

## Judges 3:1-31

### Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar

**Judges 3:1-2** - "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; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;"

The "proving" of Israel, which we discussed last week, is now expanded to include "to teach them war."

God wants each generation to understand the spiritual warfare we are in. The "wars of Canaan" are examples of how that warfare is carried out. As long as we have faith, God fights the battles for us, using tactics that don't seem to make sense (see Jericho). The new generation did not see giants fall, they did not see walls crumble at the blast of the shofar. Now they will learn this for themselves, if they continue in faith and trust in God.

If not, they will learn how inadequate human plans and strategies can be, and call out for God. Either way, they will "learn war."

This "learning war" continues until Messiah comes, and His kingdom is triumphant:

- **Isaiah 2:4** - "And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Until we "know" - Know what? The secret that the earlier generation knew:

Rashi -"did not know thereof": These battles and their tactics, and they did not need them.

### Our Spiritual Warfare

- **2 Thessalonians 3:3** - "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil (the evil one)."

- **2 Corinthians 10:4-5** - "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

- **James 4:7** - "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

- **Romans 8:37-39** - "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him

that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- **Ephesians 6:10-12** - "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

We submit to God through prayer - offering up our life to God continually, and by letting go, giving up control, setting aside our own agendas.

### The Philistines

**Judges 3:3** - "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."

The Philistines in the archaeological record appear later in Israel around the first half of the 11th century B.C. (i.e. around 1050 B.C. during the time of Samson, where they figure as his chief opponents).

It could be they are mentioned here among the nations the Lord "left" because they later occupied the coastal area and supplanted the Canaanites who lived there originally.

The Bible traces them from Mizraim the grandson of Ham:

- **Genesis 10:13-14** - "And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim."

The biblical account describes the Philistines as a variety of peoples who were constantly developing and changing, constantly interacting with their neighbors around them, and being influenced by them as well. Their language appears similar to the Minoan scripts that led to the Greek language. They brought with them worship of a diety called Ashdoda. But later they adopted the Canaanite god Dagon.

(This shows the seductiveness of Canaanite religion, and emphasizes the danger to Israel).

According to Egyptian records, after defeating the Sea Peoples - a "transcultural" confederation of tribes - Viking-like pirates? - that wreaked havoc across the eastern Mediterranean at the end of the Late Bronze Age in the 13th century and early 12th century B.C. - Pharaoh Ramesses III (who reigned circa 1186 to 1155 B.C.) settled them in the area that was to become "Philistia." Thereafter they began developing a

political structure called the Pentapolis - Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron - i.e. the "five Lords of the Philistines."

Philistines are described in several Bible passages as coming from the "Land of Caphtor" (modern-day Crete).

Recent DNA studies confirm the Philistines were from the west, and point to Greece, Crete, Sardinia, and the Iberian peninsula. They intermarried with the local Canaanite population and adopted much of Canaanite culture.

**Judges 3:4** - "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."

"Prove" is repeated here, emphasizing God's purpose.

**Judges 3:5-6** - "And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods."

- contrary to the express command of God, in **Deuteronomy 7:3** and **Exodus 34:15-16**

- **Exodus 34:15-16** - "Do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you, and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you take some of their daughters as brides for your sons, their daughters will prostitute themselves to their gods and cause your sons to do the same."

**Judges 3:7** - "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."

### **Idolatry - Inner and Outer**

The temptation to idolatry operates on multiple levels. Outwardly we pick up the value systems of our society from our parents or our culture. The Phoenicians (who were also Canaanites) were famous as seafaring traders. The term "Canaanite" eventually took on the meaning of "merchant" in the same way "Chaldean" came to mean any "astrologer." Buying, selling and dealmaking is embedded in Canaanite values - i.e. self-seeking for personal advantage and having only mercenary relationships. This is the way of the world.

