



THE  
BIBLE  
FOR HOME  
& SCHOOL

JUDGES



Division 1-43

Section 1-5





*THE BIBLE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL*

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THE BOOK OF JUDGES

EDWARD LEWIS CURTIS

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SHAILER MATHEWS, GENERAL EDITOR

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# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

BY

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## NOTE

At the time of his lamented death, Professor Curtis had completed the manuscript for this volume up to and including Chapter 18. At the suggestion of the family of Professor Curtis, and with the approval of the General Editor, Dr. Albert A. Madsen has edited the entire manuscript and written the comment upon Chapters 19 to 21, inclusive, as well as adding the Bibliography.



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE BIBLE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL is intended to place the results of the best modern biblical scholarship at the disposal of the general reader. It does not seek to duplicate other commentaries to which the student must turn. Its chief characteristics are (*a*) its rigid exclusion of all *processes*, both critical and exegetical, from its notes; (*b*) its presupposition and its use of the assured results of historical investigation and criticism wherever such results throw light on the biblical text; (*c*) its running analysis both in text and comment; (*d*) its brief explanatory notes adapted to the rapid reader; (*e*) its thorough but brief Introductions; (*f*) its use of the Revised Version of 1881, supplemented with all important renderings in other versions.

Biblical science has progressed rapidly during the past few years, but the reader still lacks a brief, comprehensive commentary that shall extend to him in usable form material now at the disposition of the student. It is hoped that in this series the needs of intelligent Sunday School teachers have been met, as well as those of clergymen and lay readers, and that in scope, purpose, and loyalty to the Scriptures as a foundation of Christian thought and life, its volumes will stimulate the intelligent use of the Bible in the home and the school.

SHAILER MATHEWS.



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THE BOOK OF JUDGES

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. TEXT

THE text of the Book of Judges has a common history with that of the Old Testament as a whole. The Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament all represent a single text called the Massoretic or traditional text. Thus these manuscripts differ widely from those of the New Testament, which represent a number of variant texts, the product of different copyists who carefully or with intention departed from originals. The reason for this uniformity of Old Testament manuscripts lies in the great reverence which the Jews had for their Scriptures. This reverence was of gradual growth, but by the first century A.D. it had become so intense that the work of a copyist was then called divine, and warnings were given against dropping or adding a letter. This resulted in the establishment, probably early in the second century, of a single authorized text. All other manuscripts were either destroyed or allowed to disappear. Care was also taken that manuscripts worn or defective through age should be destroyed. Hence the existing manuscripts of the Old Testament are all much younger than those of the Greek New Testament. The oldest Hebrew manuscript of the Pentateuch, the most revered portion of the Jewish Scriptures, is of the ninth century A.D., and that of the entire Old Testament of the tenth.

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This single Massoretic text of the Old Testament is preserved in two forms, one, the earlier, of consonants only, and one of consonants with vowel signs which were introduced sometime between the beginnings of the fifth and ninth centuries A.D. But the variations between these forms are slight. The text itself, however, is not without corruptions which came in before its authorization. Some of these may be corrected by a recourse to the Greek translations of the third and second centuries B.C., and some help also in the same direction is given by the Syriac translation of the third century A.D., which is based upon the earlier Greek. Many corruptions, however, must either be allowed to remain, giving passages which are untranslatable or without meaning, or else be removed by conjecture. The Book of Judges compared with the Books of Samuel has few of these corruptions. Some, however, will be found, especially in the fifth chapter, the song of Deborah; this like many passages of poetry seems to have suffered badly at the hand of early copyists.

### II. PLACE AND CONTENTS

The Book of Judges is the seventh book in the Old Testament in the Hebrew, Greek, and English Bibles, coming in the two latter between the Books of Joshua and Ruth, and in the first between the Books of Joshua and Samuel (the Book of Ruth having a later place in the Hebrew Canon). This place was given it from its contents. It narrates the history of Israel from the conquest of the land of Canaan given in the Book of Joshua to the beginnings of the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy with which the Books of Samuel open.

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The book falls into three divisions: chapters 1-2:5, an introduction giving a fragmentary account of the conquest of Canaan; chapters 2:6-16:31, the main history of the judges; and chapters 17-21, an appendix containing the stories of the origin of the sanctuary at Dan and of the sin of Gibeah.

The first division (1-2:5) pictures especially the unsubdued Canaanites west of the Jordan. It opens with the invasion by the tribes of Judah and Simeon of their subsequent territory, situated from Jerusalem southward and embracing the regions of Hebron, Debir, and Hormah, whose captures are related (1:1-21). Then follows the conquest of Central and Northern Palestine. The seizure of Bethel by the house of Joseph is given in detail (1:22-26), but the failure of the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan to completely expel the Canaanites is particularly recorded. Lists of the unconquered cities are given (1:27-36), and the section closes with the story of a reproof from the angel of Jehovah for this failure (2:1-5).

The second part (2:6-16:31) opens with the mention of the death of Joshua and of the character of the men of his generation (2:6-10). Then follows a general statement of the course of Israel's history, which consists of a series of alternating oppressions and deliverances occasioned by apostasies in the worship of Jehovah and returns in loyalty to him (2:11-3:6). The people do evil in the eyes of Jehovah, who sells them into the hand of their enemies; and in their distress they cry unto Jehovah, who raises up a judge to deliver them; but at his death they backslide, and the same events are repeated. The failure of

Israel to expel the Canaanites, recorded in the first section, is thus explained. The nations, a list of whom is given (3:3), were left to test Israel's loyalty to Jehovah and to teach them war. After this introductory history comes the history of the series of judges who delivered or ruled Israel and from whom this period of Israel's history derives its name. These judges are usually reckoned as twelve, falling into two groups: six great judges, Othniel, Ehud, Barak (with Deborah), Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson; and six minor ones, Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Each of the great judges is introduced with a statement of an apostasy and an oppression, according to the outline of events just mentioned. Then follows a story of length relating deeds of interest and valor connected with the overthrow of Israel's enemies; and each narrative is concluded with the statement of the length either of the judgeship or the period during which the land enjoyed rest. The minor judges, on the other hand, are associated with no apostasies or oppressions and have only the briefest mention. No exploit except in the case of Shamgar is recorded of any of them; and taken as a whole they appear like an afterthought, added to make the number twelve and to give a required number of years (see p. 17). With the great judges for interest and length of narrative is to be classed Abimelech, the king of Shechem, to whom a long chapter (9) is devoted.

Othniel, the first great judge, rescues Israel from the oppression of Cushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia (3:7-11). No particular exploit is recorded of him, but only the bare fact of the deliverance. He thus for treatment stands in a class by himself among the great judges.

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Ehud, the second great judge, delivers Israel from the oppression of the Moabites. His story is one of romantic exploit. With cunning craft he assassinates the king of Moab, summons his countrymen to arms, and they, taking the fords of the Jordan, slay not less than ten thousand of their enemies (3: 12-30). Ehud is followed by Shamgar, the first of the so-called minor judges. His record is limited to a single verse (3: 31). He was the hero of the exploit of slaying six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad and is said to have saved Israel. Barak, the third great judge, also mentioned as though the follower of Ehud with a period of oppression between them, is associated with Deborah, a prophetess. The oppressor of Israel is the Canaanite king Jabin of Hazor, along with Sisera, the captain of his army. Deborah incites Barak to lead a revolt and to take the field against Sisera, who meets with signal defeat and is treacherously slain by a woman. This story of revolt, victory, and the death of Sisera is twice related, first in prose narrative (4: 1-24) and secondly in a poem commemorative of the great victory (5: 1-31). The fourth great judge is Gideon, who delivers Israel from the hordes of the Midianites, who are represented as having completely overrun the land. His story is one of considerable length (6: 1-8: 32). He is called to his work by the angel of Jehovah and granted miraculous signs. He selects his final army of three hundred men on a singular principle, and by the crafty use of torches and war-cries he renders his foes panic-stricken and wins a great victory. Summary vengeance is taken upon men of Israel who refused him succor when in pursuit of the enemy. The people in gratitude for his deliverance are ready to make Gideon king.

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He refuses, asking only a portion of the spoil from which he made an image which afterwards caused the people to go astray. Two independent narratives appear plainly in this story, most clearly evident in the twofold conclusion of the war (7:23-8:3 and 8:4-21). After the account of the judgship of Gideon comes the story of the short-lived reign of his bastard son, Abimelech, whom the inhabitants of Shechem made their king. This story, after the introduction and the account of Abimelech's measures to become king (8:29-9:6), presents the parable of Jotham on the appointment of Abimelech as king, likening the choice of him as sovereign to that of a bramble bush to rule over the trees of the forest (9:7-21). Then follows the description of the rebellion against Abimelech and of his ignominious death by the hand of a woman (9:22-57). After the episode of Abimelech two minor judges, Tola and Jair, are mentioned (10:1-5); and then comes the account of the oppression of the Ammonites and the story of the deliverance from them under the leadership of an outcast and freebooter of Gilead, the fourth great judge, Jephthah (10:6-12:7). Three striking features appear in this story: the messages interchanged between Jephthah and the king of Ammon, the vow of Jephthah resulting in the sacrifice of his daughter, and the strife between the men of Gilead and the men of Ephraim. The narrative of Jephthah is followed by a brief record of the minor judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12:8-15), and then is introduced the sixth great judge, Samson, the hero of Dan and the deliverer from the Philistines. Of him are related seven most graphic stories: that of the annunciation of his birth through the angel of

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Jehovah, and his birth (13: 1-25); that of his wooing and feast at Timnah (14: 1-20); that of the destruction of the Philistines' harvest through fire spread by brands fastened to foxes' tails (15: 1-8); that of the slaughter of one thousand men with the jawbone of an ass (15: 9-19); that of bearing away the gates of the city Gaza (16: 1-3); that of his amour with Delilah, to whom he reveals the secret of his strength and through whom he is shorn of his locks and delivered to his enemies, who put out his eyes and cause him to grind in prison (16: 4-22); and finally the story of his triumphant death, destroying a multitude of his Philistine enemies by pulling down upon them and himself a great building (16: 23-31).

The first story of the appendix describes the founding of the sanctuary of Dan. A woman of Mt. Ephraim possessed a considerable quantity of silver which her son stole, but the mother forgave him the theft and turned the metal over to him. He made thereof an idol and created a sanctuary in which a wandering Levite was installed as priest (17: 1-13). Members of the tribe of Dan on their march through the land to secure a home in Northern Palestine took both idol and priest and established therewith the sanctuary at Dan (18: 1-31). The second story, the sin of Gibeah, is a gruesome tale of a Levite whose concubine was so outraged by the men of Gibeah that she died. He, then, severing her body, sent its pieces through Israel (19: 1-30). This called the people out to war against the inhabitants of Gibeah, who were defended by their fellow tribesmen of Benjamin. They were defeated and nearly all of the tribe of Benjamin was massacred, six hundred men alone escaping (chap. 20).

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All the assembled people of Israel had bound themselves by an oath not to give their daughters in marriage to the Benjamites. Hence to provide the survivors with wives, lest a tribe should become extinct, the Israelites sent an expedition against the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, who had not joined with the rest of Israel, and all were put to the sword except four hundred virgins who were spared to become the wives of four hundred Benjamites (21: 1-14). The remaining two hundred were allowed to provide themselves with wives by seizing virgins of Shiloh when in attendance at the dances of the annual feast of Jehovah (21: 15-25).

### III. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Book of Judges has already been indicated in part. It was designed to furnish a history of Israel during the period intervening between the death of Joshua and the birth of Samuel, or, as stated, from the close of the conquest of Canaan to the beginnings of the Hebrew monarchy. But this was not its only purpose. The main portion of the book (2: 6-16: 31) was clearly designed to teach a great religious lesson, to wit, that departure from the service of Jehovah, especially in the worship of other gods, brought oppression and disaster upon the people of Israel, from which relief might be obtained by crying to Jehovah, who stood ready to raise up a deliverer, under whom rest from foreign oppression might be enjoyed. This is the meaning of the general introduction (2: 6-3: 6) and the repeated formula with which the story of each great judge is usually opened and closed; *i.e.* *The people sinned and were given by Jehovah*



*into the hands of their enemies, who oppressed them certain years, when they cried unto Jehovah, who raised up a deliverer* (whose deliverance is then related) *and the land had rest certain years* (3: 7-9, 11, 12-15 a, 30 b; 4: 1-3; 5: 31 b; 6: 1-6; 8: 28; 10: 6-18; 13: 1; 15: 20).

The Book of Judges presents, therefore, a constant lesson of the divine government and has a common feature with the Books of Joshua, Kings, and Chronicles, all of which were designed to inculcate similar great principles of divine rule and thus to guide human conduct, especially the national conduct of Israel. (The same fact appears in the earlier chapters of the Books of Samuel, but less distinctly in the remainder of those books which are more purely historical.) The spirit and form of this teaching in the Book of Judges is especially that of Deuteronomy, which contains repeated prohibitions and warnings in connection with the worship or service of any god but Jehovah (Deut. 6: 14 f.; 7: 4; 8: 19 f.; 11: 16 f.; 12: 30; 13: 6 ff.; 30: 17 ff.), and threatens such defection with dire disasters (Deut. 7: 4; 8: 19 f.; 30: 17 ff.).

#### IV. LITERARY CHARACTER

The Book of Judges shares with other books of the Old Testament the characteristic of being, not the work of one writer nor the product of a single generation, but a literary growth of centuries. Its composition can best be understood in the light of that of the Hexateuch, the first six books of the Old Testament, which originally were a literary unit. Three great strands or documents run through these books. The most prominent of these, though the latest, is a priestly writing in the main of the fifth cen-

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tury consisting very largely of laws, embracing the Book of Leviticus and the related parts of Exodus and Numbers; and yet consisting also of a historical narrative which commences with an account of the creation and ends with the allotment of the tribes in the land of Canaan. This narrative is statistical and formal in character, marked with a well-defined progress in divine revelation or law, and especially with the conception of Israel as fully organized by Moses into a theocracy or church. This document, ordinarily called the Priests' Code, is symbolized by modern scholars by the letter P, representing both the literary material itself and the author or authors.

Next earlier in age to the Priests' Code and of the half century beginning about 625 B.C. is the strand or document which embraces the Book of Deuteronomy (with minute exceptions) and related parts of the Book of Joshua, and possibly a few verses in the earlier books. This, as seen in Deuteronomy, is clearly marked by its hortatory character and the stress which it lays upon the worship of Jehovah and the keeping of the statutes and commandments, with well-defined principles of divine retribution in rewards and punishments. Its symbol, applied both to the writing and the author or authors, is the letter D.

The third and earliest strand or document is a narrative called prophetic because it reveals a divine purpose for the future. In its completed form this was designed to give a history of Israel from the creation to a much later period than the conquest of Canaan. This, composed largely of stories, is the naïve and picturesque element of the Hexateuch. It is a resultant of the literature which grew from the entertainment of assemblies at family

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hearths, camp-fires, and sanctuaries. With this some early laws have also been combined. A line of cleavage exists in this strand or document, and it is really composed of two primary ones, known as the Jahvistic (Jehovistic) and Elo-histic, so called from the names of deity, *Jahweh* (Jehovah) and *Elohim*, used in its respective parts in Genesis. Its symbol is JE and those of the two primary documents J and E. Of these latter J is the earlier. Both were probably composed in the eighth century (possibly J in the ninth) and were united into JE in the seventh. The place of composition or origin of J was in Judah or the Southern Kingdom while E came from the Northern Kingdom, hence J is called the Judean Narrative and E the Ephraimite. The two narratives J and E are not very dissimilar, and yet each is characterized in some degree by its own vocabulary and phrases and notably, as already mentioned, in the use of terms for deity. E is rougher in style than J. Certain conceptions also distinguish them. J is the more naïve. Jehovah appears in J frequently in human form and talks directly with men. In E God is more remote and usually reveals himself or his word in a dream. E exhibits more reflection than J. Its author is not so simple-minded. In E<sup>2</sup>, a revision of E, the author approaches the conceptions of Deuteronomy.

All of these works, symbolized by the letters P, D, J, and E, are regarded as the products of schools of writers rather than individuals. They bear the marks of not being continuous, or written by a single author, and occasionally of revision (for example, as mentioned, there is E and E<sup>2</sup>). Account must also be taken of the editor who united JE, *i.e.* R<sup>JE</sup>, and other editors who gradually brought the

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documents JE, D, and P together and thus formed the Hexateuch. Viewing the Hexateuch as a whole, it resembles in structure largely a harmony of the Gospels, one which might have passed through several editions, as though at first the life of Christ had been written by the union of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and then later, to this those of Luke and John had been added, and the compilers had also felt free in places to annotate and change according to their own views.

The structure of the Book of Judges, while far from being identical with that of the Hexateuch or such a harmony of the Gospels as we have described, is not altogether dissimilar. Already in the description of its purpose we have noticed, in connection with its second or main part, the introductions and conclusions of the narratives of the great judges (see pp. 8 f.). These form a framework in which the stories of the judges are set. The writer of this framework, who composed in the spirit of Deuteronomy (see p. 10), clearly shaped the main portion of our book (2:6-16:31) and may be called its Deuteronomic author. The stories, however, were not written by him. Scholars are not entirely agreed in regard to their source, whether they existed independently or were taken from a continuation of JE, the constituent part of the Hexateuch. This latter is the prevailing view and the one adopted in this Commentary. Such a composite source explains the duplicate stories of Gideon (see p. 6) and other seeming traces of double narratives. The history of the Book of Judges, then, is as follows: Sometime during the sixth century a member of the Deuteronomic school of writers, having before him the great historical work JE, took from it the

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stories of Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson and gave them their Deuteronomic setting, writing likewise the introduction, and the account of the judgeship of Othniel. His work, beginning with the death of Joshua, and closing with the judgeship of Samson, consisted of 2 : 6-16 : 31 with the exception of chapter 9, the story of Abimelech, which shows no trace of his hand, and 3 : 31 ; 10 : 1-5 ; 12 : 8-15, the accounts of the minor judges, and possibly also chapter 16. In the fifth or fourth century another writer turned again to the work of JE and excerpted from it the other two parts of our book, the introduction, 1-2 : 5, and the appendix, 17-21, both of which he edited with considerable annotations or additions. He also added chapters 9 and 16 and the accounts of the minor judges, although these last may have been composed independently of JE. This author or editor belonged to the school of P and we call him the priestly editor, giving him the symbol R<sup>P</sup>. He virtually completed the Book of Judges, although a few annotations may have been made later. The verse describing the action of Shamgar (3 : 31) seems to have been one of these.

We will find, then, in our Book of Judges all this various material; the naïve stories of J, united or inextricably woven together with the more reflective stories of E and E<sup>2</sup>. A few paragraphs will appear from the compiler of JE, R<sup>JE</sup>, then considerable material from the Deuteronomic author of Judges, and still later from the priestly editor, and probably, as mentioned, some from another final hand.

### V. HISTORICAL CHARACTER

The contents of the Book of Judges taken as a whole are legendary rather than historical. By that we mean

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that, while actual events gave rise to much of its narrative, the form in which these events are related is that of the story-teller and religious teacher and not that of the sober historian. The narratives were composed primarily to entertain, and then later were edited to teach religious lessons. The imagination had free play in their composition, and they abound in the marvels which belong to all such early literature. To some this view of a book of the Bible may come as a shock, and yet no one ought thereby to be disturbed. Morality can be taught by fable, the Gospel by parables, and so likewise legend has its place in the teaching of religion. The supreme value of the Bible lies in its revelation of God, or the introduction of God into the sphere of human life. This revelation or introduction required the use of the imagination, hence legend became its appropriate vehicle. A bare chronicle of events has never produced such results and never can. Hence modern scholarship, in showing the legendary character of much of the Scripture, has confirmed this principle of knowledge. The historical books are now intelligible to all thinking men. They speak of God through human experience.

But in the legends of the judges lie embedded historical facts. In the introduction to our book (1-2:5) an accurate outline of the conquest of Canaan is given. The tribes obtained a foothold in the South and then in Central and Northern Palestine, and the Canaanites retained possession of a large number of cities as mentioned. This continued until the reigns of David and Solomon, during which these Canaanite cities were absorbed into Israel. Behind the story of the first great judge, Othniel, it is

barely possible that there may have been a struggle with Edom; but if such history is there, it has been entirely distorted, and a narrative really unhistorical has taken its place.

The story of Ehud rests not unlikely upon a real occurrence. There is nothing improbable in the oppression of a portion of Israel by the Moabites and the deliverance through the crafty assassination of the king.

The deliverance through Barak and Deborah, as far as it relates a great victory over Sisera, a Canaanitish king of the plain of Esdraelon, is undoubtedly historical, and interwoven with it is a reminiscence of an earlier actual struggle with Jabin, King of Hazor. That the elements favored the Israelites in battle and that Sisera was treacherously slain are no doubt real events. The details of the muster for battle given in the poem are probably authentic.

Behind the long and complex story of Gideon we find a decisive defeat by that hero of troublesome Bedouin marauders. We believe also that he set up an image of Jehovah and that he ruled over a district of the region of Shechem as a petty king. The story of the short-lived kingdom of Abimelech even in its detail is also essentially historic.

The same is true of the story of Jephthah. He was a real warrior who delivered the land of Gilead from the encroachment of either the Ammonites or the Moabites. The sacrifice of his daughter actually took place.

In the stories of Samson we find little of real history. There may have been an Israelitish hero of that name that harassed the Philistines, but the Samson of the Book of

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Judges is certainly half mythical, and his exploits are not inaptly compared with those of the Greek Hercules.

The story of the founding of the sanctuary of Dan as far as it relates to the plundering of a sanctuary in Mt. Ephraim and the enticement therefrom of a priest is certainly plausible and on no good grounds can its historicity be denied.

What lies in the story of Gibeah is entirely obscure. Real history, however, is there; but the original events, beyond some crime and some summary vengeance upon a number of the tribe of Benjamin, are no longer recognizable; and conjectures, though interesting, cannot give the real facts.

### VI. CHRONOLOGY

The following chronological data are found in the Book of Judges:

3:8	Israel serves Cushan-rishathaim . . . . .	8 years
3:11	Peace after the deliverance by Othniel . . . . .	40 years
3:14	Israel serves Eglon . . . . .	18 years
3:30	Peace after the deliverance of Ehud . . . . .	80 years
4:3	Oppression by Jabin . . . . .	20 years
5:31	Peace after the deliverance by Barak . . . . .	40 years
6:1	Oppression by Midian . . . . .	7 years
8:28	Peace after the deliverance by Gideon . . . . .	40 years
9:22	Reign of Abimelech . . . . .	3 years
10:2	Rule of Tola . . . . .	23 years
10:3	Rule of Jair . . . . .	22 years
10:8	Oppression by Ammon . . . . .	18 years
12:7	Rule of Jephthah . . . . .	6 years
12:9	Rule of Ibzan . . . . .	7 years



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12 : 11 Rule of Elon . . . . .	10 years
12 : 14 Rule of Abdon . . . . .	8 years
13 : 1 Oppression by the Philistines . . . . .	40 years
15 : 20 ; 16 : 31 Samson judges Israel . . . . .	20 years

This total of 410 years is too long to fit into any scheme either of biblical or actual chronology covering the period of the judges. It is evident then that the periods of foreign service or oppression should be eliminated and only the periods of rest or judgeship be retained. This is after the common method of reckoning, in which years of insurrection or illegitimate sovereignty are omitted in giving the length of dynasties. No English royalist, for example, would give the period of the Commonwealth in reckoning the length of the rule of the House of Stuart, but those years would be included under the reign of Charles the Second. Omitting then the periods of foreign service and oppression and the reign of Abimelech, we have for the period of judgeship or peace in the land, Othniel 40 years, Ehud 80 years, Barak 40 years, Gideon 40 years, Samson 20 years, and Jephthah and the minor judges taken together 76 years, or a total of 296 years. If now to these years are added the 40 years of the sojourn in the wilderness, 20 years as the period of the conquest under Joshua and of the life of the elders of his generation, 40 years the judgeship of Eli (1 Sam. 4 : 18), 20 years as the judgeship of Samuel, and 20 years as the reign of Saul, and the 40 years of the reign of David (1 Kgs. 2 : 11) and the 4 of the reign of Solomon to the laying of the foundation of the Temple (1 Kgs. 6 : 1), the total is 480 years : or the exact period said to have elapsed from the Exodus to the found-

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ing of the Temple (1 Kgs. 6 : 1). This result shows that this reckoning of the Book of Judges was made to fit into that scheme of chronology which placed the period from the Exodus to the founding of the Temple at exactly 480 years or twelve periods of 40 years each. The actual period of Israel's history covered by the Book of Judges is probably about 150 years, beginning in the first half of the twelfth century.

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### THE MORE IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

- AV . . . . Authorized (King James) Version.
- ARV . . . . American Revised Version.
- RV . . . . English Revised Version.
- Gr. . . . . Septuagint.
- Heb. . . . . Hebrew.
- m. . . . . margin.

### EXPLANATION OF LETTERS IN THE MARGIN OF TEXT (SEE ALSO THE INTRODUCTION)

- J . . . . . The Yahwist Document.
- E . . . . . The Elohist Document.
- JE . . . . . These two documents combined.
- E<sup>2</sup> . . . . . Later additions to the Elohist Document.

## INTRODUCTION

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- R . . . . . Passages by a redactor or editor of uncertain date.  
R<sup>JE</sup>. . . . . Additions by the redactor who combined J and E.  
R<sup>D</sup>. . . . . Additions by the Deuteronomic redactor.  
R<sup>P</sup>. . . . . Additions by the Priestly redactors.

# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

## A. THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE TRIBES, 1: 1-2: 5

### I. CONQUESTS IN SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL PALESTINE, 1: 1-26

1. And it came to pass after the death of Joshua, that <sup>RP</sup> 1: 1  
the children of Israel asked of the LORD, saying, Who J

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1: 1-2: 5. In this section of the Book of Judges are given in the briefest outline an account of the conquest by the tribes of Judah and Simeon of the Canaanites of the district near Jerusalem (1: 1-8), of those located at Hebron and Debir (1: 9-15), of those of the land farther south (1: 16 f.), and likewise of those of the lowland or Shephelah to the west (1: 18-21); an account of the conquest by the house of Joseph of Bethel (1: 22-26); and then lists of unconquered Canaanites who dwelt in the territories of the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan (1: 27-36); and finally an explanation of the presence of these unconquered Canaanites (2: 1-5). The section is from the primitive document J, but has been annotated or glossed by the priestly editor, R<sup>P</sup>.

1. **And it came to pass after the death of Joshua.** A statement from the canonical editor to show the relation of the Book of Judges to the Book of Joshua which closes with the death of Joshua. In reality, however, this chapter describes the conquest, and is another version of that related in the Book of Joshua as having taken place under Joshua. **That the children of Israel asked of the Lord.** The original connection of this asking is not here given. It presupposes that the Jordan had been crossed and Jericho conquered (cf. Josh. 3-6). We may think of the tribes of Israel encamped in the neighborhood of

- shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to
2. fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.
  3. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy
- R<sup>P</sup> 4. lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they smote of them in

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that city. The *asking* was probably either by the Urim and Thummim, 1 Sam. 14:41 (Greek text) or by the Ephod, 1 Sam. 23:9; 30:7, *i.e.* by some kind of lot. **The Canaanites.** The pre-Israelitish inhabitants of Western Palestine. *Canaan* as a geographical name seems to have been first applied to the coast land of Phœnicia and then southward to Egypt and eastward into the highlands west of the Jordan.

2. The response of the oracle or inquiry is here given.

3. **Simeon his brother.** The two tribes of *Judah* and *Simeon* together with Reuben and Levi were closely related. The patriarchal legend made them the successive sons of Jacob and Leah (Gen. 29:31-35). **Into my lot.** This implies that in some way the invading tribes had divided the land between them. While historically this is not impossible, more likely it is a later conception. **So Simeon went with him.** In historic times Simeon and Judah occupied adjacent territory, the former dwelling to the south of the latter.

4. **The Lord delivered.** The writer ignores the second cause, and after the usual Old Testament method ascribes the victory to Jehovah. **The Perizzites.** An obscure designation of a people of Palestine. It is uncertain whether they represented a tribe, perhaps of an earlier population than the Canaanites, or a class of Canaanite villagers. **Bezek.** An unknown locality not far, as the context shows, from Jerusalem. Another Bezek is mentioned in 1 Sam. 11:8. This has been identified with Ibzik, some fourteen miles southwest of Beisan, the ancient Beth-shan.

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5. Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and
6. they smote the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.
7. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.
8. And the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire. And afterward the
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5. **Adoni-bezek.** This name, meaning lord of Bezek, is anomalous. Probably by some confusion it stands for *Adoni-zedek*, "lord of righteousness," the name of the king of Jerusalem according to Josh. 10: 1, 3.

6. **Cut off his thumbs and his great toes.** Such mutilation was not uncommon in ancient warfare, although not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament. The Greeks and Hannibal and Cæsar are said to have thus treated captives.

7. **Threescore and ten kings.** This seems like an exaggeration, yet each city in Palestine generally had its king. **Under my table.** The table was a small low stand: diners sat on the ground; hence the captives were not actually under the table, but gathered like dogs pieces which fell from the table (cf. Matt. 15: 27). **And they brought him to Jerusalem.** His own people, since Jerusalem was not taken (v. 21).

8. **And the children of Judah fought, etc.** This verse contradicts v. 21 and all that is known of the history of Jerusalem elsewhere (cf. 19: 11 f.; Josh. 15: 63). The city was not taken until the time of David (2 Sam. 5: 6-9). Hence this verse is a gloss added by some one who interpreted the last clause of the previous verse to mean that the men of Judah carried *Adoni-bezek* to Jerusalem.

- children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the hill country, and in  
 J 10. the South, and in the lowland. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron beforetime was Kiriath-arba:) and they smote Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.  
 11. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir. (Now the name of Debir beforetime was

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9. This verse is introductory to vv. 10-21 and summarizes in physical divisions the land conquered by Judah subsequent to the defeat of the Canaanites near Jerusalem. **The hill country.** The central mountainous region of Judah, having its highest elevation at Hebron. **The South.** Heb. the *Negeb*, the arid plain extending southward, stretching off into the desert between Egypt and Palestine. **The lowland.** Heb. *Shephelah*, generally the western foothills between Philistia and the Judean hill country, but here seems also to include the maritime plain (v. 18). Many ancient geographical names in Palestine are used in both a narrow and a broad sense.

Vv. 10-15 appear also in Josh. 15: 13-19. This shows that both the author or compiler of Joshua and of this section of Judges incorporated material from a common source usually supposed to have been J.

10. **Hebron.** The most important city of southern Judah, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem; the patriarchal burial place (Gen. 23: 2, 19; 25: 9; 35: 27 f.; 50: 13); and David's residence as king (2 Sam. 2: 11; 5: 5; 1. Kgs. 2: 11). **Kiriath-arba.** "City of four," *i.e.* of four quarters, representing probably four clans. **Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.** In Josh. 15: 14 these are called "sons of Anak," a term implying that they were giants. In that passage the conqueror of Hebron is *Caleb*. This is implied here in v. 12.

11. **Debir.** In Josh. 11: 21 placed in the hill country, here and in v. 15 in the *Negeb*. **Kiriath-sepher.** According to the ordinary Hebrew meaning this compound means, "City of a book"; but originally *sepher* may have meant something else.



12. Kiriath-sepher.) And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kiriath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give  
 13. Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he  
 14. gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, when she came *unto him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted down from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What  
 15. wouldest thou? And she said unto him, Give me a <sup>1</sup> blessing; for that thou hast <sup>2</sup> set me in the land

<sup>1</sup> Or, *present*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *given me the land of the South*.

The implication also of "Book-city" is obscure, and the conjectures have been many: "Archive-city," "Library-city," etc.

12. **Caleb.** In the narratives of Numbers and Joshua, one of the twelve spies to whom Moses promised the region of Hebron (Num. 14: 24; Josh. 14: 6-15). In 1 Sam. 25: 3; 30: 14, Caleb is the name of a clan or tribe living in southern Judah during the time of David. Because Caleb is repeatedly called a Kenizite or son of Kenaz (Num. 32: 12; Josh. 14: 6, 14; 15: 17) this clan seems to have been of Edomitic origin (cf. Gen. 36: 15). Through the influence of David it seems to have been incorporated into the tribe of Judah and became one of the most important families of Judah (see genealogies of 1 Chron. 2). This position doubtless gave rise to the stories concerning the hero Caleb. The word Caleb means "dog." **Achsah.** Mentioned also in 1 Chron. 2: 49.

13. **Othniel.** Appears in 3: 9, 11 as the first of the judges of Israel. **Kenaz.** Appears in the genealogy of the descendants of Esau (Gen. 36: 15), (see also v. 12). In regard to the direct relationship of *Othniel* to *Caleb*, the text is ambiguous. It is uncertain whether *Othniel* or *Kenaz* is the younger brother of *Caleb*.

14. **When she came.** *Achsah* is assumed to have been elsewhere, perhaps at Hebron in her father's home. **That she moved him.** Better after the Greek or Latin text with a slight change in the Hebrew text: *that he moved her*.

15. **For that thou hast set me in the land of the South.**

of the South, give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

16. And the children of the Kenite, Moses' <sup>1</sup>brother in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which is in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *father in law*.

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Through the decision of her father her home would be in *Debir*, belonging by conquest to her husband, where water was scarce. **Springs of water.** In Hebrew *Gullath-mayim*, a proper name. Likewise also **the upper springs**, and **the nether springs**, *i.e.* *Gullath-illith* and *Gullath-tithah*, are proper names. Following the identification of Debir given in v. 11, the springs are those of Seil ed-Dilbeh, about two-fifths of the way from Hebron to Debir. These springs are fourteen in number, making one of the best watered valleys in Southern Palestine. Hence they must always have been highly prized. The story of this verse was told to explain how it happened that these springs belonged to the Othnielites of Debir and not to the nearer Calebite inhabitants of Hebron.

16. This verse is introductory. **And the children of the Kenite.** An impossible rendering of the Hebrew text, which is defective. The name *Hobab* after the Greek translation is to be supplied, *And the children of Hobab, the Kenite, the father-in-law of Moses.* The Hebrew word translated *brother-in-law* or *father-in-law* denotes a kinsman through marriage. Here it should be rendered father-in-law, since Hobab stood in that relation to Moses. In Exod. 2: 18 the father-in-law of Moses is Reuel, and in Exod. 3: 1; 4: 18; 18: 1, 5, 9, 12, Jethro. The traditions clearly varied respecting his name. **The city of palm trees.** *i.e.* Jericho (Deut. 34: 3; 2 Chron. 28: 15). **The wilderness of Judah, which is in the south of Arad.** This is an impossible designation, since the wilderness of Judah is quite distinct from the South, the Negeb. The text has in some way been confused. An amended reading proposed is, *In the wilderness of Arad. With the people* is meaningless. We should read after the Greek

17. with the people. And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they smote the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and <sup>1</sup>utterly destroyed it. And the name
18. of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took R<sup>P</sup> Gaza with the border thereof, and Ashkelon with the border thereof, and Ekron with the border thereof.

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *devoted*.

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version, *with the Amalekites*, with whom, according to 1 Sam. 15 the Kenites were dwelling in the time of Saul. The Kenites, according to this narrative, clearly joined their forces with Israel and entered with them into the land of Canaan, and from the rendezvous at Jericho allied themselves with Judah and Simeon and settled in the wilderness of Judah, where they became associated with the Amalekites. Their union with Israel is implied in the story of Num. 10: 29-32. During the reign of Saul they dwelt with the Amalekites, and in the reign of David their home was in the south of Judah. According to 1 Chron. 2: 55 the Rechabites were Kenites.

