

Judges Chapter 1 Part 3

Review

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.

Afterwards. There is a break here. Why? Both Bezek and Jerusalem were in Benjamin's allotment, not Judah's. So, starting now, Judah is fighting, with Simeon, for his own land allotment, not Benjamin's. The land is described in general categories: hill country (or mountains), in the Negev (desert) and in the lowland. This is Judah's allotted territory. So "afterward" could mean, after they dealt with the obstacles in their way, which happens to be Benjamin's territory, now Judah can fight for his own land.

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 Talmi.

The first place mentioned belongs to Caleb.

Joshua 15:13 Now he gave (our word for give, natan) to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command (literally "mouth") of the Lord to

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Joshua, namely, Kiriath-arba, Arba being the father of Anak (that is, Hebron).

Joshua 15:14 Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the children of Anak.

So, we should understand that Joshua 15:13 is being fulfilled in Judges 1:10/1:20. A promise made, a promise kept.

Continuing in Judges:

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

The text does not specifically say Debir belongs to Caleb. And Caleb does not give this land in his challenge. But it was in the allotted territory for Judah (Joshua 15:48).

Judges 1:12 And Caleb said, “The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah for a wife.”

Who was Caleb?

Why bring up Caleb here? What connects him to this scene during Judah’s occupation effort of the land? Caleb is a member of the tribe of Judah. Also, observe that Judges 1:12-15 is a duplicate of Joshua 15:16-19. As such, this passage is an emphasis. Let’s take some points on Caleb to make it a little easier to comprehend who he was and his greatness as a spiritual warrior.

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Who Was Caleb?

1. Caleb is first mentioned in the Bible in Numbers 13 as a member of the reconnaissance team sent into Canaan to spy out the land.
2. Caleb was 40 years old when he became a member of the reconnaissance team (Joshua 14:7).
3. Caleb was a member of the tribe of Judah per Numbers 13:6, **“from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.”** However, we will see later that he may have been a convert from the Edomite tribe of Kenaz.
4. Caleb, the name, is from the same Hebrew root as “dog,” keleb. He is not Dog the Bounty Hunter. He is Dog, the Faith Warrior.
5. Caleb as a member of the reconnaissance team, provided a positive report. **“We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.”** (Numbers 13:30). Other than Joshua, the other 10 members of the team gave a negative report. They all died shortly thereafter. But Joshua and Caleb lived long lives.
6. After an outcry by the people against going into the land from a human viewpoint, Joshua and Caleb reiterated the positive report based upon divine viewpoint:

Numbers 14:6 Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;

Numbers 14:7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, “The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.

Numbers 14:8 If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it [natan] to us—a land which flows with milk and honey.

Numbers 14:9 Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey [literally, bread or food]. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.”

7. God gave a special land reward to Caleb because of his faith.

Numbers 14:24 But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.

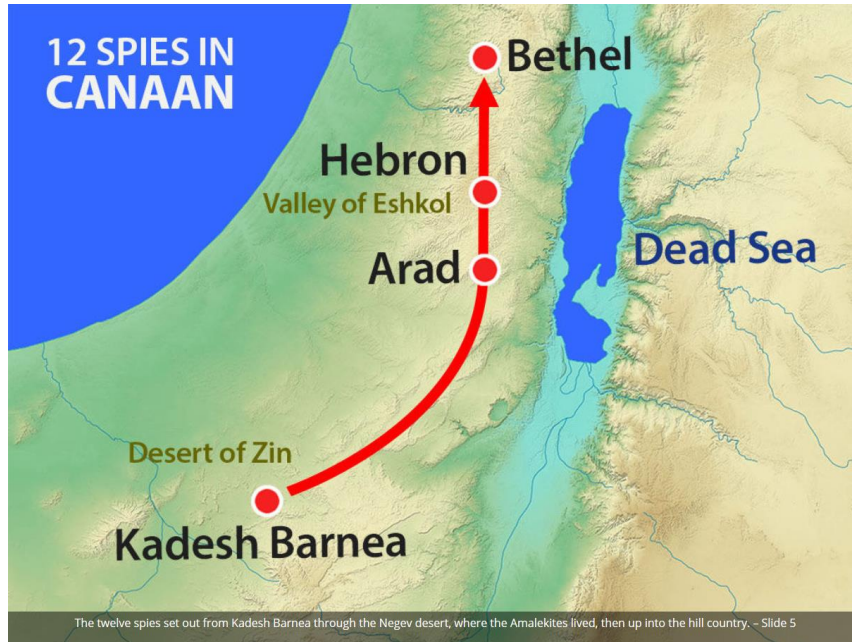
This is reiterated in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 1:34 “Then the Lord heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath, saying,

