

Judges - Introduction & Background

Title

The book of Judges derives its name from the major characters in the book. Thus, the title of Judges is derived differently from the books of the Pentateuch, which get their names from the opening words of the various books. The LXX uses the Greek word *Kritai* for the book's title. The Latin Vulgate uses the title *Liber Judicum*, which means "The Book of Judges." The English title of the book is "Judges."

Authorship

Although Judges is an anonymous work like the other historical books, it is probable that Samuel is the book's author. First, Samuel is a logical candidate for authorship of the book since he evidences a propensity for writing (1 Sam 10:25). Second, since Samuel was the crucial link bridging the era of the Judges and the monarchical period (1 Sam 7:6, 15-17; Acts 13:20), he is the individual most qualified to compose the book. Third, Jewish tradition ascribes the book to Samuel (*Baba Bathra* 14b). Fourth, because the contents of the book precede Samuel's death, it is rational to assume that he wrote Judges. Although the documentary hypothesis attributes most of the book to J and E and a few parts to P, as explained in earlier arguments, this theory is built upon tentative assumptions.

Date

The book was obviously written after Samson the last judge exercised his reign (15:20; 16:31). If it is granted that Samson's judgeship transpired in between 1104 BC and 1084 BC, the Book of Judges was composed after this time period. The book was probably written during the monarchy. The repetition of the statement "Israel had no king" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) seems to assume the existence of the monarchy at the time of writing. Thus, the book was written after the monarchy came into existence with Saul's kingship in 1051 BC. In addition, the book also seems to indicate that it was written after the Ark was removed from Shiloh (18:31; 20:27; 1 Sam 4:3-11).

However, the repeated phrase "Israel had no king" also seems to assume the existence of the united monarchy rather than the divided monarchy. Therefore, the book was written before the kingdom was divided in 931 B.C. Furthermore, because the book was written while Gezer was still in the control of the Canaanites (1:29), it was obviously written before the King of Egypt conquered Gezer and gave Gezer to Solomon as dowry with his Egyptian bride in 970 B.C. (1 Kings 9:16). In addition, because the book was written while the Jebusites were living in Jerusalem even "to this day" (1:21), it was obviously written before David captured Jerusalem in 1004 B.C. (2 Sam 5:6-7).

One problem posed for dating the book early is the phrase "until the day of the captivity in the land" (18:30). If this refers to the captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., the early date scheme is not necessarily jeopardized since this verse could represent nothing more than an editorial insertion.

However, others have called this suggestion into question and have instead opted for explaining the verse by equating the word "land" and "ark." Under this rubric, Judges 18:30 would refer to the time when the Philistines captured the Ark in 1075 BC. However, the best option interprets the phrase as either referring to the capture of the land by Dan¹² or the Philistines during the time of the Judges. Interestingly, Psalm 78:61 describes the Philistines taking the land as a "captivity." Thus, Judges 18:30 poses no threat to an early date. All things considered, a date of 1040–1020 B.C. for the composition of the Book of Judges seems appropriate.

Scope

While the events described in the Book of Joshua takes place over a mere thirty-year period (1405–1374 BC), the Judges era spans a full three centuries. Most agree that it covers the time beginning with the death of Joshua to the inauguration of Saul as the nation's first king. The former took place in 1374 BC and the latter took place in 1051 BC. However, Merrill presents a good case for the Judges era not beginning until 1350 BC since the events surrounding Othniel's judgeship seem to begin after the elders who had served with Joshua died (2:7). It would have taken some time for these elders to die since they were twenty years of age Andrew Marshall Woods ©2007

at the time of the Kadesh Barnea incident (Num 13:2; 14:29) and they probably lived at least as long as Joshua who died at 110 (Josh 24:29). Thus, the Judges era probably spanned 300 years from 1350 B.C. to 1051 B.C.

However, this 300-year duration presents an obvious chronological problem since the summation of each judge's rule along with its preceding oppression yields 410 years. Thus, this number is 110 years too long. Furthermore, because there were only 480 years in between the Exodus and the fourth year of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 6:1), a period of 410 years for Judges would leave a mere 70 years for the wilderness wanderings, conquest, and reigns of David and Saul. Such a scenario is obviously unworkable. Thus, it is better to understand the various reigns of the judges as overlapping or contemporaneous in certain areas rather than strictly chronological.

