

## **Judges Chapter 3 Part 4**

Let us read 1 Samuel chapter 12.

Judges is a book about spirituality. But it is not an in your face type of spirituality. As Herman has said, “The Bible is written to reveal; it is written to conceal.” You may see with the deliverer Ehud, spirituality expressed through words and actions.

Consider the impact of individual men.

Adam was the source of the human race after he sinned. One man. And in this case also one woman.

Noah and his family were the only ones that survived the great flood. One man who obeyed God in faith. As Genesis 6:9 says, “...Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God....” Or as Hebrews 11:6 says, “ By faith Noah,...” One man empowered by God.

Out of Abraham comes blessing for the entire human race. And his children populate the Middle East. One man empowered by God.

Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. One man empowered by God.

Joshua led them into the land. One man empowered by God.

Individual men and women, empowered by God in response to faith had great impact in history. The book of Judges contains the acts of individual men, empowered by God, that saved Israel.

Individual men empowered by God the Holy Spirit have and will continue to have great impact on history because God is in control of history. His men and women today are accomplishing great things.

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Whether Old Testament or today, believers empowered by the Holy Spirit accomplish God's will. Are you walking by faith right now? Are you one man or one woman empowered by God?

Let us look at another perspective of spirituality. Let us look at the "sacrifice of Eglon." Robbie Dean observed, there are several double entendres, that is words or phrases that can have a double meaning. In the case of Ehud, there are words that have the dictionary meaning on the surface, but when strung together in the context with other words with similar double meanings, an interesting story appears.

Outline (based upon Thomas Constable & Robert Dean):

Judges 1:1 – 3:6	The reason for Israel's apostasy
<b>Judges 3:7 – 16:31</b>	<b>The record of Israel's apostasy</b>
Judges 17:1 – 21:25	The results of Israel's apostasy

Here is an outline of the section based upon a combination of Thomas Constable, J. Vernon McGee and Robert Chisholm.

- A. The first apostasy 3:7-11 [judge: Othniel] 3:7 "The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord,..."
- B. **The second apostasy 3:12-31 [judge: Ehud]** **3:12 "Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord."**
- C. The third apostasy chapters 4—5 [judge: Deborah and Barak] 4:1 "Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord..."
- D. The fourth apostasy 6:1—10:5 [judge: Gideon] 6:1 "Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord."
- E. The fifth apostasy 10:6—12:15 [judge: Jephthah] 10:6 "Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord,..."
- F. The sixth apostasy chapters 13—16 [judge: Samson] 13:1 "Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord,..."

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Pattern of chapter 2 applied to chapter 3 (NASB).

<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Chapter 3</b>
<p><b>2:11-13 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, 12 and they forsook the Lord,</b> the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 So they <b>forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.</b></p>	<p><b>3:12 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. ...because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.</b> 2X evil</p>
<p><b>2:14 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel,</b> and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and <b>He sold them into the hands</b> of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.</p>	<p>?No Anger? Just action.  <b>3:12 So the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel,</b>  <b>3:13-14 And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they took possession of the city of the palm trees.</b>  <b>14 And the sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years.</b></p>
<p><b>2:16 Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them</b> from the hands of those who plundered them.</p>	<p><b>3:15 But when the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them,</b> Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man.</p>
<p><b>2:18 When the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge;</b> for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.</p>	<p><b>3:29-30 They struck and killed about ten thousand Moabites at that time, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped.</b> 30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was at rest for eighty years.</p>
<p><b>2:18-19 But it came about when the judge died,</b> that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.</p>	

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Read Judges 3:12-30.

At this point, I want to read from Josephus. It adds a perspective that may be of help. But, please remember that Josephus is not inspired, inerrant Scripture. It is extra-Biblical. I was going to just read it. But for those that depend on the handout, I decided to include the following excerpt from Josephus. It is quoted from “The Complete Works of Josephus,” translated by Wm. Whiston, page 114:

