

Judges 08-05-21b

We pick up our study here in the book of Judges. We are at the threshold of the Jephthah story in chapter 11. We're looking at the introduction that's found in the last portion of chapter 10.

And let me just try once again, I suspect I kind of made a hash of all of the year references in the first session, but think about this. You're convinced, I think, by now that we are at the 300 or so mark as we start the Jephthah story. 300 years from the time of Kushan Rashataim.

OK, that's 300 years. Now, when Solomon puts a temple in, it's 480 years. So some of that time between 300 and 480 is prior to Kushan Rashataim.

40 years in the wilderness, seven year conquest, 20 years afterward, 67 years, right? So you've got the 300 years from Kushan Rashataim to now, Jephthah's time, and you've got 67 years before that. So let's add that together, 368 years since Israel came out of Egypt at this point, with me so far. Let's just round it off to 370.

Now, we have to get from 370 to 480 when Solomon is putting the temple in. Well, three years are the first three years of his reign. 40 years in the reign of David, so that's 43 years of the distance between 370 and 480, which is 110 years.

Well, 43 of those years are the reign of David and the reign of Solomon. So 110 minus 43 is 67, right? So, from where we are to David starting his reign is 67 years. Still hanging with me here? We are 67 years away from David taking the throne.

Now, how old is David when he takes the throne, from 2 Samuel? Same age as Jesus when he started his earthly ministry, 30 years. David was 30 years old and he reigned 40 years. So, we are 67 years, right here at the threshold of Jephthah, we are 67 years from him going on the throne, so how far are we from his birth? We're 37 years away from his birth.

What story do we know about the ancestry of David? Moabite lady, time of famine, Boaz, Salmon, Obed, Jesse, David? So, if we're only 37 years away from David's birth, David is the youngest of Jesse's sons, Jesse is perhaps alive now. If he didn't get all of his sons born before he was 37, where is Obed and Salmon and where are we in that whole story? These things are already taking place. Where are we with Samuel and Eli? And here am I, Samuel wearing the little robe and so on that his mother made for him.

You see what I'm saying in terms of, we need to greatly compress our impression of the distance between these events. There's a lot of stuff going on and I'll try to give you next time a graphic and for people on the link there, I'll stick it out in the handouts folder and try to graph out lifespans and who is where doing what. And I think it'll sort of show you what I'm getting at here.

It's really surprising to think about how close we are to the events that we're very familiar with

in the latter part of First Samuel and so forth. And so this is context. Now, why would that make a difference? It might be interesting, but is it helpful? And one of the observations that was made just as we were getting into our break time is if you think about the necessity for the people of God to be ready for the Davidic kingdom.

Look at these people at the start here in chapter 10 after Tola and Jair. These people are serving Baals and every Canaanite God imaginable. How is God going to bring David in and establish his throne? How is he going to bring the tabernacle to Jerusalem? How is he going to get the funding and the design and the plan and all of the pieces in place to build a house for God in an environment like this? How much time is there to get Israel squared away for the coming reign of David? It's less than two biblical generations.

It's less than 80 years. So God, as I said earlier, kind of ratchets up the intensity level. He turns up the voltage.

He applies additional pressure on Israel to make them see their situation and their responsibility before God. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens and He scourges every son whom He receives. Jacob is my son.

Israel is my son. Out of Egypt, I have called my son. God has a genuine fatherly relationship with this nation and He will do whatever it takes to train them up in the way that they should go.

And they are right now being very rebellious and disobedient. And look at everything God has done for them. It's easy to forget, as time passes, the deliverances and the mercies and the gracious compassion of God in the past.

But if you remember the elements of worship, one of them is remembering His name. God over and over again identifies Himself. I am the God who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt.

Don't forget, 300 odd years have gone by since they came into the land and took possession of it. And they've forgotten how they got there. So, we're going to see now coverage of what's going on in areas of Israel.

We're going to look first over in Ammon. From that year, they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel 18 years. All the children of Israel who are on the other side of the Jordan, in the land of the Amorites in Gilead.

