

14.14a Ninth Judge, Jephthah, Made Captain (Judges 10:6–11:11)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *cornerstone*: “In biblical times, a cornerstone was used as the foundation and standard upon which a building was constructed. Once in place, the rest of the building would conform to the angles and size of the cornerstone. In addition, if removed, the entire structure could collapse. In the Bible, messianic prophecies spoke of the Messiah as the Cornerstone” (<https://www.compellingtruth.org/Jesus-Christ-cornerstone.html>).

Scripture: (ESV)

Judges 10:6 The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtarothe, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the Lord and did not serve him. 7 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites, 8 and they crushed and oppressed the people of Israel that year. For eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. 9 And the Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

10 And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, “We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals.” 11 And the Lord said to the people of Israel, “Did I not save you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites and from the Philistines? 12 The Sidonians also, and the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, and you cried out to me, and I saved you out of their hand. 13 Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods; therefore I will save you no more. 14 Go and cry out to the gods whom you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress.” 15 And the people 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 became impatient over the misery of Israel.

17 Then the Ammonites were called to arms, and they encamped in Gilead. And the people of Israel came together, and they encamped at Mizpah. 18 And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said one to another, “Who is the man who will begin to fight against the Ammonites? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

11:1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. Gilead was the father of Jephthah. 2 And Gilead’s wife also 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 Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob, and worthless fellows collected around Jephthah and went out with him.

4 After a time the Ammonites made war against Israel. 5 And when the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6 And they said to Jephthah, “Come and be our leader, that we may fight against the Ammonites.” 7 But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “Did you not hate me and drive me out of my father’s house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?” 8 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “That is why we have turned to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the Ammonites and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.” 9 Jephthah said to the

elders of Gilead, “If you bring me home again to fight against the Ammonites, and the Lord gives them over to me, I will be your head.” 10 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “The Lord will be witness between us, if we do not do as you say.” 11 So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and leader over them. And Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord at Mizpah.

Introduction/Review:

Although two judges judged Israel for a total of forty-five years, “protecting from their enemies, administering justice, and preserving them in the true religion” (Matthew Henry), very little is said about them in the Book of Judges. Who were they? [Tola and Jair.] When they died, the same ol’, same ol’ cycle began anew. What was that cycle? [Worshiping other gods; God’s sending enemies; crying out to God; God’s sending a judge; peace.]

Story:

Many gods

Israel, like us all, tended often to disobey God and turn from Him. After Tola and Jair died, Israel not only turned to but *served* gods called Baal and Ashtaroath. (By the way, do we truly *serve* our true God?) But two extra gods were not enough for Israel; they served gods of Syria (also called *Aram*, north of Israel) [locate all the places mentioned in this lesson on Maps 38 and 45], Zidon (also spelled *Sidon*, north in Phoenicia), Moab (southeast, across the Jordan), Ammon (east, across the Jordan), and Philistia (southwest, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea). That’s at least seven gods and perhaps more! Obviously, as the Scripture says, “They forsook the Lord and did not serve him.”

Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, has said, “Those serving God and Mammon (money and the world) will often end up serving Mammon only.” These people may have started out by worshiping both God and gods, but they ended up serving only gods and not God.

Much distress

What would God do to these rebellious people of His? [Cause an enemy to come against them for punishment.] Sure enough, the Philistines and the Ammonites came up against Israel. For eighteen years they harassed the people in Gilead and Judah and Benjamin and Ephraim.

Israel was extremely distressed. Recognizing their sin, they finally cried to the Lord: “We have sinned in forsaking the Lord and in serving Baalim.”

The Lord scolded, “Didn’t I deliver you from the people whose gods you are serving—the Philistines, Zidonians, Ammonites—plus, I’ve delivered you from the Egyptians, the Amalekites, the Amorites, and the Maonites.” Seven nations! The Lord continued, “You cried unto Me, and I delivered you. Yet you forsook Me and served other gods. I am not going to deliver you. Go cry to the gods you have chosen; let them deliver you from your trouble.”

