

Is There No Balm in Gilead?

Rescuing Jephthah's Daughters

The Bible, Archaeology, and Faith for the Twenty-first Century

by Douglas R. Clark

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan: "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord: "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." The Lord said to Satan: "Have you considered my servants, the biblical archaeologists? There are none like them on the earth, blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then Satan answered the Lord: "Do biblical archaeologists fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around them and their institutions and all they have, on every side? But now stretch out your hand and send them, with full funding, to excavate at the site of biblical Jericho or Ai and they will curse you to your face!"¹

So thought Joseph Callaway, following excavations at Et-Tell, biblical Ai, where he hoped to find evidence of the encounter between local Canaanite citizens and the blitz-krieging Israelites on their way toward rapid conquest of the Promised Land. The disappointment of uncovering nothing from the time of transition between the Late Bronze Age and the early Iron I Period (ca. 1200 B.C.E.) registered profoundly on Callaway's Baptist faith and contributed to a total reassessment of the account in Joshua of Israel's entry into Canaan. And it continues to create Joban shockwaves among people of faith who want to take seriously the Bible and the results of recent archaeological research. In fact, not only have some discoveries of the past several decades eaten away at the history of the settlement, the period of Israel's ancestors seems to have lost some of its luster, the Exodus has little direct archaeological corroboration, and, according to some extremists, reassessments of later periods have also taken their toll.

The situation may appear bleak and biblical archaeologists on the verge of a massive crisis of faith, but there is plenty of good news to accompany the challenging. In this article I want to explore the dynamic relationship among biblical studies, Syro-Palestinian archaeology, and faith, commenting on what I see and recommending a few modest proposals for the future.

To do so, I thought to take a simple story from the Bible and see where an exploratory investigation might lead us biblically, archaeologically, and perhaps existentially . . . so, why not the Jephthah narrative in the well-known and deeply appreciated popular and warmly devotional book of Judges? But, to begin, some definitions of terms.

Some Definitions

The Bible is a collection of sacred books that carries divine credentials and human fingerprints. I affirm the inspiration of the Bible, although I cannot prove it empirically. At the same time, I observe and study the human activities that lie behind its initial proclamation, written expression, and final shape.

Archaeology is the systematic recovery, analysis, interpretation, and preservation of ancient human cultural remains. Biblical archaeology is the same plus the line: relating to biblical people, places, events, chronology, culture, concerns, and so forth.

Faith is an experiential reality beyond what can be proven, but not independent of facts, knowledge, and reason. Although any line of rigorous inquiry cannot form faith, it can, in the words of James Charlesworth about archaeology, "help inform faith."² However, I am struck by insights from those who, while admitting that faith goes beyond evidence, do not deny that rational inquiry also plays a role.

As we turn to the story of Jephthah, I have to admit that I typically follow a centrist approach. I am neither a thoroughgoing positivist when it comes to the results of archaeological investigation, nor an inerrantist regarding the Bible, nor a fundamentalist in the arena of faith. Unfortunately, since these discussions involve issues of science and religion, Bible and history, belief and reality, this leaves me vulnerable from all sides of the debates. It reminds me, in the words of some of my Texas teaching colleagues several years ago, that there is nothing left in the middle of the road except dead armadillos.

