

Jephthah

The Return of Israel's Rejected Deliverer

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES by Jim Cowie

Foreword

How many among those who love the Scriptures have not spent time pondering Jephthah's vow and the fate of his daughter? The subject has been vigorously discussed in Christadelphian magazines over the years and inevitably is 'debated' in earnest when it arises as a topic of discussion among brethren. In modern times the fate of Jephthah's daughter has been a vexed question which will probably not be fully resolved until the Lord returns to resolve all problems. What then can these brief notes contribute to the discussion?

While the writer of these notes would not be bold enough to claim that an answer has been found to this problem which will satisfy everyone, he is confident that the approach adopted herein of studying Jephthah's vow in the overall context of his life and giving due place to key phrases in that vow provides an answer for a number of difficulties associated with the vow and its outcome.

It is the settled conviction of this writer that Jephthah's daughter died at the hands of her father. If that is the case then the circumstances under which the vow was made and the motivation for it assume critical proportions. So many of the views expressed about this subject completely ignore the surrounding context, and often the very terms of the vow itself. A concerted effort to understand the vow and the character of the man who made it is essential in arriving at a rational decision as to the fate of Jephthah's daughter. An examination of discussion on the problem of Jephthah's daughter in past Christadelphian magazines reveals that those who oppose the conclusion we have reached do so mostly by casting around for grounds outside of the context to show that such a denouement could not possibly be correct. These notes attempt to focus the discussion where it rightfully belongs - in the context of Judges 10 to 12.

When that context is faced with an enquiring and receptive mind only one conclusion seems possible, however distasteful we may find it. We can but accept what the scriptures say and search them more diligently for an explanation we may have hitherto missed. If these notes assist the Bible student in doing that they will have accomplished their purpose.

Finally, a word about the wisdom of raising a subject that never fails to produce strong feelings and lively debate. Are we justified in doing so? The publishers believe so. Can there be any harm in bringing to light some points that, to the writer's knowledge, have not been introduced into the discussion before? Is there any section of scripture that should be ignored because brethren cannot agree on a single conclusion of fact? Or should we not encourage rational discussion on such matters in the hope of clarifying in our minds a vexing problem of scripture?

The publication of this booklet represents our answer to these questions, and it is hoped that what is presented will bring to the reader a fuller appreciation of the depth and breadth of Jephthah's character and his work which so graphically prefigured the future work of the Son of God.

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Jephthah's Character

Few Biblical characters have been the subject of so much debate as the man Jephthah and his daughter. To this day the debate continues both within and without the Brotherhood on the question of the fate of Jephthah's daughter, with seemingly little hope of resolution. And yet such debate is a relatively modern phenomena. Up to the 12th Century AD there was never any dispute as to the fate of Jephthah's daughter. It was universally accepted that she died at the hands of her father in accordance with his vow. Only when Kimchi and other rabbis arose in the 12th Century and attempted to show that she was not sacrificed but remained unmarried did the debate begin in earnest. Ever since, the contention surrounding this issue has succeeded in obscuring and blurring the beautiful characters of Jephthah and his daughter portrayed in the record of scripture.

Jephthah has been charged with a number of weaknesses and accused of error by some who see his vow and its outcome as inexplicable on any grounds and totally unwarranted. These charges include rashness in making a foolish and ill-considered vow, ambition in seizing the headship of Israel, and succumbing to the influences of the idolatrous practices of the nations who routinely offered human sacrifices to their false gods. Let us assess these charges in the light of what we find in the scriptures.

The first point which must be carefully noted is found in 1 Sam.12:11, which reads, "and Yahweh sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan (probably Barak), and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side and ye dwelled safe." Thus while the account in Judges is silent as to the origin of Jephthah's judgeship, Samuel is eloquent - "Yahweh sent Jephthah". He was specially raised up for the task of delivering Israel from oppression as were both Gideon and Samuel.

Secondly, we need to keep well in mind the inclusion of Jephthah's name in the Honour Roll of Faith - Heb.11:32. He was clearly a man of great faith, worthy of a place next to David and Samuel in that immortal list of the characters "of just men made perfect". And while it may be argued that Samson, a man with great weaknesses, also appears in the same verse with Jephthah, and that perhaps therefore he also had weaknesses which were forgiven him as those of Samson and also David were, it should be remembered that the sins of the latter-named were fully documented in scripture and divinely disapproved of, but that no such disapproval can be found concerning Jephthah's vow and its sad outcome. All that remains is the divine approbation of his faithfulness, and it is the view of this writer that the making of his vow and its fulfillment was a demonstration of the depth of that faith. So then, both in the origin of his mission and its eventual outcome there are clear signs of divine approval.

This conclusion is further enhanced by a careful analysis of the record of Jephthah's life and work. The charges laid against him are seen to be out of harmony with the revealed facts. Let us take each charge in turn.

WAS JEPHTHAH RASH IN MAKING HIS VOW?

The reason *why* he made such a vow as he did is discussed in the body of these notes and when it is comprehended, entirely rules out rashness as a motivating influence in Jephthah's vow. But let us look at the manner and the circumstances in which the vow was made to see if any evidence exists that Jephthah was given to rashness.

After concluding his dealings with the elders of Gilead, Judges 11:11 says that "Jephthah uttered all his words before Yahweh in Mizpeh." A correct translation of verse 9 reveals that Jephthah had made acceptance of the status of "head and captain" over the men of Gilead conditional upon Yahweh granting him victory over Ammon. The elders of Gilead ignored that request and appointed him as their head. His response was to commit his whole cause to Yahweh by laying the matter before Him. This is not the action of a rash man prone to ill-conceived verbal outpourings and lacking in emotional self-control.

His appeal to the king of Ammon reveals him to be a man prepared to explore every avenue to overcome a problem (Judges 11:12). Furthermore, the very terms of that appeal do not betray a shallow or rash turn of mind, but the opposite. His reasoned and considered scriptural argument show him to be a man of great knowledge and profound self-control in the pursuit of his aims.

Finally, it should be noted that it was not Jephthah who decided to advance against the Ammonites. The spirit of Yahweh propelled him into battle (Judges 11:29), and while enveloped by God's power he made his vow. Can we justly accuse him of rashness, or should we not look a little deeper into the reason why such a vow would come from a godly man marching into battle bearing the divine seal of approval?

WAS JEPHTHAH AMBITIOUS?

From what has already been said it can be seen that ambition was not the motivating influence in Jephthah's life. A correct translation of Judges 11:9 (see notes) shows that Jephthah flatly refused any status or titles in Israel until Yahweh had given him the victory over Ammon. Apart from the unfair interpretation placed by some commentators upon that verse, no evidence exists at all that Jephthah was ambitious.

WAS JEPHTHAH AN IDOLATOR?

Heb.11:32 lays that question to rest. Men influenced by the idolatrous practices of the nations to the point where they were prepared to make a human offering to Yahweh after the custom of the Ammonites and the Moabites in worshipping their gods, do not find their way into "the great cloud of witnesses" of Hebrews 11.

To suggest that Jephthah was in any way influenced by the practices of the nations in making his vow is to do him the greatest disservice possible. We attempt in these notes to show why.

Would Yahweh have clothed Jephthah with His spirit if the man was confused on this fundamental question? Would he have given such a man a great victory knowing the outcome would be an abhorrent sacrifice? Would there not be open condemnation in the scriptures of Jephthah's ignorance and folly had he been wrong? Why then is the record silent about any wrong doing or misconceptions on Jephthah's part? The answer clearly is, that he was justified in what he did, and under the circumstances Yahweh was pleased to accept the fulfillment of his vow.

Rightly understood, Jephthah's vow is a classic example of profound Messianic knowledge and the deep consolidated faith in God that has been the hallmark of all great men and women of faith whose names are recorded in "the Honour Roll of Faith" and who will finally stand perfected in the Kingdom of God with the one whose appearance they foresaw with the eye of faith.