This solution makes sense due to the fact that no single judge ruled overall the land of Israel at the same time. Also, Judges 10:7 seems to describe the contemporaneous judgeships of both Samson and Jephthah. After reading this verse, one gets the impression that while Samson dealt with the Philistines west of the Jordan, Jephthah dealt with the Ammonites in the Transjordan. Furthermore, Tola could have ruled during the same time as Jair since "after" can be interpreted as "with" (10:1-3). Contemporaneous judgeships

would not be unusual since the book does not record all the dates and ministries of every judge. For example, the judgeships of Eli and Samuel are not even recorded in the Book of Judges but rather are recorded in the Book of 1 Samuel.

Recipients

As previously stated, the book was probably written during the beginning of the monarchy. Thus, the recipients of the book were the whole nation of Israel as they were transitioning from God's rule through the judges to God's rule through the kings.

Role of a Judge

The concept of the role of a judge in Israel's national life was not novel with the era of the Judges. Jethro suggested that Moses select wise, discerning, and righteous men to help him officiate judicial matters within the nation (Ex 18). Later provisions in the book of Deuteronomy explain how Jethro's suggestion was to be implemented (Deut 1:5-18). This arrangement called for having judges in every town for the purpose of settling disputes (Deut 16:18-22), having a chief judge at the tabernacle when cases could not be resolved by local judges (Deut 17:9,12), and even having a tabernacle supreme court (Deut 19:17). In the Book of Judges, the Hebrew word ("judge") is used once in reference to Yahweh and six times in reference to those who delivered Israel under the empowerment of God's Spirit. The biblical use of the term judge has a wider meaning in comparison to how the word is typically understood in English. The employment of this word throughout the book seems to suggest both the political and spiritual reality. Politically, a judge was one who delivered Israel from foreign bondage through military conquest. Spiritually, a judge was one who established justice in resolving disputes by bringing people under Yahweh's ethical rule through the establishment of Torah.

Genre

The primary genre of the book is historical narrative. However, the writer also uses other sub genres such as poetry (14:14,18; 15:16; 16:24). Judges is part of the former prophets section of the Hebrew Bible. As such, the book's primary function is to use history selectively for the purpose of teaching a spiritual lesson rather than to furnish merely a historical account.

Structure

Several structural clues enable the reader to better discern the book's contents. First, the book contains three major divisions. The first division, which is found in the first two chapters, describes the deterioration of the nation as Israel made the decision to live with the Canaanites. This section explains the cause of the cycles given in the second section. The second division, which is found in Judges 3-16, unfolds the curse of the seven cycles of bondage and deliverance and features Israel continually at war with the Canaanites. The third division, which is found in Judges 17-21, depicts the depravity of the nation. Here, the nation is portrayed as living like the Canaanites.

Second, the section depicting the bondage and deliverance of the nation (3–16) follows a predictable five-fold pattern. These five stages include sin, servitude or suppression, supplication, salvation, and silence. Another way of expressing this cycle is rebellion, retribution or ruin, repentance, restoration, and rest. Yet another way of conveying this idea is decline, defeat, divinely directed prayer, deliverance, and delay. In these five stages the people do evil by worshiping other gods, God sends a foreign oppressor, Israel cries out to God, Yahweh provides a deliverer, and the nation enjoys a season of rest from oppression. This cycle recurs seven times in the book's middle section.

Third, the section depicting the bondage and deliverance of the nations (3-16) focuses on 13 individuals.

Fourth, some have suggested that it is possible to group the material in the second section depicting the bondage and deliverance of the nation (3–16) according to five geographical areas. They include the southern campaign (3:5-31), the northern campaign (4:1–5:31), the central campaign (6:1–10:5), the eastern campaign I (10:6–12:7), the northern campaign II (12:8-15), and the western campaign (13:1–16:31).

Theological Themes

Various theological themes recur throughout Judges. Human depravity is the most prominent. The Book of Judges has more to say about human depravity than does any other biblical book.²⁷ The book also juxtaposes God's grace and covenant faithfulness against the backdrop of Israel's depravity. Other themes include the consequences of sin as well as the curses and blessings of the Mosaic Covenant (Deut 28–30).

Unique Characteristics

Judges boasts several outstanding characteristics. As mentioned above, depravity is emphasized more in Judges than any other canonical book. Other unique features include the seven cycles of bondage and deliverance, the emphasis upon the need for the monarchy (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), Gideon's fleece (6:37-40), and Jephthah's vow (11:29-40).

