

## THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

The Historical Books of the Old Testament, usually so-called, are twelve in number, from Joshua to Esther inclusive.

It should, however, be remembered that the entire Old Testament is filled with historical material.

The story of the Historical Books is the story of the rise and fall of the Commonwealth of Israel, while the prophets foretell the future restoration and glory of that under King Messiah.

Definition: Commonwealth—a nation, state, or other political unit as:

A: one founded on law and united by compact or tacit agreement of the people for the common good

B: one in which supreme authority is vested in the people

The history of Israel falls into seven distinct periods:

1. From the **call of Abraham** to the Exodus, Genesis 12:1-Exodus 1:22; (with Acts 7) The book of Job belongs to this period and shows the maturity and depth of philosophic and religious thought, and the extent of revelation of the age of the Patriarchs.
2. From the **Exodus to the death of Joshua**. The history of this period is gathered from the books of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and such parts of Leviticus as relate to the story of Israel. The great figures of Moses, Aaron, and Joshua dominate this period.
3. **The period of the Judges**, from the death of Joshua to the call of Saul, Jud. 1.
4. **The period of the Kings**, from Saul to the Captivities, (1 Samuel 11:1 - 2 Kings 17:6)
5. **The period of the Captivities**, Esther, and the historical parts of Daniel. With the captivity of Judah began "the times of the Gentiles," the mark of which is the political subjection of Israel to the Gentile world-powers Luke 21:24.
6. **The restored Commonwealth**, always under Gentile over-lordship, from the end of the seventy years' captivity and the return of the Jewish remnant to the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. The inspired history of this period is found in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi in the Old Testament, and in the historical and biographical material found in the New Testament. During this period Christ, the promised King of the Davidic Covenant, and the Seed of the Adamic and Abrahamic Covenants, appeared, was rejected as king, was crucified, rose again from the dead, and ascended to heaven. Toward the end of this period, also, the church came into being, and the New Testament Scriptures, save the Gospel of John, John's Epistles, and the Revelation, were written.
7. **The present dispersion** (Luke 21:20-24) which according to all the Old Testament prophets is to be ended by the final national regathering promised in the Palestinian Covenant Deuteronomy 30:1-9 The partial restoration at the end of the 70 years was foretold only by Daniel and Jeremiah, and was to the end that Messiah might come and fulfil the prophecies of His sufferings.

In the year A.D. 70 Jerusalem was again destroyed, and the descendants of the remnant of Judah sent to share the national dispersion which still continues.

## JOSHUA

Jehovah is his help, or Jehovah the Savior. The son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, the successor of Moses as the leader of Israel.

He was born in Egypt, and was probably of the age of Caleb, with whom he is generally associated. He shared in all the events of the Exodus, and held the place of commander of the host of the Israelites at their great battle against the Amalekites in Rephidim.

He became Moses' minister or servant, and accompanied him part of the way when he ascended Mount Sinai to receive the two tables. He was also one of the twelve who were sent on by Moses to explore the land of Canaan and only he and Caleb gave an encouraging report.

Under the direction of God, Moses, before his death, invested Joshua in a public and solemn manner with authority over the people as his successor.

Now began the wars of conquest, which Joshua carried on for many years, the record of which is in the book that bears his name.

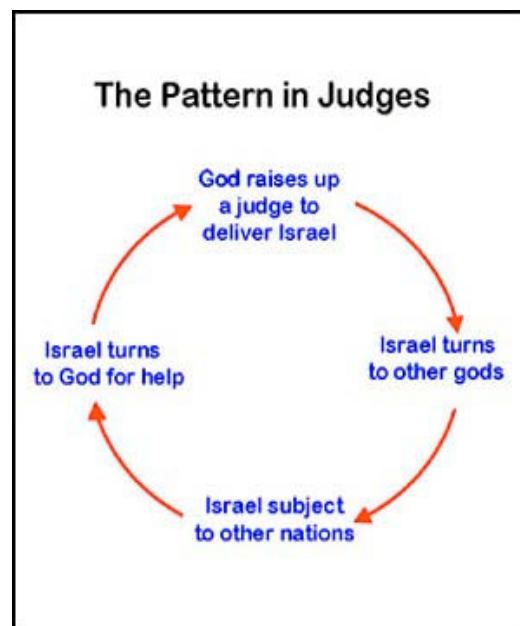
He conquered six nations and thirty-one kings. Having thus subdued the Canaanites, Joshua divided the land among the tribes

His work being done, he died, at the age of one hundred and ten years, twenty-five years after having crossed the Jordan. He was buried in his own city of Timnath-serah and "the light of Israel for the time faded away."

## JUDGES

The judge in Israel was not a new office during the period of history that this book records. Moses ordered the people to appoint judges in every Israelite town to settle civil disputes (Deut. 16:18). In addition, there was to be a chief justice at the tabernacle who would, with the high priest, help settle cases too difficult for the local judges (Deut. 17:9). Evidently there were several judges at the tabernacle who served as a supreme court (Deut. 19:17).

When Joshua died God did not appoint a man to succeed him as the military leader of the entire nation of Israel. Instead each tribe was to proceed to conquer and occupy its allotted territory. As the need arose God raised up several different individuals who were judges in various parts of Israel at various times to lead segments of the Israelites against local enemies. These judges were similar to modern mayors of towns. God endowed them with certain qualities and identified them in various ways as being those He had chosen to lead His people.



This leadership sometimes involved military command. As God had raised up Moses and Joshua, and as he would raise up David (1 Sam. 16:13), so He also raised up the judges. The writer also described Yahweh as a judge in Judges (11:27). This points out the fact that the judges were God's agents in Israel who judged under Him at this period in the nation's history.

Judges is the second book of the Former Prophets section of the Hebrew Old Testament. As I pointed out in the notes on Joshua, the fact that the Hebrews placed the book in this section of their canon is significant. It demonstrates that they recognized it as God's selective history of the period designed to teach spiritual lessons more than simply to record historical facts. God revealed Himself through the events of life and history as well as through the sermons of the prophets. Jewish tradition suggests that Samuel wrote Judges

The peculiar circumstances connected with his birth are recorded in. Hannah, one of the two wives of Elkanah, who came up to Shiloh to worship before the Lord, earnestly prayed to God that she might become the mother of a son. Her prayer was graciously granted; and after the child was weaned she brought him to Shiloh and consecrated him to the Lord as a perpetual Nazarite. Here his bodily wants and training were attended to by the women who served in the tabernacle, while Eli cared for his religious culture. Thus, probably, twelve years of his life passed away. "The child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men".