BACKGROUND TO THE APPEARANCE OF JEPHTHAH

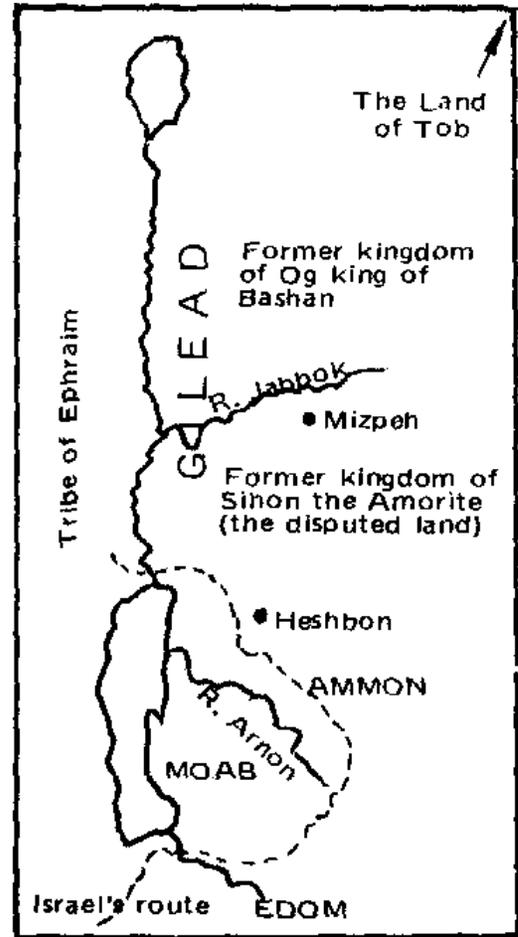
Though we meet Jephthah for the first time in Judges 11:1, introduced by the words "Now Jephthah the Gileadite", his story actually begins in Judges 10:6 with the fifth major apostasy of Israel: an apostasy that was not only widespread in the nation but also extremely diverse, in that the gods of almost every surrounding nation were adopted by Israel.

So angry was Yahweh with His people that when they cried in anguish to Him after 18 years of severe oppression He told them to call upon the gods they had chosen for help (Judges 10:10-14), and when they again confessed their sin and pleaded for His help He remained silent. That Yahweh hid His face from His people even after they had abandoned their false gods is indicative of the gravity of their sin. But true to

His character He did respond to their genuine repentance - though silent He sent Jephthah who had been rejected by his own tribe and family many years before Israel's apostasy, Yahweh's response in hiding His face, and the manner in which He sent a deliverer to His people are all highly typical of the present apostate condition of Israel and the way in which their God who has hidden His face from them because of their iniquities will send the Deliverer to Zion to redeem them from the hand of the oppressor. Read Isaiah 59.

The return of Jephthah and his work in Israel is a glorious type of the future work of the Lord Jesus Christ as Israel's rejected deliverer. See chart next page.

A Map of the region of Gilead. the home of Jephthah



JEPHTHAH - A TYPE OF CHRIST

A Type of Christ's First Advent and His Rejection by Israel

1. Conceived out of marriage (11:1) - Christ born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18-23).
2. Gilead's wife bare him sons (11:2) - Yahweh's wife, Israel (Jer.3:14, 20), bare Him sons, namely - the priests, scribes, Pharisees and the Jews.
3. Through envy and jealousy Jephthah's brethren cast him out (11:2) - For envy Christ's brethren rejected and crucified him (Mk.15:10).
4. Jephthah fled to Tob ("goodness and fruitfulness") and gathered to himself the 'despised' of this world (11:3) - Christ ascended to heaven and the 'foolish', 'weak', and 'despised' of the world gathered unto him (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

A Type of Christ's Acceptance by Israel at His Second Advent

1. In distress from unprovoked invasion by Ammon ("tribal" i.e. a people as a congregated unit), Israel call upon Jephthah to deliver them (11:4) - Israel under attack by Gogian host will cry to Yahweh for help (Hos. 5:15).
2. Jephthah agrees to be Israel's head and captain only if Yahweh gives him victory over Ammon (11:5-11) - Christ will claim the throne of David and rulership over the world by divine authority and power (Ps.2:6-9).
3. Jephthah defeats Ammon after fruitless negotiations (11:12-33) - Christ will defeat Gog and then all nations who refuse to submit to his ultimatum (Ps.2:10-12; Rev.14:6-7; 11:15).
4. After defeating the invading forces Jephthah returns home and fulfills his vow by offering up his only child, a virgin daughter (11:34-39) - After the defeat of Gog, Christ will dedicate the refined third of Judah (the virgin daughter of Zion – Lam. 2:13) to Yahweh as a "whole burnt offering" (Zech.13:9; Mal.3:2-4, comp. Isa.66:20).
5. Jephthah's daughter spent two months in mourning before being offered (11:37-39) - The refined third of Judah will mourn bitterly in "houses apart" before their final acceptance by Yahweh (Zech.12:10-14).
6. Jephthah and the men of Gilead purged the proud tribe of Ephraim at the fords of Jordan (12:4-6) - Christ will send Elijah the Gileadite to purge out the rebellious and proud from scattered "Ephraim" before their entry into the land (Ezek.20:33-38, Mal.4:5-6).
7. Jephthah killed all Ephraimites who were influenced by the ways of the Canaanites - 42,000 is 6 x 7,000 = the end [seventh millennium – completion] of flesh [six] (12:6) - Christ will not permit the Canaanite or those influenced by them into the House of Yahweh (Zech.14:21).
8. Jephthah relinquished his judgeship in his seventh year and Ibzan ("splendid") succeeded him (12:7-8) - Christ will "deliver up the kingdom to God" (the Splendid One) at the end of the seventh millennium, 1 Cor.15:24.

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

Judges 11:1-12:7

JEPHTHAH'S DESCENT AND REJECTION - Judges 11:1-3

VERSE 1

"Jephthah" - "He will open". (Ges. "Whom, or what God sets free"). -(Oxford - "God opens"). His name epitomises the work he performed as Yahweh's deliverer in freeing the nation of Israel from the oppression of the Ammonites - See 1 Sam. 12:11.

His name appears in the Honour Roll of Faith - Heb.11:32 along with Gideon, Barak, and Samson. Faith emerges as the dominant factor guiding Jephthah's life and work upon a careful consideration of the record of Judges 11 and 12.

There are many ways in which Jephthah was a type of Christ (see accompanying chart). His name foreshadowed the arrival of the one who would deliver 'Israel' from their enemy (the flesh manifested individually and politically), and having set them free would open the way to harmony and eternal fellowship with Yahweh. Jephthah foreshadowed the one who would ultimately turn away ungodliness from both the houses of Israel - "Judah" in the Land and "Ephraim" scattered abroad.

"Gileadite" i.e. an inhabitant of Gilead. The region of Gilead extended from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee to the northern end of the Dead Sea - about 60 miles; from Jordan it extended eastwards and its average breadth scarcely exceeded 20 miles. The name first appears in Gen. 31:21 as the name by which the region was known in the days of Jacob. Smith's Bible Dictionary suggests Gilead originally meant "a hard rocky region" as descriptive of the terrain in contrast to Bashan — "a level, fertile tract". The area was rough and rugged, sparsely forested, but a very picturesque region providing unsurpassed pastureland (Num.32; 1). The mountains of Gilead have a real elevation of two to three thousand feet but appear much higher from the west due to the depression formed by the Jordan Valley. Their outline is singularly uniform, resembling a massive wall running along the horizon. The summit is broad, almost like table-land "tossed into wild confusion of undulating downs" (Stanley - 'Sinai & Palestine')

Gilead was a frontier-land exposed to attacks by Syrian and Assyrian invaders and to the frequent raids of wandering tribes. It was therefore an area which produced toughened fighting men - Josh.17:1, 1 Chron.12:8&15 . The most famous son of Gilead was Elijah whose physical appearance and manner were much like the region from which he came. By a slight change in pronunciation the name Gilead became Galeed as a result of the covenant between Jacob and Laban - Gen.31:44-48. "Galeed" means "a heap of witness". This meaning is now given to the name "Gilead".

"a mighty man of valour" - "mighty" is gibbor - a powerful warrior. "Valour" is chayil - a force, strength. The phrase is used of Gideon - Judges 6:12 and describes a man of courage and skill in warfare. In a spiritual sense it describes a man dedicated and zealous in upholding the things of God, as indeed Jephthah proved to be. Cp. Jer.9:3,

"an harlot" - zanah — to commit adultery. Roth. - "an unchaste woman". Lit. "a woman a harlot".

"Gilead" "a heap of witness (or testimony)". This was not Gilead the son of Machir, Num.26:29, but a descendent of his, bearing the same name. This becomes clear in verse 2.

VERSE 2

"and his wife's sons grew up" - It is evident by a careful reading of verse 1 and 2 that Jephthah was

Gilead's firstborn and that other sons followed from a wife he took after his association with the harlot.

"they thrust out Jephthah" - The rejection of Jephthah by his brethren who had grown to maturity foreshadowed the rejection of Jesus by His brethren - John 7:3-5.

"Thou shalt not inherit" - Because he was the son of a 'strange woman' he was not to receive a share of his father's inheritance, Gen.21:10, Deut.23:2, Gal.4:30.

"the son of a strange woman" - Roth.- "the son of an alien woman". "Strange" is *acher* — hinder; from root, to loiter (i.e. be behind), i.e. a woman of the former inhabitants of the region - a Canaanite. Jesus was accused of being of doubtful birth by the Pharisees in John 8:41 and was rejected by them as having no part in their "inheritance", John 11:49-51, Matt.21:37-39.

