

# Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 14, The Israelite Settlement in the Book of Judges Resources from NotebookLM

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

## 1. Abstract of Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 14, The Israelite Settlement in the Book of Judges, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Jeffrey Hudon's lecture** on biblical archaeology explores the Israelite settlement during the Book of Judges period. **He examines archaeological evidence**, including pottery and housing styles, to contextualize the biblical narrative. **The lecture also discusses key figures** from the Book of Judges, such as Ehud and Samson, relating their stories to archaeological findings. **Furthermore, the lecture touches upon the Merneptah Stela**, which provides extra-biblical evidence for the existence of Israel, and the Sea Peoples, who impacted the region during this time. Finally, **the lecture analyzes the historicity of the Book of Judges itself**, considering it as both a historical and theological source.

**2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Archaeology).**



**Hudon\_BibArch\_Session14.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture by Dr. Jeffrey Hudon on the Israelite settlement during the period of the Judges.

#### **Briefing Document: The Israelite Settlement in the Book of Judges**

**Introduction:** This lecture by Dr. Jeffrey Hudon explores the period of the Israelite settlement in Canaan, specifically focusing on the archaeological and historical context of the Book of Judges. The lecture examines the material culture, settlement patterns, and historical events to provide a richer understanding of this period.

#### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. Context and Setting:**

- The Book of Judges follows the Book of Joshua, dealing with a period after the initial conquest of Canaan.
- The lecture opens with a painting depicting a typical pastoral scene in ancient Israel, including terraced farming, a watchtower, and a village.
- The period is identified as the time when the Israelite tribes were settling and establishing their communities.
- Unwalled villages suggest a time of peace, whereas the need to defend property and possessions arises in times of conflict.

##### **1. Scholarly Perspectives:**

- Dr. Hudon mentions key scholars and their works on this period.
- Avi Faust: Takes an anthropological approach.
- William G. Dever: Supports the indigenous origins model for the Israelites.
- Israel Finkelstein: Initially argued for peaceful immigration but now leans toward indigenous origins.
- Lawrence Stager: Provides an excellent overview of the Israelite settlement in "Forging an Identity".

### 1. **The Merneptah Stele:**

- The Merneptah Stele (c. 1205 BC) is crucial because it provides the earliest extra-biblical mention of Israel as a people, not a nation or territory.
- The stele states, "Israel is desolated, but her seed is not," indicating the existence of a distinct people called Israel in Canaan at this time.
- Hudon acknowledges that while critical scholars attempt to downplay the importance of this record by calling it proto-Israel, the existence of an Israelite people at the time is impossible to deny.
- There is discussion of whether "the waters of Nephtha" in Joshua might be a reference to Merneptah.

### 1. **Pottery as Ethnic Identifiers:**

- The lecture emphasizes that while pottery can provide ethnic identifiers, it is not definitive on its own.
- The collar-rim jar was initially thought to be exclusively Israelite but was later found at both Israelite and Canaanite sites.
- Hudon acknowledges that while collar-rim jars were found in many Israelite sites, they were also found in non-Israelite sites.
- Israelite pottery is described as basic, thick, heavy, and unadorned, contrasting with later, more decorative styles.
- "Israelite pottery was distinctive in some ways from Canaanite pottery, but it was very, very basic, thick, heavy, clunky, not painted, not designed with any designs, not embellished in any way. It served a purpose, and it was practical, and that was it."

### 1. **Israelite Four-Room Houses:**

- The four-room house is a typical Israelite housing form, featuring a broad room at the back and three rooms in the front.
- These houses served multiple functions: living space, animal shelter, storage, and defensive walls when connected.
- The broad room at the back can be divided into several smaller rooms.

- Hudon explained, "A four-room house is basically a rectangular structure with an entrance at the front and a broad room at the back... Then it has three rooms, one, two, three, facing towards the entrance."
- Examples of four-room houses were found at sites like Isbet Sartah (biblical Ebenezer), and sometimes were also constructed with two stories.

#### 1. **Ebenezer and the Philistine Coastal Plain:**

- The site of Isbet Sartah/Ebenezer highlights the contrast between the rocky, hilly terrain where the Israelites lived and the well-watered coastal plain controlled by the Philistines.
- This disparity likely contributed to the sense of "haves and have-nots" among the Israelites.

#### 1. **Terracing:**

- The lecture details the practice of terracing, where hillsides are carved into level steps to maximize the use of rainfall and arable land.
- "Water, water, rainfall falling on this hillside and percolating down through the terraces and watering all of these houses."
- The importance of this technique during this time period in Ancient Israel is emphasized.

