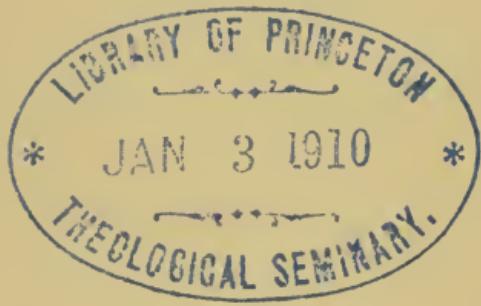


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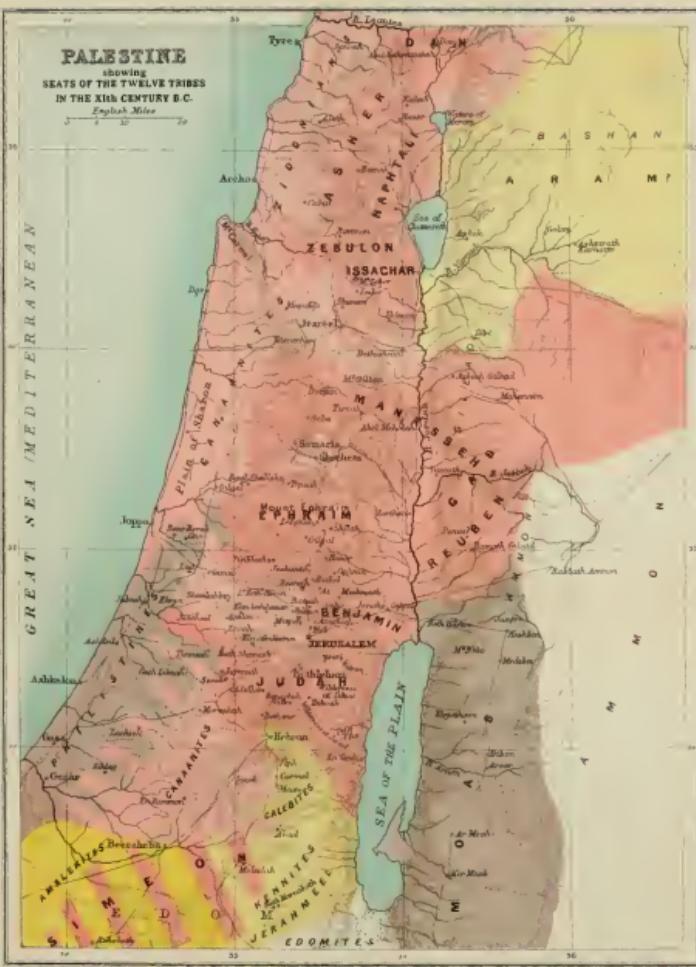
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# The New-Century Bible

GENERAL EDITOR:

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## Judges and Ruth

INTRODUCTION; REVISED VERSION WITH  
NOTES, GIVING AN ANALYSIS SHOWING  
FROM WHICH OF THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS  
EACH PORTION OF THE TEXT  
IS TAKEN; INDEX AND MAP

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## PREFATORY NOTE

THE object of this commentary is not to evolve historical or religious teaching from the books treated. That should be the final object of every thoughtful reader. The special work of the editor is to show what material is available for such a purpose, how it arose and how it has fared in the course of its transmission. For those who would study these things more in detail, this little book may serve as an introduction to the fuller works cited under *Literature*.

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# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

## INTRODUCTION



# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

## INTRODUCTION

### THE PLACE OF THE BOOK IN THE CANON.

THE Hebrew Bible, of which our O. T. is a translation, is known among Jews as ‘The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.’ The three titles correspond with three divisions of the O. T. writings, and indicate three stages in the formation of the Canon. ‘The Law,’ comprising Genesis to Deuteronomy, formed the first Hebrew Bible, and was received as such about the end of the fifth century B.C. To this was added, not later than 200 B.C., the collection called ‘the Prophets,’ composed of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings in the first half, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor Prophets in the second part. The third Canon, called ‘the Writings,’ was practically closed at the time of Christ, though the fitness of some books to be in it was matter of dispute until near the end of the first century A.D. In it were contained the Psalms (the Jewish hymn-book), the two Wisdom books, Proverbs, and Job, a collection of five small works (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther) recited in the synagogues on certain special days, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, the great Church History of the Jews. The first half of the second Canon thus contained the history of the Hebrews from the death of Moses to the Exile, and the Book of Judges was put into this Canon to fill up the gap from the death of Joshua to the birth of Samuel. Was the book written for this purpose and at this time, or was it already in existence? Like the other historical books of the O. T. it is anonymous. Little or no regard

was paid to authorship in those days. Nor is the date of its composition given in the work itself. It is only by a careful examination of the contents, structure, language, and modes of expression that we can hope to gain some idea of the origin and history of the book which was thus received into the Canon.

#### CONTENTS.

The Book of Judges in its present form claims to present the history of Israel from the time when the tribes went up from the Jordan valley to take possession of the districts which had fallen to their lot to conquer, up to the days of Samuel, in whose time the monarchy came into existence. The Israelites are represented as a nation existing alternately in a state of anarchy and idolatry, and under the rule of distinguished 'judges' or heroes, of whom thirteen are mentioned.

