





They went out to praise her. Most people, when they read this, assume that she was offered as a burnt offering, but I think it's not likely the case. When we look at the vow that Jephthah made, which of course the wording of it is found in verse 31.

He said that if you deliver these people in my hand, then it will be that whatsoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up as a burnt offering. Some Hebrew scholars have said that the word and can also mean or. I know this is true in some languages and I don't know Hebrew well enough, except that some scholars have actually said that they do know Hebrew.

So I'm going to take their word for it. That the word and can also mean or, depending on context. And if in fact he said, whatever meets me shall be the Lord's or I will offer it up as a burnt offering, then he's making two possible options.

One is if it's a human being that meets him, they will be the Lord's. Or if it's an animal, a clean animal, it will be offered as a burnt offering. Of course, if a donkey or a dog or a rat came out of his house, he couldn't offer that because that's an unclean animal.

Couldn't offer a human either. So that his vow would be essentially, if it is an animal that can be offered as a burnt offering, then that's what I'll do with it. And if it's not, then I'll dedicate it to the Lord.

As Samuel was dedicated to the Lord. And there's plenty of evidence in the scripture that both boys and girls could be dedicated to the Lord by their parents. And this would mean that in the case of a girl, she would not marry.

Now in the case of a boy, he might. Because a priest could marry. And Samuel was dedicated to the Lord, but he married and had children.

But apparently a girl that was dedicated to the Lord would serve as a virgin her whole life in the tabernacle. Just doing whatever services had to be done there. Boys and girls would both grow up in the tavern.

I thought they were dedicated to God to just be like Levites, really. I mean, Samuel was not a Levite. And yet he did functions as a priest when he was older.

Probably because one who is dedicated to the Lord to serve in the temple would be essentially the same as a Levite. And would apparently just be viewed as having no distinction from a Levite. But in the case of a girl, she's not just like a Levite.

Because female Levites didn't serve in the tabernacle. But she would be more like a nun. A little bit more like what we think of a nun being in a convent.

And so many people believe that she was not sacrificed. And that's not what he

promised. What he promised was that he would do one or the other.

Given one set of circumstances, I will just dedicate it to the Lord. Now, could you dedicate a donkey to the Lord? Yes, you could. Or you could redeem it with a lamb.

Or break its neck under the law. It was the Lord's. The firstborn of a donkey, the firstborn of any animal was the Lord's.

Even the unclean ones. They couldn't be sacrificed, but they could be dedicated to the Lord. And so could human beings.

But some animals, clean animals, could be sacrificed. I think it's likely that that's how he spoke it. Because certainly, he knew the Pentateuch well enough, and he was pious enough, that he would never promise to offer a human sacrifice.

And therefore, it's not likely that a man who was able to speak his mind in a clear way, as he did when he made that defense against the Ammonites, when he spoke to them, that was a man who knew how to put his thoughts in a precise and a logical argument. It's not likely he'd be so careless as to make a vow that would commit him to offer anything, including an unclean animal or a human, as a burnt offering. Knowing, as he would, that that was forbidden in the Pentateuch, which he was familiar enough with.

So I'm thinking that his vow should be translated, without the and, but with the or. And therefore, he wasn't grieved that his daughter was going to be sacrificed as a burnt offering. He was grieved that she was going to have to be committed to perpetual virginity, and he'd never have any offspring.

And that is what's emphasized here, is it not? She went out to grieve her virginity, not her death. She went out to grieve that she would never be married, and never have children, and never give her father grandchildren, and so forth. That's what she says in verse 37, Let's go out and wander the mountains and bewail my virginity.

And, when it says in verse 39, that he carried out his vow, it doesn't say he sacrificed her. It just says he carried out his vow, which he had vowed, and she knew no man. Apparently, it was her virginity that was vowed.

She was apparently committed to serve in the tabernacle, and never to marry. So, that would be a tragedy, that both she and her father would be well, because she was the only child. And that this would prevent him from having any lineage, would make her sympathetic toward him, too.

She obviously was sympathetic toward her father. He was grieved. If she was to be put to death, do you think she'd spend her last two months hanging out with her friends on the hillsides, instead of with her dad? There was obviously affection between them.

So, I really just don't think anything about the story makes it likely that he sacrificed a human being to God. That would be an outrage. God strictly forbade people to offer their sons or their daughters.

And, again, Jephthah is commended for his faith in the book of Hebrews. So, I'm thinking that a man who is known only for such a horrendous deed as a human sacrifice would not be given as a great example of faith to us. So, I don't think that's what he did.

I think his daughter was not sacrificed, but that she was committed to perpetual service to Yahweh, and, therefore, perpetual virginity.