#### 1. **The Judges Cycle and Book of Judges as a Historical Source:**

- The lecture outlines the Judges cycle: peace, sin, punishment, repentance, deliverance. This is a recurring pattern in the book.
- The Book of Judges is considered a summary of military campaigns, arranged geographically, with periods of peace included in brief spans.
- Judges 1 is described as an "anti-conquest account" due to its honesty about the failures and struggles of the Israelites.
- Hudon explains, "Judges 1, in contrast to other records, is that boast, rather than complaints about failures, is an anti-conquest account. It's not political propaganda. It's actually quite shameful to the Israelite people."
- Hudon points out that this makes the book unique in the ancient Near East, which tends to be full of boastful and self-aggrandizing accounts.

- The text of Judges also highlights that the Israelites did not conquer all of Canaan. Much land was still held by Canaanites, especially the fertile coastal plain.

### 1. **Key Stories and Archaeological Corroboration:**

- **Debir/Kiriath-sepher:** The lecture discusses the debate surrounding the location of Debir, initially identified as Tel Beit-Mirsim by William F. Albright but later corrected to Khirbet Rabud.
- Moshe Kochavi's excavation of Khirbet Rabud found that the site had springs mentioned in the biblical account. The site's occupational history aligned with that of Debir, leading most scholars to accept that site as Debir.
- Hudon emphasized that, despite his great influence, Albright made mistakes.
- **Ehud and Eglon:** The story of Ehud's assassination of King Eglon is reviewed, referencing the Beit Halani palace, and the possibility that Ehud escaped through the privy.
- Hudon mentioned that the Hebrew text seems to indicate "that Ehud escaped through the privy, through the toilet, climbed down through the toilet, and got out of the palace that way."
- The Balu'a Stele was also introduced in this section, a historical artifact of the time period.
- **Deborah and Barak, Gideon:** The lecture also references Mount Tabor and the Jezreel Valley, places in which Deborah and Barak battled the Canaanites, and the Hill of Moreh and the Midianite Camp, locations of Gideon's battle against the Midianites.
- **Sea Peoples and the Philistines:** The Sea Peoples, particularly the Philistines, are identified as a major threat during the period of the Judges.
- The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III provides detailed depictions of battles between the Egyptians and Sea Peoples, including a variety of distinctive groups.
- The Temple at Tel Qasile is presented as a small Philistine temple with two central columns, corroborating the architecture of the structure mentioned in the story of Samson.
- Hudon points out that while this does not prove the story of Samson is true, it "certainly puts the story of Samson in an Iron One context during his actual life."

**Conclusion:** Dr. Hudon's lecture provides a detailed look at the Israelite settlement period using both archaeological evidence and biblical text. The lecture highlights the importance of understanding material culture, settlement patterns, and historical events in interpreting the Book of Judges. It stresses the value of scholarly debate, and the understanding of historical events in their proper context.

## 4. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 14, The Israelite Settlement in the Book of Judges

### The Israelite Settlement in the Book of Judges: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. What is significant about the Merneptah Stele in relation to the early Israelites? The Merneptah Stele, dated around 1205 BC, is the first historical record to mention the people of Israel. It indicates the existence of Israel as a distinct people in Canaan at the beginning of the period of the judges.
2. What is a collar rim jar, and why is it significant in the study of the Israelite settlement? A collar rim jar is a type of pottery with a distinctive "collar" around the rim. While initially thought to be exclusively Israelite, it has been found at other sites, showing that while used extensively by Israelites, they are not a sole ethnic identifier.
3. Describe a typical Israelite four-room house and its function during the period of the judges. A four-room house has a broad room at the back and three parallel rooms in the front. The back room was used for storage or as a casemate, while the front rooms could be for cooking, animal care, or other domestic purposes. The roof might be used for living quarters in the summer months.
4. Why is the site of Isbet Sartah significant in understanding the relationship between the Israelites and the Philistines? Isbet Sartah, or biblical Ebenezer, offers a visual contrast between the hilly, rocky Israelite terrain and the fertile Philistine coastal plain. This underscores the economic and territorial tensions present during the early settlement period.
5. What is the Judges Cycle, and how does it shape the narrative of the Book of Judges? The Judges Cycle is a theological pattern of peace, sin, divine punishment, repentance, and deliverance through a judge. This cycle demonstrates a decline of Israel's faithfulness and forms the overall narrative structure of the Book of Judges.
6. Why is Judges 1 considered an anti-conquest account? Judges 1 is considered an anti-conquest account because, unlike typical ancient near eastern texts, it focuses on the failures and shortcomings of the Israelites. Instead of boasting of their successes, it reveals their inability to fully conquer the land.

