

Sunday Night Message

October 28, 2018

Judges 12 - Jephthah

Series – *Judges*

Text – Judges 12

Introduction

Last week we saw the following regarding Jephthah:

The Rejection of Jephthah's Maternal Pedigree (vs. 1 – 3)

The Reversal of Jephthah's Military Popularity (vs. 4 – 11)

The Rehearsal of Israel's Missionary Past (vs. 12 – 28)

The Routing of Israel's Mighty Persecutors (vs. 29; 32 – 33)

The Results of Jephthah's Misguided Pledge (vs. 30 – 31; 34 – 40)

In chapter twelve we will see that not everybody in Israel is happy about Jephthah and the Gileadites great victory over the Amorites. The Ephraimites over on the other side of the Jordan River want to know why they were not called to help with the Battle.

I **A Problem Arises with the Ephraimites (Judges 12:1 – 3)**

The Ephraimites seem to have a problem entering into conflicts after they are over, and armchair quarterbacking what took place. (See Judges 8:1 and refer back to Judges 7:24) They are now mad that Jephthah went to war without consulting them. However, according to Jephthah, the Ephraimites did know.

The Ephraimites claimed they did not know. Jephthah claimed that they did. The Scriptures don't reveal the truth to us. We only know what both groups claim. We do know, however, that the people of Gilead were being oppressed by the Amorites for thirteen years, and during that time nobody from Ephraim did anything to help them. The bottom line is that the Gileadites on the eastern side of the Jordan River were the ones under attack, and they had every right to defend themselves.

If I were to make a judgment call here, I would say that it seemed that Ephraim wanted to share in the glory of the conquest after the victory, but were not too eager to get involved in the battle itself. I find that to be true often today as well. People may not be too eager to pay the price for actually doing something, but they all want to somehow get the credit for a successful outcome when it happens.

Jephthah explains that he had to do what he needed to do to defend his people from the Amorites. He was responsible to do what's right, not please a group of people who might be offended.

You and I need to determine that we will do what is right, and not what is necessarily expedient. We ought to please God, and not be too concerned with what people think. People will often complain about someone who is actually doing something. If you are not going to be part of the solution, don't add to the problem by complaining about the ones who are at least trying to do something.

Illustration – When Pastor Clark wanted to come back from Texas and start Solid Rock Baptist Church in Berlin, he didn't have any supporters. Nearly all of the preachers in the area blackballed him. You see, Pastor Clark never went to Bible college, and he wasn't ordained, and he did not have the official endorsement from any

church. He just knew God wanted him to start a church in Berlin. Nobody though he would succeed, and some even opposed him. Fast forward 35 years, and now Solid Rock is one of the biggest churches in the northeast, and one of the most influential churches in country, and now everybody is for their friend.

II The Pronouncement of a Word (or rather mispronunciation of a word) Identifies the Ephraimites (Judges 12:4 – 7)

The men of Ephraim while trying to escape, pretended that they were actually Gileadites. The Gileadites set up a simple test involving the correct pronunciation of the word, “Shibboleth.” The Ephraimites could not pronounce it correctly.

Illustration – Tom Barnes and I were driving around down near Millville, and I saw a sign for the Maurice River. I pronounced it like the name “Maurice,” but the people in Cumberland County pronounced it like the name, “Morris.” (Also, Buena in South Jersey is pronounce “Byoonah,” not “Bwena” as it is pronounced in Florida.) The point is, these Ephraimites could not say the word Shibolet, because in Hebrew, the “h” is silent.

I cannot roll my “r’s” like the Spanish language requires for some words. People can easily tell that I am not Spanish.

According to Wiersbe, “because of this story, the word *shibboleth* has become a part of our English vocabulary and is now found in our dictionaries. It stands for any kind of test that a group gives to outsiders to see whether they really belong.”¹

God apparently did not appreciate the position of these complaining critics – the Ephraimites, because they lost the battle with the Gileadites, and 42,000 of them died. Moral of the story – Quit Gripping!

III The Post-Jephthah and Pre-Samson Judges (Judges 12:8 – 15)

You will recall that Jephthah only had one daughter, but two of these men have more boys than they knew what to do with.

A Ibzan (12:8 – 10)

B Elon (12:11 – 12)

C Abdon (12:13 – 15)

