



A Study of the Book of Judges

Lesson 4: Ehud, The Left-Handed Judge... Judges 3:11-3:31

Two beginnings and two endings with seven judges on a seesaw in between and Gideon in the middle.

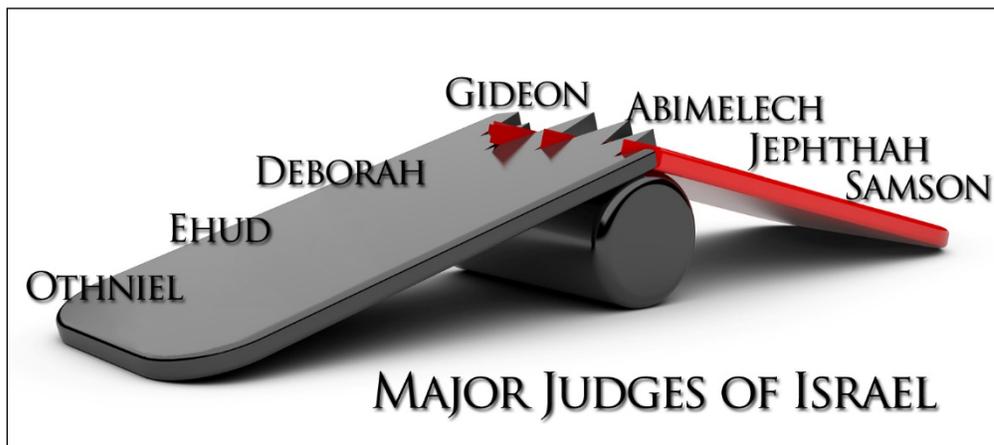
That is the structure of the Book of Judges. Over the last three weeks, I have repeated that phrase several times. The reason I've done that is because I wanted to try to put into your minds, in a visual sort of way, the design of the Book.

I wanted you to see its design so you could get a sense of its message. I wanted you to know the design well enough that you might be able to consider how the individual sections of the book fit into the author's overall plan and intention. You see the book of Judges was written to show God's people the need for a righteous king.¹ It was written to show them that unless they followed their righteous king, and I personally think that meant David, that they were going to be subject to continued judgment and defeat at the hands of their enemies. The way the author of Judges works that out is through stories that demonstrate the repeated cycle of sin-oppression and deliverance.

To say it plainly, the author uses stories to show how the nation's disobedience brings them into oppression and then how God, through sending it brave warrior-like judges, delivers the nation only to have it fall into the same cycle all over again after that particular delivering judge died.²

Now I have said that enough times now that I think you probably have it. But I do want to add one other thing. As the Book of Judges develops, the cycles of deliverance get shorter and shorter, the times of oppression grow longer and darker and the deliverers themselves become less and less noble.

That is why I have made it a point to show you this slide.



You see the overall view of the first three judges is positive. The overall view of the last three judges is negative. The character of Gideon in the middle seems to be the place where the transition takes place. Gideon starts off positively and ends negatively. After Gideon everything goes downhill.

Now last week, we looked at the first deliverer God raised up to deliver His people, Othniel son of Kenaz and younger brother of Caleb. We saw how he faced Cushan-Rishathaim...the dark, doubly evil one...and delivered the nation from his power and gave the land rest for forty years...the life of a whole generation.

Now this morning, we are going to look at the story of Ehud, the left-handed judge. So if you'll open you Bibles to Judges...chapter three, we'll start in at verse eleven.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:11**...So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died. ¹² Once again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and because they did this evil the LORD gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel.

The first thing you ought to notice is that peace lasted throughout the life of Othniel. But as soon as Othniel died, the Israelites returned to doing evil in the eyes of the Lord which means they returned to worshipping pagan gods...specifically Baal and the Asherahs. Because they did that God gave them over to the power of Eglon, king of Moab.

Now there are a couple of points I ought to make about that. First of all, Moab is both a place and a people. In terms of where Moab was...this ought to help.



Moab was both east and south of Gilgal and the Dead Sea.

The land in those days was apparently much more fertile than it is today. Archaeologists can tell that from the numerous settlements that have been discovered there. Today the land is very dry and sparsely populated.