VERSE 3

"fled from his brethren" - Roth.- "fled from the face of his brethren". Similarly Jesus was forced to avoid walking in Judea because of the hatred of his brethren the Jews - John 7:1-5. He was despised and rejected of men - "as one from whom men hide their faces" - (R.S.V.) - Isa.53:3. Like Jephthah, cut off from his father's inheritance it could be enquired concerning the Lord - "who shall declare his generation" Isa.53:8.

"the land of Tob" - "good". Roth.- "fruitful district" (Mgn.). The land of Tob was an area in the North-east of Perea on the border of Syria and is referred to again in 11 Sam.10:6&8 as Ish-tob or more literally "the man of Tob", meaning according to Hebrew idiom, the "men of Tob".

"vain men" - req -empty; fig. worthless. J.B. - "worthless followers gathered around him". R.S.V. - "worthless fellows". Roth.- "and there gathered about Jephthah unemployed men". The word is used in Judges 7:16 "empty", 9:4 "vain", 11 Sam.6:20 "vain fellows", 11 Chron.13:7 "vain", Prov.12:11 "vain". Compare the men who surrounded David, 1 Sam.22.-2, 30:22- Jephthah was clearly a man of faith and integrity and though the men who gathered around him were not of the same mental and moral stature, he dominated them for good as did David the 600 who surrounded him. Perhaps a parallel may be drawn between Christ and the men who gathered around him as his disciples. Though certainly not "vain men" they were nevertheless despised by the leaders of the nation as "worthless fellows" - Matt. 11:19. As the story proceeds it becomes obvious that the men who gathered around Jephthah finally came to share his convictions and his faith.

"went out with him" R.S.V. "and went raiding with him". It is evident from what follows that Jephthah established a reputation as a formidable military leader - verse 1 & 5, 6.

JEPHTHAH APPOINTED CAPTAIN OF THE MEN OF GILEAD -Judges 11:4-11

VERSE 4

"in process of time" Roth. & R.S.V. - "after a time". Probably about 18 years.

"the children of Ammon made war against Israel" - This is the war mentioned in Judges 10:17 which commenced near the end of the 18 years oppression mentioned in verse 8. How long Jephthah was in exile is not revealed but the phrase "in the process of time" indicates a considerable passage of time, and in view of the fact that Jephthah had a mature daughter (Judges 11:34-37) after apparently being rejected from his father's house at an early age, may indicate that he had been absent for most, if not all the 18 year oppression. One thing is certain; Jephthah had not been a party to the apostasy of Israel - Judges 10:6.

"Ammon" - "tribal" i.e. inbred; from root, a people (as a congregated unit) hence troops. Here, Ammon is a type of latter day Gog who invades the land to take a spoil with the confederated forces of socialism - a collection of peoples loosely welded together by a common political ideology and national ambition.

VERSE 5

"the elders of Gilead" - These were the "princes" mentioned in Judges 10;

18 who earnestly sought a leader and deliverer. These men are a type of the leaders of Israel who in "the time of Jacob's trouble" under the fierce oppression of Gog will cry out for a deliverer, and he who has been long absent since his rejection by the house of Israel will return to deliver Israel from the hand of the oppressor. Jer .30:7-9, Zech.12:9-10-

VERSE 6

"Come, and be our captain" - "Captain" is qatsiyn – a magistrate (in the sense of determining). The word first occurs in Josh.10:24 to describe "men of war", hence military leaders. Apart from here and in verse 11 all other occurrences of the word are translated either "rulers" or "princes". Roth. - "Oh! Come and be our commander". R.S.V. - "Come and be our leader".

This foreshadows in the future the recognition by a humbled Israel of their rejected deliverer - Zech.12:10.

The principle underlying the call of the despised and rejected Jephthah to lead Israel is expressed by the Apostle in 1 Cor.1:27-29.

VERSE 7

"Did ye not hate me" - Jephthah's reply reveals that his expulsion from his father's house had not been merely a family affair, but that the elders and princes of Gilead had concurred with, and supported his brethren. Possibly his brethren had consulted these men over the matter of the inheritance.

"expel" - garash - to drive out from a possession. This is the same word as "thrust out" verse 2. It is also the word used in Josh.24:12, 18; Judges 2:3; 6:9 to describe how Yahweh "drove out" the Canaanites from the land.

"distress"- tsarar — to cramp. R.S.V. & J.B. - "in trouble". This distress resulted not only from the impending advance of the Ammonites but also from the rejection by Yahweh of their plea for help - Judges 10:10-14. Although they had put away their strange gods and turned to Yahweh, no word had come from Him concerning this crisis. Yahweh's help was to be provided however, in the form of "the rejected deliverer", 1 Sam.12:11. There is in this a remarkable parallel with Christ's work in redeeming Israel from the oppression of Gog. Modern Israel undergoing terrible tribulation in "the time of Jacob's trouble" will be saved out of it by one who both they and their fathers had rejected.

VERSE 8

"Therefore we turn again to thee now" - R.S.V. - "That is why we have turned to you now". This is a confession that they had indeed turned to Jephthah because they were in trouble. It is a humble plea for help and an admission of their guilt in rejecting him.

"and be our head" - rosh - the head. The elders and princes had surveyed all prospective deliverers and only Jephthah was able to lead them against Ammon. In accordance with their declaration of Judges 10:18 he was to be their head - This meant he was to become a judge as well as a military leader.

In this Jephthah foreshadowed Christ who having been rejected by his own people will be received by them as Yahweh's salvation, "the head of the corner". Ps.118:21-23,26 (cp. Matt.23:39).

"all the inhabitants of Gilead" - i.e. the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

VERSE 9

"If ye bring me home again"- "home" is shuwb - a primary root; to turn back. Roth.- "If ye do bring me back".

"and Yahweh deliver"- The first real indication in this record of the faith of Jephthah. He was a man of God and doubtless was known as such when he was rejected by his brethren.

"shall I be your head"- R.S.V. - "If you bring me home again to fight with the Ammonites, and Yahweh gives them over to me, I will be your head". This is correct as there is no question from Jephthah but a positive statement of intent, conditional upon divine approval in giving him victory over Ammon. A question in this verse is ruled out by the response of the elders in verse 10. He is simply saying that he would be their head only if Yahweh gave him victory and delivered Israel through him. In a similar manner the rightful heir to David's throne will claim it following his dramatic victories over Israel's enemies - Isa.63:1-6, Ps.24:7-10.

VERSE 10

"Yahweh be witness" - Roth. "Yahweh himself will be hearkening between us". The elders promised to give him the headship on oath.

VERSE 11

"the people made him" - Jephthah's appointment as judge and leader of Gilead was by popular choice; he being the only one able to deliver them because he was the only one through whom God could deliver. This is in itself a testimony to Jephthah's standing before Yahweh. Comp. Judges 10:15-16. They saw in Jephthah ("God will set free") their only hope of a deliverance from Yahweh.

"Jephthah uttered all his words before Yahweh" - Roth.-- "and Jephthah spake all his words before Yahweh". i.e. he repeated in a solemn assembly of the people, before God at Mizpeh, the conditions and obligations under which he would accept the responsibility conferred upon him- This was to demonstrate to Yahweh and to the people that he saw his leadership as valid only while Yahweh was with him. He committed his entire cause into the hands of Yahweh. If Yahweh blessed and strengthened him, then he would lead and judge Israel, if not, then he would be disqualified from holding that position. There is no petty bargaining by Jephthah in a bid to avenge the injustice of his rejection from his father's house. A strong contrast is presented between Jephthah and Abimelech the son of Gideon who in his wild ambition to lead Israel slew his brethren and ruthlessly dominated the people without regard for the qualifications of leadership - Judges 9.

"in Mizpeh" - "an observatory or watch-tower". This Mizpeh was east of Jordan in the mountains of Gilead (Gen.31:49) and hence called Mizpeh of Gilead (verse 29) to distinguish it from another place of the same name, west of Jordan, in the tribe of Judah; Josh.15:38. There is no reason to assume that the Ark was in Mizpeh at the time as Jephthah is simply presenting his words before Yahweh in prayer. It is interesting to note the reference to Jephthah made by Samuel before an assembly of the people at Gilgal, 1 Sam.12:11 at the confirmation of Saul as king, following his appointment at Mizpeh in Judah - 1 Sam.10:17. He is there linked with Jerubbaal (Gideon), Bedan (unknown), and Samuel all of whom Yahweh strengthened to deliver Israel — their only claim to leadership in Israel was that Yahweh "sent" them and gave them the victory.

