

## JUDGES

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 1

- Vv. 1- 8 *A summary of the period after Joshua's death.* God's leading Israel to have Judah to begin the conquest is recorded in these verses. Judah began the task of completing the conquest of the land. Such work would include the driving out of the Canaanites who had filtered back into the fortified sites which had been overthrown in the quick campaign led by Joshua. The men of Judah were closely assisted in this work by the men of Simeon, who settled among them.
- Vv. 9-21 *A resume of the activity of the tribe of Judah.* This section includes a review of Caleb's asking for and receiving Hebron as his special inheritance. Since this area was within the midst of the land assigned to the tribe of Judah, it is natural for the conquest to be recounted at this point. Special notice is made of the failure of the tribes to drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. The site of Jerusalem lay within the boundaries of the tribe of Benjamin, but it was on the border of the land assigned to the tribe of Judah. The Benjaminites, themselves, are especially held responsible for driving out this branch of the Canaanites.
- Vv. 22-29 *Failure of the children of Ephraim.* Ephraim and Manasseh did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in their midst. Mention is made of this failure in the sixteenth chapter of Joshua, and is in contrast to the more effective work which was done by the tribe of Judah.

Vv. 30-36 *The failure of the other tribes.* The tribes of Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan are singled out as having failed to drive out the Canaanites who formerly inhabited the territory which was assigned to them. Such a failure led to these people being snares to the children of Israel; they were as thorns pricking their eyes. They especially presented a temptation to the young men of Israel who married the young women of the pagan tribes who remained in the territory. Eventually they persuaded the Israelites to worship their gods and thus brought the downfall of Israel.

#### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Let the Lord lead.* The children of Israel did well to ask God to direct them in their activity. When one who believes in God begins any activity, he should seek God's guidance. God should be put first at the beginning of every day's activities. He should be put first in giving consideration to any new project. Throughout all of life's activities, the paramount consideration should be the performance of the will of God.
2. *God leads to victory.* Such a statement as the account that "the Lord was with Judah" is followed by the record that "He drove out the inhabitants of the land." The fact that the people of Judah were not able to drive out all of the inhabitants of the mountains was the result of their failure to let the Lord lead all the way. Whenever a person puts his trust completely in the Lord, he finds that the Lord leads to complete victory.
3. *Sin is a reproach to any people.* The Word of God does not draw a curtain over the failure of God's

chosen people, either individually, or collectively as a nation. A large part of Judges One is a record of the failures of the people of Israel to drive out the Canaanites who formerly inhabited the land promised to them. The failure was not in God's ability to help, but it was on account of the sin of the people. As Isaiah said, the Lord's hand was not shortened, that He could not help; His ear was not heavy that He could not hear, but the sins of the people separated them from their God (see Isaiah 59:1 ff.) .

## CHAPTER ONE

General Introduction to the Period of the Judges 1:1-2:5

### *Judah and Simeon Capture Adoni-bezek 1:1-7*

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?

2 And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

4 And Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered

their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

1. *What is the connection between Judges and Joshua?*

1:1

Opening with the phrase "And it came to pass after the death of Joshua," the book of Judges makes it clear that it follows immediately after the book of Joshua. It was in this same manner that Joshua was related to the Pentateuch, by the statement "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses" (Joshua 1:1) . Some of the events in Judges are recapitulations of the events in Joshua, e.g., Caleb's taking Hebron (cf. Joshua 14:6-15; 15:13-19; Judges 1:11-15). Most of it, however, *is* a continuation of Israel's history from the time of Joshua to the time of Samuel. The narrative begins with a flash-back to the time of Joshua and telescopes in with some of the era of Eli which immediately precedes the time of Samuel, the last of the judges.

2. *How did they ask the Lord? 1:1b*

The high priest inquired of the Lord by using the URIM and the THUMMIM. Joshua was told to make this kind of inquiry through Eleazar the high priest (Numbers 27:21). We may assume that Phinehas, Eleazar's son, succeeded him as high priest and that Israel's leaders made inquiry of the Lord's will through him. If such were not the case, a tribe to lead might have been selected by casting the sacred lot (Joshua 7:13-18; cf. 17:1).

