

# **The Judges Period of Ancient Israel (c. 1350-1050 B.C.)**

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# What was a Judge?

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Ruled Israel (areas of it, not the whole country)  
between the time of Joshua and King Saul

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Covered by the book of Judges in the OT

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The Lord wanted his people to follow his  
instructions through the law and the prophets, but  
they always turned away from Him

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God chose Judges to take care of His people (who  
were usually in trouble)

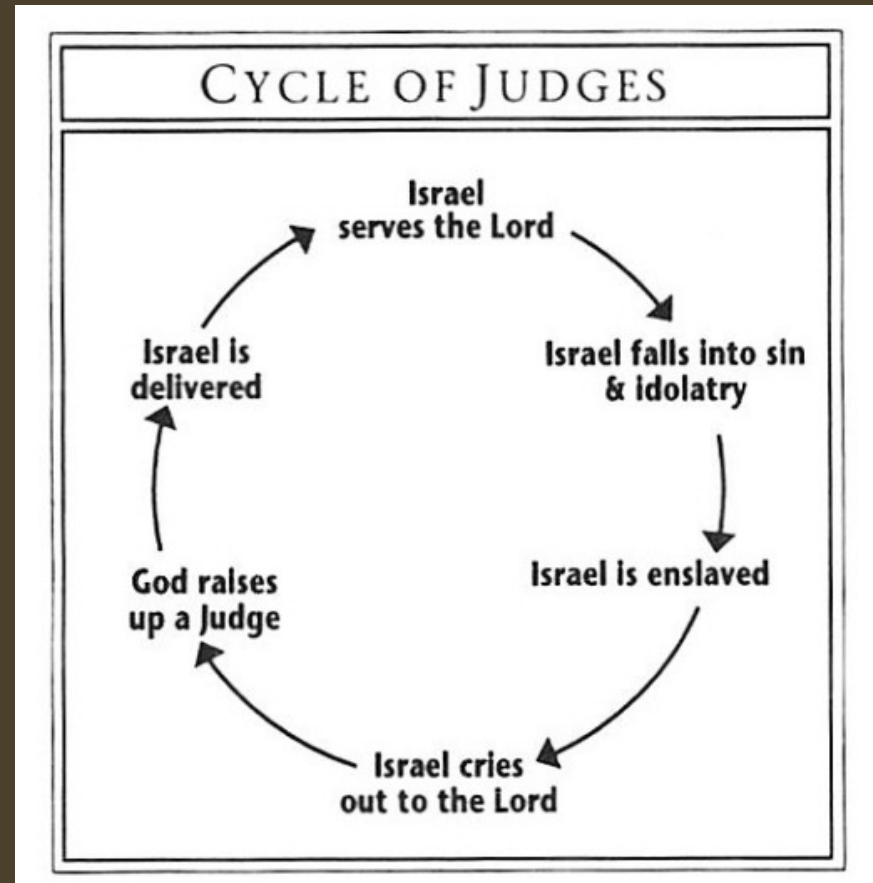
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Judges were military leaders, like a chieftain

# Who were the Judges? 15 of them...

Othniel	( <a href="#">3:7-11</a> ) 1st Judge after Joshua's death
Ehud	( <a href="#">3:12-30</a> ) Fought the Moabites
Shagmar	( <a href="#">3:31</a> ) Led Israelites against the Philistines
Deborah	( <a href="#">4-5</a> ) Prophetess, guided Barak to victory over the Canaanites, only female judge
Gideon	( <a href="#">6-8</a> ) Defeated Midianites with 300 men
Abimelech	( <a href="#">9</a> ) Only judge to win leadership through treachery
Tola	( <a href="#">10:1-5</a> ) Judged Israel for 23 years
Yair	( <a href="#">10:1-5</a> ) Judged Israel for 22 years
Jepthah	( <a href="#">10:17-12:7</a> ) Defeated Ammonites
Ibzan	( <a href="#">12:8-15</a> ) Judged people for 7 years
Elon	( <a href="#">12:8-15</a> ) Judge for 10 years
Abdon	( <a href="#">12:8-15</a> ) Ruled for 8 years
Samson	( <a href="#">13-16</a> ) Fought Phillistines singlehandedly
Eli	( <a href="#">1 Samuel 1:9</a> ) Priest, ruled people from the sanctuary at Gilo
Samuel	Last judge before the kingdom came under the rule of Saul

# The opening of Judges sets out the pattern which the stories will follow:





# Who wrote Judges?

- The author certainly lived in the early days of the monarchy
- So, it is written historically (looking back)
- But remember, the Bible is theological primarily and historically (and many other things) secondarily
- “In those days there was no king in Israel” is a common refrain
- Probably written during the reign of Saul (which begins c. 1050)
- A sequel to the Book of Joshua
- Some think the author was possibly Samuel, but can't be sure

