

Week #:	168	Series:	God's Judgment	Title:	Judge #1: Othniel
Scriptures:	Judges 3:1-11; I Kings 5:6; I Kings 7:11; Isaiah 2:1-2; I Chronicles 4:13; Joshua 15:19				
Songs:	Victory Chant (2:23)				
	Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone) – Chris Tomlin (4:26)				
	PRAYER:	Famous For (I Believe) – Tauren Wells (4:04)			

Judge #1: Othniel

We had a little bit of an introduction already into the first judge (Judges 1:13). **His name is Othniel** and he is the nephew of Caleb – the same Caleb who stood with Joshua as ten other spies who were sent into the land by Moses gave a negative report. Caleb and Joshua instead saw all that Adonai wanted for them as a nation in this Promised Land.

Caleb and Joshua were the only two from that generation who entered the land. Everyone else had to die in the desert because of their negative outlook on what God wanted to do.

Judges 3:1-2

¹ These are the nations which Adonai allowed to remain, in order to put to the test all the people of Isra'el who had not known any of the wars with Kena'an [Canaan]. ² This was only so that the generations of Isra'el who had previously known nothing of war might learn about it.

We talked about this before. The generation of Moses and Joshua had all passed away. The people who were left were not those who knew firsthand of the miracles of Egypt, or of the Red Sea, or of the manna and water in the desert. This generation didn't know firsthand of the parting of the Jordan, nor of the walls of Jericho falling with a shout. They knew these events only as stories. I'm sure in some ways they looked at them as a sensationalism of what really happened. God allowed these nations to remain because He wanted to draw this generation to Him. He wanted them to experience the miraculous just as their forefathers had. He wanted them to be able to say firsthand what God had done for them, and so God was setting up for this to take place. He wanted them to know of the fight that it was to get this land, but more than that He wanted them to know what HE had done for them to possess this land.

Judges 3:3

³ These nations consisted of the five chiefs of the P'lishtim [Philistines], all the Kena'ani [Canaanites], the Tzidoni [Sidonians], and the Hivi [Hivites] who lived in the hills of the L'vanon [Mount Lebanon] between Mount Ba'al-Hermon and the entrance to Hamat.

Lebanon was a mountainous region tucked between the sea and the desert. Two high chains of mountains—the Lebanon Mountains (highest peak 10,115 feet) and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains (up to 10,000 feet) bisect the region north to south. Mount Hermon (9,263 feet) lies at the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon which refers to a chain. The name "Lebanon" comes from a Hebrew root meaning "white," to the snow-capped peaks of the region. The mountains refers to famous "cedars of Lebanon." Their great size made the cedars desirable for construction of ships and large public buildings such as temples and palaces. Solomon used cedars from Lebanon in his temple and palace (1 Kings 5:6; 7:11). The Egyptians coveted the cedars, using them for sacred boats used in transporting the image of a false god.

Isaiah 2:1-2

¹ This is the word that Yesha'yahu [Isaiah] the son of Amotz saw concerning Y'hudah [Judah] and Yerushalayim [Jerusalem]:

² In the acharit-hayamim the mountain of Adonai's house will be established as the most important mountain. It will be regarded more highly than the other hills, and all the Goyim will stream there.



Judges 3:4-7

⁴ They stayed there to test whether Isra'el would pay attention to the mitzvot [commands] of Adonai, which, through Moshe [Moses], he had ordered their ancestors to obey. ⁵ So the people of Isra'el lived among the Kena'ani [Canaanites], Hitti [Hittites], Emori [Amorites], P'rizi [Perizites], Hivi [Hivites] and Y'vusi [Jebusites]; ⁶ taking their daughters as their wives, giving their own daughters to their sons and serving their gods.

⁷ Thus the people of Isra'el did what was evil from Adonai's perspective, forgot Adonai their God, and served the ba'alim and asherim.

Ba'al (also called Ba'alim) is the pagan false god of the Canaanites. They would offer burnt sacrifices to this false god. This is the false god that we see Elijah go up against on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18).

