

# IMPROVING COMMUNITY Sunday School- July 31, 2011

## Unifying Topic: RETURN TO OBEDIENCE

### Lesson Text

I. Israel Abandons God (Judges 10:10)

II. God Abandons Israel (Judges 10:11-14)

III. Israel Repents And God Delivers (Judges 10:15-18)

**The Main Thought:** And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (Judges 10:16, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** When the community standards of behavior are low, the community will suffer. What must the community do to improve conditions of living? The people must turn to God, realize their misdeeds, and repent in order to have hope of rescue.

**Lesson Aim:** To examine Israel's act of repentance in spite of God's wrath.

**Life Aim:** To promote the practice of repentance as the only means for restoring a right relationship with God.

10:10 And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

10:11 And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?

10:12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

10:13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

10:14 And Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

10:15 And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.

10:16 And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

10:17 Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.

10:18 Then And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

### **HISTORY:**

**Judges 8:27-35** In regards to the security of the nation, which was in quietness for forty years, Gideon's rule as the fifth judge over Israel was a success. Yet in many ways he was a spiritual failure. He had made a golden ephod from the gold earrings he had gathered from the people. Unfortunately, the people began to worship the ephod as an idol. Sadly, some decisions that stemmed from good motives had negative results. He had many wives and one concubine, who fathered 70 children. The relationship between Gideon and a concubine produced a son who tore apart Gideon's family and caused tragedy for the nation. Gideon illustrates the fact that heroes in battle are not always heroic in day-to-day living.

**Judges 9** As soon as Gideon dies, they don't even consider God for idol worship begins again. Abimelech, a disinherited son of Jerubbaal (Gideon), managed to seize the leadership that Gideon had refused by eliminating all seventy of Jerubbaal's sons—his half-brothers, with the help of his mother's family in Shechem. Only the youngest, Jotham, escaped the slaughter by hiding (9:1-6). He is the first self-declared king of Israel. God did not put him there.

Jotham standing on Mount Gerizim and shouts a "*parable of the trees*" (the olive tree, the fig tree, and the grape vine) to the people of Shechem to help the people set good priorities. Jotham's point was that if the person chosen as king was a fruitful tree, then good fruit would come from his reign, however, all the fruitful trees refused. But the thorn bush was chosen, who was a worthless and selfish thing to begin with and could offer no real security to the men of Shechem and therefore, ultimately became their destruction. Abimelech is portrayed as the thorn bush used tree boughs as battering rams to knock down the stronghold of the tower of Shechem and setting it on fire, killing 1,000 men and women; and then Abimelech and his men then attacked Thebez (another city) and trapped some of the people in the height of the tower and tried to do the same as was done to Shechem. However, a woman drops a millstone upon Abimelech's head and crushes his skull. She saves her people! He begs his armor-bearer to kill him with his sword, so

he does not die at the hand of a woman, because death at the hands of a woman was considered to be an utter disgrace for a warrior. This stopped the battle, and everyone went home because Abimilech was dead, thus God repaid the wickedness which Abimilech committed towards his father (Gideon), in slaying his 70 half brothers except one (Jotham). Chapter 9 concludes with the destruction of the men of Shechem. This was in answer to the curse Jotham had spoken three years ago upon them for following Abimelech. It took three years for God to answer!

**Judges 10:1-5** And after Abimilech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. Tola, the seventh judge, was not an important judge. He did not do any great work. He probably only decided the results of legal arguments for **twenty-three years**. **When he died, he was buried in Shamir and succeeded by Jair, a man from Gilead, who judged Israel for twenty-two years. His 30 sons rode 30 donkeys and owned 30 towns throughout Gilead which are still called The Cities of Jair. And Jair died, and was buried in Canaan being Israel's eighth judge.**

**Judges 10:6-9** The children of Israel turn from the Lord and turned back to evil (practicing idolatry) where they served Baalim and Ashtaroth and many other gods. Israel was attracted to these other gods not because of the beauty of an idol image, but because of what was associated with the pagan deity (weather, fertility, financial and so called blessings). **The anger of the Lord being hot against Israel** was because of Israel's sin—idolatry, therefore, He allows the Philistines and the Ammorites to **oppress them for 18 years**. The Ammonites crossed over Jordan into the land of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim and vexed them also. Again God allows heathen nations to oppress His people. The Ammorites, whose power had been broken by Ehud, one of the earlier judges (second judge), had again become strong and were plundering Israel. Israel was never blessed when they served these other gods. Instead, God allowed them to be harassed, oppressed and severely distressed - but God gave them what they wanted.

