

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Place in the Biblical Story

Since Genesis 1:26, and 3:15 the narrative has looked for the Ruler. In Genesis 12:1-3, the Ruler was to Rule from within Israel. In Genesis 15, God promised Israel the land as their inheritance.

Yet the book is, as its place in the Biblical narrative, a tragedy. The hope of conquering the land falls to a civil war rather than eliminating the enemy, and the people have no hope, having changed depravity and superstition to the level of the Law, and the Law itself has been forgotten. The only hope is the anticipation of the coming King.

²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25)

Equipping of the Nation

Then beginning in Exodus, God had begun to equip the nation to represent Him. The deliverance from Egypt, the Law, the dwelling in the tabernacle, and finally the land under Joshua. Now God moves to install Judges (Deuteronomy 16--17) who will anticipate His King, by possessing the land. These Judges, while not kings (“there was no king in Israel”), will demonstrate the problem of the lack of the proper heart. The judge will ultimately glorify himself, not God, through his decisions, making God in his image. God will serve the judge, instead of the other way around.

The “Cycles” of Depravity of the Nation

The “cycles” of the Judges continually go downhill, demonstrating the depravity of the heart of the leadership and the nation. Israel continues in these cycles and will decline until she goes into captivity. It will only be the new heart (Jeremiah 31:31-34) that will come with the ultimate Judge/Ruler that will change Israel, yet she will reject it when the ultimate “Judge/King” appears in Jesus.

Jesus expressed these cycles of Israel and their hopeless following of Satan in Matthew 12:43-45 after they had rejected the ultimate Deliverer Judge, Jesus.

⁴³ "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*. ⁴⁴ "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds *it* unoccupied, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ "Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes

worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

Deliverance of the Nation by the Deliverer

Genesis 3:15 had prophesied a Deliverer who would deliver the world from the grasp of Satan. In Genesis 12:1-3, God promised this Deliverer would deliver Israel and subsequently the Gentiles.

Thus when Israel was oppressed by Egypt, God raised up a deliverer, Moses. Joshua continued the conquering of the Canaanites. Now Israel will do evil, be oppressed by a nation, and God will provide a Judge to deliver the nation. This will preface the ultimate Deliverer who will deliver Israel from Rome and from Satan.

The "Seed of the Woman"

Physical Seed

The physical Seed has not been identified since Judah in Jacob's blessing in Genesis 49. It will not seemingly appear again until David in 1 Samuel 16. Yet, coinciding with the Book of Judges is the Book of Ruth, whose purpose is to identify this Seed during the period (in Boaz and Ruth), and thus the story's purpose.

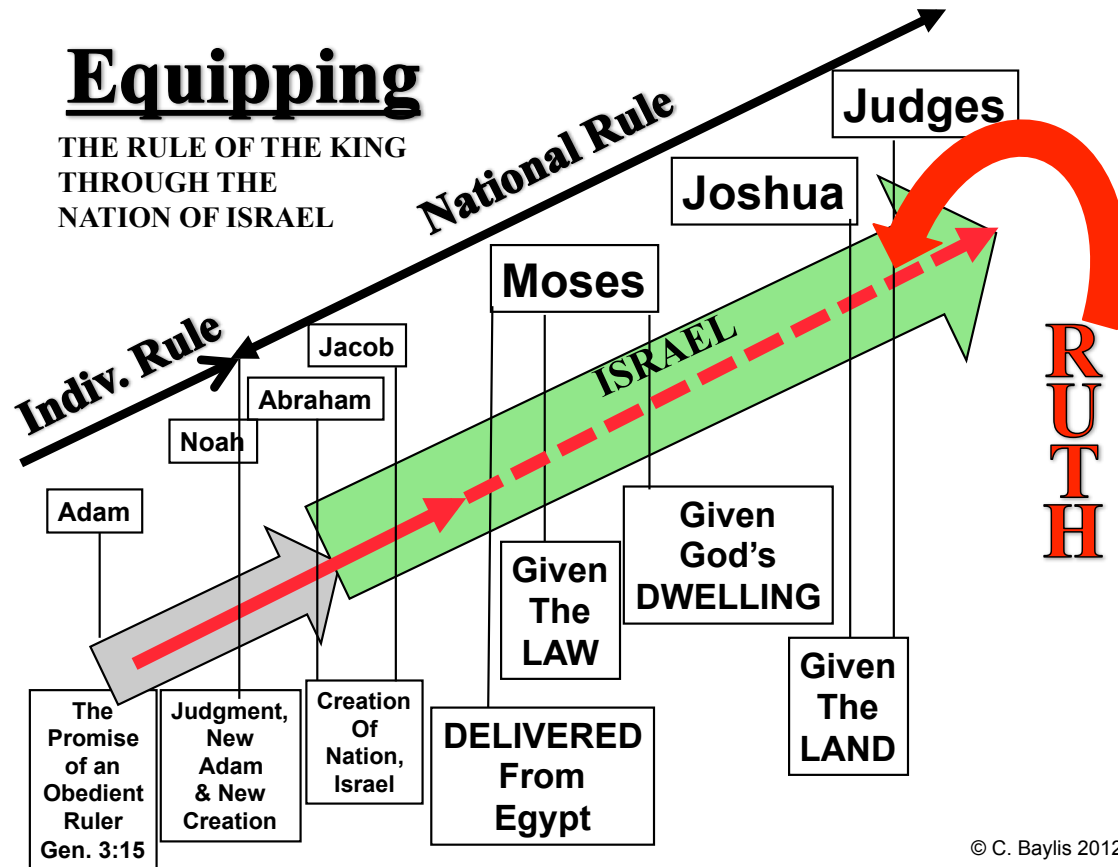
Genesis 46:12 left off with naming Perez, Judah's son, as the designated seed line.¹

¹² The sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

The Book of Ruth (4:18-22) then fills in the blanks following Judah and Perez, beginning with Perez. It then ends with David, providing the link between Genesis and 1 Samuel.

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron,¹⁹ and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab,²⁰ and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon,²¹ and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed,²² and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

¹ It is clear that Perez is designated since all the other sons of the children of Jacob were just listed with no one in particular being singled out. Here Perez is singled

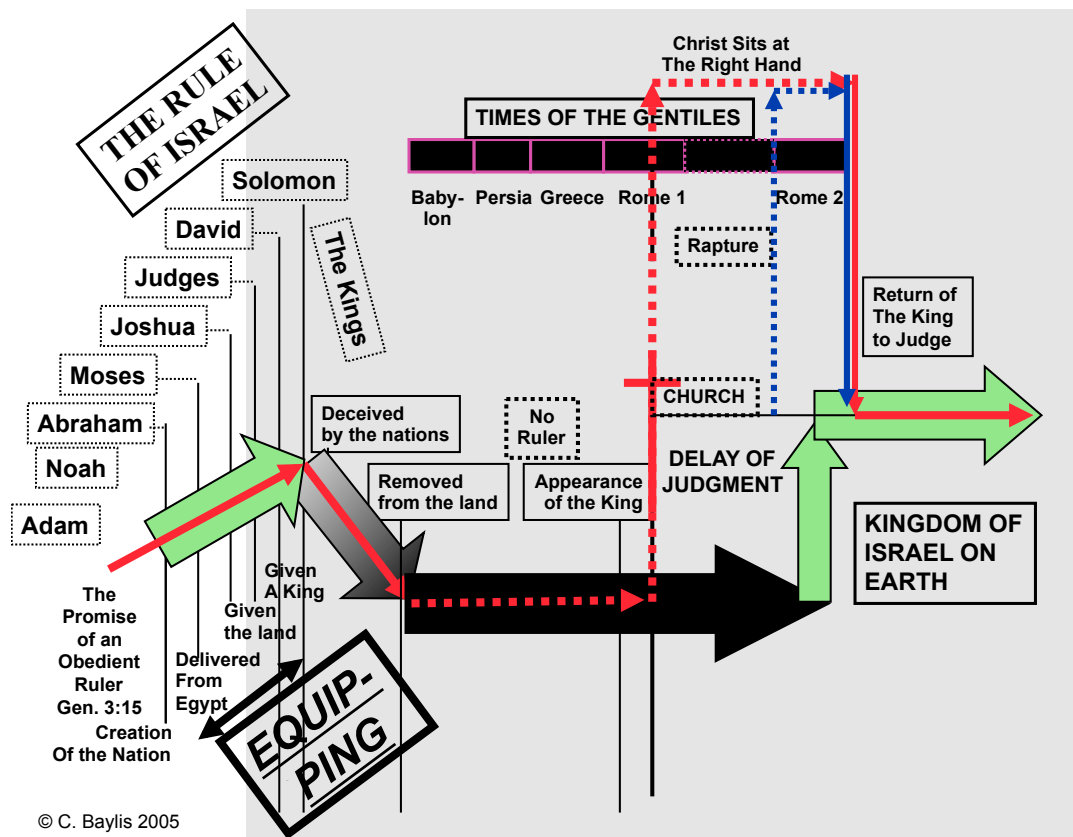


The Obedient Seed

The obedient (or representative) part of the Seed (acting for God) has been seen in Moses and Joshua (as leader/prophet), the Passover Lamb (sacrifice of Messiah), the Tabernacle (God dwelling with nation), the Law (the character of YHWH).

