

LESSON 20: Judges and Kings



AIM

To enable the children to tell and respond to stories of the Judges and Kings in ancient Israel (8.4.6)

OUTCOME

Learners are familiar with some key biblical figures.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Introduction:** Introduce the topic of leaders in Israel, mentioning that you will be dealing with the judges and kings. Locate the periods in question on a time line drawn on a chart or the board for the children. Alternatively, you may hand out the worksheet provided. ⇒

Also have displayed the following names on flashcards:

JOSHUA, DEBORAH, GIDEON, SAMSON, RUTH, SAMUEL, SAUL, DAVID, BATHSHEBA, SOLOMON.

Tell the learners that after this lesson and the following one, they will be asked to choose one character to represent at the Bible Times Party ⇒ LESSON 21. They should therefore pay close attention.

- 2 How would you like school if no one was in charge to enforce any rules? Imagine if teachers and children only came when they felt like it? Perhaps it sounds tempting, but after a while you would see that there were disadvantages.

It was like this for the Israelites after **Joshua** had led them into the Promised Land of Canaan and he had died. It has been called the “Dark Ages” of Israel. There was no great leader. Joshua had divided Canaan among the 12 tribes of Israel.

All the tribes of Israel worshipped one God Yahweh, and all the people were supposed to follow the laws God had given them. Sometimes they did, but more often they were disobedient. The Book of Judges tells us that “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” [Judges 17:6]. In other words, each person decided for himself what he should/ should not do. What kind of school would we have today if everyone did just what they felt like doing?

- 3 **The Time of Judges:** When one of the tribes had a problem the people would cry out to God for help. In answer, God would choose a judge from among the people. A judge was a man or woman who worked with God to save the people. They were often military heroes who had led the Israelites in battle against the enemy. After each victory there would be peace for a while. But then the Israelites would again disobey and start to worship idols again. This idol-worship had been the main thing that Joshua had warned his people about. Very little was written about some of the judges. In fact, many people have not even heard of some of their names. During the time of Judges, the stories of people like **Deborah** [Judges 4: 4-22], **Gideon** [Judges 6: 1-40 and 7: 1-25], and **Samson** [Judges 13-16] helped the people understand that God gives power and strength to all who trust in him.

WHAT YOU NEED

- * Worksheet (1) ⇒
- * Flashcards (1)
- * Bible, Story of Gideon (4)
- * Story of David (6)
- * Bible (7)
- * *The Lord's My Shepherd* (7) ⇒
- * Bible (8)(9)(10)(11)
- * Magazines for cutting out, scissors, glue (12)
- * Bible, poster material (13)
- * School atlases (14)

- 4 Some of the learners will be familiar with Deborah or Samson from LESSON 6. Tell or read the story of **Gideon's defeat of Midian** [Judges 6:7-24, 33-40; 7:1-22].
- 5 **Israel gets a king:** After some years an enemy arose that was too strong for all the tribes. They were the Philistines. The Israelites went to the holy man Samuel whose sons were the last of the judges of Israel. "Ask God to give us a king" they said. "We want to be like other nations" [1Samuel 8:5-10, 18-22].
- A man named Saul became Israel's first king around 1030 BC [1 Sam 9: 1-10: 1]. . At first Saul was a good king. He co-operated with Samuel in carrying out God's plan for the Israelites. He ruled the people justly and led them in observing the covenant. The people were happy with what he was doing for them. Sadly, Saul became proud. He forgot that all goodness and power come from God. He took power into his own hands. God could not work with Saul. Samuel was sad and no longer went to the king's court to advise him. Saul no longer ruled with God's blessing. Thus none of Saul's sons would succeed him as king.
- Instead David, his servant, who soothed Saul with his harp playing became the next king [1Samuel 16:14-23].
- 6 Read or tell the story of **David's anointing** [1Samuel 16:1-13], or the story of **David's victory over Goliath**, the Philistine. [1Samuel 17:1-54].
- 7 Many of the **psalms** are attributed to David. Conclude the lesson by praying or singing Psalm 23 which use the image of a shepherd, which was David's occupation as a young boy. The words of the well-known *The Lord's My Shepherd* are given below. ⇨