## LESSON:

### Judges 10:10 Israel Abandons God

**10:10** Double sins: one, forsaking God, and two, servicing Baalim. The Israelites finally confessed again that they messed up with God and they cried out for help, acknowledging their sins. Notice that when the Israelites were at the end of their rope, they did not look to their heathen gods for help, but to the only True God who was really able to help them and save them. <sup>1</sup>Israel was not just aware that she was sinning against God, but she realized why and in what way she had sinned against God. Most believers, when put under severe discipline, usually have a clue as to why they are under discipline. They might blame other to start with but God will always find a way to shine the light on the circumstance—the sin of turning away from God! It gets more and more difficult as a society moves further and further from divine viewpoint. <sup>2</sup>It's true of all of us - we have been created with a "God shaped vacuum" and if we will not worship the One True God, we will worship the god of self, of money, of power, etc. These latter gods make no moral demands per se on us and thus we can do as we please, doing whatever seems right in our own eyes. Israel acknowledged that they had abandoned God. The Israelites were blind or simply stupid to ignore God's Law, but we do the same when we put God outside our daily events instead of at the center of them.

### Judges 10:11-14 God Abandons Israel

**10:11-12** Just as a parent feels great rejection when a child rebels, so does God when we ignore or neglect Him, especially when we already know better. So, God tells Israel at this point, **Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.** This is a list of people that Israel had been oppressed by and God delivered them:

- <sup>3</sup>The first here was **Egypt**. Egypt eventually enslaved Israel to the point where it was completely unbearable. Thus this became the Exodus (when they went out of Egypt).
- When on the east side of the Jordan, God had not ordered Israel to engage in any aggressive behavior. They

<sup>1</sup> <http://kukis.org/Judges/Judges10.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.preceptaustin.org/judges\\_10\\_commentary.htm](http://www.preceptaustin.org/judges_10_commentary.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <http://kukis.org/Judges/Judges10.pdf>

implored the semi-hostile nations to allow them to pass through. Israel sent messages to Sihon, who was the king of the Amorites, asking for a peaceful and temporary passage through his country in Num.21:21–22. God had helped them to defeat the **Amorites**. (Look at the story about Sihon and Og).

- The **Ammonites** had oppressed Israel along with the Moabites in the time of Ehud (Jdgs.3:12) but God delivered through Ehud. He had also helped them to defeat the people from Ammon through Jephthah. (*Read the entire chapter 11 of Judges, with such moving scriptures*).
- The fourth hostile group mentioned here are the **Philistines**. Only one direct altercation with the Philistines has been mentioned previously in Judges, was when Shamgar struck down 600 Philistines with an ox-goad (Jdgs.3:31).
- Canaanites' border was from Sidon unto Gaza (Gen.10:15). When Joshua was taking the northern portion of Israel, he chased the enemies all the way to **Zidon**, indicating that he did not go into Sidon and take it (Josh. 11:8). The point is: the Lord delivered them into their hands; they had yet to be subdued (Jdgs.1:31).
- The **Amalekites** went against Israel after they came out of Egypt, coming to the land of Canaan. Joshua and his men went to fight the army of Amalek. As long as Moses held the rod up they were winning. He became tired and Aaron and Hur rolled a stone for him to sit on and they stood on each side holding up his hands. As a result, Joshua and his troops crushed the army of Amalek (Ex. 17:10-13). And when the Amalekites sided with the Moabites and Ammon (Jdgs. 3:13), God delivered them.
- Israel's people had also defeated the **Maonites**, meaning either the old inhabitants of Maon, a city in the mountains of Judah, near to which was a wilderness of this name, (Josh.15:55) or probably those same people from Midian. Not too much is known about the Maonites.

God reminded them how much He had helped them to escape from their oppressors when they cried out. He delivered the Israelites from seven different tribes. That's completion!

