

Judges 3

Verses 1 - 6

Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them (*that is*, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; ² only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly). ³ *These nations are:* the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. ⁴ They were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses. ⁵ The sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; ⁶ and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them.

Two reasons are given for why the Lord did not drive out all of the Canaanites.

1. New generations needed to be schooled in the art of war.
2. To find out if they would obey the commandments of the Lord

³ **These nations are: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath.**

The Philistines came from the descendants of Ham.

See Genesis 10:6, 13-14

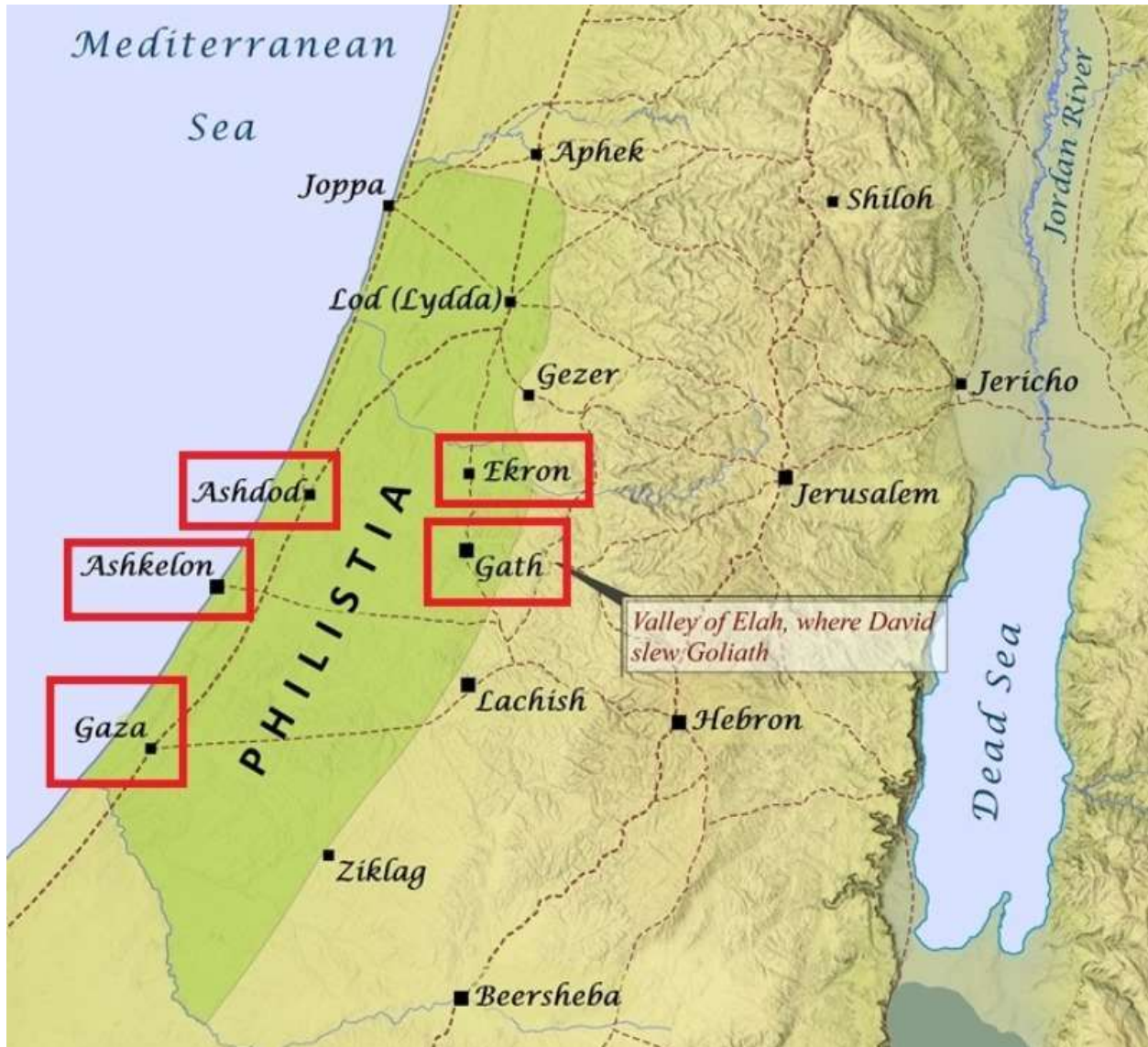
⁶ **The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.**

¹³ **Mizraim fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹⁴ Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines), and Caphtorim.**

Ham – Mizraim – Casluhim – The Philistines.

