

KNOWING CHRIST THROUGH THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

I. Overview

HISTORY

The 12 History books continue with the story of the people of Israel and the conquest of the Promised Land in the book of Joshua, the continuous cycle of disobedience in the book of Judges, the first kings and the United Kingdom, Divided Kingdom, the Assyrian invasion, Babylonian invasion, the years in exile, and the return from exile during the Persian rule.

JOSHUA

Who: Unknown (Joshua)
What: History of Conquest
Where: Canaan
When: c. 1405 BC–1383 BC
Why: To assure the people that obedience to God is rewarded.

Outline (Chapter)

- The Conquest (1-12)
- Dividing the Land (13-22)
- Joshua's Farewell (23-24)

Key Verse: Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. (Joshua 1:7)

JUDGES

Who: Unknown (Samuel)
What: History before Kings
Where: Canaan
When: c. 1086 BC–1004 BC
Why: To stress the importance of remaining loyal to God.

Outline (Chapter)

- Reasons for Failure (1)
- The Judges: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson (2-16)
- Days of Lawlessness (17-21)

Key Verse: In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. (Judges 21:25)

RUTH

Who: Unknown (Samuel)
What: Story of Faithful Foreigner
Where: Canaan
When: c. 1046 BC–1035 BC
Why: To demonstrate the kind of faithfulness, godliness, loyalty, and love that God desires for us.

Outline (Chapter)

- Naomi and Ruth (1)
- Ruth meets Boaz (2)
- The Threshing Floor (3)
- The Marriage (4)

Key Verse: But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16)

1 SAMUEL

Who: Unknown
What: History of Events
Where: Israel and Judah
When: c. 1050 BC–750 BC
Why: To record how Israel got a king.

Outline (Chapter)

- Samuel (1-7)
- Saul (8-15)
- Saul and David (16-31)

Key Verse: But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)

2 SAMUEL

Who: Unknown
What: History of Events
Where: Israel and Judah
When: c. 1050 BC–750 BC
Why: To demonstrate the prominence of David's line.

Outline (Chapter)

- David's Reign in Judah (1-4)
- David Unites Israel (5-10)
- David and Bathsheba (11-12)
- Family Problems (13-20)
- Conclusions (21-24)

Key Verse: I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. (2 Samuel 7:9)

HISTORY

1 KINGS

Who: Unknown
What: Evaluation of the Kings
Where: In Exile in Babylon
When: 590 BC–570 BC
Why: To demonstrate the value of obeying and the danger of disobeying God.

Outline (Chapter)

- King Solomon's Reign (1-4)
- Temple Construction (5-8)
- Queen of Sheba (9-10)
- Kingdom Splits (11-16)
- Prophet Elijah (17-22)

Key Verse: So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. (1 Kings 3:9a)

2 KINGS

Who: Unknown
What: Evaluation of the Kings
Where: In Exile in Babylon
When: 590 BC–550 BC
Why: To demonstrate the value of obeying God.

Outline (Chapter)

- The Prophet Elisha (1-8)
- Kings of Judah and Israel (9-16)
- Fall of Israel (17-21)
- King Josiah (22-23)
- Fall of Judah; Exile (24-25)

Key Verse: And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: "O Lord, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth." (2 Kings 19:15)

1 CHRONICLES

Who: Ezra
What: Review of David's Reign
Where: Judah
When: c. 450 BC–425 BC
Why: To encourage the remnant.
Key Verse: "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." (1 Chronicles 4:10)

2 CHRONICLES

Who: Ezra
What: Highlights Kings of Judah
Where: Judah
When: c. 450 BC–425 BC
Why: To show the benefits that come from obedience.
Key Verse: As for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him. (2 Chronicles 13:10a)

EZRA

Who: Ezra
What: History of Reconstruction
Where: Judah
When: c. 457 BC–444 BC
Why: Provide a detailed account of the exiles' return and the rebuilding of the Temple.

Outline (Chapter)

- The Exiles Return (1-2)
- Rebuilding the Temple (3-6)
- The Work of Ezra (7-10)

Key Verse: With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever. And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." (Ezra 3:11)

NEHEMIAH

Who: Nehemiah
What: History of Reconstruction
Where: Judah
When: c. 445 BC–430 BC
Why: Rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Outline (Chapter)

- Nehemiah Returns (1-2)
- The Rebuilding of the Walls (3)
- Threats and Persecution (4-7)
- Renewal of Covenant (8-10)
- Dedication and Laws (11-13)

Key Verse: Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

ESTHER

Who: Unknown
What: Story of Redemption
Where: Persia
When: c. 464 BC–435 BC
Why: To demonstrate that, in all circumstances, God is in control.

Outline (Chapter)

- Search for a new Queen (1-2)
- Haman's Plot (3)
- Esther's Plan (4-6)
- Haman's Downfall (7)
- Esther saves the Jews (8-10)

Key Verse: For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14)

II. The Historical Books

A. Joshua

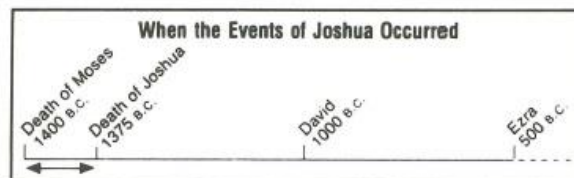
1. Summary

The book of Joshua forges a link between the Pentateuch and the remainder of Israel's history. Through three major military campaigns beginning in 1406 B.C., the people of Israel learned a crucial lesson under Joshua's capable leadership: victory comes through **faith** in God and **obedience** to his word, rather than through numerical or military superiority. The theme is underscored by the name of the book itself. Joshua's name, which means "The Lord is salvation," is symbolic of the fact that although he is the leader of Israel during the conquest, the **Lord** is the Conqueror.⁶⁷

Joshua at a Glance

FOCUS	CONQUEST OF CANAAN		SETTLEMENT IN CANAAN			
REFERENCE	1:1 ————— 6:1 ————— 13:8 ————— 14:1 ————— 20:1 ————— 22:1 ————— 24:33					
DIVISION	PREPARATION OF ISRAEL	CONQUEST OF CANAAN	SETTLEMENT OF EAST JORDAN	SETTLEMENT OF WEST JORDAN	SETTLEMENT OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY	CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUED SETTLEMENT
TOPIC	ENTERING CANAAN	CONQUERING CANAAN	DIVIDING CANAAN			
	PREPARATION	SUBJECTION	POSSESSION			
LOCATION	JORDAN RIVER	CANAAN	TWO AND A HALF TRIBES—EAST JORDAN NINE AND A HALF TRIBES—WEST JORDAN			
TIME	c. 1 MONTH	c. 7 YEARS	c. 8 YEARS			

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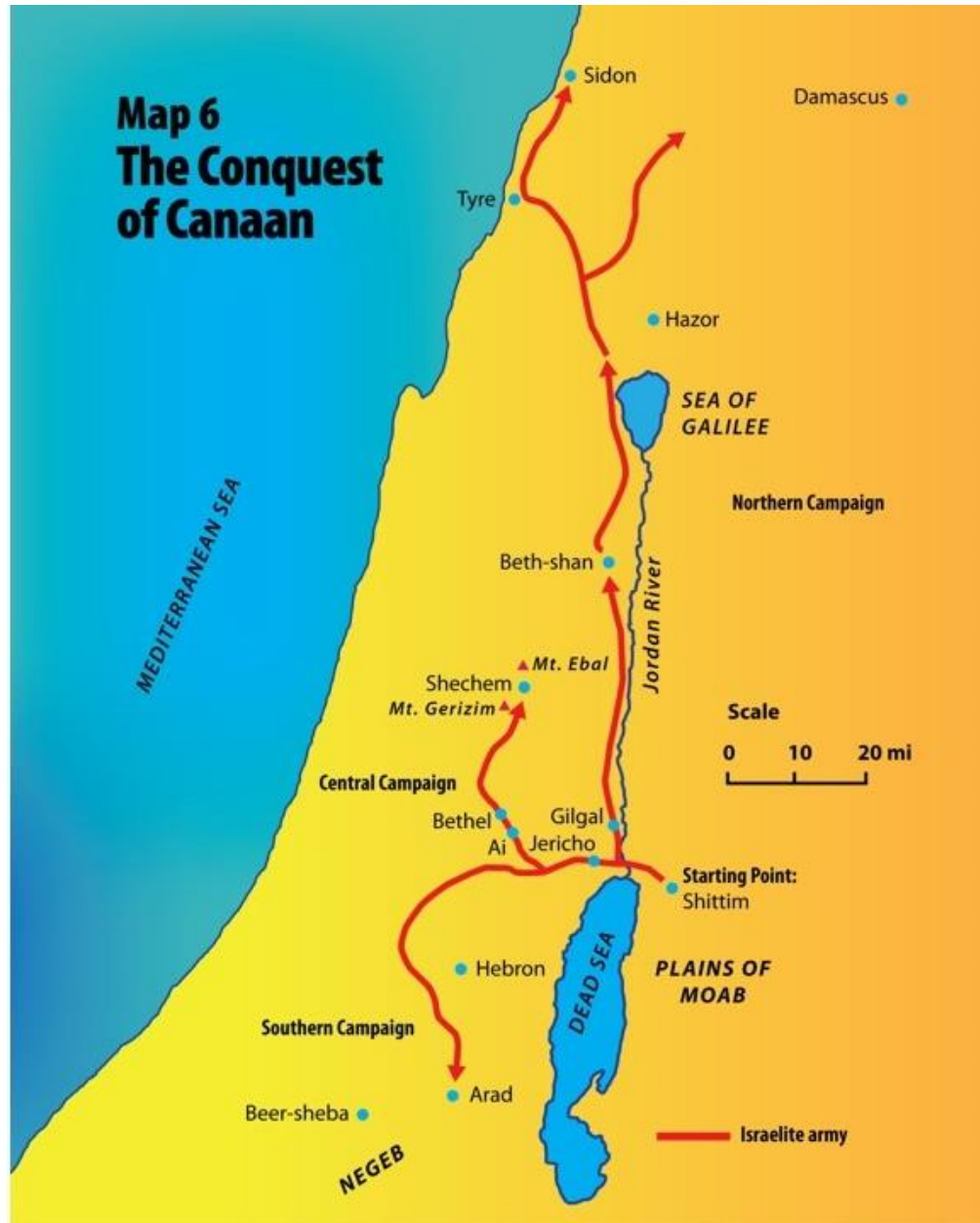


⁶⁷ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 66.

