

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

Judges 1:1–19a, 20, 22–26

Joshua 15:14–19

Introduction

1 After the death of Joshua, the Israelites inquired of Yahweh, saying, “Who will go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?”

2 And Yahweh said, “Judah will go up. I hereby give the land into his hand.”

Judah and Simeon’s Upland Campaign

3 And Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Go up with me into my allotment, and let us fight against the Canaanites; then I too will go with you into your allotment.” And Simeon went with him.

4 And Judah went up, and Yahweh gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand, and they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek.

5 At Bezek they came upon Adoni-bezek, and they fought against him and defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 And Adoni-bezek fled, but they pursued after him; they caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

7 Adoni-bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to pick up *scraps* under my table; just as I have done, so God has repaid to me. And they brought him *to* Jerusalem, and he died there.

The Conquest of Jerusalem

8 The descendants of Judah fought against Jerusalem, and they captured it, put it to the sword, and set the city on fire.

Judah and Simeon’s Lowland Campaign

9 Afterward the descendants of Judah pursued to fight against the Canaanites who were living in the hill country, the Negev, and the Shephelah.

Caleb Conquers Hebron (Kiriath Arba)

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites living in Hebron (the former name of Hebron *was* Kiriath Arba).

And they defeated Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi.

Othniel Conquers Debir (Kiriath Sepher)

11 And from there they went to the inhabitants of Debir (the former name of Debir *was* Kiriath Sepher).

12 And Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kiriath Sepher and captures it, I will give to him Acsah my daughter as a wife.”

13 Othniel son of Kenaz, the younger brother of Caleb, captured it, and he gave to him Acsah his daughter as a wife.

14 When she came *to him*, she urged him to ask her father for a field. As she dismounted from the donkey, Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”

15 And she said to him, “Give me a gift; you have given me the land of the Negev, and give me also a spring of water.” And Caleb gave to her the upper and lower spring.

14 Caleb drove out from there three of Anak’s sons, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak.

15 And from there he went up against the inhabitants of Debir (the former name of Debir *was* Kiriath Sepher).

16 And Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kiriath Sepher and captures it, I will give to him my daughter Acsah as a wife.”

17 Othniel son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it, and he gave to him Acsah his daughter as a wife.

18 When she came *to him* she urged him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”

19 And she said to him, “Give to me a gift; you have given me the land of the Negev, and you must give to me a spring of water.” And he gave to her the upper and lower spring.

The Settlement of Arad

16 The descendants of Hobab *the* Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up with the descendants of Judah from the city of palms *into* the wilderness of Judah, which *is* in *the* Negev *near* Arad. And they went and settled with the people.

The Conquest of Zephath/Hormah

17 And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they defeated the Canaanites inhabiting Zephath; they utterly destroyed it, so he called the name of the city Hormah.

The Conquest of the Lowland

18 Judah captured Gaza and its territory, Ashkelon and its territory, and Ekron and its territory.

Conclusion of the Judah-Simeon Alliance

19 And Yahweh was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country,

20 They gave Hebron to Caleb just as Moses said, and he drove out the three sons of Anak from there.

Joseph's Conquest of Bethel

22 Likewise, the house of Joseph went up *against* Bethel, and Yahweh *was* with them.

23 And the house of Joseph spied out Bethel (the former name of the city was Luz).

24 And when the spies saw a man leaving the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance of the city, and we will deal kindly with you."

25 So he showed them the entrance of the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword, but they let go the man and all his family.

26 And the man went *to* the land of the Hittites, and he built a city and named it Luz; this *is* its name to 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 17:12–13; 16:10

Failure of Transjordan Tribes

13:13 But the Israelites did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites; Geshur and Maacah live among Israel to this day.

Failure of Judah

Josh 15:63 But the descendants of Judah were unable to drive out the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so the Jebusites live with the descendants of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.

Jdg 1:19b but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they *had* chariots of iron.

