

The Book of  
**JUDGES**

*Testing the Heart of God's Children*



Ignorant Commander

Judges 11:1-40

Lesson 11

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## Introduction

Though Jephthah was one of Israel's judges, he was the people's choice, much like Saul. The text calls Jephthah a *mighty man of valor*, a man of military skill and personal strength. It is the same phrase God used for Gideon. God called Gideon a *mighty man of valor* for the potential He saw in him, but Jephthah earned the name for himself. Valor is not just military in nature, but can refer to a person of strength and influence who has good standing in the community. His rise to prominence is depicted as the result of the hidden providence of God at work to deliver his people from their oppressors amid the sins and maneuverings of human beings. Jephthah found himself empowered by the Spirit of God for the deliverance of His people from their enemies. However, before he went out he tried to strike a bargain with God, by an ignorant vow. Jephthah's vow was an attempt to manipulate God in his favor.

**Jephthah** - Though a son of Gilead, he was the son of a harlot. He may have been half-Canaanite, conceived by a temple prostitute. He lived in a culture given over to the combined worship of many gods.

**Ammonite** – The god of the Ammonites was Molech. Ammon and Moab lived side by side and shared a common heritage. Both nations having descended from Lot, shared cultural and religious ideas. The favor of the gods could be bought by human sacrifice and other detestable acts.

**Chemosh** – Is the god of the Moabites, though Ammon also worshiped him. He is said to bring victory in battle.

Ignorance of God's Word, can be dangerous and have tragic consequences. God's law prohibits human sacrifice (Deut. 12:31), and also makes provision for a vow rashly uttered (Lev 5:4-6). Jephthah, though familiar with Israel's history, appears to be ignorant of God's ways, to his own hurt. Those who do not understand the character of God as revealed in scripture, can find themselves the victim of circumstances of their own ignorance. *Dan. 11:32* says "the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." In applying this verse to Jephthah's situation, the verse becomes, "the people who are ignorant of God will display stupidity and wreak havoc." -Gary Inrig He may have been passionate in his attempt to honor God with his vow, but he was passionately wrong. Timothy Keller points out that "God wants only one kind of human sacrifice, the self-sacrifice of offering God the lordship of every area in our lives."



## **Looking for Gold - What does it say?**

The first step in mining for gold is getting the lay of the land. **Carefully observe the text** looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. **Mark your text** looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. Look for answers to, Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

*Setting the scene: Read Lev. 5:4-6, Deut. 12:29-32, Micah 6:6-8 for added insight. Use an atlas or other sources to place the cities in the appropriate place on your map. Pay attention to who's inheritance they are occupying.*

### **Judges 11:1-11**

1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. 2 Gilead's wife bore sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, "You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman." 3 Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him.

4 It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. 5 And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6 Then they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon."

7 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?"

8 And 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."

9 So Jephthah said 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 be your head?"

10 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The Lord will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words." 11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.





## **Judges 11:29-40**

**29** Then 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. **30** And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, **31** 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."

**32** So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands. **33** And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith — twenty cities — and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

### Jephthah's Daughter

**34** When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. **35** And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back on it."

**36** 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." **37** Then she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I."

**38** So he said, "Go." And he sent her away for two months; and she went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. **39** And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had



### **Boiling it Down – What does it mean?**



What **lesson** can I draw from my observations?

State each lesson in a simple sentence (aim for 10 words or less).

Judges 11:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 11:12-28 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 11:29-40 \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Refined as Gold - How can I apply it?**

How should it change me? Ask yourself, "What **course of action** do I need to take to apply each lesson?" (aim for 10 words or less)

Judges 11:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 11:12-28 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 11:29-40 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Challenge:** Use cross-references to find correlating scripture that backs up a main point of the chapter. Summarize your findings in your own words.

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### Storing up Your Treasure . . .

What did God say about doing what is right in your own eyes? Ecc. 11:9b

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What are some of the wrong thoughts Jephthah had about God?

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Why might God have given His Spirit to a leader he had not chosen? v. 11, 27

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What character qualities does God show by His actions, behind the scene?

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What words or phrases are repeated?

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**Checking for Clarity:** See if you can boil down the meaning of **each section** into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you catch the vision?

Judges 11:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Judges 11:12-28 \_\_\_\_\_

Judges 11:29-40 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bars of Gold:** State the main **point** of the passage in the form of a title.

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**Flex Your Muscles:** Can you discover an N.T. example of this O.T. truth?

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### **Hide Your Treasure in your Heart**

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. Rom. 10:2-3

Radiating His Truth . . .

We do not simply need a sincere faith; we need a sincere and understanding faith.

-Gary Inrig