Yet Israel continued to cry, “We have sinned. Do what you want to us, but please deliver us.” It sounds as if they meant business with God. In fact, they showed their earnestness by getting rid of their idols, and they served the Lord. Then the Lord showed compassion.

No deliverer

When the Ammonites brought their armies in Gilead and camped there, Israel, trusting God now, got together an army and camped at Mizpah [locate on Map 45]. But the Israelite army had no captain. They said, “If we can find a captain, he will be a ruler over us.”

Now let’s shift gears. Some years before in Gilead, where the Ammonites camped, the man named Gilead had had some sons by his wife and another son named Jephthah by another [immoral] woman. When all these boys grew up, the wife’s sons kicked Jephthah out of the house, out of the family, and even out of their region. Jephthah moved to live in the land of Tob [locate on Map 45].

When Jephthah left Gilead, he, like Abimelech, drew worthless men to himself and became their leader. We are not told what they did, but Jephthah became a “mighty man of valor.” Those words are the same ones that described the great Gideon/Jerubbaal.

A courageous leader

✓The people of Gilead thought, “We need a courageous leader right now. We hear Jephthah is a mighty man of valor. But does it have to be Jephthah? Yikes! We kicked him out. Oh, it’s so humiliating to have to ask him to be our leader. But we need a leader, and he would be a good one.”

So they humbly came to Jephthah and asked him to become their captain. “Didn’t you hate me and kick me out?” Jephthah asked. “Why are you coming to me when you’re in trouble?”

The men of Gilead answered, “Yes, we are in trouble. That’s why we need you. We are coming to ask you to be captain over us so that we can go against the Ammonites. Then you can be ruler over all Gilead.”

“You mean,” said Jephthah, “that if you bring me with you to fight Ammon and the Lord delivers them into my hand, I’ll be your head ruler?”

The men of Gilead answered, “Exactly. May the Lord witness between us if we don’t do as you say.”

So Jephthah went with the elders, and the people made him head and captain over them.

We can see that Jephthah was a God-fearing man, for we read, “Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord at Mizpah.” This means Jephthah went to God in prayer and devotion, saying, “The people have made me head. Please confirm Your will in this. Go with me” (Matthew Henry).

Will God go with him?

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Jephthah asked, “Now if, by the blessing of God, I come home a conqueror, tell me plainly shall I be your head? If I deliver you, under God, shall I, under him, reform you?” The same question is put to those who desire salvation by Christ. “If he save you, will you be willing that he shall rule you? for on no other terms will he save you. If he make you happy, shall he make you holy? If he be your helper, shall he be your head?” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/judges/11.html>).

Jephthah was rejected by his brothers. Jesus, too, was rejected by the religious leaders of His day. Scripture compares Jesus to a rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone, a very important stone (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42).

- What would you do or say when someone rejects you? Have you rejected others? Are you prepared to be humbled before them if God so chooses.

Activities:

- Play dough: sword
- Snack: An Israeli food (originally from Egypt) is falafel. The following site gives a recipe that takes 30 minutes to prepare: <https://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a54231/easy-homemade-falafel-recipe/>. Although the recipe states the falafel should be served with pita bread, *etc.*, perhaps just the falafel itself with ranch dressing would work for kids.
- Sing “Jephthah, Jephthah” by Mary Shackleford to the tune, “London Bridge.”

Jephthah, Jephthah go away, go away, go away.
Jephthah, Jephthah go away; we don't want you.

Israel, Israel turned from God, turned from God, turned from God.

Israel, Israel turned from God to serve idols.

Jephthah, Jephthah please come back, please come back, please come back.

Jephthah, Jephthah please come back, we need you.

Jephthah fought the Ammonites, Ammonites, Ammonites.

Jephthah fought the Ammonites, saved his people.

