

Judges Chapter 1 Part 1

Last time I covered an introduction to the book of Judges. Tonight, I will start with the text.

Review of Outline (based upon Thomas Constable & Robert Dean):

Judges 1:1 – 3:6 The reason for Israel's apostasy

Judges 3:7 – 16:31 The record of Israel's apostasy

Judges 17:1 – 21:25 The results of Israel's apostasy

The first two chapters are going to characterize the entire period of the judges.

Robbie Dean gives a good summary of these two chapters:

“The point that comes through time and again in the first chapter is how God is gracious even when the Jews are failures.”

“The lesson of chapter one is that Israel has compromised, and the more they compromise the less they are able to have any kind of victory militarily until they are left with simply co-existence with the Canaanites.”

“Chapter two gives us the divine interpretation of the failures of chapter one. Chapter one is basically a record of what happened. Their failure wasn't because they were militarily inefficient or because Judah didn't possess chariots of iron, verse 19. The issue was spiritual.” [Judges lesson 4]

A simple outline of chapters 1 and 2:

- I. Chapter 1: Occupation of the Land
- II. Chapter 2: Abandonment of the Lord

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My Outline of Chapter 1: Occupation of the Land

Verse(s)	Content	Remarks
1	The Question Asked	To God
2	The Answer Given	God Answers
3	The Deal Made	Between Judah & Simeon
4	The Answer Realized	Battle Success
5-7	The Adoni-Bezek Mistake	Didn't Kill
8	The Jerusalem Mistake	Didn't Occupy
9-11	The Canaanite Conquest/Success	Battle Success
12-15	The Caleb/Othniel Example	Model of Spirituality
16	The Midianite Move	Questionable
17	The Deal Fulfilled	Simeon Success
18	The Answer Realized Even More	Battle Success
19	The Lowland Failure	Battle Failure
20	The Caleb Promise Fulfilled	Caleb Reward
21	The Benjamin-Jerusalem Failure	Battle Failure
22-26	The Joseph-Luz Deal	Battle Compromise
27-28	The Manasseh Failure	Battle Failure
29	The Ephraim Failure	Battle Failure
30	The Zebulun Failure	Battle Failure
31-32	The Asher Failure	Battle Failure
33	The Naphtali Failure	Battle Failure
34-36	The Dan Failure	Battle Failure
	Where is the tribe of Issachar?	Not Mentioned
	The tribes of Gad and Reuben and ½ Manasseh already had their land on the east side of the Jordan.	

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Judges 1:1 Now it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the Lord, saying, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

Now it came about. Literally, “And it came about.” It is OK to translate the “and” as now. But, don’t miss that Judges is a continuation of Joshua, “and now it continues,” but with a difference. As a review from last week, here is a comparison that Unger made in his Bible Handbook that shows the difference.

Book of Joshua	Book of Judges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defeat
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Servitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unbelief
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spiritual Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Earthly emphasis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fidelity to the Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apostasy from the Lord
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sorrow
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sense of Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declension, Anarchy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sin Judged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sin Lightly Regarded

The “and” points us back to Joshua chapter 24.

After the death of Joshua. Again, this points us back to the last chapter of Joshua. So, let’s read Joshua 24:1-33.

In Joshua chapter 24, note the repeated use of the word “gave” from the Hebrew “natan” in Joshua chapter 24. Last week, I told you about the extensive use of this word in the book of Judges. This is God’s grace.

Back to Judges chapter 1.

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The word for inquired in Judges 1:1 is not the Hebrew word I would expect to be translated “inquired.” This is a simple “ask.” The two other words darash and biqqesh, from what I have seen, indicate some spiritual involvement. So, is this word in the Hebrew for “ask” the first hint that the Israelites have lost their spiritual focus? It is easy to second guess what the right question should have been. The question they did ask was sufficient.

We sometimes think that the Old Testament is about the Mosaic Law. That is only part of the story. There is a lot of grace and “lovingkindness” from God in the Old Testament. There is a constant battle between faith/grace & law and lawlessness. Judges brings this into stark contrast. In spite of the failures of the Israelites, when they turned back to God, he rescued them. And God is omniscient. He knows they will not be faithful to Him in the future, again and again. Now don’t shake your finger at them. How many times has God pulled you out of a jam, knowing that you will again be unfaithful to Him? God is trying to get us to a point of maturity...a point of maximum blessing. Just trust Him.

In Joshua 24:1-13, God recounts His grace in choosing Israel and setting them up and even giving them land and produce that was not theirs:

Joshua 24:13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.’ (Grace)

Note the similarities to Deuteronomy 28 when the shoe is on the other foot.

Deuteronomy 28:30 “...**you shall build a house, but you shall not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not use its fruit.**”

This actually happened to the Israelites three times: 722 B.C. (Northern Kingdom); 586 B.C. (Southern Kingdom) and 70 A.D. (Judah).

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It is not my intent here to explain the fairness of God giving a land that belonged to someone else to the Israelites. That is a discussion for another day. Let me leave you with an insight from Robbie Dean:

“Some might ask why God would want a culture eradicated. Three reasons: one had to do with divine discipline on that culture itself because of its rank carnality, immorality, perversion, and God wanted that culture removed from the face of the earth; secondly, to protect the believers in Israel from this influence; and third, He wanted to demonstrate that believers do not need to rely upon unbelievers for their sustenance or provision, that God's grace was sufficient for everything. They did not need to depend upon anything that was produced by the Canaanite culture.”

Let me add a couple of stories to give some perspective about killing women and children in war.

Consider World War II. The Nazi's flew V-1 and V-2 bombs to crash indiscriminately in England. Or consider the 9-11 terrorists killing men, women and children. Of course, The Americans had to drop bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the war. We killed virtually every man, woman and child in those cities. But it saved countless American lives and shortened the war because it convinced the Japanese it was futile to continue. Or what about killing children who were armed with bombs in Vietnam. The list could go on.

Joshua, before he dies, gives them a choice: either to serve the Lord (Yahweh) God or to serve other gods. The word serve used throughout this passage is the word 'abad which means to serve or to be a slave to. Here, we see the choice we have today: either serve our flesh nature, the kosmos world and Satan, or serve God through walking by faith. Your choice. But, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 in the Old Testament and many New Testament passages stand as a warning to make the wise choice.

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The Israelites say they will not “forsake” God in Joshua 24:16. This word “forsake” means “abandon.” They will not abandon God. Yet, in Judges (Judges 2:12,13) that is exactly what they do. Same word “forsake.” As Joshua puts it

**Joshua 24:19 Then Joshua said to the people,
“You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He
is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not
forgive your transgression or your sins.”**

We have the same issue today. We cannot serve God apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit. We are unable to fulfill the commands of God on our own. Only through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit can we do that.

When God says he will not forgive, he is not talking about the penalty of sin that Jesus bore on the cross. There is divine discipline in time for which we can be judged. In the New Testament, there is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16-17, 1 Corinthians 5:5). This is not loss of salvation. This is loss of physical life and loss of rewards in eternity.

When challenged by Joshua, they make the claim that

**Joshua 24:21 The people said to Joshua, “No,
but we will serve the Lord.”**

**Joshua 24:22 Joshua said to the people, “You
are witnesses against yourselves that you have
chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him.”
And they said, “We are witnesses.”**

**Joshua 24:23 “Now therefore, put away the
foreign gods which are in your midst, and**

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incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

Joshua 24:24 The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice.”

We will obey His voice. Literally, we will “listen” to His voice. This is often translated “obey.” But when we get to Judges 2:2 this is exactly what they did not do:

Judges 2:2 ‘and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?

You have not obeyed Me. This is literally “you have not listened to Me.” It didn’t take very long for the Israelites to go from “we will obey His voice,” to you have not obeyed (listened) to Me.” Parents in my day would use the same type expression. “Do you hear me?” Meaning, do you understand and will you comply?

Here is another comparison between Judges chapters 1-2 and Joshua chapter 24.