Christ in Judges

Judges contain no direct messianic prophecies. However, because the book stresses the need for a righteous king (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), the whole book points to Christ. Moreover, because the judges acted as prophets (Samuel), priests (Eli), and rulers (Othniel, Gideon), they foreshadow Christ who will perfectly fill all three roles as prophet, priest, and king.

Purposes

Samuel had several purposes in mind when he composed the Book of Judges. First, the Book of Judges was written to provide a historical bridge in between God's mediatorial rule of Israel through Moses and Joshua and God's mediatorial rule of the nation through the monarchy. The book shows how God in between these two forms of theocracy ruled the

nation through judges. Second, the book was written to show how Israel's external condition was determined by her internal, spiritual condition. In other words, the book shows how Israel experienced prosperity when she obeyed the Mosaic Covenant and how Israel experienced curses when she disobeyed the covenant (Lev 26; Duet 28).

Third, Samuel wrote the book as an apologetic for the monarchy. By routinely attributing Israel's depravity to the lack of a king (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), Samuel showed that Israel could never fulfill her divinely intended design as long as she lived under judges or any form of theocracy other than a monarchy. The book demonstrates that the Israelites were incapable of adhering to the Law of Moses without a king. Because a judge could only partially and imperfectly administer Torah (legislative function), execute justice (executive function), and condemn law breakers (judicial function), a king was needed who could perfectly fulfill all three roles.

Fourth, Judges shows that not just any king could effectively govern the nation but rather a king who honored God's covenant. When Samuel wrote the book the nation was functioning under the imperfect kingship of Saul; yet Israel was not experiencing the prosperity spoken of in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut 28:15-68). By tracing the various cycles of bondage and deliverance, Samuel shows that Israel's external condition is inextricably linked to her spiritual condition. Thus, in order to experience covenant blessing, the nation needed not just a king but also a righteous king. All of this forecasts the prosperity that the nation will one day experience when they have a king who acts in accordance with God's covenant (Deut 17:14-20; 18:15-18). The messianic overtones here are self-evident.

Message

While God demonstrates His faithfulness to both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants by raising up judges to deliver Israel through seven cycles of bondage and liberation, these seemingly endless cycles show that God's mediatorial rule through Judges was inadequate in helping the nation fulfill her divinely intended design thus necessitating the rise of the monarchy. However, the lesson taught by these seven cycles, which is that Israel's external condition is determined by her spiritual condition, reminds Israel living under the monarchy how wonderful things will one day be when she has a king bound to obey God's covenant.

Outline

I. Israel deteriorates due to her failure to drive out the Canaanites (Judges 1:1—3:6)

(1) Political failure (1:1-36)

(A) Judah (1:1-20)

(B) Benjamin (1:21)

(C) Joseph (1:22-29)

(D) Zebulun (1:30)

(E) Asher (1:31-32)

- (F) Naphtali (1:33)
- (G) Dan (1:34-36)
- (2) Spiritual failure (Judges 2:1—3:6)
 - (A) Angelic announcement of judgment (2:1-5)
 - (B) Godly conquest generation dies (2:6-10)
 - (C) Judges cycle described (2:11-19)
 - (D) Test as reason for Canaanites being left in the land (2:20—3:6)
- II. Failure in rescue of Israel through the seven cycles (Judges 3:7—16:31)
 - (1) Othniel defeats Cushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia (3:7-11)
 - (A) Sin (3:7)
 - (B) Suppression (3:8)
 - (C) Supplication (3:9)
 - (D) Salvation (3:10)
 - (E) Silence (3:11)
 - (2) Ehud defeats Eglon of Moab (3:12-30)
 - (A) Sin (3:12a)
 - (B) Suppression (3:12b-14)
 - (C) Supplication (3:15a)
 - (D) Salvation (3:15b-30a)
 - (E) Silence (3:30b)
 - (3) Shamgar defeats the Philistines (3:31)
 - (4) Deborah and Barak defeat Jabin and the Canaanites (Judges 4:1—5:31)
 - (A) Sin (4:1)
 - (B) Suppression (4:2)
 - (C) Supplication (4:3)
 - (D) Salvation (4:4—5:31a)
 - (a) Battle (4:5-24)
 - (i) Deborah calls on Barak to accompany her (4:5-11)
 - (ii) God gives Israel victory at Tabor (4:12-16)
 - (iii) Jael kills Sisera (4:17-22)
 - (iv) End of Canaanites suppression (4:23-24)
 - (b) Song of victory (5:1-31)
 - (i) Past conquests (5:1-5)
 - (ii) Present Challenge (5:6-11)
 - (iii) Tribal cooperation (5:12-18)
 - (iv) Victory through Deborah (5:19-23)
 - (v) Jael's victory over Sisera (5:24-31a)
 - (E) Silence (5:31b)

