

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 22, Introduction to Judges Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 22, Introduction to Judges, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Howard's lecture introduces the Book of Judges, exploring its authorship, dating, and purpose. He highlights the book's central theme of **Israel's apostasy** and its cyclical pattern of sin, servitude, and deliverance. The lecture also examines the historical context of the Book of Judges, including the **Late Bronze Age collapse** and the rise of the Philistines, and discusses the roles and characteristics of the judges themselves. Finally, it analyzes key themes such as God's faithfulness despite Israel's disobedience and the transition toward the Israelite monarchy.

2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 22 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Joshua-Ruth).



**Howard_Josh_Ruth
_Session22.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 22, Introduction to Judges

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes, ideas, and facts from the provided source, "Howard_Josh_Ruth_EN_Session22_IntroJudg.pdf":

Briefing Document: Introduction to the Book of Judges

Overall Context: This lecture serves as an introduction to the biblical Book of Judges, the second book in the Hebrew canon's "Former Prophets" section (following Joshua). It focuses on the book's historical context, literary structure, and major themes, and emphasizes the theological purposes of the text.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Cycle of Apostasy and Deliverance:

- The central, recurring theme of Judges is a cycle of Israel's apostasy, followed by servitude to foreign powers, their cry for deliverance, God raising up a judge to deliver them, and then a period of rest, only to repeat the cycle. As Dr. Howard states, it's a cycle that "really kind of seems to go not just straight across but downhill."
- This cycle is presented as a consequence of disobedience to God.
- The repeated nature of the cycle highlights the Israelites' tendency to abandon God and their covenant.

1. Judges as Military Deliverers:

- The "judges" in the book were primarily military deliverers or saviors, not primarily legal figures, as the title might suggest today. While Deborah performed a judicial function, most of the judges stories focus on their military leadership.
- Dr. Howard states, "at the core of who the judges were, were military deliverers or saviors."
- He emphasizes that when thinking of the Book of Judges, "the first thing you should think of is not the idea of someone in a courtroom with a gavel, or sitting under the palm tree coming to decisions, it's more of a military deliverer that is to lead the people."

1. **Transition to Monarchy:**

- The book of Judges is presented as a transitional period between the leadership of Joshua and the establishment of a monarchy in Israel.
- The absence of a central leader and the resulting chaos in the book highlight the need for a king to guide and unify the nation. This is reflected in the repeated phrase, "every man did what was right in his own eyes." Dr. Howard states, "the book is showing the consequences of disobedience to God...and it then is also pointing ahead to something else, which is namely the benefits of having a king in and over Israel."
- The book serves as a foundation for the establishment of the monarchy in Israel.

1. **Theological Purpose of Historical Books:**

- The book of Judges, like other historical books in the Bible, serves more than just a historical record; it demonstrates how God works through history. It shows "how God works through history and through people and sometimes in spite of people, sometimes against people."
- It illustrates the consequences of disobedience and points toward God's faithfulness despite Israel's shortcomings.

1. **God's Faithfulness:**

- Despite Israel's repeated apostasy, God remains faithful to his people.
- Whenever the Israelites cried out to God for help, he raised up a judge to deliver them, showcasing His mercy and commitment to His covenant.
- Dr. Howard points out that "God really, in a sense, emerges as the hero of the book. He acted on Israel's behalf in spite of its faithless character."

1. **The Land and Purity of Worship:**

- The concern for the land in Judges ties in with another theme of Joshua, which is the idea of the purity of worship.
- In the book of Judges, the incomplete conquest is highlighted and it is shown how Israel failed to follow God's commands, failing to drive out all of the Canaanites. This led to a contamination of their worship.

1. **Incomplete Conquest:**

- Unlike the seemingly complete conquest in Joshua, the book of Judges reveals that many Canaanites were not driven out and actively influenced the Israelites' abandonment of God.
- This incomplete conquest is presented as a key reason for Israel's later apostasy and difficulties. Dr. Howard quotes the text that says, "Judah captured Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon, et cetera. But in verse 19, he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron."

