
Judges—Preface

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Preface and Acknowledgment

Preface: I began this book back in the middle of the year 1999 and finished (more or less) in the middle of the year 2000. When I began writing this, I had already finished exegeting several books of the Bible, and several other portions of books, only one of which I was satisfied with the final result (the book of Joshua). The reason I began this approach of personal exegesis is that I was no longer being fed at church, and have thus far not found a single church which deals with God's Word in the detail and with the respect that I think is appropriate. After years of faithful church attendance, I began to do a great deal of the study for myself, until my church attendance decreased considerably and my personal study increased even more. This was not a choice I made lightly nor altogether consciously, nor is it a choice that I recommend to any other believer. Christians, apart from other Christians, tend to become antinomian or, at the very least, goofy and dogmatic. We are a group effort; however, there are times that a person has to leave the group for awhile—but that time is related to group effort, and that's where I am at this time. If you just flat out stop going to church, citing what I have written here and your unhappiness with your present church, you are a damned idiot who is just looking for any way out. There are outstanding study aides out there. To name two: the late J. Vernon McGee has a broadcast found in almost every single city in the United States and several places abroad where he goes through the Bible in five years, hitting every book, and a vast majority of the verses. Every believer should find where McGee is and listen faithfully for at least five years, if not ten. A second resource, if your church is not giving you what you need, is Bob Thieme. His tapes from the mid 60's through the mid 70's are extraordinary. You may not like him personally (which I didn't for about the first year that I listened to him), but he does some of the best Bible teaching that I have ever heard. One need not have financial concerns, as these tapes are sent out as needed, without regard to one's financial ability to support his ministry. I first heard about Bob when I was a very poor student in California. I listened to his tapes, was pissed off at him for several months (although I continued to listen), and listened to an hour of Bible teaching every single day for about the next twenty years. Not once during that time did I find myself added to some strange quasi-Christian mailing list as a result of my association with his ministry; nor did he even once send me a letter telling me the desperate straights that his ministry was in, and could I just send him whatever was in my heart. For a long time, I was unable to support his ministry, and later, I was able. I always received his tapes faithfully, regardless.

Acknowledgment: Don't think that I just got this whiff of inspiration and sat down to write and what resulted was this book of Judges. I first of all had twenty years of teaching under the ministry of Robert B. Thieme Jr., for which I will be eternally grateful. He set me straight on hundreds of doctrines and pointed me in the right direction when it came to Biblical exegesis. What has impacted in particular with regards to this book is his teaching of dispensations. Now, EVERYONE in the community of believers is a dispensationalist. I have found that no matter how much a believer holds to the false doctrine of covenant theology, you can push that believer in to a corner where he will finally admit that some things were done differently in the Old Testament than are done now. That is the most fundamental tenant of theological dispensationalism, and all believers with any kind of an opinion will agree to this, if you push them hard enough (which I have done). From there, it is simply a matter of degree.

What you should do: the problem with most cults or believers who begin with the Old Testament is that they become confused in our relationship to the Law of God. Bob's teaching kept me from falling into that sort of trap. If you are a brand new believer who wants to read the Bible for yourself, you should **never**, ever start in the book of Genesis. The place for the unbeliever or the new believer to start is at the very beginning of time, which is the book of John, the third book of the New Testament. From there, a study of the book of Romans would be imperative. However, even more importantly, it is imperative for a new believer to find a place where God's

Word is taught faithfully, regularly (three times a week is too few times), and primarily verse-by-verse. If your pastor does not do a great deal of verse-by-verse teaching, you are in the wrong church.

Now, it would be impossible to name all the shoulders that I stand upon, primarily because I don't know their names. However, I would venture to guess that I am standing on the shoulders of probably 2000-5000 believers who devoted their life to studying, to teaching, to archeology, to the written word; they no doubt had a great barrage of people who prayed on their behalf, acting as blockers for a quarterback. A great pastor might receive all the attention and admiration of his congregation, but what you never see is the hundreds and thousands of prayers offered on his behalf by ten times as many people which allow him to proceed. Any pastor who thinks he stands on his own is a fool. You may never know the names of the people who prayed on your behalf, or the blocking that they did on your behalf, but God knows, and these prayers will become a part of the permanent record in heaven.

Let me be specific in terms of the people whom I know that I am beholden to. Had it not been for Bob Thieme's ministry, even though rarely I quote him throughout my exegesis, I doubt that I would even be doing this in the first place. Even if I had proceeded without his original direction, my exegetical approach would be a sorry shadow of what it is today. When quoting the Bible, I primarily use the NASB, judging it to be one of the very best of the recent translations, hitting a tremendously well-placed midpoint between ultra literal and understandable. I rarely quote from it word for word, and for this I apologize. Often, when using the NASB, I give my bastardization of it. I tend to replace LORD with Jehovah, *shall* with *will*, and I take several other liberties as well. My intention is not to denigrate this excellent translation, nor to obfuscate the passage at hand, but to facilitate understanding. If a person is to own but one Bible, this should be it. I am also deeply beholden to Young's *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*, Owen's extremely helpful *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* (my Old Testament crutch), the NIV as well as over a dozen other English translation of the Holy Scriptures. When it comes to commentaries, I have been lucky to have stumbled across Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary of the Old Testament*, McGee's radio broadcasts converted into book form and *Barnes' Notes*. I would have been able to do nothing without my BDB Lexicon or Gesenius's excellent lexicon; and I have been so thankful for the use of Wigram's *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament*. Obviously, I used Strong's Concordance as well. I can't let this go without mentioning *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976, which has been an outstanding resource for a lot of the nitty gritty material. In fact, for this study, I used roughly 100 different books and translations, and I tried to do my best to give credit where credit was due. I will list all of the authors from whom I specifically drew in the Bibliography section of this book; but my point is, I am standing on the shoulders of at least these 100 men (and any translation or book may have had multiple contributors). All of these men had training, had a Christian background, and learned what they learned from other teachers and authors who likewise stood upon the shoulders of hundreds, if not thousands, of dedicated men. And this is only an allusion to the people whom I can see, so to speak. Behind this are the prayers and financial support of thousands upon thousands of believers whose names will not be known to us until eternity. My point in all this is that we are a team effort. And when it comes to something which I have stated dogmatically and unequivocally that you disagree with, just get over it and move on. You will find out I was right in eternity, and you may even come to that conclusion before that.

Translation: You may wonder how I have the nerve to present a translation of my own, and I wonder that myself sometimes. I am not a Hebrew scholar. I rely heavily upon the aides which have been made available to me which deal with the Massoretic text and the Hebrew pertaining thereto. I use Owen's *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, and write a translation based upon that (I recall many of the Hebrew words by their BDB number). Both his translation, the BDB number, and the information given about each word helps me piece together a translation. Then I check my translation against Young's and often against Rotherham's. When it comes to serious and sometimes not so serious disagreements, then I go to the various Lexicons and to *The New Englishman's Concordance*, as well as to several grammar books, and discuss the options from there. And, of course, there are times when a work is clear, but I like to bring it up so that it will be easy to work with it the next time that we see it. There are also nuances which I just feel are apropos to deal with and therefore, do so. Many people will find this aspect of this book tedious, and I fully understand, as I put forth the study and the work in the first place, so I know how difficult it can get. However, this is God's Word, and care must be given to its rendering. Part of my thinking

here is that at some point in time, in the future, we of the church will be raptured and God will use some of this information for the Jewish evangelists who follow us.

Finally, one of the things which I need to mention, is that I will comment on other commentaries, other translations and other misinterpretations. I do this not to rain on someone else's parade, but in the interest of accuracy. Most believers own one, maybe two Bibles, and come to think of them as the greatest Bibles around. Some are brought up with the KJV, and think we should rely on no other (the old saying is: *if it was good enough for the Apostle Paul, it's good enough for me*). However, there are innumerable times where the KJV has an antiquated, undecipherable translation, or times when it is based upon an inferior manuscript—if we want the truth, we have to dig for the truth. The result, at times, is a Bible verse that we have memorized, liked, and might even be true, but is not what we find in the original language. My intention is to arrive at the most accurate translation possible, with an eye toward textual criticism. Now, many Bibles nowadays also offer commentary. The Scofield Reference Bible (which is the Bible I cut my teeth on), contains abbreviated notes and basic and advanced doctrines throughout. 99% of the time, Scofield is dead on accurate; however, when he isn't, I will let you know. Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible*, a tremendous work which is difficult to find, is one of the most helpful when it comes to alternative readings—however, it is by no means complete, and there are one or two footnotes which are entirely wrong (e.g., Judges 19:3, where he suggests that the Levite would bring *her* back, *her* referring to his mistress's *heart*). Furthermore, there are even times when the CEV or the TEV (of all translations) point out an important textual note which Rotherham misses. And when it comes to the NIV Study Bible—this is an outstanding value; there is a running almost verse-by-verse commentary throughout the Bible—however, there are times that they are wrong. If you have an NIV Study Bible, then I will let you know the few places where they are mistaken and I will, of course, explain why.

Gary Kukis
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Judges—Introduction

Judges Introduction

The Israelites Settle in and Fall into Apostasy

Introduction: Judges is one of the most unusual books in the Bible. It takes its name from the twelve men and one woman, most of whom are referred to as *judges* and/or *deliverers*. This is a book rarely studied as a unified whole. Although most people know about several different characters in this book, they don't really know their significance or how they are tied to Israel. Both the authorship and the time period and the sequencing of this book is under question, and these issues will be covered in lurid detail in this introduction, as well as throughout the entire study. Furthermore, this is a time during which Israel is at its most degenerate. One of the reasons that we know that Israel is quite degenerate is that we have very few instances of Christ figures or parallels with the New Testament. What was marvelous through the book of the Law and the book of Joshua is that there were many instances which foreshadowed the coming of our Lord. We do not find that very often in the book of Judges. All we have is the general notion of a deliverer, and some parallels between our Lord and Samson and Gideon.

Keil and Delitzsch give a very good introduction to this book: *It was rather a transition period, the time of free, unfettered development, in which the nation was to take root in the land presented to it by God as its inheritance, to familiarize itself with the theocratic constitution given to it by the Mosaic law, and by means of the peculiar powers and gifts conferred upon it by God to acquire for itself that independence and firm footing in Canaan, within the limits of the laws, ordinances, and rights of the covenant, which Jehovah had promised, and the way to which He had prepared through the revelations He had made to them. This task could be accomplished without any ruler directly appointed by the Lord. The first thing which the tribes had to do was to root out such Canaanites as remained in the land, that they might not only establish themselves in the unrestricted and undisputed possession and enjoyment of the land and its productions, but also avert the dangers which threatened them on the part of these tribes of being led away to idolatry and immorality.*¹ In other words, God gave Israel enough to run with the program. Israel will fail at the very first and she will not remove the Canaanites from the land. And lest some revolutionary or racial purist mistakenly apply this concept, and begin to remove the *Canaanites* from his periphery, this was a unique time and a unique place. God had clearly identified the Canaanites to be removed. Today, there is no nation operating as a theocracy; and there is no nation which has Canaanites in their land who must be removed. Therefore, you do not get to remove those who have different beliefs than you, those who have a different culture or skin color from you, or those whose moral values are not the same as yours. The kind of separation which must be maintained is from false doctrine.

Background: Barthel: *After Joshua's death the Israelite conquest had begun to lose momentum. As might be expected, the Israelites found themselves living in uneasy proximity to the various other tribes they had not succeeded in exterminating or driving off.*² We covered in great detail in the book of Joshua just how degenerate these other peoples had become, which information came from secular history. The Bible nowhere really justifies the decimation of the indigenous peoples of the Land of Promise in humanitarian terms. God told the Jews to wipe them out and the Jews followed that mandate in part. The remaining peoples continued to cause problems for Israel, both internal and external. Even though the Jews fell into great apostasy during this time period, it was nothing by comparison to the peoples who previously controlled this land.

Spiritual Background: The book of Judges is a book which describes a bleak period in the time of Israel's history. Scofield claims that the incidents which occur in this book fall into a four-fold cycle of rebellion, retribution, repentance, and restoration.³ The NIV Study Bible describes the history of this book as *recurring cycles of*

¹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 176.

² Manfred Barthel, *What the Bible Really Says*; ©1982; © by Quill; p. 139.

³ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 288.

*disobedience, foreign oppression, cries of distress, and deliverance.*⁴ Israel rebels against God, God delivers Israel into the hand of another nation, Israel regrets her actions, and then God delivers her from subjugation. But then, Israel falls again. To quote Scofield: *Joshua is a book of victory and Judges is a book of defeat.*⁵

One of the evils of contemporary theology is known as Covenant Theology, which takes a rather uninformed, and short-sighted view of Israel. According to this view, Israel somehow morphed itself into the Church, and we, as the Church, as the true seed of Abraham, are heirs to the promises of God, and that the racial Jew and the nation Israel have faded almost completely from the spiritual horizon (with the exception of the handful of Jews who believe in Christ Jesus). This is completely wrong and off base, and the book of Judges is one of the books which reveals God's faithfulness throughout the great apostasy of Israel. Israel strays far from God, yet God is always there to bring her back. We, the Church, gentiles, have only been grafted in as wild olive branches (Rom. 11). The nation and the people of Israel have a future with God (Rev. 7). In the book of Judges, we begin to understand God's faithfulness⁶.

God had already promised in His Word that He would place Israel under increasing discipline whenever she strayed from Him. In Lev. 26:14–46, even before the Israelites entered into the land, God warned them of discipline to come, which was dependent upon their relationship to Him. In Deut. 28, Moses writes down the blessings and the cursings which Israel will read from the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal—the cursings of Deut. 28:15–68 foreshadow the times of the judges.

The Ark of God will be mentioned but one time in this chapter. The advice of Phinehas, the spiritual leader for Israel, will be sought but one time in this book. Even though there are a few men who are guided by God in this book, for the most part, Israel is in rebellion against God, choosing it's own path. A popular refrain in this book is In those days is: [There was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes](#) (Judges 21:25). Although this appears to cry out for a king to rule over them, what Israel needed was to obey the Law given them by God already. Israel needed to seek out God and to obey God. Instead, Israel more or less made its way as time went along. Some of the incidents found in this book are appalling and you must realize upon beginning this book that it is a simple history of the time of the Judges. There is no reason to think that every incident recorded in this book is condoned by God. Furthermore, these are two separate thoughts. The fact that there was no king in Israel (Judges 17:6 18:1 19:1 21:25) simply sets the time period for us. By this, we know where these books belong in time. The second phrase (Judges 17:6 21:25) simply tells us what the spiritual conditions were at that time.

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The Relationship Between the Tribes of Israel: Early on in time, the various tribes of Israel acted in concert. Under the leadership of Joshua, all the tribes—including those who had conquered their own inheritance (Reuben, Gad and East Manasseh)—participated in the taking of the rest of the land. They all responded as a group when the evil position was taken by the tribe of Benjamin in Judges 20 (Judges 17–21 occurred early on during the days of the judges). However, we do find strained relationships. In chapters 17 and 19, we have wandering Levites for hire, which is not in accordance with Scripture. The Danites give up on securing their own territory, given them by Joshua, and take a land belonging to a peaceful people in the north (Judges 18). The tribe of Benjamin quickly falls into degeneration, accounting for the horrible set of events in Judges 19–21. When Deborah and Barak battle against the Canaanites, there were warriors from the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, East Manasseh (Machir), Zebulun and Issachar. However, several tribes were conspicuous in their absence: Reuben, Gilead (the tribe of Gad), Dan and Asher did not participate in the war against the Canaanites.

⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 323.

⁵ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 288.

⁶ Quite frankly, if God has thrown away Israel, then I would personally question the integrity of my own salvation, which is integral to God's character and faithfulness. Oh, and please don't think that Rom 11 and Rev. 7 make up the sum total of my Scriptural arguments against Covenant Theology.

