

### Israel's First Three Judges

#### Judges 3

#### Introduction

Would you choose freedom instead of slavery? Are you sure? Freedom is not free. It has a price. Also, there are responsibilities and restrictions. To be free, people must make difficult choices. Slavery, on the other hand, removes the opportunity to have choices.

Israel had won her freedom by following God and obeying His word. The tribes could have kept their freedom by doing those same things. But, they did not. Let us learn from their example.

#### Outline of Judges Chapter 3

- I. Living with Canaanites - Judges 3:1-6
- II. Cycle Introduced and First Judge - Judges 3:7-11
- III. Cycle Repeated and Two More Deliverers - Judges 3:12-31

#### I. Living with Canaanites - Judges 3:1-6

God's **mercy** is most obvious when He turns something that is meant to be bad into something that is good instead. God and everything He does is good. Joseph was sold into slavery when he was around seventeen years old by his own brothers! The evil actions of his siblings could not possibly be used for good, or could they? God raised Joseph to the second highest position in Egypt and through him many nations were saved from starvation (Genesis 41:40, 57). When reunited with his brothers who had sold him, Joseph could say with faith, *You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good* (Genesis 50:20). God used bad for good. Israel failed to drive out the Canaanites, and God uses their failure to teach them.

The new generation of Israelites were not experienced soldiers. They were farmers. So,

God used the pagan people to teach Israelites the difference between good and evil. Would Israel choose to keep God's commandments given to them by Moses? Could they stay pure with immorality all around them? Would they worship the one true God faithfully, or would they be **lured** away to shiny idols? The Israelites may have been jealous of the pagans lifestyles. It looked as if the pagans lived 'freely,' doing whatever they pleased with their bodies, their children, and their worship. They may have felt that their God had too many rules for them and that He was keeping them from having fun. Do you ever feel like non-Christians have more fun? *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death* (Proverbs 14:10).

God's people started to marry pagan people. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul refers to this as *unequally yoked* (2 Corinthians 6:14). A yoke is used to keep two animals side by side as they pull a load behind them. The yoke helps the animals to share the weight by distributing it to each animal. When one animal is stronger and bigger than the other, the animals cannot go straight because the weight is distributed improperly. Have you ever tried to stand on one side of the shopping cart while your mom pushes it? Your weight on the side makes it harder to push the cart straight ahead. In the same way, close relationships with non-believers are difficult. There is an invisible pull on each person. Marrying someone who does not believe in the one and only true God always brings heartache to individuals. The flood sent during the time of Noah came after God's people married the pagan people and were led astray to worship their false gods. For our protection God still advises, *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers* (2 Corinthians 6:14). This does not mean you cannot have friends that are unbelievers. It

does mean that those friends can cause you to **stumble** more often than friends who share your love for God. Pray for unbelieving friends and family. God has put them in your life for a reason. You may be the one God will use to teach them. Most importantly, pray for God's protection and guidance when you spend time with unbelieving friends and family. Choose to be a godly influence on them, and not the other way around.

## II. Cycle Introduced and the First Judge - Judges 3:7-11

The Israelites did two things wrong: 1) they forgot God, and 2) they served the pagan gods. The theologian, Francis Schaeffer, wrote, "Israel has forgotten what her end will be if she turns from God,... (and) she has forgotten her purpose... - she has forgotten her relationship to God. She has forgotten...that the chief end of man is to love God. She has forgotten her purpose as the people of God" (Death in the City). Have you forgotten...

- what your end will be if you turn from God?
- your purpose as a believer?
- your relationship to God?
- you were made to love God?
- you are a believer?

Friends, when someone you know is surprised to find out you are a believer, you are in trouble! Do you know anyone that would be surprised to hear you quote a scripture verse? Do you have friends that would be surprised to see you reading your Bible when you could be doing something else?

God is a jealous God. His jealousy has pure **motives** (unlike our jealousy which has selfish motives). He loves us too much to not care when we sin. He will take action because He is just. After all, you would not want an unjust god, would you? In His justice, God lifted His hand of protection from Israel and King Cushan-Rishathaim dominated them. He was from Mesopotamia, the area that Abraham had left. (Today, Mesopotamia is Iraq.) The Israelites went from being slaves in Egypt to slaves in their own land, with about 100 years of freedom in-between. And, forty of those

years were spent wandering in the desert for lack of faith!

