



journal of biblical  
perspectives  
in leadership

## THE CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP OF JEPHTHAH IN JUDGES 11 AND DEUTERONOMY 12

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This social and cultural textural analysis (Robbins 1996) explores two Old Testament texts, Judges 11 and Deuteronomy 12 (NASB). Using Biblical cultural anthropological principles, this analysis examines the parallels between Deuteronomical law and the leadership of Jephthah. As the main character in Judges 11, Jephthah's leadership decision making presumably arises due to his cultural position within the ancient tribe of Gilead. Born the son of a prostitute, Jephthah rises to a leadership position and attempts to regain integrity within this ancient culture. The analysis reveals that there are potential flaws in Jephthah's leadership capabilities that may be due to the cultural underpinnings of his background and his actions within the framework of the dominant society, particularly related to Deuteronomical expectations of behavior. Application to the contemporary period, limitations, and future implications are provided.

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There is definitive value to the discussion of ancient Israel from a cultural anthropology perspective because this area has much to offer in terms of providing a voice to Old Testament texts (Harrington 1981). According to Grunlan and Mayers (1988, 35) cultural anthropology is multilayered and considers the distinctive study of "...humans across time and cultures." Although there are numerous examples of Biblical cultural anthropology in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 12 and Judges 11 are two examples of rich cultural tradition and ritual. Deuteronomy 12 (New American Standard Bible), a book of the Pentateuch, covers the cultural guidelines for dwellings, land possession, offerings, food consumption, and pagan influence. Judges 11 (NASB) recounts the story of Jephthah, the "ninth judge" and his plight from accusations that he

was not a true son of Gilead (Marcus 1990, 113). The two books have the potential to converge to form a template and application of cultural norms or regulatory standards within the Old Testament tribe of Gilead. Deuteronomy stands as a portion of the cultural influence in itself and has an abundance of “Hebrew scribal culture” interwoven within its verse (Van der Toorn 2007, 143). This special cultural law of the land in Deuteronomy 12 is a divine gift from God for the people of Israel, so that they might live and flourish beyond sin (Hoppe 2000, 343).

If this law of the land is followed, will Jephthah follow it? Likewise, the journey of Jephthah in Judges 11 is a cultural one. Janzen (2004, 181) writes that Jephthah was less equipped to subscribe to the regulatory indications of God. Jephthah as a warrior, negotiator, son of prostitute, and father (Judg. 11, NASB) faltered on multiple fronts, presumably due to the motivations and familial background which may not have allowed him to flourish as an accepted tribesman in the Gilead tribe. Yet, there are suggestions that the culture of ancient Israel may have been in a state of sin (Clements 1989), not knowing how to return to the law of God. Analyzing the culture of Jephthah, and him within this culture will provide analytic data regarding his societal position and subsequent leadership.

Robbins (1996, 71) has created a framework suitable for the analysis of culture named “social and cultural texture”. Using Robbins guidelines for texture analysis, the text is analyzed via the broader categories and sub-categories indicated in this cultural and social framework (71). Following this structure three areas are analyzed: (a) “specific social topics” which can indicate a textural voice, (b) cultural and social themes, and (c) “cultural category” (Robbins 1996, 72-86). The purpose of this exegetical paper will be to draw the cultural components of Deuteronomy 12 and Judges 11 from their respective cultural positions, and compare and contrast those positions. Secondly, the paper will address contemporary leadership and future directions for bringing forward Old Testament literature into the current global era.

## I. METHOD OF ANALYSIS: JUDGES 11 AND DEUTERONOMY 12

Robbins (1996, 71) indicates that the exegetical researcher can explore the cultural anthropology of a text via analysis of three sub-areas of texture: “...specific social topics, common social and cultural topics, and final cultural categories”. The first, involves categorization of the voice of the text and how it gives cultural clues regarding “...meanings, values, traditions, convictions, rituals, beliefs, and actions to people” (72). Within this category of analysis, Judges 11 and Deuteronomy 12 are discussed in the context of Robbins conversionist and thaumaturgical perspectives. The conversionist voice is described by Robbins as a view of the world as it stands, and how it can be navigated by taking a Godly stance as a participant (72). The thaumaturgical perspectives in these passages relate to “...the foresight and avoidance of calamity” (73).