At the beginning of chapter 1, Judah and Simeon begin to take their own territory, which was the correct thing to do. However, from this point on, we note a separation between Judah and the other tribes. In fact, even though Judah begins well, by the days of Samson, they turn on Samson rather than risk the consequences of resisting the Philistines (Judges 15:9–13). There is no animosity, per se, between Judah and Samson, or Judah and any of the tribes of Israel—just a separation which will eventually manifest itself in a northern and southern kingdom. Ephraim becomes pissy toward the other tribes, as we see in Judges 8:1, which could have erupted into a serious incident. Gideon approaches this tactfully, which keeps things under control (Judges 8:2–3). Nevertheless, there are specific cities which Gideon comes into contact with (Succoth and Penuel) which cause him grief (Judges 8:6–9).

In Judges 12, Ephraim again becomes pissy—this time with Jephthah, and a small civil war between Gad and Ephraim breaks out in Israel. The separation of their tribes becomes quite apparent, as their are sounds which the Gadites can pronounce which the Ephraimites cannot (Judges 12:5–6).

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Historical Value: ZPEB: *The Book of Judges illuminates the political, social, and religious condition of Israel during the vital period between the Conquest and the institution of the monarchy. The manner in which this is done allows the reader to capture the atmosphere of the period in a way that would be impossible in a formal history. It provides a dramatic illustration of the effect of apostasy upon every aspect of life. The root cause of Israel's decline was that the covenant relationship with the Lord, with its requirement of absolute and loyal obedience to His commands, was broken. This led to disintegration in the political, religious, social, and family spheres and to a sharp increase in immorality. The Book of Judges serves as a reminder that a nation cannot live on its past glories.*⁷ [Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people](#) (Prov. 14:34).

Personal Application: How pertinent is this book to us? Very. In the United States, our churches have fallen into deep apostasy, as have the believers in them. We have a huge number of believers who have no concept of right and wrong, whose understanding of the Bible is extremely weak. Most do not know how they get out of fellowship or how to get back in. The role of the pastor-teacher has become more of a cheap, third-rate psychologist. *People say, "If we could just change this or that and put in this party or that party, everything would be fine."...[that] is perfect nonsense. What we need today is to get back to a spiritual foundation. That is where we went off the track, and that is where our troubles began.*⁸ The book of Judges is filled with the same cycle: Israel falls into great spiritual apostasy, which causes her to fall under great oppression; when she calls out to God, God answers and God delivers her, and even provides some prosperity. Then Israel falls into spiritual apostasy again.

Name of the Book: I was asked once why this book was called Judges. Israel, from the time of Joshua's death, did not have a king. Although it may be argued that Moses and Joshua functioned as kings, neither had that title and both considered themselves channels of God's authority. Even portions of the Law dealt with having a king, although Moses nowhere assumes that title himself (Deut. 17:14–20). What is most fascinating about that passage is that this is brand new information given by Moses. Moses is not quoting what God had told him here nor is he quoting history—Moses is looking down the corridors of time and warning Israel what is proper and improper with regards to having a king. However, I digress. What we have over this period of about 300 years is a time when there are regional judges who have the authority in Israel. This authority is not quite the same as a king would have. They do not levy taxes, nor do they make laws themselves. They are simply to enforce the laws which are on the books (the Law of God) and to make judgements for difficult matters (as Moses did in Num. 36). However, the primary responsibility of the judges was to deliver Israel during times of trouble. [Then Jehovah raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them](#) (Judges 2:16). The authority of some of the judges extended over all of Israel; while other judges enjoyed a very regional limitations on their power. Whereas, Joshua naturally assumed the power and authority which belonged to Moses, and even though none of the judges

⁷ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 744.

⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; pp. 213–214.

developed or consolidated their power base through violence against other possible judges, none of them assumed the authority of Joshua or Moses.

The Hebrew Word for Judge: *shâphaṭ* (שָׁפַט) [pronounced *shaw-FAHT*], which means *to judge, to govern*. This is often found as a masculine plural, Qal active participle, and it is written *shôph^{at}îm* (שׁוֹפְטִים) [pronounced *showf-TEEM*]. The Qal active participle is often used to refer to one's occupation or activity in life; so the proper rendering is *those judging, judges, governors*. *Shâphaṭ* is the most general term for a leader or ruler. Therefore, this could have just as easily have been rendered *governor* and this book could have been called *governors*. We must look beyond our understanding of someone who settles disputes and maintains justice in the land, to one who also liberates or delivers. We first find this word applied to Jehovah God in Gen. 18:25. The Greek word used in the Septuagint is *κρίται* and the Latin word used in the Vulgate is *liber judicum*; in both instances, the emphasis is upon justice, although the Hebrew allows for a wider application. Strong's #8199 BDB #1047. The judge ruled over regional areas and their power was not absolute. Gideon helps us understand their limitations. After Gideon had delivered the nation from Midian, [Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian." But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you; Jehovah will rule over you."](#) (Judges 8:22–23).

The Names of the Judges: There were six major judges (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson) and six minor ones (Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibjan, Elon and Abdon). The difference between a major and a minor judge is essentially the amount of time which is spent on them. A minor judge is generally mentioned in passing and given 1–3 verses. A major judge will have an event or several events of his life covered in anywhere from a half of a chapter to three chapters. We are the ones who differentiate between major and minor judges; there is no such Biblical differentiation. Two men will rise up at the end of this time period and in another book: Eli, the priest, a Levite; and Samuel, who will be called both a judge and a prophet—their story will be found in 1Samuel.

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The Political Establishment During the Time of the Judges: Quite frankly, there was no political establishment during the days of the judges. Of all that Moses and Joshua taught, one thing that they did not teach is what sort of governmental structures had to be put into place; nor was there a successor to Joshua as there was to Moses. In other words, Israel was given direction and responsibility, but Israel was not given any particular political structure to put into place.

Israel had just finished a campaign to conquer the Land of Promise, and there was a military machine in existence with established leaders, as well as a chain of command. Early on, that military machine would go into action as a unit (e.g., Judges 20); however, as time went on, fewer tribes participated in wars—even those which affected them (Judges 5:15b–18).⁹ There were elders—men who had been around for a long time, and had wisdom—their opinion of various matters was valuable (mentioned in Joshua 23:2–24:1). We had the High Priest, who could determine God's will through lots or employing Urim and Thummim. Furthermore, throughout this book, there will be men whom God calls, and the Holy Spirit empowers (e.g., Judges 6:11–14, 34). Finally, the true authority over Israel was God, Who made His will known through His Law and through those who represented Him (principally, the High Priest). Israel did not follow His Word, and remove the remainder of the Canaanites from the land; she did not obey His Law with regard to Sabbaths and feast days; and the book of Judges records only one spiritual leader being consulted one time.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge tells us a little about these judges: *The shophetim were not judges in the usual sense of the term; but were heads or chiefs of the Israelites, raised up on extraordinary occasions, who directed and ruled the nation with sovereign power, administered justice, made peace or war, and led the armies over whom they presided. Officers with the same power, and nearly the same*

⁹ Chronologically, Judges 5 occurred after Judges 20.

*name, were established in New Tyre, after the termination of the regal state; and the Carthaginian Suffetes, the Athenian Archons, and the Roman Dictators, appear to have been nearly the same.*¹⁰

You may wonder, *just exactly what is the difference between a judge and a king?* Jamieson, Fausset and Brown answer this succinctly: *There was no regular, unbroken succession of judges. Individuals, prompted by the inward, irresistible impulse of God's Spirit when they witnessed the depressed state of their country, were roused to achieve its deliverance. It was usually accompanied by a special call, and the people seeing them endowed with extraordinary courage or strength, accepted them as delegates of Heaven, and submitted to their sway. Frequently they were appointed only for a particular district, and their authority extended no farther than over the people whose interests they were commissioned to protect. They were without pomp, equipage, or emoluments attached to the office. They had no power to make laws; for these were given by God; nor to explain them, for that was the province of the priests--but they were officially upholders of the law, defenders of religion, avengers of all crimes, particularly of idolatry and its attendant vices.*¹¹

The Holy Spirit and the Judges: One aspect of the book of Judges which is more difficult to understand than others is the operation of the Holy Spirit in this book. The Spirit of Jehovah is mentioned seven times in this book (Judges 3:10 6:34 11:29 13:25 14:6, 19 15:14). We would expect the Holy Spirit to be associated with Othniel, Gideon and Jephthah; however, the other four passages associate God the Holy Spirit with Samson, who is perhaps the lamest spiritual hero of Scripture. God used Samson to keep the Philistines in check and God gave Samson the power to do so, despite his self-centeredness and immorality. God the Holy Spirit did not rest upon Samson his entire life; just for a few brief instances in order to accomplish His will. For those brief moments, Samson was spiritually empowered. And when God empowers an individual, that man is invincible for that time of strengthening.

Despite the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these men, the judges will be seen to be generally very flawed men. Othniel, Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah will be the greatest historical figures from this book, although none of them compares to Moses, Joshua or to their antecedents, Samuel and David.

The Power of God in the Book of Judges: The book of Judges shows us that God will accomplish his ends, despite the apostasy of the people. He uses great armies, as in Judges 4 and 20, as well as small, combat units (Judges 7), as well as individuals (Ehud or Samson). He still has control over the elements (Judges 5:20–21). Furthermore, God's character is intact—He is longsuffering toward the Jews, despite their repeated movement toward apostasy. Every time that they called His name, He came to their rescue. Our patience would have given out the second or third time—God's patience continued.

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Brief Synopsis: The book of Judges deals with the history of Israel between Joshua and the prophet Samuel. During this period of time, there was no king over Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes. Judges ruled over specific areas and their power was not absolute.

The Structure of the Book of Judges: The book of the Judges can be easily broken down into three parts: at the beginning, we have an introduction to the time period of the judges, which tells us, in general, what the various tribes accomplished over this time period, how the people behaved in general and how God dealt with Israel (mostly, He gave them judges to rule over them). The second part of this book, from the middle of Judges 3 to the

¹⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Judges 2:16.

¹¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Judges 2:16.

end of Judges 16, gives a chronological history of the judges over Israel. One might call this Israel's foreign relations. This details the relationship between Israel and her surrounding nations. In these chapters, we have the actual judges, for which this book is named. A couple of them stand out as great men (Barak and Gideon) and others merely have a few great moments (Samson). At the beginning of Judges 17, we begin to examine Israel's domestic situation. What did Israel do as a nation within its own borders? Herein are two different incidents which occurred during this time period. These incidents give us insight into the lives, actions, and spiritual thrust of the people of Israel during that time.

Part 1 of the book of Judges can be broken down into two sections. In section 1, we find out essentially how each tribe did with regards to its assignment to conquer the Land of Promise. This chapter encompasses the entire time period of the Judges. In Judges 2, we have a warning to Israel (vv. 1–5), the time period (*after* the death of Joshua—vv. 6–10), followed by the pattern for the middle part of the book of Judges (vv. 11–23).

The lengthiest portion of the book of Judges is part 2, where we have the list and history of all of the judges (chapters 3–16). Right in the middle of the book of Judges, in the middle of this section, we have the story of Gideon and his bastard son Abimelech, from Judges 6:1–9:57, which should be considered a unified literary unit in the book of Judges. On one side, we have the ruler Israel should have desired—Gideon; and on the other, the ruler that Israel deserved, Abimelech. This duo is bracketed by the stories of Deborah and Jephthah. Deborah is descended from Ephraim, a son of Joseph and is from the west side of the Jordan. Jephthah is descended from Manasseh, the other son of Joseph, whose tribe is located primarily east of the Jordan. These two accounts are further bracketed by the stories of Ehud, of the tribe of Benjamin, and Samson, from the tribe of Dan.¹² The tribes of Dan and Benjamin are located between Judah, which is in the south, and Ephraim and Manasseh, which is in the North. On each side of Gideon/Abimelech, we have certain parallels. Prior to Gideon, we have the phrase, *and the land remained undisturbed for "X" years*. After Abimelech, we no longer find that phrase. Whereas, Gideon was able to avoid a civil war with Ephraim (Judges 8:1–3), Jephthah was unable to maintain internal peace (Judges 12:1–6). Lone savior, Ehud, was able to effect a deliverance of Israel from under the control of Moab through the death of one man; lone savior, Samson, despite his superhuman strength, was unable to effect deliverance from the Philistines, despite the fact that he killed a tremendous number of Philistines.

The outline and structure of Judges is better done in Judges 12:7, which I will mention again at that time.

With Judges 12:7, we begin a new formula for the span of the career of a judge. *And so Jephthah judged Israel six years*. This same formula is repeated in Judges 10:2, 3 12:7, 8, 11, 14 15:20 16:31. The verb is Qal imperfect of *shâphaṭ* (שָׁפַט) [pronounced *shaw-FAHT*], which means *to judge, to govern*. The NIV uses the verb *led*. Strong's #8199 BDB #1047. Prior to this, the formula was: *And the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim* [or, whomever] *eight years* (Judges 3:8b; see also Judges 3:14; also see Judges 4:3 6:1) later followed by: *And the land rested forty years* (Judges 3:11a; see also Judges 3:30 5:31 8:28). Originally, we had a statement of subjugation, the introduction of a deliverer, and this was followed by a time where the land *rested*. That latter verb was the Qal imperfect of *shâqaṭ* (שָׁקַט) [pronounced *shaw-KAWT*] and it means *to be quiet, to be undisturbed, inactive*. Strong's #8252 BDB #1052. As you will note with the two Hebrew words, this was somewhat of a play on words.

Now, I realize that, for most of you, these differences seem insignificant, but you are wrong. Firstly, the book of Judges sets up a shadow of our Lord, our Great Deliverer, our Great Judge, Who was and Who is to come. We first found ourselves in subjugation. For Israel, this was to Rome. For us, this was to Satan and our old sin nature. Jesus Christ came as our Savior, our Deliverer, to lead us out from our being oppressed. He offered Israel rest; he offers us rest. In between our Lord's first and second advents, we have rulership of this world by Satan. In the book of Judges, in between the changes of terminology, we have rulership by the evil Abimelech (Judges 9). None of the formulas for judging, saving or resting appear in this chapter. He simply rules over Israel for 3 years (Judges 9:23). In our Lord's second advent, He will return *to judge, to govern, to rule*, as did the judges. There will still be our enemy who will return to plague us at the end of the Millennium, whom our Lord Jesus Christ will defeat and cast into the lake of fire. In other words, the very language used here is expressive of our Lord's first and

¹² The organization of this comes from *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 335..

second advents—the very words used here set up an outline of what is to come (by the way, I don't know if *any* expositor has noticed this before).

Secondly, it helps us with authorship. The book of Judges appears to be easily broken down into four or five sections: Judges 1–2, which gives us an introduction; Judges 3–8, where we have the formula *and the land rested for "n" years*; Judges 9—the rulership of Abimelech; Judges 10–16, where the judge judges for so many years; and, finally, the last portion of Judges, where we have an anecdotal history of some of the things which occurred in Israel during the time of the Judges 17–21.

Unity and Diversity: One of my sources noted, as I had, the diversity to be found in this book—they commented upon the diversity of the contents, referring to the subject matter—and that is easily extended to vocabulary and writing styles. However, there is a unity *in that all the contents witness in one way or another to the political, social, moral, and religious decline in the period between the death of Joshua and the institution of the monarchy.*¹³ The first chapter reveals that only Judah and Simeon began to conquer the land given them by God; in the second chapter, we have the degeneracy cycle that Israel repeatedly went through. From the third to the sixteenth chapter, we see Israel almost in a moral free fall. Finally, in the last few chapters, we look at Israel apart from her leaders, and the people are every bit as corrupt and confused as the gentiles who oppressed them.

