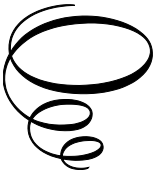
Feminist Interpretations of Biblical Literature

Feminist Interpretations of Biblical Literature

Edited by

Lilly Nortjé-Meyer

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



Feminist Interpretations of Biblical Literature

Edited by Lilly Nortjé-Meyer

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8580-8
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8580-5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

LILLY NORTJÉ- MEYER

The Society of Biblical Literature presents every year an International Meeting (ISBL) hosted by a country outside the USA, where the Annual SBL Meeting is held. *Feminist Interpretation* is one of the ISBL sessions and gives scholars and especially upcoming scholars the opportunity to discuss current biblical feminist theory and practice and the issues faced by women scholars in their respective contexts and countries. This is also an opportunity for scholars to meet colleagues from all over the world and especially scholars that are leaders in the field of feminist and gender research.

This publication is a follow-up of a previous collection of *Feminist Interpretation* papers that was edited by Irmtraud Fischer from Graz, Austria, namely: "*GENDER AGENDA MATTERS. Papers of the 'Feminist Section' of the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature*". This edition links up and continues in the same line, *Feminist Interpretations of Biblical Literature.* These are papers of the Feminist Sessions of the International Meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature 2018-2021. The II has a double meaning in the sense that it means 2 but also too!

Included in this publication is a selection from more than sixty papers that were accepted for the conferences held in Helsinki (2018) Rome (2019), Adelaide (2020), and London (2021). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the world is experiencing, the Adelaide (2020) and London (2021) ISBL conferences were cancelled. However, this publication gives scholars that could not present at the Adelaide and London conferences, a platform to display their research and the opportunity to publish their papers.

The Feminist Interpretation units focus on methodological and hermeneutical issues specifically relating to exegesis in feminist and gender studies. Presenters focus on different methodologies (e.g., historical-critical, narratology, intertextuality, decoloniality, interreligious and transnational studies …) and their relevance for gender studies. Invitations also comprise a session on feminist exegesis and cultural studies, specifically on the reception history of gender-relevant themes and texts of the Bible. Upcoming

researchers are invited to present their research and get feedback from prominent international scholars.

The subjects of discussion in this publication, include and reflect the above-mentioned criteria *Feminist Interpretation* endorses, namely *Crossing the Threshold of Home: Jephthah's Daughter from the Hebrew Bible to Modern Midrash* (Rachel Adelman); *Constructions of Gender: Early Australian Feminists and Notions of Gender in a Hebrew Bible Creation Story* (Barbara Deutschmann); *Sex and Power: The Crossroads of Abuse And Obtainment* (Christopher Ryan Jones); *Is there Female Language for God? A Response to David Clines* (Karen Langton); *Threshing out Grandmother Stories: Reflecting on Ruth 3 in colonial Australia* (Rebecca Lindsay); *Women on the Move with Jesus* (Susan Brasier); *Consent and Female Motivations in the Gospel of Luke* (Sylvie Chabert d'Hyères); *The intersection of flesh* (σὰρξ). *An eco-feminist incentive for animals, women, and the Logos as interconnected flesh* (Lilly Nortjé-Meyer); and *Nuptial Imagery and the Bridegroom and Bride Metaphors in Eph 5:21-33: A Reconsideration* (Bruna Velcic).

The publication is made possible by an invitation from Cambridge Scholars Publishing to contribute to and edit another *Feminist Interpretation* conference proceeding.

I would like to thank Ms. Onyinye Patricia Emua and Mr. Stuart Marr for assisting me with the preparation of the final edition. I also want to thank the scholars who participated in the project. Without your contribution, the publication would not have been possible.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF HOME: JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE TO MODERN MIDRASH

RACHEL ADELMAN
HEBREW COLLEGE, HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

Introduction

The sacrifice of the anonymous daughter of Jephthah (Judg. 11:29-40) is one of the most infamous "texts of terror" in the Hebrew Bible (Trible 1984). On the verge of his military confrontation with the Ammonites, the charismatic warrior, Jephthah, utters a vow to sacrifice the one who first comes out to greet him if the enemy is delivered into his hands. Upon his victorious return, his only daughter crosses the threshold with drums and circle-dances. Distraught, he tells her of his vow. She affirms that he must fulfil it, but asks for a two-month reprieve in the mountains with her companions to mourn her nubility. When she returns, he does with her "according to the vow he had made" (11:39). In a four-day yearly ritual thereafter, the daughters of Israel lament or recount her story (v. 40). Feminist Bible scholars have made a *cause célèbre* of Jephthah's daughter, both as a victim of her father's rash vow and as an agent of her own story, in solidarity with her female companions and with those who later memorialize her.[1] It is the double-edged role of the daughter—subject to patriarchy and resistant to that power—that this essay sets out to explore through the prism of feminist hermeneutics, as well as classic and modern midrash.

Though she remains unnamed in the biblical text, feminist scholars reluctant to re-inscribe her "alienating anonymity" have named her "Bath" or "Bat", meaning simply "daughter".[2] Alternatively, she might be called "Sheila"— "she who questioned" (actively), or "she who was demanded or asked for" (in the passive voice)—echoing Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, "Se'ila."[3] I would like to remain loyal to the biblical Hebrew

and call her Bat Yiftaḥ, literally "daughter-of-that-which-opens." The name alludes not only to the fatal consequences of the eponymous father's vow—Jephthah [Yiftaḥ] who opened [*ptḥ*] his mouth—but also to the alternative destiny she opens for herself. By naming her Bat Yiftaḥ, I grant her personhood and agency, acknowledging her role as a full character. Yet in preserving her name as a mere epithet "daughter of Jephthah [*bat Yiftaḥ*]," I continue to read her typologically—the epitome of the dark side of the father-daughter relationship.

In this chapter, I engage in three reading strategies. The first entails a contextual reading of the narrative within the Deuteronomic history (from hereon DtrH), set during the era of the Judges when there was no king in Israel. As a period of moral turpitude and *ad hoc* leadership of tribal chieftains (the so-called "judges", *shoftim*), the narrative anticipates how the monarchy will upstage this transitional era in Israelite history (Römer 1998; Janzen 2005). In this reading, Jephthah's vow is deemed flawed, and the sacrifice of his daughter a human distortion of the will of God. From the perspective of the author (or redactor), the abuse and misuse of women serves as a socio-political critique.[4] Jephthah's story becomes a case of "father-right gone awry",[5] emblematic of the breakdown in relationships along both the horizontal human axis (from father-to-son, brother-to-brother, or father-to-daughter) and the vertical axis between the people and their deity. In being compelled to sacrifice his daughter, his only progeny, Jephthah severs his line to the future. In God's failure to stay the father's hand—whether from silence, or the absence of prophetic or priestly intervention—the people are held culpable for not intervening. Yet many questions remain. If the vow was not condoned by the historiographer, why was the warrior victorious in battle? Why does the daughter comply with the consequences of the vow? And what is the significance of the two-month reprieve and the ritual of commemoration by the daughters of Israel four days a year?

