

## **Dr. David Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 22, Introduction to Judges**

© David Howard and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. David Howard in his teachings on the books of Joshua through Ruth. This is session 22, Introduction to Judges.

Greetings, Dr. David Howard here, and in this segment, we'll be introducing the book of Judges.

So, the next lectures, if you're following through watching lectures, this is now the beginning of a new book, following the book of Joshua, of course. It is the second book in what in the Hebrew canon is called the Former Prophets, Joshua being the first. In informal nomenclature among Christians, often it's called, these are called the historical books, which again is maybe a little bit misleading in that there is, I would say, also accurate history being recorded in Genesis and Exodus and Numbers.

These books continue in that thread. Accompanying the videos, there should be a resource for you that will be my outline of the book of Judges, and you'll have it available to you. If you want to have that out as we go through, that will probably be helpful.

You will notice that I've constructed the outline around the idea of Israel's apostasy, and Israel's abandonment of God, and that seems to be a theme running through the entire book, sadly. So whereas the book of Joshua is very positive in terms of the things that are happening, what God is doing for his people, how they are responding and obeying for the most part, how it's a fulfillment of so many promises and it's the first time they're securely living as a nation in the land. Most of the Canaanites appear to have been driven out.

In the book of Judges, we find the underside, the dark underbelly of that kind of story because it turns out many of the Canaanites had not been driven out and they are causing trouble for the Israelites, and the Israelites seem to be willingly led astray by their actions with the Canaanite neighbors. And there's a repeated cycle in this book of sin and servitude and then God delivering them with the next judge, but it just is a repeated cycle and it's a cycle that really kind of seems to go not just straight across but downhill. So, we'll talk about that over and over again as we go through the book.

So, let's begin by just thinking about the title of the book in our Bibles is called Judges and it just translates the Hebrew term behind that, Shofatim, which means judges. And basically, it's the book about 12 judges through Israel from chapters 3 to chapter

16 over a period of several hundred years. In terms of the authorship of the book, we don't really know.

The book does not claim authorship anywhere and there's no other place in scripture that talks about authors of judges. So, as I've said in connection with the book of Joshua, really all of the historical books from Joshua down to Esther in the Protestant canon, all of those books are anonymous. And so late rabbinical tradition assigned to Samuel the authorship of judges and that's certainly possible.

He was the final judge early in the book of 1 Samuel, but there's no evidence for that in the Bible itself. So we'll just basically leave that question up in the air about authorship. In terms of the date of the writing of the book, again we don't really know that.

Certainly, it was written after the final events of the period and that would be about 1050 BC. It's right before the rise of kingship under the first king in 1 Samuel, Saul, and right before David's ascent as king in 1 Samuel. Saul became king around 1050 BC, and David around 1010 BC, and these events are taking place before that.

That's the date of the events. So the writing would have been after those events at some point, but we don't know how soon afterward. There's a reference in chapter 18, verse 30, to the day of the captivity of the land.

And that's almost certainly a reference to the Babylonian captivity, the exile of the people to Babylon. And so that little statement seems to be then written hundreds of years later. Whether the entire book was written at that time or whether that's added to make something else more clear at that point in the book, we're not really sure.

But we certainly have to say that it's composed, at least part of the book is composed much later. There is another reference in chapter 1, verse 21, to the Jebusites, namely the inhabitants of what became known as Jerusalem, that the Jebusites were living in Jerusalem to this day. And we find in 1 Samuel that David liberated Jebus.

He captured Jebus, and made it into his own city, the city of David, called Jerusalem. The year of that would have been around 1003 BC, the seventh year of David's reign. After David captured Jerusalem, pretty much the Jebusites were dispersed and did not figure that much.

So, a reference to the Jebusites living there till this day. Seems like that part of the book would have been written before David captured the city. So, there are these different kinds of indicators in the book as to the time of writing.

And maybe the book was a collection of different things. We have the stories, the records of 12 different judges judging, and maybe there were these disparate collected parts. 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.

So maybe the book came together over a period of time. Again, the final form of the book, I would affirm strongly that it was done under the inspiration, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, but it may have been done not all at one time, but different times. So ultimately, we have no real clear indications of the date of the writing.