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The Time Frame of the Book of the Judges: We are about to enter into the most difficult portion of the study of the book of Judges, which is dating the various events and judges found in this book. The end result will be, after easily a dozen hours of work, I will be able to give you some numbers which will be accurate within perhaps 20 years and numbers that you can hang your hat on. The easy part is, generally, speaking most of the events which took place in the book of Judges occurred between 1400 and 1100 B.C. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that the entire book is in chronological order. For instance, the death of Joshua is mentioned in Judges 1:1 and in 2:6–8, but appearing in the English as though they are chronologically placed. The NIV places the death of Joshua as being around 1390 B.C., and therefore the bulk of the events of this chapter occur after that.

One of the things which I intended to do was to teach much of the Old Testament in chronological order, owing that predilection to my Gentile thinking. Doing so with any precision has become extremely difficult, particularly with the book of the Judges. What Reese, in his Chronological Bible does is intersperse Joshua 23–24 with Judges 1–3 with some 1Chronicles thrown in. In fact, what he does is absolutely nutty. Not that what he did was a bad idea or a poorly executed one; it is just difficult to do, and, at times, very difficult to follow. The Narrated Bible, also a chronologically arranged Bible, and a bit easier to follow, in several places chooses the order of the book of Judges over chronological order. Therefore, I am teaching the book of Judges in the order in which we find it, even though it is reasonable to place portions of the first three chapters back with the book of Joshua; and to intersperse some of the incidents found in Judges 17–21 with Judges 1–3. Furthermore, to add to your confusion, let me point out that the book of Ruth precedes Judges 4–17. However, the Jew did not have a linear mind, nor was the literature put together in a linear fashion. In fact, if such a thing occurred, it would take from the inspiration of Scripture. It is natural for the book of Ruth to cover what it does apart from the books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel. This is how a normal person would have composed it. Since the book of Joshua and the book of the Judges were likely composed by different sets of people, there is logically going to be some overlap. Furthermore, the book of the Judges introduces a set pattern which Israel was a part of. The first several chapters of Judges bear out this pattern. After that pattern is covered, then some individual incidents which occurred during the time of the judges is presented. It does not fall categorically into Judges 1–16 and therefore is not place in there, even though it falls into that time period.

¹³ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 742.

Let me rephrase all that. At the end of Judges 2 and the beginning of Judges 3, we will have a pattern set up. The pattern will deal with the unfaithfulness of Israel, followed by the oppression of a foreign power, followed by the raising up of a judge, followed by the deliverance of Israel via that judge. Given this pattern, then it would make perfect sense to immediately jump into the history of Israel which illustrates that pattern. That is how the book of Judges is set up—it makes perfect literary sense.

At the end of this book, we have several incidents (including the book of Ruth) which God the Holy Spirit thought important for us to know about. In these incidents, we get an idea as to what some of the people were like and how some of the tribes acted. This is provided by way of, *oh, by the way, here are some illustrations as to the degeneracy of this people*. Two of those incidents, the two included in the Book of the Judges, are fairly easy to place in time. The first incident involves the tribe of Dan going northward and taking a piece of property from a peaceful people (Judges 17–18). The second incident involves the rape and murder of a woman in a city of Benjamin and Israel's reaction to this incident (Judges 19–21). Phinehas is mentioned in the second occasion, placing this pretty close to the beginning of the book of Judges. However, in Judges 20:1, we have the phrase, *from Dan to Beersheba*, which is a phrase that takes in all of Israel by naming the most northern and most southern part of Israel. The tribe of Dan did not occupy the far north until Judges 17–18, which, therefore, places it prior to 19–21 and therefore, also at the beginning of the time period of the judges.

What I am going to launch into is a rather detailed examination of the time period taken up by the historical incidents of the book of the Judges. I will not pretend to hit these years exactly right. If I can get us within 20 years of the reasonable time period, I will be happy.

Linear Chart

Oppressor/Judge/Deliverer	Passage	Time	Notes
Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia	Judges 3:8	8 years	Oppression; probably involved Judah
Othniel, deliverer (from the tribe of Judah ¹⁴)	Judges 3:9–11	40 years	Peace; probably involved Judah (this is because Othniel was a part of the tribe of Judah)
Eglon, king of Moab	Judges 3:14	18 years	Oppression; probably involved the tribe of Benjamin and Ephraim.
Ehud, deliverer (from the tribe of Benjamin)	Judges 3:15–30	80 years	Peace; probably involved the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 3:15) and Ephraim (Judges 3:27).
Shamgar, deliverer (unknown tribe)	Judges 3:31	unknown	Struck down 600 Philistines.
Jabin, king of Canaan	Judges 4:1–3	20 years	Oppression; Zebulun and Naphtali initiated the rebellion against the Canaanites (Judges 4:10).

¹⁴ Othniel is the nephew of Caleb, whose lineage is covered in great detail in Joshua 14:6. Caleb was an Edomite through the family of Kenaz, and it is uncertain as to how he is tied to the tribe of Judah, whether by marriage or adoption. He is probably one of the mixed multitude who left Egypt with Israel, although he certainly had close ties of some sort to the tribe of Judah at that time.

Oppressor/Judge/Deliverer	Passage	Time	Notes
Barak, deliverer; and Deborah, judge and deliverer (both probably of the tribe of Ephraim; Barak is from the tribe of Naphtali)	Judges 4:4–5:31	40 years	Zebulun and Naphtali were joined by east Manasseh (Machir) and Benjamin (Judges 5:14), and the tribe of Issachar (Judges 5:15a). It appears as though Reuben, Gad, some of Manasseh, Dan and Asher should have joined in, but did not (Judges 5:15b–17). Peace resulted.
Midianites (and the Amalekites), oppressors	Judges 6:1–7	7 years	Oppression; Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali are involved (Judges 6:35)
Gideon, deliverer (from the tribe of Manasseh)	Judges 6:11–8:28	40 years	War then Peace. Gideon was a reluctant starter, but one of the great heroes of the book of Judges.
Abimelech, ruler (from the tribe of Manasseh)	Judges 9:1–57	3 years	Abimelech, a bastard son of Gideon, was the first man to officially rule over Israel, and he is an evil man. Here, Israel was oppressed by an Israelite. Civil war results.
Tola, deliverer and judge (from the tribe of Issachar)	Judges 10:1–2	23 years	Judged west of the Jordan.
Jair, judge (of Gilead; from the tribe of Manasseh)	Judges 10:3–5	22 years	Judged east of the Jordan.
Philistines and sons of Ammon, oppressors	Judges 10:6–11	18/40 years	Oppression
Ammon oppresses a portion of Israel east of the Jordan.	Judges 10:8	18 years	Oppression; this continues Judges 10:6–7.
Then the Ammonites cross over the Jordan and their oppression and attack includes Judah (probably eastern Judah), Benjamin, and Ephraim.	Judges 10:9		The time period is not given. My educated guess is that this was the last year of the eighteen years.
Jephthah, deliverer and judge (from the tribe of Manasseh or Gad)	Judges 10:12–12:7	6 years	Ephraim (Judges 12:1) and East Israel.
Ibzan, judge (probably a Benjamite)	Judges 12:8–10	7 years	
Elon, judge (from the tribe of Zebulun)	Judges 12:11–12	10 years	
Abdon, judge (probably from the tribe of Ephraim)	Judges 12:13–15	8 years	

Oppressor/Judge/Deliverer	Passage	Time	Notes
Philistines, oppressors	Judges 13:1	40 years	Oppression; this appears to be the continuation of Judges 10:6–7 and coterminous with the 49 years of the Ammonite oppression and the judges who followed that oppression.
Samson, deliverer and judge (from the tribe of Dan)	Judges 13:24–16:3	20 years	This appears to be concurrent with the 49 aforementioned years (Judges 15:20). In fact, since the prediction of Samson took place during the time of the oppression by the Philistines, this meant that his judgeship occurred within the 40 years of the Philistine oppression.
Total:		428	
Reduce by simultaneous time of Samson and Philistines		60	Overlap: Judges 10:6–12:15 and Judges 13:1–17:13
The Tola and Jair overlap		20	Overlap: Judges 10:1–2 and 10:3–5
Reduce by 10 years for overlapping ruling periods.		10	In most cases, the time period given by a judge can be shaved by one year as, if their rulership begins mid-year, that is counted as a full year.
Actual total:		338	

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Probably the greatest difficulty in Scripture is matching the dates of this time period, and that immediately before and after, to history. We have internal problems as well as external problems. If we figure the time of Joshua for the early 1400's and a little time into the 14th century, and then Ruth around 1100 B.C. and 1Samuel around 1000 B.C., we have the problem of fitting 410 years into less than 300 years. One option, of course, is to push back the time of Moses and the exodus. None of the scholars who deal with dating do that and I do not know enough in this realm to take those kinds of liberties. We also have a problem with Paul's statement that the period of the judges was about 450 years (Acts 13:20). Eli and Samuel (before Saul became king) would have been included in this time period estimated by Paul, and possibly Joshua's final years. Between these three men, there should easily be an additional 112 years (give or take) to give us the approximated 450 years. However, if Jews enter the land approximately 1400 B.C.; if Saul is made king approximately 1043 B.C., then that period of time is about 360 years.

At this point, it may be helpful to see exactly what Paul said: "The God of this people Israel did choose our fathers, and the people He did exalt in their sojourning in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm did He bring them out of it; and about a period of forty years He did suffer their manners in the wilderness, and having destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He did divide by lot to them their land. And after these things, about four hundred and fifty years, He gave judges—till Samuel the prophet; and thereafter they asked for a king, and God did give to them Saul, son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years." (Acts 13:17–21). The critical phrase is v. 20, which is rendered in the NKJV as: "After [or, with] that He gave *them* judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet."

So Paul does not exactly say that *the time of the Judges was 450 years*; but that does seem to be the general sense of it. If we take the generally accepted dates, beginning with the exodus in around 1446 B.C. and take this to the time of David's reign (where Paul will stop and change the subject from general history to David's place in spiritual history), which is around 1000 B.C. (depends on whether you calculate his reign from partial control or total control), we have about 450 years. However, if we understand Paul to refer simply to the period of the judges, not including the time of Samuel, then we're really pushing back the exodus 60–110 years, which is not in agreement with anyone at this time.

Packer, Tenney and White put the book of Judges as a time period which lasted approximately 337 years, between circa 1380–1043 B.C.¹⁵ This is a problem, as it encroaches upon the rule of Saul, as well as possibly contradicting Paul's statement. Now, Samuel was the last judge and he did live through much of Saul's reign, so that gives us some additional time, but certainly less than the additional hundred years necessary for this to be roughly 450 years (as per Paul). The NASB's study edition agrees fairly closely with Packer, Tenney and White—they suggest that the book of the Judges runs from 1380 B.C. to 1050 B.C., a period of time of 330 years. As you see above, I have the time period as 338 years. Insofar as I am concerned, we three are in agreement.¹⁶ However, we have trouble in two areas: trying to mush this book down to fit within the time period of the traditional dates given for the exodus and those given the beginning of the monarchy of Israel¹⁷.

Jephthah helps us in this area of time; Jephthah comes in at the tail end of the book of the Judges and tells us that from the time of his writing to the king of Ammon back to the time of Barak (which is forty years after the exodus and immediately prior to the entering in of the Land of Promise) was 300 years (Judges 11:24–26; this being a round figure means that we can give or take, say, 25 years). If Moses stopped outside the Land of Promise around 1400 B.C., then 300 years passed, this would take us to 1100 B.C. for Jephthah. We have maybe 30 years after that (the times of Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon), which would take us to the end of the book of Judges, which places us at 1070 B.C., which is within spitting distance of what is suggested by the NASB and by Packer, Tenney and White.

In 1Kings 6:1, we are told from the exodus out of Egypt to the building of the Temple, there were 480 years (although this is a round number, our *fudge factor* is about 4 years). Most scholars (not all) accept 960 B.C. as the date of the building of the Temple by Solomon, which would therefore take the exodus out of Egypt to about 1440 B.C., which is still in complete agreement with the previous several paragraphs.

So, now, let us return to our most difficult problem is that posed by Paul and marking the time of the judges as approximately 450 years. However, Paul does not actually state the time of the Judges was 450 years. What Paul says is: **"The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm, He led them out from it. And for a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—about four hundred and fifty years. And after these things he gave judges until Samuel the prophet. And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years."** (Acts 13:17–21). We essentially have three choices here (as these are the only numbers given by Paul during this sermon): (1) between the end of the forty years in the desert and the beginning of the rule of Saul we have to fit in 450 years, which pushes the exodus back to circa 1533 B.C. (a date given by no conservative theologian that I am aware of); or, (2) the 450 years includes both forty year book ends, which then gives us 1453 B.C. for the date of the exodus. Since Paul uses the space of about 450 years, shaving off seven years from that to give us the traditional date of 1446 B.C. is reasonable (we do not know whether Paul was rounding off to the nearest ten years, the nearest twenty-five years or to even the nearest fifty years). (3) The third possibility, which

¹⁵ *The Bible Almanac*, J. I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White, Jr.; ©1980 Thomas Nelson Publishers; p. 52.

¹⁶ The time of ten years for beginning of mid-year rulings could have just as easily been given as 18 years, making me agree exactly with the NASB Study Edition.

¹⁷ There, of course, has been much discussion on this point among theologians, the two principal views being the early date for the exodus (circa 1440 B.C.) and the late date for the exodus (circa) 1300 B.C. It should be obvious that, despite any arguments given it, the latter view is completely untenable, although proposed by believers who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. See Charles A. Clough, *Dawn of the Kingdom*, ©1974, p. 139.

is the way I take it, is that Paul was using the 450 years to cover the time that Israel was in Egypt to the time that Israel entered into the land and took it. Israel was 400 years in Egypt; there were then 40 years in the desert; and then it took Joshua 7–10 years to conquer the land before him. In other words, taking either option 2 or 3, we no longer have any contradictions.

With respect to Paul, there is a completely other viewpoint. Keil and Delitzsch tell us that the text which I have given you from Acts is incorrect. Keil and Delitzsch tell us that there is an alternate Greek text as well as the Latin, which gives us the rendering: **The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they were sojourners in the land of Egypt: And with an high arm brought them out from thence. And for the space of forty years endured their manners in the desert. And, destroying seven nations in the land of Chanaan, divided their land among them by lot. As it were, after four hundred and fifty years** [i.e., the time the Jews were in Egypt + the exodus]. **And after these things, he gave unto them judges, until Samuel the prophet** (Acts 13:17–20; Douay-Rheims Bible). This understanding smooths pretty much everything out.

For reasons that I do not understand, Keil and Delitzsch suggest, instead, that this 450 years is from the birth of Isaac (the call of Abraham) to the distribution of the land,¹⁸ which is not in agreement with any chronological estimation. Unfortunately, they quote the Latin and alternate Greek text at this point in the original languages.

I have a personal predilection which will factor into setting these dates: I don't believe enough time is ever allotted for the death of Joshua or for the time period which immediately precedes the judges. I don't think that it is unreasonable for there to be, say, 50 years following the conquest of the land, during which the rulership of Joshua fades and the authority of Phinehas becomes more accepted—and all of this occurring prior to the establishment of the first judge. In fact, I have no problem with the incidents of Judges 17–21 occurring prior to the first judgeship (the judges are not mentioned in these two narratives, although Phinehas is). Most exegetes place most of these judgeships in such a way that they do not overlap and that robs us of this time period, which appears to exist, but is never given its due.

ZPEB is fairly adamant about the war of Deborah and Barak against the armies of Jabin and Sisera at c. 1125 B.C.¹⁹ whereas *The Narrated Bible* places these events at c. 1224 B.C.²⁰ My guess is that ZPEB probably placed too much emphasis upon the dates given by the archeologists whereas *The Narrated Bible* is basing their value upon a strict, succeeding interpretation of the given terms of the judges. Other sources place the destruction of Hazor at both 1300 B.C. and 1230 B.C., the latter date finding reasonable agreement with *The Narrated Bible*.²¹

There is a general pattern in the first half of the second section of the book of Judges: we have oppression for a set period of time, we have a judge raised up, and then the land remains undisturbed for “x” amount of years. This would reasonably indicate consecutive, non-overlapping judgeships.