Verse nine of chapter 10, Moreover, the people of Ammon crossed over to fight against Judah, against Benjamin, against the house of Ephraim. Israel severely distressed. They cried out to the Lord, we have sinned.

God says, look, I already delivered you from these people once, and you disobeyed. You have forsaken me. You've served other gods.

Therefore, I will deliver you no more. We could go back and review the portion of the law. You remember the portion that talks about the cycles of discipline? I will call you to myself, and if you do not respond, I will make it worse, and I will make it worse.

And there are five steps. It has been called in the past the five cycles of national discipline, ending up with foreign domination, virtual servitude to oppressors on the outside. Children of Israel said to the Lord, we have sinned, do whatever seems best to you.

Only deliver us this day, we pray. They put away the foreign gods. They served the Lord.

His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel. This bears, by the way, on people's impression or interpretation of 1 John 1.9. Is it enough to simply say we have sinned? Does that turn God's policy around? What causes God to essentially change His mind here? It is action. They return to what we would call walking in the light.

They put away these gods. They make a policy change. They make a habit change.

They make a priority change, and they return to worship of God. It's not simply naming their sins, and God says, oh, well, since you named it, well, let me run off these Philistines and Amorites and so on, Ammonites. It is when they sort of put their life where their mouth is, when they make a substantial change in their behavior, that God's wrath is cooled and He relents.

And He can no longer endure the misery of Israel. So in verse 17, we pick up now, the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. The children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah.

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. We need a leader. We need a general.

We need somebody to take charge of this rabble. This brings us to chapter 11. I've already read the first portion of this.

You know Jephthah's situation with regard to his brothers, and he has become something of a brigand. Worthless fellows have assembled round about him, so to speak. And he is a rascal.

They went out with him. And you notice raiding is in italics there in verse three, because of course it's not in the original. The idea of going out, we've seen this combination of phrases before.

Going out and coming in. David, when he ends up in the situation with Bathsheba, when it was the time when kings should go out, i.e. go out to battle. So the implication here is, or the connotation is that they went out and did this sort of taking of things by force.

Doing something by force. These men gather around him, and they're not playing pinnacle. They're not in there just amusing themselves.

When it says they went out with him, they went out as some sort of militia, military force. But raiding kind of gives the wrong impression, because it sounds like, well, they were committing crimes. It doesn't actually say that.

We infer that because the men, it doesn't say wonderful men of God surrounded him, like those who came to David at Adullam. It says worthless men. And you can probably guess what the phrase is for, that is translated worthless here.

This is sons of Belial. And these individuals, bad company corrupts good morals. These are literally, they are Anoshim Rakeem.

And Rakeem is an adjective that has, it comes from reek. These men reek. R-Y-Q is sort of how it's spelled in Hebrew.

But it means empty or vain. The lexicon will tell you that this is the word for something that is idle, something that is worthless. We've seen it in the vision of Joseph, for example, the dream.

Remember he had the dreams that, actually it's the interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh about the fat cows and the lean cows and how the fat cows ate the lean cows. Well, the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven lean years. The seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine.

And reek or Rakeem are used of these bad news cows, these bad news symbols for the upcoming years. And they're used for the ears of corn. The seven ears of corn are reek.

And same thing in the interpretation later on, verses 23 and 24 of Genesis 41. So it can also mean ethically worthless. Abimelech hired the same kind of individual back in chapter nine of Judges.

Remember they gave him 70 pieces of silver from the house of Baal-Berit with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows and they followed him. Same type of guys. And you know what the outcome of that was.

So these are not worthy, God-fearing, faithful, wholesome, let's go out and deliver Israel from the Ammonites. These guys are essentially worthless, worthless fellows in the sense of, you know, thugs. So he's surrounded by these.

And you have to ask yourself, if Jephthah is a wonderful, faithful, man of integrity and character and upstanding righteousness and is renowned for his calm, cool, God-fearing demeanor, why do worthless men flock to him this way? You know, that would be strange. In other words, the company you keep says something about you. Worthless people are drawn to other worthless people, the birds of a feather syndrome.