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Some Connections between Joshua and Judges chapters 1-2:

Joshua	Topic	Judges
24:29	Joshua died	1:1
15:13-19	Caleb/Othniel Story	1:14-19
24:1-17	Gathering. Joshua gathers tribes at Shechem; The Angel of the Lord addresses tribes at Bochim	2:1-5
24:28	Joshua dismissed (commissioned) the tribes	2:6
24:20;31	People under Joshua served the Lord; But they will not be able to keep the Law. The next generation that did not know Yahweh did evil and served the Baal's.	2:7-14

Back to Joshua 1:1

Joshua 1:1 “...Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

Go up. Often used in connection with attacking. It is also indicative that they are going uphill. For instance, Jerusalem is on a mountain. So, often the Jews “went up” to Jerusalem. Later Judah will “go down” to fight the Philistines on the coast.

First. This is the beginning of the mopping up operation. Under Joshua, the Israelites conquered the land. God gave them the title deed. Now comes the hard part of individual tribes taking control of the areas for which God gave them their title deeds. This could also be translated “at the beginning” or “at the commencement” as in the Young’s Literal Translation. (on the next page)

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Against the Canaanites. It is interesting to note that in the English, “against” is used twice in this sentence. But, they are different words. This first one is literally “to” or “toward.” They will be advancing toward the Canaanites in order to fulfill God’s command to destroy them.

To fight against them. The second use of “against” here is “with.” To fight with. Translating it “against” is OK. It just obscures the fact that there are two different words with different thrusts of meaning. In the first one, the Israelites are advancing toward the Canaanites. In the second one, the Israelites are engaging with the enemy in battle.

The Young’s Literal Translation brings out some of this nuance:

Judges 1:1 (Young’s Literal Translation) And it cometh to pass, after the death of Joshua, that the sons of Israel ask at Jehovah, saying, ‘Who doth go up for us unto the Canaanite, at the commencement, to fight against it?’

Now on to the next verse.

Judges 1:2 (NASB) The LORD said, “Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand.”

The Lord (Yahweh) responded. The text does not indicate how He responded. It is suggested that it was by means of the Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21). The means of delivering the message is not the point here. The point is the content of the message.

Go up. This word has many nuances. It is often used later in the Old Testament and even in the New Testament in the Greek of going up to Jerusalem. This city was on a mountain and was higher than the surrounding land. Of course, this would also have a spiritual connotation

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once the temple is built. There is in current times the ‘Aliyah, going up, as a term for Jews immigrating to Israel to live. Here is a connection between ancient history and current history. Israel will continue to “go up” to Jerusalem even into the Millennium when Jesus Christ reigns from Jerusalem.

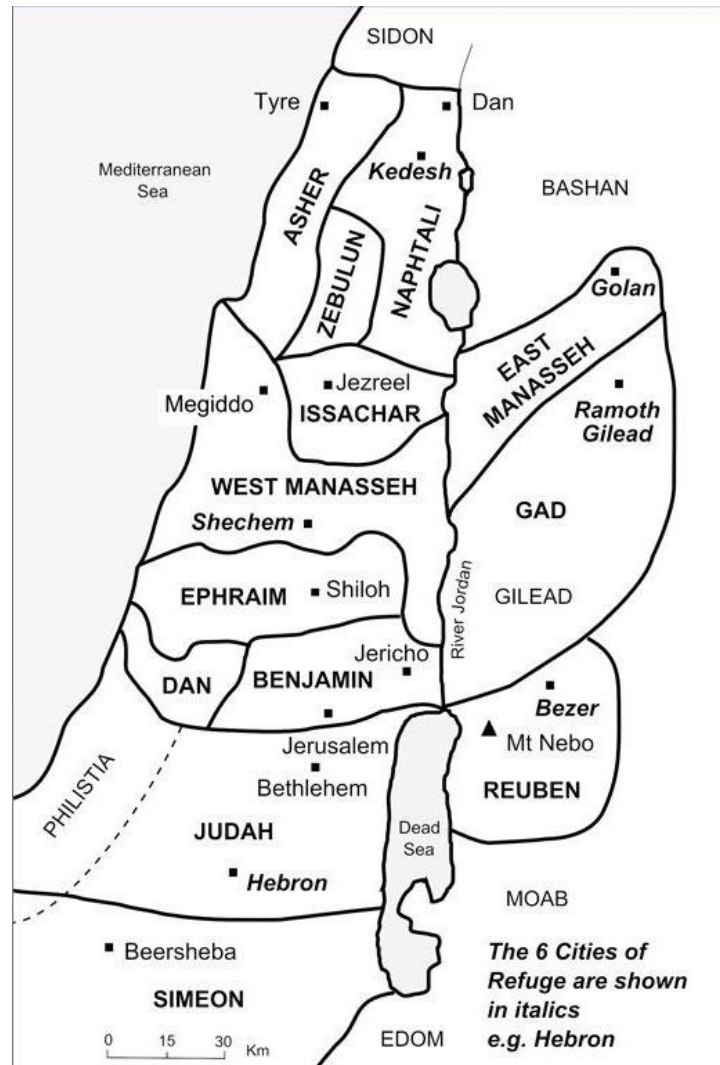
Behold. This is a demonstrative pronoun in the Hebrew. It serves to emphasize what God is saying. It can also mean, Look! Here!

