

Judges

Still in the history books we move to Judges. In Joshua it was nothing but success and victory, if one would call it that.

In Judges it is the account of the children of God taking him for granted, not following the laws set out for them and just behaving poorly. Joshua has died and now who will lead these people?

It starts out with more conquering, death, and setting Jerusalem on fire by the tribe of Judah and Simeon. It is a narrative sprinkled with poems and personalities. Here are some highlights:

Othniel

The Judges are on a roll and Caleb promises to give his daughter to the man that captures Debir (Kiriath-sepher). I suspect that Caleb is some higher up in the tribe of Judah. So Othniel captures the city and gets the daughter, Achsah as his wife. Achsah figures if she is to be given away she should get some land also, so Caleb gives the couple upper and lower Gullath.

More half hearted conquering goes on by various tribes. These were not the genocides of Joshua so some of the inhabitants they conquered were kept alive and became slaves. But intermingling was going on between the sons and daughters. God is throwing his hands up in disbelief and takes a time out. Othniel dies and the Israelites again turn to bad behavior. The Lord let King Eglon of Moab in and Israel was defeated and subject to him for 18 years.



who was raised by the
Lord to save them
(Judges 3:9)

Ehud



Surprisingly the Israelites are crying out to the Lord and he sends them Benjaminite Ehud son of Gera who was left handed. Ehud presents a gift with his right hand, tells King Eglon he has a secret message, then uses his left hand to stab the king in the belly. Long story short the Moabites surrendered after a bit of killing and life was peaceful for 80 years.

Deborah

I wish I would have kept a song I wrote about Deborah in EFM. It was sung to Wake up little Suzzie by the Everly Brothers. Ehud has died, the Israelites were bad and now King Jabin of Canaan is in charge. Here comes Deborah, a Prophetess. She calls on Barak and tells him to take his men and march on Mount Tabor. He says he will go if she goes with.

Of course, Barak is successful and everyone dies except the military leader, Sisera. He flees to Jael, the wife of a Kenite.



She hides him under some blankets and says she will protect him. Instead when he was sleeping she took a tent pin and a mallet and kills him.



Then there is a long song/poem. There was 40 years of good times.

Gideon

Do I even need to say this? The Israelites were bad again and now they were under the control of the Midianites. Amalek, a Midian liked to wait for the harvest to be done and then raid the camps and destroy everything. And the people cried out. Here enters Gideon. He asks for proof that the angel is a representative of God, a couple of times. Again Gideon is successful in defeating the Midianites despite his low number of troops and they ask him to be king. Gideon says no but goes on to have 70 sons with various wives. Clearly he did not have time to be king. One of his sons with a concubine was Abimelech. And there was peace for 40 years.

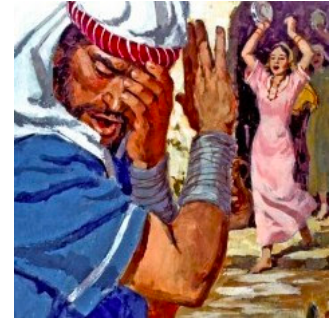
Abimelech

The Israelites are bad again, worshiping other gods. Abimelech decides it is better to have one person to follow rather than 70. He kills all his brothers except the youngest who is hiding. So the people made him king for 3 years. Then civil war breaks out thanks to Jotham, the youngest brother, who gives the people this olive tree story. There is a battle and Abimelech was near a tower he was going to burn down. A lady on top of the tower drops a rock and hits Abimelech on his head. He is nearing death but doesn't want to die at the hand of a girl so he orders his soldier to stab him. Pay back.

Jephthah

good times bad behavior and we are at the story of Jephthah. His mom was a prostitute, he was sent away so he wouldn't get an inheritance, he gathers a bunch of thugs around him and

becomes powerful. The Israelites ask him to war against the Ammonites and Jephthah vows to the Lord that if he is victorious, upon his return home, he will make a burnt offering of the first thing that comes running out, assuming it would be an animal. As luck would have it, his only daughter comes running out and Jephthah kept his vow. (The daughters of Israel commemorate this sad, sad event each year by lamenting Jephthah's daughter for four days.)



The neighboring tribe of Ephraim is now mad because they didn't get to help in the battle. Jephthah puts them in their place. To escape back home the Ephraimites need to cross a river. They must speak some dialect that does not have the shh sound. The password to cross the river is shibboleth. If Mike Sanford was here he would point out that word was used on a episode of West Wing by a Chinese stowaway who sought asylum from the US.

Samson and Delilah.

And now for the big guy. First the Essenes were a type of Israelite, like the Pharisees and Sadducees. They didn't cut their hair and they didn't shave. They stayed to themselves, sometimes in the wilderness. (Think Dead Sea Scrolls.) Back to Samson. The people were naughty and now the Philistines were in control. A woman has a dream saying she will conceive a child and to name him Samson.