Now in Judges, the leadership aspect of the Seed comes out. The question is whether the leaders (anticipating the Ruler) will occupy the land by fearing YHWH.

On the other hand there are the Canaanites, as the seed of the serpent. They are evil, follow other gods (demons), and follow their senses. Thus, the followers of Satan are to be judged and removed from the inheritance that belongs to Israel. They are warned to eliminate them lest they “deceive” the Israelites, as Eve was deceived from the Serpent.



Background

The land of Canaan that was given to Israel was full of local groups. Israel had conquered the land under Joshua, and now the individual tribes were to enter in and throw out the individuals of all these pagans. Joshua had given the leadership up, and the judges were now to rule locally.

Date

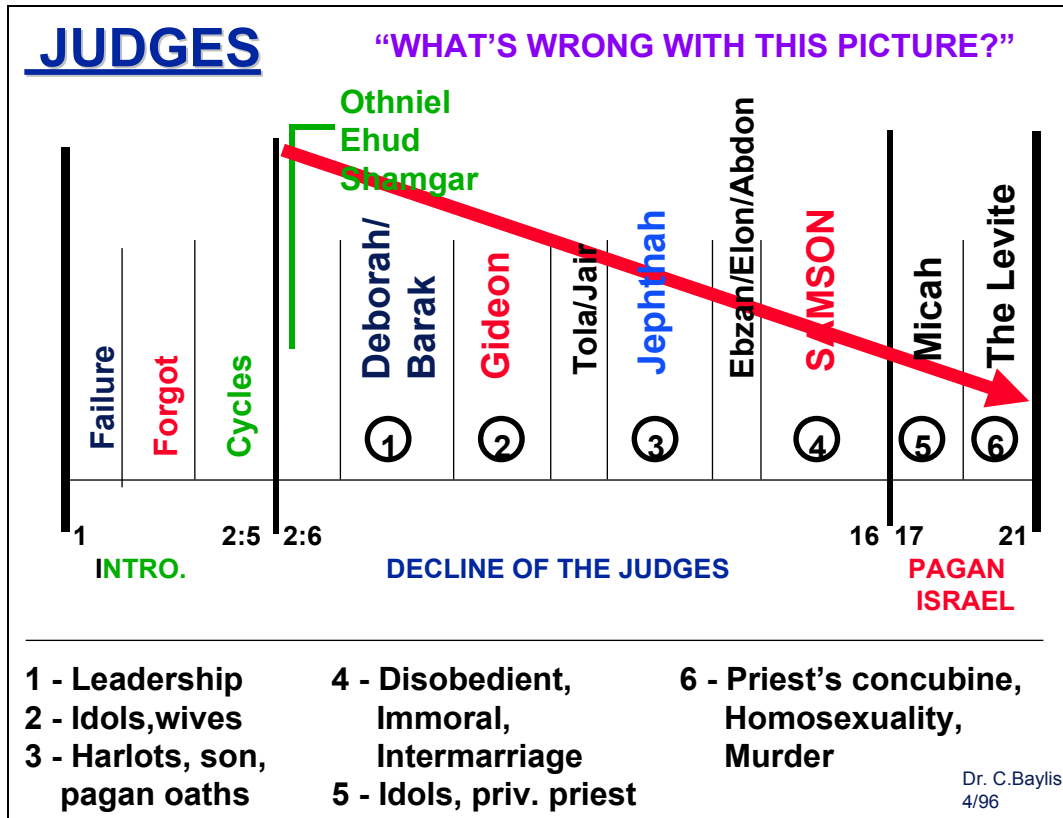
Some would claim that the mention of 'king' in 21:25 would imply a date into the monarchical period. However, 1:21 shows the Jebusites still in Jerusalem at the time of writing. Thus, the date would be required to precede David's conquering of the city in 2 Samuel. On the other hand 18:30 seems to indicate a date following the captivity.

Purpose

There is an introduction period in the book, which details the failure of the tribes to conquer their land. They are chastised by the Angel of the Lord for their disobedience in this matter. The body of the book then details over and over the cycles which Israel

passes through; their disobedience and resulting oppression, God's mercy and the raising up of a delivering judge, and their repeated disobedience. Finally in the conclusion of the book, there are a group of stories that show how Israel had declined so far away from YHWH worship, and indeed were worse than the pagans they had replaced.

Thus, the book's purpose is to propose God's plan of a Deliverer for Israel to possess the land, yet the people reject God, and the Deliverer is evil himself. Thus the depravity of the heart of the nation and the leadership points to the hope of the ultimate Deliverer who will serve God for the sake of the nation.



I. The Conquering of Canaan: The individual tribes conquer their land, but not totally (1:1-2:6).

Chapter 1 is essentially a listing of the tribes and their respective failures to drive out the people, which they were commanded to do by God. Immediately following that (2:1-5), the Angel of the Lord shows up to give them an explanation. The Angel says they have not obeyed the Lord,² and therefore the pagans that they left would be 'thorns in their sides' and would be a 'snare' to them.

² The explanation of the deliverance from Egypt takes one back to Deut. 6:20ff. when Israel was instructed to teach their children regarding the deliverance from Egypt.

This sets the stage for Judges. The people had no leader but God, yet they refused to obey His clear command. Thus they would be plagued with the influence of these people, and would end up adopting their influences. The effect of this sin would influence their dwelling for the remainder of the book.

JUDGES 1		Report on the Tribes: Success (Failure?)
JUDAH	Conquers with SIMEON's help (Adoni-Bezek)	Must be aided by Simeon, lets king live
	Captures Jerusalem and Hebron	
	CALEB: Captures Keriath-Sepher (Son-in-Law)	Chooses Son-in-law through test of faith
	Conquers for SIMEON	Must aid Simeon
	CALEB: Conquers Anak at Hebron	Conquers very people feared at Kadesh-Barnea
Benjamin	Does not conquer Jebusites	"Jebusites lived with sons of Benjamin"
Joseph	Does not eliminate City of Luz	Luz rebuilt in land of Hittites (within Israel's land)
Manasseh	Does not conquer Canaanites	"Canaanites persisted in living in that land"
Ephraim	Does not conquer Canaanites	"Canaanites lived . . . among them"
Zebulun	Does not drive out Canaanites	"Canaanites lived among them"
Asher	Does not drive out Canaanites	"lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land"
Naphtali	Does not drive out Canaanites	"lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land"
Dan	Forced into hill country by Amorites, did not allow them to come down...	"persisted in living in Mt. Heres"

- A. Judah conquers, almost (1:1-21).
 - 1. Judah has Simeon join with him to conquer the Canaanites (after God has promised victory?) and the Perizzites at Bezek, including the de-thumbing of Adoni-Bezek (but keep him alive³) (1:1-7).

Judah's success is listed, although they do not obey Deut. 20 which requires the death of all in the conquered lands. It is possible that Judah also shows a weakness by including Simeon in their battles, but Simeon was in the midst of Judah⁴. While the

³ A seeming violation of Deut. 20:16.

⁴ See Joshua 19:1-9.

tribes were to unite under Joshua (note that Reuben, Gad and the ½ tribe of Manasseh were to return to their inheritance after they had fought with Joshua to conquer the country and they did that.).

2. Judah conquers Jerusalem, the Negev, the lowland, Hebron, etc. (1:8-10).

Judah succeeds in conquering Jerusalem and other lands.

3. Caleb conquers Kiriath-Sepher through his son-in-law Othniel as a test for his daughter (1:11-15).⁵

Still in Judah, Caleb is specifically reviewed to show the completion of the promise made to him at Kadesh-Barnea. In addition, the means by which he chose a son-in-law was to test his faith in God's promise, as he had done in Numbers 13.

4. Judah joins Simeon, as Moses' father-in-law's people dwell in the wilderness of Judah, as Judah takes Zephath, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and the hill country, yet they did not conquer the valley (iron chariots)⁶ (1:16-19).

Moses father-in-law, a converted Gentile, does not conquer, but seems comfortable in living with the Canaanites, although the passage could indicate his joining with Judah. Interestingly, Moses was a Levite which had no allocation, and so his choice to go with Judah would be legitimate. However, the inability to conquer due to the "iron chariots" indicates a lack of faith due to the reference in Deut. 20:1.

