



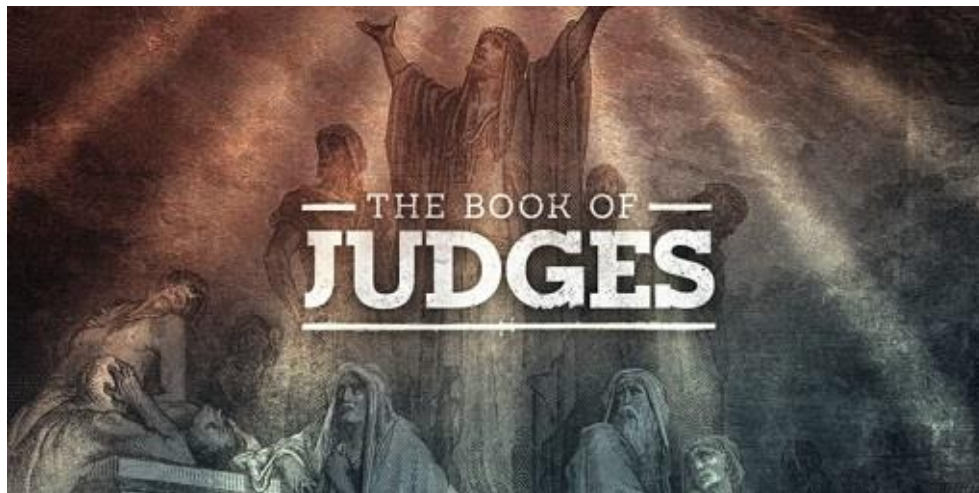
## My Drift

**Title: Bible – The Book of Judges**

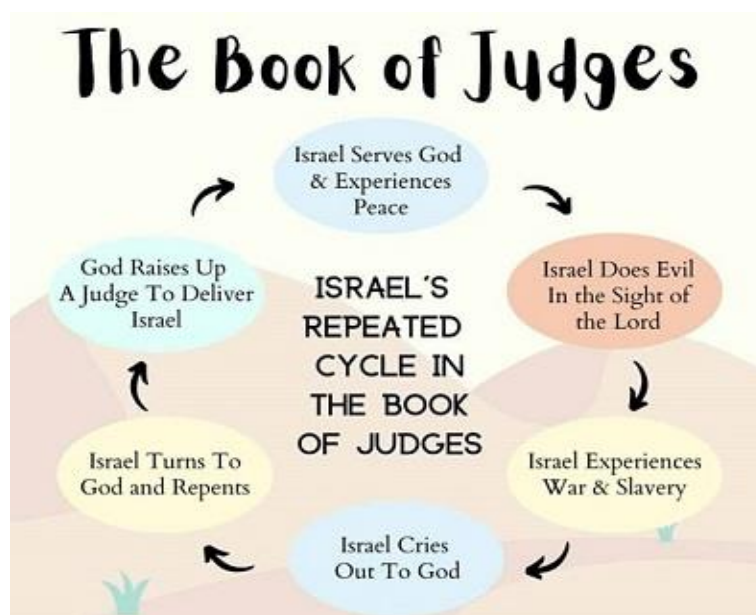
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The book of Judges recounts the history of the Israelites from the time they settled in the land of Canaan after Joshua's death to the birth of Samuel (approximately 1400–1000 B.C.). Besides a short narrative in the book of Ruth, Judges provides the only biblical account of this time period.



## Summary

The book of Judges describes a cycle that repeated itself multiple times during the reign of the judges. Because the Israelites failed to remove all wicked influences from the promised land, they became entangled in sin and were conquered and afflicted by their enemies. After the Israelites cried unto the Lord for help, He sent a series of tribal leaders called judges to deliver them from their enemies.