- Review questions: (Game: Print on cardstock the sheet of footprints found below. Cut apart. For each correct answer, a student places a footprint in a pocket chart.)
 1. Name one of the five countries and cities whose false gods Israel worshiped. [Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia.]
 2. What two people groups did God send to afflict Israel? [Philistines; Ammonites.]
 3. How long did the Philistines and Ammonites afflict Israel? [Eighteen years.]
 4. When the people cried out to God, to whom did He say they should go for relief? [To the gods they had been serving.]
 5. What did Gilead's sons do to Jephthah when they grew up? [Kicked him out of their family and land.]
 6. Jephthah was a "mighty warrior." Which other judge was also described as a "mighty warrior"? [Gideon/Jerubbaal.]
 7. Which nation ended up warring against Israel: the Philistines or the Ammonites? [Ammonites.]
 8. Who did the Gileadites choose to be their captain? [Jephthah.]
 9. What was the promise to Jephthah if he brought victory to Israel? [He would become their ruler.]

Memory Verse[s]: (ESV)

- 1 Peter 2:4—[C]ome to him [Jesus], a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.

Handwork:

- Print the page found below that has the words *Rejected* and *Made Captain*. Print, cut out, and glue a shoe (for kicked out) under *Rejected*. Print, cut out, and glue the sword found below under *Made Captain*.

