

Judges background

- According to Rabbinical tradition, written by Samuel.
- “No king in Israel” (17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25) implies that it was written during the monarchy
- “To this day” (1:21), Jerusalem not yet captured, so before David’s reign (2 Samuel 5:6-7)

Judges in the New Testament

- Judges 4:4 – 5:31 Deborah was a prophet and a judge. Her general was Barak, who is mentioned as a man of faith in Hebrews 11:32. Barak overcame great odds because he believed that God marched with him.
- Judges 13:1 – 16:31 Samson is listed among the judges and is mentioned in Hebrews 11:32. Despite many errors in judgment, Samson generated a great reputation for God.

Judges 1

- (1 – 21) Judah and Simeon fight the remaining Canaanites in their region.
- Simeon had territory within Judah due to the incident with Dinah (Genesis 34, 49:5 – 7).
- (6 – 7) Thumbs and toes: humiliation and unfit for battle.
- (8) Jerusalem taken, but later lost because David had to take it again. See 1:21.

Judges 1

- (11 – 15) Caleb gives his daughter to his nephew as a prize for gallantry. The Law did not forbid the marriage of first cousins.
- (16) Moses’ in-laws settled in southern Judah.
- (18) Judah took three of the five cities of the Philistines, but later lost them because David had to conquer them again.

Judges 1 – 2

- (1:19, 21, 27 – 36) First signs of weakening faith.
- (1:26) Location of Hittite Luz is unknown.
- (2:1 – 6) God brought their weak faith to their attention. The people wept, but God did not offer to give them another chance. (Like Numbers 14:39 – 45.)
- (2:7 – 3:7) When the generation who saw the miracles died off, the people turned to idols again.

First Judge

- (3:8 – 11) Othniel
 - The same one who won Caleb’s daughter (1:10 – 15)
 - Israel served (paid tribute to) Mesopotamia (Iraq) eight years.
 - Othniel led the army and defeated the oppressors.
 - Othniel judged the most difficult cases 40 years (Moses’ court system, Exodus 18:13 – 26) and things went well.

Second Judge

- (3:12 – 30) Ehud
 - After Othniel, Israel again fell back into idolatry (see v19).
 - Moab (with the help of Ammon and the Amorites) put Israel under tribute.
 - After 18 years, Israel cried out to God, so He raised up Ehud.
 - Ehud assassinated the king of Moab, Eglon.
 - Ehud led Israel, defeating the Moabites.
 - Things went well 80 years this time.

Third Judge

- (3:31) Shamgar
 - Moab is to the southeast. Philistia is to the southwest.
 - Shamgar probably overlapped Ehud and Deborah (4:1 and 5:6). Apparently, things did not go very well during Shamgar's term.
 - Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad (a sharp stick).

Fourth Judge

- (4:1 – 5:31) Deborah
 - After Ehud, Israel turned back to idols (5:8)
 - Conquered by the Canaanites, served 20 years.
 - Deborah called for Barak to lead the army. Barak said, "If you will go with me, I will go."
 - The fleeing Canaanite general stopped for a drink at the tent of Jael. He drank milk and fell asleep. Jael tent-pegged his head.

Fourth Judge

- (4:1 – 5:31) Deborah
 - Chapter 5: the song of Deborah
 - Not all the tribes took this risk
 - (17) The tribes east of the Jordan River did not participate. Dan and Asher did not show up.
 - (23) Meroz, perhaps a town in Issachar, was cursed for their failure to participate.
 - Things went well 40 years.

Fifth Judge

- (6:1 – 9:57) Gideon
 - (6:1) Served Midian 7 years
 - (6:8) A prophet was sent, telling them that they were this way because they had no faith
 - (6:13) Gideon thinks God has forsaken Israel because God had not rescued them
 - (6:15) Gideon says he is too weak to help and asks for a sign
 - (6:21) The angel ignites Gideon's sacrifice
 - (6:22) Gideon believes and builds an altar

Fifth Judge

- (6:1 – 9:57) Gideon
 - (6:25) Gideon cuts down his father's Baal
 - (6:31) Gideon's father stops the people from killing Gideon by saying, "Let Baal plead for himself." (Jerubbaal)
 - (6:33) At the next invasion, Gideon assembled Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphthali
 - (6:36) Gideon asks for another sign: wet fleece and dry ground.

Fifth Judge

- (6:1 – 9:57) Gideon
- (6:39) Gideon asks for another sign: dry fleece and wet ground.
- (7:2) God said 32,000 was too many or they would think they did it. Gideon offered to release anyone who was scared.
- (7:4) God said 10,000 was too many. Only lappers (300) retained.
- (7:12) Midian too numerous to count.
- (7:13) Gideon hears a dream from Midian

Fifth Judge

- (6:1 – 9:57) Gideon
- (7:19) In the night, Gideon's men suddenly flash torches and sound trumpets, imitating 300 divisions. Midian fled in disarray.
- (7:23) Naphthali, Asher, and Manasseh pursue.
- (7:24) Gideon also called Ephraim, who were upset that they were not called sooner.
- (8:5) Gideon asks for food from Succoth and Penuel but is refused.

