

## Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

### Overview

These three judges begin the first sequence of judges:<sup>1</sup>

1. **Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar**, Deborah-Barak, ch. 3-5
2. Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair (6-10)
3. Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (11-12)
4. Samson (13-16)

We know nothing about Shamgar, but Othniel comes from Judah, and Ehud from Benjamin (Figure 1, chart). Thus, like chapters 1-2, we start in the south.

Ch. 3-5 show clearly the cyclical structure that dominates the book (Table 1, chart). Throughout these chapters, the enemy comes successively closer. It is initially remote (Mesopotamia), then comes from a neighboring country, but finally from within Canaan, and in particular, an adversary that Joshua had already subdued (Hazor, under an earlier king Jabin, Joshua 11).

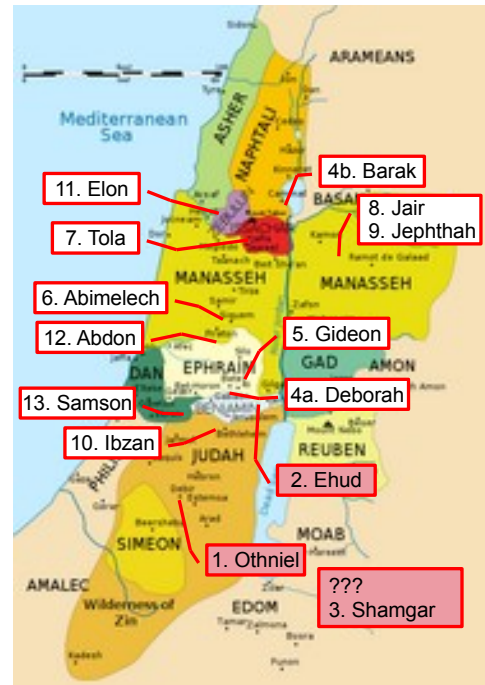


Figure 1: Origins of the Judges

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:12\\_Tribes\\_of\\_Israel\\_Map.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:12_Tribes_of_Israel_Map.svg)

### 3:7-11, Othniel

Four words summarize the lessons of Othniel: *Forget, Mesopotamia, Spirit, and Rest.*

**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.**—The first word, *forget*, arises in the description of Israel’s apostasy. This description is the most complete of any cycle until Jephthah. Of Ehud, Deborah, and Gideon, we read only that they “did evil in the sight of the Lord.”

Recall the summary of Israel’s apostasy in ch. 2 (chart),

Judg. 2:11 And the children of Israel did evil עשה הרע H6213, H7451 in the sight of the LORD, and served עבד H5647 Baalim: 12 And they forsook עזב H5800 the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed הלך אחר H1980<sup>2</sup>, H310 other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed הוה *Sh* H7812 themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13 And they forsook עזב H5800 the LORD, and served עבד H5647 Baal and Ashtaroth.

The writer adds one verb here that is not included there: “they ... forgot שכח H7911 the Lord.” He derives it from Deuteronomy 8, which is the inspiration for his earlier list (see notes). The idiom “forget the Lord” appears four times in Deuteronomy. It appears only three other times in

- 1 This is Easton’s division. Rudd divides these chronologically, but this ignores “again” in 10:6 and 13:1. Chronologically, I am inclined toward Chisholm’s bipartite division at 6:1. The fourfold division is supported by the marking of the first judge in each section by the Spirit of God, and the minor judges clustered at the end of major episodes. In addition, the description of apostasy at the start of Jephthah is fuller than any other except Othniel. The Deborah-Barak section is a bit anomalous—is it part of the first section (because it has no separate attribution of the Spirit), or a section unto its own (because of the minor judge Shamgar at the end of ch. 5)?
- 2 Strong derives this from a separate root ילך H3212, but modern lexicons recognize this as a byform of הלך.

Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

<b>Rebellion:</b> <i>Did Evil</i> <i>Forsook/served</i>	2:11 :12,13, 17,19	3:7 :7	3:12	4:1	6:1	10:6 :6	13:1
<b>Retribution:</b> <i>Lord angry</i> <i>Spoilers</i>  <i>Years</i>	:12,14 :14-15	:8 :8 Meso- potamia 8	:12-14 Moab  18	:2 Canaan  20	:1-6 Midian  7	:7 :7-9 Philistines, Ammon 18	:1 Philistines  40
<b>Repentance:</b> <i>Cry to Lord</i> <i>Rebuke</i>	:15,18	:9	:15	:3	:6 :7-10	:10 :11-16	
<b>Restoration:</b> <i>Judge</i> <i>Land had rest</i> <i>Years</i> <i>He judged Israel</i> <i>Years</i>	:16,18	:9-11 Othniel :11 40	:15-30 Ehud :30 80	:4-5:31 Deborah, Barak :31 40	:11-8:28 Gideon :28 40	:17-12:7 Jephthah  :7 6	:2-16:31 Samson  15:20, 16:31 20
<b>Other Judges:</b> <i>Years</i>			:32 Shamgar		:29-9:57 Abimelech, 3 10:1,2 Tola, 23 :3-5 Jair, 22	:8-10 Ibzan, 7 :11-12 Elon, 10 :13-15 Abdon, 8	

Table 1: The Cycles of Judges. 206 years in the first three, and 201 in the last three.

the OT, no more than once in a given book. The first occurrence is in Deut 6:12, where the memorial Israel is commanded to maintain are to keep them from forgetting.

