

JUDGES 3:7-31

# OTHNIEL & EHUD

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

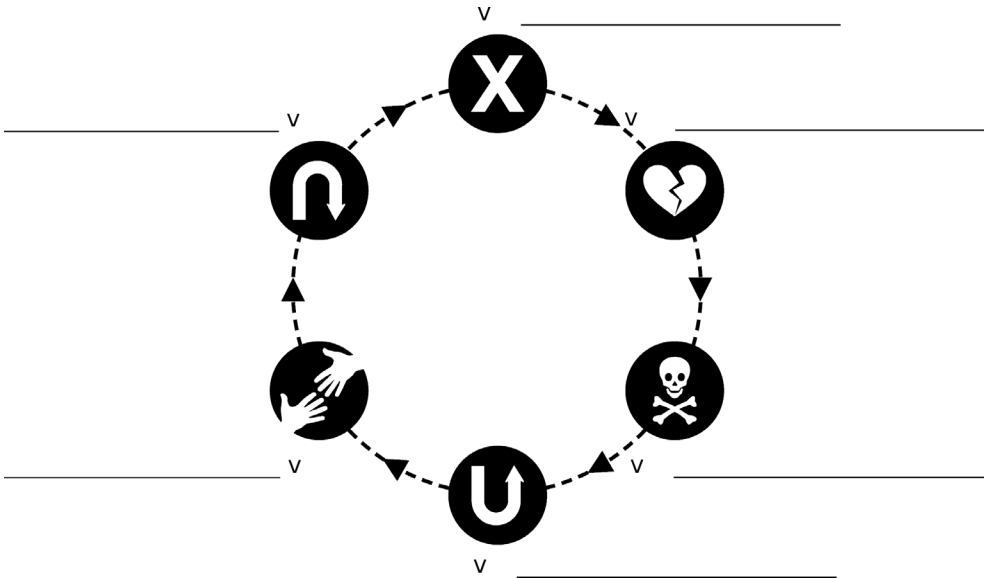
The introduction (last week) set fairly grim expectations for Israel's subsequent history. Fortunately we haven't reached the worst of it yet! Here we meet the first of the Judges themselves: Othniel and Ehud.



# OTHNIEL

**Read Judges 3:7-11.**

1. Can you identify the 'Judges cycle' in this story? See if you can fill in the diagram from this section. Check the diagram from last week to see if the pattern matches.



At first glance, this looks good! God's people turned back to him, he proved faithful to his promises, he provided a Spirit-filled rescuer, and there was peace and wellbeing in the land for a fullness of years (see *sidebar* on the significance of 40).

2. What note does the story end on? Why do you think the narrator phrases it that way?

## 40 YEARS

You'll notice in Judges that time periods are often given as multiples of 40 years: 40 (3:11, 5:31, 8:28), 80 (3:30).

Throughout the Bible, 40 is often used as a round number to indicate a "full" amount. For example, in the flood it rained "40 days" (Gen. 7:4), Moses fasted on Sinai "40 days" (Ex. 34:28), Israel spied out Canaan "40 days" (Num. 13:25) and wandered the wilderness "40 years" (Num. 14:33-34), David and Solomon each reigned "40 years" (2 Sam. 5:4, 1 Kings. 11:42), temple construction began "480 years" (40 X 12) after Israel's exodus from Egypt (1 Kings. 6:1).

# EHUD

From the Spirit-charged heroics of the mighty Othniel we discover a different kind of hero in Ehud. **Read Judges 3:12-31.**

3. What causes the crisis?

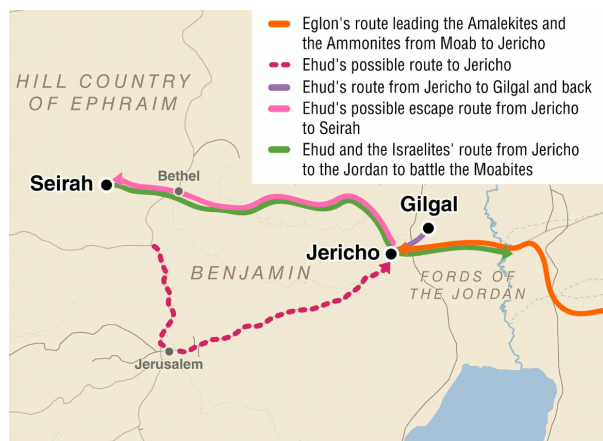
4. What impression do you get of Eglon, our arch-villain, in verses 12-17?

### LEFT HANDED

The Hebrew translated here as 'left handed' literally means 'restricted in the use of his right hand.' Ehud was disabled. What perception issues might Ehud have encountered in life? (For an extra stimulus, see Leviticus 21:16-19)

5. What impression do you get of Ehud? (**see sidebar**)

6. Did you enjoy the embarrassing way Eglon got his just deserts? (see verses 22-25 for details on his attendants' awkward embarrassment) Do you think that the author meant his readers to enjoy the embarrassing demise of the foreign dictator?



7. Did you notice Ehud's two unusual little detours? Twice, Ehud goes to Gilgal (see map), where there are stone idols (v19 & 26). Why do you think he did that?

8. How does the narrator describe the final victory over the Moabites? Note how he describes the Moabite army.

## WHAT HAVE WE SEEN SO FAR?

We can already see a couple of hints that Israel's problem isn't identical in each generation. There's already hints at a downward trend. If Othniel is a knight in shining armour, Ehud's methods are a little grey, both militarily and religiously.

Apart from this, the passage shows God executing covenant judgement on Israel by handing her over to the Canaanites, as he promised that he would do if they were unfaithful to him. We see God being faithful to his word in judgement. We also see him being faithful to his word in answering their cries for rescue from that judgement.

For Israel, right behaviour would have been to call on God not only in the bad times, but also in the good. But as soon as the Judge dies, they forget.

## LIVING GOD'S STORY

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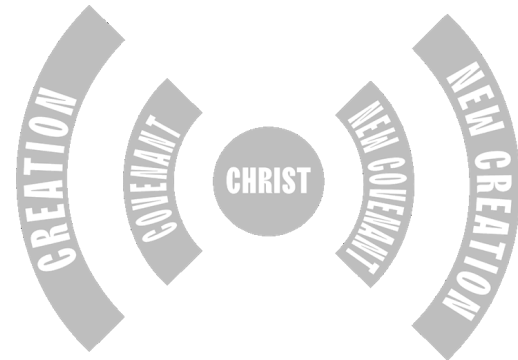
The Israelites seem to forget their God after they're no longer in living memory of his great saving actions that delivered them from their sin and its consequences. As inhabitants of episode 4, we don't look back on great military conflicts as the great saving action of our time, but to the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

9. How do we have short memories and forget what Jesus did for us? How can we keep remembering afresh God's great saving act for us? And for the kids in our church?

10. God was gracious to Israel through fallible, broken Judges upon whom he sent his Spirit. In his kindness, he still works through these means. **Read 2 Corinthians** and be thankful for those sinful, broken and Spirit-filled people who shared Jesus with you.

Do you feel that you too can be used by God?

We've seen a hint of decline from Othniel to Ehud... As time goes on, we'll see more of a decline as even the Judges themselves become more and more influenced by Canaanite culture. Individually think of one aspect of the harmfulness of our sin, the faithfulness of God to judge or the incredible grace of God to us in Jesus, and remind the group of it in prayer.



### 2 CORINTHIANS 4

<sup>5</sup> What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.