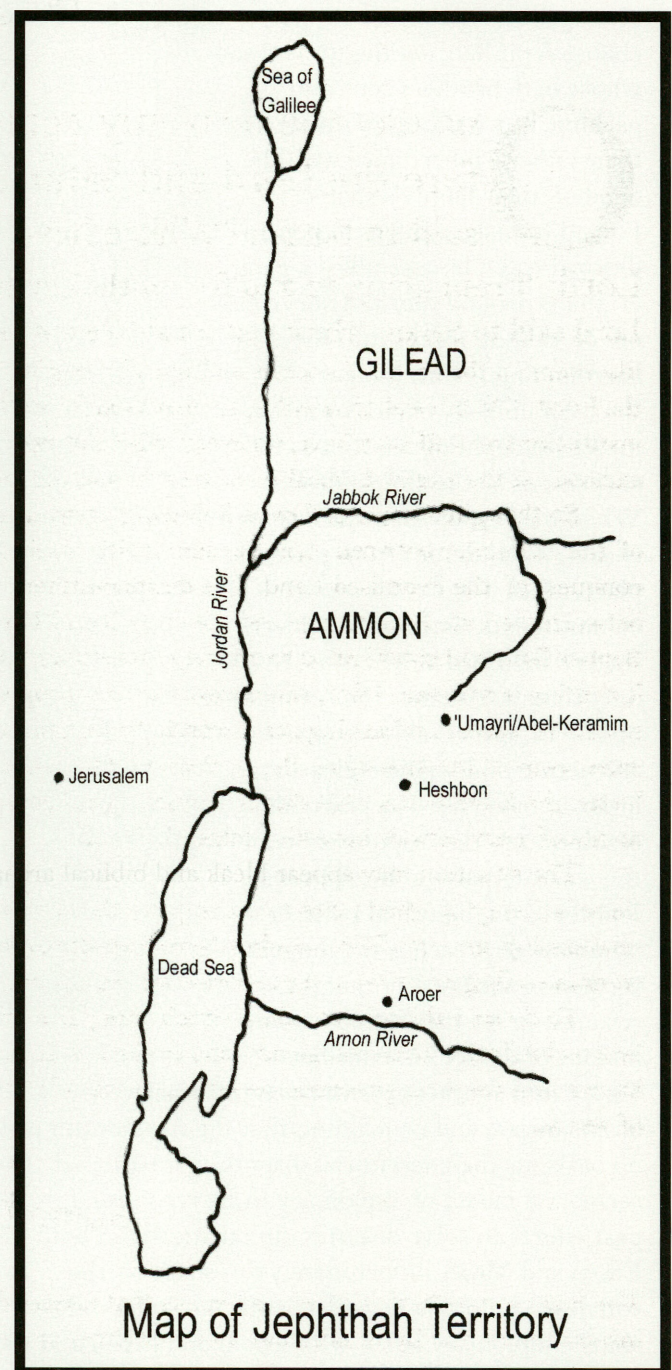
The Story of Jephthah

Occupying most of chapters 10-12 of the book of Judges, the Jephthah story begins at the same place that most of the major judge accounts start: "The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (Judges 10:6). This patterned editorial template sets hearers and readers up for human collapse, divine punishment, human despair, and supplication to God, and finally divine rescue.

The narrator takes us to northern Transjordan, where the Gileadites were attempting to hold off aggressive Ammonites encamped on their southern borders. This was a time of tremendous upheaval. It was an interval, according to what appears to be a growing consensus about life and survival during this period, of shifting subsistence strategies growing from a developing symbiosis of pastoral and agricultural economies, combined rural and urban lifestyles in the setting of the remote central hill country of Transjordan and Cisjordan, and melding religious traditions and practices.

We read in the narrative about the worship of the Baals and the Astartes, consequent oppression by

the Ammonites for a number of years, and a plea to God for deliverance. The literary template stretches a bit in the Jephthah story, as God feigns unwillingness to intervene one more time on behalf of the ever-stumbling tribal groups who lay claim to this god's allegiance, even if they have once again cried out for rescue. Eventually, Israelite separation from local deities and the Lord's compassion in the face of continued suffering results in divine intervention. When Ammonites then muster themselves for battle, Gileadite tribal leaders mumble among themselves about who should lead the counterattack.



As we wait for the opening shofar to sound, the narrator distracts us temporarily from the imminent battle by informing us of the search for a qualified military commander who will become the political leader, as well. Expectations run high for a hero. The battle can wait for now; the inhabitants of Gilead are in search of leadership and we should anticipate the strongest candidate if they have any hope of pulling off a victory. So they select well; they choose Jephthah, an illegitimate son whose half brothers sent him packing, not wanting to divide up their father's inheritance with the child of their family's shame. Forced to make a living in nontraditional ways, he assembles a gang of thugs around him and survives off of raiding forays into the surrounding countryside.