And it is not without significance that worthless fellows gathered themselves about Jephthah and went out with him. They are up to no good, even though they're in the land of good. So

when the convocation appears, they say, we're going to gather and fight these Ammonites.

Let's look around and find somebody who knows how to lead men and get stuff done with military force. They say, well, you've got that rascal Jephthah. He's got a small band of guys.

Let's give him a big band of guys. And instead of terrorizing us, let him go terrorize the Ammonites. So verse five, the sons of Ammon fought against Israel.

And the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tov. Same guy that they had run off. You know, the land of Tov is elsewhere.

He has left his familial region of Gilead. So they send for him. They said to Jephthah, come and be our commander.

Come and be our commander. What is the status, what is the spiritual status of people who find the bandit leader and say, you be our general? I mean, we don't typically go find Jesse James and say, hey, would you please lead this battalion? We don't go to Al Capone and say, well, you're pretty good with a machine gun. Can you help us out in the war? But this is what Israel does.

They say, well, let's, at least what the Gileadites do. So they say, you come and be our commander. And this is Katsil.

It's not Melech for king. It's not Tsar, prince. It's not Sheik or any such thing.

Katsil means a chief or a ruler in battle or in war. Back in Joshua chapter 10, the generals that were defeated when they took the land. Remember Joshua invited all the elders to come up put their foot on the necks of these guys.

They were Katsil. They were chiefs or commanders. We have seen this as recently as when we reviewed Isaiah in chapter one, verse 10.

We looked at that recently. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Give ear to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah.

And it's not just talking about the mayors or the elders. Katsil has a very specific reference to those who have military governance. So come and be our Katsil.

Come and be our militia general. Come and lead the armies. That we may fight against the people of Ammon.

So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, did you not hate me and expel me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress? All the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, that is why we have turned again to you now. That you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. Did I miss a piece of the argument somewhere? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?

Because we're in distress.

That's why we've come to you now. Why have you come to me? You're in distress and now you've come to me? And he says, yes, we're in distress and that's why we've come to you. They give no answer to the real question.

They don't acknowledge that it was wrong to drive him away. There's no, you know, if you've ever been in a debate or a discussion with people that are not objective and don't really have very good principles, this is the kind of response you get. Well, it makes perfect sense.

That's why we've turned to you now. Why do you think we're here? As though that answers the question. So that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Now we have a different word. Originally they say, be our qatsil. He says, well, you come to me, you ran me off.

They say, well, that's why we're here. We've got this trouble distress going on. And so we want you to be the Rosh.

We want you to be the head. So they're offering him a plum. You're going to go from being the least to being the greatest.

You're going to go from being the off scouring of all things to being our commander. You're going to go from being the stone that the builders rejected to the head of the corner. You're going to go from the bottom to the top.

We appeal to you because we are in distress. So Jephthah says to the elders of Gilead, if you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon and the Lord delivers them to me, shall I, in fact, be your Rosh? I just want to get some confirmation here that this is in fact what you're saying. Shall I be to you for a head? L'chem l'rosh.

Shall I be for you all for a head? L'rosh. And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, notice how the ante keeps getting up here. First of all, they said, come be the general.

Then they say, you can be the head. He says, am I really going to be the head? And they say, the Lord will be a witness between us if we do not do according to your words. So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead and the people made him Rosh and Qatsil over them.

Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord in Mizpah. Now, what could this possibly mean? He spoke all his words before the Lord. Each side makes an oath.

This is a contract. And the people say, we swear before the Lord, we swear by the Lord, in the sight of the Lord, you're the guy. You're the Rosh.

You're the Qatsil. And Jephthah says, okay, on account of you holding up your end of this

bargain, I will lead your army. I will go fight the Ammonites.

So they spoke their words and he spoke his words before the Lord in Mizpah. So now he's under contract. His mission lies before him.

So he sends messengers to the king of the people of Ammon saying, what do you have against me that you have come to fight against me in my land? Well, this is really funny if you think about it. Because the king of Ammon didn't come to fight Jephthah and Jephthah wasn't in the land when he came in there. And so Jephthah hasn't even been there.