JEPHTHAH'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KING OF AMMON – Judges 11:12-28

VERSE 12

"What hast thou to do with me" - Roth.- "What occasion is there between us". The singular pronoun is used because the messengers of Jephthah speak in the name of the nation - cp. verse 19. In attempting to negotiate with Ammon, Jephthah followed the example of Moses when Israel had made their way to the

borders of the land - Deut-2:19, 26; Num.20:14, 21:21; Deut.20:10-12.

"my Land" - This becomes the crux of the dispute - see verse 13.

VERSE 13

"Because Israel took away my land" - This claim was incorrect but has one feature in it which appears to give it a colour of reasonableness. Israel had only made war upon the kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, and defeated them, and taken possession of their kingdoms and occupied them, without attacking the Ammonites, the Moabites or the Edomites whom Yahweh had expressly forbidden them to attack - Deut.2:5,9,19. However, one portion of the territory of Sihon had formerly belonged to Moab and Ammon, but had been conquered and occupied by the Amorites -Num.21:26-29. Although it is not expressly stated in Num.21 that Sihon had captured territory from Ammon as well as Moab, this becomes clear when his land was divided and given to the tribes who settled east of Jordan. The tribe of Gad received "half the land of the children of Ammon" - Josh. 13:25.

Therefore, portion of the territory captured from Sihon had formerly been Ammonitish territory, but they had been dispossessed by the Amorites. It is to this state of affairs that Jephthah refers when he charges the "gods" of Ammon with impotence in verse 23&24. The portion of Ammon's land occupied by the Amorites had ceased to be Ammon's property because Chemosh their deity had been powerless to restore it to them. On the other hand Israel's god, Yahweh, had revealed His power and His will by giving Sihon's land into Israel's possession.

"from Arnon even unto Jabbok" - The River Arnon was the southern border of Sihon's kingdom while the River Jabbok lay on its northernmost border. It is evident from Num.21:26 that the king of Ammon's claim to all of this territory was not valid as it had formerly been the territory of Moab. From the description of Heshbon as "the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites" it is probable that the northern border of Moab before Sihon's invasion had been the northern tip of the Dead Sea - Num.21;26-28. If this is correct then the land from the northern tip of the Dead Sea to the River Jabbok may have previously belonged to Ammon. Whatever, the claims of the king of Ammon were certainly extravagant and as Jephthah later points out, extremely belated.

"now therefore restore those lands again peaceably" - Jephthah's reply to this unreasonable demand is found in verses 23-24.

VERSE 15

"Thus saith Jephthah " - In the following verses Jephthah recounts the history of Israel's march from Egypt to the border of the land of Canaan. He reveals a concise knowledge of that history and also quotes extensively from the writings of Moses, revealing that he was a careful student of the scriptures.

Note: "And Israel abode in Kadesh" verse 17 - word for word from Num. 20:1. "And Israel sent messengers..." verses 19-22 - this is almost verbatim from Num.21:21-25.

VERSE 19

"into my place" - Jephthah uses the singular pronoun here in a similar manner to verse 12. It was the voice of the nation speaking. By "my place" is meant the land of Canaan which Yahweh had appointed for Israel as a possession.

VERSE 20

"Sihon" - "Tempestuous".

"Jahaz" - "To stamp"; a threshing-floor.

VERSE 21

"so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites" Having recounted the historical facts, Jephthah now proceeds to give the first of four reasons why he rejected the claims of the king of Ammon. Those claims were groundless because firstly it was not his land that Israel possessed.

The four reasons advanced by Jephthah were:

1. Possession - the rights of conquest
2. Power - the strength of national deities
3. Acquiescence - by better placed claimants
4. Time - the lapse of all claims

VERSE 23

"So now Yahweh Elohim of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites" - Jephthah now focuses attention on the real issue as he saw it. It was a question of power. Ammon had lost territory to the Amorites; why had not their God Chemosh restored it to them? Simply, because he did not exist and therefore was powerless. But Yahweh had helped Israel overcome the Amorites, therefore he was more powerful than either the God of the Amorites or of the Ammonites.

The supremacy of Yahweh and the weakness of Chemosh is the second reason advanced in rejection of Ammon's claim.

VERSE 24

"Chemosh thy god" - "to subdue"; the powerful. In using the name of Chemosh, Jephthah is heaping sarcasm on the king of Ammon. Would he not possess the land given to him by "the powerful subduer"?

It is noteworthy however, that this is the only place where Chemosh is said to be the god of the Ammonites. Chemosh was the national deity of the Moabites - 1 Kings 11:7; 11 Kings 23:13. The principal deity of Ammon was Molech. The reason for choosing Chemosh appears to be twofold. Firstly, there is an obvious play upon the meaning of the name, and secondly, the Moabites, whose god he was, are next to be introduced into the dispute by Jephthah as a nation who had recognised the limitations of their god when opposed to Yahweh.

VERSE 25

"And now art thou any thing better" - Roth. - "Now therefore art thou really better". Jephthah now advances his third reason to the king of Ammon - why had not his neighbouring state Moab sought restitution of its former territory?

"Balak" - "Waster", from root; to annihilate.

"son of Zippor" - "A little bird" (as hopping). Jephthah now goes back again 300 years to the history recorded in Num.22&23.

"did he ever strive against Israel" - While Balak did in fact hire Balaam the son of Beor to curse Israel, he never entertained going out to war with Israel. He acted out of fear that Israel who had conquered the Amorites to the north would also conquer what remained of his kingdom - Num.22:2-6. He certainly had no intention of depriving Israel of the territory they had conquered from the Amorites. His sole aim was to defend his kingdom against an attack, so that his remaining possession might not be further eroded. Furthermore, at no time did Balak put forward any claim to the land of the Amorites captured by Israel even though it had formerly been part of his kingdom - Num.21:26-29.

The point Jephthah is making is that Moab had a greater claim for restitution than Ammon but had remained silent because Balak understood the principle of verses 23&24. See Num.21:29 and compare Num.22:6; 24:10-11.

VERSE 26

"While Israel dwelt in Heshbon" - Roth. - "All the time that Israel hath been dwelling". Israel had captured Heshbon from the Amorites Num.21:25 and Reuben had rebuilt it Num.32:37 and dwelt in it for 300 years. "Heshbon" means contrivance; by imp. intelligence. It is probable that Heshbon formerly belonged to Ammon. Num.21:25-26 would permit this view; however the next city mentioned was certainly a city of Moab.

"Aroer" - "Nudity (of situation)". A former city of Moab situated near the River Arnon which formed the boundary between Moab and the kingdom of Sihon the Amorite.

"the coasts of Arnon" - Roth.- "the banks of Arnon". "Arnon "means "a brawling stream".

"three hundred years" - While this may be a round figure of the time that had elapsed it is nevertheless very close to the actual period since Israel had captured this region.

"why therefore did ye not recover them within that time" - If the Ammonites had had any right to this territory they ought to have asserted their claim in Moses' time. They failed to do so and the passage of 300 years had completely annulled any right that they might have had. This is the fourth and final reason advanced by Jephthah in dismissing the claims of the king of Ammon. In support of Israel's prescriptive right to the territory of Gilead, Jephthah had advanced these four unanswerable reasons.

VERSE 27

"I have not sinned" - Jephthah speaks in the first person singular as a representative of the nation of Israel whose head he had become, verse 11.

"Yahweh the Judge"- shaphat - to judge; i.e. pronounce sentence, hence to vindicate or punish. It may well be that this title of Yahweh was adopted by Jephthah from the words of Abraham in Gen.18:25, after all, God promised to bring Abraham's national seed into the land of Canaan and give them the possession of the Amorites - Gen-15:16,21. Summarising his argument, Jephthah now returns to the principle of verses 23&24; whose God would prove the most powerful? It is interesting to reflect also that Jephthah's judgeship of Israel depended upon Yahweh being with him - see notes verse 9. He recognised that Yahweh was Israel's great judge - he, Jephthah, only judged Israel on God's behalf.

VERSE 28

"hearkened not" - The territorial ambitions of the king of Ammon were not dampened by the restatement of historical facts or the unanswerable logic advanced by Jephthah. He regarded his military superiority as adequate grounds to pursue the road of conquest.

