

## JEPHTHAH'S SACRIFICE: NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR TODAY

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### INTRODUCTION

Jephthah's vow is one of the most interesting and problematic of all Old Testament passages. It is also one of the most controversial, and not only between conservatives and liberals or inerrantists and non-inerrantists, but among conservatives/ inerrantists there is wide disagreement. Nor is this, as some might think, a merely technical matter to be debated over and hair-split by egg-headed scholars. On the contrary, this debate may actually go right to the depth and roots of God's forgiveness and the power and efficacy of Christ's blood to remit sins.

This debate also illustrates a very important point about such debates in general about any Bible passage, that is, the same biblical evidence or proof-text can be used by different sides to support or arrive at opposite conclusions.<sup>1</sup> The word, phrase, verse or passage which one protagonist uses will be used by his adversary to demonstrate a completely different or even opposite position. In such cases, it becomes harder for the exegete to separate truth from falsehood. It is somewhat easier if the two sides are using different verses to support conflicting views. In such cases, the exegete can examine each passage cited and decide for himself whether the passage is being used in its proper sense to support the writer's intended conclusions. However, if both sides use the same verses but take them in opposite ways, the exegete must go deeper and decide for himself which is the most valid based on the principles of word studies, exegesis, and context, and must rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance as he does.

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<sup>1</sup>John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 402.

Judges 11:29-40 is one such passage about which the foregoing discussion is true. The debate about Jephthah's vow is one in which the theologians who would otherwise agree on almost everything may take opposite sides. Conversely, those who would not normally agree on much of anything may come to the same conclusion, though perhaps for different reasons and with different opinions about the significance of their conclusion or the spiritual lessons to be gained from it. The different reasons used to support the various conclusions, and the various and far-reaching ramifications of those conclusions, will hereafter be explored.

### CONTEXT

A brief examination of the context of the passage will be an important basis of whatever conclusions one may draw on this matter. Jephthah is a Gileadite and the son of a harlot who is thrust out by his half-brothers because of his mother's status. Jephthah flees, dwells in the land of Tob, and becomes the leader of a band of worthless men. When the Ammonites invade Israel, the men of Gilead negotiate with Jephthah to lead them in their struggle against Ammon. This is done on the condition that Jephthah will be their head if he is victorious. Jephthah then corresponds with the king of Ammon. Both claim rightful possession of Gilead, with Jephthah listing several detailed reasons that the rightful claim over Gilead belongs to Israel. Neither party will yield, and all-out war is inevitable.

It is at this point that the passage, which this paper will examine in detail, begins. The Spirit of the LORD comes on Jephthah and he makes a vow. The content of the vow is that if the LORD will deliver the Ammonites into Jephthah's hand, "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" (Judg 11:31). That is the content of the vow, which Jephthah makes, and that is the center of the controversy over this passage.

After this vow, Jephthah went into battle against the Ammonites, the LORD gave him the victory, and he returned to his house. When he returned to his house, the first one out of the house to greet him is his daughter (whose name is not given), his only child. She comes out to meet him in a dance of celebration. He tears his clothes and expresses

his grief to her. The tragedy of this event is almost overwhelming in light of the obviously tender love between father and daughter in both directions. Though the text does not say that he told her the content of the vow, it may be assumed that she was aware of it. She submits herself to his vow and asks that she be given two months to mourn her virginity with her friends. He gives her leave, and she goes into the mountains for two months, after which she returns to Jephthah. He does “with her according to his vow” (v. 39). It thereafter became a custom in Israel for the young women to lament Jephthah’s daughter’s virginity four days in a year, or possibly to praise her memory.<sup>2</sup> In either case, there was a four-day annual observance.

The first half of the next chapter details Jephthah’s dispute with and victory over the Ephraimites. The story of Jephthah ends with his death and burial, and the fact that he judged Israel six years. Nothing more is said of Jephthah’s vow or of what he did with his daughter. He is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture except Heb 11:32, in which he is listed briefly and without comment as a model of faith, which may also have some effect on how one interprets Judg 11. That is the whole of the biblical material on this man who is so interesting and colorful and yet so enigmatic and controversial.

### PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF THE ISSUE

The central and burning issue in all this, and the dividing line between the two schools of thought on the passage, is the question:

Did Jephthah kill his daughter?

Those who answer this question in the negative will generally say that she, rather than actually being killed, was redeemed from death but consigned to perpetual virginity. It will usually then be presumed that she served out this vow as a servant at the tabernacle, which was then in Shiloh, in the tribal territory of Ephraim.

For those who take the view that Jephthah actually killed his daughter, the task of working out the details is much simpler. Jephthah simply took his daughter’s life in accordance with his vow, and judged Israel for six more years before he died also. The problem which the advocates of this opinion face, however, is not in sorting out all the historical details, but rather in the theological ramifications of their

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<sup>2</sup>C[arl] F[riedrich] Keil and F[rantz] Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament Vol. II*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1857; reprint, 1984), 387.

position. This is especially true as the Mosaic law made no provision for human sacrifice, along with such verses as 2 Kings 17:17, as well as the fact that the new Testament lists Jephthah as a hero of faith.

How does one reconcile such passages with a man who killed his own daughter because of his own foolish vow? Those who do not believe in the reliability of the Bible or in the sovereignty and consistent holiness of God may have no trouble with the issue. Yet evangelicals will have trouble, and either view is problematic. The only question is which view presents the fewest problems and is closest to the meaning of the text.

### COMMENTATORS' OPINIONS

#### Josephus

This article will examine several opinions on the subject, generally in chronological order of the writers. The starting point will be Josephus, who stated:

This action which was to befall her was not ungrateful to her, since she should die upon the occasion of her father's victory, . . . he sacrificed his daughter as a burnt-offering, offering such an oblation as was neither conformable to the law nor acceptable to God.<sup>3</sup>

Several points are to be observed. First, it appears that, until the Middle Ages, opinion was virtually unanimous that Jephthah killed his daughter.<sup>4</sup> Second, Josephus stated that Jephthah's vow was not ungrateful (displeasing) to her because she was so pleased about her father's victory. However, this does not seem to square with the biblical text, in which she mourns the effect of the decision for two months. It should be noted that she mourns not her death but her virginity. Third, Josephus states that Jephthah offered her for a burnt offering, which is of course the very wording used when Jephthah makes his vow in 11:31. In 11:39, Jephthah does with her "according to his vow," so Josephus is stating the case fairly in using these words. Finally, he notes that Jephthah's sacrifice was not acceptable to God and in clear violation of the law.

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<sup>3</sup>Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 5.7.10.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., Keil and Delitzsch, 388; John J. Davis, *Conquest and Crisis: Studies in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, with a foreword by John C. Whitcomb Jr. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1969), 124.

## C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch

C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch acknowledged at the outset that the plain sense of the text indicates that Jephthah killed her, but they considered the difficulties of such a view impossible to overcome. Next they asserted that Jephthah must have been assuming a human being would be the object of his vow, and noted that the law would have prohibited such an act (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut 12:31; 18:10). They then stated that such acts were unknown in Israel that early. They also disputed the common view that Jephthah made a rash vow, stating that in Jephthah there is no hint of rashness. Keil and Delitzsch further stated that Jephthah could not have killed his daughter in semi-pagan ignorance of the law, and compared his early life to that of David in flight from Saul. They then imply that if Jephthah had burnt his daughter, he would have been a worshiper of Moloch. They also indicated that if Jephthah had killed his daughter, such an event would have not made it into the canon, for it would have been of no theocratic significance.<sup>5</sup>

Working toward a conclusion, Keil and Delitzsch then stated: All these circumstances, when rightly considered, almost compel us to adopt the spiritual interpretation of the words “offer as a burnt-offering.” It is true that no exactly corresponding parallelisms can be adduced from the Old Testament in support of the spiritual view; but the germs of this view . . . are contained in the demand of God addressed to Abraham to offer Him his only son Isaac.<sup>6</sup> They cited Ex 38:8 and 1 Sam 2:22 as examples of people who dedicated themselves wholly and perpetually to the service of the tabernacle. They stated that the Hebrew word for burnt offering (חֵלֶבֶת) does not mean “burning,” but “going up whole onto the altar,” that is, “wholly dedicated.” Yet they admitted that there is no mention of such a living sacrifice in the Old Testament. As John Walton observed, “The burnt offering (olah) involves death in all 286 O.T. occurrences.”<sup>7</sup> They also admitted that nothing is known of the nature of the service of the women in the passages cited. They then conclude by asserting that

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 388-94.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 394.

