

The Judges

Introduction

The chronology for the period of the Hebrew judges is at best a puzzle and at worst a tangled mess. Scripture provides plenty of names and durations, but as we will see, reaching a conclusion as to who was active when is far from simple. Unlike the later period of the Kings, the information provided in Judges lacks both internal and external reference points to allow us to find dates. While Egypt was the primary foreign power for much of this period, no interaction with Egypt is recorded. Much of this is simply because, “In those days there was no king in Israel” (Judges 21:25), and consequently no central government to fight wars, build monuments, keep records, or (perhaps most important to the Egyptians) levy taxes and pay tribute. To get some idea of how the judges fit into the period between the Exodus and the coronation of Saul we will need to look at the whole of scripture and what scant archaeological evidence we have and try to find a solution that makes sense in the larger context.

Bookends

While the specifics of the period of the judges are fuzzy, scripture does provide clear and easily datable boundaries for this period. More specifically, I Kings 6:1 provides us with the overall span of time between the Exodus and the reign of Solomon:

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

This scripture is the primary basis for what is known as an early exodus, and the early date is the basis for the timeline proposed here. To those proponents of a later exodus in the reign of Ramses II I would suggest that the book of Judges cannot be reconciled with a later date as can be deduced from the discussion to follow. Consequently, the Judges account supports an early date for the exodus.

The information given in I Kings 6:1 allows us to construct a set of bookends if you will for the period of the judges: A beginning and ending date inside of which to attempt to build a chronology. The current accepted date for the reign of Solomon is 970-930 BC following Thiele¹. Subtracting 480 years from this date gives us a date of 1,446 BC for the exodus. Adding back the forty year period between the exodus and the entry into Canaan (Deuteronomy 1:3, Joshua 4:19) gives us a starting date of 1,406 BC and the bookend on the left. On the right side we can subtract from the fourth year of the reign of Solomon the four years of his reign, forty years for the reign of David (II Samuel 5:4-5), and forty years for the reign of Saul. The Old Testament does not provide any information on the length of Saul’s reign. The only reference that we have is found in Acts 13 in a speech by Paul to the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch:

“After that he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they asked for a king, so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin for forty years.” (Acts 13:20-21)

In this passage, Paul both solves the problem of the length of Saul’s reign and hands us another problem with his statement about the duration of the period of the judges. Given that this was a speech in a synagogue we must expect that both facts were generally accepted and taught in the Jewish community of the

¹ Thiele, Edwin R.; The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings; Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, © 1983

time. Sticking to Saul for the moment, by subtracting the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon (40+40+4 = 84) we get a date of 1,050 BC (966 + 84) for the beginning of Saul’s reign. Given overlapping partial years, this is adjusted to 1,049 BC as shown in Figure 1.

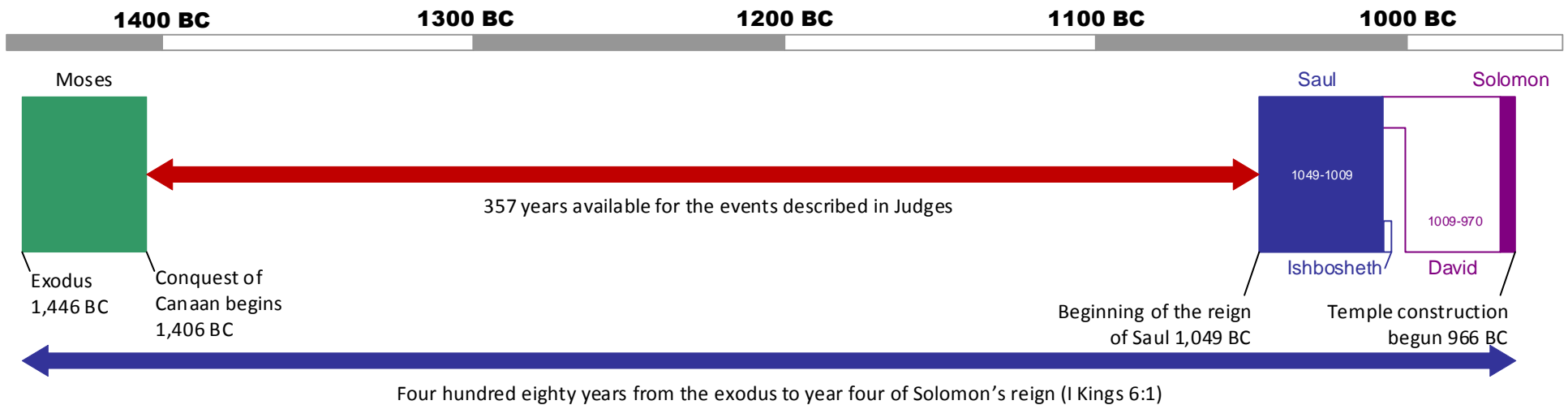


Figure 1: Bookends for the period of the Judges

Based on the available scriptures we then have a period of 357 years available to us into which to squeeze the events of Judges, but also all of the book of Joshua and I Samuel 1-12. How is it then that Paul ascribes 450 years to the period of the judges? Paul may be simply summing up the periods of the judges and the intervening periods of peace as shown in Table 1. Note that in this reckoning, Eli is included as the final judge. No duration is given directly for Samuel’s judgeship, but I Samuel 4:18 gives a period of forty years for Eli.

