

OTHNIEL AND EHUD

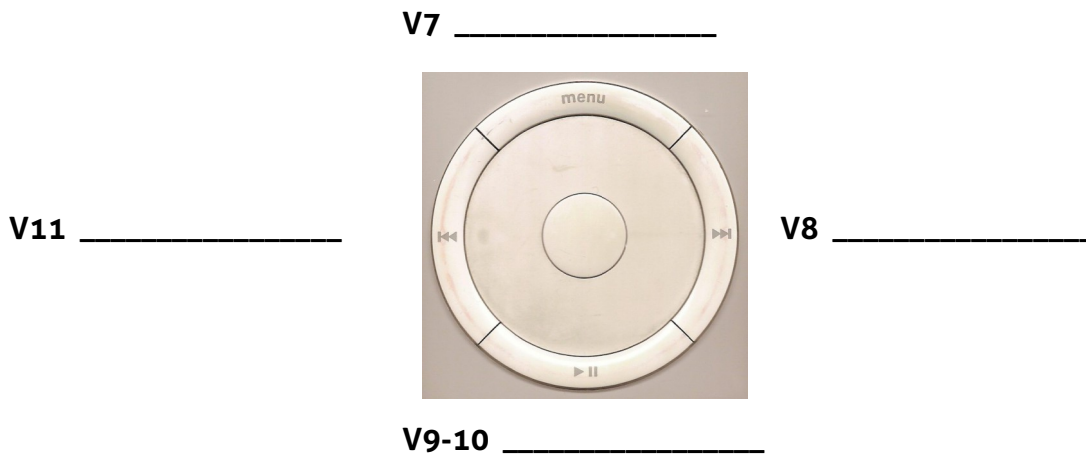
JUDGES 3

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

This week we look at the first set of judges, two men by the name of Ehud and Othniel. It's worth noting that the Hebrew word translated 'judges' in most English bibles means something a little different from what we would associate with a 'judge'. When we think of 'judges', we think of a person who sits in a court room with gavel and wig, and hears cases and gives his verdict. But as we'll see, the judges of Israel very much got their hands dirty! They were more like - judge, jury and executioner! These judges provided leadership for the community, and they were often the military commander-in-chief who saved the people from their enemies.

Read Judges 3:7-11

In our look at chapters 1-2 last week, we saw that there's a certain pattern, a cycle that goes round and round for Israel. Write down how this cycle works during the time of Othniel:



1. Does Othniel seem to you to be a good choice as a judge? Why or why not (see Judges 1:12-13)?

Cushan-rishathaim means Cushan of 'double evil'. He's obviously a nasty piece of work but God raises up Othniel as a judge to defeat him and he gives Israel peace for forty years. It seems that Othniel is the quintessential judge for Israel. He's connected to Judah the most successful conquering tribe in chapter 1. He has family connections to the great Caleb (see Numbers 13) and he has great military success as he leads the Israelite army to war.



Read Judges 3:12-30

2. Why does Israel get into trouble again?
3. What is the first thing we learn about Ehud (v 15)?

In Hebrew, left handed is literally 'restricted in the use of his right hand.' To be left-handed was considered a defect, a deformity—it was a stigma. Even in English the word 'sinister' refers to the left hand. Sorry to all you left handed people! And yet this stigma is the key to the way Ehud delivers Israel.

4. What job is Ehud sent to do, Do you think the Israelites see him as a military leader (v 15b)?
5. From Ehud's method of defeating the enemy, what kind of words would you use to describe his character?
6. How does Ehud compare with Othniel?

Compared with the heroic Othniel, the disabled and deceptive Ehud seems an unlikely choice as judge. And Israel may never have been aware of what Ehud was planning—he was 'working alone'. But God uses Ehud to fulfil his plans of bringing rescue to Israel.

7. Can you think of any other examples of God's preference for using unlikely heroes to deliver his people (have a look at Matthew 27:35-44)?
8. What is the most memorable thing about King Eglon?
9. How does Edud's left-handedness and Eglon's weight play in the assassination? How does this make you feel?



10. How do verses 22-26 contribute to the story? - What would be lost if these were missing?

Both Eglon and his servants end up as a laughing stock. Eglon is overweight and gullible. His servants are even worse. God uses one left handed man to humiliate this seemingly powerful pagan king and his followers.

11. What enemies does the New Testament talk about God defeating? Can you think of any references?

12. What things do Christians get scared of?

13. In the light of God's treatment of King Eglon, what would you say to a scared Christian?

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Men—serve your wife by planning to look after the kids on the day—so that she can have a day of encouragement and great bible teaching with others from freshchurch.