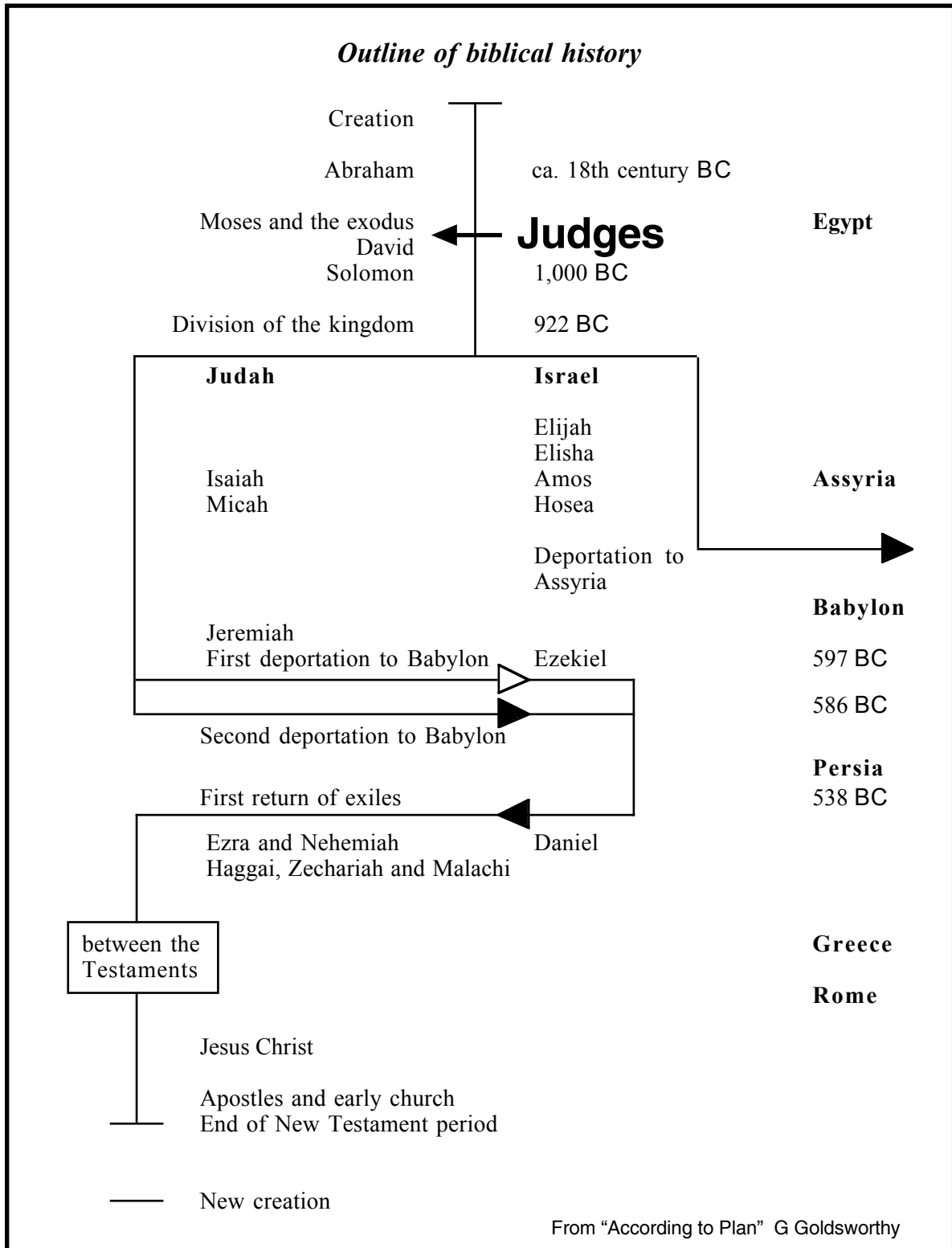






# Introducing Judges



## a. The story so far

### Promises to Abraham (Genesis 12 and 15)

#### 1. Descendants (a great nation)

Israel increases in Egypt (Joseph)