<sup>7</sup>John H. Walton, “Views Concerning the Fate of Jephthah’s Daughter,” in *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament: Revised and Expanded* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 104.

there were many Hebrew customs which were probably common but which are not mentioned in the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup>

In response to Keil and Delitzsch, first, regarding the Law passages they cite, the first three (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut 12:31) clearly refer to human sacrifice to pagan gods, which was not what Jephthah was doing. Deut 18:10 is less clear, but even that prohibition is given in the context of heathen religion (18:10b-14). Thus, three out of four passages they cite bear little relation to Jephthah's action, and the fourth is questionable. Their assertion that human sacrifice was unknown as early as Jephthah's time is clearly false, else the Mosaic prohibitions against such actions would have been meaningless at the time they were given. Furthermore, the whole tenor of the argument indicates that such offerings were fairly common among the heathen of Jephthah's time.

The argument that Jephthah could not have been somewhat ignorant of the demands of the law and the comparison to David are rather meaningless for several reasons. First, Jephthah preceded David by about 100 years. This is especially significant in light of the fact that David was fleeing during the days of the monarchy. The recurring theme in Judges is that the lack of a king allowed everyone to do what was right in his own eyes (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Therefore, the days of Jephthah were days of rampant apostasy and spiritual ignorance. Second, David spent much of his flight, though not all, in Judah, not in semi-pagan Gilead. Third, David was from Bethlehem, a town evidently known for its piety (as seen in the Book of Ruth), far different from Jephthah's background. Fourth, David was a special Old Testament saint (Acts 13:22), which may help to explain why God chose David instead of Jephthah to establish the permanent Israelite monarchy. However, it must be noted that David's faithfulness did not prevent him from committing odious sins, a fact which will be discussed in some detail later.

Keil and Delitzsch are mistaken also in their assertion that, if Jephthah did kill his daughter, that he would necessarily be worshiper of Moloch. This mention of child sacrifice to Moloch undercuts their earlier claim that such practices were unknown in Jephthah's time. Their argument that, had Jephthah killed his daughter, that such an event would not have made it into the canon is especially weak, for two

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<sup>8</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, 394-95.

reasons. First, if one accept the divine inspiration of the Bible, it seems presumptuous in the extreme to dictate what God should include in His Book. Second, several possible reasons exist for the inclusion of such an act. These reasons include the blackness of man's sin, the extent of Israel's apostasy during the period, and the depth and efficacy of God's grace and Christ's redemption, points which will be discussed more fully in due course.

The admission of Keil and Delitzsch that they must go against the plain sense of the text is damaging to their case, nor do they give compelling reasons for their spiritual interpretation. The comparison with Abraham and Isaac is strained for several reasons. Two obvious factors are that God commanded Abraham to kill his child, in contrast to Jephthah, and that Abraham still had to make a blood sacrifice, not a sacrifice of perpetual virginity. Keil and Delitzsch admit that nothing is known of a burnt offering which does not die, nor is anything known anything about the character of women's tabernacle service. In fact, it appears from Ex 38:8 (which they cite) that these were married women doing a temporary and voluntary service. In contrast, Jephthah's daughter's service, it is asserted, was perpetual, conscripted, and spent in lifelong virginity. For these reasons, Keil and Delitzsch's argument is not at all compelling.