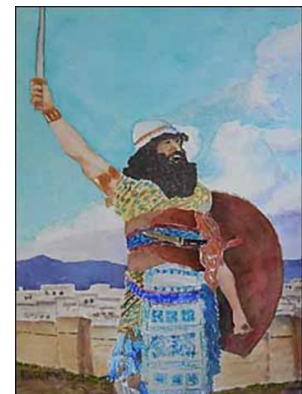
*“Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.” —Judges 2:16*

However, every time a judge died, Israel went astray again, returning to sinful practices and idolatry. It was a constant cycle of sin and deliverance. Israel rebels. God disciplines them. Israel repents. God delivers them. (See Judges 2:11–19.) The Book of Judges records this dark chapter in ancient Jewish history, noting each judge’s deeds and the circumstances surrounding them.

The judges	
■ Othniel	■ Ibzan
■ Ehud	■ Elon
■ Shamgar	■ Abdon
■ Deborah – only woman	■ Samson
■ Gideon	■ Samuel: last judge, first prophet
■ Tola	
■ Jair	
■ Jephthah	

### Othniel: The first Judge

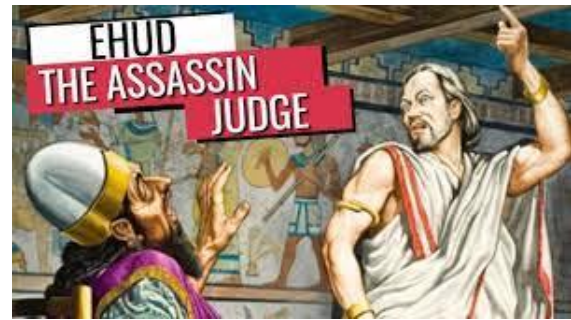
In the Biblical timeline, when the period came that the people of Israel turned back to God for help against the oppressive regime of the King, Othniel, the son of Kenaz, was sent by God to be their deliverer. Othniel accepted the challenge of being the savior wholeheartedly even if it came with risks. He made war to defeat the regime of Chushanrishathaim, the King of Mesopotamia. The battle began and in the end, Othniel equipped with his bravery and faith in God, defeated the king.



After the war, Othniel became a hero in the eyes of the Israelites. Furthermore, he succeeded in reforming them and restoring their fellowship with God. He was selected as Israel's new leader. Israel was at peace during the forty years of Othniel's reign until his death.

### **Ehud: The left-handed judge**

Ehud (Judges 3:12–4:1), son of Gera, the Benjaminite, Israelite hero who delivered Israel from 18 years of oppression by the Moabites. A left-handed man, Ehud tricked Eglon, the overweight king of Moab, and killed him. He then led the tribe of Ephraim to seize the fords of the Jordan, where they killed about 10,000 Moabite soldiers. As a result, Israel enjoyed peace for about 80 years.



**King Eglon and Ehud (right)**

### **Shamgar: And the Ox Goad**

A single verse in Judges 3:31, we meet Shamgar who was an Old Testament judge responsible for maintaining law and order in the land of Israel.

Few people have heard of him, but he was a brawny, heroic, steel-muscular character who saved Israel by striking down six hundred Philistines with the only thing he had at hand: an Ox Goad.



### **Deborah: The only women Judge**

Judge Deborah ranks among the most famous women of the Bible. Deborah stands out not only for her wisdom, but also for her courage. She is the only woman of the Old Testament who is known for her own faith and action, not because of her relationship with any man. As a prophet, judge Deborah was said to hear God's voice and share the Word with others. As a priestess, she did not offer sacrifices, as the men did, but she did lead worship services and preach.





## **Gideon: The Mighty Warrior**

After seven years of brutal oppression by the Midianites, Israel cried out to God for relief. An unknown prophet told the Israelites that their wretched conditions were a result of their forgetting to give exclusive devotion to the one true God.

