

Leading Ladies

Oct 2020



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“The Devoted Daughter”

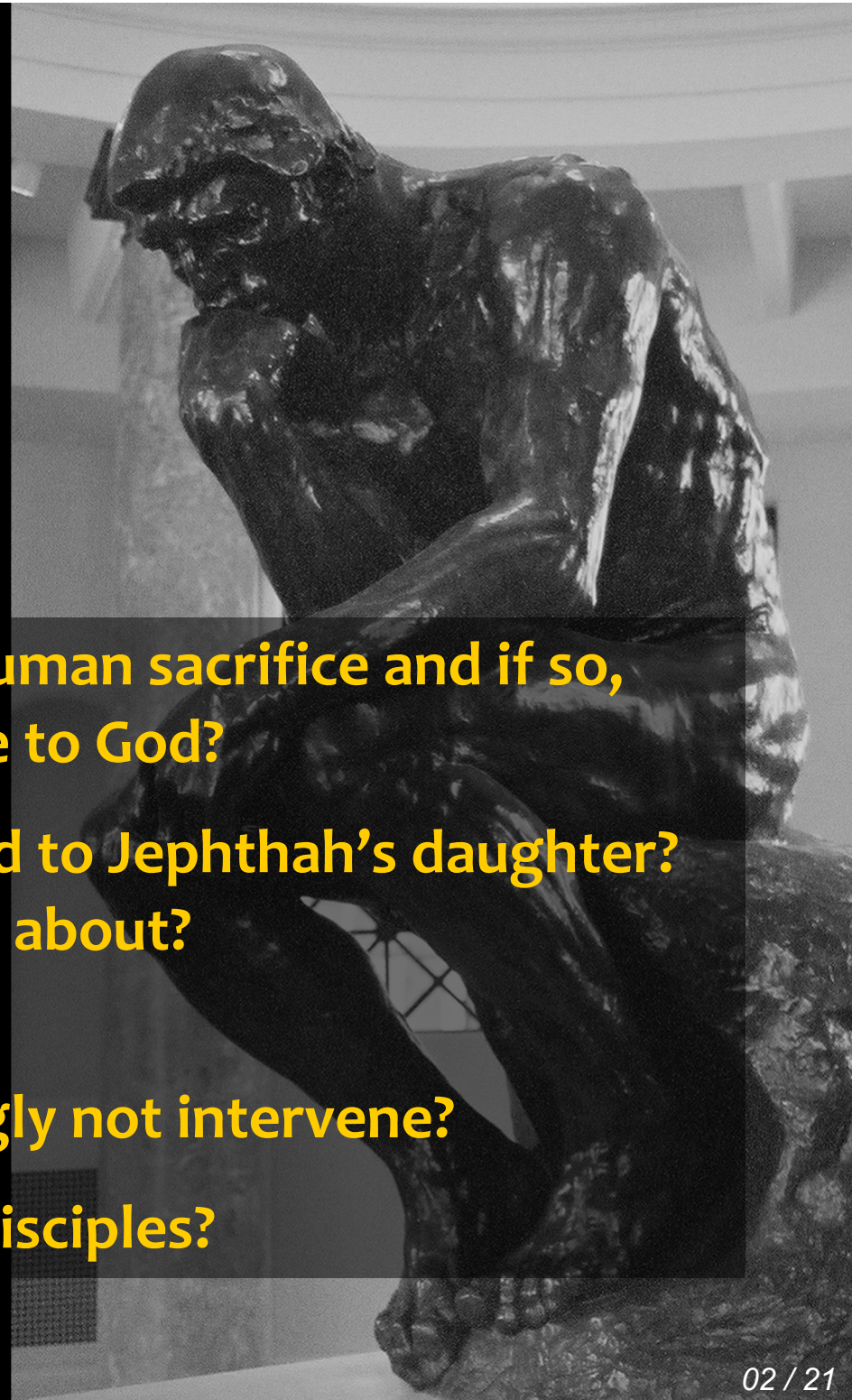
Jephthah’s Daughter’s Story

Problems

Judges 11 is a problem passage for many, mainly because God approves of Jephthah *Heb 11*

Questions

- Is Jephthah participating in human sacrifice and if so, how can Jephthah be acceptable to God?
- If not, what actually happened to Jephthah's daughter? and what is the story actually all about?
- Where is God in all this?
Why does He seemingly not intervene?
- Is any of this relevant to 21C disciples?