Deut. 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. ... 12 Then beware lest thou forget the LORD,

In Deuteronomy 6, the command not to forget the Lord is associated with three details:

- The material blessings conveyed to them by the conquest, 6:10-11
- The deliverance of the Exodus from Egypt, 6:12b
- The need to worshipping him alone and keeping his commandments, 6:13-19.

In Deuteronomy 8, it appears three times, amplifying these details. Now each section emphasizes a different way to forget him.

8:1-9 summarizes the Lord's blessings: his care for them in the wilderness (1-4: provision of manna, preservation of their clothing) and the bounty of the land (7-9). Three times he warns of not keeping his commandments (8:1, 2, 6), and concludes,

Deut. 8:11 Beware that thou **forget not** the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

8:12-17 focuses on his role in bringing them out of Egypt and through the wilderness, and warns of the danger,

Deut. 8:14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou **forget** the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; ... 17 And thou say in thine

heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. 18 But thou shalt **remember** the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

He concludes with a warning against false worship, which is the heart of forgetting the Lord:

Deut. 8:19 And it shall be, if thou do at all **forget** the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

Note the progression in how one forgets the Lord. First we are careless about obeying his commandments. Then we become confident in our own strength. Finally we turn to other gods.

The term “forgot” in 3:7 recalls these warnings. It reminds us of the danger in being seduced by other gods, whether things we fear, or appetites we indulge, or anything that keeps us from loving the Lord with every aspect of our being (Deut 6:5). It also suggests our best defense against forgetting: focusing our attention constantly on the Lord, his word, and his blessings.

**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.—**

The second key word in the history of Othniel, *Mesopotamia*, identifies Israel’s first adversary in Judges (Figure 2, chart), the region between (*meso*) the two rivers (*potamia*), the Tigris and the Euphrates. This region often enters Israel’s history. It is the source of the first opposition to Abraham’s kin:

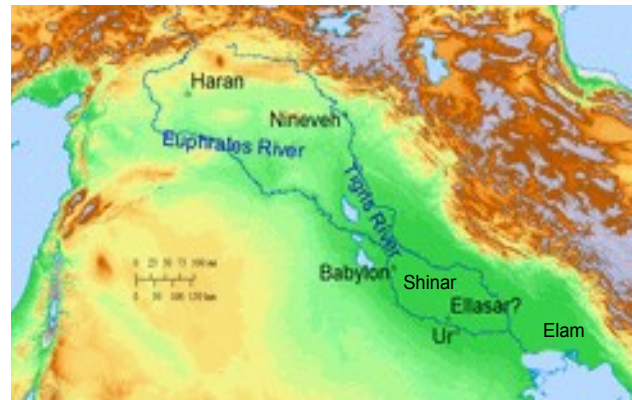


Figure 2: Mesopotamia—“Between the Rivers”

Gen 14:1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of **Shinar**, Arioch king of **Ellasar**, Chedorlaomer king of **Elam**, and Tidal king of nations; 2 That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, ...

Mesopotamia is the region from which God called Abraham.

Gen 15:7 And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee **out of Ur of the Chaldees**, to give thee this land to inherit it.

Abram’s obedience was suspended while the family settled temporarily in Haran to the north, but eventually resumed. As Stephen later recalls the event,

Act 7:2 The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, **when he was in Mesopotamia**, before he dwelt in Charran, 3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

The move was not just geographical. Joshua reminds the people in his farewell address,

Jos 24:2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood [הנהר, the Euphrates] in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and **they served other gods.**

## Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

This history adds special significance to the repeated threat from Mesopotamia. It is the land of other gods, and when Abraham's descendants forget the Lord and step out of his protection, those gods send their servants back to claim their former subjects. All three conflicts fit this pattern.

- In Genesis, the target is Sodom and Gomorrah, infamous for their corruption. Lot's toleration for this behavior may have made them particularly attractive to the gods of Mesopotamia.<sup>3</sup>
- Judg 3:7 clearly states that the people have forgotten the Lord.
- 2 Ki 17 emphasizes that the Assyrians took the Northern Kingdom because they turned from the Lord and forgot his covenant (17:38).
- The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah show that the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon is rooted in apostasy.

None of us is born a believer (chart). Our Mesopotamia, from which we come, is the domain ruled by Satan. Paul's mission to the Gentiles, which the Lord Jesus declared to him on the road to Damascus, was

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and **from the power of Satan** unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Later he reminded the Ephesians,

Eph 2:2 ... in time past **ye walked** according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

If we forget the Lord and his blessings, Satan and his demons will be happy to take us back. In fact, the NT describes the consequences of excommunication as delivering someone unto Satan:

1Cor. 5:3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, ... 5 **To deliver such an one unto Satan** for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1Tim. 1:19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have **delivered unto Satan**, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

When Israel forgot the Lord, the Lord sent them back to Mesopotamia—or sent the Mesopotamians to chastise them. If we forget the Lord, he may allow the evil spirits we once served to torment us once again, to remind us of the deliverance he has provided for us.

Note the name of this first oppressor of Israel: Cushan Rishathaim. The second word means “Double Wickedness,” and is probably a mocking play on the true name (just as Ishbosheth, “man of shame,” probably reflects an underlying Ishbaal, “man of Baal”). This title reinforces our interpretation of Mesopotamia. Just because Israel is wrong does not mean that those whom God sends to chasten them are right. Their action anticipates Asaph's principle (chart),

---

3 The dynamic in Daniel 10 would lead to such raids even without Lot, but the jealousy of Marduk and his minions for those who have turned to Jehovah would certainly increase the attractiveness of the target.

## Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

Psa. 76:10 Surely **the wrath of man shall praise thee**: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Failure to recognize this principle can lead to the confusion that Habakkuk felt. He complained to God of injustice in the land:

Hab 1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! 3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. 4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

The Lord responds that he will send the Chaldeans (Mesopotamia again!) to chastise them:

Hab 1:5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. 6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs. ...

This revelation totally confuses Habakkuk. If it is unjust for God to tolerate Israel's sin, how can he tolerate the wickedness of the Chaldeans?

Hab 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. 13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

But this is exactly what God does—when he brings Mesopotamia to chasten Israel, when he allows a messenger of Satan to chasten Paul, when he brings wicked people into our lives to purge out evil and make us more like his son. In such cases, it's a mistake for us to lament that the rod that God uses to chasten us is more wicked than we are. God will use whatever he pleases to accomplish his work in us: "surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." And when he is done, he will bring judgment on them: "the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

Understanding this principle is central to the whole dynamic of Judges, which describes Israel's oppressors as sent by God, yet goes on to approve judges who bring violent and cruel destruction on those oppressors. Perhaps that's why the writer chooses this nickname for the first oppressor. Israel is wicked, so the Lord sends Mr. Double Wickedness to chasten his people. Perhaps Israelites with the mind set of Habakkuk were saying, "But he is twice as wicked as Israel is." Yes, he is. But that's how God works. We should not be distracted by the immorality of those whom God sends to afflict us. Leave them to God's justice, and instead ask, "What is the Lord trying to teach me through this disaster?"

**9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD,**—It took them eight years to get the message!

**the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him,**—The third key word in Othniel's history, *Spirit*, appears here for the first time in Judges. Note the different expressions that are used (chart; see notes). The Spirit *comes upon* Othniel and Jephthah (3:10; 11:29). It *clothes* Gideon (6:34), but *moves* Samson (13:25), and then three times  *prospers upon* him (14:6, 19; 15:14). These interventions come at the start of each of the four

## Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

sequential series of Judges. The consistent message of Judges is that God's people triumph over their adversaries only through the power of God's Spirit.

The emphasis on the Spirit offers an important parallel with Acts, which has more references to the Spirit than any other book in the NT. In Acts, as in Judges, God's people triumph through the power of the Spirit. But there is an essential difference between the experience of the judges and our experience, pointed out by our Lord the eve of his crucifixion (chart):

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for **he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.**

This distinction is rooted in the New Covenant promised in the prophets. Isaiah promised,

Is. 59:21 As for me, this is **my covenant** with them, saith the LORD; **My spirit** that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, **shall not depart** out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Jeremiah, who uses the term "new covenant" in his description in 31:31-34, does not mention the Spirit, but Ezekiel does:

Ezek. 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 **And I will put my spirit within you**, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Our endowment is much greater than theirs.

- The Spirit simply came upon them, but he dwells within us (John 14:17).
- He could depart from someone in the OT, as we know from Saul's later history:

1Sam. 11:6 And **the Spirit of God came upon Saul** when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

1Sam. 16:14 But **the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul**, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

but he dwells with us forever (John 14:16). In fact, he is the earnest (down payment) of God's ultimate redemption of us,

Eph 1:13 In whom ye also ~~trusted~~, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, **ye were sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

**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.—**

As with the first part of Judges 1, there is nothing negative about Othniel's judgeship. In the Spirit's power, he undertakes the work the Lord gives him, and succeeds in it.

Again, note the pattern implied by the tyrant's name. He is as wicked as Israel. God in his righteousness chastens Israel, at the hands of someone named Double Wickedness, who himself deserves and receives God's judgment.

**11 And the land had rest שָׁקֵט H8252 forty years.**—The fourth word, *rest*, appears at the end of each of the first four cycles. Ominously, it is lacking for Jephthah and Samson, something that we will study further. The victory granted to Othniel, and his wise leadership of the people, led to a period without war.

In our earlier studies, we have often noticed the Lord’s promise of rest to his people (chart):

Is. 28:12 To whom he said, **This is the rest** wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

Matt. 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest**.  
29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Heb. 4:8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. 11 Let us labour therefore to enter into **that rest**, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

These promises go back to God’s pledge to bring Israel into the land, at peace from her enemies:

Deut. 12:10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell **in the land** which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you **rest from all your enemies** round about, so that ye dwell in **safety**;

All these use variations of נָחַם H5117. (See note.) Judges uses a different term, one that refers to superficial quietness, the cessation of hostilities (cf. Jos 11:23; 14:15, both times “from war”), not any deep, abiding peace. In the days of Joshua, the nation did enjoy the deeper rest (Jos 21:44; 23:1). But now, in Judges, the only nations to whom the Lord gives this deeper “rest” in Judges are the Gentiles whom Israel should have driven out:

Judg. 2:23 Therefore the LORD **left [gave rest to]** those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua. . . . 3:1 Now these are the nations which the LORD **left [gave rest to]**, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

This shift in usage is a clear mark of the spiritual decline of the nation since the days of Joshua.

**And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.**—As with Joshua, so with Othniel (and every subsequent judge), the leader eventually dies, and the people become vulnerable once again to attack.

