

Digs in the central highlands of Israel show that during the period of the judges there was a great increase in the number of cities and towns in that region. Their cultural level was lower than that of the Philistine culture of the same period which is just what would be expected of semi-nomadic people who had been wandering in the desert for a generation.

Key study areas in Judges include the recurring cycle of Judges 3-16 as is found in 2:11-19...where the pattern for the following eleven chapters is set. Two themes are paramount in Judges: "Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord" occurs in the "cycle portion" of the book (2:11, 3:7-12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1), and "There was no king in Israel.."characterizes the final segments (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). The failure of the tribes to drive out the inhabitants of the land (1:19-35) becomes the occasion for Israel's repeated apostasy from the Lord. The concluding note of 21:25 is one of sadness but a very accurate description of the way things were: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Some study tips for Judges include the reading of the book at one sitting (and you might add Ruth to the reading although our formal discussion of this book comes later as it is among the Sacred Writings). Read again (or on the first reading) with a Bible Atlas to follow the action. Use Judges 2:11-19 to understand and identify the cycle we have mentioned in 13-16 and compare the times of war and battle with the times of peace. This latter will help you have a more complete view of the action of the book. If you have time for special studies, look up the uncaptured cities in Palestine and see how they affected this period. Chart the judges and locate their territories and their enemies.

Further reading may be found in Cundall, Arthur and Leon Morris: JUDGES, RUTH (IVP) and in Ellison, H.L., JOSHUA - II SAMUEL (Eerdmans). Some devotional material and practical study in Inrig, G. HEARTS OF IRON, FEET OF CLAY.

## 2. Judges in an expanded but not very analytical outline

### I. Historical background 1:1-3:4

- A. Conquests of Judah and Simeon 1:1-21
- B. The Benjamite experience 1:22
- C. The war of Joseph's children 1:23-29
- D. Campaigns and failures (!) of the other tribes 1:30-36
- E. God's challenge 2
  - 1. The test of faith 2:1-5
  - 2. Historical progression 2:6-15
  - 3. Divine leadership provision 2:16-19
  - 4. Divine Purpose 2:20-23
- F. The Troubling nations 3:1-4

### II. The Judgeship economies 3:5-16:31

- A. Othniel 3:5-11 --Mesopotamian oppression
  - B. Ehud 3:12-30 Moabite
  - C. Shamgar 3:31 Philistine
  - D. Deborah and Barak 4:1-5:31 Canaanite
  - E. Gideon 6:1-8:35 Midianite
  - F. Tola and Jair 9:1-10:5 (unknown)
  - G. Jephthah 10:6--12:7 Ammonite
  - H. Ibson, Elon, Abdon, 12:8-15 (unknown)
  - I. Samson 13:1-16:31 Philistine
- (Judges Samuel and Eli come after the close of the book)