

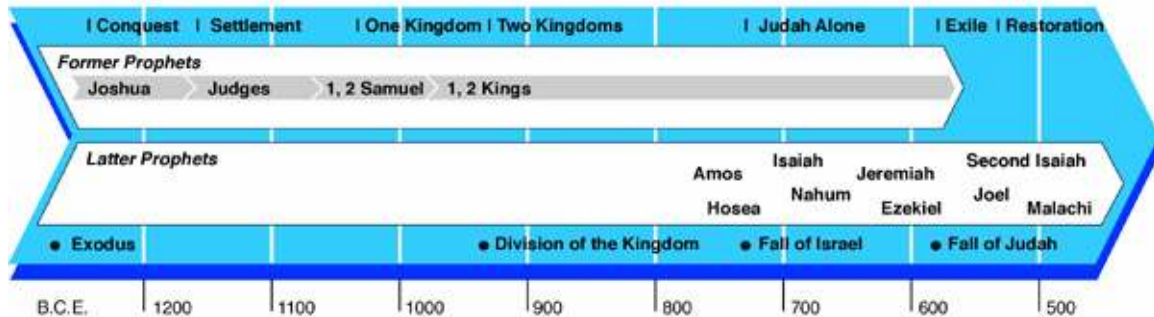
Discovery 7

Joshua

As it just so happens, no external references to events recorded in the Deuteronomistic History exist until relatively late. No text references or artifactual remains have been found that can confirm the accuracy or even the happenedness of biblical history from Joshua all the way until the time of Omri, the Israelite king of the ninth century B.C.E.

Baal was the god responsible for agricultural productivity and Asherah, his female counterpart, also had fertility influence.

Official Yahwism, as expressed in prophetic literature and in the Psalms, appropriated elements of Baalism. Yahweh is described using the same phrases that were applied to Baal.



How should we deal with the warfare ideology of the book of Joshua?

Ai in Hebrew means "ruin" (today the site is called et-Tell, which in Arabic also means "ruin").

Judges

The name *Judges* was taken from references to the main figures about whom tales are told. None of the figures is actually called a **judge**. The name was applied because the text says so-and-so "judged" Israel a certain number of years.

There are twelve judges in the book, but they are not judicial figures such as the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court who sit in a courtroom behind a mahogany bench. While some of these ancient figures might have occasionally arbitrated disputes (Deborah, in particular), they possessed peculiar qualities of leadership for which they were called judges. The judges might better be called *saviors* or *defenders*, in keeping with their historical function.

The most significant challenge to Israel came from a group called the Sea Peoples. They had moved into the coastal plain of Canaan as part of a larger migration of people fleeing the Aegean. One of the groups of the Sea Peoples is called the **Philistines** in the Hebrew Bible.

This cyclic pattern repeats itself each generation throughout the book of Judges: (1) Israel turns from Yahweh, (2) an enemy oppresses Israel, (3) Israel cries for help, (4) Yahweh sends a judge to deliver Israel.

Eglon, whose name means fatted-calf.

The tale of **Deborah** and Barak reveals many things about the period of the judges. It illustrates how at various times, out of military necessity, individual tribes would join forces to combat a formidable enemy. But, as the Song of Deborah indicates, not all the tribes always answered the call for help. Sometimes some refused. Israel as a confederacy was still dominated by regional interests. There was no national cohesion at this time.

The story also profiles the prophetic and military role female Israelites at times played in Israel. The courage of Deborah and Jael, and the credit for victory they received, sets in relief the deplorable lack of male initiative and leadership in Israel at the time of the judges.

Gideon. What happens next relates to the ideology of covenant and kingship, a major concern of the Deuteronomistic Historian. After he had killed the last kings of the Midianites, the Israelites begged Gideon to be their ruler. Although he took tribute from them--a share of the booty taken from the defeated Midianites--he refused to be king, saying, "Yahweh will rule over you". Gideon's son Abimelech, (whose name means "my father is king"),

Samson is one of the most colorful personalities in the Old Testament. He is a walking contradiction. Brash, bold, and impressively powerful, he is at one and the same time naive and vulnerable. He is physically massive, yet spiritually infantile. The story of Samson is the last story of the judges. As such, we may assume that the editor is telling us something special. Samson epitomizes the age. And in Samson, we have a portrait of Israel in miniature.

The book of Judges ends with stories describing the state of tension that existed among the tribes. The tribe of Dan migrated from the coastal plain to the far north of Israel. And some tribes tried to wipe out Benjamin.

In addition to the people's lack of faith in Yahweh, the problem was lack of leadership. The moral condition of the nation deteriorated massively after the death of Joshua. The writer repeatedly uses the statement, "In those days there was no king in Israel...all the people did what was right in their own eyes" to characterize the problem.

Table 7.1 A Synopsis of the Judges

Judge	Text	Home Territory	Area of Activity	Foe	Years of Oppression	Years Judged
Othniel	3:7-11	Judah?	Cushan-	king of Aram	8	40

			rishathaim			
Ehud	3:12-30	Benjamin	Hill country of Ephraim and Moab	Eglon king of Moab, Ammonites, Amalekites	18	80
Shamgar	3:31		Philistia	Philistines		
Deborah	4:1-5:31	Ephraim	Mount Tabor, Naphtali, Zebulun	Sisera, Jabin king of Hazor, Canaanites	20	40
Gideon	6:1-9:57	Manasseh	Manasseh	Midianites, Amalekites, Kedemites		40
Tola	10:1-2	Issachar	Ephraim			23
Jair	10:3-5	Gilead				22
Jephthah	10:6-12:7	Gilead		Ammonites	18	6
Ibzan	12:8-10	Bethlehem				7
Elon	12:11-12	Zebulun				10
Abdon	12:13-15	Ephraim				8
Samson	13:1-16:31	Dan	Philistia	Philistines	40	20
Totals					144	256