey from the lion's carcass.
- At an engagement party, Samson posed a wager with a riddle to the Philistine men: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness".
- They could not solve it, but forced Samson's fiancée to get the answer out of him.
- She did, and so he owed the men 30 sheets and 30 suits of clothes.
- In anger, Samson slew 30 Philistines, and used their clothes to pay the debt.
- Samson's fiancée's father gave her to another man to marry.





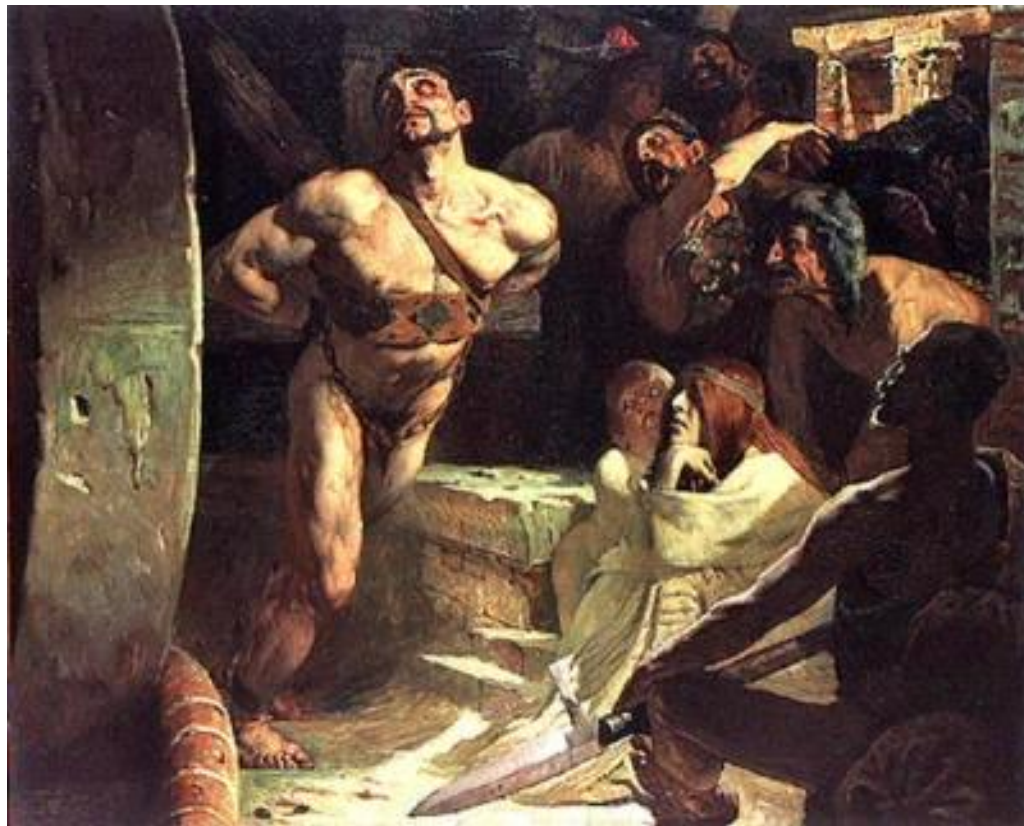
# Samson at War (chapter 15)

- Samson went again to visit his wife, but found that her father had given her to another man.
- Angry at how the Philistines had treated him, Samson tied torches to the tails of pairs of foxes, and released them in the standing corn of the Philistines.
- The Philistines burned up Samson's wife and father-in-law.
- Samson then killed many of the Philistines, and intended to end his battle there.
- He went to live on a mountaintop, but the Philistine army mobilized against Judah.
- Three thousand men of Judah came to Samson to deliver him to the Philistines.
- Samson said if they would not attack him themselves, he would go peacefully.
- They bound him with cords, and took him to where the Philistines were encamped.
- When Samson got among the Philistines, they shouted against him, and he burst his cords, took up the jawbone of an ass, and slew 1000 Philistines soldiers with it.
- After this victory, Samson was very faint with thirst, and concerned about dying for lack of water. He prayed to God, who filled the hollow of the jawbone with water, and Samson drank, and was sustained.
- Samson became the judge of Israel, and led them for 20 years.