Asherah / Asherim / Ashtarot was one of the three great goddesses of the Canaanite pantheon. In Canaanite religion her primary role was that of "mother goddess." Canaanites

associated Asherah with sacred trees, an association also found in the Israelite tradition. Israel's association of Asherah with sacred trees is repeated over thirty times in the Bible; many of these citations are used by the biblical writers to describe sites of idolatrous worship, implying that the worship of Asherah was an apostate behavior in Israel and improper for followers of YHWH.

Judges 3:8

⁸ Therefore the anger of Adonai blazed against Isra'el, and he gave them over into the hands of Kushan-Rish'atayim [Cushan-Rishathaim] king of Aram-Naharayim; and the people of Isra'el served Kushan-Rish'atayim [Cushan-Rishathaim] eight years.

God was angry – and rightly so. He offered them the opportunity to see His miraculous hand in battle, but they instead worshipped false gods of the area. Instead of keeping to their own people, they intermarried and took on the religious practices of those around them. So God held back His hand of protection and allowed King Cushan-Richathaim to take them captive and the Israelites became their slaves. They were oppressed for 8 years.

Judges 3:9

⁹ But when the people of Isra'el cried out to Adonai, Adonai raised up a savior for the people of Isra'el; and he rescued them; this was 'Otni'el, the son of Kalev's [Caleb's] younger brother K'naz [Kenaz].

Finally, the people grew tired of the bondage and they called out to Adonai. God raised up a rescuer – Othniel – who was the nephew of Caleb.

Judges 3:10

¹⁰ The spirit of Adonai came upon him, and he judged Isra'el. Then he went out to war, and Adonai gave Kushan-Rish'atayim [Cushan-Rishathaim] king of Aram into his hands; his power prevailed against Kushan-Rish'atayim [Cushan-Rishathaim].

God raised up Othniel, who went to war on behalf of Israel, freeing them from the bondage of the King of Aram [Mesopotamia]. Othniel is an interesting individual in that his judgment covered a transitional period connecting the leaders of the past to the leaders of his time. He was related to Caleb, who had left Egypt as a freed slave and entered the Promised Land as a leader. Very few could boast of such family connections during this time in the land of Israel.

The name **OTHNI-EL** is derived from the ancient Hebrew words for **LION** and **GOD**. Thus his name means: **God's Lion**, and he was truly used in this fashion.

Othniel is mentioned a few other times in scripture, and we find in reading I Chronicles 4:13 that Othniel took on the challenge of conquering the city of Debir (or Kiriath Sepher) and

driving out the Canaanites there. As the victor, Othniel received the reward of Achsah, Caleb's daughter, as his wife. He had two sons named Hathath and Meonothai and was from the tribe of Judah. Joshua 15:19 tells us that Othniel lived in Debir in the land of Judah after this time. Through his wife's influence, he obtained from his uncle Caleb the upper and lower springs in the land of Negev.

Notice that Othniel did not do what those around him did. He did not marry into the culture of the *-ites* who surrounded them. Because of this decision, and because He stepped up to become the judge Adonai needed, He was blessed with a wife, two sons, and a large amount of land (the upper and lower springs).

Judges 3:11

¹¹ So the land had rest for forty years, until 'Otni'el the son of K'naz [Kenaz] died.

Othniel kept the peace in this region until his death, 40 years later. Israel got to see the blessings of God during this time.

Some important lessons to take away from this first judge include:

- The influence of a family.
 - God blessed not only Caleb for his decision to stand up for God's truth, but his whole family line on down was blessed as well, and they were able to influence not only one generation, but multiple generations.
- The role of the Holy Spirit in empowering a person's life.
 - Othniel kept God's commands, and in so doing was able to allow the Holy Spirit to guide him in rescuing his people from bondage.
- The tremendous value of Godly leadership in keeping peace among the community of people.
 - Because of Othniel's Godly lifestyle and keeping God's commands, he was able to keep Israel on the straight and narrow path for 40 years! What an influence He had on that generation!



