

# Judges 11:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab.

## Analysis

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**Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab.**

This verse contributes to the narrative of Jephthah's deliverance and tragic vow. The Book of Judges documents Israel's cyclical pattern of apostasy and deliverance, revealing both human depravity and divine mercy. Each cycle begins with Israel doing evil (usually Baal worship), followed by God's judgment through foreign oppression, Israel's cry for deliverance, God raising up a judge, temporary peace, then renewed apostasy after the judge dies.

Theologically, this pattern demonstrates several crucial truths:

1. Human inability to maintain covenant faithfulness apart from God's transforming grace
2. God's justice in punishing covenant violation through the curses of Deuteronomy 28
3. God's mercy in responding to repentant cries with deliverance

4. The inadequacy of repeated deliverances to produce lasting transformation, pointing to the need for the New Covenant with God's law written on hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The judges themselves foreshadow Christ—they are divinely appointed deliverers who save Israel from enemies.

Yet their imperfections and temporary victories point to the need for the perfect Judge who would provide permanent deliverance. Jesus fulfills the judges' typology, being the ultimate "sent one" who conquers spiritual enemies definitively through His death and resurrection, providing eternal salvation rather than temporary political relief.

## Historical Context

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**Historical Setting:** The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

**Cultural Context:** This passage relates to Jephthah's deliverance and tragic vow. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1

Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

## **Related Passages**

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## **Study Questions**

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1. How does this passage about Jephthah's deliverance and tragic vow reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

## Interlinear Text

וַיֵּלֶךְ	בַּמִּדְבָּר	וַיִּסָּב	אֶת	לְאֶרֶץ	אֶדוֹם	וְאֶת
H1980	through the wilderness	and compassed	H853	and the land	of Edom	H853
	H4057	H5437		H776	H123	
לְאֶרֶץ	מוֹאָב׃	בָּאוּ	מִמִּזְרַח	שָׁמַשׁ	לְאֶרֶץ	
and the land	of Moab	and came	by the east side	H8121	and the land	
H776	H4124	H935	H4217		H776	
מוֹאָב׃	וַיִּחַן	בְּעַבְרָה	אֶרֶן	וְלֹא	בָּאוּ	
of Moab	and pitched	on the other side	for Arnon	H3808	and came	
H4124	H2583	H5676	H769		H935	
גִּבּוֹל	מוֹאָב׃	כִּי	אֶרֶן	גִּבּוֹל	מוֹאָב׃	
not within the border	of Moab	H3588	for Arnon	not within the border	of Moab	
H1366	H4124		H769	H1366	H4124	

## Additional Cross-References

**Numbers 22:36** (Parallel theme): And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast.