

# Jephthah

**Jephthah the son of a common prostitute and the then childless Gilead, [Judges 11:1].**

**Jephthah was driven out of his home by his half-brothers, he suffered as a result of another's decision, his father's, and not for any wrong he had done.**

**Yet inspite of this beginning to his life God used him as part of His plan for Israel.**

**Always remember that the Creator God can use you even if you feel you are rejected by some other people, even those who are human leaders.**

**Circumstances forced Jephthah to live life as an outcast, [Judges 11:2-3].**

Today, both believers and non-believers may drive away those who do not fit the norms dictated by our society, neighbourhood or churches.

**Often, as in Jephthah's case, great potential is wasted because of such prejudice.**

**Judges 11:4-8** [New King James] *“It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. 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. Then they said to Jephthah, ‘Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon.’ 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?’ 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.’”*

**In a time of trouble those who had rejected Jephthah recognised his skill as a military leader.**

It could very well be that Jephthah and his followers had been protecting the Israelite villages from marauding tribes, including the Ammonites, in the same way David did when rejected by Saul, [1 Samuel 22:1-2; 1 Samuel 27:8-9; 1 Samuel 30:1-27].

Before Jephthah accepted the role of leadership against the Ammonites he made the elders vow before God that they would honour their word, [Judges 11:9-10].

**Jephthah then showed his great wisdom as a military strategist who negotiated before fighting, [Judges 11:12-27].**

**Judges 11:28** [New King James] *“However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him.”*

But the king of Ammon ignored any verbal negotiations, so guided by the Holy Spirit Jephthah made tactical moves against the Ammonites, [Judges 11:29].

**Jephthah then made what was an unnecessary vow to God, not considering the outcome of what he promised God, [Judges 11:30-31].**

**The fact that God was guiding Jephthah through the Holy Spirit made this vow unnecessary.**

**Judges 11:32-33** [New King James] *“So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 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.”*

It was the Creator God who gave Jephthah the victory.

**Judges 11:34-38** [New King James] *“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. 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.’ 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.’ 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.’ 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.”*

The sacrifice of his only daughter was **not** as the pagans did, literally a burnt offering for several reasons.

If the girl was to die she would **not** have spent her last two months in the hills with the thought of death over her head.

What she sacrificed was the opportunity to become a wife and mother, as **verse 39** tells us, she remained a virgin.

Also, the Creator God would **not** have honoured a vow based on a wicked pagan practice.

**The vow Jephthah made was similar to that Hannah, [1 Samuel 1:11-28], offering his only daughter to be set apart to serve God, as Hannah did her only son Samuel, or Elizabeth and her son John, [Luke 1:5-25, 57-80].**

**Jephthah’s rash vow brought him pain and grief. In the heat of the moment of emotion or personal turmoil it is easy to make foolish promises to God.**

Making spiritual “*deals*” only brings disappointment, God is **not** wanting promises for the future but obedience for today.

**What this incident shows is that Jephthah was a person whose word could be depended on completely, and whose actions are consistent with their words.**

**For such people, talking is not avoiding action, it is the beginning of action, making them excellent negotiators.**

They approach a conflict with the full intention of settling issues verbally, but they do **not** hesitate to use other means if verbal attempts fail.

Such an approach to any conflict helps to clarify the issues involved, making sure that everyone involved knew what had caused the conflict, which could then be exposed if it was only a misunderstanding on either or both sides.

**There is a big difference between trying to settle a conflict through words and simply counter-attacking someone verbally.**

**How dependable are the statements you make?**

Do your children, friends and fellow workers know you are a person whose word can be trusted?

**The measure of your trustworthiness is your willingness to take full responsibility for what you have promised, even if you have to pay a painful price because of something you said.**

**Jephthah is listed in the “*hall of faith*” in Hebrews 11:32, the major reason was because he allowed the Holy Spirit to direct his life.**

Samuel mentioned Jephthah in the address he gave at the coronation of King Saul for the people and King Saul to remember how God used him to save Israel, also as an example of a man whose word could be trusted, [**1 Samuel 12:1-25**].

**Jephthah led Israel for six years, then he died and was buried in a town in Gilead, [Judges 12:7].**