

Judges Chapter 10 Part 4

This lesson will overlap the previous lesson to maintain some continuity as we finish chapter 10.

Judges 10:13 Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you.

Why should God rescue the believers who have rejected Him? Because He is faithful. He will again rescue them, but watch this time around. He will not overtly intervene by raising up a deliverer or appointing a judge.

Note, this is a play on words with the same word in Judges 10:6

Judges 10:6 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD ...

Remember that the word “again” was actually a verb. I translated it as Israel “continued.” Well in Judges 10:13, “no longer” is a verb from the same root, same stem. So God now says, “I will not continue...”

As we go through this chapter and the next, observe if God takes an apparent active observable role in their deliverance.

Judges 10:14 Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress.”

The irony of this is overwhelming. You abandoned the Living God. Now when you in distress you turn to the Living God. But you are in this mess because you turned from the Living God. Over and over again, you run back to the Living God when in trouble but abandon Him when prosperity returns. This is often the modus operandi.

Judges 10:15 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.”

As I said last week, they were operating under the notion that they did whatever was good in their own eyes. As a result they got themselves into a pickle. So now they return to the Lord saying do whatever seems good “in your eyes.”

Judges 10:16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

When they initially cried out to the Lord, they were clinging to their foreign gods. It’s like someone saying they will obey their parents while having their fingers crossed behind their backs. Remember the first commandment?

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

This is not something you do for a minute to please God and then go back to your sin nature. No, this is supposed to be a way of life.

Reminds me of some diets. People want to lose weight by going on some starvation diet for a week. They lose the weight and then go back to snacking in front of the TV at night. A diet should be a life style.

For Christians today, this means continuously walking by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit.

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He could bear the misery of Israel no longer. According to Trent Butler, this is literally, “And his soul was short with the trouble of Israel.” In this narrative, we do not see God acting in an overt spectacular way. He certainly delivers Israel, but he is working through people in the background. From a human anthropopathic perspective, God is frustrated.

Judges 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.

Sons of Ammon. Remember Ammon is a son of Lot through an incestuous relationship with one of his daughters.

Were summoned. This is not the simple *qal* stem which means to call or to call out. This stem that can be both passive and middle/reflexive. In other words, the verb also acts on the subject. It could be translated “they called themselves.” Or it could be that they were called by someone else. The question is who called the sons of Ammon? Did they call themselves? Or did God call them? Whoever called them, God will use them.

Again, perhaps a play on words. Same verb is used in Judges 10:12

Judges 10:12 Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands.

Now, someone, maybe God, summoned the Ammonites to prepare a battle with Israel. Another thing to remember. All this while they were supposed to train for war.

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They camped in Gilead. The map shows this the area called Gilead on the east side of the Jordan River. There is a town called Gilead, also. That is likely where they camped.

Sons of Israel gathered together. The verb is different from that used for the Ammonites but the verb stem is the same, passive/reflexive. This sets up a parallelism.

Camped in Mizpah. This is close to the town of Gilead. Also, note on the map that Mizpah is no so far from Succoth and Peniel which Gideon attacked after they refused to feed his men as he was chasing the enemy forces.

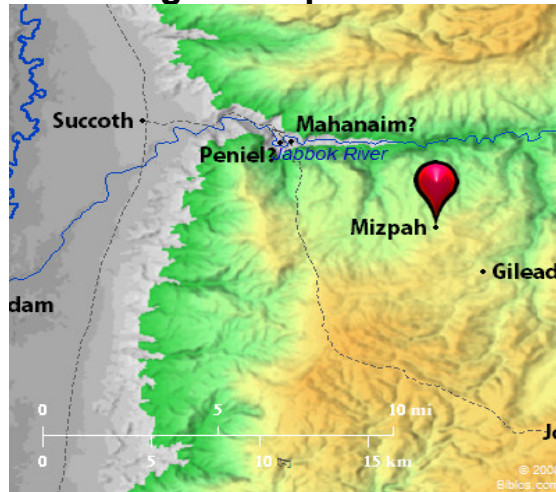
Like other battle scenes, two opposing forces camp opposite each other. The question becomes, on whose side will God fight?