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 8 **The Golden Age:** David was very young, but his faith was very strong. With God's help, David united the tribes of Israel and made them a great nation. David's leadership enabled the Israelites to share in the promises of the Covenant - peace, justice and unity. He ruled justly and took special care of the poor and homeless.
- David chose Jerusalem, an old Canaanite stronghold, as his capital. It became known as "The City of David". One of David's dreams was to build a temple, a house for God in Jerusalem. Until this time, God had travelled with his people, living in a tent as they did. The Ark of the Covenant, containing the two stone tablets of the Law, was moved around with the people. Jerusalem became a great religious centre for the people [2 Samuel 5: 6 - 6:19]. However it was Solomon, David's son who actually built the temple around 966 BC.
- David was a great king but was not always faithful to God. The story of David and his affair with Bathsheba can be found in 2 Samuel 11: 1-12, 15.
- 9 **The end of Israel's Golden Age:** When David died, his son Solomon became king. At first, Solomon was a good and faithful king [1 Kings 3: 1-15]. Explain how Solomon prayed for wisdom. Tell the story of 'Solomon's Wisdom' as recounted in 1 Kings 3: 16-27.
- Solomon built a magnificent Temple in Jerusalem. This indirectly changed their style of praying and worshipping, which became more formal [2Chronicles 5: 2-14]. Solomon also built a magnificent palace for himself. This meant that he had to impose heavy taxes on the people to maintain them. Israel continued to prosper. Its territories and trade were expanded. Sadly Solomon forgot that all blessings come from God and he became more and more greedy. Soon, the worship of pagan gods again became a problem for the Israelites. Things were not good.

10 **A Kingdom Divided:** When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam was made king. The tribes in the north of Israel asked him to remove the heavy taxes that Solomon had imposed on them. He refused, with that, the tribes in the north declared their independence, keeping the name Israel for their kingdom. Jeroboam became their king. Rehoboam was left with the much smaller kingdom in the south, known as Judah [1 Kings 12: 1-20]

11 Read **David's Song of Praise** in 2 Samuel 22. Concentrate on a few short sections, for example, verses 1-7, 29-37, 47-51. Help children to identify the different images that David uses to try to understand God – Rock, Fortress (Stronghold), Shield, Lamp. It is vital that the children understand that since God is Mystery, the Israelites could not make an idol of him. They could never say: "God is a rock" and then worship rocks! Instead they used many different images to talk about God.

12 Encourage children to complete the following home project: Ask someone to help you find pictures, stories, or words that show the strength of God working in people or groups. Create a **poster or collage** titled: "God is our strength"

13 The **Book of Proverbs** is a wonderful collection of practical religious sayings and teachings. They are full of advice about how to live in harmony with God and others. King Solomon is credited with many of them. Let the learners choose a favourite proverb and make a poster of it with a design, pictures and the verse lettered on it. They then display it.

14 Find Jerusalem, Jericho and the Jordan River on the map in your atlas.

MATERIALS

THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want,
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green. he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again,
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for his won name's sake.

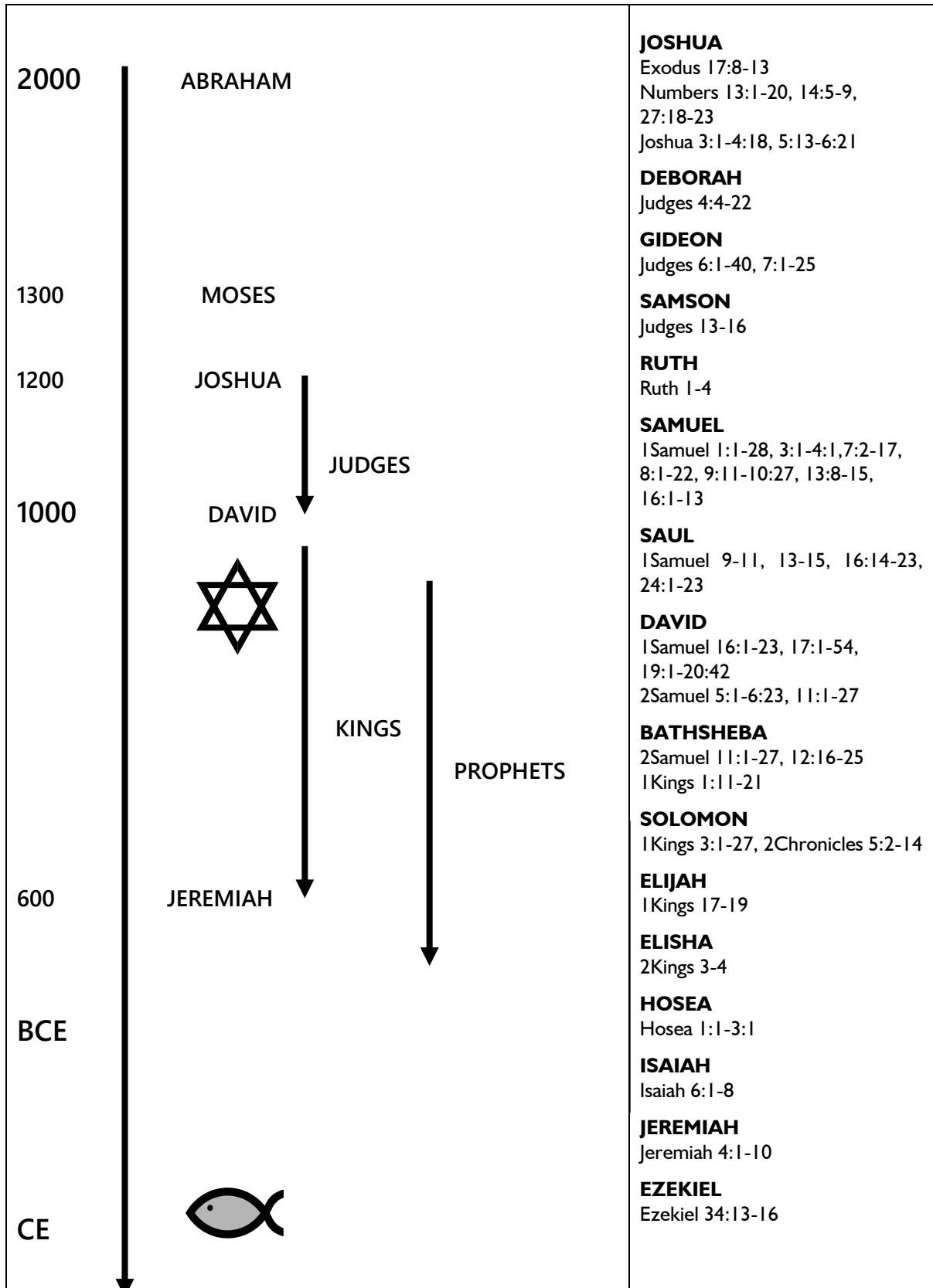
Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear none ill.
For thou art with me, and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnished
in presence of my foes,
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me.
And in God's house for evermore
my dwelling-place shall be.