An unlikely choice by all measures, Jephthah continues to surprise us as the story unfolds. While the rest of his tribe has been chasing local deities from place to place, at least Jephthah confirms his commitments to the tribal elders "before the Lord at Mizpah." Not only that, he engages the Ammonites with remarkably extensive and astute diplomatic endeavors in order to bring about a peaceful resolution to the dispute between the warring parties. In addition, Jephthah, the banished child of humiliation, preaches the longest sermon in the book of Judges, recounting for the Ammonites the history of Israel's exodus from Egypt into southern, central, and northern Transjordan, and concluding that the Ammonites had no basis for their territorial dispute against Israel. The sermon, a model of diplomacy in its recounting of past efforts to solve disputes diplomatically in both Edom and Moab, unfortunately foreshadows the collapse of diplomatic efforts with the Ammonites; shuttle diplomacy failed with Edom and Moab and so

Temporary Commutal of a Capital Sentence

"My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites." . . . And he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin.

—Judges 11:36, 39

The maidens wept, while God
and the men of Gilead remained mute.
I, Jephthah's daughter, will never marry,
will be nameless, forgotten, ignored.
I did not plead as Iphigenia did. No goddess
delivered me, no Artemis from Olympus
rebuked Agamemnon. No One saved
me from Father's stone knife and the flames.
No sheep substituted. Abraham never promised me
"Yahweh will provide."

I spoke: "I need two months
to roam the hills and weep with my friends,
for I will never marry."
"But grant me this one request," I
said. Two months. I suppose I could have fled,
could have sloughed off my virginity, bare shoulders
escaping a goat-hair robe. I could have given my
father milk — driven a tent peg through his temple.
"Go," my father said. When I returned, Father did
as he had vowed and Yahweh smelled the smoke
of my burning corpse ascending to the heavens.

by Andrew R. Becraft

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it would with Ammon.

The stage is thus set for battle, for the movement of the Spirit of the Lord and, surprisingly, for an astonishing and rash vow. "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30-31



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

Aroer at the southern border of Ammon.



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

Umayri, perhaps Jephthah's Abel-keramim.



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

The Jabbok, border between Gilead and Ammon.

NRSV). No one required or demanded the vow; the elders had already promised him leadership over Gilead without the condition of victory and the spirit of the Lord had already come upon him. Interrupting the narrative flow of the story, Jephthah demonstrates no longer faith but unfaithfulness as he tries to ensure victory with his loaded declaration. Without needing to, he sets out on his own in search of guaranteed military success, having locked himself rigidly and inextricably into the vocabulary of his vow.

The battle, which we expect to occupy center stage momentarily, given the sermon and vow leading up to it, takes fully two verses to describe and bring about to a conclusion. Beginning, oddly, along the southern border of Ammon/Moab, at the town of Aroer on the escarpment overlooking the Arnon River canyon (the modern Wadi Mujib), Jephthah marches his forces northward. How he penetrates to the south to attack in a northerly direction is not spelled out, but this represents the flow of the story.

With lightning speed, the narrator transports us from Aroer up the Transjordanian plateau. Jephthah inflicts death and destruction on twenty towns in the process. His approach to the neighborhood of Minnith, likely somewhere in central Transjordan north of the Madaba Plains, and finally his conquest of Abel-keramim (perhaps the site of Tall al-'Umayri, identified with the help of a written itinerary of Pharaoh Thutmosis III) signal the conclusion of his military accomplishments. The Ammonites are subdued and the battle is over. Victory is assured in the space of four verses: two verses for the vow to God and two verses for the war against the enemy.

Upon Jephthah's return to his home in Mizpah, the joy of celebrating victory quickly collapses into a heap as his dancing, singing daughter, who knows nothing of the vow and whose name we don't even know, leaps from the courtyard to greet an exuberant and successful military and political leader, only to discover the immeasurable weight of Jephthah's verbal commitment to a now inscrutable God.