The second are the emerging cultural and social themes for analysis in Judges 11 and Deuteronomy 12 (Robbins 1996, 72). The first of these themes indicated by Robbins is integrity and social positioning (76). The second theme applicable to these two Old Testament passages is that of legal contract which can be defined as relationships between people of different social standing (79). A third theme is “riposte”

or “challenge-response” which involves a series of steps as process of difference between two parties where one party puts forth the “challenge”, the issue is processed, and then the parties counter one another (80). Another theme is that of interchange between groups or tribes of people or what Robbins terms “exchange systems” (83). The last of these themes indicated by Robbins exists between the two Old Testament texts used in this analysis, “purity codes” or “...the boundaries separating the inside from the outside” (85). These cultural maps include differences in social status (85).

The last of the sub-textures of cultural texture analysis that is applicable to Judges 11 and Deuteronomy 12 is “dominant culture rhetoric” (Robbins 1996, 86). This final sub-texture describes what Robbins calls the “cultural location” of an individual (86). This cultural position within a broader societal and cultural milieu displays how certain individuals are those that stand out from the crowd in certain cultural and social group frameworks (86). This analytical methodology is applied to the two Old Testament texts, from both the Pentateuch and Judges 12, with particular emphasis on the Biblical cultural anthropological metamorphosis of leadership development.

## II. THE TALE OF TWO TEXTS: CULTURE IN OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL

The Old Testament text of Deuteronomy is the last of the Pentateuch, and deals partially with legalities (Deuteronomy 12, New American Standard Bible). According to Hill and Walton (2000), Deuteronomy is the basis for a solid foundation in the rules of ancient culture related to God like behavior. For example, there are multiple repetitions of the Ten Commandments throughout the book (Deut. 5, 8, 9 NASB). Considering this, a conversionist voice of the text is not surprising, since humankind would continue to do evil by ignoring God’s commandments (Judg. 11 NASB); it is only by following the laws of God that the individual might navigate the complexities of deliverance (Robbins 1996). Deuteronomy 12 highlights key verses that are applicable to Judges 11 (NASB) from the standpoint of precursor stipulations of law, some of which may have been misinterpreted by Jephthah, which will be discussed further in this paper (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

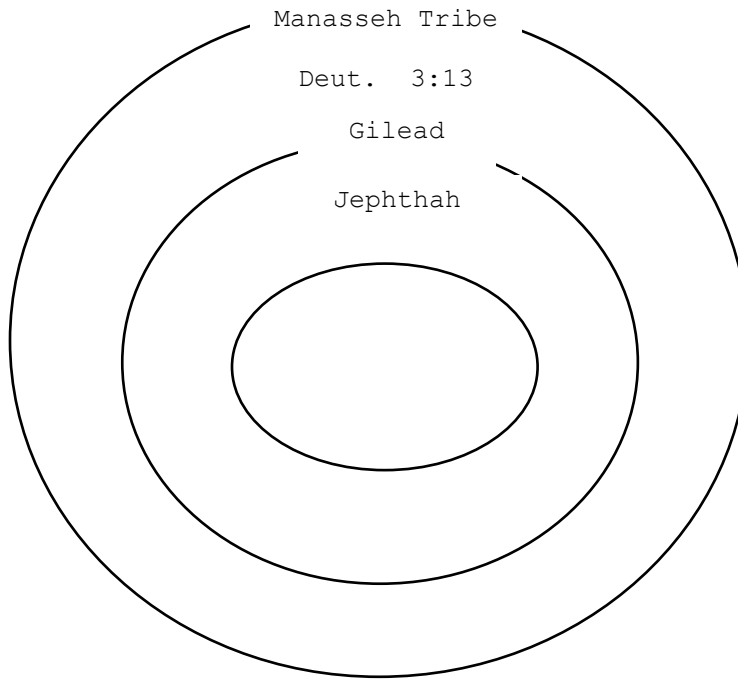
The Conversionist Voice (Robbins 1996) of Deuteronomy 12 (NASB) and its Application to Judges 11 (NASB)

Deut. 12 Verse [with emphasis]	Corresponding Application Verse to Judg. 11
<sup>5</sup> “But you shall seek <i>the Lord</i> at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. <sup>6</sup> There you shall bring your <b>burnt offerings</b> , your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.”	<sup>30</sup> “Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, “If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, <sup>31</sup> then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a <b>burnt offering</b> .”
<sup>8</sup> “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man <i>doing</i>	<sup>23</sup> “Since now the Lord, the God of Israel, drove out the Amorites from before His