WAR WITH AMMOM - JEPHTHAH'S VOW - Judges 11:29-31

VERSE 29

"the spirit of Yahweh came upon Jephthah " - Comp. Othniel - Judges 3:10; Gideon - 6:34; Samson - 13:25; David - 1 Sam.16:13. The spirit of Yahweh coming upon Jephthah confirmed him as a deliverer sent by God - 1 Sam. 12:11. This fact should remove any question about the integrity of Jephthah - Yahweh does not work through opportunists or men influenced by the idolatrous practices of the nations. The spirit power filled him with courage and strength for the battle and yet there was still need for resolution and

determination on the part of Jephthah as the following verses demonstrate. We do not have access to the power of the Holy Spirit in fighting our warfare of faith, but we do have recourse to a power of equal force, the spirit word of God. The word of God is able to work in our lives the same victory over the world as the Holy Spirit achieved for Jephthah over his enemies. Jephthah had recourse to the sword, which in his hand energised by the spirit overwhelmed the forces of evil: we have recourse to "the sword of the spirit" which is "sharper than any two-edged sword" and is able "to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself above the knowledge of God". Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12; 2 Cor.10:4-5. Its power in our life however, is dependent on us firstly, regularly and diligently inculcating its message and power into our minds.

"and passed over Mizpeh"- "Observatory". The record depicts Jephthah as a man motivated by the spirit advancing rapidly from place to place to meet the forces of the enemy. Like the Lord Jesus Christ advancing from Sinai to Zion, his progress is irresistible - Ps.68:1-17. It was at Mizpeh that he joined the army of Israel which had previously (i.e. before his call) gathered there - Judges 10:17.

"he passed over unto the children of Ammon" - As this identical phrase is repeated in verse 32 the intervening verses which deal with Jephthah's vow would appear to have occurred while he was in the passage from Mizpeh to the battle lines as head of Israel's army. The pressure of the moment; the awesome sense of responsibility; and a certain feeling of isolation from the people he led, may have had some bearing on the vow that he made at this time. However, there can be no doubt that he did not make the vow without considerable thought - rashness is totally excluded, for it is evident that he knew exactly what he was doing and the ramifications of what he had vowed.

VERSE 30

"Jephthah vowed a vow" - nadar and neder - to promise. Jephthah had already revealed a deep knowledge of the writings of Moses and it is certain, as his subsequent actions indicate that he was fully aware of the ramifications of vows as recorded in Num.30.

"without fail" - The reason for making this vow is revealed in these words. This is a key phrase to the whole context. Like Gideon before him he sought an assurance that Yahweh would be with him and would give him victory Judges 6:36-40. Rather than being displeasing to God, such behaviour was honouring to Him. It revealed that the supplicator truly believed in His existence and power and was conscious of his utter dependence upon the Almighty. The antithesis of this is found in king Ahaz of Judah who being offered a sign from God to prove that He would fight on Judah's behalf, refused it, not out of humility but because he simply did not believe that Yahweh existed. Isa.7:10-13. The first requirement for acceptance by God is a faith and conviction that God exists and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him - Heb.11:6.

Jephthah had this faith, and imposed upon himself a vow that he might reveal to Yahweh the fullness of that conviction and his readiness to give to the uttermost as God Himself has done to guarantee the redemption of Israel.

"deliver into mine hands" - There appears to be a link between these words and the closing words of Jephthah's vow; "and I will offer it up for a burnt offering". If Yahweh would deliver to him the Ammonites then he would deliver to Him in return, *whatever Yahweh chose*. Behind all of Jephthah's thinking there is the constant awareness of the greatness of his God and of his own insignificance and unworthiness of any help at all. So earnestly did he desire victory (and he knew that was only possible through divine help) that all things were dispensable to him to attain it. God did not ask Jephthah to make such a vow but it must have pleased Him to witness such depth of faith in one of His servants. There can be little doubt that once the vow was made Yahweh took control of its outcome.

VERSE 31

"that whatsoever cometh forth" - "whatsoever" is asher - who, which, that, what. "Cometh forth" is yatsa to go out. Roth. "whosoever cometh forth". R.S.V. - "Then whoever comes forth". J.B. - "Then the first person to meet me". There is agreement among most translators that the words refer specifically to a human being, not an animal. To this agree Keil and Delitzsch who translate, "he who cometh to meet me", and comment, "even if Jephthah did not think only of a man, or even more definitely still of some one of his household, he certainly could not think in any case of a herd of cattle, or one of his flock. 'Going out of the doors of his house to meet him' is an expression that does not apply to a herd or flock driven out of the stall just at the moment of his return, or to any animal that might possibly run out to meet him, for the phrase is only applied to men in the other passages in which it occurs".

Furthermore, it seems unlikely that Jephthah intended an animal sacrifice in this context as he doubtless intended to make the appropriate offerings prescribed by the Law upon his victorious return. If an animal sacrifice had been in his mind then he would have vowed the best of his flocks and not left it open to 'accident' as to what might come out to meet him. Two things seem clear; firstly, Jephthah intended a human offering, and secondly, he committed the choice of that offering into the hands of God. As noted above, God did not ask such a vow from Jephthah but once it was made it fell under the stipulations of Deut.23:21-23, and Lev.27:28-29. The interpretation of the terms of the vow contained in this verse is crucial in determining the fate of Jephthah's daughter, because we read in verse 39 he "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed".

"the doors of my house" - Jephthah intended that the offering would cost him dearly; that it would be someone closely associated with him and not as one indignant commentator complained "his neighbour's wife, sons, etc." It should be noted that strictly within the limits of the vow, he would only make an offering of "he who cometh to meet me out of the doors of my house". What if no one had come forth to meet him? While this would be a most unlikely thing to happen to a victorious warrior returning home after the battle, it is a possibility and certainly within the power of divine providence to bring to pass.

However, it is clear that this was not in Jephthah's mind when he made the vow. He fully intended to make an offering that would be close to his heart. Because he fully expected to make an offering and in the integrity of his heart left the choice to divine providence he would not have contemplated being delivered from making any offering at all. In the end, God required of him his most prized possession his only daughter.

"to meet me" - qirah - an encountering.

"shall surely be Yahweh's" - Roth. - "shall belong unto Yahweh". Jephthah's vow falls under the provisions of the law concerning vows and devoted things - Lev. 27:28-29.

THE LAW OF DEVOTED THINGS - Lev.27:28-29

Jephthah's vow fell under the provisions of this law for he vowed "that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me....shall surely be Yahweh's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" Thus devoted, there was no provision for redemption under this law, but on the contrary an express commandment that the devoted thing must die. Some object to this interpretation on the grounds that devious Israelites could use this law to dispose of enemies or offer up someone else's children or possessions. However, this objection ignores the stipulation that whatever was devoted to Yahweh by any man had to be "of all that he *hath*", or as Rotherham translates this phrase: "of all that belongeth to him" "Only that which a man possessed came under the provisions of this law.

The word "devoted" is the Hebrew *cherem* signifying something cut off, or separated. Its specific meaning in the Law is something which is cut off from common use and given up in some way to Yahweh without the right of recall or of redemption. It is applied to a field wholly appropriated to the Sanctuary (Lev.27:21), and to whatever was doomed to destruction (1 Sam.15:21; 1 Kings 20:42). The word is often

rendered as "cursed" or "a curse", hence Achan took of the "accursed thing". A thing "devoted" was given entirely to Yahweh, and could not be redeemed under any circumstances. Rotherham's translation makes verse 29 clearer by stating, "As touching any one devoted who may be devoted from among men he shall not be ransomed - he must be surely put to death." If it is accepted that Jephthah's vow fell under the provisions of the law of devoted things, there can be no doubt as to the fate of his daughter.

"and I will offer it up" - Roth. - "and I will offer him up". (So also R.S.V., J.B.).

The Hebrew does not permit the disjunctive "or" to be used in lieu of "and", in order to allow an alternative to offering up the devoted thing in any other way than by an altar sacrifice. The addition of these words is explanatory of Jephthah's intention; he would make a burnt offering to Yahweh of that which came forth to meet him.

"for a burnt offering" - Roth.- "as an ascending-sacrifice". The word is olah - a holocaust (as going up in smoke).

The special feature of the burnt offering was the total consumption of the sacrifice by fire. The offering was to be made in the manner described in Lev.1 and laid upon the altar in order; head first, then the fat, followed by the inwards and legs. Only the skin of the animal was discarded and fell to the priest.

The lesson clearly impressed upon the offerer was his need for atonement firstly, and then the principle of complete dedication to God, mentally (head), morally (fat), and physically (legs), as a means to ultimate acceptance.

That Jephthah went forth in this spirit there can be no doubt. His intention in making this vow was to seek an assurance of divine help and to indicate that he approached the great work before him in a spirit of total dedication and self-sacrifice. The word of God dominated Jephthah's mind (Vv. 15-27); the spirit of God stirred up his heart and motivated him to act as Israel's deliverer.

JEPHTHAH DEFEATS THE AMMONITES - Judges 11:32-33

VERSE 32

"Yahweh delivered them into his hands" - This is the identical language to Jephthah's vow, verse 30, and indicates that Yahweh answered him. His request had been swiftly and fully given by God, now it remained to be seen whether Jephthah would faithfully keep his vow and what God would demand of him in return for the deliverance of Israel. As it turned out Yahweh required no less from Jephthah than He himself would have to offer to guarantee the redemption of His people.