There is also an inclusion of judges who are not said to have been raised up by God, nor are the details recorded about them particularly impressive. This implies that they were included by way of filling in the time gaps rather than as spiritual heroes of the past (for instance, take a glance at Ibzan and Abdon in Judges 12:8–9, 13–15). The period of time given for the oppression and then for the time of peace are probably non-overlapping time periods (except that year in between during which one begins and the other ends).

We do not have that same formula in the latter half of the second section of the book of Judges. Instead, we have the formula, *and ___ judged Israel after him*. Many interpret this as a consecutive, non-overlapping judgeship. This

¹⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Judges 3:7–11.

¹⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 740. Perhaps this was a misprint and they meant 1225 B.C.?

²⁰ *The Narrated Bible In Chronological Order*; narrated by F. LaGard Smith; ©1984 by Harvest House Publishers; Eugene, Oregon; (NIV ©1984 by the International Bible Society); p. 393.

²¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, pp. 50, 52. Do not be concerned that ZPEB contradicts itself; it was written by numerous authors from a wide range of theological backgrounds.

is wrong, as we will see in the next paragraph. After Abimelech, we no longer have judges whose authority appears to extend over all of Israel; we have regional judges up until the time of Samuel.

What we also need to do is determine if there are any portions of the book of Judges which can be made to be simultaneous without doing damage to the narrative. Judges 10:1–5: One place where we can gain about 20 years is with Tola and Jair. Tola judged west of the Jordan and Jair is said to have arisen after him, judging on the other side of the Jordan. Recall that Scripture is generally organized more topically than chronologically, so certainly Tola's judgeship and his death would be covered and then we would go to Jair. The verb which begins Judges 10:3 is the Qal imperfect of *qûwm* (קָוַם) [pronounced *koom*], which means *to stand, to rise up*. Strong's #6965 BDB #877. Then we have the preposition *ʿachar* (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], which means *after, following*. Strong's #310 BDB #29. Our president Clinton rose to power after Brezhnev of the USSR (when such a country existed) did. An historian who might cover their time in power in a sentence or two might first speak of Brezhnev, his rise to power and his death, and then say "William Clinton arose to power after him." This does not mean that first Brezhnev died and then Clinton became our president; it simply means that he was in power first. That could be the case here.

What also appears to be the case, is that Judges 10:6–7 introduces a relatively simultaneous invasion of Israel by Ammon from the east and Philistia from the southwest. However, these invasions are treated separately in Judges 11–12 and 13–16 respectively. This gives us perhaps 40–49 years which overlap. There is no indication of when exactly the 18 year oppression of the Ammonites began in relationship to the 40 year oppression of the Philistines. My thinking is that the latter oppression began sometime during the former, perhaps 10–15 years into the Ammonite oppression. However, I have nothing to support this (nor do I find anything which contradicts this).

Furthermore, the time of Sampson is given as 20 years however, these were not 20 years which followed the 40 years of the Philistine oppression. These 20 years took place during the Philistine oppression. We are told this in Judges 15:20: *So he [Samson] judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines*. It appears as though the end of the rule of the Philistines came in 1Sam. 7. 1Sam. 7:13 reads: *So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come any more within the border of Israel. And the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel*. Since King Saul came to power circa 1043 B.C., we may place the end of Philistine oppression at roughly 1040 B.C. Since the oppression of the Philistines and the sons of Ammon are given together in Judges 10:6–11, we may assume that these oppressions were simultaneous. Therefore, they would have both begun c. 1090 B.C. Since Samson's judgeship occurred during the time of the Philistine aggression, and not before or after, it is not unreasonable to assume that the coterminous judgeships of Tola and Jair to dip into the period of time that the Ammonites and the Philistines subjugated Israel.

The last point where we can shave off a few years is that if a judge began his regional authority in the middle of a year, that half year was counted as his first year of rulership. Therefore, we can take off nearly one year per period of time quoted (the exceptions being where the change over occurred at the end/beginning of any given year).

Ending the period of the judges chronologically is difficult as there are differences of opinion as to when Saul was made king over Israel. However, to help guide us, we know that the Philistines oppressed Israel for 40 years (Judges 13:1) and that Eli was High Priest over Israel for 40 years (1Sam. 4:18). What appears to be the case is that Eli died 20 years into this oppression and that the oppression of the Philistines continued for 20 years after his death (1Sam. 4:18 6:1 7:2). Eli was functioning as a priest when Samuel's birth was prophesied (1Sam. 1), which we will take as a part of his 40 years of service to Israel.

The Compressed Time Line: Now, let me say a few words about the short view of the time of the judges. There are some who put the exodus and the taking of the land in the mid 13th century. ZPEB gives the short view (and, since ZPEB is a compilation of hundreds of authors, it is unlikely that all of them subscribe to that) and allows approximately 200 years for the times of the judges. I must admit to not giving this a great deal of study, and, if memory serves, the short view is a result of trying to put the exodus in line with Egyptian history. There are three reasons why I reject the short view of judges time period: Judges 11:24–26 1Kings 6:1 Acts 13:17–21. These three passages, previously discussed, give us a time period which allows us to give rough dates to the judges. The advantage of the compressed period of time apparently allows Biblical dates to fall in line with some secular

calculations and the generations leading to David given at the end of the Book of Ruth can be presented as *gap-less*. That is, there are four generations named in Ruth 4:21–22 from Salmon (and Rahab) to Jesse, David’s father (this exact same generational delineation is given in 1Chronicles 2, Matthew 1 and Luke 3). This works with the compressed time period of the judges. This does not work when 300+ years are given to the judges. The solution is simple: there were several generations which were left out. The Bible does not require each generation to be a father and son succession. These generations leading to David will be covered in greater detail in the introduction to the Book of Ruth.



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Time Line: Let me first offer two different time lines, one which comes from ZPEB, which features the *short view*, and the other from *The Narrated Bible*, which presents the era of the judges as running 300+ years. The Reese Chronological Bible offers two different chronologies, both of which are included here. It is obvious that there is not a great deal of agreement on these dates. Furthermore, even though I lean toward the longer period of time for the judges, some outstanding exegetes, including F. C. Cook (who was the editor of several volumes of *Barnes Notes*), believe that the short view is the more accurate²².

Comparative Chronology Chart					
Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible ¹	 The Short Chronology The Long Chronologies 	The Reese Chronological Bible ²		The Narrated Bible ³	The Bible Almanac ⁴
Date	Event	Date		Date	Date
		Reese	Klassen		
1230	Israelite conquest of Canaan			1406–1400	1406–1399
1220	Philistine settlement commences				
1205	The elders who outlive Joshua die and the period of the judges begins in Israel			1400–1380	
	The period of the judges			1380–1043	1380–1058
1200	The incident of the Levite and his concubine, as well as the aftermath (Judges 19–21)	1315			
	Assume 5 years of apostasy				1380–1375
	Mesopotamia oppresses Israel for 8 years	1415–1407	1372–1332	1380–1367	1375–1367
1190	Othniel’s defeat of Chushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia in southern Israel (Judges 3:7–11)				

²² *Barnes’ Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 413. What appears to be the case is that modern archeology and the movement of peoples is more in accord with a more recent exodus and a shorter period of time for the period of the judges.

Comparative Chronology Chart					
Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible ¹	 The Short Chronology The Long Chronologies 	The Reese Chronological Bible ²		The Narrated Bible ³	The Bible Almanac ⁴
Date	Event	Date		Date	Date
		Reese	Klassen		
	40 year peace following Othniel's victory	1407–1367	1372–1332	1367–1327	1367–1327
	Assume a 5 year period of apostasy				1327–1322
	Moabites oppress Israel for 18 years (Judges 3:12–14)	1367–1349	1332–1314	1327–1304	1322–1304
1170	Ehud's victory over the Moabites in the southwest (Judges 3:12–20)				
	Peacetime (80 year rest) following Ehud's defeat of the Moabites (Judges 3:26–30)	1349–1269	1332–1252	1304–1224	1304–1224
1150	Shamgar's exploits against the Philistines in the southwest (Judges 3:31)	1269	1253–1252		
	20 year oppression by the Canaanites (Judges 4:1–3)	1269–1249	1252–1232	1253–1224	
1125	Deborah and Barak triumph over Jabin and Sisera of Canaan, in central and northern Israel (Judges 4–5)			1224–1184	
	Peace following Deborah's and Barak's triumph (40 year rest)	1249–1209	1252–1212		1224–1184
	7 year oppression of the Midianites (Judges 6:1–6)	1209–1202	1212–1205	1184–1177	1184–1177
1110	Gideon defeats the Midianites and the Amalekites in central, northern and eastern Israel (Judges 6–8)				
	Peace in Israel following Gideon (40 year rest)	1202–1162	1212–1172	1177–1137	1177–1137
	Birth of Eli	1192	1134		
	Ruth, the Moabite	1268–1266	1251	1100	
1085	Abimelech becomes king over the Shechem District, which is in central Israel (Judges 9)	1162–1159	1175–1172		1137–1134
	Tola and Jair are judges for 45 years	1159–1114	1172–1127	1134–1089	1134–1089
	The High Priest Eli, and birth of Samuel (1Sam. 1)	1134–1094	1104–1064	1100–1050	

Comparative Chronology Chart						
Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible ¹	 The Short Chronology The Long Chronologies 		The Reese Chronological Bible ²		The Narrated Bible ³	The Bible Almanac ⁴
Date	Event	Date		Date	Date	
		Reese	Klassen			
	Jephthah's youth	1134–1096				
	Oppression of the Ammonites	1114–1096	1145–1127			
1070	Jephthah defeats the Ammonites in southern, central and eastern Israel (Judges 10:9–12:7). Jephthah rules for 6 years.	1096–1090	1127–1121	1089–1083	1089–1083	
	Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (25 years in total)	1090–1065	1121–1096	1083–1058	1083–1058	
	The oppression of the Philistines in south and central Israel (Judges 10:7 13:1)	1114–1074	1076–1036	1090–1050		
1070	Samson's exploits against the Philistines in southwestern Israel (Judges 13–16)	1108–1074		1090–1060		
	Samson's judgeship in Israel	1096–1076		1080–1060		
1060	The Danites migrate to the north (Judges 18)	1325				
1050	The Philistines defeat Israel twice and capture the Ark of God. Eli dies and Shiloh is destroyed. This affects southern, western and central Israel (1Sam. 4 Psalm 78:59–64 Jer. 7:14)	1094	1036			
1040	Samuel becomes a judge over Israel	1074–1027		1050		
1020	Saul is anointed king over Israel (1Sam. 10:1, 24 11:15)	1065		1043	1043	

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Time-Line and Geographical Chart: I am going to also attempt is a time-line, more detailed than what is normally found. This is done simply to allow you a place to hang your chronological and geographical hats—this is by no means a dogmatic delineation of time. I have used boldface where there appears to be a convergence of agreement or strong Scriptural reasons for choosing those dates:

The time period, broken up into decades
Northern Israel (Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali)

Central Israel (West Manasseh, Ephraim, Dan and Benjamin)									
Southern Israel (Judah and Simeon)									
East Israel (East Manasseh, Gad and Reuben; Gilead often refers to East Manasseh and Gad)									
Approximate Dates									

1400 B.C.	1390	1380	1370	1360	1350	1340	1330	1320	1310
Israel has	Oppres- -sion	Peace after deliverance by Othniel							
conquered the	Joseph conquers Bethel					Oppression	Peace after Ehud ↔		
Land of Promise;	Judah and Simeon campaigns								
Joshua dies	under Mesop otamia	Peace after deliverance by Othniel				under Moab	Peace after Ehud ↔		
1400–1380	1390– 1382	1382–1342				1342–1244	1324–1244 ↔		

1300 B.C.	1290	1280	1270	1260	1250	1240	1230	1220	1210
						Jabin oppresses Israel		Peace because of Deborah and Barak	
↔ 80 years of peace after Ehud									
				Shamgar					
↔ 80 years of peace after Ehud									
↔ 1324–1244					1244–1224		1224–1184 ↔		

The period of time during which Joshua was alive after the conquering of the Land of Promise may have been longer, and the time of the elders may have been longer. Under those circumstances, we would have had some overlap in the peace and oppression times.

1200 B.C.	1190	1180	1170	1160	1150	1140	1130	1120	1110
Peace	Midianite s oppress Northern,	Gideon (of Manasseh) defeats Midian, using only 300 men, thus bringing to				Abimelech	Tola judges west of the Jordan for a		
Deb & Barak	Central, and	Israel 40 years of peace. The men of					period of 23 years.		Philistines oppress
	Southern Israel	Israel wanted Gideon to be their king.							for 40 years
							Jair judges in east Israel for 22 years.	Sons of Ammon	
↔1224–1184	1184–1177	1177–1137				3 yrs	1134–1111 (1112)		1112–

1100 B.C.	1090	1080	1070	1060	1050	1040	1030	1020	1010
simultaneous with Ammonite oppression. Samson is a judge during this time.									
oppress Israel	Jephthah delivers								
-1093	1093-1087	1087-1063							

At this point in time, there are only portions of this chart which I am satisfied with. After exegeting the book of Samuel, I will probably revise the end of this chart. One major change is that I believe that the Philistine oppression began in the period of the judges, but overlapped the time of Saul, the first king.

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The Office Held by the Judges: Keil and Delitzsch give a good description of this office: *The judges whom Jehovah raised up in the interval between Joshua and Samuel were neither military commanders nor governors of the nation; nor were they authorities instituted by God and invested with the government of the state. They were not even chosen from the heads of the nation, but were called by the Lord out of the midst of their brethren to be the deliverers of the nation, either through His Spirit which came upon them, or through prophets and extraordinary manifestations of God; and the influence which they exerted, after the conquest and humiliation of the foe and up to the time of their death, upon the government of the nation and its affairs in general, was not the result of any official rank, but simply the fruit and consequence of their personal ability, and therefore extended for the most part only to those tribes to whom they had brought deliverance from the oppression of their foes. The tribes of Israel did not want any common secular ruler to fulfil the task that devolved upon the nation at that time...God therefore raised up even the judges only in times of distress and trouble. For their appearance and work were simply intended to manifest the power which the Lord could confer upon His people through His spirit, and were designed, on the one hand, to encourage Israel to turn seriously to its God, and by holding fast to His covenant to obtain the power to conquer all its foes; and, on the other hand, to alarm their enemies, that they might not attribute to their idols the power which they possessed to subjugate the Israelites, but might learn to fear the omnipotence of the true God.*²³ The NASB Study Bible gives a more succinct definition: *These judges were Spirit-filled persons who, in times of national emergencies, led the people in war and, having delivered them from the bondage of foreign oppression, continued to lead the people in peace. They functioned both as military and as civil magistrates.*²⁴

It is also important to add that between Joshua and Samuel, there is no one judge who appears to have had the support of all the clans of Israel. Joshua, because Moses, Israel's undisputed leader, picked him and because of his march through the Land of Promise, was recognized by all the tribes as the leader of Israel. Samuel, after many years of preparation also seems to have secured the respect and honor of all the tribes (1Sam. 7:15). However, in between them, there is no judge whose authority appears to be universal.

