

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 24, Judges 1-3 – Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar 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 24, Judges 1-3 – Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a lecture transcript from a course on the books of Joshua through Ruth, focusing on Judges 1-3. **Dr. David Howard** analyzes the text, highlighting **Israel's repeated cycle of apostasy, incomplete conquests of Canaan**, and the **actions of the first three judges**: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. He details the judges' victories against various enemies and emphasizes the **downward spiral of Israel's moral decline**. The lecture also explores the socio-religious context of the time, including Canaanite religious practices and the impact of iron weaponry on warfare.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 24 – 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
_Session24.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 24, Judges 1-3 – Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. David Howard's lecture on Judges 1-3:

Briefing Document: Judges 1-3 - Introduction & Early Judges

Main Theme: The lecture focuses on the beginning of the Book of Judges, highlighting the roots and initial manifestations of Israel's apostasy and the cyclical pattern of sin, oppression, deliverance, and relapse.

Key Concepts and Ideas:

1. Introduction to the Book of Judges:

- **Two Introductions:** Dr. Howard identifies two introductions to the book:
- **Chapter 1:1-2:5:** Focuses on the "roots of Israel's apostasy," detailing incomplete conquests and failures after Joshua's death.
- **Chapter 2:6-3:6:** Provides a generalized, sweeping overview of the recurring cycle of sin and deliverance.
- **Downward Spiral:** The lecturer emphasizes that the book portrays a "downward spiral" of apostasy, with each cycle worsening. Even the judges themselves are not always portrayed as flawless.
- **Lack of a Central Leader:** Following Joshua's death, there is no designated leader, marking a departure from the structure of leadership in the previous book.
- **"Everyone did what was right in their own eyes":** This phrase, used at the end of the book, is identified as a symptom of the overall problem of lack of godly leadership. This quote highlights the chaos and moral relativism that results from the absence of a unifying and righteous authority.

1. Incomplete Conquests (Judges 1):

- **Judah Takes the Lead:** After inquiring of the Lord, the tribe of Judah takes the initiative to conquer the land, often with the support of Simeon.
- **Jerusalem as a Contested City:** The narrative highlights the ongoing struggle to conquer Jerusalem, with the Jebusites remaining unconquered by both Judah and Benjamin until David's time.

- **Quote:** "In chapter 15, verse 63, at the end of the chapter on Judah, it says that Judah was not able to drive out the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And then in Judges chapter one, verse 21, we find here that the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem."
- **Limited Military Success:** While there are initial successes, most of the narratives in this chapter focus on the failure to fully displace the Canaanites from various locations. Specific examples include: Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.
- **Iron Chariots:** The Canaanites' use of iron chariots gave them an advantage in the plains, and the Israelites' lack of this technology is a factor in their failure. The lecture references 1 Samuel 13 to illustrate the Philistine monopoly on ironworking.
- **Quote:** "The Lord is with Judah, verse 19, but he was unable to completely drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had the chariots of iron."
- **Portent of Disaster:** These incomplete conquests are a foreshadowing of the "forthcoming disaster" that will unfold due to Israel's disobedience.

1. The Angel of the Lord & Initial Repentance (Judges 2:1-5):

- **Reiteration of God's Covenant:** The Angel of the Lord reminds the Israelites of God's faithfulness in bringing them out of Egypt and into the promised land.
- **Indictment for Disobedience:** They are reprimanded for not obeying God's command to break down Canaanite altars and make no covenants with the inhabitants.
- **Consequences of Disobedience:** The Angel prophesies that the remaining nations will be "thorns in your side" and their gods will be a "snare." This is a near verbatim repetition of the warning found in Joshua 23, emphasizing the consequences of their inaction.
- **Quote:** "There will be thorns in your side, and the gods will be a snare to you."
- **Initial Repentance:** The people respond with weeping, and they sacrifice to the Lord, demonstrating an initial moment of repentance. However, this repentance is not lasting.

