

JUDGES

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. Where did the angel of the Lord appear?
2. Where had His early appearance been made?
3. What is the meaning of the name given to the place where the angel appeared?
4. How old was Joshua when he died?
5. Where was Joshua buried?
6. What was the name given to the male gods whom Israel served?
7. What was the name of the female goddesses whom Israel served?
8. What was the name of the leaders whom God gave Israel?
9. Did all the people always listen to the judges?
10. Why did God leave some of the Canaanites among the Israelites?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1-7 *A list of the remaining Canaanites.* Chapter three opens with a listing of the groups of the Canaanites left in the land. Special notice is made of the five lords of the Philistines, since these were the perennial enemies of Israel. Notice is also made of the Sidonians who lived at the north boundary of the land, as well as the Hivites who centered around the Lebanon mountains. Throughout the land were scattered the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. These were the pagan peoples among whom the Israelites made marriages and whose gods they served.
- Vv. 8-11 *The career of Othniel.* The first judge was a man from the tribe of Judah. His career is summarized in these verses. Notice is made of

STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

the enemy who oppressed Israel prior to his time and from whom he brought deliverance for his people. His era is described as extending over a forty-year period.

- Vv. 12-31 *The careers of Ehud and Shamgar.* All but one of the verses describe the career of Ehud. The last verse of this section is devoted to the mention of Shamgar, who came after Ehud. Such a notice makes it clear that Shamgar and Ehud did not serve contemporaneously. Shamgar succeeded Ehud, and it seems that such was the case with most of the other judges.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *They shall learn war no more.* Isaiah foresaw the day when the nations would not learn war any more (Isaiah 2:4). In the days of the judges of Israel, the people were at war rather constantly. They were unfaithful to the Lord and brought distress upon themselves. Their enemies overpowered them and their foes beset them. In the depths of their needs, judges were raised up from among them to deliver them, but their lot was one of constant tension. In the United States of America, it seems that every generation has had to suffer through some major conflict—World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the war in Viet Nam have followed one another in close succession. It is little wonder that people long for the time when nations shall not lift up sword against nation (Isaiah 2:4a).
2. *History teaches a lesson.* A wit has said that the only thing people learn from history is that they don't learn anything from history. He meant to imply that people did not profit by the examples of others who went before them. If people did profit from the experiences

of their predecessors, they would see how the people of Israel brought distress upon themselves, and how they were blessed when they turned to the Lord. Othniel delivered the people from their enemies, and the land had rest, but then they turned back into sin. Ehud delivered them and gave them some sense of direction; but once again they were wayward. Eglon, king of Moab, oppressed them. Shamgar delivered them from the Philistines, but they still failed to see that their own iniquities were bringing distress upon them. If they had learned anything from history, they would have learned to walk with the Lord. If men today learned from history, they would live righteous lives.

3. *All is not fair in war.* Ehud was a champion, and led his people against Eglon, the king of Moab. He does not warrant as much consideration as some of the other judges, however; and perhaps one reason is that his deliverance was largely wrought through deception. Deborah, for example, is much more widely known and respected for the leadership which she gave to Israel. Even Samson, with all his weakness, has found a larger place in the consideration of Bible students. Ehud's example would be much stronger if he had not won by deception.

CHAPTER THREE

Nations Left to Test Israel 3:1-6

Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;

3 Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

5 And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

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.

1. How was Israel to learn to make war? 3:1

Learning war is equivalent to learning to make war upon the nations of Canaan. Joshua and the Israelites of his time had not overcome these nations by their own human power or by earthly weapons, but by the miraculous help of their God who had smitten and destroyed the Canaanites before the Israelites. The omnipotent help of the Lord, however, was only granted to Joshua and the whole nation, on condition that they adhered firmly to the law of God (Joshua 1:7) and faithfully observed the covenant of the Lord. The transgression of that covenant, even by Achan, caused the defeat of Israel before the Canaanites (Joshua 7). The generations that followed Joshua had forgotten this lesson, and consequently they did not understand how to make war. To impress this truth upon them, the Lord had left the Canaanites in the land. Necessity teaches a man to pray. The distress into which the

Israelites were brought by the remaining Canaanites was a chastisement from God, through which the Lord desired to lead back the rebellious to Himself.