In chapters i. 1-ii. 5 is a Preface containing a valuable but fragmentary and incomplete account of the first attempts of the Hebrew tribes to conquer Palestine, and the result of these attempts, chiefly in the way of failure. Chapters ii. 6-xvi contain the stories of the Judges, and include a scheme of chronology evidently intended to fill up the period from Joshua to Samuel. The deeds whereby the heroes won their position as judges of Israel are recorded as to Othniel in iii. 7-11, Ehud in iii. 12-30, Barak (with Deborah) in iv. 1-v. 31, Gideon in vi. 1-viii. 32, Abimelech in viii. 33-ix. 57, Jephthah in x. 6-xii. 7, Samson in xiii. 1-xvi. 31. Beside these men are mentioned Shamgar, who slew six hundred Philistines (iii. 31), and five others—Tola (x. 1, 2), Jair (x. 3-5), Ibzan (xii. 8-10), Elon (xii. 11, 12), and Abdon (xii. 13-15)—of whom we are told only their places of burial and their social distinction. The stories of the Judges come to an end with chapter xvi. In the remaining part of the book we have two stories of events which are said to have happened in the times of the Judges. In chapters xvii, xviii is con-

tained the history of the origin of a famous image which was in the northern sanctuary of Dan ; how Micah the Ephraimite made it, and how it was stolen from him by a party of Danites who were migrating from the south ; how finally it was set up in their new northern settlement and remained there ‘until the captivity of the land.’

In chapters xix.-xxi. is recorded the story of a ghastly deed of Benjamin, of the fierce war made by the other Hebrews against that tribe, and of the means adopted to prevent the total extinction of the tribe.

#### THE STORIES OF JUDGES. ii. 6-xvi. 31.

This work consists of an Introduction (ii. 6-iii. 6), which first unites the work to the Book of Joshua (ii. 6-10), and then explains the author’s view of the history of the Hebrews during the period to be treated (ii. 11-iii. 6). After this follow the stories of the Judges (iii. 7-xvi. 31).

Of the four connecting verses, three, viz. 6, 8 and 9, are from the older tradition, while verse 7 is from the Deuteronomic editor (see below). Verses 7 and 8 are found also in Joshua xxiv. 29-31.

(a) *The Introduction.* The section ii. 11-iii. 6 is the key to the purpose of the editor in compiling his work. Here he lays down in general terms the scheme of the history he is about to tell in detail afterwards. The ‘children of Israel’—conceived of as one people—were ungrateful and forsook Yahweh, who had brought them up out of Egypt, and served the local gods of Palestine. Yahweh was angry and ‘sold them’ into the hands of their enemies, so that they were sore distressed. Then (after repentance of the people in the stories) Yahweh raised up heroes (‘judges’), who delivered them from their enemies. While the judges lived the people served Yahweh, but when they died the people again turned away to the local gods, and the same story of oppression, deliverance, piety, idolatry was enacted again. In consequence of this faithlessness Yahweh determined not

to allow the annihilation of the Canaanites, but suffered some of them to remain that the faithfulness of the Israelites might be put to the test.

(b) *The Editor's Formulae.* What the editor says in this Introduction he states again and again in the course of the work. In the story of Othniel (iii. 7-11) there is nothing but this formula and the names of Othniel and Cushan-rishathaim. The story of Ehud begins with the evil of the Israelites, the oppression, the raising up of a deliverer (iii. 12-15), and closes with the summary of their deliverance and rest (verses 29, 30). In the story of Barak the same is found in iv. 1-3, 23, 24, v. 31<sup>c</sup>; in the story of Gideon in vi. 1-6, viii. 28; in the story of Jephthah in a longer form in x. 6-18; and in the story of Samson more briefly in xiii. 1, xv. 20.

(c) *Standpoint of Introduction and Formulae.* In the absence of any information as to the date at which the book was edited, it is of great importance to examine the chief features of these passages in which the editor's standpoint is so clearly marked.

(1) In all these passages 'the children of Israel,' or Israelites, are spoken of as one people, acting together, suffering together, repenting together, ruled over as a whole by each judge in turn. This fact at once shows that the editor wrote after the union of the tribes into a people, after the establishment of the monarchy. Up to that time, as we learn from the stories in the Book of Judges and from the earlier part of the first Book of Samuel, the Hebrew tribes had no such sense of unity. Each tribe made its own way in the conquest of Palestine (see Judges i). The different tribes too were so surrounded by hostile cities and peoples that intercourse was difficult and often impossible. Occasionally, only, two or three tribes were able to form a temporary alliance against a common enemy. The feeling between the tribes was by no means always one of friendship. The Ephraimites on two occasions (Judges viii. 1 ff., xii. 1 ff.) showed an un-

friendliness of disposition, which in the latter case led to inter-tribal war. The Benjamites too were once almost annihilated, not by Canaanites, but by other Hebrews. Even the song in Judges v shows that it was at that time impossible to unite all the tribes and weld them into one people. It was only at a later time, when their conquest of Palestine was more complete, and they had realized that their common worship of Yahweh was a strong bond of union, that the *Hebrew tribes* became the *Children of Israel*. The writer of this Introduction and the corresponding passages wrote after this union had been accomplished.

(2) While the stories of the Judges record the history of the times in which they lived, the author of these passages *interprets* that history. However interesting the accounts of the Judges may be in themselves for the student of ancient traditions or folklore, for the editor they have interest only as illustrations of the fact that Yahweh has led His people by a constant discipline to the better understanding of Himself and His requirements.

(d) *Date of Introduction and Formulae.* But this is exactly the doctrine that was first proclaimed by the prophets of Israel (especially Hosea) in the eighth century, and by their successors the prophets of Judah in the seventh century B.C. The great and new message of Hosea (i-iii) to the people of his own time was that they were like a faithless wife leaving her husband to follow her lovers, as they deserted Yahweh to serve the local gods; but that Yahweh would not give them up; He would bring them back, and by discipline fit them to be again what they were chosen to be in His service. What Hosea thus announces of Yahweh's dealing with His people *in the present and future* is taken up and applied in the Book of Deuteronomy to His dealing with the people in the past. The Book of Deuteronomy, published in 621 B.C., is primarily a law-book (xii-xxvi) giving precepts by which the teaching of the prophets may be

carried out in everyday life. But the historical introductions in chapters i-xi contain the application of Hosea's teaching to the past history of the people. This new interpretation of history appealed powerfully to the religious teachers of Israel. The traditions and chronicles of the past were searched to find illustrations of Yahweh's dealings with Israel, and such historic works as were in existence were edited anew in the light of this belief. All the historical books of the Hebrews that have come down to us in the second Canon of the O. T. show that they have undergone this Deuteronomistic editing. These books thus consist of two parts, (*a*) the *material*, (*b*) the Deuteronomistic *interpretation*; the two being sometimes closely interwoven, sometimes, as in the Book of Judges (ii. 6-xvi. 31), standing side by side, but separate. The ideas of Deuteronomy are found here in the Introduction (ii. 6-iii. 6) and the formulae attached to some of the stories (see above), and *not* in the other parts of the book. From the above considerations we can therefore infer that the Book of Judges (ii. 6-xvi. 31) was written some time after the proclamation of Deuteronomy in 621; how long after it is impossible to say.

(e) *The Stories of the Judges.* But was the whole work written at this time? Evidently not. The stories of the Judges differ in many respects from the framework in which they are set. The language of some (as in the song of chapter v) is of much older date than the seventh century. The method of presenting facts is also quite different. Some of these facts too contradict the statements of the Introduction. The Deuteronomistic editor implies (ii. 18-19) that the Israelites served Yahweh during the lifetime of the Judges, yet we find Gideon making an image (viii. 27), a form of Yahweh-worship common enough in his day, but pure idolatry in the eyes of a Deuteronomist. Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter would be an abomination to the editor, and it is clear that he did not write the account of it, but found it already

written. There is still, however, a choice of two possibilities as to the source of the materials the editor used. Did he find a written record of these stories at hand? Or did he collect the traditions which had been handed down (as in many other countries) by word of mouth from generation to generation? The former is certainly the more probable view. Had the editor gathered oral traditions himself, he would scarcely have taken some of the stories which do not illustrate his own view of past history (parts of Gideon and Jephthah stories as above). The style and language of the stories is quite distinct from that of the editor, a thing which would scarcely happen if he had been the first to put them in literary form.

*The pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges.* One may speak then with some degree of certainty of a *pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges*, the date of which we cannot tell, except that it must have been written some time before 621 B.C. This book probably contained the stories of Ehud, Barak (with Deborah), Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson, and the material of chapters xvii.-xxi. (See below, 'Supplement.')

What then was the source or what were the sources of this book? Had the author a document or documents before him, or did *he* gather traditions? One thing is clear—that the author had more than one account of the same events in some cases. Of Barak's deliverance in the battle of Esdraelon there is a prose story in chapter iv and a poetical in chapter v. The two have been put side by side with a few connecting words, although they differ in their representation of the facts. In the story of Gideon there seem to be two different accounts of his deeds, as viii. 4-21 certainly does not appear to be a continuation of chapter vii. Many suppose that there were two collections of traditions from which the pre-Deuteronomic book was compiled. Attempts have been made to show that these two books were parts of the great writings J

and E which contribute so much to the material of the Pentateuch and Joshua. It is indeed very possible that these works were histories beginning with Creation and extending at least to the establishment of the monarchy, but it is impossible to be certain of this, or in any case to say to which of the two works a given story belongs.

*The Traditions of Judges.* The final source of our book was certainly tradition. Of the thirteen men mentioned in the Book of Judges we have detailed tradition of six only, namely of Ehud, Barak, Gideon and his son Abimelech, Jephthah, and Samson.

*Ehud.* The story of Ehud is one which in form and material points to its being an old and authentic tradition, such as might well have been told with pride among the men of Benjamin. The inconsistency of chapter iii. 19 and 20 may show that the tradition existed in more than one form as regards details. Such variation in details is common in oral traditions, and, where it exists, both accounts are often put by Hebrew writers side by side without remark.

