

### Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

The Ephraimites are incensed against Jephthah, because he did not call them to war against the Ammonites; and threaten his destruction, Judges 12:1. He vindicates himself, Judges 12:2, Judges 12:3; and arms the Gileadites against the men of Ephraim; they fight against them, and kill forty-two thousand Ephraimites at the passages of Jordan, Judges 12:4-6. Jephthah dies, having judged Israel six years, Judges 12:7. Ibzan judge seven years, Judges 12:8. His posterity and death, Judges 12:9, Judges 12:10. Elon judge ten years, and dies, Judges 12:11, Judges 12:12. Abdon judge eight years, Judges 12:13. His posterity and death, Judges 12:14, Judges 12:15.

### Verse 1

The men of Ephraim gathered themselves together - **x•x™x!xcx\$** (vaiyitstvaek), they called each other to arms; summoning all their tribe and friends to arm themselves to destroy Jephthah and the Gileadites, being jealous lest they should acquire too much power.

### Verse 3

I put my life in my hands - I exposed myself to the greatest difficulties and dangers. But whence did this form of speech arise? Probably from a man's laying hold of his sword, spear, or bow. "This is the defender of my life; on this, and my proper use of it, my life depends." When a man draws his sword against his foe, his enemy will naturally aim at his life; and his sword in his hand is his sole defense. It is then, Fight and conquer, or die. Thus Jephthah took his life in his hand. This phrase occurs in some other places of Scripture; see 1 Samuel 19:5; 1 Samuel 28:21. And the words of the Conqueror, Isaiah 63:5, seem to confirm the above view of the subject: I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; i.e., by mine own arm I saved my life, and brought destruction on mine enemies.

### Verse 4

And fought with Ephraim - Some commentators suppose that there were two battles in which the Ephraimites were defeated: the first mentioned in the above clause; and the second occasioned by the taunting language mentioned in the conclusion of the verse, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim. Where the point of this reproach lies, or what is the reason of it, cannot be easily ascertained.

### Verse 6

Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth - The original differs only in the first letter x<sub>i</sub> (samech), instead of x© (sheen); x©xžx¨ ¨ x© x©x'xœxª x©x™x©xžx¨ ¨ xjx'xœxª (emar na Shibboleth), (vaiyomer Sibboleth). The difference between x© (seen), without a point, which when pointed is pronounced (sheen), and x<sub>i</sub> (samech), is supposed by many to be imperceptible. But there can be no doubt there was, to the ears of a Hebrew, a most sensible distinction. Most Europeans, and, indeed, most who have written grammars of the language, perceive scarcely any difference between the Arabic (seen) and (saad); but as both those letters are radical not only in Arabic but in Hebrew, the difference of enunciation must be such as to be plainly perceivable by the ear; else it would be impossible to determine the root of a word into which either of these letters entered, except by guessing, unless by pronunciation the sounds were distinct. One to whom the Arabic is vernacular, hearing a native speak, discerns it in a moment; but the delicate enunciation of the characteristic difference between those letters x© (seen) and x<sub>i</sub> (samech), and (seen) and (saad), is seldom caught by a European. Had there been no distinction between the (seen) and (samech) but what the Masoretic point gives now, then x<sub>i</sub> (samech) would not have been used in the word xjx'xœxª (sibboleth), but x© (seen), thus x©x'xœxª: but there must have been a very remarkable difference in the pronunciation of the Ephraimites, when instead of x©x'xœxª (shibboleth), an ear of corn, (see Job 24:24), they said xjx'xœxª (sibboleth), which signifies a burden, Exodus 6:6; and a heavy burden were they obliged to bear who could not pronounce this test letter. It is likely that the Ephraimites were, in reference to the pronunciation of sh, as different from the Gileadites as the people in some parts of the north of England are, in the pronunciation of the letter r, from all the other inhabitants of the land. The sound of th cannot be pronounced by the Persians in general; and yet it is a common sound among the Arabians. To this day multitudes of the German Jews cannot pronounce xª th, but put ss in the stead of it: thus for x'x™xª (beith) (a house) they say bess. Mr. Richardson, in his âœDissertation on the Languages, Literature, and Manners of the Eastern Nations,â€ prefixed to his Persian and Arabic Dictionary, p. ii., 4th. edition, makes some observations on the different dialects which prevailed in Arabia Felix, the chief of which were the Hemyaret and Koreish; and to illustrate the point in hand, he produces the following story from the Mohammedan writers: âœAn envoy from one of the feudatory states, having been sent to the tobba, (the sovereign), that prince, when he was introduced, pronounced the word (T'heb), which in the Hemyaret implied, Be seated: unhappily it

