



Overview for Judges

Purpose: Judges is a historical book. Its purpose is to show how God preserved the nation He founded for the purpose of providing a Redeemer, in spite of that nation's idolatry and wickedness. If God had not intervened in miraculous ways many times, the nation would have been exterminated.

Author: Unknown, the Talmud names Samuel as the author

Date Written: Completed about 550 B.C.

Setting: The Book of Judges describes the period of Jewish history between the death of Joshua and the birth of Samuel. The office of "judge" was not continual because there were intervals when no judge ruled the land. In addition, there may have been times when two judges overlapped in different parts of the land. The term "judge" as used in the Bible is different than it is used today. A judge was deliverer and ruler rather than one who held court. As such, he presided over the affairs of at least part of Israel during his period of leadership. From Judges 2:18, we see that God raised up judges from among the children of Israel at His discretion. The period of events covered in this book has been considered the "dark ages" of the Hebrew people, because it shows the repetitive cycle of Israel turning away from God and then turning back to Him.

Key People: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson, and Delilah.

Summary: After Joshua and his generation died, another generation arose who did not know the Lord and had not experienced the works which He had done for Israel (Judges 2:10).

God had promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation in the land of Canaan. They were to be a people ruled by God, carrying the promise that a redeemer for all humanity would be provided through them. Regrettably, they fell far short of becoming the great nation that God designed.

Seven times we read of the children of Israel doing evil in the sight of the Lord (Judges 2:11, 3:7, 3:12 twice, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6). Israel's poor moral choices

provided the foundation for their repeated experiences of defeat. Their failure to drive out the inhabitants of the land reveals their belief that they could co-exist with the wicked nations that God had commanded them to destroy.

The Book of Judges covers the approximate era of 300 years between 1400 and 1100 b.c. The events are not clustered around a single individual as in the case of the Book of Joshua and the four books of Moses. The book covers the settlement of Canaan as the tribes struggled to establish themselves against the inhabitants of the land. They were fragmented, dis-united, and constantly under attack.

A common refrain running through the book is that every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Israel was repeatedly falling away from God into idolatry. When they did this, in addition to warring amongst themselves, they were oppressed by the Canaanites, which caused them to cry out to God. God would raise up a deliverer, called a judge, whom He would use to miraculously save Israel. As long as the judge lived, the people would serve God. However, when he died, they again lapsed into idolatry. Often, a state of anarchy existed.

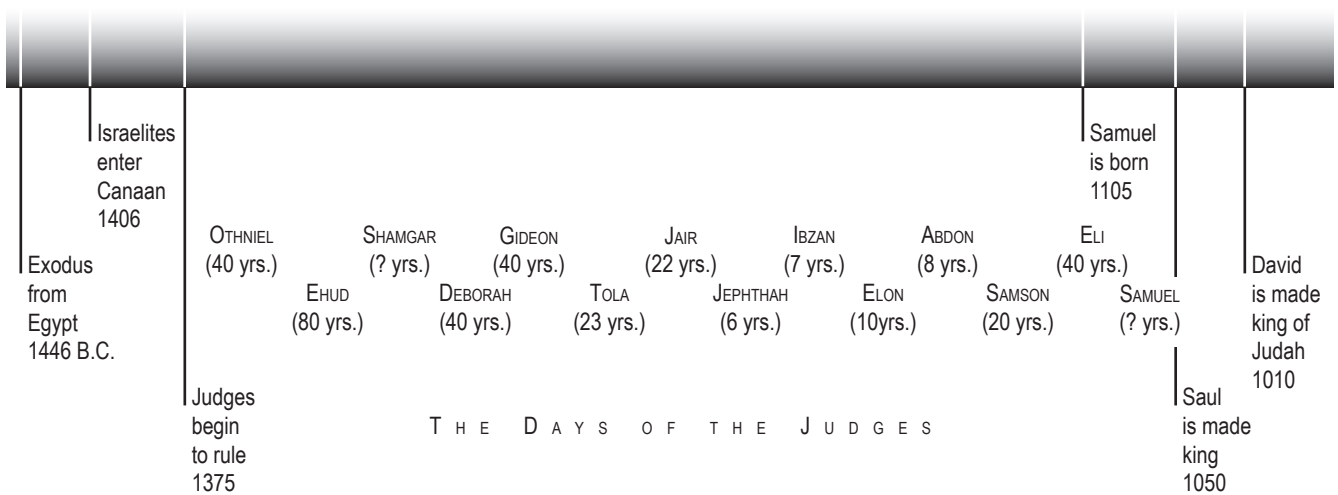
Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson are named in Hebrews 11:32 among the heroes of faith. In spite of any personal shortcomings or failures we observe in their lives, they had faith in God. The Book of Judges shows how God can take the most common among us and out of weakness create giants in the faith.

Even though this period was marked by a constant cycle of disobedience, there were still those who stayed true. The following is evidence of this fact:

- The Tabernacle was still maintained at Shiloh (18:31)
- At least one of the annual feasts was observed (21:5)
- The law of circumcision was observed (21:5)
- Sacrifices were offered (11:31; 13:15-16, 23; 20:26; 21:4)
- Vows were made to the Lord (11:30; 13:5)

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. Conditions before the period of the judges (1:1 — 2:5)
 - A. Political conditions: incomplete conquest (1:1-36)
 - B. Religious conditions: broken covenant (2:1-5)
- II. Conditions during the period of the judges (2:6 — 16:31)
 - A. Introduction: the religious character of the period (2:6 — 3:6)
 - B. The judges of the period (3:7 — 8:32)
 - C. Parenthesis: the tyranny of Abimelech (8:33 — 16:31)
- III. Appendices (17:1 — 21:25)
 - A. Gross idolatry during the time of the judges (17:1 — 18:31)
 - B. Moral decline during the time of the judges (19:1 — 21:24)
 - C. Conclusion (21:25)