17. **Zephath.** This place has not been satisfactorily identified, either under this name or the later one of *Hormah* mentioned in Num. 14: 45; 21: 3; Deut. 1: 44. **And utterly destroyed it.** The Heb. words imply a complete extermination to the glory of Jehovah. This was according to the law of Deuteronomy (Deut. 7: 1-3; 20: 16 ff.), and the repeated habit of Israel (Deut. 2: 34; 3: 6; Josh. 8: 24 ff.; 10: 28 ff.; 11: 11 ff.; 1 Sam. 15: 3 ff.). On the Moabite stone Mesha, King of Moab, records that at the command of Kemosh he took Nebo from Israel and put to death the whole population, "men and boys, wives and maidens and slave girls, for to Ashtar-kemosh I devoted it"; and again of Ataroth he said, "I killed all the people of the city, a fine sight (?) for Kemosh and Moab." **Hormah.** *I.e.* "Devoted to destruction." The root letters HRM are those of the verb translated above, "utterly destroyed."

18. This verse implies the conquest of the Philistines by Judah. **Gaza** was their principal city on the southern border of their territory, **Ashkelon** in the middle, and **Ekron** in the north.

- J 19. And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants* of the hill country; for he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had
20. chariots of iron. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses had spoken: and he drave out thence the
21. three sons of Anak. And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem: but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem, unto this day.
22. And the house of Joseph, they also went up against

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But such a conquest is a flat contradiction of the following verse and 3: 3; Josh. 13: 3, and of all that is stated elsewhere of the relations between Israel and the Philistines. The verse, then, like v. 8, is a gloss.

19 f. These verses seem out of place. V. 19 may have originally followed v. 7; and v. 20 may have followed v. 11. **The hill country.** See v. 9. **The valley.** *I.e.* the plain of Philistia. **Chariots of iron.** See on 4: 3. **As Moses had spoken.** Cf. Num. 14: 24; Deut. 1: 36; Josh. 14: 9, 13; 15: 13, 14. **Sons of Anak.** See v. 10.

21. **The children of Benjamin.** In the parallel passage, Josh. 15: 63 (see above) the reading here and in the following sentence is *The children of Judah*. This reading probably was the original. The change was made by some one who followed Josh. 18: 28, where Jerusalem is reckoned among the towns of Benjamin. **Jebusites.** The people who held Jerusalem when David conquered it. Nothing further is known of them. They are frequently mentioned among the lists of the inhabitants of Canaan.

22-26. The writer now turns from the story of the conquest of Judah to that of Northern Israel. He gives the single episode of the capture of Beth-el. Of other conquest he gives no details, but simply mentions the cities which the Canaanites held.

22. **The house of Joseph.** The tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. The latter is included since he is represented as born in Canaan, Gen. 35: 16-18, *i.e.* historically the tribe was not formed until after the settlement in Canaan. The Benjamites

23. Beth-el: and the LORD was with them. And the house of Joseph sent to spy out Beth-el. (Now the name <sup>R<sup>P</sup></sup> of the city beforetime was Luz.) And the watchers saw <sup>J</sup> a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, 25. and we will deal kindly with thee. And he shewed them the entrance into the city, and they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man 26. go and all his family. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.

II. THE FAILURE TO DESTROY UTTERLY THE NATIVE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND, 1:27-2:5

27. And Manasseh did not drive out *the inhabitants of* <sup>J</sup> Beth-shean and her <sup>1</sup>towns, nor of Taanach and her

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *daughters*.

at times called themselves members of the house of Joseph, 2 Sam. 19:20. *Beth-el*, according to Josh. 18:22, belonged to Benjamin. Also went up. Even as Judah had done (cf. v. 4). *Beth-el*. Modern Beitin, twelve miles north of Jerusalem. A place celebrated in Israel's history, the seat of the worship of one of the golden calves (1 Kgs. 12:28 ff.). **And the Lord was with them.** *I.e.* they were successful.

23. **Luz.** Cf. Gen. 28:19; 35:6; Josh. 18:13.

26. **Land of the Hittites.** This was directly north of Palestine; see on 3:3, 5. The location of the new *Luz* is unknown.

27. **Manasseh.** Settled on both sides of the Jordan about midway between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Here the reference is only to western Manasseh. **Beth-shean.** In the Greek period known as *Scythopolis*, modern Beisan, situated three miles from the Jordan, commanding the entrance into the valley of

- towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to taskwork, and did not utterly drive them out.
28. And Ephraim drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.
30. Zebulun drave not out the inhabitants of Kitron,

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Jezeel and thus into the plain of Esdraelon. **Ibleam**, modern Bel'ameh, **Taanach**, modern Ta'annuk, and **Megiddo**, modern El-leggun, are towns on the southern side of the plain of Esdraelon, in this order from east to west. *Meggiddo*, commanding the main road southward, was a place of strategic importance, mentioned in both Assyrian and Egyptian inscriptions. **Dor**, modern Tantura, is farther west on the coast about halfway between Cæsarea and the promontory of Carmel. The Canaanites thus held a district embracing the fertile plain of Esdraelon, extending from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, separating the tribes of Joseph in Central Palestine from their brethren in Galilee.

28. **When Israel was waxen strong.** The reference is to the reigns of David and Solomon. The subjugation was by the former, while the latter **put the Canaanites to taskwork** in compelling them to labor in the erection of the Temple and other buildings (1 Kgs. 9 : 15, 20).

29. **Ephraim.** Settled in the hill country south of the plain of Esdraelon and the territory of Manasseh. **Gezer.** On the southwestern border of Ephraim. Its ancient site is marked by a mound of the same name which has been recently excavated. The city retained its independence until, in Solomon's reign, it was conquered by the Pharaoh of Egypt and given to his daughter the wife of Solomon (1 Kgs. 9 : 16).

30. **Zebulun.** Settled directly west of the sea of Galilee. **Kitron** and **Nahalol** have not been identified; and beyond the

nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became <sup>1</sup> tributary.

31. Asher drave not out the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib,  
 32. nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.  
 33. Naphtali drave not out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became tributary unto them.  
 34. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill country: for they would not suffer them to come

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *subject to taskwork*, and so vv. 33, 35.

latter's appearing in the list of Zebulun's cities in Josh. 19:15; 21:35 they are not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament.

31. **Asher**. Directly north of Zebulun, bounded on the west by the coast land of Phœnicia and on the east by Naphtali. **Acco**, modern 'Akka, on the coast north of Carmel. **Zidon**, the well-known Phœnician city. **Achzib**, modern es-Zib on the coast south of Tyre. The other cities of this verse have not been surely identified. Except **Ahlab** they were probably inland towns. These cities seem never to have been subject to Israel.

33. **Naphtali**. Settled in the eastern half of upper Galilee. **Beth-shemesh**, meaning "house of the sun," hence seat of sun worship, not identified. **Beth-anath**, meaning "house of Anath," a goddess (see 3:31), hence a seat of her worship, probably the modern 'Ainitha northwest of the Waters of Merom.

34. **Amorites**. Equivalent here to the Canaanites (so generally in the document E). *Amorites* are sometimes distinguished from the Canaanites as referring more exclusively to the earlier inhabitants of the land, and then again those inhabiting the highlands. The name is common in the inscriptions of the Assy-

35. down to the valley: but the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they
36. became tributary. And the border of the Amorites was from the ascent of Akrabbim, from <sup>1</sup> the rock, and upward.
2. And <sup>2</sup> the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Sela*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *a messenger*.

ians who entered the country on the east. The territory of Dan was southwest of that of Ephraim. The Danites failed to make themselves masters of the plain stretching seaward and later migrated to the north (cf. chapters 17 f.).

35. **Heres** is mentioned only here. Perhaps the same as *Beth-shemesh* in the valley of Sorek, modern 'Ain Shems, about halfway between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean. **Aijalon**. Modern Yalo, some five miles north of Beth-shemesh. **Shaalbim**. Identified by some with modern Selbit about three miles northwest of Yalo.

36. **Amorites**. A textual corruption for *Edomites*, since the boundaries of the verse are those of Edom. **The ascent of Akrabbim**. *I.e.* "Scorpions," a pass leading from the Arabah (the valley extending southward from the Dead Sea, the home of the Edomites) into the table land of southern Judah, probably the Nagb es-Safa, by which the main road ascends from Petra to Hebron. This pass marks, then, the beginning of the territory of the Edomites, who were the reputed descendants of Esau and thus kinsfolk of Israel. They were subdued by David, but about 850 B.C. regained their independence, and at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and later were bitterly hostile to Israel. **From the rock**. (Hebrew *Sela*.) Some specific locality, either a great cliff near the southern end of the Dead Sea or the Edomite capital known as *Petra*, rock. **And upward**. As though the boundary or territory extended beyond the point mentioned. But all is obscure since the text is either corrupt or incomplete.

2: 1-5. This paragraph seems like an expansion of vv. 1a and 5b, which probably originally read "And the angel of Jehovah



to Bochim. And he said, I made you to go up out of R<sup>P</sup> Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break  
2. my covenant with you: and ye shall make no covenant

came up from Gilgal to Bethel and they sacrificed there unto Jehovah." Such words would form a fitting conclusion to the story of the conquest outward from Gilgal (1: 1), concluding with the capture of Bethel (1: 22-26). Bethel is preserved along with *Bochim* in the Greek translation. The name *Bochim* is a likely substitute for *Bethel*, because the latter stood in v. 5, and perhaps also because Bethel was later the seat of the abhorred calf worship. The reproof of the angel and the account of its effect upon the people (vv. 1b-5a) were written probably by the Priestly editor (R<sup>P</sup>) who prefixed this first section of the Book of Judges, and to whom the Canaanites left in the land were not a mark of Israel's weakness, the view of the original writer of chapter 1, but a mark of Israel's failure to keep the Deuteronomic law of extermination (see 1: 17).

1. **The angel of the Lord (Jehovah).** The divine presence which according to tradition conducted the people on their march through the wilderness (Exod. 14: 19; 23: 20 ff.; 32: 34; 33: 2; Num. 20: 16) and appeared in a human form to Gideon and the mother of Samson (6: 11 ff.; 13: 3 ff.). **Gilgal.** The first camping place of the children of Israel after crossing the Jordan, Josh. 5: 9, and according to Josh. 9: 6; 10: 6 ff., 15, 43; 14: 6, their headquarters during the conquest of the land. The moving of the angel implied the removal of the Ark to *Bochim* (see v. 5), *i.e.* Bethel (see above). Although according to Josh. 18: 1; 19: 51, the tabernacle, and therefore the ark, was placed, at Shiloh at the close of the conquest, another tradition clearly placed it at Bethel (cf. 20: 26 f.). Gilgal as well as Bethel was a later sanctuary (Hos. 4: 15; 9: 15; 12: 11; Amos 4: 4; 5: 5). **Which I swear, etc.** For the promises cf. Gen. 12: 7; 13: 14 f.; 15: 18; 17: 7 f.; 22: 16 f.; 26: 3 f.; 28: 13 f.; 50: 24. The references to the oath are very frequent in Deuteronomy (1: 8; 6: 10, 18, 23; 7: 13; 8: 1; 11: 9, 21; 19: 8; 26: 3, 15, etc.). **My covenant with you.** The reference is to Exod. 34: 10 ff.

2. Cf. Exod. 34: 12 f.; Deut. 7: 5; 12: 3.

- with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall break down their altars: but ye have not hearkened unto my voice:
3. why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they<sup>1</sup> shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall
  4. be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice,
  5. and wept. And they called the name of that place J<sup>2</sup> *Bochim*: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

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<sup>1</sup> Some ancient versions have, *shall be adversaries unto you.*    <sup>2</sup> That is, *Weepers.*

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3. This previous warning may be found in Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13, from the former of which the word *thorns* is to be supplied. **Snare.** A sudden means of destruction. Jehovah is thus described in Isa. 8:14 f.

5. **Bochim.** Means "weepers." Nowhere else mentioned. According to our explanation it must be sought in the vicinity of Bethel. Near Bethel was a sacred tree, Allon-bacuth, "The oak of weeping," connected with the burial of Rebekah's nurse, Gen. 35:8. The valley of Baca, "Weeping," is mentioned in Ps. 84:6.

## B. THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES, 2:6-16:31

### I. INTRODUCTION, 2:6-3:6

6. Now when Joshua had sent the people away, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance E<sup>2</sup> 2:9
7. to possess the land. And the people served the LORD R<sup>D</sup>  
all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders  
that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of
8. the LORD, that he had wrought for Israel. And Joshua E<sup>2</sup>  
the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an
9. hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in  
the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the

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2:6-3:6. This section opens with an account of the death of Joshua, and the conditions immediately following (vv. 6-10), parallel largely with Josh. 24:28-31. These verses serve to connect the history of the Judges closely with that of the Book of Joshua. Then follows a general statement of the course of Israel's history, which consisted in periods of apostasy, oppression, deliverance through a judge, and the service of Jehovah during the judge's lifetime, repeated one after another (vv. 11-19). This all served to explain why Jehovah had left nations in the land (vv. 20-23). A list of these nations also is given (3:1-6).

6. **Had sent the people away**, etc. The conclusion of the great assembly at Shechem, where Joshua made his farewell address and the people promised to serve Jehovah, Josh. 24:1-28.

7. **The elders**. The head men of clans and families. The term elder or old man is used because these were usually well advanced in years. **The great work**, etc. The wonders of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan (cf. Deut. 11:2-5).

9. **Timnath-heres**. The same as *Timnath-serah*, Josh. 24:

hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain  
 10. of Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered  
 unto their fathers: and there arose another generation  
 after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the work  
 which he had wrought for Israel.

R<sup>D</sup> 11. And the children of Israel did that which was evil in  
 12. the sight of the LORD, and served the Baalim: and

30; 19: 50, the modern Tibneh, about twelve and one-half miles east-northeast of Lydda. The mountain of Gaash is otherwise unknown. Cf. "the brooks of Gaash," 2 Sam. 23: 30; 1 Chron. 11: 32.

10. **That generation.** The contemporaries of Joshua and the elders (v. 7). **Knew not the Lord** (Jehovah). *I.e.* by personal experience as Redeemer and Provider and Conqueror during the Exodus and Conquest. **The work which he had wrought.** See v. 7.

11-13. These verses are repetitious; so much so that they may represent the work of more than one writer. V. 13 is an appropriate continuation of v. 10.

11. **The children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.** The recurring formula with which the history of each of the six great judges is introduced 3: 7; 3: 12; 4: 1; 6: 1; 10: 6; 13: 1. **Baalim.** Baal (of which Baalim is the plural) was a general divine title, meaning primarily a possessor; a husband was a Baal of a wife; an eloquent man was a Baal of words. Any god might be called Baal. The term, judging from the proper names Ishbaal, Meribaal, Beeliada, Bealiah, and especially the statement in Hos. 2, in early times in Israel was applied to Jehovah. Later its use was restricted to other deities, especially the local gods of the Canaanites, and thus it became *par excellence* the title of a god worshipped in opposition to Jehovah; and for an Israelite to worship Baal or Baalim (the plural may be numerical or intensive) was an abhorrent apostasy. The temptation to this worship arose from the fact that baals were generally nature gods through whom abundant harvests or other good fortunes were supposed to come. Their worship also seems to have made few if any moral demands and furnished

they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves down unto them:

13. and they provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. E<sup>2</sup>
14. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer R<sup>D</sup>

sensual pleasures. A baal might have a distinct proper name or be known through a complement, usually that of a place, for example, Baal-hermon, *i.e.* Baal of Hermon. These latter names often became place names.

12. **The Lord, the God of their fathers.** Cf. Exod. 3:15 f.; 4:5; Deut. 1:11, 21; 4:1; 6:3; 12:1; 26:7; 27:3; 29:25; Josh. 18:3. **Which brought them out of the land of Egypt.** The basis of Jehovah's claim for Israel's obedience; thus the preface of the ten commandments (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6) and of prophetic reproofs (Amos 3:1 f.). Ingratitude appears in Israel's sin (cf. Isa. 1:2; 5:4).

13. **Baal.** See on v. 11. **Ashtaroth**, a plural, perhaps originally singular, since in Heb. the consonants might be the same. Astarte was a widely worshipped Semitic goddess (in Babylonia and Assyria Ishtar). In the Old Testament the name came to denote the female deity, since the Hebrew language has no proper word for goddess.

14-15. The punishment which always followed apostasy is here expressed in general terms. The specific ones are found in 3:8; 3:12b-14; 4:2-3; 6:1b-6; 10:7-9; 13:1b.

14. **Anger of the Lord was kindled.** A very common Old Testament expression. **Spoilers that spoiled them.** The Hebrew root, to spoil, here used is somewhat unusual. It is borrowed in the Egyptian language to denote the nomadic and robber tribes of the desert of South Palestine. **He sold.** Cf. 3:8; 4:2; 10:7; also 1 Sam. 12:9.

15. stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were sore distressed.
- R<sup>P</sup> 16. And the LORD raised up judges, which saved them
17. out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they hearkened not unto their judges, for they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them: they turned aside quickly out of the way wherein their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not

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15. **As the Lord had sworn.** Two terrible lists of curses for disobedience are given in Deut. 28: 15-68; Lev. 26: 14-46.

16-19. Again we have repetitions. Vv. 18 f. are either a duplicate of vv. 16 f., or v. 17, which varies from v. 19 in introducing disobedience of the judges, is an insertion. The representation in v. 19 that the disobedience followed the death of the judges agrees with the subsequent narratives. A possible exception, the worship of the image erected by Gideon (8: 27), has been thought to have given rise to v. 17.

16. **Judges.** Deliverers, defenders. The writer is thinking of Othniel (?), Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. The root meaning is to secure one his right, hence generally to judge. Through judges Jehovah secured to the people of Israel their rights over against their enemies, and as rulers the judges secured to individuals their rights.

17. **Hearkened not unto their judges.** No case of direct disobedience to a judge is recorded in the Book of Judges. The disobedience to Samuel, in the people asking for a king, would be a case in point (1 Sam. 7: 15; 8: 6). But the writer probably had not that case or any similar one in mind, but meant that the rule of no judge effected a permanent reform. **Went a whoring after other gods.** Prostitution or adultery to describe the worship of foreign deities is very common in the prophets, and is derived from the thought of Jehovah being married to the

18. so. And when the LORD raised them up judges, R<sup>D</sup>  
 then the LORD was with the judge, and saved them  
 out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the  
 judge: for it repented the LORD because of their  
 groaning by reason of them that oppressed them and  
 19. vexed them. But it came to pass, when the judge was  
 dead, that they turned back, and dealt more corruptly  
 than their fathers, in following other gods to serve  
 them, and to bow down unto them; <sup>1</sup> they ceased not  
 from their doings, nor from their stubborn way.  
 20. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel; E<sup>2</sup>  
 and he said, Because this nation have transgressed  
 my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and  
 21. have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not  
 henceforth drive out any from before them of the na-

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *they let nothing fall of their doings.*

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people. This relationship is especially set forth in the prophecy of Hosea.

18. **It repented the Lord.** Jehovah, moved by their groaning, changed from his purpose of punishment to one of deliverance.

19. **When the judge was dead, that they turned back.** Such backsliding is recorded after the judgeship and implied death of Othniel (3: 11 f.), Ehud (4: 1), Barak and Deborah (5: 31b; 6: 1), and Gideon (8: 33).

2: 20-3: 6. These verses are clearly composite. In 2: 20-22 Jehovah is angry with Israel because they have transgressed his covenant, therefore he will not drive out the nations left by Joshua. They are to prove whether Israel will keep the way of Jehovah. In 2: 23-3: 2 Jehovah does not drive out the nations that Israel might be disciplined in war. These verses appear originally to have been the conclusion of chapter 1, since that chapter knows nothing of any sin of Israel as a cause of the retention of the nations. V. 3 is an appended list of nations.

21. **I also will not henceforth drive out.** The fulfilment of the

- R<sup>D</sup> 22. tions which Joshua left when he died: that by them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it,
- J 23. or not. So the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.
- E<sup>2</sup> 3. Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many as had not known
- R 2. all the wars of Canaan; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as beforetime knew nothing thereof;
- J 2. all the wars of Canaan; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as beforetime knew nothing thereof;
- E<sup>2</sup> 3. *namely*, the five lords of the Philistines, and all the

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divine promises was dependent upon obedience to the divine commands.

22. The Deuteronomic editor here accounts for Jehovah's action on the ground that he desired to test the faithfulness of his people in the presence of the idolatrous practices of their heathen neighbors. **Keep the way of the Lord.** *I.e.* be faithful to both the moral and ceremonial laws of his religion.

23. This verse presents an earlier point of view (J). The passage is continued in 3 : 2, which is from the same source.

3 : 1. The first half of v. 1 is introductory to the list of nations which appears in v. 3, and is doubtless from the same source.

2. The Hebrew text of this verse is corrupt. Taken with 2 : 23, the sense certainly is that Jehovah left those nations in order that the later generations of Israel might learn war.

3. An enumeration of the peoples within whose boundaries Israel lived. **The five lords of the Philistines.** The Philistines dwelt in five cities, from the north southward, Ekron, Ashdod, Gath, Ashkelon, and Gaza, in the maritime plain east of Judah. They were a warlike, non-Semitic people of uncertain origin, either immigrants from Crete or the southern coast of Asia Minor, or descendants of Egyptian mercenaries who had seized those cities. They appeared in Palestine about the time of the Exodus. Until the reign of David they were generally actively hostile toward



- Canaanites, and the Zidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon
4. unto the entering in of Hamath. And they were for to R<sup>D</sup>  
 prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.
5. And the children of Israel dwelt among <sup>1</sup> the Canaan- J  
 ites; the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite,
6. and the Hivite, and the Jebusite: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *the Canaanites, the Hittites &c.*

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Israel. For some years before the reign of Saul and immediately after his death they dominated Western Palestine. **All the Canaanites.** The unsubdued inhabitants of the lowlands from Philistia to Phœnicia. **The Zidonians.** The Phœnicians, named from their oldest city, Zidon. **The Hivites.** An error of transcription for *Hittites*, since these people and not the Hivites (see v. 5) dwelt in mount Lebanon, from Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath, *i.e.* their southern boundary was from Baal-hermon, same as Baal-gad, a town on the western slope of Mt. Hermon, to the approach of Hamath from the south. *The entering in of Hamath* is a frequent designation of the northern boundary of Israel. The modern plain of Homs is meant. Hamath is the modern Hama on the Orontes.

4. The proving of this verse differs from that of v. 3. It is of the spirit of Deuteronomy.

5. Dwelt among the Canaanites. Cf. the description of 1: 27-36. These Canaanites are now enumerated. **Hittite.** A powerful people who dwelt north of Israel. Their southern boundary has been given in v. 3. Their mention among the inhabitants of Canaan in this and similar lists implies that some of them lived in Palestine. Tradition placed them among the inhabitants of Hebron. **Amorite.** See 1: 34. **Perizzite.** See 1: 5. **Hivite.** A petty people of Central Palestine. The

## II. THE JUDGES, 3:7-16:31

I. *Othniel*, 3:7-11

- R<sup>D</sup> 7. And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God,  
 8. and served the Baalim and the Asheroth. Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king

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name is of uncertain derivation. Some give it the meaning of villagers, others connect it with a root meaning "serpent," hence "Snake tribe." Jebusite. See 1:21.

7-11. The children of Israel do evil in serving foreign gods (v. 7), and are delivered for eight years into the power of the Cushan, King of Mesopotamia (v. 8); then on their cry Jehovah raises up a deliverer, Othniel, the son of Kenaz, who successfully wages war against Cushan, and the land enjoys security forty years until Othniel dies. The narrative has no element beyond the Deuteronomic framework, a story of any exploit by Othniel being entirely lacking; hence this judge did not appear in the original Book of Judges, but only in the Deuteronomic edition. Othniel as a judge was apparently created out of Othniel the conqueror of Debir (1:13) from the desire to furnish the tribe of Judah with a great judge and to make the number equal to six. Whether Israel was dominated at this early period by a force from Mesopotamia is entirely unknown. The name Cushan-rishathaim, meaning "Cushite of double wickedness," looks like an appellative of folk-lore.

7. The usual formula for introducing a judgeship (see 2:11, 13). **Baalim.** See 2:11. **Asheroth.** Probably originally Ashteroth (see v. 13). Asheroth (the plural of Asherah) were wooden pillars erected near altars in the Canaanite places of worship. Their exact significance is unknown. The word (singular or plural) was used sometimes for a goddess or her image.

8. **Cushan-rishathaim.** See above. **Mesopotamia.** Heb. Aram-naharaim, "Aram of two rivers."

of <sup>1</sup> Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served  
 9. Cushan-rishathaim eight years. And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a saviour to the children of Israel, who saved them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger  
 10. brother. And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel; and he went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-rishathaim king of <sup>2</sup> Mesopotamia into his hand: and his hand prevailed against  
 11. Cushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Aram-naharaim*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *Aram*.

9. **Cried unto the Lord.** The usual formula (v. 15; 4: 3; 6: 7; 10: 10). **Saviour** (v. 15; the verb 2: 16). Synonymous with judge (2: 16, 18). **Othniel.** See 1: 13.

10. **The spirit of the Lord came upon him.** All extraordinary endowments were in general assigned to the spirit of God or Jehovah; the valor of the judges (6: 34; 11: 29; 13: 25; 14: 6, 19; 15: 14), the wisdom of rulers (Gen. 41: 38; Num. 11: 16 ff.; 27: 18), the skill of an artisan (Exod. 31: 3; 36: 1), etc. **He judged** in going to war (see 2: 16).

12-30. After the death of Othniel the people backslid and for eighteen years suffered under the lordship of Eglon, King of Moab; but on their cry to Jehovah he raised up Ehud the Benjamite as their deliverer, vv. 12-15. These verses are the Deuteronomic introduction to the story of Ehud, which now follows. Ehud, sent with a present to the king of Moab, contrives to obtain a private audience with him on the pretence of communicating a divine revelation and assassinates the monarch, vv. 16-26. He then rouses the people and the Moabites in Israel are slain and the land has peace eighty years, vv. 27-30. There is no reason to doubt the historicity of this story. In general outline it is entirely probable. After the children of Israel had crossed over the Jordan, other tribes from the east, like the Moabites, might well in a few years have followed their example, and the

2. *Ehud*, 3 : 12-30

- R<sup>D</sup> 12. And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done that which was evil in the sight of the
13. LORD. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and smote Israel,
14. and they possessed the city of palm trees. And the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eight-
15. teen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a saviour, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a man left-handed: and the children of Israel sent a present by
- J 16. him unto Eglon the king of Moab. And Ehud made

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establishment of their headquarters at Jericho (v. 13) would not have been difficult. How complete the suzerainty of Moab was over Israel is of course unknown. It may have been quite slight and limited to a small district.

12. **Eglon.** Is not mentioned elsewhere. **Moab.** The country east of the Dead Sea.

13. **Ammon.** Kindred of the Moabites with territory adjoining that of Moab on the north and east. **Amalek.** See on 1 : 16. Neither Ammon nor Amalek appear in the continuation of the story. **The city of palm trees.** *I.e.* Jericho (see 1 : 16).

15. **Ehud.** A family or clan name of Benjamin in 1 Chron. 8 : 6. Arabic clans are sometimes named from heroes. **Gera.** A son or grandson of Benjamin, *i.e.* one of the leading clans or divisions of the tribe (Gen. 46 : 21; 1 Chron. 8 : 3, 7). Shimei, who cursed David, belonged to this clan (2 Sam. 16 : 5). **Left-handed.** Thus seemingly were warriors of Benjamin generally (20 : 16; 1 Chron. 12 : 2). **A present.** The Hebrew word denotes a contribution of tribute probably in products of the country since bearers brought it (v. 18).

him a sword which had two edges, of a cubit length ;  
 and he girded it under his raiment upon his right  
 17. thigh. And he offered the present unto Eglon king  
 18. of Moab : now Eglon was a very fat man. And when  
 he had made an end of offering the present, he sent  
 19. away the people that bare the present. But he him-  
 self turned back from the <sup>1</sup> quarries, that were by  
 Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O  
 king. And he said, Keep silence. And all that stood  
 20. by him went out from him. And Ehud came unto him ;  
 and he was sitting by himself alone in his <sup>2</sup> summer

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *graven images*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *upper chamber of cooling*.

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16. **Of a cubit length.** The word translated cubit is *gomed*, found only here, a measure of uncertain length, probably of twelve or thirteen inches. **Under his raiment upon his right thigh.** An unsuspected place of concealment since the weapons were regularly carried on the left side ; but Ehud was left-handed.

17. **A very fat man.** The mention of this fact here anticipates the part it plays in the story.

18. **The present.** See v. 15. **The people.** A considerable retinue of bearers evidently accompanied him.

19. **He himself turned back.** From the retinue, with which he had gone some distance. **Quarries.** A word of uncertain meaning. Probably carved stones of some nature are intended, possibly the cromlech or circle of stones thought to be indicated in the name Gilgal and identified by some as the stones ascribed by tradition as set up by Joshua. **Gilgal.** See 2 : 1. **I have a secret errand unto thee.** The message sent by Ehud to the king given in the form of a direct statement. His own entrance is described in the following verse. The ruse was that he had a divine communication (v. 20) which could only be conveyed in private. It worked perfectly. The king commanded his attendants to retire and granted Ehud a private audience.

20. The audience. **And he was sitting, etc.** His complete isolation is emphasized, and the place of the interview, the roof

parlour. And Ehud said, I have a message from God  
 21. unto thee. And he arose out of his seat. And Ehud  
 put forth his left hand, and took the sword from his  
 22. right thigh, and thrust it into his belly: and the haft  
 also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon  
 the blade, for he drew not the sword out of his belly;  
 23. and <sup>1</sup>it came out behind. Then Ehud went forth  
 into the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon  
 24. him, and locked them. Now when he was gone out,  
 his servants came; and they saw, and, behold, the  
 doors of the parlour were locked; and they said,  
 Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.  
 25. And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, be-  
 hold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; there-

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *he went out into the antechamber.*

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or upper story chamber, is given. These descriptive touches heighten the picture and explain the escape.

22. The man was so fat, the weapon, two-edged, so sharp, and the thrust so strong that the handle followed the blade and the weapon was left in the wound. **And it came out behind.** *I.e.* the weapon passed through him. The sentence, however, is of very doubtful meaning. The marginal reading, "He [Ehud] went out into the antechamber," has nothing to commend it. The most probable meaning is that the dirt (the *feces*) went out through the natural passage. This is said to be the effect of such a wound.

23, 24. **Porch.** The rendering of a word of unknown meaning. We only know that Ehud left the room and that he also locked the door (the door was double, of two leaves). Probably he went through the usual entrance, since the servants seem to have seen his departure. **Surely he covereth his feet.** A euphemism. "Surely he relieveth himself in the cabinet of his summer chamber."

25. **Till they were ashamed.** *I.e.* in perplexity and confusion,

- fore they took the key, and opened *them*: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.
26. And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the <sup>1</sup>quarries, and escaped unto Seirah.
27. And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he before them. And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan <sup>2</sup>against the Moabites, and suffered not a man to pass
29. over. And they smote of Moab at that time about

<sup>1</sup> Or, *graven images*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *toward Moab*.

till they could endure the suspense no longer. **The key.** An eastern lock or bolt, made of wood, may be closed by the hand, but requires a key to open it.

26. **Quarries.** See v. 19. Some have supposed that these stones were boundary marks between the territory of Moab and Israel. **Seirah.** The site of this place is unknown. It must have been somewhere in Mt. Ephraim.

V. 27 is a description of the muster, and vv. 28-29, a description of the action after the muster.

27. **He blew a trumpet.** *I.e.* sounded the alarm and thus summoned the warriors (cf. 6: 34; 1 Sam. 13: 3; Amos 3: 6; Ezek. 33: 3 ff.). Eglon's assassination put Israel in danger. **Hill country of Ephraim.** (2: 9; 4: 5.) The portion of mountainous country from the neighborhood of Jerusalem northward to its termination at the plain of Esdraelon.

28. This verse is somewhat repetitious of the previous one. Some find, therefore, marks of a double narrative, but v. 27 may be taken descriptive of the muster, and v. 28 of the action immediately following. **They . . . took the fords of Jordan.** Thus cutting off the means of escape into the territory of Moab.

ten thousand men, every lusty man, and every man  
 R<sup>D</sup> 30. of valour; and there escaped not a man. So Moab  
 was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And  
 the land had rest fourscore years.

3. *Shamgar*, 3 : 31

R 31. And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which  
 smote of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox  
 goad: and he also saved Israel.

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29. **Every lusty man, and every man of valour.** *I.e.* all were stout and valiant men. Not one escaped; they slew them all. The land seems to have been garrisoned by Moabite soldiers.

30. **Moab was subdued.** The concluding Deuteronomic formula (cf. 8 : 28; 11 : 33). A conquest of the land of Moab is not to be inferred. **Fourscore years.** *I.e.* two generations, the longest period of peace mentioned in Judges.

The episode of Shamgar, v. 31, since no period of judgeship is assigned to him and since he is entirely ignored in 4 : 1, appears like an afterthought in the Book of Judges, later not only than the Deuteronomic authorship, but later than the editorship which inserted the minor judges. The paragraph seems to have come from some one who repudiated Abimelech as a judge of Israel and added Shamgar to make the number twelve. The name of the judge was derived apparently from 5 : 6 (which see), even as that of Othniel, 3 : 9, was derived from the tradition given in 1 : 13. The basis of the story of the slaughter of six hundred Philistines with an ox goad is unknown. The exploit is one similar to those of Samson (15 : 14 ff.) and of David's heroes, especially Shammah, the son of Agee (2 Sam. 23 : 11 f.). It has even been conjectured that the similarity of the name of the latter to Shamgar suggested the assignment to him of a similar exploit. The introduction of the Philistines in this early period appears, however, out of place since the enemies of Israel then were the Canaanites (see chap. 4). The Philistines appear later near the reign of Saul.

31. **An ox goad.** The ox goad was a wooden stick with an iron point which might serve as a spear; but that six hundred were really slain with such a weapon is improbable.



4. *Deborah and Barak, Chaps. 4, 5*

4. And the children of Israel again did that which was <sup>R<sup>D</sup></sup> evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

Chaps. 4, 5. The deliverance through Deborah and Barak is related in two narratives, one of prose (chap. 4), the other a triumphal song (chap. 5). According to the first, which has the Deuteronomic introduction, the children of Israel, having again apostatized after the death of Ehud, were severely oppressed for twenty years by Jabin, the Canaanite king of Hazor, when Deborah, a prophetess of Mt. Ephraim, instigated Barak of Naphtali to lead a revolt. This Barak did successfully. Collecting a force of ten thousand men from Zebulun and Naphtali, he attacked and signally defeated Sisera, the commander of the army of Jabin, near the river Kishon. Sisera in flight sought refuge in the camp of some friendly Kenites and was treacherously slain by the wife of the sheikh. The poem, chapter five, celebrates this victory, but differs in these important details: (1) Jabin is not mentioned; (2) Sisera appears as a king and other kings are joined with him; (3) the tribes who furnish the warriors for the battles are not only Zebulun and Naphtali, but also Ephraim, Machir (*i.e.* Manasseh), Benjamin, and Issachar; and Reuben, Gilead (*i.e.* Gad), Dan, and Asher are reproached for not assisting. All Israel thus appears involved except the southern tribes, Judah and Simeon. There is also no mention of Levi. (4) The details of the death of Sisera are also different. In chapter four he is slain asleep; in chapter five while standing upright.

The prose narrative contains also inconsistencies within itself. In vv. 9 f. the center of the revolt is at Kedesh, clearly Kedesh-naphtali, the home of Barak. Near this Kedesh the Kenites are encamped (v. 11). But in v. 13 the headquarters of Sisera are Harosheth, a town of the plain of Esdraelon, near the river Kishon. In harmony with this, the rendezvous of Barak's men, in vv. 15 f., is Mt. Tabor and from thence they march against Sisera. Jabin also has no part in the battle and is not mentioned in connection with the defeat. Considering all these facts, it is probable that in chapter four two conflicts with the Canaanites

2. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the <sup>1</sup>Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *nations*.

