

## The Judges<sup>1</sup>

Each time the Israelites repented of their sins and asked God for deliverance from their attackers, God sent a leader called a “judge.”

That word's a bit outdated now, since we associate judges with court cases. The Hebrew term had a much broader meaning, which included "ruler" or "leader." "Tribal ruler" is probably a better way of describing them.

These heroic leaders often rallied the Israelites and drove off the oppressors.

The stories are generally regional, not nationwide. Israel wasn't yet a united nation, but a loosely knit confederation of tribes. So there was likely some overlap between the dozen Judges

Judge	Passage	Years of Activity	Tribe	Claim to Fame
Othniel	3:7-11	40	Judah	Defeated king of Aram, in what is now Syria
Ehud	3:12-30	80	Benjamin	Assassinated an oppressive king in what is now Jordan, then led a successful revolt
Shamgar	3:31	Unknown		Killed 600 Philistines with an ox herder's stick
Deborah	Chap 4-5	40	Ephraim	Led an army of foot soldiers that defeated an invading chariot corps
Gideon	Chap 6-8	40	Manasseh	With 300 men, drove off 135,000 invaders from Midian, a nation in what is now Jordan or Saudi Arabia
Tola	10:1-2	23	Issachar	Considered a minor judge, he was a descendant of Dodo---whoever that was
Jair	10:3-5	22	Gilead - Manasseh	Had 30 sons who owned 30 towns in the rich grazing land of Gilead, in what is now Jordan
Jephthah	10:6 - 12:7	6	Gilead - Manasseh	Defeated Ammonites in what is now Jordan, then honored his rash vow to celebrate victory by sacrificing the first thing to greet him at home: his only child, a daughter
Ibzan	12:8-10	7	Judah or Zebulun	Had 30 sons and 30 daughters
Elon	12:11 -12	10	Zebulun	Unknown
Abdon	12:13 -15	8	Ephraim	Had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, all of whom rode donkeys-suggesting a time of prosperity and peace
Samson	Chap 13-16	40	Dan	A strongman who killed a lion with his bare hands and who waged a one man war against the Philistines, killing 1,000 with a donkey's jawbone and then killing himself and thousands more when he pushed down the support pillars of a temple

<sup>1</sup> The Complete Guide to the Bible, Stephen M. Miller, Barbour Publishing Inc., Uhrichsville, Ohio, p.73

The Period of the Judges <sup>2</sup>		
Events	Passage	Years
Israel serves Chushan-Rishathaim	3:7, 8	8
Peace following Othniel's deliverance	3:7-11	40
Israel serves Moab	3:12	18
Peace follows Ehud's deliverance	3:12-30	80
Shamgar delivers Israel from Philistines	3:31	1
Israel serves Canaan	4:1-3	20
Peace following deliverance by Deborah and Barak	4:1-5:31	40
Israel serves Midian	6:1-6	7
Peace following Gideon's deliverance	6:1-8:35	40
Abimelech, king of Israel	9:1-57	3
Tola's career	10:1, 2	23
Jair's career	10:3-5	22
Israel serves Ammon and Philistia	10:6-10	18
Jephthah's career	10:6-12:7	6
Ibzan's career	12:8-10	7
Elon's career	12:11, 12	10
Abdon's career	12:13-15	8
Israel serves Philistia	13:1	40
Samson's Career	12:1-16:31	20

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<sup>2</sup> Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

# ISRAEL'S JUDGES