Subconsciously, our private idolatry functions to fuel and support these outward, conscious values. These compose the inner high place - "high" because it is the source of pride - where we bow down before pillars (where logical rules and instructions for living are engraved) and the groves, where sexual experiences or trauma from earliest childhood imprinted on our subconscious and we respond to threats, shame or guilt from that position. Because these are our "sacred spaces," anything that violates them

meets with a violent or otherwise emotional response.

The inner high place is an antitype of the Temple worship. We find and kill scapegoats. Our offerings are based not on gratitude but with an eye to "making a deal with God."

### **Ezekiel's Vision**

Ezekiel's vision gives a glimpse of how this works. He first describes breaking through the conscious wall to reveal the subconscious mind operating within our "temple":

- **Ezekiel 8:7-8** - "And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door."

What is revealed is the spiritual idolatry taking place in every natural man "in the chambers of their imagination":

- **Ezekiel 8:10** - "So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about."

Using incense as a depiction of our thought processes, Ezekiel then reveals a chilling scene. A sort of substitute Sanhedran is worshipping idols:

- **Ezekiel 8:11-12** - "And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth."

The only antidote to this situation is repentance. In the next chapter, Ezekiel sees God commanding an angel to place a mark (the letter Tau, shaped like a cross) on the foreheads "of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel 9:4). All the rest, who do not repent, must endure the wrath of God's anger.

The mark of the cross on the forehead depicts what controls and directs their thoughts, in the same way the mark of the Beast on forehead and hand in the Book of Revelation shows what controls their thoughts and actions.

**Judges 3:8** - "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."

Whereas before, Israel had made Canaanites tributaries, now the situation was reverse, and they served this king. 'Cushan' or 'Chushan' may indicate Cushite origins.

'Rishathaim' means 'double-wickedness.' A similar name has been found in an onomasticon (name list) of the Kassites, who ruled in Babylonia from the 17th–12th centuries B.C.

In an ancient Rabbinic commentary, the “two wickednesses” are supposed to be those of Balaam and Cushan, or that of Laban repeating itself in his descendants. The Targum and Syriac render it “the criminal Cushan.”

"of Mesopotamia" is "Syria of the two rivers" in Hebrew, translated Mesopotamia by the Septuagint.

## Othniel

**Judges 3:9** - "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.

"Deliverer" = *yasha* - to deliver, save, set free, preserve, to aid or help, offer succor, to give victory to

Othniel, and each of the judges - in lessor or greater degree - are types of Messiah:

- **Jeremiah 23:5-6** - "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved (*yasha*), and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Othniel's name means “lion of God.” See Judges 1:12-13 and Joshua 15:16-17

**Judges 3:10-11** - "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. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died."

"the Spirit of the LORD came upon him" - the Targum interprets it the spirit of prophecy

Rashi - Rabbi Tanchuma expounded: He contemplated what the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses in Egypt, (Ex. 3:7) “I have surely seen (רָאִהוּ רַאֲיִתִּי) the oppression of my people.” What are these two expressions of seeing? The Almighty said to him, “I have seen that they are destined to go astray by (worshipping) the calf, but nevertheless I have seen the oppression of My people (in Egypt and I will therefore save them).” Thus said Othniel, whether innocent or guilty He must save them.

This is also a foreshadowing of the Messiah:

- **Isaiah 11:1-3** - "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a

Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

## Ehud

**Judges 3:12-14** - "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. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years."

Rabbis in the Talmudic tradition claimed that Eglon, whose name means "fat ox," was the grandson of Balak (Numbers 22), and that Ruth was a daughter or descendant of Eglon. According to this tradition, Eglon was rewarded for rising out of respect (verse 20) when Ehud mentioned the Israelite God by having King David as a descendant.

**Judges 3:15** - "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."

Jewish tradition says Ehud had a shriveled right hand, and like many of the tribe of Benjamin, was left-handed. His name could mean "loner" - he was alone in killing Eglon.

