

Ammonite Oppression (c. 1124 – c. 1106 BC)

Judges 10:6–16

The Cycle of Idolatry Continues

6 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

7 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the sons of Ammon.

8 They afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year; for eighteen years they *afflicted* all the sons of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in Gilead in the land of the Amorites.

9 The sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed.

Israel Cries Out to God for Help

10 Then the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, “We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals.”

11 The LORD said to the sons of Israel, “*Did I not deliver you* from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines?”

12 Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands.

13 Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you.

14 Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress.”

15 The sons of Israel said to the LORD, “We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please deliver us this day.”

16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

Judgeship of Jephthah (c. 1106 – c. 1100 BC)

Judges 10:17–12:7

The Winds of War

10:17 Then the sons of Ammon were summoned and they camped in Gilead. And the sons of Israel gathered together and camped in Mizpah.

18 The people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin to fight against the sons of Ammon? He shall become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

The People Turn to Jephthah in Desperation

11:1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a harlot. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah.

2 Gilead’s wife bore him sons; and when his wife’s sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, “You shall not have an inheritance in our father’s house, for you are the son of another woman.”

3 So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob; and worthless fellows gathered themselves about Jephthah, and they went out with him.

4 It came about after a while that the sons of Ammon fought against Israel.

5 When the sons of Ammon fought against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob;

6 and they said to Jephthah, “Come and be our chief that we may fight against the sons of Ammon.”

7 Then Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “Did you not hate me and drive me from my father’s house? So why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?”

8 The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “For this reason we have now returned to you, that you may go with us and fight with the sons of Ammon and become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

9 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “If you take me back to fight against the sons of Ammon and the LORD gives them up to me, will I become your head?”

10 The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “The LORD is witness between us; surely we will do as you have said.”

11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD at Mizpah.

Jephthah’s History Lesson

12 Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon, saying, “What is between you and me, that you have come to me to fight against my land?”

13 The king of the sons of Ammon said to the messengers of Jephthah, “Because Israel took away my land when they came up from Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok and the Jordan; therefore, return them peaceably now.”

14 But Jephthah sent messengers again to the king of the sons of Ammon,
15 and they said to him, “Thus says Jephthah, ‘Israel did not take away the land of Moab nor the land of the sons of Ammon.
16 For when they came up from Egypt, and Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh,
17 then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, “Please let us pass through your land,” but the king of Edom would not listen. And they also sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained at Kadesh.
18 Then they went through the wilderness and around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and came to the east side of the land of Moab, and they camped beyond the Arnon; but they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon *was* the border of Moab.
19 And Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, “Please let us pass through your land to our place.”
20 But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory; so Sihon gathered all his people and camped in Jahaz and fought with Israel.
21 The LORD, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them; so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.
22 So they possessed all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and from the wilderness as far as the Jordan.
23 Since now the LORD, the God of Israel, drove out the Amorites from before His people Israel, are you then to possess it?
24 Do you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God has driven out before us, we will possess it.
25 Now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive with Israel, or did he ever fight against them?
26 While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?
27 I therefore have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me; may the LORD, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon.”

Jephthah’s Rash Vow

28 But the king of the sons of Ammon disregarded the message which Jephthah sent him.
29 Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon.
30 Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, “If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand,
31 then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”
32 So Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD gave them into his hand.
33 He struck them with a very great slaughter from Aroer to the entrance of Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keramim. So the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel.
34 When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. Now she was his one *and* only child; besides her he had no son or daughter.
35 When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot take *it* back.”
36 So she said to him, “My father, you have given your word to the LORD; do to me as you have said, since the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the sons of Ammon.”
37 She said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go to the mountains and weep because of my virginity, I and my companions.”
38 Then he said, “Go.” So he sent her away for two months; and she left with her companions, and wept on the mountains because of her virginity.
39 At the end of two months she returned to her father, who did to her according to the vow which he had made; and she had no relations with a man. Thus it became a custom in Israel,
40 that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.

Ephraim Confronts Jephthah (As They Had Gideon)

12:1 Then the men of Ephraim were summoned, and they crossed to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the sons of Ammon without calling us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you.”
2 Jephthah said to them, “I and my people were at great strife with the sons of Ammon; when I called you, you did not deliver me from their hand.
3 When I saw that you would not deliver *me*, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the sons of Ammon, and the LORD gave them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?”
4 Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim; and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, “You are fugitives of Ephraim, O Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim *and* in the midst of Manasseh.”

5 The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim. And it happened when *any of* the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,”
 6 then they would say to him, “Say now, ‘Shibboleth.’” But he said, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it correctly. Then they seized him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim.
 7 Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead.

Philistine Oppression / The Birth of Samson (c. 1124 – c. 1104 BC)

Judges 13

Samson’s Birth Foretold

1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.
 2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no *children*.
 3 Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have borne no *children*, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.
 4 Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.
 5 For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”
 6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, “A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he *came* from, nor did he tell me his name.
 7 But he said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’”
 8 Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, “O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.”
 9 God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her.
 10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came the *other* day has appeared to me.”
 11 Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” And he said, “I am.”
 12 Manoah said, “Now when your words come *to pass*, what shall be the boy’s mode of life and his vocation?”
 13 So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Let the woman pay attention to all that I said.
 14 She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded.”
 15 Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.”
 16 The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, *then* offer it to the LORD.” For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.
 17 Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that when your words come *to pass*, we may honor you?”
 18 But the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”
 19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on.
 20 For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground.
 21 Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.
 22 So Manoah said to his wife, “We will surely die, for we have seen God.”
 23 But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear *things* like this at this time.”

The Birth of Samson

24a Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson;

Samson Grows Up

24b and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him.
 25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.