In terms of the unity of the book, I think what I just said is probably something we need to remember. The double introduction to the book that we'll be talking about later. Then the core of the book with the period of the judges, the description of the 12 judges from chapter 3, verse 7, to chapter 16, verse 31, the end of the book.

And then there's these two sort of, we might even call it appendixes, chapters 17 and 18, and then 19 to 21. So the book has a different flavor depending on where we're reading in it. Many critical scholars, of course, would say that these all came together from different sources and different times.

And it very well may be, but evangelicals would affirm that when it came together finally in the form that we have it, this is part of the scripture that Paul talks about. All scripture is inspired by God, 2 Timothy 3, 16. And the final form of the book is what really matters when all these things come together.

And that's what the spirit has inspired. What is the purpose of the book of Judges? I grew up in godly circles and I read through the Bible by the time I was in fourth grade, actually. I was encouraged to read it as a kid and read it many times since.

And in some of the circles I was growing up in and even as a young adult, judges along with Joshua and other books in this section were just seen as the history of Israel. And this is just the history just as we'd read an American history textbook or history of the Roman Empire. Here's the history of Israel.

And sort of implicit behind that kind of statement, whether it's explicitly stated or not, but implicitly certainly seems to be sometimes the idea that this is history for history's sake. Writing of history just to tell us the facts about the events in this century, that century, in the life of Israel. But I would say no.

All of the historical books are telling about historical events, but with a much greater purpose. And that is the purpose of showing how God works through history and through people and sometimes in spite of people, sometimes against people. And so there's a much more theological purpose behind the writing of the book of Judges as well as the other books.

And I think we will see that as we look at the structure and some of the specifics in the book. But basically I think the book is showing the consequences of disobedience to God. We have this repeated cycle going downhill.

Sadly, there's more chaos and more apostasy in this book than we find in most books of the Old Testament. And so, it's this downward cycle. And it then is also pointing ahead to something else, which is namely the benefits of having a king in and over Israel.

In this time there's no specific centralized leader specified. We mentioned at the end of our discussions of Joshua, if you happen to have been watching those lectures, that when Joshua ascended to the position of authority after Moses, it was clear that he had been groomed for a long time before that. Through the Pentateuch, Joshua is mentioned many times as the designated successor to Moses.

There is nothing like that in the book of Joshua pointing ahead to his designated successor. And we find then in the book of Judges, everything is decentralized. There's no centralized worship or leader around which to rally.

And the book ends with these statements about everybody did right in their own eyes because there's no king. If you've been tracking through the lectures on Joshua, you will have remembered that we talked about the king as a centralized leader who is a model of following God, being rooted in God's Word, and an example to the people. And I think the book of Judges is saying if there had been a king like the model king that God intended, and the model for that is back in Deuteronomy chapter 17, if there had been a king like that leading people in worship of the Lord, things would have been much better.

So, it's pointing us to the need for a king when the book tells us at the end, you know, in those days there's no king in Israel, the result being everybody doing going their own way. And it takes us into the books of Ruth and Samuel where they actually get finally the establishment of the kingship. In terms of the place of the book of Judges in the canon, in the order of the books of the Old Testament, it fits in a logical spot.

It follows the events of Joshua and it's the next centuries. If Joshua took place at the beginning of the, at the end of the 1400s and into the 1300s BC, the book of Judges takes place in those several hundred years between that and the time of David and Saul and Samuel in the middle of the 1,000s BC, 1050, 1010, and so on. It chronologically follows Joshua, chronologically the book of Ruth begins by saying in the days when the Judges judged, so that takes place during that time and it precedes the books of Samuel.

It's that way also in the Hebrew canon. The book of Ruth is not there, but in the Hebrew canon you have Joshua, Judges, and then 1 Samuel and 1 Kings. In terms of the dates of the events, talk about the date of the composition, but the date of the events, I will refer you to a larger discussion in the introduction of the book of Joshua about these are tied in with when we think that the Exodus happened from Egypt and my view is it happened probably in the mid-1400s BC, maybe 1446 is a precise date.

