

# OTHNIEL, EHUD, AND SHAMGAR, JUDGES OF ISRAEL

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : Judges 3:1-31

LESSON 189 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "When the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer" (Judges 3:15).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### Judges 3:1-31

<sup>1</sup> Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even* as many *of Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

<sup>2</sup> Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;

<sup>3</sup> *Namely*, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

<sup>4</sup> And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

<sup>5</sup> And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

<sup>6</sup> And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

<sup>7</sup> And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years.

<sup>9</sup> And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### NOTES:

#### A Separate People

When God promised the Land of Canaan to the Israelites, He said that He would go before them, and He would drive out the heathen, nation by nation, as the Israelites advanced. It was God's plan that Israel should possess all the land, and drive out all the inhabitants. Instead, they became friendly with the people of Canaan, and their sons married the daughters of the Canaanites, and their daughters married the men of that land.

As a punishment, God said that He would leave some of the nations He had promised to drive out. He would see then what they would do: whether they would repent and call upon God to help them, or be satisfied to let the Canaanites rule them.

The people of Canaan worshiped idols. When the Israelites lived with them, took them into their homes and families, the Israelites soon worshiped idols, too. Of course, God did not like that. They were His people and owed Him alone homage and worship.

#### Judgment

The Israelites suffered for their sins, just as everyone does. God let King Chushanrishathaim, the ruler of Mesopotamia, fight against them and win; and for eight years the Israelites had to serve that king. They did not like being in bondage to another king, and they knew how to obtain liberty. They called upon the true God.

Sinners are servants of Satan, and he is a hard taskmaster. In the end they will receive eternal death as their wages. But any sinner can do what the Israelites did to obtain mercy; he can call upon God in repentance, and He will hear and deliver. When the sinner repents and believes that Jesus saves him, Satan has no more power over him. He is free from sin and will go to Heaven when he dies.

#### Deliverance

When the Israelites called upon God, He heard them and sent a righteous judge, Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, to be the leader of their nation. He led Israel into battle against the king of Mesopotamia, and delivered the Israelites from bondage.

For 40 years there was peace in the land. The Israelites obeyed God, and He worked for them against all their enemies. God will always take good care of the people who love and serve Him with all their heart.

The time came, however, that Othniel died, and the Israelites forgot God — and again God let judgment come upon them. God strengthened a heathen king so he could defeat the Israelites. God would never have let anything like that happen if the Israelites had served Him with all their hearts and obeyed Him. But because the people did evil in the sight of the Lord, God let King Eglon, of Moab, capture one of their cities, and rule the Israelites. For 18 years they were in bondage.

<sup>10</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim.

<sup>11</sup> And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

<sup>12</sup> And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

<sup>14</sup> So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

<sup>15</sup> But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

<sup>16</sup> But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

<sup>17</sup> And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon *was* a very fat man.

<sup>18</sup> And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

<sup>19</sup> But he himself turned again from the quarries that *were* by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

<sup>20</sup> And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat.

<sup>21</sup> And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right

### The Left-Handed Deliverer

One day the yoke of bondage became too heavy, and the Israelites remembered that God was their help, and they cried unto Him. He raised up another good judge, Ehud. He was left-handed. We may wonder why the Bible mentions that Ehud was left-handed. We shall soon see how he used that as an advantage in delivering the Israelites from bondage.

While the Israelites were under the rule of the Moabites they had to pay tribute or high taxes to the Moabite king. Sometimes they may have given him presents, too, so he would be good to them.

### The Secret Message

When Ehud became the judge, the Israelites sent him with a gift to King Eglon. When Ehud had come into the presence of the king and had presented his gift, he told the king he had a secret message which no one else should hear. So the king sent out all his attendants and met Ehud alone in his summer parlor.

Ehud told the king that his message was from God. God was going to deliver His people from the dominion of this king, and the easiest way was to destroy the king. Ehud, with his left hand, reached for his sword which was on his right thigh. The king perhaps thought he was reaching for a letter that was in his pocket, never thinking that he would use his left hand to pull a weapon. But out came the double-edged dagger; and in the hand of a strong man, it soon found its mark. It was too late for the king to do anything. He was alone with his enemy, in the summer parlor. The king was very fat, and after the dagger had pierced his abdomen, it was impossible for Ehud to draw it out.

After Ehud had delivered his "message" — the dagger into the abdomen of King Eglon — he turned and walked from the room. He locked the doors as he went. No one suspected that he had killed their king, so no one tried to stop him. When the king's attendants returned and found the doors locked, they supposed that he had locked them and did not want to be disturbed. The servants waited a long time, and still the king did not come out. They felt sure he must need service, so they found another key and went to wait on the king. And there was their monarch, lying on the ground, dead. What a shock! And they had let the assassin escape!

### Victory for Israel

By the time the king's men had found the king, Ehud was well on his way back to his own people. He blew a trumpet, calling the Ephraimites to battle against Moab. He told them: "Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand." The battle had not yet been fought, but Ehud had faithfully carried out the will of God, and he had confidence that the victory was theirs.

Out they went to battle. For 18 years they had been in bondage; but now with God on their side, they suddenly gained strength to kill 10,000 strong and brave men of war. No man escaped. And the Israelites were free! Think what God did for the Israelites as soon as they turned to Him! Then the land had rest for a long time. For 80 years there was no war in Israel.

### Judge Shamgar

The next judge was Shamgar, and again there was trouble. The Philistines came against the Israelites, but God was with Shamgar so that he killed 600 men with an ox goad. The ox goad is a pole with a sharp point on the end of it, used to make the oxen move when they balk. Perhaps no one would have thought of it as

thigh, and thrust it into his belly:  
<sup>22</sup> And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

<sup>23</sup> Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.

<sup>24</sup> When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour *were* locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.

<sup>25</sup> And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened *them*: and, behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth.

<sup>26</sup> And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

<sup>27</sup> And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.

<sup>28</sup> And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

<sup>29</sup> And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man.

<sup>30</sup> So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

<sup>31</sup> And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.

a weapon of war, and yet God helped Shamgar to use it to destroy 600 men.

If we use what God gives us to use, though it may seem very little, God will give the victory. Some people may think that because their talents are small it will not matter much whether they are used or not.

### **A Boy, a Slingshot, and God**

Think of the five smooth stones little David used in his slingshot to kill Goliath, thus giving victory to Israel over the Philistines. David could have said: "I am but a boy, and it is none of my affair to challenge Goliath." But he felt that God wanted him to do something. He felt a burden for the defense of Israel, and said, "Is there not a cause?"

And even after he felt the call of God to the work, he might have said: "I wonder if the Lord really wants me to go. My brothers are older and stronger and know how to fight. I do not know how to use Saul's weapons, and what good would my little slingshot do against the giant? Perhaps I just imagine that God wants me to fight the giant." But David did not reason like that. With his slingshot, five stones (even one was enough), and God on his side, he felt he could conquer anybody; and he won a great victory for Israel against the Philistines.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" Just as the Israelites defeated their enemies every time they trusted in God to fight for them, so we can defeat every trial, every burden or trouble that comes to us, if we live to please God, and trust Him to take us through.

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 Why were the Israelites in bondage?
- 2 How were they freed?
- 3 How long were they free under Othniel's judgeship?
- 4 What happened when Othniel died?
- 5 Who was the next judge?
- 6 What was unusual about Ehud?
- 7 What was Ehud's secret message?
- 8 What weapon did Shamgar use to fight against the Philistines?
- 9 What did David use when he fought Goliath?
- 10 Why did both David and Shamgar win the battle?