7. What is the significance of the story of Caleb and his daughter Aksah in relation to the conquest of Debir? Caleb offered his daughter Aksah to whoever conquered the city of Debir. Othniel's successful conquest led to his marriage to Aksah, further cementing a family/clan foothold in the land, while demonstrating a connection between military success and land acquisition.
8. How does the story of Ehud's assassination of King Eglon provide insight into the challenges and strategies of the Israelite settlement? Ehud's assassination of King Eglon highlights the cunning and strategic methods sometimes used by the Israelites, while also providing insight into the foreign threats the Israelites were facing from the Moabites. The story also indicates political and cultural dynamics of the time.
9. Who were the Sea Peoples, and how did they impact the region during the period of the Judges? The Sea Peoples were a confederation of groups from the Aegean world who invaded the eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt and Canaan, in the 12th century BC. Their invasion weakened Egyptian power and led to the rise of new groups, such as the Philistines, in Canaan.
10. How does the Philistine Temple found at Tel Qasile relate to the biblical story of Samson? The Philistine Temple at Tel Qasile, with its two supporting columns, provides architectural context for the story of Samson bringing down the temple at Gaza, thus putting the biblical story in an archaeological context.

### Answer Key

1. The Merneptah Stele, dated around 1205 BC, is the first historical record to mention the people of Israel. It indicates the existence of Israel as a distinct people in Canaan at the beginning of the period of the judges.
2. A collar rim jar is a type of pottery with a distinctive "collar" around the rim. While initially thought to be exclusively Israelite, it has been found at other sites, showing that while used extensively by Israelites, they are not a sole ethnic identifier.
3. A four-room house has a broad room at the back and three parallel rooms in the front. The back room was used for storage or as a casemate, while the front rooms could be for cooking, animal care, or other domestic purposes. The roof might be used for living quarters in the summer months.



4. Isbet Sartah, or biblical Ebenezer, offers a visual contrast between the hilly, rocky Israelite terrain and the fertile Philistine coastal plain. This underscores the economic and territorial tensions present during the early settlement period.
5. The Judges Cycle is a theological pattern of peace, sin, divine punishment, repentance, and deliverance through a judge. This cycle demonstrates a decline of Israel's faithfulness and forms the overall narrative structure of the Book of Judges.
6. Judges 1 is considered an anti-conquest account because, unlike typical ancient near eastern texts, it focuses on the failures and shortcomings of the Israelites. Instead of boasting of their successes, it reveals their inability to fully conquer the land.
7. Caleb offered his daughter Aksah to whoever conquered the city of Debir. Othniel's successful conquest led to his marriage to Aksah, further cementing a family/clan foothold in the land, while demonstrating a connection between military success and land acquisition.
8. Ehud's assassination of King Eglon highlights the cunning and strategic methods sometimes used by the Israelites, while also providing insight into the foreign threats the Israelites were facing from the Moabites. The story also indicates political and cultural dynamics of the time.
9. The Sea Peoples were a confederation of groups from the Aegean world who invaded the eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt and Canaan, in the 12th century BC. Their invasion weakened Egyptian power and led to the rise of new groups, such as the Philistines, in Canaan.
10. The Philistine Temple at Tel Qasile, with its two supporting columns, provides architectural context for the story of Samson bringing down the temple at Gaza, thus putting the biblical story in an archaeological context.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the different scholarly models for the Israelite settlement period, focusing on the indigenous origins model and the challenges of interpreting the available archaeological and biblical evidence.
2. Analyze the significance of the four-room house as a cultural marker of the early Israelite settlement, and discuss how it functioned within the social and economic context of that period.
3. Explore the archaeological evidence for daily life in early Israelite settlements during the Iron Age I, including the types of pottery, farming practices, and community organization.
4. Compare and contrast the portrayal of the Israelite conquest in the Book of Joshua with the portrayal of the settlement in the Book of Judges, and discuss the implications for understanding the historicity of these texts.
5. Evaluate the role of the Sea Peoples, particularly the Philistines, in the book of Judges, and assess the archaeological evidence of their material culture and their impact on the political and cultural landscape of Canaan during the early Iron Age.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Merneptah Stele:** An Egyptian monument from around 1205 BC that contains the first known mention of the people of Israel.
- **Collar Rim Jar:** A type of pottery with a distinctive “collar” around the rim, initially thought to be an exclusive identifier of Israelite culture but later found to be used by others.
- **Four-Room House:** A typical Israelite house structure from the Iron Age with a broad back room and three parallel front rooms, with variations in construction and use.
- **Isbet Sartah:** An archaeological site, also known as biblical Ebenezer, that highlights the contrasts between Israelite and Philistine territories and challenges during the early settlement.
- **Judges Cycle:** A recurring theological pattern in the Book of Judges: peace, sin, divine punishment, repentance, and deliverance by a judge.
- **Anti-Conquest Account:** A historical record that focuses on failures and shortcomings rather than victories, as seen in Judges 1.
- **Debir:** A Canaanite city conquered by Othniel. The archaeological sites of Tel Beit-Mirsim and Khirbet Rabud have been proposed as locations.
- **Eglon:** A king of Moab who oppressed Israel; assassinated by Ehud.
- **Sea Peoples:** A confederation of groups from the Aegean region who invaded the eastern Mediterranean seaboard during the 12th century BC, including the Philistines.
- **Tel Qasile:** An archaeological site in Israel that features a Philistine temple with two supporting columns, providing architectural context for the story of Samson.