God appeared to Gideon as an angel and said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." (Judges 6:12). Gideon replied: "Pardon me, my lord, but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Two more times the Lord encouraged Gideon, promising he would be with him. Then Gideon prepared a meal for the angel. The angel touched the meat and unleavened bread with his staff, and the rock they were sitting on spewed fire, consuming the offering. Next Gideon put out a fleece, a piece of sheepskin with the wool still attached, asking God to cover the fleece with dew overnight, but leave the ground around it dry. God did so. Finally, Gideon asked God to dampen the ground overnight with dew but leave the fleece dry. God did that as well.



God was patient with Gideon because he had chosen him to defeat the Midianites, who had impoverished the land of Israel with their constant raids. Over and over the Lord assured Gideon what his mighty power would accomplish through him. Aware of his own weakness and the daunting task before him, Gideon was an ideal vehicle for the Lord's tremendous work of deliverance.

Gideon gathered a huge army from the surrounding tribes, but God reduced their number to only 300. There would be no doubt that victory was from the Lord, not from the army's might. That night, Gideon gave each man a trumpet and a torch concealed inside a pottery jar. At his signal, they blew their trumpets, broke the jars to reveal the torches, and shouted: "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" (Judges 7:20)

God caused the enemy to panic and turn on each other. Gideon called out reinforcements and they pursued the raiders, destroying them. The life of this hero of faith ended on a sad note. When the people wanted to make Gideon their king, he refused, but took gold from them probably to commemorate the victory. Unfortunately, the people were led astray by it, worshipping it as an idol. Gideon's family did not follow his God.

### **Tola: Ruled by God's Wisdom and Peace**

**Judges 10:1-2.** Tola was from the tribe of Issachar. He ruled for 23 years 1149BC-1126BC. Tola seems to have been raised to the position of Judge by God. He did what was asked of him by God, to rule in God's wisdom and peace for the people of Israel, and so there was no need to record anything about the events of Tola's life.

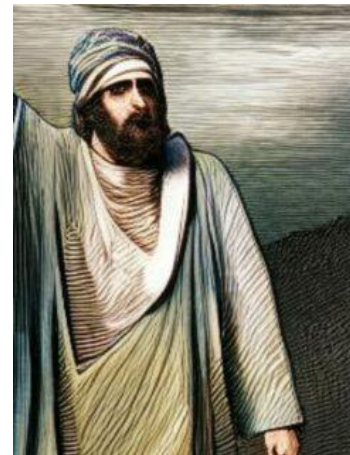
He lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim, whose land allotment by Moses was in a different part of Israel.



### **Jair: Owned a lot of Donkeys**

**Jair a Gileadite** was Israel's Judge or ruler for twenty-two years, 1126BC-1104BC. It seems to have been a peaceful time for Israel as not much is said about Jair's time as a judge. (Judges 10:3-5)

Jair owned 30 donkeys, which means he had a large family and a lot of money; only the rich could have so many donkeys. A donkey back then was like an expensive car is today. Jair and his 30 sons controlled 30 cities in the territory of Gilead named Havvoth-jair to this day. Jair died and was buried in Kamon.



### **Jephthah: Sacrificed his daughter to God**

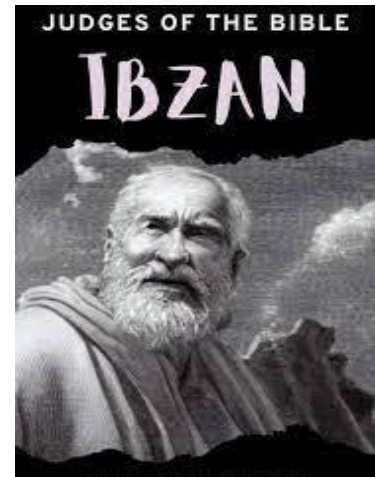
**Jephthah** was a judge who presided over Israel for a period of six years (Judges 12:7). According to Judges, he lived in Gilead. His father's name is also given as Gilead, and, as his mother is described as a prostitute. This may indicate that his father might have been any of the men of that area. Jephthah led the Israelites in battle against Ammon and, in exchange for defeating the Ammonites, made a vow to sacrifice whatever would come out of the door of his house first. When his daughter was the first to come out of the house, he immediately regretted the vow, which bound him to sacrifice his daughter to God. Jephthah carried out his vow!