# Samson's Last Days (Chapter 16)

- Samson visited a harlot in the Philistine city of Gaza, and the Philistines discovered it, and lay wait around the city all night to catch him.
- In the morning, Samson tore the city gate off its posts, and escaped the city carrying their door.
- Samson then loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, named Delilah.
- The Philistine lords promised her much silver if she could tell them the secret of Samson's great strength.
- She tried several times, but Samson lied to her, and each attempt to capture him was defeated by strength.
- Finally, he told her that he was a Nazarite, and his uncut hair was what gave him strength.
- She caused him to sleep, and brought in someone to cut his hair. He was unaware.
- The Philistines captured him, and bored out his eyes. They chained him to a millstone, where they made him push the millstone to grind grain into meal. His hair grew.
- Later, they brought him to a huge building where great crowds worshipped Dagon. He was led forth so they could make fun of him and celebrate his defeat before this false god.
- Samson prayed for one more return of strength. He stood between the main support pillars of the building, and pushed them apart. He died, but slew a vast multitude.



# Micah and the City of Dan (chapters 17-18)



- Micah, a man of mount Ephraim, stole 1100 shekels of silver from his own mother, but later confessed the theft to her and restored them.
- She was glad, and used 200 shekels to make false gods for him.
- Micah set up a house of false gods, and named his son as a priest.
- A young Levite came from Bethlehem to mount Ephraim, and visited in the house of Micah.
- When Micah found he was a Levite, he offered him an annual salary and clothes and food to serve as his priest unto the false gods.
- The young man agreed, and Micah thought God would bless him for having a Levite as a priest.
- The tribe of Dan was looking for more land, and sent five spies northward to find some.
- On their way, they came to the house of Micah, and recognized the young Levite, who told them of the career he had in that house.

- They asked him to check with God about their trip, and he said it would go well
- The spies of the tribe of Dan went northward to the city of Laish, which was a easy-to-take city in the style of Zidon, without the protection of Zidon.
- They went back south to the tribe of Dan, who decided to take Laish with 600 soldiers.
- As they went north to conquer, they came to Micah's house, and took the silver idols.
- The young Levite decided being a priest to a whole tribe was better than to just one family.
- Micah protested, but the soldiers threatened his life.
- The soldiers put Laish to the sword, renamed the city "Dan" and set up the false gods.

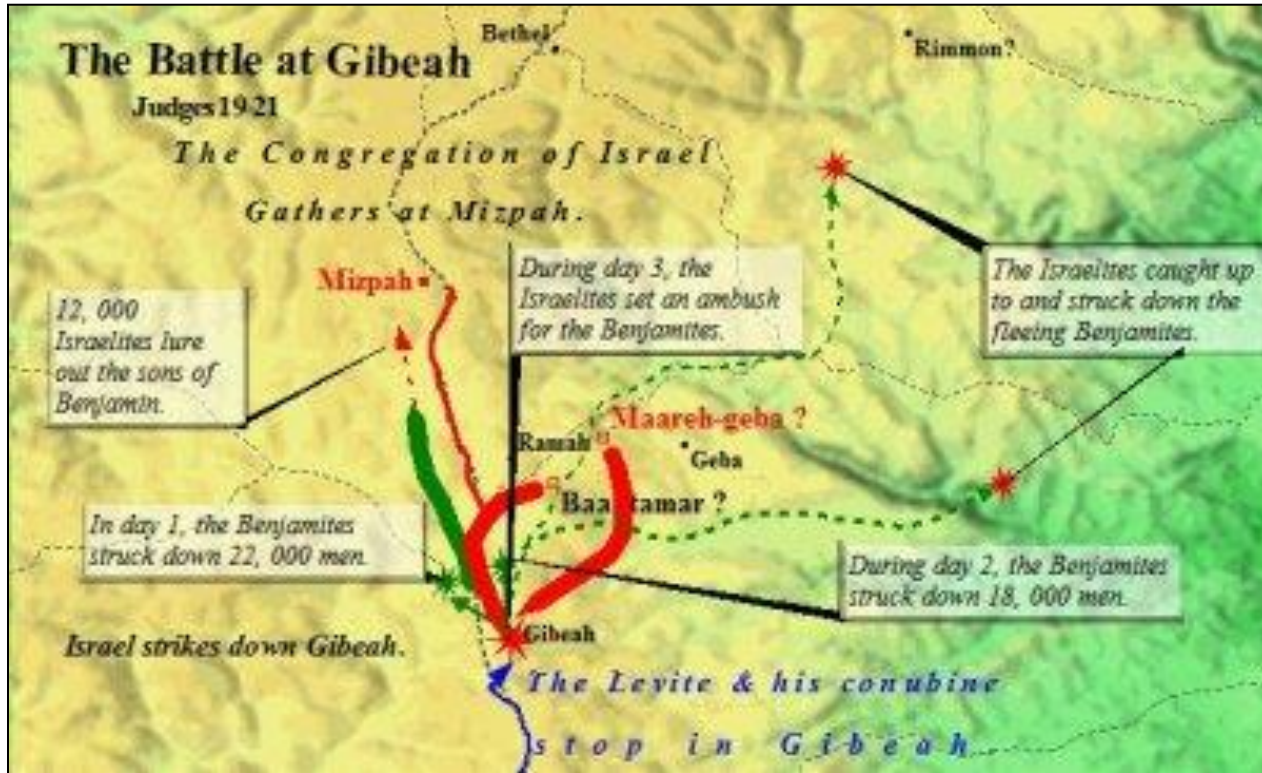
# The Murder of a Concubine (chapter 19-20)

