

# “SCIBBÒLET” O “SIBBÒLET”? LA STORIA DI UNA GUERRA FRATRICIDA (DI IERI E DI OGGI) IN GIUDICI 12,1-7

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## Abstract

*This study delves into the fratricidal conflict depicted in Judges 12:1-7, centering on the historical and narrative context of Jephthah, a controversial judge of Israel from the 11th century BCE. The narrative begins by placing Jephthah among the heroes of faith in the Letter to the Hebrews, highlighting his military prowess and strategic acumen. Born to a prostitute and exiled by his brothers, Jephthah rises as a leader and defeats the Ammonites, only to face internal strife with the Ephraimites.*

*The conflict escalates when the Ephraimites accuse Jephthah of excluding them from the victory over the Ammonites. The altercation culminates in a devastating battle where Jephthah employs a linguistic test using the word “shibboleth” to distinguish and execute fleeing Ephraimites, resulting in significant casualties.*

*This episode underscores the tribal tensions within Israel, exacerbated by linguistic differences that reveal deep-seated ethnic and separatist sentiments. The paper further explores the broader implications of this narrative, drawing parallels to modern conflicts, such as the current war in Ukraine, where language serves as a means of identification and division. The analysis concludes by reflecting on the moral and theological lessons from Jephthah’s story, advocating for unity and faith in overcoming internal divisions.*

**Keywords:** *Judges, fratricidal conflict, shibboleth, Ephraimites, tribes of Israel, linguistic tensions, war in Ukraine, internal divisions, moral lessons*

## 1. Il contesto storico di una guerra fraticida

L’autore della *Lettera agli Ebrei*, quasi al termine della sua esortazione, offre un rapido elenco di eroi dell’Antico Testamento che avevano fede in Dio in mezzo alle avversità:

E che dirò ancora? Mi mancherebbe il tempo se volessi narrare di Gedeone, di Barak, di Sansone, di Iefte, di Davide, di Samuele e dei profeti; per fede, essi conquistarono regni, esercitarono la