

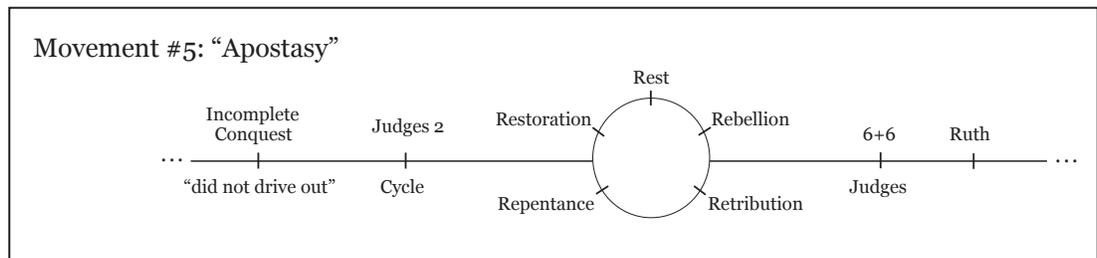
Session 2

DAYS OF THE JUDGES

I. PRAYER

II. REVIEW

A. Movement 5: Apostasy (Timeline)



B. Book of Judges (Chart)

JUDGES		
KEY THEME: Defeat & Deliverance	KEY PHRASE: Did Evil	KEY CONCEPT: Sin Cycle
Days of the Judges	Deeds of the Judges	Difficulties during the Judges
1 3	3 16	17 21
Prologue	Body	Appendix
Sin Cycle (Judges)	6 Major - 6 Minor	Idolatry/Civil War

C. Book of Judges (Historical Transition)



III. MAJOR AND MINOR JUDGES

A. Oppressors and Judges of Israel

THE OPPRESSORS & JUDGES OF ISRAEL					
OPPRESSOR	KING	DATE	JUDGE	TRIBE	REF. NOTE
1. Mesopotamia	Cushan-risha-thaim	14th BC	Othniel	Judah	3:7-11
2. Moab	Eglon	14th-13th BC	Ehud	Benjamin	3:12-30
3. Philistia		?-13th BC	Shamgar		3:31
4. Canaan	Jabin	12th BC	Deborah	Ephraim	4:1-5:31
5. Midian	Oreb Zeeb Zebah Zalmunna	12th BC	Gideon	Manasseh	6:1-8:35
6. Civil War of Abimelech		12th BC			9:1-57
7. ?		12th BC	Tola	Issachar	10:1-2
8. ?		12th BC	Jair	Gilead	10:3-5
9. Ammon		12th-11th BC	Jephthah Ibzan Elon Abdon	Gilead Judah (??) Zebulun Ephraim	
10. Philistia		12th-11th BC	Samson	Dan	13:1-16:31

B. Designations of the Judges

1. Major Judges
 - a. Othniel
 - b. Ehud
 - c. Deborah/Barak
 - d. Gideon
 - e. Jephthah
 - f. Samson
2. Minor Judges
 - a. Shamgar
 - b. Tola
 - c. Jair
 - d. Ibzan
 - e. Elon
 - f. Abdon

C. Canaanite Religion

1. General description

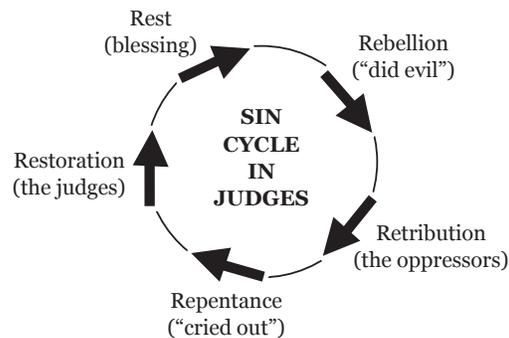
Eugene Merrill (**Kingdom of Priests**, 159) describes the Canaanite religion:

Essentially, the religion of Canaan was based on the assumption that the forces of nature are expressions of divine presence and activity and that the only way one could survive and prosper was to identify the gods responsible for each phenomenon, and by proper ritual, encourage them to bring to bear their respective powers. This is the mythological approach to reality. Ritual involves human enactments, particularly by cultic personnel such as priests, of the activity of the gods as described in the myths.
2. Major Canaanite deities
 - a. **El:** chief of the gods; impersonal, transcendent, powerful, detached, gullible (often seduced/victimized by other gods).
 - b. **Asherah:** wife of El, mother of the gods; goddess of fertility; goddess of the sea.
 - c. **Baal:** storm god, bringer of rain and fertility (cycle of seasons); powerful god who warred against others for supremacy; consorted with Asherah to bring fertility (highly sensual, perverse with cultic prostitution).
 - d. **Ashtoreth:** plural form is Ashtoroth; female fertility goddess; goddess of love and war; often associated with Baal.

- e. **Anath:** Baal's sister and wife, also a goddess of love and war.
3. The tempting attraction to Canaanite religion
 - a. The Israelites would have recognized that the fertility god, Baal, was worshiped to acquire a bountiful harvest. Although forbidden to worship a false god(s), yet in times of famine or poor harvest, the temptation to include Baal worship would be strong.
 - b. The Israelites who failed to drive out all the Canaanites of the land would come under their influences, culturally and religiously (cf. Judg 2-3). Rather than dismiss all Baal worship, the tendency would be to accept some elements and blend them into Israelite worship (a process called syncretic worship). This would be considered a serious sin before the Lord.

IV. SIN CYCLE OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

A. Viewed Pictorially



B. Assessed Critically

While the "sin cycle" seems to describe the spiritual breakdown of the tribes' faithfulness and God's disciplining action, a careful assessment of the major judges shows some variety in the Biblical narration.

Constable (**Notes on Judges**, 24) observes:

Certain formulaic expressions appear in 2:11-23 and then recur in the record of Israel's apostasy (3:7-16:31). However, as noted in the table below, they appear with less frequency as the narrative proceeds. Having established the pattern, the writer did not feel compelled to repeat these expressions as frequently since the reader learns to anticipate them as the narrative unfolds. The breakdown of these expressions is a rhetorical device that parallels and reflects the general moral and spiritual disintegration in Israel as a whole.

Expression	Othniel	Ehud	Deborah	Gideon	Jephthah	Samson
The Israelites did evil (2:11-13).	3:7	3:12	4:1	6:1	10:6	13:1
Yahweh gave them over (2:14).	3:8	3:12	4:2	6:1	10:7	13:1
The Israelites cried out (2:15, 18).	3:9	3:15	4:3	6:7	10:10	
Yahweh raised up a deliverer (2:16, 18).	3:9	3:15				
Yahweh gave the oppressor to the deliverer (2:18).	3:10	3:28				
The land had rest.	3:11	3:30		5:31	8:28	

Nonetheless, the **“sin cycle”** was present throughout the Book of Judges whether or not each stage was specifically mentioned. The diagram (of the **“sin cycle”**) still applies (stated or not) to each situation.

V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT (JUDGES 3-5)

A. Judgeship of Othniel (Judg 3:7-11)

1. The story of Othniel is a paradigm illustrating the “**sin cycle**.” Note the highlighted words that correspond to the “**sin cycle**” diagram (page 24).

Judges 3:7-11

*The Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs.*

*⁸The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so that he **sold them** into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years.*

*⁹But when they **cried out** to the Lord, he raised up for them a **deliverer**, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, who **saved them**. ¹⁰The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. ¹¹So the land had **peace** for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.*

2. Notes:
 - a. Othniel (of the tribe of Judah) was either Caleb’s younger brother, perhaps half-brother (or nephew - cp. 1 Chron 4:13; Josh 14:6).
 - b. Othniel was a recipient of divine enablement, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him” (3:10). Also, see Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29), Samson (13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).

Insight: The Kind of People the Judges Were:

They were not routine appointees who inherited their jobs. They were specially selected by God in an emergency. One may be sure, then, that they were not just ordinary people of the day...able to inspire, lead, plan military strategy and overcome obstacles...people of good judgment, capable of counseling, and able to show wisdom in the problems of society” (Wood, 161).

B. Judgeship of Ehud (3:12-30)

1. The story of Moabite oppression
 - a. The oppressors: Eglon of Moab with Ammonites and Amalekites (12)
 - b. The “sin cycle” (12-15^a)

Judges 3:12-15^a

*Again the Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord, and because they did this evil the **Lord gave** Eglon king of Moab power over Israel. ¹³Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. ¹⁴The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years. ¹⁵Again the Israelites **cried out** to the Lord, and he gave them a **deliverer**—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite.*

2. The story of Ehud, the left-handed judge
 - a. Ehud before Eglon (king of Moab) the “first time”
 - b. Ehud before Eglon (king of Moab) the “second time”

Judges 3:15^b-18

The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab. ¹⁶Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a cubit long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing. ¹⁷He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. ¹⁸After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way those who had carried it.