How thankful we should be that our Lord Jesus has conquered death, and will never leave or forsake us (Heb 13:5).

Othniel’s account is very schematic, with little embellishment. As we would expect from his behavior in chapter 1, he is a heroic Israelite from the generation that remembers Joshua. He shows no failings, but is a faithful servant of God, doing what every judge should do.

## 3:12-30, Ehud

Ehud’s history has interesting parallels later in 2 Samuel.

## The History in Judges

**12 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD:**—Forty years (v. 11) marks the length of a generation. It's how long Israel had to remain in the wilderness for one generation to die off and be replaced by the next. Lessons learned from the Lord's chastening cannot easily be passed on, but must be learned anew by each generation, as the cycle starts anew (chart).

**and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. 13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.**—Let's recall the history and geography of these nations.

Moab and Ammon were the descendants of Lot through his two daughters (Gen 19:31-38). They settled in the region to the east of the Dead Sea (Figure 3, chart).

During the Exodus, Moab did not welcome Israel (Jdg 11:17), but the Lord commanded Moses to skirt the area and not contend with them:

Deut 2: 8 And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Eziongaber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab. 9 And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.

Similarly, Israel was commanded not to disturb Ammon:

Deut 2:19 And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.

So at the time of Judges, an attack by Moab and Ammon was unprovoked. The nickname of Othniel's adversary, Chushan Double Wickedness, reminds us that Israel's oppressors are themselves wicked and must come under judgment. Eglon's unprovoked attack of Israel is wicked, and his history shows how, after God uses him to chasten Israel, he in turn suffers a gruesome end.

The Amalekites offer different story. Amalek was a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12, 16), and his descendants were nomads throughout the southland. When Israel came out of Egypt, before they reached Sinai, the Amalekites engaged them in battle at Rephidim (Ex 17:8-13) and were



Figure 3: Geography of Judg 3:12-30  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:12\\_Tribes\\_of\\_Israel\\_Map.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:12_Tribes_of_Israel_Map.svg)



defeated. Later, when Israel sought to enter Canaan in their own strength, the Amalekites defeated them (Num 14:43, 45). So it is not surprising that they join coalitions against Israel twice in Judges, here and under Gideon (6:3-5).

The “city of palm trees” is Jericho (Deut 34:3; 2 Chr 28:15), a beautiful oasis by a plentiful spring. It is no surprise that Eglon would want to leave his desert land for this pleasant retreat.

Though Ammon and Amalek are allied with Moab, this is the last we hear of them. Eglon is the dominant leader in the effort, and the focus of the story is on his death and the destruction of his troops occupying Jericho.

This is not the first time that Moab has opposed Israel. In Numbers 22-23, a Moabite king named Balak the son of Zippor, apprehensive of the size of the Israelite host, hired Balaam to put a curse on them. But he did not dare use force against them (Judg 11:25-26) as Eglon now does.

**14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.**—His name means “little calf.” It may have been intended as a title of strength and vigor, but in the context it prepares us for his coming fate.

**15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD,**—The first period of servitude, to Chushan Double Wickedness, was eight years. The second is eighteen, and when we get to Deborah, 20 years elapse before the people get the message. We might think that the people would learn from each cycle and draw closer to the Lord, but in fact they become more hardened each time around. But the Lord knows how to apply the pressure to draw his people to himself, and eventually they do cry out.

**the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded:**—The enemy is in Jericho, a city of Benjamin (Josh 18:21), so it is appropriate that the Lord sends a Benjamite deliverer. The name “Benjamin” means “son of the right hand,” but ironically, the tribe was known for left-handed warriors (chart):

Judg 20:16 Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss. (cf. 1 Chr 12:2)

**and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.**—They are paying him tribute—such a handsome tribute that it takes several people (v. 18) to carry it. This generous gift would have persuaded Eglon that Israel is his submissive ally.

**16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length;**—“Made him” is ambiguous. Does it mean that Ehud made the dagger for himself, or that he made it specifically for killing Eglon?

**and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.**—A right-handed man carries his sword on the left to draw it easily. Because Ehud is left-handed, he can easily draw a sword carried on the right, where people would not expect him to carry it.

**17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.**—The word “fat” here (בריא H1277) is not the usual word for a fat person, the root שמן H8080, but almost always refers to animals, such as the fat cattle that Pharaoh saw in the dream that Joseph interpreted in Genesis 41. The image is that Eglon, “the little calf,” is a beast ready for slaughter.

**18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. 19 But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal,**—The

word here rendered “quarries” (פסיל H6456) everywhere else in the OT (except for v. 26) refers to graven images. Perhaps the Moabites have set up images as boundary markers.

It is ironic that Ehud encounters these images at Gilgal. As we noted at the start of Judges 2, Gilgal was the site of Israel’s first sanctuary when they entered the land, the place where they displayed the twelve stones that they took from Jordan (Josh 4:19-20), and the place from which the angel of the Lord came to rebuke them for their early failures. Now the Lord has allowed it to become a place of idols.

Picture the flow of events.

1. Ehud brings a handsome tribute to Eglon at Jericho.
2. He travels back with his party (and presumably, with escorts from Eglon) as far as the boundary idols near Gilgal.
3. At that point, he returns to Jericho, claiming to have message from the king. The Moabites would reasonably think that in the presence of the idols at the ancient sanctuary, he has received a divine communication.

**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.**—The king, favorably disposed to Ehud by the generous tribute and thinking of him as a faithful ally, is eager to hear what he has to say.