Deuteronomy 1:35 ‘Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers,

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Deuteronomy 1:36 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the Lord fully.'



Partial Route of the Spies

Rather than put the entire 14th chapter of Joshua here, please turn with me to Joshua 14. I want you to understand the faith greatness of Caleb.

8. Caleb was apparently not originally from the sons of Israel but was an Edomite (descendant from Esau, the twin brother of Jacob). Here is Thomas Constable's report: "Caleb was a Kenizzite (Num. 32:12; Josh. 14:6), the Kenizzites being descended from the Edomites (Gen. 36:11, 15, 42; 1 Chron. 1:36, 53)."

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Let's have some fun here.

- a. Caleb was a Kenizzite, descended from the Edomites. Edom was another name for Esau, the brother of Jacob. He was the first born of Isaac. He lost his birthright and his blessing to Jacob. But Esau did get a blessing:

Genesis 27:39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, “Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above.

Genesis 27:40 “By your sword you shall live, And your brother you shall serve; But it shall come about when you become restless, That you will break his yoke from your neck.”

- b. So, Caleb fulfills some of this. Most of his life he spent either living in the desert or fighting for the land. He lived by the sword both literally when fighting in the land as well as spiritually trusting in the Word of the Lord. Now Caleb only had the Torah as given by God to Moses. Presumably, the priesthood taught the people. Caleb would have been in the front row listening intently. He served the Jews well, both as a spy for Moses and a fighter for Joshua and the tribe of Judah.
9. Surprisingly, Caleb is not in the so called “hall of fame for faith heroes” in Hebrews chapter 11. Why? I can only suggest a response to this question. Look at all the people mentioned in that chapter. What bothered me as I read that chapter over and over is that none of the people named there were perfect. They all have documented sins. How can they be faith heroes with so many documented sins? Then look at Caleb. He never waivered in his faith. Do you think

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you are like Caleb or more like Gideon or even Jephthah? You see? If I am like Gideon, an ordinary person, or even a Jephthah, a rogue, then I can still become a “faith hero” if I just stick with the Bible and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. I could never be, have never been as single-minded as Caleb appears to be in the Bible. But it is something to aspire to.

Numbers 14:24 But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.

Today, believers are individually rewarded for faith dependence on the Holy Spirit. We may be blessed in time. More importantly, we will be rewarded in eternity for relying on the Holy Spirit and following God the Father’s plan.

So, back to the book of Judges.

For the purpose of continuity, Judges 1:12 is printed again below.

Judges 1:12 And Caleb said, “The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah for a wife.”

Why did Caleb issue this challenge? The only thought I came up with is this: Based upon his knowledge of the other members of the tribe of Judah, he may have wondered, “Is there anyone else like me? Is there anyone else who depends on the Lord by faith in battle?” His daughter is of age to get married. He wants the best guy for his daughter. So, he issued a challenge with a promise.

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Othniel, Caleb's nephew took the challenge successfully. There was someone like Caleb. But it came not from the sons of Judah, but from an Edomite who apparently had converted to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and had been integrated into the tribe of Judah like Caleb.

Now a little about Achsah. From the Jewish Women's Archive:

“The Rabbis describe Achsah as being a beauty, finding an allusion to this in her name: “Whoever sees her is angry [koes] with his wife,” who is not as ravishing as she is (BT Temurah 16a). Achsah's beauty explains the willingness of the men to go forth to war against the Anakites (giants) of Kiriath-sepher, since Caleb had promised his daughter Achsah to the man who would conquer the city.”

