

Israel Takes Possession of the Land (c. 1380 – c. 1365 BC)

Judges 1:1–19a, 20, 22–26

Joshua 15:14–19

Introduction

1 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?

2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

Judah and Simeon's Upland Campaign

3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

4 And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

The Conquest of Jerusalem

8 Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

Judah and Simeon's Lowland Campaign

9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

Caleb Conquers Hebron (Kiriath Arba)

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi.

Othniel Conquers Debir (Kiriath Sepher)

11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher:

12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

14 And it came to pass, when she came *to him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off *her ass*; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing:

for thou hast given me a south land;

give me also springs of water.

And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

14 And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak,

Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak.

15 And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher.

16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

18 And it came to pass, as she came *unto him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off *her ass*; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?

19 Who answered, Give me a blessing;

for thou hast given me a south land;

give me also springs of water.

And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

The Settlement of Arad

16 And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

The Conquest of Zephath/Hormah

17 And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.

The Conquest of the Lowland

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

Conclusion of the Judah-Simeon Alliance

19a And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out *the inhabitants of* the mountain;

20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

Joseph's Conquest of Bethel

22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the LORD *was* with them.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before *was* Luz.)

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.

25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which *is* the name thereof unto this day.

Israel's Failure to Completely Obey God's Command (c. 1380 – c. 1365 BC)

Joshua 13:13; 15:63; Judges 1:19b, 21, 27–36

Joshua 16:10; 17:12–13

Failure of Transjordan Tribes

Josh 13:13 Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.

Failure of Judah

Josh 15:63 As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

Judg 1:19b but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

Failure of Benjamin

Judg 1:21 And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

Failure of West Manasseh

Judg 1:27 Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.
28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

Failure of Ephraim

Judg 1:29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

Josh 17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities;

but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

13 Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

Josh 16:10 And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

Failure of Zebulun

30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

Failure of Asher

31 Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:

32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

Failure of Naphtali

33 Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, nor the inhabitants of Bethanath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Bethshemesh and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them.

Failure of Dan

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:
 35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.
 36 And the coast of the Amorites *was* from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

God Confronts Israel (c. 1380 – c. 1365 BC)

Judges 2:1–5

1 And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.
 2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?
 3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.
 4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.
 5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

A Family Does What is Right in Its Own Eyes (c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC)

Judges 17:1–6

1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah.
 2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver *is* with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed *be thou* of the LORD, my son.
 3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.
 4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.
 5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.
 6 In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

A Levite Does What is Right in His Own Eyes (c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC)

Judges 17:7–13

7 And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there.
 8 And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.
 9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place*.
 10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.
 11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.
 12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.
 13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to *my* priest.

A Tribe Does What is Right in Its Own Eyes (c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC)

Judges 18

Joshua 19:47

Dan's Failure to Conquer Its Inheritance Leads to a Search

1 In those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

47a And the coast of the children of Dan went out *too little* for them:

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valor, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

The Spies Inquire of Micah's Levite

3 When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place*? and what hast thou here?

4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

The Spies Discover and Appraise Laish

7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

The Spies Report Back

8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye?

9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good: and *are* ye still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth.

Some of the Danites Decide to Migrate

11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjathjearim.

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

They Acquire Micah's Priest and Idols

14 Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even* unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war.

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

Micah's Futile Pursuit

22 *And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, What aileth thee?

25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

The Conquest of Laish

27 And they took *the things* which Micah had made,

47b therefore the children of Dan

<p>and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people <i>that were</i> at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.</p> <p>28 And <i>there was</i> no deliverer, because it <i>was</i> far from Zidon, and they had no business with <i>any</i> man; and it was in the valley that <i>lieth</i> by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.</p> <p>29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city <i>was</i> Laish at the first.</p> <p>30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.</p> <p>31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.</p>	<p>went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword,</p> <p>and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.</p>
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Scripture quotations are from *The King James Version (KJV)*. The KJV is in the public domain.

Chronological Notes

1) Judges 1:1–2:5.

- A) In a previous reading, we derived a date of c. 1380 BC for the death of Joshua. The next chronological notation we have is of the Mesopotamian oppression mentioned in Judges 3:8 which lasted for 8 years. How many years elapsed between Joshua's death and the beginning of that first oppression?
- B) One indication of the length of this interval is found in Joshua 24:31: "Israel worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and as long as the elderly men who outlived him remained alive. These men had experienced firsthand everything the LORD had done for Israel" (cf. Judges 2:7). Who are these men? Clearly, they cannot be part of the Exodus generation—that entire group of people wandered in the wilderness until they died (Num 14:26–35; 26:64–65). They must be those men who were under the age of 20 at the time of the Kadesh-barnea rebellion (military service age—cf. Num 14:29), most likely in their late teens (ages 17–19).
- C) For the sake of argument, let's say that the elderly men who outlived Joshua were 19 at the time of the Kadesh-barnea rebellion of 1445 BC (Joshua was 45 at the time and so around 26 years older). This means that they were 84 when Joshua died in 1380 BC and thus already old. Most of them would have died within the next 5–10 years. This moves the calendar to c. 1375–1370 BC.
- D) The other relevant piece of textual data is found in Judges 2:10–11: "That entire generation passed away; a new generation grew up that had not personally experienced the LORD's presence or seen what he had done for Israel. The Israelites did evil before the LORD by worshiping the Baals." Once the elderly men who outlived Joshua died, another generation took their place. This generation consisted of the young men who had been growing up during the last years of the elders. If we allow 5–10 years for this generation to mature and fall into idolatry, the calendar has now moved to c. 1370–1360 BC, with 1370 representing the lower estimate of 10 years and 1360 representing the higher estimate of 20 years.
- E) In conclusion, we estimate approximately 15 years between Joshua's death and the beginning of the first oppression—a date of c. 1365 BC.

2) Judges 17–21.

- A) Commentators agree that the two appendices of Judges (Judg 17–18 and Judg 19–21) are set in the same general period as the judge narratives from Othniel to Samson, but do not follow them chronologically.¹ The principle pieces of evidence

¹ Barry G. Webb, "The Book of Judges," *NICOT*, pp. 35, 419. So also Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000), p. 211 n. 1; Daniel I. Block, "Judges, Ruth," *NAC*, p. 511; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, pp. 178–180; Herbert Wolf, "Judges," *EBC*, Vol. 3, p. 489; Mark J. Boda, "Judges," *EBC, Rev. Ed.*, Vol. 2, p. 1239; S. Talmon, *King, Cult and Calendar*,

offered in support of this view are the mention of “Jonathan the son [or descendant²] of Gershom, son of Moses” (Judg 18:30) and “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron” (Judg 20:28). Unless both genealogical notations have been compressed, these references suggest that the events described in Judges 17–21 took place relatively early in the post-conquest period, probably within a century of the death of Joshua.³ For this reason, I have placed Judges 17–21 after Judges 2:5 in the reading plan and dated them c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC.

Textual Notes

1) Concerning Judges 18:30.

- A) The KJV, NASB, and LEB read “Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.” The ESV, NIV, HCSB, NET, and NLT read “Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses.” Why the difference of translation? “It appears that certain scribes were uncomfortable with the association between this young Levite and Moses’ clan, and so they opted to connect him to the northern tribe of Manasseh by alluding to that idolatrous southern king Manasseh (2 Kgs 21), whose behavior caused the exile of the southern kingdom (2 Kgs 21:10–15; 23:26–27; 24:1–4).”⁴ Most scholars agree that the original text identified Jonathan as a direct descendent of Moses.

pp. 45–48; Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, “Judges and Ruth,” *TOTC*, p. 176; F. Duane Lindsey, “Judges,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 408. C. F. Keil & Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 176; Israel P. Loken, *The Old Testament Historical Books: An Introduction*, p. 70.

² The term “son of” (*ben*) usually indicates a direct father-son relationship, but it can also mean “descendant of,” as in the case of 1 Chronicles 4:1. In this verse, the sons of Judah are given as Pharez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur and Shobal. We know from Genesis 46:12 that Hezron was the son of Pharez, so Hezron was actually the *grandson* of Judah, not his direct son.

³ Daniel I. Block, “Judges, Ruth,” *NAC*, 511.

⁴ For more detail, see the Note on v. 30 in Mark J. Boda, “Judges,” *EBC rev. ed.*, p. 1253 and Block, p. 513.