

Judges 10:6-12:7 Jephthah

Characters: Narrator, Jephthah, teacher, Yahweh, Leader 1, Leader 2, Leader 3, King of Ammon, Daughter, Ephraimite and CROWD

Scene 1: Gilead, Province in Israel, east of the Jordan River

Narrator, Yahweh, teacher, and Crowd

[narrator:] PREVIOUSLY in JUDGES: the people do what is evil so God sends Moabites to oppress them, God raises up the skillful, left handed Ehud to kill a king so fat and dumb that he sends away all of his guards just because Ehud asked him to.

THEN: the people do what is evil so God sends Canaanites to oppress them, when the people cry out God raises up the scaredy-cat Barak who needs a woman to hold his hand. His enemy, the over-confident sea rat named Sisera is killed by his friend's wife who drives a tent-peg through his head.

*[Reading
in EPIC
voice]*



THEN: the people do what is evil so God send Midianites to oppress them, when the people cry out God raised up Gideon, a man who needs 5 different signs from God before he'll do anything. After defeating an army of 135,000 men with only 300 soldiers some trumpets and clay pots he goes on a crazy revenge quest that ends in him brutally murdering hundreds of innocent people and reinstating Baal worship in Israel. After that his son burns 1,000 men and women alive and starts a civil conflict that ends only when a woman kills him by hitting him in the head with a rock.

NOW! In a cycle that is getting annoyingly repetitive, the people once again do what is evil, they are worshipping the Baals, the Ashtaroths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidom, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammorites and the gods of Philistines

[teacher:] all right kids let's count the Gods that the Israelites served besides Yahweh together.

ONE- the Baals

TWO- the Ashtaroth

THREE- the gods of Syria

FOUR- the gods of Sidom

FIVE- the gods of Moab

SIX- the gods of the Ammonites

SEVEN- the gods of the Philistines

*[Excited
to the
point of
being
annoying]*



That's 1-2-3-4-5-6-7! SEVEN gods!

[narrator:] So God sent the Philistines and the Ammonites to oppress them. The people of Israel suffered for 18 years, after seeking every God besides Yahweh they finally return to Him.





[Crowd:] GOD, HELP US!!!

10:13-



[Yahweh:] You worshipped literally every other God you could think to worship before you came to me for help. I mean if worshipping shoes were a thing, you'd have tried it by now.



[Crowd:] we're really sorry!

10:15



[Yahweh:] that's what you said when I sent you Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Barak, Gideon, Tola and Jair

10:16



[Crowd:] this time we mean it! Look we are putting away all of our idols! *crowd hides idols*

crowd makes crying and groaning sounds excessively



[Yahweh:] Fine.

Yahweh leaves the scene and returns only in the background later

Scene 2: Jephthah's Home in Tob

Narrator, Leader 1, Leader 2, Leader 3, Jephthah

10:17

[Narrator:] The Ammonites camped on the borders of Gilead, the Eastern front of Israel and prepared to invade.

10:18



[leader 1:] we need someone who will lead us against the Ammonites, it seems that Yahweh has not answered us. It's been 18 years without an Army, do we know ANYONE that still knows how to fight?



[leader 2:] someone who could do that would be like a king over us!



[leader 3:] I know someone, he's a man who has lived in the wilderness to the South. He runs a small gang that dominates the region. He's been a dangerous fighter his whole life, physically strong and intimidating, a man who sticks to his word no matter the cost.



[leader 1:] that's exactly who we need! Who is he?



[leader 3:] *long sigh* He's my brother.



[leader 2:] and you haven't mentioned this before because...

11:1-3



[leader 3:] we're not on good terms. His mother was a prostitute, growing up he was always picked on, so he grew up strong. People were drawn to him and we feared once father died that he would take our inheritances, so we forced him out while he was still young. Forcing him into the wilderness is probably what made him the warrior he is. There must be someone else...

11:4-5

[narrator:] There was no one else, so once the invasion began the leaders went to find Jephthah.

11:6



[leader 1:] Jephthah! Come and be our leader! Fight against the Ammonites

11:7



[Jephthah:] You are the same ones who drove me from my father's house, now you come to me for help?! Get out of here!

11:8



[leader 3:] *spoken painfully* please, Jephthah, we need you. You will rule over us if you win against the Ammonites

11:9



[Jephthah:] you will bring me home and make me leader now.

11:10-11



[leader 2:] we will do as you say, Yahweh as our witness

Scene 3: Jephthah Negotiates

Narrator, Jephthah, king of Ammon, teacher

11:12

[narrator:] Jephthah sends messengers to the king of the Ammonites in attempts to settle their issues without conflict or bloodshed.



[Jephthah:] why are you invading us? What did we do to you?



[king of Ammon:] maybe you forget, but this is our land, not yours, you took it!



[Jephthah:] I think you are mis-remembering. Time for a History lesson...

[teacher:] OK KIDS! We have to go all the way BAAACK to Genesis.

Most of the people living in Canaan are relatives to the Israelites. Abraham had a son named Isaac, he has two sons Esau and Jacob, Jacob got renamed Israel.

11:12-22



In last week's story, the Midianites were related to Abraham. One of his other sons. But Abraham had a nephew named Lot. He had two sons... with his daughters... awkward... named Moab and Ammon.

In Deuteronomy 2 God told Israel they were not allowed to take the land of either of them because HE Gave them those lands. BUT... when the Israelites came out of Egypt and were ready to take their land, Ammon and Moab wouldn't let them through. So they had a big fight, lots of people died and Israel took their land.

11:23-24



[Jephthah:] Yahweh gave us our land and Chemosh, your God, gave you your land. So, since Yahweh gave us this land, we're gonna keep it.



[teacher:] PAUSE!!! I'm sure Jephthah didn't MEAN to say that CHEMOSH gave them their land, he meant YAHWEH gave them their land. Surely, a leader wouldn't be so confused as to suggest that other gods exist and are responsible for the care of their own people... no no, we only believe in ONE GOD—just ignore the idols we're still hiding.

11:25-27



[Jephthah:] *aside to the teacher* ... I meant what I said.

turning back to King of Ammon Not to mention these lands were taken 300 years ago! Why do you want them back all of a sudden?

If we go to war Yahweh will be the judge between US! ... and he's gonna pick me!

11:28



[narrator:] the king of Ammon did not listen. Shocking... I know.

Scene 4: Jephthah makes a vow

Narrator, Jephthah, daughter,

YAHWEH Appears in background and empowers Jephthah

11:29



[narrator:] what happens next is strange, Jephthah although stating how certain he was that Yahweh would help him win he attempts to bribe Yahweh.

11:30-31



[Jephthah:] Hey God, so listen, I'm not certain that we can win, if I give you something you'd like, will you let me live through this? What do you like... well I don't know what you like. I've never read your law and most people around here don't talk to you. But all the OTHER GODS like human sacrifices most, so that must be what you like! Whatever comes out of my house to greet me when I get home I will sacrifice to you! Would you like that? Ok good

meanwhile God is in the background shaking his head and waving his arms saying NO!

[YAHWEH EXISTS THE SCENE AND DOES NOT RETURN]

11:32-34



[narrator:] the time has come for the big fight scene, Jephthah goes to war and wins. It's a little anti-climactic really. Next Jephthah returns home and who walks out the door leading the procession to greet him? ...HIS ONLY DAUGHTER.

Daughter is dancing and singing and hugs her father

11:35



[Jephthah:] *falls to the ground weeping and screaming* DAUGHTER WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!!!! I told Yahweh that I would sacrifice whatever came out of my house first and it is you! He will curse me and ruin me if I do not keep my word. Yahweh would never let anyone back out of a promise even if it brings them and others to ruin and causes deep sin, I must do this thing!

11:36-37



[daughter:] that is what we believe about Yahweh. But you must do it. Give me time, I will go with friends to mourn that I was never old enough to marry and have children to carry on our family. At the end of that time I will return, and you can do what you must.

11:38-40



[narrator:] despite God's law having much to say about Yahweh not ever wanting human sacrifices, it all takes place. The daughter leaves and when she returns Jephthah sacrifices her. For many years after this, women of Israel commemorated her tragic death.

Scene 5: Civil Conflict... again




Narrator, Jephthah, Ephraimite

12:1

[narrator:] Some time passes, and like other stories in Judges, other Israelites show up, angered that they were not invited to battle.



[Ephraimite:] Jephthah! Why didn't you invite us to go to war with you?

- 12:2-3  **[Jephthah:]** Umm... I DID. Where we you? Nowhere! So I took things into my own hands and Yahweh saved me. So what? Now you want to fight?
- 12:4  **[Ephraimite:]** You Gileadites, are a weak! You don't even deserve to have your own country, you are leeches sucking off the power of your bigger brothers Us and Manasseh.
- 12:5-7  **[narrator:]** At this comment Jephthah led Gilead in combat against the Ephraimites. They captured all the FORDS (old school bridge) and whenever the Ephraimites tried to cross they would ask them to say a Hebrew word. Apparently the Ephraimites had an accent and couldn't say the word right and they would kill them.
- By the end of this time 42,000 fellow Israelites were killed by Jephthah and his men.
- The end.

Small Group Guide

A Discussion about the Story (for concrete brains)

Why do you think Jephthah made the promise to sacrifice his daughter in the first place?

Review Judges 11:24—is it possible that Jephthah doesn't understand God and thinks this is something he wants? Have you ever tried to "bribe" God?

Why does God not stop Jephthah from killing his daughter?

Review GENESIS 22:9-13 Where God stops Abraham, what makes Genesis 22 different?

Why do you think Civil conflict keeps erupting?

Read Hebrews 11:32-34, Why is Jephthah listed in the "hall of faith"?

EVEN DEEPER (for students with big brains!)

Why can no community flourish without God as its center?

Why does God allow Human freewill to exist even when it leads to the destruction of others?

Why does God use flawed people to accomplish his purposes?