The chief deity of Moab was Chemosh. He was god appeased by human sacrifice. We talked about him in detail last week. If you want to refresh your memory you can consult almost any good Bible Dictionary for details about Chemosh.

Now the people of Moab were not descendants of Abraham but rather of Abraham's nephew Lot. We know that Genesis 19 where the whole sordid story of the creation of these two perpetual enemies of Israel is related. Let me just read a verse or two from Genesis 19.

^{NIV} **Genesis 19:36**...So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. ³⁸ The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

Now the Moabites turned out to be a source of constant conflict to the Israelites. You will remember from your study of the Book of Numbers that Balak, king of the Moabites, even hired the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites when they were trying to enter the land of Canaan. If you are not familiar with the story you ought to read it. The whole section is famous because of a scene where Balaam's ass actually speaks to him after Balaam beats him because he refused to take him down a trail where the angel of the Lord was waiting to kill him. Anyway, let me read you a brief section from Numbers 22 so you can get a sense of the historic strife between Moab and Israel..

^{NIV} **Numbers 22:1...**Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho. ² Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, ³ and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites. ⁴ The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "**This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.**" So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, ⁵ sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: "**A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. ⁶ Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.**"

Now I ought to say a word or two about the character Eglon. It is possible that his name may not be a personal name but rather a title associated with the city or area which he ruled...something like the title "**pharaoh.**" I say that because of verses like Joshua 10:5.

NIV Joshua 10:5...Then the five kings of the Amorites-- the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon-- joined forces. They moved up with all their troops and took up positions against Gibeon and attacked it.

Now Eglon's name or his title, if that is the case, is very important to the story. The reason it is important is because of the Hebrew word means and because of the ironic twist the use of the word gives the story. You see Eglon's name means **"calf."**³

Now I want you to remember that because I want you to understand how Eglon's name is utilized in telling the story of Ehud, Israel's second great judge. I think if you will keep in mind that Baal was symbolized most frequently by the image of a bull...because of the strength and fertility and power associated with bulls, it might help you to understand why the author enjoyed emphasizing Eglon's name.

Now then, let's look at verse 13.

NIV Judges 3:13...Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon⁴ came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. ¹⁴ The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years.

Now the Ammonites that are mentioned here are the descendants of Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot's other daughter. The Amalekites are descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother, the brother who sold his birthright and was rejected by the Lord.

The Amalekites are the people that battled against Israel in the great scene where as long as Moses held up his arms in intercession, the Israelites prevailed and whenever he lowered his arms, the Amalekites prevailed. You remember the scene.

Anyway, Eglon combined his forces with the Ammonites and the Amalekites and came and attacked the City of Palms, which is another description of Jericho focusing on its oasis like appearance. In fact, the palms at Jericho are referred to several times in the Old Testament in passages like...

^{NIV} **Deuteronomy 34:3**...the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar.

And also like...

^{NIV} **2 Chronicles 28:15**...The men designated by name took the prisoners, and from the plunder they clothed all who were naked. They provided them with clothes and sandals, food and drink, and healing balm. All those who were weak they put on donkeys. So they took them back to their fellow countrymen at Jericho, the City of Palms, and returned to Samaria.



Now Jericho is located in the territory of Benjamin, which means that the principal tribe suffering under Eglon's invasion was the tribe of Benjamin. Verse 14, tells us that they suffered under Eglon for some eighteen years.

Now in verse 15, we are introduced to Ehud.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:15**...Again the Israelites cried out to the LORD, and he gave them a deliverer-- Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite. The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab.

Now the most obvious thing about Ehud from the text is that he is left-handed. Now the way the text puts it is rather strange. It says...

אֶת־אֶהוּד בֶּן־גֵּרָא בֶּן־הִימִינִי אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם יְדִי־יְמִינֹו

Ehud, the son of Gera, son of Benjamin...this man was bound in his right hand...

Now that could mean that he was crippled in his right hand. It could even mean that he was ambidextrous.

^{NIV} **1 Chronicles 12:1**...These were the men who came to David at Ziklag, while he was banished from the presence of Saul son of Kish (they were among the warriors who helped him in battle; ² they were armed with bows and were able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed; they were kinsmen of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin):

But more than likely, it means that he was left-handed.⁵ Now that fact is the second instance of irony in the story. The reason it is ironic is because the name Benjamin means **“son of the right hand”**. So what you have in the story is a **“left-handed man”** from the tribe of the **“son of the right hand.”**

I think the point that the author is trying to make is that this character is not the typical Benjamite. You will remember that I said that Benjamin is mentioned almost more than any other tribe in the Book of Judges and that almost all of those instances are negative. Well, this is the exception to that. Ehud, the left-handed

man...Ehud the oddity...is different. He is loyal and covenant-keeping and obedient to the law of God.

Let's see how the author develops that. The first thing that we see is that Ehud made himself a weapon.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:16**...Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a foot and a half long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing.

The sword he makes is double-edged. Now that is somewhat different than the slashing swords and axes typically used in ancient warfare. Usually such swords were made of bronze and were reinforced along the spine so that the blade would be less likely to break. But Ehud's sword is different...it is double edged.

It is a stabbing sword.

The sword itself is described as about a foot and a half long. That measurement comes from the Hebrew word **נֶמֶךְ** which is only used here in the Bible. It is not the typical word **אַמָּה**. That has led a number of scholars to suggest that this particular word for cubit meant a short cubit and that the sword was the length from the tip of the elbow the first row of knuckles in a closed fist.

The important point is that it is short and that he strapped it to his right thigh. Now there is a reason for that. Swords, even short swords, are difficult to pull up and out. For that reason, military men wear swords on the side opposite their

strongest hand. Right handed men wear swords on the left and left handed men wear swords on the right.

Now Ehud strapped his sword to his right thigh under his clothes. It was intended to be a concealed weapon. The fact that it was on the side where men did not usually wear the weapons, the right side, meant that it was much less apt to be detected at security checkpoints.

Now the story continues in verse 17.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:17**...He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. ¹⁸ After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way the men who had carried it.

Now the word for tribute here is the word for sacrifice. It is sometimes used of grain...sometimes of animals. In this context, I think it probably has the meaning tribute.

Now the interesting thing is that it doesn't say how much the tribute was. Apparently, Ehud was selected as a representative of the tribe to deliver its payment or tribute to Eglon. It must have sizeable for the text says that it took several men to carry it.

Now what is interesting is that it says that Eglon was very fat man.

אִישׁ בְּרִיא מְאֹד:

The Hebrew is terrific here...it simply says...a man fat...greatly.

Now this is the third piece of irony in the text because that means that Eglon, or the fatted calf, is receiving a sacrifice from God's people. He is growing fat and sleek not because his gods are prospering him but rather because he is robbing God's covenant people.

But Ehud is about to put all that straight.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:19**...At the idols⁶ near Gilgal⁷ he himself turned back and said, "**I have a secret message for you, O king.**" The king said, "**Quiet!**" And all his attendants left him.⁸

Now the text is somewhat choppy here. The phrases are short and staccato-like more like an oral story than a written tale.

Apparently Ehud dismisses the men carrying the tribute and starts off with them toward Gilgal and home. The text says that he stops when he reaches the idols near Gilgal and turns around and heads back toward Eglon.

Now if you have a KJV you will notice that it translates the word as quarries but I don't think that is right. The word is **הַפְּסִילִים** and is used elsewhere to signify idols.

For example...

^{NIV} **Isaiah 30:22**...Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!"

Some scholars think that the objects in mind are the twelve stones that were set up by Joshua when the Israelites first entered the land. They get that from Joshua 4:2.

^{NIV} Joshua 4:2... "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, ³ and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight."

Now it is possible but I don't think that is very likely because the word that is used is used exclusively to refer to fashioned or carved or inscribed stones. The stones that were set by Joshua and Israelites as a memorial when they entered the land when have been unhewn.

Now because of that, let me tell you what I think happened. I think Ehud went up to Jericho to kill Eglon and either never had the chance or lost his nerve. I think he started back with his comrades and when he came to Gilgal became infuriated by the images, probably Chemosh, that had been set up there as Moabitish idols and turned back in anger to kill Eglon.

