

Week #:	169	Series:	God's Judgment	Title:	Judge #2: Ehud
Scriptures:	Judges 3:12-30; Psalm 92:12; Song of Solomon 7:7; Exodus 15:27; Revelation 7:9-10; John 12:13; Matthew 20:20-23				
Songs:	Great Are You Lord – Casting Crowns (6:39)				
	Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) – Chris Tomlin (4:26)				
	PRAYER:	I Speak Jesus – Here Be Lions (5:11)			

Judge #2: Ehud

We left off with Judge #1, Othniel, dying (Judges 3:11). As is typical of Israel, they turn away from God, decide to follow after the false gods of the culture of the people surrounding them, and God has to pull back His hand of protection and let them feel oppression. They were in oppression for 8 years, then Othniel freed them, leading to 40 years of prosperity.

Judges 3:12-14

¹² But the people of Isra'el again did what was evil from *ADONAI's* perspective, so *ADONAI* strengthened 'Eglon the king of Mo'av [Moab] against Isra'el, because they had done what was evil from *ADONAI's* perspective. ¹³ In confederation with the people of 'Amon and 'Amalek, 'Eglon went out and defeated Isra'el, capturing the City of Date-Palms; ¹⁴ and the people of Isra'el served 'Eglon the king of Mo'av [Moab] eighteen years.

The first attack, before Othniel, came from the north, the area of Mesopotamia, and King Cushan-Rishathaim. This second attack against Israel comes from the Moabites in the south. King Eglon attacked and took over the City of Date Palms, oppressing the Israelites for 18 years.

The **City of Date Palms** is a name given to the city of Jericho. Previously, under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites overtook Jericho and destroyed the city. By this time though it had been rebuilt and because of the area in which it was located and the lush vegetation and trees, it was often referred to as the *City of Date Palms*. The area of Jericho was fed by a spring called the *Spring of Elijah*.

Palm trees in general are almost entirely a tropical plant, with the exception of the Date Palm, which is native to the Middle East. It is perhaps the most distinctive native tree in the Bible, along with the Cedar of Lebanon. Both trees tower over all others in the area, and many times both are mentioned in the scriptures referencing their height and strength.

Psalms 92:12

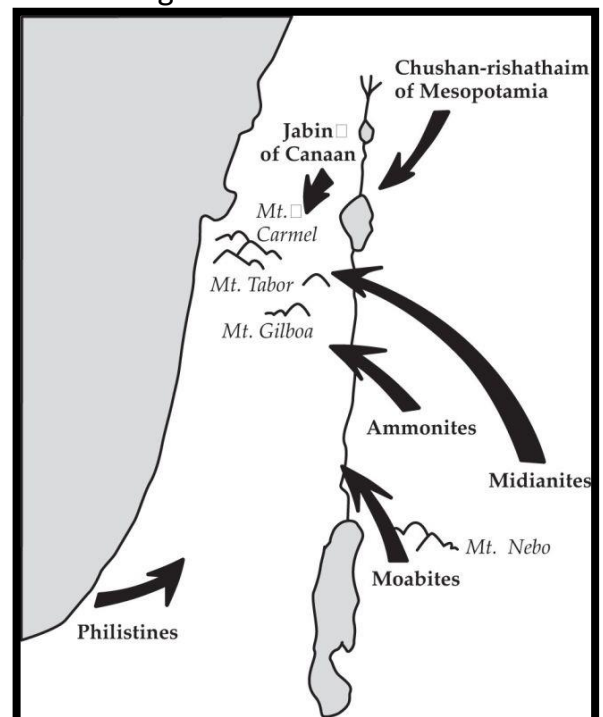
¹² The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar in the L'vanon [Lebanon].

Song of Solomon 7:7

⁷ Your appearance is stately as a palm tree, with its fruit clusters your breasts.

The first time the Date Palm is referenced in the Bible is when the Israelites came out of Egypt. God used it to provide shade and fruit for the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt and into the desert, where they would have to rely fully on God for their daily needs.