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have been confused: one confined perhaps to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, in which Jabin, King of Hazor, took part, the seat of which was near to Hazor in the north; and the other, celebrated in the song, in which Sisera was the leader of the enemy and which arose from a confederacy of the Canaanites of the plain of Esdraelon and adjacent parts against the Israelites of Central and North Palestine, whose leaders and deliverers were Deborah and Barak. The former conflict gave rise to the record in Josh. 11: 1-9, where Jabin appears as the head of a confederacy of Canaanitish kings whom Joshua defeated at the Waters of Merom. The appearance of the Kenites in connection with each is probably not due to any such original connection, but to a harmonizing editor. Originally the Kenites probably had no part in the northern conflict.

The conflict of Central Palestine was unquestionably one of great historic moment. Under Sisera the Canaanites were clearly getting the upper hand of Israel; and had he prevailed, the development of Israel would have been greatly retarded. The result of the contest seems to have been very decisive, for, although the cities of the plain of Esdraelon may not have become an integral part of Israel until later times, yet we never read of the Canaanites again taking a stand against Israel. Their defeat was as decisive as crushing.

4: 2. **Jabin.** Cf. vv. 7, 17; Josh. 11: 1; see also above. **King of Canaan.** The Deuteronomic editor ascribed a political unity to Canaan as well as to Israel. Historically there was no king of Canaan, *i.e.* a single sovereign ruling the whole land. The government was that of independent municipalities, each one of which had its own king. **Hazor.** Near Kedesh, west of Lake Merom, not identified (cf. 2 Kgs. 15: 29; Josh. 19: 36). **The captain of whose host was Sisera.** A harmonizing statement which arose from the confusion of two conflicts (see above).

3. the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.
4. Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, JE
5. she judged Israel at that time. And she<sup>1</sup> dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *sat*.

Sisera in reality had no connection with Jabin. **Harosheth.** Cf. vv. 13, 16; not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament, and generally identified with el-Harithiyeh, some ten miles north-northwest of Megiddo. **Of the Gentiles.** *I.e.* a town of non-Israelitish inhabitants.

3. **Chariots of iron.** See 1:19. These instruments of warfare enabled Sisera to control the plain. Thotmes III records 924 chariots taken in the battle of Megiddo, where the Egyptians won a great victory over a group of Asiatic allies led by the king of Kadesh in the fifteenth century B.C.

4. **Deborah.** Also the name of Rebekah's nurse (Gen. 35:8). The word means "bee." **A prophetess.** *I.e.* a woman moved by divine inspirations. The term is applied to Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:14), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), and the wife of Isaiah (Isa. 8:3). **Lappidoth.** A name of doubtful meaning not occurring elsewhere. **She judged Israel.** Acted as an arbitrator of disputes. The people came to her somewhat in the same manner as they are represented in Exod. 18:13 as coming to Moses; only the number who sought her need not have been very large, since Israel was not then unified.

5. **And she dwelt.** May also be rendered *sat*, held her court. **The palm tree of Deborah.** The later name of the tree, derived from its association with Deborah. Some have supposed it identical with the tree beneath which Rebekah's nurse, Deborah, was said to have been buried, below Bethel, north of Jerusalem (Gen. 35:8). The residence beneath the tree was not accidental. The tree was without doubt regarded as sacred through the abode of a divinity through whom the prophetess might derive inspiration. Even at the present time certain trees in Palestine are

- in the hill country of Ephraim: and the children of
6. Israel came up to her for judgement. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded, *saying*, Go and draw unto mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?
  7. And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine
  8. hand. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, I
  9. will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and
  10. went with Barak to Kedesh. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh; and there went up ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah

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revered as the dwelling places of spirits or divinities, and votive offerings are placed on their branches. **Ramah.** Modern er-Ram, north of Jerusalem. **The hill country of Ephraim.** See on 3:27.

6. **Barak.** The word means "lightning." Not elsewhere in the Old Testament as a proper name but the same as the Carthaginian *Barcas*. **Kedesh-naphtali.** Northwest of Lake Merom. The place still retains its old name. **Tabor.** Southwest of the Sea of Galilee, a natural base of operations against the Canaanite cities of the plain of Esdraelon.

7. **Kishon.** The stream traversing the northern portion of the plain. This exhortation of Deborah is phrased according to the result of the encounter; also the words of v. 9.

10. **Kedesh.** As a rendezvous is agreeable to the story of the conflict with Jabin (see above).

11. went up with him. Now Heber the Kenite had severed himself from <sup>1</sup> the Kenites, even from the children of Hobab the <sup>2</sup> brother in law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far as the <sup>3</sup> oak in Zaananim, which  
 12. is by Kedesh. And they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.  
 13. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the <sup>4</sup> Gentiles, unto  
 14. the river Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount  
 15. Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera lighted down from his chariot, and fled  
 16. away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Kain*. See Num. 24: 22.  
<sup>4</sup> Or, *nations*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *father in law*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *terebinth*.

11. **Heber.** Representing a Kenite family, he had separated himself from his brethren who dwelt in the southern part of Judah (see 1: 16) and had migrated to Northern Palestine. **The oak in Zaananim.** More correctly *the oak of Bezaananim*, mentioned also in Josh. 19: 33. This verse seems to belong to the story of Jabin. It is probably an editorial note introductory to v. 17, written, then, after the fusion of the two stories.

14. **Is not the Lord gone out before thee?** Has not Jehovah prepared the way for the victory?

15. **The Lord discomfited.** The foe were panic-stricken by Jehovah. The phrase is frequently used to describe Israel's rout of an enemy (cf. Exod. 14: 24; Josh. 10: 10; 1 Sam. 7: 10).

16. **Harosheth of the Gentiles.** See on v. 2.

chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the<sup>1</sup> Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; there was not a man left.

17. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house
18. of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And he turned in unto her into the tent,
19. and she covered him with a rug. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and
20. gave him drink, and covered him. And he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is
21. there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. Then Jael Heber's wife took a tent-pin, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the pin into his temples, and it pierced through into the ground; for he was<sup>2</sup> in a deep sleep; so he swooned
22. and died. And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera,

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *nations*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *in a deep sleep and weary; so he died*.

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17. **Jael.** The name means "mountain goat." **Heber the Kenite.** See on v. 11.

19. **Bottle of milk.** Skin of curdled milk, which in Bedouin encampments is often found at the tent door.

21. **Tent-pin.** The sharp wooden pin used to hold a tent cord. **Hammer.** Probably the heavy wooden mallet with which the tent-pins are driven. This driving is the work of Arab women. The method of slaughter seems cumbersome. But if accustomed to hold and strike the pin, it probably seemed more natural and safer than to crush his head with a single blow.

- Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And he came unto her; and, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the tent-pin was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prevailed more and more against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.
23. and the tent-pin was in his temples. So God sub- R<sup>D</sup>  
 24. the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prevailed more and more against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.
5. Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

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23 f. The Deuteronomic conclusion.

Chap. 5. The Song of Deborah is the most ancient complete piece of writing in the Old Testament, and was composed at the time of the victory which it celebrates. This contemporary origin appears in the natural and vivid description of that event and nothing else, no long enduring circumstances are its background and nothing of a later age is reflected, while marks of its own time are evident in the silence concerning Judah, in the limited number of the warriors of Israel, who are only 40,000 (v. 8), in the mention of Machir for Manasseh (v. 14), and Gilead for Gad (v. 17). The fresh vigor of the poem likewise favors this date. The song is, then, a most precious historical document. A bond of union between the tribes in the worship of Jehovah is revealed, and a lack also of all political unity, since each tribe seems to have acted independently. Their numerical strength also was small. Judah was separated from the rest. No mention also is made of Simeon and Levi. The Israel which acts or to which appeal is made is that which later formed the northern kingdom. The land occupied west of the Jordan was the hill country of Ephraim and stretches to the north in Galilee. The great plain was still in the hands of the Canaanites.

The poem is often assigned to Deborah as its author, but the reasons are not very cogent. No decision can be given. While the song is ancient and illustrates the fact that in early Israel,

- J 2. For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,  
 For that the people offered themselves willingly,  
 Bless ye the LORD.

as in the case of other peoples, literature had its beginnings in songs, yet it is marked with a certain artistic construction. It opens with a call to bless Jehovah for heroic devotion (v. 2), invoking the attention of kings (v. 3) and describing the manifestation of Jehovah in a storm (vv. 4 f.). The prelude attests the thorough religious character of the song. Then comes in vv. 6-8 a description of the desolation of the land, as overrun by hostile bands so that traffic ceased and villages were abandoned, with an interlude in vv. 9-11 calling upon travellers to rehearse the deeds of Jehovah, thus preparing for the main theme, which follows after a passionate introduction in v. 12. Vv. 13-18 describe the muster or response to the call to arms, enumerating the contingents which came and the tribes who made no response. In the battle, described in the following verses (19-22), a storm and the flooded waters of the stream Kishon seem to have played a significant part. A vivid description of the death of Sisera (vv. 23-27) is introduced, with a curse upon Meroz, who lent no assistance, and a blessing on Jael, who treacherously slew him. The manner of his death is described in detail. This description is matched by an antistrophe in vv. 28-30, picturing the anxious thoughts of the warrior's mother and her attendants awaiting in vain his return, and in v. 31 an appropriate and pious and patriotic wish closes the poem. Many of the words of this song do not occur elsewhere, and are of doubtful meaning. The text also has suffered much in transcription. Some lines therefore are very obscure and the renderings of the English and other versions are little more than guesses.

1. The introduction by the Deuteronomic editor. **Day** is used in the same meaning of time as in English.

2. Another rendering for the first line, which contains rare words, is *For that long hair is loosed in Israel* with reference to Nazirite vows of warriors dedicating themselves to Jehovah as though the war were a peculiarly religious one. But the rendering of the text is better. Jehovah is to be praised because the leaders were at hand to lead and because the people freely volunteered.



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3. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes;  
I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD;  
I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel.
  4. LORD, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,  
When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,  
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,  
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
  5. The mountains <sup>1</sup> flowed down at the presence of the  
LORD,  
Even yon Sinai at the presence of the LORD, the God  
of Israel.
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<sup>1</sup> Or, *quaked*.

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3. For similar invocations cf. Gen. 4:23; Num. 23:18, of the heavens, Isa. 1:2; Deut. 32:1. The rulers here addressed would be those of adjacent peoples, perhaps of the vanquished foes.

4, 5. In the battle the Israelites were assisted by a storm (vv. 20, 21), hence in anticipation Jehovah is here described as manifesting himself in a thunder storm. This is a frequent way of describing the presence of deity in the Old Testament; Jehovah appears on Mt. Sinai *in thunders and lightning and a thick cloud*, Exod. 19:16; through a storm he answers and delivers one in distress, 2 Sam. 22:8 ff.; Ps. 18:7 ff.; he spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, Job 38:1. Ps. 29 is a description of a thunder storm. Cf. also Ps. 97:2 ff.; Mic. 1:2 ff.

4. Jehovah is thought of as dwelling on Mt. Sinai or Horeb (cf. 1 Kgs. 19), and coming from thence to the help of Israel against Sisera by the way of Mt. Seir, the land of Edom, which lies south-east of Judah, and a great storm accompanies him. From this verse are derived the parallel passages, Deut. 33:2 f.; Hab. 3:3 f.; Ps. 68:8 f.

5. **Flowed down.** *I.e. streamed* with water. **Yon Sinai.** If retained in the text, Jehovah's presence or the storm was felt even in distant Sinai.

6. In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,  
 In the days of Jael, <sup>1</sup> the high ways were unoccupied,  
 And the travellers walked through <sup>2</sup> byways.
7. <sup>3</sup>The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,  
 Until that I Deborah arose,  
 That I arose a mother in Israel.
8. They chose new gods;  
 Then was war in the gates:

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *the caravans ceased.*    <sup>2</sup> Heb. *crooked ways.*    <sup>3</sup> Or, *The villages were unoccupied.*

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6. A description of the insecurity of the times. **Shamgar the son of Anath.** Not an Israelitish judge who preceded Deborah and Barak, the usual interpretation, because *Shamgar* as a judge is an afterthought derived from this passage (cf. 3:31), but a foreign oppressor. The name in both its elements is non-Israelitish; the second, Anath, is the name of a Canaanitish goddess; the first, Shamgar, has not been so clearly identified. Some find in it a Babylonian name, others a Hittite name. **In the days of Jael.** Jael can only refer to the heroine of vv. 24 ff., but it is difficult to understand why her name should be mentioned in connection with the preceding desolation. The words disturb the metre of the Hebrew lines and are probably a gloss. **The high ways were unoccupied.** Better the margin, *the caravans ceased.* This was because of foreign marauders. In peaceful times, long before the period of the judges, there was constant intercourse between the towns of Palestine through travelling merchant men. **And the travellers,** etc. Persons compelled to go through the country were obliged to resort to circuitous and unfrequented routes.

7. **The rulers ceased.** Better the margin, *The villages were unoccupied.* Unwalled towns were either deserted through fear or desolated by marauders.

8. The first two lines, as given, mean that at this time Israel departed from the worship of Jehovah, choosing other gods, and suffered from the attacks of enemies. But the Hebrew text is very obscure. Another rendering is *The sacrifices to God (or gods) ceased*

Was there a shield or spear seen  
Among forty thousand in Israel?

9. My heart is toward the governors of Israel,  
<sup>1</sup> That offered themselves willingly among the people:  
 Bless ye the LORD.
10. Tell *of it*, ye that ride on white asses,  
 Ye that sit on rich carpets,  
 And ye that walk by the way.
11. <sup>2</sup> Far from the noise of archers, in the places of drawing  
 water,  
 There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD,  
*Even* the righteous acts <sup>3</sup> of his rule in Israel.  
 Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *Ye that offered yourselves willingly among the people, bless &c.* <sup>2</sup> Or, *Because of the voice of the archers . . . there let them rehearse.* <sup>3</sup> Or, *toward his villages.*

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*and barley bread failed, i.e.* the people were oppressed with famine. Cf. for the failure of sacrifices under shortage through drought, Joel 1: 13. Barley bread was the common food of the country. **Was there a shield**, etc. The people must not be thought of as entirely destitute of weapons. The expression is hyperbolic. **Forty thousand**. This moderate and without doubt historic estimate of Israel's warriors is in striking contrast to the artificial numbers of Exod. 12: 37; Num. 1: 46; 2: 32.

Vv. 9-11 constitute an interlude; v. 9 is a repetition of the motive of v. 2.

10, 11. The text of these verses, like that of the first two lines of v. 8, is so corrupt and obscure that many scholars refuse to attempt a translation. Accepting the one given, an appeal is made, with the background of peace and prosperity, to travellers, *those riding on tawny asses, sitting on saddle cloths, and those walking on the way*, to rehearse, far from the tumult of archers, among such peaceful companies as gather at watering places, the acts of Jehovah's deliverance, *i.e.* those celebrated in this song. **Then the people of the Lord went down to the gates.** *I.e.* then the war

12. Awake, awake, Deborah ;  
 Awake, awake, utter a song :  
 Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son  
 of Abinoam.
13. <sup>1</sup>Then came down a remnant of the nobles <sup>2</sup>and the  
 people ;  
 The LORD came down for me <sup>3</sup>against the mighty.
14. Out of Ephraim *came down* they whose root is in  
 Amalek ;

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *Then made he a remnant to have dominion over the nobles and the people ; the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.* <sup>2</sup> Or, as otherwise read, *the people of the LORD came down for me against (or, among) the mighty.* <sup>3</sup> Or, *among.*

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began. This line with such a meaning suggests that the previous lines beginning with v. 10 originally described the preparations for war. In that case their original form has been irrevocably lost.

12. A call to sound the battle cry summoning the tribes to war. **Lead thy captivity captive.** Go forth to take prisoners. Instead of *captive* the original permits the translation *captors*. With that rendering Barak is summoned to seize those who have carried away captives from Israel. The prominence given in such warfare to taking prisoners, especially defenceless boys and girls, is seen in v. 30, where Sisera is expected with the booty of young women. Cf. also the picture of the barter of captives in Joel 3 : 3 where a boy is given for a harlot and a girl for wine.

13. The text of this verse is also very obscure. The translations of the RV. both in text and margin have little in their favor. The Hebrew text requires emendation, and the most probable rendering is :

*Then Israel came down like noblemen ;  
 The people of Jehovah came down for him like heroes.*

Thus the lines are a general description of the rally of Israel, which is given in detail in the following verses. *For him* may refer either to Barak or Jehovah.

14. **Whose root is in Amalek.** *I.e.* those who were settled in the

After thee, Benjamin, among thy peoples ;  
 Out of Machir came down <sup>1</sup> governors,  
 And out of Zebulun they that handle <sup>2</sup> the marshal's  
 staff.

15. And <sup>3</sup> the princes of Issachar were with Deborah ;  
 As was Issachar, so was Barak ;

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *lawgivers*.    <sup>2</sup> Or, *the staff of the scribe*.    <sup>3</sup> Or, *my princes in Issachar*.

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part of Mt. Ephraim wrested from the Amalekites (cf. 12: 15). But such a figurative use of the word *root* is very doubtful and in place of the noun with its possessive ending (*whose*) a verb such as is supplied in the English versions is needed. The Greek text also by omitting a single letter reads *valley* in place of *Amalek*. The next line, also, since it is without meaning, requires slight emendation and the two together may be rendered:

*Out of Ephraim they marched to the valley (i.e. the plain where the battle was fought).*

*Thy brother Benjamin among thy people.*

The tribe of Benjamin was of close kinship with that of Ephraim. In Hebrew poetry pronouns of the second and third person are occasionally used interchangeably. **Machir** represents the tribe of Manasseh. In Gen. 50: 23 he is the son of Manasseh, and in Josh. 17: 1, also by implication in Num. 26: 29, 1 Chron. 7: 14, his first-born, *i.e.* Machir, was either the earliest or most important clan of the tribe. In Josh. 17: 1 and 1 Chron. 7: 14 he is called "the father of Gilead," *i.e.* his home was in Gilead, east of the Jordan. But in this passage he is clearly located with Ephraim and Benjamin, west of the Jordan (cf. v. 17), hence the proper inference that the migration of *Machir* into the region east of Jordan was subsequent to the period of this song. **Marshal's**. The word, more properly rendered in the margin *scribe*, is probably a gloss and therefore should be omitted. *The staff* is the symbol of authority.

15. **The princes of Issachar**. The more natural rendering is that of the margin, *my princes in Issachar*, but that of the text is allowable, and it is difficult to see why *the princes* should

- 
- Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.  
 By the watercourses of Reuben  
 There were great resolves of heart.
16. Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,  
 To hear the pipings for the flocks?  
 At the watercourses of Reuben  
 There were great searchings of heart.
17. Gilead abode beyond Jordan:  
 And Dan, why did he remain in ships?
- 

be called *my princes*. The next line reads like an anti-climax. The repetition of Issachar is also singular. Hence since Issachar is not mentioned in some ancient versions and since Barak was from Naphtali, that tribe may be substituted for Issachar. The two lines may be read:

*Issachar's princes were with Deborah  
 And Naphtali was with Barak.*

**Into the valley.** The plain, cf. v. 14. **They rushed**, etc. *I.e.* they followed Barak. **By the watercourses**, etc. At this point begins the description of those who refused to respond to the call for the war. Another rendering of these opening words is *in the divisions of Reuben* with reference to different tribal divisions. The expectation of some help from Reuben, which dwelt east of the Dead Sea far from the field of action shows how strong the bond, especially of religion, was between the tribes of Israel. **Resolves.** Better, as in the last line of the following verse *searchings*. The final couplet of each verse should be read alike. The second one probably is a repetition through copyist's error.

16. **Satest.** The original has the force of being idle, refusing to help. **The pipings.** The calls of the shepherds to their flocks.

17. **Gilead.** The region east of the Jordan, north and south of the Jabbok. It was the home of the tribe of Gad for which it here stands. **Abode.** In the sense remaining still, refusing to aid. **Dan.** The portion of the tribe which settled north of Lake Merom is meant. Hence the migration described in chap. 18, had already

- Asher sat still at the <sup>1</sup> haven of the sea,  
 And abode by his creeks.
18. Zebulun was a people that jeopardd their lives unto  
 the death,  
 And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field.
19. The kings came and fought ;  
 Then fought the kings of Canaan,  
 In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo :  
 They took no gain of money.
20. They fought from heaven,  
 The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
21. The river Kishon swept them away,

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *shore*.

taken place. The mention of their remaining or, better, sojourning *in ships*, *i.e.* dwelling perhaps among seafaring people, shows that the Danites had already then become in some way closely connected with their neighbors the Phœnicians. The tribe of Asher dwelt immediately adjacent to the Phœnicians, and were thus, like Dan, thought of as having contact with the sea. Neither of these two distant northern tribes nor those east of the Jordan responded to the call to assist their kinsmen.

18. In striking contrast with the unresponsive tribes just mentioned were Zebulun and Naphtali. The mention of Naphtali here is against its substitution for Issachar in v. 15 (see above).

19. **Kings of Canaan.** The unsubdued Canaanite cities, of which there were many (cf. chap. 1), were generally ruled each by its own king. These kings were united under Sisera against Israel. **In Taanach.** The battle was in the plain in the immediate vicinity of Taanak, near the streams adjoining Megiddo (cf. 1: 27).

20. A poetical description of the intervention of Jehovah in a powerful rain storm which brought disaster upon the enemy (v. 21). A rain storm signally assisted the English at the battle of Crécy.

21. **Kishon.** The second river of Palestine, some thirty-five

- That ancient river, the river Kishon.  
 O my soul, <sup>1</sup> march on with strength.
22. Then did the horsehoofs stamp  
 By reason of the pransings, the pransings of their  
 strong ones.
23. Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD,  
 Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ;  
 Because they came not to the help of the LORD,  
 To the help of the LORD <sup>2</sup> against the mighty.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *thou hast trodden down strength.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *among.*

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miles in length, which drains the plain of Esdraelon. In summer it is an insignificant stream, but in winter it overflows the surrounding country, turning it into a morass. This is evidently what happened through a rain storm at the time of the battle. The rising waters impeded the chariots of the Canaanites and the army became panic-stricken before the fierce attack of the Hebrews ; and many soldiers while fleeing lost their lives in the swollen stream. "The fate of Sisera's army finds a parallel in the battle between the French and Turks, near Tabor, on April 16, 1799, when many of the latter were drowned in attempting to pass the morass in their flight." **Ancient.** The word thus rendered is of very doubtful meaning, and no certain one can be given. **O my soul,** etc. An expression of the intense exultation of the poet at the thought of the great victory. But it seems to many out of place here, and the line is usually regarded as corrupt, and frequently left untranslated.

22. **Pransings.** Better, *galloping*. The verse is descriptive of the confusion of the chariot corps in their flight. Cf. Nah. 3 : 2 f.

23. The emphasis placed upon the failure of the inhabitants of *Meroz* to render assistance and the position of the curse in the poem shows that the reference is not to a non-participation like that mentioned in vv. 15b-17, but something more blameworthy. The juxtaposition with the blessing of Jael to which the curse is a foil suggests that the people of Meroz allowed fugitives to escape, perhaps Sisera. The location of Meroz is entirely unknown. **Angel of the Lord.** Cf. 2 : 1. **Against the mighty.** Better is



24. Blessed <sup>1</sup>above women shall Jael be,  
The wife of Heber the Kenite,  
Blessed shall she be <sup>1</sup>above women in the tent.
25. He asked water, *and* she gave him milk;  
She brought him butter in a lordly dish.
26. She put her hand to the <sup>2</sup>nail,  
And her right hand to the workmen's hammer;  
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote  
through his head,  
Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.
27. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay:  
At her feet he bowed, he fell:  
Where he bowed, there he fell down <sup>3</sup>dead.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *of*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *tent-pin*.<sup>3</sup> Or, *overpowered*.

the marginal reading *among the mighty*. The enemy would not have been distinguished with the epithet mighty.

24. **The wife of Heber the Kenite.** These explanatory words are regarded by many as a gloss derived from 4:17. They interrupt the Hebrew parallelism. **Women in the tent.** Tent-dwelling, Bedouin women.

25. **Butter.** Curdled milk, parallel with *milk* in the previous line. Cf. 4:19. **Lordly dish.** Literally *a dish of nobles*, i.e. a large fine dish.

26. This verse must be interpreted poetically. Jael struck Sisera either with a heavy tent-pin or a heavy hammer or mallet. The word is different from that in 4:21, but it may have been the same utensil. In the next line *Sisera* is a gloss. The two lines may be rendered,

*She smote, crushed his head,  
Shattered, pierced his temple.*

He was standing when she struck him.

27. Descriptive of how "Sisera went down on his knees, fell prostrate, and lay there dead."

28. Through the window she looked forth, and cried,  
 The mother of Sisera *cried* through the lattice,  
 Why is his chariot so long in coming?  
 Why tarry the <sup>1</sup> wheels of his chariots?
29. Her wise ladies answered her,  
<sup>2</sup> Yea, she returned answer to herself,
30. Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil?  
 A damsel, two damsels to every man;  
 To Sisera a spoil of <sup>3</sup> divers colours,  
 A spoil of <sup>3</sup> divers colours of embroidery,  
 Of <sup>3</sup> divers colours of embroidery on both sides, on  
 the necks of the spoil?

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *steps*.    <sup>2</sup> Or, (*Yet she repeateth her words unto herself*).    <sup>3</sup> Or, *dyed garments*.

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28–30. The poet turns from this scene, to show us Sisera's mother anxiously awaiting her son's victorious return.

28. **Looked.** The force of the original is not only to look, but *to overhang*. The verb **cried**, which occurs only here, is a word of uncertain root meaning, better taken as a synonym of *look*. **Lattice** is a synonym of *window*. **His chariot**, a collective noun, *his chariot troop*. **Wheels.** Marg. *steps*, the sound made by blows, here the hoof beats of the chariot horses for which the mother of Sisera was listening.

*Through the window she looked forth and peered,  
 The mother of Sisera through the lattice —  
 Why delays his chariot troop to come?  
 Why tarry the sounds of his chariots?*

29. With a slight change in the first word:

*The wisest of her princes answers her,  
 Yea, she herself repeats her words to herself.*

The second line means that the mother of Sisera keeps repeating to herself either her anxious forebodings or the consolation of the princes given in v. 30.

30. **Embroidery on both sides.** Literally *two pieces of varie-*

31. So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD:  
 But let them that love him be as the sun when he  
 goeth forth in his might.  
 And the land had rest forty years. R<sup>D</sup>

5. *Gideon and his son Abimelech, Chaps. 6-9*

6. And the children of Israel did that which was evil in R<sup>D</sup>  
 the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them

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*gated stuff.* On the necks of the spoil. The text gives also for the neck of the spoiler or by the change of a single letter for the neck of the queen. But the verse seems to have suffered through the repetitions of words in transcription. It probably originally consisted of only four lines, and, removing repeated words and literally translating with an added letter giving *his neck*, read,

*Are they not finding, dividing the spoil,  
 A wench, two wenches for each man?  
 Spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,  
 A variegated piece or two for his neck?*

31. **Them that love him.** Better after the Greek and Syriac versions, *them that love thee*. The possessive *his* with *might* arose probably by corruption. *But let thy friends be as the sun when he riseth in might*.

The section dealing with Gideon is the most thrilling of all the stories of Judges. The hero Gideon is portrayed in fascinating lines. He appears as an humble peasant threshing grain in a wine vat, and is visited by the angel of Jehovah. He is of marked strength and courage, and also of human doubt and hesitation. God grants him wondrous signs, and yet he is a hero of faith; and through faith as well as stratagem he obtains a great victory. For sermonic purposes no story of Judges is equal to that of Gideon.

The narrative is long and complex, composed of the interlacings of J and E, with later annotations. The evidence of two original stories is clear when we compare 7: 23-8: 3 with 8: 4-21. Both passages give a conclusion of the war against Midian, but they

2. into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel : and because of Midian the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and the caves, and the strong
3. holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the chil-

do not together represent one continuous narrative. In one, tribal hosts are pursuing the Midianites and the chiefs of Midian are *Oreb* and *Zeeb*, who fall into the hands of the Ephraimites. In the other, Gideon, to avenge a family wrong, with three hundred men, apparently of his own clan Abiezer, is pursuing the Midianites, and the kings who fall into his hands are *Zebah* and *Zalmunna*. These differences reveal a diversity of authorship and provide a basis for expecting evidences of two united and edited narratives in the account of the events previous to the war.

6 : 1-6. This account opens with the usual Deuteronomic introduction. Israel sins and is delivered into the power of the Midianites, who overrun all the land, compelling the people to take refuge in caves and fastnesses. This oppression is described so vividly and at such unusual length that the Deuteronomic author not unlikely found some such description in his source JE.

1. The usual formula of the Deuteronomic author. **Midian.** An Arab tribe reckoned as a son of Abraham by Keturah, Gen. 25 : 1-6. Of it were the merchantmen who kidnaped Joseph, Gen. 37 : 28 ; and Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, Exod. 2 : 15-21. A town of the name *Midian*, according to the ancient geographer Ptolemy, was on the side of the Gulf of Akabah, opposite the traditional site of Sinai. This would indicate the principal settled home of the tribe, but from the Old Testament references the tribe was largely nomadic, frequenting the Sinaitic peninsula and the territory to the northeast, including even that of Moab. In 8 : 24 they are called *Ishmaelites*.

2. **Dens.** Hiding-places. The word is of uncertain derivation.

3. **When Israel had sown.** The invasion was not for permanent conquest, but only for plunder. **The Amalekites.** See 3 : 13. **The children of the east.** A term used frequently of the

4. dren of the east ; they came up against them ; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, they came in as locusts for multitude ; both they and their camels were without number : and they came into the
6. land to destroy it. And Israel was brought very low because of Midian ; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.
7. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried **E<sup>2</sup>**
8. unto the LORD because of Midian, that the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel : and he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you
9. forth out of the house of bondage ; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of

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Bedouin or pastoral people to the east and northeast of Palestine, v. 33 ; 7 : 12 ; 8 : 10 ; Gen. 29 : 1 ; Job 1 : 3 ; 1 Kgs. 4 : 30 ; Isa. 11 : 14 ; Jer. 49 : 28 ; Ezek. 25 : 4, 10.

4. **Gaza.** The most southerly of the Philistine cities, mentioned to show the wide extent of the devastation.

7-10. This admonition is so different from the usual writing of the Deuteronomic school that, as mentioned, it came from another writer than the author of the preceding verses, either **E<sup>2</sup>** given above, or a late annotator. The abrupt appearance of a prophet suggests the latter ; but its incompleteness, lacking a positive accusation, and the affinity with Josh. 24 : 1-15 ; 1 Sam. 7 : 8 ; 10 : 18 f. ; 12 (all **E** passages), and its appropriate connection with vv. 25-32 as its sequel argue for a quotation rather than an annotation.

8-10. **I brought you**, etc. The redemption from Egypt and from those who hindered the settlement of Israel in Canaan is given as the ground of the obligation to serve Jehovah only.

- the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;
10. and I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; ye shall not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not hearkened unto my voice.
- J 11. And the angel of the LORD came, and sat under the <sup>1</sup>oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.

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<sup>1</sup>Or, *terebinth*.

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The former thought is expressed in the preface to the ten commandments, Exod. 20: 2 f. Cf. also 2: 1; 1 Sam. 10: 18; Hos. 13: 4. **Amorites.** See 1: 34.

11-24. The call of Gideon is through an unrecognized angel of Jehovah with whom Gideon converses somewhat at length, and as he offers his divine guest a meal, the angel turns it into a sacrifice consumed by fire issuing from the rock. Gideon then knows that his visitor is divine and fears for his life, but receives the assurance that he will not die and erects then an altar unto Jehovah. This narrative came from the school of J. To that school belong stories of similar manifestations of deity in a human form, such as the appearance of the angel of Jehovah to Hagar (Gen. 16: 7-14); of the three men who represent Jehovah to Abram (Gen. 18: 1-15); of the angels who rescued Lot (Gen. 19: 1-28); of the divine man who wrestled with Jacob (Gen. 32: 23-33); of the divine captain who appeared unto Joshua. The story of the annunciation of the birth of Samson (Judg. 13: 3), where likewise the angel of Jehovah appears, belongs also to the same source.

11. **The angel of the Lord.** See 2: 1. **The oak.** A sacred tree (see 4: 5) in Ophrah known to the writer. This tree belonged to *Joash*. **Ophrah.** Exact site unknown, from the story of chap. 9 evidently not far from Shechem. **The Abiezrite.** Of the clan of *Abiezer* which belonged to Manasseh, v. 15; Num. 26: 30; Josh. 17: 2. **In the winepress.** Instead of threshing

12. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man  
 13. of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his wondrous works which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath cast us off, and de-  
 14. livered us into the hand of Midian. And the LORD<sup>1</sup> looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I  
 15. sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh Lord, where-with shall I save Israel? behold, my<sup>2</sup> family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's  
 16. house. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as  
 17. one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found

<sup>1</sup> Or, *turned towards*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *thousand*.

the wheat on the usual exposed place, where the wind would carry off the chaff, Gideon beat his sheaves in the wine vat — the rock-hewn receptacle in the vineyard and thus secluded.

13. Gideon repudiates the salutation of the angel that Jehovah is with him. That thought appears unreasonable in view of the present distress.

14. **And the Lord (Jehovah) looked upon him.** The angel or messenger is here directly identified with Jehovah. **In this thy might.** Gideon's strength. In v. 12 he is addressed as a *mighty man of valour*, i.e. a stalwart hero. We are to think of Gideon making an impression upon the angel through his physique.

15. Similar self-depreciation appears in the story of Moses, Exod. 3: 11; 4: 10; 6: 12; and of Saul, 1 Sam. 9: 21. Such protestations must not be taken too literally. The subsequent narrative shows that Gideon's family was neither an obscure one nor he a mean person.

- R<sup>JE</sup> grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that it is thou  
 J 18. that talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee,  
 until I come unto thee, and bring forth my <sup>1</sup> present,  
 and lay it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until  
 19. thou come again. And Gideon went in, and made  
 ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of  
 meal: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the  
 broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the  
 R<sup>JE</sup> 20. <sup>2</sup> oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said  
 unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes,  
 and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth.  
 J 21. And he did so. Then the angel of the LORD put forth  
 the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched  
 the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there went  
 up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the  
 R<sup>P</sup> unleavened cakes; and the angel of the LORD departed

<sup>1</sup> Or, *offering*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *terebinth*.

17. **Then shew me a sign**, etc. These words, implying that the visitor is a supernatural being, anticipate vv. 21 f. and hence are to be considered as a gloss. The narrative is improved by their omission.

19. Cf. Abraham's preparation for the entertainment of his similar guests, Gen. 18: 6-8. **Unleavened**. Because prepared so quickly. **An ephah**. This measure, approximately a bushel, must be taken like our indefinite word *quantity*. The cakes were abundant, matching the supply of meat represented in the *kid*.

20. **Angel of God**. This, instead of *angel of Jehovah* as elsewhere in the narrative, suggests that the verse is an insertion introduced by some one who would make of the presentation of the repast a formal sacrifice. Its omission does not mar the narrative. The *pouring* of the broth, like the barrels of water poured on the sacrifice of Elijah on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs. 18: 33-35), heightens the miracle of the fire, v. 20.

21. **And the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight**. These



22. out of his sight. And Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD; and Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! forasmuch as I have seen the angel of the LORD
23. face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be
24. unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it <sup>1</sup>Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, *The LORD is peace.*

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words are another gloss derived from 13: 20. The angel still remained, for Gideon addresses him in the next verse.

22. **O Lord God**, lit. *O Lord Jehovah*. Gideon now recognizes the angel as Jehovah and addresses him thus directly. Cf. the use of Jehovah in vv. 14, 16. Gideon feared for his life because the Hebrew notion was that no man could see God and live. Cf. 13: 22; Gen. 16: 13; 32: 30; Exod. 33: 20; Isa. 6: 5.