(Based on Psalm 23)

Judges, Kings and Prophets



LESSON 21: Prophets


AIM

To enable the children to tell and respond to the stories of key prophets in Judah and Israel (8.4.7)


OUTCOME

Learners are familiar with leading figures in the Bible.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Introduction:** Introduce the topic - prophets in Israel and Judah. Locate the period in question on a time line drawn on a chart or the board for the children. Alternatively, you may refer again to the worksheet provided for LESSON 20.  ⇒ Also have displayed the following names on flashcards:

RUTH, ELIJAH, ELISHA, HOSEA, ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL.

Remind the learners that after this lesson they will be asked to choose one character to represent at the Bible Times Party.  ⇒

- 2 **Question:** Have you ever wished for the courage to stand up for what you believe is right, when everyone else is afraid? Give children examples to respond to. Pretend that your class is writing a test. Your teacher is called away from the classroom. She tells the class that she trusts them not to copy.

As soon as she is gone, some members of the class announce that they have worked out a way of cheating. Everyone seems to want to co-operate with them. What do you feel?




OR:

The cricket team is practising in an open area. The ball is accidentally hit through the window of a neighbouring house. No one seems to be around. The children all want to keep quiet about it. How do you feel?

- 3 God has always wanted his people to remain faithful to him. The **Book of Ruth** is a wonderful story of what true faithfulness is about. During the time of the Divided Kingdom, God repeatedly sent prophets to remind his people of his great love for them.
- 4 **God's Spokesman:** During the time of the Kings, Israel often forgot God. But God never forgot Israel. He wanted them to remember his constant love and ever ready mercy. God used prophets to speak to his people. Prophets are people who tell God's truth. They are faithful to his word. They showed the Israelites what it meant to live out their covenant with God. They reminded them of God's covenant with his people, and of God's great mercy and forgiveness. Ask the learners to find the following references:
 - *Leviticus 26: 12* "I will be your God and you will be my people."
 - *Micah 6:8* "This is what God requires of you: to act justly, love mercifully and walk humbly with your God."



WHAT YOU NEED

- *  Worksheet LESSON 20 (1) ⇒
- * Flashcards (1)
- * Bibles (3)(4) (9)(10)(11)(12)(13)(14)
- * Story of Elijah (5)
- * Cloth, candles, and Bible (7)
- * Eight readers prepared (7)
- *  *Here I Am, Lord* (7)
- *  Worksheet LESSON 20 (8) ⇒
- * Name tags and pins (8)
- * Newspaper and magazine articles, scissors, glue (15)

- *Zephaniah 3: 17* “Yahweh, your God is there with you, the warrior saviour. He will rejoice over you with happy song; he will renew you by his love; he will dance with shouts of joy for you as on the day of festival.”

5 Prophets in the Northern Kingdom (Israel)

After the division of the kingdom, God sent the prophets Elijah, Elisha and Hosea to call the people back to being faithful to their own true God.

Tell the story of Elijah and the Widow [1 Kings 17: 1-24].

6 Prophets in the Southern Kingdom (Judah)

In the south, the heirs of David stayed in power and the Temple of Jerusalem was the centre of religion. So the tribes of Judah, the Jews, remained the direct descendants of the Chosen People. But this did not stop them from disobeying God. So God sent prophets to Judah, just as he did to Israel. Some of the most significant prophets were Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. They warned the people of the punishment to come if they continued to disobey God's law. The punishment for Judah was to be the same as for Israel - captivity. You would think that the people would have listened to God, having seen the Israelites being taken captive - but no, they disobeyed more than they obeyed.

- 7 **Prayer Celebration:** Create a quiet, reflective atmosphere. Gather children in circles around a low central focal point with a cloth, candles, and a Bible. Prepare eight readers, one for each of the prophetic figures whose words will be heard.

LEADER: We have met some real 'Giants of God' in this lesson.

READER 1: Ruth, an ordinary person, who showed what true faithfulness is. She told Naomi, “Wherever you go, I shall go. Wherever you live, I shall lie. Your God shall be my God too.”

READER 2: Isaiah spoke of God's great love for us: “I have called you by your name, you are mine. You are precious in my sight, and I love you and give you honour”.

READER 3: Jeremiah who answered God's call even though he thought he was too young and would not know how to speak God's word. God says to each of us what he said to Jeremiah, “Before you were born, I chose you” When we are afraid, as Jeremiah was, God says the same thing to us, “Listen, I place my words in your mouth.” God also says to us, “Do not think that you are too young, I will be with you to protect you”.

READER 4: Elijah repeated called the people to be faithful to God's covenant.

READER 5: Elisha reminded the people to be just and merciful, and to the care of those who are suffering.


READER 6: Hosea constantly spoke of God's love for his people: “I led them with cords of kindness and leading strings of love”. Hosea taught us that God always loves and forgives us, even when we are unfaithful to God.

READER 7: Ezekiel, the prophet to the Jews during the Exile, taught us to be messengers of hope during hard times: “I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest,” says the Lord.

ALL: God our creator, you speak to us in many ways and through many different people. You speak through their words and in their actions. Help us to open our minds and hearts to you, so that we can hear your voice in both the stillness and the busy activities of our lives each day.

READER 8: God spoke these words through the prophet Joel: “I will pour my Spirit on everyone; your sons and daughters will proclaim my message”.

Let everyone relax, and sit quietly with closed eyes in God's presence. Encourage the learners to listen for the voice of God within them. When we are very quiet, we may hear God speaking to us in our hearts. Give the children about three minutes and then play or sing a song like *Here I Am, Lord*. Afterwards ask the children to reflect on the experience in their books.

- 8 Hold a **Bible times party**. The children choose a character from this or the previous lesson that they will represent at the party. They need to dress up as the character and be able to tell a story about them. References for them to read up are given on the worksheet for LESSON 20.  ⇨

As each arrives, pin the biblical name on the child's clothing. Children should be called these names throughout the party. Let each child tell his or her story. For refreshments ask each child to bring something appropriate.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 9 There are some powerful **stories about Elijah**:
- Elijah's efforts culminating in a 'fire competition' [1 Kings 18: 22-40].
 - Elijah's experience on Mount Horeb or Sinai when he lived in a cave [1 Kings 19]
- 10 **Elisha, Prophet and Healer** [2 Kings 3-4] Elisha had been Elijah's assistant, but when Elijah died, he took over. Elisha is mostly remembered for his miracles and healings.
- 11 **The Prophet Hosea**: God chose Hosea to teach us that God forgives us when we are unfaithful. Hosea was a true model of forgiveness, as his own wife, whom he loved dearly, was unfaithful to him. [Hosea 1: 1-3: 1]
- 12 **Isaiah**: Use extracts from the Book of Isaiah to introduce Isaiah to the children. God called Isaiah to be a prophet [Isaiah 6: 1-8]. Isaiah told people that they had turned away from God [1:4], and he condemned idolatry [2:8]. He asked that justice be done [1:17], and preached about God's forgiveness [1:18].
- 13 **Jeremiah**: Read the full account of Jeremiah's call which was referred to in the prayer celebration [Jeremiah 1: 4-10].
- 14 **Ezekiel, Prophet of the exile**: He was a young priest serving in the Temple of Jerusalem when he was deported from Judah to Babylon. God wanted someone to comfort his people, so he called on Ezekiel to become his prophet and remind his people that their nation and their temple would be restored [Ezekiel 34: 13-16].
- 15 Who speaks out and stands up for **the truth now**? Encourage children to collect newspaper or magazine articles about people or organisations which say that there is something wrong with the way we live now. Display them.
- 16 For one week, the learners keep a **TV Watch chart** on which they record examples of faithful people. They jot down the programme, the channel and the time, and briefly describe how the person shows faithfulness to their friends. At the end of the week, charts may be compared. They might even like to write a letter of appreciation to the TV network, the producer or the star of the show.
- 17 Think of someone who could be called a **prophet in her or his time**, for example, Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Martin Luther King.