### **Ibzan: Had a lot of Kids**

There is very little information in the Bible about Ibzan other than brief facts about his family and his death.

Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel for 7 years. He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave his thirty daughters in marriage outside his clan and brought in thirty young women from outside for his sons. Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.  
(Judges 12:8-10)



### **Elon: Tribe of Zebulun**

The only information that can be gleaned superficially from this sparse bible narrative is that there was once a judge from the tribe of Zebulun who judged Israel for ten years (1087 to 1077 BC) and who was buried in Aijalon, in the territory of Zebulun.  
(Judge 12:11-12)



### **Abdon: The Wealthy and Wise Judge**

Abdon was a judge and one great thing that was mentioned about him was the fact that he had 40 sons and 30 grandsons. Bible scholars theorize that he was a man of wealth and means because his sons and grandsons were known to ride around on 70 donkeys.

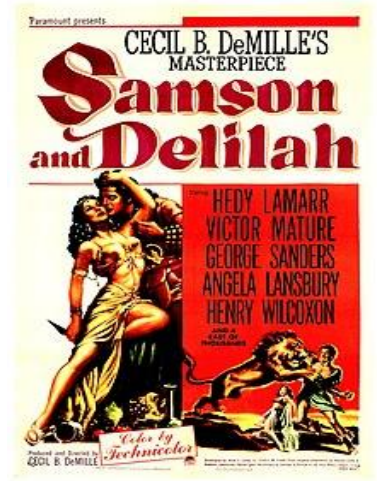
Abdon had judged Israel for eight years and apparently during his rule the people didn't rebel against God. But, shortly after Abdon's death the people of Israel turned against God once again. This means that Abdon must have had a strong influence on the people during this reign. He must have been wise as well as rich. Nothing in scripture indicates that his rule was disappointing God.





## Samson: Strong

**Note:** I didn't know Samson was a Judge, but I saw the movie "Samson and Delilah" when I was 10 years old. Here is what it was about: *Samson and Delilah is a 1949 romantic biblical drama film produced and directed by Cecil B. DeMille and released by Paramount Pictures. It depicts the biblical story of Samson, a strongman whose secret lies in his uncut hair, and his love for Delilah, the woman who seduces him, discovers his secret, and then betrays him to the Philistines. It stars Victor Mature and Hedy Lamarr in the title roles.*



### The Story of Samson - Book of Judges (chapters 13 to 16)

According to the account in the Book of Judges, Samson lived during a time of repeated conflict between Israel and Philistia, when God was disciplining the Israelites by giving them "into the hand of the Philistines". Manoah was an Israelite from Zorah and his wife had been unable to conceive. The Angel of the Lord appears to Manoah's wife and proclaims that the couple would soon have a son who would deliver the Israelites from the Philistines.

The Angel of the Lord states that Manoah's wife was to abstain from all alcoholic drinks, unclean foods, and her promised child was not to shave or cut his hair. He was to be a Nazirite from birth. In ancient Israel, those wanting to be especially dedicated to God for a time could take a Nazirite vow which included abstaining from wine and spirits, not cutting hair or shaving, and other requirements. Manoah's wife believes the Angel of the Lord; her husband was not present, so he prays and asks God to send the messenger once again to teach them how to raise the boy who is going to be born.

After the Angel of the Lord returns, Manoah asks him his name, but he says, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding." Manoah then prepares a sacrifice, but the Angel of the Lord will only allow it to be for God. He touches it with his staff, miraculously engulfing it in flames, and then ascends into the sky in the fire. This is such dramatic evidence of the nature of the Messenger that Manoah fears for his life, since it was said that no one could live after seeing God. However, his wife convinces him that, if God planned



to slay them, he would never have revealed such things to them. In due time, their son Samson is born, and he is raised according to the angel's instructions.