The Ammonites come up and Jephthah comes up and says, why are you fighting against me in my own land? And he hasn't even been there. He's just freshly back. He hasn't even got the stickers off his suitcase yet.

And he's saying, he's taking it personally. You've come against me in my land. So the king of the children of Ammon here comes back in verse 13.

And I say children, this is sons of. It says people of, but that really doesn't bring the full effect. It's interesting when it says, B'nai Ha'Yisrael, the children of Israel, as it's so often translated, but it's the sons of Israel.

B'nai Ha'Yisrael. And the sons of Israel are first and foremost, the tribes, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and on down the line. Here, when it says the B'nai Ammon, these are the sons of Ammon.

And does this make a difference? What are the two significant titles of the Lord Jesus? He called himself, his favorite term for himself was son of man, and he is son of God. Why is he called the son of man? Why does he refer to himself as son of man? What's the real emphasis there? Humanity. Son of man is to partake of man, to be like man.

Son of God is to partake of God, to be like God. We have the right to be called sons of God, to partake of the divine nature and to be associated with Him. And so the emphasis is on what you are a son of.

So it's not without importance, it's not without significance that it says this is the king of the sons of Ammon. Because Ammon, that name has a lot of history, a lot of baggage associated with it. We know all about it from Genesis and all the Israelites do, where they come from.

They are the product of incest. To be a son of Ammon is to be a son of incest, to be a son of evil, to be a son of that which is counter to the divine decree, the divine order. Israel has been acting this way and those chickens are coming home to roost.

The very thing that they have bought into is coming up to bite them. They are worshipping the gods of these foreign people. So the king of the sons of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt from the Arnon as

far as the Jabbok and to the Jordan.

Now therefore, restore those lands peaceably." Yes, you took my land wrongfully. Give it back. We were here first.

So Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon and said to him, Thus says Jephthah, Israel did not take away the land of Moab nor the land of the people of Ammon, for when Israel came up from Egypt, they walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, Please let me pass through your land. But the king of Edom would not heed, and like man were they sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent.

So Israel remained in Kadesh. And they went along through the wilderness and bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab, came to the east side of the land of Moab and encamped on the other side of the Arnon, but they did not enter the border of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab. Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon.

Israel said to him, Please let us pass through your land into our place. But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory, so Sihon gathered all his people together, encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. The Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them.

Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the Amorites who inhabited that country. They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. And now the Lord God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel.

Should you then possess it? Will you not possess whatever kimosh your God gives you to possess? So whatever the Lord our God takes possession of before us, we will possess. 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? Will Israel dwell in Heshbon and its villages, and Aror and its villages, all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years? Why did you not recover them within that time? This goes right along with our time review, doesn't it? It's been three hundred years since they came into the land and took possession. Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me.

May the Lord the Judge render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon. However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him. Surprise, surprise, surprise.

Why don't you wait and see what Chemosh gives you is the thrust of the thing. And I have a feeling that Jephthah, being the bandit chief, knows good and well that these are not the words of diplomacy. It's not the language of compromise and let's give and take, let's meet in the

middle, and why don't we give you a few villages back and land for peace and can't we all just get along? He knows that this is going to set off the king.

But in verse 29, 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. Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, If you will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, 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." Well, the word here is olah. When I return in peace from the sons of Ammon or children of Ammon, the Ben Ammon, it will be to Yahweh, to the Lord, whatever comes out and returns to meet me, from the door of my house.

Now think about it. How many possible candidates are there for coming out the door of Jephthah's house? It shall be that the coming out one who comes out. This is the Yotzeh Asher Yetzeh.

Yetzah is the verb that means to come out. It's like ex-erkamai. And you remember how you make a gerund in Hebrew.

Instead of Yetzah, it's Yotzeh. That's like putting ing on it. And you turn a verb into a noun by making it a gerund or participle like this.

So Yetzah becomes Yotzeh. It will be, it shall be, that the coming out thing, or the coming out one, the Yotzeh which Yetzeh, which comes out, the Yotzeh which Yetzeh's, from the dalet of my bait, the D of my B. Aleph, bait, gimel, dalet, hey. Bait is the second letter.

