

Judges 12 – Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon – Radio Show #246

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. Jephthah, after getting the victory over the Ammonites, came home and was met by his daughter. He had vowed to dedicate the first thing out of his house to the LORD OR offer it as a burnt offering. He dedicated his daughter to Jehovah, which in this case meant that she remained unmarried, a perpetual virgin. Now, he returns home only to face the outrages of Ephraim.

III. The Outrages of the Tribe of Ephraim.

- A. Judges 12:1. Ephraim comes north to confront Jephthah at his home. The same tribe that caused Gideon trouble, Judges 8:1. They are even more unreasonable and outrageously violent! They threaten to destroy him and his family with fire.
- B. Verse 2. He reminds them that he was in a great and manly struggle against the sons of Ammon. He did call for their help, but they did not come to save him.
- C. Verse 3. When they did not rescue him, he took his soul in his hands and passed over to fight the sons of Ammon. The LORD acted to give them into his power. Why, then, have they come up now to fight him? Thus he gives them a peaceful answer, but this time the outrageously jealous Ephraimites are beyond reason. Notice that they listen to Jephthah's reason no better than Ammon did!
- D. Verse 4. Jephthah assembles the men of Gilead to meet this threat. They battle and strike down Ephraim. They wanted to cast the Gileadites out of Israel, claiming they are refugees from the rest of Manasseh in the western, main part of the land! (Remember Joshua 22:21-29) So Ephraim is rightfully defeated.
- E. Verse 5. Gilead takes the fords of Jordan in front of the Ephraimites as they flee. The Ephraimites seek to flee back over the Jordan to their home. As they come to the ford, the Gileadites question them if they are Ephraimites.
- F. Verse 6. Because of their accent, they could not say "Shibboleth," but pronounce it "Sibboleth." So they seized the fleeing Ephraimites and executed them. Hebrew 40 + 2,000, 2,040 killed, not 42,000.
- G. Verse 7. Jephthah is judge for six years, a short rule, and then dies. Buried in an unnamed city of Gilead. The last judge named in the "hall of fame" of faith in Hebrews 10:32.

IV. The ninth judge: Ibzan. Judges 12:8-10.

- A. Verse 8. Ibzan (Whiteness or "Of Tin") of Bethlehem. (There were two cities named Bethlehem, the famous one in Judah and one in Zebulun. We are not even told if which this was, but from the next judge, probably Zebulun.)
- B. Verse 9. He has thirty sons and thirty daughters. Clearly a polygamist! He married off his daughters, apparently to men of other tribes, and he brings in women of other tribes to marry his sons. Probably mentioned because this was unusual, and probably hard to accomplish. He judged for seven years.
- C. Verse 10. Ibzan died and was buried in his hometown of Bethlehem.

V. The tenth judge: Elon. Judges 12:11-12.

- A. Verse 11. Elon (Oak) a (another?) Zebulunite. He judged Israel for ten years.
- B. Verse 12. He died and was buried in Aijalon (Field of Deer) in Zebulun. Nothing much interesting to mention about his judgeship, apparently.

VI. The eleventh judge: Abdon. Judges 12:13-15.

- A. Verse 13. Abdon (Servile) the son of Hillel (Praising), a Pirathonite (Princely, in Ephraim) judges Israel next.
- B. Verse 14. He had forty sons and thirty sons' sons (grandsons). These rode on seventy donkeys, obeying the command to kings not to multiply horses (Deuteronomy 17:16). He judged Israel for eight years. Another short judgeship.
- C. Verse 15. Abdon died and was buried in Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country that used to belong to the Amalekites.

VII. Jephthah's judgeship was opposed by the Ephraimites because of outrageous jealousy. Jehovah is with Jephthah, however, and the Ephraimites are defeated and slaughtered. Does jealousy ever cause us to act in outrageous ways? We ought to learn better, as the Ephraimites should have! Jephthah's judgeship was short, as were those after him: Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Yet during this time Israel was in relative peace. Next time we will go on to examine the final judge of the book, Samson, and consider his interesting life.