Fifth Judge

- (6:1 – 9:57) Gideon
- (8:16) Vengeance on Succoth for not helping; scourges the elders.
- (8:17) Gideon kills all the men of Penuel
- (8:18) Apparently, the two Midianite kings had killed Gideon's brothers.
- (8:22) Gideon offered kingship but declines
- (8:24) Gideon requested a modest share of the booty, about 50 pounds of gold. Gideon made an ephod of it, which was worshipped

Fifth Judge

- (6:1 – 9:57) Gideon
- (8:28) 40 years of peace under Gideon.
- (8:33) As soon as Gideon died, Israel went back to idols.
- (9:1) Abimelech, son of Gideon's concubine, lobbies for power among his mother's people versus the 70 sons of Gideon.
- (9:5) Abimelech kills 69 of the 70 sons of Gideon.

Fifth Judge

- (6:1 – 9:57) Gideon
- (9:7) The remaining son recited a poem, challenging Shechem to do right, to no avail.
- The remainder of chapter 9 is the account of Jotham's revenge executed by God:
 - Abimelech and Shechem had a falling out.
 - Gaal talked Shechem into supporting him
 - Abimelech killed Gaal and followers
 - Abimelech died in the next battle

Sixth and Seventh Judges

- (10:1) Tola of Issachar judged 23 years
- (10:3) Jair of Gilead judged 22 years
- (10:6) Israel reverted to idols
- (10:7) God sold them to Ammon and Philistia
- (10:8) Israel served them 18 years
- (10:10) Israel cried to God
- (10:13) God refused to hear them.
- (10:16) Israel put away the idols and tried again, so God relented

Eighth Judge

- (11:1 – 12:7) Jephthah
 - Although already known as a good soldier, Jephthah was ostracized because he was the son of a prostitute. He moved to Tob, east of Gilead, and became a leader of bandits.
 - When invaded by Ammon, Gilead turned to Jephthah as their best hope of victory.
 - Jephthah was promised leadership if he won.
 - Jephthah's communication with the king of Ammon is recorded.

Eighth Judge

- (11:1 – 12:7) Jephthah
 - Ammon claimed Gilead as their ancestral land, taken by Israel. Jephthah reminded him that they lost their land to the Amorites, not Israel, from whom Israel took it, so Ammon had no claim.
 - (11:26) Israel had been there about 300 years (1400 – 1100 BC), so the period of the judges was almost over.
 - Jephthah had a good knowledge of history

Eighth Judge

- (11:1 – 12:7) Jephthah
 - (11:29) Jephthah circled and attacked from the north to cut off Ammon's escape.
 - (11:31) This vow turns bad later.
 - (11:33) This pursuit went all the way to Moab so Ammon could not re-group.
 - (11:34) The first out the door at home was is only child, his daughter.
 - (11:39) Whether he killed her or put her in Tabernacle service is debated.

Eighth Judge

- (11:1 – 12:7) Jephthah
 - (12:1) After the war, Ephraim threatened to burn Jephthah's home for not asking them to help. Jephthah said that he did, but they didn't show.
 - (12:4) War ensued. Gilead (Reuben & Gad) trapped Ephraim on the east side of the Jordan. Those trying to escape back to Ephraim were detected by their accent at the river crossing (Shibboleth).

Judges Nine through Eleven

- (12:8) After Jephthah's eight years was Ibzan of Bethlehem for seven years.
- (12:11) Elon of Zebulun judged ten years.
- (12:13) Abdon of Ephraim judged eight years. Note the donkeys, the ride of royalty.
- (13:1) Israel turned back to idols, so served Philistia 40 years.
- (13:2) Most of Dan gave up trying to defeat the Canaanites, moving to the far north. Samson's soon-to-be parents had not.

Samson: the Twelfth Judge

- (13:3 – 5) An angel tells Manoah's wife that she would bear a son, that he would be a Nazirite (Numbers 6:1 – 21), and that he would *begin* to deliver Israel.
- (13:6 – 8) Manoah asks for further instructions.
- (13:9 – 23) The angel returns, but looks like a person. When the angel ascended in the flame of a sacrifice, Manoah was afraid he would die. The wife stayed calm.