1. The Cycle of Apostasy (Judges 2:6-3:6):

- **Generational Apostasy:** The narrative transitions into a generalized description of the cycle that will repeat throughout the book. A key element of this shift is the new generation that "did not know the Lord," a stark contrast to the faithful generation of Joshua's time.
- **Quote:** "All that generation were also gathered to their fathers and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he'd done for Israel."
- **Recurring Cycle:** This pattern consists of:
 - Israel falling into sin.
 - God handing them over to an enemy.
 - The people crying out to God in supplication.
 - God raising up a judge for deliverance.
 - A period of rest (Sabbath rest) until the cycle begins again.
- **Downward Spiral & Increased Corruption:** The cycle is not static; each recurrence finds the Israelites "more corrupt than their fathers," highlighting the deepening nature of their apostasy.
- **God Testing Israel:** God allows Israel to live among the Canaanites as a test of their faithfulness; a test they consistently fail.
- **Intermarriage & Idolatry:** Intermarriage with Canaanites leads to the adoption of their gods and practices, further driving the cycle of apostasy.
- **Incentives for Idolatry:** The lecture points to a separate discussion about the motivations for Israel's repeated apostasy, highlighting the allure of sex, money, and peer pressure.

1. The First Judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar (Judges 3:7-31):

- **Introduction to Judges:** The lecture introduces the concept of major and minor judges, noting that some judges receive more narrative focus than others.
- **Major Judges:** Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson are examples of judges with extended narratives.
- **Minor Judges:** Some judges are just named with the length of time they judged.

- **Othniel:** The first judge, Othniel, is presented as a deliverer, where the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him to defeat Cushan-rishathaim. His story follows the basic cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, and Sabbath.
- **Quote:** "The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel, and he went out to war, delivered them, and so the land had rest for 40 years, and then he died."
- **Ehud:** Ehud's story, involving the assassination of Eglon, King of Moab, is described as one of the more "graphic" and realistic stories in the Bible.
- The story includes the grisly details of Eglon's death. This is described as part of the straightforward and realistic nature of the Hebrew narrative.
- **Shamgar:** A minor judge who is credited with killing 600 Philistines with an ox goad. He, too, saved Israel. This feat is seen as a precursor to the stories of Samson.

1. **Canaanite Religion:**

- **Baal and Asherah:** The lecture highlights the centrality of Baal and Asherah in Canaanite religion and how their worship becomes a recurring problem for the Israelites.
- **Levels of gods:** There were multiple levels of gods and goddesses, ranging from high gods to localized gods, and even personal family gods. The concept of syncretism is highlighted.
- **Quote:** "The relationships were not always exactly clear, so sometimes we see Baal and Asherah, Asherah as the main characters, Asherah perhaps as the wife of Baal, but other, in the Canaanite texts we mentioned, Asherah is more the wife of Baal's father, Asherah is Baal's mother."

Overall Significance:

The lecture establishes the foundational patterns and themes that will dominate the Book of Judges. The incomplete conquests, the generational drift away from God, the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance, and the role of the judges are all introduced in these initial chapters. The lecture sets a somber tone, revealing a trajectory of decline as Israel abandons God and embraces the practices of the surrounding nations.

This briefing document encapsulates the key points from the provided lecture excerpts, offering a clear understanding of the book's opening chapters and their significance within the broader narrative of the Book of Judges.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 24, Judges 1-3, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

