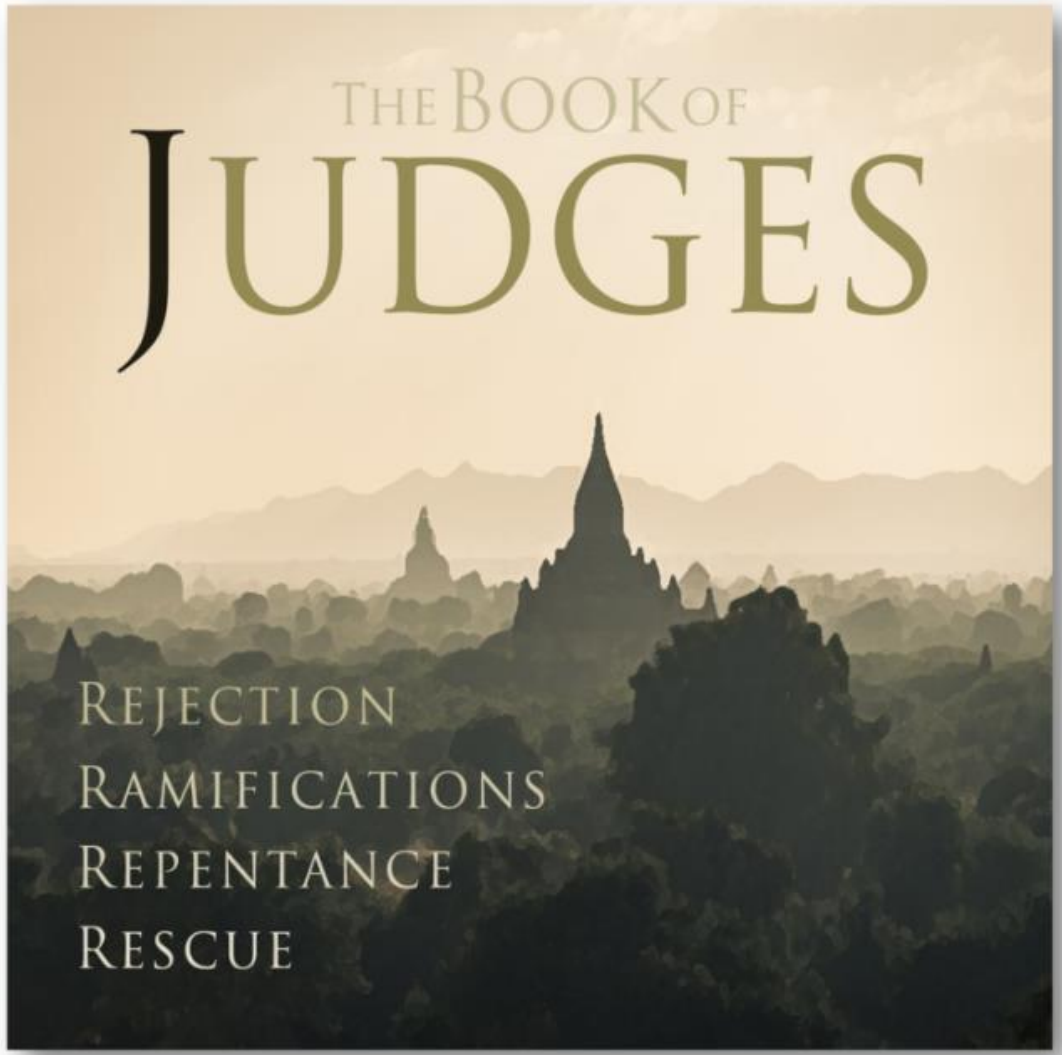


BOOK OF JUDGES



BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 9

RISE AND FALL OF ABIMELECH



1-3 Abimelech rise to power

- 1)
 - Abimelech was a son of Gideon (Jerubaal) by his one concubine.
 - The children of concubines were never in the line of succession to their father:
 - unless he specifically arranged that
 - these children held **a lower** status in society of **Jacob** and his concubines in Genesis 21:31 - 4:24
 - In Jacob's day the sons of the concubines persecuted **the chosen son**, Joseph...
 - Here the one son persecutes and kills the legitimate sons in order to rule himself.
- 2) Abimelech was born and reared in Shechem. He got **his brothers**
 - to agree to let **him** reign – the others had no **DESIRE** for **Power**
 - the successor to Gideon had been chosen **because** no **MONARCHY** had been set up.

vs 3 (NB) Abimelech got his mother's brothers **ie on his mother's side in** Shechem to agree. The **actual** succession belonged to the brothers on **his father's** side (Gideon's side). So the leaders of Shechem agreed to accept Abimelech as their leader: King?

4-5 His **mother's** family gave him "start-up money" from the "temple" of the idol. Abimelech used the money to hire murderers to go to Ophrah and kill all of Gideon's sons and heirs. He wanted **no rivals** to **his** leadership.

→ Notice the absence of a call from God
the absence of grace or guidance from the Holy Spirit
the absence of **EXTERNAL** crisis calling for deliverance for the Chosen People.