- In the days of the judges, a Levite of mount Ephraim took a concubine (a live-in girlfriend) from Bethlehem, but she ran away to her father's house.
- The Levite went to Bethlehem and made up.
- Her father kept the Levite as company several days, and they finally set off for home late in the day.
- The Levite's servant wanted them to stay in Jerusalem, but the Levite pressed on to Gibeah.
- In Gibeah, a city of Benjamin, only one old working man would keep them for the night.
- As they settled to rest, some men of Gibeah demanded they come out to be abused.
- The Levite took his concubine and gave them to her, and they abused her all night.
- In the morning, she was on the doorstep, and he told her to get up, but she was dead.
- He took her body home on a donkey, and then cut it up into twelve pieces, and sent a piece to each tribe of Israel to notify them of the murder.
- The Israelites were angered, and 400,000 soldiers of them gathered in the city of Mizpeh.
- The Levite told the soldiers what had happened, and they set up a plan to supply the fighters with food, and determined to march to Gibeah.
- They requested that the men of Benjamin turn over the murderers, but they would not.





# Another Civil War in Israel (20)



- The army of Israel did not ask God IF they should attack – only who should attack first. God said Judah, and Judah lost 22,00 men.
- The next day, they asked IF they should go, but not HOW they should go, and they lost 18,00 men.
- By the third day, they wept, fasted, got the ark and the high priest.

- This time, God told them to go attack and assured them of victory.
- They attacked Gibeah in a manner to the way Joshua attack Ai. They pretended to lose and flee, and when the Benjamites followed, men hidden in ambush came and set the city of Gibeah on fire.
- When the Benjamites saw the smoke, they turned and were surrounded in front and back.
- The Benjamites panicked and 25,000 were destroyed. Some of the survivors (600) fled to the rock of Rimmon and hid there.

# Foolish Vows and Restorations (chapter 21)

- Before attacking Gibeah, the men of Israel swore not to give any of their daughters to Benjamites to be their wives.
- After the final victory, when the tribe of Benjamin lost so many of its people, the other Israelites began to moan about the possible disappearance of the tribe.
- They began to seek ways to get around their vow, so that the few surviving men of Benjamin could marry, bear children, and repopulate the tribe.
- They recalled that the town of Jabesh-gilead had not been present at the time of the vow.
- The Israelites went to Jabesh-gilead, and slew all the men and women, saving only the virgin women alive.
- This netted only 400 wives, and there were at least 600 men of Benjamin after the battle of Gibeah, so they needed more virgin women.
- There was an annual feast and dance in the city of Shiloh each year, so the Israelites told the remaining men of Benjamin to go and simply abduct wives for themselves.
- When the fathers and daughters complained, they were pacified by the others since they did not willingly break their vow.
- The book of Judges comments on the breakdown of morality and order: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

