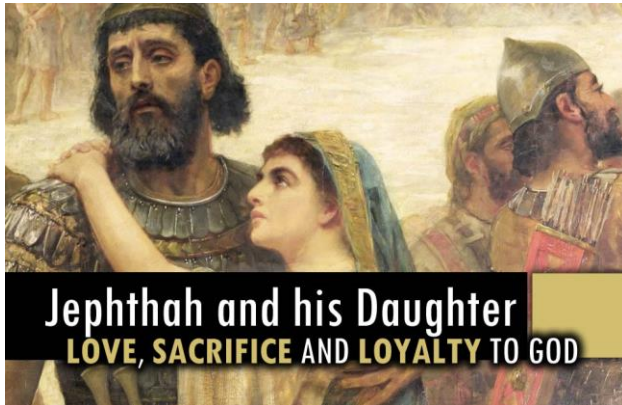


JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER - DID HE REALLY KILL HER? A STORY OF GREAT LOVE, SACRIFICE AND LOYALTY TO GOD

www.end-times-prophecy.org



The story of Jephthah and his daughter is a greatly misunderstood Bible story today. Many are focused on the **misunderstanding** that Jephthah sacrificed (killed) his daughter, which we will show did not actually happen, and therefore they miss the all important and beautiful true story of honour and loyalty to God. Some Bible translations even have a heading over this event saying *Jephthah's Tragic Vow*." But before we show you the all important lesson of honour and loyalty to God, let us look at the misunderstanding regarding the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter.

*Judges 11:29-31 ...'Then **the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah**, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon. **And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord**, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, **shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering**. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.'*

Just a quick point with these verses above. You will notice that it says "*the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah*." Some say that Jephthah's vow was a rash vow which he made himself. But here we read that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah. So the question is, could this really have been just a rash vow if the Spirit of the Lord was upon him? Something to ponder.

So let us take a look at the actual vow. Here is where many believe that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter and offered her as a 'burnt offering' unto God due to what it says in the verses above. But let us first consider the fact that child sacrifice and burnt offerings of children were an abomination to the Lord, something which the heathen nations did unto their gods, look:

*Deuteronomy 12:31 ...'Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every **abomination** to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even **their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.**'*

*Deuteronomy 18:9-10 ...'When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the **abominations of those nations**. There shall **not** be found among you any one that **maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire**, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.'*

So we can clearly see that sacrificing your child and offering your children as a burnt offering is an **abomination** to Jehovah. So did Jephthah actually commit this abomination to God by sacrificing his daughter and offering her as a 'burnt offering' to the Lord? Well, did you know that Jephthah is mentioned in that great chapter of faith, Hebrews 11? Look:

*Hebrews 11:32 ...'And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of **Jephthae**; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.'*

So the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah. God saw fit to mention him in the great chapter of faith. And yet he supposedly committed one of the worst, if not the worst abomination in God's eyes by sacrificing his daughter as a burnt offering? Really?

The issue lies directly in the verse that says ... *"whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me ... **shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.**"* Now if you take a look at some of the old commentators regarding this verse, you will see that there may be an issue in the translation of it into English, which would certainly clear things up and make proper sense of it all. Take a look at the following quotes from an 1886 Signs of the Times and an 1887 Review and Herald periodical:

*"Verse 31 of Judges [11] may be rendered, (a) "Shall surely be the Lord's, **or** I will offer it up for a burnt offering." Dr. Davidson, an eminent Hebraist, says: "It cannot be denied that the conjunction 'vav' may be rendered **or**." Dr. Randolph, J. Kimchi and Auberlen render: "Shall surely be the Lord's, **and** I will offer to him a burnt offering." Dr. Davidson says: "We admit that the construction is grammatically possible... Either of these translations removes the difficulty." (Signs of the Times, May 6, 1886, p.258)*

*"In the margin of Judges 11 : 31 Jephthah's vow reads: Whatsoever cometh forth ... shall surely be the Lord's, **or** I will offer it up for a burnt offering." (Review and Herald, July 12, 1887, p.434)*

Also, if you look at the Hebrew for the phrase in verse 31 *"and I will offer it up,"* it is simply translated in many other verses as *"to offer up,"* which would render the whole statement as *"shall surely be the Lord's, **and I will offer up a burnt offering.**"*

So in summary of what the above is saying. Jephthah didn't say that whatever came out of the house first he would offer up as a burnt offering. He was saying that whatever came out first he would dedicate them to the Lord, **AND/OR** he would offer up a burnt offering, ie., a normal animal burnt offering. Now let us look at the second part of this event which brings even more light to the truth of what actually happened, which is the response of Jephthah's daughter from verses 36 to 40 of Judges 11:

*Judges 11:36-40 ...'And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and **bewail my virginity**, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and **bewailed her virginity** upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, **who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: AND SHE KNEW NO MAN**. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.'*

First of all, does the thought that Jephthah's daughter was about to be sacrificed (killed) fit with the fact that they **waited two months** to fulfill the vow and that all she bewailed with her friends was her **virginity**? Nothing is said of her supposed coming "death," only her virginity. So instead of spending those two months making the most of her last moments of life (according to the mainstream view), she spends it bewailing and lamenting her virginity! This is not in keeping with someone who is about to be sacrificed and die. And the fact that she spent the time bewailing **her virginity**, **THIS** is what must have been connected to the actual vow, not human sacrifice.