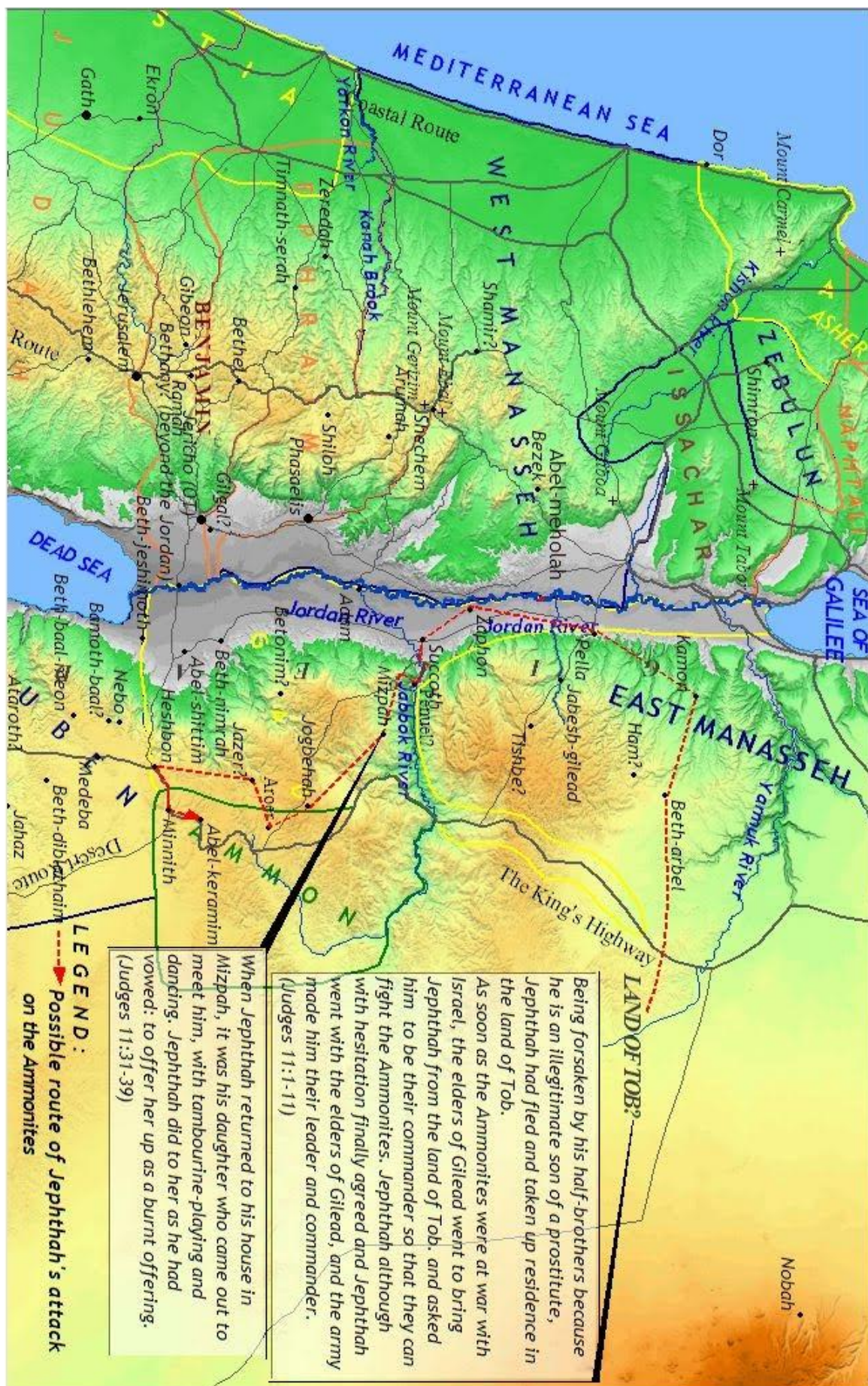
cornerstone

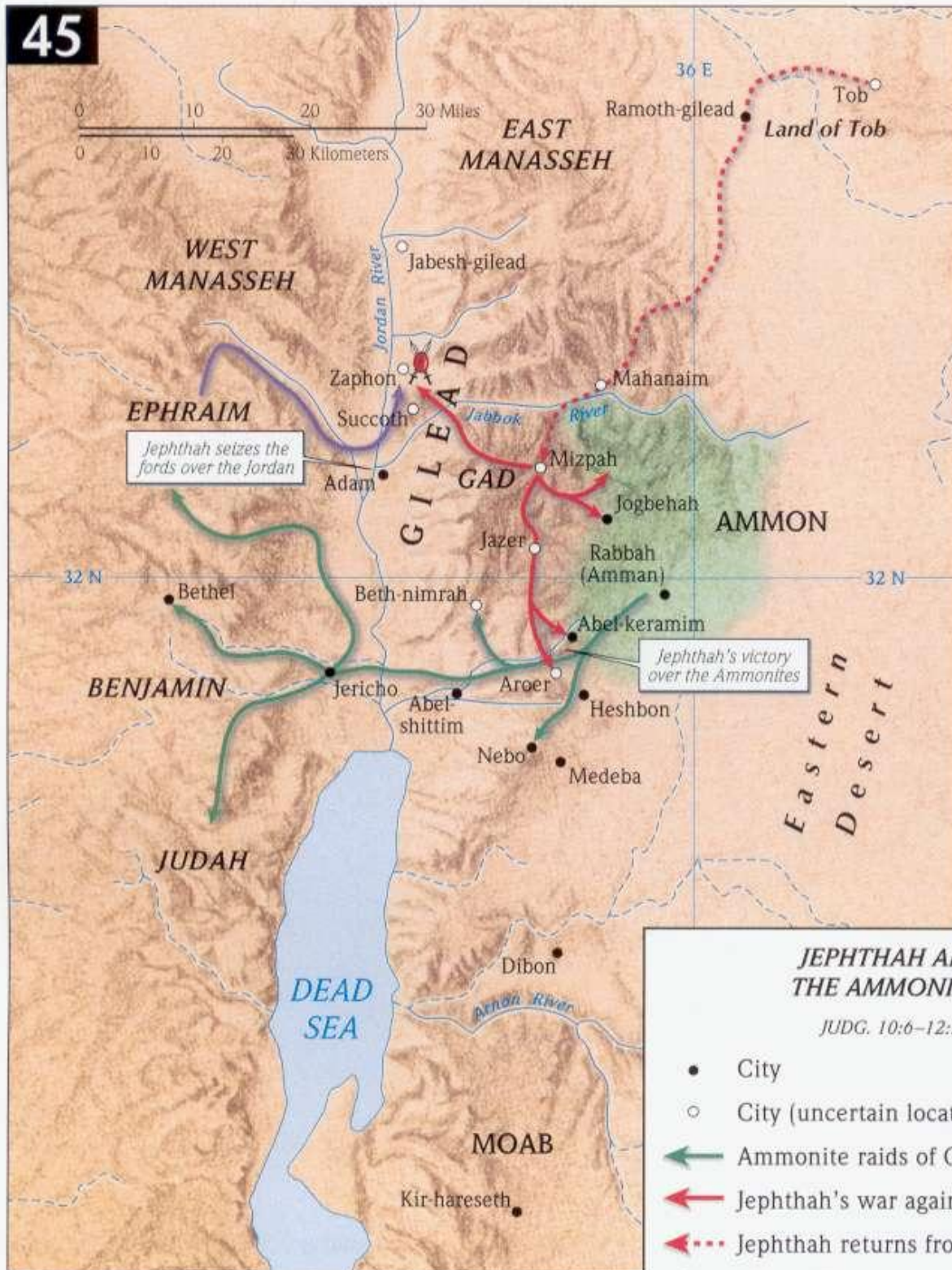
LIMITS OF ISRAELITE SETTLEMENT AND THE LAND YET TO BE CONQUERED

JOSH. 13:1-7; 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-18
JUDG. 1:1-3:6

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- City specified by Judges 1 as not taken by Israel
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Limit of Israelite control
- Areas yet to be conquered