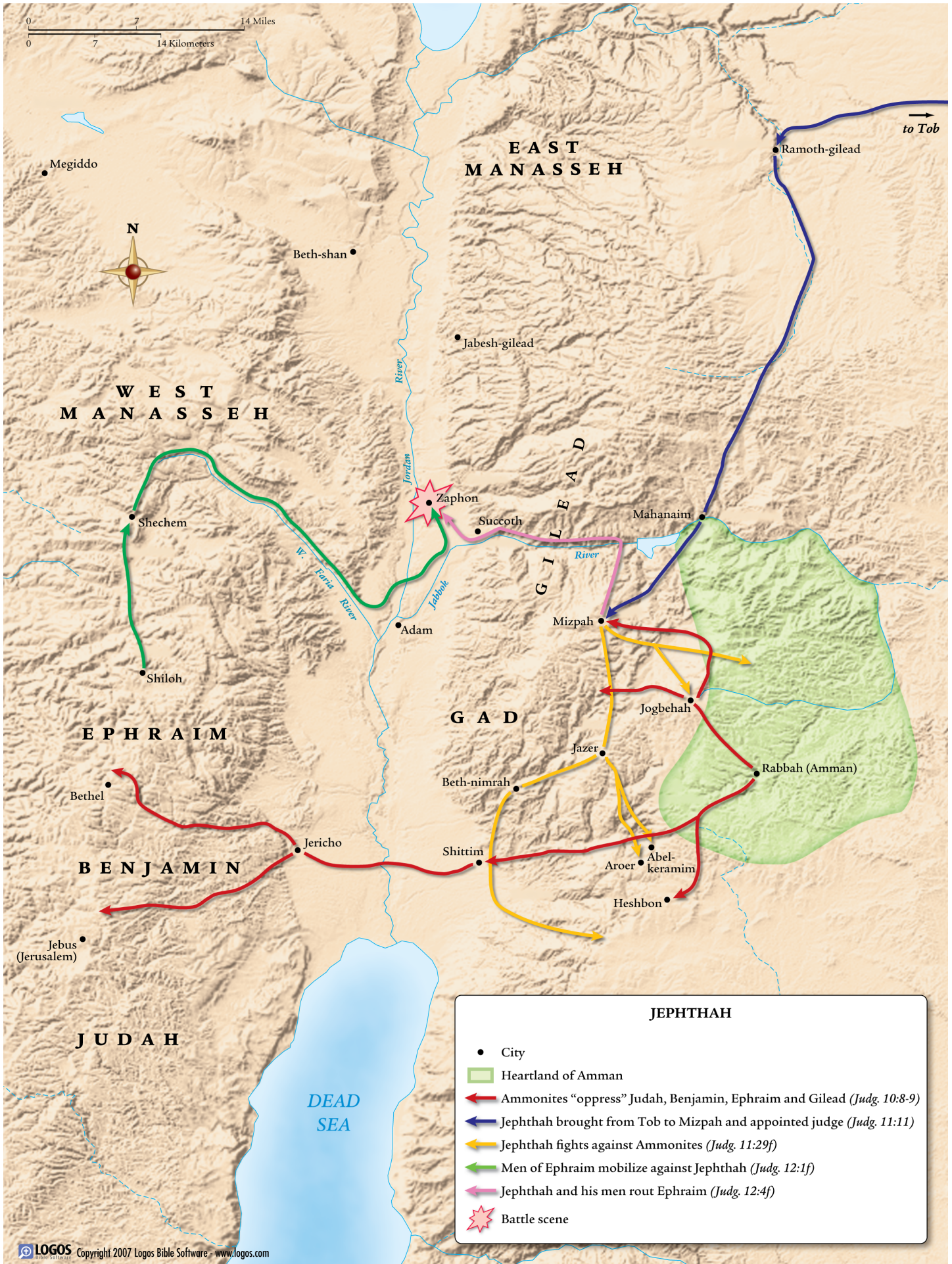
Of these three judges, we really do not know much, except that two of them had large families. That seems to indicate that during their time, it was a relatively peaceful time.

I am one of the youngest of a very large group of people (about 20% of the population in America) known as “the Baby boomers.” Baby boomers were all born in the period after World War II. When those soldiers came home to their families, they made babies. It was a time of relative peace.

These three judges seemed to live in pleasure, living off of the tax dollars of the people of Israel. It appears that they took good care of their families, but really did nothing of significance for Israel.

It seems that people are at their best when they are fighting for something.