**10:13-14** Despite being rejected by His own people, God never fails to rescue us when we call out to Him in repentance. God never failed to rescue the Israelites, yet this time the Lord tells the people, **you have abandoned Me and served other gods**, so I will not rescue you anymore; I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. What made it so different this time; because they had repeated this scenario so many times? You know a parent keeps giving a child chance after chance because they are hoping they would turn from doing wrong. Eventually, the parent finally gives over to tough love and turns them over to God. Well, God now quits the deliverance phase, telling them what they didn't want to hear. They literally took God for granted! He usually comes through is what they probably said to themselves. Well at this point, God is showing His tough love on them. As I said three weeks ago in another lesson, (one way to put it is): *'if you like sin so much or idolatry so much, I'll let you be with them as slaves, because that's what sin is—slavery!'* God says, go cry out to those gods you've chosen... I believe that God wanted them to really know the seriousness and consequences of their actions this time and if they really stopped and thought about it, they would surely know that no other god could deliver them for He is only being true to His holy Word. God was not the reason they were in this mess and they were not going to get out lightly. If they looked back at the last seven tribes He had delivered them from, they would believe and truly repent instead of He just hearing their cries over and over and getting them out. So, for them to hear "**no**" from God, had to have hit a nerve; tested their seriousness to change; hit them so hard to the core that they didn't want to go back to old behavior again. Had they really hit rock-bottom? Were they really serious this time? God had to see their seriousness. They begin to do something about it instead of just crying about it!

## **Judges 10:15-18 Israel Repents And God Delivers**

**10:15-16** When the children of Israel realized the desperate plight into which they had fallen, they made a confession of their sin. They were completely sorry unto God.

- They did not only say "**We have sinned!**"
- They asked Him to **do unto them whatsoever seemed good unto Him**.
- **Deliver us only, we pray thee, this day**.
- In reply, they removed their foreign gods (**V16**). Although they only changed their ways a little, God was ready to forgive them because of their misery.

They were really ready for change because they said, "Deliver us only, we pray thee, this day." They were saying, 'This

*thing is so hard on us; we are so in despair and depressed; we want to be delivered now! This day!; never mind another day, but this day only!*' They changed their ways and began to worship God in the manner in which He had prescribed. Israel finally discovered that serving God is better than serving idols. **V16b** It says that **God's soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.** <sup>4</sup>God looked upon disobedient Israel with compassion, not hatred. It was "difficult" for God to allow Israel to stay in their misery, though it was best for them. Like the perfect loving parent, God hated to see Israel suffer, even when it was good for them. He longed to rescue them but would not do it until it was good for them. It was the misery of soul—their suffering which had brought about their repentance.

**10:17** Remember there is still war raging against Israel (vv8-9). In preparation for the ensuing encounter of the Ammonites' threat against Israel, the Ammonites assembled in that part of Gilead which they had possessed, while the Israelites got ready to defend themselves by assembling and encamping at Mizpeh. "*Mizpeh*" means "*watchtower*" and may be identical with the Mizpeh where Jacob and Laban piled the stones of witness between them. It may also be identified with Ramath-Mizpeh and Ramoth-Gilead (Deut.4:43; Josh.13:26; 1Kgs.4:13). When you get ready for war, you have to have the banner of God going before you.

**10:18** And at this same time, the Israelites were not prepared for battle because they did not have a recognized leader, so they thought. Therefore, **the people and princes of Gilead** began to ask **what man is to fight against the children of Ammon?** It was necessary for them as a people through their recognized leaders, their princes, to select one to be their captain or head because they always worked well with a judge over them; they were obedient when the judge was leading them. Until they had such a recognized leader, it was impossible for them to make a united effort against their oppressors. This would become their seventh judge. You notice all these sevens—completion! God is always bringing us to completion, unity, and of one accord. We've got to remember to always have a repentant heart. God will always show us how to get there to be delivered!

#### **SUMMARY:**

Israel is serving the gods of those surrounding them, but not their own true God. Israel cries unto the Lord. The Lord recalls previous deliverances He has brought them out of. This time the Lord initially refuses to come to their rescue, telling them to get help from the gods they had chosen to serve. The Lord's soul was grieved for the misery of Israel! Now that's bad! Their continued cry was so despairing and depressing in seeking the Lord that they not only changed their minds, they changed their ways. They confessed their sins and they submitted to God's judgment. They put away their strange gods and whatever God would do to them they accepted. God's compassion toward them was because of the misery; the suffering of Israel. They were ready to return to serve the Lord wholly. They prepare for battle with Ammon by looking for a leader to fight for them. All God wants from us is obedience unto Him! Our consequences of suffering from wrong decisions are not to be repeated. God does not want us to suffer for wrong decisions but be restored to right relationship! Obedience will keep us in right relationship! In our lesson the community standards of behavior was greatly improved because of knowing what God will not put up with and knowing by them taking steps to change the situation brought them back into right relationship of obedience unto God. Their actions brought reaction—bad and good!

#### **APPLICATION:**

Take a look at life to see how many times you've been in the same situation. See what the outcome was and what it took to get into the situation and what it took to get out of the situation. Was there any improvement?

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/0710.htm>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>