

Judges 3:1-3:31 v1 These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan v2 (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): v3 the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. v4 They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had given their forefathers through Moses. v5 The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. v6 They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

*v7 The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. v8 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years. v9 But when they cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a deliverer, **Othniel son of Kenaz**, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them. v10 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. v11 So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.*

*v12 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. v13 Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. v14 The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years. v15 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. v16 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. v17 He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. v18 After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way the men who had carried it. v19 At the idols near Gilgal 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. v20 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, v21 Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. v22 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. v23 Then Ehud went out to the porch; he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.*

v24 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." v25 They waited to the point of embarrassment, but when he did not open the doors of the room, they took a key and unlocked them. There they saw their Lord fallen to the floor, dead. v26 While they waited, Ehud got away. He passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah. v27 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.

v28 "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. v29 At that time they struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all vigorous and strong; not a man escaped. v30 That day Moab was made subject to Israel, and the land had peace for eighty years.

*v31 After Ehud came **Shamgar son of Anath**, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.*

Introduction

During this last week we had the release of the 3rd and final part of the report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector. As we listen to some of the initial statements regarding the contents of the report, the allegations are shocking and almost unbelievable. I ask myself how a nation could go from the Heights of the Moral standing we had when Nelson Mandela was the President to the state of immoral practices, we hear coming out of the report just released.

Let me say, THIS IS NOTHING NEW. History is littered with examples of Nations and Leaders that had been exceptional in many ways, only to see the Nation fall from grace a few years or decades later.

Israel was no different. From Joseph to Moses, the nation grew stronger and stronger, then 40 years in the Wilderness, then Joshua and Caleb and their generation, then failure.

WHY NATIONS FAIL AND WHO CAN HELP?

Notice, FIRSTLY: **THE REASONS WHY NATIONS FAIL.**

1. Nations FAIL because they do not FOLLOW GODS COMMANDS.

God gave a number of clear instructions for Israel to follow when they entered the Promised Land. They are found in

Deuteronomy 7:1-6 When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations--the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you- v2 and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. v3 Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, v4 for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. v5 This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. v6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

1. **v. 1** Possess the land
2. **v. 2** Utterly destroy all the nations of Canaan
3. **v. 2** Make no peace treaties with them
4. **v. 2** Show them no mercy
5. **v. 3** Refuse to intermarry with them
6. **v. 5** Completely destroy every trace of their pagan religions

THE NATION FAILED IN EVERY COMMAND

We should not be surprised that we are failing as a nation when leaders don't even follow MAN-MADE Laws, let alone the Laws of GOD.

2. Nations FAIL because they FAIL TO RECOGNISE TESTING.

v1 These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan v2 (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): v3 the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. v4 They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had given their forefathers through Moses.

God never tempts us, but he does test us.

We know that GOD doesn't tempt us because of *James 1:13-15*, which says, 'When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; v14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. v15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.'

We know that GOD does test us because of the previous verse *James 1:12*, which says, 'Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.'

Friends, perhaps GOD IS TESTING us as a NATION, to find a LEADER who will be bold about their faith in JESUS. While President Mandela displayed many Christ-like characteristics, HE NEVER, to my knowledge, OPENLY PROFESSED FAITH IN JESUS.

In President Ramaphosa we have the potential of such a person. We know he was a Christian Student leader in his YOUTH. My prayer is that he will repent of his Lukewarm Faith, and turn himself and the Nation BACK TO JESUS. If not give us a Kenneth Meshoe or a Mmusi Maimane, who are not afraid to talk about their love for Jesus.

3. Nations FAIL because they FAIL TO BE DISCIPLINED.

v1 These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan v2 (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): v6 They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

The Nation of Israel ceased to be a Nation who were prepared, for war, and became a nation who were compromised.

When you marry the children of Nations God declared your enemies, you face a dilemma when that Nation turns their back on you. Do you listen to God, who you can't see, or do you listen to your wife, who lives with you?

We are failing as a nation because we are UNDISCIPLINED.

South Africa debt-to-GDP ratio has increased by 37.5 percentage points in ten years, from 26% in 2008/2009 to 63.5% in 2019/2020, 69% at present.

Notice, SECONDLY:

WHO CAN HELP NATIONS THAT ARE FAILING.

1. God uses PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

OTHNIEL – The Nephew of Caleb.

EHUD – From a Nobel Background. He was chosen to take the Tribute.

SHAMGAR – From a Farming Background. His weapon of choice was a farming instrument.

GOD USES WHO HE CHOOSES!!!

2. God uses PEOPLE WITH ALL KIND OF ABILITIES.

OTHNIEL – From a military Background. His father and Uncle Caleb were renown warriors. Caleb was as strong at 80 as when he was 40.

EHUD – He was Left-Handed. In Biblical it was considered as a deformity to be anything but Right-Handed.

SHAMGAR – Although a farmer, he knew how to fight. The name “***Shamgar***” means either “***sword***” or “***cupbearer***”. He is called “***the son of Anath***” - the Canaanite goddess of war.

THE GREATEST ABILITY IS AVAIL-ABILITY!!!

3. God uses PEOPLE WITH ALL KIND OF METHODS.

OTHNIEL – *v10 The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel.* Othniel was a warrior and used military style tactics. The phrase “*into the hands*” indicates that God STRENGTHENED his abilities to give him VICTORY.

EHUD – Used deception and guile to defeat his enemy. The picture of his enemy is of a once mighty warrior who had let himself go, so that he was so fat he could not defend himself. One preacher titled his sermon on Ehud, “How Lefty killed Hefty”. Being Left-Handed gave EHUD the tactical advantage, because nobody would have thought to check for a weapon on the opposite side from which it would normally be kept.

SHAMGAR – Used an Oxgoad – a stick normally used to clean ploughs or prod oxen used in ploughing.

THE BEST TOOL IS THE ONE IN YOUR HAND!!!

God wants to use what you have – not what you think you need. Jesus has gifted each person in the Body of Christ the unique gift the body needs. You don’t need somebody else’s gift to be able to work for Jesus, you just need to use what he has given to you.

4. God EMPOWERS PEOPLE FOR THE UNIQUE TASK.

OTHNIEL – *v10 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war.* The Name OTHNI-EL means “Lion-of-God”. His power came from the infilling of the Holy Spirit. In Judges 14:6, Samson was able to tear a Lion apart when the Spirit of the Lord came on him.

EHUD – *v27 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. v28 **"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.*

Trumpets were sounded for several reasons in Israel. They were blown to announce a feat. They were blown to signal a change of location. (III. The Rapture!) They were blown to demonstrate joy and to praise the Lord. They were blown to call the people to war. That is the purpose here.

SHAMGAR – *who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad.* – The fact that Shamgar could fight and kill 600 enemy soldiers with only a farming implement is a miracle. Only David is spoken of in the same glowing terms.

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE, WE ARE ALWAYS A MAJORITY!!!

5. God uses PEOPLE WHO ARE IN TUNE WITH HIM.

OTHNIEL – *v9 But when they cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a deliverer.* The word DELIVERER is “yaw-shah” which is the same word from which we get the name Jeshua = Jesus.

EHUD – *v13 Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. ... The city was Jericho – Joshua 6:26. The site of the first victory to take the promised land*

v16 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. An obvious reference to Jesus.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Revelation 1:16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

SHAMGAR – “He too saved Israel.” They were “SET FREE”

WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG!!!

CONCLUSION

SO, WHO CAN HELP?

YOU CAN!!!