

Lesson 1: Othniel, Ehud & Shamgar

Text: Judges 3



"Growing In The Word": Lesson Text & Discussion

Read Judges 3:1-4. The book of Joshua tells us all about the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites and the dividing up of the land for an inheritance as God had promised His people. In these first four verses of Judges chapter 3, we learn something interesting. The Israelites did not conquer every nation of people in the land of Canaan because God let some of them remain on purpose. What are the two reasons given for this? (1-The Lord was testing the people to see if they would be obedient and faithful to Him. 2-The Lord wanted the younger generation to learn warfare as they had not had any experience in battle.) After Joshua led the Israelites in years of warfare to conquer the land of Canaan, there was a long period of rest and peace. The younger Israelites who were growing up at this time didn't have any experience in battle. The Lord wanted His people to be prepared physically to fight against their enemies. He also wanted His people to be prepared spiritually. If they would remain faithful to the Lord by obeying His commands, God would protect them from the nations around them, but if they rebelled against God, He would allow the Canaanite nations to persecute and enslave the Israelites. The book of Judges shows us exactly what happened to God's people in times of faithfulness and in times of rebellion and sin. It gives us a very clear picture of these roughly 400 years of Jewish history. Imagine the picture as a circle with arrows. At the top of the circle, Israel starts out being faithful to God. As you move clockwise around the circle, Israel turns away from God to idolatry. Continuing around the circle toward the bottom of it, God allows an enemy nation to oppress them and their lives become miserable. Keep moving around the circle and start up the other side as Israel realizes their misery is due to their own sin, and they cry out to God for deliverance. Move up the left side of the circle as God provides a judge to free His people then reach the top of the circle as Israel turns to God again in faithfulness. This cycle is repeated 7 times throughout the book.

Read Judges 3:5-7. So the cycle begins! God's people were living among several of the Canaanite people, but it was the intermarrying with them that turned their hearts away from God. Notice in verse 6 that when they started marrying the Canaanites, they started serving their gods as well. In the law of Moses, the Lord had warned His people about this very thing. **Read Deuteronomy 7:1-4.** The Lord did not say that marrying people who worshiped idols was a bad idea because they *might* influence God's people to turn away from Him. God said that it *would* happen, and it did! God always knows what is right and best. He doesn't tell us not to do certain things in order to make us miserable; He tells us those things because He loves us so much and wants the very best for us. He wanted the Israelites to worship Him faithfully and to live blessed lives. He knew that marrying people who did not believe in the one true God would result in unfaithfulness and sad consequences, and that is exactly what happened. In verse 7, who did the Israelites forget? (The Lord) Who did they turn to instead? (The Baals and Asherahs) Baal, or Baalim was a male god of the Canaanites

and Asherah was their female goddess and companion to Baal. Your Bible may also have mentioned groves. These would be woods or a cluster of trees where the gods and goddesses were thought to live. They were like an outdoor temple and were used as a place of worship to these false gods.

Read Judges 3:8. What was God's reaction to His people turning to idolatry? (He was angry.) We are now moving around our cycle circle as God allows an enemy nation to enslave His people. The Lord is not just “being mean.” The people were warned what would happen if they disobeyed and turned away from God. It's kind of like if your parents were to say something to you such as, “If you go outside to play without finishing your chores, then you won't get to go to the movies this weekend.” So, you get tired of cleaning your room and decide to go out and play with your friends instead. Sure enough, when mom and dad see that you disobeyed, they tell you no movie outing. Should you be surprised? Were your parents being mean? You were told what to do and were told exactly what would happen if you chose to disobey. So were the Israelites and unfortunately, their wrong choice resulted in misery in their lives. How long did Israel serve the king of Mesopotamia? (8 years)

Read Judges 3:9-11. The Lord is a God of mercy. When His people cried out to Him, He raised up a man to deliver them. What was his name? (Othniel) Othniel was the first judge of Israel. He was related to Caleb. You might remember that Caleb was one of the twelve spies sent to spy out the land of Canaan in the book of Numbers. He was faithful to the Lord and he and Joshua were the only two spies who brought back a good report to the people and encouraged them to obey the Lord by entering the land of Canaan. Othniel came from a faithful family. He went to war against the king of Mesopotamia and defeated him. Israel was then able to have a time of peace. How many years did it last? (40 years) During this time, Othniel served as a judge over the people. This would mean that he would be a type of ruler over the people. They would look to him as their leader, one who would settle disputes and administer justice somewhat similar to what judges do today. What came upon Othniel as he judged Israel? (The Spirit of the Lord) God's Holy Spirit gave Othniel what he needed in order to do his job: courage, wisdom, strength, etc.