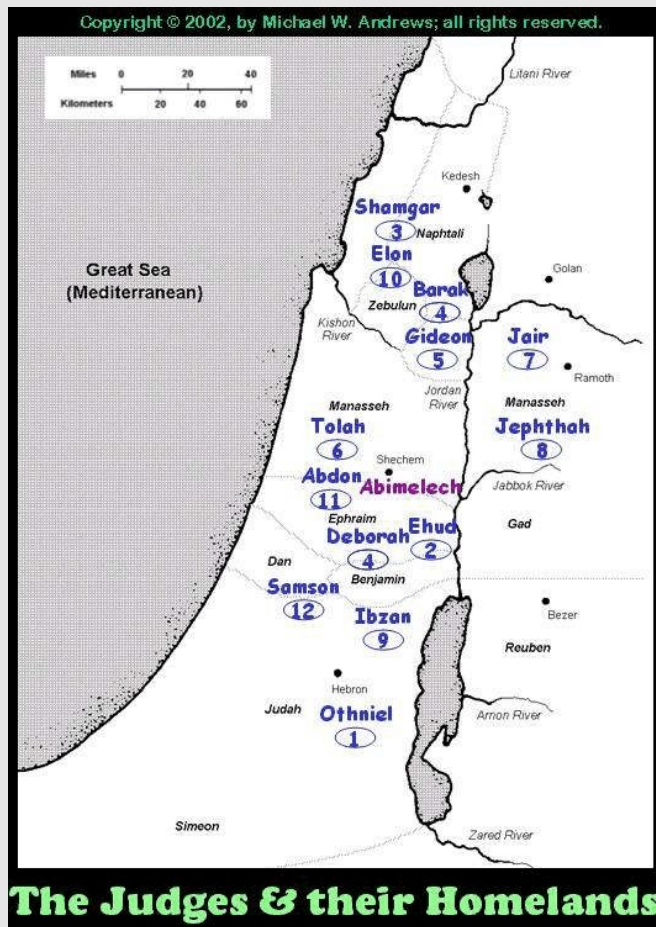
Tribal Background of the Judges: You will note through the list of judges and deliverers, that there is no mention of the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Asher, Naphtali or Reuben. All of the other tribes are mentioned. Furthermore, we would not expect the tribe of Levi to be a part of the political leadership in Israel.

²³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, pp. 289-290.

²⁴ *New American Standard Bible, Study Edition*; A. J. Holman Company, ©1975 by The Lockman Foundation, p. 241.

To help you locate these judges, I have two maps from the internet below:

Location of the Various Judges



Taken from: http://gilead.ms11.net//study_jdg_02.jpg



http://www.hope.edu/academic/religion/bandstra/RTO/T/CH7/CH7_F5.JPG

Othniel is a tough call, as he appears to be associated with the tribe of Judah, through his relationship to Caleb; however, since he fought against Mesopotamia, it is more likely that this took place in the far northeast of the territory of Israel.

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Synopsis: First of all, the book of the Judges is not altogether in chronological order. There are two portions of this book (chapters 17–18 and 19–21) which are identified as coming from the time period of the judges (*in those days, there was no king in Israel*), but there are internal hints which indicate that they belong with the early portion of the period of the judges.

That being said, in chapter one, we see what the nine tribes, those found west of the Jordan, had done with regards to taking the land which God had given them. The only progress made, in general, was by the tribes of Judah and Simeon. In this chapter, we see a parallel incident concerning Caleb and the taking of his own inheritance from Joshua 15. In chapter two, God speaks to Israel in grace, but then warns them of judgement. Joshua's death is also recorded herein, which parallels Joshua 24. The generation which follows him does not know God and serves

the gods of the indigenous peoples of the Land of Promise. The heathen were left in the land to test this new generation of Israel. The beginning of chapter three names these peoples specifically.

In the middle of Judges 3, we begin a chronological examination of the period of the judges, where each judge or governor is named, along with the important incidents which surrounded his life. From here through chapter sixteen, the history of Israel is viewed chronologically, although at the end, there are a couple of regional judges whose terms overlap. We begin with Othniel, who is related to Caleb, who delivers Israel from the control of Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia. After his death, Eglon, the king of Moab, puts Israel into a taxation-type servitude. Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite, delivers Israel through assassination. Then Shamgar delivers Israel from the Philistines. Chapters four and five: Deborah and Barak are raised up to deliver Israel from the control of Jabin the Canaanite king. This is one of the rare instances where we have a woman in Israel who is in a position of power and authority. When men do not take their proper place of authority, which is during a time of degeneracy, then women must step in to fill the gap, which is what Deborah did. Barak, who did not want to take a chance of being killed in battle, persuaded Deborah to go with him into battle against Jabin and his general Sisera. In chapters six through eight, we meet Gideon, who is often much maligned as he required God to perform several signs before he would follow Him. However, once he was certain that he was being led by Jehovah, he reveal great personal bravery, integrity and character. He led Israel to war against Midian, who had oppressed Israel for seven years. Suddenly, after Gideon, one of his degenerate sons, Abimelech, places himself in rulership over Israel (Judges 9). He takes control in a manner not unlike a mafia godfather, killing all of his possible competition. In chapter ten, we have two minor judges, Tola and Jair, mentioned, after whom Israel begins to serve the heathen gods of the surrounding and indigenous nations. The Philistines and the Ammonites arise and subjugate Israel (the Philistines from within and the Ammonites from the east from without). At this point, the book of the Judges forks, and we first follow Jephthah, the black sheep of his family, the runt of his family's litter, who is raised up by God to deliver Israel from the sons of Ammon in chapter eleven. His activities take place in eastern Israel, on the other side of the Jordan. Three more minor judges are named in that chapter, and then we move into Judges 13–16, for the story of Samson, one of the more unusual and extremely flawed heroes of Scripture, which also ends the chronological portion of this book.

In Judges 17–18, we go back to an early period of time in the judges, where the Danites, unable to take their inheritance (Judges 1:34), go northward until they find a quiet, peaceful people, and slaughter them and take their territory. Lest you think that this was with the blessing of God, they hired a Levite priest to do their bidding. From thereon, the tribe of Dan occupied two areas in Israel. Chapters nineteen through twenty-one also occurred early on during the period of the judges, either subsequent to, or coterminous with Judges 17–18. Here, in this passage, we have a very revealing look at the complete degeneracy of Israel. We have a roving group of Benjamites in Gibeah who are sexual predators, preferring males, but more than willing to exert their power over females. In this tale, we have an itinerant Levite who retrieves his mistress who left him, but then, to save his own skin, throws her out to be ravaged by these sexual predators. When he finds her dead the next morning, he cuts her into pieces and parcel posts these pieces to the various tribes of Israel. These other tribes demand justice from the tribe of Benjamin, and then things get even more out of hand. It is an awful story with many parallels to our United States today.

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For the Itching Ears: There will be portions of the book of Judges—and I am specifically thinking of Judges 15—which have never been properly exegeted before. I will not be introducing any new doctrines which will shake conservative Christian theology to its core; however, I will teach some things correctly as they have possibly never been taught before. There are things emphasized in the Hebrew which only one English translation actually catches; and there are things which Samson says and does which have never been properly explained. So, if you think you know the story of Samson, you're wrong. You really don't know much about him.

Another important fact about this book that you may not realize: the northeastern tribes of Israel—Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh—are not mentioned except for Reuben as a part of Deborah and Barak's song (Judges 5). My best guess is that the history of these tribes from this time period can only be found in 1Chron. 5:9 (and that is debatable).

Israel's relationship to God during the Book of the Judges: There are several phrases and things mentioned or not mentioned which indicate that Israel was on shaky ground during this time period. The ark of the covenant is only mentioned once in this book (Judges 20:27), and the tabernacle of God is never mentioned. The Sabbath is never mentioned. There is one feast to Jehovah mentioned near the end of the book.

The Time Period During Which Judges Was Written: There are several views here, the most widespread is that the book of Judges was not composed until Israel had a king. This position is held chiefly because of the oft-occurring phrase [in those days there was no king in Israel](#) (Judges 17:6 18:1 19:1 21:25). The idea of a king was not foreign to Israel's thinking. All of the nations which surrounded them had kings and Moses had already given advice in Deuteronomy concerning the position of a king. However, what we ought to realize is that, given the accounts of these incidents, there is more evidence that these were first-hand accounts rather than the accounts of an oral tradition which was passed on generation after generation (a silly theory which refuses to die). Part of the reason for the *oral tradition* is the fact that archeology, for a long time, maintained that writing just was not a part of ancient human culture, despite the Biblical record to the contrary. In the book of Judges, we have a young man who is pressed into writing down the names of the princes of Succoth, indicating that (1) he could write, and, (2) his knowledge of things political was complete (he obviously was not just some kid pulled off the streets). What is more likely is that these two incidents were recorded by those who observed the incident first-hand, and then this one line was appended to these scrolls in order to indicate what period of time that they came from. In any case, there were certain incidents in this book which only make sense if recounted by the person who was there (e.g., Ehud in Judges 3:15–30, where he assassinated the ruler of Moab; Samson and his exploits, particularly his relationship to Delilah; the rape and murder of the Levite's mistress, which is certainly a first-hand account of someone who did **not** go outdoors where the woman was raped). We studied the book of Genesis and saw how it appears as though we have official records which were appended and updated from time to time. Judges 3:15–16:31 appear to be done the same way. The first portion of Judges may have been written by an editor many years later (perhaps Samuel?), who also appended the scrolls of Judges 17–18 and 19–21, as, by their content, they belonged with this book.

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The Authorship of the Book of Judges: First of all, let me quickly give the reasons why this book was written during the time of King Saul *or earlier*: (1) Judges was written prior to the reign of Solomon, as the Canaanites still remained in Gezer (Judges 1:29 1Kings 9:16). (2) Judges was written prior to the time of David, as he conquered Jerusalem (Judges 1:21 1Chron. 11:4–7). (3) Judges was written prior to the time of David as Sidon is the capitol of Phœnicia rather than Tyre during the time period of the judges (Judges 1:31 3:3 10:6 18:28 2Sam. 5:11).²⁵ Essentially, the force of these arguments is that someone during the reign of David (or later) did not just make up stories about the judges of Israel in order to fill an historical gap. No one from the time period even gathered and edited these stories together. The internal evidence of the book makes the final composition of this book prior to the reign of David, which would place us in the reign of Saul or the time period prior to having a king in Israel.

The popular view is that the book of Judges was written by Samuel. The standard argument is that the phrase [in those days, there was no king in Israel](#) indicates that this book was written during the time of King Saul (or later). This is a fallacious argument. First of all, that phrase does not occur until the third portion of Judges (Judges 17:6), and this phrase could have been added or appended to the historical document in order to place it in its historical

²⁵ Paraphrased from *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 641.

context (we have similar additions to the book of Genesis which do not take from its inspiration). Although it is reasonable that Samuel (or, even Eli) put together the final product, because of the difference of vocabulary and writing styles in just the first two chapters of Judges, it is more likely that there are several different original authors here. The phrase, *in those days, there was no king in Israel*, was very likely added when these stories were edited together. Most commentators agree that there are sections in the book of Judges so disparate as to cry out for multiple authors.²⁶ What we would have expected to see is for Phinehas, who wrote the final portion of Joshua, to have naturally continued with the book of the Judges. However, the vocabulary of the beginning of the book of Judges is much simpler than what we find in the portions of Joshua that Phinehas wrote; therefore, that would seem to eliminate him as an author. Furthermore, he is not mentioned until Judges 20:28; and if he were the author, we would expect to hear about more of what occurred in his general vicinity. In fact, the first author that we can point to with some certainty is Ehud,²⁷ a judge who is mentioned in the latter half of chapter 3. What is recorded in the latter portion of that chapter is an event told with great detail, an event known only to Ehud and Eglon, the king of Moab, who didn't talk much about it (their encounter will leave Eglon dead). This would indicate that Ehud was the writer of this portion of Scripture. There are things which occurred in the several chapters about Samson that only Samson would have known. However, he died violently without a chance to record his own death (I'm sorry, but I don't go in for this *he could have predicted* his own death bull crap; certainly he could have, but that would have been out of character for his abilities, spiritual gift and writing style). So, somehow, what Samson did was recorded by someone—perhaps most of it by Samson himself—but the last portion of his life had to have been recorded by an eyewitness other than Samson. Now, again, the explanation might be given that God the Holy Spirit inspired someone to record something that they did not see, and such a thing is apropos for the first chapter of Genesis. However, keep in mind that the authors of Scripture were real people who at times realized that they were writing Scripture and at times, did not fully realize that. However, they recorded what occurred for the same reasons that anyone would record this information. It was spectacular and someone needed to record it for posterity. Or, perhaps the history was not spectacular, but there are those of us who have a drive to write; and some have a natural drive to record historical events. When we get to that portion of the book of Judges, we will discuss it further.

We have in this book an incredible variety of writing styles and vocabulary. The poetry found in Judges 5, which discusses the historical incidents of Judges 4, is so different from Judges 4 as to almost seem like a different language. What this would indicate to me is that there were several authors for the book of Judges, none of whom necessarily knew about the others. Whereas the book of Genesis seems to have this common thread that someone would begin writing where another person left off, we do not seem to have the same style here. We do have, for a period of about ten chapters, a chronological recording of the judges themselves, but then, with the life of Samson, we double back in time and take up events which are coterminous with those recorded in Judges 10–12; the history of Samson is then followed by two lengthy stories of several unsavory individuals who lived during the time period of the judges—in fact, who probably lived at the beginning of this time period (we have already discussed the placement of these latter chapters). And interspersed in these final chapters is the phrase *In those days, there was no king of Israel; a man did what was right in his own eyes* (Judges 17:6 18:1 19:1 21:25). Although this refrain suggests that these chapters were written under the monarchy of David, or even of Solomon, as has already been discussed, this would be very unlikely. The most reasonable explanation is that these events really did take place, and were recorded at different times by one or two different authors, who were likely participants in the historical events themselves; and that these couple stories were later woven into a book by an editor from the time of Saul, David or Solomon. This would easily explain the occasional reference from time to time which tends to point toward that latter period of time; and yet also account for the great historical detail that we find, which would have been logically recorded by an eyewitness.²⁸ For reasons already elaborated on, I reject the final authorship occurring during the time of David or Solomon.

²⁶ For instance, see *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 754.

²⁷ I know that you call him *EE-hud*, but his name is *ā-HOOD*.

²⁸ Let me further add: do not confuse this with the recording of the book of Genesis. Whereas, it was likely that one man, possibly even Moses, did a final editing of the book of Genesis, what appears to be the case is that one man would record a few chapters of that book, and then hand it off to a spiritual hero of the next generation, who would then record the historical events of his time. In the book of Judges, apart from chapters 2–12, we probably do not have one spiritual hero handing off this book to a hero in the next generation.

To be even more precise, since this phrase is found only in these final chapters of the book of the Judges (although they are pertinent to later chapters), and because, from the standpoint of syntax, this statement stands in contrast to the narrative around it, what is likely the case is that the book of Judges existed as someone of a cohesive whole from chapters 1 through 16. In other words, the original ending to the book of Judges would have been Judges 16:31, where Samson is said to have judged Israel for twenty years. Somewhere, floating around, were manuscripts of these final two incidents from Israel's history (as well as the book of Ruth), which logically fit into the book of Judges. Even apart from the recurrent phrase of these last couple chapters, the writing style does seem to be very similar throughout, apart from Judges 5; and dissimilar to the final chapter of Joshua. This would suggest that an eyewitness recorded both final incidents and then someone from the era of David or Solomon (and, perhaps even Samuel from the era of Saul), appended the book of Judges with these final five chapters, adding a brief comment here and there. Or it means that the incidents had been recorded, and someone from that era just sat down and rewrote the incidents entirely, which would also account for the general continuity of style and vocabulary.

There is an extremely important point which is often ignored when examining the authorship of these various books of Scripture. The Bible indicates itself that much of Scripture was lost or partially destroyed and then recovered during the reign of Josiah (2Kings 22:8). In recognizing the importance of the Word of God, there were obviously then times in the history of the Jews where they had to take what they had of the sacred texts and copy them, and, in many instances, piece them together. Therefore, we often find phrases like, *and so it is known even until today*. That is, later editors, in piecing Scripture together (the book of Joshua and Judges are prime examples of this), often affirm name changes or update or clarify geographical references. Given what Scripture says about itself and about its history, these are things which one would naturally expect to find. This in no way indicates that the books of the Bible were written in full centuries after the fact; however, these things indicate that there were very minor additions made perhaps centuries later, to update, for instance, a geographical reference for the later reader.

