

## Why Jephthah's Daughter Weeps

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# Why Jephthah's Daughter Weeps

*A Child-Oriented Interpretation*

By

Margaret Murray Talbot



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## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Talbot, Margaret Murray, author.

Title: Why Jephthah's daughter weeps : a child-oriented interpretation / by Margaret Murray Talbot.

Description: Leiden : Boston : Brill, 2022. | Series: Biblical interpretation series, 0928-0731 ; 199 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022000366 (print) | LCCN 2022000367 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004508163 (hardback) | ISBN 9789004508170 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Menstruation in the Bible. | Jephthah's daughter (Biblical figure) | Bible. Judges, XI—Feminist criticism.

Classification: LCC BS1199.M46 T35 2022 (print) | LCC BS1199.M46 (ebook) | DDC 220.8/612662—dc23/eng/20220126

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022000366>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022000367>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](http://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 0928-0731

ISBN 978-90-04-50816-3 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-50817-0 (e-book)

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*Dedicated to my parents, Mary Elizabeth Thulemeyer Murray and Michael Fielding Murray, with gratitude for their steadfast love and care and for the broad space they created for theological imagination and curiosity to flourish.*

*And in memory of  
Steven John Shepherd  
April 10, 1964–December 7, 2020  
His wisdom and zeal for life knew no earthly bounds.*

*I made my way through masters and PhD programs in the first two decades of the twenty-first century in central Texas. Here, the politics of religion and religion of politics are thoroughly intertwined and deeply destructive. In this context, I've wrestled with the question: How do our (learned) relationships with the biblical texts influence our relationships outside the text? In a sense, the story of Jephthah's daughter seems to grapple with this question as well, especially in terms of child–parent relationships. What happens when traditions and words are death-dealing more than life-giving? Although I've experienced the gifts of Christian community, I've also seen the grave harm and costs to children (and our later selves) caused by the community's doctrines, rituals, stories, and words that no longer have meaning—or that need new meaning. This book, then, is for all of us who know the shortcomings and stickiness, the stubbornness of traditions and those who guard them; and it is for all who have experienced or witnessed the harm caused by the biblical texts and yearn for a chance to make new meanings and new community, gathered around the wisdom, humor, and curiosities in these ancient myths*





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## Acknowledgements

Looking back through the history of proposals and plans, dramatic shifts and changes, and edits and comments in my files, I see how clearly I needed and received significant support in developing this book's shape and content. I'm deeply grateful for and to all those who guided me, listened, read, and/or suggested along the way:

- My committee members at Brite Divinity School, including my director, Dr. Wil Gafney, and readers Dr. Timothy Sandoval and Dr. Russell W. Dalton;
- Anna Bowden (without whom this work would have died in utero);
- Members and participants of the SBL Children in the Biblical World section, especially Julie Faith Parker, Kristine Henriksen Garroway, Sharon Betsworth, and David Schones;
- Brite Associate Dean Jeff Williams;
- Don Jones (whose coaching came at a crucial time); and
- Staff of the Stitt Library at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, especially former public services librarian Lila Parrish and Ollie Jarvis.

Writing a dissertation and completing a PhD program has, without a doubt, taken a village. Claudia Camp and David Gunn hold a unique standing in this village and in the process of this book's creation. Their intellectual energy and scholarly DNA influence every page. They stepped into the void when Brite's Hebrew Bible faculty retired at the end of my first year of coursework, and I count myself fortunate for the unforeseen gift. Their questioning and prodding, encouragement, generosity, and friendship have been invaluable. Of course, all errors, oversights, and misinterpretations that remain in this work are of my own making.

Many others in the village also supported my efforts, less in the actual production of the text that this book represents and more in sustaining me when energy flagged, when frustrations manifested, when laughter was needed. For this sustenance, I am deeply grateful to Jim, James, and Emma, who always helped me to order my priorities and to avoid taking my work too seriously; to my parents—to whom this book is dedicated—and to my ever-supportive siblings, Melanie Williamson, Mark Murray (with many thanks for providing my home away from home during coursework), and Matt Murray; to my college roommates (my “other life partners”) Debbie Shepherd, Jennifer Hanna, and Carolyn Wheat; to my running buddies, especially Shannon Stokes, Kelly Gier, and Tory Wicken; to my newest writing buddy, Sarah de la Fuente; to my cheerleaders at church, Jana Loucks and Susan McMillan; and to my friends and colleagues at Brite, especially fellow Austinite and interfaith superhero Susan

Lippe and the New Testament women—Anna Bowden, Annelies Moeser, Maziel Dani, Zhenya Gurina-Rodriguez, Kendi Mohn, Jill Nelson Engelhardt, and Christina Bryant—who welcomed me into their midst when the Hebrew Bible program at Brite was in transition. The entire village of course is much larger and has a longer history; I offer sincere thanks to all those who remain unnamed but who inspired these thoughts and gave meaning to this work.

Finally, many thanks to my reviewer; to series editor Jennifer Koosed; and to editors at Brill, including Emma de Looij, for their support, encouragement, and kindness.

# Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AKA	Annals of the Kings of Assyria
ANE	Ancient near east
APY Lands	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, Australia
ASHE	Association for the Study of Higher Education
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BSJS	Brill's Series in Jewish Studies
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CEB	Common English Bible
CSSH	Comparative Studies in Society and History
<i>DCH</i>	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
EANEC	Explorations in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations
<i>EBR</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i>
FCB	Feminist Companion to the Bible
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
HB	Hebrew Bible
ISV	International Standard Version
<i>JANER</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
<i>JANESCU</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JBRec</i>	<i>Journal of the Bible and Its Reception</i>
<i>JFSR</i>	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
<i>JOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
KJV	King James Version
<i>LAB</i>	<i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i>

LHBOTS	<i>The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies</i>
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NEB	New English Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society version
NKJV	New King James Version
OT	Old Testament
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
PLOS	Public Library of Science
<i>Proof</i>	<i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>SemeiaSt</i>	<i>Semeia Studies</i>
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
UNCRC	United Nations Commission on the Rights of the Child
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary