



That they may teach the
young women ...

Virtuous Girlhood from the Bible

By Barbara Ste. Marie

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. Ju 11:36

Jephthah's daughter is a beautiful example of nonresistance and submission. Please read the whole passage in Judges 11:29-40, which is not printed here to save space.

Jephthah, after receiving the Spirit of the LORD, makes a vow to the LORD. He vows to consecrate or offer as a burnt offering to the LORD whatsoever comes out of his house first to greet him when he returned from the battle. The LORD delivered unto Jephthah the victory, and he returned to his home. Jephthah was met by his only child, who had heard of the victory and came to greet him in joy with music and dancing. At that moment, the full impact of his vow hit him, and he rent his clothes.

The Authorized Version of the Bible has an alternate reading for "and" in verse 31. It can also be read as "or." Therefore, his vow could be read as "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me ... shall surely be the Lord's *or* I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

Besides the story of Abraham and Isaac, God never asked for human offerings and condemned those who offered up their children to Moloch. (See Leviticus 20:1-5.) I believe the intent of Jephthah's vow was whatever could not be offered as a burnt offering would be consecrated or devoted to the LORD for His service. Jephthah told his daughter that he had made a vow to the LORD that he could not go back on. Then he must have relayed to her the extent of his vow and what it meant for her, because she answered "do unto me according to your word," because the LORD was faithful.

Jephthah's daughter knew that in being consecrated to the LORD's service, she would never marry or have children. (For a woman to be barren or never have children was a reproach in Israel.) Her father's name and line would die

out with her, his only child. Yet she willingly and cheerfully submitted and obeyed her father. There is no hint of resistance in her answers or actions.

She could have said "no" and demanded her personal rights. She could have said she was not her father's property and he had no right over her life. She could have run away. But these are all fleshly responses, not the way a disciple of Jesus Christ "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2) should respond. We should obey parents (Ephesians 6:1) and authorities (1 Peter 2:13-15). The only time we could not obey is if it would go against God's laws. That is why I believe Jephthah was not going to sacrifice his daughter as a burnt offering.

Jephthah's daughter totally surrendered her will to the LORD's will. She asked only for two months to grieve her barrenness, and to focus on her new future. She needed a small amount of time to adjust her focus and desires from being a wife and a "mother in Israel" (all Jewish maidens in Israel, who understood prophecy, probably desired to be the mother of the coming Messiah) to wholly and faithfully serving the LORD; possibly in the tabernacle like Anna served in the temple in Luke 2:36-37.

After her time spent in the mountains with her companions, she returned and the vow was fulfilled: "and she knew no man." The Scriptures say that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament (possibly meaning, talk to) the daughter of Jephthah. Nowhere does it say that she afterward lamented or complained about her situation; the Scriptures leave us with the example of her being completely nonresistant and obedient.

O LORD, that we as daughters of the Heavenly King may be as Jephthah's daughter! ~