“1. When Othniel was dead, the affairs of the Israelites fell again into disorder; and while they neither paid to God the honour due to him, nor were obedient to the laws, their afflictions increased, till Eglon, king of the Moabites did so greatly despise them on account of the disorders of their political government, that he made war upon them, and overcame them in several battles, and made the most courageous to submit, and entirely subdued their army, and ordered them to pay him tribute. And when he had build him a royal palace at Jericho, he omitted no method whereby he might distress them; and indeed he reduced them to poverty for eighteen years. But when God had once taken pity of the Israelites, on account of their afflictions, and was moved to compassion by their supplications put up to him, he freed them from the hard usage they had met with under the Moabites. This liberty he procured for them in the following manner:-”

“2. There was a young man of the tribe of Benjamin, whose name was Ehud, the son of Gera, a man of very great courage in bold undertakings, and of a very strong body, fit for hard labour, but best skilled in using his left hand, in which was his whole strength; and he also dwelt at Jericho. Now this man became familiar with Eglon, and that by means of presents, with which he obtained his favour, and insinuated himself into his good opinion; whereby he was also beloved of those that were about the king. Now, when on a time, he was bringing presents to the king, and had two servants with him, he put a dagger on his right thigh secretly,

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and went in to him: it was then summer time, and the middle of the day, when the guards were not strictly on their watch, both because of the heat, and because they were gone to dinner. So the young man, when he had offered his presents to the king, who then resided in a small parlour that stood conveniently to avoid the heat, fell into discourse with him for they were now alone, the king having bid his servants that attended him to go their ways, because he had a mind to talk with Ehud. He was now sitting on his throne; and fear seized upon Ehud lest he should miss his stroke, and not give him a deadly wound; so he raised himself up, and said he had a dream to impart to him by the command of God; upon which the king leaped out of his throne for joy of the dream; so Ehud smote him to the heart, and leaving his dagger in his body, he went out, and shut the door after him. Now the king's servants were very still, as supposing that the king had composed himself to sleep."

**Judges 3:12 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.**

This subsection begins with the sons of Israel did evil in the sign of the Lord. That is how the writer delineates each new cycle of evil.

**Again.** Except, there are some differences. And those differences stand out. To begin with, “again” is not an adverb, it is an actual verb. It means to add, to increase. This is an imperfect, which indicates an incomplete or in progress action. The Hebrew verb is in the causative stem. Something caused this, the sin nature running rampant apart from faith. A single English word maybe doesn’t completely incorporate the meaning of the Hebrew. But I do like the way Trent Butler translated it,

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“continued.” This provides continuity with the previous evil which is a common thread throughout Judges.

**Judges 3:12 (Butler translation) The sons of Israel continued to do evil in Yahweh’s eyes, and Yahweh strengthened Eglon, king of Moab, to oppose Israel because they did evil in Yahweh’s eyes.**

**Did evil.** Did is an *infinitive* here working with the *verb* translated “continued.” They “continued to do evil,” as Trent Butler translated it. And the evil, as mentioned last week, starts with a violation of the First Commandment to worship God and only God. This evil starts with idolatry. Since details of that idolatry were mentioned previously in the text, the author didn’t see a need to repeat it here. But the author did repeat that the sons of Israel did evil as we will see.

Concerning idolatry, this was forbidden to the sons of Israel from the beginning, after leaving Egypt:

**Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,**

**Exodus 20:2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**

**Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.**

**Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven**

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**above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth.**

**Exodus 20:5 You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,...”**

Back to Judges 3:12

**In the sight of the Lord.** Literally, “in the eyes of the Lord” (as Trent Butler translated it), an anthropomorphism. God doesn’t have eyes like humans. But this is one way to express God’s omniscience and omnipresence. In some movies, the Masonic symbol has the “all seeing eye of God.” That is what we have here.

**So.** “So” is just the word “and” in the Hebrew. But it can mean many things depending on the context. It is a result of the evil of the Sons of Israel. But the author didn’t want to stress the result as much as provide continuity. Of course God is going to take action as a result. “So” is a fine translation.

**Strengthened.** This is an intensive *piel* stem in the Hebrew. It can mean to strengthen or to make firm. Trent Butler translates it “moved.” I think that is close. How about the Lord “motivated” Eglon?

**King of Moab.** Moab and Ammon were the sons of Lot through the incestuous relations he had with his daughters. From the sons came the tribes with their names.

Now, the sons of Israel had dealings with Moab previously. God warned them not to attack Moab in Deuteronomy:

**Deuteronomy 2:9 Then the Lord said to me, ‘Do not attack Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a**

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**possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.'**

However, as the sons of Israel traveled toward the promised land, they skirted the area of Moab. So Moab tried to curse them.