These questions lead us to the second level of reading, which highlights the ironies and gaps, bumps and fissures in text, against the grain of historiography in what Mieke Bal has called "countercoherence":

> A countercoherence relates the 'official' reading to what it leaves out; it relates the texts to the needs of the reader; it relates everything that is denied importance to the motivations for such denials. The countercoherence will start precisely where repression is the most flagrant. Since men are said to lead the game, I will start with the women; since conquest is said to be the issue, I will start with loss; since strength is said to be the major asset of the characters, I will start with the victims.[6]

The counter-coherent reading raises important questions about agency and shifts our focus to re-centre upon the marginalized. In this close reading, I pose the following questions: What lies in the gap between the vow—an offer of sacrifice in exchange for divine deliverance—and the claim of paternity and continuity? What critique is being laid against the father-right here? What power does the daughter's voice carry (despite, or *because of* her acquiescence to the vow)?

In the third stage, I explore the reception history of the Bat Yiftaḥ story, through the lens of classic rabbinic and modern feminist midrash. As in the counter-coherent feminist reading, rabbinic interpretation shines light into the darker recesses, the contradictions and ambiguities in the surface layer of the text. The Rabbis, however, advance their own agenda, with a focus on human folly and on questions of theodicy. In the most expansive midrash (Tanḥuma [ed. Buber] *Beḥuqotai* 7),[7] God is seemingly exonerated—the daughter's immolation deemed something God "did not command or decree, nor did it enter [God's] mind" (Jer. 19:5). Yet the midrash also lends Bat Yiftaḥ a voice to protest her own sacrifice. To coopt Mandolfo's provocative phrase (2007), when the "daughter talks back" in lament and resistance, not only are the traditional hierarchies of power dismantled, but so too are the inimical ways of God. The Tanḥuma and later modern feminist midrashim intimate an anti-theodicy, an unwillingness or inability to "justify God's ways to man."[8]

The Spirit and the Vow

Jephthah's vow belongs to that category of performative "speech acts" that get something (J. L. Austin),[9] as in the proverbial marriage vow "I do." Vows, oaths, blessings and curses are all biblical speech acts that create a binding reality, redefining boundaries on the psycho-social and political level. The vow is seemingly "irrevocable, irreversible and unalterable,"[10] as Jephthah himself avers—"'I have opened my mouth to Yhwh, and I cannot take it back"' (Judg. 11:35). An anxiety about the feckless nature of human commitments underlies these verbal statements.[11] Can the social contract—the fear of others' disapproval— alone spur one to do better, to fight more courageously in battle, or to bind one to one's promises? When the human word is allied with the will of God, Heaven itself has your back. Yet the corollary is equally true; when God disapproves, the maw of the Underworld might open up before you.

A vow [*neder*] is a way of negotiating with God *quid pro quo.* When the biblical protagonist is in dire straits, he or she ventures an offer for the sake of protection, or for deliverance, or even for the conception of

a child.[12] Based on an "If…then…" formula, it is future-directed, promissory, as in Jacob's vow at Bethel: if God were to protect him through his sojourn in Paddan-aram, then he would establish this anointed stone as a monument (marker for the House of God) and offer up a tenth of his wealth (Gen. 28:20-22). Likewise, in Hannah's vow, if this barren woman were to conceive a son, then she would offer that child back to the service of God (1 Sam. 1:11). As deal-making with the deity, the vow exposes anxieties latent in the protagonists' psyche: "Will I ever have a child?"; "Will God be with me through exile?"; "Will I win the battle?" It is a speech act paradoxically of faith *and* faithlessness—in questioning divine providence while believing that God will follow through, riding the power of the promissory word. Both Jacob and Hannah wager on a vow and flourish—the patriarch burgeons forth with wealth and progeny, while Hannah not only conceives the prophet who will anoint kings but, when she relinquishes the boy Samuel to service in the Sanctuary, God grants her another three sons and two daughters (1 Sam. 2:20-21).

Yet Jephthah's speech act warrants no such sanction as implied by the consequences. Instead of fertility, continuity, or family, he is cut off from his future when compelled to fulfill the vow's *literal* word in sacrificing his only daughter. Just before the warrior utters his vow, he is imbued with the spirit of God (Judg. 11:29)—perhaps a manifestation of uncanny courage or charisma. As Eliyahu Assis has observed, other chieftains—appointed and sent by God to deliver Israel—were imbued by the spirit [*ruaḥ Yhwh*];[13] what immediately follows is a battle against the enemy and salvation (clearly divinely inspired). In almost every incident, the rushing spirit immediately *precedes* the venture into war. Yet Jephthah's vow interrupts the crossing over into enemy lines when he stops short at Mitzpe and rashly opens his mouth.[14] That is, he does not trust in the divine Spirit that fills him, and instead hedges his bets. In uttering the vow, he betrays the Spirit of Yhwh within him.

Nevertheless, the Gileadites win the battle against Ammon and the victory is attributed to God (Judg. 11:32b). Is this in response to the vow (v.30), to the oath imposed upon the elders of Gilead (11:9), or to the test implied in Jephthah's speech to the Ammonites, "'Let Yhwh, who is judge, decide today for the Israelites or for the Ammonites"' (11:27)? According to Sasson, "If there is any validity to Moses' conquests [Num. 20-21 and Deut. 2], God had better take Jephthah's side. This obligation, more than any agreement Jephthah has made with his brethren, is what will lead God to bestow his *ruaḥ* (Spirit) on him",[15] and presumably guarantee the delivery of the Ammonites into the warrior's hands. It is Jephthah's account of God's engagement in history on the side of Israel that is at stake, and God is

pressed up against a wall, so to speak. The vow, on the other hand, undermines this very faith in God's salvific power.

> [29] Now there came upon Jephthah the rushing-spirit of Yhwh; He crossed over to Gil'ad and Menashe, and he crossed over to Mitzpe of Gil'ad, and from Mitzpe of Gil'ad he crossed over to the Ammonites.
> [30] And Jephthah vowed a vow to Yhwh and said:
> "If you will give, yes, give the Ammonites into my hand,
> [31] it will be the one-going-out who goes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the Ammonites, shall be Yhwh's, and I shall offer him/it up as a burnt offering [*ve-ha'alitihu 'olah*]!"
> [32] And Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them…
> (Judg. 11:30-31, adapted from Fox 2014: 203)

The conditional clause (the protasis) expresses not only the desire for military victory but also a wish to return home whole [*shalom*], by implication, to the "house of the father" at Mitzpa (Judg. 11:34).[16] Earlier Jephthah had bound the elders of Gilead in an oath at the same locale: '"If you bring me home again to fight with the Ammonites, and Yhwh gives them over to me, I will be your chief [lit. 'head' *ro'sh*]"' and they assent with an implied imprecation (11:9-10; the oath is then affirmed at Mitzpa v. 11).[17] Will God be on his side and show him to be the true champion? Will Jephthah then "overcome the father"—or, rather, his brothers' enmity and bastard status—by assuming the position of head of the tribe of Gilead? While he may overcome the figurative father as head of the clan, the over-determined use of language guarantees the *loss* of his daughter and any future continuity. The weight of the wording sets Jephthah up for such a disaster.