#### 2. Blessing God's protection

Exodus - Salvation from slavery (Moses)

Journey to the promised land

#### 3. Land

I will give you the land of the ..., ..., ... ,..., Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Jebusites, ... (400 year delay until "the sin of the Amorites has reached its full measure" see Gen 15:12-20, Deut 7:1-11 & 9:4-6)

#### Tribes of Israel

Dan Asher Naphtali Zebulun Issachar Manasseh Ephraim Gad  
Benjamin Reuben Simeon Judah + Levi (Priests - no land allotted)

**Conquest of the land** is largely achieved under Joshua

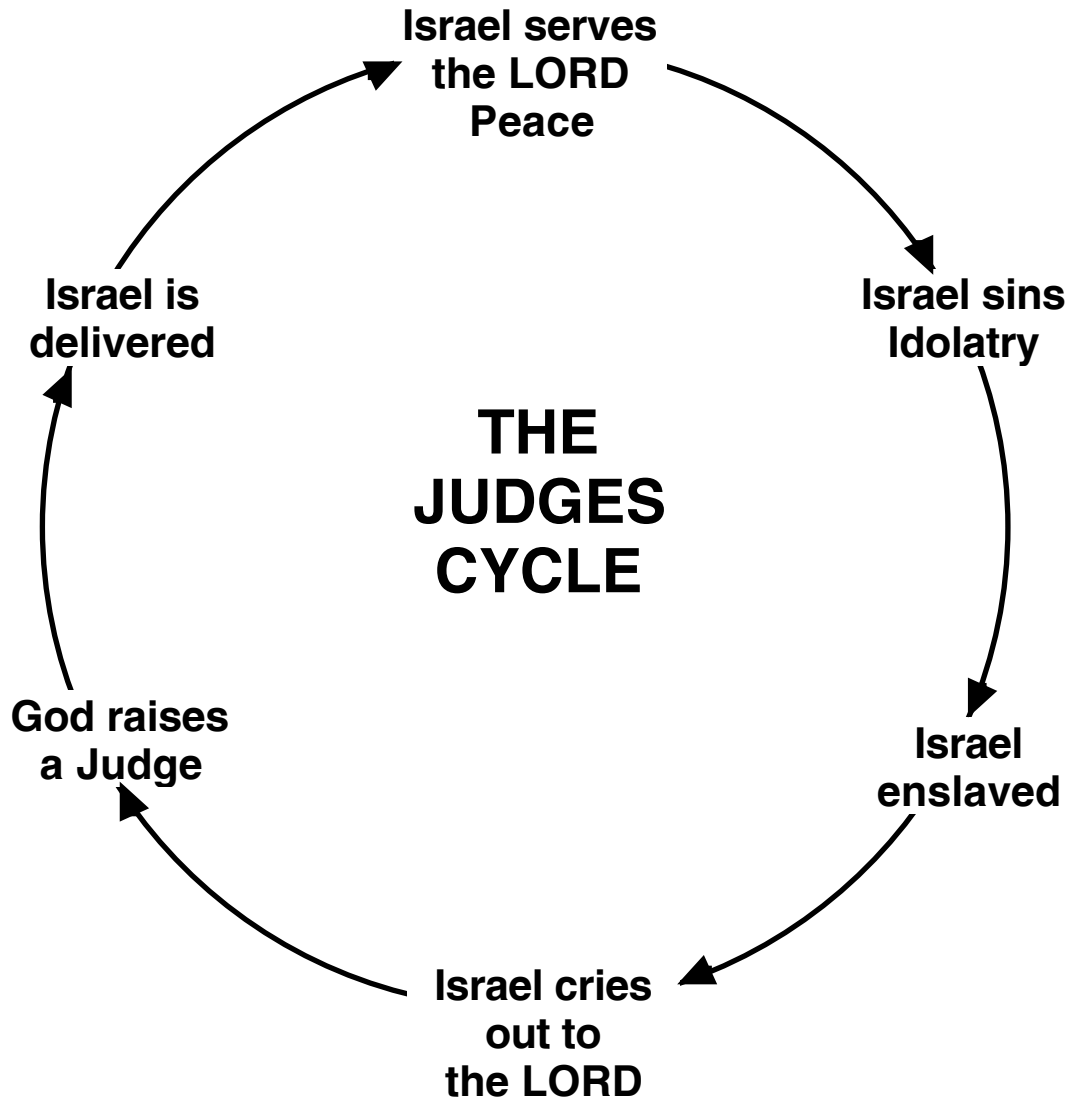
## b. The time of the Judges

In the period of the Judges Israel's task of possession and settling the land continues. Original inhabitants of the land remain with strongholds and neighbouring nations threaten the tribes of Israel. These people worship idols with a long history, often fertility cults with associated moral perversions such as cult prostitution. Child sacrifice was featured in these cults. "High places" such as mountains, local hills and significant trees were often the focus of these cults. Israel's worship with no idols and just one (true) God with high ethical standards of holiness was a great contrast to the religions of the Canaanites.

Not all judges lead all the tribes - some are restricted to certain areas. There appears to be some overlap in the narratives in the book of Judges.

## c. The book of Judges

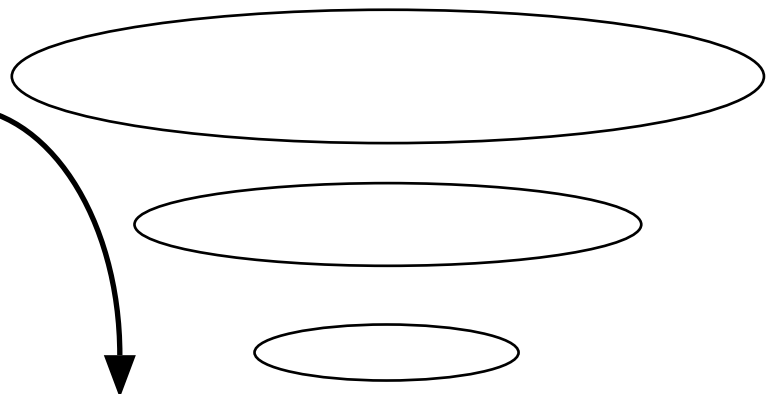
Most probably written during Israel's early monarchy - i.e. during Saul's reign. Compiled over some time. Jewish tradition says Samuel is its author - if not, then some member(s) of his disciples could well have written the material. Included in the Jewish "Former prophets" section.