(5) Gideon defeats Zebah and Zalmunna and the Midianites and the Amalekites (Judges 6:1—8:28)

(A) Sin (6:1a)

(B) Suppression (6:1b-6)

(C) Supplication (6:7)

(D) Salvation (Judges 6:8—8:27)

(a) Prophet and angel of the Lord appears to Gideon (6:8-24)

(b) Gideon tears down the pagan objects; the Midianites come against Gideon; Gideon's fleece (6:25-40)

(c) Gideon pairs back his troops at Jezreal from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300 (7:1-8)

(d) Encouraged by the Midianite dream Gideon attacks and God brings the victory (7:9-23)

(e) Gideon pursues and destroys the remnant across the Jordan and destroys the hosts of Midian Amalek (7:24—8:21)

(f) Gideon refuses kingship (8:22-23)

(g) Gideon fabricates the ephod which becomes an object of worship (8:24-27)

(E) Silence (8:28)

(6) Abimelech (Judges 8:29—9:54)

(A) Abimelech seizes power by force in Shechem (8:29—9:6)

(B) Jotham's fable to the Shechemites regarding Abimelech's evil character (9:7-21)

(C) Abimelech becomes estranged from the Shechemites and Gaal becomes king (9:22-29)

(D) Abimelech loyalist Zebul becomes aware of Gaal's quest for power in Shechem (9:30-33)

(E) Amalek returns to Shechem and puts Gaal to flight (9:34-40)

(F) Zebul prevents Gaal and his followers from returning to Shechem giving Abimelech the opportunity of killing them and besieging Shechem (9:41-49)

(G) Abimelech seeks to take Thebez because of the rebels living there and is fatally wounded by a woman dropping a millstone on him necessitating Abimelech's suicide (9:50-54)

(7) Tola (10:1-2)

(8) Jair (10:3-5)

(9) Jephthah defeats the Ammonites (Judges 10:6—12:7)

(A) Sin (10:6)

(B) Suppression (10:7-9)

- (C) Supplication (10:10-16)
- (D) Salvation (Judges 10:17—12:6)
 - (a) Israel seeks a deliverer (10:17-18)
 - (b) Jephthah's favorable reputation (11:1-8)
 - (c) Jephthah's condition for leadership (11:9-11)
 - (d) Jephthah's communication with Ammon (11:12-28)
 - (e) Jephthah's rash vow (11:29-40)
 - (f) Jephthah slays the East Jordan Ephraimites (12:1-6)
- (E) Silence (12:7)

(10) Ibzan (12:8-10)

(11) Elon (12:11-12)

(12) Abdon (12:13-15)

(13) Samson defeats the Philistines (Judges 13:1—16:31)

- (A) Sin (13:1a)
- (B) Suppression (13:1b)
- (C) Salvation (13:2—16:31)
 - (a) Angelic announcement of Samson's birth (13:2-14)
 - (b) Angelic miraculous validation (13:15-23)
 - (c) Samson's birth and growth (13:24-25)
 - (d) Samson's conflict with the Philistines (Judges 14:1—16:31)
 - (i) Samson marries a Philistine (14:1-9)
 - (ii) Samson tells the riddle at his marriage (14:10-20)
 - (iii) Samson's vengeance on the Philistines (15:1-20)
 - (a) Burning a field because one of them married his wife (15:1-6)
 - (b) Killed many of them when he took vengeance upon them (15:7-8)
 - (c) Killed 1000 of them with the donkey's jaw bone at Lehi (15:9-20)
 - (iv) Samson shows his strength at Gaza (16:1-3)
 - (v) Samson and Delilah (16:4-22)
 - (vi) Samson suicide at Dagon's feast (16:23-31a)
- (D) Silence (16:31b)

III. Depravity in Israel thereby necessitating the need for a King (Judges 17:1—21:25)

(1) Spiritual apostasy (Judges 17:1—18:31)

(A) Micah corrupts religion (17:1-13)

(B) Danite migration (18:1-31)

(2) Moral disintegration (19:1—21:25)

(A) Cause of civil war: dissection of the prostitute (19:1-30)

(B) Civil war: 11 tribes versus Benjamin (20:1-48)

(C) Consequences of civil war: wives for the Benjamites (21:1-25)

Newspaper Headlines from the Book of Judges

- "Family Feud Leaves 69 Brothers Dead!" (Judges 9)
- "Powerful Government Leader Caught in 'Love Nest'" (Judges 16)
- "Gang Rape Leads to Victim's Death and Dismemberment" (Judges 19)
- "Girls At Party Kidnapped and Forced to Marry Strangers" (Judges 21)
- "Woman Judge Says Travelers No Longer Safe on Highways" (Judges 5:6)

These headlines are from not supermarket tabloids! Warren Wiersbe opens his commentary on the Book of Judges suggesting that they characterize some of the events of this very book!