On the one hand, the terms of the vow are vague—who or what is the anticipated subject of crossing through the doors? On the other hand, the consequences are terribly specific with respect to that subject's fate: they will be raised up as a whole burnt offering ["*ve-ha'alitihu 'olah*"].[18] As many commentaries have observed,[19] the *'olah* recalls God's demand of Abraham: '"Take your son, your favorite one [*yeḥidkha*] Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering [*ve-ha'alehu la-'olah*]…"' (Gen. 22:2). Just as Isaac is the "beloved" son (*yeḥid,* as singular or unique, rather than only), Bat Yiftaḥ is the "beloved" child to her father (*yeḥidah,* Judg. 11:34).[20] But, here it is Jephthah's word that dooms the victim, not God's. As Sasson observes, "Jephthah has selfishly pledged a *quid pro quo*: the life of another human being as a warranty for his own" (2014: 444).[21]

In the consequences (the apodosis), the verb "to go out [*ytz'*]" is significantly doubled in the emphatic form: "'…the one going out who goes out of the doors of my house [*ha-yotz'ei 'asher yetz'ei mi-daltei beiti*]'". The spatial marker of "doors or gates [*delet*]" is metonymic for the daughter's liminal status as a boundary-crosser.[22] When she crosses that border, she exposes the fault line in the integrity of the father's household. Woe betides the woman who "goes out", mis-crossing the threshold of home, whether inadvertently or by way of a father's horrendous offer. Dinah "goes out" to see the daughters of the land (Gen 34:1), and is debased by Shechem. To safeguard the guests, Lot offers his virgin daughters to the hooligans of Sodom across the threshold of his home (Gen. 19:8), as does the old Ephraimite his own virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine to the violent mob in Gibeah (Judg. 19:24).[23] While God intervenes for Lot, divine providence is barely palpable in the latter days of the Judges. After the concubine is forced across the threshold while the men remain safely within (v.25), she is raped all night by the mob and returns, falling at the door [*petaḥ*] of the house at daybreak, with her hand upon the threshold (vv.26-27). These horrific stories share the same motif; the tenuous integrity of the household boundaries pivots over the threshold, where a woman's life is on the line. So too here, the protective boundary between the private and public sphere is violated by the warrior's rash vow, but this time *she goes out* (ultimately to her death) while he returns home, hardly whole.

The Response to the Vow

A blind spot lies at the center of the vow: what or whom did he expect to meet? And did his daughter hear of the vow and willfully go out to greet him?[24] Most scholars argue that, given the wording, a human sacrifice was intended—the one going "out of *the doors* of [his] *house* to meet" him (Judg. 11:31) must be a sentient being. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, women celebrate the return of victors from battle with drums [*tôf*] and circle-dancing [*maḥol*], as in Miriam's victory song, leading the woman with drums and dance after the parting of the Reed Sea (Exod. 15:20-21), and the women who greet David and Saul as they return from battle victorious against the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:6-7). Yet Bat Yiftaḥ is strangely *alone* when she comes out to greet him, at least in terms of the focus of the father's gaze.[25] Did Jephthah have an inkling that his daughter might come out to greet him? Though he did not intend that *she* be the victim—his dismay upon seeing her makes that abundantly clear (v. 35)—he does not try to mitigate the vow. Rather, he places loyalty to the promissory word and his own sense of pride and honor over loyalty to her,

his own flesh and blood. In this way the vow to Yhwh, the faithless speech act, is pitted against paternal continuity. The narrator informs us precisely what is at stake: "there was only her, a beloved child, he had no son or daughter beside her" (v.34).
Jephthah's reaction to seeing her is both poignant and obtuse:

> 35 When he saw her, he tore his garments, and said:
> 'Alas, my daughter! You have cast, yes, cast me down [lit. brought me to my knees, ***hakhre'a hikhra'tini***]; and you have become my disaster [***be-'okhrai***]—for I myself opened my mouth [*patziti pi*] to Yhwh, and I am not able to turn it back.'
> 36 She said to him:
> 'My Father, you opened your mouth [*patzita 'et pikha*] to Yhwh;
> do with me as has gone out of your mouth,
> since Yhwh has wrought for you acts of vengeance against your enemies, from the Ammonites.' (Judg. 11:34-36, adapted from Fox 203)

Tearing his clothes as an outward sign of mourning, he is reduced to a wordless *cris de coeur "Ahah*!" But then he opens his mouth again in folly, revealing his egotism. While the consequences of the vow tragically impact them both—he to forfeit his future in sacrificing his only child, she to be brutally sacrificed—he blames her. Rife with rumbling fricatives and gutturals—*qara'* (to tear), *khar'a* (bring low), and *'okher* (disaster)—he accuses her of literally "bringing him to his knees"—***hakhre'a hikhr'atini***—a verb that connotes religious and erotic submission,[26] or military conquest, as in Jael's seduction and conquest of the general Sisera: "Between her legs, he sank, he fell, he lay still [***kar'a*** *nafal shakhav*]; between her legs; he sank, he fell [***kar'a*** *nafal*]; where he sank [***kar'a***], there he fell [*nafal*] dead" (Judg. 5:27). Though a victor in battle against the Ammonites, Jephthah characterizes himself as a victim subdued by his own daughter. With an anagram of the same throaty consonants [*kr'—'kr*], he calls her "my disaster [*'okhrai*]."[27] Throughout the DtrH, the term *okher* (troubler) gestures back to disasters that problematic speech acts stir up.[28]

Jephthah then claims that he cannot retract his vow, for he has "'opened [his] mouth to Yhwh [*patziti pi 'el-Yhwh*]'" (v.35), and she affirms its irreversibility, echoing his words—"'you have opened your mouth to Yhwh [*patzita 'et pikha 'el-Yhwh*'], do with me as has gone out of your mouth'" (v.36). Instead of using the common verb *ptḥ* (at the root of Jephthah's name), they both deploy the more evocative *ptzh*. The latter, as it collocates with mouth (*patzah pi*), bodes calamity as in the opening of the ground to swallow the blood of Abel (Gen. 4:11) and the opening of the maw of the earth to swallow the rebels, Dathan and Abiram and their

followers (Num. 16:30, Deut. 11:6).[29] He concedes that, he cannot now "turn back [*l'o ukhal lashuv*]."[30] His own movement makes the consequences inevitable. Yet to her willing submission he is glaringly silent; perhaps he wished she had resisted. Note that neither the father nor the daughter repeats the pledge to offer her up as a "burnt offering [*'olah*]". How is the vow actually fulfilled? And why can't the vow be undone, or the sacrifice redeemed by an animal? There is no staying of the father's hand, as in the Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22:11-12). Further, the Israelites fail to intervene to redeem the daughter, as they do for Jonathan, son of King Saul (1 Sam. 14:45). Presumably, because Yhwh fulfilled His end of the bargain (v.32), as Bat Yiftaḥ herself affirms (v.36), the pledge must irrevocably be fulfilled. In the end, the reader is only privy to a vague circumlocution—"he did with her according to the vow he had made" (v.39). The horrific description of her sacrifice takes place off-stage.

