

ADAH

Adah is a biblical name, and as used in the Scriptures, means beauty. The Bible does not name Jephthah's daughter, but the name of Adah used as the first point of the Star may be symbolical of the beauty to be found in the characters of the five heroines of the Order. So, too, the raising of the "Veil" may be typical of the revelations which are to follow.

Jephthah, son of Gilead, but born of a harlot, was raised in the house of his father together with the sons born to the true wife, Zorah. Jephthah, the first born, was the constant companion of Gilead, and the legal wife of the household was jealous of the favor shown Jephthah. During the absences of Gilead, Zorah and her sons taunted Jephthah with his unhonored status, making sure never to molest the lad when his father was at home. As Jephthah approached manhood, Gilead died leaving his eldest son inconsolable and desolate. The father died thinking his eldest son would share with his half-brothers in the honors and properties of the estate, but jealousy soon made Zorah set aside her promises to Gilead and Jephthah was forced to leave his home.

As an earnest young warrior he wandered far and finally settled in Mizpah, in the land of Tob. His young wife died soon after the birth of his only child, a daughter. The custom of the land held sons most dear and daughters in much lesser regard, but Jephthah made of his daughter a constant companion, bringing her up in beauty and teaching her to hold honor and truth above all else, a lesson he himself had been dearly taught by the jealousy and bitterness he had been subjected to in his youth.

Adah, at fifteen, in her own thoughtful way, summed up her father's teaching thus, "Honor is best expressed by keeping clear the third of our commandments — 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.'" Adah was indeed lovely, dark haired, slender, and with eyes of the vivid blue of the cloudless sky. She most often wore a simple robe of pale blue linen tied with a wide sash of bright Roman-striped silk, the looped ends of which hung to the hem of the garment. Her head covering was usually a veil of soft, hand-woven wool about a yard square, dyed a vivid blue, by Adah herself. Jephthah's daughter was gracious and friendly, beloved by all, but at fifteen, not yet betrothed.

It was at this time that Jephthah became greatly troubled in spirit, for a war brewed in Gilead, the land of his birth. The Ammonites had again and again overrun the land of Gilead, killing and plundering. The elders of Gilead were desperate, and in their trouble turned to the outcast, Jephthah, now a warrior of great repute, begging him to lead their armies against the marauders. Jephthah in his bitterness said, "When all was well with you, ye drove me from my father's house; now in your distress ye are fain to seek me!" He, therefore, demanded and was granted recognition and power as a prince and captain over the land of Gilead. Thus, Jephthah became the Ninth Judge, and one of the mightiest men of Israel. He tried for many months unsuccessfully to avoid open war-fare by arbitration, but finally accepted the fact that there must be war.

Jephthah was a godly man, given to frequent prayer and fasting, so before setting forth to battle he humbly sought his God, and in prayer made his terrible vow — "Lord, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, 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."

It is doubtful if Jephthah was thoroughly familiar with all the ceremonial laws of his adopted people. The laws did not introduce, but regulated the practice of vows. (JOB 22:27). "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows." The making of vows was purely voluntary, but once made, were considered compulsory. However, the Law of Moses provided both restrictions and exemptions. A man might offer sacrifice of either possessions or persons, providing it did not include the first born of beasts. In the case of persons, a man might offer himself, his child, or his slave. Redemption could be made in silver at a valuation according to age and sex. If there was no redemption, the vow must be fulfilled.

Jephthah's vow was not specific and it is doubtful if he contemplated any form of redemption. He designated no particular burnt offering, and nothing in his possession was of too much value to be offered, but it is improbable that he had any thought of his daughter in this connection. It is difficult to explain this vow. It has been conjectured that being a hunter in the mountains Jephthah was accustomed to be much absent from home and that on his return from these expeditions he often was welcomed by the favorite lamb of his daughter; and that this fact was in his mind suggesting the object of sacrifice, should his dangerous enterprise be crowned with success.

Jepthah's spirit of exaltation and faith was given a brief test on his return from the Temple, for he was met on his doorstep by the small, but beloved son of a servant. Recalling his vow to the Lord, Jepthah was 'momentarily troubled, but he reasoned that except for age, the boy would be only one more warrior whose death was necessary to bring about victory, should the lad meet him on his return if he was victorious in his war with the Ammonites.

So it was that Jepthah departed to fight the children of Ammon, and as a victorious warrior, once again he hastened to Mizpah and his own home. The return of the conquering warriors was heralded by the joyous singing and dancing of the young women of the town, and like her friends, Adah was anxious to pay her tribute. With her timbrels setting the pace for her dancing feet she hastened down the garden path to the gate to be the first to welcome her beloved father to his home.

Jepthah, when he saw the girl, rent his clothes in anguish, and in keeping with the custom of the country that made this gesture an indication that death was about to pay a visit to the home. Adah's smile of welcome became a very worried question on her lips and her father broken-heartedly cried out to her, "Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low, for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." Adah embraced her father and 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. 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."

Many leading biblical scholars believe that Jepthah's daughter was not slain. They suggest the word "or" should be used in the story replacing the word "for", thus making it: "and I will offer it up, *or* a burnt offering."

Human sacrifice was strictly forbidden by the Jewish law, and it is claimed that what really happened to Jepthah's daughter was seclusion and perpetual virginity. When the sword touched Adah she became a sacrifice to a law more bitter than death itself to the faithful daughter, for she then died to the hope cherished by every zealous Jewish woman, she could never become the mother of the promised Messiah.

JUDGES 11:39 bears out this theory: "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.*"

However, if the death of Adah is accepted, it is the only time in all the history of the Israelites that a living man or woman was offered in sacrifice to the Lord.