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The Seven Detailed Cycles

3:7 to 16:31



As Michael Hattin relates in his book *Judges, the Perils of Possession*, this section of the book is the actual story of **the judges**. **With a total of twelve judges, there were actually twelve cycles, but the author does not detail all twelve . . . only seven** (to see link click [Ae - The Cycle of Sin in Judges](#)). In each **cycle**, **the tribes** strayed from **Ha'Shem** by failing to uproot **Canaanite** settlement, and consequently embraced **Canaanite** idolatry, **they** suffered oppression and then cried out to **God** for rescue. **ADONAI** relented and inspired a charismatic leader, a **judge**, who rose from obscurity to lead **the tribes** of **Isra'el** in battle against **their** foes. This **judge** triumphed, restored some semblance of stability, and led **the people** for a number of years. After the **judges'** death, however, **their** hard-won accomplishments were forgotten, and once again **the people** strayed from **God**. **The cycle** then repeated **itself**.

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The reason why there are **twelve judges**, and no more or less, is precisely because there are **twelve tribes**. While most, but not all, of **the tribes** are represented by at least one **judge**, the point is not to be comprehensive in terms of their **tribal** identity but rather to indicate to us that this is a book about **twelve** individual **tribes** . . . not about **the nation of Isra'el**. In other words, during the period of **the judges**, tribalism reigned. Its effects are acutely felt at every point in the book. When **a tribe** is oppressed, **they** will usually have to deal with the threat on **their** own. Rarely do other tribes come to the aid of **their brothers**, unless **they themselves** are also threatened. Rarely does a **judge** exercise any authority over, or rescue, any **tribe** but **their** own. This naturally led to an important conclusion about **the judges** in the book, unlike **Moses** or **Joshua**, **they** were regional, rather than national leaders.

With this surprising insight, it is now possible to appreciate why some **judges** are treated at length, while others receive only a few lines of text. We are familiar with the names **Ehud, Debroah, Gideon, Jephthah**, and **Samson** because the book tells us about them in a fair amount of detail. But how many of us recognize the names **Othniel, Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon**, or **Abdon**? How many of us remember any significant details of **their** exploits? This is in spite of the fact that these seven “minor” **judges** actually outnumber the five mentioned above. From this we may reason that the point of the narrative is not to completely relate the story of all of **Isra'el's** leaders over the course of hundreds of years; but rather, to indicate that there were **twelve** of **them**, neither more nor less, because **their** story is the story of **the tribes**. In other words, it may very well be the case that many of these minor **judges** are included not because **their** exploits were pivotal or that **their** lives were memorable; but rather, because we need a total of exactly twelve **judges** in order to construct a framework that is intended to highlight the theme of tribalism!⁵⁹