



## Reading the book of Judges

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

1. The book of Judges relates the activities of twelve men and one woman established as judges, hence its title. God had raised them as deliverers to deliver Israel at the time of decline and division after Joshua's death. (Jg. 2:16-18)
2. Judges were chosen from various tribes. Not all of them extended their jurisdiction over the entire territory of Israel; some of them carried out rather local activities. For a limited time, the administration of several judges was sometimes simultaneous.
3. The sons of Anak defeated by Caleb were tall people who frightened the spies of Israel at Canaan except for Joshua and Caleb. (Jg 1:20)
4. A person without thumbs of hands and feet cannot hold a weapon or run away quickly. Therefore, the amputation of these limbs, as the Israelites used to do to defeated kings at the time of war, was a guarantee that the captured enemy would never again be able to fight. (Jg. 1:6-7)
5. The word *Baal* comes from the Hebrew word *Ba'al* which means master, owner, and Lord. Baal was the supreme male deity of the Phoenician and Canaanite nations. (Jg. 2)
6. The fact that the Israelites cohabited and married with the other nations they were to expel from the territory was an act of disobedience.
7. Prophetess Deborah, the only female leader of the Book of Judges, had gained the respect of all. She had sent Barak to lead the army into war, but Barak would not go without her. She predicted that the true hero of the battle would be a woman. (Jg. 4 :19)
8. Singing about God's victory over other nations was a common practice among the Israelites. It was in this sense that Deborah, the prophetess, composed the song to praise God after the victory of the people of Israel over Sisera, (Jg. 5)
9. The three (3) signs that Gideon asked God for as proof that he is with him are:
  - a. The acceptance of his offering by God. (Jg. 6:17-21)
  - b. A dew-covered fleece in dry ground. (Jg. 6: 36-38)
  - c. A dry fleece in a dewy ground. (Jg. 6: 38-40)

10. The Angel of the Lord was an apparition of God in the Old Testament. Gideon thought he was going to die because the Angel of the Lord had appeared to him (Jg. 6:22-24). This belief resonated well with what God said to Moses: “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” (Ex. 33:20)
11. God proposed two tests to Gideon for the choice of the 300 soldiers who were to accompany him into battle (Jg. 7:3-6):
  - a. The test of fear and dread.
  - b. The test of lapping water from the river.
12. The word “plunder” refers to what a soldier removes with his own hands from the enemy during the war. This may include humans, livestock and special objects. However, in the case of Israel, this plunder, which certainly belonged to the soldier, must be shared between the soldier and the Levites, (Jg. 8:24)
13. Jephthah offered his daughter as a sacrifice to fulfill his vow to the Lord. It was not an ideal thing that God was asking for in Israel. He forbade it (Le. 18:21). However, Jephthah himself, who lived among the other peoples after being driven out by his brothers, was accustomed to this practice. Because of a rash vow, Jephthah fell into his own trap when he noticed that it was his daughter who was coming to meet him after his victory. (Jg. 11:31, 34-40)
14. **Schibboleth** was a tradition of using a word or phrase to determine membership in an ethnic group. The men of Jephthah wanted to identify the Ephraimites by having them pronounce the word. Because they could not pronounce the word because of their accent, they were put to death. (Jg. 12:4-6)
15. The presentation of Manoah’s sacrificial offering, as in the case of Gideon, was an act of worship that only God could receive. The fact that the Angel of the Lord ascended into the flame of this sacrifice was proof that this Angel was God. It is strictly forbidden to worship angels. (Col. 2 :18-19 ; Re. 19 :10)
16. The word **Dagon** comes from the Hebrew **dagown**, which means fish. Dagon was the male national deity of the Philistines of Ashdod and Gaza (Jg. 16:23). He had the head, arms and hands of a man (1 S. 5:1-4), but with the body of a fish, according to ancient mythology. In fact, in ancient times, the people who lived in the coastal cities lived from the sea (fishing). Most often, they represented their divinity in the form of a fish.
17. The word Teraphim comes from the Hebrew **teraphiym**. A teraphim is a figurine representing the protective gods of a family home, associated with the family cult of ancestors in ancient civilizations. (Jg. 17:5)

18. The last chapters of Judges mention four times that there was “Israel had no king” and twice that “everyone did as they saw fit”. This remark was probably made a little later, after the beginning of the monarchy of Saul and David, because a king united the nation. Some of the problems of this period, such as idolatry and the consecration of a priest who was not from the Levite family, are revealed in verse 5.
19. The expression “House of the God” refers to the tabernacle that Moses had built according to the model that God had shown him. (Jg. 18:31)
20. In the ancient Middle East, hospitality was taken very seriously. When the Levite stopped in the square of a city in Israel, he expected his relatives to offer him a home. But it was only an old man from his homeland who took care of him. The Benjaminites were inhospitable, which was a bad omen. (Jg. 19:15-16)
21. After the people of the tribe of Benjamin had raped the Levite’s wife, the other eleven tribes united against her and devastated it to the point where it became almost non-existent (Jg. 20). But later, they regretted having acted with such fury and therefore helped the tribe of Benjamin to rebuild itself. (Jg. 21)