



**Judges 21:25** *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.”*

This book opens with the death of Joshua. Moses has been the backbone of the Israelite people. They followed God directly because they followed Moses. Would they also follow Joshua? In the end, Joshua was not Moses. His legacy turned into an apostasy within a chapter. God, in His wisdom, decided to give them Judges that will direct and protect the people. Yet, the remnant was falling far and fast from what Moses and Joshua left them. They were slowly becoming a godless nation.

This book of Judges consists of three well known judges and ten lesser-known ones. The end of Sampson (in chapter sixteen) marks the end of Gods protection. It states several times from chapter 17 on that there was no king in Israel. Finally, we have the statement in Judges 21:25 *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.”* It’s the last verse and the end of an era (so it seems).

### **Narrative**

It’s nice to see the progression of Gods creation through Moses, Joshua, and the Judges. In some ways I wish we had a more detailed book on the life of the prophets. These timelines pushed Gods kingdom along. One of those time periods is called the Judges. It spans a period of around 400 years. This book begins with the death of Joshua. From there Israel dives straight

into idolatry. If you think about it, 400 years is a long time for 12 judges. Yet, between each Judge is a period of falling away from God.

We have several themes in this book. Here in chapter 3, we find within verses 5-6 that the children of Israel adopted the lifestyle of foreign cultures. That unfortunately is theme one. The second theme is the children crying out to the Lord when things go badly. Another theme is God then raising up a judge to rescue them. God eventually raised up a female judge (Deborah) with a male counterpart named Barak. The Land rested in their hands 40 years. Right after this time period it says the children did evil in the sight of the Lord. Gideon is famous for his 300 fighting men and his lack of faith with the fleece. Through chapters 9-13 we have several Judges experiencing the same themes I have outlined.

Samson might be the most famous Judge. His power from God was a blessing like no other. Yet, his appetite for women destroyed him. There were rules to being called a Nasserite. Through a series of events, Samson broke all the rules. Through Samson and the other 11 judges, God tried to save His people. Yet, in the end, they wanted a king and other Gods more than the Lord in Heaven. In chapter 17 through 21 we have the saying "*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.*" The Time of the Judges didn't prove to be very effective except in one way. A remnant was probably saved (by God) from utter destruction.

## **Intent**

What if God had enough? I believe there are more failings of the tribe of Israel than is presented here in the book of Judges. However, along side these Judges are moments of Gods righteous anger. His chosen children refused to obey and follow God. My Scofield Bible has a quote that states "*the utter failure of Israel and the persistent grace of God towards them.*" We

are raptured by the stories of Giedion and Sampson. Yet, they were just a fraction of Judges (judgments) towards Israel. Yes, the Judges saved the people in distress. However, each time it was due to falling into idolatry and in-line with other nations. This book has a direct line to their slow walk away from God and a desire to follow a king over God.

Chapter 2 verses 1-2 has an angel of the Lord saying He drove the Israelites out of Egypt and brought them into the promised land. Deep in verse 2 this angel is dismayed that the people have broken the covenant with Him. There is a series of incomplete advances by the people. They let some of the other tribes of the land live. The Israelites began to intermingle with these people and use their customs. Mixed within the Judges is years of falling away from God. Even as we hit the last Judge Sampson, the zeal for the Lord is missing. Clearly, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon these Judges, yet, it leaves too.

### **Characters**

Joshua, Jael, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Barak, God (and angels of the Lord), Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Sampson.

### **Who wrote this book?**

By tradition it's said that Samuel wrote this book. Clearly, this book of stories and history was accumulated along with the other first 6 books of the Bible and several others such as the Kings and Samuel.

### **Famous verses**

Judges 16:20, Judges 17:6, Judges 20:27

### **Controversies, issues, and Questions**

Ehud and the fat king is an interesting story. This large king had been terrorizing the people. Yet, it was a punishment by God to wake them up. It's customary that most warriors are right-handed. In boy scouts it is tradition that you shake hands with your right hand. Why? It's because in battle you carried your sword in your right hand and your shield in your left. Shaking with the right hand would mean you are laying down your sword. In Judges 3:21 Ehud greets the large king with his right hand. It is assumed that is a friendly peaceful gesture. Yet, the king was not expecting Ehud to be left-handed. He surprisingly killed the king.

In Hebrews 11:33 Paul mentions that these people of faith received the promise yet they did not know when they would receive it. By faith they obeyed God anyways. Samson was not a very good judge. He appears to be a great sinner who failed God. Yet, in the end he prayed to God for one last chance to do things right. Rahab the prostitute is on the list of the promise. Who and why are some people getting into heaven? Our standards are not God's standards.

Jephthah made a vow to God that if he was to succeed, He would sacrifice "whatever" came out of his door next. It was his daughter. The controversy is two-fold. God does not condone child sacrifice. Secondly, it appears Jephthah reneged on his vow for a time. Eventually, the Bible alludes to the daughter being sacrificed. Some scholars believe she made a vow of chastity and was not sacrificed. Either way this is a controversial story.

### **Connections**

Samson, Gideon, Barak, Jephthah and the faith chapter in Hebrews 11. There isn't a direct connection to the New Testament and Jesus. There are those who say that Jesus is in every verse. Yet, the Bible mentions these people in Hebrews and it seems like they are honored in heaven as

faithful men. We know from their stories that they struggled. Samson seems to be a great sinner. Yet, God's word honors their faithfulness to the Lord.