

Esoteric Bible Studies

BY CORINNE S. DUNKLEE

TEXT

29. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

30. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

31. 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.

32. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.

33. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

34. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

35. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.

36. 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;

for as much as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.

37. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

38. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

39. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man.

—Judges 11:29-39.

INTERPRETATION

In Judges we find one of the most mystical books of the entire Bible and, therefore, one of the most interesting books for the study and meditation of the student of esoteric Christianity. The entire book is composed of a series of stories illustrating the different steps of progress on the path that leads toward spiritual illumination. These spiritual steps are concealed within historical events.

The Bible is a great book of Initiation, and every character portrayed within it represents the neophyte at some particular step of his development. Let the student remember this, and that for this reason the Bible is not only a history of men and women who lived thousands of years ago, but it is the esoteric story of every ego's evolution.

It is this latter fact which makes it become the Book of Books for us and the textbook of our entire lives. It was in this light that the early Christian saints, or Initiates, studied it, and this was the

cause of their supreme reverence and complete dependence upon it as the guide of their daily lives.

In this particular story which we are considering this month, Jephthah represents the neophyte who has definitely set his feet upon the Path, whereupon the first task which confronts him—and a most difficult task it is—is to conquer the children of Ammon, all the lower propensities within himself. We find many versions of this same story given throughout the Bible.

The children of Israel represent the spiritual power latent within every man. This power is aroused into life and activity when the higher self takes command. Outside coercion is no longer needed, for obedience is actuated from *within*. "The Lord, the Judge (the law within), be judge this day between the children of Israel (spiritual powers) and the children of Ammon" (lower propensities). Always in the beginning "the king of the children of Ammon harkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him."

After the supreme conquest represented in the life of Christ Jesus by the Temptation, which comes to every neophyte in different form but in perfect relationship to his place upon the Path, there is still a deeper and more important work to be begun, given in this story in the words of Jephthah: "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."

Jephthah's daughter represents the great feminine principle within man that manifests as the life of the lower senses when *unawakened*, but when *awakened* becomes the great heart force which manifests as the power of the Initiate. The burnt offering typifies self-sacrifice.

It is at this point that the Path becomes so narrow that, as given in the New Testament, "Few there be that find it." Max Heindel compares it to the church steeple that narrows until at the

last there is nothing to cling to but the cross. It was here at this subtle place on the Path that many of the followers of Christ Jesus turned back and walked with Him no more.

Many persons take up esoteric development intellectually and live comfortably and happily for many years, gaining only an intellectual conception of the meaning and purpose of life. But the moment the call *from within* sounds to go upon the path of real spiritual attainment, in that moment the shadow of the cross looms before them, and they must learn to walk in its way before they can win the Crown, or liberation from the prison house of the body.

In the sacrifices involved in the lifting of this principle in man, represented in this story by the daughter of Jephthah, man himself is changed mentally and spiritually; and there are certain definite physiological changes also which must take place within the physical body. These are well known to those who have reached this place upon the Path.

In verse thirty-five Jephthah voices the lament of many at this stage of their development: "Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me." This step involves the complete surrender of the personal will; the personal life must become the impersonal. We no longer may desire earthly possessions for ourselves; we only ask to be channels through which the spiritual power may flow to be used to succor others; that is, if we are strong enough to be able to say with Jephthah: "For I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

Verse thirty-seven represents the spiritual aspiration of the neophyte who is brave enough to dare all to win the pearl of great price, and the sorrow of the awakened ego for the conditions of the earth and its humanity through the fall of the feminine pole in all mankind.

Virginity means purity, and the "two

months" symbolize the work toward the attainment of polarity or equilibrium of the two poles of man's nature. "The mountains" mean the place of spiritual consciousness.

In verse thirty-nine Jephthah represents one who is victorious in overcoming his lower nature. This was the same test that was met by Abraham in the offering up of his beloved son, Isaac. This was also the test that was met by Christ Jesus, the great Way-Shower for humanity, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Angelus Silesius, the poet-mystic, was speaking of this place of temptation on the Path when he said:

"The cross on Golgotha thou lookest
to in vain
Unless *within thyself* it be set up
again."

A Midnight Thought

BY CHAS. I. STARRETT

The average man, carried along by the tide of popularized ideas down the stream of time, his own ideas often being the inherited hazy conceptions of his ancestors, can find no answer to the deeper problems of life for he has only the effects before him. At times, however, he longs to know what produces the many manifestations of life which he sees on every hand. But without some knowledge of the causes which are responsible for them he can have but little if any understanding of the many seemingly perplexing things in life and nature.

We have permitted the cloak of materiality to so enfold us and to become cemented to us by the fears, superstitions and dogmas that have so long run rampant in the world, that the shell in which we now live seems almost impervious to life's finer forces. In addition to this the conventions of modern thought tend to force us along, and we

often agree and acquiesce rather than question and argue.

So the world goes on; but beneath this cloak there is a germination in progress, and in those who nurture the germ in time a tiny flame of inspiration may appear. Perhaps only a flash at first, but with it seems to be a ray of reason, and by their aid we are sometimes able to pierce our outer materialistic covering, dissect our time-worn ideas, and we then find they do not harmonize with our present enlightened understanding of the Great Law. As the sparks of truth are flashed across our mind, we sometimes long for a place and a people where we might go and nourish these infant conceptions until they grow to ripe maturity, without fear of their being crushed by the surge of thoughtless humanity.

As the ages pass some are beginning to catch a glimpse and gain an understanding of the glorious destiny of the human Spirit. Following this feeble, flickering gleam, focused through the darkness of ignorance, now and then there is a rift in the clouds, and through it comes a flash of illumination by which we catch a view of the wondrous Plan the Father has made for His children.

Retropection

BY PHOEBE H. BALL

For all the trials of the day,
I thank Thee, Lord;
For debts I have been made to pay,
I praise Thee, Lord;
For all the duties left undone,
Things done that should not have been
done,
Or thought impure, let me atone
By sorrow and by service, Lord.

A drop of the oil of kindness for a complaining neighbor has the same effect that a drop of oil has on the squeaking, complaining wheelbarrow.—*Claremont Courier*.