The Most Colorful Book

Frankly, you can find few books anywhere that can compete for color and intrigue. You'll wince as you read how Ehud goes to visit the king in his summer palace and slides his dagger between the king's 5th and 6th ribs so that the flesh closes around it and the knife cannot be withdrawn... You'll cringe when Jael drives a tent stake through the skull of Sisera and pins him to the ground.

You'll bite your fingernails alongside Gideon as God introduces deep military cutbacks, reducing Israel's army from 32,000 to 300—then sends this vastly outnumbered miniature army into battle! Your heart will sink when Jephthah's daughter comes out to meet him on his return from battle, and he remembers his hasty vow to sacrifice the first person he meets to God—and then fulfills that dreadful vow.

You'll glory with Samson as he wreaks havoc among the Philistines, but wonder at his folly in allowing the Philistine temptress to worm from him the secret of his strength. You will undoubtedly turn with revulsion from the story of the Benjamite perversion that marks perhaps the blackest chapter in Israel's history. Fans of historical romance, military history, soap operas, conspiracy theories, spy novels, swashbuckling adventure, or political intrigue will find it all here in the Book of Judges!

But from a broader and deeper perspective, Judges is essentially the story of a deteriorating nation—and it serves as a sober warning against deterioration in our own nation, and in our own personal lives...

Leadership Issue

The Book of Judges is the book of “no king.” [1 Samuel is the book of “man’s king” (Saul). 2 Samuel is the book of “God’s king” (David).] The world today is living in the Book of Judges because there is no king in Israel. When Israel was later presented with her rightful King, they exclaimed, “We have no king but Caesar (John 19:15).”

Next on the agenda is “the world’s king”: the Antichrist. Then God’s King will appear, defeat His enemies, and establish His kingdom. The Book of Ruth takes place during the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1). It is a story of love and harvest. God’s people are living in the Book of Ruth, sharing in the harvest and waiting for the wedding. Whereas the Book of Joshua closes with a nation resting from war and enjoying the riches of the Promised Land, the Book of Judges sees the nation suffering from invasion, slavery, poverty, and civil war. What happened?

Joshua: Victory Incomplete

Joshua, Moses’ successor in charge of the Conquest of Canaan, spent seven years and completed his basic mission. However, as we’ll see, they did not completely deal with their enemies—to their dismay. The boundary lines for the 12 tribes had been determined (Joshua 13-22), but the people had not fully claimed their inheritance by defeating and dislodging the entrenched inhabitants of the land.

Joshua 13:1: Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.
- The people owned the land, but they didn’t possess all of it; therefore, they couldn’t enjoy all of it

Introduction to Judges

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. — George Santayana

Hegel said the same things a bit differently: History teaches us that man learns nothing from history. — Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

We are living in a period similar to that described in the Book of Judges since:

- There is no king in Israel
- People are doing what is right in their own eyes
- God’s people can’t seem to work together
- People are in bondage to their various enemies

So indeed, it was the worst of times. Instead of spiritual fervor, Israel sank into apathy. Instead of obeying the Lord, the people moved into apostasy. Instead of enjoying law and order, the land was filled with anarchy. [Analogous to the classic paradigm of the cycle of nations: from bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from courage to freedom; from freedom to abundance; from abundance to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependency; from dependency back to bondage (Alexander Tyler, 1750).]

One of the key verses characterizes their predicament:

Judges 21:25: In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Cf. Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1)

- At Mt. Sinai, the Lord had taken Israel to be His "kingdom of priests," declaring that He alone would reign over them (Ex 19:1-8)
- Moses reaffirmed the kingship of YHWH when he explained the covenant to the new generation before they entered Canaan (Deut 29ff)
- At the conquest of Jericho, Joshua declared to Israel her kingdom responsibilities (Joshua 8:30-55). And he reminded them again before his death (Joshua 24)
- Even Gideon refused to set up a royal dynasty: "I will not rule over you, neither my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8:23)

Deut 6 outlined the nation's basic responsibilities:

- v1-5 - Love and obey only YHWH
- v6-9 - Teach your children God's laws
- v10-15 - Be thankful for God's blessings
- v16-25 - Separate yourself from pagan worship

Israel failed in each of these responsibilities. As a result, Israel plunged into moral, spiritual, and political disaster. But here and there, God is raising up men and women who believe Him, confront the enemy, and win the victory. The Book of Judges challenges us to be available—no matter what! God will work through people who will trust His Word, yield to His Spirit, and do His bidding. Will you be among them?