**The Judges "SPIRAL"**

Israel's sin increases

God's grace increases



**d. Themes of Judges:**

- Unity of Israel - always tenuous and under threat
- God's character - righteous sovereign and faithful
- Human failure and sin especially Idolatry
- God's gracious provision of leaders (Judges)

## e. Judges vs Kings

"In those days there was no king in Israel" The LORD is Israel's king

## f. Interpreting OT History.

1. History does not usually teach us directly. It usually illustrates a doctrine or truth taught propositionally elsewhere. Often we are invited in to experience these times and events. To give us a hands-on experience of God's character and his dealings with his people.
2. Narratives record what happened, not necessarily what should have happened. What people do is not always a good example to follow - often they are bad examples.
3. Narratives need to be read and understood in large slabs. Often a whole book works together to teach or emphasise a single major point.
4. Evaluate what happens in the light of what God has taught us. God's covenant promises that focus on Jesus hold the key.
5. Not all theological issues and questions are dealt with.
6. OT history is the history of all God's people. *If you belong to Christ, says the Apostle Paul, then you are Abraham's descendant and you inherit the promises of God made to him. (Gal 3v29)* This is **our** history - we have a stake in it.

### Some traps to avoid:

1. Avoid allegory
2. Avoid making description into prescription.
3. Avoid Impatience and over personalising.

### Recommended reading:

*How to read the Bible for all its worth* G Fee and D Stuart

*The good, the bad and the ugly* Interactive study booklet M Baddley

*Judges (Focus on the Bible) commentary* D R Davis