**20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone.**—Or, “an upper room upon beams.” Halpern<sup>4</sup> shows that a common architecture for palaces provided an elevated chamber for the monarch, separated from a waiting area.

**And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee.**—Literally, “I have a word דבר H1697,” but the Hebrew term can also mean “thing.” Eglon expects an oracular message, but Ehud is referring to the dagger.

**And he arose out of his seat.**—Eglon rises to show his respect for the divine message he is about to receive.

**21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh,**—The gesture would be unexpected, since if one carries a weapon, it is usually on the left.

**and thrust it into his belly: 22 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;**—The graphic language shows how the weapon was suited to the task at hand.

**and the dirt came out.**—The noun, which appears only here, is cognate to the word פֶּרֶשׁ H6569 translated “dung” in descriptions of the sacrifices.<sup>5</sup> For example, at the consecration of Aaron and his sons, a bullock is offered as a sin offering:

Ex. 29:12 And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar. 13 And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. 14 But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his **dung**, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering.

4 “The Assassination of Eglon: The First Locked-Room Murder Mystery.” *BR* 4 (1988) 32–41, 44.

5 Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11; 8:17; 16:27; Num. 19:5; see also Mal. 2:3

Apparently, when Eglon died, his sphincter relaxed, releasing the contents of his intestines.

**23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.**—He leaves the room without being noticed, after locking the doors.<sup>6</sup>

**24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.**—To “cover the feet” refers to defecation; compare Saul in 1 Sam 24:3. They can smell the odor from the audience chamber, and wait patiently.

**25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. 26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.**—The delay is enough for Ehud to make his escape, past the idols and up into the wooded hills of Ephraim (thus Rainey).

**27 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. 28 And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand.**—There he rallies the Israelites to take advantage of the disarray among the Moabites.

**And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. 29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. 30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel.**—The result was a comprehensive victory.

**And the land had rest fourscore years.**—This is the longest of the period of peace attested in Judges, and probably covers both Ehud and Shamgar. Note how 4:1 begins, dated from the death of Ehud, not the end of Shamgar’s activity.

## The Application in 2 Samuel

There are striking parallels between the history of Ehud and Joab’s two murders of Abner and Amasa in 2 Sam 3:27 and 20:8-10, respectively (chart).<sup>7</sup>

2Sam. 3:27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there ~~under the fifth rib~~ in the belly<sup>8</sup>, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

2Sam. 20:8 When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab’s garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out. 9 And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. 10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab’s hand: so he smote him therewith ~~in the fifth rib~~ in the belly, and shed out his bowels to the ground,

6 Halpern argues that he made his exit through a service chamber under the audience hall. But Chisholm suggests that he locked the doors on his way out.

7 See notes; Wong analyzes the similarities, VT 56:3, 2006, 399-412

8 Now recognized as the meaning of שֶׁמֶט H2570, which appears only in 2 Samuel. LXX renders ψόα “hip muscle.”

### Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

In all three cases deception is a key component, and death is by a sword blow to the belly. In addition, Amasa's case recalls Eglon's in the left-handed blow and the emphasis on his bowels being poured out. Like other Bible writers, the writer of 2 Samuel knows earlier Scripture and draws on it in his writing. In this case, he clearly has Ehud in mind. What conclusion does he want us to draw from the parallel?

Joab's action resembles Ehud's, but Abner and Amasa are not like Eglon. True, both led armies that at one time opposed David. Abner was captain of Saul's host, and Amasa of Absalom's. But each of them, after the death of the monarch he served, sought to make peace with David. In addition, Joab had a personal quarrel with each. Abner slew Joab's brother Asahel during an earlier conflict (2 Sam 2:23), while David, angered by Joab's murder of Absalom, suggested that Amasa might replace Joab as captain of David's army (2 Sam 19:13). This background suggests some striking differences between the accounts.

- The *victim* has different motives. Eglon is an enemy to Israel who seeks to take it over. Abner and Amasa, originally enemies, are now seeking to heal past wounds and unite.
- The *motives* of Ehud and Joab are very different. Ehud is bringing God's judgment on Moab for their unprovoked attack on Israel. Joab is revenging a family death (Abner) and eliminating a potential replacement (Amasa).
- Ehud was raised up *by the Lord* as a savior for the nation (Judg 3:15). Joab's action is strictly on his own behalf, seeking to preserve his own position.
- Ehud *rallies the nation* to drive out the Moabites (Judg 3:27). Joab's action frustrates David's appeasement of the northern tribes (Abner) and Absalom's rebellious faction (Amasa), threatening to fragment the nation.
- Joab arranges the murders of Abner and Amasa in a way that poses no risk to himself; they are *cowardly*. Ehud goes right into the enemy's palace, at considerable risk.

Why did the writer of Samuel emphasize the similarities, in such a different setting? David vigorously disowns both of Joab's murders, and arranges for Solomon to have him executed after David dies. Listen to his explanation for his verdict.

1Kings 2:5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and **shed the blood of war in peace**, and put **the blood of war** upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. 6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

David, though a capable warrior, longed for peace and would rather reconcile with a former enemy than seek revenge. But to Joab, the answer to every offense is to apply the methods of war. The parallels with Ehud emphasized by the writer of 2 Samuel show the appropriate context for this kind of action, and the inappropriateness of Joab's action in a very different context.

