

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Major Judges Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Major Judges, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Phillips' lecture focuses on the Book of Judges in the Old Testament, particularly the recurring cycle of Israel's apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance. She emphasizes the second-generation problem of failing to internalize faith and the geopolitical context of the time, characterized by a lack of central power and threats from surrounding nations. **The lecture highlights the stories of four major judges—Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson—examining their strengths, weaknesses, and God's use of them.** Phillips also discusses the thematic arrangement of the book, suggesting that chapters 17-21, which illustrate moral decline and the need for a king, likely occurred earlier in the period. **She suggests that those final chapters set the stage for the transition to a monarchy seen in 1 Samuel, emphasizing the prominence of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the weakness of the Levites.**

2. 35 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 17 – 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 → OT Introduction → OT Lit).



**Phillips_OTLit_Sessi
on17.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Major Judges

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Elaine Phillips' lecture on the Book of Judges.

Briefing Document: Dr. Elaine Phillips on the Book of Judges

Overview:

This lecture explores the Book of Judges, focusing on the cyclical pattern of apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance that defines the period after Joshua's leadership. Dr. Phillips emphasizes the "second-generation problem" – the failure of subsequent generations to maintain the covenant with God – and highlights key themes such as the lack of central rule in Israel, the role of flawed human leaders (the Judges), and the ultimate need for a king. She also discusses the thematic (rather than strictly chronological) arrangement of the book.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **The Second-Generation Problem:** The lecture highlights a recurring issue: "the second-generation Christians whose perhaps grandparents and parents were vitally impacted by the presence of the Holy Spirit... But you know what? If it's not ours, then it's not going to have any impact whatsoever, and that's the second-generation problem." This refers to the failure of the generation following Joshua's to maintain faithfulness to God, leading to apostasy. This problem is described as a timeless issue, not limited to the period of the Judges.
- **The Cycle of Apostasy, Oppression, Repentance, and Deliverance:** This is the central organizing principle of the Book of Judges. Dr. Phillips identifies these stages:
- **Apostasy:** The Israelites turn away from God and worship other gods (Baals, Ashtoreths). Apostasy is defined as an "intentional turning away, standing away from what they should have been committed to."
- **Oppression:** God, in his anger, hands them over to raiders and enemies who plunder and oppress them. This is presented as a form of chastisement intended to bring them back to God.
- **Repentance:** The Israelites, in great distress, cry out to the Lord for help.

- **Deliverance:** God raises up judges to save them from their oppressors. However, the cycle repeats after the judge dies. "But when the judge died, the people returned to ways more corrupt than ever before."
- **Lack of Central Rule and Tribalism:** The lecture emphasizes that during the period of the Judges, "there is no central rule." Each tribe acts largely independently, banding together with other tribes only to address local problems. This lack of unity is a significant factor contributing to the instability and moral decline of the period. Towards the end of the book, it says "that in that day, everyone did what was fit in their own eyes. Israel didn't have a king."
- **God's Sovereignty and Use of Flawed Leaders:** Despite the repeated failures of the Israelites and the imperfections of the judges themselves, God remains faithful to his covenant and uses these flawed individuals to accomplish his purposes. Dr. Phillips states, "We know well that God, in his providential oversight, his sovereignty, his directing all of these events, is indeed going to do what needs to be done with these people, and he uses flawed human beings, just like you and me."
- **The Judges as Prototypes:** The Book of Hebrews (chapter 11) is used as a lens to view select Judges (Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah). These figures are presented as examples of faith, despite their weaknesses. The lecture also acknowledges that there are a total of 12 judges in the book.
- **Women in Leadership:** Dr. Phillips notes the prominence of women during this period, citing Deborah as the major figure. Jael and Micah's mother are also mentioned. The lecture explores possible reasons why Hebrews mentions Barak instead of Deborah, such as cultural sensitivity.
- **Thematic Arrangement of the Book:** Dr. Phillips argues that chapters 17-21 are not in chronological order but likely depict events that occurred earlier in the period of the Judges. This section serves to highlight the moral and spiritual decay of Israel and to emphasize the need for a king. The point is that, in these chapters, something is "setting the stage for what is about to come" in 1 Samuel.
- **Specific Judges: Deborah and Barak:** Deborah is a prophetess and judge. Barak's courage is questioned. The victory over Sisera and the Canaanites is celebrated in poetry.
- **Gideon:** He initially shows uncertainty and doubt, but God graciously provides him with signs. His major weakness is pride, as evidenced by his creation of an

ephod that becomes an object of worship. Gideon "made the gold... into an ephod. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family."

- **Jephthah:** He makes a vow to offer a burnt offering to the Lord. The vow results in sacrificing his only daughter, raising questions about the influence of surrounding cultures and the understanding of proper worship. "He's going to go so far as to take the human life of his own daughter."
- **Samson:** He is characterized by a lust for Philistine women and a spirit of vengeance. Despite his flaws, God uses him to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Samson's weakness is "the lure of cosmopolitan culture as it is wrapped up in women."
- **Spiritual Illiteracy:** Illustrated in the story of Micah (chapters 17-18) where he steals money and then makes a shrine for the Lord. This story is used to demonstrate an "extremely superficial sense of what God requires."

Key Quotes:

- "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers... Another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel."
- "They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They worshiped and followed various gods."
- "In his anger against Israel, the Lord handed them over to raiders who plundered them... Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them."
- "In that day, everyone did what was fit in their own eyes. Israel didn't have a king."
- "Gideon made the gold, I'm in verse 27, into an ephod. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family."
- "His parents didn't know this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines."
- "Why do you ask my name? It's beyond understanding."

Implications:

The Book of Judges serves as a cautionary tale, demonstrating the consequences of disobedience and the importance of remaining faithful to God's covenant. It highlights the need for strong, righteous leadership and foreshadows the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. The lecture also encourages reflection on the importance of personal faith and avoiding spiritual superficiality.

4. Study Guide: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Major Judges

Judges: Covenant, Apostasy, and the Need for a King

Study Guide

This study guide focuses on the key themes, narratives, and characters within the Book of Judges, based on Dr. Elaine Phillips' Lecture 17. It is designed to help you understand the cyclical nature of Israel's relationship with God during this period, the role of the judges, and the overarching message of the book.

Key Themes

- **The Cycle of Apostasy:** Understand the repeated pattern of Israel's disobedience, oppression, repentance, deliverance, and relapse into apostasy.
- **Covenant Faithfulness (or Lack Thereof):** Recognize the importance of the covenant relationship between God and Israel and how the Israelites consistently break their covenant promises.
- **The Role of the Judges:** Understand that the judges were raised up by God to deliver Israel from oppression, but were often flawed individuals.
- **Geopolitical Context:** Understand the external forces (Moabites, Philistines, Midianites, etc.) that threatened Israel during this period.
- **The Absence of Central Authority:** Recognize the lack of a king or central government in Israel during the period of the Judges, which led to societal and spiritual chaos.
- **Moral and Spiritual Decline:** Appreciate the book's portrayal of the downward spiral of Israel's moral and spiritual condition as they stray further from God.
- **God's Sovereignty and Use of Flawed Individuals:** Acknowledge that God works through imperfect people to accomplish His purposes.

Key Narratives and Characters

- **The Second-Generation Problem:** Understand the challenges faced by the generation that followed Joshua.
- **Deborah and Barak:** Key events, roles, weaknesses (specifically Barak's).
- **Gideon:** Key events, weaknesses (doubt, pride, making an ephod).

- **Jephthah:** Key events, his vow and its consequences, debate over the fulfillment of the vow.
- **Samson:** Key events, his Nazirite vow (and breaking it), weaknesses (lust for Philistine women, spirit of vengeance).
- **Chapters 17-21 (Micah, the Levite, the Benjamite War):** Understand the thematic importance of these chapters, which highlight the moral and spiritual depravity in Israel due to the lack of a king.
- **Micah and the Levite (Ch 17-18):** Key events and their significance in spiritual decline.
- **The Levite and the Concubine (Ch 19-21):** Key events and their role in intertribal violence.

Geographic Locations

- **Hazor**
- **Mount Tabor**
- **Kishon Brook/Jezreel Valley**
- **Spring of Herod/Mount Gilboa/Mount Moreh/Herod Valley**
- **Gilead**
- **Philistine Plain**
- **Hebron**

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the cycle of apostasy described in the Book of Judges?
2. What covenant did the people promise to keep at the end of the book of Joshua?
3. Who are the four judges mentioned in Hebrews 11 that Dr. Phillips focuses on?
4. What are some possible reasons the book of Hebrews only mentions Barak and not Deborah?
5. What is Gideon doing when the angel of the Lord appears to him, and why is this unusual?

