

Lesson 9: Judges 12-14 Inter-tribal Fighting, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon, Samson's Birth and Marriage

In our last lesson we met two minor judges; Tola and Jair. Little is known about them, but there was peace while they reigned. But Israel again did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD and was again oppressed by her enemies for 18 years. Then, Israel offered a confession of guilt and returned to worshipping the LORD. A new judge emerged, Jephthah. Jephthah engaged the enemy, first with negotiations and discussions. When this did not work, it was time for war. The Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah, but he still made a vow to sacrifice the first person who came out of his house to greet him upon his return from battle. Alas it was his only child, his daughter. He kept his vow. Jephthah returns in today's lesson.

1. Read Judges 12:1- 7 and footnotes. Share helpful information you find with your group.

2. Reflections:

Ephraim again is angered against another tribe of Israel for not being called to join in a war against their enemies. *Why do you suppose this makes Ephraim so angry?*

What does a civil war between Ephraim and Gilead say about the tribes of the LORD's chosen people?

At what point does pride become a sin?

3. How did Jephthah determine who was a "friend" and who was a "foe" in this battle?

How long did Jephthah serve as judge of Israel?

Did his reign bring peace to Israel?

4. Read Judges 12:8-15 and *footnotes*.

Who is Ibzan?

How is the size of his family significant?

What are the possible *positive* benefits to having your children marry members of other tribes or clans within Israel?

What do we know about Elon?

What do we know about Abdon?

5. Read Judges 12:1-5 and footnotes. Share any information in the footnotes that is helpful with your group. What is a Nazirite vow? (Num 6:2-8 below)

Numbers 6:2-8 Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When men or women solemnly take the Nazirite vow to dedicate themselves to the LORD, ³ they shall abstain from wine and strong drink; they may neither drink wine vinegar, other vinegar, or any kind of grape juice, nor eat either fresh or dried grapes. ⁴ As long as they are Nazirites, they shall not eat anything of the produce of the grapevine; not even the seeds or the skins. ⁵ While they are under the Nazirite vow, no razor shall touch their hair. Until the period of their dedication to the LORD is over, they shall be holy, letting the hair of their heads grow freely. ⁶ As long as they are dedicated to the LORD, they shall not come near a dead person. ⁷ Not even for their father or mother, sister or brother, should they defile themselves, when these die, since their heads bear their dedication to God. ⁸ As long as they are Nazirites, they are holy to the LORD.

6. Read Judges 13: 6-23 How is Samson's birth special?

How is it similar to the births of Isaac, Jesus and John the Baptist? (See Genesis 21:1-6 and Luke 1:5-2:21)

7. Who is the angel that announces Samson's birth and how does Manoah react to the angel? (See 13:8, 13:15, and 13:17-22)

8. Read Judges 14:1-4. How did Samson choose a wife?

There are dangers in choosing a pagan woman for a wife. How does Judges 14 explain Samson's choosing a Philistine wife?

9. Read Judges 14:5-9 and Numbers 6:6 below. Why should Samson avoid eating the honey?

Numbers 6:6 Throughout the period of their dedication to the LORD, the Nazirite must not go near a dead body.

10. Read Judges 14:10-20 and footnotes

What do we know about Samson's wife? Can Samson trust her?

What was the purpose of Samson's riddles?

How did Samson pay the Philistines who guessed the riddle?

What happened to Samson's wife?