Samson grows up and finds a Philistine gal he wants to marry. He goes to meet her but has to kill a lion first. The following year he returns to actually get married, sees his lion and discovers bees and honey inside the lion. He eats some and bring some back to his parents. Then there is the riddle bout the honey in the lion. The wife coaxes the answer out of Samson so he is forced to kill 30 of his own men and give their clothing to the wife's neighbors. Samson is mad and takes a trip back home. Meanwhile his wife marries another. There is a bunch of drama that results from that but we will move on. I will just say that the Philistines want to capture him but he out powers them.

Now he meets Delilah. She, as we know, is working for his enemies and he is hung between pillars and dies for the men he has slain. But then the building falls down and yet more die.

The rest

More problems between the naughty tribes. Micah appoints a Levite as his priest. Micah has a shrine but some spies from Dan took his idol and his priest.

A Levite goes to Gibeah, the local men rape his concubine until she dies. Then they cut up her body and send a piece to each of the tribes. The tribes decide to attack Gibeah and the Benjaminites defend the city but lose. There are only 600 left now. The other tribes are sad that Benjamin is so low in numbers so they decide to destroy Jabesh-gilead and capture wives for those 600 Benjaminites.

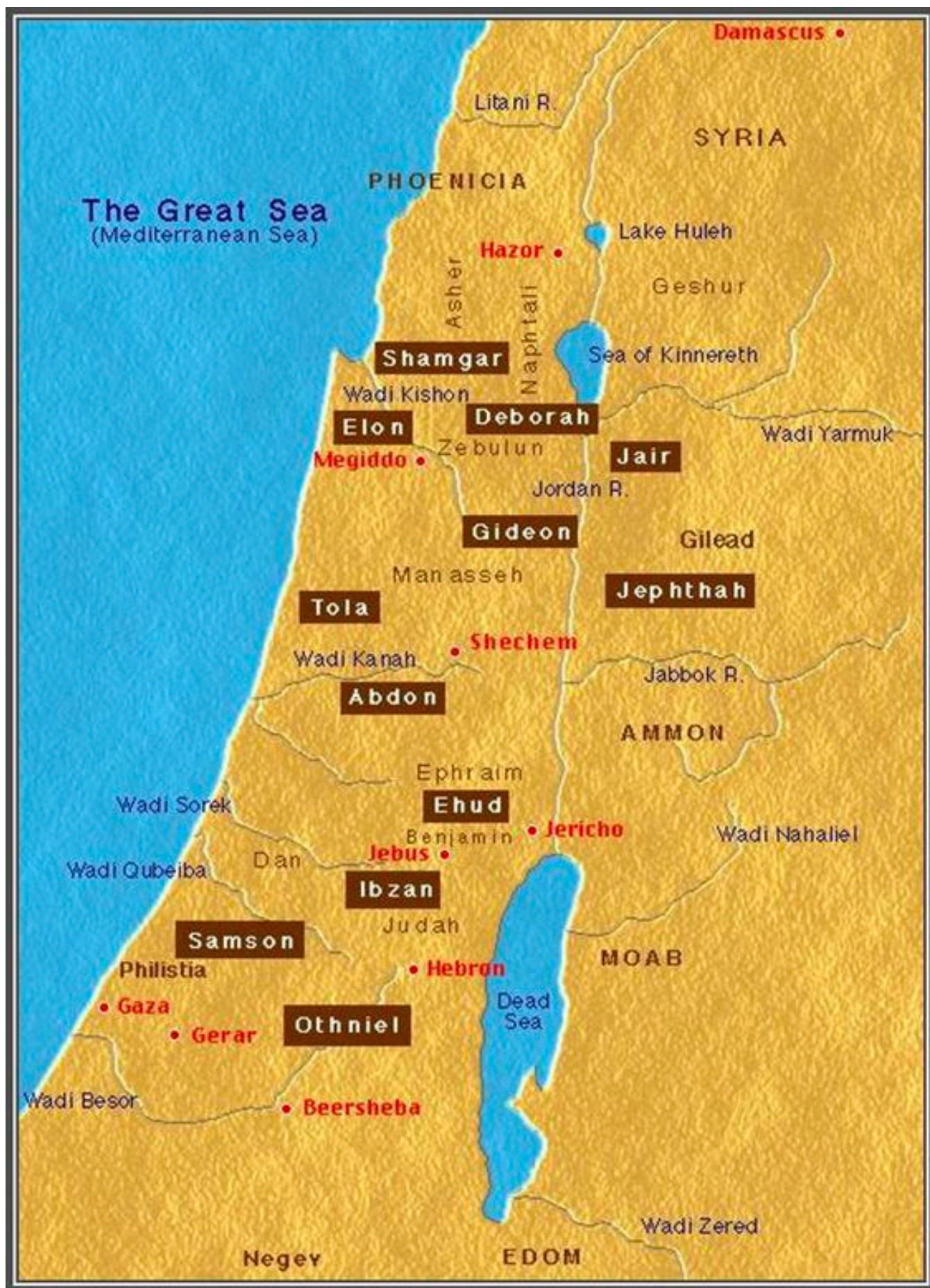


Fig 3. The 12 Judges and Locations