

## *Introduction to the Book of Judges (shophetim)*

### **I. Authorship and time of writing**

A. Attributed to Samuel by Jewish tradition

B. Time markers:

1. After the removal of the tabernacle and the ark from Shiloh (18:31; 20:27)
2. After Saul became king (17:6 / 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)
3. Before David conquered Jerusalem (1:21)
4. After the “captivity of the land” ??? (18:30)

### **II. Period covered**

A. Dates: approx. 1425 B.C. to 1100 B.C. (325 years) Contrast total number of given oppressions and judgeships (410 years) Some judgeships overlapped in different areas

B. Political character of Israel:

1. Theocracy: Ruled by God (8:22-23), primarily through the persons of the High Priest (not mentioned in Judges), prophets (4:4; 6:8; 1 Sam.3:20), and occasional judges (2:16, etc.); Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, etc.
2. Amphictyony; like a republican confederacy, with tribes or cities recognizing the leadership of elders and “princes” [NKJV “leaders”] (2:7; 8:10; 11:5).

### **III. What was a “Judge” (Heb. shophet)?**

A. The career of a Judge: Lead military missions; arbitrate in legal disputes

B. The number of Judges

Twelve men, plus “Deborah the prophetess,” plus Abimelech the usurper Eli and Samuel were also Judges, after the close of this book

### **IV. Structure of the book**

A. *Introductions* (ch.1-2):

1. Preliminary introduction (1:1—2:5)
2. Second introduction (2:6—3:6)

B. *Main body: The cycles of sin and deliverance* (3:7—chapter 16)

1. Othniel (3:7-11)
2. Ehud and Shamgar (3:12-31)
3. Deborah and Barak (chs.4-5)
4. Gideon (chs.6-8) and Abimelech (ch.9); Tola and Jair (10:1-5)
5. Jephthah (10:6—12:7); Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (12:8-15)
6. Samson (chs.13-16)

C. *Two Appendices* (chs.17-21)

1. Micah and the Danites (chs.17-18)
2. The Levite and the concubine (chs.19-21)

### **V. Cycles of the main section**

A. *Israel’s cycle of apostasy, repentance and deliverance (no fewer than six cycles)*

1. The people served the Lord (2:7)
2. A new generation, ignorant of Yahweh, did evil in the sight of the Lord (2:10-11)
3. Yahweh handed them over to plunderers, who oppressed them (2:14)
4. They groaned under oppression (2:18)
5. Yahweh raised up a deliverer to rescue and lead them (2:16)

B. The cycles charted: (see separate page)

### **VI. Lessons of the book**

- A. Israel’s utilitarian attitude toward religion: no love for God, just looking to Him for occasional deliverances;
- B. God preferred to allow people to do what was right in their own eyes than to impose a monarchical authority (17:6; 21:25);
- C. God will discipline His own children, when they need it;
- D. God works through men upon whom the Spirit rests and through the Spirit’s gifting (3:10; 6:34; 13:25; 14:6; 1 Sam.11:6)
- E. Charismatic men often are flawed characters.

**CHARTING THE CYCLES OF OPPRESSION AND PEACE**

<i>Oppressor</i>	<i>How long?</i>	<i>God's Agent</i>	<i>Years of Peace</i>	<i>Holy Spirit?</i>
Aram (Syria)	8 years	Othniel	40 years	3:10
Moab	18 years	Ehud	80 years	
Philistines		Shamgar		
Jabin, Canaan	20 years	Barak/Deborah Jael	40 years	4:4
Midian	7 years	Gideon	40 years	6:34
<i>Abimelech</i>	<i>3 years</i>	<i>Anon. Woman</i>		
		Tola	23 years	
		Jair	22 years	
Philist/Ammon	18 years	Jephthah	Ammon- 50 yrs	11:29
		Ibzan (Boaz?)	7 years	
		Elon	10 years	
		Abdon	8 years	
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