The five lords of the Philistines included the rulers of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

See Map 305



Dagon was the principal deity of the Philistines. He was the god of fertility and crops. According to ancient mythology, Dagon was the father of Baal.

Do you know what happened to the gods of the Philistines?

Dagon.....Da - gone. (They are gone) ☺

The Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites lived in Mount Lebanon.

See Map 310



Originally this area was called Phoenicia but later became known as Lebanon.

There is a long range of mountains that traverse the territory of Lebanon from North to South and this is why it is referred to as Mount Lebanon.

⁵ The sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; ⁶ and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

Almost immediately after settling in Canaan Israel did the very thing that God had forbidden them to do. They intermingled with the other nations and served their gods.

Verses 7 - 11

⁷ The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. ⁸ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

⁹ When the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

⁷ The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

Israel had committed a similar sin against the Lord in Numbers 22 thru 25.

See Numbers 25:1-2

While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to commit infidelity with the daughters of Moab. ² For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

This occurred in year 40 of the wilderness (1407 BC) about 4 to 6 months before they entered the Promised Land. The drunken and sexual nature of pagan worship appealed to the Hebrews who were being tricked by the Moabites & the Midianites.

These two nations knew God would punish Israel for this act of rebellion and planned this deception hoping to stop Israel. Israel was about to repeat this mistake because that took place 60 years ago and this generation knew very little about God or their past.

⁸ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

Cushan-rishathaim means the Ethiopian of double iniquity. Most likely this was a nickname given to him by Israel.

We first became acquainted with The Land of Mesopotamia during the life of Abraham.

See Genesis 11:31

³¹ Now Terah took his son Abram, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they departed together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran and settled there.

See Map 315



Mesopotamia is the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

Abraham traveled from Babylon (Ur of the Chaldeans) to Haran. After his father died in Haran Abraham continued his journey to Canaan. He left Haran in 1921 BC, 571 years before the 1st Judge in Israel.

⁹ When the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

Judge # 1 Othniel 1350 - 1302

Othniel was probably Caleb's brother in the broader sense of the term. (A kinsman)

There are several reasons that support this conclusion.

1. Caleb's father was Jephunneh.

See Num. 13:6

2. Caleb was 85 years old after the conquest of Canaan (1400 BC).

This is now 50 years later (1350 BC)

Even a younger brother of Caleb would be pretty old at this point.

¹⁰ The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

The Spirit also came upon Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. In 1 Samuel, the same thing is said of Saul and of David. This endowment enabled the possessor to perform feats of superhuman strength.

Verses 12 - 14

¹² Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. ¹³ And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they possessed the city of the palm trees. ¹⁴ The sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