Sacrifice. She is now the whole burnt offering Jephthah unnecessarily pledged to God. She has become the innocent holocaust victim whose life represents the obligatory cost of a superfluous sacred saying, an unwarranted utterance. Boldly she requests time for wandering mountain valleys and bewailing the mounting weight of her virginity. Unfortunately, two months lamenting on the mountains only extends the misery of father and daughter . . . and the mystery of Deus Absconditus. This death, according to several

authors, is not only unnecessary to the war against the Ammonites, it is to the war hero's daughter premature and will leave no heirs. In the memorable words of Barbara Shenk's poem, "Jephthah's Daughter,"

I hope God has a meadow in the sky
For us who leave the earth too young to die.³

The story of Jephthah, drawn from near the end of the book's record of the slide of early tribal groups into civil and theological anarchy and oblivion, carries with it enough challenges to faith as to eliminate the need to survey archaeological features of the period for problems they might entail. Questions about divine silence in the face of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter jump out at us like so many terrified Gileadite elders from Mizpah in desperate search of a qualified leader.

How is it that a vow to God for survival through conquest of the enemy can put a daughter's survival at risk through the banned practice of child sacrifice lies far outside most modern ethical hierarchies. Where is the God who stayed Abraham's hand, raised in preparation to take Isaac's life on Mount Moriah? Where was this God on the mountains of Jephthah's home? God demonstrated mercy on the idolatrous, although repentant, Israelites at the beginning of our story because he could no longer bear to see them suffer. How did God overlook the suffering of Jephthah's daughter? Is there no balm in Gilead?

Archaeological Dimensions to the Story

It is the outcome of archaeological research that has long held my interest and lasting appreciation. What can it tell us about the biblical world that might illustrate the life of people who inhabited the stories and those who first heard them? Thus, to archaeological issues we turn. We do so by proposing a number of ways in which archaeology contributes to and illuminates our story. We then take on the task of assessing several serious challenges recent archaeological investigation has raised in the context of this particular narrative.

On the one hand, while we do not have evidence, inscriptional or otherwise, to confirm the names and events reported in the story of Jephthah, we are currently in a position to speak extensively

about life and culture in the hill country of Cis-Jordan and Transjordan during the Iron I Period (ca. 1200-1000 B.C.E.). The debate has been long, heated, and, happily, productive about the settlement of the mountainous regions on both sides of the Jordan. In general, the evidence matches extremely well the picture we have in the book of Judges. Ami Mazar put it this way:

Assuming the ethnic identification used in this chapter is correct, we can draw some conclusions concerning the socio-economic



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

Hill country typical of Cis-Jordan and Transjordan.



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

'Umayri cultic installation similar to the one described in Judges 17.



Baal statue.

Photo: Biblical Archaeology Society



Female fertility figurine, perhaps Asherah.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark

structure of [early] Israelite society. In fact, these conclusions correspond to the social structure described in the biblical sources concerning this period. This was a nonurban, sedentary population of small communities, each numbering several dozens of people who subsisted on farming and herding. It appears to have been an egalitarian society, striving for a livelihood in the difficult environmental conditions of the forested mountains and semiarid regions of Palestine.⁴

We have learned a significant amount from recent excavations and surveys about such matters as worship practices, village life, domestic architecture, and agricultural and pastoral survival strategies. Given the extent and expertise of archaeological research currently underway, information has exploded across the landscape more quickly than Jephthah's march through Ammonite territory.

Worship installations like the one at Tall al-'Umayri in the Ammonite hill country of central Transjordan indicate typical features of a standing stone, votive altar, paved floor, and postbases for a curtain wall separating the worship space from a household food preparation area. This was a household shrine likely similar to the one described in Judges 17. The recovery of ceramic fragments of chalices and bronze cymbals also points in this direction.

Cultic practices involving the Baals and the Astartes (or Asherahs) are amply illustrated by finds like Baal statues fashioned for mounting in wooden holders, as well as fertility figurines found everywhere in the hill country. In a world of numinous unease and profound uncertainties surrounding the survival of family, crops, and flocks, we should expect more of a theological smorgasbord that allowed a mixed population to select from among competing deities. The book of Judges, like the archaeological record, certainly assumes this setting.