5. Caleb conquers the sons of Anak (1:20).⁷

Caleb's final note is that he conquered the very ones that the other 10 spies feared. They had not become smaller or less numerous. And, in fact, Caleb now was conquering with only his family members (and perhaps others from the tribe of Judah)

⁵ Caleb's plot is repeated here and in the Book of Joshua. What Caleb had done was perceived that a righteous man could be found by testing his ability to conquer in the Name of YHWH. If he perceived the promise of Leviticus 26:6-8, as Caleb himself had in Numbers 13, and conquered, then he would be a man like his father-in-law.

⁶ This was specifically warned of in Deut. 20:1.

⁷ According to Numbers 13:28 Caleb finally conquers the ones that the original 10 spies feared.

instead of a whole nation. Caleb was referencing Leviticus 26:6-8, as he had in Numbers 13.

- B. Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who occupy Jerusalem with him (1:21).

Benjamin shows its lack of faith to conquer the city allocated to them.

- C. Joseph conquers Bethel, saving the man who helped the spies, but since he does not seek Israel's good (but only his life) he rebuilds the city elsewhere⁸ (1:22-26).⁹

Of considerable note here is the parallel to Rahab. Both cities were in the land and were to be destroyed totally. However, the Israelite warriors appear to act in a similar fashion as they did with Rahab, but had forgotten that Rahab pleaded on the basis of YHWH's one-way mercy and had already acted at the risk of her life. This spy only answered the request for guidance to the city gate, almost as tourists as opposed to warriors. Thus the risk to the man is not particularly prominent. They promise to treat him with *chesed* is similar to Rahab, but without any reference to YHWH or a request by the man, the spies are giving the mercy of God without any request by the man. Note the fact that the man has not aligned with YHWH allows the man to rebuild the city elsewhere, meaning that Israel had not accomplished anything.

This is a wrong use of *hesed*. It is not a "deal," with two parties, each giving up something (although it is questionable what the man gave up). Instead of showing mercy, the spies made a deal, not unlike pagans.

- D. Manasseh fails to drive out the Canaanites, but puts them to forced labor, i.e., "did not drive them out completely" (1:27-28).
 E. Ephraim fails to drive out Gezer, thus Gezer "lived among them" (1:29).
 F. Zebulun fails to drive out the Canaanites so they "lived among" the Israelites (1:30).
 G. Asher fails to drive out the Canaanites so the Asherites "lived among the Canaanites"¹⁰ (1:31-32).

⁸ The mention of the Hittites goes back to Joshua 1:4 where the land of the Hittites is specifically mentioned as part of the area to be conquered for Israel.

⁹ The relationship to Jericho and Rahab here is unmistakable. It is similar with spies and an informant, but the spies are different as is also the informant. He makes no confession of YHWH (as Rahab did), and he did not join the Israelites (as Rahab). What he did do was to go and establish the same city (Luz) somewhere else. So there was no benefit to YHWH or Israel. He just moved.

- H. Naphtali fails to drive out the Canaanites,¹¹ so they “lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land¹²” (1:33).
 - I. The Amorites drive Dan into the hill country¹³, but later become forced labor of Joseph (1:34-36).
- I. The Angel of the Lord pronounces the reason why they have not pushed the Canaanites out of the land; disobedience. Israel weeps (2:1-5).

In this short paragraph the author includes the lecture given by the angel of the Lord to the Israelites¹⁴. The statement is basically a quotation from the Covenant (of which Israel demonstrates its ignorance in failing to conquer).¹⁵

- II. REASON FOR FAILURE: God gives Israel judges to lead them back to YHWH, but when the judge dies, Israel goes back to worship other gods (2:6-16:31)
 - A. Conditions of the period of the judges (2:6-2:23).

Now the author begins a summary of what has happened and will happen throughout the book. First he summarizes Joshua's days; they served God, but when Joshua died, they did not know the Lord (2:6-10).¹⁶

¹⁰ Note here that the situation is reversing itself from the previous reference (1:30). Now instead of the Canaanites living among the Israelites, it is reversed as the Israelites live among them.

¹¹ The theological import of this verse and its words is striking. The cities they lived in were called Beth-Shemesh (house of Shemesh) and Beth-Anath (house of Anat). Since they were not driven out of these cities, it demonstrated that YHWH of Israel was not victorious over the cities which belonged (were protected by) these foreign gods.

¹² Again the narrative increases the immensity of the failure, now the Canaanites are listed as the inhabitants, not the Israelites. In other words the Israelites were the intruders.

¹³ Now it is the Canaanites who are doing the aggressive driving out of the Israelites.

¹⁴ The Angel here appears as it has come from Gilgal. It was at Gilgal that the Captain of the Lord's Host appeared to Joshua. Now this Angel (perhaps the same One) appears and critiques their lack of conquering following Joshua's lead.

¹⁵ 2:1 (Deut. 20:1), 2:2 (Deut. 7:2,5), 2:3 (Num. 33:55)

¹⁶ Clearly again the problem here was that Israel did not teach their children per Deut. 6:5ff. Thus following the exploits of Joshua, the great deeds of YHWH were forgotten.

Then he summarizes the days following Joshua's generation; they served other gods, so that their enemies oppressed them. Then God raised up judges to guide them back to YHWH. But when the judge died, they went back to other gods. Thus the Lord left the other nations there (2:11-23).

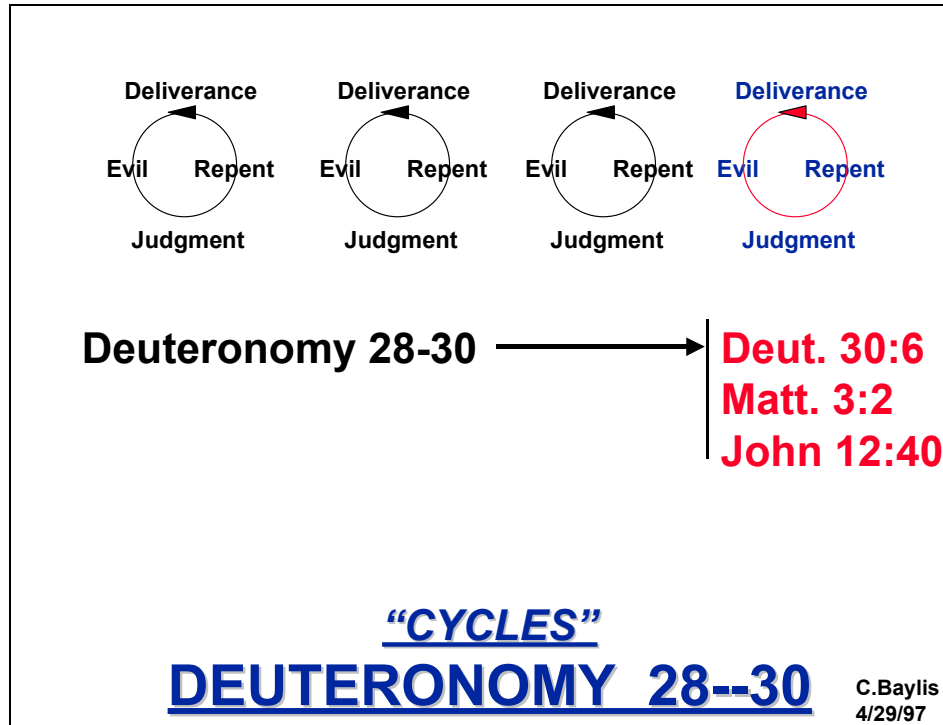
The cycle has been established for the nation of Israel. They were in a downward spiral; disobedience, oppression, repentance, deliverance, rest, obedience. And always it proceeded down further and further away from God (2:19).

1. Summary of Joshua's days; they served God, but when Joshua died, they did not know the Lord (2:6-10).

The passing on of the Lord's words and works were essential to the continuance of the nation to operate on behalf of YHWH. Yet they did not. This is a direct command of Deut. 6:5ff. and Deut. 6:20.

2. Summary of the days of those who did not know the Lord; they served other gods, so that their enemies oppressed them. God raised up judges to guide them back to YHWH. But when the judge died, they went back to other gods. Thus the Lord left the other nations there (2:11-23).

The cycles are outlined in Deut. 4:25-31 and 30:1-6. This is the pattern which Israel will follow until the last days when God changes their heart.



B. The Judges (3:1-16:31).

Now begins the cycle, not only will Israel decline but there will be marked characteristics of her decline. The judges themselves will decline. The people who are righteous show up less and less in the book, until there is no one righteous mentioned.