The reason, the linchpin for that dating is 1 Kings chapter 6 verse 1 which says Solomon laid the foundations of the temple, very specifically 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt and this happens, we know that happens in Solomon's fourth year in such-and-such a month and the year would be 966, 967, 480 years back is 446. Then the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, they entered Canaan around 1406, 1400, and so on. So, the period of the Judges is anywhere in the 14, 13, 12, and 1100s BC, maybe close to a 400 year period.

There are scholars, the majority of you in the scholarship today is that no, the period of the Judges is much more compressed and it was after 1200 BC when there was a great destruction and upheaval of societies all through the Mediterranean and that the period of the Judges was to be compressed into a period of about 150 years from about 1200 or less down to about 1050 BC. I'll say a word about the chronology in the book. If you take the numbers that are listed for every judge and we're told for almost every judge, the judge judged the land for so many years and the land had rest for 40 years or 80 years.

If you add all those numbers up, the total is much larger than fits into the period that we know about especially when you begin adding the dates of Samuel and Saul and David. So, whether we put the Exodus or whether we put the beginning of the period in the 1400s or late 1300s, early 1300s, or whether we put it in 1200 or later, we still have to think about the chronology is not just laying end to end the numbers in the Book of Judges because they come up to more than 500 years. It's too big to fit into that thing.

So sometimes the impression we get is that the Book of Judges is laid out strictly chronologically and each judge was a judge over the entire nation, but I think reading more carefully, it turns out the picture of the judges, some of the judges were just leading the people in a certain area of the country and it may have been at a certain time that may have overlapped time of another judge in another part of the country. And so, if we get into some of the specifics of the judges doing this or that, we will see they may be leading only a few tribes, not the entire nation. And so I think the better model is to think of the tenure of each judge overlapping with others and we can compress it down into the time periods that we see the fixed dates of the Exodus and the time period of David and Saul.

Here's a historical background to the book of Judges. This takes place in – it spans two eras in archaeological designations called the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. The Late Bronze Age dates in the eastern Mediterranean to around 1550 B.C. down to about 1200.

This is a time of great wealth and prosperity. There are big cities. There are big public buildings.

There's – archaeological excavations have shown societies, not just agrarian societies, but urbanized societies and very – a lot of development of tools and society has done pretty well. We see in the Book of Joshua, in the Book of Numbers, the great walled cities that you see in Canaan. That's confirmed by the archaeological digs that have been done.

So that all takes place down to about 1200. And then there's this mass dislocation. It's almost like the aftermath of a nuclear war.

Cities are flattened, and burned, all the way through the Mediterranean, not just in Canaan or the land of Israel. There are mass migrations of people, displaced peoples, sort of like in the modern day. And we have people displaced by different terrorist groups and so on.

There's – in the Egyptian text, there's a group of opponents of the Egyptians called the Land and Sea Peoples, and they were migrating from what appears to be the Aegean area, and they came and were fierce warriors and overwhelmed people through the eastern Mediterranean. So, all of that is taking place in what I would argue is the middle of the period of the judges, around 1200 and following. And after 1200, the – so civilization has collapsed.

You have people just being dispersed into rural areas. You do not have the great cities flourishing. Society has kind of disintegrated.

And it takes another 150 years or a couple hundred years for societies in the eastern Mediterranean to begin recovering. And so, you find in the Bible David and then Solomon beginning to build again Jerusalem and other places – Samaria and Megiddo. And so, there's a period of about 200 years where things have been collapsed and everybody's surviving basic bare survival in the countryside, and then they come – comes back.

So, the late – the early Iron Age I is usually the designation of those 200 years. Iron Age II starts in about 1000 BC and goes down for several hundred years. So that's the backdrop to the Book of Judges.

As you can imagine, even in the terms themselves, the Iron Age, there's a transition in tools from bronze tools, which are a little bit more malleable, to harder tools and more effective weapons – spears and other things, including iron chariots in the Iron Age. But those aren't really developed until more – toward the end of the Iron I period. So that's kind of the backdrop of the Book of Judges.

And it shouldn't surprise us because the Book of Judges itself describes the chaos. It does not describe those – all those extra outside events. We don't have the records of those things that I've mentioned.

We don't have a specific record of the big destructions around 1200. But we do have a sense of chaos all the way through this period. And it shouldn't surprise us, then, that behind these events are these other events that we know from outside sources – from archaeology, from literary texts, from around the eastern Mediterranean, and from Egypt.

Two technological advances that would be worthy of note in the early Iron Age. One was the development of iron tools and weapons, as we've said. This allowed for more sophisticated agriculture and people began to recover from being out in the wilderness.

And also, military techniques. And then, secondly, there was the development of plastered cisterns – cisterns that – where water was stored. And they were plastered so they would hold water much longer.

So, this is seen for the first time archaeologically in the Iron Age 1 all over Palestine. And so, this freed settlements from being dependent on wells or springs or bodies of water. They could collect water almost anywhere.

And those are – that's a development toward the end of this period. Now, in terms of the opponents of Israel, in the Book of Joshua, we have the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, and so on. Usually, a group of six or seven nations.

In the Book of Judges, it's not so much, but some of those are mentioned. But the big group toward the end of the period is – are the Philistines. And the Philistines begin to appear for the first time as a major identifiable grouping.

They lived on the southwest coast of Canaan, right on the Mediterranean. And they had some – they had five major cities associated with them. The Philistine territory has been excavated in the last decades.

An identifiable Philistine pottery and culture and society have been identified in that area. It appears that the Philistines migrated from the Aegean area, and they settled

in around 1200. Interestingly, their pottery looks very much like the very refined Greek and Mycenaean pottery from the Greek islands.

But it's kind of a – it's a much more crude imitation of those. Those are finely crafted and sketched and so on. The Philistines' pottery imitates that but in a much more crude way.

It's typically – it's characteristically red and black paint on it. But otherwise, the workmanship is not nearly as fine as you find in the – in the beautiful Greek kinds of things in the Mycenaean pottery from an earlier period. So that period of the 1200 demarcation is also borne out by the pottery that you find in Philistine sites.

The – Samson was the major judge who opposed the Philistines, of course. And also, Jephthah. But Samson was the major one there.

The Bible pictures the Philistines as a rather coarse people. Describes them more than once as uncircumcised. Now, we do know that other cultures did practice circumcision for other reasons, not necessarily as covenantal reasons.

So, it wasn't as if it was only Israel that practiced circumcision and then nobody else. But the Philistines were set out in part by being identified as ones who were uncircumcised. And the stereotype from the modern day is often that they really were coarse and backward people.

However recent discoveries in the Philistine territories have shown that they were much more developed than has been previously thought. And they had their own god named Dagon or Dagon. They were organized in a confederation of some type under five lords or chiefs in these five major cities.

This distinctive Philistine pottery has been mentioned. There are no Philistine texts that have survived that we know of. But they pretty much – after they arrived around 1200 and following, they flourished for a time, but it seems like they kind of dissipated and were assimilated into the other Canaanite cultures.

And so, we don't see an identifiable Philistine culture flourishing for centuries after this. It's only for a time in the early Iron Age. A big problem for the Israelites in the period of the judges was the conflict between their – what they should have been following, their religious, and spiritual beliefs in the Lord, and the conflict with the pagan gods, the Canaanites, and the tendency, the penchant that Israel had was to follow after those other gods and goddesses.

And that seems – that's the recurring thing in the Book of Judges. So, what was it that proved to be such an attraction? And we'll talk about that in a separate segment. Why did the Israelites continue to go over to other gods and goddesses and

embrace them? But for right now, we'll just talk about who are the major gods and goddesses of the Canaanites themselves.

The Canaanite religious system included quite a few gods. And the highest god in the Canaanite system was a god named El. This term in Semitic languages, including Hebrew, means god or God.

Sometimes that term is used in the Bible as a short form of the larger word for – the Hebrew word for God is Elohim. Sometimes it's just El, referring to the true God in the Bible. But in the Canaanite pantheon, this did not refer to the true god.

It referred to the head of the Canaanite pantheon. And he was kind of a detached, elderly statesman figure. One of my professors in my doctoral work had a lecture called, The Old Man with a White Beard.

And this was his lecture on El. And he said that the pictures we have in Renaissance paintings in the Church of God are this figure, going back to El. Whether that's true or not, I'm not sure I buy that.

But El was a good god, a beneficent god. He kind of appeared detached from all the things happening in and around him, according to the Canaanite mythologies. But he didn't have the real power.

The real powerful, and in a sense, the de facto high god for the Canaanites was his son, Baal. So, Baal was really the god that we see in the Bible as the main god of the Canaanites. Actually, El had a wife named Asherah.

And we see that term in the Bible, usually pronounced as Asherah. In the Bible, we know about her mainly from the poles, kind of almost like the totem poles in American Indian, and Native American kind of cultures. The Asherah poles that people erected in her honor or for her.

So that's the wife of El, the mother of Baal. Baal had a wife, Astarte, Ashtarothe, or Ashtoreth, different ways of spelling it. So, you see the whole system of gods and goddesses.

There were many of them. There were both male and female gods and goddesses. Baal had a sister.

Asherah El also had a daughter named Anat. And Anat was Baal's sister. She was a rather fearsome goddess.

She was a warrior. And she fought against the enemies of Baal. And sometimes when Baal was incapacitated or even considered to be dead, she was the one that demolished his enemies and he was able to rise again from the dead.

Baal had enemies. We'll go over here. One god, one Canaanite god was named Mot.

And the meaning of his name is death. Another god is Yam. And the meaning of that name is sea.

So, Yam was the god of the sea. He was kind of a great sea monster. Mot was the god of the underworld and the dead.

And they had conflicts with Baal. And there was this mythology that we find in the Canaanite texts talking about this, where Baal is killed by his enemies and he dies. And then Anat comes along and chops them all up.

And when they are chopped up, then Baal is able to rise again from the dead. And remember we've said in other contexts, Baal is seen as the god of the storm. He is the rider of the clouds.

He is the one who sends the storm. He is the one who sends the lightning. But he sends the rain.

And the rain is what waters the earth and makes the earth fertile. So, this cycle of Baal dying and then rising again is tied to the agricultural cycles of the year. When Baal dies, it's the time of the winter when the crops don't grow.

When he rises again from the dead, it's when springtime comes and the crops begin to grow, and so on. Let me just make a parenthetical statement here. You may have come across somewhere along the line in your reading or in places called some television specials in America, History Channel or Discovery Channel things, kind of putting the Bible in the context of, putting the biblical story of Jesus as the god, as God himself who has died and then raised again, putting that in the context of stories like this.

And there are other stories in other cultures where there is the idea of the dying and rising God. You'll see there's a strand of scholarship that likes to place the Christian story of who Jesus is in the context of these dying and rising God stories, saying basically the New Testament story is just the same as the Baal stories and other stories. It's really no different.

But a critical difference, I would say, is that we don't find in the Bible anywhere any hint of Jesus dying and rising multiple times. Whereas in these kinds of agricultural settings, it's the gods die and rise every year. So that's a whole different thing.

It's really an invalid comparison. But you will come across that in some readings if you read widely enough or teachings you might get in school, unfortunately. Let me give a background to how we know about these stories.

In the Bible, we just basically know about Baal as the god of the Canaanites, and he's opposed to the God of Israel. He's the one that people served in the days of Ahab the king many years later. His wife was a Canaanite princess, and she brought with her the worship of Baal.

Ahab, this is the first time, establishes in a sense official state religion of Baalism. Before that, people would worship Baal in an ad hoc fashion. But now under Ahab, this is brought in in a more formal way.

Asherah is really mainly known by the Poles that we know. So we don't know the stories of these relationships that I've just sketched out here. So how is it that we know that? Well, we know that because of an archaeological discovery that was made in 1929.

Up in what's today Syria, in northern Syria, there's a discovery that turned out to be an ancient city called Ugarit. And it's an interesting story of how this came about. There was a, I've mentioned earlier, I'll reiterate it here.

Plastered throughout, scattered throughout Palestine and this area are these mounds that are layered, and they were the sites of ancient cities, usually built on a prominent hill. They are called tells. That's the Arabic word, the Hebrew word is tell.

But a tell is a mound where the different layers are the different layers of a city's existence over the centuries. The city was destroyed, and a new city was built on top of it decades later, and so it goes. And so there was, in 1929, there was a Syrian peasant farmer out in his field, plowing his field.

And it was in the shadow, it was nearby one of these large tells that had never been excavated. Just was there and had been there for centuries. The farmer's plow hit a huge stone and damaged the plow, and as he looked at it, it turned out to be a gravestone of some type.

And one thing led to another, and eventually, scholars came to study this, and they began excavating, and they realized they were in a cemetery. And it turned out to be the cemetery nearby of the city that had been established here at this tell. So archaeological expeditions were assembled to come and excavate that.

They excavated down through the levels and found this huge city, a very influential city, with a royal archive of – a library of thousands of tablets written in several

different languages, including a language that came to be known as Ugaritic, which is similar to Hebrew, but a little different as well. And these texts show that Ugarit was a major center of cosmopolitan trade between the east and the west into Asia Minor, and also to the south into Canaan and also to Egypt. So it was an important commercial crossroads.

It also had dozens of texts that tell the story of the religious beliefs of the Canaanites. And this is where we learn in these Ugaritic texts. This is where we learn about more details, the fleshing out of the stories of El and Asherah and Baal and Astarte and Anat, Mot, Yam, et cetera.

So you can find the translations of these texts in books, undoubtedly, places on the internet as well if you want to read the actual stories. They make for good, interesting reading. There are lots of violent clashes between the gods and goddesses.

And they're petty, they're jealous, they're rivalries, and so on. But that's the backdrop to what we see in the Book of Judges. So, we'll come back to the Book of Judges now.

And I want to talk about some of the major themes that we can see in the book. And my overarching theme, as I see it, is the idea of Israel's apostasy. It's such a different flavor in this book than you have in Judges or so many other books.

It's just almost relentlessly negative about the people turning away from God. But the apostasy is the tool by which the author of the book wants to tell the story that the way out of this apostasy is that Israel should have a godly king. And so this book takes us downhill from the ending of the Book of Joshua into a moral morass throughout the book.

And it gets worse and worse as we go through the book. But it ends with this look toward a time when there would be a godly king who would be leading people out of that. So, this is a transitional book between the time of Joshua and the time of Samuel and David and others.

It's really a book that lays the foundation for the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. In a separate segment, I've spoken about the covenants, the Abrahamic covenant leading to the Davidic covenant, and the thread of kingship through those. And that would serve as the backdrop to this Book of Judges as well.

So, I would want to make sure you watch that segment. That's a self-contained segment of videos where I point out that the idea of kingship is God's idea from the very beginning, from the beginning of Genesis and through Deuteronomy into Joshua and Judges and Samuel and so on. And so the idea of a king was not a bad thing.

It was something that the biblical authors pointed out, that God's intent that there should be a king at some point. But it was a different kind of a king than usually seen in the ancient Near East. And we'll see a couple of examples of that in this Book of Judges as well.

So that would be the overarching theme, the apostasy and the way out leading toward a godly king. Now some themes below that. Certainly, a major theme in the Book of Judges is the land.

In Joshua is the inheritance of the land, in fulfillment of God's promises. In the Book of Judges, the focus remains the focus, but the issue is more why is Israel not able to fully possess the land? We have those hints at the end of the Book of Joshua, but they're not developed. Now in the Book of Judges, especially in the first chapter, it tells us why it was that they weren't able to hold the land.

And it was because of Israel's disobedience. And so the concern for the land in Judges ties in with another theme of Joshua, which is the idea of the purity of worship. And if they had driven out the king in the United States, as they're supposed to, their religion, and their faith could have grown in the pristine soil, uncontaminated by anyone else around.

And yet in the book of Judges, we see the precise opposite. They were contaminated, they did not drive out the people, and there were tragic results because of that. A second theme I would see, we talk about the apostasy, but then the flip side is God's faithfulness.

So over and over again, Israel's apostasy is seen as the cause of the threats. We see that in the introductions, chapters 1 and 2. We see it over and over again when the next judge says Israel turned away and God allowed them to go into the hands of whatever the next enemy was. But in every case, whenever the people cried out to God, God was faithful, and raised up the next judge to deliver the people.

So, God really, in a sense, emerges as the hero of the book. He acted on Israel's behalf in spite of its faithless character. And sadly, most of the judges themselves embodied this apostasy.

The judges were not, for the most part, great paragons of virtue. Now we have some shiny examples that are counter to that, but sometimes it feels like the judges themselves, the individual judges themselves, are as much a part of the problem as they were a part of the solution. And so there's a mixed bag, I think, that we can see in the persons of the judges.

Probably two of the most famous of the judges are Gideon and Samson. And Gideon starts out very well. At the beginning, he is doing just the right things, but eventually, he undercuts his own tenure as a leader because he makes an ephod and becomes a snare to him and his family.

Samson is a great force for delivering militarily from the Philistines, but his own moral life is far thing from a virtuous thing, and we'll look at that when we get to the life of Samson. While we're here, I think this is the place to talk about it. The New Testament mentions several of the judges.

In the book of Hebrews, we have a famous passage that most of you know about. It's Hebrews 11 that has the Hall of Faith, so to speak, the list of the heroes of the faith. And it mentions Rahab the prostitute in verse 31.

We talked about her in the lectures on the book of Joshua. But then it mentions in verse 32 four of the judges in the book of Judges. And so the author of Hebrews says, Hebrews 11, verse 32, And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel, and the prophets.

So, it goes on quickly. But it mentions four of the 12 judges here in Hebrews 11, and they were ones, verse 33, who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness. So there's a whole list of things here that it says that these heroes, these four judges, David, Samuel, the prophets as well, did all these things.

And it puts them on a high pedestal. My perspective is that the book of Judges presents most of these judges in a much more negative light. It does not shrink from saying they did some positive things, but also it does not shrink from showing their shortcomings and their flaws.

So how do we bring those two perspectives together? And I would say, basically, that the author of Hebrews is maybe focusing on sort of the final judgment on these people, that over time they accomplished God's will, and so on. But the author of Judges is focusing on some of the shortcomings to make a different point, what he's trying to make. David, of course, it's not just the judges, but David himself was a spectacular failure in the matter of Bathsheba and her husband Uriah.

And yet, the final verdict of Scripture is that he was a man after God's own heart. He was a man who composed a large number of the Psalms. So, there's a positive verdict on David, even in spite of some of the flaws.

And I guess I would have to point out the obvious, if the requirement for being included in the chapter on the Hall of Faith is that you had no sin, it would be a very

short chapter. There's no character that we know in the Bible, except Jesus himself, that fits that. So, the author of Hebrews is trying to make a different point than the author of Judges.

The author of Judges is trying to show how even the leaders themselves were debased in, sadly, in many significant ways. Another theme, I would say, in the Book of Judges is this looking ahead to the monarchy, as we've mentioned, as part of the big theme. We'll develop that more as we look at specific passages, so we'll develop that for the end.

The final two things that I want to talk about in the introductory section is, one is, what about the office itself of a judge? What were they doing? Who were the judges? What kind of people were they? What was their job description, so to speak? Today we think of judges as austere figures with black robes in the courtroom, or we see our favorite judges on TV, Judge Judy, or some people like that. But what were the judges in the Book of Judges doing? There is a significant text that shows us something about that in Judges, Chapter 4. If you turn with me to Judges 4, this is the chapter that tells about Deborah and Barak. They have conflict against the Canaanites, and God gives victories and so on.

But let's look at Judges 4, verses 4 and 5. It says, Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidot, was judging Israel at that time. So, Deborah is a judge, and what was she doing when she was judging? Well, verse 5 says, She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. So here it does sound like she is a judge in the fashion that we think of in the 21st century.

Someone to whom people come, she renders judgments, and so on. But we also see in the rest of this chapter that she takes the lead in the conflict and battle against Jabin, king of Hazor, and Sisera, the general, and their defeat of the Canaanites. So, for most of the rest of the judges, you do not see this juridical function.

We do not see this function of functioning as a judge like we would think of them. For most of the judges, what the context we know about them, at least the judges that we have actual stories about them, there are 12 judges, there are 7 of the judges we have some sort of story about what they were doing, 5 of the judges, they are called minor judges, and it just says they judged Israel for so many years, and that's pretty much it. One or two verses.

