

# Womanist Theology: Part Four: Jephthah's Daughter

STM Advent/Epiphany Series  
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## Let's consider:

1. Is this story intended to show the extent to which one must be devoted to God? (But what about Isaac (Gen. 22) and Jonathan (I Samuel 14))
2. The book of Judges laying the groundwork to justify Israel's move to monarchy?
3. Were women of such low value until Jephthah's actions are overlooked in the New Testament (i.e., Hebrews 11:30-34)?

## Commentary by Alice Laffey

In comparing Judges 11 and I Samuel 14:

*Though Saul is willing to have his vow fulfilled, that is, to allow his son to die (vv 39, 44), the people are not.*

*In contrast, the companions of the daughter of Jephthah do not protest.*

*Both episodes involve vows made to God. Both fathers are willing to have their vows fulfilled. What distinguishes these two stories? One response leads to life and the other to death.*

## Let us consider

How are we to assess Jephthah and his daughter?

*Renita Weems: On the surface, the story is about religious integrity: a man spares nothing to honor a vow he has made to the Lord.... But in the story of Jephthah and his daughter, somewhere nobility turns into a nightmare, devotion turns into death. Somewhere the quest for honor and duty, in the face of a young woman's senseless death, becomes a gross distortion of justice.*

## Let us consider

R. Weems:

*... The story of Jephthah's daughter which began as a story about a man's radical devotion to God ends as a story of women's radical devotion to one another -- and to the whole truth. It is a story of women once again taking the only weapon they have -- their tears -- and craftily cultivating a new song for themselves.*

## Wrestle with the Text

Consider views in addition to those commonly given/told/known.

A perspective from another point of view may initially sound adversarial but may eventually assist you in your understanding of the lesson.

## Sources

*Just a Sister Away*, by Renita Weems

*Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, by Alice Ogden Bellis