We desperately need more of David's spirit and less of Joab's in our society today. Believers should not be sympathetic with individuals who take up arms when things do not go their way. Israel is a state as well as a spiritual body, and Ehud acted under the Lord's direction in killing Eglon. The church is not a state. We belong to a kingdom that currently is not of this world, and

our task is to urge people to be reconciled to our King (2 Cor 5:20), as Abner and Amasa were, not to take up arms against them.

Ehud is an example of extreme courage and resourcefulness in carrying out the work to which God called him.

### 3:31, Shamgar

**31 And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath,**—This individual is mentioned only here and in Deborah’s song, along with Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, who slew Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s host:

Jdg 5:6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways.

“Son of Anath” is intriguing. Anath was a major northwest Semitic goddess of war and sexuality. We don’t know where he lived, though there are several place names build on “Anath,” three of them in the south of Israel, probably named for sanctuaries to the goddess (see note). Shamgar is thus probably of Canaanite background, but sympathetic with the Israelites and acting on their behalf. Like the Heber the Kenite and Caleb and Othniel the Kennizites, he is an example of a Gentile who sides with Israel.

**which slew of the Philistines**—The Philistines become archaeologically prominent in Canaan in the twelfth century, and if Shamgar operated near the end of the 80 years of rest reported in 3:30, he could be right around 1200. See timeline in Figure 4 (chart).<sup>9</sup>

**six hundred men with an ox goad:**—This is an unconventional weapon, and reminds us of Samson and the jawbone of an ass in 15:15. Like some of the other judges (e.g., Gideon, Jephthah), he is not raised and trained as a warrior, but is an ordinary citizen whom God has raised up. He doesn’t even have a sword, but uses an implement from his daily work.

**and he also delivered Israel.**—The Hebrew verb is פָּצַחַ H3467, literally “saved.” He is one of only six judges designated in this way: the others are Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Tola, and Samson. Of the others, it is simply said that the Lord delivered the enemy into their hand, the same expression used for delivering Israel into the hand of the enemy.

Shamgar is unexpected as a judge: he is not an Israelite, and he has no military experience. We tend to think in terms of trained and qualified leaders; God

just as often raises up those whom the world would set aside.

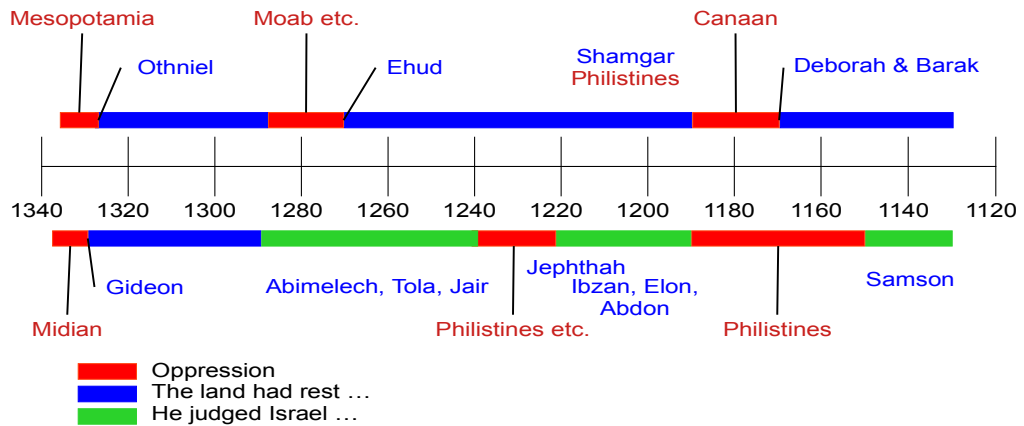


Figure 4: Chronology of the Judges (Chisholm, JETS 52:2 (June 2009) 247-255)

<sup>9</sup> 1/14/21: “Rest” 3:30 suggests Shamgar’s Philistines overlap with Canaanite oppression (Wood).

## Notes

### Modes of the Spirit's Action

See Edersheim, ch. 14.

Come upon:

Judg. 3:10 And the Spirit of the LORD **came upon על היה 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.

Judg. 11:29 Then the Spirit of the LORD **came upon על היה** Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

Clothed:

Judg. 6:34 But the Spirit of the LORD **came upon [clothed לבש]** Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

Began to move, then prospered upon (all Samson):

Judg. 13:25 And the Spirit of the LORD **began to move הלל him** at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judg. 14:6 And the Spirit of the LORD **came mightily upon על צלה him**, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

Judg. 14:19 And the Spirit of the LORD **came upon על צלה him**, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

Judg. 15:14 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD **came mightily upon על צלה him**, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

### Verbs for Apostasy in Judges

These stem from the warning in Deuteronomy:

Deut. 8:19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget שכח H7911 the LORD thy God, and walk after הלך אחר H1980<sup>10</sup>, H310 other gods, and serve עבד H5647 them, and worship הוה S/h H7812 them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

The Summary in Judges 2 mentions all except שכח:

Judg. 2:11 And the children of Israel did evil עשה הרע H6213, H7451 in the sight of the LORD, and served עבד H5647 Baalim: 12 And they forsook עזב H5800 the LORD God of

---

<sup>10</sup>Strong derives this from a separate root ילך H3212, but modern lexicons recognize this as a byform of הלך.

## Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed הֵלֵךְ אַחֵר H1980<sup>11</sup>, H310 other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed שָׁחוּ Sh H7812 themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13 And they forsook עָזַב H5800 the LORD, and served עָבַד H5647 Baal and Ashtaroth.

