

# JUDGES



# Jephthah: God's Immeasurable Patience



Judges 10: <sup>6</sup> Again the Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight. They served the images of Baal and Ashtoreth, and the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. They abandoned the Lord and no longer served him at all. <sup>7</sup> So the Lord burned with anger against Israel, and he turned them over to the Philistines and the Ammonites, <sup>8</sup> who began to oppress them that year.

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Judges 10: <sup>8</sup> For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites east of the Jordan River in the land of the Amorites (that is, in Gilead). <sup>9</sup> The Ammonites also crossed to the west side of the Jordan and attacked Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. The Israelites were in great distress. <sup>10</sup> Finally, they cried out to the Lord for help, saying, “We have sinned against you because we have abandoned you as our God and have served the images of Baal.”

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Judges 10: <sup>11</sup> The Lord replied, “Did I not rescue you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, <sup>12</sup> the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites? When they oppressed you, you cried out to me for help, and I rescued you.

<sup>13</sup> Yet you have abandoned me and served other gods. So I will not rescue you anymore. <sup>14</sup> Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen! Let them rescue you in your hour of distress!”

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Judges 10: <sup>15</sup> But the Israelites pleaded with the Lord and said, “We have sinned. Punish us as you see fit, only rescue us today from our enemies.”

<sup>16</sup> Then the Israelites put aside their foreign gods and served the Lord. And he was grieved by their misery.

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Judges 10: <sup>17</sup> At that time the armies of Ammon had gathered for war and were camped in Gilead, and the people of Israel assembled and camped at Mizpah. <sup>18</sup> The leaders of Gilead said to each other, “Whoever attacks the Ammonites first will become ruler over all the people of Gilead.”

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Judges 11: <sup>1</sup>Now Jephthah of Gilead was a great warrior. He was the son of Gilead, but his mother was a prostitute. <sup>2</sup>Gilead's wife also had several sons, and when these half brothers grew up, they chased Jephthah off the land. "You will not get any of our father's inheritance," they said, "for you are the son of a prostitute." <sup>3</sup>So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Soon he had a band of worthless rebels following him.



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Judges 11: <sup>4</sup> At about this time, the Ammonites began their war against Israel. <sup>5</sup> When the Ammonites attacked, the elders of Gilead sent for Jephthah in the land of Tob. <sup>6</sup> The elders said, “Come and be our commander! Help us fight the Ammonites!”

<sup>7</sup> But Jephthah said to them, “Aren’t you the ones who hated me and drove me from my father’s house? Why do you come to me now when you’re in trouble?”



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Judges 11: <sup>8</sup> “Because we need you,” the elders replied. “If you lead us in battle against the Ammonites, we will make you ruler over all the people of Gilead.”

<sup>9</sup> Jephthah said to the elders, “Let me get this straight. If I come with you and if the LORD gives me victory over the Ammonites, will you really make me ruler over all the people?”

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Judges 11: <sup>10</sup> “The LORD is our witness,” the elders replied. “We promise to do whatever you say.”

<sup>11</sup> So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him their ruler and commander of the army. At Mizpah, in the presence of the LORD, Jephthah repeated what he had said to the elders.

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Judges 11: <sup>27</sup> Let the LORD, who is judge, decide today which of us is right—Israel or Ammon.”

<sup>28</sup> But the king of Ammon paid no attention to Jephthah's message.

<sup>29</sup> At that time the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he went throughout the land of Gilead and Manasseh, including Mizpah in Gilead, and from there he led an army against the Ammonites.

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Judges 11: <sup>30</sup> And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD. He said, “If you give me victory over the Ammonites, <sup>31</sup> I will give to the LORD whatever comes out of my house to meet me when I return in triumph. I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.”

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Judges 11: <sup>32</sup> So Jephthah led his army against the Ammonites, and the LORD gave him victory. <sup>33</sup> He crushed the Ammonites, devastating about twenty towns from Aroer to an area near Minnith and as far away as Abel-keramim. In this way Israel defeated the Ammonites.

<sup>34</sup> When Jephthah returned home to Mizpah, his daughter came out to meet him, playing on a tambourine and dancing for joy. She was his one and only child; he had no other sons or daughters.

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Judges 11: <sup>35</sup> When he saw her, he tore his clothes in anguish. “Oh, my daughter!” he cried out. “You have completely destroyed me! You’ve brought disaster on me! For I have made a vow to the LORD, and I cannot take it back.”

<sup>36</sup> And she said, “Father, if you have made a vow to the LORD, you must do to me what you have vowed, for the LORD has given you a great victory over your enemies, the Ammonites.

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Judges 11: <sup>37</sup> But first let me do this one thing: Let me go up and roam in the hills and weep with my friends for two months, because I will die a virgin.”

<sup>38</sup> “You may go,” Jephthah said. And he sent her away for two months. She and her friends went into the hills and wept because she would never have children.



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Judges 11: <sup>39</sup> When she returned home, her father kept the vow he had made, and she died a virgin.

So it has become a custom in Israel <sup>40</sup> for young Israelite women to go away for four days each year to lament the fate of Jephthah's daughter.

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Judges 12: <sup>1</sup>Then the people of Ephraim mobilized an army and crossed over the Jordan River to Zaphon. They sent this message to Jephthah: “Why didn’t you call for us to help you fight against the Ammonites? We are going to burn down your house with you in it!”

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Judges 12: <sup>2</sup> Jephthah replied, “I summoned you at the beginning of the dispute, but you refused to come! You failed to help us in our struggle against Ammon. <sup>3</sup> So when I realized you weren’t coming, I risked my life and went to battle without you, and the LORD gave me victory over the Ammonites. So why have you now come to fight me?”

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Judges 12: <sup>4</sup> The people of Ephraim responded, “You men of Gilead are nothing more than fugitives from Ephraim and Manasseh.” So Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and attacked the men of Ephraim and defeated them.

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Judges 12: <sup>5</sup> Jephthah captured the shallow crossings of the Jordan River, and whenever a fugitive from Ephraim tried to go back across, the men of Gilead would challenge him. “Are you a member of the tribe of Ephraim?” they would ask. If the man said, “No, I’m not,”

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Judges 12: <sup>6</sup> they would tell him to say “Shibboleth.” If he was from Ephraim, he would say “Sibboleth,” because people from Ephraim cannot pronounce the word correctly. Then they would take him and kill him at the shallow crossings of the Jordan. In all, 42,000 Ephraimites were killed at that time.

<sup>7</sup> Jephthah judged Israel for six years. When he died, he was buried in one of the towns of Gilead.