

Judges Chapter 3 Part 5

//Review//

Outline (based upon Thomas Constable & Robert Dean):

Judges 1:1 – 3:6 The reason for Israel's apostasy
Judges 3:7 – 16:31 The record of Israel's apostasy
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).

Chapter 2	Chapter 3
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 , 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 forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.	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. <u>2X evil</u>
2:14 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel , and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.	?No Anger? Just action. 3:12 So the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, 3:13-14 And he gathered to himself the sons of <u>Ammon and Amalek (2x enforcement)</u> ; and he went and defeated Israel, and they took possession of the city of the palm trees. 14 And the sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years.
2:16 Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.	3:15 But when the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them , Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab. 2X commission
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 ; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.	3:29-30 They struck and killed about ten thousand Moabites at that time, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped. 30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was at rest for eighty years.
2:18-19 But it came about when the judge died , 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.	

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Recall from a couple of weeks ago the prevalence of the number two. Cushan Rishathaim, the Doubly Wicked Cushan. Then remember Aram between the two rivers. Both of those were Hebrew “duals.” That is, in Hebrew and Arabic there is a singular noun, a plural noun and a “dual” noun. English has only singular and plural, no dual. I did not expect to see that repeated in the narrative for Ehud. Imagine my surprise when I encountered the two-edged sword. And in verse 12, the evil is repeated. In other words, in the first verse, the sons of Israel did evil *twice*. But there are other “twos” in this passage. But what does this emphasis on “two” mean? When we get to verse 15 I will have a suggestion as to the import of the number two.

We will start back again with Judges 3:12 to ensure we have continuity in our thinking.

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.

Again. This is not an adverb but a verb in the *imperfect tense*. In this context it should be translated “continued,” per Trent Butler. The sons of Israel continued to sin.

Did evil. Did is an infinitive working with the verb translated “continued.” Literally, “The sons of Israel continued to do evil.” They never really stopped. Or if they stopped temporarily, as soon as danger was past and prosperity returned, they picked up where they had left off.

The sins start with idolatry, rejection of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And their fathers who made a covenant commitment to Yahweh.

Strengthened. In this context, it makes sense to translate it “motivated.” Strengthened leads us to understand God strengthened Eglon militarily.

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But it was Eglon who gathered additional troops for his conquest. God worked in Eglon's mind to motivate him to attack the sons of Israel.

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 verse 17 we read "and he presented the tribute to Eglon, the king of

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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^e'od* in the Hebrew, it is the adverb *me^e'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."

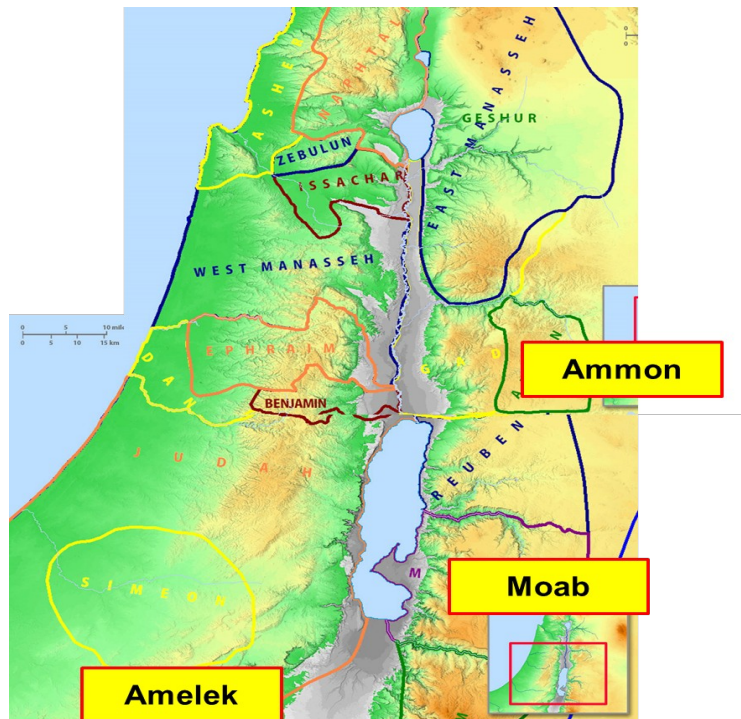
One place the word *'egel* is used is in the sin offering in Leviticus chapter 9:

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.

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

King of Moab. Moab and Israel have history. Moab apparently sees an opportunity to a) reduce Israel's influence and b) take some land and obtain some tribute 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 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. Repetition. This must mean the writer is trying to emphasize something. “Because” is a reason or motivation or cause that the Lord is acting.

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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 stand. I can’t stand no more.”

The first evil was “continued (*imperfect tense*) to do (*infinitive*) evil. This second evil was “did (*perfect tense*) evil.” The *imperfect* expresses an incomplete action. It was on-going. The second evil is a perfect or completed action. God had to intervene in order to prevent the sons of Israel from completely destroying themselves and becoming completely assimilated.

This is our first “two.” This is two evils. The repetition is unexpected and hence gets our attention. Evil in the physical world relates to evil in the spiritual world.

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.

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. Amalek 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.

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“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.

“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.”

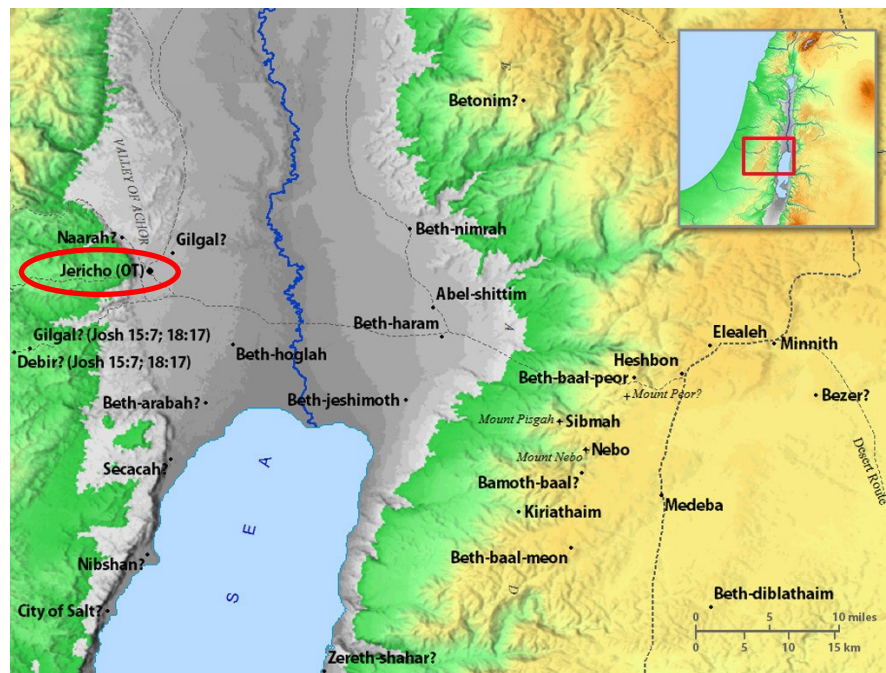
Is this our second “two?” Moab gathers two allies.

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.” Two verbs.

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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. In addition, this is what the sons of Israel were supposed to have done to the Amalekites in point 4 above.

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



From FreeBibleImages.org

Judges 3:14 And the sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years.

Served. The sons of Israel served the Baals and Asheroth spiritually. For this iteration of the paradigm, it is assumed they served the Baals and Asheroth even though it is not specifically so stated. As a result God put them under physical slavery. I am fascinated at times by the interaction between the unseen spiritual world and the visible physical world. So, there is an implied two here: the double evil includes serving the Baals and Asheroth in the spiritual world which led to the serving Moab in the physical world.

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Eighteen years. This is ten years longer than the previous period of servitude. If you broke this down mathematically from the perspective of twos, this is $2^{2+2}+2$.

Judges 3:15 But when the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab.

Cried out to the Lord. This is part of the paradigm. We all do this. When we get in trouble because of our sins, we will call out to the Lord in faith, hopefully. God has a plan for your life. The purpose of that suffering is to get your attention so that you will get back on the road to serving God and not die. Walk by faith.

The Lord raised up a deliverer. Raised up. It can mean to raise up. But in this context, the Lord chose a person to accomplish a mission. Rather than “raised up,” I would use the word “commissioned.” The Lord picked Ehud. He gave him the task of delivering Israel from the Moabite coalition headed by Eglon. Commissioned. This will connect to another word later in our passage. It is not specifically stated that the Holy Spirit came upon Ehud. I suspect that since God commissioned him for a special task, that he empowered him to carry it out.

Deliverer. Again, the writer of Judges says that the Lord commissioned a deliverer. The word for deliverer is used, not the word for judge. This word can also mean savior.

Benjaminite. He is from the tribe of Benjamin, which means the son (ben) of my right (hand).

A left-handed man. That is not what the Hebrew says. It literally says “right hand restricted.” There is a word for “left.” But that word is not used here. Rather than consider this as born left handed, it may have been

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a conscious decision to train someone to fight with the left hand. This gives advantage in a fight with a right handed man who has trained to fight against another right handed man. Look at the 700 Benjaminite slingers in Judges 20:16.

Let me quote from Robert Chisholm, the DTS OT professor who refers to another Old Testament scholar: “Halpern suggests that the phrase does not refer to mere left-handedness, but rather to a specially trained left-handed or even ambidextrous warrior. He theorizes that the Benjaminites trained such warriors by restricting the use of their right hand at an early age so they could use their left hand with facility in battle. The practice is attested elsewhere in antiquity. As Halpern explains, left-handed warriors had an advantage in hand-to-hand combat and, given the construction of ancient city gates, left-handed slingers also had a distinct advantage when attacking the gates.”

Let’s take this into a modern frame of reference you may understand. Take boxing. According to Wikipedia, “Fighting in a southpaw stance is believed to give the fighter a strategic advantage because of the tactical and cognitive difficulties of coping with a fighter who moves in a mirror-reverse of the norm.” Left-handed pitchers in baseball may also have an advantage. The issue is that most people are right-handed. So when facing a left-handed opponent, the right-handed person who is not trained to deal with the differences a “lefty” possesses, is at a disadvantage.

A short cultural observation: In the Middle East, in places, like the desert, where toilet paper was either not available, or in years past when toilet paper had not been invented, there was the dirty hand (left hand) and the clean hand (right).

But this “right-hand restricted” is used in this story to advantage.

Here is a play on words. The sons of Benjamin, the son of my right (hand), restricted their right hand, using their left hand instead, to give them an advantage in battle.

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Sent. This Hebrew word is used to send someone on a mission, often with full power to represent the one(s) sending him. In the LXX, it is translated aposteilan (transliterated from Greek to English). That is from the root verb apostello. You have met this word in the New Testament as God the Father sending the Son and the Son, Jesus Christ, sending (apostello) the apostles! So the sons of Israel, perhaps represented by a council of elders sent him on a mission. They commissioned him. And here we have two different words that can both mean to commission linking up to show us two different missions: One from God and one from man. God commissioned Ehud to deliver Israel. The sons of Israel commissioned Ehud to deliver the tribute to keep the Moabites from destroying any more of Israel than they already had. But God used the delivery of the tribute to implement Ehud's commission to deliver Israel. God is in charge of history. God uses the folly of man to bless where there is a grain of faith. Another two: Two commissions, one from God and a second from man.

Tribute. This can mean tribute, gift, sacrifice and even used of the Minha grain offering.

In verse 18 we read that Ehud dismissed the people who had carried the tribute. The word used for people, is sometimes used of the people of a nation. So here, it is likely a "multitude." So this was not a single box of gold. Likely, this is what the Israelites could produce: harvested crops, wine, fruit, perhaps wood and other products.

To Eglon. It is likely that Eglon lived at or near Jericho in a fort or palace he had built there. Would this tribute necessarily have been sent to the palace? Or would it not have been sent to some staging area at which the Moabites could take it and send it to where it was needed.

For some reason, Gilgal had been the staging area for the Israelites under Joshua. Was there some geographical characteristic of Gilgal that made it idea as a staging area?

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Why do I mention this here? Later there is an apparent disconnect in the text that makes it seem that Ehud leaves Gilgal after the delivery of tribute to Eglon. So the immediate question then becomes, If he delivered tribute to Jericho, how is it that the next thing we read is that he is leaving Gilgal? But if Ehud and the multitude of people delivered the tribute to a representative of Eglon at Gilgal who received the tribute in Eglon's name, then it makes complete sense that Ehud would then proceed to the place at Jericho to confirm the delivery, perhaps with a couple of his people as well as a representative of Eglon.

Judges 3:16 Now Ehud made himself a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length, and he strapped it on his right thigh under his cloak.

Ehud made himself a sword. This begs the question, was Ehud a blacksmith? The implication from the text that this was a sword made of metal. The sons of Israel did not yet have the capability to make iron. So this was likely a bronze sword. Whatever material it was made from, it only had to be used once to cut soft tissue and not for combat against another sword or armor.

Two edges. The number two again. I am no expert on swords. I assume that a two-edged sword is better for stabbing than a single edged-sword.

A cubit in length. Different commentators vary on how long the sword was. It varies from 12" to 18".

He strapped it on his right thigh under his cloak. The point is that the sword is hidden. A "lefty" would draw a sword from his right side. If a guard were to check someone for a sword, he would look on the left side, assuming the person was right handed. Under his cloak indicates "concealed carry."

Judges 3:17 Then he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.

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Presented. This is the Hebrew word for approach or to come near. It sometimes has a spiritual connotation. This is not the word I expected to see based upon the English translation. This is perhaps another double entendre. He brought the tribute (minha) close but brought the sword/dagger closer and Eglon becomes the sacrifice (minha)

The tribute. This would have required a multitude of people to deliver grain, wine, and other foodstuffs. Perhaps something like a wagon train. The word is minha and just mentioned above.

Very fat. The quote from Robbie Dean above applies here. He was an exceedingly fat man. Interesting double entendre. His name can mean calf or as Robbie Dean explained, fatted calf for sacrifice. He is also a man.