Judges 12:1 ¶ And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.

After Jephthah led his people to a great victory, men from the tribe of Ephraim showed up to complain that he had not asked them to go with him to battle against Ammon. Because of that, they determined to burn him down in his house.

It seems that the men of Ephraim are always showing up "after the fact" to complain about not being included. They always wanted to bask in the glory of victory—but didn't really want to commit until the victory had been gained.

Judges 12:2 And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.
Judges 12:3 And when I saw that ye delivered *me* not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?

Jephthah declared that he had issued a call for help but had been ignored. Even though they had not come to help, Jephthah had chosen to risk his own life and lead the people against the troops of Ammon. He rightfully credited the LORD for giving them the victory. In light of those facts, he questioned why they were now complaining to him.

It should be noted that the men of Ephraim didn't deny his facts, although the record does not note that Ephraim was invited to join them or that they refused to come.

Judges 12:4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, *and* among the Manassites.
Judges 12:5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so*, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;
Judges 12:6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

Jephthah gathered his troops together to do battle with Ephraim because they mocked the men of Gilead by declaring them to be nothing but refugees from Ephraim and Manasseh. It seems there was no love lost between the descendants of these two brothers.

The men of Gilead gained the upper hand and took control of the crossing areas of the Jordan River. When a man tried to get across the river at one of these points, he was asked if he was an Ephraimite. If he said "no," he was asked to say Shibboleth. The men of Ephraim could not pronounce the "sh" and said Sibboleth. If the man was identified as a man of Ephraim, he was killed; 42,000 men were killed at that time.

I liked this application from Guzik: "Today, there are certain true shibboleths in a person's vocabulary. In Judges 12:6, you could know something about a person by how they said '**Shibboleth**.' Today when someone talks about Jesus, you can listen to what they say and learn something about them. You can listen as they speak about the Bible, and you know something about them. It is also true that as much as our dialect gives us away, so does our everyday speech. Others should be able to tell that we are Christians by the way we talk."

Judges 12:7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of* **the cities of Gilead.**

Jephthah judged Israel for six years before dying and being buried in a city of Gilead.

Judges 12:8 ¶ And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel.
Judges 12:9 And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, *whom* **he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.**
Judges 12:10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem.

After Gilead died, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel for seven years. It is noted that he had 30 son and 30 daughters, a sign of a man of great influence. It seems that he sent his daughters to other places to get husbands and obtained 30 women to marry his sons from other places—I would assume from within the tribes of Israel.

Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

Judges 12:11 And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years.
Judges 12:12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

After Ibzan died, Elon, a man of Zebulon, judged Israel for ten years before dying and being buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

Judges 12:13 And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.
Judges 12:14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

Judges 12:15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

After the death of Elon, Abdon the son of Hillel, a man of Pirathon (about 10 miles southwest of Shechem) judged Israel for eight years. This man is noted as having 40 sons and 30 grandsons (from the Hebrew) that rode 70 ass colts. Again, this evidenced that he was a man of great influence. When Abdon died, he was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim in the mount of the Amalekites.

Between them, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon judged Israel for 31 years.