#### George Bush

George Bush, nineteenth-century professor of Hebrew, started by noting that if a vow were unlawful, that the person who made it would not only not be obligated to keep it, but indeed would be obligated not to keep it. He further stated that human sacrifice in any form was a gross abomination to the Lord.<sup>9</sup> He noted Jephthah's semi-pagan background, concluding that it was quite possible for Jephthah to make a vow devoting a person to death based upon the benightedness of his upbringing. Bush then describes the types of Mosaic vows, the  $\sim\text{r}\chi$ , or unredeemable ban, and the  $\text{rd}\kappa$ , or (generally) redeemable ban, stating that Jephthah's vow was  $\text{rd}\eta$ . However, based on Num 21:2, he noted that the  $\text{rd}\eta$  could also be unredeemable, and, regardless, Jephthah's

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<sup>9</sup>George Bush, *Notes on Judges* (New York: Newman and Ivison, 1852; reprint, Minneapolis: James & Klock, 1976), 151 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

background may have made him so ignorant of the details of the law that he thought that any total ban would be proper.<sup>10</sup>

Bush discussed Jephthah's possible intent as to who or what might come out of his house, whether it be human or animal. He concludes, based partly on "cometh forth to meet," that he intended to be met by a person, not a beast.<sup>11</sup> He proceeds to address two important issues. The first is whether a man upon whom "the Spirit of the LORD" had recently come could have made a vow of human sacrifice. Bush asserts that this is not necessarily the Holy Spirit and therefore does not necessarily carry with it any wholesome moral influence, but merely a divine dispensation of physical or mental abilities to accomplish a task. The second is the fact that Jephthah is mentioned in Heb 11:32 as a model of faith, but denies that inclusion in this group assures that he was an eminent saint or that he was incapable of making such a vow.<sup>12</sup>

Bush also points out that the Hebrews were extremely concerned to have children, and that the grief of this event would have been intensified by the realization that Jephthah (and his daughter) would die without posterity. The fact that she had brought him "very low" indicates that she unintentionally had done him harm in a way the Ammonite army could not. His distress indicates, Bush asserts, that he knew she must die.<sup>13</sup> He notes also the sublime obedience and selflessness of the daughter. He then speculates at length on the nature of her two months of mourning, and compares her dedication to that of Samuel.

Bush then claimed that the daughter was not killed. He based this claim on his assertion that the text does not state that she was killed. Yet the text does state: "He did with her according to his vow," the logical conclusion being that he burned her. Bush also answered the fact that Samson and Samuel were not virgins by suggesting that a man, when married, could still perform his obligations at will, while a woman would be under the control of her husband. He believed that it would have been impossible to sacrifice the girl because no priest would have done so, the tabernacle was at Shiloh in Ephraim (whom

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 152-153.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 159, 161.



Jephthah fought against), and the Levitical code would have prevented Jephthah from performing it himself.<sup>14</sup>

Bush concluded by speculating that in the intervening two months, Jephthah learned, either by diligent inquiry at the tabernacle, or by someone else's informing him, that his earlier vow was unlawful. Therefore, he argues, Jephthah offered her as a burnt offering in a spiritual sense, and still kept his vow. He notes that a person could be redeemed from a ban. He does admit, however, "The narrative [is] so constructed as to give rise almost inevitably to the impression that the *literal immolation* of Jephthah's daughter actually took place."<sup>15</sup> Bush also notes that the Old Testament states very forcefully that vows must be kept, on example he cites is Prov 20:25, "It is a snare to a man . . . after vows to make enquiry."

Evaluating Bush's arguments, his statements regarding Jephthah's semi-pagan background and possible spiritual ignorance are appropriate. The idea that the "Spirit of the LORD" has no moral dimension may be overstated, but the fact remains that it would not necessarily prevent his making a rash and ignorant vow. However, the idea that Jephthah's place in Heb 11 is no guarantee of his righteousness seems to violate the tenor of that passage, for at least two reasons. First, Heb 11:6 emphasizes the necessity of faith to please God, implying that those who exercised godly faith (one example given is Jephthah) did please Him. Second, verses 39-40 tie Old Testament saints (including those mentioned in the chapter, one of which is Jephthah) to New Testament saints through Jesus Christ. It must also be noted that almost all those holy men and women mentioned by name in Heb 11 committed grievous sins. Bush's long speculation on where the daughter may have resided during her two months of mourning seems rather pointless. His argument regarding the fact that 11:39 does not specifically state that she was killed is an argument from silence. The fact the verse does state that she knew no man can be taken to mean that she was killed as a virgin, especially considering the fact of the overwhelming importance of children to Hebrew women (which Bush notes). The argument that the Mosaic code would have prevented Jephthah from killing his daughter contradicts Bush's earlier statements regarding Jephthah's ignorance of the Law. The speculation that Jephthah learned