2. Events

Chap Summary

- 1 Moses died at the end of Deuteronomy. The Lord had appointed Joshua to take his place as Israel's leader. The Lord directed Joshua to lead the people across the Jordan River and into Canaan, the Promised Land, where they would defeat the Canaanites living there.



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JOSHUA 1:1-13

(a “Chiasm”)

¹ After the death of **Moses the servant of the LORD**,

it came to pass that the LORD spoke to **Joshua** the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying:

² “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and **all this people**, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel.

³ “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon **I have given you**, as I said to Moses.

⁴ “From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, **shall be your territory**. ⁵ “No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life;

as I was with Moses, **so I will be with you**. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

⁶ “**Be strong and of good courage**, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ “Only **be strong and very courageous**,

that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant **commanded you**; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left,

that you may **prosper** wherever you go.

⁸ “**This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.**

For then you will make your way **prosperous**, and then you will have good success.

⁹ “Have I not **commanded you**?

Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed,

for the **LORD your God is with you** wherever you go.”

¹⁰ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ¹¹ “Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to **go in to possess the land**

which the LORD your **God is giving** you to possess.’ ”

¹² And to the **Reubenites**, the **Gadites**, and half the tribe of **Manasseh**

Joshua spoke, saying,

¹³ “Remember the word which **Moses the servant of the LORD** commanded you.

- 2 Joshua sent two spies into Canaan. The prostitute Rahab hid the spies on the roof of her house in the city of Jericho. Rahab had heard about the Lord and feared him. The spies promised to spare Rahab and her family when they returned to conquer Jericho. They instructed her to tie a scarlet cord to her window when Israel came into Jericho. They promised they would not destroy that house or anyone in it.
- 3-4 Israel crossed the Jordan River into Canaan. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant led the way. When they came to the edge of the Jordan River, God parted it, and the Israelites crossed over on dry ground. Israel set twelve memorial stones at the place where the priests stood with the ark and then carried them with them to set them up in Gilgal.
- 5 While they were encamped in Gilgal, the Lord commanded Joshua to circumcise this new generation of Israelites who had been born in the wilderness. They then celebrated a Passover meal. The Lord caused the manna to cease, and the people ate the produce of Canaan from that point on. Joshua was met by the “commander of the army of the Lord.” This might have been an angel or a manifestation of the Lord himself. Joshua realized that the Lord was on his side and with him, commanding the army of the Lord, presumably angels.
- 6 Israel conquered Jericho, a fortified (walled) city. The walls of Jericho fell after the Israelites marched around the city walls once a day for six days, seven times on the seventh day, with the priests blowing their horns daily and the people shouting on the last day. The city and its people were devoted to destruction.⁶⁸ Rahab and her house were spared.⁶⁹
- Joshua 6:17**
¹⁷ And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.
- 7-9 God had told Israel in Deuteronomy 20:16-17 to destroy everything in the conquered cities (except precious metals, which were placed in the Lord’s treasury). However, the Israelite Achan kept some of the things that were devoted to destruction. The Lord first caused Israel to lose a battle. Then he killed Achan and his family. With the defilement removed, Israel defeated Ai.
- 10 Five kings united their armies against Israel. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still to allow a longer daylight time for Israel to defeat the opposing armies. The Lord listened to Joshua and made the sun stand still.
- 11-12 Israel conquered southern and northern Canaan.

⁶⁸ Though such total destruction may be offensive to modern sensibilities, the Bible insists that the total destruction of Jericho was commanded by the Lord himself (Deut. 20:16–17), and it gives evidence of God’s judgment on the terrible sin of the Canaanites. This order to destroy every living thing was not a license to kill indiscriminately in other warfare, because cities outside the Land of Promise were to be treated differently (Deut. 20:10–15). Rather, it was intended to punish the Canaanites (whose iniquity had become complete; cf. Gen. 15:16) and to protect the Israelites from falling into idolatry and apostasy (Deut. 7:1–6). The extermination of the Canaanites was a special case of divine judgment intruding into a period otherwise characterized by common grace; as such, it provides no pattern for general warfare (ancient or modern) but anticipates the final judgment that will befall all who persist in rebellion against God’s gracious overtures. *ESV Study Bible*, 402.

⁶⁹ Everyone and everything is destroyed *except* Rahab and her household, indicating grace toward all—even the worst—who turn to Israel’s God. *Gospel Transformation Bible*, 247.

- 13-23 Although much of Canaan remained to be conquered, the Lord instructed Joshua to allocate Canaan and the land east of the Jordan to the tribes of Israel. This included land already conquered and land still to be conquered.

Notes about the 12 tribal allotments of land:

- Jacob (Israel) had 12 sons. In birth order: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin. [Genesis 29-35; see earlier notes.]
 - In the tribal allotments defined in Joshua 13-23:
 - The ten tribes underlined above were each assigned an area of land.
 - The tribe of Levi, assigned to be priests, did not receive an area of land. Instead, the Lord was their inheritance (Deut 18:1-2). They did receive 48 cities in which to live and pasturelands for their livestock scattered throughout the other tribes.
 - There was no tribe called “Joseph.” Rather, the descendants of Joseph’s two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, were each considered a tribe and were each allotted an area of land.
 - Because the Levites didn’t receive land, and the two tribes descended from Joseph each received land, the total number of land allotments was 12.
- 24 Joshua reminded the people of the covenant the Lord had made with their forefathers. He called them to reject idols and to serve the Lord only.

Joshua 24:14-15

¹⁴ “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua died at the age of 110. It was around the year 1375 B.C.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 138.

Canaan Divided by the Twelve Tribes

Reuben	Gad
Simeon	Asher
Zebulun	Issachar
Judah	Manasseh
Dan	Ephraim
Naphtali	Benjamin

Map Labels:

- Regions:** GESHUR, PHOENICIA, CANAAN, PHILISTIA, AMMON, MOAB, EDOM, MIDIAN, AMALEK, EGYPT, SINAI PENINSULA.
- Cities/Towns:** Sidor, Tyre, Ptolemais, Chinnereth (Chinnereth), Dan, Kadesh, Hazor, Damascus, Golan, Ashtoroth, Ramoth-gilead, Beth Shan, Jabesh-gilead, Succoth?, Amman, Gilgal, Jericho, Mt. Nebo, Sodom and Gomorrah?, Beer-sheva, Hebron, En-Gedi, Jerusalem, Gazer, Joppa, Shechem, Shiloh, Nazareth, Megiddo, Jezreel, Samaria, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Mt. Carmel, Casarea, Pithom, Succoth?, On, Noph, Marah, Elim, Hazeroth?, Rephidim?, Mt. Sinai, Ezion-geber, Jabal al Lawz.
- Geographical Features:** Mediterranean Sea (Great Sea), Nile River, GOSHEN, Great Bitter Lake, Gulf of Suez (Red Sea), Gulf of Aqaba, Red Sea, THE WILDERNESS.

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Holy Land: Now



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B. Judges

1. Introduction

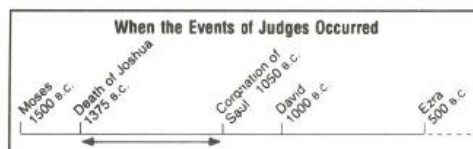
Theme. The theme of Judges is the **downward spiral** of Israel's national and spiritual life into chaos and apostasy, showing the need for a godly **king** to lead them. [The period of the judges was about 1370-1050 B.C.]

Purpose. The book of Judges was written to show the consequences of religious apostasy and to point the way to a king who, if righteous, would lead the people to God. In contrast to the serene way in which the book of Joshua ends—with all Israel obeying God's commands, for the most part—the book of Judges shows that, in fact, Israel began to disobey God even during the time of Joshua. This disobedience continued and grew more serious—and more debased—throughout the period of the judges. Time and again Israel turned its back on God and embraced the gods and the ways of the Canaanites, as the introductory summary in 2:16–23 indicates. Israel's history unfolded in this period in a cyclical or repetitive way: each cycle took Israel further downward in its debasement and apostasy. By the end of the book, Israel had violated its covenant with God in almost every way imaginable.”⁷²

Judges at a Glance

FOCUS	DETERIORATION		DELIVERANCE						DEPRAVITY			
REFERENCE	1:1 ——— 2:1 — 3:5 ——— 4:1 ——— 6:1 ——— 10:6 ——— 12:8 ——— 13:1 ——— 17:1 ——— 19:1 ——— 20:1 — 21:25											
DIVISION	ISRAEL FAILS TO COMPLETE THE CONQUEST	GOD JUDGES ISRAEL	SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN	NORTHERN CAMPAIGN (1st)	CENTRAL CAMPAIGN	EASTERN CAMPAIGN	NORTHERN CAMPAIGN (2nd)	WESTERN CAMPAIGN	SIN OF IDOLATRY	SIN OF IMMORALITY	SIN OF CIVIL WAR	
TOPIC	CAUSES OF THE CYCLES		CURSE OF THE CYCLES						CONDITIONS DURING THE CYCLES			
	LIVING WITH THE CANAANITES		WAR WITH THE CANAANITES						LIVING LIKE THE CANAANITES			
LOCATION	CANAAN											
TIME	c. 350 YEARS											

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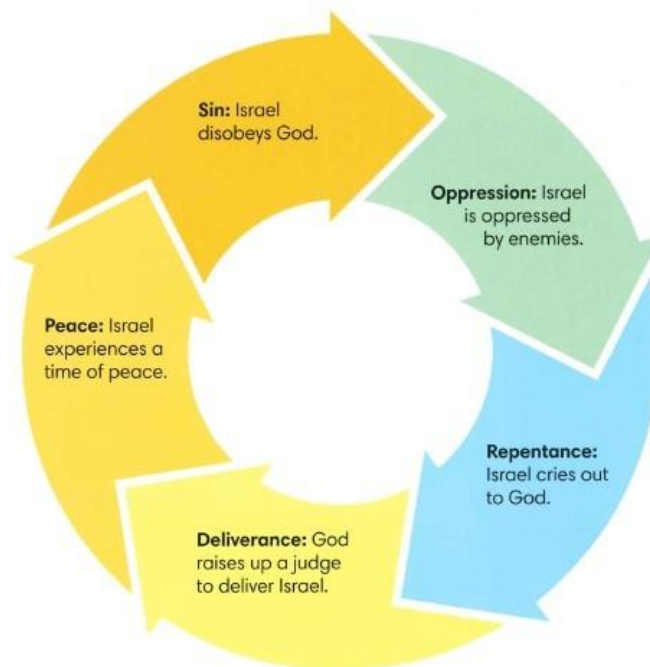


⁷² ESV Study Bible, 433.

2. Outline

Chap	Events
1-2	The Israelites failed to drive out the remaining Canaanites as they had been told to do. Joshua died. The people abandoned the Lord and began to worship the Canaanite gods. The Lord was angry at Israel and gave them into the hands of their plunderers. Then a cyclical pattern began:
	Judges 2:16-23 <i>¹⁶ Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. ¹⁷ Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so. ¹⁸ Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. ¹⁹ But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.</i>
3-16	The Lord raised up a series of increasingly bad judges in a cyclical pattern that became a downward spiral.
17-21	Israel further descended into self-destruction summarized by this verse:
	Judges 21:25 <i>²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.</i>

Cycle in the Book of Judges



Rose Chronological Guide to the Bible

The Judges

Judge and Meaning of Name	Scripture	Location	Enemy	Years of Oppression	Years of Peace
Othniel Lion of God	Judg. 1:12–14; 3:7–11	Debir	Mesopotamians	8	40
Ehud Strong	Judg. 3:12–30	Gilgal	Moabites	18	80
Shamgar Cupbearer	Judg. 3:31	Possibly Beth Anath	Philistines	Unknown	Unknown
Deborah Bee	Judg. 4:1–5:31	Between Bethel and Ramah	Canaanites	20	40
Gideon A cutting down	Judg. 6:1–8:32	Ophrah	Midianites	7	40
Tola Scarlet	Judg. 10:1–2	Shamir	Unknown	Unknown	23
Jair The Lord enlightens	Judg. 10:3–5	Kamon in Gilead	Unknown	Unknown	22
Jephthah He opens	Judg. 10:6–12:7	Gilead	Philistines; Ammonites	18	6
Ibzan Splendid	Judg. 12:8–10	Bethlehem	Unknown	Unknown	7
Elon Oak	Judg. 12:11–12	Zebulun	Unknown	Unknown	10
Abdon Service	Judg. 12:13–15	Pirathon	Unknown	Unknown	8
Samson Distinguished or sun	Judg. 13:1–16:31	Zorah	Philistines	40	20

Years of oppression refer to the times God allowed Israel to be dominated by enemies. Years of peace refer to the times when God raised up a judge. It's important to note, however, that the stories of the judges occurred in different places and the time frames of some judges probably overlapped. Also, some numbers might be estimates or symbolic. For example, forty years often means one generation, not forty years exactly. This makes the chronology of the book difficult to pinpoint.

Rose Chronological Guide to the Bible



Descriptions of the Judges⁷³

1. Othniel

Othniel was either the nephew or brother of Caleb (one of the 12 spies sent to the land of Canaan), and Israel's first judge. After the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, Othniel freed the Israelites from King Cushan-Risathaim, who ruled the region of Aram Naharaim (part of Mesopotamia). Cushan-Risathaim had oppressed the Israelites for eight years, and after Othniel overpowered his forces, the Jews enjoyed peace for forty years—until Othniel died.

2. Ehud

Ehud, whose name means “where’s the glory?” is most known for two things:

1. Being left handed
2. Brutally killing the king of the Moabites

After Othniel died and the Israelites fell back into disobedience, “the Lord gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel” (Judges 3:12). Eglon gathered the support of the Ammonites and Amalekites and together they captured the Israelite city of Jericho.

“Again the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and he gave them a deliverer—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite. The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab.” —Judges 3:15

Ehud concealed a small, double-edged sword under his clothes—on the right side, where he could easily draw it and the king’s men (apparently) wouldn’t think to check for weapons. After delivering the Israelites’ tribute to King Eglon, Ehud dismissed his men and told the king—whom the Bible makes a point of telling us is “a very fat man” (Judges 3:17)—that he had a secret message for him.

In the privacy of the king’s upper room, Ehud told Eglon, “I have a message from God for you” (Judges 3:20), and then plunged his sword into the king’s belly.

Ehud escapes from the upper room using the porch, leaving the king’s chamber locked from the inside. The servants saw Ehud and assumed the meeting was over, and since the door was locked from within, they assumed the king was using the bathroom (which, in a manner of speaking, he was).

With the king dead, the Israelites launched a surprise attack, killed 10,000 soldiers, and conquered Moab. Moab became subject to Israel, and there was peace for 80 years.

3. Shamgar

Shamgar son of Anath was a judge, but we only get one verse to learn of his accomplishments: *“After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.” —Judges 3:31*

4. Deborah

Deborah was both a prophetess and judge. Her name means “honey bee,” and she was also the wife of a man named Lappidoth. Deborah was the only female judge.

After the death of Ehud, the Israelites “did evil in the eyes of the Lord” (Judges 4:1), so God handed them over to Jabin, king of Canaan. With his commander Sisera and an army of chariots, he oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, and they finally cried to the Lord for help.

Deborah was leading the Israelites, and she summoned Barak son of Abinoam to command the Israelite army, telling him God would give Sisera and his army into his hand. Barak said he would only go if Deborah went with him, and Deborah prophesied:

⁷³ <https://overviewbible.com/judges-of-israel/>.

“Certainly I will go with you . . . But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.” —Judges 4:9

Barak took 10,000 soldiers and slaughtered Sisera’s entire army, but Sisera fled and hid in the tent of a woman named Jael. While Sisera was hiding under a blanket, *Jael drove a tent peg through his head*, fulfilling Deborah’s prophecy.

The Israelites eventually defeated King Jabin, and there was another forty years of peace.

After the victory, Deborah wrote a song celebrating what God had done and honoring the Israelites who played a role in defeating the Canaanites. It is known as “The Song of Deborah.”

5. Gideon

Gideon is one of the most well-known and important leaders from the Book of Judges. There are more verses dedicated to him than any other judge. Interestingly, while he’s listed among the judges, the Bible never explicitly calls him a judge or states that he “saved Israel,” as we see with most of the other judges.

His name means “hewer, slasher, hacker,” but in Judges 6:25–32, Gideon earned another name—Jerubbaal—for tearing down idols to Baal. The Israelites who worshipped Baal wanted to kill Gideon, but his father Joash told them to let Baal defend himself, because his altar was torn down. The name Jerubbaal means “let Baal contend against him.”

In Gideon’s time, the Israelites had once again embraced the idolatry of their neighbors, and God used the Midianites to punish them for seven years. The Midianites ravaged their farmlands, destroying crops and killing everything in sight “like swarms of locusts” (Judges 6:5).

This time, when the Israelites cried out for help, God sent a prophet to remind them what he’d done for them, and then the angel of the Lord—possibly another theophany of the Lord—appeared to Gideon and commanded him to save Israel:

“Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” —Judges 6:14

Gideon resisted, suggesting that he was too insignificant to save Israel and then asking for a sign. The angel of the Lord touched his staff to some meat and bread, and it caught fire. Then the angel of the Lord disappeared. It was the first of many times that Gideon asked God for a sign and received one.

Shortly after this, God told Gideon to destroy his father Joash’s Asherah pole (an idol used to worship Baal) and replace it with an altar to the Lord. He was afraid, so he did it at night. The next morning, everyone wanted him dead, Joash said, “If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar” (Judges 6:31), and Gideon became known as Jerubbaal. (Both names are used throughout Judges.)

Later, Israel’s enemies gathered forces, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon (Judges 6:33–34). He summoned the tribes of Israel, and then proposed two tests to confirm God’s promise for before.

First, he put a wool fleece on a threshing floor and said:

“If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” —Judges 6:37

In the morning, the ground was dry, and the fleece was full of dew. But Gideon was still hesitant, so he tested God again:

“Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” —Judges 6:39

Once again, God delivered this sign, and this time Gideon accepted it.

As Gideon prepared to fight the Midianites, God said:

“You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’” —Judges 7:2

So God gradually whittled Gideon’s army down from 32,000 men to 300. The Midianite and Amalekite armies camped in the valley below them, “thick as locusts,” and “their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.”

Understandably, Gideon was afraid, so God told him to sneak into the camp and listen to what the troops were saying. There he found a man who was telling his friend about a dream:

“A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.”

His friend responded, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.” —Judges 7:13–14

This gave Gideon the confidence he needed to execute his battle plan. His men surrounded the camp, and when Gideon gave the signal, they all broke jars, blasted trumpets, raised torches, and shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon.”

Then God caused the Midianite soldiers to turn on each other, and they fled. Gideon sent messengers to Ephraim (an Israelite tribe which hadn’t been called to fight yet), and the Ephraimites killed two Midianite princes.

Gideon pursued the two kings of Midian, routed their armies, captured them, and executed them.

After this victory, the Israelites attempted to make Gideon their king, saying, “Rule over us—you, your son and your grandson—because you have saved us from the hand of Midian” (Judges 8:22).

Gideon refused, proclaiming: “The Lord will rule over you” (Judges 8:23).

But as a favor, Gideon asked them all to give him one of their gold rings, and he had them melted down and made into an ephod—a garment used in oracle-related rituals. The Israelites worshiped it, and the ephod “became a snare to Gideon and his family” (Judges 8:27). Before Gideon even died, the Israelites had already gone astray again.

While Gideon lived, the Israelites enjoyed forty more years of peace. And when he died, they abandoned his family and returned to worshipping Baal.

6. Tola

Tola, son of Puah, was a “minor judge” (which just means the Bible doesn’t say much about him) who led Israel for 23 years after the death of Abimelech (Gideon’s son). He was from the tribe of Issachar, and his grandfather was a man named Dodo. When Tola died, he was buried in Shamir.

When Tola came onto the scene, Israel was a mess. Gideon had 70 sons, and Abimelech (a son he’d had with one of his slaves) had them all slaughtered on a stone—except Jotham, who escaped—attempting to seize power for himself and establish a Jewish monarchy. He governed (not “judged”) Israel for three years, and fought and killed many Israelites who opposed him. He died fighting against his own people.

The Bible says Tola “rose to save Israel” (Judges 10:1), but it doesn’t tell us what he saved them from. It could have been any number of the neighboring nations Israel frequently warred with, or perhaps, in the wake of Abimelech’s death, he saved them from themselves.

7. Jair

Jair gets about the same coverage as his predecessor, Tola. *“He was followed by Jair of Gilead, who led Israel twenty-two years. He had thirty sons, who rode thirty donkeys. They controlled thirty towns in Gilead, which to this day are called Havvoth Jair. When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon.”* —Judges 10:3–5

8. Jephthah

Jephthah was a mighty warrior and the son of a prostitute. His father, Gilead, also had sons through his wife, and Jephthah’s half brothers drove him away to the land of Tob, where Jephthah led a “gang of scoundrels” (Judges 11:3).

We read about Jephthah in Judges 10:6–12:7, and while he delivered Israel from its enemies, his story ends in one of the most unforgettable tragedies in Scripture—a tragedy of his own making.

Before Jephthah was a judge, the Israelites were basically worshiping any god that wasn’t Yahweh. They worshiped the Baals, Ashtorahs, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. But not their own God.

When the Israelites’ enemies oppressed them, they cried out to God, and he refused:

“When the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried to me for help, did I not save you from their hands?”

But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!” —Judges 10:11–14

But the Israelites repented, getting rid of their foreign gods and once again serving the Lord. And he showed mercy through Jephthah.

Israel fought with the Ammonites, and knowing Jephthah was a mighty warrior, they went to the land of Tob to ask him to lead them, promising to make him the head of Gilead if he agreed. He accepted, and began by negotiating with the Ammonite king, attempting to resolve the conflict peacefully.

The king refused, and the Israelites began driving the Ammonites out of the land. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah (Judges 11:29), and Jephthah made a foolish (and completely unnecessary) vow:

“If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord’s, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.” —Judges 11:30–31

The Lord gave the Ammonites into Jephthah’s hands, and the first thing out of Jephthah’s house was his only daughter.

Jephthah may have been expecting to be greeted by livestock (it was common for them to live in the same space as people). Vowing to make a human sacrifice would’ve been against the law (Deuteronomy 12:31), but it’s possible that Jephthah was so unfamiliar with Israel’s God and the Torah that he was willing to sacrifice any human servant or attendant, too. When Jephthah came on the scene, Israel had been giving themselves over to other gods, so he may have simply been treating God like one of them.

But whatever he intended, Jephthah definitely hadn’t planned on sacrificing his daughter. He basically blames her for his mistake:

“Oh no, my daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated. I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break.” —Judges 11:35

She asks for two months to mourn, and Jephthah lets her grieve with her friends.

“After the two months, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed.” —Judges 11:39

The tragedy of Jephthah’s sacrifice in many ways overshadows his accomplishments, and it inspired an annual tradition in which young Israelite women leave for four days to commemorate his daughter.

The tribe of Ephraim felt left out because—once again—God’s judge hadn’t invited them to the battle (Gideon forgot to bring them along, too). Jephthah insists that he *did* call them to fight with the rest of the Israelites, and when they didn’t come, the fighting simply started without them.

After some name calling, the two armies began fighting: Gilead vs. Ephraim. The Gileadites won, and captured the river crossing that led back to Ephraim. Whenever an Ephraimite wanted to cross, the Gileadites asked if they were an Ephraimite. If they said, “No,” the Gileadites tested them to say “shibboleth.” Ephraimites pronounced it “sibboleth.” And then the Gileadites would kill them.

Jephthah led Israel for six years, and when he died, he was buried in Gilead.

9. Ibzan

Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel for seven years. He’s only mentioned in Judges 12:8–10. While the Bible tells us Ibzan “judged” Israel, it gives no record of any battles he fought or enemies he overthrew, nor does it say he “saved” Israel, as we see with several other judges.

Pretty much the only thing we know about Ibzan is that he had 30 sons and 30 daughters, and he made a point of marrying all of them to people outside of his tribe. This likely would’ve helped extend his influence throughout Israel, and *could have* played a role in creating a period of peace.

10. Elon

Elon from the tribe of Zebulun is perhaps the most unknown judge. We only get two sentences about him, and there’s little we can gather from them: *“After him, Elon the Zebulunite led Israel ten years. Then Elon died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.” —Judges 12:11–12*

11. Abdon

Abdon son of Hillel came after Elon and was another obscure “minor judge.” *“He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel eight years. Then Abdon son of Hillel died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.”* —Judges 12:14–15

12. Samson

Samson is hands down the strongest person in the Bible, and God basically uses him as an agent of chaos against the Philistines. His strength came directly from the Spirit of the Lord, and it enabled him to do numerous supernatural feats—including the one that led to his death.

Interestingly, Samson is also one of the few people in Scripture who had a miraculous birth. His mother had been unable to get pregnant, but the angel of the Lord appeared and told her she would conceive. The angel instructed her to raise him as a Nazarite and not cut his hair. Samson’s hair was both the secret of his strength and his Achilles’ heel.

As Samson came of age, he became impulsive and lustful, which strangely, God used. He saw a Philistine woman and demanded that his father get her for him. This was “from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel” (Judges 14:4).

On his way to visit the woman, a lion came toward him, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and gave him strength. He “tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat” (Judges 14:6).

When he returned to marry the woman later, he found a hive of honeybees in the carcass of the lion, and he ate some honey. His discovery inspired a riddle, which he shared with the Philistine guests at his wedding feast:

*“Out of the eater, something to eat;
out of the strong, something sweet.”* —Judges 14:14

He challenged his guests to solve it within seven days. If they could, he’d give them 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes. If they couldn’t, they’d do the same for him. They were stumped, so they threatened his new wife and said they’d kill her and her family if she didn’t tell them the riddle.

Over the next several days, she coaxed the answer out of Samson, and when they shared it with him he angrily replied:

*“If you had not plowed with my heifer,
you would not have solved my riddle.”* —Judges 14:18

Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson again, and he killed 30 men, took their clothes, and gave them to the men who solved the riddle. And then he left his wife and went home (Judges 14:19).

Assuming Samson hated his wife, his father-in-law gave her to one of the men who was at the wedding. When Samson came back and tried to visit her room, her father refused to let him in and offered her younger sister instead.

In his anger, Samson caught 300 foxes, tied their tails together in pairs, tied torches to them, and set them loose in the Philistines’ grain fields. He burnt down all their grain, vineyards, and olive groves (Judges 15:5).

When the Philistines found out who started the fire, they burned Samson’s wife and father-in-law to death. In return, he killed a bunch of Philistines and hid in a cave.

The Philistines prepared to fight the Israelites in order to take Samson prisoner. 3,000 Israelites went to fetch Samson from his cave, and he allowed them to tie him up and take him to the Philistines. When the Philistines saw him they started shouting, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson again. “The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands” (Judges 15:14).

Then Samson put Shamgar (the cattle prod judge) to shame: he killed 1,000 Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone (Judges 15:15).

After all that jawboning, Samson was thirsty. He cried out to the Lord, and God miraculously created a spring for him (Judges 15:18–19).

Later, Samson went to the city of Gaza and slept with a prostitute. The people of Gaza learned he was there, gathered around the city gate, and planned to kill him at dawn. Instead, he got up and left in the middle of the night and casually *ripped out the city gate and carried it away on his shoulders*.

Awhile after that, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in a valley that bordered the Philistines and the Israelite tribe of Dan. The Philistine rulers approached her and asked her to trick Samson into revealing the secret of his strength, promising to reward her with eleven hundred shekels (or about 28 pounds) of silver *each* (Judges 16:4–5).

When she asked Samson, he lied, and told her that if someone tied him up with seven fresh bowstrings, he'd "become as weak as any other man" (Judges 16:7). So naturally, she tied him up with seven fresh bowstrings. The Philistines were hiding in the room, waiting to capture him, and in an uncharacteristic display of restraint, he snapped the bowstrings and didn't kill anyone.

Delilah reacted by saying, "You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied" (Judges 16:10).

Samson played along, and lied again:

"If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I'll become as weak as any other man." —Judges 16:11

She ties him up. It doesn't work. She gets upset again. He lies again. She tries the new thing. It doesn't work either.

Now, the Bible doesn't go into detail about how much Samson loved Delilah, but it's probably safe to assume that his love for her was why he eventually tells her his real weakness:

"No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man." —Judges 16:17

It's also possible that Samson was simply that arrogant, and he didn't believe it was possible for someone to cut his hair. Delilah put him to sleep and had the Philistines cut his hair. As soon as they cut the seven braids of his hair, his strength—and the Lord—left him (Judges 16:19).

The Philistines captured him, gouged out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and forced him to grind grain in prison.

But as time passed, his hair grew (Judges 16:22).

The Philistines celebrated and praised their god, Dagon, for delivering Samson to them. All the rulers gathered at the temple to Dagon, and three thousand Philistines watched from the roof. As part of the celebration, they forced Samson to perform.

Then they put him by the pillars supporting the temple, and Samson asked a servant to move him to where he could feel the pillars so that he could rest against them.

Samson prayed:

"Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." —Judges 16:28

And then Samson ripped out the two pillars that supported the entire temple, and it collapsed, killing everyone including Samson (Judges 16:29–30).

Samson's whole family went to retrieve his body, and they buried him "between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father" (Judges 16:31).

Samson judged Israel for twenty years.

Final verse of the book of Judges:

Judges 21:25

²⁵ *In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

C. Ruth

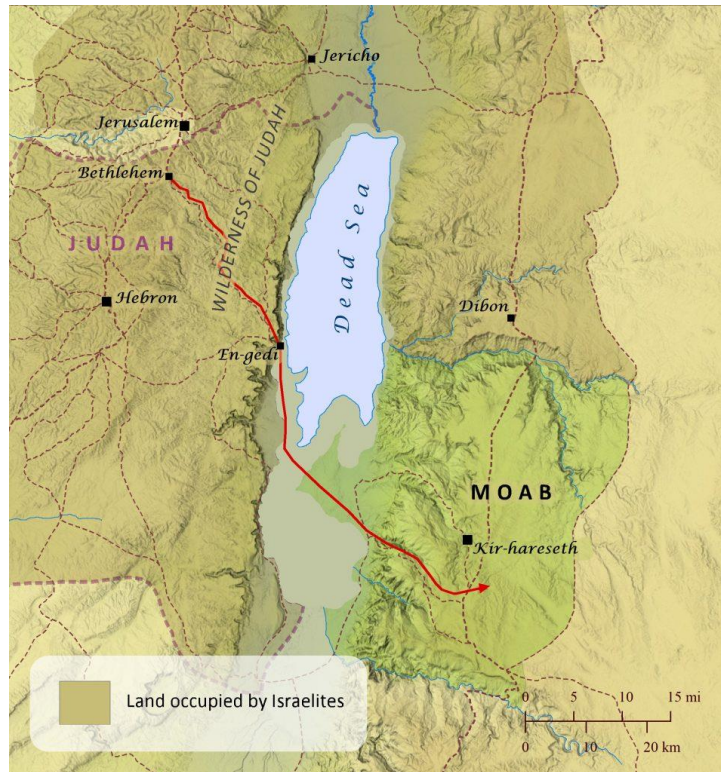
Written toward the end of the time when judges ruled Israel (around 1100 BC), the book of Ruth shares the following account.

- A famine in Judah forced a Bethlehemite couple Elimelech and Naomi to relocate to Moab, a country across the Dead Sea from Judah. Moab was traditionally an enemy of Judah.
- Elimelech died. The widow's two sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Naomi's sons died, leaving all three women widowed.
- Naomi set out to return to Judah once the famine ended. Ruth showed tremendous love to her mother-in-law Naomi.

Ruth 1:16-17

¹⁶ But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."

- Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem. Ruth worked among the poor, gleaning leftovers in grain fields. By God's plan, she was working in the fields owned by Boaz⁷⁴, a relative of Naomi's deceased husband. Boaz, a "worthy man" (2:1) married Ruth, a foreigner and a "worthy woman" (3:11). Because he was her relative, he served as her "close relative . . . redeemer" (2:20), also called "kinsman-redeemer." A kinsman-redeemer could preserve the family name and land. Boaz bought back the land previously owned by Naomi's husband, and he married the foreigner, Ruth, bringing her into the security of his family. He did this voluntarily out of love and compassion.



- Boaz and Ruth's son, Obed, ended up fathering Jesse, the father of the future King David of Israel. Ruth was the great-grandmother of David and an ancestor of Christ.
- Boaz's redemption of Ruth pictures Christ's redemption of his church. Jesus is our kinsman-redeemer. He voluntarily left heaven to become one of us (our kinsman). He redeemed us from slavery to sin (purchased our freedom with his blood). He took the church (all of God's people of all time) as his bride.

⁷⁴ Boaz was a descendant of Rahab the Jericho prostitute who married Salmon the Judahite (Matthew 1:5).

D. Historical Survey of Old Testament Israel

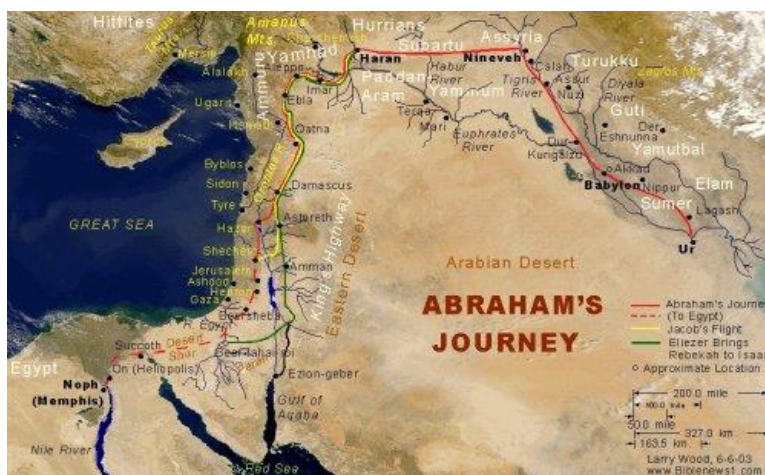
We're going to take a break from looking at individual books in order to survey Old Testament history from Abraham through the end of the Old Testament. This historical context is crucial to understanding the individual books. We will particularly examine the unfolding of the land promise to Abraham (from promise to reception).

PATRIARCHAL PERIOD

2091 B.C.⁷⁵ God called Abram to depart Ur (Acts 7:2-3), then Haran (Gen 11:31), and move to Canaan.⁷⁶

Genesis 12:1-8

1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a **land that I will show you.** 2 I will make you a **great nation**; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you **all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"⁷⁷ 4 So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. 6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. 7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "**To your descendants I will give this land.**" And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east: there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.



⁷⁵ The Biblical dates presented in this lesson agree with the studies of Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996). The date given here, 2091 B.C., refers to the date of Abram's departure from Haran.

⁷⁶ Apparently Abram received his initial call from God while in Ur (Acts 7:2-3; Gen 12:1 NKJV, NIV: "The Lord *had said* to Abram"), then traveled and settled for a while in Haran [*Ur to Haran = 600 miles*] with Terah, Sarai, and Lot (Gen 11:31; Acts 7:4). After having the call confirmed in Haran, Abram set out on the second leg of his journey to Canaan [*Haran to Canaan = 400 miles*]. See also Genesis 15:7; Joshua 24:3; Nehemiah 9:7.

⁷⁷ Christians ultimately receive a greater fulfillment of the promises to Abraham of land, a great nation, and being a blessing to the families of the earth. Christians receive the New Heavens and New Earth, are part of a spiritual nation with people of all ethnicities who have their allegiance to Christ as King, and a worldwide evangelistic witness that will lead to people from all tribes and tongues worshipping God in heaven. ***Galatians 3:9: And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.***

After Abram and his wife Sarai moved to Canaan, the Lord repeated His promise.

Genesis 13:14-17

14 And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 **for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.** 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."

Abram settled in Hebron.

Genesis 13:18

18 Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.



- 2081 The Lord made a covenant with Abram and repeated the land promise—including a description of the extent of the Promised Land.

Genesis 15:18-21

18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "**To your descendants I have given this land**, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— 19 the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

The Old Testament records many descriptions of the boundaries of the Promised Land. For example, general descriptions are given in Exodus 23:31; Numbers 13:21; Deuteronomy 11:24; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 14:25; Isaiah 27:12. Specific descriptions are given in Joshua 13:8—19:51; Ezekiel 47:15-21.

- 2081 At Sarai's urging, Abram conceived with Sarai's Egyptian maid Hagar (Gen 16:1-4).
- 2080 Ishmael ("God hears") was born to Abram and Hagar (Gen 16:15-16).⁷⁸
- 2067 The Lord confirmed His covenant with Abram ("Exalted Father") and changed his name to Abraham ("Father of a Multitude"). The Lord changed the name of Sarai

⁷⁸ Ishmael is the ancestor of ethnic Arabs. Many Arabs follow the religion of Islam (founded by Mohammed). Those who follow Islam are called Muslims.

(“Princess”) to Sarah (also “Princess”). The Lord promised the land of Canaan as an “everlasting possession” to Abraham and his descendants.

Genesis 17:7-8

*7 “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 **Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.**”*

- 2066 Isaac (“Laughter”) was born to Abraham (100) and Sarah (90) in their old age (Gen 21:2-3).
- 2029 Sarah died in Hebron at the age of 127 (Gen 23:1-2). As a sojourner in the Promised Land of Canaan, Abraham bought his first piece of property—a burial site for Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah at Hebron (Gen 23:19).
- 2026 Isaac (40 years old) married Rebekah (Gen 24:67; 25:20).
- 2006 Esau and Jacob were born to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 25:25-26).
- 1991 Abraham died and was buried in the cave of Machpelah with Sarah (Gen 25:7-10).

Abraham’s life was a pattern for the sojourning Christian as he left his life of comfort to go to an unknown place, lived by faith in a foreign land, trusted in God’s promises, and looked forward to a future heavenly city and country.

Hebrews 11:8-16

*8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 **for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.** 11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 **But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.***

- 1930 Jacob traveled to his ancestral homeland of Paddan-aram (Haran) to see his uncle Laban and find a wife. He ended up marrying Laban’s older daughter Leah and younger daughter Rachel. Jacob had twelve sons plus one daughter (Dinah).

In order (verse references are from Genesis):

With Leah: Reuben 1, Simeon 2, Levi 3, **Judah*** 4 (29:32-35)

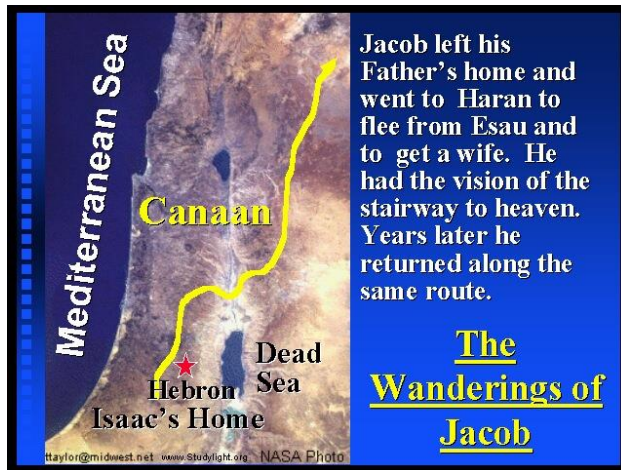
With Bilhah (Rachel’s maid): Dan 5, Naphtali 6 (30:6,8)

With Zilpah (Leah’s maid): Gad 7, Asher 8 (30:11,13)

With Leah again: Issachar 9, Zebulun 10, Dinah (30:18,20)

With Rachel: Joseph 11, Benjamin 12 (30:24; 35:18)

* **Line of Christ**



- 1916 Joseph was born to Jacob and Rachel (Gen 30:22-25) in Paddan-aram.
- 1910 Jacob and his family returned to Hebron (in Canaan). On the way, the Lord changed Jacob's name ("Heel-grabber") to Israel ("He struggles with God") (Gen 32:28).
- 1899 Jealous of Joseph's multicolored tunic and angry at his dreams, Joseph's brothers sold him to some Ishmaelite merchants who in turn sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard (Gen 37). Joseph ended up in prison after being falsely accused of advancing on Potiphar's wife (Gen 39).



- 1886 Isaac died at Hebron at the age of 180 and was buried by Esau and Jacob (Gen 35:29).
- 1886 After releasing Joseph from prison, Pharaoh appointed him to be second in command of Egypt (at 30 years old) and overseer of grain storage during the abundant years preceding an upcoming famine (Gen 40-41).
- 1879 Once the famine spread to Canaan, Jacob sent ten of his sons to buy grain in Egypt. Joseph eventually revealed himself to his brothers and sent them to bring his father Jacob. (Gen 42-45)
- 1876 Jacob and his family (70 direct descendants total plus his sons' wives) moved to Egypt and settled in the land of Goshen (Gen 46-47).



Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, Mannaseh and Ephraim, and gave them each a full share of the inheritance (Gen 48). Later, when the land of Canaan was conquered and allocated to the twelve tribes of Israel after the exodus and wilderness wanderings, Ephraim and Manasseh received full shares of the land. Because the tribe of Levi didn't receive any land as priests, the total number of shares remained at twelve.

- 1859 Jacob died at the age of 147, and his sons carried his body to Canaan and buried him in the cave of Machpelah at Mamre with his forefathers (Gen 50).
- 1806 Joseph died and was buried in Egypt (Gen 50). Later, the Israelites brought his bones out of Egypt in the Exodus (Ex 13:19) and buried at Shechem in Canaan (Josh 24:32).

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

- 1526 Moses was born during the captivity in Egypt.
- 1500 Joshua was born during the captivity in Egypt.
- 1446⁷⁹ After living in Egypt for 430 years (Ex 12:40-41), eventually becoming enslaved (Ex 1), the Israelites departed by God's power and under Moses' leadership (Ex 12). After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai two months after leaving Egypt (Ex 19). They remained at Mt. Sinai for eleven months.
- 1445 Thirteen months after the Exodus, the cloud signifying God's presence lifted from the tabernacle and led the people on their way to the Promised Land (Nu 10). While Israel was encamped at Kadesh in the desert of Paran, the Lord commanded Moses to send twelve spies (one from each tribe) into Canaan to explore it. They returned to report a land flowing with milk and honey and huge fruit. However, it was also filled with powerful people in fortified cities. Ten of the spies spread frightening reports among the people. Only Caleb and Joshua called on the people to trust in the Lord's faithfulness and to go in and conquer that land as commanded. The Lord's anger burned against the people. Moses pleaded with the Lord not to strike them down by appealing to his name. The Lord forgave the people but declared that none from that rebellious generation except for Caleb and Joshua would be allowed to enter the Promised Land. All those twenty years and older who were counted in the census would die in the wilderness. Their children would inherit the land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (one year for each of the 40 days the spies were exploring Canaan). [Nu 13-14]

⁷⁹ According to 1 Kings 6:1, the Exodus from Egypt occurred 480 years before the laying of the foundations of Solomon's temple (in his fourth year, 966 B.C.). Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 67.



1406 Forty years after the Exodus, Israel camped in the plains of Moab on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moses recounted the history of Israel's time in the wilderness and exhorted them to obey God in the Promised Land (Deut 1-4). He reminded them that obedience to God's commands would bring them long lives in the Promised Land (Deut 5). He commanded the people to destroy the current pagan occupants of Canaan when they went in to possess the land (Deut 7).⁸⁰

Moses anticipated the possibility of judgment and exile for Israel and looked beyond the time of judgment to Israel's future repentance, restoration, and divine blessing. Significantly, Moses' reference to the circumcision of the heart finds fulfillment in later prophecies and ultimately in the New Testament (Deut 30).

Moses appointed Joshua the new leader of Israel (Deut 31). Moses pronounced a final blessing on the tribes of Israel (Deut 33). In the Pisgah mountain range on the top of Mount Nebo, the Lord showed Moses much of the Promised Land. Then Moses died on Mount Nebo at 120 years of age. Israel mourned for thirty days. The Israelites were now set to conquer the Promised Land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership (Deut 34).

⁸⁰ Some think the God of the Old Testament was harsh and vengeful to decree the destruction of the Canaanites, but this is to forget that God is just. The sins of the land's inhabitants were extreme, and the time for judgment had come (compare Gen 15:16). God used Israel to punish the Canaanites, but warned that if Israel committed apostasy, leaving the God who had graciously revealed Himself to them, they too would perish (Deut 28:15-68). *New Geneva Study Bible*, 251.

Exodus and the Fight for Canaan

This map is a smaller view of the delta region of Egypt and an over-all look at Canaan. It shows the likely exit path of the Israelites when they left Egypt after hundreds of years of bondage, as led by God and Moses (the servant of God). It also shows the successful military campaigns which Joshua led to capture the land of Canaan (the promised land).

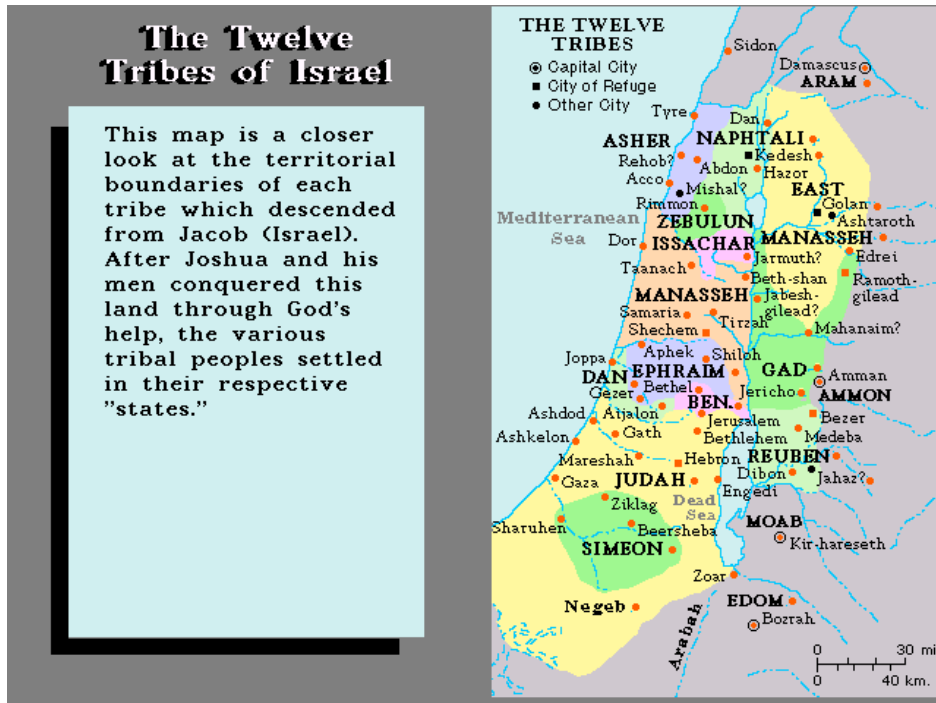
EXODUS AND THE FIGHT FOR CANAAN



CONQUERING AND SETTLING THE PROMISED LAND

1406-1399 Through three military campaigns lasting a total of seven years, the Israelites under Joshua's leadership conquered Canaan (Josh 6-13). The Israelites first took Jericho and then moved north and south against the fortified Canaanite cities, only gradually gaining the upper hand. However, many Canaanite cities remained unconquered and the Philistines to the southwest of Canaan still held five key cities (Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Ashkelon).

1398-1390 Over the course of the next eight years, Israel settled into Canaan. The Lord instructed Joshua to divide the land among the twelve tribes of Israel (Josh 13-21). Land was allotted to the descendants of all Jacobs's sons except Levi (Josh 13:33). Levi's portion went to the two sons of Joseph—Manasseh and Ephraim (Josh 14:3-4). The Levites didn't receive land because they were to serve (guard) the tent of meeting (Numb 18:21-24), because they were to carry the ark (Deut 10:8-9), because Yahweh was their inheritance (Josh 13:32-33), and because their priesthood was their inheritance (Josh 18:7).



1375 Joshua died at the age of 110.

1380-1051 Although Israel possessed the land, they disobeyed God by not completely driving out its pagan inhabitants (Judges 2:2-3). God's people ended up living alongside the Canaanites and adopting their pagan practices. During this period, no formal government existed, and the Lord raised up "judges" to deliver the people from their enemies in times of crisis.

1121 The prophet, judge, and priest Samuel was born (1 Sam 1). He served as a transition figure between the judges and kings of Israel.

THE ISRAELITE MONARCHY

1051 Samuel anointed Saul the first king of Israel (1 Sam 9).

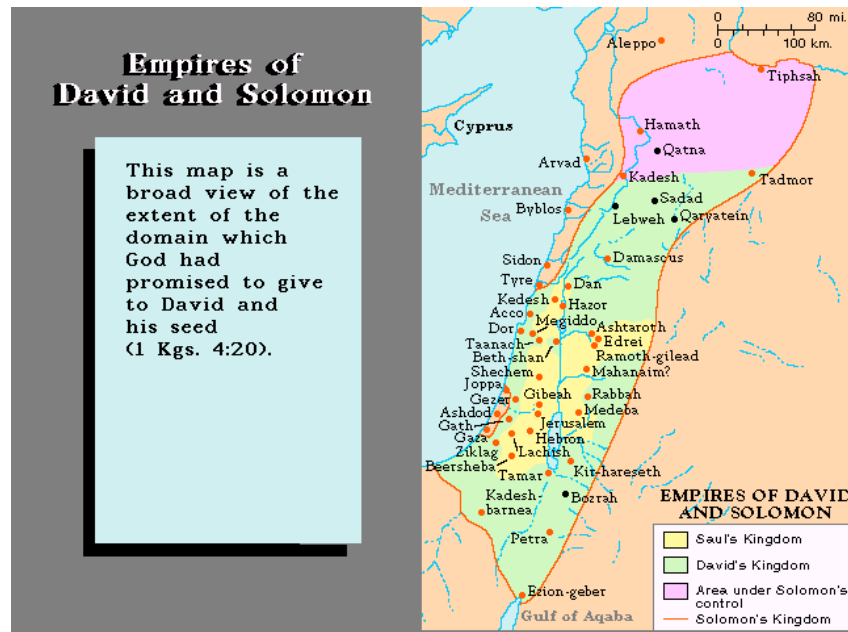
1029 Samuel anointed David king (1 Sam 16) in the presence of David's father and brothers, but David didn't actually become the king of Judah until 1011.

1011 Saul died. The men of Judah anointed David the king of Judah (2 Sam 2). David ruled from Hebron. Abner, the general over Saul's army, controlled Israel and made Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, the king of Israel (2 Sam 2).

1004 After Joab, the general over David's army, killed Abner, and two of Joab's men killed Ish-bosheth, all the tribes of Israel anointed David king of Israel (2 Sam 3-5). Now Israel was a united kingdom (Israel and Judah). The tribe of Benjamin remained with Judah. David established the capital of the united kingdom at Jerusalem (after capturing it from the Jebusites). He moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. David expanded the boundaries of the kingdom during his reign (see map). He

waged several successful military campaigns during his reign, annexing Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and parts of Aram (modern Syria). He built a palace and gathered materials for the temple to be built by his son.

- 971-931 Shortly before his death, David anointed his son Solomon (by Bathsheba) as the next king of united Israel (1 Kings 1-2). Solomon expanded the boundaries of the kingdom during his reign (see map). His reign was largely peaceful and prosperous. However, maintaining his splendid court life and ambitious building projects proved burdensome to the people. Some Hebrews were used as forced labor and territory was ceded to Tyre in return for supplying craftsmen and materials. The prophets rightly criticized Solomon for tolerating the pagan religious practices of the many non-Hebrew wives he had acquired from diplomatic marriages. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, and they turned his heart after other gods.



- 966-960 Solomon constructed the temple in Jerusalem. The construction took seven years.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

- 931 Upon Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam's tactless leadership (listening to reckless counsel from younger peers rather than wise counsel from older advisors who had served his father well) led to a secession of northern Israel from the united kingdom. Israel was again divided. The northern kingdom of Israel, including the cities of Samaria and Shechem, was ruled by Jeroboam. The southern kingdom of Judah, including the city of Jerusalem, was ruled by Rehoboam. Most of the non-Hebrew provinces fell away.

Northern – Israel – Jeroboam
Southern – Judah - Rehoboam

Israel set up separate worship sites at Dan and Bethel, entered into political alliances with surrounding nations, and sanctioned idol worship and sacred harlotry. None of the twenty kings of Israel received a favorable report in the Bible.

Judah, with the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the Davidic king, alternated between high points of zeal for the Lord and low points of idolatry. Judah went as its king went. Eight of the twenty kings of Judah received a favorable report in the Bible. Judah neglected God's word, entered into political alliances with surrounding nations, and oppressed the poor with injustice.



THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

880-612 The Assyrian Empire rose to power in the region.



In 841, Israel staved off an Assyrian attack by paying a heavy tribute to its king. Beginning in 743, Assyria launched five attacks against Israel and Judah.

- 743-738 First Assyrian invasion: King Menahem pays tribute to Assyria
- 734-732 Second invasion: Galilee area captured; some deportation
- 725-722 Third invasion: Israel's capital, Samaria, falls; Israel deported⁸¹
- 712 Fourth invasion: Judah invaded but not overcome
- 701 Fifth invasion: Assyrians take 46 cities in Judah but the Lord defeats the Assyrian army at Jerusalem⁸²

722 The Assyrians defeated Israel's capital city of Samaria and deported many Israelites *throughout* Assyria (many had already been deported during the battles leading up to this final defeat of Samaria). These deportees were scattered throughout Assyria rather than being sent to one location. They ended up assimilating into Assyria, never to return to Israel as a group.

712-701 The Lord protected Judah from Assyrian invasion (see above and footnote).

THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

612-539 The Babylonian Empire controlled this region after defeating the Assyrians at Ninevah in 612.

605 Soon-to-be-King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon raided Jerusalem and deported Daniel and others to Babylon.

597 Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem again and deported Ezekiel and others.

586 Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, its wall, and its temple and deported more people. Some poor Judeans were left in the land to till the soil.



⁸¹ The exiles were deported to northwestern Mesopotamia (the land around and between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) and to Media (northwestern Iran). In place of the deported Israelites the Assyrians introduced settlers from Babylonia and Syria, who brought their idols with them. In time these pagan settlers were assimilated to the remaining Israelites and to Yahwism. The later Samaritans were a mixture of Israelite and foreign elements and were therefore despised by the Judeans. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 344.

⁸² Isaiah assured the pious King Hezekiah of Judah that Jerusalem would not be overcome, and the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrians outside Jerusalem, thus saving Judah from the Assyrian attack. 2 Kings 19.

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

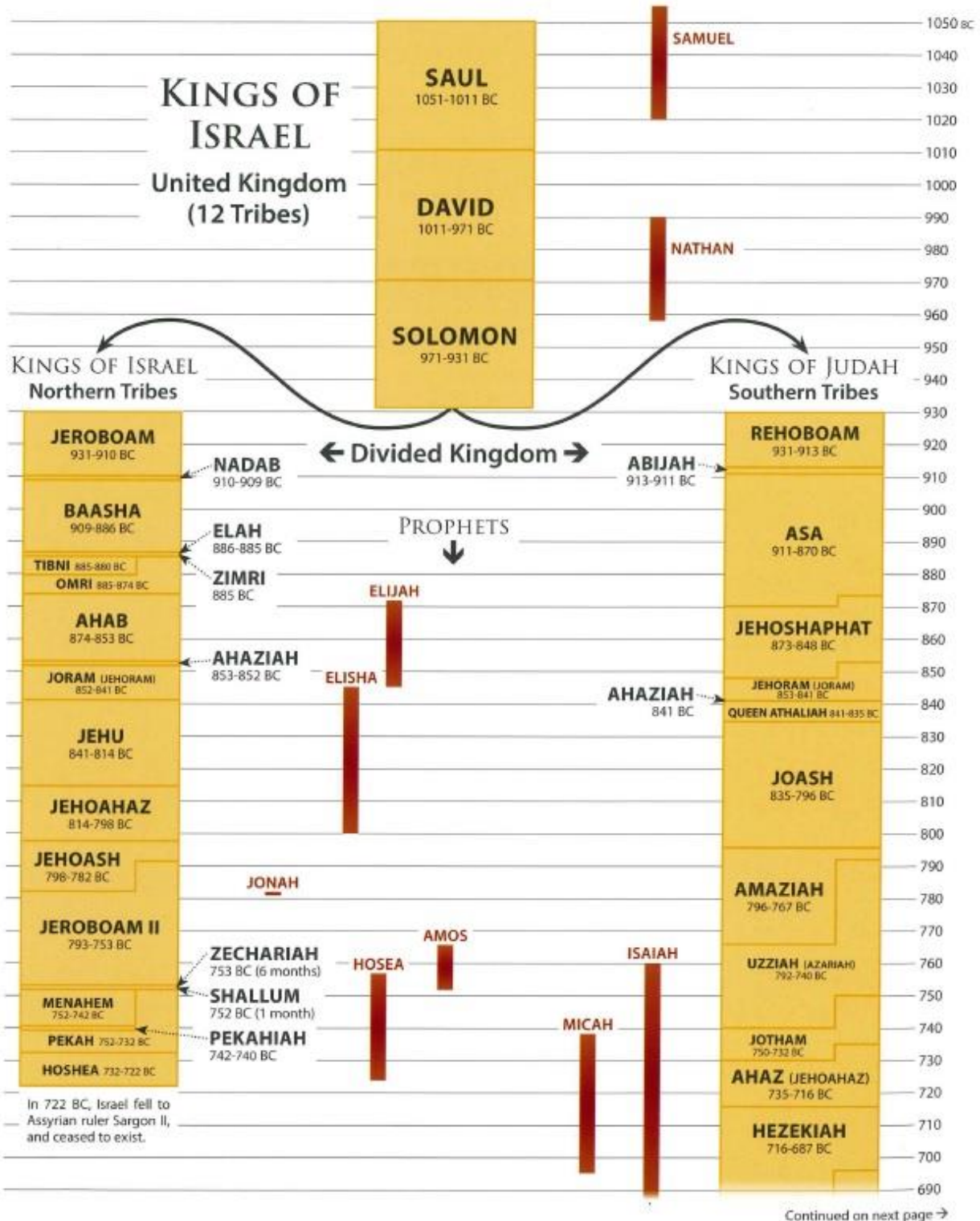
539-333 The Persian Empire controlled the region.