This lacuna led later interpreters to claim that she was never sacrificed at all, but rather spent the rest of her life as a celibate, living out a monastic existence, having "never known a man" (v.39).[31] While both endings are tragic, one is fatal and thus presents a far deeper, more searing critique of Jephthah as a leader, of his social milieu, and of the deity who seems to back him. Paraphrasing Hamlet, indeed "something is rotten in the state of" Israel, but it is unlikely that *this* Ophelia obeyed the more benign decree: *Get thee to a nunnery*.

The Theological Issue: The *Dis*-providential

Various scholars have struggled with how this episode can be harmonized with the Deuteronomic tradition forbidding child sacrifice.[32] Idolatry and, even more so, child-sacrifice was deemed the *conditio sine qua non* for the conquest of the Northern Kingdom and Israel's dispersal at the hands of the Assyrians (2 Kgs. 17:17; Ps. 106:37-38). The worst of the Judean kings "made his son pass through fire"—Ahaz (2 Kgs. 16:3, 2 Chron. 28:3) and Mannasseh (2 Kgs. 21:6, 2 Chron. 33:6). King Josiah attempted to put a stop to the practice by defiling the altar at Topheth in the valley of Ben-hinnom associated with child sacrifice (2 Kgs. 23:10). The prophets Micah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah all railed against it (Mic 6:6-8; Ezek. 16:20-31, 23:37, 39; Jer. 7:31 and 19:5-6). Yet both Jephthah and his daughter affirm that her immolation is *to Yhwh* in response to the deliverance of the Ammonites into the warrior's hands (Judg. 11:31, 36). In granting Jephthah victory, Yhwh inadvertently also condemned the one who would come out to greet him. Does this imply that God accepted Jephthah's vow and the sacrifice of his daughter?[33] Jon Levenson reframes the question:

> …is YHWH also behind his daughter's being the first to greet her triumphant father? If not, if this is only a tragic coincidence, then the sacrifice, though evidently totally acceptable to Yhwh, was not at his initiative. But if Jephthah's daughter being the first to meet her father is providential, then it is precisely through this vow that YHWH exercises his claim upon Jephthah's first-born child. In sum Yhwh is indirectly implicated in Jephthah's sacrifice through the sacral norm that vows must be executed at whatever cost and through his awarding Jephthah his victory over Ammon.[34]

Perhaps, as some scholars argue, this episode was not authored by the same historiographic hand.[35] Jephthah's offering was an expression of syncretism, where Canaanite (or, in this case, Ammonite or Moabite) idolatrous sacrificial rituals had been assimilated into Yahwism.

The role of God, however, remains covert in the narrative, creating a gap between the author and the character's intention. Dramatic irony lies at the crux of the story. The hero (or, rather, anti-hero) assumes that he is committing a deed of magnanimous piety and self-sacrifice in filling his sails with windy verbiage, only to be dashed on the great reef of history. The reader's perception of irony emerges not in the instant, but in retrospect. So what Levenson suggests might be "providential"—Bat Yiftaḥ's coming out to greet her father—should really be read as *dis-providential*, that is anathema to God's beneficent will. This is not to deny that some inauspicious force—malignant, even divine—underlies the unravelling of the plot. But, like the evil spirit [*ruaḥ ra'ah*][36] from God that fills King Saul with madness and murderous intent towards David, the daughter's emergence through the gates is indicative of the *loss* of divine favor rather than the bestowal of God's grace.

Our ability to read irony rather than heroism into the vow and its consequences hinges on an integrated reading of the whole Jephthah story. What follows the daughter's presumed sacrifice is the disastrous civil war with the Ephraimites. The descent into internecine conflict is characteristic of the mayhem of the Abimelech episode and the anarchy of the last four chapters of Judges (17-21), when every man "did what was right in his own eyes" and "there was no king in Israel" (Judg. 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). At the end of Jephthah's story, the narrative informs us that he was ignominiously *not* buried in his father's ancestral grave, but in the towns (plural) of Gilead and that he "judged Israel for six years" (12:7)—the shortest span of leadership for any chieftain in the Book of Judges.[37]

Yet, in response to his daughter's sacrifice, no echo sounds from Heaven, no prophet rails against his knife: "This is not what I commanded or decreed, nor did it enter my mind" (see Jer. 19:5). The silence is

resoundingly dis-providential. The vow, the conquest of the Ammonites (attributed to Yhwh), and the inauspicious appearance of his daughter in the victory greeting should be read as three intertwined cords in the proverbial rope by which the protagonist hangs himself. It is not the will of God, but rather the consequence of divine disfavor. The fact that God does not intervene to avert the sacrifice aligns with the curse: "On that day I will surely hide my face on account of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods" (Deut. 31:18). That is, the palpable *absence* of God is meant as rebuke.

The problem of theodicy still resounds. O cruel God, who wishes to prove that child sacrifice is alien service to Yhwh by having one of Israel's daughters slain on the altar! Like the great tragedies of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* and Sophocles' *Antigone*, the narrative resists the coherent reading that God's implacable justice reigns. We are keenly aware that her sacrifice cannot be understood simply as a consequence of her father's transgression. The tragedy of her brute fate, as well as the ambiguities and resonant ironies in the text, point to a *countercoherent* reading of Bat Yiftaḥ's story against the grain of the historiographer.

Rabbinic Midrash: Jephthah's Vow—God's Condemnation

Into the breach in the vow, between "If…" and "then…" clauses, steps the rabbinic voice. According to the midrashic tradition, God sets Jephthah up for failure by highlighting the risk the warrior takes in committing this speech act. If the vow was meant to ensure victory, then the hollowness at its core is exposed by taking the consequence of the vow to the extreme. The classic rabbinic midrash has many iterations,[38] but I will focus on a selection from the late homiletical midrash Tanḥuma (ed. Buber) *Beḥuqotai* 7 (circa 7th-9th century CE). The structure follows a classic circular proem (*petiḥta*), opening with the first or second lectionary verse of the weekly Torah reading, concerned with a vow dedicating the value of a human life (Lev. 27:2), citing a distant verse usually taken from the Writings (*ketuvim*) to introduce the homiletical theme, and then working its way through an expanded exegetical narrative back to the distant (*petiḥta*) verse.[39] This midrash combines many components from the earlier rabbinic sources, but includes a unique section which gives Bat Yiftaḥ a voice. It is this striking passage of female protest that has galvanized many feminist commentators to take up the gauntlet of rabbinic midrash.[40] In this analysis, I consider the way her voice is deployed against the backdrop of the entire homily as a literary work.