Let me give you a more clear illustration. In 1Chron. 29:29 and 2Chron. 9:29, we have mention of several reference books written by nearly a half dozen authors, only one of which is possibly extant today (the book of Samuel). The books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles were no doubt composed using these books as reference material. The resulting books are inspired by God—the source material was not necessarily so. We likely have the same thing in the book of Judges. We have some historical records and other documents which someone sat down and pieced together, often doing no more than inserting a line here or there. The result was God's Word.

Now, for those who are concerned, this does **not**, in any way, detract from the verbal plenary view of the inspiration of Scripture. I believe, and with good reason, that the Bible is God's Word, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, and have covered this in great deal in my *Study of Inspiration*. The fact that there was some editing done by believers at a later date does not mean that these words are less inspired, nor does it mean that the comments added by a later editor are not inspired. In the Bible, we have a whole host of different forms of literature, and one form is no less inspired than another. We have narrative, we have the recording of God's exact words, we have poetry, we have lengthy discussions, we have letters, we have the recording of history, we have prophecy, and we have edited compilations of Israel's history—this rich variety of writing forms in no way detracts from the fact that the Bible is God's Word.

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The Authorship Chart

Now let me make some suggestions as to who the original authors were. This is a much tougher call. Although we have many first-hand accounts, the actual authors are difficult to ascertain. Let me make the following suggestions:

Portion of the book of Judges	Notes and Comments	Possible Author
Judges 1:1–3:7	Information gotten from the other portions of the book of Judges as well as other historical records. Whoever wrote these chapters wrote them prior to David's conquering of Jerusalem (2Sam. 5:6–9 1Chron. 11:4–9) and probably prior to the military advances made by King Saul (1Sam. 14:47–48). Since Saul delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them , it is reasonable to assume that the person who wrote Judges 1, which records Israel's inability to take the land fully that God had given them (see Judges 1:27–36) wrote prior to the time of Saul's victories.	Samuel, who may have assembled the entire book from previous records, writing this introduction himself.
Judges 3:8–14	As above? Appended historical records.	Official historical recorder.
Judges 3:15–29	First-hand account of Ehud's assassination of Eglon.	Ehud
Judges 3:30–31	Appended historical records.	Official historical recorder.
Judges 4:1–5:31a	The history of Deborah and Barak.	Either Deborah, Barak, or an official, unnamed aide-de-camp. My guess would be that Barak wrote chapter 4 and Deborah chapter 5.
Judges 5:31b–6:10	Oppression under Midian.	An official historical recorder; possibly Gideon.
Judges 6:11–8:27	Gideon delivers Israel from Midian. There are portions of this passage—particularly God speaking to Gideon—which demand a first-hand author.	Gideon, perhaps appended by his official aide-de-camp historian.
Judges 8:28–10:18	Historical filler surrounding the degenerate rulership of Abimelech.	Possibly Gaal or Zebul or an official historian. This portion could have had several different authors, most of them official historical recorders.
Judges 11:1–12:6	The story of Jephthah the Gileadite.	Probably Jephthah with some information appended by an official historian.
Judges 12:7–15	Final record of Jephthah; minor judges.	Official court historian.
Judges 13–16	The story of Samson. Certainly, some of these incidents were recounted by Samson, whether verbally to someone else (likely, knowing Samson, verbally to many people)	Samson or someone whom Samson spoke to; some filler added via historical records.
Judges 17	Micah and his priest-for-hire.	Aide-de-camp historian or court historian.

Portion of the book of Judges	Notes and Comments	Possible Author
Judges 18	The Danites take Laish from a peaceful people.	Aide-de-camp historian or a court historian—probably the same as above.
Judges 19	The rape and murder of the Levite's mistress. This appears to be first-hand from one of those in the house.	The old man of Ephraim probably gave this verbally to a court historian.
Judges 20–21	Israel avenges the Levite's mistress; however, gets out of control. It appears as though the final third of this chapter was recorded or recounted by someone who was an observer or actually a part of the battle.	Probably an aide-de-camp historian; because of the latter portion of Judges 21, I would think there were at least two authors.
Entire book	Although much of this book was certainly recounted verbally by those who were there; or written down by those who were there, there was undoubtedly one man who organized this book, and appended it here or there. My guess is the one who composed the first two and a half chapters, did the final composition from the historical records which were extant.	Samuel as the final editor (who seems to be the most popular choice among theologians)?

Now, let us assume for a moment that the book of Judges was not assembled into a unified whole until the end of this time period by, say, Samuel. Would there be a reason for that? ZPEB offers one explanation: *Moreover, there was a human motive underlying the promulgation of the Book of Judges. The monarchy in the early period faced opposition from the champions of the old traditions. There was an active concern to show that the monarchy had achieved what the amphictyony had singularly failed to win—namely, a complete conquest and the establishment of law and stability, which indicates an early, rather than a post-Disruption (922 B.C.) Date. The favorable attitude to the monarchy thus implied, makes the Talmudic tradition that Samuel himself was the author of the Judges appear unlikely. His attitude to the monarchy is clearly revealed in 1Samuel 8.²⁹* So ZPEB, on the one hand, gives you a reasonable human motive, but then takes away Samuel's traditional authorship on the other hand (or, vice versa).

I include this information on authorship, not as gospel, but as a list of suggestions and theories, based upon the information which these portions contain, as well as upon the vocabulary and sentence structure. Who wrote the book, whether a group or one person, is of great interest to me, although this information is not necessary in order to understand or to appreciate this portion of God's Word.

What should be clear is, someone from the era of David or Solomon did not just sit down and start writing stories that he made up or heard as bedtime stories. We have historical incidents which, in most cases, appear to be very personal; and we have such a remarkable difference in vocabulary and writing style in Judges 5, to further suggest that someone did not just come along and make this stuff up. Furthermore, the way these incidents are recalled; some with great detail and some with the sparsest of detail, again points to dissimilar historical documents as a source rather than to one particular author. However, there does appear to be an attempt to give a complete history of the time of the judges, with the number of years of oppression given, and long with the years during which a judge might govern Israel. This would suggest the final hand of an editor.

²⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 742. In fact, ZPEB even offers the possibility of two editors.

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Style of Writing and Translation: The beginning of this book seems to have been written by a fairly simple man; the vocabulary is quite simple and repetitive, as is the sentence structure (much like most of the book of 1 Samuel). However, that is not the case for the entirety of this book. In fact, the vocabulary and sentence structure change several times in this book.

On the other hand, there are some definite similarities. Apart from Shamgar, we have the same formula for the minor judge: the length of his term of office and his burial place (Judges 10:2–3, 5 12:9–15), which details are also given of Samson (Judges 15:20 16:31) and Jephthah (Judges 12:7). Furthermore, we typically have the phrase *after him*, which can be misinterpreted to indicate consecutive judgeships in the same area. With Gideon, only the place of burial was noted (Judges 8:32). In fact, with Gideon and prior to, what was typical was to give the length of time of the oppression and give the length of time that the land was *undisturbed* (Judges 3:8, 11, 14, 30 4:3 5:31b 6:1 8:28). This does not mean that we have two different authors for these two portions—this was simply the information recorded. Furthermore, in the first half of the book of the Judges, we have periods of time when the land was undisturbed. This would indicate that the judges which we find up through Gideon were chronological and that his son, the gangster—Abimelech—marked the dividing point. After Abimelech, we no longer have long periods of time during which the land was undisturbed.

The Vocabulary: The vocabulary found throughout most of Judges 1 is particularly easy, but in Judges 2, it becomes a great deal more sophisticated. Through the main of Judges, the vocabulary and sentence structure is fairly easy. There are difficult areas, such as the last portion of Judges 20.

Literary Style: Even in chapter 1, there is a variety of styles. Throughout most of that chapter, we have a very, very simple, fundamental Hebrew, and we find some words used 5–10 times in that chapter alone. On the other hand, there are verses in Judges 2 which are rather complex.

There is a general style given to the history of each judge. This literary style will be found once in general form and six times specifically in the book of the Judges. We are first told that Israel does evil in the sight of God, turning away from God to the idols of the heathen around them.

General Style

Judges 2:11–13

Specific Example

Judges 3:7

And so the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of Y^ehowah when they served the Baals. And so they forsook Y^ehowah, the God of their fathers, the One who brought them out from the land of Egypt. Then they went after other gods from the gods of the peoples who [were] around them. They bowed down to them and they provoked Y^ehowah. So they forsook Y^ehowah and they served Baal and Ashtaroth.

So then the sons of Israel did the evil in the sight of Y^ehowah, they forgot Y^ehowah their God and they served the Baalim and the Asheroth.

Further examples: Judges 3:12a 4:1 6:1 10:6 13:1a

Then God's anger would burn against Israel and God would sell Israel into the hand of some foreign despot.

General Style

Judges 2:14

Specific Example

Judges 3:8

Therefore, the anger of Y^ehowah was kindled against Israel, and He gave them into the hand of pillagers and they pillaged them. And he sold them into a hand of their enemies from round about and they were no longer able to take a stand before the faces of their enemies.

So then the anger of Y^ehowah burned against Israel and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Aram-Naharaim. Then the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim for eight years.

Further examples: Judges 3:12b–14 4:2 6:2–5 10:7–8 13:1b

Israel would then become distressed and call out for God. God would answer and send them a deliverer who would deliver them out of the hand of the ones who persecuted them.

General Style

Judges 2:15–16

Specific Example

Judges 3:9–10

In all of where they went out, the hand of Y^ehowah was against them for evil, as that which Y^ehowah had promised and as that which Y^ehowah had sworn to them. Therefore, He showed extreme hostility on account of them. And so Y^ehowah raised up judges and so they delivered them from the hand of their looters.

Then the sons of Israel cried to Y^ehowah, so Y^ehowah raised up a savior for the sons of Israel. And so Othniel ben Kenaz, younger brother of Caleb, delivered them. Then the Spirit of Y^ehowah was upon him and he judged Israel. He went out to war and Y^ehowah gave Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Aram, into his hand, and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

Further examples: Judges 3:15–30a 4:3–5:31a 6:6–8:28a 10:9–12:7 13:2–16:30

Then, God would give the Israelites peace and prosperity until they moved away from Him again.

General Style

Judges 2:17

Specific Example

Judges 3:11–12b

And furthermore, they did not listen [and obey] their judges, but they committed adultery with other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way which their fathers had walked [who] listened and obeyed the commandments of Y^ehowah—they [this new generation] did not do so.

Then the land rested for forty years and Othniel ben Kenaz died. So the sons of Israel continued to do evil in the sight of Y^ehowah...

Further examples: Judges 3:30b 5:31b 8:28b–33 12:8–15 16:31

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The History of the World at that Time: McGee makes some important points here: *The account of the judges was discounted by the critics for many years. They said because it was not in secular history, these events actually did not take place, and there was no situation in the past into which they could be fitted. But all of that has changed now because of the spade of the archeologist and the scholarly work of men like Burney, Moulton, Breasted, and Garstang. These outstanding conservative scholars have given us the background for the Book of Judges. Now we know that at this particular time in history Egypt was weak, very weak. It had been a world power, but it was weak because the Pharaohs who were then in office were weak men. Also there were internal problems and troubles. As a result, this nation was losing its grip upon its colonies. The nomadic tribes to the east of the Dead Sea and to the south of the Dead Sea began to push in. They pushed in because there was a drought in their land. They had experienced it there for several years. So these nomadic tribes of the desert began to*

encroach upon the territory of Israel. The Midianites and the Amalekites were among the Bedouins of the desert who came into the land.³⁰ The Midianites and the Amalekites will push their way into Israel in Judges 6.

Idolatry: Nations who worshipped idols surrounded Israel, as well as permeated Israel. The Canaanites took that which was observable in nature, then both personified and imputed deity to these things. There was great importance attached to fertility with regards to agriculture, livestock and human stock. There was cultic prostitution of both sexes associated with the Canaanite religions, as well as human sacrifice, which occurred less frequently than we might think³¹.

Israel fell into these cultic religions and worshiped Baal and the Ashteroth (Judges 2:11–13, 17). One of the great misunderstandings of the Old Testament is intermarriage. Although not a hot topic of the book of Judges, the results of intermarriage between the Israelites and the pagan population of the land is seen in Israel's continual overtures made toward the religions of the land (Judges 3:7 4:1 6:10, 28–32). The emphasis of the Old Testament was never upon racial purity but upon the purity of the faith (Ex. 34:12–17 Deut. 7:2–5)³².

The Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Judges: We have a few specific claims for the inspiration of the book of Judges. Several times throughout this book, Jehovah speaks (Judges 1:2 7:2–11 10:11–14); the Angel of Jehovah speaks (Judges 2:1–3 6:11–25 13:13–18)³³; the will of Jehovah is known (Judges 2:11–3:2, 8–9 4:1–2, 6–7, 14–15 6:1 9:56–57 10:6–7 13:1); and several times He allows His will be known (Judges 20:18, 23, 28). The Holy Spirit is mentioned several times as filling those who required His ministry (Judges 3:10 6:34 11:29 13:25 14:6, 19). A prophet of Jehovah is sent to the people of Israel (Judges 6:8–10). Finally, the power of Jehovah is made known in Judges 5:4–5 6:39–40 7:19–25 15:19. As is found throughout much of Scripture, these things are presented more as a matter of fact rather than with an unusual amount of fanfare. It is when miracles are performed for a large group of people that God's power is given more fanfare (this occurs primarily during three periods of time). Furthermore, the canonicity of this book has never been seriously challenged, despite the fact that its authorship is unknown.

Authority and canonicity work in two directions. The book of Judges, despite the absolute degeneracy of the people, does not dispute with or discredit previous men of God, nor does the book deify them. Moses is mentioned in Judges 1:20 3:4 4:11; Joshua is mentioned in Judges 1:1 2:6–10, 21–23; Caleb in Judges 1:12–20 3:9; and the authority of Phinehas is recognized, albeit briefly, in Judges 20:28. Jephthah first tries to reason with the king of Ammon from the recorded history of Scripture (Judges 11:12–27).

One way canonicity is attested to is when other books of the Bible refer back to a book as authoritative, as well as that book making reference to previous Scriptures. We will examine that in the next couple sections:

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Reference by the book of Judges to Previously Written Scripture: The period of time of the judges was a very bleak period of time. Therefore, later writers do not quote specific Scriptures from this book. However, we do find general references; for instance, the death of Joshua is mentioned twice (Judges 1:1 2:8); there are two passages which parallel passages in Joshua (Joshua 15:13–19 parallels Judges 1:10–15; and Judges 2:6–9 summarizes several verses and passages from Joshua). There are various passages in Judges which indicate that the writer had some familiarity with the Law (for instance, Judges 6:8, 13 10:11 11:13–26 13:5 16:17 20:26–27). I do not recall any passage in the book of Judges which *quotes* a previous passage.

³⁰ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 145.

³¹ Paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 757.

³² There are several important instances of valid interracial marriages in Scripture, which is beyond the scope of our immediate study. See my short study on this subject in Deut. 7:4.

³³ In each case, it is made clear that the Angel of Jehovah is Jehovah.

References to the Book of Judges by Other Writers of Scripture: What we find are more general references, either to the historicity of specific characters in this book, or a general mention of the judges.