1. **The Complex Figures of the Judges:**

- While the book does not minimize their accomplishments, it also highlights the shortcomings and moral flaws of the judges. Dr. Howard says that "most of the judges themselves embodied this apostasy," meaning "the individual judges themselves are as much a part of the problem as they were a part of the solution."
- Figures like Gideon and Samson are shown to have significant moral flaws despite their roles as deliverers.
- Hebrews 11 mentions several judges in the Hall of Faith, focusing on their faith and accomplishments. However, Dr. Howard notes a contrast between this positive portrayal in Hebrews with that of Judges, which is more balanced, including their failures.

1. **Structure and Authorship:**

- The book of Judges is anonymous, with no known author. Late rabbinical tradition assigns authorship to Samuel, but there's no biblical evidence for this claim.
- The book likely came together over time and may have been composed from different sources with double introductions, a core narrative with the judges, and additional appendixes at the end, though Dr. Howard affirms its final form was inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- He mentions, "there are basically two introductions to the book, chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 2, verse 5, and then 2.6 to 3.6. And maybe those are separate."

1. **Dating of Events and Composition:**

- The events of Judges took place between Joshua's death and the rise of the monarchy in Israel, spanning several hundred years (roughly from 1400s-1100s BC).

- The writing of the book likely occurred after these events, with some parts possibly written much later. References such as the mention of the Jebusites in Chapter 1 and the "day of the captivity of the land" in chapter 18 provide clues about when portions of the text may have been written.
- The book mentions a "day of the captivity of the land" which is likely referring to the Babylonian captivity, which means that at least part of the book was composed hundreds of years later.

1. **Historical Background:**

- The book spans the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. The Late Bronze Age was a time of prosperity and urban development, ending with mass destruction around 1200 BC.
- The Early Iron Age saw the collapse of cities and a shift to more rural settlements, before societies began to recover.
- Technological advances during this time included iron tools and plastered cisterns.

1. **Opponents of Israel:**

- The book of Judges focuses on conflicts with Canaanites, who were not fully driven out of the land, as well as the rise of the Philistines.
- The Philistines, a group that migrated from the Aegean, are major opponents toward the end of the period, possessing distinct pottery and culture.

1. **Canaanite Gods:**

- The attraction to the pagan Canaanite gods, including El, Baal, Asherah, Astarte, Anat, Mot, and Yam, is central to the recurring apostasy theme in the book.
- Baal was considered the de facto high god and god of storms, with a cycle of death and resurrection tied to agricultural fertility.
- The Canaanite religious system was learned through archaeological discoveries in Ugarit that unveiled texts describing the gods, their relationships, and the myths surrounding them.

- Dr. Howard points out that some have tried to link the story of Jesus to these dying and rising god stories. He states that this is an invalid comparison, because, unlike Jesus's one death and one resurrection, these other gods go through this cycle every year.

1. **Double Introduction and Joshua Connection:**

- The book has two introductions, Chapters 1:1-2:5 and 2:6-3:6 which provide different but overlapping perspectives on the immediate post-Joshua era.
- The second introduction (2:6-10) is a flashback to Joshua 24, which provides an understanding for the beginning of Israel's apostasy.
- The placement of the flashback emphasizes that the people of Israel started turning away from God soon after Joshua died and his generation passed away.

Conclusion:

The Book of Judges serves as a powerful narrative illustrating the consequences of disobedience and the importance of faithfulness to God. It highlights the chaotic period following the conquest of Canaan, where Israel struggled to fully possess the land due to their recurring apostasy. The cycle of sin, servitude, and deliverance underscores God's faithfulness, while also setting the stage for the establishment of a monarchy, which the book implicitly suggests is the solution to the people's lack of unity and direction. This document provides the main topics for a deeper analysis of the Book of Judges.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 22, Introduction to Judges

Judges Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the significance of the title "Judges" and what does it translate from the Hebrew?
2. According to the lecture, who is traditionally credited with authorship of the book of Judges, and is this claim supported by the Bible?
3. How is the book of Judges structured, and what are the main components?
4. What is the primary purpose of the book of Judges, and how does this differ from simply being a history of Israel?
5. What is the repeated cycle of events described in the book of Judges, and how does it contribute to the book's main purpose?
6. How does the book of Judges contrast with the book of Joshua?
7. What is the archaeological and historical context for the time period of the judges?
8. Who were the Philistines, and how did they relate to the Israelites during the time of the judges?
9. What were the key features of the Canaanite religious system, and what role did Baal play?
10. What are the two introductions in Judges, and what purpose does each serve?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The title "Judges" is a direct translation of the Hebrew word *Shofatim*, which refers to the 12 leaders who ruled Israel over several hundred years. These individuals are the central figures throughout the book.
2. Late rabbinical tradition assigns the authorship of Judges to Samuel, the last judge, and an important figure in the following books. However, there is no explicit evidence to support this claim within the biblical text itself.