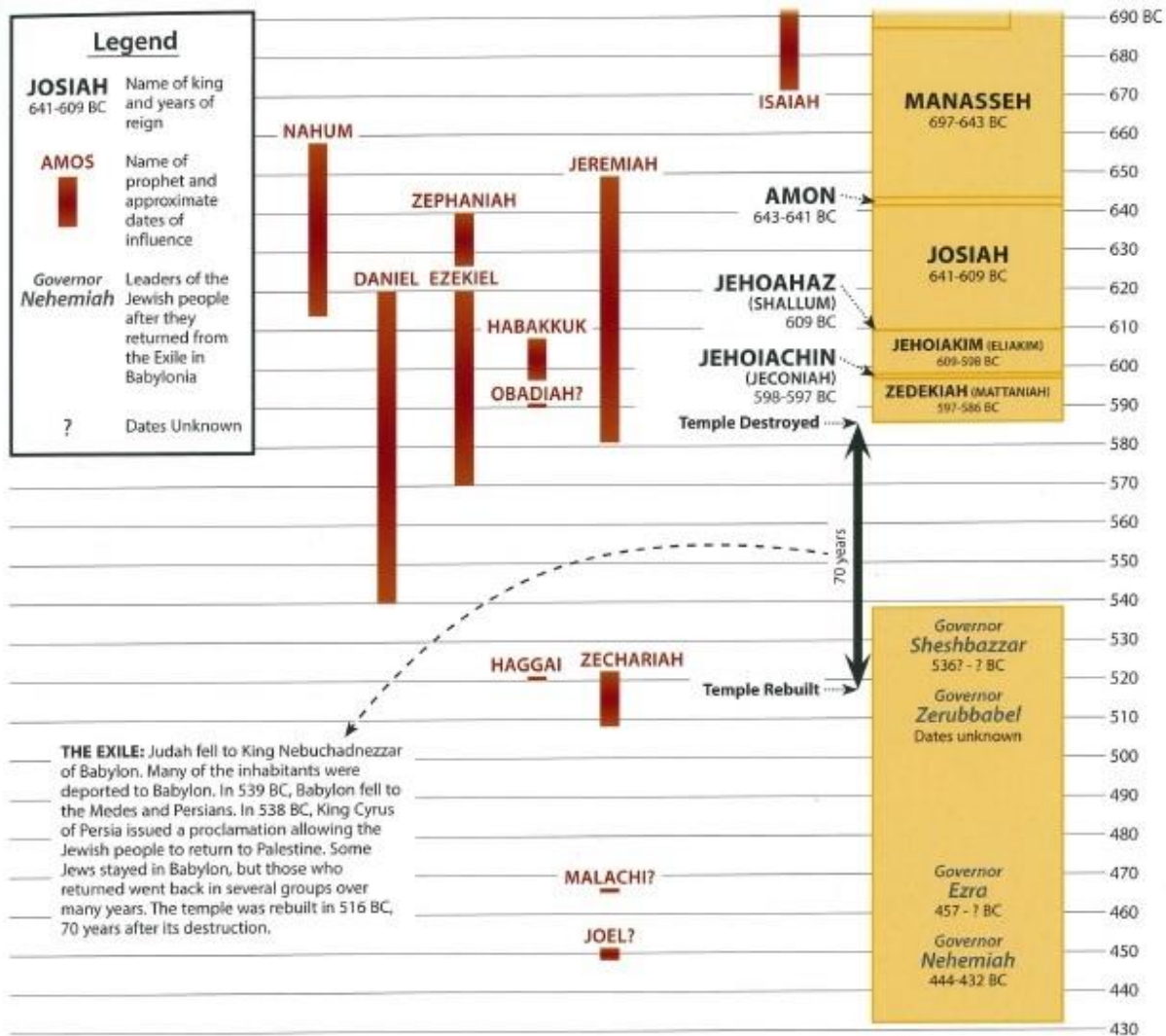


- 539 Persia conquered Babylon.
- 538 King Cyrus of Persia decreed that the Jews may return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Sheshbazzar led the first group to return. Zerubbabel soon became the leader.
- 516 The temple rebuilding was completed (70 years after its destruction).
- 479 Esther became Queen of Persia.
- 458 Ezra returned and led the rebuilding of the spiritual condition of the people.
- 445 Nehemiah returned and led the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem.
- 430 Malachi prophesied and wrote the last book of the Old Testament.

Kings and Prophets

KINGS & PROPHETS





FASCINATING FACTS

DOMINANT POWERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

900-612 BC - Assyria 612-539 BC - Babylonia 539-332 BC - Medo-Persia

What made a king "good" or "bad"?

The biblical writers were not as interested in a king's abilities as an administrator as they were in the king's desire to follow God's commands. Kings that followed God's law and those who outlawed the altars to foreign gods, the high places, and idol worship were designated as good. Those who did not, were evil. The Bible uses the phrase "He did evil in the eyes (or *sight*) of the Lord," to evaluate the king's reign. In secular history, one of the important kings was Omri of Israel, who conquered the Moabites; but in the Bible this evil king's victories go unmentioned.

Dates of the kings adapted from Edward R. Thiele's *Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*. Used by permission of Zondervan.
Dates of the prophets from Alfred J. Hoerth's *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. Used by permission of Baker Book House.
Special thanks to Alfred J. Hoerth, Director of Archaeology, Emeritus, Wheaton College.

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KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH (GOOD OR BAD?)

Here's a chart listing the kings of **Israel** (Northern Kingdom) and **Judah** (Southern Kingdom), identified as **good** or **bad** based on their faithfulness to God, using primarily the biblical evaluation found in 1–2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. All kings of Israel were considered bad, while Judah had a mix of good and bad kings.⁸³

Kings of Israel (Northern Kingdom) – All Considered *Bad*

#	King	Reign (Approx.)	Evaluation
1	Jeroboam I	931–910 BC	Bad – Introduced idolatry
2	Nadab	910–909 BC	Bad
3	Baasha	909–886 BC	Bad
4	Elah	886–885 BC	Bad
5	Zimri	885 BC (7 days)	Bad
6	Tibni	885–880 BC	Bad – Contested reign that overlapped Omri's
7	Omri	885–874 BC	Bad – Did more evil than predecessors
8	Ahab	874–853 BC	Bad – Married Jezebel, promoted Baal worship
9	Ahaziah	853–852 BC	Bad
10	Joram (Jehoram)	852–841 BC	Bad
11	Jehu	841–814 BC	Bad – Destroyed Baal worship but not fully faithful
12	Jehoahaz	814–798 BC	Bad
13	Jehoash (Joash)	798–782 BC	Bad
14	Jeroboam II	782–753 BC	Bad – Politically strong, spiritually corrupt
15	Zechariah	753 BC	Bad
16	Shallum	752 BC (1 month)	Bad
17	Menahem	752–742 BC	Bad
18	Pekahiah	742–740 BC	Bad
19	Pekah	740–732 BC	Bad
20	Hoshea	732–722 BC	Bad – Last king before Assyrian exile

⁸³ ChatGPT.

Kings of Judah (Southern Kingdom) – Good & Bad Kings

#	King	Reign (Approx.)	Evaluation
1	Rehoboam	931–913 BC	Bad – Allowed idol worship
2	Abijah (Abijam)	913–911 BC	Bad – Though had some good moments
3	Asa	911–870 BC	Good – Removed idols, faithful most of life
4	Jehoshaphat	870–848 BC	Good – Sought the Lord, instituted reforms
5	Jehoram	848–841 BC	Bad – Married Ahab’s daughter, led Judah astray
6	Ahaziah	841 BC	Bad
7	Athaliah (Queen)	841–835 BC	Bad – Usurped throne, promoted Baal
8	Joash (Jehoash)	835–796 BC	Good/Bad – Good early with Jehoiada, bad later
9	Amaziah	796–767 BC	Good/Bad – Started well, turned to idols
10	Uzziah (Azariah)	767–740 BC	Good – Faithful, but became proud
11	Jotham	740–732 BC	Good – Followed the Lord
12	Ahaz	732–716 BC	Bad – Very wicked, promoted idol worship
13	Hezekiah	716–687 BC	Good – Trusted God, reformed worship
14	Manasseh	687–642 BC	Bad/Repented – Very evil, but repented late
15	Amon	642–640 BC	Bad
16	Josiah	640–609 BC	Good – Great reformer, loved God's law
17	Jehoahaz	609 BC	Bad
18	Jehoiakim	609–598 BC	Bad
19	Jehoiachin	598–597 BC	Bad
20	Zedekiah	597–586 BC	Bad – Last king before Babylonian exile

Summary:

- **Israel (Northern Kingdom): All 20 kings were bad** (unfaithful to God).
- **Judah (Southern Kingdom):** Out of 20 rulers:
 - **8 were good or mostly good** (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash*, Amaziah*, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, Josiah)
 - **12 were bad or mostly bad**

**Joash and Amaziah started well but failed later.*