**Numbers 22:4 Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will eat up all that is around us, as the ox eats up the grass of the field!" And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.**

**Numbers 22:5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the Euphrates River, in the land of the sons of his people, to call for him, saying, "Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they have covered the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me.**

**Numbers 22:6 Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."**

Later, Jehoshaphat refers back to this when Israel is threatened by Moab asking God for guidance.

**2 Chronicles 20:1 Now it came about after this, that the sons of Moab and the sons of**

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**Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat.**

**2 Chronicles 20:10 Now behold, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom You did not allow Israel to invade when they came out of the land of Egypt (for they turned aside from them and did not destroy them),**

**2 Chronicles 20:11 see how they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance.**

**2 Chronicles 20:12 Our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.”**

Here are some helpful points on Moab from Trent Butler. I reformatted and edited the information:

1. “Moab is Israel’s perpetual enemy (Exod 15:15; Num 21:29; 22-24; Deut 23:4; 1 Sam 14:47; compare 1 Sam 12:9) and the original example of a foreign power tempting Israel to serve fertility gods (Num 25:1; compare Judg 10:6; 1 Kgs 11:7, 33; 2 Kgs 23:13).”
2. “Still God did not allow Israel to conquer Moab (Deut 2:9; compare Judg 11:15, 17-18).”
3. “At some point David established peaceful relationships with the king of Moab (1 Sam 22:4), but he soon made the Moabites his tributaries and subjects (23 Sam 8:2; 8:12; 23:20).”

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4. “Later Moab gained the upper hand.”

**Eglon.** It may be the name of the king of Moab. That or it is another epithet like Cushan the “double wicked.” This name plays into the story. It provides some insight into the author’s style but it also plays into the meaning. Robbie Dean gives a good explanation even if it is a little long.

“Now what we see in this verse is that this king is called Eglon. I don’t know whether this is his proper name or not; just as last time with Othniel we saw that the oppressor was Cushan-rishathaim which was more of an epithet rather than a proper name. Cushan indicated his area of origination which was in Midian and rishathaim is a Hebrew word meaning doubly evil or doubly wicked, so it seems more of a nickname. Well, Eglon might have been a nickname as well and it has certain connotations. This whole section starts turning on these puns that begin with the name of Eglon. For example, Eglon is a paronomasia on the Hebrew word *'egel*, you can see that the consonants are the same, these three letters, this is an 'Ayin, a Gimel and a Lamed, and it's the same consonants; remember Hebrew is a consonantal language as most Semitic languages are, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Arabic don't have vowel points, the vowels were added later.

“So when you do a comparison of different words in terms of their consonant roots you can see that there are certain similarities. Well, *'egel*, Eglon is the diminutive, the "on" indicates something small, like you would say Tom or Tommy, Bob or Bobby, Bill or Billy, the Eglon is a diminutive suffix and it's a paronomasia on the word *'egel*, which means a bull or a calf. This is specifically in reference to a fatted calf used for a sacrifice and it is talking about...also it's related to the adjective, *agal* which means round or rotund. If we were to take Eglon and bring this pun over into English it would be a word that would instantly bring to mind the term "fatty." Now that's not politically correct, the Jews are poking fun at this guy. He is obese. If you look in

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verse 17 we read "and he presented the tribute to Eglon, the king of Moab; now Eglon was..." and we need to expand the translation a little bit, it is not simply "a very fat man," he is "an exceedingly fat man." The term is *bariy' me'od* in the Hebrew, it is the adverb *me'od* which means exceedingly or greatly or to the extreme, plus the noun *bariy'* which is also a term used to describe the fatted calf brought to the altar for sacrifice."

One place the word '*egel*' is used is in the sin offering in Leviticus chapter 9:

**Leviticus 9:1 Now it came about on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel;**

**Leviticus 9:2 and he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a calf, a bull, as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, both without defect, and offer them before the Lord.**

The word “calf” is our word. So in the word play, Eglon is a “little” very fat calf about to be sacrificed for a sin offering for Israel. But as often happens in the Old Testament, everything is backwards. The “calf” is Eglon sitting on his chair or maybe some kind of throne rather than an altar. Ehud, not from the tribe of Levi but from the tribe of Benjamin. He used a double edged sword which is concealed under his garment on his right thigh. Before he pulls it out, he tells Eglon that he has a secret (in this case, concealed) message from God. His message, literally “word,” is the sword. Of course you remember Paul’s description of the armor of God in Ephesians

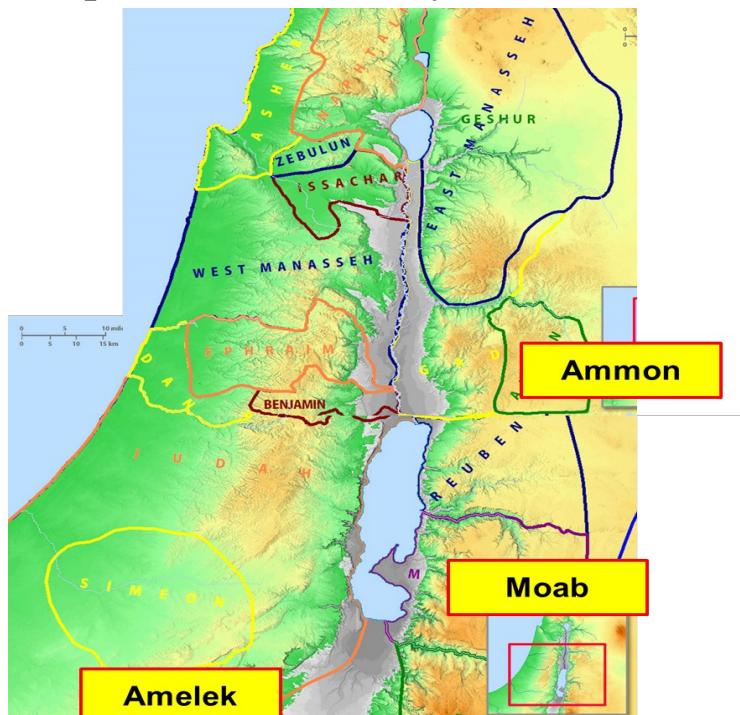
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**Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

Is this a coincidence that the sword is the word? Or was Paul not making this up when he composed Ephesians but using a concept that was already understood by mature believers in the Old Testament?

Back to the sacrifice of Eglon. Rather than slit his throat, Ehud used a double edged sword to rip into Eglon's intestines and from their probably into his aorta. The "refuse" that came out was not a sweet savor.

So I see a spiritual component to this story that is concealed in the words.



Map showing Ammon, Moab and Amelek (based upon FreeBibleImages. Org map)

Moab and Israel have history. Moab apparently sees an opportunity to a) reduce Israel's influence and b) take some land c) remove the perceived threat. I find it interesting that they started with Jericho. That is where the sons of Israel started when they entered the land. So is Moab thinking they will now take the land for themselves? And Joshua cursed the man

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who would eventually rebuild Jericho. It was not rebuilt and the curse not fulfilled until 1 Kings 16:34. So at this point, there was not a walled city here. Easy pickings.

**Joshua 6:26 Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, “Cursed before the Lord is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with the loss of his firstborn he will lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he will set up its gates.”**

**Because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.** Repetition. This must mean the writer is trying to emphasize something. “Because” is a reason or motivation or cause that the Lord is acting. In this verse we have the sons of Israel a) caused to continue doing evil leading to b) God “strengthening” or “motivating” Moab to take action which c) was the result of the sons of Israel doing evil. It is like a parenthesis emphasizing the middle or the motivation of the king of Moab. Israel’s idolatry is not further elaborated. But you can assume that the idolatry of chapter 2 continued.

**Had done.** This is a verb from the same stem as the “do” at the beginning of the verse, except here it is in the perfect tense. This is viewed as a completed action. It has reached a point at which God has to take action to save His people. Like Popeye said, “That’s all I can stands. I can’t stands no more.”

**Judges 3:13 And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they took possession of the city of the palm trees.**

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**He gathered.** This has the idea that the king of Moab formed an alliance with Ammon and Amalek. This verb is also used of gathering a harvest.

**Ammon and Amalek.** As stated previously, Ammon and Moab are the tribes from Lot's two sons. Amelek is descendant from Esau. I have included below points on the Amalekites from Gary Kukis (Kukis.org).

