

INTRO

In the 1st ½ of ch8, starting with a force of just 300, Gideon whoops the Midianites who've ravaged Israel for 7 yrs. It's a stunning victory. So

Gideon's trophy • 8:22-28

²² Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian."

Gideon's proven to be quite the man, so they ask him to become ruler.

Not just him though; they propose to make his family a **royal dynasty**.

²³ But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."

Gideon knew Israel was supposed to be a theocracy; not a monarchy. God was their King.

Gid shows a remarkable humility here.

Listen: It's good to be king. Who **doesn't want** to be king / queen?

Few are those who'd turn down the offer when handed them on a plate like this.

Gideon does because he knows taking the position offered would not be blessed by God.

He's just experienced the sweetness of centering himself in that blessing.

He's not going to give it up.

²⁴ Then Gideon said to them, "I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder." For they had golden earrings, because they [**that is, the Midianites**] were Ishmaelites.

Ishmaelite referred to the **culture** of ALL the nomads who occupied the Saudi peninsula.

All the men wore large gold earrings.

It was the custom of ancient warfare that the leader of a battle had the right to take his choice of the spoil.

Each warrior got to keep 1 item of whatever he'd taken as loot the rest was put in a communal heap.

Then the leader took what he wanted.

Then came the next tier of command, & the next, and so on down to the common foot soldier.

Gid asked for just the earrings; a humble request no one balked at.

²⁵ So they answered, "We will gladly give *them*." And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the

earrings from his plunder. ²⁶ Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1700 *shekels* of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that *were* around their camels' necks.

The weight of gold from the earrings was ~ 50 lbs; no small sum.

The rest of the loot Gideon took comes from what we ended with last week – the gear he took from the two Midianite kings, Zalmunna & Zeba.

²⁷ Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

Gideon melted down the gold and made a special vestment called an ephod, something worn by a priest when performing his office.

Now: Why would Gideon make a priest's garment?

He's from the tribe of Manasseh, not the priestly tribe of Levi.

He'd just refused the kingship because that was God's role.

So why does Gid seem willing to take on the task of a priest when that too was forbidden.

The text doesn't say; but we can make a good guess The priests weren't doing their job.

Their failure to stand against idolatry led to the Midianite-scourge in the first place.

If the priests won't do their job, somebody has to. Why not Gid?

After all, God had **appeared, spoken to, & called** him.

He figured he couldn't lead Israel **politically**, but he **could** lead it **religiously**.

In reality, Gid **ought to have led** within the sphere of his calling, **which was to simply be a godly man**.

His influence flowed from his faith; his trust in God, not a label or office.

When he sought an office that wasn't his, it all fell apart.

And that's a tale that's been repeated endlessly.

One of the great banes of Church History is the ambitious who seek office with a call or anointing by God.

Like Gideon, they're dynamic & skilled in other ways, but they're **not called** by God to lead His flock.

²⁸ Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for 40 years in the days of Gideon.

Gideon's error, while glaring, took a while to settle in.

It's during the time of his sons it comes back to haunt Israel.

Gideon dies & Israel reverts to form • 8:29-35

²⁹ Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. ³⁰ Gideon had 70 sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives.

Gideon was the son of Joash, who back in ch6 *nicknamed* Gid *Jerubbaal* when he tore down Baal's altar; "Let Baal deal with it."

The flip btwn the 2 names here clues us in that something fishy's going on.

Sure enough: Gid's been influenced by Canaanite customs; he has a harem.

He hasn't taken on the **title** of king, but he's living like one.

To sire 70 sons, and who knows how many daughters, he had to have a **LOT** of wives.

And if he's can get away with having a lot of **wives**, of course he has **concubines**; a fancy word for mistress

³¹ And his concubine who *was* in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

Remember this guy.

³² Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ³³ So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. ³⁴ Thus the children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; ³⁵ nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (**Gideon**) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.

The sad cycle starts all over again for the 6th time.

Blessing – Prosperity – Apathy – Immorality – Idolatry – Judgment – Deliverance – Obedience > Repeat.

Abimelech sows treachery at Shechem • 9:1-6

Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, ² "Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all 70 of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that 1 reign over you?' Remember that I *am* your own flesh and bone."

Abimelech is Gid's son by a concubine in Shechem.