Samson: the Twelfth Judge

- (13:21) Samson grew up near Philistia.
- (14:2 – 5) Samson fancied a Philistine girl so talked his parents into getting her for him, not aware that Samson had a plan.
- (14:6 – 9) Samson killed a lion with his hands. Bees made a hive of the carcass. He ate the honey and gave some to his parents.
- (14:10 – 17) At the wedding feast, Samson posed a riddle about the lion and honey. His bride finally got the answer out of him.

Samson: the Twelfth Judge

- (14:18 – 20) Samson killed 30 Philistines and took their clothes to pay off the riddle bet. The bride was given to the best man.
- (15:1 – 8) When Samson went back to claim his bride, he was rebuffed. So he burned the fields of the Philistines, who in turn killed the in-laws and bride. Samson took revenge again.
- (15:9 – 13) To avoid war, the men of Judah came to arrest Samson.

Samson: the Twelfth Judge

- (15:14 – 20) Once delivered, Samson broke his bonds and killed 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. He then judged Israel 20 years.
- (16:1 – 3) Samson visited a prostitute in Gaza (a Philistine city). The men of Gaza surrounded the house. Samson escaped carrying the city gates nearly 40 miles.
- (16:4 – 14) Samson lied to Delilah three times about the source of his strength.

Samson: the Twelfth Judge

- (16:15 – 21) Finally, Samson told Delilah the truth. He was captured, blinded, and imprisoned.
- (16:22 – 31) But his hair grew back. So, when he was brought out for display, he collapsed the building on the prominent Philistines, killing more in that event than in the rest of his life. His brothers claimed the body for burial in his home region.

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- Why tell such terrible stories? So we don't romanticize history into mythology.
- (17:2) Compare to 17:10. 1100 shekels was a huge sum.
- (17:3) Compare to 17:4. "Wholly dedicated" was 18%?
- (17:5) How many ways did Micah mess up?
- (17:7) Part Levi, part Judah.
- (17:12 – 13) More culture than Law

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (18:1) Joshua 19:40 – 48 Dan had had some success against the Canaanites but later lost it (Judges 1:34).
- (18:5 – 6) Whether God spoke to this priest is unknown. But, the spies from Dan were satisfied.
- (18:7) Having allies meant that a siege could be broken by an attack from the rear.
- (18:19) Taking the Levite and the idol was important to the Danites.

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (18:29) This is the second time the Danites took a city and renamed it Dan. This one remained in their possession until the Assyrian captivity in 721 BC (400 years). With the division of the country around 950 BC, this became a calf-worship site.
- (19:1) Probably not the same Levite as above because the previous Levite moved to Dan and the Tabernacle was in Ephraim where Phineas, grandson of Aaron, was High Priest.

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (19:2 – 9) A concubine of a Levite in Ephraim cheated on him, so ran home. Four months later, the Levite went to retrieve her. Her father delayed their departure by extending the party.
- (19:10 – 21) On the way back, the Levite bypassed Jerusalem (of the Jebusites) to stay in Gibeah of Benjamin. No one invited them home until an old Ephraimite was hospitable.

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (19:22 – 26) See Genesis 19:1 – 8, Lot, entertaining angels, offers his daughters to the mob. Same idea here, except the Levite wasn't an angel, so things went badly.
- (19:27 – 20:7) The Levite seeks collective vengeance by sending pieces of the dead concubine all over the country. Israel responded. The Levite's account left out that he sent her out.

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (20:8 – 11) 10% of the 400,000 volunteers are tasked with gathering provisions for the others.
- (20:12 – 17) Israel demands the Benjamin give up Gibeah to be punished. Benjamin unites with Gibeah (26,000 soldiers).
- (20:18, 23, 26 – 28) Israel repeatedly inquired of God at the tabernacle.
- (20:19 – 21) Judah fights first and loses 22,000 men.

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (20:22 – 25) Second attempt, Israel loses 18,000 more.
- (20:29 – 46) Third attempt was better planned (a fake retreat followed by an ambush followed by taking Gibeah and burning it), resulting in the loss of 25,100 Benjamites.
- (20:47 – 48) The remaining 600 Benjamite soldiers were well fortified on a mountain, so Israel burned all the cities and killed all the people and livestock.

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (21:1) Another ill-advised vow – no wives for Benjamin.
- (21:2 – 7) The people weep before the Lord that they have cut off an entire tribe.
- (21:8 – 15) Their answer was to take further vengeance on a no-show group, Jabesh Gilead. The city was sacked and the people killed except for 400 virgins. These were given to the 600 of Benjamin (Jabesh Gilead, obviously, had not vowed anything).

Stories from the Era of the Judges

- (21:16 – 23) Because of the vow, no one could give a daughter to Benjamin. So, they let Benjamin know where a large group of “daughters of Shiloh” would be, so they could take 200 more.
- (21:23 – 25) From this beginning of 600 couples, Benjamin rebuilt their cities and had many children.