3. *Who went up first among the tribes? 1:2*

The tribes of Israel resolved to continue the war with the Canaanites after Joshua died. In order that they might exterminate them from the land altogether, they wanted to follow God's leading; hence, they asked who should be first to go to battle. Judah was selected and he corn-

menced the strife in conjunction with Simeon. They smote the king of Bezek, conquered Jerusalem, Hebron (although Caleb had earlier taken possession of the land), Debir, Zephath, and three of the chief cities of the Philistines. Judah possessed the hill country but was unable to drive out the inhabitants of the plain, just as the Benjaminites were not able to drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem.

#### 4. *When did these events occur? 1:311*

The conquest was made in the days of Joshua. Some of the events described in the first chapter of Judges occurred in the days of Joshua (for example, the conquest of Hebron by Caleb in 1:10-15; cf. Joshua 14:6-15; 15:13-19). Others occurred at a later time. The whole chapter is a summary of the activity which was begun under Joshua's leadership and continued through the succeeding era. It forms a proper introduction to the time of the judges and provides a background against which their careers are outlined. The fact that some of the events happened much earlier than the time under most careful consideration is evidenced by such statements as that in 1:8: "Now the children of Judah *had fought* against Jerusalem, and *had taken* it." Later, in the same chapter, it is said, "And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day" (verse 21). Under Joshua, this city had been overthrown (Joshua 10). Mention is made again in Judges 1:8 that the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it, setting the city on fire (Judges 1:8). At the same time, the statement made in Judges 1:21 is true. Such a resume of the general activity of the time leaves room for Jerusalem to have been attacked earlier by Joshua, attacked as Judah led in settling her assigned territory, and yet occupied by Canaanites who crept back into the city when it was not occupied by the



Israelites. This is typical of the way in which the various accounts of military campaigns and early attempts at settlement were made prior to the time of the judges.

5. *Why is Simeon called Judah's brother? 1:3*

Simeon is called Judah's brother, not because Simeon and Judah were both sons of Jacob by the same mother, but because Simeon's territory lay within the territory of Judah (Joshua 19:1 ff.). Simeon was more closely connected with Judah than any of the other tribes. Simeon was really absorbed by Judah and lost his identity. Such a condition was predicted by Jacob, who said of Simeon, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7).

6. *Why had Adoni-bezek. not joined the southern coalition? 1:5*

The fact that Adoni-bezek had not joined Adonizedek and the other kings of the South to fight against Joshua when the Israelites first came into the land is an indication that this king's power had begun to decline at the time of the Israelite invasion. If he had conquered seventy kings in his time, he had overthrown more kings than Joshua did in all the land of Canaan. Bezek is a city whose location has not been positively ascertained; but a probable identification has been made with the modern Khirbet Bezka, near Gezer, at the edge of the Shephelah, just west of Jerusalem overlooking the Maritime Plain and the Road of the Kings.

7. *Why did they cut off his thumbs and great toes? 1:6, 7*

A man maimed was not good for fighting. When his thumb was amputated, a man could not hold a spear or sword effectively. Neither could he handle a bow and arrow with dexterity. Likewise, without his large toes on his feet, he could not run swiftly, nor jump obstacles put in his way. Such treatment seems torturous by Christian standards, but the Israelites only treated him in the same

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way as he had handled the seventy kings who were dependent upon him for their sustenance. It was certainly less torturous than the treatment given conquered peoples by pagan kings.

### *Conquests of Judah 1:8-10*

8 Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

### *8. What were "the hill country," the South," and the lowland"? 1:9*

These were the main geographical divisions of Palestine. Much of Palestine is quite hilly. Mt. Carmel arises at the Mediterranean Sea and stretches from a point near the Bay of Acre in a southeasterly direction to the center of the land. The center itself is often described as Mount Ephraim. To the south lay the "hill country of Judah." All of this could properly be called "hill country." The South" was a designation of the area south of Hebron, and this territory stretched past Beersheba and reached to the wilderness of Paran, the extreme southern border of the country. It is often called the *negeb*. Along the Mediterranean Sea stretched the Maritime Plain—the Philistine Plain and the Plain of Sharon. The Jordan Valley was a part of the Ghor, a deep declivity which terminated in the area round the Dead Sea, the lowest place on Earth. All of these areas were grouped under the heading, "the lowland."

