

General Church Education



Three Hero Judges

Judges 3

Lesson 19

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Three Hero Judges

Judges 3

For Parents and Teachers

The children of Israel settled in Canaan, but they did not get rid of enemy nations living in the land. After a while, they began to worship other gods and started marrying people from other nations. The Lord tested their faithfulness by sending enemies against them. First Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia, ruled over them. After eight years Israel cried to the Lord, and He raised up **Othniel** to deliver them. Othniel received power to fight Mesopotamia, and Israel rested forty years until his death.

Then, once again the children of Israel did evil, and this time the Lord permitted Moab to defeat them. They served Eglon, the king of Moab, for eighteen years. When they cried to the Lord, He raised up **Ehud** as a judge. Ehud was left-handed. As he brought tribute money to Eglon, he cleverly concealed a dagger on his right thigh, where it would not be expected. He asked for a private audience with the king. During their meeting Ehud used his dagger to kill Eglon before escaping. Moab was defeated by Israel, and Israel rested for eighty years. Next, **Shamgar** was raised up to judge Israel. He killed six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad.

These enemy nations represent natural or selfish qualities that can rule our lives. “Cushan-Rishathaim” means “blackness of iniquities”. “Othniel”, who defeated him, means “Lion of God”. “Moab”, represents “natural goodness”—good ideas and actions springing not from noble conviction or love, but from habit, training or natural disposition. “Eglon”, the king, means “young bull”—an unbroken bull needing restraint, or a life of overindulgence in natural goods that lacks higher purpose. Ehud’s sword uncovered these evils, just as true ideas from the Word reveal selfish motivations so that over time they can be defeated and removed. Shamgar overcame the “Philistines” who represent true ideas that are not acted on.

Ideas for Children

- Seeing selfish thoughts and feelings is the first step to overcoming them.
- The Word exposes our evils and shows us how to act.
- Our wish to act rightly must come from loving the Lord, not because we want to look good.

From the Writings

‘Moab and Ammon’ are people whose worship is external and appears holy, but is not internal. They take up the things which belong to external worship as goods and truths but reject and regard as worthless those that belong to internal worship. This type of worship and religion falls to people with whom natural good exists but who regard others as worthless in comparison with themselves. They are not unlike fruit which is not unattractive on the outside but which within is rotten. They despise the interior things of worship because they are governed by self-love. See *Arcana Coelestia* 2468.

“‘The Philistines’ are those who have a knowledge of the cognitions of faith but do not lead a life of charity.” *Arcana Coelestia* 8093

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Vocabulary

iniquities—wicked or sinful acts

entrails—internal body parts of a person, such as intestines

hilt—handle of a weapon

ox goad—a long stick with a pointed end for prodding cattle

As long as the Israelites served the Lord, they were safe from their enemies. But when they forgot the Lord and His commandments, enemy nations took them over, and sometimes ruled them for many years.

Today we will learn about three times when the Israelites “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” Each time one of their enemies attacked them or conquered them. Each time they turned to the Lord and called for His help, and He sent a judge to deliver them.

Othniel

The children of Israel forgot the Lord, and worshiped the gods of the nations around them. These gods were called Baals and Asherahs. They were idols made from wood and stone. Since the people rejected the Lord and His protection, the Lord allowed the king of Mesopotamia, Cushan-Risathaim, to conquer them. The king’s name means “blackness of iniquities”. For eight years the people served the evil king and had to do what he told them to. Finally, they cried to the Lord to save them from their misery.



The Lord heard them and sent a judge, Othniel, to deliver them from their slavery. Othniel’s name means “Lion of God”. Othniel’s uncle was Caleb, the spy who gave a good report about the land of Canaan many years earlier. Othniel led the people in war against King Cushan-Risathaim and defeated him. After that, the land had rest and peace for forty years.

Read Judges 3:1-11.

Ehud

In time the children of Israel forgot what had happened and did evil in the sight of the Lord again. This time Eglon, the king of Moab, attacked them. With help from the Ammonites and the Amalekites, Eglon became their ruler for eighteen years. He forced the Israelites to pay taxes or tribute money to him.

Eglon was a harsh ruler. Israel cried to the Lord for help. This time the Lord raised up a judge from the tribe of Benjamin. This judge, Ehud, was left-handed. He did not go to war against Eglon. He had a clever plan. Read Judges 3:12-16.

Ehud's Crafty Plan

Ehud was to take the tribute money to king Eglon in Jericho, the beautiful city of palms. Ehud got ready to bring the money by making a special double-edged dagger. It was one cubit long, about 18 inches or 15 cm. A right-handed person would strap his weapon to his left thigh, where it would be easy to pull out at a moment's notice. Since Ehud was left-handed, he hid his dagger under his clothes on his *right* thigh, where he could easily grab it. Since most people are right-handed Ehud took a chance that the guards would check his left thigh for weapons, but not his right. So when he went to pay the tribute money, the guards did not find his hidden dagger!

The Word says King Eglon was fat. Eglon represents doing things to look good in front of others, and not because you love the Lord or other people. For example, a person might go to church so others will think they are good, when they don't really care about the Lord at all. Ehud presented the tribute money. Then he told Eglon he had a secret message for him. So Eglon sent away the men who had brought the tribute, and all of his guards. Ehud was alone with Eglon in an upper room.

Ehud told the king he was to deliver a secret message from God. As Eglon got up to hear the message, Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and stabbed Eglon in the belly. Then Ehud carefully shut and locked the doors of the room and went out through the porch. A little while later the servants found the door locked. They thought the king was sleeping or perhaps using the bathroom, so they waited patiently outside. When the king did not come out for a long time they got a key, and opened the door. They found their master dead on the floor.

Read Judges 3:17-30.



The delay gave Ehud time to escape. He ran to the mountains of Ephraim and blew the trumpet to gather the Israelites. They followed him to the fords of the river Jordan that led to the land of Moab. There, they killed about ten thousand men. With Moab's defeat the children of Israel had rest for eighty years.

We each have a “cool upper room” in our minds. It is the place where we raise our thoughts up to the Lord. He can “cool” our hot anger to help us see what we've done, and what we should do.

Shamgar

The next judge the Lord raised up was a man named Shamgar. All we know is that he killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad and delivered Israel from the Philistines. An ox goad is a rod with a metal pointed end for prodding cattle.

Read Judges 3:31.

The Lord Is the Deliverer

Each time the children of Israel did evil, their enemies ruled them and made them miserable. When we disobey the Lord, He lets us feel the consequences of doing wrong so we can learn from our mistakes and turn back to Him. He is always ready to forgive us when we turn to Him for help.

Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar were heroes who delivered the Israelites from the oppression of their enemies. But the Lord was the real Hero, the Deliverer.

Discussion Questions

- Why did the Lord let Israel's enemies rule over them?
- How might selfish thoughts and feelings rule over us and make us “pay tribute” to them?
- Did the Lord send the children of Israel help as soon as they got into difficulty, or later, when they had suffered? What had to happen before the Lord sent help?
- Ehud and Eglon were alone in a “cool upper room” when Ehud killed the king. Finding a cool upper room in our minds is like raising our thoughts up to the Lord. How can bringing the Lord to mind “cool” us off? Can the Lord help us get perspective on things we've done if we're “hot” with anger?
- Can you think of another story in the Word when something happened in a “upper chamber”? (Hint: the Lord and His disciples once went to an upper room. What happened? (see Luke 22:14) A boy (2 Kings 4:34) and later a girl (Mark 5:41) were healed in an upper room. How were they healed, and by whom?)
- When Ehud killed Eglon his ugly insides poured out on the floor. Killing Eglon, the evil king, is like thinking about something we've done wrong, seeing our ugly thoughts and feelings and closing the door on doing it again.
- What does the Lord raise up in our minds that is like a judge?

Activity Overview | Three Hero Judges

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies;
In You I take shelter.
Teach me to do Your will,
For You are my God. Psalm 143:9,10

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Conquering Baals in Our Lives
- Judges Trading Cards—Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar
- Picture to color—Ehud and Eglon (Judges 3)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Read Judges 3 to fill in the blanks and answer questions about the first three judges. This activity is available online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-the-first-three-judges-review-questions-judges3.pdf>.

Activity 1 | Conquering Baals in Our Lives

Every person born into the world has the opportunity to choose the thoughts and feelings that rule their lives. This quality is the “lord” that “rules over” us. Baal was a Canaanite god. Baal means “lord”. In Canaanite mythology, Baal was lord over all—especially the fertility of the land. Let’s take a closer look at what false “Baals” might be in our own lives.

“Baals” appear to make us powerful and successful. They look good! But their long-term effects in our lives may be very different.

| False gods—“Baals” | The True God |
|---|--|
| It is more important to cheat on a test so I do well in school, than to fail. | It is more important to face the consequences of not studying so I can learn not to make that mistake again, and so that I can really learn what I was supposed to. |
| Saying unkind things about others behind their backs won’t hurt them. | Making a habit of saying unkind things about others makes doing it seem OK, but the Lord wants me to love and think well of others—just as I hope they think well of me. |
| It’s OK for me to be angry with my friend. My friend said something that really hurt me—and it was not even true. I think everyone should know what a rotten person she is. | Letting bad feelings rule the way I see things and think about others may lead to a self-centered outlook. Bad feelings come from evil spirits wanting to pull me down to their level. I will be happier if I do not make them welcome in my life. |
| Getting this game/toy is so important. I will be so happy when I have it. | Things cannot make me happy. True happiness comes from loving and caring about others. |
| My friend got new clothes. She looks and feels great. I can’t feel good about myself in these old things—I really need something new. | True beauty comes from inside—it is the way I carry myself that is important. I can appreciate my friend’s clothes without being jealous of her. |

1. The Land of Canaan in the Word represents the kingdom of heaven. To experience states of heavenly peace and joy, we need to drive the “Baals” out of our own lives. How can we do this?
2. The children of Israel were to drive nations that worshiped idols out of the land. In what ways might this relate to the “Baals” of our lives? What could happen if we let them live?
3. How might knowing about this affect the way we think about friendship with other people or the ways we spend free time? Can we help others with these problems?

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Cards

Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar

This activity is the start of what could be a long-term project. Judges Trading Cards are offered for each judge students will learn about. By choosing this activity each time it is offered you will have a complete set of Judges Trading Cards. You can use these cards to review the judges. Students in groups choosing this activity may trade cards with each other when all cards have been completed.

Do the following on the front of each card:

1. Write the name of the judge in the space at the top of the card.
2. Write the number of years of peace Israel had after this judge conquered Israel's enemy.
3. Draw a picture of the judge.

Fill in the following details given in the story on the back of each card:

1. Write the name of the region(s) or city in Israel being attacked.
2. Write the name of the judge's tribe.
3. Write the name of the enemy attacking Israel.
4. Write the kind of weapon used to fight the enemy.
5. Fill in the "other" box with any details from the story that interest you, e.g. how a judge escaped, the number of years he or she judged Israel, other things he or she did.

When you have completed the card, cut it out. Fold the card in half and tape the edges together.

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Othniel

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| JUDGES FROM THE WORD | | YEARS OF PEACE <input type="text"/> | | |
| OTHER <input type="text"/> | WEAPON <input type="text"/> | ENEMY <input type="text"/> | TRIBE <input type="text"/> | PLACE OR CITY <input type="text"/> |

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Ehud

FROM THE WORD

JUDGES

YEARS OF PEACE

PLACE OR CITY

TRIBE

ENEMY

WEAPON

OTHER

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Shamgar

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <p>FROM THE WORD</p> <h1>JUDGES</h1> | <p>YEARS OF PEACE</p> |
| <p>PLACE OR CITY</p> | <p>TRIBE</p> |
| <p>ENEMY</p> | <p>WEAPON</p> |
| <p>OTHER</p> | |