24. **Built an altar**, etc. The statement of this verse properly concludes the story of Gideon's call through the angel. At the time when the story was written there was an altar at Ophrah bearing the name of *Jehovah-shalom*, Jehovah is peace, *i.e.* well disposed. Whether Gideon had anything historically to do with its origin, whether he really felt himself thus called by an angel even as Joan of Arc did by the Virgin, or whether the story was a tale that grew up in connection with the altar to account for its existence is now impossible to determine. The law in ancient Israel was that altars were to be erected to Jehovah in every place where he caused his name to be remembered, Exod. 20: 24. A remarkable experience might then give rise to a place of worship or from a place of worship might arise a story of a remarkable experience. Probably the latter rather than the former occasioned the stories connected with the sanctuaries at Bethel, Gen. 28: 11-22; 35: 1-7, 9-15; Peniel, Gen. 32: 24-30; Mahanaim, Gen. 32: 1-2; Hebron, Gen. 13: 18; Beersheba, Gen. 21: 33. Altars bearing memorial names are mentioned in Gen. 33: 20; 35: 7; Exod. 17: 15.

E<sup>2</sup> 25. And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's bullock, <sup>1</sup> even the

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *and*.

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25-32. After his call Gideon receives at night from Jehovah a command to destroy the altar of Baal and he does so, receiving through the incidents of the act the name Jerubbaal. This episode is an interlude in the narrative. Its underlying thought is that the land must be cleansed from Baal worship before the attack upon the enemies can begin. That this section is not an immediate continuation of vv. 11-24 is clear, since they contain a command to erect an altar unto Jehovah (v. 26), but according to v. 24 an altar had just been erected. The command also to destroy the altar of Baal (v. 25) would naturally have come through the angel visitor if the narratives are a unit. The whole tenor of vv. 25-32 is not that of J. In v. 11 the holy tree of Ophrah on the land of Joash is the sacred spot on which Jehovah appears, and there is no intimation that the people are engaged in wrong or idolatrous worship for which calamities have befallen them. It is a story of the people oppressed by Midian without its cause being revealed and Gideon summoned to be their deliverer. On the other hand, these verses logically follow vv. 7-10. The warning of the prophet addressed to the people as a whole naturally prepares the way for the specific revelation given to Gideon. In its original and complete form the admonition doubtless terminated with an upbraiding for the worship of Baal and a declaration that for this the people had been delivered into the hands of their enemies, and hence the first step in any restoration to divine favor and in any deliverance must come through the abolition of Baal worship.

25. **The same night.** In the present connection the night following the interview with the angel, but originally it was the night following the prophet's warning (see above). **Thy father's bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old.** The text is corrupt. Some read *thy father's fat bullock* (fat taking the place of *second*, in Heb. the two words being much alike) and attempt no restoration of the remaining words. Others, following the suggestion of v. 27 and omitting the word

- second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the
26. Asherah that is <sup>1</sup>by it: and build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this strong hold, <sup>2</sup>in the orderly manner, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah
27. which thou shalt cut down. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had spoken unto him: and it came to pass, because he feared his father's household and the men of the city, so that he
28. could not do it by day, that he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah was cut down that was <sup>3</sup>by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built.
29. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.
30. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out

<sup>1</sup> Or, upon.<sup>2</sup> Or, with that pertaining to it.<sup>3</sup> Or, upon.

*second*, which is wanting in the Greek translation, read *ten men of thy servants and a bullock seven years old*. No reason, however, can be given for the command to take a *seven-year-old bullock*. **And throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath.** The altar belonged to the town (vv. 28 ff.). Joash, Gideon's father, was its custodian. *Baal* represents a Canaanite or foreign god and *the Asherah* the wooden pillar which customarily stood by the altar of a Baal (see 3 : 7).

26. **Upon the top of this strong hold.** The altar is to be erected in a new place upon a hilltop. **In the orderly manner.** Either a corruption or a technical term not understood: some interpret *with orderly layers of stone*. **The second bul-**

- thy son, that he may die: because he hath broken down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down
31. the Asherah that was <sup>1</sup> by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? or will ye save him? he that will plead for him, <sup>2</sup> let him be put to death <sup>3</sup> whilst *it is yet* morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath
- R  
E<sup>2</sup> broken down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him <sup>4</sup> Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath broken down his altar.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, upon. <sup>2</sup> Or, shall be put to death; let be till morning; if &c. <sup>3</sup> Or, before morning. <sup>4</sup> That is, Let Baal plead.

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**lock.** Again the word *second* is to be omitted or read *fat*. The offering was one of consecration, dedicating the new altar to Jehovah.

31. **Will ye plead for Baal? or will ye save him?** *I.e.* will ye take up his quarrel? or will ye vindicate him? Immediately following these questions of Joash were originally the words: *If he be a god let him plead for himself.* Joash would rescue Gideon by the proposal, "Leave the guilty one to suffer divine vengeance." The writer, however, meant his words to be taken in irony, implying that Baal was no god, cf. 1 Kgs. 18: 21-39. The intervening words *He that will . . . morning*, are an interruption and a gloss by some one who felt that an advocate of Baal either that morning or the morning of the following day should be put to death (cf. Deut. 13: 6-11).

32. This verse explains the meaning of Gideon's name, *Jerubbaal*, to wit, *Let Baal contend*, as though a name of defiance against Baal and connected with the destruction of his altar. This whole story of the destruction of the altar of Baal, however, we have seen is late and of a religious motive and thus without historic foundation. Jerubbaal, however, was a name of Gideon, 8: 29, 35; 9: 1, 16. Why he bore it is unknown. Its meaning is either *Baal pleads*, *i.e.* contends for one, or *Baal founds*; and *Baal* meaning *Lord* was in early times in Israel the equivalent

33. Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the E  
 children of the east assembled themselves together;  
 and they passed over, and pitched in the valley of  
 34. Jezreel. But the spirit of the LORD <sup>1</sup>came upon J  
 Gideon; and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was  
 35. gathered together after him. And he sent messengers R<sup>JE</sup>  
 throughout all Manasseh; and they also were gathered  
 together after him: and he sent messengers unto R<sup>P</sup>  
 Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and  
 36. they came up to meet them. And Gideon said unto E

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *clothed itself with*.

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of Jehovah. Such names compounded with *Baal* were then not unusual. *Eshbaal*, *Merib-baal*, were the names of son and grandson of Saul, 1 Chron. 8: 33 f., 9: 39 f.; *Beeljada* (*Baal-iada*), of a son of David, 1 Chron. 14: 7. Elsewhere *Bosheth*, meaning *shame*, and *El*, meaning *god*, are substituted for *Baal* in these names, 2 Sam. 2: 8; 4: 4; 5: 16. This was because *Baal* gradually ceased to be used of Jehovah, but only of heathen deities (cf. 3: 7).

Vv. 33-35 represent several sources, v. 33 belonging in the main to E, v. 34 to J, and v. 35 to R<sup>JE</sup> and R<sup>P</sup>.

33. Cf. vv. 1 f. **Passed over.** Crossed the Jordan. **Valley of Jezreel.** The broad deep vale east of Jezreel which descends to the Jordan, the natural gateway from the Jordan into the fertile plain of Esdraelon.

34. For the endowment of Gideon with the Spirit, cf. 3: 10. The clan *Abiezer* follows him, cf. v. 11. This is agreeable to the narrative of J, see above and 8: 3.

35. **Manasseh.** West Manasseh is meant. The second half of this verse anticipates 7: 23, and hence is probably an editor's gloss.

36-40. Gideon asks that his call may be proved by the miracles of a wet and a dry fleece. From the use of *God* instead of *Jehovah* (vv. 36, 39 f.) this section cannot have come from J, hence it may be assigned to E.

God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou  
 37. hast spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the  
 threshing-floor ; if there be dew on the fleece only, and  
 it be dry upon all the ground, then shall I know that  
 thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast  
 38. spoken. And it was so : for he rose up early on the  
 morrow, and pressed the fleece together, and wringed  
 39. the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. And  
 Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be kindled  
 against me, and I will speak but this once : let me  
 prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece ; let  
 it be now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all  
 40. the ground let there be dew. And God did so that  
 night : for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there  
 was dew on all the ground.

R<sup>JE</sup> 7. Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people  
 that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the

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36. **As thou hast spoken.** This cannot originally have referred to the visit of the angel of Jehovah (vv. 11-24), because in these verses (36-40) the name of deity throughout is *God*. Gideon also after the wondrous sign of the fire, whereby he knew that Jehovah had directly spoken to him (vv. 21-23) would not be expected to ask for another sign. The "speaking," then, is one not preserved in our story, probably according to the manner of E, a vision of the night for which was substituted the admonition of the prophet and the night call of Jehovah for the destruction of the altar of Baal (see above, vv. 7-10, 25-32).

37. **On the threshing-floor.** A hard, exposed place well suited for Gideon's test.

39. Gideon asks that the test may be repeated in a reverse form, as though perchance the gathering of the dew upon the fleece might have been due to natural causes.

7 : 1-8. Gideon and the assembled people now proceed against the Midianites, but Jehovah tells him that the people are too

spring of <sup>1</sup>Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, <sup>2</sup>by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against
3. me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and <sup>3</sup>depart from mount Gilead. And there

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<sup>1</sup>That is, *Trembling*. See v. 3.    <sup>2</sup>Or, *from the hill of Moreh, onwards in the valley*.    <sup>3</sup>Or, *go round about*.

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many for a deliverance through them not to occasion self-pride, and Gideon dismisses all who are faint-hearted and more than two-thirds return home, leaving 10,000 men. But these, Jehovah says, are still too many, and they are reduced to three hundred chosen through their lapping water like a dog. With these Gideon is to conquer the Midianites. As this narrative now stands it cannot well have come from J or E. The exaggerated religious motive rules the former out, and the use of Jehovah militates against the latter, hence scholars assign it to an editor.

1. **The spring of Harod.** Only mentioned here; usually identified with 'Ain Jalud at the foot of Mt. Gilboa. **The hill of Moreh.** *I.e.* the hill of the teacher or diviner, hence a place where communications were believed to be received from God, usually identified with Neby Duh, about four miles distant from the spring. But these identifications of *Harod* and *Moreh* are uncertain. They both are derived from the statement of 6:33, that the Midianites were in the plain of Esdraelon, but the only *Moreh* mentioned elsewhere is in the neighborhood of Shechem, Gen. 12:6; Deut. 11:30. Hence some hold that this verse represents a source which placed the camp of the Midianites in the neighborhood of Shechem.

3. **Whosoever is fearful and trembling.** The dismissal of such is according to the law of Deut. 20:8. **Mount Gilead.** The

returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall
5. not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to
6. drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their
7. knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all

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reading *Mount Gilead* is clearly a mistake, since it represents the district of Central Palestine east of the Jordan. Either read *Mount Gilboa*, see v. 1, or leave untranslated as unintelligible.

5. The modes of drinking are described: first, that of those who, lying prostrate, put their mouths directly to the water and drink like a dog; and secondly, those who kneel and raise the water in their hands to their mouths.

6. **Putting their hand to their mouth.** These words are either the gloss of some one who did not understand the passage, and should be struck out; or they belonged originally at the end of the verse.

7. Why the preference was given to the men who lapped is not evident. Perhaps their mode of drinking was that of rude, fierce men, hard fighters. The name of *Caleb* who was the hard fighter of south Judah means *dog* (cf. 1: 20).



8. the people go every man unto his place. <sup>1</sup> So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the men of Israel every man unto his tent, but retained the three hundred men: and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley.
9. And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD **E** said unto him, Arise, get thee down <sup>2</sup> into the camp;
10. for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Purah thy servant down
11. to the camp: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down <sup>2</sup> into the camp. Then went he down with Purah his servant unto the outermost part of the

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<sup>1</sup> According to some ancient versions, *So they took the victuals of the people.*  
<sup>2</sup> Or, *against.*

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8. **So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets.** With slight changes in the Hebrew word rendered *victuals* we may translate, *So they took the pitchers of the people in their hands and their trumpets.* This explains how the army of three hundred had so many *pitchers* or *jars* and *trumpets* or *horns*, see vv. 16 ff. They took those of the people who went home.

9-15. Gideon in spite of the divine command is afraid to attack at once the Midianite camp and hence, likewise by divine command, reconnoitres the camp and receives a sign of great encouragement in overhearing a soldier's dream and its interpretation. This use of the dream bears the mark of coming from E.

9. **The same night.** As the narrative now stands the night immediately following the selection of the army of three hundred. **Arise, get thee down into the camp.** These words, as the following clause shows, are a command to attack at once the camp of Midian.

10. But if Gideon is afraid to make the attack at once, he is to go down with his servant and hear the talk of the camp. Thereby he will be encouraged and strengthened to make the attack, v. 11.

- R<sup>JE</sup> 12. armed men that were in the camp. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude; and  
 E their camels were without number, as the sand which  
 13. is upon the sea shore for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came unto the tent, and smote it that it fell, and turned it upside down, that the tent  
 14. lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: into his hand God hath delivered Midian, and all the host.

12. This verse appears like an editorial annotation, reflecting 6: 3, 5, which see.

13. Gideon's encouragement comes through hearing a dream and its interpretation. Dreams figure very largely in the Old Testament as means of divine revelation. Compare especially the dreams connected with the story of Joseph, Gen. 37: 5-10; 40: 5-19; 41: 1-32. **And, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled,** etc. The dream is of a round, hard, flat ash-cake of barley meal, rolling into the camp, striking a tent, and overturning it. The words **that it fell** and **that the tent lay along** are wanting in certain Greek texts and should be struck out. Read then, *and came unto the tent and smote it and turned it upside down.* The *cake of barley bread* symbolizes the tillers of the soil, and thus the men of Israel whose land was being plundered; *the ten* symbolizes the nomad, and thus the invader the Midianites.

14. This verse has also suffered editorial expansion. Originally it read, *This is nothing else than the men of Israel, into their hand God hath delivered all the host.* A specific person was not referred to in the barley loaf, but as mentioned a social class, the agriculturists, and hence the men of Israel and not their leader. **Host.** Better rendered *camp.*

15. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped; and he returned into the camp of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into
16. your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the JE three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets, and empty
17. pitchers, with torches within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outermost part of the camp,
18. it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, For the LORD and for Gideon. RP

16-22. Gideon makes a night attack whereby the Midianites, through the crashing of jars, the flashing of torches, the blowing of trumpets, and shoutings, become panic-stricken, slay one another, and flee. The jars, the torches, the trumpets, and the shoutings are an excessive combination and suggest the union of two stories, in one of which the panic was caused by the crashing jars and flashing torches and war cries and in the other by the trumpets sounding an attack in the darkness. The former is assigned to E, the latter to J.

16. **Three companies.** Such a division is frequently mentioned in connection with fighting, 9:43; 1 Sam. 11:11; 13:17 f.; Job 1:17. **And he put into the hands of all of them trumpets (horns) and empty pitchers (jars) with torches within the pitchers (jars).** This combination of the two narratives (see above) makes their hands more than full. Two hands would be required to convey a jar containing a torch, so covered as to keep the light invisible and yet burning.

18. **And say, For the Lord and for Gideon.** An editorial note suggested by v. 20. In the attack in which the noise was made by blowing the trumpets there would be little place or use for shouting.

JE 19. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their  
 20. hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, <sup>1</sup> The sword of the LORD  
 21. and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran;  
 22. and they shouted, and <sup>2</sup> put *them* to flight. And they blew the three hundred trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, and against all the host: and the host fled as far as Beth-shittah

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *A sword for &c.*

<sup>2</sup> Another reading is, *fled.*

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20. Again the combination of two narratives is clear. **The sword.** Probably an insertion. The battle-cry of the host who broke their jars and waved their torches was, *For Jehovah and for Gideon.*

21. **And they stood every man in his place round about the camp.** The attacking force did not advance, but remained standing either blowing the trumpets or waving the torches and shouting. (The statement probably belongs to the narrative of the latter strategy.) The remainder of the verse describes the action of the Midianites. There is no change of subject. It should be rendered, *And all the host awoke and sent up a wild cry and fled.*

22. Such a panic as is here described, in which the men of a camp or army attack one another, appears also in the description of the rout of the Philistines by Jonathan and his armor-bearer, 1 Sam. 14: 20, and in that of the overthrow of the hordes which invaded Judah in the days of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 20: 23, and in prophetic outlooks, Ezek. 38: 21; Hag. 2: 22; Zech. 14: 13. **Beth-shittah, Zererah, Abel-meholah, and Tabbath.** These four

- toward Zererah, as far as the <sup>1</sup> border of Abel-meholah,  
 23. by Tabbath. And the men of Israel were gathered E  
 together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out R<sup>JE</sup>  
 24. of all Manasseh, and pursued after Midian. And E  
 Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country  
 of Ephraim, saying, Come down against Midian, and  
 take before them the waters, as far as Beth-barah,  
<sup>2</sup> even Jordan. So all the men of Ephraim were  
 gathered together, and took the waters as far as

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *lip*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *and also*.

places, mentioned in connection with the flight, have not been satisfactorily identified. They were probably on the road into the Jordan valley, either from the plain of Jezreel or from the vicinity of Shechem, according to the location assigned to the camp of Midian (see v. 1), or the places were in the valley itself. **Abel-meholah** is frequently placed ten miles south of Beth-shean (see 1 : 27), and **Zererah** has been thought miswritten for *Zeredah*, the same as *Zarethan*, much farther south in the valley of the Jordan near *Adam*, Josh. 3 : 16, modern ed-Damieh, where the main road has always crossed the Jordan.

23-25. The men of Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh, and Ephraim are now summoned to pursue the fleeing Midianites, and the Ephraimites slay the princes of Midian. This section is in the main from E.

23. **Naphtali** and **Asher**. The appearance of these two tribes in the story is probably due to some late annotator. They were too distant to be concerned with a Bedouin invasion in the territory of Manasseh.

24. The flight of the marauders southward leads them into the territory **Ephraim**, hence the men of that tribe are summoned to cut off their retreat by seizing **the waters**, *i.e.* the crossings of any stream. The one particularly referred to is without doubt the Wady Farah, a tributary of the Jordan. The fords of the Jordan may also have been meant. The location of **Beth-barah** is unknown.

25. Beth-barah, <sup>1</sup> even Jordan. And they took the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian: and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond Jordan.
- R<sup>JE</sup>
- E 8. And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with Midian? And they did
2. chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I now done in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the
  3. vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *and also*.

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25. **The rock of Oreb and the winepress of Zeeb** were two localities whose names in the writer's day preserved the remembrance of the places where the princes were slain. Their location is unknown. *The rock of Oreb* is mentioned in Isa. 10: 26 and the victory over Midian in Isa. 9: 4; Ps. 83: 9-12. *Oreb* means "raven," and *Zeeb*, "wolf." **And pursued Midian.** These words are closely connected with those following and with them are an editorial note inserted to bring this narrative into harmony with that of 8: 4 ff.

8: 1-3. Ephraim was the leading tribe of Northern Israel and always very jealous of its rights. A similar quarrel is related in 12: 1-6. This paragraph, to which v. 29 belongs, concludes E's story of the pursuit of Midian.

1. The men of Ephraim are represented as angry because they had not participated in the war from the beginning. The idea doubtless was that then they would have received more booty.

2-3. Gideon cleverly says that in the capture of the princes of Moab the Ephraimites have received even better spoil than that which fell to his own followers, the men of Abiezer, who began the war.

hand the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their<sup>1</sup> anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

4. And Gideon came to Jordan,<sup>2</sup> and passed over, he, and J the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet
5. pursuing. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah
6. and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *spirit*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *to pass*.

4-21. Gideon with three hundred men pursues the Midianites. He asks food for his wearied host of the towns of Succoth and Penuel. The rulers of those cities, doubting his success, refuse. Later he wreaks upon them terrible vengeance. He captures the kings of Midian, and since they had slain his brethren, he orders his son to kill them. The boy is unwilling and Gideon slays them himself. Thus the war is ended. This conclusion, as mentioned, differs so widely from that of 7: 23-8: 4, that it must come from another hand, and its vivid naturalness points at once to J rather than E.

4. **Three hundred.** From the three hundred of this story probably grew the legend of the sifting down of the followers of Gideon to that number (7: 2-7).

5. **Succoth.** The location is uncertain; usually identified with Tell Deir Alla, east of the Jordan and about a mile north of the Jabbok. **Zebah and Zalmunna.** A witticism is expressed in these names as vocalized in the Hebrew text; they mean "victim" and "protection refused." This is a reflection of their fate. In the other narrative the leaders of the Midianites are Oreb and Zeeb (7: 25).

6. **Princes.** More correctly rendered *officials*, those who held military or civil offices, distinguished thus from the *elders* who were the heads of families. The address of these men is

7. thine army? And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will <sup>1</sup> tear your flesh with the thorns of the
8. wilderness and with briers. And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them in like manner: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth
9. had answered. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.
10. Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and  
R<sup>P</sup> their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the host of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand
11. men that drew sword. And Gideon went up by the  
J way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host; for the host was

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *thresh*.

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quite inconceivable if the great rout of the Midianites had already taken place. In this narrative (J) the rout must have occurred later.

7. **Then will I tear**, etc. A fearful punishment is threatened, see v. 16.

8. **Penuel**. The town associated with the story of Jacob's wrestle with the angel (Gen. 32: 24-30). It must then have been near the Jabbok and evidently was not far from Succoth, but the exact site is uncertain.

10. The location of **Karkor** is unknown. **One hundred and twenty thousand**. This great number, utterly unhistorical, is a mark of an annotation by a writer of the late Priestly school.

11. **By the way of them that dwell in tents**. *I.e.* by a caravan route, leading to the district of tent-dwelling Arabs east of **Nobah** and **Jogbehah**. The former of these names appears in Num. 32: 42 as that of a clan of Manasseh, which gave its name



12. secure. And Zebah and Zalmunna fled; and he pursued after them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and <sup>1</sup> discomfited all
13. the host. And Gideon the son of Joash returned from
14. the battle from the ascent of Heres. And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he <sup>2</sup> described for him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, seventy and seven
15. men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom ye did taunt me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *terrified*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *wrote down*.

to *Kenath*, modern Kanawat, which lies far to the northeast of Succoth and Penuel, and need have no connection with the *Nobah* here mentioned which then remains an unknown place. *Jogbehah* has been identified with Khirbet el-Gubeihat, northwest of *Rabbath Ammon* and not far from the river Jabbok. **And smote the host.** In this connection we place the night attack with jars and torches which has been transferred and combined with the other account in 7: 16-22. **For the host was secure.** The camp of the Midianites rested at night without expecting an attack.

13. **From the ascent of Heres.** This phrase is of uncertain meaning in the Hebrew. Accepting the translation given it may imply that Gideon returned to Succoth by some unexpected route in order to surprise the town. The location then would be in the neighborhood of Succoth.

14. **He described.** *I.e.* wrote down. This casual mention of writing shows that when this story was written, in the ninth century B.C., the art of writing must have been common in Israel. **The princes . . . and the elders.** See v. 6.

15. **Behold Zebah and Zalmunna.** These kings, whose slaughter might have been expected immediately on their capture, were kept alive as a witness against the men of Succoth and Penuel.

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16. bread unto thy men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he <sup>1</sup>taught the men of
17. Succoth. And he brake down the tower of Penuel,
18. and slew the men of the city. Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the
19. children of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye
20. had saved them alive, I would not slay you. And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared,
21. because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the
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<sup>1</sup> Some ancient authorities read, *threshed*. See v. 7.

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16. **And with them he taught.** We should here follow the Greek and Latin versions and render *threshed* after v. 7 instead of *taught*. He dragged or *trampled* these men naked over thorns and briers; a fearful form of death by torture frequently mentioned by Greek authors.

17. The threat of v. 9 is fulfilled.

18. Gideon asks respecting the death of his brothers. **What manner of men.** Literally, *Where are the men whom ye slew?* Gideon calls the kings to an account for the death of his brothers. Their answer shows that they expected blood revenge to be inflicted upon themselves. **Tabor.** Not Mt. Tabor or its village north of the plain of Esdraelon, since too remote from the home of Gideon, but an unknown place. The word may be a corruption of *Thebez* (9: 50), which was in the neighborhood of Shechem.

20. Gideon's request of his son was an honor to the young man and an ignominy to the captives.

21. The prisoners desire to be spared the disgrace of being slain by a youth and perhaps also the pain of an unskilful exe-

man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescents that were on their camels' necks.

22. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou E or R<sup>JE</sup>  
 over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian.
23. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall
24. rule over you. And Gideon said unto them, I would J  
 desire a request of you, that ye would give me every

cution. **And took the crescents that were on their camels' necks.** Riding camels are still often adorned with strings of shell and metal objects.

Vv. 22. f. interrupt the narrative. They are either misplaced or an editorial insertion. If the former, they are a conclusion of 8: 1-3 (E); if the latter, they were inserted by some one (perhaps R<sup>JE</sup>) who desired to offset the impression conveyed by 9: 1 ff., that Gideon ruled as a king.

23. On the motive of Gideon's refusal cf. 1 Sam. 8: 7; 10: 19; 12: 17, 19. "The condemnation of the kingdom as in principle irreconcilable with the sovereignty of Yahweh, the divine king, appears to date from the last age of the kingdom of Israel, those terrible years of despotism, revolution, and anarchy which intervened between the death of Jeroboam II and the fall of Samaria, when history seemed to write large the words of Yahweh by a prophet of the time: Thou saidst give me a king and princes; I give thee a king in my anger and take him away in my fury (Hos. 13: 10 f.)" (*Moore*).

Gideon fashions out of the spoils taken from the Midianites an idol which, preserved at Ophrah, becomes an object of worship. This continues the narrative of J, (v. 21).

24. **Unto them.** In the present connection this seems to refer to the men of Israel (vv. 22 f.); but originally the reference must have been to Gideon's fellow-warriors who possessed the spoil. Such a request from Gideon as leader and chief was both reason-

man the <sup>1</sup> earrings of his spoil. (For they had golden  
 25. earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they  
 answered, We will willingly give them. And they  
 spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the  
 26. earrings of his spoil. And the weight of the golden  
 earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven  
 R<sup>P</sup> hundred *shekels* of gold; beside the crescents, and  
 the pendants, and the purple raiment that was on the  
 kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were  
 J 27. about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an  
 ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah :  
 R<sup>P</sup> and all Israel went a whoring after it there : and it be-  
 28. came a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. So

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *nose-rings*.

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able and customary. **Earrings.** The word means also *nose-rings*, but it is doubtful whether these were worn by men. **Ishmaelites.** *I.e.* in customs and manner of life; they were nomads, children of the desert. In race according to Gen. 25 : 2, 12 ff. the Midianites were not Ishmaelites.

26. **A thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold.** About seventy pounds weight. This seems excessive to some, who omit the *thousand* as a gloss. The Midianites, however, were traders and hence would have considerable wealth, which as nomads they would carry with them in the form of jewels. The second half of the verse reads like an editorial addition.

27. **An ephod.** An idol of some kind; mentioned with the *teraphim* (17 : 5; 18 : 14, 18, 20); used as a means of inquiring of Jehovah (1 Sam. 14 : 18; 23 : 6, 9; 30 : 7). There was one at the sanctuary in Nob (1 Sam. 21 : 9). The same word *ephod* is also used to designate some kind of a priestly garment (cf. 1 Sam. 2 : 18, 28; 2 Sam. 6 : 14) especially in P of the garment of the high priest (Exod. 28 : 6-14). As an idol the ephod symbolized Jehovah. **And all Israel went a whoring.** Cf. 2 : 17. The seat of the idol became a popular place of unlawful worship. This

Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, and they lifted up their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon.

29. And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in  
 30. his own house. And Gideon had threescore and ten  
 sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. E  
R<sup>P</sup>  
 31. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also  
 bare him a son, and he <sup>1</sup> called his name Abimelech.  
 32. And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age,  
 and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father,  
 in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *set*.

is the judgment of the Deuteronomic editor who wrote the second half of this verse and the following one. **And it became a snare**, etc. Cf. 2:3. The ruin which befell the house of Gideon (9:5) is interpreted as due to his erection of the ephod.

29. This verse is out of place. Its original position was in all likelihood after 8:3.

8:30-35, as an introduction to chap. 9, consists of two parts: vv. 30-32 are from the priestly editor (R<sup>P</sup>), who added the story of Abimelech to the Deuteronomic Book of Judges and wrote these verses to explain who Abimelech was (9:1. ff.); vv. 33-35, on the other hand, are the Deuteronomic editor's substitute for his omission of the story of Abimelech (see Introduction, p. 13).

30. **Threescore and ten sons.** Cf. Abdon's seventy sons and grandsons (12:14); Jair's thirty sons (10:4); Rehoboam's twenty-eight sons and threescore daughters (2 Chron. 11:21). **Many wives.** An evidence of wealth and power.

31. **And his concubine that was in Shechem.** Beside his wives, inmates of his own home and harem, Gideon entered into a form of matrimonial alliance with a free woman who, according to an ancient custom, remained with her own parents and whose child therefore would be reckoned as belonging to her family. Her son was thus regarded a Shechemite in contrast to the other sons of Gideon (9:1-3). **Abimelech.** The name means

- R<sup>D</sup> 33. And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after the Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god.
34. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of
35. all their enemies on every side: neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *who is* Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.
- E 9. And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem

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“Melek (the god-king) is my father” or “Father of Melek.” There is no reference in the name to the kingship of Gideon.

33. **And went a whoring.** On this figure to express apostasy from Jehovah, cf. 2:17. **Baalim.** Cf. 2:11. **Baal-berith.** “Baal of a Covenant”: the local god of Shechem. The Deuteronomic editor has assumed that the worship of this god by the Shechemites represented a defection of the Israelites. But from the narrative of the following chapter it is clear that the Shechemites were Canaanites. Some have supposed that the word *covenant* in the name of the god indicated a desire to bring the Israelites and the Canaanites into a covenant relationship.

35. **Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal.** Here again the misdeeds of the Canaanites of Shechem, related in chap. 9, are referred to as chargeable to the men of Israel.

Chapter 9. After the death of Gideon, who seems to have ruled as a king, his son Abimelech the Shechemite persuaded his kinsfolk to exert themselves in his behalf that he might succeed to the authority of his father. This attempt, through its appeal to the racial prejudice of the Shechemites, was successful. All the other sons of Gideon, save one, having been slain, the men of Shechem made Abimelech king (vv. 1-6).

Jotham the escaped son of Gideon then from the heights overlooking the city of Shechem delivered a taunting fable predicting the destruction of Abimelech and his abettors (vv. 7-21).

For three years Abimelech ruled. Then a party within Shechem rose against him. A civil strife ensued in which the city

unto his mother's brethren, and spake with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father,

of Shechem and many of its citizens were destroyed, and Abimelech likewise perished, slain in the siege of the neighboring city of Thebez (vv. 22-57).

This narrative bears no marks of Deuteronomic editorship and seems to have been taken from JE and added to the book of Judges by the priestly editor. The story has been commonly regarded as a unit, yet recently it has been divided by scholars between J and E, vv. 26-41 being assigned to the former and vv. 1-23, 25, 42-55 to the latter, with vv. 24, 56 f. being assigned to R<sup>JE</sup>. The evidences of the two narratives are not very pronounced. The grounds for finding them are the two accounts of the origin of hostilities between Abimelech and the Shechemites." "In vv. 22-25 an evil spirit sent by God stirs up the Shechemites; their armed bands rob all who pass through their territory; in vv. 26-29 a family of newcomers headed by Gaal incite a revolt by appeals to race pride and hatred. The sequel of the first of these is found in vv. 42-45; Abimelech lays an ambush against the city and destroys it; that of the second is found in vv. 30-41." A reflection of real events may be seen in these narratives. The turmoil and strife between Israelites and Canaanites at Shechem is probably historical. We have a glimpse of early political conditions in Palestine. The story as a whole is also a little drama of moral retribution. It contains material which under Greek influences might have been wrought into a powerful tragedy.

1. **Abimelech.** Cf. 8:31. **Jerubbaal.** Another name for Gideon (cf. 6:32; 7:1; 8:29). **Went to Shechem.** The young man seems to have been at his father's house at Ophrah. *Shechem* is the modern Nablus, a town of importance with some eighteen thousand inhabitants, about twenty-eight miles almost directly north of Jerusalem, in a valley flanked on the north by Mt. Gerizim and on the south by Mt. Ebal. It was a trade center of importance, and is conspicuous in Old Testament narratives. According to the usual interpretation of Gen. 34, it was attacked by the tribes of Simeon and Levi, who in turn were nearly destroyed for their outrages. According to Josh. 24:1, Joshua assembled there the tribes of Israel just before his death and the

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2. saying, Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, rule over you, or that one rule over you? remember
  3. also that I am your bone and your flesh. And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our
  4. brother. And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light fellows, which followed
- 

bones of Joseph were buried there (Josh. 24:32). There also in later history the northern tribes assembled to choose their king, 1 Kings 12:1. Whatever may have been the earlier history of the town, its inhabitants at the time of Abimelech were predominantly Canaanites. (Cf. v. 28, where they are appealed to as *men of Hamor*.) **Mother's brethren . . . house of his mother's father.** Abimelech addressed first his nearer kinsfolk and the clan to which his mother's father belonged, asking an intercession in his behalf with the people of Shechem.

2. **Threescore and ten persons, rule over you.** These words are rhetorical. They mean that an authority divided among the sons of Gideon is not to be considered. One among them must be chosen. Let that one be me, says Abimelech, since **I am your bone and your flesh.** This was an appeal to family and race prejudice which was successful (v. 3).

3. **He is our brother.** Of Canaanite stock through his mother and thus of the same race as the men of Shechem.

4. **Threescore and ten pieces of silver.** A silver shekel may be reckoned at about sixty cents. The purchasing power of silver was much greater than at present. **Out of the house of Baal-berith.** Cf. 8:33. The money was either from the public treasury of the temple, the accumulation of gifts and votive offerings (such treasuries are mentioned in connection with the temple at Jerusalem, 1 Kgs. 15:18; 2 Kgs. 18:15), or from family funds stored for safe keeping in the temple. **Vain and light fel-**



5. him. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: but Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.
6. And all the men of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all <sup>1</sup> the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the <sup>2</sup> oak of the <sup>3</sup> pillar that
7. was in Shechem. And when they told it to Jotham,

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Beth-millo*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *terebinth*.<sup>3</sup> Or, *garrison*.

**lows.** Worthless and reckless men, ready to commit any crime. Through this following Abimelech slew his brothers at Ophrah (v. 5).

5. **Upon one stone.** This implies that the sons of Gideon were taken alive and slain like sacrificial animals (cf. 1 Sam. 14:33). A primitive Semitic sacrifice was the application of blood (without fire) to the altar or sacred stone. Possibly the wanton followers of Abimelech made this butchery as a human sacrifice to a god.

6. **Millo.** The designation of a citadel in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:9; 1 Kgs. 9:15, 24; 11:27; 1 Chron. 11:8; 2 Chron. 32:5), and here without doubt the citadel of Shechem (cf. v. 20). *The house of Millo* then would represent the family or authority having control of the fortress of the city. **By the oak of the pillar.** Trees were revered by the early Hebrews as sacred to a deity (cf. 4:11). This oak is mentioned in Gen. 35:4 and Josh. 24:26. The *pillar* was the sacred stone, the *mazzebah*, which belonged to the sanctuary at Shechem. Tradition assigned the erection of the stone to Joshua (Josh. 24:26). Such stones were accessories of the early sanctuaries of the Hebrews (cf. Gen. 28:18; 31:45, 51 f.; Exod. 24:4). When the law of the central sanctuary was promulgated in the book of Deuteronomy, they, together with worship at high places, were forbidden (Deut. 16:22). The choice of a ruler which involved a covenant was naturally made at a sanctuary.