1. Israel sins, is oppressed, so God raises up Othniel (3:1-8).

The first cycle is when the remaining nations test Israel. Israel mixes with the nations, serves other gods, serves Cushan-rishathaim for 8 years (3:1-8). The Lord raises up Othniel (Judah) to be a judge.¹⁷ The land has rest for 40 years. Othniel dies. (3:1-11).

Othniel, the son-in-law of Caleb, is a righteous man, understanding the covenant, and delivering Israel. As the initial judge he is a marker for righteous leadership. It will decline from here.

¹⁷ Othniel, Caleb's son-in-law, has already demonstrated that he can conquer in faith, as he had been rewarded with Caleb's daughter. He now is enabled by God to continue.

- a. The remaining nations test Israel.¹⁸ Israel mixes with the nations, serves other gods, serve Cushan-rishathaim for 8 years (3:1-8).
 - b. The Lord raises up Othniel¹⁹ (Judah) to be a judge. The land has rest for 40 years. Othniel dies. (3:1-11).
2. Israel sins, is oppressed, so God raises up Ehud (3:12-30).

The second cycle is when Israel serves Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years (3:12-14). God raises up Ehud the Benjamite, a left-handed man, who kills Eglon, a fat man (3:15-23). Eglon's servants discover the dead Eglon (3:14-25). Ehud leads the Israelites (Ephraim) against the Moabites. They have peace for 80 years (3:26-30).

Ehud marks out the first of the valiant stories. Yet the narrative is tainted by the mention of idols in 3:19, 26.

- a. Israel serves Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years (3:12-14).²⁰
- b. God raises up Ehud the Benjamite,²¹ a left-handed man, who kills Eglon, a fat man (3:15-23)²².
- c. Eglon's servants discover the dead Eglon (3:14-25).

¹⁸ The point of “teaching them war” (3:2) is to teach them to trust God in conquering Canaan, which is the Book of Deuteronomy, as listed in chapters 1—2.

¹⁹ Literarily Othniel is an exemplary judge. He has a history of trusting God for conquering (1:13), and does so here also.

²⁰ Note the sending of tribute here is demonstrating the reversal of roles. Moab is over Israel.

²¹ There are many *inclusios* in this book. This left-handed Benjamite is one who comes to the aid of his countrymen for God. In 20:16 the left-handed men of Benjamin do not deliver “worthless men” up for execution and do not honor their countrymen. They act as delivering judges, but for the opposite purpose.

²² The mention of the “idols at Gilgal” (3:19) is interesting. Apparently it is a subtle note regarding Israel’s compromise toward other gods. It is also mentioned at the end of the king’s killing (3:26). Note that the man is going to Moab, where 2 ½ tribes were located, but is ruled by a Moabite (they hadn’t dominated) as well as Gilgal is the place where Israel crossed from Moab. Ehud is crossing the other way and noting that there are idols where the stones would have been that marked their original crossing.

- d. Ehud leads the Israelites (Ephraim) against the Moabites. They have peace for 80 years (3:26-30).
3. Shamgar strikes down the Philistines with an oxgoad, saving Israel (3:31).

The fourth cycle is demonstrating the power of God as one man strikes down 600 Philistines.

While not much is mentioned of Shamgar, including any divine intervention. Yet he shows the ability to conquer against impossible odds, a definite reflection of the covenant, and a comparison later to Samson who conquers with the jawbone of an ass.

4. Israel sins, is oppressed, so God raises up Deborah (4:1-5:31).

Two chapters are now dedicated to a woman.²³ If there is one thing clear in this story it is the lack of a man to lead Israel. Thus it is clearly seen that things are going awry in Israel. There are fewer and fewer who will follow God and there appears to be no men following Him.

The leader of the army of Naphtali and Zebulun, Barak, refuses to go into battle, even though the Lord has declared that he will be victorious over Sisera, the Leader of Jabin's armies. Deborah says she will go, and comments that the Lord will give the victory to a woman (4:9).

The Lord does give the victory to Israel, so that no one lives. However, Sisera flees and is killed by a woman, Jael. She was one who had married into the family which was from Moses' father-in-law,²⁴ and now, a woman and a Gentile, was the one who killed him;. God had conquered through the lowliest, since the proud men had deserted him.

²³ The author does not want the reader to miss the problem here. Not simply being satisfied to name Deborah as a prophetess, he gives her the title, “Deborah, a woman prophetess, the wife (woman) of Lapidoth” (אִשָּׁה נְבִיאָה אִשָּׁת לָפִידוֹת) (וְדִבְרֹתָ).

²⁴ They had now joined alliances with Sisera. Jael, will appear, as Rahab earlier to deliver Israel as she is faithful in the midst of pagans.

Deborah then gives her song, which reflects her praise for God and His covenants, and her inclusion in the deliverance.

- a. Deborah conquers Jabin (4:1-16).
 - 1) Israel sins, Jabin oppresses them for twenty years (4:1-3).
 - 2) Deborah judges Israel, requests Barak to conquer Jabin. He refuses without her. She accompanies him. (4:4-10).
 - 3) The Lord gives the victory to Barak and 10,000 men (4:11-16).
 - b. Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, killed as he flees, by Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite (Moses' father-in-law), with a tent peg through his temple. (4:17-22).
 - c. God subdues Jabin and conquers him (4:23-24).
 - d. Deborah's Song (5:1-31).
 - 1) Introduction (5:1).
 - 2) Praise to God for the covenant at Seir and Sinai (5:2-5).
 - 3) Praise for deliverance from fear of the oppressors (5:6-11).
 - 4) Israel gathers its tribes for the battle (5:12-18).
 - 5) The battle: the enemies of the Lord and Israel crushed (5:19-23).
 - 6) The blessing on Jael, the killer of Sisera (5:24-27).
 - 7) Lament for the mother of Sisera (5:28-30).
 - 8) The conclusion: Blessing on those who follow YHWH, curse on the enemies (5:31).
2. Israel sins, is oppressed, so God raises up Gideon (6:1-8:32).

The next cycle again demonstrates regularity as Israel sins and repents. Israel sins, Midian prevails against Israel. Israel cries to YHWH. A prophet tells them of God's faithfulness to the covenant, Israel's disobedience.

Then God hears their cries and selects Gideon (6:11-40). The angel of the Lord first instructs Gideon. The beginning of the story is one of Gideon's response, but showing a doubt that God has been true to His covenant, as he cannot understand why they

are enslaved to the Midianites. The Angel of the Lord gives a remarkable miracle to demonstrate to Gideon that He is with him.²⁵

Gideon shows his problem of trusting God, when he obeys, but carries his duty out at night. He is instructed to pull down the altar of Baal and the Asherah (6:25-32).

Gideon now follows God's order and gathers Israel together. But he again shows his lack of confidence in God's power, and continually asks for a sign.²⁶ He is never sure that the sign might not be simply a coincidence and thus he continues to question God. This shows a definite decline in the quality of the judges from Deborah.

Gideon then proceeds to go against Midian, and through an indication to him by the Lord that he would win, he gains confidence²⁷ and Israel is victorious (7:1-25).²⁸

The sons of Ephraim show greed when they get upset at Gideon for fighting without them. However, the Lord had desired a small group so that it would be shown that it was the Lord. Ephraim is looking after their own pride. Gideon ends up killing the kings.

However there is a crucial verse here which is essential to the understanding of Judges. Israel was not to have a king until the Lord brought them one. Thus they were to have the Lord as king. They were not obeying Him as king, and thus they desire to have Gideon (8:22-23).

²⁵ Note here that Gideon shows lack of knowledge of the covenant as he reverses the order of Deut. 13 (the test of a false prophet). While the order of a false prophet was to try to verify his misleading words with miraculous signs, and the Israelite was to test his words apart from the signs, Gideon needs the signs to test the words. The words were simply a repeat of the covenant. Gideon needed no confirmation, since they were essentially nothing new, except he now was labeled as the one.

²⁶ Again this is the reverse of Deut. 13.

²⁷ Had Gideon either been honest or knew how he would feel later he should have eliminated himself, for he fears the battle in only 7 verses (7:10-11).

²⁸ Deuteronomy had indicated that the nations would fear. Yet Gideon, who has had the Lord speak personally, now puts great confidence in a pagan man's dream.

However, Gideon shows decline, for while he rejects kingship, he desires the gold that they take as spoil.²⁹ This gold he makes into an ephod and Israel worships it. Yet Israel still gets rest under Gideon for 40 years. But Gideon continues in his decline. He uses his fame to have many wives and children and even a concubine.³⁰ In addition he names his child Abimilech, “My father is king.”

Israel however declines on the death of Gideon, and forgets the Lord's deliverance. It seems Israel identified with the man who was delivering them, and once he died, they no longer felt they were delivered. However, the Lord had not died. Israel shows the desire for a human king.