She had big plans for her boy and named him "My father Is King," though Gid had refused that title.

When he became an adult, he decided to put her plans into effect.

Now: Gid had 70 sons **by wives**; all who had a superior claim because their mama's were married to Gid.

But as the end of ch8 makes clear, no one was paying them much attention.

Abimelech saw this and decided to capitalize on it.

He **WANTED** to be king and knew if he could persuade people to regard him as such, his half-brothers might very well step up with a **superior** claim as Gid's **legitimate** heirs.

He needed to get rid of them.

They all lived around far off Ophrah – way N in the Jezreel Valley.

And compared to Shechem, Ophrah was Hicksburg; a tiny village.

Did the Shechemites want to be ruled from some far-off group of guys who had no idea what life in Shechem was like – or one of their own?

It's a clever appeal.

³ And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." ⁴ So they gave him 70 *shekels* of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him.

That they took this money from the temple to their local deity means they saw this as a holy war; a religious campaign.

Abimelech used it to hire shiftless ruffians.

These guys have no compunction about killing if it means getting paid.

⁵ Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the 70 sons of Jerubbaal, on 1 stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself.

Gideon's sons were gathered & put to a **public** execution. Only the youngest survived.

⁶ And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

After the purge at Ophrah, Abimelech returned to Shechem where he was made king.

The details given here add a touch of clarity to the story.

The prime real estate in any city is the heights.

That's where the nicer homes are; where the wealthy & influential usually live.

Shechem was located in a valley between 2 hills, Gerizim & Ebal.

The city stretched up onto the flanks of Gerizim; that's where **Beth Millo** was.

The words mean "House of the rampart/mound." == "Shechem Heights."

Abimelech was crowned at a well-known & sacred tree.

That tree is referred in Abraham's story. He camped under it. [Gen 12:6].

Jacob buried the idols his wives took from their father Laban under that tree. [Gen 35:4]

The pillar was erected by Joshua when Israel camped there yrs before. [Joshua 24:26]

Jotham's warning • 9:7-21

⁷ Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them: "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, That God may listen to you!"

The lone survivor of Gid's sons hiked up Gerizim above Shechem.

The acoustics of this area are prime for being heard from afar.

Jotham starts out by telling the men of Shechem who've aligned with Abimelech to listen up because God's been listening to them and He's not pleased.

He tells a parable ...

⁸ "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' ⁹ But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I cease giving my oil, With which they honor God and men, And go to sway over trees?' ¹⁰ "Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come *and* reign over us!' ¹¹ But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, And go to sway over trees?' ¹² "Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come *and* reign over us!' ¹³ But the vine said to them, 'Should I cease my new wine, Which cheers *both* God and men, And go to sway over trees?' ¹⁴ "Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come *and* reign over us!'"

The **olive, fig, & vine** represent the judges God had raised up from Othniel to Gideon.

While the people ached for a king, none of the judges God graciously sent would consent since to do so would be wrong.

The **bramble** represented Abimelech.

A bramble is a **weed**, a useless shrub that produces nothing but trouble.

It lives for short time, dies, dries up & makes a mess.

¹⁵ And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me as king over you, *Then* come *and* take shelter in my shade; But if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!'

Trees can't take shelter under a bramble.

Abimelech's promise of ruling them is a farce that's going to come back to bite them.

Abimelech's already proven he's a murdering criminal. // Jotham goes on ...

¹⁶ "Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he deserves — ¹⁷ for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; ¹⁸ but you have risen up against my father's house this day, and killed his 70 sons on 1 stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem,

because he is your brother—¹⁹ if then you have acted in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you.²⁰ But if not, let fire come from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth Millo; and let fire come from the men of Shechem and from Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!”²¹ And Jotham ran away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

Jotham had no power to exact revenge.

But he had to confront Abimelech & the leaders of Shechem with their crime.

They’d hoped to keep it secret from the people of Shechem. Now, they’re exposed.

Having said his piece, Jotham split. We don’t hear from him again.

Abimelech reaps treachery • 9:22-57

²² After Abimelech had reigned over Israel 3 yrs,²³ God sent a spirit of ill-will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech,

Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows, that he shall also reap.

²⁴ that the crime *done* to the 70 sons of Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers.²⁵ And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech.