There is an obvious parallelism here, with some slight differences. The Ammonites are “called” together.



Map showing Israel and Surrounding Nations & Gilead
From ConformingtoJesus.org

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This map shows the relative locations of Mizpah and Gilead

From Bibleatlas.org

They both camp opposite each other in preparation for battle. There is no surprise attack.

Judges 10:18 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. The Hebrew is not straight forward as the relationship of the people and leaders. The LXX translates as the leaders of the people. And so is the NIV.

Leaders. This is one of the words used for leaders. There others that have been used in Judges: leaders (having dominion over), king. God’s appointed leaders have titles like “judge,” or “deliverer.” There is no overt appointment by God of a “deliverer.” God let’s the people pick someone who is right in their own eyes. Yet, as we will see, the leader ends up in the Hebrews chapter 11 hall of faith. How is that possible?

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Who is the man that will begin to fight? Here we have two verbs working together. The first verb means to pierce or to bore in the simple *qal* stem. Here it is in the causative stem and can mean “to begin.” Who will get the ball rolling and lead the troops into battle? To fight, is an infinitive expressing purpose.

But the choice of words should have reminded someone who they should depend on to fight for them. Perhaps the author is again playing with words.

Exodus 14:14 The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.”

People who know their doctrine go back to this concept. Remember David?

1 Samuel 17:46 This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

1 Samuel 17:47 and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into our hands.”

Here is a man who was living in fellowship, trusting the Lord. He knows Exodus 14:14. His words explode with confidence. Where does this confidence come from? Daily exercising faith in God’s promises, His Word.

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This is not always easy. It takes time to trust God for more difficult situations. Say you are living pay check to pay check with a house mortgage and a car payment. Your boss calls you into his office. Based upon recent events, you think he may fire you. Do you put your trust in the Lord? “The battle is the Lord’s.” Or do you start perspiring in fear, abandoning faith in His promises?

The choice. The people decide to find the deliverer on their own rather than wait for God. In other books like Chronicles, Kings, Isaiah, people inquire of the Lord. Not here.

The people recognize that an army needs a leader. Someone doesn’t just say charge and they go into battle. There needs to be tactics, planning and direction.

But then they say he shall be head over us. Here is another word for leader, “head.” This Hebrew word can mean “head” as part of the human body. It can also mean beginning, top, company, leader. By using this word, they avoid saying “king.” In modern day Arabic, the cognate word is used for “president.”

Judges 10:18 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 discussion starts out with trying to find a “man.” There is no discussion of let’s ask God to provide. No faith of Abraham here.

This verse has red flags which beg a comparison to Gideon/Abimelech.

1. Acts of God versus the acts of man. The people decide to find someone to lead the farmer army into combat. In the Gideon narrative, God first sent a prophet, then the Angel of the Lord approached Gideon. The Lord

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answered Gideon's questions through demonstrations. Then the Holy Spirit came upon him. God acted. Not so here. As God said, He will not continue to deliver (overtly) as He did in the past. Now He is working through people and their actions to bring about His desired result.

2. Man is allowed to come up with a solution. In the Gideon narrative, God took the initiative.

3. This solution involves rewarding the military leader with a political position as the leader of the people. In present day terms, president.

4. We have seen this with other judges. They delivered Israel and then they "judged" Israel for some number of years. Gideon was offered a position as a leader. Abimelech became king without fighting a foreign enemy. Instead he ended up killing the very people he was king over.

Note there are two functions suggested here. Who will fight. They are looking for a commander of the forces to fight against the Ammonites. But they also suggest that this man will be "head" over the people.