6. What vow does Jephthah make, and what are the consequences of this vow?
7. What are the main features of a typical Israelite four-room house, and how does that add to the understanding of Jephthah's vow?
8. What are some weaknesses of Samson?
9. Why does Dr. Phillips suggest that Chapters 17-21 in the Book of Judges might have taken place earlier than their placement suggests?
10. What two legal fictions occur in chapter 21 to allow for the restoration of the tribe of Benjamin?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The cycle of apostasy involves Israel turning away from God and worshiping idols (apostasy), God punishing them with oppression, the people crying out to God (repentance), God raising up a judge to deliver them, and then the people returning to their sinful ways after the judge dies.
2. At the end of Joshua, the people promise to be obedient and keep the covenant with the Lord; they vow to serve God alone and forsake all other gods.
3. The four judges mentioned in Hebrews 11 are Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah; these figures are highlighted as examples of faith despite their flaws.
4. One possibility is that Barak displayed a weakness (lack of courage), which Hebrews highlights to demonstrate God's use of flawed individuals. Another speculation is that the author of Hebrews might have been sensitive to the cultural preference for male leadership in their first-century audience.
5. Gideon is threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites; this is unusual because grain was typically threshed on a hilltop to use the wind to separate the grain from the chaff.
6. Jephthah vows that whatever comes out of his house first upon his return from battle will be offered as a burnt offering to God. Tragically, his daughter is the first to greet him, leading to a significant moral and theological dilemma.
7. A four-room house typically had one long room for storage in the back and three other rooms, often with a second story. Animals would live on the first floor, making it understandable that Jephthah would expect an animal to exit the house.

8. Samson's weaknesses include his attraction to Philistine women, breaking his Nazirite vows, and a spirit of vengeance. He is drawn to cosmopolitan culture, constantly putting himself in dangerous situations.
9. Dr. Phillips suggests that Chapters 17-21 may be chronologically earlier because they mention figures such as a grandson of Moses and a son of Aaron, implying an early time in Israel's history. Additionally, Samson's story unfolds at Mahaneh-Dan, already named even though it gets its name in chapter 18.
10. Two legal fictions occur in chapter 21: one, they allow the remaining Benjamites to seize unmarried women from Jabesh-Gilead, a town that did not participate in the war against Benjamin. Two, they permit the Benjamites to ambush and take women who come out to dance at the annual festival in Shiloh.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the recurring cycle of apostasy in the Book of Judges. What are the key stages of this cycle, and how does it reflect Israel's relationship with God during this period?
2. Analyze the role and character of Deborah in the Book of Judges. What makes her a significant figure, and how does the narrative challenge or reinforce societal expectations of women in leadership?
3. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of Gideon and Samson as judges. How does God use these flawed individuals to deliver Israel, and what lessons can be learned from their stories?
4. Examine the significance of Jephthah's vow and its consequences. What theological and moral questions does this narrative raise about the nature of vows, obedience, and the value of human life?
5. Evaluate the thematic importance of Chapters 17-21 in the Book of Judges. How do these chapters highlight the moral and spiritual depravity in Israel due to the lack of a king, and what message do they convey about the need for righteous leadership?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apostasy:** The act of abandoning or renouncing a religious or political belief or principle; in the context of Judges, it refers to Israel's turning away from God to worship other gods.
- **Baal/Baals:** A generic term for various local deities worshiped in Canaan, often associated with fertility and agriculture.
- **Ashtoreth:** A Canaanite goddess of fertility, love, and war, often worshiped alongside Baal.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or promise, especially the agreement between God and Israel in the Old Testament.
- **Judges:** Leaders raised up by God to deliver Israel from oppression during the period between Joshua and the monarchy; they served as military leaders, arbitrators, and spiritual guides.
- **Ephod:** A priestly garment or vest, sometimes associated with divination or seeking guidance from God.
- **Nazirite Vow:** A vow taken by an individual to dedicate themselves to God for a specific period, involving abstaining from certain foods and drinks, not cutting their hair, and avoiding contact with dead bodies.
- **Philistines:** A people who inhabited the coastal plain of Canaan and were frequent enemies of Israel, especially during the period of the Judges and early monarchy.
- **Theocracy:** A system of government in which priests rule in the name of God or a god; in the context of Israel, it refers to the ideal that God was their ultimate ruler.
- **Jezreel Valley:** A fertile valley in northern Israel that has historically served as an important area for travel, trade, and military engagements.
- **Mahaneh-Dan:** A place name associated with the tribe of Dan (Judges 18), which means "camp of Dan."
- **Levite:** A member of the tribe of Levi, who were designated for religious service.
- **Midianites:** A nomadic people who lived east of Israel and often raided Israelite territory.