*Barak.* Of the Hebrew victory over the Canaanite kings we have two traditions, which, though differing in some important features (see commentary to chapter v.), evidently refer to the same event. The poetical account in chapter v. is one of the most vivid pieces of writing in the O. T., and seems to have been written by one who had taken part in the movement. Such poetic stories are often among the earliest literary productions of a people. Before 800 B.C. there were collections in writing of such poetry (2 Sam. i. 18, Num. xxi. 14). As is very common in such collections, the authorship of the poems is often unknown, or at any rate not mentioned. As will be seen from the commentary, the text, partly in consequence of its antiquity, is very difficult to explain in many places, but the general course of events is clear. It is pre-eminently a battle-song of triumph. Barak and Deborah are twice addressed in it, but the poem was composed not to

glorify them, but to celebrate the triumph over the enemy. It is, however, because of its association with the 'judge' Barak that it is put into the Book of Judges. The prose story in chapter iv is evidently regarded by the Deuteronomic editor as the more important for his purpose. His own formula precedes (iv. 1-3) and follows (iv. 23, 24) the prose story, and only the closing section of it, 'and the land had rest forty years,' is reserved for the end of the song. Yet it is almost certain that the poem contains the truer account. Prose traditions were always liable to additions and alterations in the mouths of the people, while it was more difficult to alter poetry without disturbing the rhythm of the whole. In chapter iv. the story of Sisera's battle against the kings of Canaan seems to have been blended with a story (recorded in Joshua xi. 1-9) of a war with Jabin, king of Hazor, hence the discrepancies between this account and the song.

*Gideon and Abimelech.* The stories of Gideon and his house are more numerous than those of any other judge. He was evidently a man of great influence in Central Palestine. His own personal character is more clearly delineated than that of any other hero (except Samson, whose life is of quite another character). Above even his simple straightforwardness and his courage stands his religious nature. He receives his call to deliver his tribe from Yahweh's angel. One of his earliest deeds is the destruction of the Baal's altar, after he has erected one to Yahweh. Four traditions are recorded as to his intercourse with Yahweh and desire to know His will (vi. 36 ff., vii. 2 f., 4 ff., 9 ff.); and when he had crushed the Midianites he devoted his share of the spoil to making an ephod by which Yahweh might be consulted. The traditions here, as in other cases, were doubtless collected from different quarters. Some of them were told of Jerubbaal, so that the collector in vii. 1 feels it necessary to explain in one of these which he is using that Jerubbaal is Gideon. There are two distinct sets

of traditions in chapters vii, viii, the one telling how he led the Hebrews against the Midianites under Oreb and Zeeb, how he conquered them and saved his people. The other (viii. 4 ff.) tells how he and the men of his family (Abiezer) pursued Zebah and Zalmunna to exact blood revenge, because they had killed his brothers.

Although in the story of viii. 22 Gideon is said to have declined to rule over his people, it is evident from the story of Abimelech that he had exercised a recognized authority, and of such a character that his family might be expected to continue it after him. The Deuteronomic editor did not recognize Abimelech as a judge, and has not enclosed his story in his own usual framework (see p. 6). But the traditions here evidently come from the same sources as those of the other judges, and show the same blending of various stories (see commentary to chapter ix).

*Jephthah.* This story, like that of Gideon, presents a man of striking personality. Like Gideon he is a man of strong religious earnestness. He even sacrifices his only daughter rather than break his promise to Yahweh. He is, however, of a fiercer disposition than Gideon. The Ephraimites, who had made Gideon speak flattering words to them when they threatened him (viii. 1 ff.), brought destruction on themselves when they found fault with Jephthah (xii. 1 ff.). The stories current about Jephthah have been increased by the addition of a long section (xi. 12-28) made up from Num. xx, xxi. This is very awkwardly introduced here, for it breaks the connexion between verses 12 and 30, and as a matter of fact refers to Moab, while Jephthah's enemy was Ammon. This section must have been introduced from the other work, when the traditions were first written down, or when the pre-Deuteronomic book was composed.

*Samson.* The traditions of Samson, said to be a Danite, differ altogether from those of the other Hebrew heroes. The Deuteronomic editor seems to have felt this, as his

formulae (xiii. 1, xv. 20) shrink to the smallest dimensions. He is throughout a reckless strong man, whose adventures are partly due to sudden frenzies, partly to a deliberate desire to avenge himself for what he considers to be ill treatment of himself. He is a wilder Hereward the Wake, a berserker, or very like the Russian bogatirs. Such characters are to be found in the folklore of most countries. That his deeds are said to be generally due to the spirit of Yahweh rushing upon him is quite in accord with the beliefs of early peoples, who ascribed all extraordinary manifestations of power to the deity. (Extraordinary natural features are often ascribed among ourselves by the people to the devil—‘the devil’s bridge,’ &c.). Judged by modern standards Samson was most immoral, but moral standards are not usually applied to folk-stories. These stories must have been in the mouths of the people, and been favourites with them, long before they were reduced to writing, and Samson was raised to the dignity of a judge in Israel. One is tempted by the name of the hero to believe that they were Canaanitish in origin, and taken over and adapted by the Hebrews. One can hardly imagine a Hebrew mother, a worshipper of Yahweh, giving a name like Samson (probably ‘Sun’s man’), connected with the worship of the Sun, to her child. (The city ‘Beth-shemesh,’ ‘Abode of the Sun,’ was close to his birthplace.) Some have attempted to resolve the whole story into a sun-myth, but without success. Although all the stories were probably in the pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges, the Deuteronomic editor put his closing formula at the end of chapter xv. It was no part of his plan to tell the painful story of his end. Chapter xvi has, however, been later restored from the earlier book, and the ending repeated in a shorter form in xvi. 31.