Judge	Portion of the Judges	Reference
Barak	Judges 4–5	1Sam. 12:11: “Then Jehovah sent Jerubbaal [another name for Gideon] and Bedan [or, Barak in the Greek and Syriac codices] and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security.” Heb. 11:32: And what more will I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah...
Gideon	Judges 6–8	1Sam. 12:11 Heb. 11:32a
Jephthah	Judges 11–12	1Sam. 12:11 Heb. 11:32a
Samson	Judges 13–16	Heb. 11:32a

Specific Scriptural References to Historical Figures from the Book of Judges

Scripture	Quote
1Sam. 12:9–11	“But they forgot Jehovah their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried out to Jehovah and said, ‘We have sinned because we have forsaken Jehovah and we have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth; but now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You.’ Then Jehovah sent Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security.”
2Sam. 11:21	“Who struck down Abimelech, son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall so that he died a Thebez? Why did you go so near to wall?”
Psalms 83:9–11	Deal with them as with Midian; as with Sisera and Jabin, at the torrent of Kishon; Who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground; Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, “Let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God.”
Isa. 9:4	For You will break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders. The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.
Isa. 10:26a	“And Jehovah of the armies will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb.”

General Scriptural References to Judges

Scripture	Quote
Ruth 1:1a	Now it was in the days when judges governed, that there was a famine in the land.
2Sam. 7:11 (1Chron. 17:10)	God is speaking to David, giving him the Davidic Covenant: “Even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel...”

General Scriptural References to Judges	
Scripture	Quote
Psalm 83:9–11	Deal with them as with Midian; as with Sisera and Jabin, at the torrent of Kishon; Who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground; Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, "Let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God."
2Kings 23:21–22	Josiah is reinstating the Passover: Then the king commanded all the people, saying, "Celebrate the Passover to Jehovah your God as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." Surely such a Passover had not been celebrated from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah.
Isa. 1:26a	God is speaking about the restored Zion: "And I will restore your judges as at the first."
Acts 13:20	Paul is giving a dissertation on the Law and the Prophets: "And after these things, He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet."

Finally, by interpretation, we have several references to the time period of the judges in Neh. 9:27–31 Psalm 78:56–68 106:34–45. Now, although no book of the Bible references the book of Judges and says, *Thus saith the LORD*; there is very little in the book of Judges that we would quote in that way. This book records, as has been mentioned, a very dark time in the history of Israel; therefore, there would be few who would quote this book in order to justify a doctrine or to make a point.

Textual Criticism: With the exception of a half dozen passages, the text of this book appear to be very well preserved (this is determined by comparing various versions of the Hebrew and comparing the Hebrew to the various ancient translations). According to ZPEB, there were two apparently distinct versions of the book of Judges, made evident when one compares LXX A (5th century A.D.) With LXX B (4th century A.D.). I only have the latter version, so I can't really comment here on the former. However, LXX β lines up very well with the Hebrew text (which is lucky, because very little of the book of Judges was preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls). There is apparently one version of the Septuagint (Rahif's edition) which simply prints the two Greek versions of Judges side-by-side.³⁴

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Order and Location in Hebrew Canon: It is the seventh book of Scripture in the Hebrew Bible just as it is in the English Bible. It is the second book of the second section of the Hebrew Bible, known as the *Nevi'im*, which are the prophets (the Hebrew Bible is broken down into the Law, the Prophets and the Writings).

The History which was Left Out of the Book of Judges: Keller mentions some of the things which archeology has revealed that the Israelites accomplished (and, in all fairness, perhaps it was the Canaanites before them?): *Real pioneer work was done by the Israelites in the mountains. Uninhabitable areas, districts without springs or streams were opened up. Although it sounds unbelievable, what remains of a new technique used by their ancestors has been partly taken over and put into commission again by the state of Israel today. They dug cisterns in the ground to collect the rainfall, and lined the insides with a type of limestone plaster which was hitherto unknown. These fixtures were so solidly built that they have been able to withstand the ravages of time for thousands of years.*³⁵ What is mentioned in the book of Judges is how the Israelites made slaves of the Canaanites who remained in the land. Obviously, their slavery had to be employed in some way. What is interesting about the

³⁴ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 743.

³⁵ Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition), p. 170.

book of the Judges is that, if this were simply man's history of this time period, then we would hear about certain building projects which were initiated during this time period. However, the most we find in this book is the occasional rebuilding of an area (Judges 21:23).

Egypt, as one would expect, played little or no part in the history of the Israelites during the time of the judges. After what Egypt endured when Moses took his people out of that land, the Egyptians had no interesting in trying the God of the Israelites. According to ZPEB, the countries of Moab and Edom had been established a scant 50 years or so prior to Israel entering into the Land of Promise. The establishment of Ammon, again according to ZPEB, occurred roughly the same time that Israel did enter into the land³⁶.

Comparing the Heroes of the Judges to the Spiritual Heroes found in the Old Testament: ZPEB compares the failings and shortcomings of the men in this book to those of David, Abraham or Solomon, who have a greatness which outshines their worst moments. What we do not find in this book is a great man along the lines of a Joshua, Moses or David. We have very flawed individuals—Gideon and Jephthah probably the least so—but not one of them is even close to those found in the books on either side of the Judges. *ZPEB: the judges were men who lived in an age of low standards, and this fact is reflected in the narratives, giving a graphic representation of conditions in a period of apostasy, when the Mosaic covenant, with its high standards, was in partial abeyance*³⁷.

Extra-Biblical Commentary: “What makes this book so lively and exciting is the diversity and the contrasts exhibited by the personalities who appear in it”—or so we are assured by Joseph Dheilly in the Glossary to the five-volume Andreas edition of the Bible, which appeared in 1975. Two years earlier, the definitive *Handbuch zur Bibel* (Handbook of the Bible) commented that, “The human actors in the Book of Judges are a depressing lot, and the destiny of the Jewish people is played out in a series of monotonous cycles.” Even the Bible sometimes plays to mixed reviews³⁸.

Seeds Planted in the Book of the Judges: It will be hundreds of years before we see a split between northern and southern Palestine. However, the seeds of such a division will become apparent in the book of Judges. In chapter 1, the only tribes which attempt to fulfill their manifest destiny are Judah and Simeon, in the south. They immediately set out to remove the indigenous populations from their soil. The other tribes are listed in the latter half of this chapter as failures. God told them to eradicate the Canaanites and Philistines from their land; and they merely enslaved them (and this was at best). In chapter 5, we will see Zebulun and Naphtali instigate a rebellion against the Canaanites who had enslaved much of Israel at that time. Deborah will name those tribes who came to their aide and castigate those tribes which did not (Judges 5:14–18). She will not mention the tribes of Judah or Simeon in this list.

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An Outline of the Book of the Judges

I. Part I: General Introduction (Judges 1–2:10)

- A. The setting of the historical stage for the book of Judges (Judges 1:1–1:36)
- B. God's warning to Israel and the end of Joshua's rulership (Judges 2:1–10)
 1. God's warning to Israel (vv. 1–5)
 2. The death of Joshua (vv. 5–10)

³⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 756.

³⁷ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 743.

³⁸ A quote from Manfred Barthel, *What the Bible Really Says*; ©1982; © by Quill; pp. 138–139.

II. Part II: The History of the Judges (Judges 2:11–16:31)

- A. Introduction—the historical cycles Israel would fall into—*apostasy, oppression, cries of distress and gracious divine deliverance*³⁹ (Judges 2:11–3:4)⁴⁰
 - 1. The typical cycle that Israel will fall into (vv. 11–23)
 - 2. The nations remaining within the borders of Israel (3:1–4)
- B. God raises up Othniel as a deliverer for Israel, but the exact mechanics are not specified (Judges 3:9–10); Othniel, nephew of Caleb, possibly of the tribe of Judah, delivers Israel from Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia (Judges 3:7–11)
- C. God raises up Ehud, but the specific mechanics are not given (Judges 3:15) Ehud, of the tribe of Benjamin, assassinates the Eglon, the king of Moab, and delivers Israel from eastern oppression—from the hand of Moab (Judges 3:12–30);
- D. Shamgar, minor judge (Judges 3:31)
- E. Deborah of Ephraim and Barak of Naphtali deliver Israel from a coalition of Canaanites under Jabin, their king. Sisera, his commander-in-chief, also plays a significant part (Judges 4–5)
 - 1. The historical record (Judges 4)
 - a. Deborah, as a prophetess, is spoken to by God, to call Barak into service (vv. 1–6)
 - b. Barak defeats Sisera and his armies in battle (vv. 7–17)
 - c. Sisera is assassinated by Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite (vv. 18–22)
 - d. Conclusion (vv. 23–24)
 - 2. The poetic record (Judges 5)
- F. Gideon, of Manasseh, defeats Midian (Judges 6–8)
 - 1. The oppression of Midian; the Angel of Jehovah calls upon Gideon directly (Judges 6:1–10)
 - 2. Gideon is called (Judges 6:11–40)
 - 3. Gideon defeats Midian in battle (Judges 7)
 - 4. Ephraim's beef with Gideon (Judges 8:1–3)
 - 5. Gideon captures and executes the two kings of Midian (Judges 8:14–21)
 - 6. Gideon rules over Israel (Judges 8:22–35)
- G. Abimelech, Gideon's son, and therefore, of Manasseh, rules over Israel as an anti-judge (Judges 9)
 - 1. Abimelech takes power; he persuades others around him to support his authority (vv. 1–22)
 - 2. The fall of Abimelech (vv. 23–57)
- H. Tola, of Issachar, who migrated to Ephraim—a minor judge (Judges 10:1–2)
- I. Jair of Gilead (either of the tribe of Gad or East Manasseh)—a minor judge (Judges 10:3–5)
- J. Israel is oppressed by both Ammon and the Philistines, which initiates incidents which are parallel in time (Judges 10:6–18)
- K. Jephthah, of Gilead, from the tribe of East Manasseh, defeats Ammon (Judges 11:1–12:7)
 - 1. Jephthah's background and calling; the elders of Gilead ask Jephthah to step into the gap (vv. 1–11)
 - 2. Jephthah first reasons with Ammon (vv. 12–28)
 - 3. Jephthah defeats Ammon (vv. 29–33)
 - 4. Jephthah's tragic vow (vv. 34–40)
 - 5. Ephraim's dispute with Jephthah and his resolution; Jephthah's judgeship (vv. 1–7)
- L. Ibzan of Bethlehem, possibly from Judah or Zebulun, a minor judge (Judges 12:8–10)
- M. Elon, from the tribe of Zebulun—a minor judge (Judges 12:11–12)
- N. Abdon, a minor judge in Ephraim and possibly of the tribe of Ephraim (Judges 12:13–15)
- O. Samson, from the tribe of Dan, versus the Philistines (Judges 13–16)
 - 1. Samson's background; Samson is pressed into service by his parents prior to His birth; which vocation, the Holy Spirit ratified (Judges 13)
 - 2. Samson's marriage (Judges 14)
 - 3. Altercations between Samson and the Philistines (Judges 15)
 - 4. Samson and Delilah (Judges 16:1–20)
 - 5. Samson is captured and enslaved by the Philistines (Judges 16:21–27)
 - 6. Samson's revenge (Judges 16:28–31)

³⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 323.

⁴⁰ Many lump this with the introduction to the book of Judges.

III. Part III: Two Incidents During the Time Period of the Judges (Judges 17:1–21:25)

- A. Religious depravity: the Levite, Micah and the tribe of Dan (Judges 17–18)
 - 1. Micah hires a personal Levitical priest (Judges 17)
 - 2. The Danites take both Micah's personal priest as well as some land up north from a quiet and peaceful people (Judges 18).
- B. Moral Depravity: the rape and murder of a Levite's mistress, which results in civil war (Judges 19–21)
 - 1. Some renegade Benjamites rape and murder a Levite's mistress (Judges 19)
 - 2. Israel attacks and decimates the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20)
 - 3. Israel tries to restore the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 21)
- C. It would be reasonable to append to Judges the book of Ruth, as it took place during the early period of the judges.

Nelson's Outline

Nelson⁴¹ organizes the second section somewhat differently, and his approach is well worth examining:

I. The Southern Campaign

- A. Othniel (Judges 3:5–11)
- B. Ehud (Judges 3:12–30)
- C. Shamgar (Judges 3:31)

II. The Northern Campaign

- A. Deborah and Barak are called (Judges 4:1–11)
- B. The Canaanites are defeated (Judges 4:12–24)
- C. The Song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5)

III. The Central Campaign

- A. Gideon (Judges 6:1–8:32)
- B. Abimelech (Judges 8:33–9:57)
- C. Tola (Judges 10:1–2)
- D. Jair (Judges 10:3–5)

IV. The Eastern Campaign

- A. Israel sins (Judges 10:6–18)
- B. Salvation through Jephthah (Judges 11:1–12:6)

V. The Second Northern Campaign

- A. Ibzan (Judges 12:8–10)
- B. Elon (Judges 12:11–12)
- C. Abdon (Judges 12:13–15)

VI. The Western Campaign

- A. Samson's birth (Judges 13)
- B. Samson's sinful marriage (Judges 14)
- C. Samson as a judge (Judges 15)
- D. Samson fails (Judges 16)

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The Outline of Keil and Delitzsch

Keil and Delitzsch⁴² present a slightly different approach to the central portion of Judges; they sort it into three sections, based upon the three warnings of God:

⁴¹ Taken from *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*; Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1993; pp. 76, 78.

⁴² Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 179.

I. Warning I; Israel is warned by the Angel of Jehovah:

- A. God warns Israel at Bochim (or, outside of Bethel) (Judges 2:1–4)
- B. Deliverance by Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and Deborah and Barak (Judges 3–5)

II. Warning II; Israel is warned by a prophet of Jehovah:

- A. God places Israel under discipline to Midian, reminding them first that He brought them out of the house of bondage in Egypt, then gave them the land; and then He warns them concerning their reverence for the gods of the Amorites (Judges 6:8–10)
- B. Gideon delivers Israel; he is followed by the evil Abimelech and the two judges Tola and Jair (Judges 6–10:5)

III. Warning III; God speaks directly to the sons of Israel, although it is not clear what the exact mechanics are:

- A. God warns Israel that He has answered their cries again and again, and they continue to seek after false gods. God tells Israel to ask for deliverance from their false gods, and then relents, and promises them deliverance (Judges 10:7–18)
- B. God delivers through Jephthah, Ibban, Elon, and Abdon; then finally, through Samson

Literary Structure: Rather than include this section immediately after *Literary Style*, I felt that this would be better understood, having had the outline to the book of the Judges. This book is organized thematically rather than chronologically (which is not unusual in Scripture). The central portion, the history of the judges themselves, has a peculiar format. At the center of this narrative is Gideon, who is almost an ideal judge (he is knocked due to the first chapter he is introduced), followed by his son, Abimelech, who is the worst governor of Israel, consolidating his power as a mafia godfather would by killing all his real and imagined enemies. These two are bracketed by the parallel narratives of the outcasts Deborah and Jephthah. Deborah was a female prophet and leader, which is quite unusual; and Jephthah was an outcast from his own family. These are further bracketed by the lone heroes, Ehud and Samson.⁴³ The judgeship history of the book of Judges is further bracketed by the introduction and the epilogue. The introduction gives us an overall view as well as the typical pattern of spiritual degeneracy, subjugation, a sorrowful Israel, and a savior is raised up.⁴⁴ The end of the book of Judges focuses on two incidents which deal primarily with the lives of the people of Israel, as well as their degenerate choices, apart from their leadership.

Interestingly enough, both the prologue and the epilogue are neatly divided into two parts each. In Judges 1, the results of Israel entering into the land are given, and in Judges 2, we have the cycle which Israel fell into. In Judges 17–18 and 19–21, we have a number of interesting parallels. (1) Both stories involve a Levite passing between Bethlehem and Ephraim through the Benjamin-Dan corridor. (2) Both accounts mention 600 warriors—600 warriors led the tribe of Dan and there were 600 warriors who remained after the decimation of the tribe of Benjamin. (3) Both accounts involved the emptying out of their respective corridors (Dan and Benjamin)⁴⁵.

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The Purpose of the Book of Judges: Without this book, we would have a huge gap in the history of Israel, not unlike the 400 year gap in the history of the Jews during their captivity to Egypt.

