

The Judges of Israel

Judge	Years of Judging	Memorable Act(s)	Reference
OTHNIEL	40	He captured a powerful Canaanite city	Judges 3:7-11
EHUD	80	He killed Eglon and defeated the Moabites	Judges 3:12-30
SHAMGAR	unrecorded	He killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad	Judges 3:31
DEBORAH (w/Barak)	40	She defeated Sisera and the Canaanites and later sang a victory song with Barak	Judges 4 and 5
GIDEON	40	He destroyed his family idols, used a fleece to determine God's will, raised an army of 10,000, and defeated 135,000 Midianites with 300 soldiers	Judges 6-8
TOLA	23	He judged Israel for 23 years	Judges 10:1, 2
JAIR	22	He had 30 sons	Judges 10:3-5
JEPHTHAH	6	He made a rash vow, defeated the Ammonites, and later battled jealous Ephraim	Judges 10:6-12:7
IBZAN	7	He had 30 sons and 30 daughters	Judges 12:8-10
ELON	10	unrecorded	Judges 12:11, 12
ABDON	8	He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, each of whom had his own donkey	Judges 12:13-15
SAMSON	20	He was a Nazirite, killed a lion with his bare hands, burned the Philistine wheat fields, killed 1,000 Philistines with a donkey's jawbone, tore off an iron gate, was betrayed by Delilah, and destroyed thousands of Philistines in one last mighty act	Judges 13-16

EHUD

At first glance, Ehud's career as a judge in Israel may not seem relevant to us. He clearly lived in another time. He took radical and violent action to free his people. His murder of Eglon shocks us. His war on Moab was swift and deadly. His life is difficult to relate to. But our commitment to God's Word challenges us not to ignore this leader. As we read about his life, some questions come to mind: (1) When was the last time God showed me something wrong in my life and I took immediate and painful action to correct the error? (2) When was the last time I asked God to show me how he could use something unique about me (as he used Ehud's left-handedness)? (3) When was the last time I made a plan to obey God in some specific area of my life and then followed through on that plan? (4) When was the last time my life was an example to others of obedience to God?

The enemies we face are as real as Ehud's, but they are most often within ourselves. The battles we fight are not against other people but against the power of sin. We need God's help in doing battle against sin. We also need to remember that he has already won the war. He has defeated sin at the cross of his Son, Jesus. His help is the cause of each success, and his forgiveness is sufficient for each failure.

Strengths and accomplishments:

- Second judge of Israel
- A man of direct action, a frontline leader
- Used a perceived weakness (left-handedness) to do a great work for God
- Led the revolt against Moabite domination and gave Israel 80 years of peace

Lessons from his life:

- Some conditions call for radical action
- God responds to the cry of repentance
- God is ready to use our unique qualities to accomplish his work

Vital statistics:

- Where: Born during the last years of the desert wanderings or during Israel's early years in the promised land
- Occupations: Messenger, judge
- Relative: Father: Gera
- Contemporary: Eglon of Moab

Key verse:

"Again the Israelites cried out to the LORD, and he gave them a deliverer—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite" (Judges 3:15).

His story is told in Judges 3:12-30.