

The Book of Judges
THE INCREDIBLE SAGA OF EHUD, THE LEFT-HANDED JUDGE
January 11, 2017

1 The people of Israel could never say they had not been fore-warned about idolatry and the
2 terrible cost to them if they failed. Just before his death, the great Jewish General Joshua
3 had told them:

4
5 Joshua 24:19-24

6 **And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God;**
7 **he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. [20] If ye**
8 **forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and**
9 **consume you, after that he hath done you good. [21] And the people said unto**
10 **Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord. [22] And Joshua said unto the people, Ye**
11 **are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And**
12 **they said, We are witnesses. [23] Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods**
13 **which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel. [24] And**
14 **the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we**
15 **obey.**

16
17 So what happened?

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19 Judges 3:7-8

20 *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their*
21 *God, and served Baalim and the groves.*

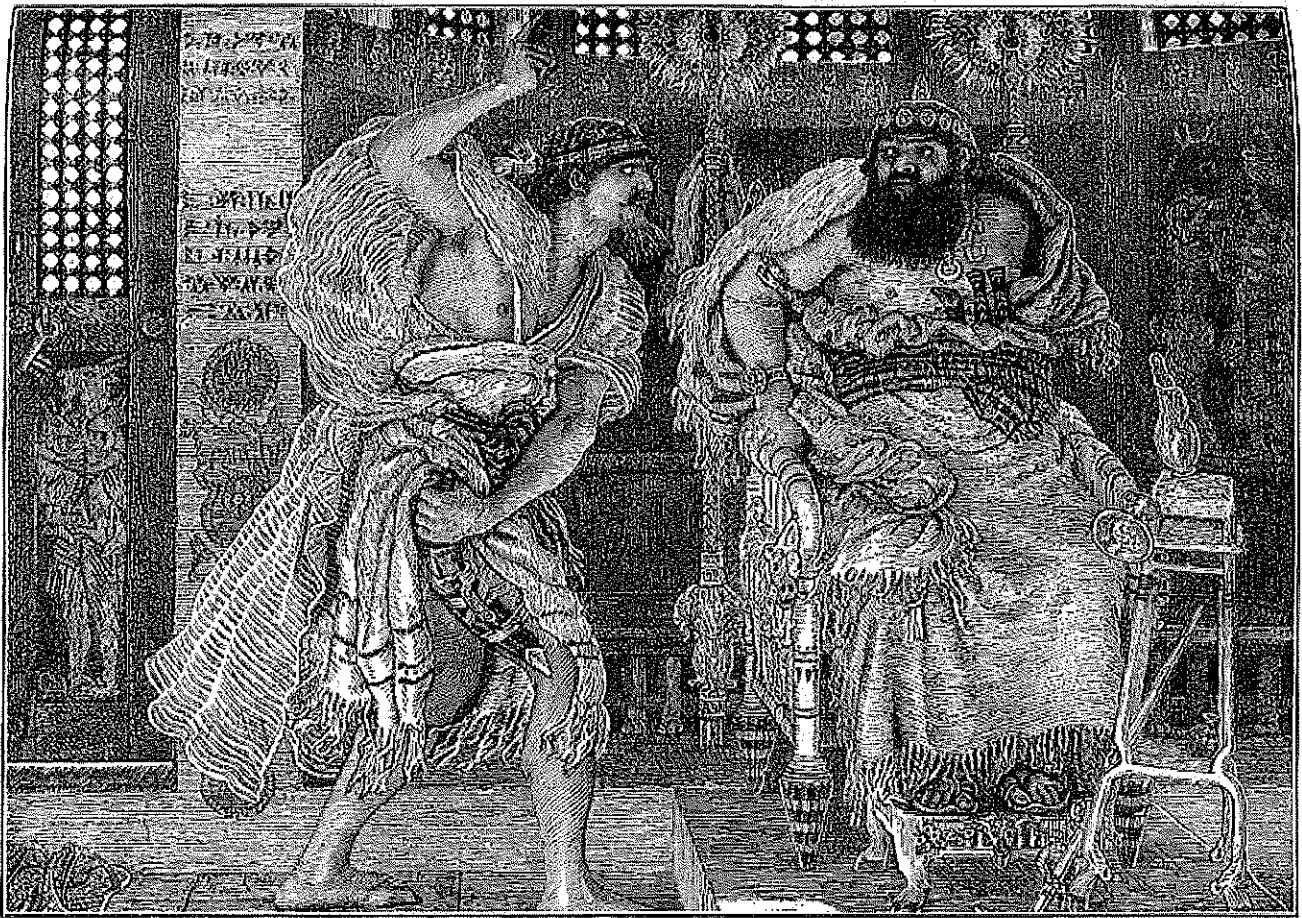
22 *[8] Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the*
23 *hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served*
24 *Chushan-rishathaim eight years.*

25
26 As we studied briefly last week, God sent THE FIRST JUDGE - OTHNIEL to them and
27 they had respite from their troubles, but only for a short time.

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29 Judges 3:12-14

30 *And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord*
31 *strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the*
32 *sight of the Lord. [13] And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek,*
33 *and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. [14] So the children of*
34 *Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.*

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36 Moab is the land east of the Dead Sea. Its king at this time was a hugely-obese man
37 named Eglon. He conquered the Israelites for 18 years - and even took back the city of



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OLD PAINTING OF JUDGE EHUD KILLING WICKED KING EGLON OF MOAB

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22 Jericho. A generation earlier, under Joshua, the Israelites had conquered the fortified
23 and walled city of Jericho by marching around it for seven days. It was quite actually
24 the victory of God, not the people, for the city was conquered by supernatural forces, its
25 massive walls collapsing without human assistance. Now - it was lost, lost to a vicious
26 pagan foreign monarch.
27

Remember that the key word to the book of Judges is CYCLES. Cycles of disobedience to God! Sin foments death, without question. As a result of Israel's idolatry God allowed foreign nations to oppress them. Sometimes that oppression lasted for decades until the people of Israel cried out to God in repentance. God would raise up a judge - a deliverer - to liberate them. While that judge lived the people seemed content to follow the Lord but when the deliverer passed away they would fall into their evil ways again.

28 The first judge was Othniel. Now let's read in the Word about Israel's second deliverer,
29 Ehud.

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31 Judges 3:12-30

1 **And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord**
2 **strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in**
3 **the sight of the Lord. [13] And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and**
4 **Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. (Jericho)**
5 **[14] So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. [15] But**
6 **when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer,**
7 **Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of**
8 **Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. [16] But Ehud made him a dagger**
9 **which had two edges, of a cubit length (18 inches); and he did gird it under his**
10 **raiment upon his right thigh. [17] And he brought the present unto Eglon king of**
11 **Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man. [18] And when he had made an end to offer**
12 **the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. [19] But he himself**
13 **turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand**
14 **unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from**
15 **him. [20] And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which**
16 **he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And**
17 **he arose out of his seat. [21] And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger**
18 **from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly: [22] And the haft also went in after**
19 **the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger**
20 **out of his belly; and the dirt came out. [23] Then Ehud went forth through the**
21 **porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them. [24] When he**
22 **was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the**
23 **parlour were locked, they said, Surely he *covereth his feet* in his summer chamber.**
24 **(King James for “going to the bathroom”) [25] And they tarried till they were**
25 **ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a**
26 **key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.**
27 **[26] And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and**
28 **escaped unto Seirath. (Near Petra) [27] And it came to pass, when he was come,**
29 **that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went**
30 **down with him from the mount, and he before them. [28] And he said unto them,**
31 **Follow after me: for the Lord hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your**
32 **hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab,**
33 **and suffered not a man to pass over. [29] And they slew of Moab at that time about**
34 **ten thousand men, all lusty (strong or healthy), and all men of valour; and there**
35 **escaped not a man. [30] So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel.**
36 **And the land had rest fourscore years.**

37
38 Under the leadership of Israel’s first judge, Othniel, the people had peace in the Promised
39 Land for several decades. But then another cycle of disobedience began. The people
40 turned away from God and incredibly began to worship man-made idols carved from

1 wood or stone or made from other materials. **Remember the theme of Judges is “every**
2 **man did that which was right in his own eyes.**