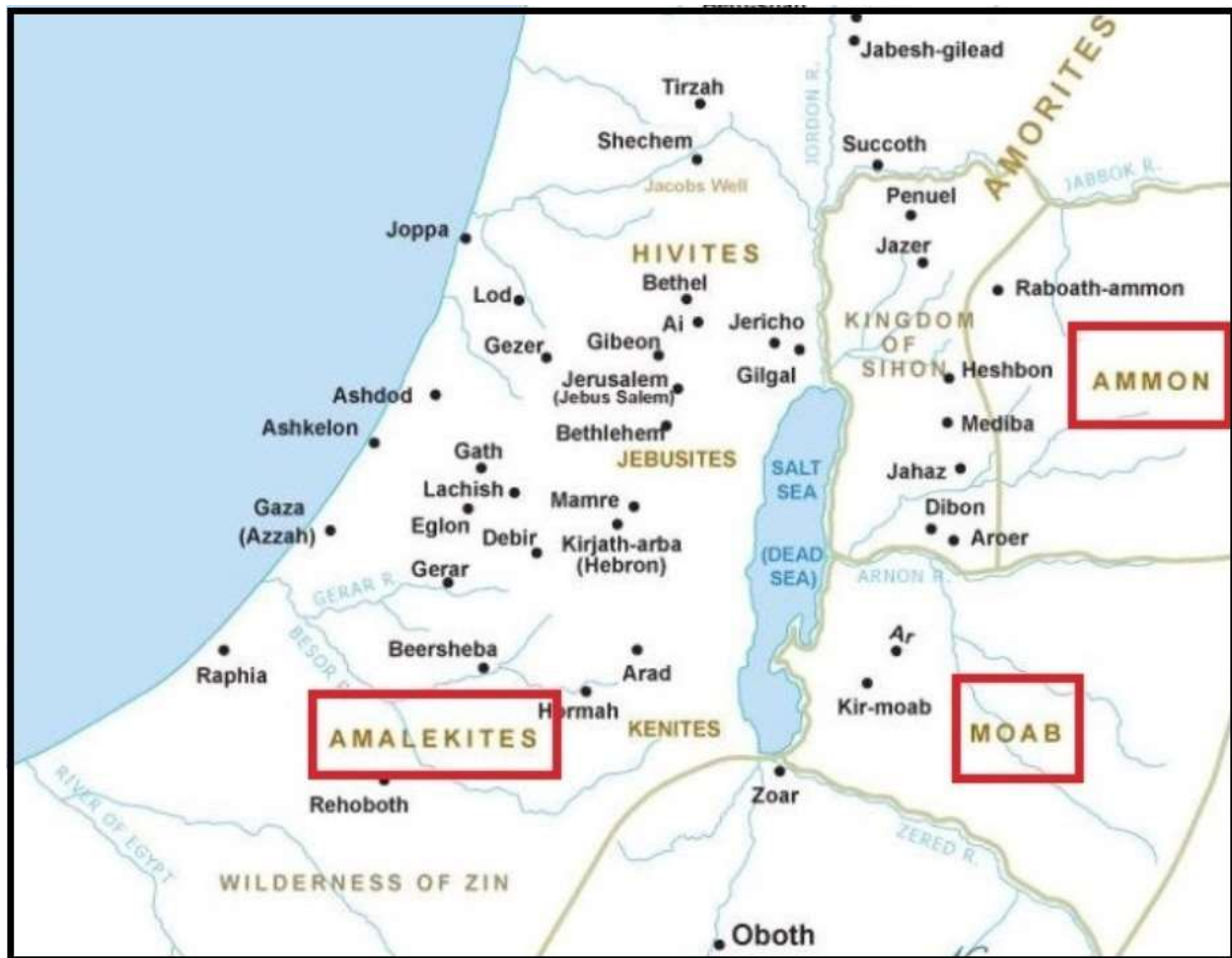
¹² Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.

God will use pagan nation many times to punish Israel for their sin.

¹³ And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel,

The Moabites and the Ammonites were descendants of Lot and his daughters. The Amalekites were sons of Amalek the grandson of Esau.

See map 320



And they possessed the city of the palm-trees

This was the city of Jericho. The king of Moab apparently made it his capital.

Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years

During this period Israel was required to pay tribute to the king of Moab.

Verses 15 - 18

¹⁵ But when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab. ¹⁶ Ehud made himself a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length, and he bound it on his right thigh under his cloak. ¹⁷ He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. ¹⁸ It came about when he had finished presenting the tribute, that he sent away the people who had carried the tribute.

¹⁵ But when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man.

Judge #2 Ehud 1302 – 1204 BC

Ehud was left-handed, as were many in the tribe of Benjamin.

See Judges 20:15-16

¹⁵ From the cities on that day the sons of Benjamin were counted, twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah who were counted, seven hundred choice men. ¹⁶ Out of all these people seven hundred choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

It is interesting that God choose a man from the tribe of Benjamin. About 50 years earlier the tribe was reduced to 600 men and their wives.

And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab

This was a good plan since it would be unlikely that a nation would attempt to kill a king that they were sending tribute to.

¹⁶ Ehud made himself a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length, and he bound it on his right thigh under his cloak.

Trying to sneak a weapon past the king's guards would normally end in disaster.

Some think this was avoided by having the weapon on his right thigh. If this was the case then the king's guards were incompetent.

¹⁷ He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.

¹⁸ It came about when he had finished presenting the tribute, that he sent away the people who had carried the tribute.

The tribute must have been fairly substantial considering a group of men were required to carry it.