Who is Jephthah?



A Warrior, of the tribe of Gad

*Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. **Jdg 11:1***

Son of the region's Founder, but an illegitimate ('defective') son, born of a prostitute

*His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute. **ibid***

A Godly man, recognizing God's Hand in Israel **Jdg 11:9-27**

A Man Commended for his Faith

*I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, **Jephthah**, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice... These were all commended for their faith... **Heb 11:32-33,39***

The Rejected Brother

Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away. "You are not going to get any inheritance in our family," they said, "because you are the son of another woman." Jdg 11:2

Presumably Gilead has died & inheritance is being divided

Some time later... the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. "Come," they said, "be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites." Jephthah said to them, "Didn't you hate me and drive me from my father's house? Why do you come to me now, when you're in trouble?" Jdg 11:4-7

=> Jephthah still nurtures bitterness against his brothers

To Be King

- *The elders of Gilead said... “you will be our head over all who live in Gilead.”*
- *Jephthah answered, “...will I really be your head?”*
- *The elders of Gilead replied, “The LORD is our witness; we will certainly do as you say.” Jdg 11:8-10*

So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them. And he repeated all his words before the LORD in Mizpah. Jdg 11:11

Jephthah's desire to have ultimate power repeats 4 times! – a critical detail

Jephthah insists on total control of Gilead's people - why? From pride?



Humility

Jephthah recognizes God's Hand in Israel's battles, past & present

- *“Israel did not take the land of Moab... the LORD, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his men into Israel's hands...”*
- *“Suppose you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the LORD gives them to me...”*
- *“Now since the LORD, the God of Israel, has driven the Amorites out before his people Israel, what right have you to take it over? ...whatever the LORD our God has given us, we will possess.”*
- *“Let the LORD, the Judge, decide the dispute this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites.” Jdg 11:9-27*

**Jephthah is a humble man: his desire for power isn't from pride...
...but needs the power for his plan...**

The Disastrous Vow: Inception

“If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD’s, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.” Jdg 11:30-31

Did Jephthah intend to perform/risk human sacrifice by fire?

Detestable to the Lord

[Ahaz]... sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out **2 Kg 16:2-3**

[Israel] sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire... provoking [the Lord] to anger. **2 Kgs 17:16-17**

“They have built the high places... to burn their sons in the fire... something I did not command or mention **Jer 19:5**

You... do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire **Dt 12:31**

Let no one... sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire... Anyone who does... is detestable to the LORD **Dt 18:10-12**

“whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me... I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.” **Jdg 11:30-31**

The Answered Prayer

“When you offer your gifts—the sacrifice of your sons in the fire—you continue to defile yourselves... Am I to let you inquire of me, O house of Israel? “As surely as I live,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “I will not let you inquire of me.” Ezk 20:31

“If you sacrifice your children in the fire, I will not even listen to your prayers”

“Let the LORD, the Judge, decide the dispute this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites...” Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah. Jdg 11:27,29

God listens to Jephthah’s prayer & responds favourably

*This *proves* Jephthah was never going to burn anyone*

Unraveling the Idiom

Jephthah uses “burnt offering” as an idiom. But what does it mean?

“If the offering is a burnt offering... he is to offer a male without defect... and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar.” Lev 1:3,9



Characteristics of a burnt offering:

- (Generally) a freewill offering
- The subject was a ‘male without defect’
- **The entire animal was utilized (sole unique characteristic)**

=> Jephthah planned to give ‘a male without defect’ to the Lord forever (i.e. wholly)

Hannah's Burnt Offering



Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, “O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life..” 1 Sam 1:10-11

**Hannah sacrifices Samuel
‘as a burnt offering’:**

- a freewill offering
- a male without defect
- given wholly (for life)

Hannah is offering her firstborn son for lifelong Temple service

The Disastrous Vow: Result

Clue

*When **Jephthah** returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child... When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the LORD that I cannot break."* **Jdg 11:34-35**

Jephthah lives in Tob, his
family home is in Mizpah

He's after one of
his brothers!