7-15. Jotham, the escaped son of Gideon, is represented as having uttered a taunt against the men of Shechem in the fable that

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- he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may
8. hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive
9. tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, <sup>1</sup> wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to wave to and fro
- 

<sup>1</sup> Or, *which God and man honour in me.*

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the trees, having vainly sought the olive and the fig and the vine to rule over them, turned at last to the bramble and made him their king. The meaning of the fable is that good and useful citizens are unwilling to leave their fruitful callings to assume political office, and that the choice of rulers falls upon worthless members of society. The fable does not directly mirror the circumstances under which Abimelech was chosen king. Hence it was probably taken by the writer from current folklore as well suited to the narrative, into which it fits with telling force. A similar brief fable is given in the reply of Jehoash king of Israel to Amaziah king of Judah, where the thistle asked of the cedar his daughter for his son (2 Kgs. 14:9).

7. **He went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim.** Jotham, having learned that Abimelech had been made king, is represented as stationing himself on the top of the neighboring Mt. Gerizim and there uttering his prophetic taunt. Some assume that he actually summoned the citizens to the mountain and then at a safe distance above them (the top is 900 feet high) uttered his words. This is of course possible. The episode is, however, more likely a dramatic embellishment of the story than a real occurrence. The writer is introducing a bit of prophecy (see vv. 16-20). He uses fable and Jotham as the vehicle of its utterance, instead of bringing upon the scene, as the later writers were wont to do, a man of God. **That God may hearken unto you.** May God hear your prayers as you listen to my words.

9. **My fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man.** From the olive tree came oil, *fatness*, not only very widely used in

10. over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree,  
 11. Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said  
 unto them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good  
 12. fruit, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And  
 the trees said unto the vine, Come thou, and reign  
 13. over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I  
 leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go  
 14. to wave to and fro over the trees? Then said all the  
 trees unto the <sup>1</sup> bramble, Come thou, and reign over  
 15. us. And the <sup>1</sup> bramble said unto the trees, If in truth  
 ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *thorn*.

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the preparation of food, as a substitute for butter, and in lamps for illumination, but also used in anointing as a symbol of honor. Cf. the anointing of priests (Exod. 29 : 7; Lev. 8 : 12; 10 : 7; 21 : 10; Num. 35 : 25; Ps. 133 : 2 f.), and kings (1 Sam. 10 : 1; 16 : 13; 2 Kgs. 9 : 3), and guests (Ps. 23 : 5; 45 : 7; Luk. 7 : 46). Oil likewise was poured upon stones where God was supposed to dwell (Gen. 28 : 18; 35 : 14) and was an ingredient of certain sacrifices (Exod. 29 : 23; Lev. 6 : 15, 21; 7 : 10; Num. 6 : 15; 8 : 8). **To wave to and fro.** *I.e.* to rule over the trees.

11. **My sweetness and my good fruit.** "Figs are not only a delicious luxury but one of the food staples of the country."

13. **My wine which cheereth God and man.** The exhilaration which comes from wine is viewed as desirable. *God* should here be rendered *gods*. The writer has the notion of a plurality of gods and of their partaking in some way of the libations which were poured out to them (cf. Num. 15 : 5, 7, 10).

14. **The bramble.** A thorny shrub from two to six feet in height with insignificant flowers and small berries. The fruitful and useful trees having refused the offer of the kingship, resort is had to brushwood, contemptible in size and useless. This thorn bush symbolizes Abimelech. Gideon, according to 8 : 22 f., may be seen in the fruitful trees of the forest.

15. **Then come and put your trust in my shadow.** To speak

- trust in my shadow : and if not, let fire come out of the <sup>1</sup>bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.
16. Now therefore, if ye have dealt truly and uprightly, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands ;
17. (for my father fought for you, and <sup>2</sup>adventured his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian :
18. and ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, be-
19. cause he is your brother ;) if ye then have dealt truly and uprightly with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also
20. rejoice in you : but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo ; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and de-

<sup>1</sup> Or, *thorn*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *cast his life before him*.

of sitting under the shadow of the contemptible straggling thorn bush is the acme of irony, illustrating the absurdity of seeking protection through the kingship of a worthless member of society. **And if not, let fire**, etc. But after such a one had been made king, while powerless to protect, he had power to destroy. The protection of the bramble was a mockery, but destruction awaited those who did not submit to his authority. **The cedars of Lebanon**. The most stately trees of the forest in contrast to the thorn bush.

16-21. A moral judgment is passed upon the conduct of the Shechemites. Their ingratitude and frightful wrong to the house of Gideon are laid bare. Their doom likewise is declared. Having made a bramble king, a fire from the bramble shall destroy them,

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21. your Abimelech. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.
22. And Abimelech was prince over Israel three years.
23. And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt
24. treacherously with Abimelech: that the violence done R<sup>JE</sup>  
to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and that their blood might be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them, and upon the men of Shechem, which strengthened his hands to
25. slay his brethren. And the men of Shechem set E  
liers in wait for him on the tops of the mountains
- 

and in the conflagration the bramble shall likewise be destroyed. The writer had clearly in mind the disastrous results to Shechem which attended the reign of Abimelech and his own untimely end.

21. Jotham is not heard of again. **Beer.** This place is unknown. The word means "well," and places of that name would be frequent. Some in this connection have thought of *Beeroth* north of Jerusalem (Josh. 9 : 17; 2 Sam. 4 : 2); others of the well-known *Beersheba* in southern Judah.

22. **Over Israel.** There is nothing in the story of Abimelech to show that his rule extended beyond Shechem and adjacent cities, hence the phrase *over Israel*, or this entire verse, is from the hand of some annotator.

23. **And God sent an evil spirit.** Not necessarily a spirit intrinsically evil, but a spirit who produced evil results. Cf. the evil spirit which troubled Saul (1 Sam. 16 : 14; 18 : 10; 19 : 9) and especially the spirit which became "a lying spirit" in the mouth of Ahab's prophets (1 Kgs. 22 : 22). God is represented as sending these spirits to occasion the undoing of men. In this instance the spirit caused the men of Shechem to act in bad faith toward Abimelech.

24. This verse is probably an editorial comment.

25. **For him.** *I.e.* to the disadvantage or injury of Abimelech.

and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech.

- J 26. And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem  
 27. put their trust in him. And they went out into the field, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes*, and <sup>1</sup>held festival, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abime-  
 28. lech. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abime-

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *offered a praise offering.*

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The men of Shechem encouraged highway robbers, who from the tops of the hills plundered all who passed by. Shechem was favorably located for such violence, being at the juncture of two important routes of trade. This brigandage may have interfered with tolls which Abimelech was accustomed to collect. **And it was told Abimelech.** The sequel to this sentence appears in v. 42.

26-33. This story is independent of the preceding narrative, although it serves to show how a spirit of discord arose between the Shechemites and Abimelech. Gaal, whose former home is not given, accompanied by his family, takes up his residence in Shechem, and, gaining the confidence of the men of the place, foments a revolt against the authority of Abimelech. Of this defection Abimelech is apprised by messengers from Zebul, the governor of the city, who counsels a night march to the vicinity of Shechem, and a morning demonstration against the city.

26. **Ebed.** This word means *slave*; the more probable name was *Obed*, "worshipper," with reference to some god.

27. **And they went out into the field.** It was the season of the vintage when the people were accustomed to go from the city into their vineyards and gather the grapes and tread them into wine. This was a joyous occasion. The people feasted together, and since such festivities partook of a religious character, they entered the temple of their god and there, doubtless under the influence of Gaal, they cursed Abimelech.

28. **Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should**

lech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve ye the men of Hamor the father of Shechem:

29. but why should we serve him? And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said <sup>1</sup> to Abimelech, In-

30. crease thine army, and come out. And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son

31. of Ebed, his anger was kindled. And he sent mes-

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<sup>1</sup> Or, of.

---

**serve him?** The contrast is between Abimelech and the Shechemites. The former as a half Israelite is unworthy to be the ruler of men of pure Canaanite stock. **Is not he the son of Jerubbaal?** Is not Abimelech of Israelite descent? As his Canaanite blood had served to procure him the kingship (vv. 2 f.), so now his Israelite blood becomes a pretext for his rejection. His representative, Zebul, is also referred to with contempt. **Serve ye the men of Hamor the father of Shechem.** This command bids the people to find a ruler in one of their own race. *Hamor* was the reputed founder of Shechem (cf. Gen. 34: 2). Another rendering of the Hebrew text is: *Did not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer (formerly) serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem? Why then should we serve him (Abimelech)?* This son of an Israelite and his agent formerly were subject to us of Canaanite stock; why should we serve him now? Thus by appeal to racial prejudice Gaal sought to undo Abimelech.

29. Gaal urges that if he were in command of the people he would remove the upstart Abimelech. He would likewise bid him defiance (*and I would say* is the correct rendering, after the Greek version, in place of, *and he said*). Like a true demagogue Gaal, having inflamed his hearers against Abimelech, seeks to elevate himself to office.

30. **The ruler of the city.** Zebul, called in v. 28 Abimelech's officer, evidently ruled the city as the deputy of Abimelech.

31. **Craftily.** The word thus rendered is more probably the

sengers unto Abimelech <sup>1</sup> craftily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren are come to Shechem; and, behold, they <sup>2</sup> constrain the city to  
 32. *take part* against thee. Now therefore, up by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait  
 33. in the field: and it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them <sup>3</sup> as thou shalt find occasion.

34. And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against She-  
 35. chem in four companies. And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that  
 36. were with him, from the ambushment. And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the tops of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *in Tormah*.    <sup>2</sup> Or, *oppress the city on thy account*.    <sup>3</sup> Heb. *as thine hand shall find*.

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name of the place where Abimelech resided, *i.e.* at *Arumah*. They constrain the city. Literally, *they besiege the city*. This is not agreeable to the context. Hence by a slight change in the Hebrew text read, *they are stirring up the city against thee*.

34-41. Abimelech follows the counsel of Zebul. He marches by night toward Shechem, and dividing his forces into four companies, lies in concealment not far from the city (v. 34). In the morning when Gaal with Zebul was standing at the entrance to the gate of the city, the troops of Abimelech reveal themselves (v. 35). Gaal detects their movement, but Zebul says, *Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men* (v. 36). He implies that Gaal is full of foolish or cowardly fear. But when Gaal dis-



37. mountains as if they were men. And Gaal spake again and said, See, there come people down by the <sup>1</sup> middle of the land, and one company cometh by the
38. way of <sup>2</sup> the oak of Meonenim. Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, that thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out now, I pray,
39. and fight with them. And Gaal went out before the
40. men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and there fell many wounded, even unto the entering of
41. the gate. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul drave out Gaal and his brethren, that they
42. should not dwell in Shechem. And it came to pass E

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *navel*.<sup>2</sup> That is, *the augurs' oak, or terebinth*.

cerns with sureness the advance of the troops (v. 37), Zebul then bids him fulfil his braggart boast and march forth against Abimelech (v. 38). This he does with disastrous consequences. He and his followers are driven back into the city. (The fight seems to have been a petty affair, since none were slain, v. 40.) Abimelech withdraws to his residence at *Arumah*; but Zebul drives Gaal and his kinsmen out of Shechem (v. 41).

37. **By the middle of the land.** Read as in the margin *Navel of the Land*. This is the proper name of an unknown locality. Equally unknown is the situation of **the oak of Meonenim**, *i.e.* the oak of the augurs or diviners. *The oak of Moreh*, *i.e.* the oak of a teacher or diviner, near Shechem is mentioned in Gen. 12:6. Whether this sacred tree was identical with the one here mentioned cannot be determined.

42-45. This narrative (from E) is a continuation of vv. 22-25. The revolt of Gaal (just related) seems to have been a minor episode in the reign of Abimelech and to have preceded the more serious defection, which manifested itself in the brigandage related in v. 25 and resulted in the destruction of Shechem.

- on the morrow, that the people went out into the field ;  
 43. and they told Abimelech. And he took the people,  
 and divided them into three companies, and laid wait  
 in the field ; and he looked, and, behold, the people  
 came forth out of the city ; and he rose up against  
 44. them, and smote them. And Abimelech, and the  
 companies that were with him, rushed forward, and  
 stood in the entering of the gate of the city : and the  
 two companies rushed upon all that were in the field,  
 45. and smote them. And Abimelech fought against the  
 city all that day ; and he took the city, and slew

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42. **On the morrow.** From the connection this would be the day after the repulse of Gaal and his adherents. But that story has been finished with the mention of the retirement of Abimelech to *Arumah* and the expulsion of Gaal from Shechem (v. 41). This verse (42) is then either a harmonizing gloss from R<sup>JE</sup> or this *morrow* is to be connected with v. 25, and must not be taken too literally. The report of the highway robberies having been brought to Abimelech (v. 25), then *on the morrow* (*i.e.* the next time) when the men of Shechem purposed to go *out into the field*, *i.e.* into the country for robbery (*and it was told Abimelech*), he, it is to be assumed, proceeded against them according to the stratagem and result described in the following two verses, 43 f. Abimelech divided his forces into three companies, placing them in ambush near Shechem. Then when the expedition, intent on highway robbery, had come out of the city into the country, Abimelech with one company (the Hebrew text by mistake has the plural *companies*) took his position at the entrance of the city gate to check any fellow-townsmen who might come forth to assist the expedition and likewise to prevent their retreat into the city. The other two companies in the meanwhile attacked the expedition itself, which was completely defeated.

45. Abimelech fought the entire day against Shechem, which he finally took, slaughtering, after the manner of Israelitish warfare, all of the inhabitants. He likewise destroyed the buildings.

the people that was therein: and he beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

46. And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard thereof, they entered into the hold of the house of  
 47. Elberith. And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.  
 48. And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took <sup>1</sup> an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it up, and laid it on his shoulder: and he said unto the people that were with him,  
 49. What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done. And all the people likewise cut down

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *the axes.*

**And sowed it with salt.** Abimelech symbolically devoted the place to utter desolation. A salt land was unfruitful and uninhabitable (cf. Deut. 29: 23; Jer. 17: 6; Ps. 107: 34). Shechem, however, if thus completely destroyed had too advantageous a situation to remain long desolate. It was an important place early in the kingdom (1 Kgs. 12: 1) and was rebuilt and fortified by King Jeroboam (1 Kgs. 12: 25).

46. **The tower of Shechem.** Either a place outside of Shechem, the site of the temple of El-berith, or a stronghold within the city, an acropolis, in which was located the temple of El-berith and which became the final refuge of the men of Shechem. Those who hold this latter view generally assign vv. 46-49 to J, since v. 45 gives a final summary of the destruction of Shechem, and elsewhere in E, in vv. 6 and 20, the apparent name of the citadel of Shechem is *Millo*. **The hold.** An excavated chamber of some sort; perhaps in the rock behind the temple. The word occurs also in 1 Sam. 13: 6. **Elberith.** "God of covenant." The same as *Baal-berith* mentioned in 8: 33; 9: 4.

48. **Mount Zalmon.** The exact location of this hill is unknown. The name means *shade, shadow*.

- every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.
50. Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped  
 51. against Thebez, and took it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut themselves  
 52. in, and gat them up to the roof of the tower. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn  
 53. it with fire. And a certain woman cast an upper millstone upon Abimelech's head, and brake his skull.  
 54. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and kill me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.
- R 55. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was

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50. **Thebez.** Identified with modern Tubas, about 13 miles northeast of Shechem, on the road to Beth-shean. The kingdom of Abimelech clearly embraced other cities besides that of Shechem, and those discontented with him were not confined to the latter place.

53. **An upper millstone.** The upper stone of a hand mill, with which women were accustomed to grind grain. It might weigh twenty-five or thirty pounds.

54. **His armourbearer.** Leaders usually had personal attendants of this kind: so Gideon, 7: 11; Jonathan, 1 Sam. 14: 6; Saul, 1 Sam. 16: 21; 31: 4; Goliath, 1 Sam. 17: 7. The request of Abimelech is to be compared with that of Saul, 1 Sam. 31: 4.

55. This verse with its allusion to **the men of Israel** is probably from the hand of an editor who drew no racial distinction between the parties concerned in the strife about Abimelech; and yet since the revolt against Abimelech had been a Canaanite defection

56. dead, they departed every man unto his place. Thus <sup>R<sup>JE</sup></sup>  
 God requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he  
 did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:  
 57. and all the wickedness of the men of Shechem did  
 God requite upon their heads: and upon them came  
 the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

6. *Tola*, 10: 1-2

10. And after Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola <sup>R<sup>P</sup> or JE</sup>  
 the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar;  
 and he dwelt in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim.

(cf. v. 28), his supporters would have been naturally Israelites, and hence the editor wrote better than he knew.

The section 10: 1-5 and the account of the minor judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12: 8-15), having no marks of Deuteronomic editorship, as already mentioned (see p. 13), are late additions to the Book of Judges coming from the hand of the priestly editor (R<sup>P</sup>), either his own composition or that of the compiler of JE (R<sup>JE</sup>). The notices of these judges, whose lives were colorless and without any exploits, were introduced to give a certain symmetry to the history of the period of the judges, making their number twelve and providing seventy years for the chronology. The minor judges themselves were undoubtedly originally clans, and are an illustration of the personification (common among the Hebrews and other ancients) of peoples, tribes, and families, whereby each of them was imagined to have sprung from an ancestor bearing its name and hence in modern usage called an eponym. Thus the tribes of the desert east of Palestine traced their descent from Ishmael and his sons, whose names they bore, and the children of Israel from Israel and his sons. From the sons of the ancestor of a tribe came tribal clans and families. In some instances, it is true that a historical person has given his name to a tribe or family, but these are very rare compared to the reverse.

1. **Tola** and **Puah** both appear in the genealogy of Issachar as

2. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

7. *Jair*, 10 : 3-5

- R<sup>P</sup> or JE 3. And after him arose Jair, the Gileadite; and he  
4. judged Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called <sup>1</sup> Havvoth-jair unto this

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<sup>1</sup> That is, *The towns of Jair*. See Num. 32 : 41.

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names of his sons (Gen. 46 : 13 ; 1 Chron. 7 : 1), *i.e.* clans (cf. Num. 26 : 23). Historically they were such, and out of them were the names of the judge and his father derived. The meanings of the names are interesting: *Tola* signifies a worm producing a crimson dye, and *Puah* a plant producing the same. **Dodo**, not mentioned elsewhere in connection with Issachar, appears as the name of the father of one of David's heroes (2 Sam. 23 : 9, 24). **Shamir**. Not identified, but since Tola was of the tribe of Issachar, it must naturally be placed in the northwestern portion of the *hill country of Ephraim*, adjoining the plain of Esdraelon, into which the territory of Issachar extended.

2. **And was buried in Shamir**. A similar notice is given in the case of the other minor judges. Tombs of these judges, the reputed founders of the clans bearing their names, were undoubtedly shown in later times.

3. **Jair**. This judge is derived from the son of Manasseh, the reputed conqueror of the district of Havvoth-jair in Gilead, the rich and hilly district belonging to Israel east of the Jordan (cf. Num. 32 : 41 ; Deut. 3 : 14 ; Josh. 13 : 30 ; 1 Chron. 2 : 22 f. ; 1 Kgs. 4 : 13). Like Tola, Jair is the name of a clan.

4. **And he had thirty sons**. Cf. the thirty sons of Ibzan (12 : 9) and the forty sons and thirty grandsons of Abdon (12 : 14). **Thirty ass colts**. The ass was highly esteemed as a riding animal and was used by people of rank (cf. 1 : 14 ; 5 : 10 ; 1 Sam. 25 : 20 ; 2 Sam. 17 : 23 ; 19 : 26 ; Zech. 9 : 9). **And they had thirty cities which are called Havvoth-jair unto this day**. The word *Havvoth*

5. day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

8. *Jephthah*, 10:6-12:7

6. And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baalim, and R<sup>D</sup>

means primarily a group of tents and then secondarily a group of permanent dwelling towns. These of the district of Jair were variously reckoned: in Deut. 3. 14 at 60; in 1 Chron. 2:22 at 23; and here at 30 to correspond with the sons of Jair. The sons of Jair represent families or branches of the clan of Jair. *Harvoth-jair* is in the northern portion of Gilead.

5. **Kamon** has not been identified.

The story of Jephthah, 10:6-12:7, relates the deliverance of Israel, especially that part which dwelt in Gilead east of the Jordan, from the oppression of the Ammonites. This so-called oppression was in reality not of great significance in the life of the people, and Jephthah appears as the hero simply of one of those border struggles which often must have taken place between the eastern tribes and their neighbors of Ammon and Moab. The main interest also of this tale lies neither in the personality of Jephthah nor in any striking exploit of his, but in his vow whereby his daughter was sacrificed unto Jehovah (11:34-40). To the custom of the yearly celebration of her untimely fate is probably due the preservation of the story.

In composition this tale exhibits some of the same complexity which we have found in the story of Gideon. The introduction (10:6-18) is of unusual length. It opens with the usual Deuteronomic formula that *the children again did that which was evil . . . and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and he sold them . . . into the hand of the children of Ammon. And they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel . . . eighteen years* (vv. 6-8a). This much, allowing for a possible annotation in v. 6 (which see), is perfectly regular. But in vv. 8b-16, Deuteronomic regularity and phrases are lacking except in the words *so that Israel was sore distressed* (9b) *and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord* (10a), hence we have here in all probability

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R        the Ashtaroth, and the gods of <sup>1</sup> Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the chil-

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Aram*.

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the work of the priestly editor (R<sup>F</sup>). He has added to the Deuteronomic introduction not only his own annotations, but some earlier introductory material (of E<sup>2</sup>) taken from JE, especially vv. 10-16 in the main. With chap. 11 commences the story proper of Jephthah. In this is a striking discrepancy. After the call of Jephthah (given in 11: 1-11) comes his message to the king of Ammon (11: 12-28). But the message itself was plainly not originally addressed to the king of Ammon, but to the king of Moab. *Chemosh* in v. 24 is the god of the Moabites and not of the Ammonites. *Balak* in v. 25, as there stated, is the king of Moab. The towns mentioned in v. 26 anciently belonged to the Moabites (cf. Num. 21: 26 ff.). All the historical recapitulation of these verses was originally concerning Moab, and the passage has been plainly harmonized to the circumstances of a war with the Ammonites by substituting Ammon for Moab in vv. 12, 13, 14, 27, 28 and by adding in v. 15 *nor the land of the children of Ammon*. Hence this section is either the insertion and adaptation of material originally foreign to the story of Jephthah or else two different traditions are embedded in the narrative. Suggestions of this appear elsewhere: Jephthah's residence in 11: 3 is at *Tob*, but in 11: 34 at *Mizpah*; the war in 11: 30-31 is a single campaign, but in 12: 2 of considerable duration; certain verses seem out of place in their present context e.g. 11: 11b, 29, 33. We have, then, as the preferable conclusion, although there is not much choice between them, two Jephthah narratives. According to one, a fugitive son of a harlot is summoned to Gilead to deliver the land from the Ammonites, which he does, and then inflicts a crushing defeat upon the complaining Ephraimites (11: 1-11a, 29, 33; 12: 1-6). According to the other account Jephthah lives at Mizpah in Gilead. In a war with the Moabites, having fruitlessly endeavored to ward off the conflict by an embassy, he makes a fatal vow in the event of securing victory. He conquers and by the term of his vow he must sacrifice his only child to Jehovah (11: 11b-28, 30-32, 34-40).



- dren of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and R<sup>D</sup>
7. they forsook the LORD, and served him not. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines, and into the
8. hand of the children of Ammon. And they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel that year: eighteen years *oppressed they* all the children of Israel that were R<sup>P</sup>

The compiler retained the victory over the Ammonites because the Moabites had already in his narratives suffered defeat at the hand of Ehud. While the grounds for assigning either narrative to J or E are not very decisive, to E is assigned the second because the material of the messages to the king of Moab (11: 12-28) is derived from the narratives of E in Numbers (20: 14; 21: 21-27), and the story of the sacrifice of the only child is parallel to that of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22) also from E. The first narrative then would come from J, to which as a writing of the southern kingdom naturally belongs the story of the disastrous defeat of the Ephraimites.

6. **Baalim and the Ashtaroth.** Cf. 2: 11, 13. **And the gods of Syria,** etc. The editor who introduced this catalogue wished to illustrate the Baalim and the Ashtaroth.

7. **Into the hand of the Philistines.** The introduction is thus designed not simply for the story of Jephthah but also for that of Samson (cf. 13: 1). But the words are out of place preceding the reference to Ammon and hence are probably a gloss. **The children of Ammon.** The reputed descendants of Lot (Gen. 19: 38). Their territory was east of the eastern tribes of Israel with Rabbah-ammon as their chief city. Both Saul and David contended with them (1 Sam. 11: 1-11; 2 Sam. 10: 1-14; 12: 26-31). They are frequently mentioned by the prophets (Amos. 1: 13; Zeph. 2: 8; Jer. 49: 1-6; Ezek. 25: 1-7), and their general attitude was that of hostility towards Israel.

8. **That Year.** These words are meaningless in their present connection. They are from the earlier narrative which probably mentioned a single catastrophe and not a long oppression. **Eighteen years.** This chronological statement is from the Deuteronomic editor. Omitting *that year*, read, *And they vexed and*

- beyond Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in
9. Gilead. And the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was
- R<sup>D</sup> 10. sore distressed. And the children of Israel cried unto
- E<sup>2</sup> the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, even because we have forsaken our God, and have
11. served the Baalim. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I save you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of
- R<sup>P</sup> 12. Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians
- E<sup>2</sup> also, and the Amalekites, and the<sup>1</sup> Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried unto me, and I saved you out

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<sup>1</sup> The Sept. has, *Midianites*.

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*oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were beyond Jordan in the land of the Amorites which is Gilead. In the land of the Amorites.* The land which had been taken by Israel from the Amorites (cf. 11: 19-23; Num. 21: 21-26). **Gilead.** Usually the territory north of Moab extending from Heshbon to the Yarmuk, sometimes the country as far south as the Arnon; here the east Jordanic possessions of Israel.

9. Nothing elsewhere in the narrative reveals the presence of the Ammonites west of the Jordan. Indeed their aggression is plainly confined to Gilead. Hence we have here as well as in 8b the gloss of a later editor who desired to heighten the oppression of the Ammonites.

11 f. The list of oppressors following the *Egyptians* is a strange medley given upon no principle of order or of history beyond that of a certain contact with Israel, and is probably from the priestly editor (R<sup>P</sup>). *The children of Ammon* are derived from the story of Jephthah, *the Philistines* from the story of Samson and the narratives of Saul and David. *The Amalekites* are mentioned with the Midianites in the story of Gideon (6: 3, 33).

13. of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served  
 14. other gods: wherefore I will save you no more. Go  
 and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let  
 15. them save you in the time of your distress. And the  
 children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned:  
 do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee;  
 16. only deliver us, we pray thee, this day. And they  
 put away the strange gods from among them, and  
 served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the  
 misery of Israel.

17. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, <sup>RD</sup>  
 and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel  
 assembled themselves together, and encamped in  
 18. Mizpah. And the people, the princes of Gilead, said  
 one to another, What man is he that will begin to  
 fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be  
 head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

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But *the Amorites*, although conquered by Israel (cf. v. 8), never oppressed them. Neither also did the *Zidonians*, the inhabitants of Zidon, a city on the coast north of Tyre, who represent the Phœnicians; nor *the Maonites*, the inhabitants of Maon, a city south of the Dead Sea, who appear in Chronicles as enemies of the kings of Judah (cf. 2 Chron. 20:1; 26:7). Some, however, remembering the story of Gideon, substitute, after certain Greek versions, *Midianites* for *Maonites*. The Hebrew text of v. 11 is slightly corrupt and the construction of the two verses should be made uniform. *Did not the Egyptians and the Amorites . . . and the Maonites oppress you?*

14. Cf. Jer. 2:28; Deut. 32:37.

17 f. The close of the Deuteronomic introduction. The substance is drawn from the following narrative. **Mizpah**. Not the Mizpah in Benjamin frequently mentioned (cf. 20:21; 1 Sam. 7:5 ff.; 10:17), but one not identified in Gilead (cf. 11:11, 29, 34; Hos. 5:1). Many places might bear the name,

- J 11. Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of  
 R valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead
2. begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drave out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of another
  3. woman. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain fellows to Jephthah, and they went out with him.
  4. And it came to pass after a while, that the children of

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which indicates an eminence, meaning outlook-point, watch-post (cf. Gen. 31:49).

11:1-11. The story of the call of Jephthah through the summons of the elders of Gilead for assistance in their war with the Ammonites is in striking contrast to that of the call of Gideon so fraught with marvels (6:11 ff.). The whole narrative in its freedom from wonders bears the marks of an early authentic tale of history.

1. **The son of an harlot.** Jephthah's birth was far less honorable than that of Abimelech, who was the son of a concubine (8:31), because the son of a harlot would be fatherless. **And Gilead begat Jephthah.** The personification of a land as a father with the verb *begat* is a late usage. Hence this sentence and also the following verse are late glosses, arising from a misinterpretation of the adjective *Gileadite* (v. 1) and the words *his brethren* (v. 3) and the sentence *Did ye not hate me and drive me out of my father's house* (v. 7).

3. **His brethren.** Not the sons of his father, who was unknown, but his countrymen, members of his mother's tribe. **Tob.** Mentioned also in 2 Sam. 10:6, a region north or northeast of Gilead. Its exact situation is unknown. **And there were gathered vain fellows, etc.** Driven from home Jephthah took to the life of a freebooter, even as David, when compelled to flee from Saul, and led a band of needy and reckless men with whom he made forays (cf. 1 Sam. 22:1 ff.; 23:1-5; 25; 27:2).

4. **After a while.** Some time after Jephthah had been forced into exile.

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5. Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the
6. land of Tob: and they said unto Jephthah, Come and be our chief, that we may fight with the children of
7. Ammon. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and drive me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when
8. ye are in distress? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore are we turned again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight with the children of Ammon, and thou shalt be our head over all the in-
9. habitants of Gilead. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight with the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them
10. before me, shall I be your head? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD shall be <sup>1</sup> wit-
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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *hearer*.

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5. **The elders.** The heads of families or clans, those upon whom the conduct of the war devolved.

6. **Come and be our chief.** The invitation is to an extraordinary authority, a kind of dictatorship.

7. Jephthah meets the invitation to leadership with a reference to his banishment. The elders had no reason to expect help from him.

8. **Therefore are we turned again to thee now.** The elders admit the charge that they had banished Jephthah. *Therefore* they have turned to him now and seek to make him their leader, that thus the past may be forgotten or righted.

9. **Shall I be your head?** A question is not required by the Hebrew text. Better to translate *I shall be your head*. Jephthah repeats the proposition that there may be no misunderstanding.

10. The agreement is solemnly ratified by an appeal to Je-

- ness between us; surely according to thy word so will
11. we do. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them: and Jephthah spake all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.
12. And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come unto me to fight against my
13. land? And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because

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hovah as a witness. He will see to it that the elders shall keep their word (cf. Gen. 31 : 49 f.).

11. **And the people made him head and chief over them.** This was presumably done by an assembly at Mizpah. **And Jephthah spake all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.** The reference is to Jephthah's vow related in vv. 30 f. This vow was made at the sanctuary of Jehovah at Mizpah (cf. 10 : 17).

12-28. Jephthah demands of the king of Ammon his reason for warring against Gilead (v. 12). The king of Ammon replies that when the people of Israel came out of Egypt they seized the territory of the Ammonites extending from the Arnon unto the Jabbok, and now they should even restore peaceably that territory (v. 13). To this Jephthah replies that the people of Israel had not taken this land from the Ammonites, but from the Amorites, who had forcibly opposed the peaceable passage of Israel through the land, and therefore had Jehovah delivered the Amorites into the hand of Israel, who thus became possessed of this territory. The Ammonites then should not seek to deprive Israel of the fruit of their conquest. Even as the Ammonites held that which their god (Chemosh) had given them, so Israel rightly held whatever Jehovah had given them. Moreover Israel had possessed this land for three hundred years, and the Ammonites had not reclaimed it during that period. The king of Ammon then was in the wrong.

As already mentioned, this message was originally composed as an address to the king of Moab. The land in question, from

Israel took away my land, when he came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those *lands* again peace-  
 14. ably. And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the  
 15. king of the children of Ammon: and he said unto him,  
 Thus saith Jephthah: Israel took not away the land of

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the Arnon to the Jabbok according to Num. 21:24, had originally belonged to the Moabites who had been dispossessed by the Amorites, who forced them to dwell south of the river Arnon. The Moabites might well have laid claim to the land of Gilead as their ancient possession, and Jephthah's reply to them would have been appropriate: to wit, that Israel had it by right of conquest as a gift from Jehovah, even as Moab had their present territory as a gift from Chemosh their god, and moreover their ancient king Balak the son of Zippor, who reigned when Israel took this territory from the Amorites, never fought with Israel to regain this territory, neither had any of their kings during three hundred years asserted a claim for it. All this could have been fitly said to a king of Moab, but not, as far as we are aware, to a king of Ammon. The conquest of Israel on their entrance into Canaan extended to the border of Ammon, but no further (Num. 21:24). According to Deut. 2:19, Israel was not to have the land of Ammon for their possession. The home of Ammon bordered Gilead on the east.

13. **Arnon.** Modern Wady Mojib, a valley with a stream emptying into the middle of the Dead Sea on the east. The valley is about seventeen hundred feet deep and some two miles across at the top, with only a narrow width of a few hundred feet at the bottom. Like an enormous trench cutting across the plain east of the Dead Sea, it served as a natural boundary line. The **Jabbok** is forty-five miles north of the Arnon, emptying into the Jordan. It bisected the territory of Israel east of the Jordan. Its valley is very fertile. **And unto Jordan.** *I.e.* the western boundary of this disputed territory was the river Jordan.

15. According to Deut. 2:9, 19 the children of Israel were commanded as they approached the land of Canaan not to molest either the Moabites or the Ammonites.

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16. Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon: but when they came up from Egypt, and Israel walked through the wilderness unto the Red Sea, and came to
17. Kadesh; then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom hearkened not. And in like manner he sent unto the king of Moab: but
18. he would not: and Israel abode in Kadesh. Then he walked through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and they pitched on the other side of Arnon; but they came not within the border
19. of Moab, for Arnon was the border of Moab. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land unto my place.
20. But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his
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16. **Through the wilderness unto the Red Sea.** These words admit of no satisfactory explanation. One would expect, *from the Red Sea through the wilderness*. **Kadesh.** Often called Kadesh-barnea, the modern Ain-kadis, fifty miles south of Beersheba; according to the narrative of Numbers (JE) (cf. Num. 20: 1-21; Deut. 1: 46), it was the rallying centre of the children of Israel during thirty-eight years of their sojourn in the wilderness.

17. The account of this message unto the king of Edom is given in Num. 20: 14-21, but nowhere is there mention of such message unto the king of Moab.

18. Israel, receiving no permission to traverse the territory of Edom or of Moab, encompassed Edom on the south and Moab on the east until they moved westward and came to the land of the Amorites to the north of the Arnon (cf. Num. 21: 11b-13).

19 ff. The message to Sihon and his conquest are related in Num. 21: 21-24 and Deut. 2: 24-37. **Heshbon.** Modern Heshban, sixteen miles east of the Jordan, and slightly north in lati-



- border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel
21. And the LORD, the God of Israel, delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites,
22. the inhabitants of that country. And they possessed all the border of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.
23. So now the LORD, the God of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and should-
24. est thou possess them? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God hath dispossessed

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tude from the northern extremity of the Dead Sea. **Jahaz.** Exact site is unknown, but from references (cf. Num. 21: 23; Deut. 1: 2; Josh. 13: 18; 21: 36; Isa. 15: 4; Jer. 48: 21, 34) it was not far north of the Arnon and near the wilderness on the east.

22. Cf. v. 13, where the same boundaries are given except that here the eastern boundary is mentioned, *i.e.* **the wilderness.** In Num. 21: 24 the eastern boundary of the kingdom of Sihon is *the children of Ammon.* Here then they are either ignored or placed in the wilderness, *i.e.* the desert east of Palestine.