When he is a young adult, Samson leaves the hills of his people to see the cities of Philistia. He falls in love with a Philistine woman from Timnah, whom he decides to marry, ignoring the objections of his parents over the fact that she is not an Israelite. In the development of the narrative, the intended marriage is shown to be part of God's plan to strike at the Philistines.

Samson is repeatedly seized by the "Spirit of the Lord," who blesses him with immense strength. The first instance of this is seen when Samson is on his way to ask for the Philistine woman's hand in marriage, when he is attacked by a lion. He simply grabs it and rips it apart, as the spirit of God divinely empowers him. However, Samson keeps it a secret, not even mentioning the miracle to his parents. He arrives at the Philistine's house and becomes betrothed to her. He returns home, then comes back to Timnah sometime later for the wedding. On his way, Samson sees that bees have nested in the carcass of the lion and made honey. He eats a handful of the honey and gives some to his parents.



At the wedding feast, Samson tells a riddle to his thirty groomsmen (all Philistines). If they can solve it, he will give them thirty pieces of fine linen and garments, but if they cannot, they must give him thirty pieces of fine linen and garments. The riddle is a veiled account of two encounters with the lion, at which only he was present:

*Out of the eater came something to eat.*

*Out of the strong came something sweet.*

The Philistines are infuriated by the riddle. The thirty groomsmen tell Samson's new wife that they will burn her and her father's household if she did not discover the answer to the riddle and tell it to them. At the urgent and tearful imploring of his bride, Samson gives her the solution, and she passes it on to the thirty groomsmen.

Before sunset on the seventh day, they say to him,

*What is sweeter than honey?*

*and what is stronger than a lion?*



**Samson replies, If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle.**

**Samson then travels to Ashkelon (a distance of roughly 30 miles) where he slays thirty Philistines for their garments; he then returns and gives those garments to his thirty groomsmen. In a rage, Samson returns to his father's house. The family of his would-have-been bride instead gave her to one of the groomsmen as a wife. Sometime later, Samson returns to Timnah to visit his wife, unaware that she is now married to one of his former groomsmen. But her father refuses to allow Samson to see her, offering to give Samson a younger sister instead.**

**Samson goes out, gathers 300 foxes, and ties them together in pairs by their tails. He then attaches a burning torch to each pair of foxes' tails and turns them loose in the grain fields and olive groves of the Philistines. The Philistines learn why Samson burned their crops and burn Samson's wife and father-in-law to death in retribution.**

**In revenge, Samson slaughters many more Philistines, saying, "I have done to them what they did to me." Samson then takes refuge in a cave in the rock of Etam. An army of Philistines go to the Tribe of Judah and demand that 3,000 men of Judah deliver them Samson. With Samson's consent, given on the condition that the Judahites would not kill him themselves, they tie him with two new ropes and are about to hand him over to the Philistines when he breaks free of the ropes. Using the jawbone of a donkey, he slays 1,000 Philistines.**



**Later, Samson travels to Gaza, where he sees a prostitute and visits her. His enemies wait at the gate of the city to ambush him, but he tears the gate from its very hinges and frame and carries it to "the hill that is in front of Hebron".**

**He then falls in love with Delilah in the valley of Sorek. The Philistines approach Delilah and induce her with 1,100 silver coins to find the secret of Samson's strength so that they can capture their enemy, but Samson refuses to reveal the secret and teases her, telling her that he will lose his strength if he is bound with fresh bowstrings. She does so while he sleeps, but when he wakes up he snaps the strings. She persists, and he tells her that he can be bound with new ropes. She ties him up with new ropes while he sleeps, and he snaps them, too. She asks**

again, and he says that he can be bound if his locks are woven into a weaver's loom. She weaves them into a loom, but he simply destroys the entire loom and carries it off when he wakes.