But Othniel's introduction picks that up:

Judg. 3:7 And the children of Israel did evil עָשָׂה הָרַע in the sight of the LORD, and forgot שכַּח the LORD their God, and served עָבַד Baalim and the groves.

Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson are introduced only with "did evil":

Judg. 3:12 And the children of Israel did evil עָשָׂה הָרַע again in the sight of the LORD:

Judg. 4:1 And the children of Israel again did evil עָשָׂה הָרַע in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

Judg. 6:1 And the children of Israel did evil עָשָׂה הָרַע in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

Judg. 13:1 And the children of Israel did evil עָשָׂה הָרַע again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

Jephthah is more full:

Judg. 10:6 And the children of Israel did evil עָשָׂה הָרַע again in the sight of the LORD, and served עָבַד Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook עָזַב the LORD, and served not him.

## The Promise of Rest in the Bible

In the past, I have merged

- the promise of rest in the land offered in the Pentateuch
  - Deut 12:9 מְנוּחָה כְּאַתְּנָסִים, v. 10 כְּאַתְּנָסִים
  - Dt 25:19 כְּאַתְּנָסִים
  - Also Josh 1:15; 22:4; 23:1
- the periods of rest in Judges שָׁקֵט, הָשִׁטָּה
- our Lord's offer of rest in Matt 11:28-30. ἀναπαύσις
- Heb 4:8 καταπαύω

Different terms are used in each place, in both Hebrew and Greek (Table 2). How are they distinct?

Table 2: MT-LXX Correspondences for "rest"

	נוח H5117	שבת H7673	שקט H8252	H רבץ	Total
καταπαύω G2664	19	14	1	0	66
καταλείω G2641	9	0	0	0	279
ἡσυχ*	0	1	21	2	61
ἀναπαύω G373	25	3	3	8	71
Total	137	71	42	30	

11 Strong derives this from a separate root יָלַךְ H3212, but modern lexicons recognize this as a byform of הָלַךְ.

## Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

The difference in the NT between καταπαυ\* (13x, all in Acts and Hebrews) and ἀναπαυ\* (17x, never in Acts or Hebrews) appears to be due to author preference. Both correspond to MT נוה, so it is legitimate to connect Matt 11:18-30 and Heb 4:8 to the promise of rest in the land.

However, the rest in Judges is more superficial—not true repose, but quiet, absence of strife.

The verbs occur together 6x in the OT: Is. 14:7; Ezek. 16:42; Job 3:13, 26; 2 Chr. 14:6; 20:30.

Note in particular the last two, speaking of Asa:

2Chr. 14:6 And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest שקט, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest נוה.

and Jehoshaphat:

2Chr. 20:30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet שקט: for his God gave him rest נוה round about.

The outward symptom is quietness, but what God gives is rest. See also Solomon,

1Chr. 22:9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest מנוחה; and I will give him rest מנוחה from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace שלום and quietness שקט unto Israel in his days. (Cf. 1 Ki 5:4 But now the LORD my God hath given me rest נוה C on every side).

Also

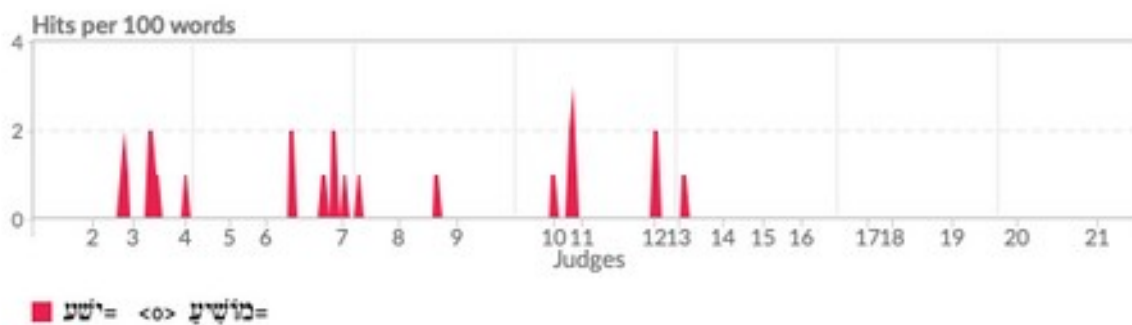
Is. 14:7 The whole earth is at rest נוה, and is quiet שקט: they break forth into singing.

The general rule is that נוה produces שקט, but the inverse is not necessarily true.

The promise in Isa 28 is of מנוחה ἀνάπαυμα, and likely refers to the offer in Matt 11:

Is. 28:12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

## Verbs for the Deliverance provided by the Judges



The distinctive expression is יָשַׁע. The words are missing in 4-5 (Deborah and Barak), Abimelech, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (though the people ask the Lord to save them in the case of Jephthah, ch. 10)

Shamgar: 3:31 and he also delivered יָשַׁע Israel.