“1. The origins of the Amalekites are unknown. They seem to appear suddenly in Gen. 14:7, although there is also a mention of an Amalek being born to the family of Esau (Gen. 36:12, 16).

“2. They primarily occupied the area south of Judah, although they also made inroads to Ephraim. Gen. 14:7 Ex. 17:8 Judges 12:15 1Sam. 30:1–3.

“3. The Amalekites were the first nation to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt. They attacked Israel from the rear, where there were the tired, weak and sickly Israelites. It is possible that this attack was based on water rights, even though the water provided for the Israelites was from God. Ex. 17:8–16 Deut. 25:17–18.

“4. Because of this merciless and vicious attack, and because of the negative volition and anti-Semitism which this people exhibited over the years, God ordered their complete and total destruction (Deut. 25:19 1Sam. 15:2–3). Saul disobeyed God about completely destroying the Amalekites, which was the act of disobedience which marked the end of his dynasty. 1Sam. 15.

“5. David was troubled by the Amalekites when he was an expat in the territory of the Philistines. They raided his camp when he was gone and took his women and the things which he had accumulated over the past year or so. 1Sam. 30.

“6. The Amalekites were among the people which David struck down. 2Sam. 8:11–14 1Chron. 18:11.

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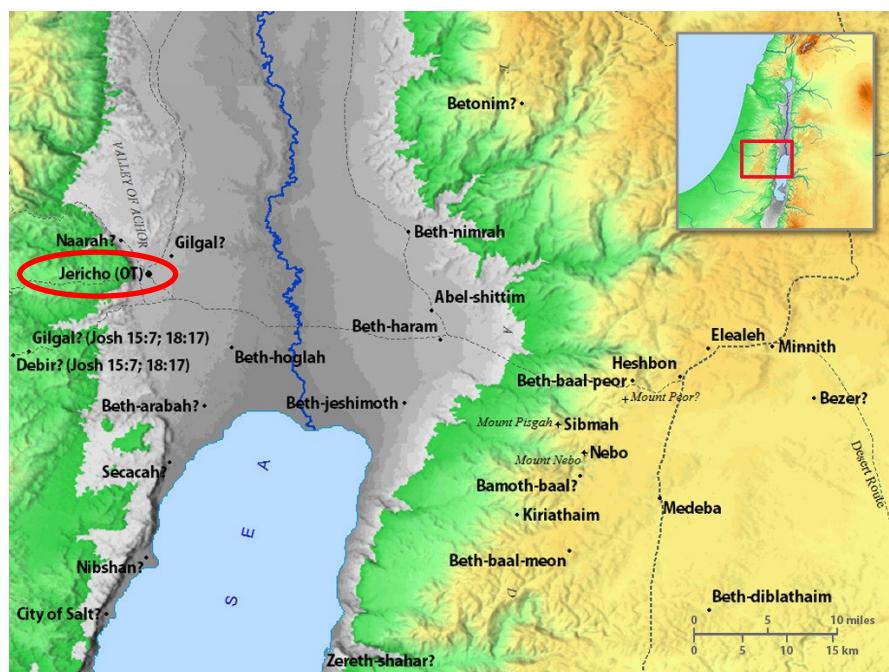
“7. The Amalekites are not mentioned again until the time of Hezekiah (circa 700 A.D.), when the tribe of Simeon defeat them. 1Chron. 4:24.

“8. The last Amalekite that we hear about is Haman, who is said to be descended from Agag (an unspecified Amalekite king). Haman, in the book of Esther, launches a plan to destroy all the Jews in Persia (a scheme thwarted by Esther and her uncle, Mordecai). Esther 3:1, 10 8:3, 5 9:24.”

**He went and defeated Israel.** The writer likes to use two verbs when one group is attacking another. We saw that in chapter 1. Here the first verb indicates they moved their troops toward Israel and engaged the enemy. Then, the second verb is rightly translated “defeated.”

**Took possession.** The Hebrew word means, “destroy someone so that someone else can possess his property, …” This is what the sons of Israel were supposed to have done in chapter 1 but failed. Now the king of Moab, along with help, succeeded to do this to the sons of Israel at Jericho.

**City of the Palm Trees.** This is the city of Jericho.



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