



The Judges of Israel

Judges 1

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Judges 1

c. 1389–1050 B.C.

The Book of Judges is all about God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness. In Joshua, God told the sons of Israel to drive out the people living in the Promised Land. When they were faithful, God gave their enemies into their hands. Unfortunately, they were often unfaithful, and refused to destroy God's enemies. They often fell away because they were tempted by the Canaanites and seduced into the worship of Canaanite gods.

The cycle of Israel's faithlessness, repentance, and deliverance repeats throughout Judges. The sons of Israel go after other gods and forsake the one true God. God then punishes them by allowing the Canaanites to oppress them. As the oppression grows, the people repent and cry out to God. God hears the cry of his people and sends a judge to free them. After the people are delivered, however, they fall back into worshipping other gods, and God gives them over to their enemies again.

The major judges are Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, and Samson. These people were civil rulers who freed God's people from foreign oppression.



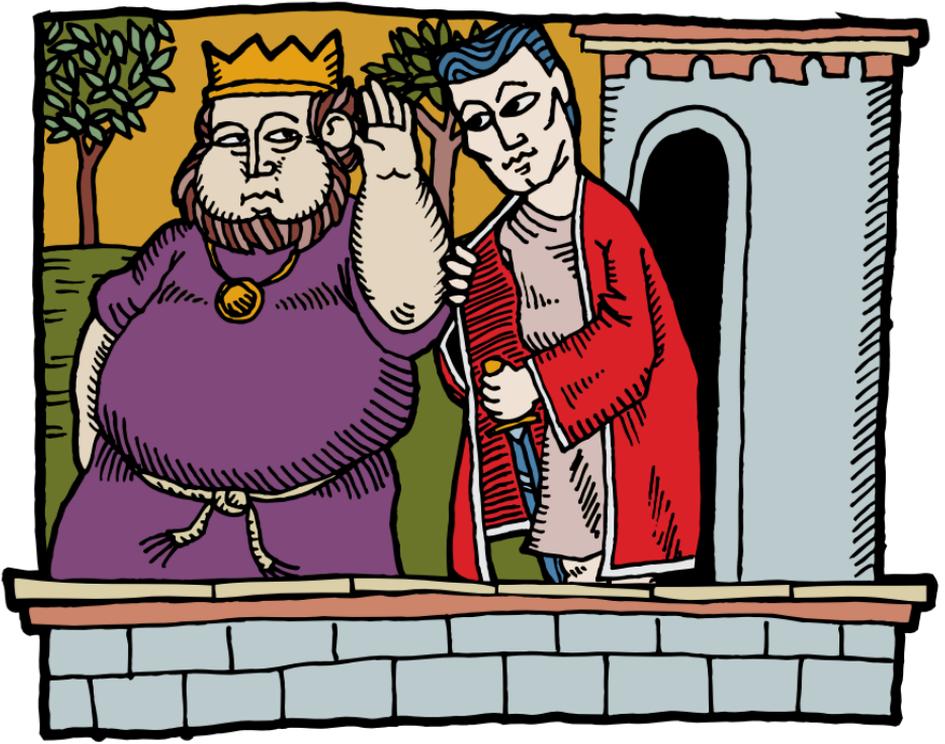
Shamgar

R E S O U R C E S

Bible

Greenleaf Guide to OT, p. 64





Ehud, the Left-Handed Agent of God

Bustard

Othniel and Ehud

Judges 3

Othniel and Ehud

Judges 3

1377–1337 B.C.

Israel sinned against the Lord. They intermarried with the Canaanites (see Deut. 7:3–4). They forgot God, and served Baal and Asheroth in direct disobedience to the First Commandment (Ex. 20:3). The Lord punished Israel by allowing Cushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia, to oppress them for eight years.

Finally, Israel cried out to the Lord and he delivered them. He sent Othniel to save them. God's Spirit came upon him, and he led Israel into battle. He defeated Cushan-rishathaim, and the people enjoyed 40 years of peace.

Sadly, Israel again broke covenant with God. This time he allowed Moab, and their sinister king, Eglon, to rule over them. Eglon made an alliance with the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and they all persecuted Israel.

Again Israel cried out to God, and he delivered them. God used Ehud to overthrow Eglon. Ehud approached Eglon, pretending to bring him a secret message from God. When Ehud was alone with the fat King Eglon, he told him that to hear the secret message the king had to come closer. When Eglon got close enough, Ehud stuck the dagger into Eglon's fat belly and escaped. He then rallied the sons of Israel, and they drove out the forces of King Eglon.

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Greenleaf Guide to OT, p. 65

Child's Story Bible, pgs. 114, 115





Deborah the
Prophetess
Judges 4, 5

Deborah the Prophetess

Judges 4, 5
c. 1350 B.C.

Again Israel turned away from God. God then allowed Jabin, King of Canaan, to oppress them. The commander of Jabin's army was named Sisera.

When the sons of Israel cried out to God, he delivered them in an exceptional way. All of the other judges of Israel were men, but this time God chose Deborah, a prophetess, to deliver Israel. She called Barak, a leader in Israel, and told him to attack Sisera's army. Barak was willing to go, but only if Deborah went with him. Because of Barak's hesitance, the Lord did not let him have the glory of capturing Sisera.

God gave that honor to an unlikely person. Under Barak's leadership, Israel defeated the forces of Sisera. Sisera, however, escaped on foot. He came to the tent of Jael, and she lured him in. He thought that Jael was going to hide him, but she had other plans. While Sisera slept Jael slipped into the tent and killed him by pounding a tent peg through his head. Thus the mighty warrior was killed by a woman.

Deborah wrote a song in honor of this great deliverance. It is full of praise for the God that delivers Israel. She also describes the battle and tells the wonderful story of Jael, who became a heroine in Israel that day.

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Greenleaf Guide to OT, p. 65

Child's Story Bible, pgs. 116, 117





Gideon
Delivers Israel
Judges 6-7

Gideon Delivers Israel

Judges 6–7
c. 1350 B.C.

When Israel again rebelled, God allowed the Midianites to oppress them.

Finally, Israel repented and cried to God. God chose humble Gideon to deliver them. As he led the armies of Israel into battle, however, he still lacked confidence. The Lord confirmed his word to Gideon by giving him a sign. Gideon put a sheep skin, or fleece, on the ground. On the next morning, the fleece was wet with dew, but God kept the ground dry. The next night, the ground was wet, but the fleece was dry.

God's miracle increased Gideon's confidence, but God also tested that confidence. Gideon led 32,000 men into battle. God, however, wanted Israel to know that he delivered them, not their armies. God told Gideon to send home anyone who was afraid. Ten thousand men were left. God also made Gideon send home any man that knelt to drink. After sending these men home Gideon had only 300 left. All of the men were given a pitcher and a trumpet. They attacked the Midianites that night while they slept. They blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers. When the Midianites heard the noise they thought that a great force was attacking. In the confusion, they fought and destroyed each other, and God delivered Israel using only 300 men.

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Bible

Greenleaf Guide to OT, pgs. 66, 67

Child's Story Bible, pgs. 117–121

Children's Illustrated Bible, pgs. 96, 97

Journey Through the Bible, pgs. 86–89

