

Episode #531 Judges 11 Part 2 – Jephthah 2: Jephthah and the Ammonites

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. Jephthah, the eighth judge, was a son of the leader of Gilead and a prostitute. When he was grown his legitimate siblings cast him out so he would not inherit with them. When Gilead was oppressed by the Ammonites, however, they called Jephthah to rescue them.

III. Jephthah's Return. Judges 11:5-11.

- A. Verse 5. Gilead's elders (representative leaders) think of the famous and powerful bastard of their former leader, and they send for him.
- B. Verse 6. They ask him to be their commander in the fight against the sons of Ammon.
- C. Verse 7. He recalls their former poor treatment of him. They kicked him out, and now they come to him when they are in trouble?
- D. Verse 8. They can offer no excuse. They just point out what they are doing now...turning to him for help in the battle with Ammon. They offer him to be the head (the top position) over all who dwell in Gilead. Like Joseph, Moses, David.
- E. Verse 9. He does not trust them. If he does return to fight and Jehovah gives him the victory, how does he know he will be their head? Note he credits Jehovah!
- F. Verse 10. They swear by Yahweh as witness that they will do this.
- G. Verse 11. He is made head and captain. He speaks (some kind of oath?) before Jehovah's face in the Israelite camp at Mizpeh.

IV. Jephthah's argument with the King of the Ammonites.

- A. Judges 11:12. Jephthah sends messengers (angels!) to the king of the sons (representatives) of Ammon. He asks Ammon their excuse for attacking the land?
- B. Verse 13. The King of Ammon tells the messengers that he claims the land Israel took when they came out of Egypt. Arnon = Rushing Stream, on the coast between Moab and Gilead. Jabbok = Emptying, on Ammon's northern border. Jordan (Yarden) = Descender, the border between the main part of Israel and Gilead east.
- C. Verse 14. Jephthah sends his messengers back.
- D. Verse 15. He denies this claim. They took no land from Moab or Ammon.
- E. Verse 16. He recalls them coming through the wilderness to Kadesh (Holy), far south in Judah. Jephthah is well aware of Israel's history. Very informed for a raider!
- F. Verse 17. He recalls their poor treatment by Edom (Esau). They wanted to merely pass through his land, but he would not agree to it.
- G. Verse 18. They acquiesced and circled around Edom through the wilderness. They avoided Moab as well, passing along its east side through the wilderness and camped on the other side of Arnon not owned by Moab.
- H. Verse 19. The land Ammon's king wanted was owned at that time by Sihon (Warrior) king of the Amorites (Mountaineers) in Heshbon (Stronghold). If Ammon ever owned it they had already lost it by the time Israel got there! They asked Sihon the same thing they asked Edom.
- I. Verse 20. Sihon not only did not allow it like Edom, he also gathered his army in Jahaz (Trampled Place) to fight Israel!

- J. Verse 21. Jehovah God of Israel delivered Sihon and his people into Israel's power, and they destroyed them. Then Israel possessed the land of the Amorites, the dwellers in that country.
- K. Verse 22. This is how they came to possess all this land. Ammon did not possess any of it at that time. Note Jephthah's intimate knowledge of Scripture!
- L. Verse 23. Yahweh Elohim had given Israel this land through this victory. Should the Ammonites then take it away?
- M. Verse 24. Would not they do the same with land that Chemosh (Subduer) their god gave them to possess? Of course Chemosh was a false god, but Jephthah argues according to their own beliefs.
- N. Verse 25. He asks them if they are better than Balak (Emptier) the son of Zippor (Sparrow) king of Moab when he attacked Israel? He was destroyed when he did it!
- O. Verse 26. They have dwelt there for three hundred years, and Ammon made no claims on the land! If it really belong to Ammon why did they not claim it all that time? Mexico could claim California and Texas with a much more recent claim, and the United States actually DID take these from them! (Note: this proves that what some say, that various judges largely overlapped, is not true.)
- P. Verse 27. It is not Israel who has sinned against Ammon but Ammon against Israel to bring the calamity against them they have. He calls on Jehovah the Judge to judge between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon.
- Q. Verse 28. The King of Ammon does not listen. His was an emotional, not a logical, claim on this land, and such never listen to reason.

V. Jephthah's victory and foolish vow.

- A. Judges 11:29. Jephthah is filled with the Spirit of Yahweh! He passes over Gilead, Manasseh, and Mizpeh (Watchtower) of Gilead. Assume this means collecting soldiers. Then goes to confront the sons of Ammon.
- B. Verse 30. Jephthah makes a vow to "pay the LORD back" for giving the sons of Ammon into his power. A foolish thing to do. But this is something that causes many to slander the Bible! What can we say about this?

VI. Jephthah the illegitimate son of a prostitute shows a Godly spirit and intimate knowledge of Israel's history. His plea to Ammon is Biblically accurate, but the Ammonite argument was an emotional one and they had no time for logic. Jephthah foolishly vowed the first thing that came out of his house to "pay back" the LORD for redeeming Israel. Yet this presents a horrible idea of human sacrifice. Is this really what happened? We will examine the Bible carefully to see what truly happened in our next message.