Let us look at how God responded to previous major judges. Note that these are overt. You see what God has done. In the Jephthah narrative, you don't see God even though He is working behind the scenes.

Othniel

Judges 3:9 **When the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.**

Judges 3:10 **The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel.**

Ehud

Judges 3:15 But when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab.

Deborah & Barak

Judges 4:4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

Judges 4: 6 Now she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, “Behold, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

Gideon

Judges 6:7 Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian,

Judges 6:8 that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery.

Judges 6:11 Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

Judges 6:12 The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.”

Judges 6:14 The Lord looked at him and said, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?”

Judges 8:22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son’s son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.”

Judges 8:23 But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.”

Judges 9:6 All the men of Shechem and all Beth-millo assembled together, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar which was in Shechem.

Judges 9:56 Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father in killing his seventy brothers.

Judges 9:57 Also God returned all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads, and the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal came upon them.

Why did I read quotes from the previous major judges/deliverers? I pointed out where God acted. But we don't see much of that in the Jephthah narrative. We see man acting foolishly. Yet, behind the scenes God is using this to deliver Israel. And remember, Jephthah is listed as a "faith hero" in Hebrews chapter 11. Jephthah was not someone like David who consistently walked with the Lord. No, Jephthah, when it was absolutely necessary for the survival of Israel, he trusted the Lord. Faith. God added the Holy Spirit. God is faithful, even if man is not. If I was writing in Greek, this would be a first class condition. Man is not faithful, no if's about it.

Eventually, we do find that Jephthah was a judge. It is almost an afterthought.

Judges 12:7 Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Let us get our feet wet in chapter 11. We will review this next week, but we can start it this week. I find the beginning of chapter 11 more interesting than the end of chapter 10.

Judges 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.

Jephthah. Translated as "he will open." [Unger].

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Valiant Warrior. Where did we see this before? Gideon was told he was (going to be) a valiant warrior by the Angel of the Lord. Here, the inerrant Word of God narrative states that Jephthah was indeed a valiant warrior. So immediately we have visions of him being like Caleb or Othniel. But we must go back to the Gideon narrative. Here is a parallel with a difference. God didn't say he was a valiant warrior like Gideon. Gideon had not proved himself at that point. But here, people recognize Jephthah as a valiant warrior because of his exploits. They were likely in the criminal realm.

Son of a harlot. But our visions are immediately dashed as we learn that he was the son of a prostitute. This should remind us of Abimelech, the son of Gideon who was the son of a concubine. So we have gone from previous judges being legitimate sons, to the son of a concubine to the son of a prostitute. And he is going to deliver Israel? So, this forces us to consider the Gideon/Abimelech narrative. A faith hero can come from the most unexpected places. Like the "little cook" in the movie Ratatouille.

Gilead. This can be a little confusing. We saw on the map that there was an area on the east side of the Jordan called Gilead. There is a town on the east side of the Jordan called Gilead. Now we have a man, the father of Jephthah whose name is Gilead.

Judges 11:2 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."

Wife. This would indicate that Gilead has one wife, unlike some of the previous characters in the book of judges.

Jephthah had half-brothers. They were "legitimate," while he was "illegitimate." The half-brothers did not want Jephthah to even attempt to

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inherit. They may also have been aware that some brothers killed their siblings, like Abimelech.

Judges 11:3 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.

Fled. The only other time this word is used in the book of Judges, it is used of Jotham fleeing from his half-brother Abimelech.

Here is a guy that may have been equal in evilness to Abimelech and the people want him to lead them. And why do they need him? Because they have not been training for war like the Lord told them to. No, they were too busy making money farming and shepherding.

Worthless fellows. Another parallel to Abimelech who had “worthless and reckless fellows.” The word “worthless” is the same word used here.

They went out. NIV has “followed him.” The verb means to go or come out.

Next week, perhaps we can delve into a more detailed look at the parallels between the Gideon/Abimelech and Jephthah narratives.