

Old Testament Survey

Judges

General Outline of Judges

- I. Partial Conquest of Canaan by Israel - 1:1-2:5
- II. Reasons for the Survival of the Canaanite Remnants - 2:6-3:6
- III. Oppression Under Cushan-Rishathaim - Deliverance by Othniel - 3:7-11
- IV. Oppression Under Eglon - Deliverance by Ehud - 3:12-30
- V. Exploits of Shamgar - 3:31
- VI. Oppression Under Jabin of Hazor - Deliverance by Barak and Deborah - 4:1-24
- VII. Song of Deborah - 5:1-31
- VIII. Oppression Under Midian - Deliverance by Gideon - 6:1-8:35
- IX. Career of Abimelech - 9:1-57
- X. Judgeships of Tola and Jair - 10:1-5
- XI. Oppression Under Ammonites - Deliverance by Jephthah - 10:6-12:7
- XII. Judgeships of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon - 12:8-15
- XIII. Oppression Under the Philistines - Deliverance by Samson - 13:1-16:31
- XIV. Micah's Priest and the Danite Migration - 17:1-18:31
- XV. Atrocity at Gibeah and the Benjamite War - 19:12-21:25

Date of Composition

Evidence for a Date in the Early Monarchy

1. The phrase, "at that time there was no king in Israel" points to a time when there was a king.
2. The phrase, "The Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day" (1:21) point to a time prior to David's capture of Jerusalem.
3. Judges 1:29 states that the Canaanites were still dwelling at Gezer. This would point to a time prior to 970 B.C. when the city was given to Solomon as a wedding present.

Evidence Against a Date in the Early Monarchy

1. Judges 18:30 seems to state that Jonathan and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the captivity of the land. If this refers to the Assyrian captivity of 732 when Tiglath-Pileser III took the northern territory of Israel then this would appear to be a much later insertion.
2. In answer to this the following explanations have been offered:
 - a. The last letter in land (eres) could be changed to mean ark (aron). The letters tsadeh and nun are quite similar. This could then point to the time the ark went into captivity during the tenure of Eli as high priest.
 - b. This verse could be a later addition.
 - c. This verse refers to another military defeat of Dan by an invading army.

Authorship and Unity

1. There is really no clear indication as to who the author of the book is.

2. We can deduce the following points about the author and unity from a study of the book itself:
 - a. The writer speaks from a prophetic perspective, giving the history of the judges in terms of Israel's faithfulness to the law.
 - b. The author appears to have made use of original sources, editing them together in the final composition. This is evidenced by the song of Deborah and the Gideon accounts which appear in the northern dialect.
 - c. The author arranged the material to show how Israel's faithfulness to God resulted in blessing and oppression.

Questions of Chronology

1. If the judgeships of all of the judges are added up we have a total of 410 years. However, the long date of 480 years in 1 Kings 6:1 gives us only 292 years between the judgeship of Othniel and the time of Eli.
2. The conclusion then, is that many of the judgeships overlapped in time and in fact some of the judgeships were simultaneous, for example, Deborah and Barak.

Archaeological Contributions to the Times of the Judges

1. Archaeology shows that many of the city-states defeated by Joshua were allowed to reoccupy their capitals and continue to survive.
2. Archaeology also shows that many of the city states, such as Megiddo and Eglon, were not completely destroyed until some time later when Israel grew stronger and gained a greater control of the land.
3. John Garstang (excavator of Jericho) has worked out the chronology of the periods of rest mentioned in Judges with the times of Egyptian dominance over the trade routes. When Egypt dominated the trade routes, peace prevailed.
4. An inscription by Ramses III records a naval defeat of the Philistines by Egypt. Many use this to show that after this defeat the Philistines began to inhabit the coastlands. However, this is a *non-sequitur* argument and cannot be proven. There is no evidence to prove that the Philistines did not exist prior to their defeat by Ramses III.

Jephthah's Daughter - A Burnt Offering??

1. Human sacrifices were prohibited. It would be very unlikely for Jephthah to break the law of God in order to please God.
2. His daughter was allowed two months to mourn, not her death, but her virginity.
3. After Jephthah offered her, it is stated that she "knew not a man." This would indicate that she was devoted to the service of the tabernacle for the rest of her life and not as a burnt offering to God.