

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Lecture 15, People Groups, Philistines and Ugarit, Rise of the Monarchy

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This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 15, People Groups, Philistines and Ugarit, Rise of the Monarchy.

Welcome to our next tape, a continuation on some levels of the discussion about the Sea Peoples Movement. It's funny because in the audience, I would be surprised if only anything other than a very small percentage of you have ever heard of the Sea Peoples Movement, and yet almost everybody out there has heard of the Philistines. Well, the Philistines are more important than the movement in the sense that we've heard of the Philistines, but they were just a tiny, tiny, infinitely small fraction of the people who were involved in this movement.

But they are among the most famous of all the biblical peoples, and especially because of Delilah. So, we can look at them and still learn more from them, so we would like to talk about what I call post-Exodus Philistines. And these post-Exodus Philistines are closely associated to the Tjekker and the Danuna and so on.

Apparently, the Old Testament uses the term Philistine generically. It must have been difficult for the Hebrews to tell the tribes apart from one another because they didn't know anything about the Aegeans, so they probably just took the name of the most powerful of these people groups or the ones that were closest to where the Hebrews were at, and used that name to describe all of them. So, what we would want to say to you as we get ready to move along is when the Egyptians defeated them, they settled multiple different tribes in multiple areas of Israel, and so these post-Exodus Philistines moved into the area not suddenly as much as they did gradually.

The Peleset were settled in the Pentapolis, the five cities that are mentioned in the Bible, Gaza, Gath, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. So those are the five cities. These were not Philistine cities per se, this is where the Egyptians settled them.

And the Egyptians settled them because they were vassals to the Egyptians, and by putting them, this area here, guys, was very sensitive to the Egyptians, all right? So, if I could digress for a sentence or two, you remember the Hyksos. The Hyksos made an unending impact on Egyptian thought. So, what the Egyptians learned from the Hyksos is that in spite of this desert region separating Egypt from the Middle East, the Egyptians weren't safe.

There's a desert region here of about 250 miles. The Egyptians thought that was enough. But as a result of the Hyksos, they learned that they were vulnerable if they couldn't control this land bridge. So, to try to control the land bridge, they took the Philistines, who were their vassals, and they set them right along here, where they put them in five cities, and then they guarded the approaches to Egypt.

As long as they had these powerful Aegean warriors in those five cities, then they couldn't easily be invaded. Then they also put them up here, south of the Sea of Galilee. They put them here because they were guarding the Jordan Rift, which was strategically important.

Then they put them over here in Amman because that city controlled the entire eastern part of this region. So, with these strategic settlements of Aegeans, they were basically creating a powerful buttress protecting Egypt from these hated Semites. So this is why they settled them where they did.

Therefore, they were settled in multiple regions. But by the 10th century, they were spread out throughout more than just the regions I mentioned. So culturally, the Philistines are clearly unique to the region.

They are Aegeans, and you can tell from looking at their pottery. Well, if you knew what Semitic pottery would look like, you could tell. This is typically Aegean pottery that I have there for you. The artwork and the elegance of it is far superior to anything in the Semitic world.

Even at this very early stage in Aegean presence, the fact of the matter is that the pottery of the Aegeans was superior to anything the Semitic world produced. So, they produced a very distinctive pottery. They had distinctive burial patterns.

These are not necessarily Philistine because we know at a later date, the Egyptians used the same kind of burial coffins, but we call these anthropoid clay coffins because they are shaped like humans, and they're built of clay, and people were buried in them. And it's a little hard to tell, but maybe your eye can pick up on it. Here's the head and, of course, the ears, but then here's the chin, and then underneath the chin, you can see the two arms, which are disproportionate to the body, but this is the way these clay coffins were shaped.

It reminds me vaguely of the death masks of Mycenaean kings. Certainly not identical, but it reminds me of these Mycenaean king death masks. So, at any rate, these were burial coffins of some of these Philistines.

We know that early on, they absorbed the religious deities, gods, and practices of the area. They were Semitized very early. So why are the Philistines such a big deal in the Bible? Well, they're a big deal in the Bible because they are very powerful warriors.

They had the winning weapon. What we know from 1 Samuel 13, 19 is that the Philistines enjoyed a monopoly on iron in the area. It's not like the ancient world took forever to find iron.