Part 1. God Sets Jephthah Up

> Another interpretation, "…when a man makes a vow [to the LORD concerning the equivalent of a human life [*nefashot*]…." (Lev. 27:2), This is (related) to what is written: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life…" (Prov. 11:30). This refers to the Torah, since whoever is a man of Torah [*ben Torah*] learns how to acquire lives, as it says: "and a wise person acquires lives [*nefashot*]" (ibid.). Thus you find with Jephthah the Gileadite who, because he was not a man of Torah, lost his daughter. When? At the time he battled with the Ammonites and vowed: "Jephthah vowed a vow to God…whoever/whatever comes out…" (Judg. 11:30-31). At that moment the Holy One, blessed be He, became angry with him, and said: If a dog or a pig or a camel had come out of his house, would he offer it before me?[41] The Holy One, blessed be He, summoned his daughter. "And, look, his daughter was coming out to meet him… It was, when he saw her…" (vv. 34-35).

The midrash presents Jephthah as a foil to rabbinic wisdom,[42] which advocates for the dedication of the monetary value of an individual's life in lieu of human sacrifice. A whole tractate in the Talmud is devoted to the legal ramifications of this kind of substitution (*'Arakhin*). Why one would dedicate the value of a human life in the context of a vow or oath is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say here that the rabbinic tradition aligns itself strongly with the DtrH in condemning human sacrifice. The midrash, opens with the lectionary verse—the first significant verse of the Torah reading for the triennial cycle then practiced in Palestine, introducing the law: "When anyone explicitly vows to the LORD the equivalent for a human being [*be-'erkekha nefashot*, lit. your assessed equivalent of persons]" (Lev. 27:2, NJPS).[43] It then relates the Torah verse to the homiletical theme by citing a distant verse from wisdom literature, in this case Proverbs: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the wise man acquires human beings [*nefashot*] (11:30). By the word-association of *nefashot* with *nefashot*—human life/soul, or life-force—the homily expounds upon the source of wisdom that upholds the value of a human life [*nefesh*], identified with "the tree of life", a common euphemism for the Torah throughout liturgy and midrash. Those who cling to Torah, the Tree of Life, hold sacred the value of a human life.

The moral message may be reduced to a pithy sentence: Because Jephthah was not learned in Torah, he ended up sacrificing his daughter. But the Rabbis also take the opportunity to teach about the risk a vow entails more generally. What if a ritually impure [*tamei*] animal had crossed the threshold. Would Jephthah have sacrificed a dog, pig, or camel to God?[44] The summons of the daughter here is to prove the dangerous consequences

of the vow by taking it to the extreme. The parallel aggadic sources (b. Ta'anit 4a, Gen. Rab 60:3, and Lev. Rab 37:4) also berate the warrior for his foolish vow, but compare him disfavourably to three others who similarly made promissory speech acts: Abraham's servant (Gen. 24:14), King Saul (1 Sam. 17:25), and Caleb (Josh. 15:16; Judg. 1:12-13). All three men utter vow-like statements: the first maid to offer to water Eliezer's camels will become the bride of his master's son; the man to defeat Goliath will marry the king's daughter; and the warrior to conquer Kiriath-sepher will marry Caleb's daughter, Achsah. All of these vows were deemed "unreasonable", like Jephthath's, because they dared chance, testing God's providential ways. What if an inappropriate match had passed the test—a slave, someone blind or lame, or ill-begotten (*mamzer*)? Yet Abraham's servant is answered favorably by Rebekah's appearance, King Saul by David's, and Caleb by Othniel's, whereas Jephthah's own daughter inauspiciously appears.

In the comparison between the four promissory speech acts, all spell out the fate of a daughter. The first three lead to a marriage: Rebekah to Isaac, Achsah to Othniel, and Michal (displacing Merav) to David—while the fourth leads to the daughter's death. Why does God respond to the first three "unreasonable" requests reasonably, while responding to Jephthah's vow by vindictively sending his own daughter? The suggestion in the discussion that follows, quoting Jeremiah's diatribe against child sacrifice (Jer. 19:5), is that God is unreasonable here *precisely* because the warrior called for human sacrifice. God ratchets up the stakes, so to speak, to demonstrate the irrationality, the danger of a vow that involves a human victim. The folkloric principle "be careful what you promise" clearly undergirds this corpus of midrashim and the rabbinic critique of vow-making. Yet another prominent motif is at stake here. The daughters are the focal point of exchange, the seam (if you will), between the seemly and unseemly. They expose the tear in the social fabric—the abuse and misuse of women.

Part 2. Phinehas and Jephthah: The Altercation between the Chief and the High Priest

Once Bat Yiftaḥ appears to greet her father, the question in the Tanḥuma becomes why was the oath not annulled or disqualified?

> Was not Phinehas there? Yet [Jephthah] had said: "I am not able to turn it back (i.e. rescind the vow)" (v. 35). Yet Phinehas said: I am High Priest son of the High Priest! Should I humble myself and go to that boor [or ignoramus, *'am ha-'aretz*]? [And Jephthah said: I am the chief of the tribes

> of Israel, head of the officers. Should I humble myself and go to that commoner? Between the two of them, the wretched woman was lost, and both of them were liable for her blood. The Holy Spirit departed from Phinehas,[45] and the bones of Jephthah were scattered, as it says: "and he was buried in the towns of Gilead" (Judg. 12:7).

In this section, the midrash emphasizes Jephthah's ignorance and the priests' pride. Jephthah was not a Torah scholar, knowledgeable in Scripture and the art of interpretation—that is, a man in the image of the Rabbis. The midrash also depicts how the High Priest, Phinehas, and the Chieftain, Jephthah, refuse to dissolve the vow or redeem the daughter (as the people had done for Jonathan in 1 Sam. 14:45): the priest would not stoop so low as to meet with an ignoramus [*'am ha-'aretz*, lit. man of the land; a plebian, not part of the learned elite], while the chieftain refused to kowtow to a "commoner". In the absence of genuine leadership, the priest and the military general fail to cancel the vow and avert the reality created by these killing words. The parallel version (Gen. Rab 60:3), invokes a powerful Aramaic proverb: "Between the midwife and the woman in labor the son of the unfortunate woman was lost" (Gen. Rab 60:3; cf. Lev. Rab 37:4).[46] That is, the midwife failed to arrive in time to save the child. The rabbinic interpretive voice, which would have provided a loophole to redeem the daughter, is compared to the feminine role of midwife. The Rabbis highlight how Bat Yiftaḥ's life was forfeit, falling between the fissures of human folly and pride. The two pillars of the community—one the head of the military and political office, and the other the head of the priestly caste—are both liable for her blood and subsequently punished. The Holy Spirit abandoned Phinehas, and Jephthah was not buried in his ancestral graveyard, but his remains were spread throughout the cities (pl.) of Gilead (Judg. 12:7).[47] The bastard rogue who, in life, wrangled to become chief in Gilead with great honor and acclaim, in death is ignominiously scattered throughout Gilead.