23 f. These two verses state first that conquered territory is obtained through the gift of the god of the conquering people, and secondly that such a right of possession should be respected, whether it comes through Chemosh or Jehovah. Israel should be left in undisturbed possession of Gilead, even as the Ammonites (Moabites) would claim the right to possess their own land in peace. (**Chemosh** was the god of the Moabites, hence as mentioned they were the original subject of this passage. The god of the Ammonites was *Milcom.*) The teaching here is that Moab was of the people of Chemosh just as Israel was of Jehovah. On the inscription of Mesha king of Moab we read of the oppression of Moab by Israel owing to the anger of Chemosh; of the restora-

25. from before us, them will we possess. And now art thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or
26. did he ever fight against them? While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her <sup>1</sup> towns, and in Aroer and her <sup>1</sup> towns, and in all the cities that are along by the side of Arnon, three hundred years; wherefore did ye
- R<sup>P</sup>/E 27. not recover them within that time? I therefore have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD, the Judge, be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of
28. Ammon. Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *daughters*.

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tion to Moab through Chemosh of territory conquered by Israel; of the command to the king of Moab by Chemosh to war against Israel. Chemosh thus stands to the Moabites exactly in the same relation as Jehovah is represented in the Old Testament as standing to Israel. Such a belief in the reality and power of the gods of other peoples as expressed here by Jephthah was common in early Israel (cf. 2 Kgs. 3 : 27). But later through the teachings of the prophets these gods were esteemed as things of nought.

25. **Balak the son of Zippor.** The king who reigned in Moab at the time of Israel's conquest of Gilead (cf. Num. 22 : 2 ff.). The argument is that Balak the great king of the past did not endeavor to conquer this territory from Israel and how much less then should the present inferior king of Ammon (Moab) engage in such an undertaking.

26. **Heshbon** (cf. v. 19) **and her towns.** *I.e.* and the villages governed from Heshbon. **Aroer.** Modern Aroer on the northern bank of the Arnon. **Three hundred years.** A round number. The sum, however, of the years of oppression and rest recorded up to the oppression of the Ammonites equals 301 (see p. 16). This

29. Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, J  
and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed R<sup>JE</sup>  
over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he J  
30. passed over unto the children of Ammon. And Jeph- E  
thah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou  
wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into mine  
31. hand, then it shall be, that <sup>1</sup> whatsoever cometh forth  
of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in  
peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be the  
32. LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. So  
Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon  
to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *whosoever*.

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may then be the source of the 300. In that case the generation of Joshua and the elders succeeding him is ignored; and, since *Abimelech* and the two minor judges *Tola* and *Jair* are included in the reckoning, *the three hundred years* must be a gloss from the priestly editor.

29. This verse properly follows v. 11a. **The spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah** (cf. 3 : 10) after he had been chosen *head and chief*, and then **he passed over Gilead and Manasseh** collecting his army, and then **he passed over unto the children of Ammon**. The intervening words about *Mizpah* are from the compiler R<sup>JE</sup>. **Manasseh**. The tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the northern part of the east-Jordanic territory of Israel.

30. **And Jephthah vowed a vow**. For other examples of vows see those of Jacob (Gen. 28 : 20-22), Hannah (1 Sam. 1 : 11), and Absalom (2 Sam. 15 : 7 f.).

31. **Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house . . . I will offer it up for a burnt offering**. Instead of *whosoever* and *it* we should read, as in the margin, *whosoever* and *him*. Jephthah will offer as a burnt offering unto Jehovah the first person who will come forth from his house to meet him, *i.e.* some one of his own household. Whom it should be is left for Jehovah by the

- J 33. into his hand. And he smote them from Aroer until thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto <sup>1</sup> Abel-cheramim, with a very great slaughter. So the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.
- E 34. And Jephthah came to Mizpah unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor
35. daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my
36. mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. And

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<sup>1</sup> That is, *The meadow of vineyards.*

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event to determine. Human sacrifices were not unknown nor abhorred, though probably quite rare in early Israel, as the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22) and the question of the prophet, "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression" (Mic. 6:7) show. By the later prophets they were utterly condemned.

33. **Aroer.** Not the one on the Arnon (v. 26) but an Aroer east of *Rabbah* of the children of Ammon mentioned in Josh. 13:25. **Minnith, Abel-cheramim.** The locations of these places are unknown.

34. **With timbrels and with dances.** *I.e.* dancing to the accompaniment of tambourines played by herself and the dancing women with her. It was customary for women thus to celebrate victories (cf. Exod. 15:20; 1 Sam. 18:6 f.).

35. **He rent his clothes.** An expression of great grief (cf. Gen. 37:29; 2 Sam. 13:19, 31; Job 1:20). **Thou art one of them that trouble me.** A very strong expression in the original. It has been rendered, "Thou, thou art become my ruin."

- she said unto him, My father, thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD; do unto me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of
37. Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may depart and go down upon the mountains, and
38. bewail my virginity, I and my companions. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she departed, she and her companions, and be-
39. wailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she had not
40. known man. And it was <sup>1</sup> a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to <sup>2</sup> celebrate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *an ordinance.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *lament.*

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36. A verse of great dramatic force in revealing the resignation and heroic disposition of Jephthah's daughter.

37. **Bewail my virginity.** That I am to die unmarried and thus without the hope of children. This was the most coveted possession of a Hebrew woman. In her case, since she was an only child (v. 34), it meant the extinction of her father's house.

39. **Who did with her,** etc. There is a fine reticence in the writer's forbearance in giving no details of the sacrifice. **She had not known man.** She died a virgin. This statement emphasizes the thought of v. 37.

40. **To celebrate.** Better *to lament.* The parallel between Jephthah's daughter and Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon,

- J 12. And the men of Ephraim were gathered together, and passed <sup>1</sup>northward; and they 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.
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 saved me not out of their hand.
3. And when I saw that ye saved me not, I put my life in my hand, 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
4. fight against me? Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye are fugitives of Ephraim, ye Gileadites, in the midst
- R
- J 5. of Ephraim, *and* in the midst of Manasseh. And the

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *to Zaphon*.

who according to one legend was sacrificed to the Greek goddess Artemis, has been often pointed out. There is no ground for the adoption of the interpretation that Jephthah did not really sacrifice his daughter, but that her fate was only that of perpetual virginity.

1. **Northward.** A movement of the Ephraimites in this direction implies that certain details of the story (of J) are lacking. Otherwise the word is to be rendered as the name of a place, *unto Zaphon*, mentioned in Josh. 13: 27, in the eastern valley of the Jordan near Succoth (cf. 8: 5).

4. **Because they said, Ye are fugitives of Ephraim, ye Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim, *and* in the midst of Manasseh.** The cause of the battle, according to the natural interpretation of these words, is the insult offered to the Gileadites in the declaration that "they were not a tribe, but a crew of runagate Ephraimites; they had no tribal lands of their own, but lived by suffer-

- Gileadites took the fords of Jordan <sup>1</sup>against the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when *any of* the fugitives of Ephraim said, Let me go over, the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said,
6. Nay; then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth; for he could not frame to pronounce it right; then they laid hold on him, and slew him at the fords of Jordan: and there fell at that time of Ephraim forty and two thousand.
7. And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died <sup>RP</sup> Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, toward Ephraim.

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ance in the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh." But ample cause is given for the battle in vv. 1-3, without this one, and the word *fugitives* in Hebrew does not lend itself to the interpretation of *runagates*. It means *survivors, those who have escaped*. There was nothing also in the situation or descent of the Gileadites to provoke such a taunt. The sentence is plainly then a gloss which arose from a copyist wrongly introducing the words *the fugitives of Ephraim said* (later expanded) from the next verse.

5 f. The Ephraimites, having suffered defeat, turned homeward in flight across the Jordan, where they were intercepted, and betrayed by their pronunciation of the word *Shibboleth*, beginning with *sh*, which they pronounced *sibboleth*, *i.e.* with *s* (the word means an ear of corn); but any other beginning with the same letter would have served equally as well. Such a ruse to detect an enemy has often been successfully tried. "In the Sicilian Vespers, March 31, 1282, the French were made to betray themselves by their pronunciation of *ceci e ciceri*; those who pronounced the *c* as in French (*sesi e siseri*) were hewn down on the spot." **Forty and two thousand.** From a historical point of view this number is an exaggeration.

7. **In one of the cities of Gilead.** An impossible translation.

9. *Ibzan*, 12 : 8-10

- RP or JE 8. And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel.  
 9. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters he sent abroad, and thirty daughters he brought in from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.  
 10. And Ibzan died, and was buried at Beth-lehem.

10. *Elon*, 12 : 11-12

- RP or JE 11. And after him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel;  
 12. and he judged Israel ten years. And Elon the Zebulunite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

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The Hebrew text has suffered in transcription. Probably the original was *in his city Mizpah in Gilead*.

8. **Ibzan of Beth-lehem.** The *Beth-lehem* here mentioned is not Bethlehem of Judah, the city of David which is distinguished in Judges and Ruth by the affix *Judah* (cf. 17 : 9 ; 19 : 1, 18 ; Ruth 1 : 1 f.), but Bethlehem of Zebulun, mentioned in Josh. 19 : 15, modern Beit Lahm, about seven miles northwest from Nazareth. *Ibzan* is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament except as *Ezbon* in 1 Chron. 7 : 7. (The genealogy of 1 Chron. 7 : 6 ff. is when properly restored that of Zebulun and not of Benjamin.) **And thirty daughters he sent abroad.** *I.e.* he made marriages for them in other clans, or families, and in a similar way he obtained wives for his sons. This implies that Ibzan was a person of much importance with whom marriage alliances were desirable. Regarding Ibzan as originally a clan, the sons and daughters are its numerous branches and connections. (Cf. the sons of Jair, 10 : 3-5.)

11. **Elon.** In Gen. 46 : 14 and Num. 26 : 26 this name appears as that of a son of Zebulun, *i.e.* as the name of a Zebulunite clan.

12. **Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.** Aijalon is only another pronunciation of Elon. In Hebrew the consonantal text is identical. The site of the place is unknown.



11. *Abdon*, 12 : 13-15

13. And after him Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite R<sup>P</sup> or J<sup>E</sup>  
 14. judged Israel. And he had forty sons and thirty sons' sons, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and  
 15. he judged Israel eight years. And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

12. *Samson*, chaps. 13-16

13. And the children of Israel again did that which was R<sup>D</sup>  
 evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

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13. **Abdon.** The name occurs also in the genealogy of Benjamin (1 Chron. 8 : 23, 30), and through the close relationship of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim there may be a connection between its occurrence there and here, since Abdon's home (v. 15) was in the territory of Ephraim. This **Hillel** does not occur again in the Old Testament. **Pirathonite.** Of *Pirathon*: the home also of Benaiah, one of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23 : 30). *Pirathon* has been identified with the modern Ferata, six miles southwest from Nablus, but it is possible that it should rather be sought farther south in Benjamin.

14. The mention of Abdon's numerous posterity suggests that, as in the case of the previous minor judges, he represented originally a clan. **Ass colts.** These were honorable riding animals (cf. 10 : 4).

15. **Land of Ephraim.** The central tract of Western Palestine, extending from the plain of Esdraelon on the north to Bethel on the south, thus including the territory of Benjamin. **In the hill country of the Amalekites.** No satisfactory explanation has yet been given of the designation of a section of the land of Ephraim as *of the Amalekites* (cf. 6 : 3).

Samson as a judge (chaps. 13-16) stands in striking contrast to Ehud, Barak, Gideon and Jephthah. He is no leader of the

- J 2. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife

people but performs his exploits single-handed. His narrative also is not a connected tale leading to one great event, but a series of independent adventures mostly amours. He exhibits no set purpose of freeing his countrymen from their oppressors, but the injuries which he inflicts upon the Philistines are in return for personal wrongs. His career thus is ill adapted to convey a religious lesson, but he was too striking and popular a character to be omitted from the roll of Israel's deliverers. The source of the stories of Samson is J.

13: 1-25. This narrative with its divine announcement has points of likeness with the call of Gideon. It probably arose from the deep impression made by the exploits of Samson and hence may be regarded as the latest of the tales concerning him. The narrative is prefaced with the Deuteronomic introduction (v. 1). The angel of Jehovah, unrecognized, appears unto the barren wife of the Danite Manoah, and promises her a son whom she is to rear as a Nazirite. She relates this unto her husband (vv. 2-7). In response to the request of Manoah the angel again appears and instructs Manoah and his wife how to bring up the child (vv. 8-14). Manoah offers the angel a kid, which he accepts only as a burnt offering unto Jehovah, in the flame of which he disappears (vv. 15-20). Manoah and his wife recognize the divine character of their visitor (vv. 21-23). Samson is born and endowed with the spirit of Jehovah (vv. 24-25).

1. The brevity of this Deuteronomic introduction is to be noted. There is no cry of Israel unto the Lord (cf. 3: 9, 15; 4: 3; 6: 6; 10: 10). Probably the writer recognized the inadequacy of the deliverance wrought by Samson and shortened accordingly his introduction. **Philistines.** Cf. 3: 31.

2. **Zorah.** The modern Surah, about sixteen miles west of Jerusalem, on the northern side of the valley of Sorek, on the line of the railroad to Jaffa; on the opposite side of the valley to the south was *Beth-shemesh*. **Of the family of the Danites.** The tribe of Dan was very small, consisting of only a single clan (Num. 26: 42); only one son is assigned to Dan (Gen. 46: 23). The original settlement was southwest from Jerusalem in the vicinity of Zorah

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3. was barren, and bare not. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou
4. shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink no wine nor strong drink,
5. and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come upon his head: for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God
- 

(cf. 1:34). Later the tribe sought a home in Northern Palestine (cf. 18:1 f.). **Manoah.** This name, meaning "rest," occurs only in this story. **His wife was barren.** As were Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, the mothers of the patriarchs, Hannah, mother of Samuel, and Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist. A child thus born was regarded a peculiar gift of God, designed for some high purpose.

3. **The angel of the Lord.** A manifestation of Jehovah in a human form (cf. 2:1; 6:11).

4. **Drink no wine nor strong drink.** *I.e.* all intoxicating beverages, whether made from grapes or from other fruits and grains. **Any unclean thing.** Forbidden food: to wit, an animal which had died of itself, or had been torn by wild beasts, or any of solid hoof or which did not chew the cud, or a bird of prey, or a fish without scales, or insects, except the locust (cf. Lev. 11; Deut. 14).

5. **No razor shall come upon his head: for the child shall be a Nazirite.** A *Nazirite* was one consecrated to Jehovah primarily through uncut hair and secondarily through the abstinence commanded Manoah's wife and avoiding contact with the dead (cf. the law, which is late, of Num. 6). These latter requirements do not seem to have been observed by Samson. He ate honey defiled by a carcass and thus unclean (14:8 f.), and he entertained in a way which implies the use of liquor (14:10), and stripped the bodies of the dead (14:19). The hair of the Nazirite was left uncut as a sign that the powers of life were not being interfered with, but were wholly given to deity. No other lifelong Nazirites except Samson and perhaps Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 1:28)

- from the womb : and he shall begin to save Israel out
6. of the hand of the Philistines. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible; and I asked him not
  7. whence he was, neither told he me his name : but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son ; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing : for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb to the day of his death.
  8. Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, Oh Lord, I pray thee, let the man of God whom thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do
  9. unto the child that shall be born. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah ; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field : but Ma-
  10. noah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and told her husband, and said

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clearly appear in the Old Testament. As an early order *Nazirites* are mentioned with the prophets in Amos 2 : 11, but in later periods men and women became Nazirites for a limited time (Num. 6). **And he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.** The writer sees in Samson a deliverer or judge, but recognizes the incompleteness of his work. The complete deliverance of Israel from the Philistines only came later, according to one source (E) through Samuel (1 Sam. 7 : 13 f.), according to another (J) through Saul (1 Sam. 9 : 16) and David.

6. **Man of God.** The ordinary term for a prophet, a person to whom God made revelations; thus applied to Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, and others, and frequently of unknown persons (cf. 1 Sam. 2 : 27; 1 Kgs. 13 : 1 ff.; 2 Kgs. 23 : 16 f.). **Very terrible.** Exceedingly awe-inspiring, not necessarily an object of terror.

- unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me  
 11. that came unto me the *other* day. And Manoah  
 arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man  
 and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto  
 12. the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said,  
<sup>1</sup> Now let thy words come to pass: what shall be the  
<sup>2</sup> manner of the child, and <sup>3</sup> *what shall be* his work?  
 13. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all  
 14. that I said unto the woman let her beware. She may  
 not eat of any thing that cometh of the <sup>4</sup> vine, neither  
 let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean  
 thing; all that I commanded her let her observe.  
 15. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray  
 thee, let us detain thee, that we may make ready a  
 16. kid for thee. And the angel of the LORD said unto  
 Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy  
 bread: and if thou wilt make ready a burnt offering,  
 thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *Now when thy words come to pass, what &c.*    <sup>2</sup> Or, *ordering.*    <sup>3</sup> Or, *how shall we do unto him.*    <sup>4</sup> Or, *grape-vine.* See Num. 6: 4.

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12. **Now let thy words**, etc. *I.e.* when thy words come to pass, how shall the boy be brought up and what shall he do? The following verses strangely enough do not answer this question, but only repeat the directions already given to the mother respecting her mode of life in anticipation of the birth of the child. The prohibition respecting the fruit of the vine is amplified so as to include grapes and raisins as well as wine (v. 14). This is according to Num. 6: 3 and may be an editorial addition.

15. Cf. the hospitality offered by Abraham to the three angels (Gen. 18: 3 ff.) and by Gideon to the angel (6: 17 ff.).

16. **For Manoah knew not that he was the angel of the Lord.** This sentence is out of place. It follows either the invitation of v. 15, or better the question of v. 17.

17. not that he was the angel of the LORD. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy words come to pass we may do thee  
 18. honour? And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is  
 19. <sup>1</sup>wonderful? So Manoah took the kid with the meal offering, and offered it upon the rock unto the LORD: and *the angel* did wondrously, and Manoah and  
 20. his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *secret*.

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17. Manoah asks after the angel's name, supposing him to be a man of God, so that if the event took place he might, in some way not mentioned, honor him. Cf. the honor given to Samuel as a foreteller (1 Sam. 9 : 6), and that of money probably promised to Balaam (Num. 22 : 17 f., 37).

18. **Seeing it is wonderful.** Incomprehensible, beyond the understanding of Manoah (cf. Gen. 32 : 29). This is an intimation of the deity of the speaker.

19. **With the meal offering.** These words here and in v. 23 are an editorial addition to make the sacrifice conform with the ritual of the later priestly legislation, which required such an offering with the burnt offering (cf. Num. 15 : 8 f., P). **Upon the rock.** A rock served as an altar for Manoah. Cf. the rock used as an altar in 6 : 20 f. **And the angel did wondrously.** The word angel is not in the original. The other words by a slight change in the text give as the true rendering, *And offered it upon the rock unto Jehovah the wonder-worker*. The reference is to the marvel of the birth of the child and not to the marvel of the disappearance of the angel in the flame of the altar (v. 20). **And Manoah and his wife looked on.** These words are to be omitted. They are a copyist's error from the following verse.

20. **For it came to pass.** The correct translation is *And it came to pass*, etc. Cf. the disappearance of the angel who appeared unto Gideon (6 : 21).

the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar : and Manoah and his wife looked on ; and they  
21. fell on their faces to the ground. But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah or to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of  
22. the LORD. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall  
23. surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meal offering at our hand, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would at this time have told  
24. such things as these. And the woman bare a son, and called his name <sup>1</sup> Samson : and the child grew, and the  
25. LORD blessed him. And the spirit of the LORD began

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Shimshon*.

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22. **We shall surely die, because we have seen God.** The notion was that if any one saw God he would die (cf. 6 : 22).

23. A woman's practical sense set over a man's theoretical reasoning is seen in this reply.

24. **Samson.** There is no connection between the name *Samson* and either the divine appearance announcing his birth or the work which the child was designed to accomplish. The name is a derivative from the Hebrew word *shemesh*, meaning "sun." He was a sun's man. Adjacent to the home of his parents was the town of *Beth-shemesh*, evidently from its name "house of sun," a seat of the worship of the sun. Samson's name may indicate nothing further than that he was a "sun worshipper"; but when his exploits are considered as well as his name, it is hard to believe that he like Hercules was not in some way a personification of the sun. There is a certain parallelism between these two men of strength. Each begins his career by strangling a lion; each perishes through the wiles of a woman; each catches wild beasts, although the beasts of Samson are only foxes.

25. **And the spirit of the Lord began to move him.** Cf. 3 : 10.

to move him in <sup>1</sup> Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

14. And Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman  
2. in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. And

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<sup>1</sup> That is, *The camp of Dan*. See 18: 12.

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Samson began to manifest those outbursts of rage and great strength exhibited in his later exploits. **Mahaneh-dan.** The name means "camp of Dan." **Zorah.** Cf. v. 2. **Eshtaol.** Modern Eshua about a mile and a half east of Zorah, with which it is generally associated (cf. 16: 31; 18: 2, 11; Josh. 15: 33; 19: 41; 1 Chron. 2: 53).

Chapters 14, 15. Samson, through the controlling spirit of Jehovah, who will use him as an instrument to harass the Philistines, contrary to the wishes of his parents seeks as a wife a Philistine woman at Timnah. On his way to visit her he strangles a lion in whose carcase bees lodge and store honey (14: 1-8). From the circumstance of the honey so singularly placed Samson at his wedding feast held at Timnah propounds, on a wager of thirty suits of clothing, a riddle to his guests, which they are unable to answer until they persuade his newly wedded wife to entice the answer from her husband (14: 9-18). Samson, to pay the wager of clothing, slays and strips thirty Philistines and in anger returns to his home, and his bride is given to another (14: 19-20). Samson, finding that his bride has been given to another, captures 300 foxes and, by means of firebrands attached to their tails, sets fire to the grain and orchards of the Philistines. They in turn burn his wife and her father, and Samson then in revenge slays great numbers of the Philistines (15: 1-8). At this the Philistines invade Judah to seize Samson, and the men of Judah deliver him, bound with ropes, to his enemies, but he bursts the ropes and with the jawbone of an ass slaughters the Philistines (15: 9-16). Afterward Samson thirsts, and God creates a cavity in which water appears (15: 17-20). The original narrative has been obscured by revision, especially by the introduction of Samson's parents in 14: 3 (the mother), 5 f. (the father and mother), 10 (the father).

14: 1. **Timnah.** Modern Tibneh, only some three and a half miles southwest of Zorah and thus quite near the home of Samson.



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- he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to
3. wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she
4. pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD; for he sought an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines had rule over Israel.
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In Josh. 19 : 43 it is reckoned as belonging to Dan; in Josh. 15 : 10 as on the border of Judah; and in 2 Chron. 28 : 18 it is among the towns taken by the Philistines from Judah in the reign of Ahaz.

2. **Now therefore get her for me to wife.** In ancient Israel the choosing of the bride was the business of a man's father or the head of the family (cf. Gen. 24 : 2 ff.; 38 : 6; 28 : 1 ff.; 21 : 21). The woman became a member of her husband's family.

3. **And his mother.** An editorial gloss, as appears in the reply where we have *my people* and not the plural pronoun *our*. The feeling against foreign wives according to the patriarchal stories was very strong in Israel. Abraham makes his servant swear not to take a foreign wife for Isaac (Gen. 24 : 3), and Isaac charges Jacob not to take a Canaanite wife (Gen. 28 : 1), and Esau's foreign wives were very grievous to his mother (Gen. 27 : 46). **Uncircumcised.** A term of reproach applied repeatedly to the Philistines (cf. 15 : 18; 1 Sam. 14 : 6; 17 : 26, 36, etc.). The other neighbors of Israel were kindred peoples who generally practised circumcision.

4. The father and mother did not know that the persistent love of their son for the Philistine woman was caused by Jehovah, who sought the opportunity which would arise from this passion to inflict evil upon the Philistines.

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5. Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnah, and came to the vineyards of Timnah: and, behold, a young lion roared against
6. him. And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his
- R J 7. father or his mother what he had done. And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased
8. Samson well. And after a while he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of
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5. **A young lion roared against him.** Lions were very plentiful in ancient Palestine: David as a shepherd overcame one (1 Sam. 17: 34 ff.); Benaiah slays one in a pit on a snowy day (2 Sam. 23: 20); a lion slays the disobedient prophets (1 Kgs. 13: 23); lions harass the new settlers of northern Israel (2 Kgs. 17: 25).

8 f. **And after a while he returned to take her.** The return is not to Timnah but to Samson's home. The words *to take her* are to be omitted as gloss, and with the glosses of *father and mother* in the two previous verses have led to a complete misconception of the original story. In its present form it reads as if Samson, accompanied by his parents, goes down to Timnah, and while on the way slays a lion, strangely enough unbeknown to his father and mother, who are with him (v. 6). Then later on the three are again on their way to Timnah, this time that Samson may marry the woman; and Samson slips away from his parents to view the lion and returns to them with the honey, *and his father went down to the woman* (v. 10), *i.e.* to arrange for the marriage. In the original story the father and mother were not mentioned, except in v. 9, where Samson meets them on his return home. Samson first goes down alone to Timnah and on the way he slays a lion. After remaining in Timnah awhile he returns to his home, and on the way he views the carcase, takes and eats the honey, and brings some of it to his parents at Zorah. Then later on (v. 10) he goes again to Timnah unto the woman and marries her, celebrating the union with a feast. His parents have no part in his wooing and marrying the Philistine woman of

the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees  
 9. in the body of the lion, and honey. And he took  
 it into his hands, and went on, eating as he went,  
 and he came to his father and mother, and gave  
 unto them, and they did eat: but he told them not  
 that he had taken the honey out of the body of the  
 10. lion. And his father went down unto the woman:  
 and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young  
 11. men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him,  
 that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

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whom they so thoroughly disapprove (vv. 2 f.) and of whose divine purpose they are ignorant (v. 4). **A swarm of bees in the body of the lion.** That the dead body in the hot sun and dry atmosphere would soon shrivel and form a cavity in which bees might assemble is not improbable; yet the appearance of the bees and honey must be regarded as a wonder and be classified with the other marvels of the stories of Samson.

10 f. Removing as a gloss the words *his father*, Samson goes down to marry the woman and makes at her home a wedding feast according to the custom of bridegrooms, who, like Samson, contract a marriage with a woman who is to remain in her father's house (cf. 8: 30). In an ordinary marriage the feast would be at the bridegroom's home, where the bride would remain. This is a plausible interpretation of v. 10; but v. 11 in the present text can only mean: When the Philistines saw Samson, or according to some Greek texts *since they feared him* (the two verbs are very nearly alike in Hebrew), knowing his dangerous character, they brought thirty men as a posse of constables to be with him. But this statement is unnatural. Samson has not yet become a mischief-maker to the Philistines. It is better by a rearrangement of the clauses of the two verses and by slight changes in the text to render: 10a. *And Samson went down unto the woman to take (marry) her.* 11. *And it came to pass when they saw him that they brought him thirty companions to be with him, 10b. and they made a feast, for so used the young men to do.* When Samson came to marry the woman in her father's house, her

12. And Samson said unto them, Let me now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of
13. raiment: but if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment. And they said unto him, Put forth thy rid-
14. dle, that we may hear it. And he said unto them,  
 Out of the eater came forth meat,  
 And out of the strong came forth sweetness.  
 And they could not in three days declare the riddle.

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friends, the Philistines, provided Samson with companions who in an ordinary wedding would be his kinsmen, and these companions after an eastern custom furnished the feast.

12. **Riddle.** To propose a riddle, a knotty or dark saying, has always been a favorite means of entertainment in the East. The Queen of Sheba tested Solomon with riddles (1 Kgs. 10: 1). A perplexing moral problem is called a riddle (Ps. 49: 4, dark saying). Samson's riddle (v. 14) called for the substitution of special terms for general ones and required a knowledge of a beehive in a lion's carcass or something similar for its solution. **Seven days.** The customary duration of wedding festivities (cf. Gen. 29: 27). **Linen garments.** Wrappers, sheetlike, rectangular pieces of cloth of fine material worn at night upon the naked body (cf. Mark 14: 51), or as a mantle over other clothing. **Changes of raiment.** Apparel worn on festival and ceremonial occasions (cf. Gen. 45: 22; 2 Kgs. 5: 5).

14 f. **Three days.** This does not agree with the following *seventh day* (v. 15) unless the riddle was propounded on the fourth day, in which case there still remains the discrepancy of the woman weeping seven days (v. 16). It is best to strike out both statements of time as glosses (the first, though a gloss, having originally been *six*) and render *And when they could not declare the riddle then it came to pass that they said*, etc. The Philistines in the original story seem to have realized from the

15. And it came to pass on the <sup>1</sup>seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to <sup>2</sup>impro-
16. erish us? is it not *so*? And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my
17. mother, and shall I tell it thee? And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she pressed him sore: and she told the
18. riddle to the children of her people. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them,
- If ye had not plowed with my heifer,  
Ye had not found out my riddle.
19. And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, R

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<sup>1</sup> The Sept. and Syriac have, *fourth*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *take that we have*.

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beginning that the riddle without special knowledge was insoluble, and applied at once to Samson's wife for the solution. **Lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire.** This was the ultimate fate of the woman and her family. The Ephraimites threatened Jephthah with a similar punishment (12: 1).

18. **Before the sun went down.** Render more correctly, *before he went into the chamber*. The Philistines spring the answer upon Samson just as he is about to retire that his discomfiture may be great. **If ye had not plowed with my heifer.** This reply is in the form of a riddle.

19. Cf. v. 6. Samson's mighty deeds are represented as

- and he went down to Ashkelon, and smote thirty men of them, and took their <sup>1</sup> spoil, and gave the changes *of raiment* unto them that declared the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's
20. house. But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.
15. But it came to pass after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber.
2. But her father would not suffer him to go in. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she?

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *apparel*.

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through the special influence of Jehovah (cf. 3 : 10). **Ashkelon.** One of the five cities of the Philistines, modern name the same, on the seacoast, a couple of days' journey from Timnah. This episode of movement to such a distant place and of the slaughter of thirty Philistines to secure spoil with which to pay the wager is the insertion of an editor. The latter half of the verse gives the original sequel. Samson in furious rage leaves then and there his wife, and she, deserted by her newly made husband, against whom she had conspired, is given at once to his best man (the friend of the bridegroom, Jn. 3 : 29).

1. **After a while.** The anger of Samson cools, and he visits his wife with the desire of assuming his rights as a husband. **In the time of wheat harvest.** This statement of time is given with reference to v. 5. Since young people in Palestine are usually married in March this would be about two months after the wedding. **With a kid.** A gift of reconciliation and such a one as the husband of a woman who lived with her parents would naturally bring on a visit to his wife: possibly, since Judah promised a kid to Tamar (cf. Gen. 38 : 17), the usual gift in connection with the marital relations.

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3. take her, I pray thee, instead of her. And Samson said unto them, This time <sup>1</sup> shall I be blameless in regard of the Philistines, when I do them a mischief.
  4. And Samson went and caught three hundred <sup>2</sup> foxes, and took <sup>3</sup> firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a
  5. firebrand in the midst between every two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks and the standing corn, and also
  6. the oliveyards. Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they said, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he hath taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines
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<sup>1</sup> Or, *shall I be quits with.*<sup>2</sup> Or, *jackals.*<sup>3</sup> Or, *torches.*


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3. **This time shall I be blameless**, etc. Samson exults in the thought that in return for the wrong done to him in giving his wife to another, he is free to inflict injury upon the Philistines.

4 f. The calm deliberation and cunning stratagem with which Samson here works his revenge is in striking contrast to his seizure by a divine frenzy. Three hundred foxes or jackals are caught, and one hundred and fifty pairs with their tails tied together and burning faggots attached are set loose, and the cut and standing grain is destroyed and the olive orchards suffer likewise. This story is an invention of folklore, and hence is not to be considered seriously in reference to the possibility of such an occurrence. It has a remarkable parallel in a Roman ceremony described by Ovid in which, at the festival of Ceres, the goddess of grain, foxes with lighted torches tied to their tails were turned loose in the circus. This Roman ceremony is explained by Ovid as commemorating the burning of grainfields kindled by a wisp of burning hay tied by a boy to a fox's tail. The coincidence between this and the Samson story may be accidental, but probably a common myth of great antiquity underlies each.

6. **Her and her father.** After the Greek and Syriac versions

- came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.
7. And Samson said unto them, If ye do after this manner, surely I will be avenged of you, and after that I
8. will cease. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.
9. Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah,
10. and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they said, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to
11. him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam,

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we should read **Her and her father's house** (*i.e.* family) (cf. the destruction of the families of Dathan and Abiram, Num. 16: 27 ff., and Achan, Josh. 8: 24).

7. Samson, although having wrought injury upon the Philistines for the wrong done him through his Philistine wife and family, stands ready to avenge their cruel death. Under any event the Philistines are to suffer.

8. **Hip and thigh.** A proverbial expression for complete overthrow. **Etam.** Usually regarded the place of this name near Beth-lehem (cf. 2 Chron. 11: 6). But not far from Timnah and Zorah (near Artuf) is an almost vertical cliff with a large cave very difficult and even dangerous of access which may well have been the traditional refuge of Samson (Moore).

In addition to the marvels of Samson's strength the story of 15: 9-17 has the usual exaggerations of a folktale. The Philistines seek Samson with an invading army (v. 9), and the force of Judah which summons him to surrender is three thousand men (v. 11).

9. **Lehi** (cf. vv. 14-19). Site unknown. The word means "jawbone," and the name was not unlikely given from the resemblance of the rocks or cliffs of the place to the underjaw of an animal.

11. **Three thousand men.** Samson's strength is glorified



- and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what then is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them,
12. As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me,
13. that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new
14. ropes, and brought him up from the rock. When he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him: and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the ropes that were upon his arms be-

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through the number of men thought necessary to take him. Some explain the willingness of the men of Judah to deliver Samson by the fact that he was a Danite and hence they felt no obligation to protect him. But that does not appear in the narrative. The only apparent motive for their action is fear of damage from the Philistines and an obligation to them as their rulers. This in view of the outcome of their surrender of Samson would not be felt by the writer as reprehensible. **The Philistines are rulers over us.** This was the actual condition of affairs immediately preceding the kingship of Saul. **What then is this that thou hast done unto us?** Samson is charged through misconduct toward the Philistines with subjecting the men of Judah to an invasion.

12. **Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.** Upon this condition Samson, evidently confident of his own ultimate deliverance, is willing to be delivered to the Philistines.

13. **New ropes.** Cf. 16: 11. A precaution against the possibility of escape.

14. **The spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.** As when

came as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands  
 15. <sup>1</sup>dropped from off his hands. And he found a new jaw-  
 bone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it,  
 16. and smote a thousand men therewith. And Samson  
 said,

With the jawbone of an ass, <sup>2</sup>heaps upon heaps,  
 With the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thou-  
 sand men.

17. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of  
 speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his  
 hand; and <sup>3</sup>that place was called <sup>4</sup>Ramath-lehi.  
 18. And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and  
 said, Thou hast given this great deliverance by the  
 hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst,

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *were melted.*      <sup>2</sup> Heb. *an heap, two heaps.*      <sup>3</sup> Or, *he called that place.*  
<sup>4</sup> That is, *The hill of the jawbone.*

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he slew the lion (14: 6) and the men of Ashkelon (14: 19) (cf. 3: 10).

15. **A new jawbone.** An old jawbone would have been brittle and hence not adaptable as a weapon of great destruction.

16. **Heaps upon heaps.** The text of these words requires a slight emendation. In the original they are a pun upon the Hebrew word *ass*. To preserve this the couplet has been translated:

*With the jawbone of an ass,  
 I assailed my assailants;  
 With the jawbone of an ass  
 Have I slain a thousand men.*

17. **Ramath-lehi.** *I.e.* "Jawbone-hill." Ramath is a common place name meaning height or hill.

