

Techlet

THE TIMES OF THE JUDGES — A CHRONOLOGY

Questions and Comments from Rev. F.G. Smith of Manilla, N.S.W., Australia.

We are indeed indebted to Dr John Osgood for his clear presentation of the Chronology of the Judges (EN Tech. J., Vol. 1, 1984, pp. 141–158). Here is another example of the importance of taking Scripture statements at their face value. May I refer to a couple of points arising out of his article.

The date of the Exodus has been bandied about by scholars and archaeologists for years, but they can reach no finality on external evidence. We are wise to accept the Scripture-given date of 1447 BC (based on 1 Kings 6:1) and leave the experts to argue on their own. Must we only believe Scripture when archaeology tells us we may?

Secondly, Dr Osgood does not seem to have made very clear the basis of his exegesis of Acts 13:19–20. There is a variant in the Greek text here. The AV follows the Received Text, which definitely implies a judgeship of 450 years. All modern versions I have been able to view, beginning with the RV, translate a different Greek text, which reads, “He gave them as an inheritance this land for about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.” This latter reading makes more sense, as Dr Osgood has pointed out.

Finally, just a comment on the reign of Saul. It is generally assumed that Saul reigned somewhere between 20 and 40 years, based, no doubt, on Acts 13:21. Paul’s comment is loosely worded, but accurate. We have to do our homework and come up with a correct figure for Saul’s reign, as Dr Osgood has done.

I am grateful for his insight on this point as I could never understand why Saul was rejected from being king early in his reign, yet was allowed to stay around and cause trouble in Israel for a further 30 years or more! Now it is evident that when Saul was rejected from being king he had but five years or so left, long enough to repent. A ten year reign for Saul not only fits the facts when they are pointed out to us, but is also consistent with his rejection from being king.

Dr John Osgood replies. . .

The question has arisen regarding my basis for the exegesis of Acts 13:19–20 (EN Tech. J., Vol. 1, 1984, p. 143). By that I presume is meant from what text and why — the critical verse is in fact verse 20. Essentially there are two texts available.

- 1) The Stephens’ or Received Texts — basis of AV and some others before 1881.
- 2) What is popularly known as the Nestle’s Text used for most translations since 1881.

There is a variation, as pointed out by Rev. Smith, with regard to these texts.

- 1) The Received Text of Acts 13:20 most particularly would read as follows (after Newberry):

“**And after these things** about years four hundred and fifty he gave judges until Samuel the prophet.”

- 2) The Nestle’s Text would read (with thanks to Dr Alan Hall):

“About years four hundred and fifty **and after these things** gave he judges until Samuel a prophet.”

The real problem does not lie with the hearer of Paul’s day but with the modern translator.

It is to be noted that there is a dislocation of the phrase “and after these things” which on the surface seems to change the meaning. But that is only in the mind of the English translator for when the **Hebrew** writer of the Greek text made a statement such as this, a particular form was used, as here, which allows a firm meaning whether the particular clause is before or after.

For example, in Genesis 15:13 (Green’s Interlinear):

“. . .an alien shall be your seed	item 1
in a land not to them	item 2
and will serve them	item 3
and they will afflict them	item 4
four hundred years.”	— TOTAL TIME

the latter figure has the force of = 400 years; and it includes all the foregoing items from the time

of the seed (= Isaac and progeny) in a round figure
of 2000 years (in fact very close)

So in Acts 13:17–20 a **HEBREW** speaker of the
Greek says (from Newberry Interlinear):

“The God of this people Israel chose fathers our,
...item 1

and the people exalted in the sojourning in (the) land
of Egypt, ...item 2

and with arm a high brought them out of it,
...item 3

and about forty years (the) time he bore manners
their in the desert ...item 4

And having destroyed nations seven in (the) land of
Canaan, he gave by lot to them their land” ...item 5

And after **THESE** things ABOUT years four
hundred and fifty he gave judges. (emphasis mine)

The point is that “about years four hundred and
fifty” has the same effect as the 400 years in Genesis
15, its force is = **about 450 years**, and refers to
THESE things — which are items 1–5.

It is true that the Nestle’s Text makes this clear
and obvious but against the Hebrew manner and Old
Testament background, the sense to Paul’s **Jewish**
hearers was very clear, despite the way it is put in
the Stephens’ Text. They also knew that it was
impossible mathematically to put 450 years into the
period from the end of the conquest to the beginning
of Samuel’s ministry.

The basis of my exegesis was therefore the
Received Text of Stephens (whatever the translation)
against the common manner of Old Testament
Hebrew reckoning, and strangely not the other
easier variant text.