Deut. 12 Verse [with emphasis]	Corresponding Application Verse to Judg. 11
<p>whatever is right <b>in his own eyes</b>;  <sup>9</sup>for you have <b>not</b> as yet come to the resting place and the <b>inheritance</b> which the Lord your God is giving you.”</p>	<p>people Israel, are you then to possess it?”  <sup>24</sup> “Do you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the Lord our God has driven out before us, we will possess it.”  <sup>27</sup> “I therefore have not sinned against you, but you are doing <b>me</b> wrong by making war against <b>me</b>; may the Lord, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon.”</p>
<p><sup>13</sup> “Be careful that you do not offer your <b>burnt offerings</b> in every <i>cultic</i> place you see, <sup>14</sup>but in the place which the Lord chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your <b>burnt offerings</b>, and there you shall do all that I command you.”</p>	<p><sup>30</sup> “Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, “If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, <sup>31</sup>then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as <b>a burnt offering</b>.”</p>
<p><sup>31</sup> “You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their <b>gods</b>; for they even <b>burn their sons and daughters</b> in the fire to their <b>gods</b>.”</p>	<p><sup>24</sup> “Do you not possess what Chemosh your <b>god</b> gives you to possess? So whatever the Lord our God has driven out before us, we will possess it.”</p>
<p><sup>32</sup> “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; <b>you shall not add to nor take away from it</b>.”</p>	<p><sup>39</sup> At the end of two months she returned to her father, <b>who did to her according to the vow which he had made</b>; and she had no relations with a man. Thus it became a custom in Israel, <sup>40</sup>that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.</p>

These laws offer a conversionist view to the main leader or “ninth judge” of Judges 11 (NASB), Jephthah. Jephthah is a leader who has the choice to integrate this law into his decision making or choose to ignore this law in his decision making. This is inherent because the backdrop of life in Old Testament Israel was based upon the culture of the family unit, the accompanying interpersonal relationships between families, and decision making rules and regulations associated with those interactions (Blenkinsopp 1997) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Blenkinsopp's (1997) Concentric Circles of Family Connection in Ancient Israel Applied to Jephthah



*Figure 1.* Blenkinsopp (1997) describes in text, that the Old Testament individual would reside at the epicenter of each of these circles (50). In the case of Jephthah, he is identified as the "...son of a harlot" (Judg. 11: 1 NASB). This would have been in direct violation of the contents of Deuteronomy (Sinclair 2011, 666) and would have left Jephthah without a solidified amount of land to base himself within the "kinship" of his half-brothers in the long term (Blenkinsopp 1997, 63). Blenkinsopp indicates that ancient Israelites ultimately valued "paternity and inheritance" (63). In this case, Jephthah leveraged his warrior skills, for the Gilead clan members in need of his assistance who initially rejected him. This countered what he was unable to biologically inherit.

There is a second voice within the text of Judges 11 (New American Standard Bible), the thaumaturgical voice (Robbins 1996, 73), shown through two different instances in the events of this Old Testament text. According to Robbins the thaumaturgical is "...the individual's concern for relief from present ills by special dispensations...salvations takes the form of ...the foresight and avoidance of calamity" (73). The story of Jephthah in Judges 11 (NASB) begins with the identification of the leadership characteristics. Jephthah is described as the following in Judges 11 (NASB): (a) "a valiant warrior" (1), (b) son of Gilead (1), (c) the "...son of another woman" (2), and (d) that he was in the company of "worthless fellows" (3). Jephthah is then called upon by his brothers who had initially rejected him in their family unit, to fight the Ammonites, who began conflict with the Israelites (4-8). At this juncture, Jephthah confirms a bargain with his brothers, specifying that is he decides to fight for the side of Israel, this would guarantee his leadership position in the Gilead clan (9-11). Jephthah

then goes to task to rectify the situation with the Ammonites who are ready to engage in conflict with Israel, by first attempting diplomatic means in order to avoid war which ultimately fails (12-28). However, in Judges 11 (NASB) Jephthah realizes that it is ultimately God that will determine the outcome (27), and makes a request of God, offering a sacrifice to God for his victory against the Ammonites:

If you will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's and I will offer it up as a burnt offering (30-31)

Jephthah then realizes that the individual coming out of the doors is his one and only daughter and child (35-36). Jephthah is then placed in a situation of distress, where he decides to fulfill his promise from his prayer request to God at his and his daughter's expense (37-39). Jephthah could have potentially faced misfortune by not fulfilling his promise, although this option appears to be absent in the text, because he immediately makes his decision after seeing her (35). Jephthah knows that God must guide his leadership in the Ammonite conflict in order to avoid misfortune for the tribe of Israel, and he asks for definitive "supernatural help" (Robbins 1996, 73) to do so. The voices of this text and Deuteronomy's application to it may possibly open a door to the cultural and social themes interwoven in the threads of Jephthah's leadership decision making.