The ancient people knew about iron as far back as you can go. It was unique. It was heavy, and it was too hard to ever work with.

It wasn't until sometime earlier than where we're now, which is probably 1500 BC or so on, that human beings finally learned how to melt iron. Iron can't be melted by the temperature of ordinary fire. If I were to try to light a fire under a metal piece of iron, it would do nothing to it other than just make it warm.

They could not melt iron. Somewhere in human history, they learned the secret, and they did it by what we know of as a bellows system. In early American history, these smiths, iron smiths, who worked with horseshoes and things like that, were able to melt iron by an accordion-like structure that would increase the airflow across the metal.

The more air, the hotter the flame could get. At some time, people in Aegean circles had learned how to melt iron. Of course, if you melt it, you can do what human beings have done.

We can be sure, certain will continue to do so; we will make them into agencies to kill people with. So, it was in antiquity. Before they turned iron into things that were practical, like pottery and implements, they turned them into weapons.

And so, the Philistines had iron, and iron weapons in warfare gave them an unbeatable advantage. As a matter of fact, the Bible talks about the Canaanites and their iron chariots. Well, there's no iron within 500 miles of Israel.

So, all iron had to be imported, and certainly, the Canaanites knew nothing about how to smelt iron. So, the iron that was in the area was the region that was brought into the region through trade or purchase, and the Philistines had that technology, and that made them the winning power because they could have iron swords. So the Philistines were among the most formidable of the people that the Israelites had to deal with, and their impact was so great that they ended up, not by them imposing it, but by the Romans adopting the name they called the territory Palestine.

They are among the most important people from biblical times, and of course, we laugh somewhat sad at the same time about Samson's escapades with Philistine women. So, they also had an impact on the Hebrews in other ways. We're going to turn our attention to, I think, the last of the locations and peoples that we want to deal with before we get into the biblical text.

That's where we're heading here later on in this lecture, and that's the site of Ugarit. Once again, most of my maps are gone, so I can't exactly show you where Ugarit is, but I can point it out on a map like this way up here in this region where my cursor is pointed at. We have the ancient city of Ugarit. And Ugarit was a city about which we really knew nothing until it was accidentally found.

Nearly a century ago, a local individual was out plowing, and the tip of his plow uncovered an artifact and it turned out to be an artifact from the site of Ugarit. And so here we are nearly two generations later, and we still are excavating at Ugarit. The major excavator was a French priest named Claude Schaeffer.

And when you see the site, one of the things that strikes you is that it's a perfect trading location. As you can see where it is here, here is Cyprus. You can just see a little bit of the extension, the easternmost extension of Cyprus.

Cyprus, of course, was where the ancients had most of their copper from. So, Ugarit is just across the ocean from Cyprus. Here are the main trade routes up here, Arpad and Aleppo and so on.

Of course, it also interdicts north-south traffic for trade. So, in other words, it sits at the center of the east-west and north-south trade routes, making it the ideal trading center. Thus, it was throughout its history until it was destroyed in the Sea People's Movement. The site, therefore, is ideal for trade.

When this site was found, its language and literature has been of monumental importance to biblical studies. The reason why is, well, there are actually multiple reasons, and we'll talk about them. You'll see I have a lot more information on Ugarit than what I'm going to go over.

But what I wanted to tell you is that Ugarit, even if you've never heard the term, Ugarit is a discipline all to its own. There are men and women who spend their entire lives in Ugaritic studies. Ugarit is a discipline in which it has its own language, its own grammars, its own lexicons, its own bibliographies.

It's a discipline in itself, so it's well-developed. One of the most interesting things about Ugarit is that it is among the earliest alphabetic languages ever found.

Now, we used to think that Ugarit at one time was the earliest alphabetic language that has ever been found. We now know that's not true. As a matter of fact, they keep pushing the date further back on the alphabet, and I think we're up to now about 1700 or 1800 as the date when the earliest alphabet was invented.

But certainly, Ugarit provides us with many tablets, whereas none of these other proposed alphabets provide us with any tablets. So, it is a Semitic language very closely related to Hebrew. Its alphabet consisted of 30 consonants written in a cuneiform script.

If you as a layperson were looking at an Akkadian script, if you were looking at a tablet that was in cuneiform, it could be written in Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, or Hittite, and you couldn't tell the difference. It would look all the same. But Ugarit is a language very closely related to Hebrew, and that, of course, is one of the things that makes it such an important language find for Hebrew.