- this is the **human will** at its worst – there is NO wisdom, discernment, love, mercy or grace... all is disorder, sin and death.
- a person who murders his way to power is an enemy of the people of God.



Rise of Abimelech

vs 6 Shechem makes Abimelech king

which is worse (i) the murder or (ii) those who crown him king afterwards?
- so they approved of murder?

Now the Chosen People have an **INTERNAL** crisis

- a) they have rejected **The Lord God** as their King
- b) and chose a brutal, cowardly murderer to rule over them.
 - they have chosen the Kingdom of darkness... which will lead to **civil war** because the reign of darkness is also a **reign of death**

C.S. Lewis: "Where, except in uncreated Light, can darkness be drowned?"

Jn 1:4-5 **The light shines in darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it**

Jn 3:19-20 **... but the people loved darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.**

1 Jn 1:5 **God is light. There is no darkness in him at all**

Is 5:20 **How horrible it will be for those who call evil good and good evil... who turn light into darkness**

Ps 82:5 **These oppressors know nothing, they are so ignorant! They wander about in darkness, while the whole world is shaken to the core.**

vs 6 Abimelech's coronation took place at the **SAME TREE** where Joshua placed a copy of the Law of God:
Jos 24:26

- the Word of God was there – but did anyone read or obey it?
- Abimelech was the first person to be crowned king over God's People
 - his reign was short but ran roughshod over **God's** requirements for anyone holding that office!

- * In later history another man Rehoboam broke away from the People of God after the death of King Solomon – taking 10 of the 12 tribes into apostasy with him (1 Kg 12:1,25) ... he **also** went to **Shechem** to secure his kingship – even though the **city itself** was in ruins by then.

7 – 15 Jotham’s Fable: his prophetic warning to those who chose Abimelech

- Jotham survived the man murder of his brothers at Ophrah (vs 5)
 - His prophetic poem was addressed to the men (leaders) of Shechem who had just made a disastrous decision in crowning Abimelech.
- 1) **Listen to me... that God may listen to you!**
The Word of God comes through the Prophet. If they **HEAR** it, they will turn back to God who will hear their prayers.
 - 2) **The trees** symbolise the leaders of God’s People **The Olive... Fig... Vine**
there were golden figures of olive, fig and vine standing in the Presence of God in the Temple in later history.
 - 3) All 3 of them were **TOO IMPORTANT** in **God’s** Reign and descend to seeking **human power**
- especially with violence.
cf Jn 6:15 the Chosen People wanted to make **Jesus** King in the sense of being a military leader to fight and conquer the Romans.

- **His** Mission – to save Humanity from its sins – was far too important to descend to such unworthy activity: Jn 6:15

But when He had given His Service to Humanity He **was** proclaimed King: Jn 19:19

- a) **The olive** provided oil and food to nourish the People of God.
- b) **The Fig** provided food to nourish the People of God.
- c) **The Vine** gave joy through its wine and food...

14-15 **The Thorn Bush** (JB) (Bramble) (KJV)

- this was the useless plant – it gave nothing but **PAIN** through its thorns... it was used for **scourging** and **kindle for fire**
 - “take shelter in my shade” was ironic. The thorn bush was a low plant which gave no shelter.
 - In the great heat and drought of Summer, the thorn bush could **catch fire** spontaneously and cause terrific damage by burning down **VIP** forests.
 - the **cedars of Lebanon** were the most prized trees for **CONSTRUCTION**.
- Ⓜ The murderous despot kills his rivals – who were better than him!
The Lesson: History shows that weak, worthless, wicked men thrust themselves into positions of power... and in the end bring ruin upon themselves and on the people who accept their rule.

Prophetic Message

Jesus came to redeem Humanity from **itself** and its foolish decisions

- a) He is **The True Vine**: Jn 15 Jesus **is** that Vine and we are **His Branches**...
- b) He is **The Olive Tree** and the Holy Spirit is His **Olive oil**
Olive trees are beaten and crushed to produce its oil.
 - Jesus was beaten and crushed in order to give us the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus’ Agony took place in Gethsemane – the olive press! The Gethsemane was an instrument to crush the olives to get the oil from them.

- c) Jesus used the **Fig Tree** as a symbol of **God's Chosen People: Joel 1:7**
Lk 13:6-9; 21:29-31 Mt 21:19-21; 24:32 Mk 11:12-14; 13:28
→ Habakkuk 3:17-19 Jn 1:47-57 Jer 24:2-3 James 3:10-12

d) Jesus is our Food and Life: Jn 6

- e) Jesus accepted the thorn bush on His Head to redeem the **reign of man** on Earth.
He bore the pain and **the fire** of scourging and crowning with thorns to restore the **lordship of Adam** over all the Earth – **to us**

16-21 **Jotham tells the men of Shechem they will pay dearly for choosing Abimelech**

- Jotham spoke to them from **Mount Gerizim** (v 7). This was the mountain where Joshua had the **Blessings** of the Covenant proclaimed to all in Shechem and elsewhere 150 years earlier.
Deut 11:29; 27:12; Joshua 8:33

Jotham asked the men of Shechem to **THINK** about their actions **AND DISCERN** if they could possibly be part of God's Will for them.

- (i) Have you been **JUST** to Gideon (Jerubbaal) who fought for you against the enemy?
- (ii) You have risen up against Jerubbaal **and** his House (extended family) killing his 70 sons
- (iii) You have made the son of Gideon's maidservant (concubine), King
- (iv) Have you acted with Truth and Sincerity with **Gideon's House**?

Conclusion a) If you **have** acted justly – rejoice
b) If not a fire will consume you both, Abimelech and Shechem
- this will be the "fire" of civil war – which happened about 3 years later.

22-25 **Prophecy Fulfilled**

- (i) **God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and Shechem**
- so the men dealt treacherously with Abimelech
 - Peace has been taken from both sides as the leaders of Shechem began to **see** who they put over them as king.
- (ii) Abimelech's "Kingdom" was very small – Shechem, Beth-Millo, Aramah, and Thebez (Judges 9:50). So it was just a portion of West Manasseh.
- it was **not** over the **12 Tribes**, so it is disputed among scholars whether one **should** use the term **KING** – but he was **NOT** a Judge.

The men of Shechem set an ambush against him (Abimelech) **on the tops of the mountains** – this would disrupt the trade routes which benefited Abimelech. He would also see that they no longer acknowledged him or his authority so he is effectively "dethroned".

26-29 **Shechem chooses a new leader**

- (i) They choose **Gaal**, son of Ebed.
- (ii) They celebrated in the "house" of their false god and challenged Abimelech to come out and fight them!

30-33 **Role of Zebul, ruler of the city**

When he heard of the uprising, he informed Abimelech. "Ruler" of the city means a city manager. He advised Abimelech to come and **attack** the city!

- a) Abimelech decided on a surprise attack at night – this was the very successful plan used by Joshua in his campaign and by Gideon against the Midianites –
- b) Zebul deceived Gaal regarding the army coming against him from 3 fronts –
- c) Since Abimelech and his men had the advantage of the mountains, it wasn't difficult to rout Gaal and the men of Shechem.



The Ruins of Shechem

- 42-45** Abimelech attacks the **citizens** of Shechem and conquers the city. With Gaal defeated, Abimelech now turned on **his own town** of Shechem
- on those he called “Brothers” in vs 1-3
 - on those who had conferred kingship on him (1-3)
 - **But** Abimelech had murdered his 70 **actual** Brothers (half-brothers) in Ophrah
 - Now the men of Shechem – who were in apostasy to **the Ba’als** discover that Jotham’s Parable applies **to them**
 - A leader chosen against God’s Will and under the influence of Satan will bring hell-on-earth to them **and** death **by Fire**
- a) **The next day:** The people felt confident enough to go out working – the fields around the city - but Abimelech had divided his men into 3 companies (the usual way for Israelites to fight)
- one lot killed those people in the fields
 - the other entered the city and conquered it **easily** for it was not prepared for war!
- b) Abimelech **demolished the city** and sowed it with salt.
- the **salting of the city** was an ancient ritual curse to prevent it being rebuilt
 - Shechem was not rebuilt again until the time of **Jeroboam** – almost two centuries later:

1 Kgs 12:25

Notice

When a man of violence comes to power **through** violence, it is only a matter of time before he turns on those who gave him power.

- evil turns on evil • evil is not united

46-49 Massacre at the Tower of Shechem

- All the leaders of the city gathered in **the Tower** which was **outside** the confines of the city – like the Round Towers of Ireland.
- Abimelech and his men cut branches of trees and set fire to the Tower killing about 1,000 men and women who **took refuge in it**
 - there were the last survivors of the city of Shechem and this event graphically fulfilled Jotham’s Prophecy in Judges 9:19-20

- **The Tower** they took refuge in was a **FORTRESS** dedicated to the **idols**.
Ba'al Berith = "god" is my strong tower – my fortress... I will be safe! (Judges 9:6)
Beth Millo = House of Millo may be the same place (Judges 9:6)

→ These poor people relied on a worthless "god" and paid with their lives for putting a worthless "King" over them.

We are privileged to know the **Truth The Name** (Person) **of the Lord is a strong Tower;**
the righteous run to it and are safe Prov 18:10

Ps 61:3 **For you have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy**

Ps 32:7 **You are a hiding place for me O Lord. You protect me from trouble.**

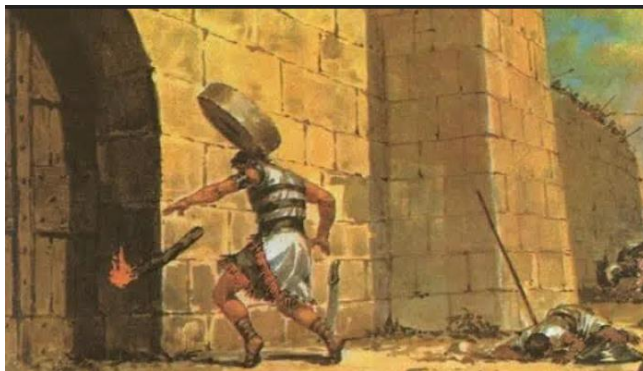
50-55 **Judgement comes to Abimelech**

Abimelech proceeded to attack the city of Thebez... and took it.

There was a strong tower **IN** the city where people took refuge.

He went to the tower to burn it down but a woman threw **a millstone** on his head and crushed his skull.
(another Jaal!!)

- this would have been a hand-held instrument 10-14 inches long and weighing about 5lbs.
- Abimelech asked his armour-bearer to kill him as it was humiliation to be killed by a woman!
- Nevertheless history remembered the woman! **2 Sam 11:21**



Abimelech's Revenge and Downfall (9:42 – 57)

- Not satisfied with Gaal's defeat, Abimelech **attacked** the unsuspecting Schechemites on their way out to their **fields**, because they supported his enemy (v 42 – 43)
- He stood at the city **gate** watching the attack and then fought against the city all day (v 45)
- All the remaining leaders took refuge in the Tower of Shechem, so Abimelech gathered **BRUSHWOOD**

56-57 **Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech**

Rom 12:19-21 **"Vengeance is mine, I will repay" says the Lord**

There are different ways to look at this: evil recoils on itself.

Abimelech is an example of **A DESTROYER**: in Rev 11:18 God says:

I will destroy the destroyers of the Earth.

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 10

Two Minor Judges and More Oppression

1-2 **Tola** from Issachar judged Israel for 23 years.

No detail is given but his long service gave Israel **peace** for **23 years**.

3-5 **Jair** from **Gilead** on the Transjordanian side

Nothing is said of him except that he judged for **22 years**.

vs 6 Back to “normal” for the Book of Judges! Apostasy, servitude and supplication to God!!

Then the children of Israel (Israel means descendants of the troubled Jacob!) **again did evil in the sight of the Lord.**

(NB) This phase is repeated **seven** times in the Book of Judges!

But the problem **deepens** with each relapse – now they are serving **many** false gods: Ba’als, Ashtoreths, gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammon **And** the Philistines!!

- every manifestation of Satan that was available in **their** “whole world! cf Ex 20:3-6 Habakkuk 2:18

What attracted them to these idols?

(i) Maybe the beauty of the statue **(ie)** the artwork **“the work of human hands”** Is 44:9-20
cf **Ps 115:4-9 Jer ch10 on idols** (read)

(ii) Maybe it was the sexual licence at these shrines.
Ashtoreth was a goddess of **fertility** which was vital for survival but awful excesses occurred at “her” shrines.

(iii) Maybe they were just **useful**: The Ba’al was the “god” of **Weather** and “he” was needed to ensure **rain** for crops. cf **1 Kgs ch 18** where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal **to produce RAIN** ... to no avail!

(iv) Maybe it was the fact that Kings got false priests to use **VENTRILLOQUISM** to get the idol “to speak” cf **Daniel 14:1-22**

(v) Maybe because God demands **HOLINESS** cf Jer 11:44-45; Leviticus **19:2; 20:26; 21:8**
and this was considered **too severe** **1 Pet 1:13-16** Deut 23:14

- **The draw** of idol worship **was** that it was **useful** and easy on the flesh.
 - there were no demands on **LOVE, SACRIFICE** or **SELF-GIVING**
 - it was selfish and self-serving ultimately.

Lesson: Nothing has changed! God has not changed / Satan has not changed
But Humanity **SHOULD** have changed with **REDEMPTION: 1 Jn 5:21**

- Yet the world **today** has more idols than in the past
is **more** self-serving... **more** immoral etc: Gal 4:8-9; 5:19-21

- But the teaching of Scripture **HAS NOT CHANGED** either!
It shows us the Way to **Heaven!** cf 1 Cor 10:14

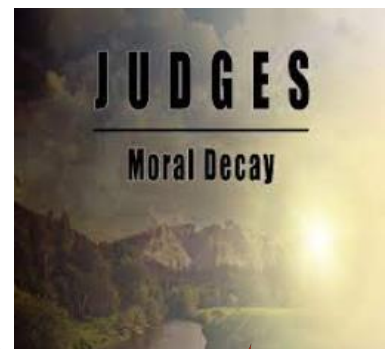
(NB) **The fall** of God’s people happens when:

- (i) they turn **away** from God **TO** anything/anyone else
- (ii) they reject **The Word of God** for the deceptions of the world and Satan
- (iii) they turn away from loving their neighbour to a self-serving life-style

cf Mt 24:27-39 **It will be as it was in the days of Noah...**

cf 2 Tim 3:1-5 **In the last days...**

cf **Rom 1:21-23**



So let us not **judge** the people at the time of the Book of Judges – since they lived centuries **BEFORE** Redemption. We live 2,000 years **AFTER** Redemption.

- God **had** to show **us** through them what happens when society deteriorates into godlessness and immorality **because** He wants to save us **FROM** ourselves!