### III. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL THEMES

There are five themes that emerge within the social and cultural aspects of these two texts, and the first is that of integrity within social position (Robbins 1996). From a Deuteronomy 12 (New American Standard Bible) standpoint, it would have been appropriate to "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree" (2). In the case of the Ammonites, who may have worshiped many gods (Aufrecht 1999, 156), honor would come from following the benefit of God's law to acquire land for His glory alone. According to Deuteronomy 12: 28 (NASB) a sense of integrity comes from following the Godly laws of the home or land,

Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.

In the case of Jephthah, who was born and societally placed *without* honor (Judg. 11: 1-3 NASB) to rebound to a place of honor within his house (family unit), and become hero of the lands of his tribe, he would have to perform successfully after being called to task to fight against the Ammonites by his half-brothers (Judg. 11: 6-11, NASB). Particularly, relevant is Judges 11: 9 (NASB) which states, "...If you take me back to fight against the sons of Ammon *and the Lord gives them up to me* [with emphasis], will I become your head?'" Marcus (1990) builds an argument that Jephthah's dishonor comes from losing in court to his half-brothers over the rightful legitimacy of his adoption as a son of Gilead (111). There may have been no way to concretely prove that Gilead was Jephthah's actual father (111). However, Jephthah does potentially conduct himself honorably, by first negotiating with the Ammonites, before attacking and defeating them (Judges 11: 12-32 NASB), which then annuls any legal misgivings regarding his

honorable place in the family unit per his own request to clan members (Judges 11:9 NASB). This becomes a part of his social standing and honor because a legal contract in this case may have been decided regarding the status of Jephthah in his family unit, and subsequently, the clan and tribe, *prior* to the heads of tribes requesting his assistance against the Ammonites, and then again, after Jephthah agrees to engage in the conflict (Judges 11:6, NASB; Marcus 1990). As the passage progresses, it is the confrontation with the Ammonites which truly gives the reader an opportunity to know the leadership and renewed determination of Jephthah.

Robbins (1996) indicates that the process of “*riposte*” is that which could jeopardize the status of an individual within the text (80-81). There are two potential ways in which Jephthah’s status within the culture of this ancient tribe is challenged. The first is from the Deuteronomical text, and the second is via the confrontation with the Ammonites. Deuteronomy 12 challenges Jephthah directly, and his responses show the potential flaws in his decision strategy and status within the Godly portion of the culture (see Table 2) Although, according to Römer (1998) Jephthah is only following the book of Qohelet, specifically a verse in the book that indicates that one must always satisfy a promise to God (38). The book of Qohelet or Ecclesiastes is the book “...read during the celebration of the Feast of Booths...” (Lohfink 2003, 1).

**Table 2**

Test and Reaction in Jephthah the Ninth Judge

Deuteronomy 12: The Test	How did Jephthah React? (Judg. 11, NASB)
<sup>2</sup> “You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Engages Ammonites by negotiation without success (28)</li> <li>▪ Leaves the situation in the hands of God to decide the winner of the conflict (27)</li> <li>▪ Defeat of the Ammon (32-33)</li> </ul>
<b>Possible Flaws in Decision Making Occur at this Juncture</b>	
↓	↓
<sup>8</sup> “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man <i>doing</i> whatever is right in his own eyes”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bargains with God from his own standpoint in order to potentially save face, secure his honor, position, and defeat the Ammon by offering what would meet him upon his return from victory (30-31)</li> </ul>
<sup>13</sup> “ Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every <i>cultic</i> place you see, <sup>14</sup> but in the place which the Lord chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potentially at Ammon, a cultic place, he called to God to exchange victory for a burnt offering as a vow that he did not intend to break (31-35)</li> </ul>
<sup>31</sup> “You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fulfills his promise to give a burnt offering of his one child to God (39) — a cultic practice.</li> </ul>

Deuteronomy 12: The Test	How did Jephthah React? (Judg. 11, NASB)
their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods”	
<sup>32</sup> “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Added to his situation by unnecessarily bargaining with God for a victory (30)</li> <li>▪ Took away God’s blessing of a child by offering her as burnt offering (39)</li> </ul>