Read Judges 3:12-14. Israel's faithfulness to God and time of peace don't last very long. They have started around the cycle circle again as they do evil and turn away from God. Who enslaved the people of Israel this time? (Eglon, king of Moab) How long did Israel serve the king of Moab? (18 years)

Read Judges 3:15. As God's people cry out to Him again, He raises up the second judge of Israel to be their deliverer. What was his name? (Ehud) Ehud was from the tribe of Benjamin and he was left-handed. Being left-handed is going to come in “handy” when he undertakes a dangerous mission in the next few verses.

Read Judges 3:16-23. Ehud the assassin! He carefully planned a mission to kill Eglon the king of Moab. First, he made a dagger that was about a cubit long. A cubit was roughly 18 inches. It was usually measured by the distance from the tip of a man's middle finger to his elbow. Which thigh did Ehud fasten his dagger to? (His right thigh) Remember, Ehud was left-handed, so he would need to reach for the dagger on the right side of his body. This would also allow him to make it past the king's guards. They would probably check for a weapon on the left side of his body because most people are right-handed and would carry

their weapons on the left side of their bodies. It was unusual to be left-handed and therefore, unusual to be carrying a weapon on the right side of the body. Ehud got access to the king of Moab because he was bringing him the tribute for Israel. When the people of Israel were enslaved, it didn't necessarily mean they were hauled off to a foreign country. Many times, they were allowed to remain where they were, but they had to work for the king who conquered them, and they had to pay him so much per year in money, crops, livestock, or other items as a tribute payment. If they ever refused to "pay up," they would suffer the consequences. How does the Bible describe King Eglon? (A very fat man) How did Ehud manage to get Eglon alone with him? (Ehud tells the king that he has a message for him from the Lord. The king then ordered everyone out of the room.) As the king got up from his seat, Ehud stabbed him in the stomach with the dagger. Was Ehud able to get his hand-made dagger back? (No) Why not? (The fat of Eglon's stomach closed over it.) Ewww! Ehud didn't waste any time worrying about that. He locked the doors of the room behind him and made his escape.

Read Judges 3:24-25. The king's servants found the door to the king's room locked, but they didn't knock on the door or try to go in at first. What did they think he was doing? Your Bible may say "covering his feet" or "attending to his needs." This is a Bible way of saying he was going to the bathroom. This is what the servants thought he was doing because the door was locked. But after awhile, the servants started to get embarrassed. It couldn't be taking him *that* long to do his business! They finally unlocked the door and got the surprise of their life – they found their king lying dead on the floor.

Read Judges 3:26-30. Ehud didn't waste any time. He made his escape and rallied the people of Israel together to go to war against Moab, knowing that they would be in confusion over the death of their king. How many Moabites did the Israelites kill that day? (About 10,000 men) Ehud was the deliverer of Israel and their second judge. How long did Israel have rest and peace this time? (80 years)

Read Judges 3:31. The third judge of Israel was a man named Shamgar. There are a few of the judges that we are given very little information about, and this is one of them. We do know that he fought against the Philistines and killed 600 of them himself. (That's impressive!) What weapon did he use? (An ox goad) An ox goad was a long pointed stick that farmers used to guide or prod their cattle or livestock. Shamgar delivered Israel and served as the third judge over them.

Review Questions: (Answers are provided in the Answer Key.)

1. What are the two reasons the Lord allowed some of the Canaanite nations to remain in the land?
2. What passage of scripture in the law of Moses warned the people not to intermarry with the Canaanites?
3. How long did the Israelites serve the king of Mesopotamia?

4. Who was the first judge of Israel?
5. Which spy of Israel was he related to?
6. How long did the Israelites serve the king of Moab?
7. Who was the second judge of Israel?
8. How did he assassinate Eglon?
9. About how long is a cubit?
10. What do the phrases "covering his feet" and "attending to his needs" mean in the Bible?
11. How many Moabites did the people of Israel kill?
12. How long did Israel have rest and peace after the defeat of Moab?
13. Who was the third judge of Israel?
14. How many Philistines did he kill?
15. What weapon did he use?



"Putting Down Roots": Memory Work

- Memorize Judges 21:25
- Memorize the 15 judges of Israel: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, *Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, Samuel
*Abimelech was made king by the men of Shechem so some Judges of Israel charts exclude him from the list. Nevertheless, he was a ruler of Israel so he is included in this list.
- Memorize Judges 2:16



"Farther Afield": Map Work

Maps 2 & 3

- Locate Mt. Lebanon (This is a central mountain range in the land of Syria)

- Locate Mt. Baal Hermon
- Locate the city of Hamath
- Locate the city of Seirah (also known as Bethel)
- Locate the land of Mesopotamia
- Locate the land of Moab



"Harvest Fun": Games & Activities

- Judges of Israel chart - Begin a chart of the judges of Israel which you will add to throughout this study. You can make this chart on a regular piece of paper or a large poster board adding any color or illustrations you would like. You will need to make columns with the names of the judges running down the left-hand side of the chart. Information to include in subsequent columns: Tribe of Israel (which tribe the judge is from), Name of father, Number of years as judge, Interesting facts. Some information may not be available (such as what tribe the judge is from) for a particular judge. Simply leave that space blank. For this lesson, add Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar to your chart. All information concerning them will be found in the text.
- "Who Am I?" Game - For this game, each player will need three index cards. On one card write the name Othniel. On the second, write the name Ehud. On the third, write the name Shamgar. As each clue is read aloud, let each player hold up the card which he thinks contains the correct answer.