7-9 Israel's Servitude: God **sold them into the hands of the Philistines... and Ammon for 18 years.**

They had been serving the gods of the Philistines and the Ammonites anyway –

- now they were “sold” to them (ie) God permitted the **RESULTS** of their apostasy. **They were harassed and oppressed... and severely distressed.**
- this is the result of entering **Satan's** kingdom!
The Enemy **HATES** us and wants to **destroy** us **for he is THE DESTROYER:** Rev 9:11

10-14 Israel calls upon the Lord: They go back to the **True God** when they **are in trouble**

- this is a sign that they do not **relate** to God **AS FATHER** or **LORD**
- God is **now USEFUL** in time of need! (Humans take note!!)
- But as soon as God delivers them they return to their evil ways (ie) God is asked to do **their** will!
The weak, sickly human will rules... bringing **CHAOS** in its wake.

(NB) This was **NOT true Repentance** – a day **acceptable to the Lord** cf Is ch 58 Job 1:13-20 2 Cor 6:1-3
Is 30:15 Ps 19:14

(NB) **God's REPLY** to Israel was **SHOCKING!** **Therefore I will deliver you NO MORE**

- even God can say **ENOUGH!** He had repeatedly saved them, but they were self-willed!
- but He was reduced to a **CONVENIENT SAVIOUR**
- modern world take **note!** People can go through a **RITUAL** of repentance **WITHOUT** a genuine CHANGE of heart!
- the people have to become **sick of their sins** to turn to God effectively...

v 14 Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen; let them deliver you...

- Here God tells them to go and **find out** if these false gods are **REAL**
- whether they are **TRUE RIVALS** to the Creator and Lord of the Universe.

15-16 Partial Deliverance

Even half-hearted repentance draws mercy from God!

- God has a **SOFT HEART** for the repentant sinner: cf Lk 15 (Prodigal son), 18:9-14 (Tax collector)
19:1-9 (Zacchaeus)

- The people heeded God's warning – but they **KNEW** that He wouldn't give up on them!
 - after all He was covenanted to them and **He** never breaks **His Word**
- **Do to us what seems best to you** – this sounds like total surrender to God's Will!
This is the moment of grace – if only they would persevere in it.
- **The sign** they gave to God that they **were sincere they put away their foreign gods.**
 - a change of heart requires **ACTION** – reparation and restitution where needed (Zacchaeus)

(NB) they **have** to learn that 'the **worst** of serving God is better than **the best** of serving idols'

vs 16 Our soft-hearted God: His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

This **Infinitely Loving Parent** wants His children happy for eternity.

He does not want to see them suffering – even if it is the result of their own decisions and actions.

cf Phil 4:4-7 **What God wants is your happiness**

cf Ezek 33:11 (18:23) **I desire not the death of the wicked but that he convert and live.**

17-18 Israel gathers for war WITHOUT a LEADER!

The Ammonite (descendants of one of the daughters of Lot) offensive was in Gilead on the East side of the Jordan.

Israel gathered for defence at Mizpah.

Where was **the Judge** called by God to lead them?

God's people are always referred to as **SHEEP** who desperately **NEED** a Shepherd!

God Himself was **The Great Shepherd**

cf Ps 23, 80:1, 95:7, 79:13, 100:3; Gen 49:24 Ezek 34:31 1 Pet 5:2; Jn 10; Lk 12:32; Acts 20:28-29

Is 40:11 **Like a shepherd He will tend His flock**
In His arm He will gather the lambs to carry them in His bosom;
He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

(NB) Israel must **not** take on the enemy **without a leader appointed by God**
-they will fail utterly; the enemy will wipe them out. (Remember Joshua!)

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 11

Jephthah



1-3 Jephthah was from Gilead on the Eastern side of the Jordan.
He was the son of a harlot and had **NO STATUS** in the family or clan.
He was a mighty man of valor yet despised by his brothers and thrown out as **WORTHLESS** for they were the sons of the legitimate wife.

- Gilead was the general term for the lands of Reuben, Gad and ½ Manasseh in Transjordania.
- Gilead was Jephthah's **father's** name, so he must have been the leader of the Eastern Tribes of Israel.
Jephthah fled from his brothers... to TOB an area in modern day **Syria**.

- Ⓝ Neither his parentage nor his low social status mean anything to God, who called this man to be the next judge over the Chosen People.
- It's not where you come from, but where you are going to, that matters in life.
 - Jephthah is listed in **Hebrews ch 11** among the heroes of faith!

TOB seems to have been a desolate place about 15 miles north-east of **Ramoth-Gilead** which lay just on the border between Israel and the territory of **Ammon**.

Worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went RAIDING with him

- a superficial reading gives the impression that these were **BANDITS**
 - But that is **not** the case. The men who joined Jephthah were **also family rejects!!**
 - **Worthless** also means **poor** and **homeless...** they understood each other.
 - the **fact** that they were not **criminal** will become obvious as we proceed.
- It seems that their **RAIDING** on the border of Israel and Ammon was a way of protecting the Israelite land from **INVASION**... they had experience of conflict, cf 1 Sam 25:4-8, where David and his men acted in the same way after he was rejected by King Saul...
 - the result was that this group of men became **famous warriors** who won every battle against the Philistines – whom they got to know very well in all their skirmishes.
 - In the same way Jephthah and his men became experienced warriors against the Ammonites.

