

# JUDGES

## STUDY GUIDE

### **AUTHOR & DATE**

There is a lot about the book of Judges that we do not know. For example, the author is never stated and scholars are not certain about who authored the book. Many believe it was Samuel, for he was also known to write (1 Sam. 10:25). What we do know is that the author carefully selected oral and written sources to complete this work with a focus on teaching theological importance of Israel's history – mostly the severe departure from God.

Though we don't know the exact date of when the book was written, there are a few clues within the text that point to a date 1050-1000 B.C. – the timeframe between Saul's early monarchy and David's conquest of Jerusalem. The phrase, "In those days there was no king in Israel" indicates the book was written in a time when Israel did have a king. Second, Judges 1:21 says, "the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day," signifying a time before David's takeover of Jerusalem shortly after he was made king over all Israel (2 Sam. 5:6-7).

### **BASIC INFORMATION**

The book covers Israel's chaotic history from about 1375-1050 B.C. – basically from Joshua's death until the time of Samuel the prophet who will anoint Israel's first king, Saul. Keep in mind as you read that the book is not laid out in chronological order. In fact, chapters 16-21 precede chapters 3-15, and chapter 2 serves as a summary of the whole book. Therefore, the book is presented thematically and illustrates the way in which the Lord intervened and dealt with Israel per Judges 2:16-19.

The basic structure of the book falls into 3 main divisions:

The Disobedience of Israel (1:1-3:6)

The Roller Coaster Ride of Deterioration & Deliverance (3:7-16:31)

The Depravity of Israel (17:1-21:25)

### **POLITICAL CLIMATE AND ISRAEL'S POOR EXAMPLE**

During this time of Israel's history, major shifts in world powers were taking place. The Assyrians to the north, once strong now underwent a period of decline. The Egyptians to the south had also reduced in power. The Canaanites, Philistines, and Israelites found themselves in a power vacuum, yet having greater mobility and freedom from neighboring forces. Rather than a time of peace, it meant repeated attempts of the people turning on each other to gain power.

Israel's entrance and settling into the Promised Land should have fostered a time of consolidation and strength during this turbulent time. As a nation, they were positioned to be an example to surrounding peoples of how a nation could come under the lordship of Almighty God and be blessed and protected. Instead, they chose idolatry and disobedience, and in the absence of a unifying leader like Moses or Joshua, Israel adopted more of a tribal system loosely held together by their Hebrew identity.

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### OBSERVATION WORDS

- God, Jesus, Holy Spirit
- Judge/Deliverer
- Did evil
- Cried out/Cried to the Lord
- Deliver/Rescue
- No king in Israel
- Delivered/Gave
- Take note of explanations for things

### SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What did the Lord teach YOU through what you read?
  
- Where/how is **Jesus** & the **Holy Spirit** represented in the book?
  
- In chapter 1, there is a repeated phrase which is not used beyond that chapter. What is it? Look up the following passages & explain why this repeated phrase is significant.
  - Exodus 23:20-33
  
  - Deut. 7:1-11, 16
  
  - Joshua 23:5-13
  
- What is the cycle lived out by the Israelites? How is this pattern reflected in your own life?
  
- Based on this book, what is a judge? How is a judge similar and yet different from a king?

- Fill out the following chart based on what you learn about each judge (continued on next page)

JUDGE	REFERENCE	PEACE?	NOTES
Othniel	1:11-15 3:7-11	40 yrs	
	3:12-14:1		
Shamgar	3:31; 5:6	Not stated	Slew 600 Philistines with an ox goad (3:31)
	4:1-5:31		
	6:1-8:35		
Abimelech	9:1-57	3 yrs.	Not really considered a judge, but ruled Israel through a civil war
Tola	10:1-2	Not stated	Judged Israel 3 yrs; probably from one of the leading families of Issachar (Gen. 46:13; Num. 26:23)
	10:3-5		

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Tola (continued)	10:6-12:7		
Ibzan	12:8-10		
Elon	12:11-12		
Abdon	12:13-15		
Samson	13:1-16:31		

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- Choose one of the following judges and put together a brief “life lesson” from their story: **Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson**. You can do this below or on a separate sheet.

- **KEY WORD** – How would you summarize what you’ve read into one word or very short phrase? Why did you choose that?
- **KEY VERSE(S) & CHAPTER** – Like key words, key verse & chapter reflect something that stood out to you from the book. It may be a means of summarizing the book, or it may be something that the Lord taught you through that verse & chapter. So, what are they for you and why?

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