

## Handout 1: Judges Lesson 5

The inspired writer repeats key words and events to invite the comparison between Gideon and Jephthah and Abimelech and Jephthah.

### **Gideon and Jephthah**

- Both Gideon and Jephthah are called “valiant warrior” in the text: God addressed Gideon as “valiant warrior” in Judges 6:12 and the inspired writer called Jephthah a “valiant warrior” in Judges 11:1.
- Both men began their careers as judge deliverers “clothed in the Spirit of Yahweh” (Judges 6:34 and 11:29).
- Although both, through God’s intervention, became “valiant warriors,” their success was followed by the sins of pride, arrogance, and unnecessary cruelty.
- Both men made war on their own Israelite kinsmen: Gideon destroyed two Israelite towns for refusing food to his men (Judg 8:13-17) and Jephthah began a civil war with the Israelites of Ephraim and killed thousands of men from that tribe (Judg 12:1-6).

### **Abimelech and Jephthah**

- Both Abimelech and Jephthah had Canaanite mothers and the mention of their births begins each narrative (Judg 8:31-32; 11:1b).
- The role of a woman in the life of each man both begins and ends each of their narratives: for Abimelech a Canaanite woman gives him life and a Canaanite woman ends his life (Judg 8:31; 9:52-53), and for Jephthah a Canaanite woman gives him life and in the end he takes the life of his daughter (Judg 11:1b; 11:30-39).
- Both men became the leaders of “empty men” (Judg 9:4; 11:3).
- Both men made war on their own people: Abimelech made war on his mother’s town of Shechem and Jephthah made war on the Israelite tribe of Ephraim (Judg 9:39-49; 12:1-6).

The failures of these three men illustrate the moral and spiritual decay of the Israelites as a people in the era of the Judges.

All 6 minor judges are introduced with the word “after”: (Judg 3:31; 10:1, 3; 12:8, 11, and 13).

The Judge Samson: *Long hair flowing, the original Hell’s Angel, rumbling through Philistia like a one man army... A Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death.*  
(Gregory Mobley, *Empty Men: the Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel*, page 7)

The narrative of Samson can be divided into four parts:

1. Samson’s miraculous birth
2. Samson’s marriage
3. Samson’s one-man war with the Philistines
4. Samson’s failure, redemption, and victory

Hebrew word *issa* means both “woman” and “wife”; it is a thematic keyword in the narrative.

Chapter 13 contains four of the seven statements in the typical judge-deliverer cycle:

1. Announcement of Israel’s wrong doing (13:1a)
2. Statement of Yahweh’s response (13:1b)
3. Notice of how long Israel was oppressed by the enemy (13:1b)
4. Reference to Israel’s repentance in “crying out” to God (absent from the narrative)
5. Announcement of God sending a deliver (13:5, 25)

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## Handout 2: Judges Lesson 5

The commands of the angel-messenger to the wife of Manoah concerning the requirements for her and for the son she is to bear by divine decree:

1. Drink no wine or fermented liquor.
2. Eat nothing unclean.
3. Never cut the child's hair.
4. The child is to be God's Nazirite.
5. He will start rescuing Israel from the Philistines.

The episode of the young lion in the vineyard in Judges 14:5-6:

Element	Symbolism
Samson separates from his parents on the journey	Beginning of Samson's emotional distancing himself from his parents
The vineyard	Israel
The young lion	The young Samson
Yahweh's Spirit aids him in conquering the wild and unpredictable lion	The invitation for Samson to use Yahweh's Spirit to conquer his wild and unpredictable human nature
Withholding the event from his parents	Distancing himself from his parents established
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Judges 14:5-6	Judges 15:14-19
The lion came roaring towards him.	The Philistines came running towards him with triumphant shouts.
The spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him.	The spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him.
He killed the lion with his bare hands.	He killed the Philistines with a jawbone of an ass.

Most of the major judges' narratives ended in "the country then had peace for x years":

- Othniel: *The country then had peace for forty years* (Judg 3:11).
- Ehud: *...and the country had peace for eighty years* (Judg 3:30).
- Deborah: *And the country had peace for forty years* (Judg 5:31).
- Gideon: *...and the country had peace for forty years...* (Judg 8:28).

However, Samson, like the major judge Jephthah, does not have the same concluding deliverer statement. Both have the statement "judged Israel for x years" (12:7 and 15:20), like the minor judges' short narratives (with the exception of Shamgar) that have a similar statement:

- Tola: *He was judge in Israel for twenty-three years* (Judg 10:2).
- Jair: *... who judged Israel for twenty-two years* (Judg 10:3).
- Ibzan: *He was judge in Israel for seven years* (Judg 12:9b).
- Elon: *He was judge in Israel for ten years* (Judg 12:11).
- Abdon: *He was judge in Israel for eight years* (Judg 12:14b).

The absence of a statement of peace or "rest" for Israel from chapter 9 forward suggests that while there were judge-deliverers that there was no lasting peace for Israel as a people during the judgeship of these men as there had been in the earlier era of the Judges of Israel.