3
4 Several thousand years later, the Apostle Paul would summarize their actions: Romans
5 1:21-24 **Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither**
6 **were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was**
7 **darkened. [22] Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, [23] And**
8 **changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible**
9 **man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. [24] Wherefore God**
10 **also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour**
11 **their own bodies between themselves:**

12 MOAB

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15 Moab was a relatively small country on the west bank of the Dead Sea. The original
16 “Moab” was the grandson of Lot by incest with his elder daughter. (Genesis 19:30-38)
17 The history of the land of Moab is quite evil. In the book of Numbers God gave a
18 prophecy to Balaam that proved to be true: Numbers 31:16 **Behold, these caused the**
19 **children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the**
20 **Lord, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.** A major part of
21 this trespass had to do with sexual seduction. Numbers 25:1-9 (Living Bible) **While**
22 **Israel was camped at Acacia, some of the young men began going to wild parties**
23 **with the local Moabite girls. [2] These girls also invited them to attend the sacrifices**
24 **to their gods, and soon the men were not only attending the feasts, but also bowing**
25 **down and worshiping the idols. [3] Before long all Israel was joining freely in the**
26 **worship of Baal, the god of Moab; and the anger of the Lord was hot against his**
27 **people.**

28 **[4] He issued the following command to Moses:**

29 **"Execute all the tribal leaders of Israel. Hang them up before the Lord in broad**
30 **daylight, so that his fierce anger will turn away from the people."**

31 **[5] So Moses ordered the judges to execute all who had worshiped Baal.**

32 **[6] But one of the Israeli men insolently brought a Midianite girl into the camp,**
33 **right before the eyes of Moses and all the people, as they were weeping at the door of**
34 **the Tabernacle. [7] When Phinehas (son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the**
35 **priest) saw this, he jumped up, grabbed a spear, [8] and rushed after the man into**
36 **his tent, where he had taken the girl. He thrust the spear all the way through the**
37 **man's body and into her stomach. So the plague was stopped, [9] but only after**
38 **24,000 people had already died.**

39
40 Not long before Jesus' birth, King Herod (himself a Moabite and only half-Jewish)

1 erected one of his palaces in what had been the Kingdom of Moab. The palace was
2 called Machaerus. That's the place where John the Baptist would be beheaded.

3
4 So you can see how the enmity between Israel and Moab existed throughout the ages of
5 both the Old and New Testament.

6 7 **EGLON**

8
9 The king of Moab was an obese man named Eglon. He had formed a coalition with the
10 Ammonites (today the capital of Jordan is Amman, led by the quite brilliant King
11 Abdullah and probably the most reasonable leader in Arab nations today) and the
12 Amalekites (an ancient and nomadic marauding people who lived mainly in the Negev
13 Desert from the time of Abraham to King Hezekiah). Judges 3:13-14 **And he (Eglon)**
14 **gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel,**
15 **and possessed the city of palm trees (Jericho). [14] So the children of Israel served**
16 **Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.**

17
18 This travesty would not have occurred had Israel not fallen away from God. This should
19 be a strong reminder to Americans that distancing ourselves from God is playing a very
20 dangerous game. If Israel had not fallen into idolatry they would not have lost the city
21 of Jericho or been oppressed by this evil coalition for 18 years.

22
23 Losing their land, their freedom and paying tribute (taxes) to Eglon year after year finally
24 convinced the Israelites of their sinful folly and they began to take God seriously once
25 again. They cried out to Him for deliverance.

26 27 **EHUD**

28
29 Ehud would probably not have been our first choice as a hero. He was of the tribe of
30 Benjamin. The King James lists him as left-handed. But the original Hebrew text goes
31 beyond that and informs us that Ehad had a disability. His right hand was either
32 shriveled or arthritic or in some way disabled. Bottom line, he apparently did not have
33 the use of his right hand. But God used his disability as the potent weapon to "take out"
34 Eglon.

35
36 Judges 3 informs us that Ehad was delivering tax money (tribute) to Eglon in person.
37 By this time Eglon's alertness was not as sharp as it once had been. He saw in Ehad
38 only a peon, a subject obediently paying tax money to him. And furthermore, this
39 Jewish tax payer was a poor disabled fellow who posed very little, if any, threat to him,
40 "the great Eglon."

