

Exegetical Notes - Judges 3:7-11  
Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320  
610-384-1375  
[charleshjensen@aol.com](mailto:charleshjensen@aol.com)

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 3:7:11

### Verses 7-8

***The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. <sup>8</sup> The anger of the LORD burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years.***

- “The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Asherahs.” Who or what were the Baals and the Asherahs? Baal was the god worshipped by the Canaanites and the Phoenicians, the indigenous people that Israel had failed to drive out of the Promised Land when it was given to them by YHWH. Baal was a “fertility god.” It was believed that he caused the womb to conceive, and gave rain to the crops. Worship of Baal involved sacred prostitution and child sacrifice. Asherah was the wife of Baal. Worship of Asherah also involved sacred prostitution, lascivious practices and child sacrifice. Their names are plural because they were worshipped by other names in other cultures. Baal was also known as the Son of Dagon, the Son of El, Hadad, and Adad. Asherah was also known as Ishtar, Athartin, Astrate, Aphrodite, and Venus.
- The worship of anything as god other than YHWH was forbidden to the Israelites. But the culture influenced the Israelites. The practices of these religions allured them. So, they did what their neighbors were doing and worshiped Baal and Asherah. This does not mean that they ceased to worship YHWH. The worshipped YHWH and the other gods too.
- As a result, Israel lost YHWH’s favor and protection. They were taken captive by the King of Aram Naharaim and served him for 8 years.

### Verse 9

***<sup>9</sup> But when they cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, who saved them.***

- But, at last, Israel cried out to YHWH for help. YHWH heard their cries and raised up for them a “Deliverer.”
- The deliverer was Othniel, Caleb’s brother (see Judges 1:13).

### Verses 10-11

***<sup>10</sup> The Spirit of the LORD came on him, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of***

***Othniel, who overpowered him. <sup>11</sup> So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.***

- The Holy Spirit came upon Othniel. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the God-head, co-equal and pre-existing with the Father and the Son. When the Holy Spirit “fills” or “comes upon” an individual the Spirit enables them to hear and respond to the call of God on their life.
- Othniel was called by God to lead Israel in war against Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Aram and defeat him,
- delivering the Israelites from his hand.
- As long as Othniel was alive, he led the people of God and they remained faithful to YHWH and were blessed. For 40 years they had peace. But then Othniel died.



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