4-8 Elders of Gilead call upon Jephthah's leadership and skills

The people of Ammon made war against Israel and the groups best suited to deal with them was Jephthah's men.

- The Ammonites were a semi-nomadic group which descended from Abraham's nephew, **Lot!**

Jephthah's Response **Did you not hate me and expel me from my father's house?
Why have you come to me when you are in distress?**

Jephthah reminded them of **the distress** they caused him as a youth so it is not logical that they now expect **him** to get them out of this fix!

- Yet the Elders **NEED** Jephthah as he is the only experienced warrior and leader among them.
Come and be our commander against the people of Ammon.
- They offer him a **PRIZE** **Be our HEAD over all the peoples of Gilead**
 - they offer him leadership **AFTER** the war... from 'rags to riches'
 - from outlaw to Ruler over **his whole household** and people!

9-11 Jephthah's Response He was willing to take leadership **IN** the crisis **only** if he was also leader after the crisis:

- he was not going to risk being **rejected a second time** if it **suited** them!
- Then the Elders – who were desperate for help – **SWORE** to their word.
- This meeting took place **before the Lord** at **Mizpah** (see map)
 - this was the place where Laban and Jacob made a pact in Gen 31:43-50

Mizpah = "watch" This was a warning to keep your promise or there would be consequences.

- so Jephthah was appointed **Commander of the Lord's armies!** Remember **Joshua 5?**
- only the one who visited Joshua was the **Commander of God's armies!!**
- How quickly we forget! cf Joel 2:11; Psalm 46:7; Psalm 18:29,39; 1 Sam 17-45

12-13 Jephthah negotiates with the Ammonite King – whom he would have known well!

- He took a gentle approach to see if negotiation would solve the problem.
What have you against me that you have come to fight me in my land?
- The reply was that Israel had **no right** to this land – which they took in war.

14-28 Jephthah Response to Ammonite King

- Jephthah told the story of **the Exodus** detailing **HOW** and **WHY** Israel came into possession of the land eg they had fought and conquered **Sihon**, King of the **Amorites** – who ruled land that had **previously** belonged to the **Ammonites!**
- Jephthah argued that since **God** gave this land to the Israelites – **they** had no further **claim** on it.
- Then Jephthah produces **a brilliant** argument. **Will you not possess whatever **CHEMOSH** your god gives you to possess?**
 - this false god must show himself **worthy** to possess this land which the only **True God** had given to Israel **300 years ago!!** **Who is stronger?**

(NB) The period covered by the Judges is about 319 years!

- Chemosh was traditionally the god of the **Amorites** but these peoples of Middle East often just gave different names to the **same** false god, eg Chemosh and Milcom

(NB) Jephthah showed wisdom in treating the problem as a **Spiritual Battle** which all wars are ultimately.
Result: Jephthah's words were rejected so war as **inevitable**.

vs 29 **The call** and **a Vow** **Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah.**

God accepted Jephthah as Leader and strengthened him through the Holy Spirit for the Battle. God wanted to guide him as He did Joshua but Jephthah is not like **Joshua!**

30-31 **A Rash Vow:** Thinking that he would get **victory** from God, Jephthah made a **Rash** vow

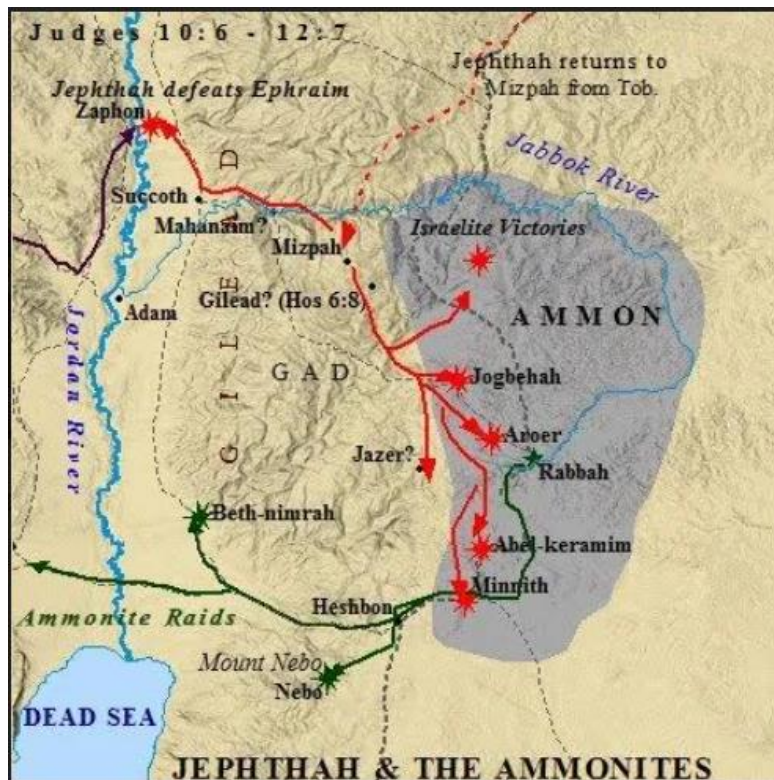


- but we can't **manipulate God**: we can't say 'I'll do this IF you do that' because this means asking the Divine Will to lower itself to the level of the **human will** which is weak and sickly.
- the perfect solution – as Joshua discovered, was to do **God's Will**

Whatever } **comes out of my house to meet me, I will sacrifice it.**
Whoever }

(NB) This statement is disputed by scholars: the text is **masculine** gender and so it can read **WHATEVER** instead of **WHOEVER**
WHATEVER would be an animal which will be sacrificed.

(NB) Since **HUMAN** sacrifice was strictly forbidden by Mosaic Law, reading **WHOEVER** is a problem since Jephthah is presented as a **good** man.
So "I will sacrifice it" could be read as "**I will CONSECRATE to the Lord**" cf Lev 18:21 Deut 12:31



32-33 Victory over the Ammonites and the Lord delivered them into his hands

- this was a **VIP** victory for Israel
- he had overcome bitterness and family rejection to bring his People to Victory
- his forgiveness was more important than his rash vow.

34-35 Heartbreaking in fulfilling his Vow: Jephthah only child, his daughter came out first

- an advisor would have told him **NOT** to fulfil it, if it meant **breaking God's law** in killing his daughter!
- we cannot glorify God by breaking His commandments!
- yet Jephthah felt **obliged** to fulfil his vow! He had given **his Word and** God had given **him Victory**.
cf Eccles 5:1-2 and 5:4-6 speak of the danger of making foolish vows.

Lesson on a completely **different level** when we have made proper vows or promises to the Lord, we must fulfil these **My vows to the Lord I will fulfil before all His People**

- **We cannot** go back **on our word** of **commitment** to the Lord
 - (i) just to avoid persecution or mocking by worldly people
 - (ii) not even in **small** things

36-40 Jephthah fulfils his VOW: Some people think Jephthah actually killed his daughter

- if he did it was wrong
- She asked to be allowed to go into the mountains for 2 months **to bewail her virginity** – in those days virginity was NOT prized. It was **a shame**.
- Jephthah daughter didn't rebel against her father's vow
 - but only the fact that she would never be **a mother**

Another Interpretation

- If Jephthah set his daughter aside for **Tabernacle Service** – it would mean that he **consecrated** her and she would live her life there in virginity...

cf Lev 27:2-4:

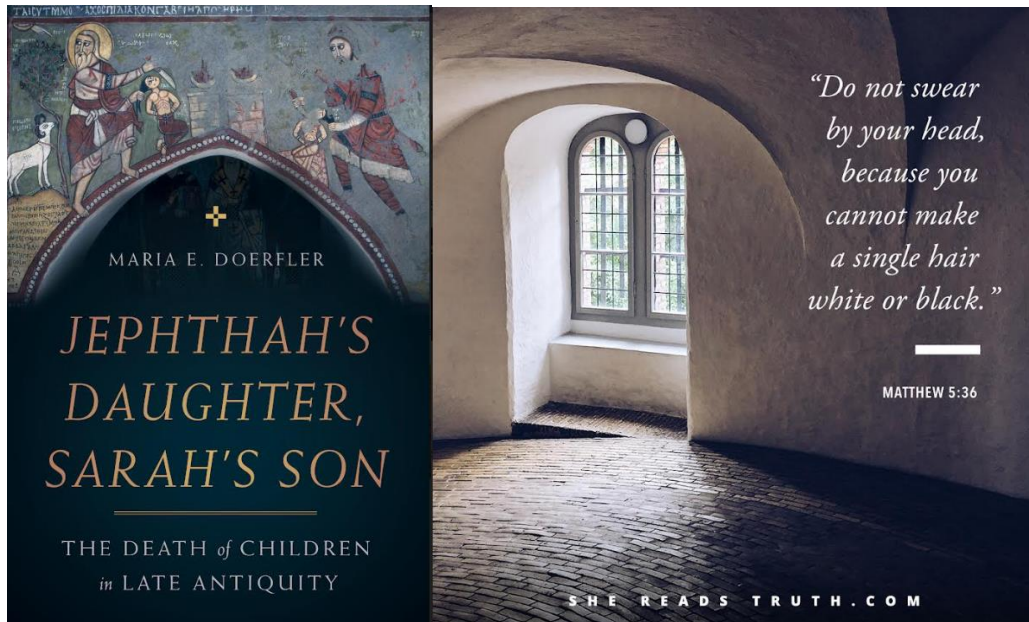
Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "when a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to the Lord, according to your valuation

– if a male 20-60 years old... 50 shekels of silver

– if a female... 30 shekels

- this means that animals were sacrificed but people were "sold" into service.
- Women who were set apart for Tabernacle Service were called "the women who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting": Ex 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22
 - it is more likely that Jephthah's daughter became one of these women.

(NB) If Heb 11:32 calls Jephthah **a hero** of the faith, he couldn't have killed his daughter as if she were just an animal!



Remember Abraham and Isaac in Genesis ch 22?

Let's look at both incidents.

- (i) God **asked** Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to Him as **an act of total surrender** to the Divine Will... **entrusting the future to God, entrusting God to fulfil all His Promises even when that seems impossible to us.... to lay down his heart and his heart's desire on the altar of God.** Abraham obeyed, and God **prevented** the death of his son, replacing him with a ram caught in the bushes.
- (ii) Jephthah made his decision in order to try and influence God to do what he wanted... it was **not** God's Will to kill the young woman.

Both fathers loved their children, but loved God above all things...

Both fathers broke their hearts in carrying the action out...

Both are called heroes of the faith: Heb ch 11

Abraham's action was **wise and heroic**, but Jephthah's action was **unwise yet heroic!**

Lesson:

It is better to do God's Will rather than the human will. Jesus said: **By their fruits you will know them!**

What the Book of Proverbs says about your 'word'

It has 50 proverbs on the 'word' – here are a few samples

- 17:27** **A person who can control his tongue has knowledge** ... that means has understanding. **A man of discernment keeps his temper cool**... so the control of the tongue is extremely important. It is the exact opposite of this rash vow that Jephthah took.
- 18:4** **Deep waters, such are the words of man, swelling torrent, a fountain of life** ... so our words can have a much, much, much deeper effect than we ever intended. It was never Jephthah's intention to kill his daughter. And if he hadn't made this rash vow, he wouldn't have consecrated her to the temple, if that is what he did. So what he actually did to his only child would never have happened if he had never taken that rash vow. So controlling the tongue is extremely important.
- 18:21** **Death and life are in the gift of the tongue; those who indulge it must eat the fruit that it yields.** ... Now death was in Jephthah's tongue if it actually resulted in his daughter being killed. So the tongue is very powerful. Just with the tongue the Judge can send somebody to their death; just with the tongue the judge can set somebody free – life or death. But this can happen on the spiritual plane that with criticism and condemnation we can actually kill off a person's spirit; and with acknowledgement and love we can actually build a person up.
- 10:19** **There is never a flow of words without fault.** ... watch the tongue!

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 12

Jephthah and the Ephraimites

v 1 The men of Ephraim were angry with Jephthah

Now that the battle is over and the “glory” goes to Jephthah, the Ephraimites complain:

- they **want** the glory and fame of Gideon in Judges 8:1-3
- they considered themselves the most prestigious tribe of Israel because their ancestor **Joseph** had ruled Egypt... they were of **Royal** lineage!
- this problem persisted up to the time of the monarchy when Jeroboam the first broke away from the South and formed the Kingdom of Ephraim in the North.
- they took 10 of the 12 tribes with him leaving only Judah and Benjamin in the South to form the Kingdom of Judah.

Ⓝ They threaten to **BURN** Jephthah’s house down – showing they considered **him worthless!**
This is too much for a man who has been humiliated all his life!

2-3 Jephthah’s Response 1) **The Lord delivered them into my hand**
2) **When I called you, you did NOT deliver me out of their hands.**

Jephthah told **the truth**: the victory was **God’s** and the glory and fame are **His** alone.

: the Ephraimites refused to join the campaign showing **they despised Jephthah!**

Ⓝ The Ephraimites thought only of themselves: self-centred people don’t glorify **God** and don’t acknowledge the worth of others – or their achievements.

4-6 Fraternal War

1) The men of Gilead fought and defeated Ephraim easily – so Ephraim is **not** strengthened by the Presence or Power of God.

2) The men of Ephraim were identified by their **DIALECT**, as they tried to cross the Jordan River.
- they were killed there – 40,000 of them... Ⓝ a large number.

eg In World War II German Soldiers identified Russian soldiers by dialect also!

a) The Russian Jews pronounced CORN as “Kookoo Rooca”
- their pronunciation revealed their ethnic background.

b) In Mt 26:73 Peter was **also** identified by his Galilean accent.

Note “Shibboleth” came into the English language as something which determines which side you are on
- Ⓝ the “acid test”

In general we **give ourselves away** in our speech. cf Proverbs

In our speech:

Ⓝ we reveal faith or unbelief / Christian or other
we reveal our political party; sports team, etc., likes and dislikes

v 7 Jephthah judged for 6 years and died

8-10 Three Minor Judges

1) **IBZAN** judged for 7 years

He lived in Bethlehem – but not the one in **Judah**.

This was in the territory of Zebulun – 10 miles north of Megiddo (Joshua 19:18)

11-12 2) **ELON** from Zebulun judged 10 years.

13-15 3) **ABDON** the Pirathonite judged for 8 years.

He was buried in the mountains of the Amalekites – those people who were cursed because of their treatment of the weakest and most vulnerable when Israel wandered in the Wilderness:

Ex 17:8-13 Deut 25:17-19 1 Sam 15:2-3

Note that Judges rose up from different tribes to lead the Chosen People.