Summary: Judg. 2:16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered יָשַׁע them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. ... 18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the



## Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

LORD was with the judge, and delivered **וַשִׁׁי** them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge:

Ehud: Judg. 3:15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer **וַשִׁׁי**, Ehud the son of Gera,

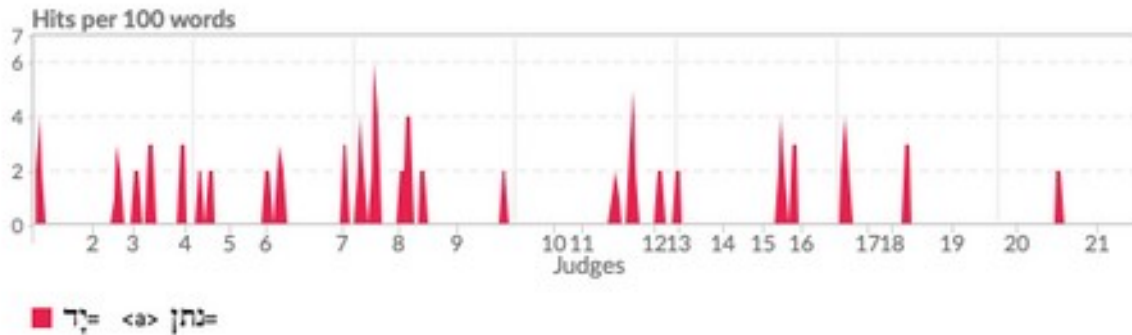
Caleb: Judg. 3:9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer **וַשִׁׁי** to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

Gideon: Judg. 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save **וַשִׁׁי** Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

Tola: Judg. 10:1 And after Abimelech there arose to defend **וַשִׁׁי** Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

Samson: Judg. 13:5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver **וַשִׁׁי** Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

Another common idiom is “deliver <enemy> into thy hand,” used both for what God does to Israel, and what God does to her enemies.



This appears with Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah. Samson is delivered into the hand of the Philistines.

## Ehud and Joab

Wong (VT 56:3, 2006, 399-412) points out striking parallels between the history of Ehud and Joab's two murders of Abner and Amasa in 2 Sam 3:27 and 20:8-10, respectively.

In all three cases deception is a key component, and death is by a sword blow to the belly. In addition, Amasa's case recalls Eglon's in the left-handed blow and the emphasis on his bowels being poured out. It seems likely that the writer of 2 Samuel has Ehud in mind. But what conclusion does he want us to draw from the parallel?

David vigorously disowns both of Joab's murders, and arranges for Solomon to have him executed after David dies. On the basis of this evaluation of Joab, and evidence that the writing of Judges antedates Samuel, Wong concludes that later writers viewed Ehud's action with disapproval, in particular, his use of deception. But there are problems with this analysis.

### Judges 3: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

- Deception is central to all of warfare. Compare Joshua's feint against Ai in Joshua 8, Jael's feigned hospitality toward Sisera in Judges 4, or David's own tactics while ostensibly serving Achish in 1 Samuel 27. It is unlikely that biblical writers would condemn Ehud for such conduct.
- The motives of Ehud and Joab are very different. Joab is revenging a family death (Abner) and eliminating someone whom David has in mind as his replacement (Amasa). Ehud is bringing God's judgment on Moab for their unprovoked attack on Israel.
- Ehud was raised up by the Lord as a savior for the nation (Judg 3:15). Joab's action is strictly on his own behalf, seeking to preserve his own position.
- Ehud rallies the nation to drive out the Moabites (Judg 3:27). Joab's action frustrates David's appeasement of the northern tribes (Abner) and Absalom's rebellious faction (Amasa), threatening to fragment the nation.
- Joab arranges the murders of Abner and Amasa in a way that poses no risk to himself; they are cowardly. Ehud goes right into the enemy's palace, at considerable risk, to carry out his mission on behalf of the nation.

So how should we explain the parallels? Wong sees the allusions to Ehud in Joab, and Joab's subsequent condemnation by David, as indicating disapproval of Ehud's methods. But the disapproval may run in the opposite direction: comparing Joab with Ehud shows the inappropriateness of Joab's action. In fact, David doesn't condemn Joab for deception. He condemns him for using methods appropriate to war, during peacetime.

1Kings 2:5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and **shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.** 6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

When Solomon authorizes Benaiah to execute Joab within the tabernacle, he emphasizes the innocence of Joab's victims, which clearly contrasts with the wickedness of Eglon in attacking Israel without provocation:

1Kings 2:31 And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the **innocent** blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. 32 And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men **more righteous and better than he**, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah.

So the parallel is intentional, but the message is that actions appropriate in holy war are not appropriate in personal relations. "To a small child with a hammer, every problem is a nail," and to Joab the warrior, the answer to every offense is to apply the methods of war. The parallels with Ehud emphasized by the writer of 2 Samuel show the appropriate context for this kind of action, and the inappropriateness of Joab's action in a very different context.

## Shamgar's Home

Shamgar is the only judge for whom we have no indication of his home. Several suggestions have been made, based on place names that mention Anath (perhaps locations of pre-Israelite sanctuaries to the goddess):

- Beth-Anath in Naphthali (Joshua 19:38) is rather remote from the center of Philistine activity
- Anathoth, a Levitical city in Benjamin (Josh 21:13-18), later the home of Jeremiah
- F.F. Bruce suggests Beth-Anoth in Judah (Josh 15:59), which fits better with the reference to the Philistines, though the linguistic connection is weaker.
- Danielus (*JNES* 22:3 (Jul., 1963) 191- 193) makes an interesting case for Michmethah, which the LXX in Jos 17:7 calls “Delanath, which is before the sons of Anath,” on the border of Ephraim and Manasseh, on the edge of the plain of Sharon and within striking distance of the center of Philistine activity.