3. The book has a double introduction, a core section dealing with the 12 judges, and two appendices. The central portion focuses on the repeated cycle of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance led by the various judges.
4. The book of Judges is not simply a historical record but serves a greater theological purpose. It demonstrates the consequences of disobedience to God and the need for a righteous king to lead Israel.
5. The book describes a cycle of Israel's sin, followed by servitude, then the people crying out to God, who delivers them with a judge. This pattern shows how Israel repeatedly abandoned God, suffered the consequences, and was then rescued.
6. Joshua portrays a positive narrative of obedience, land acquisition, and God's faithfulness, while Judges reveals a dark underbelly of Israel's apostasy, incomplete conquest, and the consequences of their faithlessness.
7. The events of Judges span the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, marked by societal collapse and migrations around 1200 BC. It was a period of shifting powers and cultural change in the Eastern Mediterranean.
8. The Philistines were a group who migrated from the Aegean area and settled on the southwest coast of Canaan. They became a major opponent of Israel and were known for their iron technology and distinctive culture.
9. Canaanite religion was a polytheistic system with El as the head god, but Baal, god of storms, was the de facto leader, associated with fertility. It was a cyclical religion tied to agricultural seasons.
10. The two introductions, in Judges 1:1-2:5 and 2:6-3:6, set the stage for the book's narrative and establish the context. They highlight Israel's failure to fully conquer the land and explain the cycle of apostasy that is central to the book.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of apostasy in the book of Judges. How does it manifest itself in the narrative, and what are its consequences for Israel?
2. Analyze the role of the judges in the book of Judges. How do their actions and characters contribute to the overall message of the book, and how do they demonstrate leadership?
3. Compare and contrast the descriptions of the conquest of Canaan in the books of Joshua and Judges. What explains the differences in the descriptions of the outcomes?
4. Explore the significance of the Philistines in the Book of Judges. What made them such a formidable enemy for the Israelites and what role did they play in the book?
5. Examine the purpose of the book of Judges within the larger narrative of the Old Testament. How does it set the stage for the events that follow in the books of Samuel and Kings?

Glossary of Key Terms

Apostasy: Abandonment or renunciation of religious or political beliefs.

Baal: The main god of the Canaanites, associated with storms, fertility, and agriculture.

Canaanites: The people who inhabited the land of Canaan before the arrival of the Israelites.

Chronology: The arrangement of events or dates in the order of their occurrence.

El: The head god of the Canaanite pantheon, often considered a detached figure.

Iron Age: An archaeological period characterized by the widespread use of iron for tools and weapons.

Jebusites: The inhabitants of Jebus (later Jerusalem) prior to its capture by David.

Judges: The leaders of Israel in the period between Joshua and the monarchy, who served primarily as military deliverers.

Late Bronze Age: An archaeological period preceding the Iron Age, characterized by advanced civilization.

Mot: The Canaanite god of death and the underworld.

Philistines: A people who migrated to the southwest coast of Canaan during the time of the judges. They were known for their military prowess.

Shofatim: The Hebrew word for judges, which is the title of the book.

Ugarit: An ancient city in Syria where texts were discovered that detail the Canaanite religion.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 22, Introduction to Judges, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Book of Judges

