

Old Testament Israel: Law, **Judges**, Kingdoms

Introduction: The Book of Shophetim (Hebrew = “Judges”, but also Liberators/Rulers)

Scripture **Judges 3**

Judges 3:1-4 Remaining enemies – incomplete obedience with dire consequences

Judges 3:5-8 First falling away and judgment

Judges 3:9-11 First Judge, Othniel – Caleb’s little brother

Judges 3:12-14 Second falling away and judgment

Judges 3:15-18, 19-22, 23-26, 27-30 Second Judge, Ehud

Judges 3:31 Third Judge, Shamgar

Discussion:

Notes on Baal and Asherah:

Baal was primarily a fertility god. He appeared mainly as a man with the horns of a bull, carrying thunderbolts in his hand. He also appeared in the form of a serpent. Both the bull and the serpent were worshiped as gods of fertility. Baal was worshipped by the Canaanites as a fertilizing, life-giving, and life-renewing deity who fulfilled his function through his mother turned wife/mistress: Asherah...All sources concur that cult prostitution, both male and female, was a major element of the worship of Asherah and Baal. The cultic practices of the Canaanites included sacred groves, trees, and carved wooden images of Asherah. Also included were animal sacrifices at high places, divination, and snake worship.

Note that Shamgar’s “ox goad” was probably about 8 ft long, with a spear tip on one end and a broad blade on the other. Also, note that it could have been cut down to a more manageable length. The same use of this “farm tool” as an improvised weapon of war is described by Homer as being used by Lycurgus at the siege of Troy – which is actually about the same timeframe as the book of Judges.

Open Question:

How was Ehud justified in his assassination of Eglon, or was he wrong to do so?