- a. Israel sins, repents (6:1-10).
 - 1) Israel sins, Midian prevails against Israel (6:1-6).
 - 2) Israel cries to YHWH. A prophet tells them of God's faithfulness to the covenant, Israel's disobedience (6:7-10).
- b. God selects Gideon (6:11-40).
 - 1) The angel of the Lord instructs Gideon (6:11-24).
 - a) The angel of the Lord appears to Gideon³¹, chooses him to conquer Midian. Gideon presents an offering (6:11-18).
 - b) The Angel of the Lord makes fire consume the food. Gideon panics, having seen the face of the Angel of the Lord. (6:19-24).
 - 2) The confrontation: Gideon pulls down the altar (6:25-32).

²⁹ Deuteronomy 17:14 indicated the problems that they would have when they had a king. While Gideon rejects kingship he decides to take all the benefits of the king. Deut. 17 prohibited the king from increasing silver and gold, yet Gideon accomplishes that without the title.

³⁰ In the spirit of Deut. 17:17 he was not to multiply wives for himself. Yet he had many wives and concubines.

³¹ Similar to the equipping of Joshua.

- a) The Lord instructs Gideon to pull down the Baal altar and the Asherah. Gideon complies at night (6:25-27).
 - b) The men seek Gideon. His father Joash refuses to deliver him, telling them to let Baal contend against him (6:28-32).
- 3) The war: Gideon leads Israel against Midian (6:33-7:25).
- a) The Midianites gather against Israel. Gideon blows a trumpet to gather Israel together (6:33-35).
 - b) Gideon asks for a sign; the wet fleece. He presses God for another sign; the dry fleece (6:36-40).
 - c) Gideon begins the campaign (7:1).
 - d) God eliminates two-thirds of the army, the fearful (7:2-3).
 - e) God eliminates all but 300 men, the dog lappers (7:4-8).
 - f) Gideon fears, goes down to the camp and hears a dream foretelling his victory (7:9-14).
 - g) Gideon worships, instructs the 300 men (7:15-18).
 - h) Israel breaks the pitchers, blows the trumpets³². Midian flees. (7:19-23).
 - i) Gideon commands Israel to complete the conquering of Midian. The kings are killed (7:24-25).
 - j) Gideon explains to Ephraim about their part in the battle (8:1-3).
 - k) Gideon conquers Zebah and Zalmunna, while Succoth and Penuel refuse to help (8:4-12).
 - l) Gideon thrashes the elders of Succoth, tears down the tower of Penuel and kills the men (8:13-17).
 - m) Gideon kills Zebah and Zalmunna³³ (8:18-21).

³² This appears to be similar to the validation of Joshua at Jericho.

³³ Gideon kills them but only in personal revenge. He should have killed them as a direct response to Deut. 20.

- n) Gideon takes earrings for spoil³⁴. Israel sins. The land is at peace for 40 years (8:22-28).
- 4) Gideon lives and dies (8:29-32).
- c. Abimilech, Gideon's son, seeks to be king (8:33-9:57).

This section is really an appendix to Gideon which is extended due to Gideon's desire to be a king without the title. Apparently he did this so as to avoid the restrictions on a king in Deut. Thus, he self-centeredly names his son, Abimilech ("my father is king") and thus his son advocates he has inherited the kingdom. Of course, he accomplishes this by destroying all the other rightful inheritors (although they weren't to take the kingship either). The result is that civil war ensues and Israelites are killing one another instead of the enemy. There is no repentance, no deliverance, nor any of the other cycles here. Israel's judgment is their own as they, instead of an enemy, are destroying themselves.

In this section, the desire for a king which was offered to Gideon, but refused, is picked up by one of Gideon's sons, Abimilech. He slays 69 of the 70 sons of Gideon (only Jotham remains), and rules for three years. He is finally killed when the cities rebel, but is killed by a woman.

The interesting thing concerning this story is the state to which Israel is declining. First they are playing the harlot with Baal. And as the story progresses it is interesting how the author slips in the little tidbits concerning the normalcy of Baal worship which they had accepted (4:1: Baal-berith, 9:37: diviner's oak).

- 1) Israel plays the harlot with the Baals (8:33-35).
- 2) Abimilech (son of Gideon) seeks to be king. Slays his 70 brothers, except Jotham, becomes king (9:1-6).
- 3) Jotham tells the story of the trees seeking a king (9:7-15).

³⁴ This was a violation similar to Achan where the spoil was God's and was to be put into the temple.

- 4) Jotham tells the men of Shechem and Beth-millo to take the test of integrity in the selection of Abimilech as king. Jotham flees. (9:16-21).
 - 5) Dissension between Abimilech and Shechem. The Shechemites become highway robbers. (9:22-25).
 - 6) Gaal the son of Ebed asserts himself over Abimilech (9:26-29).
 - 7) Zebul, the ruler of the city, deceitfully seeks Abimilech's help (9:30-33).
 - 8) Abimilech drives out Gaal (9:34-41).
 - 9) Abimilech captures the city, kills the people, sows it with salt (9:42-45).
 - 10) Abimilech sets fire to the tower of Shechem and kills the men in it (9:46-49).
 - 11) Abimilech goes against Thebez. He is wounded by a woman. He dies. Israel returns home. (9:50-57).
5. Toal, the son of Puah, judges Israel 23 years and dies (10:1-2).
 6. Jair, the Gileadite judges Israel for 22 years and dies (10:3-5).

The next cycle of two judges comes and goes, leaving the reader with the sense of Israel's confirmation to idolatry.

7. Israel sins, is oppressed, so God raises up Jephthah (10:6-12:8).
 - a. God sets Jephthah out (10:6-11:11).

Jephthah continues to demonstrate the problems to which Israel had come. Jephthah was the son of a harlot,³⁵ but he was banished, since his proper step-mother did not want him to have any inheritance. On the other hand they came to get him when they needed to fight. Israel was without any sense of YHWH.

So this outcast is raised up by the Lord to deliver Israel. Jephthah though shows his pagan superstitions coming out as he makes a deal with the Lord, who would have given him the victory without a deal. He offers his daughter as a sacrifice through a casual vow to the Lord. And he has to keep it. So Jephthah portrays himself as fitting into the continual decline of the judges.

³⁵ Israel was not to have harlots. They were to be killed as adulterers.

Ephraim again rises up against Jephthah and Jephthah goes against them to conquer them. Thus Israel is now in civil war.

- 1) Israel sins. God gives them to their enemies for 18 years (10:6-9).
- 2) Israel repents. God refuses to deliver them. Israel takes action. God relents. (10:10-16).
- 3) Israel gets ready for battle against the Ammonites. They seek a leader. (10:17-18).
- 4) Jephthah sent out from Gilead's house by his half-brothers and sisters, since he was the son of a harlot (11:1-3).
- 5) Israel seeks Jephthah to lead them against the Ammonites. Jephthah agrees if they make him leader (11:4-11).

b. Jephthah battles the Ammonites (11:12-33).

- 1) The Ammonites argue that the land belongs to them. Gideon recites the history of the taking of the land, when they were attempting only to pass through. The Ammonites disregard the advice. (11:12-28).
- 2) Jephthah vows to the Lord if He gives him the victory (11:29-33).
- 3) Jephthah's daughter is given in payment for the vow (11:34-40).

c. Jephthah battles Ephraim.

Ephraim objects to Jephthah. Jephthah explains their lack of help. They fight. Jephthah wins, slays the fugitives of Ephraim. He judges Israel 6 years and dies. (12:1-7)

8. Ibzan judges Israel 7 years and dies (12:8-10).
9. Elon judges Israel 10 years and dies (12:11-12).
10. Abdon judges Israel 8 years and dies (12:13-15).

Again there is a cycle of three judges showing Israel in its consistent decline.

11. Israel sins. God raises up Samson (13:1-16:31).

a. Israel sins. Given to the Philistines for 40 years. (13:1).

- b. The instruction for Samson is given to his mother, then to his father (13:1-23).

Israel sins. Given to the Philistines for 40 years. (13:1). But God brings them Samson, using a supernatural announcement of his birth. His mother is a barren woman who is given a child, and she is told before the husband.³⁶

- 1) The Angel of the Lord appears to Manoah's wife, predicts the birth of Samson and gives instructions for her and her son's activities.(13:2-7).
 - a) The angel of the LORD appears and gives instructions to Manoah's wife regarding her activities and Samson's (13:2-5).
 - b) The woman repeats accurately the account of the angel (13:6-7).
- 2) The Angel of the Lord appears to Manoah and his wife, and repeats the instructions (13:8-14).
 - a) Manoah desires that God repeat the instructions through the angel (13:8).
 - b) The angel appears again to Manoah's wife in response to Manoah's prayer (13:9-10).
 - c) Manoah questions the angel regarding the raising of the boy, affirming only the prophecy of the birth (13:11-12).
 - d) The angel instructs Manoah regarding Samson as a Nazarite and the mother's activities (13:13-14).
- 3) The Angel of the Lord leaves Manoah and his wife (13:15-23).
 - a) Manoah, perceiving that the angel is a man, invites him to stay for dinner (13:15).