Part 3: Bat Yiftaḥ Pleads her Cause

The heart of the midrash, which has no parallel in the earlier Amoraic rabbinic corpus, gives voice to the daughter; she becomes the cipher of the Rabbi's ethical message. Unlike the biblical daughter, the rabbinic one confronts her father with wit, quoting extensively from Scripture:

> Bat Yiftaḥ said to him (her father): "Is it possible that it is written in the Torah that they should sacrifice the lives [*nefashot*] of their sons on the altar? Is it not written: '[When any of you presents a sacrificial offering to the LORD], he shall choose his offering from the beasts [*behemah*], from

> the herd or from the flock…' (Lev. 1:2). 'From the beasts' and not from human beings!"
> He said: "My daughter, I made a vow: 'whoever/whatever comes out…' (Judg. 11:31)."
> [She said]: "Jacob, our forefather, when he made a vow—'And of all that You give me, I will surely set aside a tenth for You' (Gen. 28:22)—and the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him twelve sons. Did he offer up one of them (as a sacrifice)?
> [Moreover, Hannah, when she made a vow and said, '"… I will dedicate the man-child to the Lord all the days of his life."' (1 Sam. 1:11). Did she offer up her son as a sacrifice to the Holy One, blessed be He?"][48]
> All these things she said to him, but he did not heed her…

While in the biblical text Bat Yiftaḥ acquiesces to her sacrifice (Judg. 11:36), in the Midrash Tanḥuma she resists. In contrast to her father Jephthah, the ignoramus or boor, she is eloquent and wise and knows how to wield the rapier of rabbinic interpretation. Modelled in the image of the Rabbis she argues that a monetary sum should serves as a substitute for the pledge of the human life (as spelled out in Leviticus 27 and the Talmud tractate *'Arakhin*). Further, she quotes two other famous vows in Scripture. Jacob promised at Bethel, as he left the Land of Canaan, to pledge a tithe (a tenth of his wealth) if God protected him through his sojourn, but God did not demand the sacrifice of one of the tribes. Likewise, Hannah pledged to dedicate to divine service the child she would be given, if God opened her womb.[49] Yet these arguments fall on proverbial deaf ears.

When Jephthah refuses to heed her, she (anachronistically) turns to the Court of Law, the Sanhedrin, the pinnacle of the rabbinic establishment. According to the biblical text, she asks for a two-month reprieve to withdraw from him and society to "go down to the mountains"[50] with her girlfriends to mourn her nubile youth (Judg. 11:37). In this fourth section (which I will merely paraphrase), the odd expression "go down to the mountains" is understood as a euphemism for the rabbinical court (the Sanhedrin). The midrash then pivots away from female solidarity, and offers Bat Yiftaḥ the opportunity for one last appeal—a pitch, really, against the third pillar of male authority.

But the rabbinic judges fail to find a loophole (*petaḥ,* lit. opening) to release her from the consequences of the vow. They too become liable for her bloodshed, and are identified with the 42,000 men of Ephraim who were slaughtered at the fords of the Jordan (Judg. 12:6). The midrash concludes with a *cris de coeur* from On High, which as at odds with God's seemingly vindictive stance throughout the midrash thus far.

Part 4. A Voice of Protest from On High

This passage draws upon the poignant diatribe of the prophet Jeremiah against child sacrifice: "And (they have) gone on building the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command, nor decree, nor did it enter my mind" (Jer. 19:5; cf. Jer. 7:31). The triple expression dissociating the LORD, Yhwh, from the heinous act of passing their children through fire is projected back onto three infamous stories in the biblical corpus: the '*Aqedah* (Gen. 22:12), Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter (Judg. 11:40), and the king of Moab's sacrifice of his firstborn son on the walls as he is under attack by the king of Israel (2 Kgs. 3:27).[51] In the midrash, God's voice is embodied by the Holy Spirit [*ruaḥ ha-qodesh*]. As Sarah Friedland ben Arza points out, it is akin to the feminine lament voiced by the women who ally with the daughter (Judg. 11:38, 40), distinct from the judgmental deity that sets Jephthah up for her sacrifice.

The midrash concludes by circling back to the lectionary and distant (*petiḥta*) verse:

> … What caused Jephthah to lose his daughter?
> Because he [Jephthah] did not read Torah, for had he read Torah he would not have lost his daughter, as it is written, "When a man makes a vow [to the LORD concerning the equivalent of human life (*nefashot*)]… And if it is a female…"" (Lev. 27:2-3), Hence: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life (and a wise person acquires lives [*nefashot*])" (Prov. 11:30).

Though the midrash upholds rabbinic wisdom and interpretation as a means of mitigating the vow, the heart of the midrash pits Bat Yiftaḥ's voice against the centers of male authority: the military and political leadership (represented by the chieftain, Jephthah), the Priesthood (Phinehas), and even rabbinic wisdom itself (as embodied in the Sanhedrin). All three fail to intervene to save the daughter. As Daniel Boyarin has pointed out, while the Talmud (and midrashic sources) aggrandize "the Rabbis and the rabbinic institutions and practices, the study of Torah and the House of Study," they also "(let) us into the self-doubts and internal critique of those persons, practices and institutions themselves".[52] The role of the *daughter* as the voice of this critique is at the core of the feminist hermeneutical reading of rabbinic literature.

Modern Feminist Midrash: Solidarity with Women

The story of Bat Yiftaḥ ends with a coda, turning away from the jurisdiction of the father and towards solidarity with women. Instead of spending the last months of her life by her father's side, she asks to withdraw to the mountains with her companions:

> [37] And she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: Grant me two months, so that I may go and wander on the mountains, and bewail my nubility [*betulai*][53] my companions and I." [38] "Go," he said and sent her away for two months. So she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her nubility on the mountains.[39] At the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did with her according to the vow he had made. She had never known a man. So there arose an Israelite custom [*ḥoq*] that [40] for four days every year the daughters of Israel would go out to lament [*letanot*, alt. recount the story of][54] the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite (Judg. 11:37-40).

While Jephthah loses any hold on future posterity with the sacrifice of his daughter, her memory is collectively preserved by the community of women. Many feminist scholars have explored what this two-month reprieve signified and the custom that followed, linking it to a rite of passage for nubile young women before marriage.[55] Rather than lament her childlessness or lack of sexual fulfillment in marriage, the retreat becomes etiological for an initiation ceremony for young women before their nuptials. Like Persephone or Kore, the one who sets the precedent for the ritual (in the Bible) is given over to the Underworld. All girls undergo this transformation when they die, figuratively, as children and emerge as marriageable young women. The women then tell the story of Bat Yiftaḥ in the context of this rite of passage, a "custom [*ḥoq*]" practiced four days each year. Cheryl Exum (1993a) reads the women's collective mourning or, rather, retelling of her story as a counterweight to the vow, the father's speech act that gave her away to death.