Although only some of the Ammonite and Gileadite sites mentioned in the Jephthah story are identifiable with any certainty, excavations and surveys have added to our knowledge of central and northern Transjordan. Extensive survey work has suggested an explosion of sites in these regions, some very small and by far most (over 90 percent) still awaiting excavation. Following a long period of abatement in land use and observable population, there sprang up nearly 150 hill-country sites (all the way

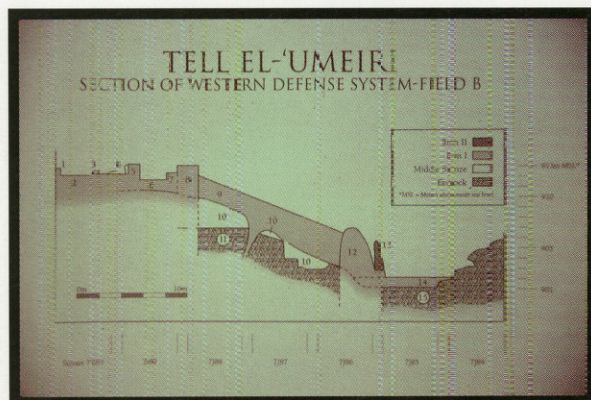
down to simple sherd scatters) in the area between the Arnon and the Jabbok rivers during Iron I (1200-1000 B.C.E.), the general territory claimed by the Ammonites fighting against Jephthah. Over one hundred appear between the Jabbok and the Yarmuk rivers, in the territory of Gilead. Another fifty sites from this time have been identified in the Jordan Valley.

Of the towns and cities mentioned in Judges 10-12, many are debated as to location and identity. Those known include Sidon, which plays no role in the geography of the story, Kadesh, Heshbon, and Aroer. Among disputed towns are Mizpah, Jahaz, Minnith, Abel-keramim, and Zaphon, the final site showing up in the civil war appendix to the story (Judges 12). The town of Aroer has been excavated and contains the remains of a few houses from this period. Kadesh and Heshbon have been thoroughly studied. Tall al-'Umayri, which the Madaba Plains Project has cautiously identified with Abel-keramim, where I am currently codirecting excavations with Larry Herr, has been tremendously productive as a source of information about this period and this part of the country.

Following a strong earthquake around 1200 B.C.E., inhabitants of 'Umayri invested a significant amount of energy and expense in refortifying their four- to five-acre settlement. Its dry moat, retaining wall, steep rampart, and perimeter wall system speak volumes regarding the importance of protecting the town. Although we have documented a massive destruction of the city around 1150, there is no way to identify the external forces that instigated the disaster. Even if this were Abel-keramim, and even if Jephthah were responsible for the destruction, he left no business cards.

In any case, the site offers a remarkable picture of fortified town life and architecture from this time because of the accident of incredible preservation of transitional Late Bronze Age/Early Iron I walls and buildings. Because of the destruction debris, accumulated up to six and seven feet thick in places, at least one important building was immortalized in a condition like it had the day it collapsed to enemy assault. There is something perverse about an archaeologist's delight in destruction layers. After all, people suffered painful injuries; they bled and died and burned and became disarticulated skeletons. Because of this fiery destruction, 'Umayri can now boast the best preserved typical Iron I domestic "four-room" house anywhere in the Levant, and one of the oldest.

What might we learn from 'Umayri, especially from this four-room domestic house, that might illuminate the Jephthah story? Since this type of



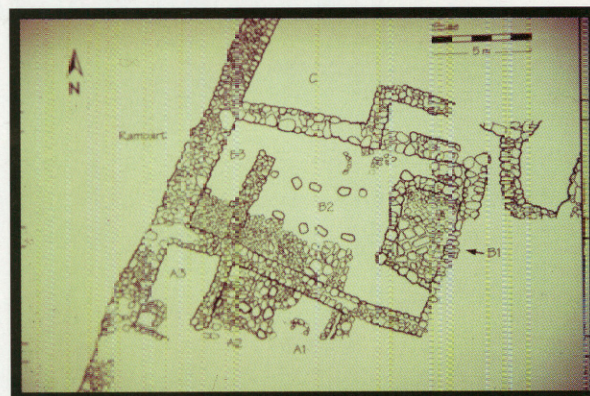
Section of defense system at 'Umayri.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark



Four-room house like one Jephthah might have lived in.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark



Top of four-room house at 'Umayri.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark

household architecture is typical of contemporary and later hill country sites on both sides of the Jordan, we might be able to expect that Jephthah and his daughter encountered each other just outside the courtyard of such a house.