Given. The first use of the Hebrew word “natan” in the Book of Judges. To give. God gives grace. This is the title deed to the land. Judah still needs to defeat the enemy and take control. But as always, defeating the enemy is based upon faith dependence on God. The repeated use of “natan” will give this word emphasis and importance in the book of Judges.

Judges 1:3 Then Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me into the territory allotted me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I in turn will go with you into the territory allotted you.” So Simeon went with him.

The territory allotted me. Again, there is a link to the book of Joshua. In Joshua 13-21, God allotted land to the various tribes. Gad, Reuben and half tribe of Manasseh already had their land east of the River Jordan (Numbers chapter 32/Joshua chapter 13). The other tribes had an allotment of land outlined in Numbers chapter 34. Judah’s allotment was identified in Joshua chapter 15. Below is a simple map outlining the tribal territories.

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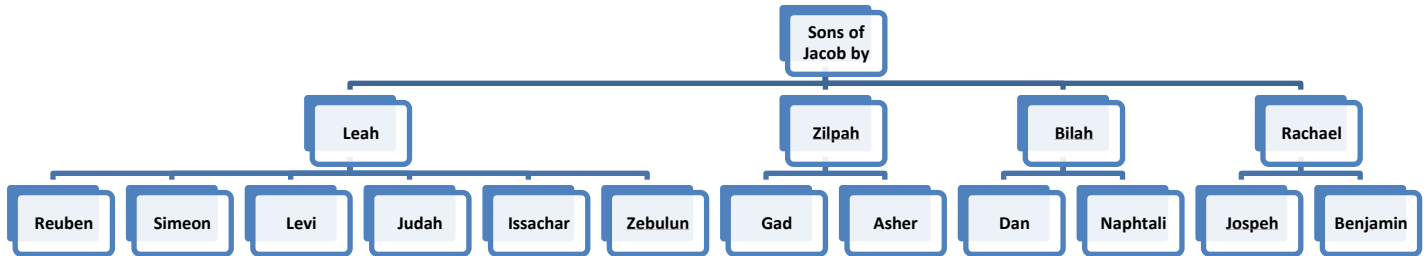
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An obvious, logical question is why did Judah ask Simeon to help him? There are at least two good reasons:

1. Judah and Simeon are full brothers. Jacob had two wives and each wife had a maid given to Jacob. Leah had several sons by Jacob. See the following chart. Based upon reading about Saudi culture, in particular, the Saudi kings, brothers of the same mother share a bond that brothers of different mothers do not share. Full brothers are closer. If you are interested in this subject, look up The Sudairi Seven.

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Now, this can't be the only reason since there were other full brother of Judah.



2. Simeon's land is contiguous to that of Judah. Actually, in some maps, it is surrounded by Judah's land. So if they travel together towards Simeon's territory, they will fight together first for Judah, then for Simeon. This makes sense.

Judges 1:4 Judah went up, and the Lord gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands, and they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek.

Judah went up. It is Judah's fight, but as noted in the previous verse, Simeon is with him.

The Lord gave. Here is the second use of the Hebrew word "natan" to give. Trust the Lord God. Then He acts and does the work. Jesus did the work on the cross bearing our sins for our salvation which is by faith. The Holy Spirit does work through us by faith.