So, we're going to limit our comments to this to just a few things, but it's worth pointing out to you. I think out of all of the languages I studied in my years as a student, I would have to say other than Hebrew, Ugaritic was my next favorite. So, while Ugarit is not the only place in the West where tablets have been found, it is the only place with any significant amount of tablets except Ebla.

Furthermore, it's the only tablet find of any consequence in the second millennium B.C. Ugarit was destroyed in about 1200. It was never reoccupied, but it left us hundreds of tablets that are utterly priceless to us today. Perhaps the happiest result of this find would be its significance for Hebrew language studies, especially Hebrew poetry.

It has been of tremendous value for the study of Old Testament syntax, Hebrew grammar, and hapax legomena. Hapax legomena means literally written once. So, when we're dealing with a language like Hebrew, on occasion we have words that appear only one time, and we're just unsure what that word means.

So, when we look at Ugarit, one of the first things I would like to put into your thinking is this is a language that has had amazing impact on the Hebrew Bible. When I was a student in my early years, I used to work a lot in the Psalms. And I remember going and looking at commentaries on the Psalms that were done back in the 30s and the 40s.

And literally, what the commentators would do would be to rearrange, to alter the Hebrew Bible to make it conform to Greek poetic structures. In other words, some of those early commentaries were written, and the commentator thought that the Hebrew was corrupt. And so, they would try to conform it to Greek literary structures.

Well, what we now know, of course, is that it was Balderdash. And in fact, the Hebrew poetry that we have today fits very comfortably with the structure of the poetic prose of Ugarit. Ugarit does not have Psalms per se, but it has poetic prose

that fits so nicely that it has brought about a happy state of affairs for the study of Hebrew poetry.

Now, scholars don't waste their time changing the Hebrew text but have largely come to accept the Hebrew text as it is because of the influence of Ugarit. When I was young, Michel Dahood, a great Catholic scholar, wrote a three-volume commentary on the Psalms in the Anchor Bible and basically adopted a very conservative stance toward the Hebrew text that he would not change the consonants of the Hebrew text. Now, he changed the vowels but not the consonants.

Things like that happened because of Ugarit, and so it has helped us understand especially Hebrew poetry, but also Hebrew grammar and syntax. It has helped us understand strange and rare words that we don't know what to do with. I remember when I became a new convert to Christ, I remember I just, for some reason, it might have been just God's sovereignty.

I was just drawn to the Old Testament. I just loved it right from the beginning. But if you read the Old Testament, especially the first few times you're reading it, you have a lot of questions.

I can remember because back then, we read the King James—just about all of us did—and I can remember reading the prophets, and they were talking about, under the prophetic influence, hewing down the groves. Hewing is a word we don't use as much anymore. It means cutting down.

And they talked about hewing down the groves like you were somehow attacking Canaanite religion by cutting down these groves. And I remember being so puzzled as a young man wondering, how can trees be sinful and why are they cutting them down? Well, of course, now we know that these are not groves at all. They're actually wooden images of a female deity named Asherah.

But see, we know that, largely under the influence of Ugarit, the King James translators, they were just guessing. What they had was a word that meant to cut. Well, if you're cutting things down, they must be trees.

But thanks to sites like Ugarit, we now know that they were cutting down wooden cultic images. So, Ugarit has been of tremendous, tremendous help to us in understanding our Hebrew Bible. I would go so far as to say for my purposes, for purposes of the Hebrew text, I would go so far as to say that apart from the Dead Sea Scrolls, for understanding our Bible, I would say Ugarit is the most important tablet find and for a second reason, not just of Hebrew, but because virtually everything that we know of consequence about Canaanite religion, we know from Ugarit.

When you read your Old Testament, you have a pretty clear picture that the Canaanite religion was an awful thing. But the Old Testament isn't very clear about telling you what they believed. Now, there are a few things that they did that are pretty awful, like sacrificing babies and things like that.

But we don't really know much about Canaanite theology from the Old Testament. We just know it was sinful. As we get to Ugaritic, we come to find out that on the contrary, now we know what theology characterized Canaanite religious thought.