VERSE 33

"Aroer" - "Nudity of situation". See note verse 26.

"Minnith" - "Enumeration". A town four Roman miles from Hebron on the way to Amman (ancient Philadelphia).

"the plain of the vineyards" - or Abel-keramin. The situation of this city is not known.

JEPHTHAH FULFILLS HIS VOW - Judges 11:34-40

VERSE 34

"Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house" - The crucial moment arrived. Yahweh who had guided Jephthah and Israel in the war against Ammon now had control of the circumstances surrounding the

outcome of Jephthah's vow.

The house at Mizpeh had not long been the home of Jephthah. It can only be assumed that when Jephthah had "passed over Gilead" from the land of Tob to Mizpeh that he brought all with him and established his home there while he undertook negotiations with the king of Ammon - verse 11.

"and behold" - Roth. - "and lo!"

"his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances" - J.B. - "his daughter came out from it to meet him; she was dancing to the sound of timbrels." The plural form of timbrels may indicate that Jephthah's daughter was at the head of a company of women, who received the victorious conqueror with joyous music and dances - compare Ex.15:20; 1 Sam. 18:6.

"and she was his only child" - Roth. - "and she was none other than his only child ". This point is emphasised to reveal that Jephthah's name and inheritance in Israel depended for their perpetuation on this one daughter who had now become subject to the terms of his vow. His only hope of regaining a portion of his father's inheritance and "a name in Israel" rested with her. Significantly, the position Jephthah and his daughter found themselves in, corresponded to the circumstances of Zelophehad and his daughters, another much earlier descendent of Gilead - Josh.17:3-6. The words "only child" are the Hebrew word *yachiyd* - united; i.e. sole; by imp. beloved. This word occurs 12 times in the O.T. and is used in some very significant contexts; e.g. Gen.22:2,12,16 ("thine only"); Ps.22:20 ("my darling"); Ps.25:16 ("desolate"); Ps.35:17 ("my darling"); Ps.68:6 ("the solitary"), Prov.4:3 ("and only"); Zech.12:10 ("only"). Isaac, David, and Solomon were all types of God's only begotten son in various ways and the use of this word in relation to them indicates that the affinity between Jephthah and his daughter is also being likened to the relationship between the Father and His own beloved son.

The word *yachiyd* when used in the feminine form can mean the life (as not to be replaced). This was true in Jephthah's case, as the death of his only child meant the extinction of his name in Israel. It is precisely for this reason that the faith of both Jephthah and his daughter shine from the record. In the face of this stark fact and with newly revived memories of the bitterness of his rejection from his father's house, Jephthah determined to fulfill his vow whatever the cost, and was fully supported in his intentions by his submissive and faithful daughter. Both saw their hope of an inheritance in the land and the perpetuation of their names in Israel as being dependent upon the power and mercy of Yahweh *who* would grant them a resurrection to life eternal.

VERSE 35

"rent his clothes" - A sign of grief and intense agony - Gen.37:29,34; 2 Sam.13:31.

God could not have required of him a greater sacrifice than this: he was deeply saddened by his impending loss but instantly resolved as to what he must do. Jephthah's sadness was not a sign of reluctance to fulfill the terms of his vow but an indication of the extent of his personal loss.

"thou hast brought me very low" - The word "low" is *kara* - to bend the knee, to sink, prostrate. The elation of his magnificent victory over Ammon rapidly dissipated into sadness as the reality of what lay before him struck home. He had to learn that divine redemption "without fail" could not be accomplished without sacrifice - the penultimate sacrifice in his case. The offering up of his only child.

"trouble me" - *akar* - to disturb, afflict. Lit. - "Thou art among those who trouble me". (See Roth.).

Ironically for Jephthah his only daughter had become a troubler to him in that her death would effectively mean the loss of his inheritance in Israel-This is what his brethren had originally done to him by rejecting him from his father's inheritance.

"I have opened my mouth unto Yahweh and I cannot go back" - Roth. - "Yet I opened wide my mouth unto Yahweh". Jephthah was fully aware of the irrevocableness of his vow. Once made it must be paid.

Ecc.5:4-5. It is interesting to note that the law relating to vows provided for a father to disallow a vow made by his daughter but every man making a vow was rigidly bound to fulfill it - Num.30:2-5. The principle that now governed the actions of Jephthah is expressed in Deut. 23:21-23. That he fulfilled it in the face of such a painful loss places him in the category of those spoken of in Ps.15:4.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER - A TYPE OF CHRIST

The first words of Jephthah's vow were deliberate and carefully chosen, "If thou shalt without *fail* deliver" He knew that to obtain such a guarantee he must be prepared to offer to Yahweh the ultimate sacrifice, hence he deliberately specified a human offering in his vow but left the choice of who it should be in God's hands, saying, "whosoever (as it should read) cometh forth of the door\$ of my house." It is of the utmost significance that Yahweh chose his "only child"; words that are later used to describe God's own son (Ps.22:20). *Yachiyd* in the Hebrew is used of Isaac at the time when his father was to offer him up for a burnt offering to Yahweh. God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine *only son* Isaac, whom thou lovest" (Gen.22:2). He was to offer him upon a mountain in the land of Moriah which God would shew him, doubtless the very hill that later saw the antitypical fulfillment of this transaction in the crucifixion of Christ. The events on Moriah clearly foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ in almost every particular, even to a resurrection from the dead, from whence Abraham received Isaac in a figure (Heb.11:19). The faith and determination of Abraham, and the submission of Isaac are witnessed again in the case of Jephthah and his daughter, where once more the word *yachiyd* is employed. Note the following points of similarity between Jephthah's "only child" and God's "only begotten son":

1. Both cooperated fully with their father in a work of redemption that was to be without fail.
2. Both died to fulfil the will of their father, but were not personally worthy of the kind of death they suffered.
3. Both were totally submissive to the will of their father because they knew redemption for 'Israel' depended on it. The fact that Jephthah's daughter remains nameless is also significant in emphasising an important principle of the Atonement - the absence of human strength. Israel's redemption had been accomplished by her father - so with Christ's work of redemption; the source of strength was His father. A fact also borne out by the female element in Jephthah's work of redemption. God promised to redeem humanity from sin and death by "the seed of the woman", thus summarily dismissing the involvement of any strength from man in fulfilling that purpose (Gen. 3:15).

In summary, what we see portrayed in this context is a beautiful type demonstrating the most glorious aspect of the Atonement, running in parallel to the overall type of Jephthah's life. Namely, that in order to secure redemption for mankind "without fail" Yahweh was prepared to offer His "only child" on their behalf. Should He have required any less from Jephthah, who in the full knowledge of that great truth sought to work redemption for Israel "without fail"?

VERSE 36

"And she *said unto him*" - Jephthah's daughter remains nameless in the record but emerges as a young woman of great faith, possessed of a readiness to cooperate to the uttermost with her father in the fulfillment of his vow. No evidence exists of any accusations against her father of rashness and folly, nor does she show any sign of annoyance that she had become the unsuspecting victim of a rash vow. The thing that dominated her thoughts even in the heat of the moment was her own and her father's responsibility to Yahweh. Her faith is a testimony to the sound upbringing she had received from her

father in the things of the Truth and is further evidence of the fact that the Truth completely dominated Jephthah's life,

"forasmuch as Yahweh hath taken vengeance" - J.B. - "since Yahweh has given you vengeance". It is evident that the terms of Jephthah's vow had now been made known to his daughter although the record does not state it. She knew now that Jephthah had made his vow to ensure victory over Ammon and her response was "Yahweh has fulfilled his part we must fulfill ours". The truth had been vindicated, and the enemies of the ecclesia destroyed. Now the price had to be paid and she was willing to pay it. In this selfless example of submission to her father's will Jephthah's daughter prefigured the son of God who said, "I come to do thy will, O God" Heb. 10:7 which for him as well as her meant laying down his life in obedience to his Father's commandment. The spontaneous submission of Jephthah's daughter to an unpleasant end can only be explained by her lively faith in the power of God to raise her from the grave to life eternal. So it was also that Jesus submitted to an agonising death and endured all things for the joy that was set before him -Heb.12:2.

VERSE 37

"Let this thing be done for me" - J.B. - "Grant me one request." She sought only one thing and even this was associated with her love of the Truth.

"let me alone two months" - Two is the number of division in scripture and Jephthah's daughter requests to be left *alone* that she might bewail her virginity. She was to be divided from her father and with her death he was to be again divided from his inheritance in Israel. Both were to be separated from natural Israel through having no seed to carry on their name in the nation.