The Book of Judges is the record of Israel's decline and fall: The first two chapters describe four stages in that fall:

- (1) Fighting the Enemy (1:1-26)
- (2) Sparing the Enemy (1:21,27-36)
- (3) Imitating the Enemy (2:1-13)

(4) Obeying the Enemy (2:6-23)

	JUDGE	MEANING OF NAME	SCRIPTURE	TRIBE	ENEMY	YEARS OF OPPRESSION*	YEARS OF SERVICE/PEACE*
1	Othniel <i>The First Judge</i>	Lion of God	Judges 3:7-11 (1:12-14)	Judah	Mesopotamians	8	40
2	Ehud <i>The Left-Handed Judge</i>	Strong	Judges 3:12-30	Benjamin	Moabites	18	80
3	Shamgar <i>The One-Verse Judge</i>	Cupbearer	Judges 3:31	Unknown	Philistines	Unknown	Unknown
4	Deborah <i>The Female Judge</i>	Bee	Judges 4:1-5:31	Ephraim	Canaanites	20	40
5	Gideon <i>The Valiant Judge</i>	A cutting down	Judges 6:1-8:32	Manasseh	Midianites	7	40
6	Tola <i>The Hill Country Judge</i>	Scarlet	Judges 10:1-2	Issachar	Unknown	Unknown	23
7	Jair <i>The "30" Judge</i>	The Lord enlightens	Judges 10:3-5	Manasseh	Unknown	Unknown	22
8	Jephthah <i>The Vowing Judge</i>	He opens	Judges 10:6-12:7	Manasseh	Philistines and Ammonites	18	6
9	Ibzan <i>The Marrying Judge</i>	Splendid	Judges 12:8-10	Judah	Unknown	Unknown	7
10	Elon <i>The Decade-long Judge</i>	Oak	Judges 12:11-12	Zebulun	Unknown	Unknown	10
11	Abdon <i>The Grandfather Judge</i>	Service	Judges 12:13-15	Ephraim	Unknown	Unknown	8
12	Samson <i>The Foolish Judge</i>	Distinguished / Sun	Judges 13:1-16:31	Dan	Philistines	40	20
13	Eli <i>The Neglectful Judge</i>	Exalted is the Lord	1 Samuel 1:1-4:18	Levi	Family strife	Unknown	40
14	Samuel <i>The Transitional Judge</i>	Heard of God	1 Samuel 1; 3; 7-13; 15-16; 25:1; 28	Levi	National strife	Unknown	Possibly 40

Outline of Judges

Judges 1—3:6 - Prelude: a summary of the incomplete conquest of the Land

Judges 3:7—16:31 - seven cycles of oppression and deliverance

— 3:7-11: oppression by the Mesopotamians under Cushan-Rishathaim, and deliverance through Othniel

— 3:12-30: oppression by Moab under Eglon, and deliverance by Ehud

— 3:31: oppression by the Philistines and deliverance by Shamgar

— 4:1—5:31: oppression by the Canaanites under Jabin, and deliverance through Deborah and Barak

— 6:10—10:5: oppression of the Midianites and deliverance through Gideon, followed by the rule of Abimelech, with short notices of the judgeships of Tola and Jair

— 10:6—12:15: oppression of the Ammonites and deliverance through Jephthah, with brief notices about the judgeships of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

— 13:1—16:31: oppression by the Philistines and deliverance through Samson

- Each of the seven cycles follows a five-part cycle:

— Rest - Israel is obedient and enjoying rest; began with the last years of Joshua

— Rebellion - with a new generation, apostasy and disobedience to the Law (idolatry)

— Retribution - divine judgment, by means of subjugation to their enemies

- Repentance - Israel cries to the Lord for help
- Restoration - God raises up a judge to deliver Israel through successful battle; begins a new period of Rest

Judges 17:1—21:25: Appendices

- Migration of the Tribe of Dan
- Israel's War with the Tribe of Benjamin