Delilah, however, persists and Samson finally capitulates and tells Delilah that God supplies his power because of his consecration to God as a Nazirite, symbolized by the fact that a razor has never touched his head, and that if his hair is cut off, he will lose his strength. Delilah then woos him to sleep "in her lap" and calls for a servant to cut his hair. Samson loses his strength, and he is captured by the Philistines, who blind him by gouging out his eyes. They then take him to Gaza, imprison him, and put him to work turning a large millstone and grinding grain.



One day, the Philistine leaders assemble in a temple for a religious sacrifice to Dagon, one of their most important deities, for having delivered Samson into their hands. They summon Samson so that people can watch him perform for them. The temple is so crowded that people are even climbing onto the roof to watch – and all the rulers of the entire government of Philistia have gathered there too, some 3,000 people in all. Samson is led into the temple, and he asks

his captors to let him lean against the supporting pillars to rest. However, while in prison his hair had begun to grow again. He prays for strength and God gives him strength to break the pillars, causing the temple to collapse, killing him and the people inside.

After his death, Samson's family recovered his body from the rubble and buried him near the tomb of his father Manoah. A tomb structure which some attribute to Samson and his father stands on the top of the mountain in Tel Tzora. At the conclusion of Judges 16, it is said that Samson had "judged" Israel for twenty years.

### **Samuel: Last Judge – First Prophet**

Samuel was a Levite from the descendants of Kohath. He was one of the few biblical characters to have a detailed birth narrative.

His story in the Bible began with a barren woman, Hannah, praying to God for a child. The Bible says, "the Lord remembered her," and she became pregnant. She named the baby Samuel, which in Hebrew means "the Lord hears" or "the name of God." When the boy was weaned, Hannah presented him to God at Shiloh, in the care of Eli the high priest.



Samuel grew in wisdom and became a prophet. Following a great Philistine victory over the Israelites, Samuel became a judge and rallied the nation against the Philistines at Mizpah. He established his house at Ramah, riding a circuit to various cities where he settled the people's disputes.

Unfortunately, Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, who had been delegated to follow him as judges, were corrupt, so the people demanded a king. Samuel listened to God and anointed the first king of Israel, a tall, handsome Benjaminite named Saul.

In his farewell speech, the aged Samuel warned the people to give up idols and serve the true God. He told them if they and King Saul disobeyed, God would sweep them away. But Saul did disobey, offering a sacrifice himself instead of waiting for God's priest, Samuel, to do it. Again Saul disobeyed God in a battle with the Amalekites, sparing the enemy's king and the best of their livestock when Samuel had ordered Saul to destroy everything. God was so grieved that he rejected Saul and chose another king. Samuel went to Bethlehem and



**anointed the young shepherd David, son of Jesse. Thus began a years-long ordeal as the jealous Saul chased David through the hills, trying to kill him.**

**Samuel made yet another appearance to Saul--after Samuel had died! Saul visited a medium, the witch of Endor, ordering her to bring up the spirit of Samuel, on the eve of a great battle. In 1 Samuel 28:16-19, that apparition told Saul he would lose the battle, along with his life and the lives of his two sons.**

**In all of the Old Testament, few people were as obedient to God as Samuel. He was honored as an uncompromising servant in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11.**

### **What is the main lesson in the book of Judges?**

**All Biblical Judges performed judicial duties and the institute of Judges was separated from the institute of King. Their main task was to obtain justice for the tribes of Israel in the face of their enemies, annihilate or drive out their oppressors, and bring salvation, rest, and peace to the land.**

**No matter how long or how far we stray from God, the stories found in the book of Judges teach us that God is faithful and rescues us when we cry out to him. The stories found in Judges reveal God's character and demonstrate how God works through his chosen leaders to rescue and deliver his people.**

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