

Judges Chapter 3 Part 7

//Detour//

For three weeks, there is something in the text of Judges, or perhaps more appropriately, missing from the text of Judges that has bothered me. Each week it has bothered me more and more. This week we need to use our hermeneutical process, in particular, observation, in order to look at something that is staring us in the face. There are words missing in the book of Judges. They were left out intentionally. As I looked at Judges, I noticed in chapter two there is a paradigm. So in chapter 3, that paradigm is applied. There are two aspects: things that are added and things that are left out. I have been more interested in what was added. It is something we can see and deal with. Those things that are left out can seem invisible. But that invisibility or silence, when we look for it, screams for attention. Someone once told me there was a Chinese proverb about an empty glass: Is a glass the container or the space inside? We normally concentrate on the glass since it is what we see and what contains something. But if the glass is empty, it is not really empty — it contains air while on the earth. Not sure it is actually a Chinese proverb, but it makes a point.

I presented the paradigm in the last couple of weeks in a table. First, the paradigm from chapter two was compared to the narrative of Othniel. Then it was compared to the narrative of Ehud. I highlighted the items in the narratives of Othniel and Ehud that matched up with the paradigm. For the Ehud narrative, I suggested that just because the narrative in verse 12 does not mention the forsaking of the Lord and the idolatry, that it didn't exist. Instead, because it is not mentioned, it caused me to say that it did. It caused me in a way to emphasize what was not there. Now isn't that a neat trick! The author, possibly Samuel, got me to emphasize something he didn't put into the narrative. Just like the glass half empty

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or half full, what the glass or does not contain can be just as important as the glass itself. Let me pause a couple of seconds and let that sink in.

There is a technique in speaking which can grab your attention. Supposed a speaker is talking and all of a sudden stops for several seconds. If you were looking somewhere else, you would look up to see if the speaker is OK or if there is some distracting event taking place.

A writer can also string out a narrative to give you pieces of information such that you are chomping at the bit, grabbing at each individual word. Let us take a detour to one of my many favorite passages: 1 John 1:1-5. I have not taught this yet. And I will not answer all your questions, but I want you to understand how John emphasizes each and every word. Many commentators think John was an idiot when it came to Greek. In actuality, he was a master of simple Greek.

Assume, for a minute, that we are in a church in the first century AD. Someone comes to the podium (assuming they had podiums in church or in the house then). He has the letter of 1John. He starts to read.

“Ho!” He says. This is the first word in the letter. In Greek this can mean either “the” or “that which.” So immediately, we have a question. Which is it?

Then the reader says “en.” This could be one of two Greek words: “in” or “was existing (imperfect tense).” It is the latter. So so far we have “That which was existing.” More questions and more ambiguity.

Then the reader says “Arche.” This is “beginning.” It does not have a definite article. R. B. Thieme Jr. translates it as “a beginning that is not THE beginning,” or something similar. More questions. Which beginning?

Continuing, “what we have heard and seen with our own eyes.” Now we are really confused. Who is “we?” And what is it that they heard and saw with their own eyes? This continues to verse 5 where it says “These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.” Many, perhaps

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most commentators conclude that John is talking about the 12 disciples or the authors of the New Testament books. But all John has said is “we write.” The “we” here may be the writers of Scripture. Yes, in the immediate context, he may be saying he and perhaps his secretary (assuming he had one) and perhaps others with him. But he doesn’t limit it. He has left out specifics of who “we” are. The implication could be ALL writers of Scripture. And who or what is the subject of ALL Scripture? Jesus Christ. So, by stringing out the words of the narrative, one by one, John grabs the attention of the audience. The Bible conceals. The Bible reveals.