JEPHTHAH AND THE AMMONITES

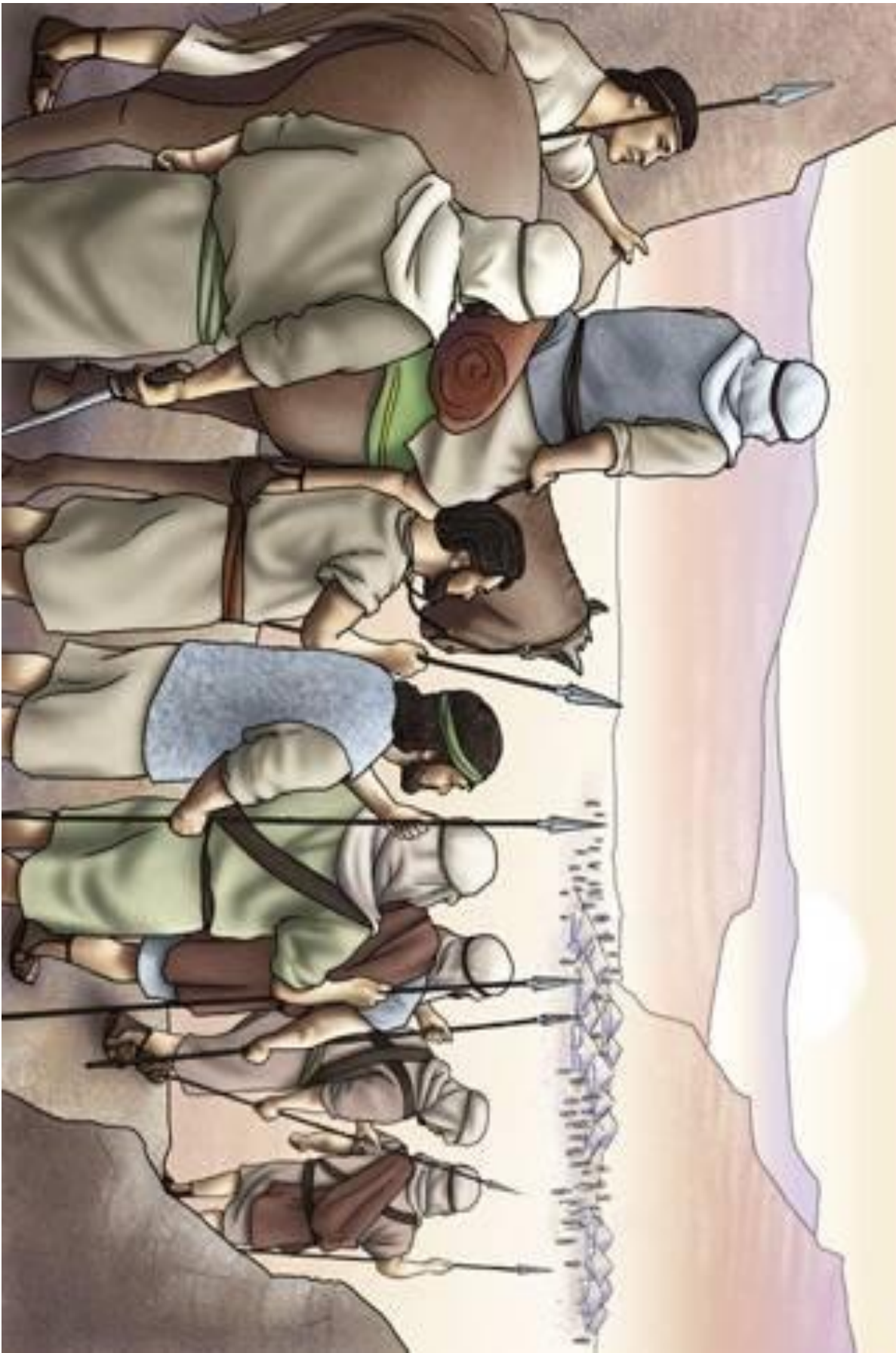
JUDG. 10:6-12:7

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ← Ammonite raids of Gilead tribes
- ← Jephthah's war against Ammon
- ← Jephthah returns from Tob
- ← Men of Ephraim clash with Jephthah
- Ammonite territory
- Battle at Zaphon

