

### Immediate Context

This passage occurs after the death of Joshua. The Lord have given Israel rest from its enemies (*Joshua 23:1*) and the land was divided up by tribe (see *Joshua 13:1-7; 13:8-19:51*) even though many enemies remained to be conquered. The tabernacle appears to be in Shiloh at this time (*Joshua 18:1*). Shechem, a Levite city and city of refuge in the land of Ephraim, was the first capital city of the nation of Israel (*Joshua 24:1, 25*)

### Judges 1:1-2 – Israel (the whole nation) inquires of the Lord

- How did they inquire of the Lord? See *Numbers 27:21*. It was likely via the High Priest who possessed the Urim & Thumim. **This is the starting point of Judges and it stands in stark opposition to the last verse: *Judges 21:25* – “... in those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” They eventually stopped seeking God.**
- Why should Judah go first? It is possibly because Judah had the eldest birthright. Reuben, Levi, and Simeon were not given the blessing by Jacob (see *Genesis 49:1-12*) but Judah, the fourth-born, was blessed.

### Judges 1:3 – An invitation to Simeon

- Why did Judah ask Simeon to come? See *Joshua 19:1, 9*. The inheritance of Simeon was in the midst of Judah’s territory (in accordance with Jacob’s blessing/curse). Also, Simeon was the smallest tribe in numerical size (as of the date of last census in *Numbers 26*) and Judah was the largest. Note that the eastern tribes were dismissed and they were not fighting together anymore. **The Judah-Simeon alliance is a picture of the blessing of cooperation among God’s people. The stronger valued the weaker and included them (see *1 Corinthians 12:21-25*). Both were blessed by this alliance.**
- “The Canaanites” was both a general term for the inhabitants of Israel, and a specific term for the people in the southwest lowlands.

### Judges 1:4-7 – Defeating Adoni-Bezek

- Adoni-Bezek means, “the Lord of Bezek”. Adoni is the root of the word, “Adonai”, from which Lord is translated.
- What is significant about Adoni-Bezek’s fate?
  - Israel failed to follow God’s command for dealing with captives (see *Deuteronomy 20:16-18*)
  - Israel adopted the Canaanite ethic for dealing with a captured king. Cutting off his thumbs and toes would render him ineffective in fight or flight. He ate food off the floor like a dog.
  - He recognized his treatment as a judgment from God and that it was fair. This is consistent with what the Lord told Moses about the iniquity of the Canaanite nations (see *Deuteronomy 9:4-5*).

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### Judges 1:8 – The Capture of Jerusalem

- We later read in scripture that David captured Jerusalem (*2 Samuel 5:6-9*). What happened here? Note *Judges 1:21*, which states the Benjaminites did not drive out the Jebusites in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a large city overlapping the borders of Judah and Benjamin. Because the city was so large, apparently Judah took the southern part of the city, but Benjamin did not take the northern part. It appears that eventually the entire city fell back under the control of the Jebusites.

### Judges 1:9-10 – The Continued Campaign

- Here Judah takes the Hill Country, the Negev (desert land) and the Low Lands.
- Hebron is a major city, approximately 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Hebron would become David's capital when he ruled exclusively over Judah.
- Who were Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai? They were fearsome Anakite leaders and possibly giants (see *Deuteronomy 9:1-3*). This victory was realized by Caleb, the de facto leader of the Tribe of Judah (see *Joshua 15:13-19*). **Because Caleb was faithful, God allowed him the power to realize what he believed over 40 years prior.**

### Judges 1:11-15 – The Capture of Debir and the Blessing

- Why is this account here? There are two potential reasons:
  1. We can assume Caleb is aging but wants to see the campaign move forward and prepare the next generation to continue with the work. With this act, we are introduced to Othniel, the first judge of Israel (see *Judges 3:9-11*) and he is connected with the generation that conquered the land. We see purposeful discipleship by Caleb.
  2. The request of Caleb's daughter demonstrates her intelligence (she realized that the desert Negev-like inheritance would need water to thrive) and that she was valued and respected by her father and husband. We see a high-value on the contribution of women compared to what likely existed in the surrounding tribes.  
**These two points are in stark contrast to the way Judges ends: failed discipleship and the abuse and devaluation of a man's concubine.**

### Judges 1:16 – The Kenites

- Who were the Kenites? They were the descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and were Midianites. A promise was made by Moses (see *Numbers 10:29-32*) that if they were remain with Israel and serve as guides, they would be given a place in the Promised Land.
- The City of Palms is another name for the City of Jericho, the spot from which the conquest of Canaan began.
- Note the language of this passage. The Kenites went and "lived with the people", implying that they did not conquer the incumbent inhabitants, but rather settled among them. This would lead to their corruption. The Midianites in general (whether from the Kenites or other Midianites in the land) became a problem to Israel in the days of Gideon.

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**Judges 1:17 – Judah fighting for Simeon**

- They were faithful to destroy the inhabitants and called the city Hormah (meaning destruction). **Note that when a city was fully conquered, they were able to rename it** (see *Judges 1:10, 11*). **Naming implies authority over the city.**

**Judges 1:18-20 – Judah’s Final Battles**

- They took the low lands by the sea (later to be conquered by the Philistines)
- They could not take the river valleys because of Canaanite technological superiority
- Why couldn’t they take the chariots? There are five distinct possibilities, or some combination thereof.
  1. There was some unnamed disobedience (see *Judges 2:1-3*)
  2. To test the ongoing faithfulness of Judah (see *Judges 2:21-23*)
  3. To allow an opportunity for the next generation to learn to fight (see *Judges 3:1-2*)
  4. Their faith failed (see *Joshua 17:16-18* – Joshua did not see the chariots as an obstacle)
  5. They were not yet large enough to adequately utilize the land (see *Exodus 23:28-30*)
- What promise did Moses make to Caleb? See *Joshua 14:6-15*. **It is interesting to note that although we are about to witness Israel fail on many fronts, any promise or commitment made because of faithfulness was fulfilled. Even when everyone else around you fails God, if you remain steadfast, you will not lose your reward!**