Rashi - "a shriveled right hand": Targum Jonathan renders, "a person with a shriveled (גְּמִידָא) right hand." Any (word) גְּמִידָא is an Aramaic expression (meaning) something shriveled by disease. ...He had no use of his right hand. In Hebrew (the word) אָטַר means "closed" as in, (Psalms 69:16) "Do not close upon me, O well, your mouth." His right hand was closed up and he had no use of it.

**Judges 3:16** - "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."

This emphasizes the stealth used to kill Eglon. Ehud's apparent weakness (a shriveled right hand) was used by God. He was disabled and looked harmless. The guards checked his left side - the usual place for a weapon - but it was hidden under his clothing, strapped to his right thigh.

- **2 Corinthians 12:10** - "For when I am weak, then I am strong... And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

## The Assassination of Eglon

**Judges 3:17-20** - "And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. 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. 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."

Josephus (Antiqu. l. 5. c. 4. sect. 2.) says, Ehud told him that he had a dream at the order of God to declare unto him, and for joy at the dream he was to hear, he rose from his throne.

**Judges 3:21-22** - "And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly: 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."

**Judges 3:23-26** - "Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlor upon him, and locked them. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlor were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber. And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlor; therefore they took a key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath."

Rashi - he is covering his feet: Targum Jonathan renders עֲבִיד צוֹרְכִיהָ (doing his needs), i. e., moving his bowels (based on Yeb. 103a).

### **Question - Was this deception and assassination right?**

If it had been Ehud's idea, certainly not. But God through the Spirit had given Ehud his mission.

There are other instances of deception. For example, the midwives who were charged with caring for the infant Moses carried out an elaborate deception in order to safeguard the life and well-being of Moses, hiding his Hebrew origins and leading the Pharaoh to believe that he was actually one of his own sons (**Exodus 2:1-10**). In addition, Rahab deceived the soldiers of Jericho in order to safeguard the lives of the Israelite spies who came to serve as advance scouts of the promised land (**Joshua 2:1-24**). Jael lies to Sisera before driving a spike through his head. The deception of Judith allowed her to decapitate Holofernes.

Lying is sin to God (**Exodus 20:16**). Satan is called the father of lies. In Titus 1:2 Paul says God never lies. But in **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12** - "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but delighted in wickedness."

The only pure Truth is Christ Himself. In dealing with a fallen world, it seems, there are exception to strict truth telling - war, the threat of murder, or criminal activities perhaps. Other scholars say that just because Ehud was raised up to deliver Israel it "by no means follows that the means which he selected were either commanded or approved by Jehovah" (Keil and Delitzsch). It was said that the Spirit rested on Othniel, but there is not a corresponding declaration about Ehud.

Recall that even God-directed holy war required a cleansing of the soldiers afterward, because blood had been shed. Most of the patriarchs displayed the frailty and weakness of human nature. Jacob was a trickster. Abraham lied and said his wife was his sister. Their stories are recorded to reflect God's faithfulness more than their own.

More importantly, these events occurred and were written down for our edification, as spiritual types to reflect aspects of our spiritual warfare. In our presents struggle we are to be "wise as serpents, but harmless as doves."

### The Battle

**Judges 3:27-28** - "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. 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."

**Judges 3:29-30** - "And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valor; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore (80) years."

### Shamagar as a Footnote

**Judges 3:31** - "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."

Neither his name nor that of his father is Jewish, and it has been conjectured that he may have been a Kenite. Shamgar means "name of a stranger" Since no date is given, this story - against the Philistines - is probably set out of place and too early. Judges 4 skips from Ehud to Deborah.

Shamgar may have not personally slain 600, but led a band of men. Similar to "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (**1 Samuel 18:7**).

Ox-goads could be formidable implements, eight feet long, pointed with a strong sharp iron head on one end and on the other with a small spade or paddle of iron for cleansing the plough from the clay that would glob onto it. Being disarmed, the Israelites would be unable to find any more effective weapon.

Josephus (Antt. v. 4, § 3), following some Jewish hagadah, says that Shamgar was



chosen judge, but died in the first year of his office.