18 f. Samson, after his great effort in slaying the thousand Philistines with the jawbone, is overcome with thirst, and as though about to perish prays unto Jehovah, who cleaves a hollow in which water gushes forth and his spirit is revived. The

19. and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised. But God clave the hollow place that is in <sup>1</sup> Lehi, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore <sup>2</sup> the name thereof was called <sup>3</sup> En-hakkore, which is in
20. Lehi, unto this day. And he judged Israel in the R<sup>D</sup>  
 days of the Philistines twenty years.
16. And Samson went to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, J  
 2. and went in unto her. *And it was told* the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed R  
 him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *the jawbone*. <sup>2</sup> Or, *he called the name of*. <sup>3</sup> That is, *The spring of him that called*.

spring which thus appears is named, "The spring of him that calleth." This spring was in Lehi until the day of the writer. All of this is a legend which arose in explaining a hollow and a spring at Lehi. Since *Lehi* itself means jawbone, from that name possibly came the entire story of Samson's adventures at Lehi. **En-hakkore** means "The spring of the Partridge," as well as "The spring of him that calleth," and this (Partridge-spring) was undoubtedly the original name.

20. This Deuteronomic conclusion suggests that the remainder of the story of Samson, chap. 16 (taken from JE), was added by the priestly editor.

16 : 1. The original of this verse, as witnessed by the Greek version, read *and from thence Samson went to Gaza*, thus closely connecting this story with the preceding one. **Gaza**. The most southerly of the Philistine cities, on the borders of the desert towards Egypt. The modern town has the same name, and being on the highway to Egypt is, like the ancient one, a city of importance. The present population is some sixteen thousand. Gaza is some thirty miles south of Samson's home at Zorah. He thus had recklessly entered into the heart of the enemies' country.

2. **And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city**. These statements do not harmonize with the remainder of the verse, since if Samson's lodging was sur-

- J the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, <sup>1</sup> *Let be*
3. till morning light, then we will kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and laid hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and plucked them up, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron.
4. And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman <sup>2</sup> in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.
5. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her and

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *When (or Before) the morning light.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *by the brook.*

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rounded and the city gate was watched, how could he without an encounter have carried off the gates? The words, then, seem to be an interpolation designed to make the escape of Samson more wonderful. The Philistines are represented as confident, the city gates being closed, that Samson could not escape during the night. They therefore quietly awaited his appearance in the morning, expecting to have him at bay and kill him.

3. **The doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts . . . bar and all.** The doors or leaves of the city gate moved on pins set in sockets; the bar extended across the doors into two posts at the sides of the gate, and was in some manner locked. Samson removed the whole of this structure. **Mountain that is before Hebron.** *I.e.* the hill which faces Hebron as one approaches from Gaza. The distance between the two cities is some forty miles; thus the feat was gigantic. Some have thought of a hill near Hebron on the road to Gaza, which from its natural formation was called the "Gates of Gaza." This, however, is doubtful, since the narrative gives no such local connection.

4. **The valley of Sorek.** The fertile valley now known as the Wady Surar, extending from near Jerusalem westward into the coast plain. In it were the towns of Zorah, Timnah, and Bethshemesh. *Sorek* in Hebrew is the name of a choice variety of grapes which probably grew abundantly in the valley.

5. **And the lords of the Philistines.** Five lords or rulers of

- said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to <sup>1</sup> afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred
6. *pieces* of silver. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.
7. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven <sup>2</sup> green withes that were never dried, then shall
8. I become weak, and be as another man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven <sup>3</sup> green withes which had not been dried, and she bound him
9. with them. Now she had liers in wait abiding in the inner chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withes, as a string of tow is broken when it <sup>4</sup> toucheth the

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *humble*    <sup>2</sup> Or, *new bowstrings*.    <sup>3</sup> Or, *new bowstrings*.    <sup>4</sup> Heb. *smelleth*.

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the Philistines are mentioned in 3:3. The number is derived from the five cities Ekron, Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza. **Wherein his great strength.** In harmony with the development of the story the rulers think his strength due to some magic the secret of which may be discovered. **Eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.** *I.e.* over a thousand shekels, an enormous sum, considering the purchasing power of money in those days. A slave was valued at only thirty shekels (cf. Exod. 21:32). Intrinsically a shekel was worth sixty cents.

7. **Seven green withes.** *I.e.* seven fresh sinews such as were used for bowstrings. These could be readily knotted and would not easily break. Seven is a charmed number.

8. **Brought up to her seven green withes.** Delilah naturally would not have fresh sinews at hand.

9. **The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.** The scare words do not imply that the liers in wait rushed out. They probably

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10. fire. So his strength was not known. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith
11. thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If they only bind me with new ropes wherewith no work hath been done, then shall I become weak, and be as
12. another man. So Delilah took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And the liers in wait were abiding in the inner chamber. And he brake them from
13. off his arms like a thread. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of
14. my head with the web. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and plucked away the pin of the beam, and the web.
- 

remained in concealment each time when they saw that Samson's strength remained.

12. **Like a thread.** In contrast to the rope.

13 f. The concluding words of Samson's directions have been omitted (v. 13) and also the first part of Delilah's actions. These may be restored from the Greek text as follows: *And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web and makest it fast with the pin then shall I become weak like another man. And she made him sleep, and she wove the seven locks of his head with the web, and she made it fast with the pin.* **The pin.** This was the wooden peg with which the weaver beat the woof tight and hard into the warp. While Samson slept with his head near the loom, Delilah wove his long hair into the warp with her fingers and beat it up tight and hard. Samson was thus fastened with his hair in a prostrate position. When he awoke he pulled up by his hair

15. And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me
16. wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, that his soul was vexed unto death.
17. And he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazirite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.
18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for <sup>1</sup> he hath told me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought the money in their
19. hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for <sup>2</sup> a man, and shaved off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and

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<sup>1</sup> Or, according to another reading, *he had told her.*      <sup>2</sup> Or, *the men.*

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the web and its support. The words *the pin of* are to be omitted before the words *the beam*. They have come into the text through a misunderstanding of the use of *the pin*.

16. Delilah finally succeeds in wresting the secret from Samson by the same tactics by which his wife obtained the answer to the riddle (14: 17).

17. **And he told her all his heart.** All that he knew. The *heart* in Hebrew is frequently equivalent to the mind. **A Nazirite.** Cf. 13: 7.

19. **And shaved off.** The pronoun *he* should be supplied. The man did the shaving. **And she began to afflict him.** Better after Greek texts, *and he began to be afflicted, i.e. he began to grow weak.*

20. his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times, and shake myself. But he wist not that the LORD was
21. departed from him. And the Philistines laid hold on him, and put out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass;
22. and he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.
23. And the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their

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20. **And shake myself.** Set himself free from the bonds with which Delilah may be thought to have bound him (cf. v. 6), since the Philistines would wish to know that his strength had really departed before they appeared to seize him. **The Lord was departed from him.** The presence of Jehovah was manifested in Samson's strength. When his hair was cut, the divine presence or spirit left him.

21. **And put out his eyes.** Assyrian monuments contain representations of the blinding of captives. The eyes of the captive king Zedekiah of Judah were put out by the Babylonians (2 Kgs. 25 : 7). **And they brought him down to Gaza.** The Philistine city, the farthest from his home. Jewish scholars saw in this a punishment for his whoring in Gaza (cf. v. 1). **And he did grind.** Grinding was woman's labor, therefore contemptible for a strong man.

23. **Dagon their god.** The chief deity of the Philistines, mentioned in the story of the capture of the ark (1 Sam. 5 : 2 ff.), and occurring in the local name *Beth-dagon* (Josh. 15 : 41; 19 : 27.) The name has been connected with the Hebrew word for fish (*dag*) and also the word for grain (*dagan*). The latter is the more probable derivation, and since the name occurs in the Amarna tablets (1500 B.C.) and in inscriptions of Phœnicia and Babylonia, Dagon was probably an ancient Semitic god of agriculture



- god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath de- R  
 24. livered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when J  
 the people saw him, they praised their god: for they  
 said, Our god hath delivered into our hand our enemy,  
 and the destroyer of our country, which hath slain  
 25. many of us. And it came to pass, when their hearts  
 were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he  
 may make us sport. And they called for Samson  
 out of the prison house; and he made sport before  
 26. them: and they set him between the pillars. And

revered on the seacoast of Palestine and adopted by the Philistines when they entered Palestine. **For they said.** Literally *and they said*. These words with the remainder of the verse are an insertion. The feast was not called to celebrate the capture of Samson, for that event, as is shown by the regrowth of his hair, had taken place long before, but was a great sacrificial feast in honor of Dagon. Rejoicing would be a feature of a sacrificial feast of Dagon even as of Jehovah without reference to any special circumstance (cf. Deut. 12: 12, 18).

The following two verses, since the sight of Samson (v. 24) naturally follows his call out of the prison house, must be transposed. Their present order is a copyist's mistake.

24. **For they said.** Better after the Greek translation, *and they said*; since the following words, *Our god hath delivered into our hand*, etc., are not the words of praise (the *hallel* shout, consisting of names and honorific titles of their god), but are "an improvised hymn setting forth the reason and meaning of their praises." The passage (Our god, etc.) in Hebrew contains five words of a single rhyme.

25. **When their hearts were merry.** Doubtless with wine (cf. 2 Sam. 13: 28), although songs, music, dancing, trials of wit and athletic sports may have formed a feature of their festivity. **That he may make us sport.** That he may amuse us. How Samson should amuse them, whether by song or dance or feats of strength, is not indicated. Perhaps his presence as a blind captive to receive their jeers would be sufficient.

- Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand,  
 Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the  
 27. house resteth, that I may lean upon them. Now  
 the house was full of men and women; and all the  
 lords of the Philistines were there; and there were  
 upon the roof about three thousand men and women,  
 28. that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson  
 called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remem-  
 ber me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee,  
 only this once, O God, that I may <sup>1</sup>be at once avenged  
 29. of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson  
 took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the  
 house rested, and leaned upon them, the one with his  
 30. right hand, and the other with his left. And Samson  
 said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *be avenged . . . for one of my two eyes.*

26. **The lad.** The word is better rendered servant or attendant. There is nothing to indicate that he was not a grown man. **The pillars whereupon the house resteth.** Many attempts have been made to describe architecturally the building overthrown by Samson. One who desires to make actual the occurrence may think of a great hall connected with the temple, whose roof, as well as its interior, was thronged with spectators viewing Samson making sport for them before the building, perhaps in the space in front of the temple. After his exhibition he was led unto the two middle pillars of the building, possibly those within at its centre, and pushing with his right hand upon one pillar and his left hand on the other, he caused the great hall to collapse.

27. The Hebrew text suggests that mention of the presence of the lords of the Philistines and likewise of the people on the roof is an editorial addition. V. 30 does not mention the death of any on the roof.

28. **For my two eyes.** The Hebrew text requires the translation of the margin, *for one of my two eyes.* The death of the

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himself with all his might ; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than 31. they which he slew in his life. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years. R

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Philistines whom he may destroy will atone only for the loss of one of his eyes, so great is his sense of injury and so great his desire for revenge.

31. **Zorah and Eshtaol.** Cf. 13:2, 25. The recovery of Samson's body and its burial by his kinsmen is a simple touch to describe the regard of his own people for the hero.

## C. THE APPENDIX, CHAPTERS 17-21

### I. THE FOUNDING OF THE SANCTUARY AT DAN, CHAPTERS 17, 18

- 17: 1 J 17. And there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim,  
E 2. whose name was Micah. And he said unto his  
mother, The eleven hundred *pieces* of silver that were
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Chapters 17-21. This section of the Book of Judges consists of the stories of the founding of the sanctuary at Dan and of the sin of Gibeah. It shows no trace of Deuteronomic editing, and hence the two stories come from the priestly editor (R<sup>p</sup>). They were presumably taken from the historical work JE and then edited and joined as an appendix to the Deuteronomic Book of Judges at the same time that chaps. 1-2: 5 were prefixed as its introduction.

Chapters 17, 18. At Dan far to the north in Israel at the headwaters of Jordan was a famous sanctuary during the life of the Hebrew nation. There Jeroboam placed one of the golden calves (1 Kgs. 12: 29). This story of the origin of this sanctuary differs from the accounts of the origins of the sanctuaries at Beersheba, Bethel, Mahanaim, and Penuel given in Genesis (21: 31; 26: 33; 28: 12 ff.; 32: 2, 30), because this is not a mythical legend of divine appearances and patriarchal, but a flesh and blood tale of real life.

A man Micah of Mt. Ephraim has a private temple with an idol and he secures a Levite as a priest. The tribe of Dan, having too narrow a territory, send forth spies to find a new dwelling place. These spies chance in their journey upon Micah's temple and priest, whom they recognize as an old acquaintance. They inquire in regard to the success of their undertaking, and receiving a favorable response, they come to the unprotected Phœnician town of Laish, near the head waters of the Jordan. This town they recommend their countrymen to seize as a new home. An armed force of Danites march thither, and on their way they

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taken from thee, about which thou didst utter <sup>1</sup> a curse, and didst also speak it in mine ears, behold,

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *an adjuration.*

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plunder Micah's temple and persuade his priest to join them. Having conquered and destroyed Laish, they make it their home, which they call Dan, and set up there the idol of Micah.

The story contains the marks of the union of two narratives to be assigned to J and E. In the former (J) Micah has a *temple* in which are an *ephod* and *teraphim* (v. 5), and one of his sons is priest, for whom he substitutes a wandering Levite from Beth-lehem-judah (vv. 8-11a, 12c-13). In the latter (E), from restored stolen silver Micah's mother has made for him a *graven image and a molten image* which are *in the house of Micah* (vv. 2-4). A *young man* of Beth-lehem-judah, a Levite, is sojourning *there, i.e.* in Mt. Ephraim, Micah's home (v. 7). This young man was *as one of Micah's sons* and became his priest (vv. 11b-12ab). Of the two conclusions of the narrative, 18: 30 belongs to J and 18: 31 to E. Elsewhere the marks of the two narratives are not distinct and hence the narrative as a whole we assign to JE.

The antiquity of this narrative appears in the fact that it contains no condemnation of the use of images in the worship of Jehovah. As already intimated, the tale gives also a true bit of history and an authentic glimpse of early conditions in Israel. A well-endowed householder may have his own shrine with images for the worship of Jehovah. (Cf. *the ephod* of Gideon, 8: 27.) He may maintain at his own expense a priest. The priesthood has become a profession already associated with the tribe of Levi. The land of Israel and the adjacent country on the north is so destitute of controlling and protecting authorities that an armed force of a tribe in one district could leave its home, and, marching through the country, take the property of people and attack and destroy a peaceable and prosperous community. This migration of a portion of the tribe of Dan took place soon after the entrance of Israel into Western Palestine. In the song of Deborah the tribe is mentioned as already in its northern home (cf. 5: 17).

17: 1. **The hill country of Ephraim.** See on 3: 27. **Micah.** The Heb. has the longer form of the name *Micayehu*, here and in

the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother  
 3. said, Blessed be my son of the LORD. And he re-  
 stored the eleven hundred *pieces* of silver to his mother,  
 and his mother said, I verily <sup>1</sup> dedicate the silver unto

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *had dedicated.*

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v. 4, but elsewhere the shorter form, *Micah*. The word means, "Who is like Yah (*i.e.* Jehovah)?"

2-4. The general meaning of these verses is clear. From the mother of Micah eleven hundred shekels of silver have been stolen and she has cursed the thief. Her son, moved by the imprecation, confesses the theft and restores the money. The mother thereupon blesses her son and dedicates the silver for an idol for him. This purpose is carried out. The text, however, of these verses is in disorder. In the Hebrew of the clause, *And didst also speak it in mine ears* (v. 2) the *it* is lacking. The object of the verb *speak* (literally *say*) perhaps as an expression impious to the Jewish scribes has been omitted from the text. The last clause of v. 3 is out of place. It follows *I took it* in v. 2. The restoration of the silver also in v. 4 (where in the Hebrew the word *when* does not appear) is a repetition from v. 3; and the clause, *And his mother said* (vv. 2 f.), has been repeated. The passage should read: *And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou didst utter a curse and did also speak (i.e. say) . . . in mine ears, behold the silver is with me. I took it. Now therefore I will restore it unto thee. And he restored the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, Blessed be my son of Jehovah. I verily dedicate the silver into Jehovah from my hand for my son to make a graven image and a molten image. And his mother took two hundred pieces of silver, etc.*

**Eleven hundred pieces of silver.** Cf. 16:5, where the same sum is offered by each Philistine lord to Delilah. The possession of such a sum by Micah's mother suggests that she was a widow. **Blessed be my son of the Lord** (Jehovah). A curse spoken against the thief could not be unsaid, but it might be neutralized by a blessing. Thus when a curse or calamity is to be averted a blessing is desired (cf. Exod. 12:32; 2 Sam. 21:3). Curses

- the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will
4. restore it unto thee. And when he restored the money unto his mother, his mother took two hundred *pieces* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and it
5. was in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had <sup>J</sup> an house of <sup>1</sup> gods, and he made an ephod, and teraphim, and <sup>2</sup> consecrated one of his sons, who became

<sup>1</sup> Or, *God*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *filled the hand of*.

and blessing were regarded in ancient Israel as having real power. **A graven image and a molten image.** Only one image is meant. It was a carved image overlaid with metal. **Two hundred pieces of silver.** The dedication did not require that the entire sum should be made into an idol, but only that which was sufficient to make a worthy image. **The founder.** The smelter or silver-smith.

5. This verse continues v. 1, representing a different source from vv. 2-4. **An house of gods.** *I.e.* a temple. The ordinary furniture for worship was an altar with pillars of stone and wood adjoining. These required no building. A temple was erected only in the case of some sacred object like the ark or an idol. **An ephod.** An image representing Jehovah. See the one which Gideon made (8: 24-27). **Teraphim** (plural in form, but may be translated as a singular noun). An idol of some sort, generally regarded as that of an household deity, possibly used in connection with ancestor worship. Rachel hid that (or those) of her father's home under a camel's saddle (Gen. 31: 19, 34). Michal, the daughter of Saul, put one in the bed to represent her husband (1 Sam. 19: 13, 16). Like the ephod, the teraphim was employed in divination (2 Kgs. 23: 24; Ezek. 21: 21; Zech. 10: 2). **And consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.** In a similar manner, when the ark was brought into the house of Abinadab, one of his sons was set apart to keep the ark (1 Sam. 7: 1). The sons of David held the office of priest (2 Sam. 8: 18).

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- R 6. his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.
- E 7. And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and
- J 8. he sojourned there. And the man departed out of
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6. This verse is an editorial note (repeated in 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) to explain how such doings as those related in the story of Micah were possible. The editor wrote after or within the period of the monarchy when the establishment of a private temple with idols and an ordinary citizen as a priest was unlawful.

The passage 17:7-13 is a combination of the two narratives J and E. According to the latter narrative, to which v. 7 belongs, the Levite whom Micah secured was one already living in Mt. Ephraim. He was Micah's priest in the first instance, the narrative (E) knowing nothing about the consecration of Micah's son. According to J (vv. 8-13 in the main), a Levite from Beth-lehem-judah seeking a home came to Mt. Ephraim and was gladly employed by Micah as a priest in the place of his son. This latter view, in connection with v. 5, is the one given by the section as a whole. V. 7 in its present connection reads like an anticipatory summary of the detailed narrative which follows.

7. **Beth-lehem-judah.** So called to distinguish it from other Beth-lehems, as the one in Zebulun (cf. 12:8, 10); the modern Beit Lahm, five miles south of Jerusalem, the home town of David. The name means *house of bread*, descriptive of its fruitfulness; hence its other name *Ephrathah* (Mic. 5:2), meaning fruitful.

**Of the family of Judah, who was a Levite.** The young man belonged to the tribe of Judah, but by profession he was a *Levite*; *i.e.* he was especially trained to perform the office of a priest. The tribes of Levi and Simeon, probably from their treacherous conduct at Shechem (cf. Gen. 34:25-30, a tale of tribal history), were early dispersed in Israel (Gen. 49:7b) and considerable remnants of both tribes settled in Judah. Many of the members of the tribe of Levi followed the priestly calling; and the word *Levite* came to have a professional as well as tribal meaning.

**And he sojourned there.** *I.e.* dwelt as a stranger there. The expression is used when one resides apart from his own family or



- the city, out of Beth-lehem-judah, to sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.
9. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place*.
10. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *pieces* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and
11. thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the
12. young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. J
13. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.
18. In those days there was no king in Israel: and in R/JE

tribe; hence *there* cannot refer to Beth-lehem-judah, since the young man was of Judah, but to the vicinity of Micah's home.

8 f. These verses are a doublet of v. 7 and state how the Levite happened to be in the vicinity of Micah.

10. **A father.** A title of respect given to prophets, priests, and high officers of state. Joseph (also a young man) says, "God hath made me a father unto Pharaoh" (Gen. 45:8). **Ten pieces of silver.** Ten shekels of silver. The intrinsic value of a shekel is about sixty cents, but its purchasing power was much greater. The offer of Micah was regarded as advantageous.

13. Micah feels great satisfaction in having one regularly trained for the priest's office to minister in his temple. He is confident now of prosperity.

18: 1. **In those days there was no king in Israel.** An editorial note belonging to the preceding chapter (cf. 17:6). Its place, as the opening words of this chapter, is due to the influence of the Latin version which gave it this wrong connection with the

- R those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes
- JE 2. of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their whole number, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: and they came to the hill country of Ephraim, unto the house of Micah, and lodged
3. there. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned aside thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what doest thou in this
4. place? and what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus hath Micah dealt with me, and

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emigration of the tribe of Dan. **And in those days.** The days when Micah had his temple and priest. **For unto that day *their* inheritance had not,** etc. An infelicitious gloss to explain the reason why the Danites were seeking new territory. The tribe had received an inheritance west of Judah bordering on the land of the Philistines, as we learn from the story of Samson (cf. 13:2). They were, however, restricted in their territory through the Amorites, who did not allow them to enter the coast plain (1:34). Hence the narrowness of their land led a portion of them to seek a new inheritance.

2. **From Zorah, and from Eshtaol.** See on 13:2, 25. **And they said unto them, Go, search the land.** This statement with the foregoing is redundant and is a mark of the union of two narratives.

3. **They knew the voice.** They recognized **the young man the Levite** by his dialect or pronunciation as belonging to their section of the country, the southland of Judah and Dan. The multitude of questions here asked and the double reply in the following verse are further marks of the two sources (cf. v. 2).

5. he hath hired me, and I am become his priest. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go
6. shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go.
7. Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt in security, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; for there was none in the land, possessing <sup>1</sup> authority, <sup>2</sup> that might put *them* to shame in any

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *power of restraint*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *that might do any hurt*.

5. A temple such as Micah's would be a place not less of seeking divine responses than of worship. David made inquiries through an *ephod* (cf. 1 Sam. 23:9 ff.).

6. **Before the Lord (Jehovah) is your way wherein ye go.** You shall be prospered upon your journey.

7. **Laish.** Called *Laish* only in this chapter; in Josh. 19:47, *Leshem*. Mentioned very frequently in the Old Testament under its later name of Dan. From *Dan to Beersheba* is a standard expression to denote the extreme northern and southern limits of the land of Israel. The exact site of Dan is in doubt: whether it was the modern *Tell el-Kadi*, "hill of the judge" (Dan means judge) or modern *Banais*, an hour's distance from the former place. At the foot of the hill, *el-Kadi*, are two great springs which feed the main source of the Jordan. Baniyas is about thirty miles east of Tyre. The remainder of the verse is in disorder, corrupt, perhaps owing to the union of the two sources. We should read: *And (they) came to Laish. Now the city dwelt in security after the manner of the Zidonians, and they saw the people that were therein quiet and secure (and there was no want of anything in the earth) (cf. v. 10) possessing wealth, and they were far from the Zidonians and they had no dealing with any man. In security. I.e. without fear. They were a peaceful people quietly pursuing their own occupations. After the manner of the Zidonians.* The Zidonians, the inhabit-

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- thing, and they were far from the Zidonians, and had  
 8. no dealings with any man. And they came unto  
 their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their  
 9. brethren said unto them, What *say* ye? And they  
 said, Arise, and let us go up against them: for we  
 have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and  
 are ye still? be not slothful to go and to enter in to  
 10. possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto  
 a people secure, and the land is large: for God hath  
 given it into your hand; a place where there is no  
 want of any thing that is in the earth.
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ants of Zidon, on the coast north of Tyre, represent the Phœnicians, an unwarlike, commercial people. The men of Laish were of a similar peaceful disposition. **Far from the Zidonians.** Some thirty miles, but considering the intervening rugged and hilly country sufficiently far to be without protection from the Phœnicians. **And had no dealings with any man.** A surprising statement of a people resembling the commercial Phœnicians. A change of less than an entire Hebrew letter gives the reading, *and they had no dealings with the Arameans* (Syrians). They had no treaty relationship with their Aramean neighbors on the east which might have afforded them protection, hence their position was defenceless.

8. **What say ye?** Better, *What have ye seen?*

9. **Let us go up against them.** The words *against them* imply that Laish was the object of the expedition, which hardly accords with v. 2. Hence some read, *Let us go up unto Laish*, and also, *Be not slothful to go unto Laish.*

10. **For God hath given it into your hand.** This sentence is logically out of place, either by copyist's blunder or through the unskillful weaving of sources together. One may transpose it and the remainder of the verse with the preceding part of the verse. Then joining with v. 9b we have, *Be not slothful to go and to enter in to possess the land, 10b. for God hath given it into your hand, a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth. 10a. When ye go ye shall come unto a people secure, and the land is large.*

11. And there set forth from thence of the family of  
 the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six  
 12. hundred men girt with weapons of war. And they  
 went up, and encamped in Kiriath-jearim, in Judah:  
 wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan, unto  
 13. this day: behold, it is behind Kiriath-jearim. And  
 they passed thence unto the hill country of Ephraim,  
 14. and came unto the house of Micah. Then answered  
 the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish,  
 and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there  
 is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a  
 graven image, and a molten image? now therefore  
 15. consider what ye have to do. And they turned aside  
 thither, and came to the house of the young man the

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12. **Kiriath-jearim.** One of the cities of the Gibeonite confederacy (Josh. 9:17), later celebrated as the abode of the ark (1 Sam. 6:21; 7:1 ff.). Usually it is identified with the modern Kuriet el-'enab (Abu Ghosh) some nine or ten miles west of Jerusalem on the road to Joppa. The distance from the territory of Dan was a small day's journey. **Mahaneh-dan.** The name means "Camp of Dan." According to 13:25, a place of this name lay between Zorah and Eshtaol. This then must have been another place of the same name. **Unto this day.** When the story was written the place was thus called. **Behold, it is behind Kiriath-jearim.** This statement that it was behind (*i.e.* west of) Kiriath-jearim is an editorial note.

14. **An ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image.** The mention of these four idols here and in v. 17, and of three in vv. 18 and 20, is a mark either of the union of material from different sources or of scribal annotation based on 17:3-5 (which see).

15. This verse seems to hang in the air and from the mention of *the young man the Levite* is probably from E (cf. 17:7, 11b, 12b), while the verses immediately preceding and following may be assigned to J. It is not improbable that, according to E, while

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- Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and asked him  
 16. of his welfare. And the six hundred men girt with their  
 weapons of war, who were of the children of Dan,  
 17. stood by the entering of the gate. And the five men  
 that went to spy out the land went up, and came in  
 thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod,  
 and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the  
 priest stood by the entering of the gate with the six hun-  
 18. dred men girt with weapons of war. And when these  
 went into Micah's house, and fetched the graven  
 image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten
- 

the spies exchanged salutations with the Levite, the armed men seized the idols of Micah. The narrative of J, on the other hand, as given in vv. 16 ff., represents the armed men standing guard at the gate of the village or compound of Micah, while the five spies plunder the temple and persuade the priest, who is presumably at the temple, to go along with them. **Even unto the house of Micah.** These words are plainly a gloss.

17. **And the priest stood.** The mention of the priest here in connection with the armed men at the gate is most easily explained as a copyist's error. The sentence then would read, *And the six hundred men girt with weapons of war stood by the entering of the gate.* But even this may be a copyist's repetition of v. 16.

18. **And when these.** The word *when* is not expressed in the Hebrew text. *These* may either refer to spies, or the six hundred men. In the latter case 18a is the doublet of 17a and gives the story of E (see v. 15).

The seizure of Micah's idol by the Danites was not an ordinary robbery. It had a deep underlying religious motive. They were going to found a new home in territory outside Israel and hence, in their crude thought, not under the protection of Jehovah their God. To bring this land under the protection of Jehovah they needed some object in which he dwelt; and what better one could they have than the image through which success had been promised

19. image, the priest said unto them, What do ye? And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be priest unto the house of one man, or to be priest unto a tribe and
20. a family in Israel? And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.
21. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones
22. and the cattle and the goods before them. When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of
23. Dan. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, <sup>1</sup>that thou comest with such a
24. company? And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and are gone away, and what have I more? and how then say ye unto
25. me, What aileth thee? And the children of Dan

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *that thou art gathered together.*

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their spies on their journey (cf. v. 6)? The writer of the story expresses no abhorrence of their deed; on the other hand, in the vivid narration of vv. 19 ff. his sympathies seem to be with the spoilers.

19. **A father and a priest.** See on 17: 10.

20. **The graven image.** The Greek version adds, *and the molten image.*

21. **And put the little ones and the cattle and the goods before them.** The proper order of march for defence when the Danites expected pursuit and attack from Micah and his neighbors.

22-26. This narrative of the fruitless pursuit of Micah and his neighbors is exceeding graphic, especially so in the irony and ruth-

- said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest <sup>1</sup> angry fellows fall upon you, and thou lose thy
26. life, with the lives of thy household. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and
27. went back unto his house. And they took that which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword; and
28. they burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no dealings with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob. And they built
29. the city, and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name
- J 30. of the city was Laish at the first. And the children of Dan set up for themselves the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of <sup>2</sup> Moses, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *bitter of soul*.<sup>2</sup> Another reading is, *Manasseh*.

less defiance of the Danites (vv. 23, 25) and the pathetic though useless appeal of Micah (v. 24).

28. Cf. v. 7. **Beth-rehob**. This place has not been surely identified. All that we know about it is that it must have been in the vicinity of Dan. Rehob is mentioned in Num. 13 : 21 as the northern limit of the exploration of Moses' spies. Beth-rehob appears also as the name of an Aramean state (2 Sam. 10 : 6, 8).

30. **Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses**. This Gershom is mentioned as the son of Moses in Exod. 2 : 22; 18 : 3. The Hebrew text has a letter *n* written above the word Moses, and by inserting it we secure the marginal reading, *Manasseh*.



31. until the day of the captivity of the land. So they E  
set them up Micah's graven image which he made,  
all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

## II. THE SIN OF GIBEAH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES, CHAPTERS 19-21

19. And it came to pass in those days, when there was JE  
no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite so-

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The change was suggested by some late reader who took offence at the thought that an idolatrous shrine should have had a legitimate priesthood. Descent from the idolatrous king Manasseh seemed more appropriate. **Until the day of the captivity of the land** probably refers to the captivity of the people of northern Galilee by Tiglathpileser in 734 (cf. 2 Kgs. 15: 29).

31. **All the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.** That there was a "house of Jehovah" at Shiloh, we learn from 1 Sam. 1: 24; cf. 3: 15. It is clear that this was a temple and not a tent. When this temple was destroyed we do not know, but the fact of its destruction is mentioned in Jer. 7: 12, 14; 26: 9. **Shiloh**, the modern Seilūn, lay in the territory of Ephraim, twelve miles south of Shechem and about ten miles north-northeast of Bethel. For biblical description of site see 21: 19.

Chapters 19-21. This second narrative in the appendix relates the events of a civil war directed against the tribe of Benjamin. A certain Levite of the hill country of Ephraim goes to Bethlehem of Judah to bring back his concubine who has deserted him. On the return journey she is so maltreated by worthless men of Gibeah of Benjamin that she dies. Hereupon the Levite calls on all the tribes of Israel to avenge the outrage, and in the war which follows the whole tribe of Benjamin is destroyed except six hundred men. In order to provide these men with wives and thus preserve the tribe from extinction, the Israelites send a punitive expedition against the city of Jabesh-gilead, where they spare only four hundred virgins alive. These are given to the remnant of Benjamin. The remaining Benjamites are instructed to seize wives from among the daughters of Shiloh.

- journing on the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah. And his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there the space of four months. And her husband arose,

In its present form this narrative comes from the post-exilic period, as is shown by the language, the exaggerated numbers, the exceptional unity of the tribes, and the conception of Israel as a church. However, these indications of late date are confined chiefly to 20: 1-21: 14. The remaining portion (19; 21: 15 ff.) is of the same general character as other parts of Judges, and in the main seems to have been derived from J, although passages from an E narrative apparently have been incorporated.

The late section is of little or no historical value, but the older narrative doubtless points to an early event of importance in which the tribe of Benjamin suffered severely. This must have occurred much earlier than the position of the story in the Book of Judges would suggest, since the tribe of Benjamin had certainly recovered strength at the time of Saul.

19: 1-9. An unnamed Levite has a concubine from whom he becomes estranged and she returns to her father's house in Bethlehem. Thither he follows to bring her back, and is gladly received and entertained by the damsel's father, who persuades him to postpone his departure repeatedly.

1. **In those days, when there was no king in Israel.** See on 17: 6; 18: 1; 21: 25. Editorial, and connects this narrative with the preceding story. **Sojourning.** See on 17: 7. **On the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim.** Probably the northern side. This description bespeaks a Judean point of view. **A concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.** Thus this Levite is brought into connection with Bethlehem as is the Levite in the preceding narrative, cf. 17: 7.

2. The text is dubious. **Played the harlot against him** is not very agreeable to the context. The reading of the oldest Gr., *was angry with him*, is perhaps original. Certainly it suits the context far better.

and went after her, to speak <sup>1</sup> kindly unto her, to bring <sup>2</sup> her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw  
 4. him, he rejoiced to meet him. And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged  
 5. there. And it came to pass on the fourth day, that they arose early in the morning, and he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *to her heart*.

<sup>2</sup> Another reading is, *it, that is, her heart*.

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3. **To speak kindly unto her.** Cf. Gen. 34:3; Hos. 2:14. **To bring her again** is doubtless the original reading and is to be preferred to that of the margin. **She brought him into her father's house** should more likely read with the oldest Greek version, *he went to her father's house*.

4. A guest enjoyed the privilege of staying three days and three nights, and on the other hand his host might require him to stay that length of time. The latter right was not frequently exercised, but from the words **retained him** and in view of the host's subsequent actions, it seems to have been in this case.

5. **They arose early in the morning, and he rose up to depart.** The last clause may better be rendered, *he stood up to depart*. The subject of the first verb, **they**, probably refers to the guest and his host as in the preceding verse. A departing guest was not expected to partake of food before leaving in the morning, but simply to bid his host adieu. Courtesy required that the host also should rise early. We might expect a plural subject in the second clause, since there were several in the party about to set out. However, it was the place of the head of the little company to give the signal to depart by rising, hence the singular is really more suitable, cf. vv. 7, 8. **Morsel of bread** is becoming modesty on the part of the host. Compare Gen. 18:5-8, where

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6. afterward ye shall go your way. So they sat down, and did eat and drink, both of them together: and the damsel's father said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart
  7. be merry. And the man rose up to depart; but his father in law urged him, and he lodged there again.
  8. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart; and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee, and tarry ye until the day declineth; and they did eat, both of them. And when
  9. the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold,
- 

the *morsel* consists of cakes baked from three measures of fine meal, a tender calf, and butter and milk.