### 9. *When was Hebron taken? 1:10*

Caleb took Hebron before Joshua died (see Joshua 14:6-15 cf. Joshua 15 : 1 6-19 ) The notice is repeated here. This first chapter of Judges is a typical summary of the conquest of the land, most of which was accomplished under Joshua's leadership. As time elapsed after the major battles of conquest, some of the Canaanite tribes drifted back into towns which Israel had burned but had not inhabited immediately. It thus became necessary for many of the sites to be retaken (e.g. Jerusalem). Since this is a summary account of conquest and settlement, it is natural to mention such early assaults as that of Caleb while describing continuing efforts to occupy the territory.

### *Othniel Conquers Debir and Receives Achsah 1:11-15*

11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher:

12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13 And Othni-el the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

14 And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her *ass*; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

### *The Extent of the Conquests of Judah and Benjamin 1:16-21*

16 And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the chil-

dren of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

17 And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and B<sup>y</sup>ron with the coast thereof.

19 And the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

21 And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

#### *10. What city is called the "city of the palm trees"? 1:16*

This name was given to the city of Jericho (see Judges 3 :13 ; Deuteronomy 34:3 ; II Chronicles 28 : 1 5 ). Strabo, Clericus, and others suppose that this is a reference to some other town in the desert of Arabia, but without substantial grounds. When Jesus went up from Jericho to Jerusalem, crowds followed Him; and on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they threw palm branches along the roadway ( John 12:13).

#### *11. Who were the Kenites? 1:16*

The Kenites were descendants of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses. They were probably a branch of the Kenites mentioned in Genesis 15 : 19 along with the other tribes of Canaan, which had separated from the other

members of its own tribe before the time of Moses and removed to the land of Midian, where Moses met with a hospitable reception from their chief, Reuel, on his flight from Egypt. These people had gone along with the Israelites to Canaan at the request of Moses (Numbers 10:29 ff.). When the Israelites advanced into Canaan itself, they had probably remained as nomads in the neighborhood of the Jordan near Jericho, without taking any part in the wars of Joshua; but when the tribes of Judah had driven out the Canaanites from Hebron, Debir, and the neighborhood, after the death of Joshua, they went into the desert of Judah with the Judeans and settled on the border of the steppes of the Negeb.

### *12. Where were Arad and Hormah? 1:16, 17*

*Hormah* was the chief town of a Canaanitish king in the south of Palestine (Joshua 12:14). Near here the Israelites were discomfited by the Amalekites when against the advice of Moses they attempted to enter Canaan by that route (Numbers 14:45; cf. 21:1-3; Deuteronomy 1:44). Hormah was afterward taken by Joshua and assigned to Judah (Joshua 15:30; but it finally fell to Simeon 19:4; 1 Chronicles 4:30). Hormah has not been positively identified, though Tell-es-seba, about three miles east of Beersheba is a likely location (see Unger's *Bible Dictionary*, p. 449). *Arad* was a Canaanite city of the southern-most borders of Palestine, whose inhabitants drove back the Israelites while they were trying to enter Canaan from Kadesh (Numbers 21:2; 33:40), but were finally subdued by Joshua (Joshua 12:14; Judges 1:16). It lay twenty miles south of Hebron, and is now called Tell Arad (see Unger, *op cit.*, p. 77). Considerable excavations have been undertaken at Tell Arad, and evidences of Canaanite civilization are extensive. Nearby is a large settlement of modern Israel which keeps alive the ancient Biblical name.

*13. Was Jerusalem occupied by Israelites in the day of the judges? 1:21*

After defeating Adoni-bezek, Judah and Simeon went against Jerusalem, conquered this city, and set the city on fire. Joshua had already slain the king of Jerusalem and his four allies after the battle of Gibeon (Joshua 10:3, 18-26), but had not conquered his capital. Even after Judah and Simeon smote the city, Jerusalem did not come into the sole and permanent possession of the Israelites until David made it his capital (II Samuel 5:6 ff.) . When this chapter of Judges was written, the site was occupied by that group of Canaanites known as Jebusites. The necessity for such repeated attempts to conquer a single site illustrates how the Canaanites infiltrated back into the midst of the Israelites whenever Israel did not exterminate these enemies or occupy immediately the citadels taken from them.

*Conquest of Other Tribes 1:22-36*

22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the Lord was with them.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el (Now the name of the city before was Luz.)

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will show thee mercy.

