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The Incomplete Conquest

1: 1 to 2:5



As Michael Hattin relates in his book *Judes, the Perils of Possession*, the book of **Judges** follows the book of **Joshua** seamlessly. In **Joshua**, the people of **Isra'el** crossed **the Jordan River**, entered **the Promised Land**, and began the process of conquering it (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, [to see link click Ag](#) - **The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**). This involved major battles against coalitions of **Canaanite** kings, each of whom ruled over a petty city-state. First, the southern hill country was conquered, followed by the northern part of the country. Only then, did the settlement of **the Land** begin in earnest.

While the actual warfare in the book of **Joshua** lasted for a relatively short time, the settling of **the Land** took centuries. Only the initial stages are described in the book of **Judges** - the allotment of territory to **the tribes** of **Isra'el** and **their** first halting steps in clearing the land and cultivating its slopes. **Joshua** died with much of the task incomplete.

The book of **Judges** begins where the book of **Joshua** ends. With the aged leader no more, **the tribes** of **Isra'el** naturally turn inwards, more concerned with **their** own fate than with a larger vision of **the people** as a whole. Each **tribe** must fend for **itself**; some were more successful in wresting **their** territory from the grip of

the Canaanites, and some less. **Joshua** may have smashed the **Canaanite** military coalitions, but **the Canaanite** people and **their** culture remained intact. When **the tribes of Isra’el** fell prey to **Canaanite** idolatry and its associated values, retribution was swift and harsh. It took the form of Gentile oppressors, regional despots, who overran one or more **tribes** and imposed tyranny.⁶