

EHUD THE ASSASSIN JUDGE

We come to the second judge that plays out like a scene from a James Bond tale. Let us be clear however, as often as we innocently call these parts of the Old Testament stories or tales, they are in fact historical accounts. Often times we see fact play out much more intense and interesting than fiction, that is why biographies, autobiographies, and world history are so intriguing. We can take away at least three things from the following account, God can use our quirks, incredible works can come from one person, a judge can show us our need to turn back to God (proof that judging one another under righteous terms isn't really so bad).

After the Spirit came upon Othniel and raised him up to deliver the Israelites, they enjoyed 40 years of peace and growth. During this time, I assess that there was prosperity thanks to a devotion to the Lord. However, as was mentioned in the piece on Othniel, we continue with the common theme of God's people; blessings, apostasy, punishment, cry out to God, He welcomes His children back. Each time this happens we get a lesson in God's power and covenant mercy in graciously delivering the sons of Israel from their frequent iniquity and compromised integrity that result from an incredibly short memory.

After the death of Othniel, we are abruptly met with direct and concise words, "Now the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord" (3:12). We have heard this before and we will hear it again, and it is at this time that God not only gives them over to the sinful nature of their heart (Rom. 1:24-27) but he strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, a district east of the Dead Sea. Eglon, however, did not go in it alone. He acquired the help of the sons of Ammon and Amalek, which were regions to the north and west of Moab respectively. Each of these regions has a history worth noting. The Ammonites for example are the descendants of Lot, that resulted from the incestuous wickedness of his daughters as they tricked their father into unknowingly fathering their children. The Amaleks were descendants of Esau, adopting their name from his grandson Amalek. From both sides we know there is a history of animosity toward the Jewish people leading to a likely eagerness to help the king of Moab defeat their nemesis. As they marched into battle, they defeated the sons of Israel who had turned away from their God meaning He was not there to protect them. At this time the king of Moab occupied the city of palm trees (Jericho), as well as the lives of the Jewish people for 18 years.

Enter Ehud, a deliverer from the tiny tribe of Benjamin. After 18 years of occupation and captivity, the sons of Israel had had enough, they cried out to the Lord and He felt compassion for them. God raised up Ehud, an unassuming left-handed son of Gera who was the son of Benjamin. The Septuagint eludes to the possibility that his right hand was crippled, leading to a south paw stance, nonetheless, this will play a key role concerning his status of deliverer. As the sons of Israel were likely required to give a tribute to the king of Moab on specified occasions, a portion of which likely went to the sons of Ammon and Amalek, on one

such occasion it was Ehud whom the Lord chose to deliver said tribute. Prior to his journey he fashioned a double-edged dagger one cubit in length (18 inches) and fastened it to his right side. This is relevant because left handers were not typical and when approaching the king he would be searched for a weapon. Assuming the likelihood of a right-handed individual, a quick inspection of the left hip would reveal no weapon, leaving Ehud with a weapon to address the king with. He enters the king's chambers with the king's guards carrying the tribute and pleases the king with his gift. After presentation of the tribute and pleasantries, our protagonist begins to leave when he stops at the idols of Gilgal (a circle of stones used for idolatry). At this point he turns around to request a private audience with the king so that he may reveal a secret message which the king likely interprets as a secret or betrayal of the Jewish people. The king dismisses his guards because he is a vain man and relishes in the possibility of being told a secret that his subordinates will not be privy to. As he arose from his seat to hear the words of the deliverer, Ehud swiftly reaches for his dagger, thrusts it into the obese belly of the king and left it there as the fat and entrails encompassed the handle and blade and the refuse exited his body. Ehud then steps away into the open area to close and lock the doors as he plots his escape. The guards waiting outside, supposing the king is merely relieving himself do not pay much attention until an excessive amount of time passes and they begin to have concern for their king. At this time, they unlock the chamber doors to find their king lying dead on the floor, but our hero has already left the building in the midst of their delay.

At some point prior to his journey with tribute, Ehud must have assembled the sons of Israel for battle, informing them of his intentions. This was not a half-cocked scheme, this was a deliberate attempt at deliverance from their oppressor. Once at the hill country of Ephraim (just northwest of the Dead Sea), Ehud sounds the trumpet and gives the command "Pursue them, for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hands". The rally cry prompted the sons of Israel to pursue their enemies and strike down 10,000 valiant and robust Moabites with no prisoners or escapees. This led to 80 glorious years of undisturbed solitude for Israel under the watchful eye of Ehud, the deliverer of the Lord.

As I mentioned earlier, this account can give us at least three lessons from the Lord.

1. God can use our quirks and perceived setbacks to lift us up. Ehud was supposed to have a crippled right hand, was left-handed, and this is a rarity as roughly 10% of the earth's population is left-handed. God has a way of using unassuming people and situations to deliver His message and complete His tasks (Moses, David, Jesus to name a few). So don't let things that you perceive to be a shortcoming or setback keep you from having the confidence to do the work of the Lord.
2. Incredible works can come of one person. Ehud, just one man, killed an oppressive king and led a Hebrew army that slayed 10,000. He was also from the smallest tribe of Israel but did not let that interfere with his task or love for the Lord. Notice that after he sound the trumpet he says "the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your

hands.” Although his actions led to victory, he never let it escape his mind that it was the Lord giving him the strength and courage to complete his task. He was only one man but he had God on his side.

3. A judge can show us our need to turn back to God. John 7:24 gives us a lesson from Christ when He says “do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgement.” We must be able to judge the actions of ourselves and others so that we can encourage one another into the kingdom of Heaven. Without judgement we have little incentive to correct our sins, leading to a lack of repentance, leading to living in transgression, iniquity and sin. In Galatians 6:1 the apostle Paul says “If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.” If someone is living in sin, in order for them to be restored there has to be judgement.

Let us all walk with the courage and faith of Ehud. Although he had shortcomings and came from a small, unassuming tribe he was not afraid to do the work of the Lord. Finally, let us remind ourselves of 2 Timothy 3:16 which states “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequately equipped for every good work.”