

God Works Through Ehud

Lesson Scripture: Judges 3

Focus Scripture: Judges 3:15-23, 30

Key Verse: *When the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. Judges 3:15a*

JUDGES 3:15-23, 30 (NRSV UE)

Judges 3:15-23

15 But when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The Israelites sent tribute by him to King Eglon of Moab.

16 Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, and he fastened it on his right thigh under his clothes.

17 Then he presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.

18 When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent the people who carried the tribute on their way.

19 But he himself turned back at the sculptured stones near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." So the king said, "Silence!" and all his attendants went out from his presence.

20 Ehud came to him, while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber, and said, "I have a message from God for you." So he rose from his seat.

21 Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's belly;

22 the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly, and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and closed the doors of the roof chamber on him and locked them.

JUDGES 3:15-23, 30 (KJV)

Judges 3:15-23

15 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 lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16 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.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

19 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.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:

22 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.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.

30

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest eighty years.

30

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

KEY TERMS

- **City of Palms** – Also known as Jericho; highlighting its lush, fertile oasis and abundant date-palm groves; see Deuteronomy 34:3.
- **Cubit** – About 18 inches or about 45 centimeters; this length is the standard specification for a medium-sized machete and is the defining length for several historical short swords.
- **Ehud** – The name of a heroic judge in the Bible, meaning *unity*. His name is believed to be derived from the Hebrew root *y-ḥ-d*, signifying togetherness or oneness.
- **Tribute** – A compulsory tax, payment, or service imposed by a ruling power (such as a king or foreign empire) as a sign of submission and allegiance. A political or religious tax.

INTRODUCTION

Israel finds itself once again in a state of defeat and bondage. They are oppressed under the pagan nation of Moab, who defeated and ruled over

Israel for eighteen years. Once again, the people cry out to God for deliverance. This time, an unlikely hero arises, whose militaristic tactics bear a resemblance of both a spy and a warrior. Acting as an envoy to deliver a tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, Ehud requested a private audience with the king. He claims to

Acting as an envoy to deliver a tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, Ehud requested a private audience with the king. He claims to have “a message from God” only to use this deception to perform a strategically planned assassination.

have “a message from God” only to use this deception to perform a strategically planned assassination. Ehud is portrayed as a man of great wisdom as well as physical skill and prowess. He leads the Israelites to victory and into an era of peace lasting eighty years, the longest period of rest recorded in the book

of Judges. This story presents God's continued mercy coupled with a divinely ordained leader. Ehud brings God's people out of jeopardy but also back into alignment with God's law and will.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The story of the judge named Ehud is one which illustrates how God selects those often rejected

or considered less capable by man.

Ehud is identified as left-handed, which is often considered the weaker side of human strength due to its less common occurrence. Yet Ehud's preference or tendency to his left side did not leave him weaker. Instead, it was beneficial for Ehud in combat, as most would

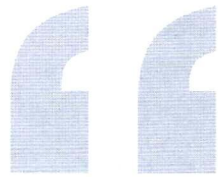
be focused on being attacked by their opponent's right hand. Ehud is triggered by the images he saw as he returned from paying tribute to their oppressive ruler. Ehud is said to have perceived these stone images at Gilgal, a place once occupied by the Israelites. These stone images called *pesilim*, are commonly

interpreted by scholars as idols, graven images, or carved statues. These images likely represented Moabite gods (such as Chemosh) and were set up as a sign of conquest by King Eglon of Moab to signify their dominance over the region of Gilgal. The sight of these statues may have enraged Ehud. But it is also considered a time of revelation from God, as Ehud returns to Eglon with a "secret

message from God."

The text indicates that the moment Ehud was passing the idols that stood for the eighteen-year Moabite reign, was the moment of enlightenment for Ehud. These images ignited a spirit of resolve to God's command forbidding the worship of idols. The statues were an insult to God and a reminder

of the demise of God's people. Thus, the left-handed messenger returned with more than a tribute, but with a determined spirit to restore the land to the God of Israel and the people of God. The actions by Ehud were resolute as he used his hand-crafted blade to kill the king, then craftily locked the quarters and made



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his escape from the king's chambers. Ehud was a true military strategist. He understood that the Moabite's earlier alliance with the Ammonites and Amalekites strengthened King Eglon to make his earlier defeat over Israel. Ehud's plan resulted in the Moabites delayed reactions. The Israelites attacked quickly and defeated the Moabite army. However, it is also noted that the Lord was with Ehud, giving him and the Israelite's victory. The story unfolds as God's warrior leads the people into victory and an era of peace for eighty years.

