

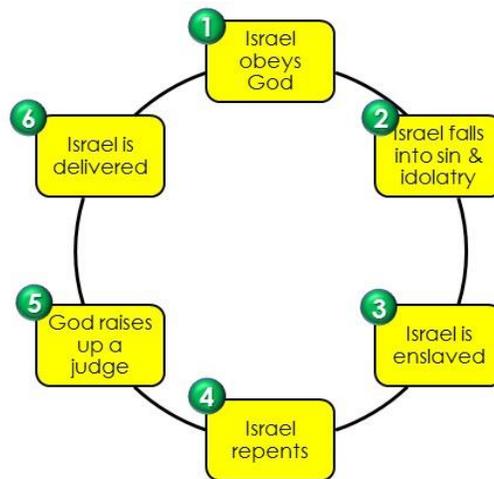


LESSON 7: THE PERIOD OF JUDGES

Discovering the Heart of the Old Testament

QUICK LOOK AT THE PERIOD

- A. The book of Judges is a period of about 356 years taking place between the conquest of the Promised Land and the uniting of the twelve tribes under a single king (Saul, David, Solomon)
- B. The book of Judges describes the repeated six stages of Israel's apostasy, and how God raised up a judge to deliver them from their enemies each time



STAGE 1: ISRAEL OBEYS GOD

- A. Israel obeyed God all during Joshua's reign of leadership (Josh. 24:31)
- B. Joshua dies at the age of 110
- C. After Joshua, Israel quickly sins and falls into idolatry

STAGE 2: ISRAEL FALLS INTO SIN AND IDOLATRY

- A. They forgot the Lord (Deut. 6:12)
- B. They didn't teach their children (Judges 2:10; cf. Prov. 22:6; Joel 1:3)
- C. They followed other gods (Deut. 6:14)
- D. They tested the Lord (Deut. 6:16)
- E. They disobeyed God's commands (Deut. 6:16)
- F. They did not thrust out all their enemies (Deut. 6:19)
- G. They forgot God's past protection (Deut. 6:20-24)
- H. They forgot the conditions of the Covenant (Deut. 6:25)

STAGE 3: ISRAEL IS ENSLAVED

- A. The Israelites did not drive the Canaanites out of the land during the conquest period (Josh. 17:13; Judg. 2:3, 23)

- B. The Israelites allowed surviving Canaanites to co-exist with them (Josh. 13:13; 16:10)
- C. They intermarried with Canaanites
- D. The Israelites actually had a much stronger army but fell to the sensual religion and practices of the Canaanites

STAGE 4: ISRAEL REPENTS

- A. Israel realizes the mistake they made and cries out to the Lord for deliverance from their oppressors (Judges 3:9, 15; 6:6; 10:10)
- B. Each time Israel repented God raised up a judge ("deliverer") to free Israel from its oppressors (Judges 3:9, 15)

STAGE 5: GOD RAISES UP A JUDGE

- A. Cycle 1: Othniel (Judges 3:7-11). Othniel was probably the nephew of Caleb, and one of four judges in the Bible where it says, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon them." Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson were the others.
- B. Cycle 2: Ehud and Shamgar (Judges 3:12-30). Ehud was left-handed and hid a short sword on his right side to enable him to assassinate the evil Eglon, king of Moab, Israel's oppressor. Normally, one looked on the left side of a person to see if he was carrying a sword. Shamgar (3:31) used an ox goad (a long stick with a pointed end) as a weapon to kill 600 Philistines.
- C. Cycle 3: Deborah and Barak (Judges 4:1—5:31). Deborah was the only female judge and an actual Judge. She and Barak (military General) devised a plan to defeat the superior army of the Canaanites. Deborah's victory poem is one of the most beautiful poems in the Bible.
- D. Cycle 4: Primarily Gideon, but including Tola and Jair (Judges 6:1—8:32). Gideon is known for testing God with a fleece (Judges 6:36-40) and devising a plan to make Israel's army of 300 men appear to be greater than the Midianite army (Judges 7:15-22). But God reduced Israel's army strength to show the true source of their power—Yahweh (Judges 7:2; cf. Deut. 8:17, Eph. 2:8-9).
- E. Cycle 5: Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (Judges 11:29-40; 12:8-15). Israel's oppressors were the Philistines, and the Ammonites who were nomadic descendants of Lot. The period of this oppression lasted for 18 years. "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" (Judges 11:29). Jephthah's mistake was making a foolish vow to God (Judges 11: 30-40). Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon were also raised up as judges during this cycle (Judges 12:8-15).
- F. Cycle 6: Samson (Judges 13:1—21:25). Samson lived during a period under the rule of the Philistines. More than 1/3 of the book of Judges is devoted to Samson who was endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh--the spirit of personal patriotism, and the spirit of vengeance upon a foe of 40 years standing (Judges 13:1,25; 14:6:19; 15:14).



STAGE 6: ISRAEL IS DELIVERED

- A. God in his love and patience empowers these judges to deliver Israel from its oppressors
- B. Israel then enjoys peace for a period of time (Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28)
- C. Israel falls back in sin and idolatry and repeats this same cycle for a total of six times