Exodus 15:27



²⁷ They came to Elim [Elim], where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and camped there by the water.

Palm branches also are significant in that they represent victory.

Revelation 7:9-10

⁹ After this, I looked; and there before me was a huge crowd, too large for anyone to count, from every nation, tribe, people and language. They were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands; ¹⁰ and they shouted, "Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

We, of course, know of their use during Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before His death. The people were waving palm branches and laying them down on the ground – saying in essence that they wanted to be victorious against the Roman oppression, and they thought Jesus was going to be the one who brought them out of this.

John 12:13

¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "**Deliver us!**" "**Blessed is he who comes in the name of ADONAI**, the King of Isra'el!"

Date Palms can grow in the desert because they need relatively little water and they require soil with a high salinity. This makes them ideal in a desert oasis, and even to this day are often found throughout the desert areas in the Middle East. The tree also produces dates, which are a sweet fruit. The Hebrew and Arabic word for this fruit is *tamar*.

Judges 3:15

¹⁵ But when the people of Isra'el cried out to ADONAI, ADONAI raised up for them a savior, Ehud the son of Gera, from the tribe of Binyamin, a left-handed man. The people of Isra'el appointed him to take their tribute to 'Eglon the king of Mo'av [Moab].

God raises up a man by the name of *Ehud* to help free them from this oppression brought on by Eglon the King of Moab. It specifically says that he is left-handed, and this is significant because it is this physical feature that will set him up for what he is going to do.

Left-handed people are rare. They say that throughout history only about 10-13% of all people are left-handed. (About 1% are ambidextrous.) This makes for a very rare and special attribute that Ehud would use to get the job done.

The right hand is often referenced in the Bible as being of strength, and this is because of the vast majority who are right-handed, and thus their right arm is the stronger arm. So often when you see the right hand/arm referenced it is regarded with strength and honor. The disciples argued over who would sit at Jesus' right hand during their seder meal in the Upper Room. This was the most honored position. The second most honored position in Eastern culture is the seat to the left.

Matthew 20:20-23

²⁰ Then Zavdai's [Zebedee's] sons came to Yeshua [Jesus] with their mother. She bowed down, begging a favor from him. ²¹ He said to her, "What do you want?" She replied, "Promise that when you become king, these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right and the other on your left." ²² But Yeshua [Jesus] answered, "You people don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We can." ²³ He said to them,

“Yes, you will drink my cup. But to sit on my right and on my left is not mine to give, it is for those for whom my Father has prepared it.”

The mother of two of the disciples, James and John, wanted Jesus to honor these sons with this position at his right and left, but Jesus points out that they don't understand His mission at all. Not only is He not going to rule in that way here on earth (yet!), but He also points out that the position to His right and left will be given by God alone. He is talking here about Heaven. We are the honored ones that will sit with Jesus one day in Heaven.

So, while the right hand is often referred to in scripture as being valued and of strength, the left is not a curse or a weakness. In fact, the few times left-handedness is specifically mentioned in the Bible, it is given as an advantage.

In Judges 20 it tells of a group of 26k men from the tribe of Benjamin who are armed with swords to fight a battle, and 700 of these men were specifically chosen for being left-handed and for their accuracy with a sling.

Judges 20:15-16

¹⁵ On that day there were 26,000 men from Binyamin armed with swords, besides the inhabitants of Giv'ah, who numbered 700 specially chosen men. ¹⁶ All of these 700 specially picked men were left-handed, and every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

This is a great example of the advantages given to those who were left-handed. Ehud had this distinction and was able to accomplish what others would not have been able to because of this physical feature.

Judges 3:16-25

¹⁶ Ehud made himself a double-edged sword eighteen inches long and strapped it to his right thigh under his clothes. ¹⁷ Then he presented the tribute to 'Eglon king of Mo'av [Moab]. Now 'Eglon was a very fat man. ¹⁸ When he had finished presenting the tribute, he dismissed the people who had brought it. ¹⁹ But he himself, after reaching the quarries at Gilgal, went back and said, "King, I have a secret message for you." The king commanded silence, and all his attendants withdrew. ²⁰ Ehud came to him; he was sitting alone by himself in his upstairs room, where it was cool. Ehud said: "I have a message from God for you." As the king arose from his seat, ²¹ Ehud reached out with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into the king's belly. ²² The hilt too went in after the blade, and the fat closed around the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly, so that it came out behind. ²³ Then Ehud went out onto the porch, shut the doors of the upstairs room behind him and locked them. ²⁴ After Ehud had left, the king's servants came. Seeing that the doors of the upper room were locked, they said, "He must be relieving himself in the inner part of the cool room." ²⁵ They waited until they became embarrassed, but he still didn't open the doors of the upstairs room. So they took the key and opened them; and there before them lay their master, dead on the ground.

Ehud was selected as the one to take a special tribute to King Eglon. He knew he could possibly use this as a means of killing the king, so he made a special sword that he strapped to his right leg, because he was left-handed. He was able to get past the security without being found out because of this special physical feature. They didn't think to pat down his right leg, otherwise they would have found that sword. Ehud was able to get his weapon into the palace – that was step #1 of his plan.

Step #2 of this plan was to get the king alone, away from his servants and guards. After Ehud made his tribute presentation, he asked for a moment to tell the king something in confidence, and so the king allowed Ehud to join him in a private chamber. This is when Ehud was able to get close enough to the king to drive his sword into the king's belly, killing him. Then he snuck out, locked the doors, and left.

Judges 3:26-29

²⁶ But while they were delaying, Ehud escaped — he passed beyond the quarries and arrived safely in Se'irah. ²⁷ Upon arrival in the hills of Efrayim, he began sounding the call on the *shofar*; and the people of Isra'el went down with him from the hill-country; he himself took the lead.

²⁸ He said to them: "Follow me, because *ADONAI* has given your enemy Mo'av [Moab] into your hands. They went down after him, seized the fords of the Yarden [Jordan] opposite Mo'av [Moab] and permitted no one to cross. ²⁹ On that occasion they defeated Mo'av [Moab], some ten thousand men, all tough, experienced soldiers; not one of them escaped.

By the time the servants found the king, Ehud had time to escape and had rallied the people of Israel. He blew the shofar, which echoed in the hills and wadis, and all the people of Israel knew to come down to fight. Their strategy was to stop the Moabite armies at the Jordan River. This worked. It did not allow any of the soldiers to cross, thus limiting the damage they could do. This army couldn't go around behind them to attack from the back. They were cut off from anything but a forward-facing attack, and Israel was prepared for this fight, and with God's help, they were able to kill 10k highly trained soldiers without even one person escaping.

Judges 3:30

³⁰ Thus was Mo'av [Moab] subdued that day under the power of Isra'el. Then the land had rest for eighty years.

While this is one of the more graphic Biblical accounts, it is also very insightful. We can see God's powerful hand throughout.

- First, a lone man walked into the king's palace, assassinated the king, and walked out without being found out or captured.
- Second, the battlefield was chosen specifically for their victory. The enemy could not go around and attack any other way – they had to go through the soldiers who were ready for this battle, mentally and physically.
- Third, in a matter of a day, and with God's help, they were able to change the next 80 years of Israel's history. Ehud's story involves more than just removing a wicked leader; it includes a change in national history for an entire generation.

I think the most profound take-away from this story of Ehud is this: When they turned back to God, it did not take God long to change their story. In a matter of a day, they went from being oppressed to being free!

God doesn't need any more than a moment to do the same for us in our own lives and circumstances. It is nothing for Him to work mightily in a matter of a day, an hour, or even a minute. God's grace is always available to us when we are willing to turn away from sin and back to God. His faithful promise is always that He will be there when we return, just as He was there for Israel when they repented and turned back to God.