Judges 1-3 Study Guide

Quiz

1. According to the text, what is the overarching theme that organizes the book of Judges? *The theme that organizes the book of Judges is Israel's apostasy, which is introduced in the first few chapters and unfolds throughout the book. The book demonstrates a repeated cycle of sin, oppression, cries for help, deliverance by judges, and then a return to sin.*
2. How does the book of Judges portray the leadership situation in Israel after Joshua's death? *After Joshua's death, there is no clear leader designated, which marks the beginning of a downward spiral into chaos. The people initially followed the Lord during the time of Joshua and the elders, but this commitment fades quickly.*
3. What was the significance of the iron chariots in the context of the incomplete conquests in Judges 1? *The Canaanites' possession of iron chariots, particularly in the plains, made it impossible for the Israelites to completely drive them out. The Israelites were unable to defeat them in the plain where the chariots had an advantage, showing a lack of technology and military power.*
4. How does the "cycle" of Israel's behavior in Judges 2 contribute to the overarching narrative of the book? *The "cycle" of sin, oppression, crying out, deliverance, and relapse demonstrates a recurring pattern of Israel's repeated unfaithfulness to God. This cycle serves as a backdrop to the stories of the judges and reinforces the book's theme of apostasy.*
5. Why did the new generation in Judges 2 not know the Lord, and what were the consequences? *The new generation did not know the Lord because they were not taught about his work for Israel, or they did not witness it directly. This lack of knowledge led to the abandonment of God and the service of other gods, setting the stage for the events in the rest of the book.*
6. What was the primary form of idolatry that the Israelites fell into, according to the text? *The Israelites primarily fell into the idolatry of worshiping the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the Canaanite gods and goddesses. The worship of these deities is portrayed as a central cause of Israel's turning away from the Lord.*

7. Who was the first judge, according to the text, and what were the outcomes during his period of judging? *Othniel was the first judge, raised up after Israel's apostasy led to their oppression by Cushan-rishathaim. Othniel delivered them, and the land had rest for forty years under his leadership.*
8. What is unique about the story of Ehud in terms of narrative and detail? *The story of Ehud is notable for its graphic detail, and realism, particularly in the description of King Eglon's assassination. It highlights the downfall of the enemy and emphasizes the importance of God's deliverance.*
9. Why is Ehud's being left-handed significant in the narrative? *Ehud being left-handed is significant because he uses his left-handedness to surprise King Eglon, thrusting a sword into his belly when the king would expect an attack from the right side. His unique ability becomes a key part of his ability to deliver Israel.*
10. What is unique about the judge Shamgar? *Shamgar is notable because he is only mentioned in one verse, but he achieved significant military success by killing 600 Philistines with an ox goad. His story, though brief, underscores the theme of God's ability to use different people to save Israel.*

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of incomplete conquests in Judges 1. How do they contribute to the understanding of the subsequent apostasy described in the book?
2. Discuss the repeated cycle of sin, oppression, and deliverance in Judges 2. How does this cycle reflect the overall message of the book?
3. Compare and contrast the roles of the major judges (e.g., Othniel, Ehud) and minor judges within the framework of Judges 1-3. How do they each contribute to the narrative?
4. Explore the theme of syncretism and idolatry in the book of Judges. How does the pursuit of Canaanite gods impact the Israelites and lead to their downfall?
5. Examine the use of specific details in the narratives of the judges. What do the details reveal about the nature of the stories and their intended effect on the audience?

Glossary of Key Terms

Apostasy: The abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief, in this case, Israel turning away from God.

Canaanites: The inhabitants of Canaan, often portrayed as enemies of Israel, and whose idolatrous practices tempted the Israelites.

Baal: A major Canaanite god, often associated with fertility, storms, and agriculture, whose worship became a form of apostasy for the Israelites.

Ashtaroth: A Canaanite goddess often associated with fertility and warfare, frequently worshiped alongside Baal and also known as Asherah.

Judge (in the context of Judges): A leader, often raised by God, to deliver the Israelites from oppression, typically combining judicial and military functions.

Syncretism: The mixing or blending of different religions or cultural beliefs, which was happening in the period of Judges as Israel adopted Canaanite gods and practices.

Philistines: A people group who lived along the coast of Canaan who were also a frequent adversary of the Israelites and noted for their iron technology.

Jebusites: The inhabitants of Jerusalem prior to its conquest by David, who persisted even when other cities had been overtaken by Israel.

The Spirit of the Lord: The empowering presence of God that comes on select individuals to enable them to do God's work.