1. **What is the main theme of the Book of Judges, and how does it contrast with the Book of Joshua?** The main theme of Judges is the cycle of Israel's apostasy, their abandonment of God, which leads to oppression, followed by their repentance, God raising up a judge to deliver them, and then the cycle repeats, with the situation seeming to worsen over time. This starkly contrasts with Joshua, which depicts a more positive picture of Israel's obedience and God's blessings in the initial conquest of the Promised Land. Judges focuses on the "underside," highlighting the consequences of disobedience and incomplete conquest, particularly the failure to fully drive out the Canaanites, and the resulting influence this had on the Israelites.
2. **Who wrote the Book of Judges, and when was it likely written?** The authorship of Judges is anonymous. There's no internal claim of authorship within the book itself, and no other part of the Bible mentions its author. Late rabbinical tradition attributed it to Samuel, but this is without biblical evidence. Regarding the date of writing, it's generally accepted to have been written after the events it describes, likely sometime after 1050 BC (the events of the book span several hundred years, concluding before the rise of kingship under Saul). However, a reference to the "captivity of the land" suggests possible additions or edits were made much later, potentially during or after the Babylonian exile. Additionally, references to the Jebusites living in Jerusalem suggest that portions of the book were written before David's capture of Jerusalem around 1003 BC. This implies that the book may have come together over a period of time, with various additions being made by different authors or editors. The final form of the book, however, is understood to be divinely inspired.

3. **What is the purpose of the Book of Judges, beyond just being a historical record?** While Judges records historical events, its purpose is much more theological. It demonstrates the consequences of disobedience to God and highlights the need for a godly king. The book portrays a downward spiral of chaos and apostasy due to the lack of a central, God-fearing leader. The recurring cycle of sin, servitude, deliverance, and relapse illustrates the negative consequences of decentralization of leadership and a failure to follow God's law. Ultimately, Judges points ahead to the benefits of a kingship, and the need for the sort of godly king that is described in Deuteronomy 17, someone who could lead the people in worship of the Lord and bring them out of the moral morass they were in during the time of the judges.
4. **What was the role and function of a "judge" in the Book of Judges?** The judges in the Book of Judges are primarily military deliverers or saviors, rather than judicial figures in the modern sense. While some, like Deborah, rendered legal judgments, the majority acted as leaders who rose up to deliver Israel from oppression and foreign enemies, often leading them in battle. The emphasis is not on their legal skills but on their ability to rescue Israel from the consequences of their apostasy and to provide a period of peace in a given area. The judges were not necessarily spiritual paragons either, with some displaying their own moral shortcomings.
5. **What is the "cycle of apostasy" described in the book of Judges?** The Book of Judges reveals a recurring pattern: the Israelites would turn away from God and fall into sin, which lead to the Lord allowing them to be oppressed by a foreign power. The people, in their distress, would cry out to God for help, and the Lord would then raise up a judge to deliver them. After a period of deliverance, peace, and rest (usually stated as 40 or 80 years), the cycle would start again, with Israel again falling into sin. This cycle serves to highlight the Israelites' propensity to abandon God. Sadly, the cycle seems to worsen throughout the book, with each new period of apostasy being worse than the last.

6. **How does the Book of Judges present the judges themselves?** The judges are portrayed as a mixed group of leaders with various flaws and shortcomings. While some are portrayed as being more faithful than others, even the more righteous judges had flaws. The book is honest about their failures, showing they are products of their culture who struggled with the same challenges as the people they led. This emphasizes that God can use flawed individuals to accomplish his purposes and that the people needed a godly king to truly guide them in their faith and worship of God.
7. **How does the historical context of the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age inform our understanding of the Book of Judges?** The period of the Judges spans the transition between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. The Late Bronze Age was a time of prosperity and developed urban areas, as evidenced by the walled cities described in the Book of Joshua. Around 1200 BC, there was a significant collapse of civilizations across the Eastern Mediterranean, which resulted in mass migrations and the breakdown of society. The Early Iron Age was characterized by the development of iron technology and the slow recovery of societies. This backdrop of chaos, displacement, and new technological developments, and the breakdown of society helps to contextualize the turmoil and social disruption described in Judges. The emergence of the Philistines also happened during this period.
8. **Who were the major Canaanite gods that challenged the Israelites, and what did their worship entail?** The primary Canaanite deities included El, considered the head of the pantheon but somewhat detached; Baal, his son, who was seen as the de facto high god and god of storms and fertility; and Asherah, El's wife and the mother of Baal. Baal's wife was Astarte. Anat was Baal's sister and a fearsome warrior goddess. They also worshipped Mot, the god of death, and Yam, the god of the sea. Their worship was associated with fertility, agriculture, and included violent myths of their battles and cycles of death and rebirth. The attraction for the Israelites was likely the promise of immediate prosperity and fertility that these gods were thought to offer, along with sexual rituals that were part of their worship. This contrasted greatly with the more abstract, moral, and personal relationship demanded by the God of Israel.