

Ehud

A Judge In Israel

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Overview

EHUD TOOK A VIOLENT ACTION TO FREE HIS PEOPLE His story is told in Judges 3:12-30.

At first glance, Ehud's career as a judge in Israel may not seem relevant to us. He clearly lived in another time. He took radical and violent action to free his people.

Ehud was sent to the Moabite King Eglon on the pretext of delivering the Israelites' annual tribute. He made a double-edged short sword about eighteen inches long, useful for a stabbing thrust. Being left-handed, he could conceal the sword on his right thigh, where it was not expected.

His murder of Eglon shocks us. His war on Moab was swift and deadly. His life is difficult to relate to. But our commitment to God's Word challenges us not to ignore this leader.

As we read about Ehud's life, some questions come to mind:

- (1) When was the last time God showed me something wrong in my life and I took immediate and painful action to correct the error?
- (2) When was the last time I asked God to show me how he could use something unique about me (as he used Ehud's left-handedness)?
- (3) When was the last time I made a plan to obey God in some specific area of my life and then followed through on that plan?
- (4) When was the last time my life was an example to others of obedience to God?

Ehud a descent of Benjamin

1 Chron. 8:1-7

Now Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, [2] Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. [3] And the sons of Bela were, Addar, and Gera, and Abihud, [4] And Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah, [5] And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Hiram. [6] And these are the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath: [7] And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Ahihud.

Here is a larger list of Benjamin's tribe. We may suppose that many things in these genealogies, which to us seem difficult, abrupt, and perplexed, were plain and easy at that time, and fully answered the intention for which they were published. Many great and mighty nations then were in being upon earth, and many illustrious men, whose names are now wholly forgotten; while the names of multitudes of the Israel of God are here kept in everlasting remembrance. The memory of the just is blessed.

Jacob and his family go to Egypt

Genesis 46:21

And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard.

We have here a particular account of Jacob's family. Though the fulfilling of promises is always sure, yet it is often slow.

It was now 215 years since God had promised Abraham to make of him a great nation, [Gen 12:2](#); yet that branch of his seed, to which the promise was made sure, had only increased to seventy, of whom this particular account is kept, to show the power of God in making these seventy become a vast multitude.

The numbering of the sons of Benjamin

Numbers 26:38

The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites: of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites:

Moses did not number the people but when God commanded him. We have here the families registered, as well as the tribes.

The total was nearly the same as when numbered at Mount Sinai. Notice is here taken of the children of Korah; they died not, as the children of Dathan and Abiram; they seem not to have joined even their own father in rebellion.

If we partake not of the sins of sinners, we shall not partake of their plagues.

The counting of some tribes omitted

1 Chron. 7:12

Shuppim also, and Huppim, the children of Ir, and Hushim, the sons of Aher.

Here is no account either of Zebulun or Dan. We can assign no reason why they only should be omitted; but it is the disgrace of the tribe of Dan, that idolatry began in that colony which fixed in Laish, and called it Dan, [Judges 18](#) and there one of the golden calves was set up by Jeroboam.

Dan is omitted, [Rev 7](#). Men become abominable when they forsake the worship of the true God, for any creature object.

The suffering and deliverance of Israel

Judges 3:12-30

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.

And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.

And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlor, which he had for himself alone.

And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.

And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly: And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, surely he covered his feet in his summer chamber.

And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.

And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.

And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the Lord hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valor; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

The Story of Ehud in review.

Ehud kill King Eglon

Ehud, the hero of the story, was a shining example of what the Israelites did best: adapting to a situation and making the most of what they had.

Ehud was alone like David when he faced Goliath, and apparently without armor - but this just made him seem harmless.

Ehud, from the tribe of Benjamin. He was left-handed – there were an unusually large number of left-handed people in the tribe of Benjamin. This point is important to the story.

Ehud decided to assassinate King Eglon of Moab, who was oppressing the Israelites. He made a double-edged sword, sharp on both edges. This was unusual for that time since most swords were curved, with only one sharp edge.

Because he was left-handed, he fastened his sword directly onto his right thigh instead of his left, hiding it under his clothes.

Then he went to deliver tribute to Eglon – conquered people paid onerous taxes to their overlords.

He was the leader of the delegation, and his servants carried the goods. Naturally they were all searched for weapons, but Ehud's sword was not where a sword would normally be, so it was missed by the guards.

At this point in the story, the Bible makes the point that the king to whom the taxes were being paid, Eglon was an enormously fat man, not a warrior, not kingly, but a figure of fun.

When the tribute had been presented, Ehud sent away his assistants and asked for a private audience with Eglon. This was granted. All his attendants left.

Alone with the king in a small private chamber, Ehud pulled the sword from its hiding place and thrust it into the fat man's belly.

He pushed it so deep into the man's bowels that the hilt of the sword disappeared under folds of flesh.

Having done the deed, Ehud left, locking the door behind him. Then he left the palace.

When King Eglon's servants came back and found the door locked, they assumed their master was relieving himself – they could smell the faeces.

They waited. And waited. Finally they unlocked the door and found the king, dead on the floor. But by this time Ehud was long gone.

There was more. He had not finished the task. Taking advantage of the confusion his murder had caused, Ehud rallied his people to battle and captured the fords across the Jordan River, killing large numbers of Moabites. Leaderless, they were easy prey.

'And the land had rest for eighty years'

Life application:

Notice Ehud's address to Eglon. What message from God but a message of vengeance can a proud rebel expect?

Such a message is contained in the word of God; his ministers are boldly to declare it, without fearing the frown, or respecting the persons of sinners.

But, blessed be God, they have to deliver a message of mercy and of free salvation; the message of vengeance belongs only to those who neglect the offers of grace.

The consequence of this victory was, that the land had rest eighty years. It was a great while for the land to rest; yet what is that to the saints' everlasting rest in the heavenly Canaan.

The enemies we face are as real as Ehud's, but they are most often within ourselves. The battles we fight are not against other people but against the power of sin. We need God's help in doing battle against sin. We also need to remember that he has already won the war.

He has defeated sin at the cross of his Son, Jesus. His help is the cause of each success, and his forgiveness is sufficient for each failure.

Key verse: "Again the Israelites cried out to the LORD, and he gave them a deliverer—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite" (Judges 3:15).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.