The second demand-response within Jephthah’s story is between Gilead and the Ammonites. Culturally speaking, migratory patterns cannot be excluded as considerations for the conflicts that surround the territory contested in Judges 11 (Mehlman 1995, 76). This is true of the exchange that occurs between Jephthah and the king of Ammon. There is a structure that follows the exchange in Judges 11 (NASB) as follows: (a) a question, why are you seeking conflict? (12), (b) an answer from the king of Ammon (13), (c) a reply from Jephthah (14), and (d) no reply from the king of Ammon (28). An argument is put forth by Jephthah that is convincing, in order to either avoid or continue the conflict that might ensue. Webb (1987) indicates that his intention in the dialogue is to lay out a position for war (58). Webb also indicates that it is unknown whether Jephthah was truly acting in the interests of the Israelites or if he was acting in his own self-interest (60). It is the postulate of this author based upon the text, that he may have been doing both, in order to satisfy a sense of belonging in the family unit and greater tribe as someone who followed the cultural claims of the time, as well as rise to respected leadership temporarily.

Robbins (1996) asserts that interchanges amongst people could take on a variety of shapes, but in general the people engaged in a “clan-based system” for services (p. 83). Deuteronomy 12 lays a foundation for exchange within the clan and tribal system between God and the people. One example of such reciprocity is in Deuteronomy 12: 10-12 (NASB) where the writer indicates that God will give the people sanctuary and safekeeping from enemies, and in return, offerings, oaths, and exultation for the blessings given to the people will take place. Another example of service exchange occurs again, when Jephthah offers his services to fight the Ammonites (Judges 11: 8-9 NASB). Because it is likely that the half-brothers of Jephthah did not believe in the lawfulness of his adoption as a true son of Gilead (Marcus 1990, 113), the social exchange that occurred here appears to be “asymmetrical exchange” (Crook 2006, 91). Crook indicates that this type of exchange mechanism was not based upon familial association, and that the exchange could be based upon an agreement, between individuals of imbalanced social standing (91). Based upon the treatment of Jephthah by his supposed family and tribe, it is not unanticipated that this type of exchange might be seen as absent from familial associations. One is not astonished that because there is this questionable divide between familial players that Jephthah’s past plays a role directly in his future as a leader from the standpoint of purity.

The role of the natural imperative of life was a part of the “purity codes” of ancient Israel (deSilva 2011, 145; Robbins 1996, 85). An example of this in Deuteronomy 12 (NASB) is the practice of slaughtering meat (15-17) and the abolishment of idolatry to have a clean place of haven (2-7). Practices and circumstances that veered from this



natural order were deemed impure, as is the situation with prostitution or sodomy (Leviticus 18 NASB). In the case of Jephthah, the natural order and purpose of the family unit, clan, and tribe would have been disrupted by a potentially illegitimate child of a prostitute. Jephthah's half-brothers would have probably seen his existence in their family as impure and therefore took steps to nullify his existence within the group (Smith 2005, 286). Smith indicates that Jephthah wasn't the first and wouldn't be the last to be the product of an unstable familial unit, and given to the hands of grave sin. Smith writes, "to destroy the family would be to destroy Israel" (284). Indeed, the family of Gilead was in upheaval at the beginning of the passage, and this trend continues with Jephthah potentially destroyed his own offspring as well (Judges 11: 39 NASB). Smith continues, "...while not purposefully passing on the faith by planning for a Godly heritage, they were destroying not only their own families but Israel as well. Problems in the home ultimately impacted the nation"(298). Based upon the impurities associated with Jephthah and his background, Jephthah's cultural position within the dominant culture would have made him a social outcast (Judges 11: 3 NASB) who was given a second chance.

#### IV. CULTURAL POSITION

Jephthah rose from a leadership position from a cultural position of denigration, once a man who was taken as a part of family, only to have been removed by his own kin (Judges 11: 1-4 NASB). The prevailing culture (Robbins 1996) of the time would have attempted to make the impure, pure (deSilva 2011). However, the problem with this situation is that in doing so, the family unit and the individual characteristics of Jephthah created a leader whose social needs as a part of the prevailing culture potentially outweighed a wisdom that could have been fostered by his family unit, clan, and tribe. In other words, if the story showed that due to the nature of the situation, the units nurtured Jephthah as a valid member, would he have emerged to produce better decisions for the tribe and his own daughter later? Or would ritual have an override over reason?