When I was a freshman in college, I took a Chem 101 course in an auditorium at 8AM in the morning. For those who didn’t get much sleep the night before, it was difficult to stay awake, assuming you even made it to class. One day, during fraternity “hell week” during which new pledges are hazed all night, there was one student on the first or second row in the auditorium who was having serious difficulty staying awake. His head was down and partly propped up with an arm. The professor was apparently used to this kind of thing and came prepared that morning. He had an empty can that he put on a table which just happened to be near the front row near the sleeping student. While continuing his lecture, the professor occasionally would back off from the blackboard (this was in the days before personal computers and whiteboards) and poke the empty can closer and closer to the edge of the table. Those of us who were wide awake, were pushed to a heightened sense of alertness knowing what was about to happen. The drama was almost nerve wracking. Would the can fall to the ground. The floor was made of tile, not a rug so it was going to make a lot of noise. Eventually it hit the ground. Everyone in the audience was deathly quiet waiting for the moment of truth. When it came, all eyes were on the sleeping student. He awoke with a start. The professor asked him to join the rest of us listening to the lecture. That is the only thing I remember from that lecture. All these years, it has never been forgotten. The professor used a

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method of emphasizing a lesson without words, “Don’t sleep in my class. You will be humiliated.”

So the author of Judges is using various techniques to get our attention and to emphasize various points. One of those techniques is to give us a paradigm and then leave out parts of that paradigm when using it in a narrative.

So what things did the author leave out of the Ehud narrative?

Look at Judges 3:12. It says the sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord (Yahweh). Twice! So what does he mean by evil? What is evil in this context. The paradigm is in chapter 2.

They forsook (abandoned) the Lord.

They followed (worshipped) other gods of wood and stone.

They bowed down to these idols of wood and stone.

They served the Baals and the Asharoth.

These are the evil actions the sons of Israel participated in. There was no need to repeat these in chapter 3. This is understood by the use of “they did evil in the eyes of the Lord.” Repetition would add many words but no extra information. We already have that information. But by leaving it out, it caused us to look back at what this evil is. In a way, it emphasized it to those awake and “listening” to the Word of God.

In the same verse, “the Lord strengthened Eglon.” If Yahweh “motivated” Eglon, rather than “strengthened,” then how did he do that? When we realize Eglon was king of Moab, then the author forces us to look up the history between the sons of Israel and Moab. We are forced to concentrated on that. The author emphasized something by not explaining “motivated,” but adding “Moab.”

Verse 15 is back on track with the paradigm. The sons of Israel cried to the Lord. This takes us back to the paradigm of the Exodus 2:23+ and the raising up of Moses as a deliverer, although he did not lead troops into

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battle. Rather, he watched the Lord deliver them. The Lord acted. Always.

In verse 19 there appears to be a disconnect. It is assumed Ehud delivered the tribute to Eglon at Jericho. But verse 19 shows him turning back from Gilgal. The author left out or did not clearly identify where Ehud delivered the tribute. It causes commentators to spend time explaining their own perspectives.

Revised literal translation of verses we have covered:

Judges 3:12 Now continued the sons of Israel to do evil in the eyes of the Lord (Yahweh). So the Lord (Yahweh) motivated Eglon (fatted calf) the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Judges 3:13 And he gathered (harvested) to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they took possession of the city of the palms (at or near Jericho).

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

Judges 3:15 But when the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord (Yahweh, like they did in Egypt), the Lord (Yahweh) commissioned a deliverer (or savior) for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjaminite (literally “son of my right), a right-hand restricted man. And the sons of Israel sent by mission tribute (minha/sacrifice) by him

(i.e. commissioned him to take) **to Eglon the king of Moab.**

Judges 3:16 Now Ehud made himself a (single use) sword which had two edges (literally, two “mouths”), a cubit in length, and he strapped it on his right thigh under his cloak (so that it was concealed).

Judges 3:17 Then he presented the tribute (same/similar words to presenting a Levitical offering to God) to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat (characteristic of a good sacrifice) man.

Judges 3:18 And it came about, when he had finished presenting the tribute (same/similar words to presenting a Levitical offering to God), that Ehud sent away (on a mission: get ready to attack Moabite forces) the people who had carried the tribute (minha/sacrifice).

Judges 3:19 But he himself turned back from the idols which were at Gilgal, and said, “I have a concealed message (word) for you, O king.” And the king said, “Silence!” (“clear the room”) And all who were attending him left him. (Why would Eglon trust Ehud – One of those items left out but provided by Josephus)

Judges 3:20 Then Ehud came to him while he was sitting in his cool roof chamber alone.

And Ehud said, “I have a message (word) from God for you.” And he got up from his seat.

Judges 3:21 Then Ehud reached out with his left hand and took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.

This is a solemn moment. Ehud is about to kill the king who has enslaved his people. They have been enslaved for eighteen years. This one event changes history. Without the king to give commands, the army is caught off guard. But, Eglon the king has now become a “him.”

An observation from a personal perspective. Perhaps you have seen on TV when a momentous thing is happening, the movie goes into slow motion. I can attest that this kind of thing actually happens in real life.

I was driving to work one very icy December on Fort Meade. This is an Army base between Baltimore and Washington DC. All of a sudden, a lady in an SUV pulls out in front of me from a side street. It appeared she thought she could pull in front of me and zoom off without stopping. The road was so icy that a) she pulled out in front of me slower than she had predicted and b) Even though I slammed on the brake, all I did was swerve my car in a half circle and hit her SUV side to side. At the point I slammed on the brake, everything appeared to go into slow motion. These few moments were burned into my memory. I remember them today as if they just happened. This has been explained from the perspective of psychology in the journal Psychology Today:

(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sense-time/201707/the-matrix-effect-when-time-slows-down>)

“What would be an explanation for this slow-motion effect? Obviously, physical time does not slow down. It is our experience that has changed. The standard explanation would be that the internal processes run faster in situations of “fight or flight.” Inasmuch as the brain works more quickly in a situation of danger, the world outside seems to be moving

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more slowly. The function of such acceleration is clear: When the organism processes environmental stimuli faster than usual, it enables one to respond more readily. Perceiving, thinking, and acting faster amounts to an advantage for survival. What goes on in the body and the brain in such situations has been worked out and summarized by the Finnish Philosopher Valteri Arstila in an article in *Frontiers in Psychology*. Accordingly, and in relation to the speeding neural and mental processes within the observer, external events relatively slow down.”

This may have happened to Ehud. The Bible doesn't say nor would I have expected it to say. But this event is something that might fit that category of immanent danger. I want you to get a sense of the momentous drama here.

Left hand. Remember, Ehud is “right hand restricted.” He has been trained to use his left hand in combat.

Sword. The sword was designed for this moment, this one time use.

Right thigh. It does not say if the sword is on the outside, inside or on the posterior of the right thigh. But it is situation such that he can swiftly draw it out and immediately be able to use it.

Thrust. It can mean thrust as a sword. The translation is fine. But imagine my surprise as the next use of this word. It can also mean to blow a trumpet as we will later in Judges 3:27. So Ehud thrusts the sword into Eglon and kills him. Then he blows (same word as thrust) a trumpet to signal an attack or thrust of Israelite troops into the forces of Moab and kill many of them. The author is again playing with words to show the leadership of Ehud. It is Ehud that thrusts the sword into Eglon. It is Ehud that blows the trumpet that impels the Israelites into the opposing forces. By using the same word in two places, the author has linked them back to Ehud as the deliverer. He took decisive planned actions with success blessed by God.

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Now I must quickly confess, that others think Ehud was corrupt to use Canaanite deception to kill or as some would say, murder Eglon. This is not murder. How can this be murder if the sons of Israel are fighting for their freedom the way the American colonists fought for their freedom from England. And this is sanctioned by God through raising/commissioning Ehud. And all the vocabulary suggesting this is similar to a sacrifice, although much of it backwards from a Levitical sacrifice.

Belly. This is the abdomen. This word is also used for a woman's womb. Belly is a fine translation.

Judges 3:22 The hilt of the sword also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade because he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the refuse came out.

Hilt. The sword likely had a simple handle such that the entire sword would go into Eglon.

Went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade. This may have been a thrust through the intestines (see next verse for "refuse."). In order to kill Eglon quickly, the sword would likely have severed at least a branch of the aorta. So an upward thrust through the intestines and through the aorta or at least a branch of the aorta. The fat is pliant and could have been compressed while the sword was going in and popped out covering the hilt after Ehud let go.

Fat. Per Trent Butler: "The "fat" represents another vocabulary item closely connected to the sacrificial language (Gen 4: 4; Exod 23: 18; Lev 4: 26; 6: 5; 8: 25; 9: 19–20, 24; 10: 15; 16: 25; Deut 32: 38; 1 Kgs 8: 64; 2 Chr 7: 7; 29: 35; 35: 14; Isa 43: 24)."

Refuse came out. This is the contents of the intestines. Thomas Constable quotes Michael L. Barre:

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"Thus by way of a humorous if vulgar twist, something unexpected 'comes out' of Eglon—his excrement. Such a grotesque occurrence would have been precisely the kind of detail that a story of this sort would have delighted in recounting and would be unlikely to omit. Although it no doubt strikes modern readers as vulgar and distasteful, in the context of the story it adds a note of extreme humiliation with respect to the Moabite king that would have delighted an Israelite audience, especially as it takes place at the very height of the drama: the national hero not only dispatched the enemy king with much cunning but in the process caused him to become besmirched with feces."

Pardon me for getting a little graphic here. Based upon what the text says, let me stand back and watch Ehud and Eglon. The king rises from his throne and takes a step toward Ehud. The sword comes out and Ehud stabs Eglon in the belly. Eglon is caught off balance and starts to stumble forward. Ehud has to take a step back as Eglon falls forward forcing the sword further into and through him. Ehud lets go of the sword. The fat of Eglon's belly closes over the sword. Ehud takes another step back as Eglon falls forward with hands outstretched as if to grab hold of Ehud's shoulders. Instead, Eglon lands on the ground with outstretched arms as if worshiping Ehud. The Moabite king, in his death, is now serving Ehud. The author will tell us Eglon had fallen on the floor in verse 25. Note a similar situation in 1 Samuel with the Philistine idol and the ark of the covenant:

1 Samuel 5:1 Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

1 Samuel 5:2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon, and placed it beside Dagon.

1 Samuel 5:3 When the Ashdodites got up early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set him back in his place.

1 Samuel 5:4 But when they got up early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord.

Again, the author left out details that we can put in based upon the action presented and logical deductions.

The word “fallen” in both passages is exactly the same word.

In the sacrifice, no bones are broken. No blood is mentioned, only refuse/entrails. There was a perfect sacrifice by Jesus on the cross in which no bones were broken. Only blood and water (serum/plasma).

Judges 3:23 Then Ehud went out into the vestibule, and shut the doors of the roof chamber behind him, and locked them.

Vestibule. Per Robbie Dean

“Then Ehud went out into the vestibule” now we don't know what that is either, but in light of all the discussion here, that the slaves are outside and they think later on, they don't know what happened, they're going to think he's in the head (for you Navy guys), that he went to the rest room, they won't come in to the room. So Ehud goes out into the vestibule, and there's some indication that this word is not really a vestibule but some architectural feature probably related to the latrine, privy or the head. So what he does is that this is a private part of the throne room and he locks from the doors from the inside and then either escapes through some door inside the chamber, some other exit, or he goes on the roof and goes

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over the outside wall, but whatever the case, he manages to get out without anybody seeing him and he locks the doors from the inside.”

Judges 3:24 When he had left, the king’s servants came and looked, and behold, the doors of the roof chamber were locked; and they said, “Undoubtedly he is relieving himself in the cool room.”

Relieving himself. The Hebrew uses a different euphemism to describe this: He (was) covering (participle) his feet (dual). Again, if I read Gesenius correctly, feet here is the “dual” plural for feet, meaning two feet. Our favorite word, two. The servants’ assumption may have been amplified by the smell of excrement from Eglon.

Judges 3:25 So they waited until it would have been shameful to wait longer; but behold, he did not open the doors of the roof chamber. So they took the key and opened them, and behold, their master had fallen to the floor dead.

Key. Apparently there were locks in those days. I saw a mention of an “Egyptian lock” in one commentary.

Fallen to the floor. To reiterate what was already said, the word “fallen” here in Judges is the same word used of the Philistine idol falling before the Ark of the Covenant. Based upon the text and the probable geometry of the “kill,” it is possible that Eglon the king of Moab ended up fallen in front of Ehud in a “worship” position.

Judges 3:26 Now Ehud escaped while they were hesitating, and he passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah.

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Passed by the idols. Interesting that idols are not worshiped.

Seirah. Per Unger: “a place in the mountains of Ephraim, bordering on Benjamin, to which Ehud went for refuge after killing Eglon at Jericho (Judg. 3:26, 27).”

Escaped. He eluded the hostile forces in the fort because he got a head start before the discovery of the dead Eglon. Below, the same word is used of the hostile forces that did not escape.

Judges 3:27 And when he arrived, he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was leading them.

Blew the trumpet. As noted previously, “blew” is the same word used of thrusting the sword into Eglon.

Trent Butler expands on this:

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“The Hebrew verb **that he blew** plays an important role here. It describes the sounding of the “ram’s horn” or shofar as featured in Josh 6. The same verb appeared in Judg 3:21 describing the thrusting of the dagger into Eglon’s belly. It will appear again as Jael hammers the tent peg into Sisera’s temple. Gideon sounds the shofar to muster the troops (6:34) and scares the Midianites into fleeing by having the people sound their shofars (7:18–22). Finally, Delilah will thrust a peg into Samson’s hair in a fruitless effort to discover the secret of his strength (16:14). Thrusting and blowing thus mark the narratives with action, summon the troops to battle, and celebrate the heroism of one woman and the dastardly deception of another.”

Combine this word with the word used for “trumpet.” Again per Trent Butler:

“The shofar was not a musical instrument. It was used in solemn occasions to celebrate God’s approach in theophany (Exod 19: 16, 19;

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20: 18; Zech 9: 14; compare 2 Sam 6: 15; Pss 47: 6; 98: 6; Joel 2: 1; Zeph 1: 16), to call people to holy days on the religious calendar (Lev 25: 9; Ps 81: 3 [Heb. 4]), to instigate national fasts (Joel 2: 15), and to announce a new king (1 Kgs 1: 34, 39, 41; 2 Kgs 9: 13). A major function involved battle signals and warnings (Josh 6: 4–20; Judg 6: 34; 7: 8–22; 1 Sam 13: 3; 2 Sam 2: 28; 18: 16; 20: 1, 22; Isa 18: 3; Jer 42: 14; 51: 27; Ezek 33: 3–6; Hos 5: 8; 8: 1; Amos 2: 2; 3: 6).”

Note how Ehud was a leader from making the sword, to delivering the tribute, to killing Eglon, to blowing the trumpet and leading the Israelite troops into battle. He took the initiative, planned the mission, coordinated with others and executed it well. We will have an opportunity to contrast this with a weaker leader, Barak, in chapter 4.

Judges 3:28 Then he said to them, “Pursue them, for the Lord has handed your enemies the Moabites over to you.” So they went down after him and took control of the crossing places of the Jordan opposite Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross.

Per Robbie Dean:

“So if you look at the map he heads out from Jericho and heads up into this central area highlands here, blows the trumpet and basically what the text says is again a little bit of a mistranslation, "pursue them," he really says "charge," and off they go. He gathers the forces that are up in this area and they come down and they bypass the troops at Jericho, an excellent military maneuver and they seize the fords of Jericho. And that way they trap them inside the land and they're able to take the Moabite army apart piece by piece.”

This is war. The Moabites had enslaved the Israelites. They are winning their freedom. One more time.

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Judges 3:29 They struck and killed about ten thousand Moabites at that time, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped.

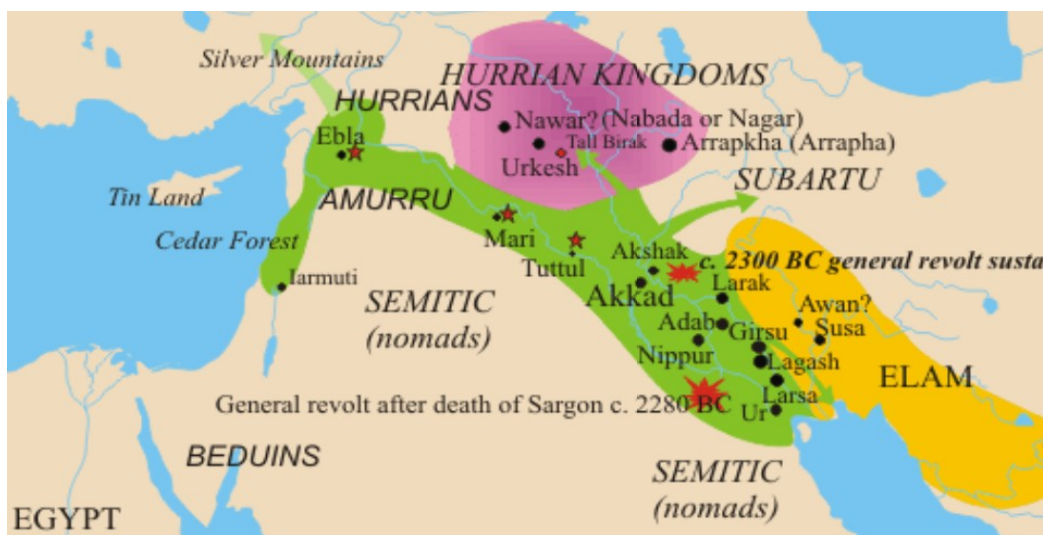
No one escaped. In verse 26 Ehud escaped (our word). Here ten thousand Moabites did not escape. When God is “with you,” the battle belongs to the Lord.

Judges 3:30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was at rest for eighty years.

The end of the paradigm. The end of the story of Ehud. I did not find any reference on the internet to a burial site for Ehud.

Now we come to a cryptic passage consisting of a single verse. I will rely on Robbie Dean here to explain this.

Judges 3:31 Now after him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck and killed six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel.



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Per Trent Butler: “Shamgar is assigned no tribal designation among the Israelites. His name appears to be Hurrian (B. Maisler, “Shamgar ben ‘Anat,” PEQ 66

Per Robbie Dean:

“Another thing we need to observe in the text is that his name is Shamgar Ben-Anath, Shamgar the son of Anath. The Hebrew word for "son" is the word "ben," and in Benjamin, son of my right hand. So he is called the son of Anath. Now who is Anath? In the Canaanite religious system the chief god is El who is kind of off center stage right now, in the background and he's really replaced by his son, Baal, the storm god. Baal is also known in Phoenician as Hedad. Now Baal has a consort, a female goddess, named Anath, who is the goddess of war and she is an extremely violent blood individual. You read through some of the ancient texts that describe her wading through the battlefield drinking blood and gore dripping off of her teeth and off of her hands and it's just horrendous sort of stuff. And Anath is the female goddess of war. And we know that as far back as the 19th century BC, which is 1800-1900 BC that Anath was assimilated into the Egyptian pantheon of goddesses, and she becomes the personal protectress of the Pharaoh. And we have evidence that from at least the 15th or 14th century the elite troops that guarded the Pharaoh, just as the elite troops that guarded Caesar were called the Praetorian guard and you have the Swiss troops that guarded the French kings, the elite troops of the Pharaoh, the special forces, the force recon types of the Egyptian army were called the "Sons of Anath." That was their technical name in Egyptian; they were the sons of Anath.”

Now I've given you all this historical background; the point that I'm making is once we get into the history of what's going on at that time, we know that there was a hardcore first class elite troop of soldiers that

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the Pharaoh used as his battering ram against the incursions of the Philistine sea peoples and they were called the Sons of Anath. And here we come across this cryptic figure in Judges name "Shamgar, son of Anath," and from the etymology of his name and from the fact that he too is called the "son of Anath," then I think we can conclude that this guy is not a Jew, he's probably not a believer, but he is a mercenary warrior serving under Pharaoh and that God uses him to come in and kick the Philistines out of the south of Judah in order to protect Israel.

Now what are the implications of that? The implication is that there's no one among the Jews that's trusting God, that's following a spiritual life, that God can use in order to protect Israel. There is a major problem here: God is using a Gentile to bless Israel instead of Israel to bless the Gentiles according to the Abrahamic Covenant. It is a reversal, so when the writers of Judges mentions this he is making a very strong statement; it's a slap in the face to the Jews, you have failed so badly, Israel, that in order for God to preserve His covenant, preserve the nation in the land, He's obviously raising up leaders in the north but there's no one in the south that God can call on, there's no leader to stand in the gap in the south, God has to use an unbeliever operating in the Egyptian army to come in and remove the Philistine threat and to protect your left flank. And what the writer is indicating in all of this is a tremendous indictment on the leadership of the nation. The point that he is making is that paganism and pagan thought has so infiltrated the worldview and the culture of Israel that they no longer can produce leaders that can defend the nation. Probably they've become pacifistic.