

Citizens of Time When Judges Ruled

Veda Duff Tohline

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The Old Testament is filled with names that inspire greatness, perseverance, and courage.

As readers explore these lives through the scriptures, they can see that each personage had strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. The study of these people encourages readers to keep trying and to keep going when it seems that they have no energy left.

For a story filled with drama, intrigue and mystery, readers can look to the life of Samson. Samson was born late in life to parents who had been promised a child. His parents were directed, even before his birth, to raise him in a particular way so that he would be prepared to be the leader God wanted him to be. However, Samson did not have the discipline to keep those rituals and so, in his encounter with Delilah, he finds himself weakened and powerless. But even at this point of failure, God was still able to use Samson.

One of the greatest love stories in the Bible is that of Ruth and Boaz. After death took her husband and both of her young sons, Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi chose to return to her own land. Although Naomi encouraged her daughter-in-law Ruth to return to her own people so that she might marry again, Ruth chose to stay with her mother-in-law and care for her. As a result of that decision, Ruth would marry again and become an important figure in Jewish history.

In *Citizens of Time When Judges Ruled*, twenty-five chapters give readers a look into the lives of these Old Testament people who lived during the time in history when the Israelites were governed by judges. With the exception of the book's last two chapters, each brief chapter gives a biographical sketch of a particular person. Because of the interconnectedness of many of the stories, there is a great deal of duplication here. Entire paragraphs seem to be lifted out of one chapter and inserted into another, with little or no revision. For example, the chapters on Hannah and Samuel, Deborah and Jael, as well as the chapters on Samson and Delilah are interworking stories, but the author could have taken a different approach to one or the other of the figures involved, in order to present new material. She might also have written each of those stories as single chapters, rather than trying to develop them into two separate chapters.

The index of personalities and the scripture references given at the beginning of each chapter provide material for further individual study, as do the author's reflections given at the end of each chapter. Veda Duff Tohline's years of ministry and teaching are evident in her simple, easy to understand descriptions of these lives. Tohline's own reflections on each personality provide a thoughtful approach to daily application. This is a quick read for the layperson, but it is not a worthy purchase for a Bible scholar.

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