2. *What five lords of the Philistines oppressed Israel?* 3:3

These kings are rulers of the city-states of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath; and they are named in Joshua 13:3. The five cities over which they ruled were known as the Philistine Pentapolis. They were important throughout the times of the judges and over into the time of David. If one were to pick any certain nation as an enemy of Israel, the Philistines would probably be the choice; and the rulers of these five cities were the leaders of the Philistines. They played a large role in the defeat of Samson, as they bribed Delilah to learn his secret (16:5, 8).

3. *What divisions of the Canaanites are noticed?* 3:5

The Canaanites were all descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, but they were divided into many families. The Hittites were descendants of Heth. The Amorites were those who lived in cities, and may be traced back to Amor. The Perizzites were also villagers. The Hivites were a particular branch of the Canaanites who lived in the north near Mount Lebanon from Baal-hermon to Hamath (verse 3). The Gibeonites were also called Hivites (Joshua 9). The Jebusites were a branch of the Canaanites who lived in Jebus, the location which later became known as Jerusalem. All of these were groups of Canaanites who lived in the land which had been promised to the Israelites.

4. *What were the groves?* 3:7

For "groves," some texts read, "Wooden Images." This word is translated "Asheroth" in the American Standard Version. Many of the images of pagan gods were set up in groves on high places. To these spots the Canaanites would gather; and undoubtedly they invited their Israelite neighbors and captors to worship with them. The fact

that it is stated that Israel served the groves, suggests that the people were in spiritual bondage in this idolatrous worship.

List of the Judges 3:8—16:31

Othniel Judges and Delivers Israel 3:8-11

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

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

10 And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

11 And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

5. *Who was Cushan-rishathaim?* 3:8

Cushan-rishathaim was the king of Mesopotamia. All that we know about this king is what is recorded here. The name is more than likely a title which was given to him by the Israelites. *Rishathaim* means "double wickedness." Cushan may be a derivative of Cush, signifying that the man was a Cushite. The rulers of Babylon from 1518-1273 B.C. were Arabs, but the Arabs of the time may have included not only Shemites of the tribe of Joktan or Ishmael, but Cushites as well. The invasion of Canaan by this Mesopotamian king has a historical analogy in the campaign of the allied kings who came with Chedorloamer in the time of Abraham (Genesis 14).

6. *Who was Othniel?* 3:9

Othniel was the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. His tribe was Judah. Later Biblical history reveals he had a son named Hathath (I Chronicles 4:13). Heldai, a Netophathite, is also described as being of the family of Othniel (I Chronicles 27:15). Othniel had conquered Kiriath-sepher, later known as Debir, in the territory of Judah in the days of Joshua. As a result, he was given the daughter of Caleb, Achsah, as his wife (Joshua 15:17, Judges 1:13). Josephus in *Antiquities* (V. vi, 3) says Othniel had an admonition from God not to overlook the Israelites in their distress. Undoubtedly, he was stirred by the circumstance of these people and, as Josephus said, endeavored boldly to gain them their liberty. The particular problem in Othniel's day was the oppression of Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia. Josephus said one of Othniel's first strokes was to attack the garrison which Cushan had set over them. When the people saw he was successful in his first attempt, they were willing to join battle with the Assyrians, and thus they drove them out entirely. He held sway in Israel for forty years.

7. *What was the Spirit of the Lord?* 3:9-11

The Spirit of God is the spiritual principle of life in the world of nature and man; and in man it is the principle both of the natural life which we receive through birth and also of the spiritual life which we receive through regeneration. In this sense the expressions "Spirit of God" (Elohim) and "Spirit of the Lord" (Jehovah) are interchanged even in Genesis 1:2, compared with Genesis 6:3, and so throughout all the books of the Old Testament. The former denotes the Divine Spirit generally in its supernatural causality and power. The latter signifies the same Spirit in its operations upon human life and history in the working out of the plan of salvation. The recipients and bearers of this Spirit were thereby endowed with the

power to perform miraculous deeds, in which the Spirit of God which came upon them manifested itself generally in the ability to prophesy (I Samuel 10:10; 19:20, 23; I Chronicles 12:18; II Chronicles 20:14; 24:20). His working is seen also in the power to work miracles or to accomplish deeds which surpassed the courage and strength of the natural man. The latter was more especially the case with the judges. We are hardly at liberty to split up the different powers of the Spirit of God and to restrict its operations upon the judges to the spirit of strength and bravery alone. The judges not only attacked the enemy courageously and with success, but they also judged the nation. For this the spirit of wisdom and understanding was indispensably necessary. They put down idolatry (2:18, 19), which they could not have done without the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. We can make these observations:

1. The influence came straight from above
 2. It was not necessarily a sanctifying influence
 3. Not the same as the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit
 4. Gifts were miraculous, rather than gracious
 8. *How are the chronological notes to be understood?*
- 3:11

All the chronological notes in the book of Judges indicate a period of 410 years. It has been supposed that the rule of several judges was contemporaneous, not successive. Therefore the total period during which the judges ruled Israel would be cut down accordingly. It is evident that this was not the thought of the writer. The reader of the Biblical narrative will note that it is stated in the case of the judges' rule that they ruled over "Israel." No intimation is made of taking "Israel" as partial or limited in sense. The best way to work out the chronological

problem is to subtract the periods of oppression as having occurred during the time of some of the different judges. Adding up the total periods of rule of the judges, one finds the period must have been at least 299 years in length. If Abimelech's usurpation is ignored, then a total of 296 years is achieved; and this resultant number is very near the total which the statement in I Kings 6:1 suggests.

Ehud Delivers Israel from Moab 3:12-30

12 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.

13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.

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, 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.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlor, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, 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; and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlor upon him, and locked them.

24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlor were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.

25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlor; therefore they took a key, and opened them; and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.

26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

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. 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 valor; and there escaped not a man.

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

9. *What was the extent of the second oppression?* 3:13

Eglon, king of Moab, secured the help of the Ammonites and the Amalekites. They smote "Israel," an indication of the fact that the oppression was not against Benjamin alone, although Jericho, the city of palm trees, was first taken. The oppression lasted for eighteen years, and during much of this time Ehud must have been attempting to rally Israel. Israel's weakness, of course, arose from her rebellious ways; but when the people repented and sought God's forgiveness, they received strength to overthrow their oppressors.

10. *Who was Ehud?* 3:15

Ehud was of the tribe of Benjamin. He is described as being a son of Gera (II Samuel 16:5; 19:16). Josephus (*Antiquities*; V, iv, 2, 3) said he was a man of great courage, of a very strong body, and was fit for hard labor. In process of time, he is described as having become well acquainted with Eglon, the king of Moab, who was oppressing Israel in his day. He obtained his favor and worked his way into his confidence. By this manner, it is said he was trusted by those who were in attendance of the king. A great deal of detail is given in the secular account of Josephus, which is absent from the Bible. For example, it is said Ehud came to Eglon in the summer at the middle of the day when the guards were lethargic on account of the heat, and some of them had gone to dinner. It is even said he told the king he had a dream to impart to him by the command of God. This startling announcement caused the king to stand up from being seated on his throne, and thus he presented himself as a large target for Ehud's thrust. Although considerable detail is given in the Biblical account, Josephus' account is still fuller. For instance, he says the attendants did not go into the king's parlor until towards evening and this long delay gave Ehud a great

advantage. He also says the king's death threw the court into great disorder and many of the attendants fled toward Moab in order to save themselves. By that time, the Israelites had seized the ford of the Jordan and slew many of them; and this bold stroke was the most outstanding deed performed by Ehud, although Josephus calls him a man worthy of commendation even besides what he deserved for the slaying of Eglon.

11. *What was the advantage of being left-handed?* 3:15

It helped him in his deception. Benjamin was famous for its left-handed warriors. When war broke out among the tribes over the unpunished crime committed at Gibeah, Benjamin counted "seven hundred chosen men left-handed." Every one could sling stones at an hair breadth and not miss (Judges 20:16). Why there should be so many men of such similar nature is nowhere explained, but this unusual characteristic was of some importance in the case of Ehud. By extending his right hand in a normal greeting, he was able to conceal the sword grasped tightly in his more dexterous left hand. In this way he took his enemy by surprise and slew him.

12. *What tribes followed Ehud?* 3:15

Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh were in the most advantageous position to give him assistance; but when Eglon oppressed the people, it is recorded that "the children of Israel" cried unto the Lord (verse 15). When Ehud rallied his people, he was in Mount Ephraim, a territory in the midst of Ephraim and Manasseh. Since he was from the tribe of Benjamin himself, it was to be expected that these people would follow him; but once again the narrative says, "the children of Israel" went down with him (verse 27). Such a reference indicates that all the tribes were united behind this second judge.

Shamgar Delivers Israel 3:31

31 And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.

13. Who was Shamgar? 3:31

Shamgar was of the tribe of Benjamin. We are not told that he was of the family of Ehud, but since he was from the same tribe, it is apparent that the leadership of Israel in this era centered in this tribe. Nothing much is recorded of his career. We are not told how long he prevailed as a judge, and this has led many to believe that his judgeship is a part of the eighty years mentioned in verse 30. It is not said that Ehud judged for eighty years, but that "the land had rest fourscore years." Probably the deliverance wrought by Ehud began an era of peace which continued through the time of Shamgar. The most outstanding deed performed by Shamgar was his killing six hundred Philistines, using an ox goad as his weapon. The enemy of this time was the Philistines, who lived on the west border of Palestine, thus indicating Israel was beset not only by those living across the Jordan, such as Moab and Ammon, but also by the Philistines on the west and others in different directions. Whenever the people weakened themselves by their sins, their enemies on all sides oppressed them.

14. In what time was this slaying? 3:31

It was probably in the springtime when oxen were plowing in the field since an ox goad was the weapon mentioned. Warfare was waged in what seems to us today a very peculiar way. Kings would not go to battle in the wintertime, even though winter weather was not particularly cold. Wintertime brought many rains, and it was not a time for living in the fields. After the rainy

season ended along towards the spring equinox, the kings would go to battle against each other. Such must have been the time when Ehud brought this deliverance.

15. *In what part of the land did this take place?* 3:31

The Philistines lived along the west coast of Israel's borders, and the slaying no doubt occurred there. No place is mentioned, of course, to identify the field of battle; but Shamgar's deliverance was evidently an attempt to extend the territory possessed by the Israelites. The maritime plain which was occupied by the Philistines was very fertile, and it would have meant a great deal to Israel to be able to till the fields there. Since there is no particular mention of a conquest on the part of the Philistines, it seems better to think of this battle as having occurred in the western territory.

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. How many lords led the Philistines?
2. Where did the Hivites dwell?
3. Who was the oppressor of Israel in the days of the first judge?
4. Who was the first judge?
5. Of what tribe was he a member?
6. Who was the second judge of Israel?
7. What king oppressed Israel in his day?
8. Of what country was he the ruler?
9. Who was the third judge?
10. Who were the oppressors in his day?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 4

- Vv. 1- 9 *The rise of Deborah and Barak.* Deborah was a prophetess. As a woman, she demurred to lead Israel without the assistance of some capable man. Barak, of Zebulun, came to her