³⁶ Very similarly to Deborah, the revelation comes through the woman to the man. She will later show more understanding of the revelation than her husband.

- b) The angel of the Lord explains that he will not eat (not being a man) and to offer the kid as a burnt offering (13:16).
- c) Manoah asks the name (assuming it is a man) of the angel, but is told that it is beyond human perception (13:17-18).
- d) Manoah offers the offering and the angel ascends to heaven in the flame thus revealing to Manoah that he was not a man. (13:19-20)
- e) Manoah fears his death by the angel's appearance (forgetting the prophecy of his wife's conception and birth), but is corrected by his wife (13:21-23).

Manoah continues is impressionistic responses. He either does not believe his wife, or does not believe the angel, or both. He has believed only the prophecy of the birth, not the means of Samson's dedication. He has ignored all the other merciful expressions of God's utilizing him, his wife and their child for a fear that he will be removed. Thus Manoah appears to have a very limited view of God, more of a Judge, and less as an implementer of deliverance of Israel through his future son.

- c. Samson slays the Philistines, deceived by his wife (13:24-15:8).

Samson marries a Philistine over the objections of his parents. The Philistine father gives the wife away to his friend (a curse). Each of these events makes Samson angry and he destroys the Philistines due to his own injured pride. Samson goes into a harlot (16:1), and this ends up in the ruin of the Philistines. Following that he falls in love with Delilah, who deceives him into the loss of his strength. Of course, the Lord uses these weaknesses of Samson to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

- 1) Samson is born (13:24-25).

- 2) Samson goes to Timnah³⁷ and seeks a wife (14:1-4).
 - 3) Samson kills a lion on the way to Timnah. Honey is in the body of the lion on his return. (14:5-9).
 - 4) Samson proposes a riddle to the Philistines (14:10-14).
 - 5) Samson's wife convinces him to tell the riddle. She gives the answer to the Philistines. Samson pays off his bet by killing 30 men of Ashkelon. He loses his wife to his companion. (14:15-20).
 - 6) The Timnite gives his wife away. Samson sets their fields on fire. He slays them ruthlessly. (15:1-8).
 - 7) The Philistines oppress Judah because of Samson. Judah binds Samson and delivers him. (15:9-13).
 - 8) Samson breaks the bonds, slays 1000 men. God supplies him water. Samson judges Israel 20 years (15:14-20).
- d. Samson deceived by Delilah. Captured by the Philistines. He slaughters them (16:1-31).

Samson's final victory is when he has lost all his sight, his hair and his strength, and is delivered by God alone when he pulls the house down on the Philistines. The hair of Samson is interesting, for it is used clearly so that it would be known that it was God who delivered Samson, for it is clear that long hair would have nothing to do with his strength physically. However, due to the nature of the superstition of the pagans which Israel had followed, they would likely believe in long hair.

- 1) Samson is trapped in the city of Gaza. He carries the gates to the mountains. (16:1-3).
- 2) Delilah deceives Samson (16:4-22).
 - a) Delilah deceives Samson into telling the secret of his strength is being bound in new cords. The Philistines attack. Samson breaks the bonds. (16:4-12).
 - b) Delilah deceives Samson a second time. He tells her the secret is in the weaving the locks of his hair. The Philistines attack. Samson responds. (16:13-14).

³⁷ Timnah was where Judah went and found Tamar dressed as a harlot.

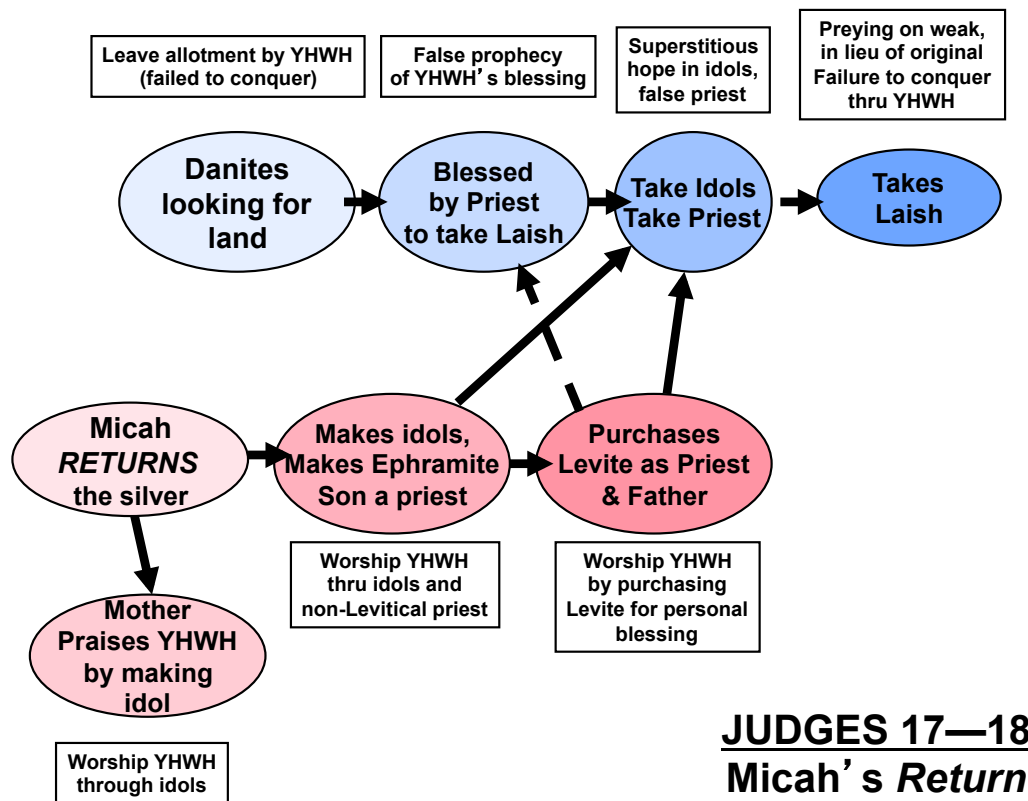
- c) Delilah presses. Samson relents and tells her the secret of his unshaved head. (16:15-17).
 - d) The Philistines attack. Samson is taken, his eyes gouged out, he becomes a grinder at the prison. (16:18-22).
- 3) The Philistines celebrate. YHWH is victorious (16:23-31).
- a) The Philistines praise Dagon. Samson is brought to their party to amuse them.. (16:23-27).
 - b) Samson brings down the house. He judges Israel 20 years and dies in the destruction of the Philistines (16:28-31).

III. Conclusion: Israel's state which summarizes³⁸ the judges (17:1--21:25).

The next few events related in the book of Judges have no judges in them. It is strictly to show the decline, and the chaos to which Israel had sunk. She was no longer aware of YHWH's words and commands. However, it is apparent that Israel thought she was worshipping YHWH, but she had adopted superstitious ways of the Canaanites. The stories become a "What's wrong with this picture?"

- A. The abomination of Israel; Micah makes a graven image and hires a personal priest, which results in the Danites taking the advantage to find a land for themselves (17--18).

³⁸ Technically these "appendices" are not in sequential order and do not "end" the period of the Judges. They are a summary section to conclude on how the days of the Judges represented their own self-interest, and it had become the Law rather than the revelation of God.

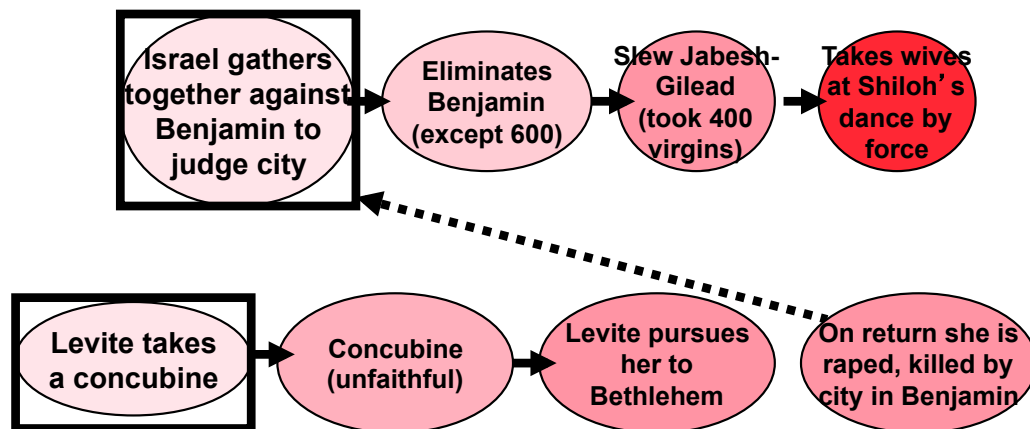


First a man of Ephraim, named Micah returns the silver he had stolen. Since his mother is so happy with his honesty she wishes to worship the Lord. She does it through superstitious pagan ways. She makes a graven image. He makes other idols and makes his son a priest (17:1-7). All of these things were forbidden; the making of any graven images by commandment, and only the tribe of Levi could become a priest.