The modern feminist midrashim similarly give Bat Yiftaḥ a voice that "protests her marginalization and victimization—one that claims for her a measure of that autonomy denied her by the narrative that sacrificed her to the father's word".[56] I list a few: the poet Alicia Ostriker's "Jephthah's Daughter: A Lament" (2009); the womanist Renita Weems' "A Crying Shame"[57]; and the indie-folk song by Alicia Jo Rabins (Girls in Trouble), "Mountain/When My Father Came Back". Here, I present a selection from the contemporary feminist Israeli midrash by Rivka Lubitch, originally

published in Hebrew in the anthology of Israeli women's Midrash - *Dirshuni*:

Tanot, Jephthah's Daughter
by Rivka Lubitch

> "She was an only child, he had no other son or daughter" (Judg. 11:34). The Shekhinah (Divine Presence) said to Jephthah's daughter: Jephthah had no progeny through you, and on earth they don't know that a woman has a name of her own, even without having a son or daughter. Sit with me in heaven and weep for this. On earth they call you "Jephthah's daughter," but I will call you "Tanot."
>
> And why was she called "Tanot"? Because it is written, "for four days every year the daughters of Israel would go out to lament [recount the story of, *le-tanot*] the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite" (Judg. 11:40). And they said, *tanot* does not mean lament, but rather it is the name of Jephthah's daughter. And what does she do? She sits in heaven and listens to the stories of the earthly daughters of Israel, and then sits by the Shekhinah and recounts their sorrows in Her ear, prays for them and teaches merit on their behalf. (Biala and Weingarten-Mintz[58]; adapted translation by Yehudah Mirsky)[59]

Bat Yiftaḥ is elevated, in this midrash, to a heavenly figure like Enoch or Elijah, but here she uniquely advocates for the daughters of Israel to the Shekhinah, the feminine aspect of the Divine Presence. After her ascent, the Shekhinah deplores the way men (and the androcentric biblical narrative) perceive the value of women, given names only if they bear children. Though the anonymous daughter of Jephthah "never knew a man" and never bore children, the Shekhinah decides to name her "Tanot"—a clever re-reading of the complex act [*le-tanot*] which the daughters of Israel enact in their yearly ritual. Tanot is then invited to sit beside the Shekhinah in heaven and continue to "recount [*tnh*]" the stories of women, reciprocating what they, according to the biblical rite, do for her—pleading their cases against the injustices of patriarchy. As the victim of an outrageous injustice, Tanot is uniquely suited to empathize with the sorrows of women and pray on their behalf, interceding before the Shekhinah. Rivka Lubitch is personally schooled in such advocacy work, having worked as an official female advocate [*to'enet rabbanit*] in the rabbinical court system in Israel for years. Tanot serves as a recurrent figure in Lubitch's midrashim, as well as in the midrashim of others (including *Dirshuni*). What the Lubitch does on earth, Tanot mirrors in heaven.

Conclusion

In this essay, I set out to explore the way in which three reading strategies of the story of Jephthah's vow and sacrifice of his daughter overlap. The first entails a close literary and contextual reading of the biblical text, where the protagonist's speech act exposes the emptiness of his faith. His daughter goes out to greet the chieftain as he returns victorious—just as many women greet men returning from battle—only to bring him to his knees in dismay. Here, in concert with the tenor of the Deuteronomist, I read a searing critique of the vow and child-sacrifice. When he fulfills his promise, it is to the thunderous silence of a disapproving deity. The second level of reading exposes the fissures at the surface level of the text—the gaps and ambiguities—and fills them in by foregrounding what remained "fraught" with background in the biblical narrative. This feminist "countercoherent" reading addresses the anti-theodic underpinnings of the story: how could God remain silent as Bat Yiftaḥ was bound on the altar?

I then turn to rabbinic midrash which presents a seemingly strong defense, dissociating God from human sacrifice. Though the midrash grants the daughter a voice to protest her immolation, she is unable to save herself. Yet her tragic death poses a poignant critique of the three pillars of patriarchal society: the political office of chieftain (Jephthah), the priesthood (Phinehas), and the Rabbinic Court of Law (the Sanhedrin), because they each failed to find a "loophole" (*petaḥ,* lit. an opening) by which to redeem her, and are consequently held culpable for her death. This points to the secondary understanding of her name, Bat Yiftaḥ. Not only is she daughter of the man who rashly opened his mouth, but she is also the woman who sought openings, "loopholes" (*petaḥim*) in resistance to this "father's right gone awry". I then turn to the modern feminist midrash to find an alternative ending to her inimical fate. And, indeed, it is as an advocate in heaven that Bat Yiftaḥ (*qua* Tanot) uniquely has the ear of the Divine Presence.

Works Cited

Abbreviations of Primary Rabbinic Texts and Lexicons

b. = Babylonian Talmud (standard printed edition)

BDB = Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966. Print.

Gen. Rab. = Breshit Rabbah, ed. H. Albeck and J. Theodor, 3 vols., Berlin, 1912-31. Repr. Jerusalem: Wharmann Books 1965.

Lev. Rab. = VaYikra Rabbah, ed. Mordecai Margulies, 5 vols., 3rd ed., Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1993.

Sifre Deut. = *Sifre Devarim (Sifre on Deuteronomy)*. Eds. H.S. Horovitz and A. Finkelstein. Berlin: 1939; rpt. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1969. (Heb.). Print.

Tanḥuma = *Midrash Tanḥuma-Yelammedenu,* 1st ed., Constantinople (Kushta), 1520-1522, and the standard printed edition (Warsaw, 1875), republished Jerusalem, 1971; English trans. S. A. Berman, Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1996.

Tanḥuma (ed. Buber) = *Midrash Tanḥuma HaKadum ve'haYashan*, ed. S. Buber, S., (Vilna 1885). English trans. J. T. Townsend, *Midrash Tanḥuma*, Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1989-2003 (3 Vols.).

Secondary Sources

Ackerman, Susan. 1993. "Child Sacrifice: Returning God's Gift," *Bible Review* 9:3. 20-28, 56. Print.

Alter, Robert. 2019. *The Hebrew Bible Vol. 2. Prophets, Nevi'im. A Translation with Commentary*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co. Print.

Assis, Eliyahu. 2005. *Self-Interest or Communal Interest? An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives (Judg. 6-12).* Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 106. Leiden: Brill. Print.

Baker, Cynthia. 1989. "Pseudo-Philo and the Transformation of Jephthah's Daughter", in *Anti-Covenant; Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible*. Ed. Mieke Bal. Sheffield: Almond Press. 195-209. Print.

Bal, Mieke. 1988. *Death and Dissymetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988. Print.

Biala, Tamar and Nehama Weingarten-Mintz (eds.). 2009. *Dirshuni: Midrashei Nashim.* Tel Aviv: Yediyot Ahronot and The Jewish Agency (Heb.). Print.

Baumgarten, Elisheva. 2007. "Remember That Glorious Girl: Jephthah's Daughter in Medieval Jewish Culture," *JQR* 97/2, 180-209. Print.

Beavis, Mary Ann. 2004. "A Daughter in Israel: Celebrating *Bat Jephthah* (Judg. 11.39d-40)", *Feminist Theology* 13/1. 11-25. Print.