Period	By	Reference	Years
Peace	Joshua and Elders	Joshua 24:31	Unknown
Servitude	Cushan Rishathaim	Judges 3:8-9	8
Peace	Othniel	Judges 3:11	40
Servitude	Eglon King of Moab	Judges 3:14	18
Peace	Ehud + Shamgar	Judges 3:30	80
Servitude	Jabin King of Canaan	Judges 4:3	20
Peace	Deborah + Barak	Judges 5:31	40
Servitude	Midian	Judges 6:1	7
Peace	Gideon	Judges 8:26	40
	Abimelech	Judges 9:22	3
	Tola	Judges 10:1-2	23

Period	By	Reference	Years
	Jair	Judges 10:3	22
Servitude	Philistines + Ammon	Judges 10:7-9	18
	Jephthah	Judges 12:7	6
	Ibzan	Judges 12:8-9	7
	Elon	Judges 12:11	10
	Abdon	Judges 12:13-14	8
Servitude	Philistines	Judges 13:1	40
	Samson	Judges 15:20	20
	Eli	I Samuel 4:18	40
	Samuel	I Samuel 8:1-4	Unknown
Total			450

Table 1: Years of the judges as found in scripture

As the table shows, the total of the years given in Judges, plus Eli, totals to 450. This interpretation requires us to lay each period end to end much like the kings lists of the period. However, this is not necessarily the correct solution. As we have already seen, the available time is only 357 years and we still need to account for the life of Joshua and the period between the death of Eli and the coronation of Saul. Furthermore, the text gives us indication that there is at least some amount of overlap. For example, Judges 15:20 states that Samson, “judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines”, indicating that Samson’s twenty years is included in the forty years of servitude to the Philistines. Eli and Samuel were also active during a period of Philistine supremacy so we should look for additional overlaps in this period and at least consider the potential for others.

Dan and Gibeah

Before diving into the chronology of the specific judges, we should address the portion of Judges that falls outside of the period listed in Table 1. Judges 1:1 – 2:10 provides a summary of the last portion of the book of Joshua with some additional details and a summary of what remained unconquered at the death of Joshua. Judges 2:11-23 then provides the introduction and overview to the book. Judges 3-16 is the portion of primary interest to us for the construction of a timeline, but what of the last four chapters, Judges 17-21? The last four chapters recount two stories, specifically that of Michah’s idol and the capture of Laish and that of the Levite’s concubine at Gibeah and the near destruction of Benjamin.

The story recounted in Judges 17-18 parallels that found in Joshua 19:40-48 except that in Joshua the name of the captured city that is renamed “Dan” is given as Leshem instead of Laish. I believe that these are two versions of the same story, with the Judges version providing more color. Based on the details in this story and the parallelism with Joshua 19, I believe that these events took place very early in the period of the judges; either during the life of Joshua or shortly thereafter. Probably no later than the judgeship of Othniel.

The story of the Levite’s concubine and the near destruction of Benjamin does not have a parallel in Joshua. However, the behavior displayed by the children of Israel is similar to that found in Joshua 22:10-34. Considering that Benjamin appears to have recovered by the time of Saul and the type of military action

described here is consistent with that in Joshua and inconsistent with the later period of the judges I have to believe that these events also took place early in the period covered by Judges.

Jephthah, the Anchor Point

In all of scripture, there is only one reference that allows us to fix a date for any of the events found in Judges relative to any other point in history. That reference is found in Judges 11:26 and quotes a letter sent by Jephthah to the king of Ammon:

While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?

This tells us that in Jephthah's time, Israel had occupied the area east of the Jordan river for 300 years. This area was conquered in the last year of the wilderness period, just months before the entry into the land. We thus date the conquest of this area to late 1,407 BC and consequently Jephthah's letter to 1,107 BC. From this date we can locate the period of oppression by the combined Philistines and Ammonites as beginning in 1,125 BC followed by Jephthah's intervention in 1,107 and the end of his judgeship in 1,101, a scant 52 years before the coronation of Saul! This can be seen in Figure 2:

