

Exegetical Notes - Judges 3:12-31
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Background: When Joshua died, the conquest of The Promised Land was only partially completed. In large part, Israel had followed the instructions of YHWH regarding the taking of the land and the destruction of the indigenous population who lived there, but Israel had not followed God completely. Large sections of the indigenous population remained and were not under Israeli control.

From the time of the occupation (around 1380 BC) until the beginning of the Monarchs (1050 BC) Israel was a THEOCRACY, a nation whose king was God. Israel was supposed to listen to and follow the word of the Lord, but as we have already seen, Israel was not good at following the instructions of YHWH. Her failure to do so left her in trouble time and again. Partial obedience to the word of the Lord is disobedience to the word of the Lord and always leads to disaster. "Judges provides many examples of the principle that OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW BRINGS PEACE, WHEREAS DISOBEDIENCE MEANS OPPRESSION AND DEATH" (Charles Ryrie). This is the constantly repeated lesson of the Book of Judges. Judges is the story of the time in Israel's early history when "Every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6 and 21:25). This always results in chaos and disaster.

In the Book of Judges a recurrent theme emerges: Step one - The people are following the will of YHWH; Step two - The people stop obeying the word of the Lord; Step three - An enemy arises that oppresses the people of God; Step four - The people cry out to God for help; Step five - God answers Israel's prayer by sending them a deliverer (a judge to lead her, a Messiah); Step six - The people repent and return to the Lord. Then, the process begins again. Judges simply repeats this pattern over and over again. God's people are "stiff necked and disobedient." God is forever faithful. If God's people would follow God's word, they could save themselves hardship, worry, pain, etc. But they choose to do what seems right in their own eyes.

Judges 3:12-31

Verses 12-14

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and because they did this evil the LORD gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel. ¹³ Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. ¹⁴ The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years.

- After the death of Othniel (see verses 7-11), Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, again.
- Because Israel did not follow YHWH, YHWH lifted his hand of protection over the nation and Israel fell under the control Eglon, the King of Moab. With the help of the Ammonites and the Amalekites, Eglon captured the city of Palms, Jericho.
- Israel lived under Eglon's control for 18 years.

Verse 15

Again the Israelites cried out to the LORD, and he gave them a deliverer—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite. The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab.

- After 18 years, Israel cried out to YHWH for deliverance and God raised up a deliverer, a Judge name Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite.
- Because Ehud was left-handed, he was eliminated from military service. He was chosen by the Israelites to take tribute, the taxes owed to Eglon by Israel, to Eglon.

Verses 16-19

Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a cubit long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing. ¹⁷ He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. ¹⁸ After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way those who had carried it. ¹⁹ But on reaching the stone images near Gilgal he himself went back to Eglon and said, "Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you."

The king said to his attendants, "Leave us!" And they all left.

- Ehud had a sword which was about 18 inches long. He strapped the sword to his right thigh under his clothing. Since swords were worn on the left side no one would look for a sword hidden on the right side of his body.

- After presenting the tribute to Eglon, who was very fat, Ehud ordered those who had come with him to leave, but after they had gone a short distance, he returned to King Eglon's palace.
- He told the King that he had a secret message for the king's ears only. So, the King sent all his guards and attendants away.

Verses 20-23

²⁰ Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his palace and said, "I have a message from God for you." As the king rose from his seat, ²¹ Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. ²² Even the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed in over it. ²³ Then Ehud went out to the porch; he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

- Ehud told King Eglon that he had a secret message for him from God. As the King rose from his seat to receive the message, Ehud used his left hand to draw the hidden sword from his right thigh. He plunged the sword into Eglon's belly.
- Eglon was so fat that even the handle of the sword was hidden. His intestines came out.
- Ehud withdrew his sword and Eglon's fat closed over the hole.
- Ehud left the palace closing and locking the doors to the room where Eglon's body lay as he left.

Verses 24-25

²⁴ After he had gone, the servants came and found the doors of the upper room locked. They said, "He must be relieving himself in the inner room of the palace." ²⁵ They waited to the point of embarrassment, but when he did not open the doors of the room, they took a key and unlocked them. There they saw their lord fallen to the floor, dead.

- Eglon's attendants, finding the door to the room where he was locked, assumed that the king had locked so that he could use the bathroom in private. After a long while, they entered the room and found the king dead.

Verses 26-30

²⁶ While they waited, Ehud got away. He passed by the stone images and escaped to Seirah. ²⁷ When he arrived there, he blew a trumpet in the hill

country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hills, with him leading them.

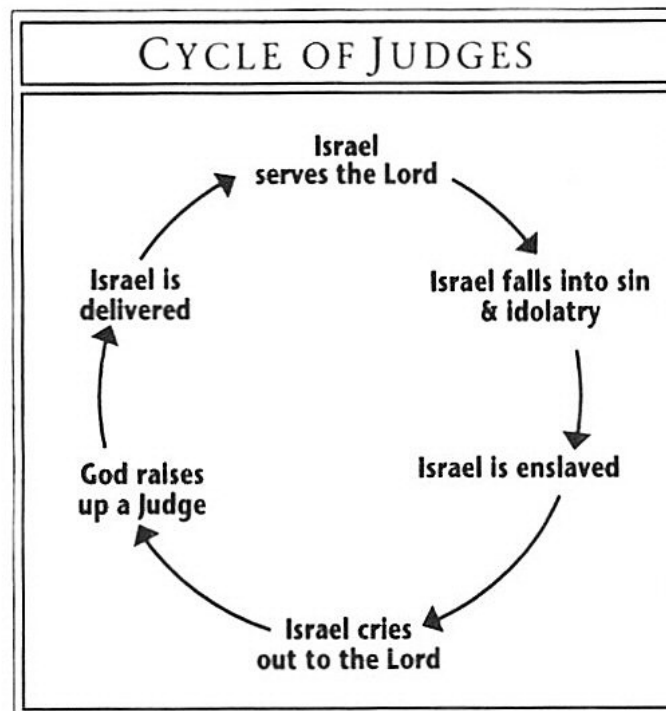
²⁸ "Follow me," he ordered, "for the LORD has given Moab, your enemy, into your hands." So they followed him down and took possession of the fords of the Jordan that led to Moab; they allowed no one to cross over. ²⁹ At that time they struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all vigorous and strong; not one escaped. ³⁰ That day Moab was made subject to Israel, and the land had peace for eighty years.

- After his escape, Ehud rallied the Israelites. They followed him and took possession of the place where the Jordan was crossed. They struck down 10,000 Moabite soldiers and took control of Moab.
- For 80 years, Moab was subject to Israel.

Verse 31

³¹ After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.

- The third judge of Israel was Shamgar. No details of Shamgar's exploits are given. All we know is that using an oxgoad as his weapon (an instrument used for cleaning a plow), Shamgar killed 600 Philistines and saved Israel.



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