"that I may go up and down upon the mountains" - Roth. – "That I may depart and go down upon the mountains". Lit. "go and go down". Her intention was to leave Mizpeh which stood on an eminence and go down to the surrounding mountains and their valleys. Here she would fortify herself to fulfil her part in the 'redemption of Israel'. The Lord Jesus Christ also sought the solitude of the mountains to fortify himself for his great work of redemption - Matt.14:23; 15:29.

"and bewail my virginity" - "bewail" is *bakah* - to weep; to bemoan- Every woman in Israel recognised the importance of bearing children to perpetuate the family name and secure their inheritance- Furthermore, every woman in Israel looked with anticipation to being the mother of Israel's Messiah. Perpetual virginity was therefore considered a curse in Israel, and barrenness was ranked with it - 1 Sam.1:6.

The sorrow of Jephthah's daughter was made more intense because she was the only one through whom her father's house could be perpetuated. The fact that Jephthah's daughter sought two months to bewail her virginity is a point in favour of the view that she was offered as a burnt offering and died. If she was to be devoted to the Tabernacle service as a perpetual virgin she would have had ample opportunity to bewail her virginity for the rest of her life,

VERSE 38

"And he said, Go" - The brevity of Jephthah's reply indicates his personal grief, but also his unshakeable resolution.

VERSE 39

"she returned unto her father" - True to her word. She is revealed as the equal of Jephthah in faith and submission to the divine will. There is not a hint in the record of any bitterness or rebellion by Jephthah's daughter. Total submission and quiet resolve characterised her entire approach to these heart-rending circumstances.

"who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed" - To determine the fate of Jephthah's

daughter, careful attention must be given to the terms of his vow in verse 31, because what he vowed he actually did to the letter (see notes on verse 31).

The arguments for and against the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter are many but an accurate understanding of the terms of the vow is the critical factor in resolving the issue according to these words.

"and she knew no man" - This statement of fact is said by some to provide evidence that she was in fact dedicated to the Tabernacle service as a perpetual virgin, but if it is kept in context it is simply a restatement of the real issue facing Jephthah and his daughter - see notes on verses 34&37. The tragic irony of this verse is that a man born out of adultery and rejected by his brethren from his father's inheritance because of it, now puts to death his own daughter, a *virgin* who was his only hope of securing that natural inheritance in Israel.

"And it was a custom in Israel" - choq - an enactment, an appointment. Gesenius says the word means an appointed law, a statute, an ordinance. Roth.- "And it became a statute in Israel". The importance ascribed to this custom implies that Jephthah's daughter made the ultimate sacrifice, and was not devoted to the Tabernacle service. If the latter is correct, why was a special period of four days set aside annually for a pilgrimage to remember her and commemorate her faith? Normal visits to Shiloh for the Feasts would have provided adequate opportunity for this.

VERSE 40

"went yearly" - Roth.- "from year to year". They must have gone to Mizpeh in Gilead - the place of her death.

"to lament" - tanah - to ascribe, i.e. celebrate, commemorate. The word appears only twice in the O.T. The other usage in Judges 5:11 provides the sense in which it is to be understood. There it is translated, "there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of Yahweh". The sense is to speak of, celebrate and stir up memories of Yahweh 's acts. The word does not mean , and does not imply communication with the one being celebrated or commemorated. There seems to be no sound textual evidence for accepting the marginal alternative, "to talk with". Roth.- "lament aloud". It is obvious that this annual pilgrimage was taken to commemorate, not communicate with Jephthah's daughter.

"four days in a year" - Four is the scriptural number for righteousness produced by the Word of God and that which it accomplishes by its action - a new creation. By her willing submission to the word of God, which required the death of devoted things Jephthah's daughter will be the subject of a resurrection to eternal life amongst God's new creation. This certainly was her anticipation and hope as she submitted to sacrificial death, and this faith and courage is what the daughters of Israel celebrated each year.

CONFLICT WITH EPHRAIM - Judges 12:1-7

VERSE 1

"the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together" - Roth.- "And the men of Ephraim were called together." R.S.V. - "the men of Ephraim were called to arms."

The jealousy and leadership ambitions of the tribe of Ephraim had already been revealed in the days of Gideon and a disaster was only averted then by the wisdom and moderation of Gideon (Judges 8:1-3). The pathetic story of the rise and fall of Abimelech in Judges 9 reveals the way in which jealousy and ambition had diseased the minds of the men of Ephraim, and now that same jealousy rears its ugly head once more-Here was an 'ecclesia' in Israel which had been deaf to the cries of the men of Gilead for help against Ammon, but when Ammon had been defeated under Jephthah's leadership suddenly became indignant that they had not been invited to share in the glorious victory. It is sometimes characteristic of large groups

troubled by internal decay and apathy to think that sheer size qualifies them for leadership. When their help is desperately needed they are reluctant to give it, but when that need is filled from another source they immediately take offence that they were not invited to participate in the victories won.

They were able to marshal 42,000 men to challenge their brethren in Gilead, but not one Ephraimite had lifted a finger to help the Gileadites fight with Ammon - a nation that is typical of the latter day Gog and symbolic of the "world".

"and didst not call us to go with thee" - The answer to this was simple, Jephthah had called them and they had been true to form. Their normal dilatoriness and apathy was again manifested and they failed to help their distressed neighbouring tribe. Comp. verses 2&3. The Ephraimites were blinded by their own ambition and envy. Compare Judges 8:1. Also see Ps-109:2-4; Ecc.4:4.

"we will burn thine house upon thee with fire" - This was a practice of the Philistines- Judges 14:15, 15:6. See Prov.27:4.

VERSE 2

"I and my people" - There is a strange irony in these words. Jephthah had previously been a fugitive from his own family and tribe, having been rejected by them, Judges 11:2&7; now he speaks as the leader and representative of those same people who now themselves were being called fugitives among their own brethren, verse 4.

VERSE 3

"I put my life in my hands" - "life" is nephesh (soul or life). There appears to be a play on the word 'hands' in Jephthah's reply. He accused Ephraim by saying, "ye delivered me not out of their hands," so "I put my life in my hands" and "Yahweh delivered them into my hand". *"wherefore then are ye come up unto me"* Jephthah was justified in asking this question: he sought their help, which they refused to give and so he set out trusting in Yahweh, who delivered his enemies into his hand ~ what quarrel could Ephraim have with that? What grounds were there for justifiable indignation? Absolutely none! The men of Ephraim were motivated by pride and its evil products - envy and jealousy.

VERSE 4

"Then Jephthah.....fought with Ephraim" - With the sadness and grief of his daughter's death still upon him Jephthah is now forced into another tragic and heart-rending situation. Internecine strife of this sort over issues of pride and authority is a bitter experience at any time, but doubly so when it comes hard upon the revival of bitter memories of rejection, the hardships of war, and the anguish of an only child sacrificed by her own father's hand. The severity meted out to the Ephraimites by Jephthah and the men of Gilead illustrates the gravity of Ephraim's sin. "Pride cometh before a fall" and their fall was great indeed.

EPHRAIM - PROPHETIC NAME FOR SCATTERED ISRAEL

"Israel", "Ephraim", and "the remnant of Jacob" are synonymous terms for the nation of Israel in dispersion in the prophetic scriptures - Ezek.20:27,30,39; Zech.9:13, 10:7; Isa.11:13; Mic.5:7-8. "Ephraim" is to be gathered from dispersion by Elijah the prophet, a man of Gilead (Mal.4:5-6), thus this context is highly typical of the work Christ is to perform among scattered Israel in the future.

When the antitypical Jephthah has destroyed Gog and purified "Judah" (the Jews in the land at Armageddon - Zech.12:7) he will have to deal just as severely with proud "Ephraim" gathered out of every nation by Elijah. They will be no more disposed to humbly submit to their redeemer than the men of

Ephraim to Jephthah, until the rebels are purged out and an entire generation perishes in "the wilderness of the people" - Ezek.20:33-38.

"the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said" - It is significant that "Ephraim" is to be gathered out of the nations in the future by one of Gilead's most notable sons - Elijah the prophet (1 Kings 17:1; Mal.4:5-6). Should Elijah be accompanied on his mission by another famous son of this region - Jephthah the son of Gilead, it would not be at all surprising.

"Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim" - palet - a refugee; from a root meaning, to slip out, i.e. escape. Significantly the word is used again in verse 5 and translated "those...which were escaped". Roth.- "Fugitives of Ephraim are ye, O ye Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim, in the midst of Manasseh."