Cycle of Apostasy: The recurring pattern in the book of Judges: Israel sins, is oppressed by an enemy, cries out to God, is delivered by a judge, and then falls back into sin.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 24, Judges 1-3, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Judges 1-3

- **What is the main theme or idea that the book of Judges explores?** The book of Judges primarily explores the theme of Israel's apostasy. It illustrates a recurring cycle of Israel falling into sin, experiencing oppression as a result, crying out to God for deliverance, God raising up a judge to save them, and then a period of rest. However, this cycle is not simply repetitive; it's portrayed as a downward spiral, with each cycle becoming more severe and the judges themselves sometimes contributing to the problem.
- **What are the two introductions to the book of Judges, and what does each focus on?** The book has two introductory sections. The first, in Judges 1:1-2:5, focuses on the roots of Israel's apostasy, detailing incomplete military conquests and the tribes' failure to drive out all of the Canaanites. The second, in Judges 2:6-3:6, is a more generalized overview of the entire period, describing the cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, and sabbath rest that will characterize the era of the judges, beginning with a flashback to Joshua's death. This second introduction also emphasizes that a new generation arose who did not know the Lord or the works that He had done.
- **Why did the Israelites fail to completely conquer Canaan?** Multiple reasons contributed to the incomplete conquest. Some tribes lacked the necessary resources or technology, such as iron weapons, which were monopolized by the Philistines. More importantly, many tribes failed to fully drive out the Canaanites, often choosing to coexist with them and put them to forced labor, failing to adhere to God's command to remove them entirely. This lack of obedience allowed idolatry to take root, which led to the cycle of sin and oppression that defines the book of Judges.

- **What is the significance of the phrase, "everyone did what was right in their own eyes" at the end of the book?** The phrase "everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (or as they saw fit) summarizes the chaotic state of Israel during the time of the judges. The lack of a central, godly leader (specifically a king) resulted in a moral relativism where individuals and tribes made their own decisions, without regard to God's laws and commands. This highlights the necessity of having righteous leadership in order for the people of Israel to live in accordance with God's will.
- **How does the role of the "angel of the Lord" in Judges 2 contribute to the story?** The angel of the Lord serves as a divine messenger, reminding the Israelites of God's faithfulness in bringing them out of Egypt and into the promised land, as well as reiterating their failure to obey the command to drive out all the Canaanites. The angel's pronouncement that God will not drive out the remaining inhabitants and that those people would become "thorns in their sides" is a pivotal moment. The people initially respond with weeping and sacrifice but there is no indication that their behavior changes long term.
- **What is the typical cycle of the Judges and what is its purpose?** The recurring cycle throughout the book of Judges is: (1) Israel falls into sin and abandons God; (2) God allows them to be oppressed by another nation; (3) the people cry out to God in distress; (4) God raises up a judge to deliver them; and (5) the land experiences a period of rest. This cycle demonstrates the consequences of Israel's disobedience and God's consistent mercy in providing deliverance, even though the people repeatedly fail. It emphasizes that the judges did not change the core problem of Israel's tendency to stray from the Lord and this downward cycle continued.
- **How are the judges Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar portrayed in the first three chapters of Judges?** Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar are presented as deliverers and heroes. Othniel, prompted by the Spirit of the Lord, defeated Cushan-rishathaim, Ehud cleverly killed Eglon, king of Moab, and Shamgar defeated 600 Philistines with an ox goad. While these stories provide accounts of deliverance and victories, these are set against the backdrop of the bigger downward spiral of Israelite society at this time. While not wholly negative, even the success of these judges did not undo the overall problem.

- **Why did the Israelites turn to worshiping Baal and Asheroth, and what is the nature of those deities?** The Israelites' attraction to Baal and Asheroth stemmed from several factors including sex, money, and peer pressure. Baal and Asheroth were central figures in the Canaanite pantheon. Baal, often seen as a storm god, and Asheroth, sometimes viewed as his wife or mother, were worshiped with practices often involving ritualistic sexual activity and were often associated with fertility and prosperity. The allure of these deities lay in their supposed ability to control natural forces, influence agriculture, and provide immediate, tangible benefits, which stood in contrast to the more demanding requirements of the God of Israel.