We know that it was largely connected to the seasons and fertility, but a lot of what we know about Canaanite theology comes from Ugarit. So, what I would suggest to you is that if you decide someday, you're going to become a biblical scholar, you leave room in your training to develop a working knowledge of Ugaritic. So I will leave this by telling you that, sure enough, entire cacophonies of errors were made because these tablets were so powerful and so important that we entered into a period that some, I don't think I created this term, we entered into a period of pan-Ugariticism.

In other words, it was as if what we did was we put on the special eyeglasses of Ugaritic, and we read the whole Old Testament in light of Ugarit. And so that meant there were a lot of things that weren't correct, and I'm not going to talk about them because I need to move us along in our course; we're a little more than halfway, and we still have got lots of ground to cover. So, I'm going to just say these things about Ugarit to you and then leave that site.

One of the most fortuitous things about Ugarit, strangely, is that it was destroyed. Tablets were found in the oven that were never even finished cooking. And because it was destroyed and never reoccupied, then everything at Ugarit was found in situ, that is, in its original setting.

That's the ideal kind of find. When you build on top of building upon building upon building, that destroys evidence, whereas when the site is just destroyed, you lose some things, but you gain many things because it isn't sort of squashed by subsequent buildings. So, what we're going to do in the remainder of our tape, on this tape, is turn our attention toward a subject area of some significance, which is the rise of the monarchy in Israel.

And so, I start out by talking about early Israel. There are many, many histories available, and some of the best ones are Leon Wood's Survey of Israel's History, John Bright's History of Israel, Eugene Merrill's Kingdom of Priests. Frankly, when you have all three of those, you've got adequate... There are many new histories today that are more up-to-date, but boy, I tell you, those three guys did a great job in their histories, and if you have those three, you're well situated.

We want to talk about the period of judges. And again, we aren't going to spend a long time on this, but what archaeology reveals to us from the long period of judges, judges is a time period that roughly, just to give you a round figure, is 350 years, roughly, just to give a round figure. And when you read Judges, it is a depressing book.

I happen to have developed a love for this book, and so in my church ministries, I love to teach this book. And my wife, today is our 48th anniversary. When she found out that I was teaching judges at my church, she would say, oh, no. It's not exactly a book about how they rode off into the sunset and lived happily ever after.

It's a depressing book. As a matter of fact, there are very few stories in the book that are happy or even neutral. It's a book that's designed to tell us that things are really bad.

What we know about archaeology in this time period is that it shows us that the people we call Israel really weren't a people. People suggest they shared a common ethnic identity and were building a nation. What we see in judges, guys, is that they weren't a nation.

There's only one time in the book of Judges when the people of Israel joined together completely, and that's to kill one another. In one of the last stories in the book, there is a great civil war in which the 11 tribes fight the one tribe of Benjamin, and they virtually exterminate it. And it's the only time in the entire book when the tribes cooperate.

And in that case, to kill one another. They weren't a people, and they weren't a nation. They were a collection of tribes, and obviously, there was a tremendous amount of religious apostasy.

So, it's important to understand that archaeology teaches us that this period was not a time of prosperity. Things in the countryside are rustic, and there are not many large cities.

There's virtually nothing in the way of monumental structures. And it's a time period that, quite frankly, looks like it was not just agricultural, but it was relatively poor. So, it will be good for us to remember, therefore, that Judges is connected to the Sea People's Movement.

The Sea People's Movement occurs roughly in the middle of the Book of Judges, and what we think happened in the Sea People's Movement is, as those tribes were making their way down the coast, a lot of cities were captured and some were destroyed. This seems to have created part of the chaos that we see that's going on

in the Book of Judges, the kind of political chaos when there is little or no political order. The Egyptians have lost control of Syro-Palestine.

So, chaos in judges is probably connected in some unmeasurable ways to the chaos of the Sea People's Movement. One final point of continuity with the following period of the United Monarchy needs to be talked about. Judges is an unfortunate term for this period, as it does not really characterize the book.

Let me tell you something about the strange culture of the Hebrews. Many of the names that you have in your Bible for the books of the Old Testament, many of the names that you have are not the names of these books in the Hebrew tradition. In other words, we get the name Judges not from the Book of Judges, we get it from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Since it talks about people judging, the writers of the Septuagint, understandably, gave the name of the book to be Judges. But it was common tradition both in the Hebrew Bible and in the ancient Mesopotamian world to make the first few words of the book the title. So the title of the book of Judges is really not Judges, but "It came about after the death of Joshua."