Further the man takes in a Levite for his own household and pays him. Both he and the Levite should have known better, but the man feels that this act of superstition will make the Lord bless him (17:8-13).

In chapter 18 the Danites come on the scene and after seeking a ritual blessing from Micah's priest, they investigate the elimination of the secure Sidonians to take their land as an inheritance. They then steal Micah's priest and the idols so that they might be blessed. Then they proceed to eliminate Laish and set up the sons of Manasseh as priests to the tribe of Dan.

- B. The Levite and his concubine reveal the abhorrent reasoning apart from the covenant (19—21).



IMMORALITY BRINGS CIVIL WAR

In chapter 19 the story is told of the Levite who took a concubine for himself. (They were not even to marry widows). His concubine becomes a harlot³⁹ and runs away to her father's house.⁴⁰ He takes her

³⁹ The word here is disputed. Some say she had a rift against him, while others say she was a harlot. Even others discuss whether she was unfaithful on her own or was a prostitute at his request. The word for “harlot” is used only in that form for prostitute or harlot and not for something against him. However the preposition and pronoun seems to be used primarily for “on” or “over”, normally a positive type of use, rather than against him. So it appears to me that the possibility that she was being used by him as a prostitute is not without some basis. Whatever, the phrase is difficult. Now her fleeing to the father is clearly that she has something against the husband. The difficulty with prostitution is that the father would not likely want her to go back to the son unless there was something in it for him which does not seem to be the case. If however she was a harlot, or that there was some disagreement between them, then perhaps the father would embrace the husband. The question still remains unanswered as to why he wanted him to stay, seemingly having a greater bond with the husband than the daughter. Of course,

from the house at night, and refuses to go into a non-Israelite city (Jebus or Jerusalem). So they go to Gibeah, and find that in this city of the Benjamites no one will take them in. Only an old man takes them in. However, in a comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah (19:22-26), the concubine is raped by homosexuals who desire to rape the master. She is returned. He is so upset that he cuts her in twelve pieces to send to all the tribes. They react at the atrocity in their own nation.

The irony of the situation is that in chapter 20, when the men of Israel who gather together to avenge this atrocity ask the Levite what happened he really gets down on the nation for their 'lewd and disgraceful act'. It is interesting that he never considers his own actions of having a concubine disgraceful.

In 20:8ff. Israel gathers against Benjamin who refuses to give up the worthless men. The Lord supports them in their victory as they wipe out the tribe's soldiers with only a few left. However, they mourn as Benjamin has no children to be born since there are few of them left. So by conniving they find a way for the sons of Benjamin to steal wives and they are again restored to their land.

1. A Levite has a concubine who departs back to her father's house. The Levite gives chase. The father-in-law keeps making merry with him to prevent his departure (19:1-9).
2. On the journey back, they stay in the square at Gibeah (Benjamin), for no one would take them in (19:10-15).
3. An old man takes them into his house (19:16-21).
4. Worthless fellows of the town demand that the old man send out the Levite so they may have relations with him (cf. Sodom and Gomorrah). The man refuses and sends the Levite's concubine out. They abuse her all night and let her go. (19:22-26).
5. The Levite takes her home, cuts her in twelve pieces and sends them to the tribes of Israel. They are shocked for their nation (19:27-30).

D. The reaction of the sons of Israel (20:1-21:24).

1. Israel avenges the concubine's death (20:1-48).

this could be adding to the context of the male superiority and the diminishing of women in the story. It flows nicely if he was using her to make money, so she flees to the father, but the father embraces the fake son-in-law instead of his concubined daughter.

⁴⁰ Why one's father would be proud of the man who made his daughter a concubine is somewhat baffling.

- a. The sons of Israel seek a report from the Levite (20:1-7).
 - b. Israel unites against Gibeah (20:8-11).
 - c. Benjamin unites to save Gibeah against Israel (20:12-16).
 - d. Israel seeks God. Judah shall go first (20:17-18).
 - e. Israel loses 22,000 men in their first assault. God tells them to go again. (20:19-23).
 - f. Israel loses 18,000 men. Israel requests God at Bethel. God says He will deliver them. (20:24-28).
 - g. Benjamin defeated (20:29-36).
 - h. Israel kills the men of Benjamin and burns their cities that they found (20:37-48).
2. Israel seeks to save Benjamin (21:1-24).
- a. Israel repents at Bethel, refuses to give any daughter to Benjamin in marriage (21:1-4).
 - b. Israel asks who has not come up to worship God (21:5-7).
 - c. Israel slays all the non-virgins in Jabesh-gilead, since Jabesh-gilead had not come up to worship God (21:8-12).
 - d. The fugitives of Benjamin return and take the virgins for wives (21:13-15).
 - e. The elders wonder about more wives for Benjamin (21:16-18).
 - f. A solution is posed where the Benjamites take the women of Shiloh as wives (21:16-23).
- E. Conclusion: In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (21:24-25).

Thus the book ends showing how the nation has adopted ways to please God through pagan superstitions and their own hands. They do not leave things in God's hands, but are strictly on their own pagan ways, disobedient.

THE INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION:

Introduction

The introductory chapters are to be broken into three sections.

Israel's failure (Chapter 1)

The first section is the record of the tribes and their victories (and losses). It records essentially the attempts at victory and the subsequent included failures since they did not trust in the Lord for complete victory.

Israel's Return: Israel's call to repentance and their repentance (2:1-5)

The second section reveals the Angel of the Lord appearing to call them to repentance telling them essentially what Deuteronomy told them would happen. They had not trusted in the Lord and obeyed the covenant fully, and this was the reason for their failures.

Israel's Cycles of Depravity (2:6-23)

Now that Joshua died, the nation was moving to forgetting the covenant and the works which God had done. Thus the book repeats the cycles that Israel will move through in their continuing downward cycle to death.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the book contains two stories, each of which has no judge in them, demonstrating the principle that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

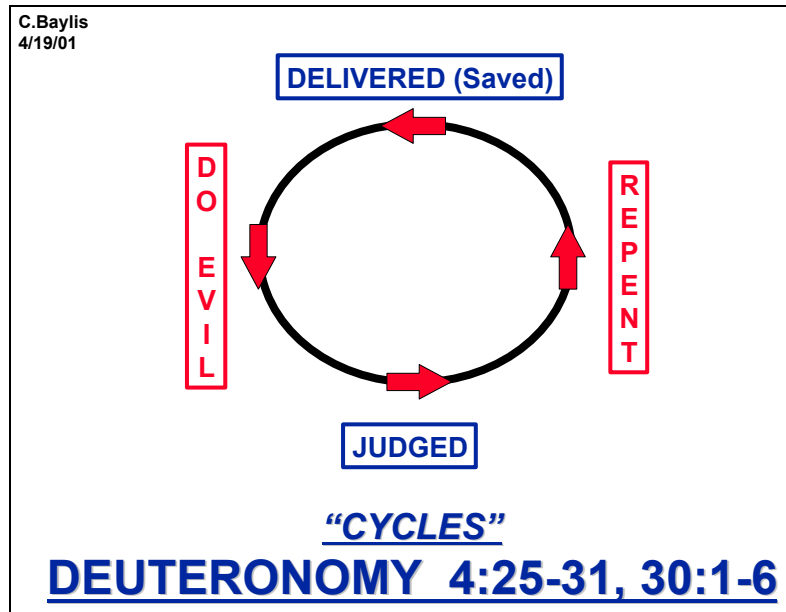
Micah and the Danites

This story is full of failures to regard the covenant, from the mother's making of an idol to thank YHWH for her son's confession, to a personal family priest being purchased, the Danites stealing him, and pouncing on a weak city in lieu of their being able to conquer what God had given them.

The Levite's Concubine

This story moves into places unimaginable for pagan's let alone a nation with a covenant with YHWH. A Levite who has a concubine, travels through Israel and a city of Benjamites attempts to molest him, and instead of that, molest his concubine until she is dead, or near death. He hacks her body up, sending a piece to each of the tribes. All tribes respond against Benjamin, who comes together to defend this homosexually depraved city. They are wiped out, and they then attempt to find loopholes in the Law to allow the Tribe of Benjamin to again have progeny. The story is one of man's human wisdom, working out what is best for himself, while claiming to have an interest in YHWH's good.