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 162-63.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 165. Italics original.

better in the intervening two months is just that, speculation. Once again, he contradicts himself by speculating that Jephthah would have gone to the tabernacle at Shiloh in the tribal territory of Ephraim (Jephthah's enemies) to study the Law. Finally, the verses regarding the performance of vows (such as Prov 20:25), which Bush uses to bolster his case, actually refute his case. Bush's case may be more sound than that of Keil and Delitzsch, but it is still unconvincing.

#### Arthur Cundall

Arthur Cundall offered little new information, but there were a few statements which deserve mention. He agreed that Jephthah's vow intended a human sacrifice, and stated that Jephthah must have intended a household servant. This seems reasonable enough. However, Cundall also asserted that the concept of a personal resurrection was unknown in Israel at this time. This seems to be a hard case to prove, for at least three reasons. First, its widespread nature among cultures of the world suggests it is a constant of human personality. Second, Job, the events of which apparently took place quite early, had a concept of some sort of life beyond the grave (Job 19:25-27). Third, the religions of other nations of the time had a well-developed doctrine of the afterlife, as shown, for example, in the Egyptian "Book of the Dead."<sup>16</sup> Cundall flatly states that any attempt to take 11:39 in any way other than a literal death is unsustainable, and asserts that the perfect should be taken as a pluperfect, "she had known no man."<sup>17</sup>

#### Edward Dalglish

Edward Dalglish notes that vows were not commutable. He also observes that human sacrifice was practiced by the heathen in that region, and implies that Jephthah could have understandably practiced it also. Much of his discussion concentrates on the flawless character of Jephthah's daughter.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997), 127-28.

<sup>17</sup>Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, *Judges and Ruth: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1968), 148.

<sup>18</sup>Edward R. Dalglish, *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, *Leviticus-Ruth* (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 436-37.

## Alberto Soggin

Alberto Soggin assumed the sacrifice to be literal on the basis of some unstated comparison of the terminology with Num 3:2ff. He denied that Jephthah's vow was spoken rashly, stating that Jephthah was never rash at all. He likened Jephthah to the king of Moab in 2 Kings 3:27, who sacrificed his son, and Soggin implied that Jephthah intended from the time he made his vow to kill his daughter. He drew many supposed parallels between the sacrifice, the annual commemoration thereof, and pagan practices. He asserted that much of the Old Testament is a historicization of myth, denied the existence of any tenderness in Jephthah, and implied that human sacrifice was a generally accepted practice (presumably among the Hebrews). He speculated that the geographic setting and Jephthah's family background were a deliberate attempt to divest the story of its Hebrew origins. He claimed that Israelite religion before Josiah was heathen practices and implied that the "redactors" glossed over the entire history of ancient Israel, polishing everything that had been written to that point. He implied that Jephthah's victory was as successful as the Bible indicates, and that the "redactor" intentionally made the geographic references cryptic so as to hide their historical tracks, as it were.<sup>19</sup>

Soggin's positions are obviously unfaithful to the text and his logic is weak. He does not explain the supposed connection of Judg 11 to Num 3 and the point of the reference is lost on this reviewer. The statement that Jephthah's character shows no rashness appears to be refuted by a comparison of Jephthah's rough answer to the Ephraimites in 12:2-3 with Gideon's measured and diplomatic response in 8:2-3. The difference in the effect of the two responses is seen in the heartache brought to Israel (42,000 dead Ephraimites, 12:6) by Jephthah's ill-thought-out words. His denial of any tenderness in Jephthah clearly contradicts 11:35. The worst part of Soggin's argument, however, is the fact that he seems to try as hard as he can to prove that ancient Israel was pagan and that the narrative, at least in most details, is a deliberate lie. This begs the question that if the Jephthah narrative embarrassed the seventh- or sixth-century-B.C. "redactors," why did they include it at all? The contrived slickness of