Boyarin, Daniel. 2009. *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis.* Chicago: Chicago University Press. Print.

Bregman, Marc. 1981. "*Petiḥta'ot Ma'agaliyot upetiḥta'ot zo hi shene'emrah beruaḥ hakodesh*," in *Studies in Aggadah, Targum and Jewish Liturgy in Memory of Joseph Heinemann*. Eds. Jakob J. Petuchowski and Ezra Fleischer. Jerusalem: Magnes Press. 34-51. Print.

Braiterman, Zachary. 1998. *(God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Thought*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Print.

Caroselli, Susanna Bede. 2009. "The Dissemination of Jephthah's Daughter," in *From the Margins 1: Women of the Hebrew Bible and their Afterlives*. Eds. Peter S. Hawkins and Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press. 86–101. Print.

Claasens, Juliana L. 2013. "Female Resistance in Spite of Injustice: Human Dignity and the Daughter of Jephthah", *Old Testament Essays* 26/3. 607-22. Print.

Day, Peggy. 1989. "From the Child is Born the Woman: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel.* Ed. Peggy L. Day. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 58-74. Print.

Exum, Cheryl J. 1993a. "On Judges 11", in *A Feminist Companion to Judges.* Ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. 131-45. Print.

Exum, Cheryl. 1993b. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. Sheffield: JSOT Press. Print.

Fox, Everett. 2014. *The Early Prophets.* New York: Schocken Books. Print.

Fox, Harry. 1982. "The Circular Proem: Composition, Terminology and Antecedents", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 49. 1-31. Print.

Fuchs, Esther. 1993. "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter", in *A Feminist Companion to Judges.* Ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. 116-30. Print.

Friedland ben Arza, Sarah. 2002. "Doors of Bitterness: Hazal Protests through the Pleas of Biblical Women". *Ma'aleh* 20. https://lib.cet.ac.il/pages/item.asp?item=16916 (Heb.). (Accessed June 2019)

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. 2002. *Reading the Women of the Bible.* New York: Schocken Books.

Ilan, Ilan. 2007. "Gender Difference and the Rabbis: Bat Yiftah as Human Sacrifice", in *Human Sacrifice in Jewish and Christian Tradition*. Eds. Karin Finsterbusch, Armin Lange and K. F. Römhold. Numen 112. Leiden: Brill. 175-89. Print.

Jacobson, Howard. 2013. "Pseudo-Philo, Book of Biblical Antiquities", in *Outside the Bible.* Eds. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and

Lawrence H. Schiffman, vol. 1. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society. 479-481, 563. Print.

Janzen, David. 2005. "Why the Deuteronomist told about the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter," *JSOT* 29/3. 339-357. Print.

Kedari, Tamar. 1999. "Jephthah's Daughter: Midrash and Aggadah". *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia.* Jewish Women's Archive. https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/jephthahs-daughter-midrash-and-aggadah. (Accessed June 2021).

Kramer, Phyllis Silverman. 1999. "Jephthah's Daughter: A Thematic Approach to the Narrative as Seen in Selected Rabbinic Exegesis and in Artwork," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, Second Series. Ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. 67–92. Print.

Levenson, Jon. 1993. *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son.* New Haven: Yale University Press. Print.

Lubitch, Rivka. 2009. "*Midrashei Bat Yiftaḥ*", in *Dirshuni: Midrashei Nashim*. Eds. Tamar Biala and Tamar Weingarten-Mintz. Tel Aviv: Yediyot Aḥaronot. 100. (Heb.) Print.

Mandolfo. Carleen. 2007. *Daughter Zion talks back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of The Book of Lamentations*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature. Print.

Marcus, David. 1986. *Jephthah and His Vow.* Lubbock: Texas Tech Press. Print.

Niditch, Susan. 2008. *Judges, Commentary.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. Print.

Ostriker, Alicia. 2009. "Fathers and Daughters: The Jephthah Issues and the Scream," in *Embroidered Garments: Priests and Gender in Biblical Israel*. Ed. Deborah W. Rooke. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press. 151–59. Print.

Rabin, Alicia Jo. Jewish Women's Archive. "Mountain/When My Father Came Back." <https://jwa.org/media/mountainwhen-my-father-came-back>. (Accessed July, 2021)

Reis, Pamela Tamarkin. 1997. "Spoiled Child: A Fresh Look at Jephthah's Daughter," *Prooftexts; a Journal of Jewish Literary History* 17/3. 279-298. Print.

Römer, Thomas Christian. 1998. "Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell About the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?" *JSOT* 77. 27-38. Print.

Sasson, Jack M. 2013. "Jepthah: Chutzpah and Overreach in a Hebrew Judge", in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist.* Eds. D. Vanderhooft and A. Winitzer. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. 405-19. Print.

Sasson, Jack M. 2014. *Judges 1-12*. The Anchor Yale Bible Vol. 6D. New Haven: Yale University Press. Print.
Stiebert, Johanna. 2013. *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Print.
Trible, Phyllis. 1984. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress. Print.
Valler, Shulamit. 1999. "The Story of Jephthah's Daughter in Midrash", in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to Bible* (2nd series). Ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. 48-66. Print.
Weems, Renita. 1988. *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible*. San Diego, CA: Lura Media. Print.
Ziegler, Yael. 2008. *Promises to Keep.* Leiden and Boston: Brill. Print.
Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John, vol I: I-XII* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1982), 31.
Lilly (SJ) Nortje-Meyer, "The Logos as "Flesh" in John 1:14 and 6:51-57: Formulating a Christology for the Liberation of Animals from *Humanarchy*", *Neotestamentica* 53, no. 3 (2019): 535-555.

Notes

[1] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 93-115. Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 41-68. Peggy Day, "From the Child is Born the Woman: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel,* edited by Peggy L. Day, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 58-74. Cheryl J. Exum, "On Judges 11", in *A Feminist Companion to Judges,* edited by Athalya Brenner, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993a), 131-145. Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "Spoiled Child: A Fresh Look at Jephthah's Daughter," *Prooftexts; a Journal of Jewish Literary History* 17, no. 3 (1997): 275-298. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible,* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 102-119. Mary Ann Beavis, "A Daughter in Israel: Celebrating *Bat Jephthah* (Judg. 11.39d-40)", *Feminist Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 11-25. Juliana L. Claassens, "Female Resistance in Spite of Injustice: Human Dignity and the Daughter of Jephthah", *Old Testament Essays* 26, no. 3 (2013): 607-22. Johanna Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 72-101.

[2] Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymetry,* 43; Johanna Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters,* 82.

[3] *LAB* 40:1. As Jacobson points out, the name "Se'ila" could also mean "'she who has been borrowed', i.e. that God has lent Jephthah his daughter and now reclaims the loan. Strangely, similar etymologies are used in the Bible for Samuel (1 Sam. 1:20, 27-28)" (Jacobson 2013: 563). Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, known by its Latin title as *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (L.A.B.), was composed between the