Into their hands. Note the plural. This takes cognizance of Simeon fighting alongside Judah. So far, so good. We came; we fought; we won. Kind of like the Latin "veni, vidi, vici."

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Bezek. The exact location is not certain. It was possibly west of Jerusalem. Or maybe it was north of Jerusalem. There is nothing that pins down the exact location.

Perizzites. Thomas Constable says: The Perizzites are believed to have been an aboriginal people of a different race from the Canaanites, who settled in Canaan before Abraham arrived there (cf. Gen. 13:7). Other commentators are not so certain. They show up in a couple of places in the Old Testament (Genesis 13:7, 34:30; Judges 1:4,5; Judges 17:15-18; 1 Kings 9:20; 2 Chronicles 8:7. Based upon their name, they may have lived in unwalled villages (per Unger).

To emphasize the context, look at

Deuteronomy 20:16 Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.

Deuteronomy 20:17 But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you,

Defeated. The Hebrew word can mean anything from attack to wound to defeat to kill. In this context, and keeping in mind the instructions to kill all Canaanites and Perizzites, this means killed in combat. Saying defeated here is a euphemism. Judah took no captives, except one, which we will see was a mistake.

10,000. According to Thomas Constable, "The word translated "thousand" (Heb. eleph) can also mean "military unit." In [Judges] 20:10, it refers to

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a unit of "10 men." Consequently, its meaning here may be "10 military units" rather than "10 thousand" soldiers." Without additional clarifying information, I will go with a literal 10,000.

Men. Typically, in the Old Testament, soldiers were men, not women. There are physiological differences that would make it difficult for women to fight. One Muslim leader once commented that it would be difficult for a women that is 8-9 months pregnant to parachute out of an airplane into combat. Again, following the instructions from God and in this context, it is logical to assume there were women and children killed as well.

Judges 1:5 They found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

Adoni-bezek. Bezek is the city or village. Adoni in Hebrew means Lord. In this context, it is probably a title like Mayor or King of Bezek (per Dean).

Judges 1:6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

Where did they get the idea of cutting off his thumbs and toes? This is not normal Mosaic Law. This is Canaanite procedure. Uh Oh! Besides being cruel punishment (in Western thought), it maims the person such that a man cannot hold a sword or walk upright. In other words, it makes a man unfit to engage in combat. As we will see in the next verse, this is what Adoni-bezek did to other kings that he conquered.

In addition, this was not authorized by God. He said they must die. Remember that line from the James Bond movie, Gold Finger? James Bond asks, "Do you expect me to talk?" Goldfinger responds, "No mister Bond, I expect you to die." God told the Israelites to kill the Canaanites

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and Perizzites. They were expected to die. When they didn't, that became a "snare" for the Israelites.

Judges 1:7 Adoni-bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." So they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there.

Adoni-bezek explains this is what he did to other kings. Interesting number 70. In the story of Gideon, his son killed 70 brothers.

So they brought him to Jerusalem. Why? He was now a prisoner of war who they maimed and have to take care of. They go to Jerusalem to wage war against it. But they are taking their first mistake with them. They were supposed to kill Adoni-bezek. Then they go to Jerusalem and make another mistake that is not specifically called out.

But we will see that come back to bite them in Judges 1:21 when the tribe of Benjamin cannot defeat the Jebusites at Jerusalem. Wait you say! Look at the next verse.

Judges 1:8 Then the sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.

If the tribe of Judah reinforced with the tribe of Simeon "struck Jerusalem with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire," how can the Jebusites be living there still? Because, they didn't occupy the site. They set it on fire and then left. The context of verse 21 would suggest the Jebusites came back and reinforced Jerusalem. Hence, the first mistake, Adoni-bezek dies

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at Jerusalem where they don't wipe out the Jebusites. It takes David a couple of hundred years later to conquer and occupy Jerusalem.

Judges 1:9 Afterward the sons of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites living in the hill country and in the Negev and in the lowland.

Judges 1:10 So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba); and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai.

Judges 1:11 Then from there he went against the inhabitants of Debir (now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher).