

Judges 450 Years

We will try to present a simplified explanation without exploring every technical aspect.

☛ 450 years for Judges forms a key link in the chronology and is based on Acts 13:20.

It is this text that is questioned as a valid basis.

For Acts 13:19-20, there are different Greek manuscripts, some of the oldest and generally accepted texts render the 450 as if BEFORE the Judges: Sinaitic, Alexandrian, etc.

More recent manuscripts render the time of the Judges as AFTER DIVIDING THE LAND to be 450 years: Textus Receptus, Byzantine Text, etc.

Clearly the texts are different. But we cannot decide simply that the oldest is the most accurate.

For we do not know the age of manuscripts that each were copied from.

In fact it is possible that those copies which are **not so old** may have used an even earlier copy than perhaps those manuscripts used by the very oldest copyists.

In other words we do not know precisely the material was in the hands of those oldest copyists.

This would not be determined until Luke's original hand written manuscript surfaces.

So now lets just look at what each translator says without the gloss of the translators.

The two literal renderings of the Greek are:

☛ Earliest Manuscripts:

AND AFTER DESTROYED NATIONS SEVEN IN LAND OF CANAAN HE DISTRIBUTED BY LOT THE LAND OF THEM AS YEARS FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY AND AFTER THESE HE GAVE JUDGES UNTIL SAMUEL THE PROPHET.

NAS: *When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.*

☛ Later Manuscripts:

AND AFTER DESTROYED NATIONS SEVEN IN LAND OF CANAAN HE DISTRIBUTED BY LOT TO THEM THE LAND OF THEM AND AFTER THESE AS YEARS FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY HE GIVES JUDGES UNTIL SAMUEL THE PROPHET.

YLT: *and having destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He did divide by lot to them their land. And after these things, about four hundred and fifty years, He gave judges--till Samuel the prophet.*

The words AFTER THESE (things) is placed differently in the manuscripts.

So you see one mentions 450 years and then AFTERWARD the giving of Judges.

The NAS and supplies extra words: "All of which took 450 years" for their understanding.

This rendering is **supposed** to indicate that the 450 years are **all the years from the birth of Isaac**, as implied from verse 17 "The God of Israel chose our fathers..." until the dividing the land.

The other version has the 450 years AFTER dividing the land to designate the time of the Judges. This version indicates that Paul added 450 years for the Judges to his other historical notations.

Now notice that if Paul did NOT indicate the time of the Judges, then chronology depends on other texts like 1Kings 6:1 to determine that period.

I know that there is much said about the construction of Greek language, dative forms, the tense of verbs, where sentences should end, etc. For more on this see: Henry Aford's "*Exegetical and Critical Commentary*" on Acts 13:20.

My approach is not with the form of the Greek words nor to base the evidence on establishing which manuscript is the oldest or even the most accepted one.

Rather I want to look at **Paul's theme** and get into his mind as to what and how he prepared this response to the rulers of the Synagogue at Antioch. Here it is:

☛ He begins by affirming the Jews as God's chosen people.

✓17 The first event he mentions is God delivering them from Egypt at the Exodus.

✓18 Next he recounts God's patience with Israel in the wilderness during **40** years.

✓19 Afterward he recalls that it was God who destroyed 7 nations before them and afterward divided the land to them by lot. We know this took **6** years.

✓20 Afterward God gave them Judges and Paul's statement of these **450** years.

✓21 Afterward when they desired a king, God gave them their first King Saul for **40** years.

Here Paul gives us a number that is not explicitly stated in the Old Testament, but which can readily be deduced along with historical sources known to Paul and the Synagogue.

✓22 After Saul, God raised up David as their next king which every Jew knew was also **40** years.

~From David came the promised seed of the Messiah, the Saviour Jesus.

~From here Paul proceeds to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

~From here he shows that justification can only come through Jesus the Messiah, who is able to raise David and all his generation more than could Moses, where his lecture began (vss. 38, 39).

Paul, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, was educated in the school of Gamaliel. He knew history and scripture. He did not speak casually when preaching to these leaders of the Synagogue. He constructed a careful chain of events with NEXT and AFTER links from Moses to David. In this chain of history, he does not introduce Abraham, Isaac or Jacob as any beginning point, but only the **Exodus from Egypt**. He continues with the **successive events**: The years in the wilderness, conquering and dividing the land by lot; giving judges; King Saul, King David. At each step of his lecture, he introduces the essential event and marked it with years.

The **assumption** that he dates 450 years **from Isaac** is a **contrivance** to reason that Paul did not know a period for the Judges, and demand we accommodate a reading of 1Kings 6:1.

Doing so places Paul as presenting a precise tabulation for the Exodus, wilderness years and dividing the land, then leaves him as reverting backward 450 years to **an event not introduced**.

He is then left with a **gap** regarding any time for his introduction of the Judges.

Then he is allowed to pick up again with a precise tabulation for the time of Israel's first kings.

To presume he meant the 450 years to begin with the birth of Isaac without ever mentioning him or any other marker point prior to the Exodus is entirely out of context and uncharacteristic of Paul's scholastic lessons.

So without contending about the validation of manuscripts, the grammatical form and order of words in various versions of the received text, I can only conclude that he meant the 450 years to attach to the Judges in his sequential steps of divine providence in Israel's history.

Any other reading breaks the consistency of his theme without a reason or precedence.

☛ Now we need to resolve the theological conflict with the reading of **1Kings 6:1**.

Because 480 years are recorded between the Exodus and the 4th year of Solomon, it is deduced that 480

- 6 years to division of the land
- 40 years for Saul
- 40 years for David
- 4 years of Solomon
- = 350 remaining for Judges.

Some suppose Acts 13:20 is mistaken and Paul meant 350 instead of 450 to concur with 1Kings 6. Otherwise, as above, they assume Paul had nothing to say about the time for Judges and 1Kings 6 is the only direct statement about that period.

1Kings 6 allows for only 350 years and cannot affirm Paul's 450.

Of course the 350 years need to account for significant **overlaps** of judges and oppressions to shorten the total by 100 years. Then the claim is made that Paul had nothing to say about it.

Various rationales have been proposed to reinterpret 1Kings 6:1 to allow for Paul to be correct for the **450** years of judges:

- ✓ These include the possibility that the beginning of the **480** in 1Kings 6:1 was not intended to begin at the Exodus.
- ✓ Another is that the **480** includes only years of sovereignty and omits the counting of any of the years of oppression or captivity without a Judge.

Neither of these explanations satisfy me.

Given the strength, precision and organization of Paul's thesis in Acts 13, there are offered two solutions for 1Kings 6:1.

- 1) Is that which Pastor Russell suggests, that the **480** here was originally **580** years.
- 2) That a portion of 1Kings 6:1 was a scribe's addition and not in the original at all.

Regarding the first option: the format of Hebrew notations was changed to spelled forms of numbers as well as ancient markings and accents is noted in:

<https://theorthodoxlife.wordpress.com/2012/03/12/masoretic-text-vs-original-hebrew>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text

The Masoretic text was rendered from the 10th to the 15th centuries and indicates that the earlier Hebrew manuscripts available to the Masorites needed standardizing and were subject to such things as numerical notations which needed to be written out as words.

The following study considers this phenomena and is in accord with Pastor Russell's comments:

http://www.biblecommentary.international/Old_Testament/1Kings/1Kings_6_1.html

If this is so, it would have been the clear basis for Paul's use of 450 for the Judges.

Regarding the second option that a portion of the text did not even exist in the most early copies, it is quoted by Origen (early 200s AD) **without these words**:

“in the four hundred and eitheith year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt.”

He quoted the text continuously from 5:17 – 6:1 as:

“The king commanded and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders did hew them and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house. And it came to pass ~~(in the four hundred and eitheith year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt)~~ in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.”

The subject of these chapters is temple building. It make perfect sense in the narrative to simply note that building began in the 4th year of Solomon. The Egypt Exodus has no other precedence or reference in the text. The questionable words **“in the 480th year after ...”** may have been an interpolation into the sacred text, which did not prevail generally before the 3rd century AD.

All the writers on Chronology from Josephus (1st century) to Clement of Alexandria who died in 215 AD, **never** used those words in 1Kings 6:1 for their accounting of Jewish history. They would have naturally referred to it if it formed a portion of the passage in their day. However among chronologists there is a great diversity of opinion respecting the time from the Exodus to the temple. The Septuagint has 440 years; Glycas, 330; Josephus and Moeslinus, 592; Melchius Canus, 590; Sulpicius Severus, 588; Clemens Alexandrinus, 570; Cedrenus, 672; Codomus, 598; Vossius and Capellus, 580; Serarius, 680; Nicholas Abraham, 527; Petavius and Valtherus, 520.

☛ Now let’s briefly review the case for the Judges after dividing the land being **450 and not less**.

We first notice that Judges 11:13-15, 25-26 records a total of 300 years that begins at entering Canaan, just 6 years before the Judges and ends with the first year of Jephthah.

So there were these 300 years + clearly 156 years of remaining judges = 456, less those 6 years in destroying conquering and dividing the land = 450 years for the Judges.

Shortening those last 7 links by 100 years is very **troublesome** to reduce 156 to a mere 56 years.

In fact they are all **needed** exactly as recorded as Paul’s record of 450.

Though we can count the years from **entering the land to Jephthah**, with these **300** years, we need not contend about shorter or overlapping times. The 300 years confirms them exactly.

The remaining years reach from Jephthah until Samuel’s anointing of King Saul.

Now notice that we can find the years of each Jubilee year from entering Canaan.

Here is a **secondary** but **supporting** evidence for the 450 premise.

We understand that God allowed Israel to at least attempt a proper keeping of each **Jubilee** without bondage or servitude to a foreign power until they were kept from the land for 70 years in Babylon. Plotting these dates according to the 450 year rule, we find those Jubilees always occurred under **Israel’s autonomy** and not while in **bondage**.

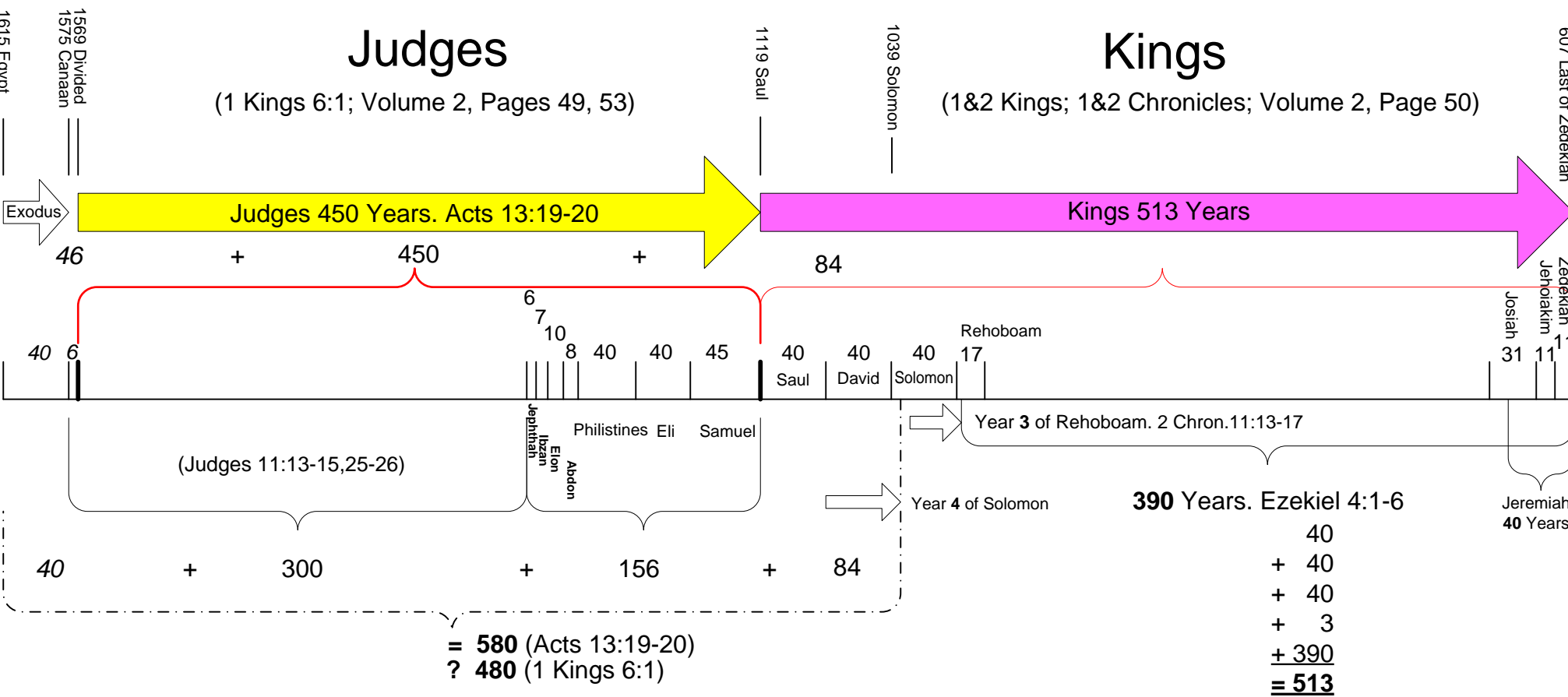
With all the internal and correlating evidence I am convinced that Paul meant exactly 450 years and that the conflicting 1Kings 6:1 account is resolved just as CTR noted as a slip of numbers as used in the most early Hebrew texts or otherwise that the original did not have the number at all.

Judges

(1 Kings 6:1; Volume 2, Pages 49, 53)

Kings

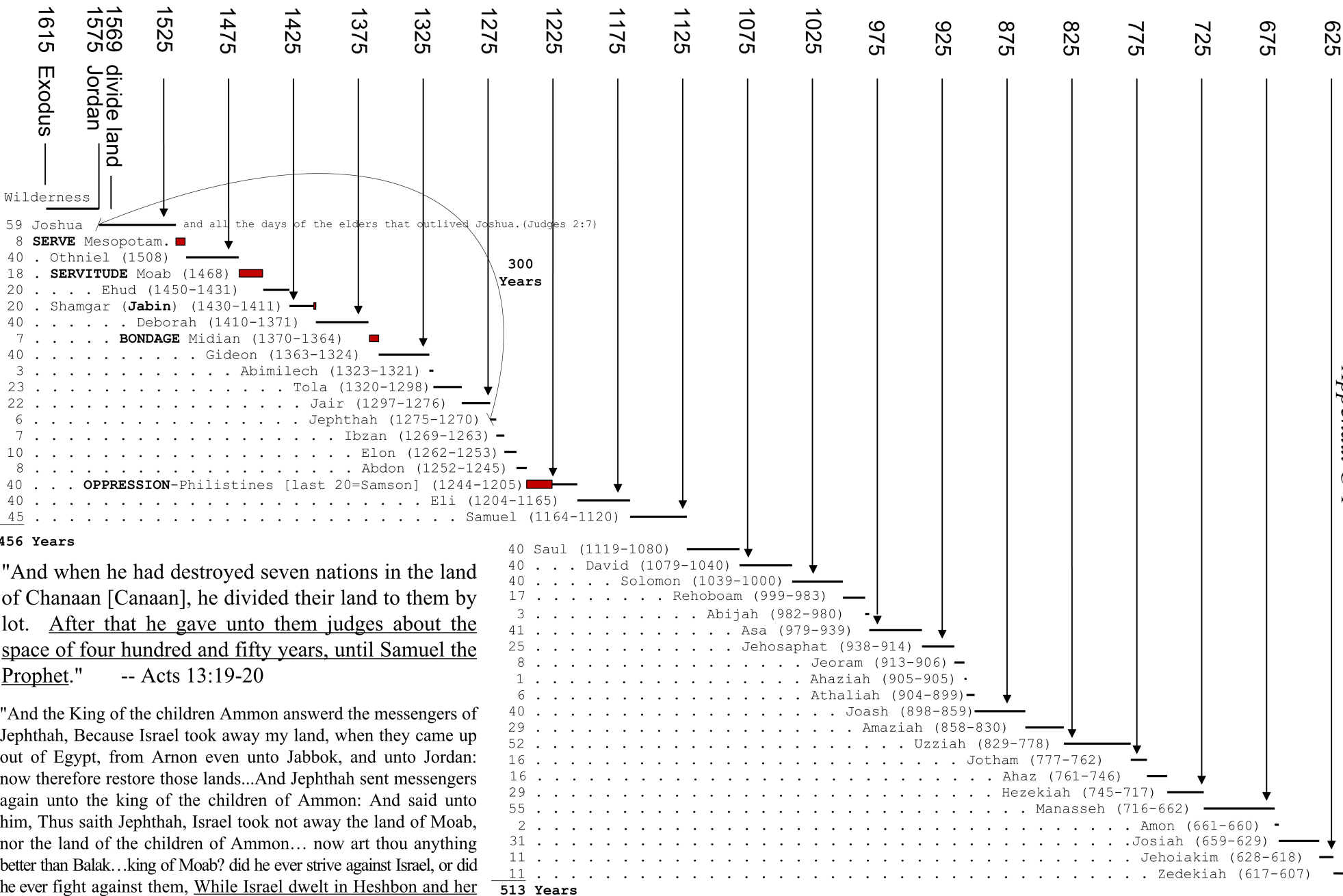
(1&2 Kings; 1&2 Chronicles; Volume 2, Page 50)



Jubilees, Judges & Kings

1st

19th



59 Joshua and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua. (Judges 2:7)

8 **SERVE** Mesopotam. ■

40 . Othniel (1508)

18 . **SERVITUDE** Moab (1468) ■

20 Ehud (1450-1431)

20 . Shamgar (**Jabin**) (1430-1411) ■

40 Deborah (1410-1371)

7 **BONDAGE** Midian (1370-1364) ■

40 Gideon (1363-1324)

3 Abimilech (1323-1321) ■

23 Tola (1320-1298)

22 Jair (1297-1276)

6 Jephthah (1275-1270)

7 Ibzan (1269-1263)

8 Elon (1262-1253)

8 Abdon (1252-1245)

40 **OPPRESSION**-Philistines [last 20=Samson] (1244-1205) ■

40 Eli (1204-1165)

45 Samuel (1164-1120)

"And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan [Canaan], he divided their land to them by lot. After that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the Prophet." -- Acts 13:19-20

"And the King of the children Ammon answerd the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those lands...And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon: And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon... now art thou anything better than Balak...king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why did ye not recover them within that time?" -- Judges 11:13-15, 25-26

300 Years

513 Years

Appendix C-1

Page-45