

The Book Of:
Judges

Hebrew Name
Sho-phetim
"Savior; Deliverer"

Structure and Outline

Overview of Israel's Status/ Intro to Israel's Apostasy	Chapters 1:1—3:6
Downward Spiral of Israel/ Careers of the Judges	Chapters 3:7—16:31
Completely Corrupted Israel	Chapters 17—21

I. What is Judges?

The book of Judges is named for the 12 leaders of Israel between the periods of Joshua and Samuel. That the leaders were called "judges" might confuse contemporary readers, but in the ancient world, governments were not separated into multiple branches. All authority would rest in one man, and the idea was that he would rule justly, governing according to the foundation of the law. Therefore, the book of Judges chronicles the rise and reign of these leaders.

II. Who Wrote Judges?

The author of the book is anonymous. Though Jewish scholars eventually ascribed it to Samuel, Scripture provides no indication of this. It is possible that various blocks of the book were authored by different people before being compiled into one document. Since the book's latest event occurred in the middle of the 11th century B.C., Judges could not have been completed before then. Though it could have been finalized following the Babylonian captivity (6th century), most of it was probably written before David captured Jerusalem in 1003 B.C. Judges 1:21 states that the Jebusites were living in Jerusalem at the time of writing, but they probably would have not been there after David took the city. Therefore, a date in the early 11th century B.C. is most likely.

Judges (continued)

III. Why Was Judges Written?

The book of Judges details the downward spiral of God's people, spiritually, morally, and nationally. Over and over, the Israelites turned their backs on God, and the apostasy grew more serious each time. The people violated the covenant in every way possible, and the consequences were always severe. It is interesting to note that during the period, Israel seems to have functioned less like a unified nation and more like twelve tribes. Two times the book mentions the lack of a king in Israel (17:6; 21:25) as contributing to the problem. In the absence of godly leadership, everyone tended to do "what was right in his own eyes." Therefore, it stands to reason that the purpose of the book was to recount the state of Israel's depravity that led to its choosing a king to fill the void of leadership.

IV. A Philosophy of the History of Israel in Judges

Sin of the people

Wrath of God

Oppression of the people

Repentance of the people

Deliverance of the people

Sin of the people (again)

God's people would sin by bowing to foreign gods, inciting God's wrath. So God would allow the oppression of Israel by a foreign power. The people would repent and groan for God's intervention. God would raise a judge from Israel who would save them. Soon, however, the people again bowed to foreign gods.

Key Themes & Theology in Judges

- **Godly Leadership Is Important**
- **Partial Obedience Is Complete Disobedience**
- **God Is the Only God**
- **God Will be Glorified In His Way**