From a cultural anthropology stance, DeMaris and Leeb (2006) suggest that Jephthah should not necessarily be considered a negative character, because he was participating in the rituals of the period from the cultural stance he was given. In particular, DeMaris and Leeb point to the end of the passage in particular, "in parlance to ritual theory, the daughter's rite references or indexes the social crisis and ritual negotiation that Jephthah has gone through..." (190). DeMaris and Leeb indicate that rituals provided a change in cultural positioning within the greater social network, as with the mourning of Jephthah's daughters virginity and that of the Jephthah's return as a victorious warrior (190). Envisioning Jephthah in the context of the rituals of the time may not be as different as the 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural hurdles that face leaders today, including, illegitimacy, prostitution, disintegration of family units, and lack of accountability to the existence of the most basic commandments and ethics.

## V. CULTURAL APPLICATION IN A CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Can cultural anthropological considerations have an impact on leadership decision making? Further, can Blickensopp's (1997) concentric circles fit into the contemporary context for leadership? Arguably, in the contemporary period, the outer concentric circles (Blickensopp 1997) are disintegrating, at minimum, within the United States, as the number of two parent, married households declines (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2011). If this is the case, then how can contemporary society learn from the leadership of the Old Testament in order to develop leaders who can provide stability and morality, especially if the leader was never taught morality in the family unit? It is the intent of this analysis to demonstrate that, indeed, societal structures at large might be able to form leaders that can have great stamina and stealth, not unlike, Jephthah, yet lack the essential components of trust, and wisdom required to lead with precision confidence in decision making. In addition, these same leaders may lack the stability of a familial tree that could have once sponsored their development as individuals (to trust, seek wisdom, and seek morality) and as stable leaders over the longer term.

Certain case studies demonstrate that there are organizations realizing the importance of good spiritual basis in leader decision making and are implementing such structures for leadership development based on Christian perspective (Brinkmann & O'Brien 2010, 656). Older cultural case studies, such as Miller (1965) give ethnological information that may be replicated and reanalyzed from an anthropological standpoint in the contemporary period. Miller found that,

leadership, decision-making, and social control are processes of maintenance which also serve to modify a culture. Both individuals and the community make decisions under the guidance of leaders who are supported by mechanisms of social control which encourage development of consensus about issues and adherence to agreements which have been reached (65)

Additional contemporary models of leadership are not devoid of the consideration of personal background. In fact, Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) indicate in their conceptual model paper of authentic leadership that,

for authentic leaders, one or more positive role models (e.g., a parent, teacher, sibling, coach or mentor) who demonstrated high levels of integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness are likely to have served as pivotal forces in the leader's personal growth and resulting self-awareness (348).

The latter theoretical examination is no stranger to the societal influences of the contemporary period. In essence, culture and background may have an influence upon leader decision making and behavior in the contemporary age, just as the highlighted influence of this analysis of Old Testament ancient Israel in Judges and Deuteronomy. The story of Jephthah allows the examination of cultural situation and influence upon leadership decision making. However, this is not to say that leaders who come from challenging social backgrounds cannot rise above them, and that there are exceptions to this notion. The contemporary age demonstrates that some leaders undeniably do rise above challenging situations to wisdom, with positive familial influences and fortitude (Carson and Murphey 1990). Such leaders may particularly have an affinity for self-determination behavior (Deci and Ryan 1985), perhaps nurtured by important family

members or influential mentors acting in the place of familial influence, rising above societal and cultural limitations for the greater good (Romans 8: 28 NASB).

## VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As par for exegetical examination, there are subject limitations to analysis, as well as the limitations of evidence from cultural anthropological circles. For example, where did Jephthah really make his vow? Did Jephthah really kill his daughter, or did he simply send her to some location to lament? Although there are holes within the literature regarding such evidence, Judges 11 and Deuteronomy 12 still have potential relevancy exegetically to our contemporary age from a position of understanding the forces that drive leader development and decision making. Future studies might ethnologically or historically follow several leaders over the course of their career to examine the influence of familial background and cultural influences upon their leadership with the Old Testament as parallel of analysis for similar leadership decision making. This methodology might also include cross-cultural qualitative comparisons, as differences in cultural values may skew what is deemed a leadership decision flaw or success. Furthermore, generational differences as a result of declining familial commitment and moral relativism may also display stark differences in what constitutes positive and negative decision making in leaders. In conclusion, culture, as existent in Old Testament clans, tribes, and family units was as important in ancient Israel, as it may be of paralleled importance in the current global era.

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