Verses 19 - 22

¹⁹ But he himself turned back from the idols which were at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he said, "Keep silence." And all who attended him left him. ²⁰ Ehud came to him while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." And he arose from his seat. ²¹ Ehud stretched out his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his belly. ²² The handle 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 refuse came out.

¹⁹ But he himself turned back from the idols which were at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he said, "Keep silence." And all who attended him left him.

Gilgal was the site where Israel had set up the 12 stones after crossing the Jordan.

See Joshua 4:20-24

Ehud had no opportunity to kill the king when he offered the tribute. However, on his way home he thought of another plan that might give him an opportunity to kill the king.

So Ehud went back to the king and told him he had a secret message for him. The king responded by sending everyone away.

²¹ Ehud stretched out his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his belly. ²² The handle 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 refuse came out.

A number of commentators tried to explain how Ehud was admitted into the presence of the king without the weapon being detected. The idea that a guard would only check the left side of a person for a weapon seems implausible.

Before we go on let's take a look at verses 15 thru 20 in the Septuagint.

15 And the children of Israel cried to the Lord; and he raised up to them a savior, Aod the son of Gera a son of Jemeni, a man who used both hands alike: and the children of Israel sent gifts by his hand to Eglom king of Moab. 16 And Aod made himself a dagger of two edges, of a span long, and he girded it under his cloak upon his right thigh. 17 And he went, and brought the presents to Eglom king of Moab, and Eglom [was] a very handsome man. 18 And it came to pass when [Aod] had made an end of offering his gifts, that he dismissed those that brought the gifts. 19 And he himself returned from the quarries that are by Galgal; and Aod said, I have a secret errand to thee, O king! and Eglom said to him, Be silent: and he sent away from his presence all who waited upon him. 20 And Aod went in to him; and he sat in his own upper summer chamber quite alone; and Aod said, I have a message from God to thee, O king: and Eglom rose up from his throne near him.

From the Septuagint we see a few differences.

1. Ehud was ambidextrous not left handed.
2. King Eglon was a very handsome man not just a very fat man.
3. This says the quarries that are by Gilgal not the idols.

None of this nullifies the story but how can these translations be so different in the minor details that are presented?

Verses 23 - 25

²³ Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and shut the doors of the roof chamber behind him, and locked *them*. ²⁴ When he had gone out, his servants came and looked, and behold, the doors of the roof chamber were locked; and they said, "He is only relieving himself in the cool room." ²⁵ They waited until they became anxious; but behold, he did not open the doors of the roof chamber. Therefore they took the key and opened them, and behold, their master had fallen to the floor dead.

Ehud left the roof chamber and locked the doors behind him.

The servants assume the king is using the bathroom so they wait for a period of time.

When they open the door, the king is dead on the floor.

Verses 26 - 30

²⁶ Now Ehud escaped while they were delaying, and he passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah. ²⁷ It came about when he had arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was in front of them. ²⁸ He said to them, “Pursue *them*, for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hands.” So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan opposite Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross. ²⁹ They struck down at that time about ten thousand Moabites, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped. ³⁰ So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was undisturbed for eighty years.

²⁶ Now Ehud escaped while they were delaying, and escaped to Seirah. ²⁷ It came about when he had arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was in front of them.

Ehud made it to the hill country of Ephraim and blew the trumpet (calling Israel to assemble for war) and then he led the way to Jericho.

²⁸ He said to them, “Pursue *them*, for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hands.” So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan opposite Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross.

The first thing Ehud did was seize the fords (the shallow area) of the Jordan River across from Moab so the enemy could neither escape into Moab nor get any help from Moab.

²⁹ They struck down at that time about ten thousand Moabites, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped. ³⁰ So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was undisturbed for eighty years.

The Moabites lost 10,000 men and its control of Jericho.

This ended the Moabite oppression and Israel had peace for 80 years.

Verse 31

³¹ After him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an ox goad; and he also saved Israel.

Judge #3 Shamgar

Little is said about this judge but we know he saved Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

See map 325



His father's name, Anath, was also the name or title of the Canaanite goddess of sex and war. She was the sister of Baal.

An ox-goad was a slender rod (a pole) six or eight feet in length with a spike and a curved knife.

The knife was used to clean the plowshares and the spike was used for controlling the ox.

See pic 330



It is unclear if the 600 Philistines were killed in one battle or numerous battles.