It summarizes: “The picture of Achsah that emerges from this midrash is that of a practical woman who is concerned for her family's sustenance.”

From: <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/achsah-midrash-and-aggadah>

Her name means “anklet.” For some reason, I have a picture of a Lara Croft, from the Tomb Raider movies, who has humility and reverence for her husband. A beauty. A fighter. A humble person. I know, not likely to find someone like that. But that is the point. She was an ideal kind of person. A model to aspire to, like Caleb.

Judges 1:13 Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah for a wife.

So Othniel receives Achsah for his wife. A promise made; a promise kept.

Having encountered Caleb the faith warrior, is there any doubt that his daughter is likely a model wife? And later, we will see that Othniel is appointed by God to be the first in a line of judges. Reading ahead, you

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will see that the judges start off being good and go downhill. Othniel may have been one of the best if not the best of the judges in this line.

Captured it. This means captured in battle. The sense here is that he seized it and took control of it. The verb is used twice in reference to this challenge and once again in verse 18. Interestingly, the name of the Likud party in Israel apparently comes from this root. The noun likud means consolidation. The Likud party is “A secular party, it was founded in 1973 by Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon in an alliance with several right-wing parties. [Wikipedia]

Here is Robbie Dean’s interpretation of Judges 1:12-15: “Othniel and Achsah are set up by the writer as the ideal man and woman in God's plan, against whom all other men and women in their relations to one another are evaluated throughout the rest of Judges. Nothing negative is there, it is presented in a very positive light, there is nothing negative about either one of them, and that is in contrast to everybody else in the book of Judges.”

Judges 1:14 Then it came about when she came to him, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. Then she alighted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”

Robbie Dean emphasizes how smart and forward looking Achsah is. She sees the need for springs to water the land that Othniel just won. How many wives today are a team with their husbands? The perfect “help-mate.”

Judges 1:15 She said to him, “Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water.” So

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Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

"... the prominence of Achsah also clearly anticipates the major roles that women will play throughout the book of Judges. Like Achsah, several women are portrayed as active and assertive in the public sphere, especially Deborah and Jael (chaps. 4—5). But, as the book of Judges proceeds, the portrayal of women changes considerably. They become not leaders like "Achsa, Deborah, and Jael, but rather the victims of abuse. ... The next time a woman is riding on a donkey is in Judges 19:28; and the woman, the Levite's concubine, is a corpse, having been brutally abused, raped, and killed. Thus, by way of the contrast between Achsah and the Levite's concubine, 1:11-15 is yet another way that 1:1—2:5 anticipates the progressive deterioration that characterizes the book of Judges." Quoted by Thomas Constable from McCann, J. Clinton. Judges. Interpretation series. Louisville: John Knox, pp 32-33.

A request made; a request fulfilled.

Judges 1:16 The descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the city of palms with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad; and they went and lived with the people.

Do not confuse Kennizites who were descendants of Edom and Kenite which were from Midian.

At first glance, this verse seems odd. But, where Israel made promises, they kept them. As Chisholm says, "This information is probably included to inform us that God (through Judah) fulfilled Moses' promise to his wife's family, which was a reward for the assistance they had given Israel (Num. 10:29-32) (Webb 1987, 88). This brief note fits well

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in this context, which highlights God's reward to Caleb, also promised through Moses and recorded in Numbers."

Numbers 10:29 Then Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out to the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord has promised good concerning Israel."

30 But he said to him, "I will not come, but rather will go to my own land and relatives."

31 Then he said, "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will be as eyes for us.

32 So it will be, if you go with us, that whatever good the Lord does for us, we will do for you."

In other words, there are two promises made by Moses that are fulfilled here, one to Caleb and the other to his father-in-law which are recorded here to verify that "promises made, promises kept." And Caleb made a promise and fulfilled it.

Judges 1:17 Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they struck the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah.

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Judah went with Simeon. This indicates that Judah is making good on his promise to support Simeon in taking his allotted territory. Hormah is listed in Joshua 19:4 as belonging to Simeon.