Judges 3:19-23

But on reaching the stone images near Gilgal he himself went back to Eglon and said, “Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you.” The king said to his attendants, “Leave us!” And they all left. ²⁰Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his palace and said, “I have a message from God for you.” As the king rose from his seat, ²¹Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king’s belly. ²²Even the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the

fat closed in over it. ²³Then Ehud went out to the porch; he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

c. Ehud before the Israelites - a call to battle

Judges 3:27-29

When he arrived there, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hills, with him leading them. ²⁸“Follow me,” he ordered, “for the Lord has given Moab, your enemy, into your hands.” So they followed him down and took possession of the fords of the Jordan that led to Moab; they allowed no one to cross over. ²⁹At that time they struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all vigorous and strong; not one escaped.

3. Observations and Notes

- a. Ehud was of the tribe of Benjamin (15); Moab and Ammon were descendants of Lot; Amalek was descended from Esau.
- b. The oppression of Eglon, king of the Moabites, lasted eighteen years. The cry of repentance before the Lord set in motion the deliverance through a God-appointed judge, Ehud (15).
- c. Benjamin means “son of the right hand,” ironic in the sense that many Benjamites were left-handed (20:16) and some even ambidextrous (1 Chron 12:2). Ehud was “left-handed” (or literally, “hindered in the right hand”).
- d. Ehud was initially welcomed in the king’s presence due to the tribute he brought (15, 18). Returning later, he claimed to have “a secret message” for Eglon.
- e. The dagger would have been about 18 inches long without a hilt, thus when violently thrust forward, it went through the king’s belly.
- f. Since the assassination took place in the “upper room” (rooftop), Ehud was able to lock the door and leave without detection.

- g. Following the defeat of the Moabites (“ten thousand” slain), the land had “peace” (rest) for eighty years, the longest period of peace in the times of the judges.

C. Judgeship of Shamgar (3:31)

1. Shamgar’s story is one verse only, thus the description as a “minor judge.”
2. Presumably the **“sin cycle”** was evident though without Biblical text for details (related to the cycle). Refer again to Constable’s Insight on page 25.

Judges 3:31

After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.

D. Judgeship of Deborah and Barak (4:1-5:31)

1. Charted

The account of this deliverance is told first in narrative, then in poetic song. This structure mirrors that of the Red Sea prose (story) and poetry (song) as recorded in Exodus 14-15.

DEBORAH AND BARAK	
Judges 4	Judges 5
Story	Song
Narrative	Poetry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin Cycle • Oppressors: Jabin and Sisera • Deliverers: Deborah and Barak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise (1-3) • Poetic epic (4-30) • Peace (31)

2. Narrative story (Judg 4)

a. The sin of the Israelites (1-3)

Judges 4:1-3

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, **now that Ehud was dead** (place of “Rest” in the sin cycle). ²So the **Lord sold them** into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. ³Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they **cried to the Lord** for help.

(1) Jabin (which means “discerning,” perhaps a dynastic title) was king over Hazor and surrounding area. He oppressed Israel (in the northern regions) for twenty years.

(2) Sisera was his commander-in-chief; notably his army had “nine hundred iron chariots.” The Jewish historian, Josephus, attributed a large army (inflated numbers?) of 300,000 foot soldiers plus 10,000 horsemen.

b. The selection of a deliverer (4-10)

Judges 4:4-8

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading (or judging) Israel at that time. ⁵She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. ⁶She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. ⁷I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’” ⁸Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.”

- (1) Deborah was one of three specified prophetesses in the Old Testament (also Miriam –Ex 15:20 and Huldah–2 Kgs 22:14). Further, the New Testament mentions Anna (Lk 2:36) and Philip’s four daughters (Acts 21:8-9) as prophetesses as well.

Not only was Deborah a prophetess (i.e. spokesperson for God), she also served as a judge (v. 4, “leading” in NIV could mean “judging”), in fact the only woman in the book to do so.

- (2) Barak was an accomplished general from the land of Naphtali (far north of Israel); when summoned by a prophetess (spokesperson for God), he obediently came to Deborah.
- (3) Barak’s refusal to comply without Deborah’s presence is surprising. Why does the general feel the need to have the prophetess go with him into battle?
 - (a) Perhaps this reluctance betrayed a personal timidity within Barak.
 - (b) Perhaps the general wanted full assurance of God’s enabling presence and desired the prophetess to go with him for certain victory.
 - (c) Perhaps Barak was counting on Deborah’s presence as a rallying point for the soldiers and a ready avenue to God if divine guidance or further knowledge was needed.
- (4) Deborah agrees to go but prophetically announces to the general, “But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman...” (4:9). At this point the reader should be thinking, “What woman? Deborah? Another?”

c. The strategy for victory (11-16)

- (1) The two opposing armies assemble at Mt. Tabor, the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley.
- (2) Deborah speaks prophetically from the Lord to Barak.

