

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 it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the LORD, saying, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

2 The LORD said, “Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand.”

Judah and Simeon’s Upland Campaign

3 Then Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me into the territory allotted me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I in turn will go with you into the territory allotted you.” So Simeon went with him.

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

5 They found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

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

The Conquest of Jerusalem

8 Then the sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.

Judah and Simeon’s Lowland Campaign

9 Afterward the sons of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites living in the hill country and in the Negev and in the lowland.

Caleb Conquers Hebron (Kiriath Arba)

10 So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron formerly *was* Kiriath-arba); and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai.

Othniel Conquers Debir (Kiriath Sepher)

11 Then from there he went against the inhabitants of Debir (now the name of Debir formerly *was* Kiriath-sepher).

12 And Caleb said, “The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah for a wife.”

13 Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, captured it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah for a wife.

14 Then it came about when she came *to him*, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. Then she alighted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”

15 She said to him, “Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water.”

So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

14 Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak.

15 Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly *was* Kiriath-sepher.

16 And Caleb said, “The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife.”

17 Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife.

18 It came about that when she came *to him*, she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she alighted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”

19 Then she said, “Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water.”

So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

The Settlement of Arad

16 The descendants of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the city of palms with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad; and they went and lived with the people.

The Conquest of Zephath/Hormah

17 Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they struck the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah.

The Conquest of the Lowland

18 And Judah took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory.

Conclusion of the Judah-Simeon Alliance

19a Now the LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country;

20 Then they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had promised; and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak.

Joseph's Conquest of Bethel

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

23 The house of Joseph spied out Bethel (now the name of the city was formerly Luz).

24 The spies saw a man coming out of the city and they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city and we will treat you kindly."

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

26 The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz which 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

Josh 13:13 But the sons of Israel did not dispossess the Geshurites or the Maacathites; for Geshur and Maacath live among Israel until this day.

Failure of Judah

Josh 15:63 Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day.

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

Failure of Benjamin

Judg 1:21 But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

Failure of West Manasseh

Judg 1:27 But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land.

28 It came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

Failure of Ephraim

Judg 1:29 Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.

Josh 17:12 But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities,

because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land.

13 It came about when the sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

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

Failure of Zebulun

30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor.

Failure of Asher

31 Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob.

32 So the Asherites lived among 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 the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath became forced labor for them.

Failure of Dan

34 Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley;

35 yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the house of Joseph grew strong, they became 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 Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you,
2 and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?
3 Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they will become *as thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.’”
4 When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.
5 So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

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

Judges 17:1–6

- 1 Now there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.
2 He said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *pieces* of silver which were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse in my hearing, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD.”
3 He then returned the eleven hundred *pieces* of silver to his mother, and his mother said, “I wholly dedicate the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son to make a graven image and a molten image; now therefore, I will return them to you.”
4 So when he returned the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred *pieces* of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made them into a graven image and a molten image, and they were in the house of Micah.
5 And the man Micah had a shrine and he made an ephod and household idols and consecrated one of his sons, that he might become his priest.
6 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man 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 Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite; and he was staying there.
8 Then the man departed from the city, from Bethlehem in Judah, to stay wherever he might find *a place*; and as he made his journey, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah.
9 Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?” And he said to him, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I may find *a place*.”
10 Micah then said to him, “Dwell with me and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *pieces* of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and your maintenance.” So the Levite went *in*.
11 The Levite agreed to live with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons.
12 So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in the house of Micah.
13 Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, seeing I have a Levite as 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 of Israel; and in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in, for until that day an inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel.

47a The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them;

2 So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it; and they said to them, “Go, search the land.” And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

The Spies Inquire of Micah’s Levite

- 3 When they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite; and they turned aside there and said to him, “Who brought you here? And what are you doing in this *place*? And what do you have here?”
4 He said to them, “Thus and so has Micah done to me, and he has hired me and I have become his priest.”
5 They said to him, “Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether our way on which we are going will be prosperous.”
6 The priest said to them, “Go in peace; your way in which you are going has the LORD’s approval.”

The Spies Discover and Appraise Laish

7 Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; for there was no ruler humiliating *them* for anything in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone.

The Spies Report Back

8 When they came back to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, “What *do you report?*”

9 They said, “Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you sit still? Do not delay to go, to enter, to possess the land.

10 When you enter, you will come to a secure people with a spacious land; for God has given it into your hand, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth.”

Some of the Danites Decide to Migrate

11 Then from the family of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men armed with weapons of war set out.

12 They went up and camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. Therefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim.

13 They passed from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

They Acquire Micah’s Priest and Idols

14 Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish said to their kinsmen, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod and household idols and a graven image and a molten image? Now therefore, consider what you should do.”

15 They turned aside there and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, to the house of Micah, and asked him of his welfare.

16 The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the sons of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate.

17 Now the five men who went to spy out the land went up *and* entered there, *and* took the graven image and the ephod and household idols and the molten image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war.

18 When these went into Micah’s house and took the graven image, the ephod and household idols and the molten image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

19 They said to him, “Be silent, put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?”

20 The priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod and household idols and the graven image and went among the people.

21 Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the livestock and the valuables in front of them.

Micah’s Futile Pursuit

22 When they had gone some distance from the house of Micah, the men who *were* in the houses near Micah’s house assembled and overtook the sons of Dan.

23 They cried to the sons of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, “What is *the matter* with you, that you have assembled together?”

24 He said, “You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what do I have besides? So how can you say to me, ‘What is *the matter* with you?’”

25 The sons of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, or else fierce men will fall upon you and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household.”

26 So the sons of Dan went on their way; and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

The Conquest of Laish

27 Then they took what Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the edge of the sword; and they burned the city with fire.

28 And there was no one to deliver *them*, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob.

And they rebuilt the city and lived in it.

29 They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish.

47b for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword

and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father.

30 The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land.

31 So they set up for themselves Micah's graven image which he had made, all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh.

Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation La Habra, Calif. Used by permission. All rights reserved. For Permission to Quote Information visit <http://www.lockman.org>.

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

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.

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.

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.