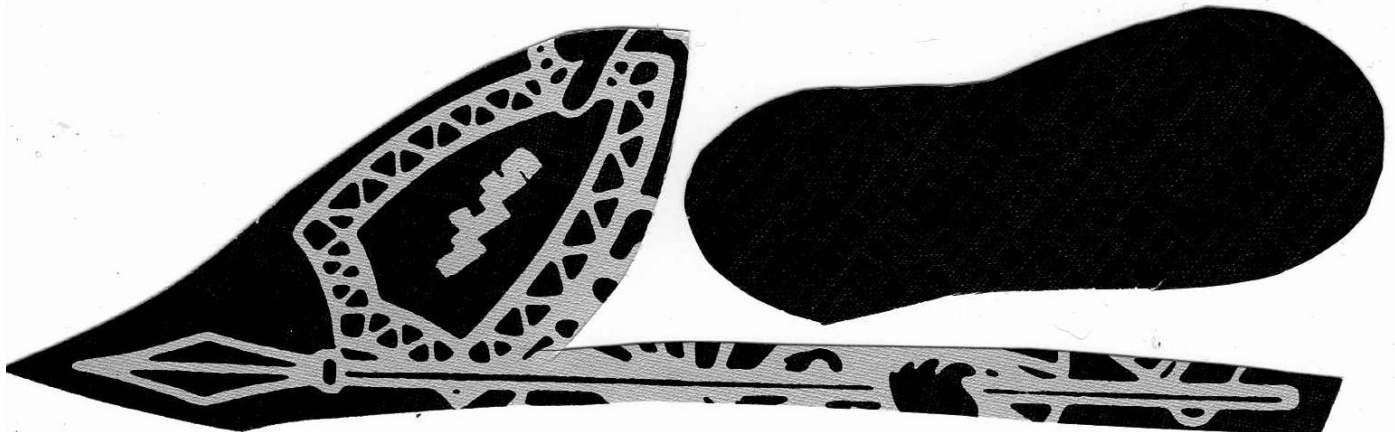
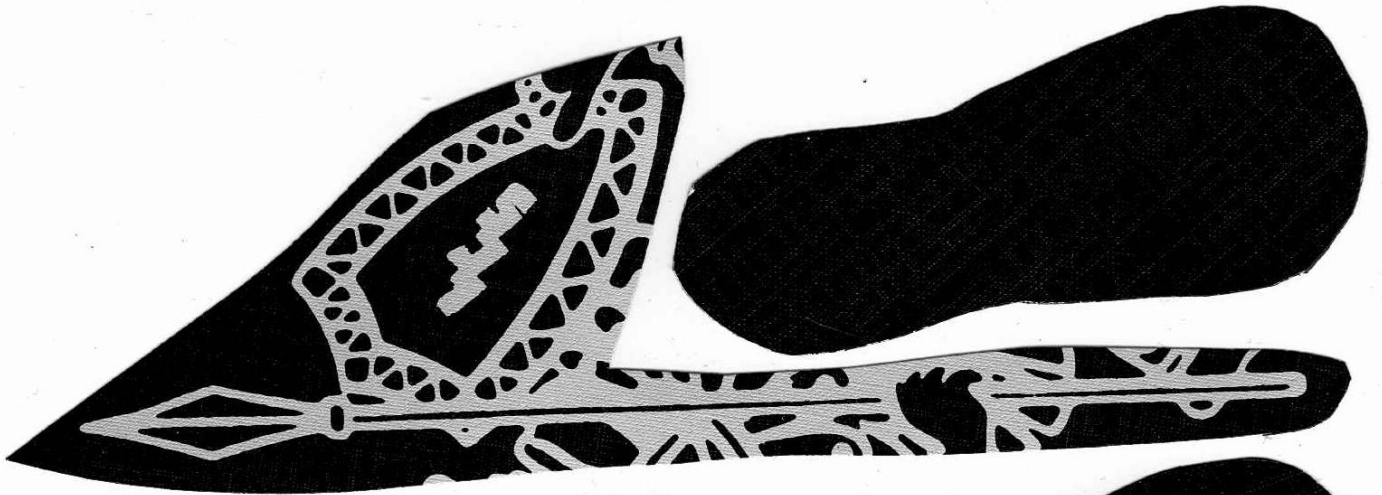
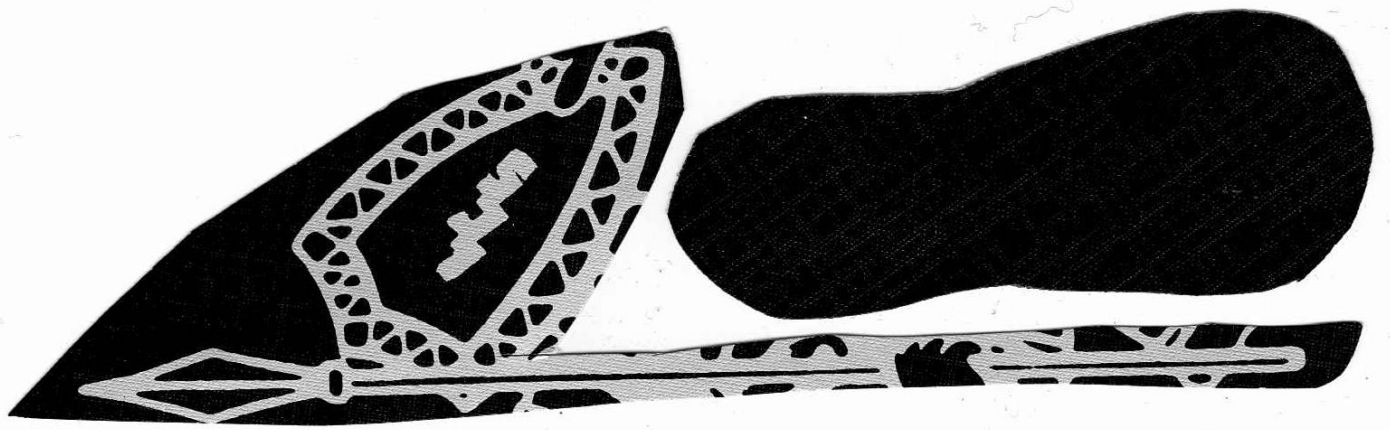












Jephthah, the Ninth Judge . . .

Rejected

Made Captain