So, the real title of our book is "It Came About After the Death of Joshua." And, of course, most readers know that when Joshua died, it wasn't good. Whereas the biblical text goes to great pains to tell us how God raised up Joshua to follow Moses, how God took the spirit that was upon Moses and put that spirit upon Joshua, and how Joshua was the exact extension of Moses because when you read Joshua chapter 1, Joshua is told over and over about keeping the law as the means by which success can be achieved.

Well, that's all the same thing with Moses. But when Joshua dies, cryptically, surprisingly, there's no leader. And the text doesn't tell us why.

If God went to pains to raise up Joshua, we might ask ourselves, why didn't he raise up a successor to Joshua? Well, the text doesn't tell us. I would make a guess on your behalf and say, friends, when you read the accounts in the Bible concerning Moses and you read the accounts concerning Joshua, the Israelites didn't follow either one of them. On several occasions, Moses must ask God to intercede because the Israelites are going to kill him.

They are that far gone from God. And when we get to the book of Joshua, as we get toward the end of Joshua, I think it's in chapter 13, if my memory is working today. In chapter 13, Joshua looks at the Israelites and says, how long are you going to stay over there? Because they're over on the east side of the Jordan River.

And Joshua is saying, come over here and follow me. Let's conquer the land. And by the time we get to the end of the book of Joshua, it tells us straightforwardly that while some land has been conquered, much land hasn't.

So, as I prepare us for where we're going in the flow of history in the Hebrew Bible, I'm trying to make the point that maybe God didn't raise up a successor to Joshua because they wouldn't follow the people that God had already raised up. They didn't follow Moses to the point that all but a handful were buried in the desert. They didn't follow Joshua because when you read Joshua chapter 1, it tells you in each and every case, no tribe succeeded in conquering the land that was given to it.

So perhaps one of the reasons that God didn't raise up a leader is because he was preparing them to be willing, finally, to accept the leader that God would raise up. Well, so much for all of that. Let's look at my comments here in the middle.

One final point of continuity with the following period is that judges aren't a very good term because, in the book of Judges, not one of the judges is ever called a judge. If they're not called judges, you might ask, why on earth then are we calling this book Judges? Well, it's because half of them are said to have judged verb form. None of the judges are ever given the title judge.

Secondly, even the verb form judged is not even used for all of its leaders. Even the verb form is not used for all of its leaders. So, in effect, I would be willing to say that there really wasn't a consistent office called judge.

As a matter of fact, what I think is happening in the book of Judges that is of some importance is this important point. There seems to have been missing administrative machinery to run anything other than a tribe. So, what I would suggest to you is something like this.

What the book of Judges is revealing is not a nation, not a people, but the individual activities of various tribes. And sometimes the tribes would agree to cooperate and follow someone we call a judge, and sometimes they didn't. But I'm unconvinced that there was an office of a judge that really ruled the country.

Instead, I have a suspicion that the way Israel was being ruled was not by the office of someone called a judge. Israel was being ruled by tribal elders. What the book is really about is tribalism.

If you're not taking notes, I would encourage you to write it down because this is what's going on. There is no cohesion to the so-called people. It's a collection of 12 different tribes that have mutual antipathy toward one another, jealousies, and an unwillingness to cooperate and join together as the people of God.

So, as we look at the so-called judges, it's not an accident that there are 12. That's probably a number specifically chosen because of 12 tribes. There are six major judges and six minor judges.

And an analysis of those judges, those so-called judges, as I mentioned to you, none of them are ever called judges, shows that the only thing each judge had in common was that they were leaders. Each judge was a leader. That's all they had in common.

There was no continuity from one judge to the next, as we would expect if it was an office. Okay, so I'm probably splitting hairs right now in the sense that I'm talking to you about the concept of a political office, and I'm saying to you there is very little evidence that there was a political office of a figure who could be called a judge. What each of these political figures did when they led was that they delivered them from their enemies.

So, I think that's a very important distinction as we are looking at this time period. The emphasis, therefore, fourthly, should be placed on the activity of the leader, not on an office that may have been mythical. Okay, now I have, used to be a saying when I was a kid about I have other fish to fry.

What I'm getting at is what I think is a real problem in biblical studies, and that is the contrast that occurs, supposedly, between judges because judges are supposed to equal theocracy and kingship, which equals monarchy. And so, I hear this a lot and what they talk about is that in the book of Judges we have a period that's a theocracy but not a monarchy because only God is a monarch in the theocracy. And I'm obviously trying to set the stage for rejecting that model.

So, first of all, as I look at what's going on in Judges, it's no more of a theocracy than what we have in the monarchy. God always rules. What Judges is doing, in my judgment, in part, this is only a part of it, but it's an important part. Judges is showing, okay, this is controversial, so not everyone will agree with me, Judges is showing what happens when you are unwilling to follow the leaders that God raises up.

I think it's on three or four occasions in the book of Judges in which the text says, in those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes. That's not a good thing. When everyone does what's right in their own eyes, then that leads to chaos, which is what the book of Judges is really designed to show us.

It shows us a time period of tragedy, theological apostasy, and national dissolution. So, what I'm suggesting to you is, contrary to a few authors, Judges is not an ideal time, it's a time of great tragedy. Okay? So, I'm rejecting the concept that says what we call the period of Judges, about 300 plus years, is not a unique theocracy because

God is still ruling Israel in Judges, the way he was ruling Israel under Moses, and the way that he would rule Israel under David, and the way he would rule Israel under Hezekiah.

God is the permanent king of Israel, God is the permanent king of the world, and I'm rejecting the concept that Judges is a theocracy as if that's unique. So, let me just quick-like set the stage for us, as I try to make the point. The word theocracy is a word that is not a biblical word.

When I say it's not a biblical word, what I mean is, not that the idea is unbiblical, but that the word never appears in the Bible. Theocracy is a combination of two words in Greek. It comes from the Greek word theos, for God, and archos, or archontos, ruler.

So, what theocracy means etymologically is the rule of God. Well, that's my point. God always rules.

There's no period when it isn't a theocracy. Contrary to what Americans might think, God is still the king of the world. This is a theocracy in the sense that God is still ruling the world.

Now, America is not a theocracy, but God is ruling to this very day. So, how did we come to call this period a theocracy? Well, in my notes, I mentioned Josephus to you, in the middle of the page. Josephus, I mentioned to you earlier on our tapes that Josephus was a general who participated in the revolt against Rome.

And, of course, he was defeated, and only by his own sleight of hand was the life of Josephus saved. He saved himself because he convinced the Romans that he was a clairvoyant prophet. And the Romans were always interested in the future, people are sure like that.

He was always interested in the future, so he convinced them that he was worth keeping around. After he saved his life, Josephus kind of did a turnaround, and he became a great admirer of Rome. So, Josephus wrote several volumes, the Wars of the Jews and the History of the Jews.

And in his book, as he was writing the history of the Jews, when he came to writing the section in the history about judges, he contrived the idea in his mind that this was an ideal time. Now, the reason that he did that is because Josephus had come to blame the troubles of Israel upon its leadership. He saw the kings of Israel, in particular the Herodian kings, as the reason why Israel had fallen upon such hard times.

He came to conceive of the idea that the lack of kingship was the secret to success, and so he came to look at the book of Judges amazingly, somehow as an ideal period.

It was ideal because there was no king; it was a theocracy, and to him, that was the model that he presented. Well, that model in which judges were a theocracy, and the period of the monarchy was somehow a bad idea, that model really took root and stuck with us to this very day.

So, I would like to take exception to that model by telling you Judges is not a period of tranquility nor ideal. It is not a period of theocracy in the sense that that's contrasted to the monarchy. Judges is a time period of chaos of the first order.

I demonstrated that for you in a simple little word study. If we look at these words, we can see that in the book of Judges, the word that dominated Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, the word Torah, Torah is the Hebrew word for law. In the entire book of Judges, the word Torah never appears once.

Moses is called a prophet. We have prophetic activity in Joshua, but in all the book of Judges, the word prophet appears only once. We have prophetesses in Exodus and Numbers, but in Judges, a prophetess appears only once, Deborah.

If you go back to Deuteronomy chapters 16 through 18, the priest is one of the governing officers in the constitution of Israel, but in all the book of Joshua, the only priest who's mentioned is one priest in chapters 17 through 18, and he's corrupt. When we read the book of Exodus, the last third of Exodus describes the building of the Tabernacle and the officers of the Tabernacle. As a matter of fact, in Exodus, the Tabernacle is so sacred that at the end of the completion of the Tabernacle, the text tells us that God came down and took up residency in the Tabernacle.

