

# Intro to JUDGES

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**Author:** The Book of Judges does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Samuel was the author of Judges. Internal evidence indicates that the author of Judges lived shortly after the period of the Judges. Samuel fits this qualification.

**Date of Writing:** The Book of Judges was likely written between 1045 and 1000 B.C.

**Divisions of the Book:** The Book of Judges can be divided into two sections: 1) Chapters 1-16 which gives an account of the wars of deliverance beginning with the Israelites' defeat of the Canaanites and ending with the defeat of the Philistines and the death of Samson; 2) Chapters 17-21 which is referred to as an appendix and does not relate to the previous chapters. These chapters are noted as a time "when there was no king in Israel (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)." The Book of Ruth was originally a part of the Book of Judges, but in A.D. 450 it was removed to become a book of its own.

**Brief Summary:** The Book of Judges is a tragic account of how Yahweh [God] was taken for granted by His children year after year, century after century. Judges is a sad contrast to the book of Joshua which chronicles the blessings God bestowed on the Israelites for their obedience in conquering the land. In Judges, they were disobedient and idolatrous, leading to their many defeats. Yet God has never failed to open His arms in love to His people whenever they repent from their wicked ways and call upon His name. (Judges 2:18) Through the 15 judges of Israel, God honored His promise to Abraham to protect and bless his offspring (Genesis 12:2-3).

After the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, the Israelites returned to serving Baal and Ashtaroht. God allowed the Israelites to suffer the consequences of worshiping false gods. It was then that the people of God would cry out to Yahweh for help. God sent His children judges to lead them in righteous living. But time after time they would turn their backs on God and return to their lives of wickedness. However, keeping His part of the covenant with Abraham, God would save His people from their oppressors throughout the 480-year span of the Book of Judges.

Probably the most notable judge was the 12th judge, Samson, who came to lead the Israelites after a 40-year captivity under the rule of the ruthless Philistines. Samson led God's people to victory over the Philistines where he lost his own life after 20 years as judge of Israel.

**Foreshadowings:** The announcement to Samson's mother that she would bear a son to lead Israel is a foreshadowing of the announcement to Mary of the birth of the Messiah. God sent His Angel to both women and told them they would "conceive and bear a son" (Judges 13:7; Luke 1:31) who would lead God's people.

God's compassionate delivery of His people despite their sin and rejection of Him presents a picture of Christ on the cross. Jesus died to deliver His people—all who would ever believe in Him—from their sin. Although most of those who followed Him during His ministry would eventually fall away and reject Him, still He remained faithful to His promise and went to the cross to die for us.

**Practical Application:** Disobedience always brings judgment. The Israelites present a perfect example of what we are not to do. Instead of learning from experience that God will always punish rebellion against Him, they continued to disobey and suffer God's displeasure and discipline. If we continue in disobedience, we invite God's discipline, not because He enjoys our suffering, but "because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:6).

The Book of Judges is a testament to God's faithfulness. Even "if we are faithless, He will remain faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). Though we may be unfaithful to Him, as the Israelites were, still He is faithful to save us and preserve us (1 Thessalonians 5:24) and to forgive us when we seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9). "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:8-9).

THE AGE OF THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL						
<b>FOCUS</b>	CYCLE OF APOSTASY		CYCLE OF DELIVERANCE		CYCLE OF DEPRAVITY	
<b>THE COVENANT</b>	THE SINAI COVENANT					
<b>SCRIPTURE</b>	1:1 →	2:1 →	3:5 →	17:1 →	19:1 →	20:1–21:5
<b>DIVISION</b>	Israel fails to complete the conquest	God judges Israel	The six campaigns to take the land	Sin of idolatry	Sin of immorality	Sin of civil war
<b>TOPIC</b>	CAUSES OF THE CYCLES		CURSE OF THE CYCLES		CONDITION OF ISRAEL DURING THE CYCLES	
	LIVING WITH THE CANAANITES		WAR AGAINST THE CANAANITES		ADOPTING CANAANITE CUSTOMS	
<b>LOCATION</b>	THE PROMISED LAND OF CANAAN					
<b>TIME</b>	about 350/410 YEARS?					

### The Judges of Israel

1. **Othniel** (3:7 – 11)
  - A brother of Caleb, defeated the Arameans, the spirit of the Lord was upon him
2. **Ehud** (3:12 – 30)
  - Killed Eglon, King of Moab, by trickery
3. **Shamgar** (3:31, 5:6)
  - Fought against the Philistines
4. **Deborah** (4 – 5)
  - Was a woman tribal leader, both militarily and legal. Campaigned against Sisera, Canaanite General under Jabin, the King of Hazor. Barak was military leader under Deborah. Jael, a Kenite woman, killed Sisera as he fled.
5. **Gideon** (6 – 8)
  - Came from a family of Baal worshippers. Was afraid to trust God, so he went through a series of setting out fleeces.
6. **Abimelech** (9)
  - Not a judge, attempted to make himself king, but failed
7. **Tola** and **Jair** (10:1 – 5)
  - Were minor judges
8. **Jephthah** (10:6 – 12:7)
  - Was an illegitimate child and an outcast. He fought against the Ammonites and made a rash vow that led to the sacrifice of his only child.
9. **Ibzan, Elon, Abdon** (12:8 – 15)
  - Were also minor judges
10. **Samson** (13 – 16)
  - Was born to a barren woman by promise. He was a Nazirite, but broke his vows. God used him to bring deliverance from the Philistines.