It's also the word for house. Dalet is the fourth letter. It's also the word for door.

So it's sort of an alphabetical promise here. Whatever comes from the dalet of my bait to meet me. Now, this is not like a little red wagon is going to come rolling out.

Or, I mean, is he thinking, I don't know that the Israelites kept indoor dogs for pets. You know, if Rover comes out, I'll make a burnt offering out of him. Think about this now.

Does Jephthah know what he's talking about? How many things are there? A servant, maybe? I'm going to make an olah out of a servant that comes out. People say, well, you know, it was rash because he didn't know his daughter was going to be coming out the door. This is rash as it comes out of his mouth.

The coming out one who comes out of my house to meet me, I will make an olah to the Lord. Maybe he had a wife he didn't care for much. If old shotgun Bessie comes out my door, I'll make her an olah.

What was he thinking? Well, think about his identity. He's a bandit king. He is the leader of worthless men.

How do you keep worthless men more or less in line? How do you accomplish anything with people who have no integrity? How do you succeed for very long as a raider? You say expedient things. You promise whatever it takes. You make deals.

You broker. You wheedle. You cajole.

You pressure. You oil up. You lay it on thick.

Whatever it takes. You say anything that comes into your head to get a deal done, to make a thing happen. And Jephthah is a rascal.

He's a wheeler-dealer. And he figures, well, this is a big job. I've got to have the Lord on my side.

You wonder who it is he's talking to. And this came up again. It was a good question on the break.

When God gives this detailed speech to the children of Israel back in chapter 10, the Lord said to the children of Israel, did I not deliver you? The Amalekites and so on. This doesn't fall out of the vesture of the high priest in scrabble letters. Somebody had to speak this.

You can't just keep throwing the urim and thummim. So now is the next word Amalekite? You can't do it that way. How does this detailed speech make it to the ears of Israel? It tells us that there are already prophets as we saw earlier in the book of Judges who sort of have one shot.

They deliver a message and they disappear. We see them later on, even down into the time of Samuel and David. We're going to have some of them coming up here just later on in the book of Judges.

You remember the infamous story of the Danites in Judges chapter 18. And sort of the false priest and the Levite of chapter 19 with his concubine. And you've got all kinds of strangeness going on with these sort of imperfect and improperly seated leadership in Israel.

So somebody delivered this message. Some nameless prophet was commissioned by God. I've teased that it might have been old Jotham.

He might have still been around from the family of Gideon to come back down out of the mountains and deliver one last retribution on everybody. But somebody spoke this. And that triggers this sort of mini-revival to the point that Jephthah is here.

Jephthah, again, kind of like Gideon, there is acknowledgment of God. But who is Jephthah talking to here when he makes this promise? Is he out on a hillside alone speaking up into the heavens? I don't think so. Remember it says he spoke in Mizpah before the Lord? Well, before the Lord means there's something in Mizpah that passes for an altar, a priest, a door of the tabernacle sort of situation where there's some formal representation of the presence of God.

You can't just do like people do today in any old courtroom. You can say, so help me God. There was something in Mizpah.

A prophet, a priest, an artifact, something. So he speaks this and he says, foolishly, the promise is bad as it is spoken. The One who comes out, the coming out One who comes out to meet me when I return in peace shall surely be the Lord's.

They will be Unto Yahweh, La Yahweh, to or for Yahweh, and I shall offer Him. And the verb here is Allah, from which we get Ola, the noun. I shall offer Him as an Ola.

So, I just want to emphasize the nature of this vow. He says, the coming out One who comes out, I will offer as an offering. In each case, there's a verb or a verbal idea and a noun.

It starts out with a noun, the coming out One who comes out verb. To the Lord I will offer, verb, as an offering, noun. So it's symmetrical.

It is as though he sort of thought this out. He was thinking, now what can I say? What can I get by way of sort of a bribe to get God on my side? And this sort of symmetry speaks of forethought. It's a really well constructed sentence in Hebrew.

The coming out One who comes out, I will offer as an offering. That's the summary. I will Allah as an Ola.