6. **Both of them together.** Neither the woman nor the guest's servant would share in such a feast. **Let thine heart be merry.** Cf. 16: 25.

7. **And the man rose up to depart.** As in v. 5, he gives the signal for departure by rising. **Urged him.** After remaining for the full time allotted to a guest by custom, the Levite could not well remain longer without this urgent appeal.

8. **Tarry ye until the day declineth.** *I.e.* until the afternoon. In the next verse this is urged as a reason for again postponing departure, a typical Oriental scene.

9. The invitation to stay overnight is repeated in nearly the same words, but in the first instance the verb is plural and in the second singular. The approach of sunset is also urged both times as the reason for tarrying. This may indicate a double source, or a corrupt text, since some Gr. Mss. omit one invitation. Very likely, however, we have simply a graphic description of an enthusiastic host pressing his cordial hospitality upon his guest. Compare the twofold invitation on the fourth

- the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early
10. on your way, that thou mayest go <sup>1</sup> home. But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus (the same is Jerusalem): and there were with him a couple of asses saddled; his concubine also was with him.
11. When they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebu-
12. sites, and lodge in it. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside into the city of a stranger,

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *to thy tents*.

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day, vv. 6, 7. Such a scene is not merely Oriental but intensely human. It is not necessary to suppose that the afternoon was far advanced. Under the circumstances the host exaggerates. As a matter of fact, the Levite travelled eight or ten miles before sunset.

10-21. The Levite finally departs in the afternoon of the fifth day, accompanied by his concubine and his servant. Sunset overtakes the little party near Gibeah of Benjamin, whither they turn aside for the night. After waiting in the street for some time, an old man, a sojourner in the city, perceives the travellers and takes them into his house as his guests.

10. **Jebus** appears as the name of Jerusalem also in 1 Chron. 11:4, 5; cf. Josh. 15:8; 18:16, 28. It was once commonly supposed that Jebus was the ancient name of the town, but the city is known as *Urusalim* in the Armana letters dating from 1400 B.C. Hence it is altogether likely that the name Jebus was derived from Jebusites, the name of the people from whom David took the city of Jerusalem. Instead of the final **with him** some Gr. Mss. read *and his servant*.

12. The Levite refused to trust himself to the hospitality of strangers, and preferred to press onward to a town inhabited by

- <sup>1</sup> that is not of the children of Israel; but we will pass  
 13. over to Gibeah. And he said unto his servant, Come  
 and let us draw near to one of these places; and we  
 14. will lodge in Gibeah, or in Ramah. So they passed  
 on and went their way; and the sun went down upon  
 them near to Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin.  
 15. And they turned aside thither, to go in to lodge in  
 Gibeah: and he went in, and sat him down in the  
 street of the city: for there was no man that took  
 16. them into his house to lodge. And, behold, there  
 came an old man from his work out of the field  
 at even; now the man was of the hill country of

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *where there are none of the children of Israel.*

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brother Israelites. No doubt the conversation near Jerusalem was introduced to emphasize the heinousness of the crime of the Gibeathites. **Gibeah** is probably the same as the town known as Gibeah of Saul, and is distinct from Geba, with which it has frequently been confused. The name means simply "hill." Its identification with the modern Tell el-Ful, about four miles north of Jerusalem, satisfies the conditions of our narrative.

13. **Ramah.** The modern er-Ram, about two miles beyond Gibeah.

15. **For there was no man that took them into his house to lodge.** Inns were not known, hence the traveller was dependent upon the hospitality of the inhabitants of the towns where he tarried. Custom demanded that the guest should spare no pains to reach his stopping place before sunset, that he might give his host sufficient time to prepare a proper meal. This the Levite had failed to do. A proverb runs, "He who arrives after sundown goes supperless to bed."

16. Finally an old man comes in from his work in the field. The narrative describes him as a sojourner in Gibeah, that is, a stranger who had put himself under the protection of the town or tribe. Having no kinsmen in the city to fight for him, he was

17. Ephraim, and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the wayfaring man in the street of the city; and the old man said, Whither goest thou?
18. and whence comest thou? And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah unto the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim; from thence am I, and I went to Beth-lehem-judah: <sup>1</sup> and I am *now* going to the house of the LORD; and there
19. is no man that taketh me into his house. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants:
20. there is no want of any thing. And the old man said, Peace be unto thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.
21. So he brought him into his house, and gave the asses

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<sup>1</sup> The Sept. has, *and I am going to my house.*

naturally at the mercy of the baser element of the population. Cf. Gen. 19: 1 ff.

17. The old man sees the traveller and his party waiting in the public square, and puts to him the questions still asked of the stranger in Palestine, **Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?** Cf. 17: 9; Gen. 16: 8; Zech. 2: 2.

18. **I am now going to the house of the Lord (Jehovah).** Not suitable to the context. Neither Bethel (cf. 20: 18, 26) nor Shiloh (cf. 1 Sam. 1: 7; 3: 3) was the destination of the Levite, but some unnamed place on the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim. The Greek version has *and I am going to my home*, which is probably original.

19-20. They do not ask for full hospitality, since they are adequately provided with food; but the old man insists that all the entertainment shall be at his expense.

- fodder: and they washed their feet, and did eat and
22. drink. As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain <sup>1</sup> sons of <sup>2</sup> Belial, beset the house round about, beating at the door; and they spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine
23. house, that we may know him. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine
- R 24. house, do not this folly. Behold, here is my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *base fellows*.

<sup>2</sup> That is, *worthlessness*.

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22-28. As the old man and his guest give themselves up to the pleasure of the evening, they are rudely interrupted by rough men of the city, who demand that the guest be given over to their evil desires. The host tries to shelter the Levite, who, to save himself, finally surrenders his concubine to their wish. At daybreak he finds her dead at the door. Placing her body upon an ass, he departs for his place.

22. **Sons of Belial.** The etymology and exact meaning of the word Belial is dubious. The phrase has been rendered, *sons of worthlessness*. From the context here and elsewhere it is clearly a strongly opprobrious epithet for which the marginal *base fellows* seems altogether too mild. *Vile scoundrels* expresses more nearly the character of these men. The whole incident has a close parallel in Gen. 19: 4 ff.

23. **Seeing that this man is come into mine house.** A guest was entitled to the protection of his host during the period of his stay and for three days after his departure.

24. This verse is generally regarded as a late gloss suggested by Gen. 19: 8 and introduced to bring this story into closer



25. any such folly. But the men would not hearken to JE him: so the man laid hold on his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when
26. the day began to spring, they let her go. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, till it
27. was light. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, with her hands
28. upon the threshold. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going; but none answered: then he took her up upon the ass; and the man rose up, and gat him
29. unto his place. And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine,

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conformity with the similar narrative of Genesis. The resemblances are even verbal and too close to be merely accidental. No reference is made to this offer in the following verses, and v. 25 joins v. 23 naturally.

25. The act of the Levite in deliberately giving up the woman to the vile lust of the mob is both cowardly and contemptible in our eyes, yet the writer of the narrative finds no cause for condemning his action.

26-27. This pathetic scene is graphically portrayed. At the first peep of dawn the woman is deserted, and amidst the dark shadows of the gathering light she gropes her painful way to the door of the house where her lord apparently spent a peaceful night. There in the full daylight he finds her lying prostrate with her outstretched hands clutching the threshold.

28. At first the Levite thought the woman asleep. When he found her dead, he placed her body upon his ass and departed.

29. **And divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces.** Apparently the twelve pieces are not intended to suggest the twelve

and divided her, <sup>1</sup> limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and  
 30. sent her throughout all the borders of Israel. And  
 it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such  
 deed done nor seen from the day that the children of  
 Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day:  
 consider of it, take counsel, and speak.

R<sup>P</sup> 20. Then all the children of Israel went out, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *according to her bones.*

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tribes, for in that case we should expect the narrative to proceed "a piece for each tribe of Israel." The limbs seem to have been divided according to the twelve joints, the head and trunk not being sent abroad. **And sent her throughout all the borders of Israel.** In the same fashion Saul cut a yoke of oxen into pieces in Gibeah and sent them *throughout all the borders of Israel* as a call to war, with the added threat that so it should be done to the oxen of every man who failed to obey the summons (1 Sam. 11:7). Here no stated verbal threat accompanied the gruesome spectacles, but the fate of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead who ignored the appeal (21:10 f.) suggests that this procedure contained a well-understood, hidden threat.

30. The Hebrew text for this verse does not seem to be intact. The commands at the end would come more naturally from the Levite or his messengers. The oldest Greek version reads, *And he charged the men whom he sent out, saying, Thus shall ye say to all the men of Israel, Did ever a thing like this happen, etc.*, which is very likely original.

Chapter 20. The story of the civil war directed against Benjamin is of late origin and of the same general character as P and Chronicles, but contains an early element which was the original continuation of chap. 19. Either a late author rewrote the narrative, taking the older account as a base, and then a later redactor united the two; or the late writer, with a priestly interest, expanded and altered the early story, to bring it into harmony with his point of view, according to the method with which the Chronicler has made us so familiar.

1-11. In response to the call of the Levite, all the people gather

congregation was assembled as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD  
 2. at Mizpah. And the <sup>1</sup> chiefs of all the people, <sup>2</sup> even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thou-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *corners*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *even all*.

together at Mizpah to deliberate concerning the evil done at Gibeah. The Levite, having been called upon, gives a recital of the affair and of his subsequent action in calling the people together. The assembly thereupon resolves to punish the perpetrators of the crime.

1. **And the congregation was assembled as one man.** This points clearly to a post-exilic author. The conception of the people as a congregation or church who could be called upon to act *as one man* stands out in striking contrast to the lack of unity and feeling of national or religious solidarity which is plainly evident in all the old stories of the judges. **From Dan even to Beersheba** describes the territory which Israel occupied, by its northern and southern limits, cf. 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kgs. 4:25. The Chronicler reverses the order, *i.e. from Beersheba to Dan*, cf. 1 Chron. 21:2; 2 Chron. 30:5. **Dan.** See on 18:7. **Beersheba.** The modern Bir es-Sebâ', lies twenty-eight miles southwest of Hebron, and was an ancient sanctuary. **The land of Gilead** is used here to include all the Israelites east of the Jordan. **Mizpah** was an ancient holy place (cf. 1 Sam. 7:5 ff.; 10:17 ff.), hence the descriptive words **unto the Lord**. It is generally identified with the modern Nebi Samwil, about three miles west of Gibeah. In the days of Asa it marked the northern limits of the Judean Kingdom (1 Kgs. 15:22).

2. **The chiefs.** Literally *corners*. The metaphor compares the leaders of the people to the strong corner towers of a city wall. The same figure appears in 1 Sam. 14:38; Isa. 19:13. **Even of all the tribes of Israel.** The Hebrew has simply *all the tribes of Israel*, before which an *and* must be inserted if the phrase is not a gloss. **The assembly of the people of God** is again a

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- J 3. sand footmen that drew sword. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpah.) And the children of Israel said, Tell us, how was this wickedness brought to pass?
4. And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was murdered, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to
5. lodge. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night; me they thought to have slain, and my concubine they
6. forced, and she is dead. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have
7. committed lewdness and folly in Israel. Behold, ye children of Israel, all of you, give here your advice
8. and counsel. And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither
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late expression; see v. 1. **Four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.** The number is greatly exaggerated according to the custom of late writers. In the time of Deborah only forty thousand were mustered (5:8).

3. The Benjamites could hardly avoid hearing of the assembly at Mizpah, which lay in the midst of their land. The Levite is called upon first to tell his story.

4. **The husband.** Literally *the man*, which may properly be rendered *husband*, since concubinage was a form of marriage.

5. **The men of Gibeah.** In the Hebrew the word for *men* is different from that of 19:22, and may be translated *lords*, *i.e.* the Levite accused the free citizens of Gibeah of having wrought this outrage, and not an irresponsible ruffian element. Hence it was necessary to appeal to the tribe to secure adequate punishment of the crime.

8. **We will not any of us go to his tent is an exact parallel to neither will we any of us turn unto his house.** On tent for

9. will we any of us turn unto his house. But now this R<sup>P</sup>  
 is the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up*  
 10. against it by lot; and we will take ten men of an  
 hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an  
 hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten  
 thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they  
 may do, when they come to <sup>1</sup>Gibeah of Benjamin,  
 according to all the folly that they have wrought in  
 11. Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against  
 the city, knit together as one man.  
 12. And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the  
<sup>2</sup>tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that  
 13. is come to pass among you? Now therefore deliver

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Geba*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *tribes*. See Num. 4: 18; 1 Sam. 9: 21.

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house cf. 19: 9 (also margin). The double expression has been taken as an indication of a twofold source.

9-10. Instead of returning home they determined to go up against Gibeah. The verb is lacking in the last part of v. 9 and has been supplied from the Greek version, *we will go up*, but this looks like an easy conjecture. Other versions fill in the gap otherwise. Since the phrase *by lot* is almost required in v. 10, possibly we have an early transposition and should read, *Now we will take by lot ten men*, etc. In the last part of v. 10 the Hebrew text is obscure. It is certainly the sense of the passage that the main body of the people, after omitting the foragers, shall punish the Gibeathites.

12-16. The Israelites at first try to avoid war by opening negotiations with the tribe of Benjamin for the surrender of the vile scoundrels who had perpetrated the outrage. The Benjamites refuse to accede to this demand and muster their forces for battle.

12. **Tribe of Benjamin.** Hebrew has *tribes*, as also in 1 Sam. 9: 21. If not a blunder, subdivisions of the tribe are intended; cf. Num. 4: 18.

13. The Israelites demanded that the men of Benjamin seek

up the men, the <sup>1</sup> sons of <sup>2</sup> Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But <sup>3</sup> Benjamin would not hearken to the  
 J 14. voice of their brethren the children of Israel. And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against  
 RP 15. the children of Israel. And the children of Benjamin were numbered on that day out of the cities twenty and <sup>4</sup> six thousand men that drew sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven  
 16. hundred chosen men. Among all this people there

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *base fellows*.    <sup>2</sup> That is, *worthlessness*.    <sup>3</sup> Another reading is, *the children of Benjamin*.    <sup>4</sup> According to some ancient authorities, *five*.

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out the criminals and deliver them up to be put to death. It was the notion of the ancient Hebrews that the guilt of a criminal clung to the entire community if they allowed him to go unpunished. If a tribe refused to punish a guilty member, the tribe became an accessory to the act. So also the whole people were in danger of suffering the consequences of guilt if they failed to extirpate it from their midst, hence the words, **put away evil from Israel**. The latter phrase occurs a number of times in Deuteronomy, and nowhere else. **Sons of Belial**. See on 19: 22.

14. Anticipating an attack upon Gibeah, against which alone the grievance held, the Benjamites made it the place of assemblage.

15. The children of Benjamin mustered twenty-six thousand fighting men besides seven hundred warriors from the city of Gibeah. According to v. 35 twenty-five thousand one hundred men of Benjamin were slain, and after adding to this number the six hundred who escaped, we have a discrepancy of one thousand. According to the figures in vv. 44-47, the discrepancy is eleven hundred. Some commentators have supposed this to represent the unrecorded slain in the first two days' fighting. The oldest Greek version has twenty-five thousand here in v. 15, which then agrees with v. 35, but there still remains a discrepancy of one hundred when compared with vv. 44-47.

were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss.

17. And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword:

16. The repetition of the words **seven hundred chosen men** is suspicious and they are wanting in the Greek version, which also joins the last word of v. 15, **chosen**, to this verse. On the basis of Greek the verse may be restored as follows: *Chosen from all this people were lefthanded*, etc. **Every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss.** This marvelous accuracy is a part of the natural exaggeration which usually characterizes this school of late writers.

17-28. Over against the twenty-six thousand seven hundred Benjamites, the Israelites muster four hundred thousand warriors. After asking counsel of God at Bethel, they go out to battle against Benjamin. The latter sally forth from Gibeah and in the attack slay twenty-two thousand Israelites. On the second day the defeated army of Israel offers battle in the same place, apparently after having again sought counsel of the Lord at Bethel. In the second day's battle Israel is again defeated with the loss of eighteen thousand slain. The discouraged Israelites then retire to Bethel, where they weep before the Lord, and after having offered sacrifice, inquire of the oracle whether they shall continue the war against Benjamin or cease. The oracle bids them continue and promises success on the following day.

This narrative has all the characteristics of the late so-called Midrashic literature. Human power avails little or nothing. God directs the war through the oracle. Greater numbers are useless without his favor. For some unstated reason the Lord was unfavorable to the Israelites on the first two days, hence their vast army became an easy victim to the onslaughts of the children of Benjamin, who apparently escaped unscathed after slaying on each day a number almost equal to their total fighting strength.

17. **Beside Benjamin.** The writer thinks of Israel as necessarily including all the tribes, hence in the interest of exactness adds the observation that here Benjamin is not included. On the number see v. 2.

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18. all these were men of war. And the children of Israel arose, and went up to Beth-el, and asked counsel of God; and they said, Who shall go up for us first to battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD
- J 19. said, Judah *shall go up* first. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.
- R<sup>P</sup> 20. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel set the battle in
21. array against them at Gibeah. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites on that day
22. twenty and two thousand men. And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, and set the battle again in array in the place where they set
23. themselves in array the first day. (And the children
- 

18. **Beth-el.** See on 1 : 22. The vast army of the Israelites is represented as first marching three or four miles northward to Bethel to inquire of the oracle which tribe should open the attack, the answer being, Judah. This passage is evidently borrowed from 1 : 1 f. and probably by the author of our narrative rather than a later interpolator. In the following verses Judah does not figure again by name, but this is not inconsistent if we think of Judah as only leading the attack in which all took part (cf. 1 Chron. 11 : 6). The outraged and murdered concubine came from Bethlehem of Judah, hence the designation of that tribe to strike the first blow toward avenging the deed in place.

19-20. These verses constitute a doublet. V. 19 is usually regarded as a remnant of the old narrative, and v. 20 as coming from the late author who put the story into its present form.

22. After the defeat of the first day, the Israelites set themselves in battle array against Benjamin in the same place.

23. Either this verse originally stood before v. 22, and was accidentally transposed, or it is a late interpolation derived from vv. 26-28. The word *Beth-el* has probably fallen from the



of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even ; and they asked of the LORD, saying, Shall I again draw nigh to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)

24. And the children of Israel came near against the  
25. children of Benjamin the second day. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew  
26. the sword. Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto Beth-el, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even; and they offered burnt offerings and peace  
27. offerings before the LORD. And the children of Israel asked of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God  
28. was there in those days, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those

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text (cf. vv. 18, 26), hence read **the children of Israel went up to Beth-el.**

26. The defeated people sought to propitiate the evident anger of Jehovah by weeping (cf. Deut. 1:45; Ezra 10:1; Joel 2:17), and fasting (cf. 1 Sam. 7:6; Joel 1:14; 2:15), and by bringing burnt offerings and peace offerings. The **burnt offerings** were wholly burned upon the altar. Only the fat of the **peace offerings** was burned, after which the priest took his portion, and the remainder was eaten in a common meal by the worshippers.

27-28. The parenthesis explaining that **the ark of the covenant** was in Bethel in those days is a late insertion to explain, no doubt, why these religious rites did not take place at Shiloh, where the ark was supposed to have remained from the days of Joshua (Josh. 18:1, 10) to the time of Eli (1 Sam. 4:3). The ark is not mentioned elsewhere in the Book of Judges. **Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron.** The glossator with a priestly interest further legalizes the sacrifice at Bethel by introducing

- days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to-morrow I will
- J 29. deliver him into thine hand. And Israel set liers in wait against Gibeah round about.
- R<sup>P</sup> 30. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and set themselves

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a priest of the family of Aaron. The mention of Phinehas, the third in line, dates the story in the first generation of the Hebrews in Western Palestine. This date is probably no more than a guess, though it is likely that the incident occurred early in the period of the judges.

29-48. The account of the battle on the third day is repetitious and confused. The first onslaught of the Benjamites, narrated in vv. 31, 32a, is repeated in briefer form in v. 39. V. 35 is a closing summary of the battle, giving the number of Benjamites who fell, but in v. 36 we are again at the beginning of the struggle and the number of dead is summoned up a second time in vv. 44-46. It is altogether probable that we have here a portion of the old J narrative to which may be ascribed, but with a considerable degree of uncertainty, vv. 29, 33a, 34, 36b, 37a, 38-42a, 44a, 47. The remaining portions are late additions. No analysis of the passage can be very satisfactory since we undoubtedly have to deal with a very corrupt Hebrew text.

The stratagem of the battle resembles closely that employed by Joshua at the capture of Ai (Josh. 8: 1 ff.), and seems to have proceeded something on this wise. The Israelites laid an ambush against the town of Gibeah, and the main army drew up for battle at Baal-tamar. While the battle was being hotly waged, the liers in wait, composed of ten thousand chosen men, pressed nearer to the city. In the meantime the main body fell back, feigning flight, to draw the Benjamites away from Gibeah, whereupon the liers in wait made a sudden attack. It had been agreed that these warriors should signal their success by causing a great cloud of smoke to rise. The Benjamites pursued the forces of Israel, believing themselves to be victorious as on the previous days. At the appearance of the signal the Israelites turned on their enemies,

31. in array against Gibeah, as at other times. And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite and kill of the people, as at other times, in the high ways, of which one goeth up to Beth-el, and the other to Gibeah, in the field, about thirty men
32. of Israel. And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them away
33. from the city unto the high ways. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and set themselves in array at Baal-tamar; and the liers in wait of Israel brake forth out of their place, even out of <sup>1</sup>Maareh-

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *the meadow of Geba* (or *Gibeah*. See v. 10).

who soon perceived that they had been trapped, and they fled toward the wilderness with a loss of eighteen thousand men. Only six hundred escaped.

31. **And were drawn away from the city.** More exactly *they were drawn*, etc., without the introductory *and*. This clause is parenthetical in the Hebrew, and is probably a gloss borrowed from Josh. 8 : 16. **In the high ways, of which one goeth up to Beth-el, and the other to Gibeah.** An attack on the road to Bethel is natural since the army of Israel was returning from that place, but *to Gibeah* is unintelligible, since the thought is certainly of a road leading *from* Gibeah. Hence we should probably read *Gibeon*, which requires the change of only one letter in the Hebrew. About a mile to the north of Gibeah the main road divides, the trunk running north to Bethel and a branch running northwest to Gibeon. The fighting must have occurred somewhere near this point. *Gibeon* is identified with the modern el Jib.

33. **Baal-tamar**, meaning "Baal of the palm tree," is not mentioned elsewhere; neither has the place been identified. Some writers would connect it with Deborah's palm (cf. 4 : 5), but against this is the location of the latter "between Ramah and

- J 34. geba. And there came over against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was <sup>1</sup> close upon
- R<sup>P</sup> 35. them. And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of Benjamin that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword.
36. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten:
- J for the men of Israel gave place to Benjamin, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they
37. had set against Gibeah. And the liers in wait hasted,
- R and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *touching*.

Bethel." **Maareh-geba** is merely a transliteration of the Hebrew. Doubtless we should correct and read with the ancient versions, *west of Gibeah*. West of *Geba* is too far from the city of Gibeah for an ambush.

34. The ten thousand did not at this time attack Gibeah, but merely took advantage of the distraction of their enemies to gain a nearer position from which they could quickly rush into the city. The Benjamites in the heat of the struggle did not perceive their danger.

35. **The Lord smote Benjamin.** The Israelites did not win either because of their vastly superior forces, nor through their stratagem, but because Jehovah was favorable to their cause. On the numbers, see v. 15. This verse breaks into the narrative prematurely and is doubtless a late interpolation.

36. **So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten.** This clause is late and belongs with the previous verse. The remainder of the verse continues the old account of the battle. The Israelites fall back to draw their enemies away from Gibeah and thus give the liers in wait their opportunity.

37. The latter half of this verse is probably a gloss, since it merely repeats what is said in the first half. This is further supported by the grammatical construction.

- themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge  
 38. of the sword. Now the appointed sign between the J  
 men of Israel and the liers in wait was, that they should  
 make a great cloud of smoke rise up out of the city.  
 39. <sup>1</sup>And the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Ben-  
 jamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel  
 about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are  
 40. smitten down before us, as in the first battle. But  
 when the cloud began to arise up out of the city in a  
 pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them,  
 and, behold, the whole of the city went up *in smoke*  
 41. to heaven. And the men of Israel turned, and the  
 men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil  
 42. was come upon them. Therefore they turned their  
 backs before the men of Israel unto the way of the

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *And the men . . . battle: (now Benjamin . . . heaven:) and the men &c.*

39. **And the men of Israel turned in the battle.** This statement is out of place here. The cloud of smoke has not yet risen, and the actual turning about is described in its proper place (v. 41). We should join the clause with the previous verse and render, *and that the men of Israel should turn about in the battle.* **About thirty persons** is a ridiculously small number to flush the Benjamites with confidence of easy victory, in a war where thousands have already been slain (cf. vv. 21, 25). However the very smallness of the number suggests that it comes down from the original account, in which, no doubt, all the numbers were more credible.

40. The liers in wait set fire to the city, and when the smoke began to arise, the Benjamites turned and at once realized their danger; cf. Josh. 8: 20. **The whole.** The same Hebrew word is used of the whole burnt offering; cf. Deut. 13: 16 margin.

41. At the signal of the burning city the Israelites turned on their foes. **Were amazed.** ARV. has *were dismayed.* **Evil was come upon them.** Cf. v. 34.

42. **And they which came out of the cities destroyed them in**

- R<sup>P</sup> wilderness; but the battle followed hard after them; and <sup>1</sup>they which came out of the cities destroyed them  
 43. in the midst thereof. They inclosed the Benjamites round about, *and* chased them, *and* <sup>2</sup>trode them down <sup>3</sup>at *their* resting place, as far as over against Gibeah  
 J 44. toward the sunrising. And there fell of Benjamin  
 R<sup>P</sup> eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valour.  
 45. And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the high ways five thousand men; and followed hard after

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<sup>1</sup>Or, *them which came . . . they destroyed.* <sup>2</sup>Or, *overtook them.* <sup>3</sup>Or, *at Menuhah.*

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the midst thereof. This is unsuitable to the context, since the Benjamites were fleeing through their own territory. The marginal reading is merely an attempt to smooth out the difficulty. Doubtless the text is corrupt, and it probably read originally, as the Latin version suggests, *and those from the city (Gibeah) were slaughtering him (Benjamin) in their midst, i.e. the liers in wait, having accomplished the destruction of the city, came out and joined the attack, thus enclosing the fleeing Benjamites.*

43. The Hebrew text for this verse is very corrupt. Instead of **they inclosed the Benjamites round about** we should read with the oldest Greek version *they cut Benjamin to pieces*. The second verb occurs in this form nowhere else in the Old Testament or later Hebrew. It may be due to dittography of the following verb, which it closely resembles in the Hebrew. **Trode them down at their resting place** is obscure and is not much improved by the marginal reading, *at Menuhah*. Possibly the latter part should be rendered after the Greek version, *from Nohah* (cf. 1 Chron. 8: 2). Finally **Gibeah** is hardly correct, since it is evident that the Benjamites were pursued for some distance. *Geba* has been suggested since it is likely that the pursuit was in that direction. The verse may be rendered tentatively as follows: *They cut Benjamin to pieces and trode them down from Nohah as far as over against Geba on the east.*

45. **Rimmon**. The modern Rammōn, about three miles east

- them unto Gidom, and smote of them two thousand  
 46. men. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin  
 were twenty and five thousand men that drew the  
 47. sword; all these *were* men of valour. But six hundred J  
 men turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the  
 rock of Rimmon, and abode in the rock of Rimmon  
 48. four months. And the men of Israel turned again R<sup>P</sup>  
 upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with  
 the edge of the sword, both <sup>1</sup> the entire city, and the  
 cattle, and all that they found: moreover all the cities  
 which they found they set on fire.
21. Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, J

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<sup>1</sup> Or, as otherwise read, *the inhabited city*. See Deut. 2 : 34.

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of Bethel, lying on a high, rocky hill. Nothing further is known of Gidom.

46. For comment on the numbers see v. 15.

48. **The entire city.** The marginal reading, *the inhabited city*, lit. *the city of men*, is better. They destroy everything as in the case of a city devoted to destruction; cf. Deut. 13 : 12 ff.

Chapter 21 contains two separate accounts of how wives were secured for the Benjamite survivors. These two were skilfully harmonized by the statement that the second plan was adopted to supplement the first (v. 16a). The first account (vv. 1-14) is of late origin, and the writer probably had the second before him (cf. the last clause in v. 14). The second is in the main from the early source (J) and knew nothing of how four hundred Benjamites had already been provided with wives (cf. vv. 15, 17).

1-14. When the men of Israel realize the extent of the destruction wrought by the war, they bewail the fact that a tribe will now be lacking in Israel. Of their late enemies only six hundred men remain, and they have sworn not to give their daughters to men to wife. Since the oath cannot be recalled, they hit upon the plan of punishing the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead for not joining in the war, and at the same time securing wives for the men of

- There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. And the people came to Beth-el, and sat there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore. And they said, O LORD, the God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel? And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up in the assembly unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up unto the LORD to Mizpah, saying, He shall surely be put to death. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe

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Benjamin. Hence twelve thousand warriors are sent against Jabesh, and they utterly destroy all the inhabitants except four hundred virgins, who are given to the survivors of Benjamin.

1. **The men of Israel had sworn.** The oath was sacred and could not be recalled, though there seems to have been no scruples about circumventing it. This verse probably belongs to the old story.

2. The people came to Bethel as they had done previously to consult the oracle. There they sat until evening, weeping before God; cf. 20 : 23, 26.

4. **Built there an altar** seems strange, since Bethel was an ancient holy place, and they had previously sacrificed there (20 : 26). **Burnt offerings and peace offerings.** See on 20 : 26.

5. **For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up.** This is not an exact rendering of the Hebrew, which should be translated, *For the great curse was (or had been pronounced) upon every one who did not go up.*

6. This verse is parallel to and dependent upon v. 15 of the



7. cut off from Israel this day. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters
8. to wives? And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up unto the LORD to Mizpah? And, behold, there came none to the camp
9. from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. For when the people were numbered, behold, there were none of the
10. inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the
11. sword, with the women and the little ones. And this is the thing that ye shall do; ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lien by man.
12. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had not known man by lying with him: and they brought

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older narrative. **Their brother.** Cf. 20: 23, 28. **There is one tribe cut off.** As a branch from a tree; cf. Isa. 10: 33.

7. **For them that remain.** *I.e.* the six hundred at the rock of Rimmon, 20: 47.

8. **Jabesh-gilead** is generally identified, following Robinson, with ed-Deir in the Wady Yabis, which preserves the ancient name, though its site remains a matter of dispute. The town is mentioned several times in the Old Testament in connection with Saul (1 Sam. 11; 31: 11-13; 2 Sam. 2: 4 f.; 21: 12 f.).

10. **Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead.** It is an interesting reversal of history that later Saul of Gibeah (probably the same town mentioned in this narrative) gathered the forces of all Israel together by a similar device, and led them forth to the rescue of the inhabitants of this same Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. 11).

11. Compare the command in Num. 31: 17, 18.

12. **Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.** It is difficult

them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

13. And the whole congregation sent and spake to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock of Rimmon,  
 14. and proclaimed peace unto them. And Benjamin returned at that time; and they gave them the women which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-  
 J 15. gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

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to see why the writer should have thought it necessary to define the situation of this well-known sanctuary. Commentators ascribe various reasons: that it is merely the style of the late writer; that he wrote for foreign readers; that he himself lived outside of Palestine. We have also an unexpected shifting of the camp from Bethel to Shiloh. This change may have come through the influence of the following narrative, but it is certain that the author of that older story did not think of the army as encamped at Shiloh. On name see 18:31.

14. **And yet so they sufficed them not.** Two hundred still lack wives. This statement makes room for the introduction of the older account.

15-25. In order to provide wives for the remaining Benjamites and yet not violate their oath, the Israelites advise them to lie in wait in the vineyards near Shiloh and seize and carry off wives from the daughters of the town when they come out to dance at the sacred feast. They promise to pacify the fathers and brothers of the maidens if they should be inclined to avenge the act. The Benjamites follow this advice and seize each a wife and carry them off to their own territory, where they rebuild their towns. The army of the Israelites thereupon disbands and each man returns to his home.

15. This verse marks the beginning of the older story. **Made a breach.** The figure is that of an opening made in the wall of a city by a hostile attack, hence the thought is somewhat different from that in the parallel verse 6. There the author expresses

16. Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women  
 17. are destroyed out of Benjamin? And they said, There must be an inheritance for them that are es-  
 18. caped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not blotted out  
 19. from Israel. Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel had sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. And they said, Behold, there is <sup>1</sup>a feast of the LORD from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north of Beth-el, on the east side of the high way that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *the feast*.

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the sorrow of the people that one of the sacred tribes should be lacking. Here the writer is thinking of the weakening of the national defences. Indeed, it was into just this "breach" that the Philistines made their first attack upon the hill country in the time of Saul (1 Sam. 13, 14).

16. **Elders of the congregation.** A mark of the late writer; see on 20: 1. The first half of this verse is a harmonizing gloss introduced to connect the story of the rape of the daughters of Shiloh with the preceding account of the capture of the maidens of Jabesh-gilead. **How shall we do for the wives for them that remain?** *I.e.* for the two hundred not provided with wives from Jabesh-gilead.

17. **There must be an inheritance for them that are escaped of Benjamin.** Literally the Hebrew has merely, *an inheritance of the escaped of Benjamin*, which means nothing. Several emendations have been suggested. Among these *We will leave a remnant of Benjamin* gives sense, but the rendering *How shall a remnant be saved of Benjamin?* suits the context better.

19. **A feast of the Lord** (Jehovah), with its dances among the vineyards, must have been a local vintage festival (cf. 9: 27). The labored and detailed description of the location of Shiloh

20. Lebonah. And they commanded the children of  
 J Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards ;  
 21. and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come  
 out to dance in the dances, then come ye out of the  
 vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the  
 daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.  
 22. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren  
 come to <sup>1</sup>complain unto us, that we will say unto them,  
 R<sup>P</sup> Grant them <sup>2</sup>graciously unto us: because we took not  
 J for each man *of them* his wife in battle: neither did  
 ye give them unto them; else would ye now be guilty.  
 23. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them  
 wives, according to their number, of them that danced,  
 whom they carried off: and they went and returned  
 unto their inheritance, and built the cities, and dwelt

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<sup>1</sup> Or, *strive with us.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *as a gift.*

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(see on 18: 31) is a late gloss from the period when Shiloh had lost its early importance and was little known. **Beth-el.** See on 1: 22. **Shechem.** See on 9: 1. **Lebonah.** The modern el-Lubban, three miles northwest of Shiloh.

20. **Go and lie in wait**, etc., originally continued v. 19a.

21. **To dance.** Dancing and feasting were important features of the early religious festivals.

22. **Grant them graciously unto us** should probably be corrected to read either, *Grant them graciously unto them*, i.e. grant the maidens to their captors, or, with some Gr. Mss., *Be gracious unto them*. **Because we took not**, etc. Some Gr. Mss. have *because they did not get*, etc. **In battle.** I.e. in the war waged against Jabesh-gilead to secure wives for them. **Neither did ye give them unto them; else would ye now be guilty.** An attempt to render a very dubious Hebrew text. A slight emendation yields, *for if you had given them to them, you would now be guilty*. The sense is clear in any case. If the Shilonites had given their daugh-

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24. in them. And the children of Israel departed thence R<sup>F</sup>  
at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family,  
and they went out from thence every man to his  
25. inheritance. In those days there was no king in  
Israel: every man did that which was right in his  
own eyes.
- 

ters in marriage to the Benjamites, they would have been guilty of breaking their vow.

24. After the affair was completely settled, the army of Israel disbanded and each man departed for his home.

25. A final summary for the whole period. Since there was no king in Israel every man did what was pleasing or right in his own sight; cf. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1.



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