Now let me tell you why Gilgal is so important. When the Israelites first came into the land of Canaan none of the men born during the wilderness wanderings had been circumcised. This was an important issue for the Lord because the covenant sign of circumcision was a sign of faithfulness to the nation's covenant with God and their failure to have kept up with the sign was an issue of great reproach. Because of that when they reached Gibeath Haaraloth they made flint knives and circumcised all of the men and boys who had not been circumcised. They named the place Gilgal because it was the place where this reproach was rolled away. The

idea is that when they rolled away the foreskins cut during the rite of circumcision they simultaneously rolled away their shame at not having applied the sign of the covenant to their men and boys.

^{NIV} **Joshua 5:9**...Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.

As a result of the great scene that occurred at Gilgal...it became synonymous with the idea of national covenantal renewal. It would be like saying, **"Let's meet at Independence Hall in Philadelphia and renew our commitment to independence."** Only in the case of the Israelites the place had more religious significance than political.

It seems to me that when Ehud got to Gilgal, the great historical center of covenant renewal for Israel and its God, he grew incensed and turned back to roll away the reproach of the nation under Eglon and the idols at Gilgal.

The idols at Gilgal would have been for Ehud something attuned to seeing a Nazi flag at Arlington national Cemetery.

I like the way Thomas Constable puts it:

It seems that Ehud delivered the Israelites' taxes, left Eglon, passed the **"idols"** at Gilgal, and then returned to Eglon. He had prepared to execute Eglon before going to Jericho. Did he lose heart at first when he left Jericho? Did he receive fresh motivation to kill the king when he passed the Canaanite objects of worship at Gilgal and then return to Jericho to finish the job? This seems to be what happened.⁹

Anyway, at Gilgal, Ehud sent a message back to Eglon that he had a secret report to give him. Now you have to remember that he had just delivered a large amount of tribute to Eglon so Eglon was amenable to hear whatever he had to say. Let put in at verse 20.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:20**...Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his summer palace and said, "**I have a message from God for you.**" As the king rose from his seat, ²¹ Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. ²² Even the handle sank in after the blade, which came out his back. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed in over it.¹⁰

Now the first thing that you ought to notice is that Ehud changes to "**secret message**" to "**a message from God.**" The message is judgment in the form of a short two-edged sword.

The second thing you ought to notice is that Ehud drove the sword home with a great deal of force. Either the sword had no crosspiece on it or he just rammed through Eglon's abdominal wall. Ehud's fat belly covered the sword over.

Now, let me add just one more thing. The NIV omits a little phrase which you will see if you have a New American Standard, a KJV or an ESV. The phrase is certainly there in the text and can mean either the sword came out the back or Eglon's excrement came out the back. I think it almost certainly means the latter and you'll see why as the story progresses. I think perhaps the NIV simply did not want to deal with what it says. I understand that...still, it is best to let the text say what the text says. The NAS has it right.

^{NAS} **Judges 3:22**...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.

Now the commentators really get sidetracked by this particular issue. The focus on what they see to be very crude, scatological humor...noting that the story was originally an oral story and that it was designed to both teach and to entertain. They go on to speculate endlessly about whether Ehud caught Eglon using the bathroom and all sorts of things. I think all those things are secondary. The issue is that while Eglon looked and thought he was prosperous, he was nothing more than an animal being prepared for slaughter.¹¹

You see prosperity...genuine prosperity...not the accumulation of worldly treasure manifests itself in the form of a life dedicated and obedient to God.

Now look at verse 23 and notice the calmness of Ehud and the irony of what happened next.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:23**...Then Ehud went out to the porch; he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. ²⁴ After he had gone, the servants came and found the doors of the upper room locked. They said, "**He must be relieving himself in the inner room of the house.**" ²⁵ They waited to the point of embarrassment, but when he did not open the doors of the room, they took a key¹² and unlocked them. There they saw their lord fallen to the floor, dead. ²⁶ While they waited, Ehud got away. He passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah.

Now the humor here is fairly significant. Thankfully the text is clear enough that you can get the humor yourself without me spelling it out. The one point I want to make is that the delay on the part of the servants allowed Ehud to escape and when he escaped he passed by the idols again. The same idols that had failed to protect Eglon were now unable to stop Ehud. They were lifeless, helpless and dead

whereas Ehud's God was alive and powerful and able to deliver His people even through the instrumentality of one, brave warrior.

