

## 30 AMAZING BIBLE STORIES YOU MAY NOT KNOW

### #2 – Ehud the Benjamite | Judges 3:12-31

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

- The period of the Judges was a period, after the death of Joshua, in which the children of Israel lived in a loose tribal confederation with no national government.
- As a result of the unfaithfulness of the people to God’s commands, God left enemies of Israel. He would later use these enemies to provoke the Israelites back to faithfulness, as needed (See Judges 2:21-3:2).
- In time, the children of Israel would forget their God and follow after the pagan gods of the surrounding enemies (Judges 3:6-7).
- In order to restore the faithfulness of the chosen nation, God would allow the enemy to gain power over one of the tribes of Israel. After years of oppression, the tribe would cry out for the Lord’s aid, and God would raise up a “judge” who would defeat the enemy, sometimes with miraculous power.
- The defeat of the enemy was always a temporary victory.
- The lesson of the period of the Judges is: *do it right the first time*. God put the nation in this erratic period of victory and defeat because the nation was unfaithful to His commands.

#### MEET EHUD, THE LEFTHANDED BENJAMITE

- God raised up an enemy: Eglon, King of the Moabites. Eglon gathered a coalition that included the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Amalekites (vv. 12-13).
  - The Moabites – Descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew. They lived east of the Dead Sea, in modern day Jordan.
  - The Ammonites – Also descendants of Lot, from his other daughter. They lived just north of the Moabites. Modern Amman, Jordan is named after this group. Their capital *Rabbah* was the burial place of King Og of Bashan (see sermon #1).
  - The Amalekites – Descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob. They were a nomadic tribe, mostly in the Sinai Peninsula. They were the first great enemy of Israel after the Exodus.
- This coalition **went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees** (v. 13).
  - This city was Jericho, as defined by Deuteronomy 34:3.
  - The city was in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.
- Ehud was a Benjamite, and **lefthanded** (v. 15).
  - The Hebrew word is also used of Benjamites in Judges 20:16. Compare also David’s mighty men, 1 Chronicles 12:2).

- The Hebrew is literally, *shut of his right hand*, and likely refers to military training to fight lefthanded with the right hand tied behind the back.
- Ehud used **a present** (v. 15) to gain access to the King’s presence. He and his entourage no doubt lavished King Eglon with praise and honor...all as a pretense. It *was the pretense of a present to gain presence with the King*.
- Ehud brought **a dagger** (v. 16) to the meeting. It is unusual for the Hebrew scriptures to focus such detail on weapons. Here it is used to describe *how* Ehud got the weapon into the meeting. The Hebrew word *gomed* is translated *cubit*. However, it is the word for a half-cubit (about 9 inches). This is much smaller than a typical weapon of war.
- King Eglon is noted for being **a very fat man** (v. 17). As with the dagger, this is important to understand for the story.
- After giving of gifts, Ehud asked for time alone. Perhaps his gifts had “purchased” the honor, in the minds of Eglon. With everyone gone, Ehud said he had a prophecy from God. Eglon recognized God enough to stand. While the fat man was trying to stand, Ehud thrust in the dagger, left it there, and left Eglon to die alone. Ehud left and went to gather the forces of Israel to cause defeat during the time of chaos.
- In the entire story it is clear that *creative and strategic thinking* was the tool used to defeat the enemy. No miracles were involved.
- Jewish sages teach that Eglon was the grandson of Balak and the grandfather of Ruth. This is unverifiable and based on Jewish tradition.

#### A HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE: SHAMGAR

- Both Ehud and Shamgar use a *weak instrument for strong victory*.
- Shamgar and Samson both fought against the Philistines. Both used small weapons. Both worked on their own. Samson’s story is the *longest* of the judges, Shamgar’s is the *shortest*.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

- Beware of the weakness and vulnerability that can come when someone bears gifts.
- Understand that the Bible does not speak of the morality of many of the exploits of its leading characters, it simply speaks of their activity. Could it be because the Bible is not chiefly a *book of morals* but rather an *inspired record and revelation* of God’s activity with man (and, in this case, man’s activity without God, who is not directly involved).