**Setting the stage: during the Judges period, Israel was oppressed by its neighbors..."Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord."**

- Mesopotamians (3:5-9, Othniel)
- Moabites (3:12-30, Ehud 'the hut' vs King Eglon, Shamgar)
- Philistines (13-16, Samson)
- Canaanites (4:1-13, Deborah vs King Jabin and Sisera)
- Midianites (6-8, Gideon - aka Jerubbaal)
- Ammonites (10-12, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon)

# Why is Judges so important?

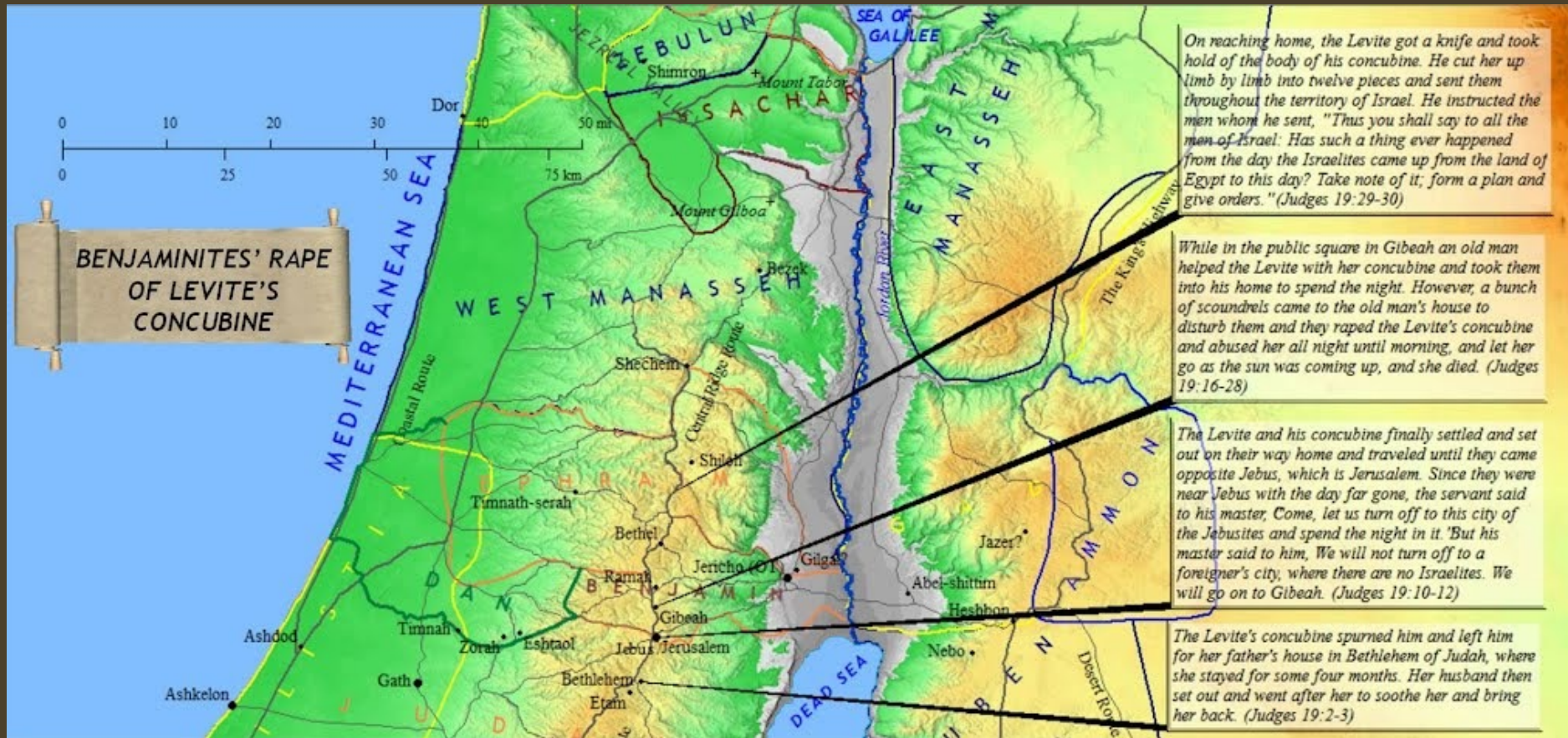
- It is during a time of great apostasy in Israel, the chaos was real!
- Book is organized by the various "oppressions" of Israel
- Great and crazy stories of heroes told as a "nation" begins to emerge
- Fascinating characters with "flaws" or differences: Ehud is left-handed, Deborah a woman, Gideon a trickster, Jephthah an outcast and Samson a Nazirite
- A "nation" undergoing serious and substantial political and religious turmoil
- The tribes fought among themselves (Manasseh and Benjamin were nearly wiped out in 12 and 20-21)
- It highlights the cycle and includes some of the most graphic, violent and disturbing scenes in all of scripture (Judges 19 as an example)