In their misery, they cried to the Lord who heard their cry, just like He had heard their enslaved grandfathers' cries in Egypt (Exodus 2:24). *This poor man cried out and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles* (Psalm 34:6). Will you cry to the Lord when you are miserable so that God can save you from your troubles? Keep in mind that when God saves us from our troubles, it doesn't mean that they go away. They may or may not. It means that what was troubling you before is now drawing you closer to God, and that is the safest place to be.

In response to the cry of the people, God sent the first deliverer, Othniel, Caleb's nephew and son-in-law (Judges 1:12-13). He was the first of Israel's thirteen judges. None of the judges ever judged over the entire nation, except the last two, Eli and Samuel (in 1 Samuel). Othniel, already a military hero, went to war against the king of Mesopotamia and won. Israel was set free. The land had rest for forty years because of the people's repentance and Othniel's leadership.

## III. Cycle Repeated and Two More Judges - Judges 3:12-31

The people committed evil in God's sight again. They may not have thought they were doing evil, but anything outside of God's will is evil. People are experts at fooling themselves and making excuses for their behavior. However, God is never fooled (Galatians 6:7).

*So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel.* Eglon took over Jericho, the city of Palms, which had been Israel's first conquest in the promised land. They served Eglon of Moab eighteen years until they cried to God. As soon as they cried out, He acted, not out of obligation, but out of mercy.

There was a man named Ehud whom God was ready to use. Ehud was a Benjamite and it is said that he was a left-handed man (3:15).

The tribe of Benjamin seemed to produce many left-handers. Later in Judges, we read of *seven-hundred select men* (of the tribe of Benjamin) *who were left-handed; every one of them could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss* (20:15-16). Imagine what big league baseball pitchers they would have been!

Some people think that being left handed is a weakness. While that is not true, everyone has weaknesses. Whatever your weaknesses are, God specializes in using weaknesses to bring Him glory. The apostle Paul said *when I am weak, then am I strong* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Do you have a weakness, **impediment**, or personality difficulty? Will you ask God to use your weakness for His glory? God loves you exactly as he made you. He has a purpose for you!

The people trusted Ehud and chose him to deliver their tax money to King Eglon of Moab. Ehud made a dagger eighteen inches long. That is longer than the length of this paper which is only eleven inches! He hid it in his clothes on his right thigh. Ehud had a plan. After presenting the tax money and sending his companions home, Ehud said, *I have a secret message for you, O king*. The king sent away all of his servants. Ehud drew near the king and said that the message was from God. Then, he killed the king, locked the door and escaped out a window. He left his weapon in King Eglon's belly. Ehud returned to the people and took no credit for any victories, saying, *Follow me, for the Lord has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand*. The land had peace and rest for eighty years under Ehud.

*After him was Shamgar...who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also delivered Israel*. Shamgar is considered the third judge and may have judged the western part of Judah during Ehud's judgeship toward the east. The Philistines lived along the coast of the Mediterranean, whereas the Moabites were east of the Jordan (see map). Today, we still call this area of land Palestine,

and the word Palestine comes from the name Philistine. They were a very strong and persistent people, undefeated until the time of David, his infamous sling, and the giant named Goliath (1 Samuel 17:49-51).

An oxgoad is used to prod (push) the ox along as the farmer plows the land. It is eight feet long with a pointed end. Perhaps the Philistines came upon Shamgar as he was ploughing, and he used the only weapon he had nearby. Whatever the circumstances were, it was not only heroic but also miraculous! †

### Timeline Note

Naomi and Ruth moved to Bethlehem during the time that Ehud judged Israel (Ruth 1:22).

### Prayer

Thank you God for giving me your mercy and sending your Son so that I can receive your forgiveness. I need it every day.

### Memory Verse

2 Chronicles 6:14 - *(Solomon) said: "O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no god like You in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to your servants who walk before You with all their heart;"* (NASB)

### Vocabulary

**mercy** - kind treatment to someone who has no right to it

**lure** - to tempt or lead away by offering some type of pleasure

**stumble** - to speak or act as if unsure

**motive** - something that causes someone to do something

**impediment** - something that interferes with movement or progress

**QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 4**

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

**DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.**

1. What impressed you most about any of the first three judges?

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2. What did you learn from Othniel, Ehud, or Shamgar that you will apply in your life?

