

**BOOK OF JUDGES  
JEPHTHAH'S VOW  
JUDGES 11:29-34**

**Introduction**

Last week we saw the rise of **JEPHTHAH** the **JUDGE**. We saw in *verse 1* that he was “*a Gileadite*” [He both lived in a place called **GILEAD** and was born to a man named **GILEAD**!] He is described there as “*a mighty man of valour,*” but we are also told that he was “*born of a harlot.*”

[Not his fault!]

We saw how that he was raised alongside his half-brothers who were born of **GILEAD'S** wife. At some point (possibly at the death of his father) his half-brothers kicked him out telling him he wasn't going to have any inheritance in their father's house. Later **SCRIPTURE** reveals that the elders of the place called **GILEAD** were agreeable with **JEPHTHAH** being run out of town.

**GILEAD** went to a place called **TOB**, pulled together a band of vain men and began using guerilla warfare against the heathen towns.

We are not told how much time had passed since **JEPHTHAH** was run out of **GILEAD**, but “*in process of time*” the **AMMONITES** made war against **ISRAEL**. The elders of **GILEAD** went to where **JEPHTHAH** was and convinced him to come back and be their captain against the **AMMONITES** and that they would in term make him their **HEAD!**

We saw **JEPHTHAH** first tried **DIPLOMACY** with the king of **AMMON** to try to avoid bloodshed. When that didn't work, then the war was on and we left off last week in *Verse 29* as the **SPIRIT OF THE LORD** came upon **JEPHTHAH** as he was about to go to war with **AMMONITES**.

With the **LORD** in his corner by the **SPIRIT Of GOD** being upon him we asked what could possibly go wrong? **JEPHTHAH** should have been assured that the **LORD** would give him the **VICTORY!** Oh, but there is a problem!

It appears that **JEPHTHAH**, on his fleshly side, appears to have suffered a severe case of **DOUBT, FEAR, and INDECISION!**

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What he did in that moment is what we want to begin dealing with tonight! Understand that there is a lot of controversy about all that happened as a result of **JEPHTHAH'S** next step. Some good men of **GOD** are on different sides of the issue that we will look at. But there are some great things to be learned here for both sides!

**I. WE SEE JEPHTHAH VOWED A VILE VOW! (Vs 30-31)**

Though **JEPHTHAH** should have known that the **LORD** was with him, he nevertheless made a misstep in what he did here by **VOWING** this **VOW** to the **LORD!**

Have you ever made a deal with the **LORD GOD**? “**LORD, if you will do “X” for me, then I'll do “Y” for you.**”

**Understand that one should be very cautious about making deals with the LORD! (i.e. VOWING VOWS to the LORD!) It is not a wise thing to do as we will see here.**

**In fact, it is unwise for two reasons:**

**1. The first reason is because the LORD will accomplish HIS PURPOSES with or without us making a DEAL with HIM!**

*Cf. Isaiah 55:11* Now he didn't have that verse but he had all that the **LORD** had done before!

**2. If one makes a VOW, the LORD expects them to fulfill it!**

It was encoded into the **LAW of GOD!**

*Numbers 30:2*–“*If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*”

*Deuteronomy 23:21*–“*When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.*”

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*Ecclesiastes 5:4–6–“4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”*

*Matthew 5:33–37–“33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

So, **VOWING VOWS** was and is a very serious thing and so **JEPHTHAH** committed a grievous error here in **VOWING** this **VOW** in the first place because it was **UNNECESSARY!**

Now, what exactly did **JEPHTHAH** have in mind when he made this vow? We don't know because the **SCRIPTURE** doesn't say what he was thinking! Because it appears here that he just blurted it out hastily when he should have given it more thought!

Some say it was an animal that he intended to sacrifice? But that was a normal occurrence in **ISRAEL**, especially after winning a battle!

Some others say that **JEPHTHAH**, in his moment of desperation, is **VOWING** to make a **HUMAN SACRIFICE**. That's hard to fathom!

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**Let's consider some important things before we go any further:**

1. Making serious **VOWS** before the battle was a common practice in those days, especially among the **HEATHEN!**
2. The **LORD** had a clear prohibition **AGAINST HUMAN SACRIFICE**. (This was part of the reason **ISRAEL** was under **JUDGMENT** at this time and needed delivering!)

*Leviticus 18:21–“And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech...”*

*Deuteronomy 18:9-10, 12–“9 When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. 10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire...12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”*

So, the fact that the **LORD** hates **HUMAN SACRIFICE** is unquestionable! But even from what we have seen thus far in the **BOOK OF JUDGES**, it is also evident that sometimes men fail to take heed to the **LORD'S WORDS!**

3. **JEPHTHAH** grew up in **GILEAD**, a mountainous region east of the **JORDAN** which was bordered by wicked **AMMON** and **MOAB**, where **HUMAN SACRIFICE** was common.

Geographically speaking **GILEAD** was much closer to the wretched pagan hotbeds than they were to any of **ISRAEL'S** religious centers!

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4. **When JEPHTHAH** fled to **TOB**, that was even further east! So he was far more inundated with the thriving pagan culture of **AMMON** and **MOAB** than **ISRAEL'S** culture!
5. Some think that at the height of **ANXIETY** over the impending battle, **JEPHTHAH** tragically did what came naturally to the times and the pagan influence with which he was raised.

We'll talk more about this after the battle when the **VOW** became a real issue! But we do know the days of the **JUDGES** were mostly some dark days from what we have seen thus far.

**II. WE SEE JEPHTHAH, BEING EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT, LED ISRAEL TO VICTORY! (Vs 32-33)**

The pattern of what happened here is the same that we see throughout this **BOOK**. But here we see that the battle is given just two verses.

The reason for that is because the focus is not on the battle but on **JEPHTHAH'S VOW**. What he did was wrong in so many ways that it overwhelms the battle account and is the main lesson the **LORD** wants **HIS** people to learn. Don't be hasty to make **VOWS**!

**III. WE SEE THE INITIAL AFTERMATH OF JEPHTHAH'S VOW! (Vs 34)**

After the **VICTORY**, we can imagine the jubilation of both **JEPHTHAH** and those that fought with him! His mind was probably not on anything else but cherishing the **VICTORY**!

But the narrative then shifts from the battlefield to the **AFTERMATH** of the **VOW**! **JEPHTHAH** returns to his house and the first one to greet him was his own daughter with timbrels and with dances.

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Now understand that his daughter's activity here—**performing a dance of triumph and joy**—was a normal thing in that day!

But I want you to notice that word, "**behold**" there! Any time we see the word "**behold**" in the **BIBLE** we should think of it as **calling our attention to something that is very, very important!**

Whether in the **OLD TESTAMENT** or **NEW TESTAMENT** the word "**behold**" is the **LORD'S** way of **calling our attention to a particular word, verse, or thought!**

Here it **calls our attention to JEPHTHAH'S daughter**, and, more specifically, back to *verse 31*, and **JEPHTHAH'S VOW**!

There are a couple of views here about **JEPHTHAH'S VOW** and what is said here about what the final result was. **LORD** willing, we'll look at that in our study next week!