THE CYCLES ESTABLISHED: DEUTERONOMY 4:25-31, 30:1-6



Deuteronomy 4:25-31

DO EVIL

25 "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God *so as* to provoke Him to anger,

JUDGMENT

26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed. 27 "And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD shall drive you. 28 "And there you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

RETURN (Repent)

29 "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. 30 "When you are in

distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

DELIVERANCE

31 "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Deuteronomy 30:1-6

DO EVIL / JUDGMENT

30:1 "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you,

RETURN

2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,

DELIVERANCE

3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 "And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

THE CYCLES: THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Introduction to the Cycles: Judges 2:11-19

DO EVIL

11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals, 12 and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from *among* the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

JUDGMENT

14 And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around *them*, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

DELIVERANCE

16 Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

DO EVIL

17 And yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as *their fathers*.

DELIVERANCE

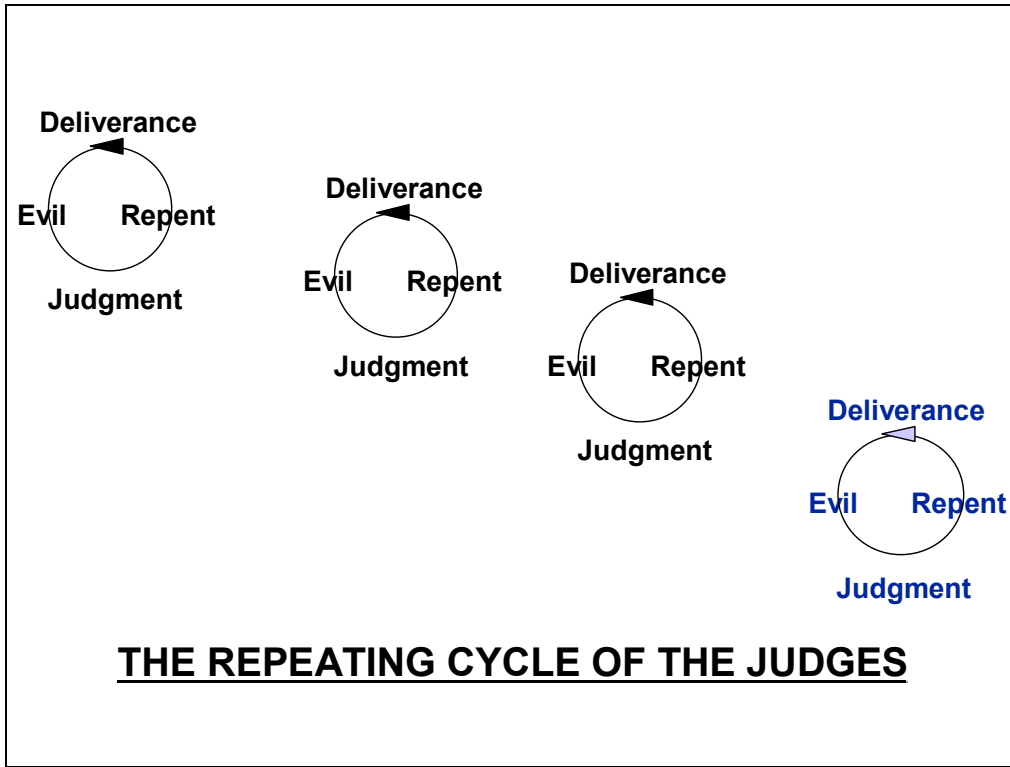
18 And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge;

RETURN

for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

DO EVIL

19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.



Othniel

Othniel is the first Judge listed in the beginning cycle of the Judges in the Book. He is a good judge, having been picked as a husband for Caleb's daughter after he proved he conquered the same way that Caleb had, by faith in the promise of Leviticus 26:6-8.

DO EVIL

5 And the sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; 6 and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. 7 And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

JUDGMENT

8 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

RETURN

9 And when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD,

DELIVERANCE

the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. 11 Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Ehud

Ehud, a left handed judge, is a Benjamite, a contrast to the left-handed Benjamites that appear at the end of the book, but not to deliver Israel from evil, but to defend the evil Benjamites from the righteous judgment of the nation.

DO EVIL

12 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.

JUDGMENT

So the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD . 13 And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they possessed the city of the palm trees. 14 And the sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

RETURN

15 But when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD,

DELIVERANCE

the LORD raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. . .

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was undisturbed for eighty years.

Shamgar

Shamgar has nothing mentioned of the need for him, nor repentance, but is one who is simply stated for the purpose of showing God's continuing deliverance. His name, son of Anath (a Canaanite god) is an interesting contrast for a judge who acts for God. Judges 5:6 (The Song of Deborah) mentions that there was a curse of death on Israel during his time. In addition, the next story, that of Deborah, begins as if continuing from Ehud (cf. 4:10).

DELIVERANCE

31 And after him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel.

Deborah

Deborah is unique. Not only is she a woman, but the story begins with her already judging, as opposed to being raised up at the time of the beginning of the story. In addition, she is a contrast to the army leader, Barak, who will not conquer in the Name of the Lord alone, but only if Deborah accompanies him into battle. For his fearful request the honor of the victory is predicted to be given to a woman. The victories, thus of women instead of men, is predominate.

DO EVIL

4:1 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died.

JUDGMENT

2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.

RETURN

3 And the sons of Israel cried to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years.

DELIVERANCE

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel. 24 And the hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Gideon

Gideon is interesting also because of his fearfulness unless he sees supernatural signs, not content to obey the simple word of God. He also has difficulty understanding why Israel is cursed, thinking that God has neglected His promises. His final years are marked with failure to claim glory to himself (taking things that the king ought not to take according to Deuteronomy 17), and leads the nation into idolatry. His story is followed by a sinful diversion as Gideon's son, Abimilech, attempts to turn the judge into a genealogical inheritance, and makes himself king. The diversion story is ended again with a woman who puts a stop to it all by executing Abimilech ('my father is king').

DO EVIL

6:1 Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD;

JUDGMENT

and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.⁶ So Israel was brought very low because of Midian,

RETURN

and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.

DELIVERANCE

8:28 So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

DO EVIL

8:33 Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god. 34 Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side;

Tola

Tola, is again, one of the judges illustrating God's deliverance without the accompanying story, the repentance, the evil, nor the deliverance.

DELIVERANCE

10:1 Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save Israel; and he lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. 2 And he judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

Jair

Jair, another judge, illustrates God's deliverance of Israel.

DELIVERANCE

3 And after him, Jair the Gileadite arose, and judged Israel twenty-two years. 4 And he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead that are called Havvoth-jair to this day. 5 And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

Jephthah

Jephthah's story has no mention of being raised up by God (though the Spirit comes upon him), but is sought out by the elders, who cry out to him (as opposed to crying out to God?). The very circumstances of his birth (by a harlot) indicate a problem in Israel, here with his father. Jephthah conquers, but only after giving away his daughter in a foolish vow, pagan and unneeded since God had promised the victory and did not need bribing like a pagan god.

DO EVIL

6 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

JUDGMENT

7 And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the sons of Ammon. 8 And they afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year; for eighteen years they afflicted all the sons of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in Gilead in the land of the Amorites. 9 And the sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed.

RETURN?

4 And it came about after a while that the sons of Ammon fought against Israel. 5 And it happened when the sons of Ammon fought against Israel that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob; 6 and they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our chief that we may fight against the sons of Ammon."

DELIVERANCE

29 Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon.

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Ibzan

From Ibzan to Abdon, three judges are mentioned to establish God's continuing deliverance of Israel.

DELIVERANCE

10 Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

Elon**DELIVERANCE**

11 Now Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel after him; and he judged Israel ten years. 12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

Abdon**DELIVERANCE**

13 Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him. 14 And he had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys; and he judged Israel eight years. 15 Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Samson

Samson is the pinnacle of the Judges stories in the book. He forms a microcosm of what Israel was as a nation. He intermarries with the pagans, lusts after their women, rebels against his mother and father's instruction, and generally sees the battles as vindicating his own honor, as over against YHWH's. However, God uses him to defeat the Philistines, demonstrating God's consistent deliverance, even in Israel, and their judges, depravity.

DO EVIL

13:1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD,

JUDGMENT

so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.

RETURN

DELIVERANCE

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no *children*. 3 Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman, and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no *children*, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. 4 "Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. 5 "For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

31 Then his brothers and all his father's household came down, took him, brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. Thus he had judged Israel twenty years.