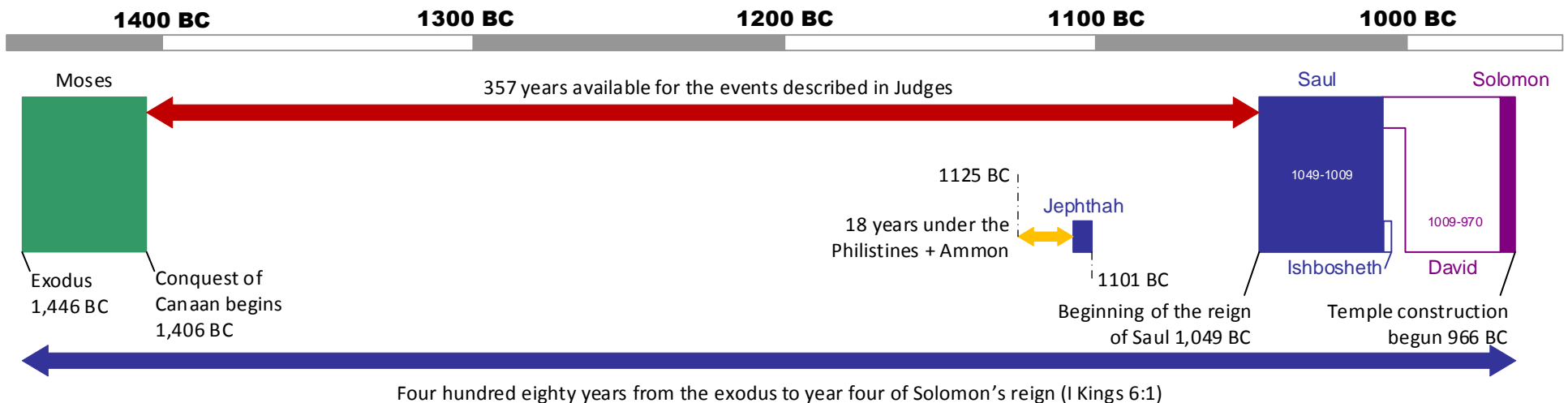


Figure 2: Jephthah based on Judges 11:26

As I have given thought to Jephthah's 300 year statement it has certainly occurred to me that this could be a round number, and more specifically that the actual number could be slightly larger, perhaps by a few years. For the time being though let us use it as a precise date and see where that leads us.

Archaeology

At the beginning of the period described in Joshua and Judges, Egypt was the ruling power in Canaan with the cities of Canaan vassals of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Egyptian power probably reached a peak under Ramses II (1279-1212 BC) and was in decline after that. Ramses VI (c1145-1137 BC) is the last Pharaoh for whom monuments have been found in Canaan. In the last hundred or so years of the judges and into the reign of David, the Philistines were the dominant power. The key archaeological finds from this period as they relate to Judges are:

- The Amarna Letters, particularly letter EA286. The Amarna letters are a collection of correspondence between Egypt and foreign powers, primarily from the reign of Pharaoh Akenaten. Several of these letters are from the ruler of Jerusalem, a vassal of the Pharaoh, requesting aid against the “Habiru” which some have associated with the Hebrews though this remains hotly debated in secular circles.
- The Merneptah or Israel Stele. A stone slab found at Thebes records a military campaign by Merneptah. Most of the inscription concerns a war with Libya but the last three lines describe a campaign in Canaan:

Hatti [Hittites] is pacified;

The Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe:

Ashkelon [Philistines] has been overcome;

Gezer [Canaan] has been captured;

Yano'am [unknown] is made non-existent.

Israel is laid waste and his seed is not;

This is the first mention of Israel’s presence in Canaan in recorded history, and the only one from the period of the judges. It has been dated to c1208 BC.

- Excavations. Archaeological digs have been conducted at many biblical sites in ancient Canaan. Of particular relevance here are those conducted at Hazor which confirm that it was ruled by an *Ibin* (etymologically similar to Jabin) and was destroyed by fire approximately 1200 BC.

A Proposed Timeline

Jephthah provides us with an anchor point from which to build a chronology. Recognizing that we need to compress a total of 450 years of combined rule and periods of piece down to less than 350, working from a 1,107 BC date for Jephthah provides an indication of where that compression needs to occur.

Before Jephthah

The total time listed in Judges before Jephthah is introduced in Judges 11 is 319 years. However, the available time for these events is only 299 years (from the entry into Canaan) and we still need to add a period for the conquest of Canaan and the remaining life of Joshua and the elders that outlived him (Joshua 24:31). The early portion of Judges follows a predictable pattern: the Lord allows a foreign power to oppress Israel for a period of time due to their disobedience, a judge is raised up to break the power of the foreign oppressor, and a period of peace ensues, sometimes corresponding with the rule of a judge. This predictable cycle of servitude and peace can be seen in Table 1. This cycle seems to end with a period of peace under Gideon. There are two more periods of servitude mentioned, but no more periods of peace. Following Gideon we have the short reign of his son Abimelech as king and two judges, neither of whom is credited with actions. If we continue the pattern of servitude and peace, then the period of peace under Gideon would be followed by the 18 year period of servitude to the Philistines and Ammorites immediately preceding Jephthah. Using this as a starting point and following scripture to work backwards, provides the solution shown in Figure 3.

This particular solution provides a good fit, not only with scripture but also with the archaeological evidence as follows:

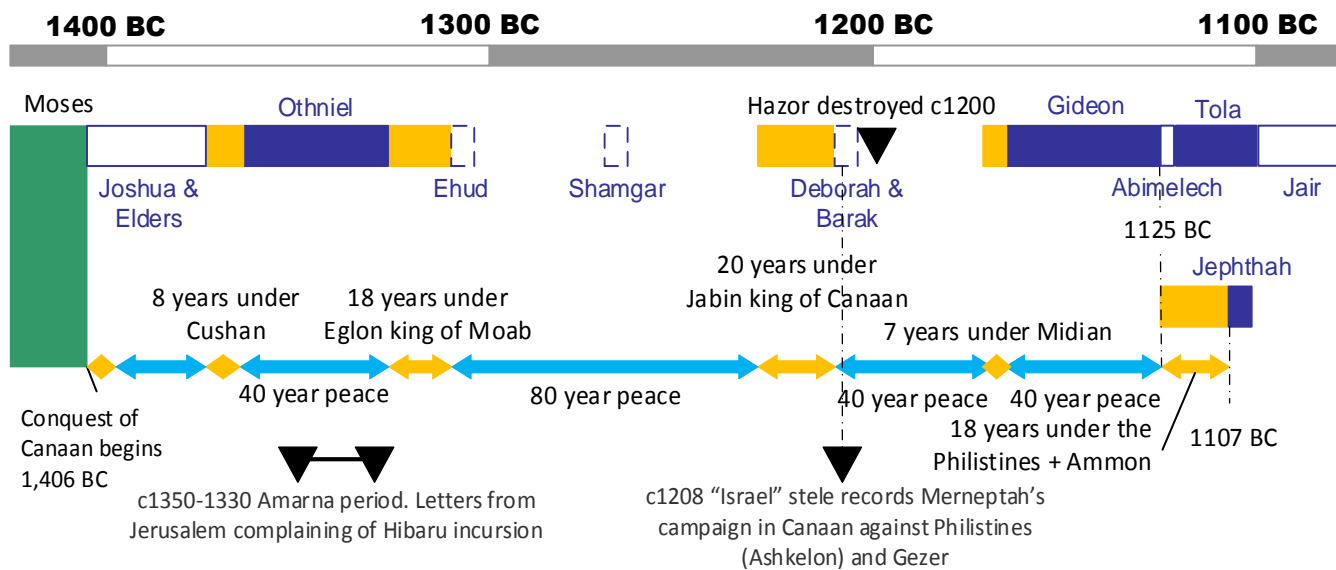


Figure 3: The early Judges period

spy out the land. This tells us that the conquest of Canaan is now in its seventh year at the point where the children of Israel are receiving their inheritance. If we assume that Joshua is of the same age, then he would live an additional 25 years to reach the age of 110. Interestingly, the solution shown in Figure 3 allows exactly 25 years following the conquest of Canaan for the remaining life of Joshua and the elders that outlived him. Conceptually I would like to see a somewhat longer period here, but this works. Others who have tried to provide a solution for this period of time for the remaining life of Joshua and the elders that outlived him have estimated it between ten and seventy-one years², with an average of 32.6 years, so it seems reasonable.

The Amarna Letters

The period of the Amarna letters corresponds to a period of peace under Othniel in this timeline. In those letters, Abdi-Hiba, king of Jerusalem, complains to Pharaoh of a people he calls "Hibiru" that are overrunning the land. He requests help from Pharaoh, but Pharaoh does not send any. The word Hibiru is cognate with Hebrew those association remains hotly debated. Assuming that it is the children of Israel that are being referred to here, it fits the biblical narrative. At this point in time the children of Israel would have been continuing to expand and claim their inheritance and the lack of Egyptian intervention allowed them to do this.

Jabin, Hazor and the Israel Stele

Egypt was still the primary foreign power in Canaan in the late 13th century BC and the Canaanite cities of that time were vassals paying tribute. I find it very interesting that in this solution to the Judges chronology, the defeat of Jabin king of Canaan and his general Sisera by Deborah and Barak falls just before the events described on the Israel Stele of Merneptah and the archaeological evidence for the destruction of Hazor. Jabin was clearly the principal power in Canaan at this point in time and would have had other Canaanite cities and probably the Philistines under his sway as well as the children of Israel. However, he would have still been under the dominion of Egypt. The defeat of Jabin's army by Deborah and Barak would have created a power vacuum and an opportunity for not

Joshua and the Elders

Scripture does not give us the period between the entry into Canaan and the first period of servitude under Cushan-Rishathaim. It only states that Israel continued to serve the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived Joshua (Joshua 24:31). Joshua's age at his death is given as 110 years (Joshua 24:29) but we are not provided with any information to determine his age at any of the important events in this period. The best we can do is estimate from the life of Caleb who can be assumed to be of similar age. In Joshua 14:10, Caleb states that he is now 85 years old and it has been 45 years since he went to

² Nolen Jones, Dr. Floyd, the Chronology of the Old Testament, Green Forest, Arkansas, Master Books, 2017. Nolen-Jones' own estimate is 26 years.

only the children of Israel to escape his rule but also for the other cities of Canaan. With Jabin unable to retain control, Merneptah was forced to intervene and put these rebellious cities back under Egyptian control. Thus, the stele records a campaign against Gezer, Ashkelon, an unknown city, and the children of Israel. Scripture records in Judges 4:24 that, “the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan”, indicating that some time passed between the victory of Deborah and Barak and the ultimate destruction of Jabin and his capital, Hazor. This is consistent with the archaeological evidence which shows that Hazor was destroyed c1200 BC or about ten years after the initial victory of Deborah and Barak.

Abimelech, Tola, and Jair

Linking the beginning of the 18 years of servitude under the combined Philistines and Ammonites to the end of the 40 years of peace under Gideon creates some parallelism in the account. Abimelech’s rise to power as king in Shechem then corresponds with the rise of the Philistines as a power in western Canaan. From my perspective the desire for leadership is increased in times of crisis and this could explain the desire to have a king.

Nothing is recorded about the actions of Tola or Jair, only that they judged Israel for a period of time. As we will see shortly there seems to have been a number of parallel judges in the period after Jephthah.

After Jephthah

It is now time to turn our attention to the period following Jephthah’s victory over the Ammonites. Joshua lists three judges that follow Jephthah during a period of 25 years. There is no reason to not simply add these names to the chronology following Jephthah as shown in Figure 4. The key questions for this period are the duration of time that Samuel judged Israel before Saul’s coronation as king, when the 40 year oppression by the Philistines began, and where to put Samson.

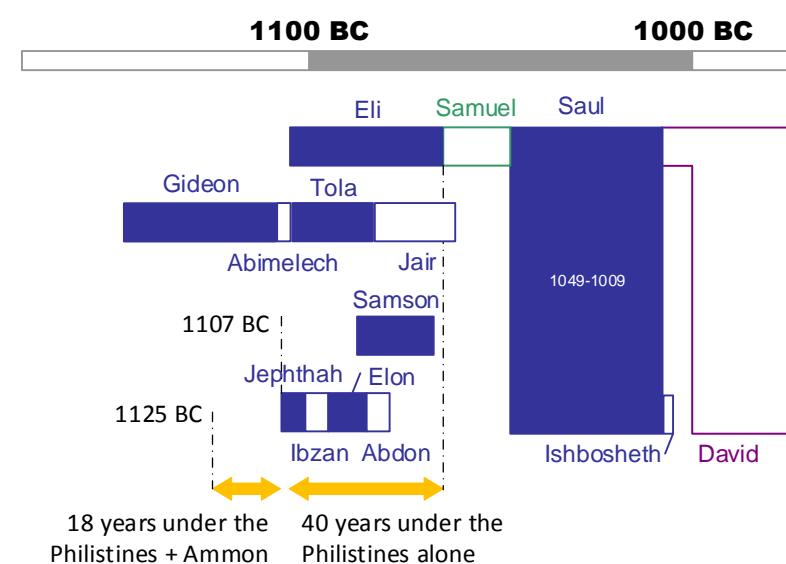


Figure 4: Judges late period

Samuel and Eli

Scripture does not provide us with the length of time that Samuel judged Israel, how long he lived, or other direct indicator of how long we should assign to his judgeship. We do however have one clue that we can work with. Following the capture and return of the ark of the covenant by the Philistines, we see in I Samuel 7:2 that the ark was at Kirjath Jearim for 20 years. This corresponds with the beginning of Samuel’s judgeship. The next (and final time in I Samuel) that the ark is mentioned is I Samuel 14:18 where Saul asks Ahijah the priest to bring the ark to him at Gibeah following Jonathan’s victory. Based on I Samuel 13:1, this appears to be in the second year of his reign or shortly afterward. Thus, I have assigned Samuel a period of (20-2 = 18) years prior to the reign of Saul. Samuel would of course continue to be a presence until approximately 30 years into Saul’s reign when he anoints David to be king.

Eli is said to have judged Israel for 40 years, ending with the capture of the ark (I Samuel 4:18). The ark was in the land of the Philistines for seven months (I Samuel 6:1) before being returned to Israel with Samuel’s judgeship starting almost immediately thereafter. Thus, the period between Eli and Samuel was probably less than a year and Figure 4 shows Eli immediately preceding Samuel. While Eli was identified as a judge of Israel, his primary role

was that of High Priest and it should be no surprise that there were other parallel judges.

The Philistines

Judges 13:1 identifies a 40 year period of Philistine oppression. The end of this period came at the battle of Mizpah in the beginning of Samuel's judgeship. Following the battle I Samuel 7:13 states that, "the Philistines were subdued and did not come any more into the territory of Israel", thus ending the period of their oppression. Adding 18 years for Samuel and 40 years for the Philistines gets us to (1049 + 18 + 40 = 1107 BC) or subtracting two half years, 1108 BC, only one year after Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites. This makes perfect sense as only Ammon was defeated. The Philistines were not subdued and therefore Israel moved almost directly from a period of oppression by the combined forces of the Philistines and Ammonites to, with Jephthah's victory, oppression by the Philistines alone.

Samson

Samson was not to be Israel's ultimate deliverance from the Philistines. The prophecy given by the Angel of the Lord prior to his birth states only that, "he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5). The final deliverance was only accomplished by Samuel. The entire Samson story is set in the 40 year period of Philistine oppression. During this period he was born, grew to manhood, and judged Israel for 20 years (Judges 15:20), beginning their deliverance. Based on this information I have placed Samson late in the 40 year Philistine period and perhaps his last act in destroying the temple of Dagon may belong at the very end of that period but there is no way to know for sure. As he was grinding grain in a Philistine prison, he is absent from the events of I Samuel 4-6, if he was indeed still living.

The complete proposed timeline then is given in Figure 5.

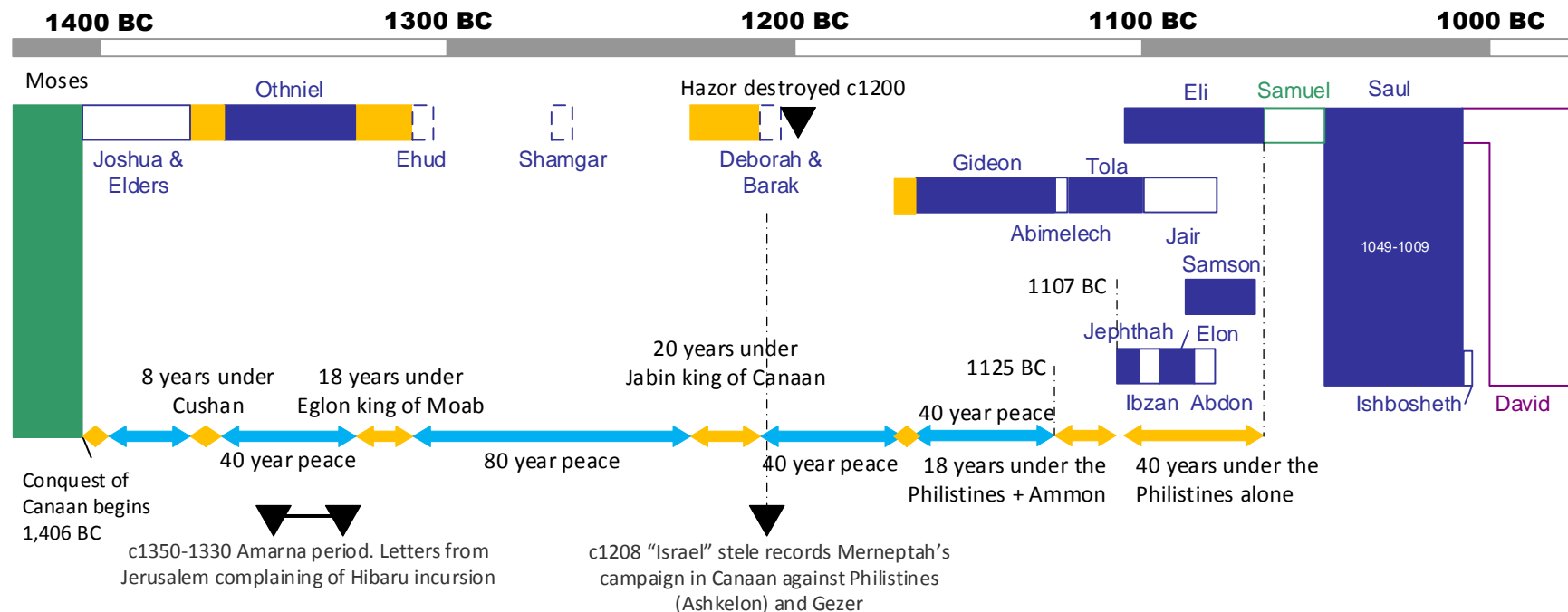


Figure 5: The complete Judges timeline

Alternative Chronologies

There have been many both ancient and modern attempts to solve the puzzle of the Judges chronology. Too many to give space to here. What I will do though is provide some insight on what is perhaps the most well known of these, that being the chronology of Bishop Ussher. This chronology is discussed at length by Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones³. Ussher used dates of 1491 BC for the Exodus and 1011 BC for the fourth year of Solomon's reign and Nolen Jones sticks with these dates. Figure 6 shows a composite of the Ussher chronology and that of Nolen Jones, but adjusted for an Exodus in 1446 and 966 as the fourth year of Solomon's reign which is the modern consensus following Thiele.

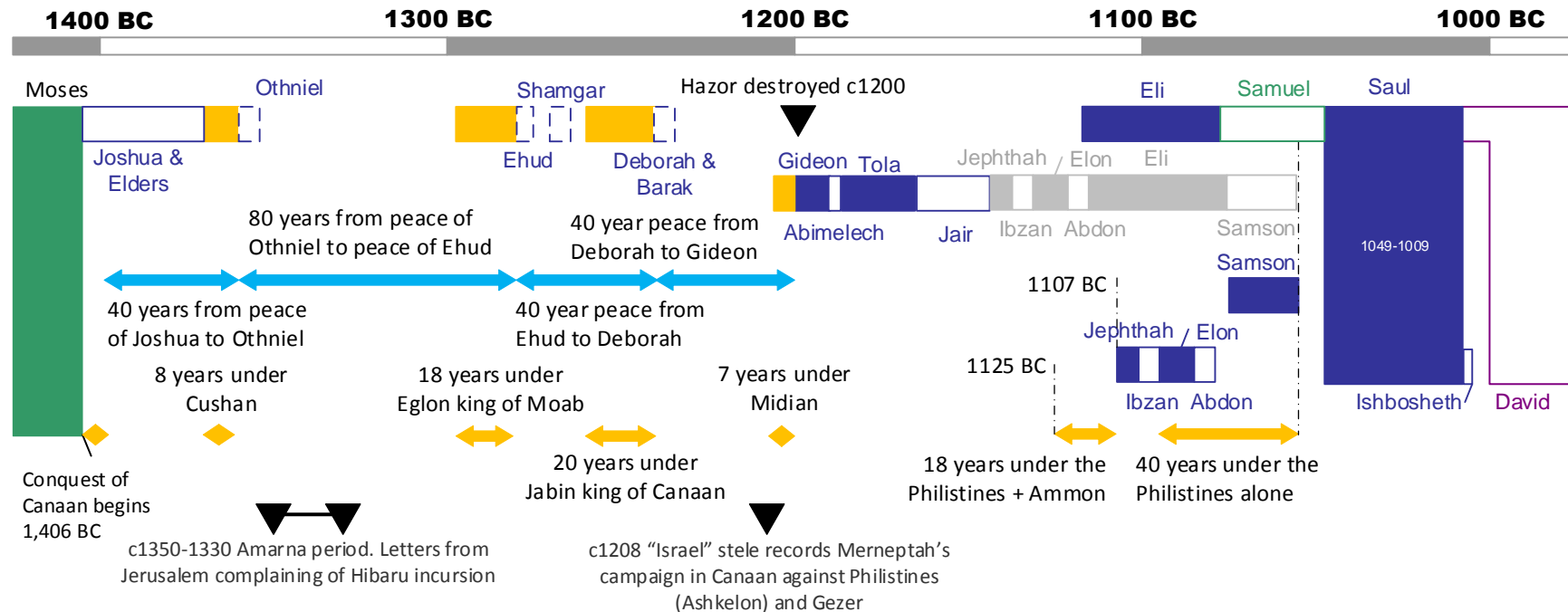


Figure 6: Ussher / Nolen Jones chronology for the period of the Judges

Ussher's approach to solving the problem of the extra years was to collapse the periods of bondage and peace so that the period of bondage was included in the period of peace as shown above. Ussher however seems to have ignored Jephthah's letter fixing the defeat of the Ammonites 300 years after the conquest of Gilead (299 years after the beginning of the conquest of Canaan). Consequently, Ussher has Jephthah following immediately after Jair and the continuation of his chronology is shown in grey. Meanwhile, Nolen Jones, recognizing the hard date provided by Jephthah has a different arrangement for Jephthah and the three judges that follow him while agreeing with Ussher on Samson and nearly so on Eli.

³ Ibid, pp71-94

In addition to ignoring Jephthah's 300 year anchor point, Ussher also has a short period of only nine years allotted to Gideon's judgeship which doesn't seem to fit with the account in Judges 8:28-32 as it doesn't allow for him to have seventy sons or die, "at a good old age". Nolen Jones' approach would allow for a full 40 years under Gideon while still allowing a short gap between Jair and Jephthah.

As a final note, I feel the approach provided in Figure 5 is superior to that of Ussher in that the archaeological evidence aligns with a later date for Deborah and Barak as noted in the discussion of the Merneptah stele and Hazor destruction layer. It also allows for a more direct reading of scripture in the early part of the chronology.

Appendix A: Scripture pertaining to dates

Table: Scriptures relating to the period between the Exodus and David

Scripture	Commentary
Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them (Deuteronomy 1:3)	Based on an early Exodus, this is the spring of 1,406 BC. The precision provided here, “in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month”, eliminates any possibility that forty years was a figurative or merely symbolic number.
Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended. (Deuteronomy 34: 7-8)	Based on Deuteronomy 1:3 and Joshua 1:11, the thirty days of mourning began no earlier than the second day of the eleventh month and ended no later than the seventh day of the first month
Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people saying, “Pass through the camp and command the people saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.’” (Joshua 1:10-11)	
Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho (Joshua 4:19)	
For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord – to whom the Lord swore that He would not show them the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Joshua 5:6)	
Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the	The first Passover in the land, 1,406 BC. The manna ceased the following day (Joshua 5:12)

Scripture	Commentary
<p>month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. (Joshua 5:10)</p>	
<p>Joshua made war a long time with those kings. (Joshua 11:18)</p>	
<p>Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed." (Joshua 13:1)</p>	
<p>I [Caleb] was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. (Joshua 14:7) And now, behold the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. (Joshua 14:10)</p>	<p>The episode at Kadesh Barnea was 2 years after the Exodus. Thus the taking of Hebron occurred in 1,399 BC</p>
<p>Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died being one hundred ten years old. (Joshua 24:29) Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. (Judges 2:8)</p>	<p>We know from Numbers 14 that Joshua was at least twenty when he spied out the land. Exodus 33 calls Joshua a young man</p>
<p>Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan Rishathaim eight years. When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. (Judges 3:8-9)</p>	
<p>So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died. (Judges 3:11)</p>	

Scripture	Commentary
<p>So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Judges 3:14-15)</p>	
<p>So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years. (Judges 3:30)</p>	
<p>After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.</p>	
<p>When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel. (Judges 4:3)</p> <p>Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. (Judges 4:4)</p>	
<p>“Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him be like the sun When it comes out in full strength.” So the land had rest forty years. (Judges 5:31)</p>	
<p>Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. (Judges 6:1)</p>	
<p>Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more.</p>	<p>This is the last peaceful period mentioned in Judges. The next one mentioned in scripture</p>

Scripture	Commentary
And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon. (Judges 8:28)	follows the victory over the Philistines at Mizpah in I Samuel.
So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. (Judges 9:33)	
After Abimelech had reigned over Israel three years (Judges 9:22)	
After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim. He judges Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir. (Judges 10:1-2)	
After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. (Judges 10:3)	
So the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years – all the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so Israel was severely distressed. (Judges 10:7-9)	
<p>And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.” (Judges 10:18)</p> <p>Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. (Judges 11:1)</p>	

Scripture	Commentary
<p>Then they said to Jephthah, “Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon.” (Judges 11:6)</p>	
<p>While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time? (Judges 11:26)</p>	<p>While I have used a number of exactly 300 years, Jephthah’s statement would still ring true if the actual number were 301 or 302 years and in fact the timeline works perhaps a little better with one of these numbers.</p>
<p>And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in among the cities of Gilead. (Judges 12:7)</p>	
<p>After him [Jephthah], Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. (Judges 12:8-9)</p>	
<p>After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. (Judges 12:11)</p>	
<p>After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years. (Judges 12:13-14)</p>	
<p>Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. (Judges 13:1)</p>	<p>Until the victory recorded in I Samuel 7.</p>
<p>And he [Samson] judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines. (Judges 15:20)</p> <p>And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years. (Judges 16:31)</p>	

Scripture	Commentary
<p>Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. (I Samuel 4:15)</p> <p>Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years. (I Samuel 4:18)</p>	<p>What can we imply from Eli's age about the ages of his sons and their sons?</p>
<p>Now the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. (I Samuel 6:1)</p>	
<p>Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord. So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. (I Samuel 7:1-2)</p> <p>And Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here" (for at that time the ark of God was with the children of Israel) (I Samuel 14:18)</p> <p>So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. (II Samuel 6:3)</p>	<p>Does this indicate that it was only twenty years from the recovery of the ark until David attempted to move the ark to Jerusalem?</p>
<p>Saul reigned one year; and when he reigned two years over Israel, (I Samuel 13:1)</p>	<p>At this point Samuel tells Saul that the kingdom will be given to another. This is quite early in his reign.</p>
<p>Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phineas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know that Jonathan was gone. (I Samuel 14:3)</p>	<p>It has been long enough since the events of I Samuel 4-6 for Ichabod's older brother to grow up and have a child that has also grown to adulthood.</p>
<p>Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he</p>	

Scripture	Commentary
<p>had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years in the days of Saul. (I Samuel 17:12)</p>	
<p>Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was one full year and four months (I Samuel 27:7)</p>	
<p>Then the princes of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected to me." (I Samuel 29:3)</p>	
<p>Ishbosheth, Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron was seven years and six months. (II Samuel 2:10-11)</p>	<p>David was apparently king over Judah in Hebron for five years and six months after Ishbosheth's assassination without a corresponding king in Israel.</p>
<p>In Hebron he [David] reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah. (II Samuel 5:5)</p>	
<p>David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. (II Samuel 5:4)</p>	
<p>"After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years." (Acts 13:20)</p>	