- **Ammonites:** A people descended from Lot who lived east of the Jordan River and were often enemies of Israel.
- **Jabin, King of Hazor:** Appears in Joshua as an enemy of Israel, and the name reappears again to signal the continuation of that conflict during the time of the Judges.
- **Eshat Lappidot:** Wife of Lappidot, the word eshat means woman or wife, and Lappidot means torches, so the translation has been debated as either the wife of a man or a woman of fire and power.

5. FAQs on Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Major Judges, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Book of Judges FAQ

- **What is the primary cycle of events that repeats throughout the Book of Judges?**
- The Book of Judges illustrates a cyclical pattern of Israel's relationship with God. This cycle begins with *apostasy*, where the Israelites turn away from God and worship other gods. This leads to God's anger, resulting in *oppression* by their enemies. In their distress, the Israelites *repent* and cry out to God for help. God, in his compassion, raises up *judges* to deliver them from their oppressors, bringing a period of peace. However, this peace is temporary; after the judge dies, the Israelites revert to their sinful ways, restarting the cycle.
- **What is the "second-generation problem" presented in the Book of Judges?**
- The "second-generation problem" refers to the tendency of subsequent generations to lose the vital connection to God that their parents or grandparents had. This is highlighted in Judges 2:10, where a generation arose who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. If the faith and convictions of earlier generations are not internalized and made their own by the new generation, the faith becomes diluted and loses its transformative power, leading to apostasy.
- **What is the geopolitical context of the Book of Judges?**
- The period of the Judges takes place in a power vacuum, where neither Egypt nor Mesopotamia exerts significant control over the region. This leaves Israel vulnerable to attacks and oppression from surrounding nations like Moab, the Philistines, Midianites, and Amalekites. The Israelites were primarily living in the hill country, and the tribal structure of Israel meant there was no central rule or standing army. Tribes would band together to fight local threats when necessary.

- **What are some key themes or messages of the Book of Judges?**
- Several key themes emerge from the Book of Judges. Firstly, the *disobedience* of the people results in *punishment* from the Lord, reaffirming the covenantal blessings and curses. Secondly, the repeated failures of the Israelites highlight their *need for a king* to provide centralized rule and moral leadership. Thirdly, God uses *flawed human beings* (the judges) to accomplish his purposes, demonstrating his sovereignty and providential oversight despite human weaknesses.
- **Who are the major judges featured, and what are their defining characteristics?**
- The lecture focuses on four major judges: Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and Samson, drawing from their inclusion in Hebrews 11 as examples of faith. Deborah is also a major figure in Judges. Gideon initially displays *uncertainty* and *doubt*, but is also prideful and sets up an idol. Barak shows a *lack of courage* and requires Deborah's presence and prompting. Jephthah makes a *rash vow* with devastating consequences, and Samson is characterized by his *desire for revenge* and his weakness for Philistine women. Deborah was a prophetess who had significant clout and was consulted beyond tribal boundaries.
- **How does the book of Hebrews portray the judges and what is significant about it?**
- The book of Hebrews portrays the judges as individuals used by God in spite of their weaknesses. This aligns with the theme that God's sovereignty allows him to work through flawed individuals to achieve his purposes. Interestingly, Hebrews mentions Barak instead of Deborah, which may reflect cultural sensitivities in the first century regarding women in leadership or a highlighting of Barak's lack of courage.
- **Why are chapters 17-21 thought to be non-chronological?**
- Chapters 17-21, which depict moral and societal breakdown, are considered to be placed thematically rather than chronologically at the end of the book. Evidence suggests these events occurred earlier in the period of the Judges. People mentioned in those narratives seem to be early figures in the period of the Judges (such as Moses' grandson or Aaron's son), and that the Philistines (prominent in Samson's narratives) do not feature prominently. These chapters highlight the need for a king and are setting the stage for the transition to monarchy in 1 Samuel.

- **What incidents are depicted in chapters 17-21, and what are their significance?**
- Chapters 17-21 depict spiritual illiteracy (Micah's idolatry), the migration and idolatry of the tribe of Dan, and a horrific act of violence and subsequent intertribal warfare against the tribe of Benjamin. Micah's story illustrates a superficial understanding of God's requirements. The Danite migration shows the establishment of idolatrous worship that persists until the exile. The violence against the concubine in Gibeah and the resulting conflict highlight the moral breakdown and lack of leadership in Israel, further emphasizing the need for a king.