Now after Ehud killed Eglon and escaped the palace, he roused his countrymen to come to his aid...to help him put an end to occupation of the Moabites. Look at verse 27.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:27**...When he arrived there, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hills, with him leading them. ²⁸ **"Follow me,"** he ordered, **"for the LORD has given Moab, your enemy, into your hands."** So they followed him down and, taking possession of the fords of the Jordan that led to Moab, they allowed no one to cross over.

That means that Ehud blew a shofar and summoned the men of Ephraim to help him cut off the Moabites' escape back to Moab.

I take the text to mean here that once Ehud killed Eglon the Moabites decided to beat it back to Moab. I think they understood that if their leader could be smitten, they could all be smitten. I think Ehud anticipated their response and appealed to the men of Ephraim to help him attack the Moabites as they fled back across the Jordan.

Anyway, the text says they waited at fords, the shallow crossing places of the Jordan, and attacked the Moabites as they tried to make their way back home. Their attack probably occurred right about here. It is a place that will come up again later when we get to the character Jephthah.



And, of course, the Lord used Ehud's obedience and resourcefulness to deliver His people with a mighty victory. Look at verse 29.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:29**...At that time they struck down about ten thousand Moabites,¹³ all vigorous and strong; not a man escaped. ³⁰ That day Moab was made subject to Israel, and the land had peace for eighty years.

Now finally, notice that the land had rest for eighty years. That means that they were free from attack or subjugation for two full generations. Most scholars think that "eighty years" here means forty years after Ehud and forty years after Shamgar...a character who is described in verse 31. Notice he gets just one verse

^{NIV} **Judges 3:31**...After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.

Listen to what the Expositors Bible Commentary of the Old Testament says about him.

The reference to Shamgar is brief but intriguing. As with the other minor judges, there is no mention of the sin of Israel. Unlike those judges, however, Shamgar's work was explicitly military. He won an astonishing victory over the Philistines by means of an oxgoad, rivaling Samson's exploits with the jawbone of a donkey. An oxgoad is a stout stick tipped with bronze and used for prodding animals.

Shamgar's use of this weapon implies that the Philistines were already disarming neighboring people.¹⁴

Now it may be that the story of Shamgar is included with the story of Ehud simply because of the nature of his resourcefulness. Here's what I mean by that. Ehud chose a short homemade sword concealed on his right thigh and Shamgar chose a farmer's implement used to drive oxen and clean plows¹⁵ but in the hands of obedient men the weapons they used...the weapons at hand...were more than adequate to do God's bidding. Now whether that is correct or not is something you will want to decide on your own. The point is that Ehud took the offense against God and God's people seriously and became enraged at the awful idolatry he saw and decided to act against it...oblivious to fear...oblivious to everything but the dishonor being heaped on God's name and the suffering being imposed on God's people and so did Shamgar and their obedience...accompanied by the people's return to covenantal faithfulness led to a long period of peace and prosperity.

Now I should point out in passing that the period of peace and prosperity mentioned here in connection with Ehud and Shamgar is extraordinarily long and that as the Book of Judges progresses the intervals of peace even after deliverance by a faithful judge grow shorter and shorter. It seems to me that the idea is that God's patience grows shorter and shorter as the narrative continues simply because the Israelites fail to ever learn the message.

But the point here is that even one man living a faithful life can be a great blessing to God's people...while one man living a life of self-absorption can be a great burden to God's people. That truth finds its ultimate expression in the life of the

Lord Jesus and His ultimate sacrifice in the redemption of the elect but I think it is safe to draw an application that much of impotence today is based not on a lack of numbers or even resources but rather on our lack of faithfulness to attempt what we have been commanded to do.

Let's pray.

¹ Edward J. Young, *A Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1956), 166.

² The notion of sin leading to judgment and obedience leading to prosperity is often referred at Deuteronomistic history...in other words; it is history that points out the implications and blessings of covenant obedience and disobedience. The concept is generally connected to Martin Noth and his famous article. For a review see Richard Nysse, "Review of Deuteronomistic History" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37 (April 1983), 204.

³ Ernst Axel Knauf, "Eglon and Ophrah: Two Toponymic on the book of Judges," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 81 (1998): 29. Knauf notes that the name "Eglon" means "a little calf" and always means someone who is fat...something like today when someone says something mean like, "She's a cow."

