

Use God's Strength

Key Verse: *"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."*
—**Judges 3:15**

Selected Scripture:
Judges 3:7-31; 21:25

TODAY'S LESSON FOCUSES

on two experiences of the deliverance of God's people Israel which followed periods in which they had served other gods. In the first case, they "served Baalim and the groves" (Judg. 3:7), and, as a result, were delivered to the king of Mesopotamia and served him for eight years. Finally, "when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD" (vs. 9), he raised up a faithful deliverer, Othniel. "And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war."—vs. 10

Because of Othniel's faithfulness, the king of Mesopotamia was defeated and "the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died." (vs. 11) One might think that this long period of rest, resulting from God's appointment of Othniel as a judge, would have had the effect on the Israelites of bringing their hearts into closer conformity with the purposes and commandments of God. Such, however, was sadly not the case. After the death of Othniel, "the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD." (vs. 12) This second departure of Israel from serving God resulted in a more severe punishment. This time the Ammonites and Amalekites both attacked Israel; and a third nation, Moab, took the

Israelites to serve them. “So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.”—vs. 14

We note a lesson here. In the first case, God allowed Israel to serve under the king of Mesopotamia for eight years. In the second case, because they had not learned from the first experience, he permitted them to serve Moab for eighteen years. In our life, if God sees us straying from obedience to his will, he may allow a difficult experience to occur which is designed to bring us back into fuller harmony with his plan and will for us. If such an experience, however, fails to accomplish this, God may allow a more severe experience to come. This is not for the purpose of harming us eternally, but to teach the needed lessons of humble obedience to his instructions.

After a period of eighteen years of service to Moab, our Key Verse again indicates that the people cried unto the LORD. He raised up Ehud who, according to the flesh, seemed an unlikely person to deliver them. First, he was from the smallest and most insignificant tribe, Benjamin. Second, he was left-handed, which was thought to be a severe physical shortcoming in any person, much less one chosen to be a leader. The Apostle Paul reminds us that “the weakness of God is stronger than men. . . . God hath chosen the foolish things of the world . . . to confound the things which are mighty: . . . That no flesh should glory in his presence.”—I Cor. 1:25,27,29

Ehud, in God’s strength and by following his detailed instructions (see Judges 3:15-26), killed Eglon king of Moab and gained the release of the Israelites from their hand. Upon learning of the death of Eglon, the Israelites joined Ehud and slew ten thousand of the Moabites “men of valour.” (Judg. 3:29) Just as God had given them the severer experience of serving Moab eighteen years, he now blessed them, not just with forty years of rest (see verse 11), but “the land had rest fourscore years.” (vs. 30) Thus once again obedience was rewarded just as disobedience had been punished. ■