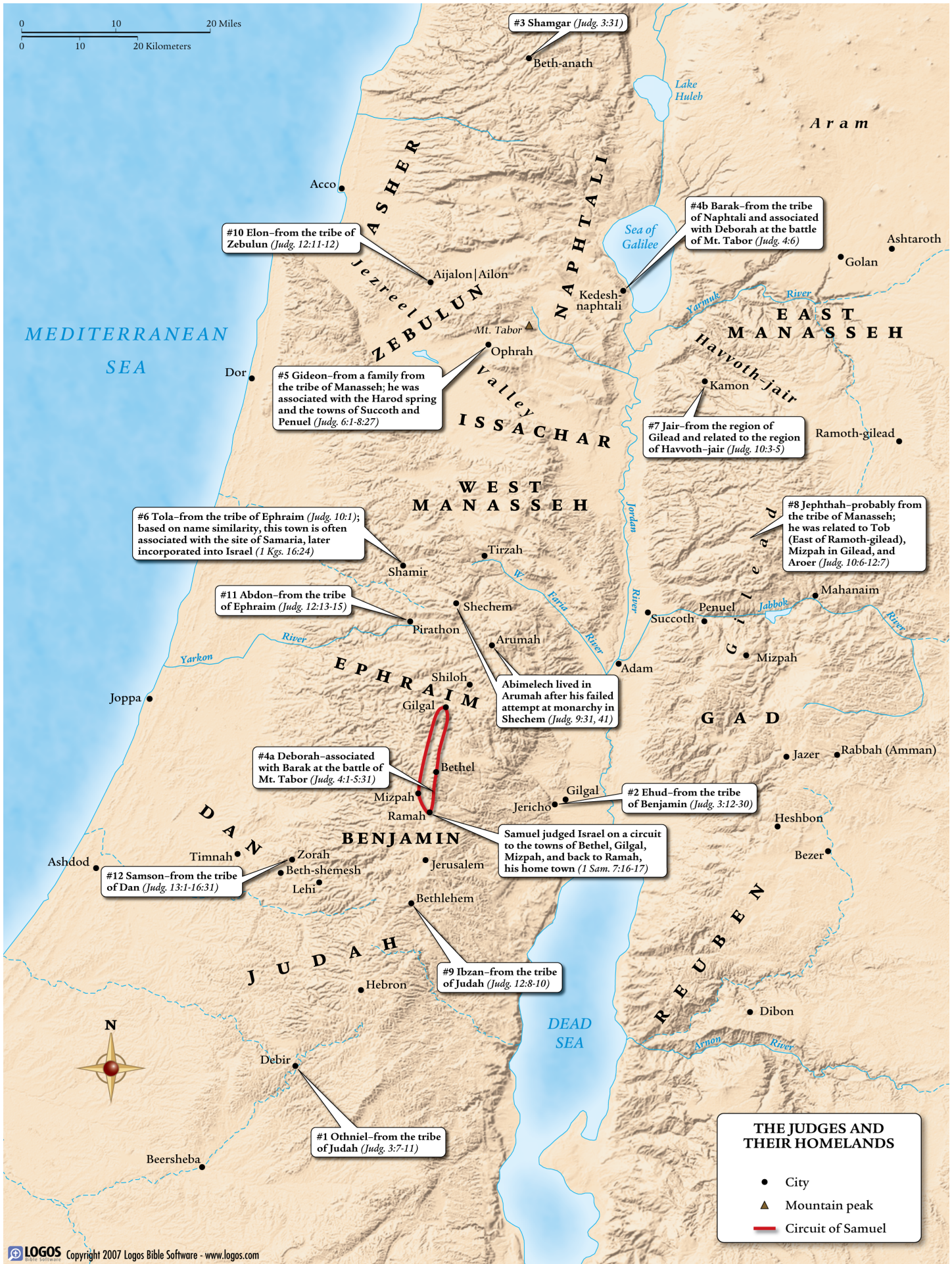
¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1994). *Be Available* (p. 102). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.



JEPHTHAH

- City
- Heartland of Amman
- ← Ammonites "oppress" Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Gilead (*Judg. 10:8-9*)
- ← Jephthah brought from Tob to Mizpah and appointed judge (*Judg. 11:11*)
- ← Jephthah fights against Ammonites (*Judg. 11:29f*)
- ← Men of Ephraim mobilize against Jephthah (*Judg. 12:1f*)
- ← Jephthah and his men rout Ephraim (*Judg. 12:4f*)
- ★ Battle scene

0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometers



#3 Shamgar (Judg. 3:31)
Beth-anath

#10 Elon—from the tribe of Zebulun (Judg. 12:11-12)
Aijalon|Ailon

#4b Barak—from the tribe of Naphtali and associated with Deborah at the battle of Mt. Tabor (Judg. 4:6)
Kedesh-naphtali

#5 Gideon—from a family from the tribe of Manasseh; he was associated with the Harod spring and the towns of Succoth and Penuel (Judg. 6:1-8:27)
Ophrah

#7 Jair—from the region of Gilead and related to the region of Havvoth-jair (Judg. 10:3-5)
Kamon

#6 Tola—from the tribe of Ephraim (Judg. 10:1); based on name similarity, this town is often associated with the site of Samaria, later incorporated into Israel (1 Kgs. 16:24)
Shamir

#8 Jephthah—probably from the tribe of Manasseh; he was related to Tob (East of Ramoth-gilead), Mizpah in Gilead, and Aroer (Judg. 10:6-12:7)
Mahanaim

#11 Abdon—from the tribe of Ephraim (Judg. 12:13-15)
Pirathon

Abimelech lived in Arumah after his failed attempt at monarchy in Shechem (Judg. 9:31, 41)
Arumah

#4a Deborah—associated with Barak at the battle of Mt. Tabor (Judg. 4:1-5:31)
Bethel

#2 Ehud—from the tribe of Benjamin (Judg. 3:12-30)
Jericho

Samuel judged Israel on a circuit to the towns of Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and back to Ramah, his home town (1 Sam. 7:16-17)
Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Ramah

#12 Samson—from the tribe of Dan (Judg. 13:1-16:31)
Timnah

#9 Ibzan—from the tribe of Judah (Judg. 12:8-10)
Bethlehem

#1 Othniel—from the tribe of Judah (Judg. 3:7-11)
Debir

THE JUDGES AND THEIR HOMELANDS

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Circuit of Samuel