⁴ Ernst Axel Knauf, 29. Knauf argues that the names "Eglon" and "Ehud" are inventions of the author of Judges and do not actually represent real people but rather areas. I completely disagree of course.

⁵ Robert G. Boling, *Judges in the Anchor Bible Commentary Series*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Publishers, 1981), 86. He writes; "This roundabout way of saying 'left-handed' is an indication that left-handedness was considered peculiar and unnatural. In the final vignette of the period, the civil war following upon the Gibeah outrage, Benjamin will be said to field seven hundred crack left-banded slingers (20:16)."

⁶ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, "Judges" in *Commentary on the Old Testament Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 296. He writes: "After presenting the gift, Ehud dismissed the people who had carried the present to their own homes; namely, as we learn from ver. 19, after they had gone some distance from Jericho. But he himself returned from the stone-quarries at Gilgal, so. to Jericho to king Eglon. מִן־הַפְּסִילִים refers to some place by Gilgal. In Dent. vii. 25, Isa. xxi. 9, Jer. viii. 19, *pessim* signifies idols. And if we would retain this meaning here, as the LXX., *Vulg.*, and others have done, we must assume that in the neighborhood of Gilgal there were stone idols set up in the open air,—a thing which is very improbable. The rendering "stone quarries," from פָּסִיל, to hew out stones (Ex. xxxiv. 1, etc.), which is the one adopted in the *Chaldee*, and by *Rashi* and others, is more likely to be the correct one."

Modern scholarship tends to disagree with Keil and Delitzsch on this point. The context, I think, favors the view that there were indeed idols at Gilgal.

⁷ Arthur Cundall, *Judges in the TOTC Vol.7* (Downer's Gove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1968), 77. Cundall believes that the stones mentioned are the stones that had been set up by Joshua at Gilgal as a memorial for future generations to remind them of the Lord's bringing them into the land. But that seems unlikely to me. The word used in Joshua 4 is **הָאֲבָנִים**...ebed. The word used in Judges 3 is **פְּסִילִי** which is used normally to indicate carved stones. The stones in Joshua were not carved.

⁸ Leon Wood, *The Distressing Days of the Judges*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1975), 173

⁹ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Judges (2004 Edition)* (<http://www.sent2all.com/Judges.pdf>), 25.

¹⁰ Tom A. Jull, "נוֹקְרָהּ in Judges 3: A Scatological Reading," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 51 (1991): 63-75. Jull proposes a lengthy argument that the room of beams is a second story outhouse for the rotund Eglon.

¹¹ Eric S. Christianson, "A Fistful of Shekels: Scrutinizing Ehud's Entertaining Violence (Judges 3:12-30) in *Biblical Interpretation* 11.01 (2003), 64. He writes: "There are features of our story that suggest its seriousness as well. For example, the use of language more appropriately suited to animal sacrifice was, as Brettler puts it, 'probably jarring to the ancient Israelite ear, leading to the conclusion that sacrifice was the underlying theme of the passage.'"

¹² Herbert Wolf, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Volume 3) - Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, edited by Frank Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1988), see Judges 3:24-5. The "key" may have been a flat piece of wood with pins that corresponded to the pins in a hollow bolt. The bolt was inside the door, and the lock was a piece of wood above the bolt from which the pins fell into the holes of the bolt. When the key was inserted, the pins in the bolt were raised and the bolt could be removed (NBC, p. 242). As stated in the Introduction (Special Problems), God did not necessarily approve of the method used by Ehud. It may be significant that the Spirit of the Lord did not come on Ehud and that he was never described as "judging Israel." Sometime later David condemned the assassination of "an innocent man in his own house" (**2 Sam 4:11**). Yet the innocence or righteousness of Eglon is open to question, and Joshua's earlier policy at Jericho was to kill virtually the entire population (**Josh 6:21, 25**).

¹³ James D. Martin, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: The Book of Judges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 50. Martin and other modern commentators think the number 10,000 here to be figurative. I see no reason why it cannot be literal.

¹⁴ Herbert Wolf, *Judges* 3:31.

¹⁵ S.D. Snyman, "Shamgar Ben Anath: A Farming Warrior or a Farmer at War?" *Vetus Testamentum* 55.01 (2005): 128.