Now, did God answer? We've got a lot of detailed information in chapter 10. God is certainly capable of speaking and communicating concepts. Did God say, Jephthah, you fool, or stop that, or shame on you, or you're going to regret that? God is silent.

So in verse 32, Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands. And he defeated them from Arur as far as Minoth, 20 cities, and to Abel-Karamim with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel." How many cities are there in Gilead that are of any note? Well, if you recall that just before this, we had two judges, Tola and Jair.

After him arose Jair, 10-2. He judged Israel 22 years. He had 30 sons who rode 30 donkeys.

They also had 30 towns, which are called Havot Jair to this day, which are where? In the land of Gilead. So there are 30 towns there that Jair judged with his sons. How many towns does Gideon recover here in verse 33? 20 cities.

Not exactly a sweeping global return to the former status of things, is it? But the ones that he does deliver and defeat, he does with a very great slaughter. And the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. They were not destroyed.

They were subdued. They were driven out. Now, when Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, notice he dwells at Mizpah.

He went down. He sent these messengers to the king of Ammon. And then he circled back through Mizpah.

And then he went back and fought these battles. There was his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing. She was his only child.

How many candidates are there that can come out the door? If his wife's alive, he's got a wife. And he's got a daughter, unless he's thinking that some hapless servant is going to come out. But remember, he's a bandit king.

Only recently returned to the land. So what kind of a big household is he going to have? I just think you have to understand that he could not envision too many different people coming out the door. Sure enough, she comes out, timbrels and dancing, only child.

Besides her, he had neither son nor daughter. It came to pass when he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, Alas, my daughter, you have brought me very low. You are among those who trouble me.

I have given my word to the Lord and I cannot go back on it. You have brought me very low. You are among those who trouble me.

Well, you begin to see why Jephthah was so attractive to the worthless men, because he's as much of a worthless guy as they are. So she said to him, My father, if you have given your word to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon. She said, Father, let this thing be done for me.

Let me know for two months, alone for two months, that I may go and wander in the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I. Well, we will look at the details of this next time. It's time for us to close tonight. But the time to exercise good judgment is when you sow a seed, not when you reap it.

The time for Jephthah to have been circumspect would have been before he made the vow, not after the battle. There are certain things that we do, and the consequences are going to come. He probably thought, Well, that must have been a pretty good vow, because the Lord gave me victory.

And you can imagine all the way up until he gets back to his yard, that he's thinking, You know, I'm a pretty smart individual. God honored that vow, and we might not have won without that vow. That was a darn good vow.

I'm really qualified to be the Rosh and the Qatsil and everything else around here, because I'm shrewd. And we can go along thinking that our decisions have been good and our commitments have been good until the point that it backfires and something terrible happens. What is the problem? Where is the failure? Here's the point in a nutshell.

You do not judge the goodness or badness of a decision by the outcome. We should know whether a decision or commitment is good or bad by thinking about it as we make it. The Word of God gives us the information to know whether a decision or a policy or a priority or a value or a goal is good or not.

We don't have to wait for results. And many times, the results themselves do not tell you whether that commitment or that decision was good or bad. John the Baptist committed himself to preaching his given word, and he got his head cut off for it.

That doesn't mean he messed up. You cannot rely on circumstantial outcomes to tell you if a decision was good or bad. Decisions have to be judged in the light of God's Word, in the light of God's will, in the light of God's plan.

Jephthah could have known from the beginning that it was God's will to deliver Israel because of the signs of revival, the signs of return to God, and that God could no longer endure their misery. He could have gone and hunted down the prophet that gave that message. But instead, he makes this foolish vow and thinks for a while that that was a great idea, because he wins.

But it ultimately costs him in a very horrible and tragic way, and actually costs his family even more than it costs him. Well, it's something to think about as we navigate our way through the things that God puts in our path. We'll pick up and look in detail at the situation.

Did Jephthah's daughter go up in smoke? That's the question we'll try to answer next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the graphic way that it presents to us truths that can guide us in our walk before You.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, transform us and renew our minds so that we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus as we live each day. We ask it in His name, Amen.