

Recap of 7/2/17 (Judges 11:12-40):

1. The Ammonites are threatening war against the Israelites. Jephthah sues for peace diplomatically through negotiations first. He shows wide knowledge of the law and of Israel's history. He argues (from Numbers 20) that Israel did not take the land, they tried to avoid conflict, but won it in war. In addition the land was won from the Amorites not from the Ammonites. The Ammonites had no claim to it to begin with. Also, for 300 years, Israel had undisputed possession of it. Ultimately, Jephthah says, God gave it to Israel, if the Ammonites were unhappy with their possession their problem was with their "god" Chemosh.
2. Ignoring the historical reality, the Ammonites choose war, seeking to drive Israel from the land. McGee writes: "The same is happening in the land of Israel today. Especially since 1948 when Israel once again became a nation, the enemy has been trying to remove them from the land, exterminate them, actually drive them into the sea. ...Jephthah outlines a very sensible basis for Israel's occupation of the land. They had a legitimate claim to it."
3. With war impending Jephthah makes an unnecessary vow to sacrifice to the Lord the first thing to come out of his house after the victory. Upon arriving home, his only child, a daughter, is the first to come out to meet him.
4. The Old Testament teaching about vows: (Christian Ethics & New Bible Dictionary)
 - warns against taking a foolish or rash vow. Proverbs 20:25
 - vows were used to gain God's favor or as an expression of zeal toward God
 - vows were strictly voluntary. It was not a sin to vow, and not a sin not to vow.
 - if taking a vow, it was binding
 - you could not vow to the Lord what was already His (firstlings, tithes, or that which was an abomination to the Lord. (Deuteronomy 23:18)
 - the effectiveness of the vow had to do with the person offering it—the vow had no virtue in itself
 - the only mention of vows in the New Testament is Acts 18:18 (Paul) and Acts 21:23-26 (4 men in Jerusalem).
5. Did Jephthah sacrifice his only child to the Lord as a burnt offering? "We do not know what actually happened to his daughter—the one who came to meet him—whether she was burned as an offering or set apart as a virgin, thus denying Jephthah any hope of descendants, since she was his only child. What we do know is that his rash vow brought him unspeakable grief." ((365 Life Lessons)