

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

A quotation from a letter written by Bro. Morton Edgar in Dec. 4, 1943.

Brother Russell points out correctly that the Greek word “hos” translated “about” in the Authorized Version of Acts 13:20, should rather have been translated “during”. For, as the Book of Judges shows, it was during a period of 450 years that judges ruled the nation of Israel. Not that the sum of the periods of the rule of all the judges was 450 years (unlike the periods of the reigns of Judah’s kings, the sum of which is 515 years).

The intervals of oppression between the rules of the judges are all included within the total of 450 years, as you will see on consulting the Book of Judges. As the Scriptures show, the judges were raised up from time to time to throw off the various oppressors that God saw good to bring upon the erring nation of Israel in punishment. Thus when the children of Israel erred the Lord brought the oppressors upon them to correct them, and when they cried unto the Lord because of the oppressors, the Lord raised up judges, saviours, who delivered them. And so it went on during the whole period of 450 years, until the people demanded a king to rule over them, Saul being the first king.

I shall present the list of the periods here, with the chapter and verse, which you can verify:

8	years servitude to king of Mesopotamia	Judges 3:8
40	years judgeship of Othniel	Judges 3:9-11
18	years servitude to Moab	Judges 3:14
80	years rest under Ehud	Judges 3:15-30
20	years servitude to Jabin	Judges 4:1-3
40	years rest under Deborah	Judges 4:4; to 5:31
7	years bondage under Midian	Judges 6:1
40	years rest under Gideon	Judges 6:11-14;8 :28
3	years reign of Abimelech	Judges 9:1-22
23	years judgeship of Tola	Judges 10:1,2
22	years judgeship of Jair	Judges 10:3
301	years in all	

In the 301st year the Ammonites began to oppress Israel for a period of 18 years (Judges 10:8). Jephthah, who delivered Israel, asked the king of the Ammonites why he fought against his land, and the king answered: “Because Israel took away my land when they came out of Egypt...now therefore restore those lands again peaceably” (Judges 11:12,13). But Jephthah replied: “While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coast of Arnon three hundred years? Why therefore did ye not recover them within that time?” (Judges 11:26)

By causing this argument between Jephthah and the king of the Ammonites, in which the three hundred years to the oppression of the Ammonites is mentioned, to be recorded in His Word, the Lord indicates how the period of the Judges is to be counted, that is, the durations of the rules of the judges, and the intervening times of oppression, are all to be added together. This is doubtless what the Apostle Paul did, in his constant reference to the Word of God. Jephthah said a round three hundred years, although the actual period, as we have seen, adds up to 301.

301	years the previous total	
18	years period of oppression of Ammon	Judges 10:8
6	years judgeship of Jephthah	Judges 12:7
7	years judgeship of Ibzan	Judges 12:8,9
10	years judgeship of Elon	Judges 12:10,11
8	years judgeship of Abdon	Judges 12:12-15
40	years oppression by the Philistines	Judges 13:1
	It was during the last 20 years of this 40 years	
	of oppression that Samson's judgeship ran	(Judges 15:20; 16:30, 31)
40	years judgeship of Eli	1 Sam. 4:12-18
20	years judgeship of Samuel the prophet,	
	until Israel desired a king.	1 Sam. 8:5
	During Samuel's judgeship the Ark	
	remained in Kirjath-Jearim	1 Sam. 7:2

450	years in all.	See Acts 13:20