Understanding Jephthah's Daughter

Why **was** Jephthah's daughter in Mizpah?

A cunning plot by the brothers?

No: Jephthah would feel rage, not guilt

Her idea to celebrate God's victory?

And mend the family?



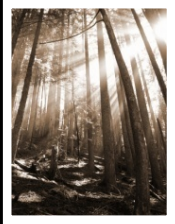
*Then Miriam the prophetess,
Aaron's sister, took a tambourine
in her hand, and all the women
followed her, with tambourines
and dancing. Ex 15:20*

=> An excruciating irony to her
father's carefully plotted revenge



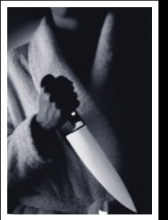
Solving the Mystery

Compiling the evidence, Jephthah:



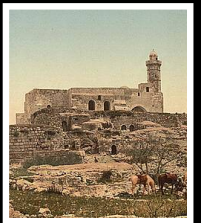
- Was a Godly man **v9-27** whose answered prayer proves he was not intending human sacrifice **Ez 20**

- Had been embittered against his brothers for “some time” [~20 yrs] **v4,7**

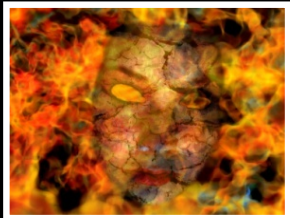


- Insisted on establishing total authority in Gilead, which gave him power over his brothers **v8-11**

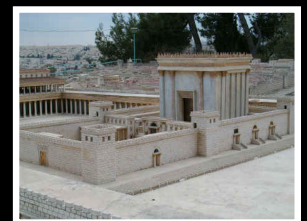
- Vowed to devote someone from his family home in Mizpah to the Lord **v34**



- Vowed to offer them ‘as a burnt offering’ - i.e. a male without defect, to be given wholly **v30-32**



=> Jephthah planned vengeance on his brothers by sending one into lifelong Temple service



Jephthah's Daughter takes the Lead

“My father,” she replied, “you have given your word to the LORD. Do to me just as you promised, now that the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. But grant me this one request,” she said. “Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry.” Jdg 11:36-37

She mourned virginity, not death

Aside: How old was Jephthah's daughter?

- **She gives a mature response to her father**
- **She was unmarried**

Probably a teenager



The Point

If Judges 11 **isn't** about human sacrifice by fire – what is it about?



Bearing grudges

... which led to:

**Taking revenge & pretending
it's service to God**



Lessons

Keep your promises

***LORD, who may dwell
in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your
holy hill?
He whose walk is
blameless...
who keeps his oath
even when it hurts...***

Psa 15:1-4



Don't bear grudges

Keep gifts to God sincere

The Big Picture: Man Rules Selfishly

His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute. Judges 11:1

Root cause of tragic sequence was abuse of power from Gilead, the city's leader. His child paid the price

"...I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering." Judges 11:31

Jephthah sought power in Gilead in order to exact personal revenge. His child paid the price



Both leaders, fathers, abused their power for a personal agenda
Both times a family was broken as a result

The Big Picture: God's Servant Rulership

- 1 Jephthah devotes his (teenage?) daughter to the Lord
- 2 Hannah devotes her young son Samuel to the Lord

Time between 2 events: ~ 30 yrs

Where is God in all this...?

...building families, as a Good Father would

Consider: Samuel grew up to respect the Lord

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men. 1 Sam 2:26

...yet not due to Eli the High Priest's 'fathering'

Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD. 1 Sam 2:12

Jephthah's Daughter's Legacy

So who was living at the temple to act as a
Godly parent to influence the infant Samuel...?

God provides a mother for
the orphaned boy...

...and a long awaited child
for the godly Leading Lady



Samuel: Israel's last & greatest judge