



Judges

Jesus Christ, Our Deliverer Judge

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Book of Judges

Unlike "Joshua," whose title is simply the name of a prominent individual, "Judges" is named after an office, "judge," which is put in the plural.

In Hebrew Bibles the book is called *Shof'tim* ("judges"), the plural of *shofet*. The word can also be translated "leaders," "chieftains," or even "warriors." The judges were something like guerilla commanders.

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F-L-I-G-H-T

- F** – The author of Judges is unknown. Some attribute the book to Samuel, but the latter portions at least were likely completed by someone else.
- L** – 12 judges provided leadership and deliverance during a chaotic period characterized by a cycle of sin: rebellion against God, retribution by God, repentance toward God, restoration from God

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F-L-I-G-H-T

- I** – In those days there was no Joshua in Israel (1:1-3:6), In those days there were judges in Israel (3:7-16:31), In those days there was no king in Israel (17:1-21:25)
- G** – Series of case studies on mankind's inability to break the cycle of sin. The imperfect deliverers in Judges anticipate and give contrast to the eventual Deliverer who would offer himself for the nation.

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F – L – I – G – H – T

H – Judges covers more than 300 years of history—roughly the years from Joshua’s death c. 1380 BC to when Saul was appointed king c. 1050 BC.

T – God often uses the least likely people to accomplish his work. Judges makes it clear again and again that sin has consequences.

Major/Minor

Major Judges	Minor Judges
Othniel (3:7-11)	Shamgar (3:31)
Ehud (3:12-30)	Tola (10:1-2)
Deborah (4:1-5:31)	Jair (10:3-5)
Gideon (6:1-8:35)	Ibzan (12:8-10)
Jephthah (10:6-12:7)	Elon (12:11-12)
Samson (13:1-16:31)	Abdon (12:13-15)

Unlikely Heroes

The judges were often from an anomalous, subordinate segment of society. Ehud is a left-hander in a world of right-handers. Deborah is a woman in a world of men. Gideon is the youngest son in a world of older brothers. Jephthah is the son of a harlot in a world of legitimate children. Samson is a non-shaving, non-intoxicant imbibing ascetic Nazirite in a world of normal people.

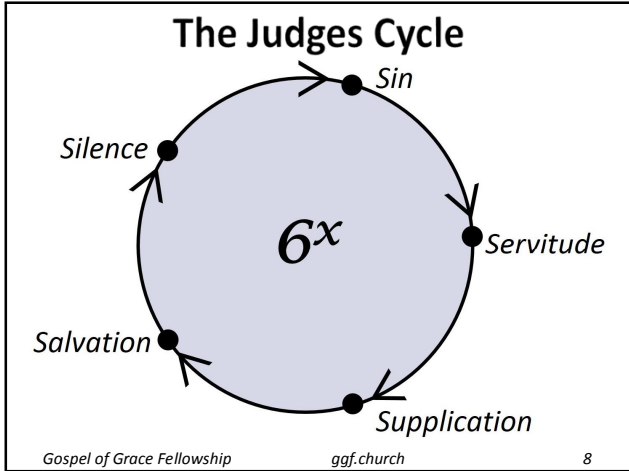
The Judges Cycle

Sin: the Israelites do what is evil in the sight of the Lord

Servitude: God allows the nation to be conquered and oppressed by a neighboring nation

Supplication: the people cry out to God

Salvation: God sends a judge to deliver the Israelites



Territory of the Judges

- The judges were NOT national leaders.
- The judges were *regional* leaders. Sometimes two judges were ruling simultaneously in different parts of Israel.

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Six Cycles in Judges

Cycle	Oppressor	Judges
1. 3:7-11	Cushan-Rishathaim	Othniel
2. 3:12-31	Eglon	Ehud <i>Shamgar</i>
3. 4:1-5:31	Jabin	Deborah
4. 6:1-10:6	Midianites	Gideon <i>Tola</i> <i>Jair</i>
5. 10:7-12:15	Ammonites & Philistines	Jephthah <i>Ibzan</i> <i>Elon</i> <i>Abdon</i>
6. 13:1-16:31	Philistines	Samson

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Israel vs. Canaanites

Chapter 1 presents a process of degeneration in terms of Israel's relationship with the indigenous Canaanites. The move is from victory (1:22-26) to partial victory (1:27-30, dominance but not expulsion), to substantial losses (1:31-33, living among the Canaanites), to defeat (1:34, Dan is repulsed by the Canaanites and confined to the hill country).

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South-to-North Sequence

Samson, from Dan (13:1-16:31)
↑
Jephthah, from Manasseh (10:6-12:7)
↑
Gideon, from Manasseh (6:1-8:35)
↑
Deborah, from Ephraim (4:1-5:31)
↑
Ehud, from Benjamin (3:12-30)
↑
Othniel, from Judah (3:7-11)

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Contrast Between Judah & Northern Tribes

Judges begins with a Judah that is both an exemplary tribe (1:2-20) and has an exemplary judge (Othniel, 3:7-11)

Judges ends with a Dan that is both a lackluster tribe (1:34) and has a wild, unrestrained judge (Samson, 13:1-16:31)

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Descending Character

The first judges are good, the next are morally ambiguous, and the last judges are more villains than heroes.

The descending character of the judges seems to represent the descending state of the people.

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Women in Samson's Life

A Mother (13:3) "The angel of the Lord appeared to the woman"

A Bride (14:1) "Once Samson...saw a beautiful woman"

A Prostitute (16:1) "Once Samson...saw a woman, a prostitute"

A Mistress (16:4) "He fell in love with a woman"

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