(f) *The Minor Judges.* There are five judges mentioned in our book of whom nothing is told save that they judged Israel for a term of years, were wealthy and influential men, and that their burial-places are known

(see p. 4). There is also one, Shamgar, who smote the Philistines and saved Israel. As there are no traditions concerning the first five, it is evident that they have been introduced to suit some scheme of the author. It is probable that they were thus introduced to make the number of judges correspond with that of the tribes of Israel, while at the same time their chronology was required by the author. The names, and possibly the information as to their social position, may have been derived from the graves themselves, or from local tradition regarding these burying-places. The mention of Shamgar (iii. 31) differs from that of the five minor judges, in so far as there is no chronology, no burying-place given, and iv. 1 connects with iii. 30, ignoring Shamgar. (See also commentary to this verse.) It is very probable that a late author did not count Abimelech as a judge, and inserted Shamgar to make up the number of judges to twelve.

(g) *The Chronology.* The Deuteronomic Book of Judges contains a system of chronology which is evidently intended to fill up the interval between Joshua and Samuel. The figures given are 8 years (iii. 8), 40 (iii. 11), 18 (iii. 14), 80 (iii. 30), 20 (iv. 2), 40 (v. 31), 7 (vi. 1), 40 (viii. 28), 3 (ix. 22), 23 (x. 2), 22 (x. 3), 18 (x. 8), 6 (xii. 7), 7 (xii. 9), 10 (xii. 11), 8 (xii. 14), 40 (xiii. 1), 20 (xv. 20), or a total of 410 years. (If the story of Abimelech was not contained in the Deuteronomic book the three years of ix. 22 must be subtracted.) It has, however, been pointed out that in 1 Kings vi. 1, 480 years are said to have elapsed from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign, whereas if to the 410 years of Judges be added the forty years of the wandering in the desert, the seven years (approximately) occupied in the conquest of Palestine according to the Book of Joshua, twenty years of Samuel's rule (1 Sam. vii. 2), probably twenty years of Saul's reign, forty of David's, and the first four of Solomon's, we should have a total of 541 years for the

period mentioned in I Kings vi. 1. But it is useless to attempt to reconcile these data, for it is clear that many of them are in round numbers only. Forty years was a general expression for a generation. This number occurs four times in Judges, twenty—or half this number—twice, and eighty—or twice this number—once. The passage in Kings is twelve times forty, or twelve generations. Whether the more exact numbers come from tradition it is impossible to tell. In any case the chronology is artificial, for the Judges did not rule over all Israel, nor is there any evidence that they really succeeded one another in order.

#### THE PREFACE. i. 1-ii. 5.

This section was evidently not a part of the Deuteronomic Book of Judges. That work, as we have seen, begins in ii. 6 with recalling the events of Joshua xxiv., and then proceeds with the history from that time. But this section contains a summary of events from the time when the Hebrews first went up from Gilgal (see i. 1) to conquer Palestine. It must therefore have been prefaced to the Deuteronomic book at a later time, but before the work was introduced into the Canon. Its incompleteness indicates that it is an extract from a larger work. This work has also been used by the compiler of Joshua, for in that book are many passages contained in this section (see commentary), and several other extracts apparently belonging to the same work, but not used here. These passages are generally ascribed to the historical work called J. (See commentary on Joshua.) The historical references to the subjugation of the Canaanites in verses 28 and 33 point to the time of David or Solomon as the earliest date for the composition of the section. Its historical value has always been estimated highly. The recognition that the conquest of Palestine was gradual, was made by the tribes separately, and was very incom-

plete, shows it to be much more reliable than the parallel story in Joshua, where the Hebrews are represented from a later point of view, acting as one people and accomplishing the conquest as they *should* have done rather than as they did. It is a fitting preface to the Book of Judges, for it shows how the different tribes were cut off from one another by unconquered Canaanite cities, so that they were exposed to attacks and oppressions, and could only with great difficulty form partial combinations against their enemies.

#### THE SUPPLEMENT. Chapters xvii.-xxi.

Chapters xvii and xviii contain an account of (*a*) the origin of a certain image which was established for a time in the hill-country of Ephraim; (*b*) the transference of that image from its original seat to Dan (Laish), where it remained until the end of the eighth century B.C. Connected with this image in both places was a Levitical priesthood. Included in this story is an account of a Danite migration from the south to the north, and the foundation of the city of Dan on the site of the older Laish. The general style of the stories makes it very probable that they were contained in the pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges, and were derived from the same sources as that work. The entire absence of any Deuteronomic editorial notes seems to indicate that these stories were not incorporated in the Deuteronomic Book of Judges, but were added afterwards from the earlier work. The confusion of the narrative in xvii. 2-4, xviii. 14-20, and the multiplication of names used for the image or images, seem to show that, as in the stories of Judges, the author had varying traditions before him, and that he has sometimes blended these without making a consistent story.