The house, as we excavated it over the span of several seasons, was clearly two stories in height. The first floor consisted of stone walls, three long rooms divided by wooden posts set on stone postbases, and a back broad room. Stone pavements suggest animal stabling in the side long rooms, as well as in the courtyard pen. The broad room in the back contained the fragmentary remains of approximately forty large, collared store jars or *pithoi*, half of which fell from a

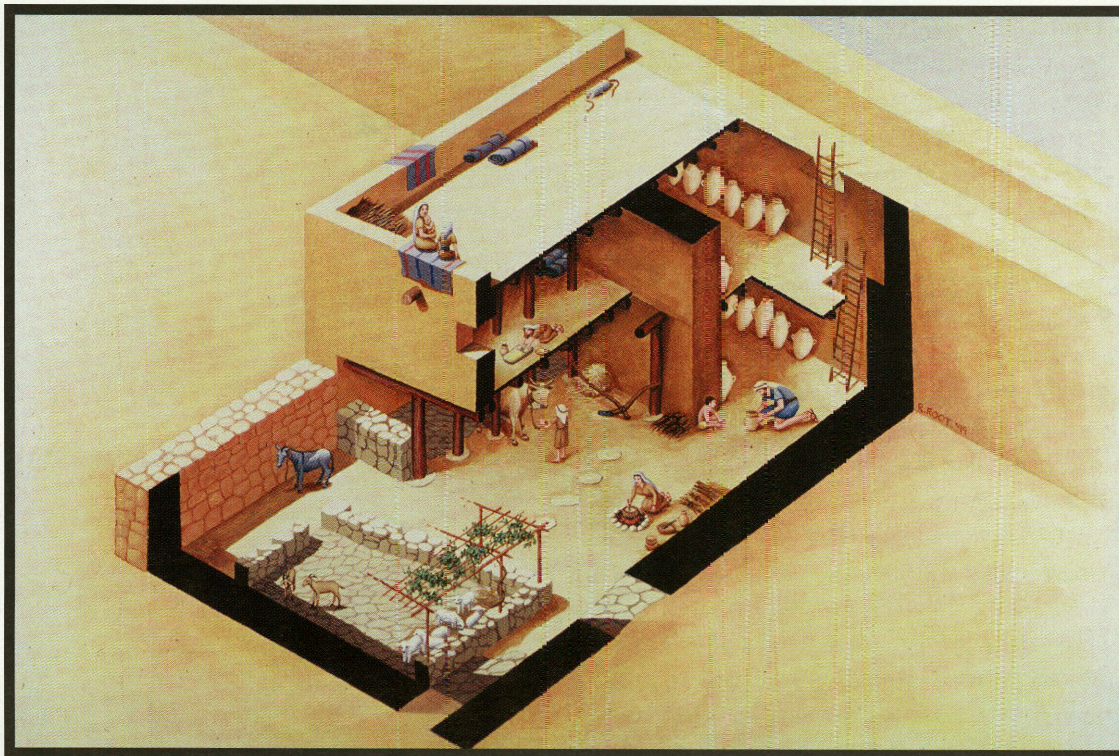


Photo: Rhonda Root

"Iron Age House (Umayri, Jordan)" by Rhonda Root, 1999. 24 x 32 inches, acrylic on canvas. An artist's rendition of a four-room house from the time of the Judges.

similarly constructed second-story store room and nearly all of which await reconstruction in basement laboratories of Bowers Hall on the Walla Walla College campus.

