

Judges 3:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

Analysis

And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

This passage relates to early judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, demonstrating God's sovereign choice and empowerment of deliverers. The judges themselves display varying degrees of faith and character flaws, yet God works through these imperfect human instruments to accomplish His purposes. This illustrates the biblical pattern that God's power is made perfect in human weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Theologically, these early judges establish the pattern of divine deliverance through unlikely means. God chooses the weak, marginalized, and flawed to demonstrate that victory comes from His power, not human strength. This anticipates Paul's teaching that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

The military victories recorded here serve spiritual purposes—they deliver Israel from physical oppression but more importantly provide opportunity for spiritual renewal. Each deliverance creates space for Israel to return to covenant faithfulness. However, the repeated cycles show these deliverances provided only

temporary relief, pointing to the need for the ultimate Deliverer who would provide permanent victory over sin and spiritual oppression through His death and resurrection.

Historical Context

Historical Setting: The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

Cultural Context: This passage relates to early judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1 Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this passage about early judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

Interlinear Text

בְּעֵד	בְּחִדְשָׁה	לְבָב	יָסַג	רְבָבָה	פָּלָבָה	בְּלָבָה	אַמְּרָה	בְּפִאָה	בְּגָם	יָבָבָה	אַיִבָּה	אַיִבָּה	
also went in	H1571	And the haft	after	the blade	closed	and the fat	upon						
H935		H5325	H310	H3851	H5462	H2459	H1157						
מִבְּטָבֵן	וְ	בְּחִדְשָׁה	לְבָבָה	שְׁלַף	בְּלָבָה	מִבְּטָבֵן	וְ	בְּחִדְשָׁה	לְבָבָה	שְׁלַף	בְּלָבָה	מִבְּטָבֵן	
the blade	H3588	H3808	so that he could not draw	H8025		the dagger		the dagger		out of his belly			
H3851						H2719		H990					
אֵלָא	וְ	בְּפִרְשָׁדָנָה:											
came out		and the dirt											
H3318		H6574											