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**DAY TWO: Read Judges 4:1-7.**

3. a. What did the people of Israel do after Ehud died?

b. How did God respond?

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4. a. How long did it take Israel to cry out to God? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Why did they finally do so?

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5. a. Who was judging Israel at this time? \_\_\_\_\_

b. What do you find most outstanding about this judge? Give reasons for your answer.

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c. Who did this judge call for? Why?

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d. God gave Barak three commands (verse 6) and two promises (verse 7) through Deborah. List the commands.

① \_\_\_\_\_

② \_\_\_\_\_

③ \_\_\_\_\_

List the promises.

① \_\_\_\_\_

② \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY THREE: Read Judges 4:8-16.**

6. How did Barak respond to God's call?

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7. a. How did Deborah encourage Barak in:  
verse 9?

\_\_\_\_\_

Verse 14?

\_\_\_\_\_

- b. Why do you think Barak needed so much encouragement?
- \_\_\_\_\_

- c. ♥(Heart Question) Are you more like Deborah or Barak? In what ways?
- \_\_\_\_\_

8. How successful was Barak and what was the reason for His success?
- \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY FOUR: Read Judges 4:17-24.**

9. Where did the defeated Sisera go? \_\_\_\_\_

10. a. How did Jael show hospitality to Sisera?
- \_\_\_\_\_

- b. In what way did she betray Sisera's trust?
- \_\_\_\_\_

- c. Give your opinion of Jael. Was she a heroine or a traitor? What other words can you think of to describe her?
- \_\_\_\_\_

- d. What does the Bible say about Jael in Judges 5:24? (Do not change your answer in the question above. It is all right to have your opinion.)
- \_\_\_\_\_

11. How was Deborah's prophecy in verse 9 fulfilled here.
- \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY FIVE: Read Judges 5:1-31.**

12. Fill in the blanks. (See verses 1-3 for help.) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
sang a song of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

13. List some phrases which give God the glory for the victory. Give the verse for each phrase.  
verse:

verse:

verse:

14. ? (Thought Questions)

a. The following tribes of Israel are praised for joining in the battle. Give one thing that is said about each. (For help, see Genesis 35:22-26 which lists the 12 sons of Jacob, who became the 12 tribes of Israel.)

Ephraim -

Isaachar -

Benjamin -

Zubulun -

Naphtali -

b. The following tribes receive rebuke. What is said about each tribe?

Reuben -

Gilead -

Dan -

Asher -

15. Find the following places on your map. Fill in the blank regarding the geography, and tell how each location relates to the time when Deborah judged Israel.

Hazor (4:2) is in the tribe of \_\_\_\_\_.

Ephraim (4:5) is surrounded by three tribes: \_\_\_\_\_.

Kedesh in Naphtali (4:6) is near the city of \_\_\_\_\_.

Name another tribe that shares the Kishon River with Zebulun (4:6): \_\_\_\_\_.

Kishon River (4:7 and 5:21) comes out of the \_\_\_\_\_ Sea.

**VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 4**

*"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...  
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."*

— Wilfred Funk

**DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s).** (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

- 1.    **mercy**    ..... vengeance ..... cruelty ..... kindness
- 2.    **motive**    ..... belief ..... doubt ..... reason
- 3.    **lure**    ..... bait ..... temptation .....



**DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**

<b><u>Word</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>
<b>mercy</b>	something that interferes with movement or progress
<b>motive</b>	kind treatment to someone who has no right to it
<b>lure</b>	to speak or act as if unsure
<b>stumble</b>	something that causes someone to do something
<b>impediment</b>	to tempt or lead away by offering some type of pleasure

**DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.**

Fill in the Blank: Review previous vocabulary word(s). Try to work from memory.

Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the Word Bank.

\_\_\_\_\_ - a group of individuals \_\_\_\_\_ and living at the same time

\_\_\_\_\_ - not concerned with the \_\_\_\_\_ of right conduct or the

difference between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ - modern day \_\_\_\_\_; refers to land between the

\_\_\_\_\_ and Jordan River, sometimes including surrounding areas

\_\_\_\_\_ - proof of God's \_\_\_\_\_ found in \_\_\_\_\_

(creation) and in man \_\_\_\_\_

**WORD BANK**

general revelation	immoral	wrong	existence	Mediterranean Sea
Palestine	nature	Canaan	himself	rules
	generation	born	right	