Judges 4:14-16

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. ¹⁵At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot. ¹⁶Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left.

d. The slaying of Sisera (17-24)

- (1) The woman, Jael (17-21)

Judges 4:17-21

Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite. ¹⁸Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. ¹⁹"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. ²⁰"Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'" ²¹But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

- (2) The general, Barak (22)

When Barak arrives, Jael shows him the dead general of Jabin.

- (3) The aftermath, defeat of Jabin the king (23-24)
Jabin, the Canaanite king was “subdued” and
“destroyed.”

Insight: The Narrative of Deborah and Barak: Judges 4

Constable (**Notes on Judges**, 37) proposes a chiasmic structure for Judges 4. As with all chiasms, note the close, conceptual relationship of A to A', B to B', and so forth. The centerpiece of the chiasm is the main emphasis of the intentional structure.

Note the Judges 4 chiasm (as adapted from Constable):

- A Israelites oppressed (1-3)
- B Deborah, the prophetess, prominent (4-9)
- C Barak and Sisera assemble armies (10-13)
- D Yahweh gives victory (14^a)
- C' Barak and Sisera battle with armies (14^b-16)
- B' Jael, wife of Heber, prominent (17-22)
- A' Canaanites defeated (23-24)

The main emphasis (D) of this deliverance account is that Yahweh ensures the victory. This will also be demonstrated in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5).

3. Poetic Song (Judg 5)

Following the great victory, a theologically-driven song of praise was composed by Deborah (5:7) and sung by Deborah and Barak (5:1). This mirrors the occasion of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and momentous victory over the pursuing Egyptians (Ex 14). The subsequent song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15) retells the victory with rich theological insight. Note the same with Deborah's song.

a. The call to praise (1-5)

Judges 5:1-3

On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song: ² “When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves— praise the Lord!

³*"Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song."*

b. The poetic epic story (6-31^b)

(1) Background: the situation (6-8)

Judges 5:6-7

"In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. ⁷Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel."

(2) Exhortation: sing praises (9-11)

Judges 5:10-11^a

"You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets and you who walk along the road, consider ¹¹the voice of the singers at the watering places. They recite the victories of the Lord, the victories of his villagers in Israel."

(3) Division: faithful and unfaithful (12-18)

Judges 5:12-13,15

"Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, break out in song! Arise, Barak! Take captive your captives, son of Abinoam.' ¹³The remnant of the nobles came down; the people of the Lord came down to me against the mighty... ¹⁵The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; yes, Issachar was with Barak, sent under his command into the valley. In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart."

(4) Defeat: supernatural intervention (19-23)

Judges 5:20-21

"From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. ²¹The river Kishon swept them away, the age-old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul; be strong!"

(5) Finale: tale of two women (24-30)

(a) Jael (24-27)

Judges 5:24-26

"Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women. ²⁵He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk. ²⁶Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer. She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple.

(b) Sisera's mother (28-30)

Judges 5:28

"Through the window peered Sisera's mother; behind the lattice she cried out, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed?'"

(6) Conclusion: theological prayer (31^a)

Judges 5:31^a

*"So may all your enemies perish, Lord! But may all who love you be like the sun when it rises in its **strength.**"*

c. The aftermath of deliverance (31^b)

Judges 5:31^b

Then the land had peace forty years.

VI. TAKEAWAYS

A. Sin Cycle

As the Book of Judges will demonstrate time and again, to sin against the Lord is to invite His chastening hand. And once the disciplining process begins, the nation (the individual?) must humbly repent, confess, and cry out to God for His merciful restoration to blessing.

B. Othniel

While only five verses describe Othniel's judgeship (Judg 3:7-11), it is noteworthy that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him" (Judg 3:10). Believers need to always acknowledge that spiritual success is found in God's work by His Spirit in us, with us, and through us. As Jesus noted, "apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

C. Deborah

Deborah was a prophetess-judge. She demonstrates that God uses all people to the task He calls them to, irrespective of stature, social status, sex, race, so forth. She faithfully fulfilled her God-given tasks. Deborah reminds one of the "wife of noble character" from Proverbs 31 in this regard:

- Proverbs 31:26
She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- Proverbs 31:30-31
*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who **fears the Lord** is to be praised.
³¹ Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*

D. Song of Deborah

The poetic psalm of Judges 5 reminds all believers that it is appropriate and important to render God praise for His mighty works in our lives.