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<sup>19</sup>J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 215-19.

which Soggin accused the Old Testament writers is belied by the very nakedness and “loose ends” of the Jephthah passage, which indicate that the passage is, in fact, an accurate recording of human history.

Soggin does succeed in revealing a possible reason for some evangelical writer's earnestness to find an alternative interpretation to Jephthah's sacrifice, despite Scripture's apparent meaning. If Soggin is an example of what some elements will do with such a passage, it is understandable why some would want to find a solution different from the literal sense. Such a desire, however, does not justify looking for a different interpretation, if the words do not call for such an interpretation.

### CONCLUSIONS ON THE NATURE OF THE SACRIFICE

With some exceptions,<sup>20</sup> most conservative commentators adopt a non-literal interpretation of Jephthah's sacrifice. Those who deny the literal interpretation cannot seem to find an adequate explanation why the text should not be taken at face value. As Luther said, “Some affirm that he did not sacrifice her, but the text is clear enough.”<sup>21</sup> Those who deny the literal interpretation appear to start from an *a priori* assumption which clouds their judgment. That is, that the thought of human sacrifice is so abhorrent that a righteous man could not possibly have performed it, therefore an alternative explanation must be found. This approach seems to be indicated by Gleason Archer's statement, “It is inconceivable that God-fearing Jephthah could have supposed he would please the Lord by perpetrating such a crime and abomination.”<sup>22</sup> This approach stands in marked contrast to the cynical Soggin, who seems to revel gleefully in the girl's blood.

The dilemma is exacerbated by the mention of Jephthah as a hero of faith in Heb 11. However, Scripture records acts worthy of major censure committed by almost every one of those mentioned in that chapter. For example, David, who as already been compared favorably with Jephthah, was an adulterer who murdered the woman's husband.

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<sup>20</sup>E.g., Davis, 124-28; Walvoord and Zuck, 402. Walvoord and Zuck held their position tentatively.

<sup>21</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, 388.

<sup>22</sup>Gleason L. Archer Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 306. Similar ideas are expressed in Solomon Landers, “Did Jephthah Kill His Daughter?” *Bible Review* 7 (1991), 28-31, 42.

Samson committed many grievous sins, and received very little praise from the book of Judges. Yet both these men are mentioned as examples of faith. Regarding Jephthah, lack of explicit condemnation in the Bible writers does not imply condonation, either by God or the human writers.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISSUE TODAY

### Extent of Israel's Apostasy

As noted when rebutting Keil and Delitzsch, Jephthah's sacrifice is relevant to people today, for at least three reasons. First, the act shows the extent of Israel's apostasy, at least during the Judges period. The act begs the question, If the faithful Israelites did such abominations, how much worse were the unfaithful? Such apostasy shows the need for the coming of the Messiah and the consequent ongoing provocation of the Jews to jealousy by the Gentile acceptance of the Gospel (Deut 32:21; Rom 10:19; 11:11).

### Extent of Human Sin

Second, Jephthah's sacrifice shows the blackness of man's sin before God. Such culpability is clear from the Old Testament (e.g., Ps 51:1-9). It is even more explicit in the New Testament (especially in Rom 3:9-20).

### Extent of God's Grace

Third, the Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter and his later listing in Heb 11 as a hero of faith show the magnitude of God's grace and Christ's redemption. Rom 5:20 elaborates, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." First Tim 1:15 makes the issue very personal, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I [not Jephthah, not Paul, not Bunyan,<sup>23</sup> I] am chief." "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen! (Rom 11:36)

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<sup>23</sup>Bunyan, based on these two verses, entitled the memoir of his conversion *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

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