Utterly destroyed it. This word is used frequently in Joshua for the various conquests Joshua led. However, in Judges it is used only here and in chapter 21 in a bad sense against the men of the tribe of Benjamin. In making good on his promise to Simeon, Judah left no doubt that he did a first rate job. In our current vernacular, you might say they “smashed” Hormah.

Hormah. This is a play on words with “utterly destroyed.” It is from the same root word. This way of naming cities is not unusual in the Old Testament. Take for instance the story behind Bethel (House of God) in Genesis 28:10-21.

Now, let us stop and consider something about which we just studied. This is in the realm of observation. Note the fulfilment of

Judges 1:18 And Judah took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory.

These are Philistine strongholds. These are three of the five cities of the Philistines that David faced later in history.

Took. The Hebrew word means to capture, to seize. It is sometimes paired in the book of Joshua with the word in the previous verse translated “utterly destroyed.” But here, only the word for seized is used. So for some commentators there is a problem.

1. Judges 3 says:

Judges 3:1 Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them (that is, all

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who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan;

Judges 3:2 only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly).

Judges 3:3 These nations are: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath.

This may indicate that they didn't "utterly destroy" the inhabitants. The LXX adds "And Judah did not inherit ..." Something happened that is not documented here which left Philistines to repopulate these cities. Perhaps like the situation in Jerusalem (see Judges 1:21 below). Additionally, as we will see in the next verse, they "could not drive out the inhabitants..." Remember, their success depended not on their military superiority but on faith dependence on God. Over and over again in the Bible, God makes it clear, success does not depend upon our human efforts; it depends on our faith dependence on God. He gives success or defeat.

Territory. They took not just the city strongholds, but the surrounding territories, per Chisholm.

Judges 1:19 Now the Lord was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots.

This now continues from verse 9 after the account of Caleb.

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There is a Hebrew word in this verse, took possession” which is important in this context. We know it is important because it is used twelves times in this first chapter. And this word, in the negative (could not drive out) is a common thread going through the book of Judges.

From a purely human perspective, iron chariots were a problem. But not for God. In Judges 4, God routes the enemy that had 900 iron chariots.

**Judges 1:20 Then they gave Hebron to Caleb,
as Moses had promised; and he drove out
from there the three sons of Anak.**

Here is the fulfillment of Moses’ promise to Caleb. Now look back with me at all the promises made and promises fulfilled. As I said on a previous occasion, the book of Judges is a documentation of the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of the land covenant. Due to unbelief and idol worship, Israel did not fully possess the land. Even more, look at the documentation of fulfillment in Judah’s paragraph:

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Judges Verse(s)	Promise	Fulfillment
10	Hebron Promised to Caleb God's Promise Num 14:24 Joshua's Promise Josh 15:13	Hebron attacked in verse 10. Actual fulfillment in verse 20 below
11-13	Caleb's Challenge & Promise: Acsah as wife for victory at Debir (verse 11-12 / Joshua 15:16)	Othniel's victory and takes Acsah as wife (verse 13 / Joshua 15:17)
14-15	Acsah asks favor (verse 14-15/Joshua 15:19)	Caleb gives favor (verse 15/ Joshua 15:19)
16	Moses Promise to His Father-in-law Num 10:29-32	Fulfillment (verse 16)
17	Judah's Promise to Simeon (verse 3)	Judah's fulfillment (verse 17)
20	Moses Promise (see verse 10 above)	Moses promise fulfilled (verse 20)

For Judah, there is documentation of several promises and fulfillments. But for the other tribes, starting with Benjamin, there is disappointment.

Judges 1:21 But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

Now, you say, didn't Judah early on capture it, struck it with the edge of the sword and put it on fire?" Yes, but they apparently didn't occupy it. The Jebusites apparently returned and rebuilt Jerusalem, or as it was called then, Jebus.

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Benjamin lived in “peaceful coexistence” with the Jebusite. But that was not God’s plan. Later, David has to conquer it again, permanently. And even more recently, the Jews in Israel had to capture it yet again. But that is another story for another day.