Failure of Benjamin

Jdg 1:21 But the descendants of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem, so the Jebusites have lived among the descendants of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

Failure of West Manasseh

Jdg 1:27 Manasseh did not drive out Beth-Sean and its towns, or Taanach and its towns, or the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its towns, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns; the Canaanites *were* determined to live in this land.
28 And it happened, when Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they never totally drove them out.

Failure of Ephraim

Jdg 1:29 Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer, so the Canaanites lived in their midst in Gezer.

Josh 17:12 But the descendants of Manasseh were not able to take possession of these towns;

the Canaanites were determined to live in this land.
13 And it happened, when the Israelites grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor but never drove them out completely.

Josh 16:10 But they did not drive out the Canaanites who were dwelling in Gezer, and so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, but they became forced laborers.

Failure of Zebulun

30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or Nahalol, so the Canaanites lived in their midst and became *subjected* to forced labor.

Failure of Asher

31 Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob,
32 so the Asherites lived in the midst of the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out.

Failure of Naphtali

33 Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or Beth-anath, but lived in the midst of the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth-anath became forced labor for them.

Failure of Dan

34 The Amorites pressed the descendants of Dan to the hill country, and they did not allow them to come down to the plain;
35 the Amorites *were* determined to live in Har-heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph was heavy *on* them, and they became *subjected* to forced labor.

36 The border of the Amorites *ran* from the ascent of Akrabbim from Sela and upward.

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

Judges 2:1–5

- 1 And the angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, “I brought you up from Egypt, and I brought you to the land that I had promised to your ancestors. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you.
- 2 And *as for* you, do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; break down their altars.’ But you did not listen to my voice. Why would you do such a thing?
- 3 Now I say, I will not drive them out from before you; they will become as thorns for you, and their gods will be a trap for you.”
- 4 And as the angel of Yahweh spoke these words to all the Israelites, the people wept bitterly.
- 5 And they called the name of this place Bokim, and there they sacrificed to Yahweh.

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

Judges 17:1–6

- 1 There was a man from the hill country of Ephraim; his name *was* Micah.
- 2 And he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *pieces* of silver that were taken from you, and about which you also pronounced a curse in my hearing, are with me; I took it.” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by Yahweh.”
- 3 He returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother thought, “I will certainly consecrate to Yahweh the pieces of silver from my hand for my son to make an idol of cast metal; now then, I will return them to you.”
- 4 When he returned the pieces of silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver, and she gave it to the smith, and he made it *into* an idol of cast metal; and it was in the house of Micah.
- 5 The man Micah had for himself a shrine, and he made an ephod and teraphim, and he appointed one of his sons who became a priest for him.
- 6 In those days there was no king in Israel, and each one did what 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 There was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, from the clan of Judah; he *was* a Levite and *was* dwelling as a foreigner there.
- 8 And the man went from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to live as a foreigner wherever he could find *a place*. And he came *to* the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, to continue his journey.
- 9 And Micah said to him, “From where do you come?” And he said to him, “I *am* a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah; I *am* going to dwell as a foreigner wherever I can find *a place*.”
- 10 And Micah said to him, “Stay with me and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give to you ten pieces of silver a year, a set of clothes, and your food.” So the Levite went *with him*.
- 11 The Levite agreed to stay with the man; and the young man became as one of his sons.
- 12 So Micah appointed the Levite, and the young man became a priest for him; and he was in the house of Micah.
- 13 And Micah said, “Now I know Yahweh will make me prosperous, because the Levite has become 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 *was* seeking territory for itself to live in, because until that day it had not been allotted territory among the tribes of Israel.

47a The border of the descendants of Dan continued beyond them,

2 The descendants of Dan sent from the whole number of their clan five capable men from Zorah and Eshtaol to spy out the land and to explore it. And they said to them, “Go, explore the land.” And they went to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and they spent the night there.

The Spies Inquire of Micah’s Levite

- 3 While they *were* with the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite, and they turned aside there and said to him, “Who brought you here? What *are* you doing in this place, and what is your business here?”
- 4 And he said to them, “Micah did such and such for me and hired me, and I became his priest.”
- 5 And they said to him, “Please inquire of God that we may know whether our journey that we *are* going on will be successful.”
- 6 And the priest said to them, “Go in peace. Yahweh *is* in front of you on the journey you want to go on.”

The Spies Discover and Appraise Laish

7 And the five men went and came to Laish, and they observed the people who *were* living according to the customs of *the* Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting, and lacking nothing in the land, and possessing restraint. And they *were* far from *the* Sidonians and had no word with anyone.

The Spies Report Back

8 They came to their relatives *at* Zorah and Eshtaol, and their relatives said to them, “What *do* you *report*?”

9 And they said to them, “Come, let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and *it is* very good. Will you do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, to enter, to possess the land.

10 When you go you will come to an unsuspecting people, and the land is spread out on all sides; God has given a place into your hands where there is no lack of anything that *is* on the earth.”

Some of the Danites Decide to Migrate

11 Six hundred men from the clan of the Danites from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed *with* weapons of war, set out from there.

12 They went up and encamped at Kiriath Jearim in Judah. Therefore they called this place Camp of Dan to this day; it is west of Kiriath Jearim.

13 From there they crossed *over to* the hill country of Ephraim, and they came to the house of Micah.

They Acquire Micah’s Priest and Idols

14 And the five men that went out to spy out the land (*that is*, Laish) responded and said to their relatives, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, teraphim, and an idol of cast metal? So then, consider what you must do.”

15 So they turned to that direction, and they came to the house of the young Levite, the house of Micah, and they greeted him.

16 And six hundred men from the descendants of Dan, armed *with* their weapons of war, *were* standing *at* the entrance of the gate.

17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and they entered there *and* took the carved divine image, ephod, teraphim, and the molten image. The priest *was* standing *at* the entrance of the gate *with* the six hundred men armed *with* the weapons of war.

18 When these went to Micah’s house, they took the divine carved image, ephod, the teraphim, and the molten image, and the priest asked them, “What *are* you doing?”

19 And they said to him, “Keep quiet! Put your hand on your mouth and come with us and be for us a father and a priest. Is it better being a priest for a house of one man or being a priest for a tribe and clan in Israel?”

20 The priest accepted the offer, and he took the ephod, teraphim, and molten image and went along with the people.

21 And they turned and went and put the little children, the livestock, and the valuable property in front of them.

Micah’s Futile Pursuit

22 When they were at a distance from the house, Micah and the men who *were* in the houses that *were* near the house of Micah cried out, and they overtook the descendants of Dan.

23 And they called to the descendants of Dan, who turned around to face them, and they said to Micah, “What is the matter with you that you assembled together?”

24 He said, “You took away my gods that I had made, and the priest, and then you go *away*. What *is* now left for me? How can you say to me, ‘What is the matter?’”

25 And the descendants of Dan said to him, “You should not let your voice be heard among us, so that ill-tempered men will not attack you, and take your life and the lives of your household.”

26 And the descendants of Dan went their way. When Micah saw that they *were* stronger than him, he turned to return to his house.

The Conquest of Laish

27 And they took what Micah had made, and his priest, and they came to Laish, to a quiet and unsuspecting people, and they put them to the sword and burned the city with fire.

28 There was no deliverer, because it *was* far from Sidon, and they had had no dealings with anyone. It *was* in the valley that belonged to Beth-rehob, and they rebuilt the city and lived in it.

29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after Dan their ancestor, who was born to Israel; but the former name of the city *was* Laish.

30 And the descendants of Dan set up for themselves the carved divine image, and Jonathan son of Gershom, son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests for the tribe of the Danites until the time of the captivity of the land.

47b because the descendants of Dan went up and fought with Lesham, and they captured and struck it with the edge of the sword,

and they took possession of it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor.

31 So they set up for themselves the carved divine image that Micah had made, all the days that the house of God was in Shiloh.	
---	--

Scripture quotations are from the [Lexham English Bible \(LEB\)](#). Copyright 2012 [Logos Bible Software](#). Lexham is a registered trademark of [Logos Bible Software](#).

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 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

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*, 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.

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.

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