But of the judges we know something more about, the 7, their primary function was the function of a military deliverer. There is a cycle that we have mentioned in passing already, where Israel fell into sin, turned away from God, God, in His wrath, gave them over into the hands of some enemy, they were oppressed, they were subjected for some time, they cried out to God for deliverance, God raised up the

next judge, the judge delivered them, and then the land had rest for 40 years, 80 years, or whatever, and then the cycle begins again. But at the core of who the judges were, were military deliverers or saviors.

We see that with Samson certainly, we see that with Gideon, and most of the other major judges. So, when we think 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. Finally, I want to talk about the introduction to the book, and if you have my outline, you'll see what I've done is I call chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 3, verse 6, the roots of Israel's apostasy, and there's really a double introduction here, chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 2, verse 5, and then 2, 6 to 3, 6, and those are kind of duplicated things.

And I want to talk about, especially the first one, the placement and the function of the first introduction to Joshua. So, let's look at chapter 1. It says, After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them? So, notice, chronologically, this is coming right after the end of their events in Joshua, and there's no leader designated. People have to ask who's going to be the leader, and God responds, well, it shall be Judah.

I think that's significant because, remember, there are promises to Judah made back in Genesis 49, that your brothers shall bow down before you. Judah is going to ascend to a place of prominence among the tribes, and we see that here. We see that much later when the godly kings come from the line of Judah, David and his descendants.

So, this is the beginning of the prominence of this tribe. We've seen in the book of Joshua, the land allotment to Judah is the greatest of all the tribes, Joshua, chapter 15. And it tells and enlists Simeon, his brother.

Simeon ends up being part of the territory of Judah. And so there's a strong contrast now where we begin to see conflict between, or contrast between the peaceful ending of Joshua and the more bellicose nature of things here. We've mentioned along the way that there seem to be complete conquests in Joshua.

Joshua 10 says that when they conquered the land, they left nothing breathing. The end of chapter 11 also says something like that. But in this chapter, especially starting around verse 19 and following, or 18, 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. So here's the iron monopoly that seems to be in the hands of the

enemies of Judah, the Canaanites. Verse 21, the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem.

So, it goes. And so, there's this incomplete feeling of conquest here, whereas it's more complete there. But if we read carefully in Joshua, of course, there are similar references to that.

Joshua itself has already anticipated that there are some places where the conquest is not actually complete. So finally, I want to look at Judges chapter 2, the next section, the first part of the second introduction, which is chapter 2, verses 6 to 10. So, let's read chapter 1, verse 1 again.

After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, et cetera. But now look at chapter 2, verse 6. It says when Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel each went to his inheritance to take possession of the land. People served the Lord all the days of Joshua, all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen the great works.

Verse 8, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years. They buried him in his hometown. Verse 10, and all that generation also gathered to their fathers, and so on.

Here it makes explicit the point that we had seen in the book of Joshua. Remember in Joshua it says that the people followed the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived them. But here in verse 10 it says, all that generation were gathered to their fathers, and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

So, bang, right away, shortly after Joshua's death, there's a time of apostasy. But the question is, what's going on here? Because Joshua seems to die twice. Chapter 1, verse 1 says, that after the death of Joshua, people came to Israel.

Then Joshua's all of a sudden alive again. In chapter 2, verse 6, he dismisses the people, and he dies later in that passage. Verse 8. So my view is that chapter 2, verses 6 to 10 are a flashback.

They're basically an excerpt, it's almost a cut and paste from Joshua chapter 24. The death notice of Joshua. And it's sort of the author of the book of Judges is putting it here to say, let's remember the ending of that and how that forms the basis for what's going on here.

So, it's not that Joshua doesn't die twice. And many critical scholars, of course, have said, well, this is another example of the contradictions in the Bible. But it seems to

me it's an intentionally placed thing here to set the stage for what's coming up in the next part of the book.

And it's basically just a little flashback to help us to see that. So, this will conclude the introduction to the book of Judges. And we will then, in the next lectures, launch into the book itself.

This is Dr. David Howard in his teachings on the books of Joshua through Ruth. This is session 22, Introduction to Judges.