# Judges 19

- The story of a Levite (priestly clan) and his concubine (what could possibly go wrong?)
- Concubine had been “unfaithful” to the Levite and left him
- The Levite found her at her parent’s where he would retrieve her
- They stopped in Gibeah, a town of Benjamites, on the way home
- That night, they are surrounded by some “wicked men of the city” who tell the old man who owned the house to “bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him”
- To spare himself, the Levite sent his concubine outside
- They abused her all that night and then killed her
- The Levite picked up her body and took it home, where he then cut it up into 12 pieces, one for each tribe of Israel, and sent the pieces throughout the land
- The response was as expected, those who received the packages of body parts said “such a thing has never been seen or done...we must do something! So, speak up!” (19:30)
- The tribe of Benjamin would not reveal the identity of the rapists and murderers, and civil war would break out and all, but 600 men of Benjamin were killed
- The leaders of the other 11 tribes sought to restore the tribe of Benjamin and chose to punish the city of Jabesh Gilead which has not responded to the call to fight the Benjamites. The 600 Benjamites were allowed to steal young women from Jabesh Gilead to take as their wives.
- Event concludes with “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.”



# Where was Gibeah?



# What lessons to we learn from Judges 19?

- This is what happened when the law is spurned, and everyone does as he sees fit
- Incidents like this would lead to the demand for an Israelite king...because that would fix everything 😊
- It really reveals the need for a perfect king, things were really bad, and the only perfect king was the messiah (but they did not recognize that).
- Context is very important though, and God has a sense of humor (or maybe justice is a better word). God will eventually grant the Israelites a king in Saul...anyone want to tell me what tribe Saul was from? What his hometown was?

# Gideon (Jerubbaal) Judges 6-8

- Israel being oppressed by Midianites, Amalekites and Mesopotamians, oh my!
- God calls Gideon to deliver Israel at the time
- Gideon tries to hide from God's call (i.e., Jonah)
- Gideon tries to deny the call (my clan is the weakest, and I am the least in my father's house)
- Gideon lacks the faith and courage to overcome the enemy
- Paul said that God calls the weak the foolish of this world (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

# Idols are nothing...

- Gideon's first task is to destroy the altar to Baal (shows how deep Israel had fallen)
- The towns folk was Gideon killed for doing this righteous action!
- Gideon's father, Joash, denies the request to turn over his son arguing if Baal is so great, let him plead for himself for Gideon's death
- Idolatry was and is a powerful force (Israel and today). Anything more important to a person than following God is idolatry.



# God sees Gideon (and us) as “unfinished products”...

- Gideon doubted and wanted reassurance from God
- He asked God to make a fleece wet while all the ground around it remained dry, which God did but he remained unconvinced, so he asked God to do it again, He did
- God is more than willing to help a struggling believer
- Ask Him...Gideon did



# The few that we have can turn into many by God...

- Gideon gathered 32,000 men
- God deems this was too many for His purpose as the Israelites would claim it was their victory and not God's
- Gideon asked the men who are afraid to fight to leave, this pared it down to 10,000
- God said reduce it more
- All but 300 leave
- They defeat the Midianites (reminds me of the Assyrian army of 185,000 men at the gates of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 19:35, and the angel of the Lord destroys that Army as they slept). God's purpose will be served, He didn't want Judah to fall to the Assyrians, that privilege will be reserved for the Chaldeans later.

# Gideon the hero...

- 8:22 "Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also: for you have deliver us from the hand of Midian."
- Seriously? They thought Gideon gave them the unlikely victory?
- Gideon replies "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."
- Israelites continued to live their life by sight, not by faith
- When we put our trust and confidence in man rather than God, we do so at our own peril

# Judges (the book of heroes) perfectly sets the stage...

- Of course, it really sets the stage for the messiah, but they aren't looking for that yet
- It sets the stage for a monarchy
- Israel constantly sees and looks for the human hero who can solve all their problems in life if they were just more powerful and more secure
- God knows man will fall short, Israel will fail, Judah will fail, but through the next roughly 600 years of monarchy and exile, he shows how we must learn our lessons the "hard way".
- Mankind fails to see the true hero at this point, as we often do, and even when that hero comes to live among us, and leaves us a book of witness and instruction, many still fail to see HIM, the HERO.