

# THE OLD TESTAMENT

## JUDGES OF ISRAEL

Listed in the chart below are Judges of [Old Testament](#) (1) Israel, along with their length of respective reign and supportive Scripture verses. The books of [Judges](#) (2) and [1 Samuel](#) (3) share with us that judges ruled over Israel for about a 300-400 year period. Shortly thereafter, Israel wanted to be like other nations and clamored for a king ([1 Samuel 8:1-22](#)).

As they offer relevant information, explore page 2 for footnotes (a) through (f) and webpage references (1) through (6). Modifications are welcome at [goodnews@downriverdisciples.com](mailto:goodnews@downriverdisciples.com). Please share this document far and wide to help spread the Good News of Jesus Christ!

#	JUDGE	LENGTH	SCRIPTURE
1	Othniel	40 years	<a href="#">Judges 3:7-11</a>
2	Ehud	80 years	<a href="#">Judges 3:12-30</a>
3	Shamgar	unknown	<a href="#">Judges 3:31</a>
4	Deborah/Barak	40 years	<a href="#">Judges 4:1-5:31</a>
5	Gideon	40 years	<a href="#">Judges 6:1-8:35</a>
6	(a) Abimelek	3 years	<a href="#">Judges 9:1-57</a>
7	Tola	23 years	<a href="#">Judges 10:1-2</a>
8	Jair	22 years	<a href="#">Judges 10:3-5</a>
9	Jephthah	6 years	<a href="#">Judges 11:1-12:7</a>
10	Ibzan	7 years	<a href="#">Judges 12:8-10</a>
11	Elon	10 years	<a href="#">Judges 12:11-12</a>
12	Abdon	8 years	<a href="#">Judges 12:13-15</a>
13	Samson	20 years	<a href="#">Judges 13:1-16:31</a>
14	(b) Eli	40 years	<a href="#">1 Samuel 1:1-4:18</a>
15	(c) Samuel	unknown	<a href="#">1 Samuel 7:1-8:1</a>

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### DETERMINING WHO WAS/WASN'T A JUDGE

When researching data about the Judges of Israel, the seeker of information will find many variations of this select group. What determined who was a Judge? What criteria excluded Abimelek (Abimelech) from certain lists? Why do Eli and Samuel appear on some lists, but not others? There appears to be no consistent benchmark by which to include or exclude those who have been traditionally identified as Judges of Israel.

NIV Bible footnotes indicate that when the words "leader" and/or "led" are included in a subject's narrative, it is traditionally understood he/she served as a Judge of Israel. However, this verbiage is not present in all of the 15 Judges listed herein (ex: Abimelek, Gideon). Additionally, the narratives of the respective Judges are not consistent as to whom was called by God and who was not.

### CHART FOOTNOTES

- (a) Some external sources list Abimelek ([Judges 9:1-57](#)) as a Judge of Israel, while others do not. The NIV indicates he was a king for 3 years, but there is no narrative or verbiage similar to that in the accounts of many other Judges to indicate he was, in fact, a Judge. He was not called by God.
- (b) Some external sources list Eli as a Judge of Israel, while others do not. The [1 Samuel 4:18](#) narrative shares, "He had led Israel forty years."
- (c) Some external sources list Samuel as a Judge of Israel, while others do not. [1 Samuel 7:6](#) narrative shares, "Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah," while [1 Samuel 7:15-17](#) tells us "Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life. From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the Lord."

### ADDITIONAL FOOTNOTES

- (d) [1 Samuel 8:1-3](#) discloses that Samuel made his two sons (Joel and Abijah) judges when he became old, but this appears to have been very short-lived as they were corrupt. As a result, the Israelites demanded that Samuel appoint them a king instead ([1 Samuel 8:4-22](#)), which God told Samuel to do. Samuel anointed Saul to be the first king and, from that point forward, kings ruled Israel in place of judges. Explore our webpage on the [Kings of Israel and Judah](#) (4) for a trove of spiritual treasures!
- (e) The [First Book of Chronicles](#) (5) mentions Kenaniah and his sons as "as officials and judges over Israel" (see [1 Chronicles 26:29](#)).
- (f) The [Second Book of Chronicles](#) (6) has a section titled, "Jehoshaphat Appoints Judges" (see [2 Chronicles 19:11](#)).

### WEBPAGE REFERENCES

- (1) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/old-testament>
- (2) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/judges>
- (3) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/1-samuel>
- (4) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/kings-of-israel-and-judah>
- (5) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/1-chronicles>
- (6) <http://www.downriverdisciples.com/2-chronicles>

<http://www.downriverdisciples.com/judges-of-israel>