Gileadites were of the tribe of Manasseh (Num.26:29), and had taken their inheritance with the half tribe of Manasseh on the east of Jordan. The sense of these contemptuous words would appear to be that the Ephraimites rejected the Gileadites as fugitives amongst their own tribe. The position of the men of Gilead was now exactly the same as that of Jephthah - Judges 11:2-3. He had been rejected by his own family and tribe and now the Gileadites who had appointed him as their head were treated in the same way by their brethren.

VERSE 5

"took the passages of Jordan" - Roth.- "the fords of Jordan". The word "passages" is ma'abarah - a crossing place. The place was known as Beth-barah (the house of fords), Judges 7:24 and ironically had been the place where the Ephraimites had themselves inflicted a terrible defeat on the fleeing Midianites in the days of Gideon, just prior to their proud challenge to that faithful judge.

This was the place used much later by John the Baptist to perform his work - John 1:28. Israel had crossed the Jordan at this place - Josh.2:7,3:1. It is therefore a place associated with baptism — i.e. the destruction of the flesh. In the context of Israel's crossing of Jordan under Joshua (Gr. Jesus) into the Promised Land it is a place symbolising the baptism of the spirit -the putting away of "the body of humiliation" (Phil.3:21) to put on a spiritual body.

"which were escaped" - palet - a refugee; from a prim. root, to slip out, i.e. escape. The same word is translated "fugitives" in verse 4. The Ephraimites were to suffer poetic justice for their pride and folly in contemptuously rejecting their brethren.

VERSE 6

"Say now Shibboleth" – "stream or flood", such as they wished to cross (at this place associated with baptism). It is important to note that the basis upon which the Ephraimites were to be permitted to return home across Jordan was two-fold. Deliverance was on the basis of:

1. **Speech** ("out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" - Luke 6:45).
2. **Perception** (the Ephraimites were asked to name what they saw before them - the perceptive man would have seen that there was a purpose in such a question. Did they understand the purpose of "baptism"?)

These two things prefigure the work of the antitypical Jephthah in relation firstly to his household, and then to "Ephraim" or scattered Israel. Zech.9:13.

Jephthah's name means "He will open" and it was in the power of his hand to open or close the way into the Promised Land for the men of Ephraim. So it is with the one who possesses the key of the house of David - Rev.3:7-10 (carefully note this context).

The above criteria for passage across Jordan will be used again by the greater 'Jephthah', the Lord Jesus Christ:

Spiritual Israel

The Household will be judged first (1 Pet.4:17) and all will be required to *speak* in giving an account of themselves (Rom.14:10-12) and acceptance will be predicated upon a perception and demonstration of the principles of baptism in their lives. Those who are found worthy will cross over Jordan by a baptism of the spirit.

Natural Israel

Scattered Israel will be regathered and the rebels purged out from among them in a similar way to the wilderness wanderings under Moses Ezek. 20:34-38. The rebels of Moses' day were known by their speech which revealed the evil of their hearts. See Ex.14; 10-12; Num. 14:1-4 and compare with Ezek.20:32. So when Israel has understood and expressed their faith in Yahweh's salvation they will be brought over Jordan and into the land promised to their fathers -Ezek.20:40-44.

"and he said Sibboleth " An entirely different word in Hebrew meaning "an ear of grain".

A fairly recent archaeological discovery has thrown additional light on this incident- The discovery of the Tell-el-amarna Letters reveals that the substitution of the "S" for the "Sh" sound of Hebrew was an Amorite peculiarity. One consequence of this is the present name for Shiloh, which the natives of the land pronounce Seilun. Condor says "This has always presented the difficulty that the "S" is not the proper representative of the Hebrew Shi. Perhaps, as in other cases, the peasant pronunciation represents the Amorite rather than the Hebrew sound". The Tell-el-amarna Letters show that this was a characteristic of the Amorite tongue. Shiloh appears in the 'Letters' as Zilu.

THE TELL-EL-AMARNA LETTERS

The following extract from the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible provides some information on this significant archaeological site: -"Amenhotep IV (Akhnaton), who was Pharaoh from 1387 to 1366 B.C., built a new capital, which he named Akhetaton, It was situated on the east bank of the Nile River, about 160 miles above the Delta and nearly 300 below Thebes; the modern name is Tell el-Amarna. Here were found in the year 1887 more than 350 clay tablets. They were written in Akkadian, the international language of the 15th and 14th centuries B.C., and proved to be the correspondence of the vassal princes and governors in Syria and Palestine with their overlords, Amenhotep III and IV. Nearly all of them were written in Syria and Palestine, and accordingly they are of first-hand value for the light they shed on conditions in Palestine of that period. "

The half tribe of Manasseh took as their inheritance a portion of the territory captured from Og king of Bashan (an Amorite) and Sihon king of the Amorites - Num.32:33.

The tribe of Ephraim and the residue of Manasseh took their inheritance on the west of Jordan from the Amorites Josh.10:1-43, 11:1-14. Both had this in common, that they had inherited territory from the Amorites the largest, fiercest and most corrupt of the tribes of Canaan. However, there was one important difference: the Gileadites had utterly destroyed the Amorites from their inheritance Num.21:23-25, 33-35, but the Ephraimites had left remaining of the Amorites in their inheritance, Josh.16:9-10. It is evident that the Ephraimites had become influenced not only by the ways but also by the speech patterns of the Amorites and had adopted the peculiar pronunciation of Shibboleth which finally cost 42,000 lives at the passages of Jordan.

The Ephraimites were separated from the Gileadites by their speech which betrayed their adoption of Amoritish principles and behaviour. Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ will divide between the faithful and unfaithful at his Judgement Seat. He will reject those who reveal by their account that they have adopted, or not forsaken, 'Amoritish' ways and practices. In not pronouncing Shibboleth correctly the men of

Ephraim used an entirely different word. Standing before Jordan at Bethbarah (the place of baptism) they were asked to express in a word (as it were) the principles of baptism as the basis of entry into their inheritance. This they were unable to do because of their adoption of Amoritish ways. "Sibboleth" was their reply, and with that word they described unwittingly what lay beyond the "stream or flood" at their feet. Sibboleth means "an ear of grain" and on the plains of Jordan, above flood level, waved the fully grown crops of this harvest season (at which time of the year Jordan was prone to flood – Josh.3:15). Thus they revealed their ignorance of the principles by which an inheritance in the land may be attained and provided an illustration of the principle expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ in John 12:24-26 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal". Like the "corn of wheat" that graced the land of their inheritance they too had to 'die' that they might live again, but because the old man of the flesh (the Amorite) had not been crucified within by a full and consistent application of the principles of baptism, they were not permitted to enter into their inheritance.

"for he could not frame to pronounce it right" - Roth. - "and he could not take heed to speak in that manner." Youngs Lit. - "and is not prepared to speak right." Keil & Delitzsch - "not taking care to pronounce it correctly." This is proof that the incorrect pronunciation of Shibboleth was not a case of inability to do so through a hereditary tribal speech impediment, but a general and widespread acceptance among Ephraimites of an Amoritish practice. They had conformed to an Amoritish speech pattern.

"Then they took him" - Roth. - "Then laid they hold on him." All who failed the test were immediately slain and not permitted to cross Jordan into the land; i.e. back into their natural inheritance. Similar treatment will be dispensed by the Lord Jesus Christ to those, who accepting the responsibilities of the Truth, have failed to eradicate 'the Amorite' from their life. Comp. Luke 13:24-28. This principle will apply firstly to the responsible at his return and then to returning Israel under Elijah. Note also the principle of Zech.14:21.

"forty and two thousand" - This is a massive slaughter by any standard, but some idea of its devastating effects may be gained by comparing the number of men above 20 years of age found in the tribe of Ephraim in the last census on the plains of Moab (Num.26:37) - 32,500. 42 is the multiple of 6 and 7. 6 is the number of man (flesh), and 7 is the number of completeness. Thousands represents families (Jud.6:15 mgn.), hence this number represents the complete destruction of flesh out of the family of Israel - natural and spiritual.

VERSE 7

"Jephthah judged Israel six years" - Jephthah's judgeship was probably only over the tribes east of Jordan who had appointed him their head and captain - Judges 11:11. The short period of six years for which he judged Israel before his death may indicate that he was not a young man when recalled to lead Israel against Ammon.

Even in this period of six years there is a foreshadowing of the work of Christ. Jephthah ruled through the sixth and into the seventh year and then relinquished his judgeship to one called Ibzan of Bethlehem. Ibzan means "splendid". Thus Jephthah as a type of Christ rules to the end of the Millennium and gives up the Kingdom to God, the "splendid one". See 1 Cor.15:24-28.

"and was buried" - Both Jephthah and his daughter await the resurrection to receive an everlasting inheritance which they will not be able to lose through unjust rejection by brethren or by death.

May Israel's rejected deliverer soon come!