Well, interestingly enough, in the book of Judges, the word tabernacle doesn't even appear once. When we read in Exodus and Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the religious system of Israel is built around three holy day events, pilgrimage events in which Israel is supposed to come to Jerusalem or come to some central location, and they present themselves before Israel's God. Well, in the entire book of Judges, the word feast or holy day does not appear even one time.

When we read Exodus and Leviticus, we repeatedly read about the holy of holies, about the dwelling place of God, the ark. When we get to the book of Judges, not even once does the word ark appear. When we take the theological centerpiece words of the Old Testament, words for grace, hesed, and hen are both Hebrew words that are translated primarily as grace or some form of the word grace.

The word hesed or hen appears in only chapter one and in chapter eight of the entire book, so when you put all of this information together, then what it's telling you is that the entire period of Judges is horrific apostasy, non-normative religious experience. And in essence, what Judges seems to be telling us is not an ideal period

of theocracy, but instead a word that I would personally insist on. It's not a theocracy, and it's certainly not a monarchy, but it is a period of anarchy.

There is no rule. This is the alpha privative. It is non-leadership.

This is a time period in which the biblical text is telling us that there is chaos, apostasy, everything is out of its right category. It is what one scholar referred to as WUD, W-U-D, World Upside Down. So what Judges is doing, in my experience, in my evaluation, is it's something like this.

Here we have the royal leadership of people I would call kings—Moses and Joshua, of course—but you're free to disagree with that.

And over here, we have the kings that follow, beginning in 1 Samuel 8. And Judges, at its core, is an ellipsis. It's a period of history in between the way things are supposed to be. It is a time period of catastrophe and chaos.

And, of course, it's also a time period in which their enemies are in charge. But notice with me that the enemies are not great. It's not like the Egyptians are knocking on the door.

It's not like the Assyrians are there to terrorize them. In fact, their enemies in the Book of Judges are all local. Ammonites, Moabites, and the Philistines are all smaller kingdoms that can actually defeat Israel because Israel is not united.

All right, this is important, in my judgment, to offer to you to study on your own to see if you want to buy into this idea. What I see is this is a period in which God is moving things toward the divine will. This is a period in which God continues to move things toward the divine will.

This period in between is a period in which the divine will is ignored, disobeyed, and abused for the entirety of this book. Well, now, you might want to say to me, well, if it's a time period of complete disobedience, what would be the theology of the book? And if I were to say that to you, my answer would be that what this book is doing is showing God's commitment to the covenant he made through Moses. What this book is showing us is God's amazing grace.

While God punishes them in every case for their disobedience and for their apostasy, what the book is showing us is that God will persevere to get them to the place where God can accomplish his desire for them. It's a strange thing in a book where the word grace hardly appears, but I think each and every story is a grace story. In each and every case, God rescues his relationship with his covenant people.

So, here's the sequence that makes its way in all of its six major stories. The Israelites commit apostasy. They sin.

God raises up an oppressor. The people cry out. God raises up a deliverer.

This is found in each cycle of the book. The people sin. God raises up an oppressor.

The people cry out in pain. God raises up a deliverer. And here's what never happens in the book.

Not once. The people repent. So what we see is that in spite of God's continual involvement with them, the people never repent.

And so, for 300-plus years, we don't seem to be getting anywhere. To my way of thinking, the purpose of this period is to prepare the Israelites for where God wants them to be going. Over here, the Israelites all died in the wilderness.

Well, here they're not in the wilderness, but they're all going to die without the fulfillment of God's promises. So, what's happening over here is that I believe God has used this time period to get them to where God wants to be going, which is to introduce them to godly kings like David and perhaps to a lesser degree like Solomon. So, with that in mind, I've tried to prepare you for what I think is the great coming event, which is the formation of the monarchy.

And in our next tape, this is what we will start with then, is the formation of the monarchy and how all of this fits into backgrounds and what God is doing. So, we'll pause there and then come back and, or then start over. I'm coming back; you're just starting over, and we will look at the formation of the monarchy.

All right, thanks for your attention.

This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 15, People Groups, Philistines and Ugarit, Rise of the Monarchy.