General Archeological Information: Once archeology gets down as far as the cities destroyed in the attack of Joshua upon the Land of Promise, the layers above those cities indicate continuous occupation by the Israelites, which goes against the nomad mold, but confirms the general Biblical record. The cities built by the Canaanites are clearly superior architecturally to those built by the Israelites who conquered those cities. There is also clear

⁴³ Paraphrased from *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 324, although several sources mention this structure.

⁴⁴ I also attempt alliteration.

⁴⁵ Paraphrased from *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; pp. 324–325.

indication that the Canaanites continued to occupy certain pockets of Palestine after the Israelite invasion of circa 1400 B.C. One area of architectural superiority of the Israelites is their underground cisterns wherein water was stored. Apparently, due to the occasional lack of rain (which was not near as pronounced as it is today), the Canaanites tended to cluster more in the central hill country, whereas the Israelites spread throughout the land, constructing underground storage areas for water, using a water-proof, lime plaster to seal these cisterns⁴⁶.

We have no permanent religious sanctuaries discovered from the period of the judges. Although this could be attributed to the lower standard of architecture of the Jews, it is very likely that few, if any, religious sanctuaries were built, as they had been prohibited by Law (Ex. 20:24–26 Deut. 12:1–7). To confirm this latter theory, we have no male or female deity figurines from this time period, although there are some clay figurines of naked women about to give birth. We could just as easily reason that these were good luck charms for pregnant women as we could that they could be a part of cultic worship, which was prohibited. However, we should note that several portions of the book of Judges indicates that Israel, from time to time, fell into idolatry (Judges 2:13, 17 3:6–7 8:33). Given this, we should not be surprised if a religious sanctuary or two from that time period were discovered, nor should we not expect idols from that time to be found. What is likely is, during a period of revival (it makes me grimace to use that word), Israel completely destroyed any idols and/or sanctuaries in an unsustained moment of devotion to Jehovah.

More specific information will be given as we go through the various chapters of the Judges.

Famous (or, Interesting) Verses: Unlike the books of Genesis, Romans, John or Isaiah, the book of Judges is not going to fall on anyone’s list of their favorite book. Furthermore, we have no quotations directly from this book in other books of the Bible, although there are some parallel passages of Scripture. Therefore, there won’t be but a handful of verses which stand out in anyone’s mind.

Literal translation:		A Freer translation:	
And the sons of Benjamin did not dispossess the Jebusite; so the Jebusite lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.	Judges 1:21	And the sons of Benjamin did not dispossess the Jebusites from Jerusalem; so the Jebusites lived among the Benjamites in Jerusalem to this day.	
And so the Angel of Jehovah went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And then He said, “I brought you up from Egypt and I brought you up into the land which I swore to your fathers. And so I said, ‘I will not break My covenant with you to the age. And you—you will not make a covenant with those inhabiting this land. You will break down their altars.’ But you have not listened at My voice. What is this you have done? Moreover, I say, I will not drive them out from your faces and they will be to you for thorns in your sides and their gods will be to you for a snare.”	Judges 2:1–3	Then the Angel of Jehovah had gone up from Gilgal to Bochim with Israel. When in Bochim, He said to them, “I brought you up from Egypt into this land which I swore to your fathers. Therefore, I said, ‘I will not ever break My covenant with you. As for you, you were not to make any covenants with those who inhabit this land. Furthermore, you will break down their altars. But you have not listened to my voice; what is this that you have done? Furthermore, let me say to you that I will not drive your enemies out from before your faces; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a trap to you.”	

⁴⁶ We actually do not find a confirmation of the building of these cisterns in the Joshua/Judges record. This is all according to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 740.

Literal translation:		A Freer translation:
<p>Moreover, all that generation were gathered to their fathers and then another generation arose after them who did not know Y^ohowah or the work which He had done for Israel.</p>	<p>Judges 2:10</p>	<p>Similarly, all of that generation passed away and after them another generation arose—a generation that did not know Jehovah or the work that He had done on behalf of Israel.</p>
<p>So they forsook Y^ohowah and they served Baal and Ashtaroth. Therefore, the anger of Y^ohowah was kindled against Israel, and He gave them into the hand of pillagers and they pillaged them. And he sold them into a hand of their enemies from round about and they were no longer able to take a stand before the faces of their enemies. In all of where they went out, the hand of Y^ohowah was against them for evil, as that which Y^ohowah had promised and as that which Y^ohowah had sworn to them. Therefore, He showed extreme hostility on account of them. And so Y^ohowah raised up judges and so they delivered them from the hand of their looters. And furthermore, they did not listen [and obey] their judges, but they committed adultery with other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way which their fathers had walked [who] listened and obeyed the commandments of Y^ohowah—they [this new generation] did not do so.</p>	<p>Judges 2:13–17</p>	<p>Therefore, they left the worship of Jehovah and served Baal and Ashtaroth instead. Therefore, the anger of Jehovah burned against Israel, therefore, He gave them over to looters who pillaged them. Furthermore, He sold them into the hand of their enemies who were around them until they were not even able to stand before their enemies. Whenever they went out to battle, the hand of Jehovah was against them bringing upon them evil, just as Jehovah had promised and sworn to them. Because of their actions, He demonstrated great hostility against them. However, Jehovah did raise up judges and these judges delivered Israel out of the hand of their persecutors. Unfortunately, they did not listen to or obey their judges; instead, they committed adultery with other gods, bowing down to them. They soon turned away from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had listened to and who had obeyed the commandments of God. They turned away from God.</p>
<p>Then Barak said to her [Deborah], “If you will go with me, then I will go; and if you will not go with me, [then] I will not go.”</p>	<p>Judges 4:8</p>	<p>Then Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; and if you will not go with me, then I will not go.”</p>
<p>The Jael, the wife of Heber, took a tent spike and she took a hammer in her hand and went to him surreptitiously. She then drove the tent spike into his temple and it went down into the earth. He was sleeping and he was in a deep sleep and then he died.</p>	<p>Judges 4:21</p>	<p>Jael, Heber’s wife, then took a tent spike and a hammer and quietly approached him. Then she drove the tent spike into his temple all the way through. Sisera had been in a deep sleep and then died.</p>
<p>Then the Angel of Y^ohowah arrived and He was sitting under the oak which [is] in Ophrah, which [belongs] to Joash the Abiezrite. Gideon, his son, was beating out wheat in the wine press to hide from the face of Midian. Then the Angel of Y^ohowah appeared to him and said to him, “Y^ohowah</p>		<p>Then the Angel of Jehovah arrived and He sat under an oak tree in Ophrah which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. Gideon, his son, was beating out the wheat in the wine press, to escape the notice of the Midianites. Suddenly, the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him and said, “Jehovah is with</p>

Literal translation:	A Freer translation:	
<p>[is] with you, mighty man of the army.” Then Gideon said to Him, “Please, sir, if Y^ehowah is with us, then why has all of this befallen us? And concerning all His wonderful deeds which our fathers have recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not Y^ehowah bring us up out of Egypt?’ And now Y^ehowah has forsaken us and He has given us into the hands of Midian.” And so Y^ehowah turned to him and said, “Go in this strength of yours and cause to deliver Israel out from the palm of Midian; have I not sent you?” And so he said to Him, “Please, my Lord, in what way can I deliver Israel? Observe my family: the poorest [and weakest] in Manasseh and I the least in the house of my father.”</p>	<p>Judges 6:11–15</p>	<p>you, great and valiant soldier.” Then Gideon spoke to him. “If you please, sir, if Jehovah is actually with us, then why has all of this happened to us? And what about all of these miracles and signs which our fathers have recounted to us, saying ‘Didn’t Jehovah bring us out of Egypt?’ Now it is quite obvious that Jehovah has forsaken us as He has placed us under the power of Midian.” Therefore, Jehovah turned to him and said, “God with this strength of yours and cause Israel to be delivered out of the control of Midian—I hereby commission you.” Then Gideon said to Jehovah, “Please, my Lord, how can I deliver Israel? My family, for instance, is the poorest and weakest in the tribe of Manasseh and I am the least in the household of my father.”</p>
<p>Then Gideon said to the God, “[Let] not Your anger be kindled against me and let me speak only [this] once: please, let it be dry upon the fleece alone and there will be dew upon all the ground.” And God did so in that night and it was dry on the fleece only and upon all the ground there was dew.</p>	<p>Judges 6:39–40</p>	<p>Then Gideon said to God, “Please do not kindle Your anger against me; just allow me this one additional indulgence: tomorrow, let it be dry on the fleece only let there be moisture upon the ground.” So God did what Gideon asked, and the next day, the fleece was dry and the ground around it was wet.</p>
<p>And then Y^ehowah said to Gideon, “By means of the three hundred men, the lappers, I will deliver you and I will give the Midianites into your hand. And all of the people will go, each man to his home.”</p>	<p>Judges 7:7</p>	<p>And then Jehovah said to Gideon and to the 300 men who lapped at the water: “I will deliver you and I will give the Midianites into your hand.” The remaining people returned to their homes.</p>
<p>But Gideon said to them, “I myself will not rule over you and my son will not rule over you; Y^ehowah will rule over you.”</p>	<p>Judges 8:23</p>	<p>Gideon then responded to them. “I will not rule over you, nor will my son. Jehovah will rule over you.”</p>

Literal translation:		A Freer translation:
<p>Later, Samson went to Gaza and he saw there a female prostitute, so he went in unto her. [And it was told] to the Gazites was said, "Samson has come here." So they surrounded [Samson] and lay in wait for him all of the night inside the gate of the city. They were [absolutely] silent all of the night, saying, "Until the light of the morning, and then we will kill him." And Samson laid down until the middle of the night and then he arose in the middle of the night. Then he took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and of the two posts and he pulled them up with the bar and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.</p>	<p>Judges 16:1-3</p>	<p>Later, Samson went down to Gaza and saw there a prostitute, whom he had sex with. The men of Gaza were informed that Samson was in town. Therefore, they lay in wait for Samson inside the city gate all that night. They remained there in absolute silence, saying, "We will wait for the dawn and then kill him." Samson remained sleeping until the middle of the night, at which point he got up. He went to the gates of the city and took a hold of the gates and of the two anchoring posts and he lifted them up, along with the bar across the top. He placed all of this on his shoulders and hauled them to the top of the mountain due east of Gaza, facing Hebron.</p>
<p>And it was after this that he loved a woman from the valley of Sorek; and her name [was] Delilah.</p>	<p>Judges 16:4</p>	<p>Sometime later, Samson fell in love with a woman from the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.</p>
<p>And it was that she [Delilah] caused distress to him with her words all the days and she nagged him and his soul was short of death. And he made known to her all of his heart, and he said to her, "A razor has not come upon my head for I [have been] a Nazirite to God since [coming] out from the womb of my mother. If I am shaved, then my strength would depart from me and I would be weak like all of the human race."</p>	<p>Judges 16:16-17</p>	<p>And as time went on, she continued to stress him with these words, day after day, nagging him until his soul was worn out. Then he finally told her all that was in her heart, saying, "A razor has never come across my head, because I have been a Nazirite to God from my birth. If I am shaved, then my strength would depart from me and I would be weak, just like any other man."</p>
<p>"My Lords Y^howah, please remember me, and please strengthen me, only this [one] time, O God, so that I will be avenged a vengeance of one on account of my two eyes on from the Philistines. Then Samson grasped two of the middle pillars [upon] which the house was firmly established, and he leaned against them, one in his right [hand] and one in his left. Then Samson said, "My soul will die with the Philistines." And so he spread out with strength and the house fell upon the princes and upon all of the people who [were] in it. So the dying ones that he killed in his dying were more than that which he killed in his life.</p>	<p>Judges 16:28-30</p>	<p>Then Samson called out to Jehovah and he said, "My Lord, Jehovah, please remember me and please strengthen me just this one time, O God, so that I may be avenged for the loss of my two eyes by the hands of the Philistines." Then Samson took a hold of the two middle pillars, which were load-bearing, and he leaned in against them, with one in his right hand and the other in his left. Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed against the pillars with all of his strength and the house fell down on the princes and on all of the people that were in it. All in all, Samson killed more Philistines in this one incident than he did during his entire lifetime.</p>

Literal translation:		A Freer translation:	
And so her master arose in the morning and he opened the doors of the man’s house and he went out to depart to the road, and, observe, his woman, his mistress, was laying [at] the entrance of the house with her hands upon the threshold. Then he said to her, “Get up and we will go.” However, no one answered. So he placed her on his ass and then the man rose up and he went to his place. So he entered into his house and took a knife and then he cut her to her bones into twelve pieces. Then he sent her to all of the borders of Israel.	Judges 19:27–29	Soon thereafter, her master got up that morning and opened the doors of the man’s house and he got up to go on his way, and then came upon his woman, his mistress, laying at the entryway to the courtyard with her hands on the threshold. Then he said to her, “Get up and let’s go.” However, no one answered him. So he placed her on his donkey and then he departed, going to his own home. When the man had entered into his own house, he cut up his mistress into twelve pieces and sent these pieces throughout all of Israel.	
In those days, [there was] no king in Israel. [Each] man does [what was] right in his [own] eyes.	Judges 21:25	In those days, there was no king in Israel. Each man did what he thought was right.	

There are certainly other passages which I have left out—the first parable, as well as Israel’s first king, which passages are both found in Judges 9. I have left out Jephthah’s foolish vow of Judges 11. We have Manoah’s wife, who has a great deal more common sense than Manoah (Samson’s father). I am hoping that you recognize enough in those verses or find enough intriguing in those quotations to whet your appetite for this book.

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Judges at a Glance Chart from *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*:

Judges at a Glance ⁴⁷											
Focus	Deterioration		Deliverance						Depravity		
Reference	Judges 1	Judges 2	Judges 3	Judges 4–5	Judges 6–9	Judges 10–11	Judges 12	Judges 13–16	Judges 17–18	Judges 19	Judges 20
Division	Israel fails to complete the conquest	God judges Israel	Southern campaign	Northern campaign	Central campaign	Eastern campaign	Northern campaign	Western campaign	Sin of idolatry	Sin of immorality	Sin of civil war
Topic	The causes of the cycles		The curse of the cycles						The conditions during the cycles		
	Living with the Canaanites		At war with the Canaanites						Living like the Canaanites		
Location	Canaan										

⁴⁷ Taken from *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*; Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1993; p. 72.

Time Period	1400–1050 B.C.	1400–1050 B.C.	1400–1350 B.C.
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Final Question: What about Eli and Samuel—were they not judges? Why are they not found in the book of Judges? There are several reasons: (1) Just because the book of Judges is called *The Book of the Judges*, that does not mean that every single judge of Israel is necessarily included. (2) Eli and Samuel belong to the transitional period from a theocracy to a monarchy. (3) Eli was the High Priest for 40 years whose functions included the leading and guiding of Israel (1Sam. 4:18). (4) Samuel was a judge over Israel for all of his life (1Sam. 7:15–17); however, he was first and foremost a prophet, whose words, rather than deeds, delivered Israel (1Sam. 3:20–21 7:3–10). Therefore, their words and deeds, even though they span the time of the oppression of the Philistines, fall within a transitional period and are more properly placed with that transitional period.

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1. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 757.
2. *The Reese Chronological Bible*; KJV translation; Editor: Edward Reese; ©1977 by Edward Reese and Klassen's dating system ©1975 by Frank R. Klassen; ©1980 by Bethany House Publishers, South Minneapolis, MN; pp. 379–437.
3. *The Narrated Bible In Chronological Order*; narrated by F. LaGard Smith; ©1984 by Harvest House Publishers; Eugene, Oregon; (NIV ©1984 by the International Bible Society); pp. 347–385, 1693.
4. *The Bible Almanac*, J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White, Jr.; ©1980 Thomas Nelson Publishers; pp. 52–53. Note how closely this parallels *The Narrated Bible*, which probably indicates that the same people were involved in the notes. Also, you will note that *The Bible Almanac* does not really set aside any time for the defeat of one of Israel's oppressors, a time period which might be 1–4 years (it might take some time for the deliverer to arise).