Builders constructed the second floor of sun-dried mudbrick, likely along the same general room-division pattern as we have seen on the ground floor. Storage of foodstuffs, food preparation activities, and domestic quarters occupied this level of the house. The language of the ill-advised and poorly planned vow might actually allow for a vulnerable animal exiting through the doorway to become the burnt offering, but, according to the story, this did not happen; Jephthah's unnamed and vulnerable daughter assumes the role of holocaust victim.

In spite of how archaeology has illuminated the territory and terrain of Jephthah's travels, there are problems. If God appears absent from pivotal parts of the story, so is archaeological evidence for many of the sites mentioned there. Although by no means impenetrable dilemmas, the current data do remain perplexing and problematic. Remaining problems include events and locations mentioned in Jephthah's sermon to the Ammonite tribal chief: (1) the Exodus, (2) the site of Kadesh, (3) Edomite occupation of southern Jordan, and (4) the town of Heshbon.

It is well known that even though there exists a significant and growing body of circumstantial

indications for the Exodus from Egypt, there is no concrete or direct archaeological evidence linking known facts to any person, place, or event in the Exodus story. This has been disconcerting to multitudes of believers over the past several decades, as have other very recent public debates involving the periods of the ancestors, the settlement, the united monarchy, and even now the divided monarchy. It has even hit the news stands in sources like the Israeli *Haaretz* newspaper in October 1999; *Science* magazine, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (both in January 2000) with bad news about ancient Israel's past.

Although without as much fanfare, the results from archaeological research at Kadesh in the northern Sinai are as problematic. No remains at all exist from the Late Bronze or Iron I Ages, at the time of the wilderness wandering. The tenth century represents the first settlement there after a millennium of abandonment. This is hundreds of years too late for the account.

Potentially even more difficult is the lack of an archaeologically definable occupation history for Edom in southern Transjordan during this time. Except within the deep river valley of the Zered, today's Wadi Hasa, which formed a boundary zone between Moab on the north and Edom on the south, there are only a handful of sites with Iron I ceramic remains. Since borders were seldom drawn along

rivers themselves (inhabitants would evidently occupy the entire river drainage system and draw political lines elsewhere), it appears that an extremely small number of sites in Edom date to the time before the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Whatever resistance Edom presented against encroaching Israelite tribal groups from the southwest, it would have come solely from nomadic entities in the scarcely populated region. This phenomenon has generated a small wheelbarrow full of articles pro and con.

Finally, the excavations at Heshbon, where I was privileged to cut my archaeological teeth in the early seventies, produced little ceramic and no architectural evidence of settlement here before about 1100. Apparently, at least at this location, there was no Heshbon when tribes on their way to Canaan came through.

So, what do we have at the end of the day except perplexities and puzzles? Perplexities concerning the Jephthah story itself and how it relates to modern faith in a just God. Tensions between the Jephthah story and recent archaeological research. Pressing disquiet about the relationship between archaeology and modern faith in the Bible's historical reliability.

How do we address these problems? Is there any hope of rescuing the Bible, archaeology, or faith? Have they become too much like Jephthah's daughter, cheerfully hoping to celebrate some victory while walking unwittingly outside the safety of a secure courtyard into the disarming world of sacrificial victims? Is there any hope, given what we know today, of saving these three?

Without attempting to be reductionistic, flippant, or trite, I believe that we should attempt to keep an open mind about some of these problems and maintain research programs, thereby continuing the exploration of the wide and wonderful world out there. We may over time find historical or archaeological evidence for resolving some of these questions about sites and stories, thus confirming elements of the historical background of the Bible. (We are not talking here of "proving" the Bible, as that represents an impossible task. Archaeology may be able to demonstrate a destruction mentioned in the Bible, but it is hardly capable of determining whether or not God did it.)

However, until then, we are obliged to go with the best results we have and not bury our heads in the sands of ancient Gilead or Ammon. We also have to recognize that the Bible comes to us by means of a process "centuries old" of editing, transmission, and translation. It is also not unlikely that ancient inspired



Satellite map of Exodus area: Egypt, the Sinai and Caanan.