Chapters xix to xxi contain the story of an outrage perpetrated by some roughs of Gibeah, the consequent punishment and almost complete annihilation of the tribe

of Benjamin, and the means adopted to preserve this tribe from extinction. Although the story is one, there are two distinct literary parts in it. Chapter xix, containing the story of the outrage, is told in much the same style and in the same language as the stories of the judges and that of the Danite image. It may well have been a part of the collection of traditions made in the time of the kings. The following chapters (xx, xxi) are different in every respect. Here the story of the war against Benjamin is imbedded in a setting of post-exilic language and ideas. Just as the post-Deuteronomic writers retold the older history of Israel (see p. 8) from the Deuteronomic point of view, so after the introduction of the priestly law (about 400 B.C.) writers wrote and judged early history from the standpoint of these new laws. What this new standpoint was we see in the priestly laws of Leviticus and Numbers; how it was used in the rewriting of old traditions we see in the P narratives of Genesis to Joshua, in the recasting of history in Chronicles. Such a writer apparently took the story of the war against Benjamin from the pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges and rewrote it in the style of Chronicles, and this has supplanted the simpler story here. There is no doubt that the earlier story is imbedded in our chapters, but it is impossible to say *with certainty* which verses belong to it<sup>1</sup>.

The characteristics of the narrative that point to the late date are (*a*) the presentation of the people as a whole—Israel; (*b*) the conception of that whole as a *religious* community; (*c*) the exaggerated numbers. All of these are unhistorical as applied to the time of the judges.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Moore suggests that the early story is contained in the following passages :—xx. 1<sup>a,c</sup>, 3-8, 14, 19, 29, 36<sup>b</sup>, 37<sup>a</sup>, 38-41, 44<sup>a</sup>, 47, xxi. 1, 15, 16<sup>c</sup>, 17-19<sup>a</sup>, 21-23, apart from one or two brief notes.

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOOK.

From what has been said in the preceding sections it may be gathered that the growth of the canonical Book of Judges was as follows :—

(a) In the period which followed the crossing of the Jordan the Hebrew tribes were continually occupied in conquering the Canaanites and maintaining their hold of the places they succeeded in capturing. This was the age in which great heroes arose in different tribes. These delivered their own tribes in times of great oppression, and became the subjects of traditions, which were handed down, sometimes in prose form, sometimes in verse.

(b) Some time after the monarchy was established and the Hebrews had undoubted possession of Palestine a literature arose. A part of this, we know from 2 Sam. i and Num. xxi. 14, consisted of collections of poems, while in the same period were written the histories which appear in the non-priestly parts of the Pentateuch and Joshua. It is possible that these two histories (J and E) contained collections of traditions of the judges.

(c) Somewhat later, but before the proclamation of Deuteronomy, a writer using the two collections of stories concerning the Hebrew judges wrote a new work in which the judges were made to follow one another as rulers over all Israel. It was this writer probably who introduced such supplementary material as the diplomatic intercourse between Jephthah and the Ammonite king (xi. 12 ff.). His work, however, contained not only stories of judges but other material, such as the stories found now in chapters xvii-xviii, xix, and the story of the Benjamite war in its simple form.

(d) After the Book of Deuteronomy had been published in 621, and had shown how the prophetic idea of the Divine discipline of Israel could be applied to the interpretation of past history, the pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges was used as the basis of a work which was

intended to show how the Divine discipline was exercised during the particular period of the people's history from the death of Joshua to the birth of Samuel. The writer of this work did not use all that was in the earlier book. The story of Abimelech (ix) shows no sign of his hand, and was probably omitted by him, and his work thus ended with xv. 20. On the other hand he added from his own pen the general interpretation of the course of history contained in ii. 6—iii. 6, and the formulae which precede and follow the stories of the greater judges. The mention of the minor judges contained no traditions, and did not illustrate the writer's view of history, therefore they have no formulae attached to them. Some system of chronology may have been present in the earlier work, but it was now brought into order, and was intended to fill up the period from Joshua to Samuel.

(e) Between the editing of the Deuteronomic Book of Judges and the reception of the work into the Canon was a period of some 300 years. During this time the book assumed a new form. A preface (i. 1—ii. 5), taken in the main from an old work, was put before the Deuteronomic editor's introduction. The stories of Abimelech (ix), the fate of Samson (xvi), the Danite image (xvii, xviii), and the Benjamite outrage (xix) were restored from the pre-Deuteronomic book. As Abimelech was not reckoned among the judges, the mention of Shamgar (iii. 31) was introduced to make up the number of judges to twelve, to correspond with the number of the tribes of Israel. For the early story of the war against Benjamin was substituted the late edition of it (xx, xxi). During these years also numerous short notes were added to explain geographical allusions, or give further details as to persons, or emphasize particular historical teachings, or express the writer's disapprobation of actions.

The outline given above is of course merely an attempt, founded entirely on internal evidence, to supply a probable history of the origin and history of the Book of Judges.