V41 says Abimelech’s HQs was at a city called **Arumah**.

Most likely because from the get-go, there was tension btwn Abi & the leaders of Shechem.

The already tense relationship soured even more.

Shechem began a covert campaign of harassing caravans & travelers.

Since the king was responsible for keeping order & providing safety, such highway robberies made Abi look weak & ineffective.

Also, Abi’s wealth came from the taxes collected from the trade that passed by Shechem, a major crossroads.

Word quickly got out to bypass this area, so Abi’s income dropped.

²⁶ Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

Gaal was captain of a group of soldiers for hire.

The leaders of Shechem saw him as a new champion to get rid of the dictatorial Abi.

²⁷ So they went out into the fields, and gathered *grapes* from their vineyards and trod *them*, and made merry. And they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech.²⁸ Then Gaal the son of Ebed said, “Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *Is he* not the son of Jerubbaal, and *is not* Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him?²⁹ If only this people were under my authority! Then I would remove Abimelech.” So he said to Abimelech, “Increase your army and come out!”

During a harvest festival in the early Summer the people of Shechem “drink a lil wine, do a lil dance, get down tonight.”

While they’re liquored up, Gaal starts to boast about how much better things would be if he was in charge rather than that bum Abi.

What you need to know about Shechem is that it’s half-Jewish / half-Canaanite.

This is a place the Jews had not cleared the Canaanites out from.

Gaal is a Canaanite who appeals to his fellow Canaanites to reclaim their heritage as the descendants of Hamor who ruled Shechem back on the days of Jacob and his sons.

While Abi isn’t in Shechem, his governor is; this guy Zebul, who Gaal insults.

³⁰ When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was aroused.³¹ And he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, “Take note! Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and here they are, fortifying the city against you.³² Now therefore, get up by night, you and the people who *are* with you, and lie in wait in the field.³³ And it shall be, as soon as the sun is up in the morning, *that* you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and *when* he and the people who are with him come out against you, you

may then do to them as you find opportunity.”³⁴ So Abimelech and all the people who *were* with him rose by night, and lay in wait against Shechem in 4 companies.³⁵ When Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance to the city gate, Abimelech and the people who *were* with him rose from lying in wait.³⁶ And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!” But Zebul said to him, “You see the shadows of the mountains as *if they were* men.”³⁷ So Gaal spoke again and said, “See, people are coming down from the center of the land, and another company is coming from the Diviners’ Terebinth Tree.”³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, “Where indeed *is* your mouth now, with which you said, ‘Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?’ *Are* not these the people whom you despised? Go out, if you will, and fight with them now.”³⁹ So Gaal went out, leading the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.⁴⁰ And Abimelech chased him, and he fled from him; and many fell wounded, to the *very* entrance of the gate.

⁴¹ Then Abimelech dwelt at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, so that they would not dwell in Shechem.⁴² And it came about on the next day that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech.

⁴³ So he took his people, divided them into 3 companies, and lay in wait in the field. And he looked, and there were the people, coming out of the city; and he rose against them and attacked them.⁴⁴ Then Abimelech and the company that *was* with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city; and the *other* 2 companies rushed upon all who *were* in the fields and killed them.⁴⁵ So Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people who *were* in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt.

The 1st day’s battle went badly for Gaal but he managed to retreat to Shechem as the evening came.

Abimelech took most of his forces home, but sent some to sneak into the city that night to protect & reinforce his governor Zebul.

The next day, these forces inside the city rounded up Gaal’s supporters & evicted them from the city where they were wiped out by Abimelech’s forces in a 2nd day of battle.

Abimelech then destroyed the city, scattering salt over it so as to kill any chance of resettling it for years to come.

Archaeology has confirmed this sowing of salt over Shechem.

Shechem remained a ruin until Jeroboam I rebuilt it and made it the capital of the N’n Kingdom. [1 Kings 12:25] What comes *next* did not happen *after* the destruction of Shechem; this is an elaboration on what happened to those leaders of Shechem who’d originally struck the bargain with Abi at the beginning of the ch.

This took place *during* the destruction of the city.

⁴⁶ Now when all the men of the tower of Shechem had heard *that*, they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith.⁴⁷ And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. The strongest place in most of these ancient cities was the central keep of their god’s temple.

That’s what the ***Tower of Shechem*** was.

⁴⁸ Then Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, [a nearby hill] he and all the people who *were* with him. And Abimelech took an ax in his hand and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it and laid *it* on his shoulder; then he said to the people who were with him, “What you have seen me do, make haste *and* do as *I have done*.”

⁴⁹ So each of the people likewise cut down his own bough and followed Abimelech, put *them* against the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire above them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

He turned the temple into an oven.

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and took it.

Thebez was a kind of suburb of Shechem.

⁵¹ But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and women—all the people of the city—fled there and shut themselves in; then they went up to the top of the tower.

These defensive towers were a common feature in ancient towns.

People could flee there if & when the city walls were breached // They were early bomb-shelters.

Often times marauding armies wouldn’t wait around for long after breaking onto a city.

They would plunder what goods came easily to hand, take a few slaves, then run off before defending

armies from another city could come.

Towers provided a place of survival from such attacks.

⁵² So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

He was going to follow the same tactic he had in Shechem.

⁵³ But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.

This stone was from a hand-mill, not one of the massive stones pulled by an ox.

This was the stone used on coarse grain to make fine grain for better bread and cakes.

It was a crude rolling pin; about 8 inches long, 2-3 inches thick, & weighed a good 5-7 lbs.

Dropped from a height, it could do a lot of damage.

It hit Abimelech in the head & smashed his skull but didn't kill him.

⁵⁴ Then he called quickly to the young man, his armorbearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his young man thrust him through, and he died.

When Abi realized what felled him was hurled by a woman, he was undone!

So he asked his servant to off him before he died of the wound, & forever have the reputation of having been killed by a woman. **The Horror!**

Naw: Doesn't matter that his servant finished him off – We still reckon Abi as felled by a kitchen utensil.

⁵⁵ And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place.

As soon as Abi was dead, his men quit fighting.

A lot of people lost their lives; a whole city wasted because of 1 man's pride.

⁵⁶ Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his 70 brothers. ⁵⁷ And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

What you sow, you reap.

Abi is NOT considered a judge.

His story is an **addendum** to the story of Gideon, his father.

Abi didn't **deliver** Israel, he was a **trouble to it!**

This story gives us a hint to the growing desire among the tribes of Israel for a king, which will come to full flower in a short time during the reign of the last judge, Samuel.

Tola & Jair 10:1-5

¹ After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim. ² He judged Israel 23 yrs; and he died and was buried in Shamir.

³ After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel 22 yrs. ⁴ Now he had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys; they also had 30 towns, which are called "Havoth Jair" to this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead. ⁵ And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

We don't know much about these 2, only what we find here.

Since **Tola** isn't listed as delivering Israel from a **specific** enemy, his role as a judge was merely to recover from the chaos under Abimelech.

Jair ruled in Gilead, E of the Jordan River.

30 sons mean he was wealthy & had several wives.

Donkeys were given to **rulers**, so we're to understand these sons as rulers of 30 cities in the Transjordan area.

Jephthah 10:6-12:7

Now we get a section that gives some details on the waywardness of Israel at this time.

⁶ Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him.

They served EVERY god except the one true God. What is **wrong** with these people???

They're like a thirsty child sitting at table where there's a tall glass of ice-cold water right in front of him.

But he pushes it away, and instead grabs a bottle of bleach & takes a long pull.

⁷ So the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.

God gives Israel what they chose.

If they wanted the Philistine's & Ammonite's gods, they could have their people as well.

⁸ From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for 18 yrs—all the children of Israel who *were* on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. ⁹ Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed. ¹⁰ And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!"

It took 18 yrs before they came to their senses and repented of their sin.

When Judah heard of Gilead's trouble, they didn't repent – because the trouble hadn't reached them.

When Judah was oppressed, Benjamin didn't repent, until Benjamin was attacked.

When Benjamin was oppressed, Ephraim didn't repent, until Ephraim was attacked.

When Florida is hit, New England didn't repent.

When New England is hammered, the West Coast won't repent.

When the West Coast is rocked by a 7.7, the central plains won't repent.

How many yrs & how much misery till we repent?

How many useless days of trouble must we endure before we come to our senses and turn back to God?

God's answer to Israel is not what we'd expect . . .

¹¹ So the Lord said to the children of Israel, "*Did I not deliver you* from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? ¹² Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. ¹³ Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. ¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress."

This is not the response we've seen from God till now.

Knowing His mercy & grace, it's not what we expect.

But it was necessary **at this point** because they needed desperately to learn something.

They'd been **willful & rebellious**, thinking nothing bad would come of their sin.

They needed to understand they were in covenant with Him & that **He is a real person** who has feelings and emotions as well.

God is not a man, but He is a person, with will, with emotions. He **feels**.

When they broke covenant with Him to worship idols, it was akin to adultery.

They needed to understand just how deeply their betrayal **hurt**.

This response brought home to them the **reality that God cared about them deeply** and that they'd insulted and offended Him in a profound way.

¹⁵ And the children of Israel said to the Lord, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray."

This is a more sincere repentance. They admit they've sinned.

They aren't innocent victims; in the wrong place at the wrong time.

They're the guilty being rightly punished.

They ask for God to effect the change in them they need so they don't have to go through this again.

¹⁶ So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord.

The genuineness of their repentance was seen in that they **took action** & changed their conduct.

And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

The moment the people genuinely repented, God's entire program changed.

Discipline flipped to deliverance.

All godly discipline aims at correction.

When correction comes, further discipline is unnecessary.

¹⁷ Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. ¹⁸ And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, "Who *is* the man

who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

They had no captain, no one to lead in battle.

Jephthah is recruited 11:1-11

¹ Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he *was* the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. ² Gilead’s wife bore sons; and when his wife’s sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, “You shall have no inheritance in our father’s house, for you *are* the son of another woman.” ³ Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out *raiding* with him.

Gilead lies E of the Jordan and came to be the name the entire region was known by.

Jephthah dad was kinda’ randy and produced a son by a prostitute.

When he grew up, his half-brothers kicked him out so they wouldn’t have to share the inheritance with him.

Jephthah went to Tob on the E’n frontier of Gilead where he became leader of a biker-gang called the Tob-Mob. In vs4-11, the men of Gilead ask Jephthah to come lead them against the Ammonites.

There’s a little back and forth btwn Jeph and the Gileadites where they agree if he leads them to victory, they’ll make him ruler of all Gilead.

Jephthah tries negotiation with Ammonites 11:12-28

In vs12-23, Jeph tries diplomacy with the Ammonites. He sends a message to their king, “Hey, why you gotta play rough?”

He replies back that Israel **stole** their land yrs before when they came out of Egypt.

But Jeph knows his history; that ain’t at all the way it was.

Israel asked permission to travel thru **Amorite** territory, not **Ammonite** to the Promised Land.

The Amorite answer was to come out in force to do battle with Israel.

Israel thrashed them and took their land by right of conquest.

The **Ammonites** were now trying to re-write history by claiming the land belonged to them.

Jeph says, “Uh, No!” // Then

²⁴ Will you not possess whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the Lord our God takes possession of before us, we will possess.

It’s clear to Jeph that the Ammonites are spoiling for a fight so he challenges them ...

“If you think your god Chemosh is stronger than our God, Yahweh, bring it on!”

“Our God is red-hot, your god ain’t diddly-squat.”

²⁵ And now, *are* you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel? Did he ever fight against them?

Speaking of a contest btwn Chemosh & Yahweh, the Moabites **also** worshipped Chemosh and got CRUSHED when they fought Israel.

²⁶ While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for 300 yrs, why did you not recover *them* within that time?

Jeph reasons, “If this land belongs to you, why did it take 300 yrs to get around to reclaiming it?”

²⁷ Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May [**Yahweh**] the Lord, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.’ ” ²⁸ However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him.

The Ammonites’ reasons for war were just a smoke-screen for their lust for plunder.

So when Jephthah poked holes in them, it didn’t change anything.

Jephthah’s vow & victory 11:29-33

²⁹ Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced *toward* the people of Ammon. ³⁰ And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, ³¹ then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” ³² So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands. ³³ And he

defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith—20 cities—and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

Another rousing victory granted Israel by the favor of God.

But there's a glaring blot left on this victory.

It's left by Jeph's well-meaning but foolish vow to offer the first thing that came out his dorr when he returned from battle.

We'll look at that Sunday.