25 And when he showed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.

27 Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the in-

habitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

31 Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:

32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

33 Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalvim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

36 And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

*14. What is known of the history of Bethel? 1:22, 23*

The children of Israel would be especially anxious to possess this site; for it was here that God appeared to the patriarch, Jacob, when he fled from the presence of his

brother, Esau. The town came into such significant prominence in the later history of Israel that it attained the same importance in many respects in relation to the northern tribes, as that which Jerusalem attained in relation to the southern. Bethel was a name given to the site by Jacob (Genesis 28:19), and this name signified to Israel that it was the "house of God." Luz was the name by which the Canaanites identified the place. The men of Bethel had assisted the men of Ai in resisting Israel's armies led by Joshua (Joshua 8:17), but no specific reference is made to the capture of Bethel in Joshua's day. The account here describes how this important site came into the possession of Israel.

*15. Did the other tribes drive the Canaanites from their land? 1:27, 29, 30, 31, 33,34*

Some of them did; some of them did not. Ephraim followed the good example of Judah and drove the Canaanites from their hill-country; but we read of Manasseh that they "did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and its towns . . ." (1:27 f f.) . God had told them that those who remained would be as thorns in their sides and that their gods would be a snare unto the people, and so did the events turn out. Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan are singled out as tribes who failed to exterminate completely the Canaanites whose land they inherited. Nothing is said of failure in this respect on the part of Benjamin, except in regard to the Jebusites in Jerusalem (1:21). Neither is an appraisal given of the work of Reuben, Gad or Issachar.

*16. What kind of tribute was exacted? 1:28, 30, 33, 35*

The men became subject to taskwork. This was the way in which the children of Joseph treated the Canaanites whom they were not able to drive out of their territory (Joshua 17:13). In similar fashion, Israel made the Gibeonites do servile work when these Canaanites tricked the

people into making a peace treaty with them. At that time, Joshua declared, Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondsmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God" (Joshua 9:23). Such must have been the fate of the other Canaanites whom the Israelites did not exterminate but whom they were able to subjugate.

*17. Which tribe was especially oppressed by the Canaanites? 1:34-36*

Dan was forced up into the mountains by the Amorites who dwelt in their land. Such pressure on the part of the Amorites induced a portion of the Danites to emigrate and seek an inheritance in the northern part of Palestine where an earlier conquest had been made (cf. Judges 18; Joshua 19:47). Dan's territory lay on the west of the land given to the children of Benjamin. It also was between Judah on the south and Ephraim on the north. The western border was the Mediterranean Sea. In such a position, it was the very heart of the territory occupied by the Philistines. This particular group of Canaanites were perennial enemies of Israel and waged warfare that was unusually fierce. The fact that Dan was especially oppressed by these Canaanites provides a background for a better understanding of the career of Samson, who was from the tribe of Dan.

*18. What was the general boundary of the territory held by the Amorites? 1:34-36*

Special reference is made to the places where the Amorites dwelt in force. They were in the territory of Dan and forced this tribe up into the hill country. This area was along the Mediterranean Sea and lay in the midst of the land assigned to Ephraim on the north and Judah on the south. These Amorites, a particular group of the Canaanites, also dwelt in Mount Heres in Aijalon and in Shaalabim. Shaalabim and Aijalon are points mentioned

in the territory assigned to the tribe of Dan, and the mention of these points gives an idea of the citadels which were held by the Amorites. Although these Canaanites were able to maintain control in these areas, the people of Ephraim prevailed against them as they assisted their brethren, the Danites; and these Amorites were made subject to taskwork. Another area where the Amorites prevailed was in the south, since the ascent of Akrabbim, mentioned also in Joshua 15:3, denotes the sharply projecting line of cliffs which intersected the Ghor below the Dead Sea. These cliffs formed the southern boundary of the Promised Land (cf. Numbers 34:4 and Joshua 15:2, 3). The rock mentioned has many times been taken as a reference to Petra, but it is better considered as a reference to the rock which was smitten when Israel needed water (Numbers 20:8, 10) . These Amorites also extended their territory beyond this point to the north. The fact that the Amorites were allowed to hold these strong points indicates the weakness of the children of Israel as they failed to fulfill God's will for them completely.

#### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 1

1. Which tribe took the lead in driving out the Canaanites?
2. Who went with this tribe?
3. What was the name of the king who had cut off the great toes and thumbs of seventy other kings?
4. What city in the midst of Benjamin and Judah was held by the Jebusites?
5. What famous city did the children of Joseph take?
6. How many cities did Manasseh fail to occupy?
7. What famous city did Ephraim fail to occupy?
8. How did Israel treat the Canaanites whom they failed to drive out?