1 When Ehud came into the tyrant's presence he would doubtless have been searched for
2 weapons. He was apparently able to conceal the weapon on his right side where the
3 king's guards would not anticipate a threat. But their search didn't really matter. Yes,
4 Ehud had a disability; however, had He wanted to, God could have taken out Eglon with a
5 duck!

6
7 God gave Ehud the instructions, a perfect assassination plan. He had gained access to
8 the king without suspicion by bringing a normal tax collection. Then he requested a
9 special meeting, one-on-one, with Eglon claiming he had a private message for him from
10 God Himself. Preening with pride that God would so speak to him, Eglon dismissed all
11 of his guards and servants so he could receive this divine message from Ehud alone.

12
13 As Ehud approached the king, close enough to touch him, he pulled the dagger from his
14 right thigh and plunged it into the belly of the obese king. The blade disappeared in the
15 man's belly, handle and all, and actually penetrated out of his back. The king of Moab
16 fell dead on the floor.

17
18 Ehud needed to escape. To buy some time to avoid being detected, he closed and locked
19 all the doors to the private chamber. This would certainly delay discovery of the corpse.
20 Ehud then slipped away undetected. The Holy Spirit touched our funny bone by
21 reporting in the Word that Eglon's men thought their boss was probably "covering his
22 feet." (That's just King James for being in the bathroom!) When Eglon's entourage
23 finally broke into the royal chambers, they found him dead and Ehud was long gone.

24
25 Once escaped, Ehud assembled an army of sorts. With Eglon dead, there would be
26 confusion among the Moabites and that would be the opportune time to attack. The
27 enemy suffered 10,000 casualties in the ensuing fray. That ushered peace into Israel for
28 the next 80 years!

ETHICS?

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32 While God's followers are committed to the Ten Commandments, among which is the
33 one against killing, there come times when God does indeed sanction it. Throughout
34 Scripture and secular history there have been occasions in which God has ordained war to
35 liberate people from oppression.

36
37 Many of here tonight lived in the days of Hitler and the Nazi nightmare. Hitler engaged
38 in genocide against the Jews. Japan's emperor OK'd the attack on Pearl Harbor (which
39 ushered the United States into World War II). Speaking of Hitler, there were any known
40 attempts to assassinate him. Probably the most well-known of them was Col.

1 Stauffenberg's attempt at the Wolf's Lair in July of 1944. The film Valkyrie concerned
2 that effort. Had Stauffenberg been successful, it might have averted hundreds of
3 thousands of deaths that followed in the waning months of the war.
4

Several years ago, I visited the spot in northeastern Poland, that heavily forested area where Hitler had his war headquarters (known as the Wolf's Lair in Rastenburg). The attempt to kill him by a bomb blast took place in the map room, rather than the Fuhrer's bunker. Had it happened there, the concussion of the bomb would have killed everyone in the room. Hitler took his escape as a sign he would prevail in the war and in a meeting there that afternoon with Mussolini (Italy's dictator) he bragged about his escape. So....would God have sanctioned Hitler's death had it happened that day? My opinion is "yes." Hitler's escape paved the way for another ten months of war and multitudes of lost human beings.

5 HOW DOES THIS STORY AFFECT US TODAY? 6

7 Ehud was a very unlikely deliverer of God's people. You and I would probably not have
8 selected him at all. But then....would we have chosen Saul, the killer and slaughterer of
9 Christians to become the great Apostle Paul? No way! But God chose him.

10 God does not pick and choose the way that we mere mortals do. And that brings us to
11 ourselves right now. Whatever God has ordained for your life.....believe it and follow
12 Him! Believe it or not, God knows what He is doing! You were created for a reason!
13 Yes, yes, God has a purpose for your life.
14

15 And....it's not your ability which impresses Him. It is your AVAILability! Ehud was
16 available and obedient. He brought 80 years of peace to Israel.
17

18 Next week we study the life of the third judge who delivered Israel with an ox goad,
19 **Shamgar**. And we will also study the life of a WOMAN whom God used incredibly.
20 Her name....**Deborah**, the fourth judge!
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