"And this is confirmed by the expression, to bewail her virginity 'upon the mountains.' If life had been the question, the same tears might have been shed at home. But her lamentations were devoted to her virginity, and such lamentations could not be uttered in town, and in the presence of men. Modesty required the solitude of the mountains for these. The virtuous heart of the maiden does not open itself in the ears of all; but only in sacred silence does it pour out its lamentations of love." (Signs of the Times, May 6, 1886, p.258)

The word "lament" in the verse 40 where it says "*the daughters of Israel went yearly to **lament** the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year,*" is actually translated in Judges 5:11 as "*rehearse,*" and if you look at the Hebrew meaning of the word, it means "*to praise, rehearse, celebrate.*" Now would the daughters of Israel go each year to 'celebrate' and 'praise' or 'rehearse' a supposed human sacrifice? No! That would have been abhorrent to them. No, what they went to 'praise, celebrate or rehearse' each year was the loyalty and sacrifice that Jephthah's daughter made in giving her life in dedication to the LORD, honouring Jephthah's vow and remaining a virgin all her life. But how can we be sure? Just look at the answer given in verse 39 regarding the vow.

*"And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, **who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: AND SHE KNEW NO MAN**.*

There you have the clear and plain answer as to exactly what the vow was. It was NOT a human sacrifice, which is an abomination before Jehovah. It was a vow that Jephthah's daughter would be dedicated to the Lord always, remaining a virgin, which is why she bewailed her virginity for two months. The statement "*and she knew no man*" is the answer to Jephthah fulfilling the vow. God's word gives us the clear answer. The belief that she was killed as a sacrifice is simply man's opinion and is not in line with God's word on this matter.

Now let us get to the amazing part of this event, which is a beautiful lesson for us all today:

THE LOVE, SACRIFICE AND LOYALTY OF JEPHTHAH AND HIS DAUGHTER

The reason it is so important to know the TRUTH about the vow is because when you have a wrong view of it like so many do today, this event tends to just get passed off as a rash vow made by Jephthah and people miss the beautiful lesson of love, sacrifice and loyalty to family and God. Jephthah did not kill his daughter, and neither did he make that vow in the first place. Yes, he made a vow of a 'burnt offering' to God, in accordance with God's law, ie., offering an animal. But the vow he made regarding whatever comes out to greet him first, was a vow to dedicate them to the Lord forever. The reason Jephthah was so grieved was because his daughter was his only child (vs.34), and so he knew when he saw her, that his family line would never continue and that his daughter would not be able to partake in the one thing that the daughters of Israel longed to partake in, which is increasing the seed of Israel and just maybe, bringing in the Messiah.

So the grief and mourning of both Jephthah and his daughter was due to this fact, that she would have to be dedicated to the Lord and 'know no man' and remain a virgin all her life. And when you understand how big a thing this was to the daughters of Israel, then you begin to understand the sacrifice made.

What was Jephthah's daughter's response to the vow her father made? Was it *"oh, well that is your problem, you made the vow not me, I don't have to abide by it!"* That would be the response of many, if not most today. But no! She simply says ... ***"My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth"*** (vs.36).

Wow! Most today are not even willing to make a SMALL sacrifice for the Lord, and yet here is Jephthah's daughter, who was not even the one who made the vow, and even though the vow would have been a HUGE sacrifice for her to make, simply says ... *"do unto me what you have promised the Lord."* No trying to get out of it. No complaining against her father or God. Yes, a lot of mourning for her loss, but accepts it straight away. Why? Because she had great love, loyalty and honour for both her father and Jehovah. And **she was ready to serve and obey, no matter what it cost her!** What a lesson for us today!

The same goes for Jephthah. He could have sought to get out of fulfilling this vow and simply sought the Lord to forgive him for making the vow and just offer the 'burnt offering.' But no. Jephthah's love, loyalty and devotion to God was more important to him than anything else, and he was ready to fulfill the vow, no matter what it cost. What heartache it must have brought him to see his daughter give up something she would have greatly longed for, remain a virgin all her life and prevent the family line continuing. And yet, God came first in his life. His loyalty to God was more important. What a lesson! This is why Jephthah is mentioned in that great chapter of FAITH, Hebrews 11.

So many of us continue to struggle in sin and worldliness, thinking of ourselves, and here is a great example of real loyalty and obedience out of love to Jehovah. Oh I pray we can be encouraged by this story of Jephthah and his daughter's love, sacrifice, loyalty and honour to each other and God. And that we would truly learn to put God first in our lives, no matter what the cost!

*Mark 12:29-30 ...'And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **ALL** thy heart, and with **ALL** thy soul, and with **ALL** thy mind, and with **ALL** thy strength: this is the first commandment.'*

John 15:13 ...'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ...'Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, **seeketh not her own**, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; **beareth all things**, believeth all things, hopeth all things, **endureth all things**.'*