SANKOFA

In the earlier days of older homes filled with paneled walls, plastic slip covers, and the smell of fried chicken, there was a tradition of placing a special object on the coffee table. No matter the social status of the house, the people of color who called themselves Christians would place a marker in the home, an important marker or symbol that stated this house was covered by almighty God. What is this marker, you ask? Of

course, it was the family Bible. Those who remember those days recall that this book held not only the sacred texts in the King James version, but it also held the family history, the lineage of parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, even birth certificates and obituaries. This marker, not a stone, but a book, would somehow also speak to the occupants of the room. As each person would carry out their

daily routines, there somehow appeared to be a presence that suggested that since the Holy Bible was in the room, so was God. Or at least God was watching. Jesus was covering. And the Holy Spirit was empowering, strengthening, even delivering the people from the oppressor outside those doors.

Now everybody may wonder not have these memories. Some may wonder whether their home had a book, a marker somewhere else in the home. Maybe it was in Mama's bedroom, or in the area where Big Mama slept. Maybe your home didn't have a big Bible, but someone carried a little one around with them. The problem is that we have so many other markers,



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distractions, even idolatrous images that steer people away. But the marker that has stood for ages, the stone that the builder's rejected, still speaks. It still holds a message from God. It's probably closer than you think. It's no longer limited to scrolls and paper. It's on your phone, your tablet, even your watch may be the marker. But it still speaks. Yes, the Bible still speaks. The question that is posed to every person is, "Are you listening?" God has a message for you.

CASE STUDY

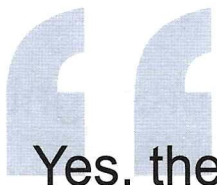
Most people would believe that in this modern day 21st century, that one would not witness the practice or law of "tributes" as is mentioned in the Old Testament stories. However, the reality

is that modern day taxes and tariffs are quite similar in their enforcement as well as their impact on the poor. For instance, the Budget Lab at Yale University published a recent article in 2025 on the Trump administration's effect on households on the United States. This group estimates that the

Trump administration's new 2025 tariffs will increase the number of Americans living in poverty by between 650,000 and 875,000 (between 0.2 and 0.3 percent of the U.S. population), depending on the poverty measure used. According to this report, tariffs are like all indirect taxes. They reduce the purchasing power of household incomes by increasing prices in the economic environment where they

are applied. Tariffs can ultimately result in a loss of purchasing power for individuals and families. In addition, The Manhattan Project reports that taxes negatively impact the poor. This primarily occurs through regressive structures, such as sales, excise, and property taxes. These

taxes consume a higher percentage of the poor populations' limited income compared to wealthier households. These taxes reduce purchasing power and, in some cases, exceed the value of welfare benefits received, particularly for childless, low-income workers, such as the elderly and disabled. Therefore, the modern-day citizen in the United States



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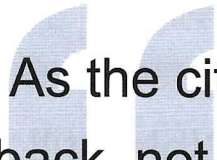
faces a ritual each year on or around April 15th, in which all are expected to pay tributes to the reigning government of the land. Although it is couched under a democratic governance, there are rulers today who seek the opportunity to have citizens pay homage, pay money, and even postulate in a sense of worship. As the citizens fight back, not with knives but with voices, there is a clarion call for no more kings, and may the tributes be used for those most in need.

LIFE APPLICATION

Today's lesson is a reminder that society has established specific legal requirements in which every person must comply. These requirements range from state and federal laws that determine rights and citizenship to obligatory payments to ruling jurisdictions, officials, and authorities. Even the church must comply with the governmental controls and laws of the land. However, some faith communities have become paralyzed and restricted their activities and their voice for fear of repercussions and retaliation

from ruling parties. However, the church must first report to God. The AME Church was built on this when Richard Allen was confronted at the altar at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. His prayers were interrupted by an unjust system of government, yet Richard Allen worshiped the God of eternal justice. Therefore, every disciple and member of the AME Church has a responsibility to continue the

walkout from injustice and stand for the equal rights of all humanity. As you review this lesson, remember that voting is one of the most powerful tools to correct the injustice within the land. Use this season to right the wrongs and send a message to the rulers of the land.



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Questions

1. How can your church be a more active voice in the community to address injustice?
2. What is your church doing to promote voter participation in upcoming elections?
3. What do you believe are valid reasons to fight in a war?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnal #307,
“Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Closing Prayer: Father God, “I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, where shall I go?” Heavenly Father, in these uncertain times, where corruption and injustice abound, where our youth are vulnerable to the evil one who deceives the people of this world, we reach towards the heavens from where our help comes

from. Move by your Spirit to direct us all to a place of peace. May your Spirit reconcile the disparities in our land and beyond our borders, and provide for the hungry, the sick, and the grieving. May your love be felt in the most difficult of circumstances and may we recognize your grace and mercy as the redemptive power to transform and restore our homes and our land. All these things we pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**October 19-25**

Monday	Exodus 20:1-7 (No Other Gods but the Lord)
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 8:1-6 (One God and One Lord)
Wednesday	Matthew 4:1-11 (Worship God Alone)
Thursday	Isaiah 44:9-20 (There's Nothing There!)
Friday	Isaiah 44:21-28 (Return to the Lord)
Saturday	Luke 16:13-17 (No One Can Serve Two Masters)
Sunday	Judges 17:1-6 (The People Cast Off Restraint)