## 5. FAQs on Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 14, The Israelite Settlement in the Book of Judges, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: Israelite Settlement in the Book of Judges

1. **What is the primary time period covered by the Book of Judges, and what is the general picture of Israelite life during this era?** The Book of Judges covers the period after the death of Joshua, generally referred to as the Early Iron Age, and details the Israelite settlement in Canaan. The picture painted in the book is one of a recurring cycle of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance led by divinely appointed "judges" or charismatic leaders. Archaeological finds suggest a largely agricultural society, with villages consisting of four-room houses, and terraced farming in the hill country. It's also a time of tension with surrounding groups like the Canaanites, Moabites, and later the Philistines.
2. **What is the significance of the Merneptah Stele for understanding the early Israelites?** The Merneptah Stele, dated around 1205 BC, is significant because it is the earliest extra-biblical reference to the people of Israel. It mentions Israel as a people group in Canaan, even though it is a boastful record of the Pharaoh Merneptah's campaign in the region. This stele confirms the presence of a distinct Israelite population in Canaan by the beginning of the period of Judges, requiring scholars to recognize their existence as a group in the region at the time, even when they may minimize its implications.
3. **What archaeological evidence is used to identify Israelite settlements during the period of the Judges?** Several artifacts are often associated with the Israelites, including the "collar-rim jar," a type of pottery, and the four-room house, a common architectural style. However, while collar-rim jars were commonly used by Israelites, they are not exclusively found at Israelite sites. The four-room house, consisting of a broad room and three parallel rooms, is a distinctive architectural style prevalent in Israelite Iron Age settlements, often with functional use for cooking, animal care and storage, and they sometimes connected as casemate walls.

4. **How did the geography of the central hill country impact the lives of early Israelites and their relationship with the Philistines?** The central hill country where the Israelites settled is characterized by its rugged, rocky terrain which is challenging for agriculture, but the Israelites developed terracing to maximize the land's potential. The Israelites were also at times in a difficult geographic situation. They could see the fertile, well-watered coastal plains controlled by the Philistines, a constant reminder of their relative hardship. This proximity and disparity in land resources likely contributed to the tensions and conflicts described in the Book of Judges.
5. **What is the historical significance and uniqueness of Judges chapter 1?** Judges 1 functions as an "anti-conquest account" offering a sobering, often shameful view of Israel's military failures and shortcomings during the initial settlement process. It stands out in the ancient Near East for its honesty and lack of boastfulness about its military successes, unlike the self-glorifying accounts common to that era. It arranges military events geographically and presents a summary account, rather than a more traditional heroic narrative, highlighting the less-than-ideal nature of the Israelite conquest.
6. **What are the major points in the story of the Judge Ehud, and what archaeological context might help us understand it?** The story of Ehud depicts him, a left-handed Benjamite, assassinating the Moabite King Eglon in Jericho. Ehud's use of his left-handedness to conceal his sword is a unique detail of the story. The account emphasizes the story's 'earthy' details like his escape through the privy. Archaeologically, the mention of Eglon's "palace" possibly having a *Beit Halani* structure fits with archaeological findings of such buildings in the Near East and descriptions of its door lock, helping give context and plausibility to the account.
7. **Who were the Sea Peoples, and what was their relationship to the Israelites during the time of the Judges?** The Sea Peoples were a group of diverse peoples from the Aegean area who invaded the eastern Mediterranean in the early 12th century BC. They are prominently featured in Egyptian records and battles such as those at Medinet Habu. One of their major groups was the Philistines. They settled along the coastal plain of Canaan, and became the primary nemesis of the Israelites during the period of the Judges. The most well-known relationship is the story of Samson, which highlights the conflict between the Israelites and Philistines.

8. **What is the significance of the Philistine temple discovered at Tel Qasile, particularly in relation to the story of Samson?** The Philistine temple at Tel Qasile provides archaeological evidence for the type of Philistine temple architecture described in the Samson story. The temple's structure is relatively small and is supported by two main columns spaced an arm's length apart. While it does not *prove* the Samson story's historicity, this discovery provides a plausible structural setting for the biblical narrative of Samson bringing down a Philistine temple by pushing over its central pillars. It shows that the story is set within a realistic cultural context, aligning with known Philistine architectural practices.