Clue #1 - I am the nephew of Caleb. (Othniel)

Clue #2 - I killed 600 Philistines. (Shamgar)

Clue #3 - I was the second judge of Israel. (Ehud)

Clue #4 - My father was Anoth. (Shamgar)

Clue #5 - I am left-handed. (Ehud)

Clue #6 - I judged Israel for 40 years. (Othniel)

Clue #7 - I made my own dagger. (Ehud)

Clue #8 - My father was Kenaz. (Othniel)

Clue #9 - I delivered a message to King Eglon. (Ehud)

Clue #10 - I went to war against the king of Mesopotamia. (Othniel)

Clue #11 - I was the third judge of Israel. (Shamgar)

Clue #12 - I was from the tribe of Benjamin. (Ehud)

Clue #13 - I was the first judge of Israel. (Othniel)

Clue #14 - I was a deliverer of Israel. (All!)

Clue #15 - I used an ox goad as a weapon. (Shamgar)

- Newspaper activity - Pretend you are a newspaper reporter living in the time of the judges. The assassination of Eglon would have been front page news! Write a newspaper story of this event including the answers to the questions who, what, when, where, and why in your story. Be sure to fact check with the scriptures. You can be creative as you'd like with this, designing an actual newspaper that could include advertisements, local events, and/or interviews with other interesting Bible characters from this lesson.



"Digging Deeper": Research

- Philistines - The Philistines were one of the enemies of Israel we read about in the book of Judges. From which son of Noah did the Philistines descend? (Genesis 10:6-14) What were the five major cities of the Philistines? (Joshua 13:3) What three major gods did the Philistines worship? (Judges 16:23; II Kings 1:2; I Samuel 31:10) Locate the land of the Philistines and their five principal cities on a map.
- Caleb - Judges 3:9 mentions Caleb as a relation of Othniel, the first judge of Israel. How were they related? (Judges 1:13) Read the following scriptures then write down or tell someone what you learned about Caleb. Numbers 13:1-2, 6, 30-31; Numbers 14:6-10; Joshua 14:6-15.



"Food For Thought": Puzzles

- Before or After? - Read each of the following statements and decide if they happened before or after King Eglon was assassinated. Write "before" or "after" on the line. Answers are provided in the Answer Key.

- _____ 1. Ehud and the Israelites killed 10,000 Moabites.
- _____ 2. Ehud escaped to Seirah.
- _____ 3. Ehud brought Eglon tribute from Israel.
- _____ 4. Shamgar killed 600 Philistines.
- _____ 5. Othniel judged Israel for 40 years.
- _____ 6. Israel served the king of Mesopotamia for 8 years.
- _____ 7. Shamgar delivered Israel from the Philistines.
- _____ 8. Ehud blew a trumpet in the mountains of Ephraim.
- _____ 9. Othniel went to war with the king of Moab.
- _____ 10. Israel served Eglon for 18 years.

- Coded Message - Break the code and read the message.

 7 19 22 15 12 9 23 9 26 18 8 22 23 6 11

 17 6 23 20 22 8 7 12 23 22 15 18 5 22 9

 7 19 22 24 19 18 15 23 9 22 13 12 21

 18 8 9 26 22 15

Key to the Code:

F N R U A G O S V C H T D I E B W K Y P M L J
21 13 9 6 26 20 12 8 5 24 19 7 23 18 22 25 4 16 2 11 14 15 17



"Fruits Of Our Labor": Crafts

- The Cycle of the Book of Judges - Design a chart or poster that shows the cycle which occurred over and over with the Israelites. It would start with Israel being faithful to God, then they would rebel and steep themselves in idolatry, then God would allow them to be oppressed by an enemy, they would cry out for a deliverer, God would mercifully send a judge to deliver them, and then they would return to faithfulness again (for a while). You can draw this in a circle, if you'd like, with arrows or design a movable arrow that could be used as you explain the cycle to someone else. Be creative!
- Qualities of a Good Ruler - Not all of the judges of Israel were good rulers. What are some qualities a good leader should have? Use the ruler template in Appendix B to make an illustration of qualities of a good ruler. Copy the ruler template onto card stock and cut it out. Think of a list of qualities of a good ruler and count them. If you have 6, trace 6 blank ruler templates and cut them out. Write one quality per template. When you have them all cut out and written, assemble the qualities behind the ruler. Mark a spot near the bottom of the top ruler and punch a brad fastener through the spot. Add each quality card behind it and secure the brad. You should end up with a ruler that you can fan out to read all of the good qualities.