

Judges

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at www.openarms-communityofchrist.org.*

Judges is about a period of transition for the Israelite tribes. Moses and Joshua have died and the “golden age” under David has not yet come. Judges tells the stories of a number of leaders, but these leaders did not have the stature of Moses, Joshua, or David. They were courageous but also fearful, and they were not entirely certain of their relationship with the God of Israel. They were clan and tribal heroes, but their stories were gathered together into this book, which became part of a larger work of history that told the story of Israel in its own land.

These leaders included:

- Deborah the prophetess (chapters 4 and 5),
- Jael, who killed the Canaanite general Sisera by inviting him into her tent and when he was asleep, putting a tent peg through his head (chapters 4 and 5),
- Gideon, who challenged the people to serve God rather than Baal and fought against the Midianites with a very small army of only 300 men (chapters 6 through 8),
- Jephthah, who made a vow of sacrifice to God if he was victorious—and it ended up costing him his daughter (chapters 11 and 12), and
- Samson, who led the Israelites against the Philistines, but who ended up being entrapped by them because of his desire for Delilah through 18).

The Israelite tribes had different backgrounds and different perspectives; this book shows the challenges they faced in trying to build **one** community that was completely different from the communities around them. This was not an easy process, but they ultimately came to a belief that they were ruled by the Lord, who took the side of the lowly and marginalized. Their future would be a product of the loyalty they owed to this God.