Photo: Biblical Archaeology Society



Edom, where nomadic groups might have resisted Israelites.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark



Heshbon produced little evidence of settlement before 1100.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark

writers, some recording events long after they occurred, connected them with sites they knew as contemporary locations. Or, maybe some of the sites have shifted in the course of the years of their unfolding history. It also appears to be the case, if one takes seriously the literary analyses of people like Robert Alter and others, that these stories grow from some kind of historical kernel, taking on embellishments and enrichment in the centuries-long process by which they travel through oral and written manifestations on their way to the Bible.⁵ Variations occur in all parallel biblical accounts, suggesting that we not press the Bible into an historically unwieldy mold. The Bible, after all, is a literary document, characterized by

literary features and stylistic finesse and flair, with great attention to plot, suspense, character development, irony, humor, and so forth.

These observations suggest that we be flexible, that while taking the Bible, archaeology, and faith seriously, we don't become as unyieldingly rigid as Jephthah with his unnecessary vow. This will result in no one's survival. These daughters are worth too much to sacrifice to unbending inflexibility. If there is hope for dialogue in today's world, and into the future, among people of faith who study archaeology and the Bible, if we anticipate that the rescue of these avenues for inquiry is possible, if we hope to ensure a responsible future for the past, then we will find ways to celebrate curiosity and with humility open ourselves to new possibilities.

To do otherwise is to hand ourselves over either to "maximalists" or "minimalists." The former make more of the evidence than is responsible, usually in an attempt to prove the Bible; the latter often limit themselves to a bare minimum of absolute, concrete evidence, sometimes while aiming to disprove biblical history. Both groups, in the arenas of Bible, archaeology and faith, border on being vow takers. Perhaps it is within the ambiguities apparent within history, science, and faith that we will find common ground for future discussions and innovative approaches. It is certainly the case that life is more interesting when lived in liminal zones between disciplines and ideologies. It is also more dangerous, especially for those of us who do take seriously scholarship and faith.

So, what of the future? I am tempted to follow the advice of a fortune cookie I received at the Centennial Celebration of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Washington, D.C., last year. The message read: "You are fated to make the past last." This would be rather easy and reasonably painless. But if we wish for the continued survival of these three arenas of personal and professional life for informed people of faith, fortune cookie prognostications will likely not do.

I am optimistic, however. It appears to me, in spite of a history of conflicts between extremists and more moderate types—sometimes more vicious than when Ammonites and Gileadites took to the field—that this century can provide a safe place for the Bible, archaeology, and faith. A few modest suggestions for ensuring such a future:

- honest, responsible biblical study, on its own terms

- honest, responsible archaeological research, on its own terms

- conversation among informed practitioners of all disciplines and perspectives

- taking advantage of emerging consensus positions

- painting the future with broad strokes to allow for ambiguities and flexibility

- avoiding the extremes of maximalist (fundamentalist) and minimalist (nihilist) positions

- minimizing agenda-laden approaches

- continued exploration of the dynamics of faith and how they are grounded and nurtured

- emphasis on the illustrative rather than the apologetic value of archaeology.

The survival of the Bible, archaeology, and faith for the twenty-first century depends on hard work, honesty, integrity, deep faith, conversation, and flexibility. We may never come to completely satisfying results in our quest to keep responsible research and unflinching faith together, but we will know more about the Bible and its backgrounds and we may discover new dimensions to faith, as well. This endeavor deserves our best efforts if we are to avoid sacrificing archaeology, the Bible, and faith on the altar of inflexible and unnecessary vows.

Notes and References

1. Adapted from the NRSV translation of Job 1:6-11.

2. See page 19 of his article, "Archaeology, Jesus, and Christian Faith," in *What Has Archaeology To Do With Faith?* eds. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 1-19.

3. Barbara Shenk, *The God of Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1985), 53.

4. Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000 - 586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 354

5. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

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This piece is adapted from the presidential plenary address for the Pacific Northwest Region of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, which Clark delivered at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, on April 28, 2000.