It should, however, be borne in mind that it is an attempt, not to make the work late, but to find out how much of it can possibly be early. The only fact that is *quite certain* is that our book in its present form became a canonical work about 200 B.C. In the eight or nine hundred years that elapsed between the time of the judges and the first authoritative appearance of our book, there may have been ten times as much editing and recasting of the work as has been suggested above. There was no special sanctity attached to the work until it became canonical. Every fortunate possessor of a manuscript of it was at liberty to add his own remarks, and it was open to any school of writers to recast the form of the whole. Such a recasting of older literature took place, we know, after the proclamation of Deuteronomy, and again when the priestly law was proclaimed later. It is unfortunate that in the changing fortunes and frequent exiles and sufferings of the Hebrew people the manuscripts of their literary works have perished, so that the earliest manuscript we have of the Book of Judges in Hebrew at the present day is not earlier than the tenth century of our era. Under such circumstances internal evidence is all we have to rely on, and probability, not certainty, is all we can hope to attain.

#### THE TEXT.

Although the present commentary is in the first place intended to be one on the English and not the Hebrew text, it is necessary at times to take account of some of the early translations in order to obtain the best sense.

The Hebrew text translated in our English version is that which was finally fixed in its present form by bodies of Jewish scholars called Massoretes, who added the vowels, accents, &c., in accordance with synagogal tradition between the second and eighth centuries A.D. Before this time consonants alone were written in Hebrew manuscripts, and the vowels were supplied by the reader. But

the same consonants might have very different meanings according to the vowels supplied, hence when the Massoretes put vowels in the text, they gave not only the text itself, but also their interpretation of its meaning. That interpretation was the one of the synagogue at the time when they did their work, but differs at times from the one adopted in early translations, and is not always the most probable. Again, Hebrew words were written without spaces between them, and sentences were not divided from one another. The Massoretes in dividing up words and sentences only represent the traditional interpretation of their own time, and the versions often divide differently. In seeking to find the meaning of the original Hebrew, commentators have to take the consonantal text only as their basis. The Massoretic text with its vowels and marks of punctuation is valuable as giving the traditional interpretation of this text from the second century after Christ onwards. Other interpretation and help is to be derived from the early versions<sup>1</sup>, one of which (the Septuagint) represents a text some three centuries earlier than the Massoretic. There is yet a third means by which the scholar may be able to come nearer to the meaning of the original Hebrew than either the Massoretes or the early translators. Hebrew is one of a class of languages, called Semitic, some of which have preserved old meanings of words which have dropped out of use in Hebrew, or become changed in the course of history. The amount of ancient Hebrew preserved to us is so small that many words occur once only. They

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<sup>1</sup> The chief versions used in the reconstruction of the Hebrew text are:—

(1) The Greek versions, comprising (a) that of the Septuagint made in Egypt in the second or first century B.C.; (b) those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, all made before the time of Origen and existing only in fragments.

(2) The Latin or Vulgate, made by Jerome, 390-405 A.D.

(3) The Syriac or Peshitta, made before the end of the second century A.D.

have fallen out of use, and their meaning has been forgotten (see note, iii. 23). In such cases our only hope is in the presence of such a word in the kindred languages of Babylonia, Arabia, &c.

### VALUE OF THE BOOK.

The traditions collected together in the Book of Judges are invaluable to the student of the history and religion of Israel. The historian who may seek to have an orderly succession of events arranged according to the years in which they happened will find nothing to help him here. Even the chronology introduced by a later editor is too vague and unreliable for such a purpose. But if he be willing to put aside this modern method of writing history, and be content to know how a number of small tribes achieved a permanent settlement in a strange and hostile land, how their heroes acquired fame, how amidst all the diverse interests of different tribes the attachment to the same deity prevented their absorption by other peoples and made possible the later union into a kingdom, then our book will afford material enough. The time of the judges is that in which some of the greatest changes a people can undergo took place. At the beginning of this period the Hebrews were a nomadic people, who for a generation had wandered from place to place with their cattle and possessions ; at the close they were settled agriculturists, settled in a country of a higher civilization than any of that generation had known before. In their earlier experience the tribal connexion was the only tie that bound one man to another ; but in this period the elders of the tribe become the elders of the city, and a man's immediate neighbours come to be of greater importance to him than even his fellow tribesmen. The life of the desert had been simple and hard, but the latter part of Gideon's story shows that luxury had come with the settled life. The simple life of

nomad times was kept before the people at a later time by prophets, Nazirites, and Rechabites ; but the people were already being weakened. There were cowards in Gideon's army who had to be sent home. When we leave aside for the time the additions to the stories we have a rich treasury of popular literature. The song in chapter v, even in its present condition, is a most stirring composition, calling upon the people to bless its God for His deliverance, describing His march to their rescue, the gathering of the tribes, the battle, the death of Sisera, and that last fierce irony in the description of Sisera's household. Very different from this, but also interesting, is the specimen of the popular fable as used by Jotham (in chapter ix). The other stories too contain descriptions, which as literature claim attention. The intense pathos of the story of Jephthah's daughter (xi. 34-40) is the result of a simplicity and restraint in the narrative which give a striking power. The stories of Samson will always be of great interest to the lovers of folklore, and stand quite by themselves in old Hebrew literature.

The material afforded for the student of Israel's religion is great. We may be repelled by the schematic method adopted by the Deuteronomic editor in packing the stories into parcels carefully wrapped up in his formulae, but we have to acknowledge that his main idea was justified. It was when the people realized the sense of its allegiance to Yahweh as its God that it was strong and made progress. That sense of allegiance due was very different from the ethical conception of Yahweh-worship taught later by the prophets, and the forms of worship would not have been tolerated by Deuteronomy. There is no conception of spiritual worship or moral duty in our book. Ehud uses the name of God to secure an opportunity for assassination ; the Hebrews chant the praise of Jael for her treacherous murder ; Gideon's religion is full of superstition, and his great devotion to Yahweh is shown by his erection of an image ; Jephthah sacrifices his daughter

to Yahweh, and no angel interposes to prevent him; Samson's deeds are mostly characterized by an entire absence of morality; the Danites steal an image so as to worship God; and the Levite's relations to his concubine are not above reproach. Yet it was this common worship of Yahweh, imperfect as it was, that brought the people together later, and the progress from this condition to the spiritual and ethical worship taught a few centuries later by the prophets will ever be an object-lesson as to the way in which God has revealed Himself to a people and prepared them to be teachers to the world.

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The articles on the different judges in the two Bible Dictionaries mentioned above.

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## SOURCES.

The following letters are placed in brackets in the Text to indicate the different sources.

- [J.] The pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges.
- [D.] The Deuteronomic editor's additions. These sometimes incorporate material from the older sources, as in ii. 6—iii. 6, where ii. 6, 8–10, 13, 20, 21, 23 are probably thus taken over.
- [T.] Material derived from earlier works in which traditions were collected.
- [A.] Additions made after the Deuteronomic editing. This has been put to chapters xx and xxi, but such additions occur, generally as short notes, all through the book<sup>1</sup>. They are usually explanations or additions made to heighten the effect of the narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> An attempt has been made to separate the book into its constituent parts and indicate them by the use of different colours in *The Book of Judges. A new English Translation printed in colours, exhibiting the composite structure of the book. With explanatory notes and pictorial illustrations, by the Rev. G. F. Moore, D.D.* (London : James Clarke & Co., 1898.)

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**Preface.** i. 1—ii. 5.

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# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS



# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

[T] AND it came to pass after the death of Joshua, that 1

*The Title.* ‘The Book of Judges’; in Hebrew simply ‘Judges.’

i. 1—ii. 5. *The position of the Hebrews in Palestine at the beginning of the period of the Judges, and some incidents connected with the invasion.* This section is not a continuation of the narrative in the Book of Joshua, but deals with the period covered by vii-xxi of that book. The Hebrews are in verse 1 at Gilgal (Joshua v-vi). The Jordan has been crossed, Jericho has been taken—else they had not been able to advance—and different parts of the land have been allotted for the tribes to conquer (verse 3). One or two striking incidents in the campaign of Judah and Simeon are told, with a brief mention of what Benjamin was unable to accomplish. From these three tribes of South Palestine the writer turns to the ‘House of Joseph’ in the north, one notable incident being recorded—connected with the capture of Beth-el. Then follows a list of the failures of different tribes, beginning with Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, continuing with those of Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. Issachar and Levi are not mentioned. This narrative gives a different idea of the settlement of the Hebrews in Palestine from that which is derived from the longer account in the Book of Joshua. In Joshua the Hebrews acting together conquer Palestine, destroying the original inhabitants, and then dividing the land among the tribes. Here the tribes go up to the districts which have fallen to them by lot and meet with but very partial success. All the later history shows that this is the truer account. To account for this failure of the Hebrews is the object of several passages in the first part of the book (ii. 1-5, 20-21, 22; iii. 1-2), and may be said to be one of the objects for which the whole book was written.

Some parts of this account are found also in Joshua (see verses 10-15, 21, 27, 29), and as they do not seem to be integral parts of the narrative there, but indeed are inconsistent with the general purpose of the book, it is probable that they were inserted from another work (now lost), from which also this section of Judges was compiled.

Although the material was thus taken from an older source, it was evidently not put before the Deuteronomic Book of Judges

the children of Israel asked of the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot,

until late, for that work begins in ii. 6 with the events which happened after the great meeting at Shechem recorded in Joshua xxiv.

i. 1-21. *The invasion of South Palestine.* The tribe of Judah is the first to sever itself from the camp of the Hebrews at Gilgal, and together with Simeon advances along the road from the Jordan valley to Jerusalem. They fight with the king of Jerusalem, and having defeated him, pass by that city, turn southwards, and encounter the peoples of the hill-country, the Negeb and the lowland. The tribe of Caleb, a Kenizzite, occupies Hebron, and a branch of it—the family of Othniel—settles in Debir and its district. The Kenites, who went up with Judah, go still further south, and settle among the Amalekites. Hormah is occupied by Judah. In the hilly country the Judahites are generally successful, but they cannot stand against the nations who use chariots in the plains. Jerusalem remains in the power of the Jebusites.

1. **after the death of Joshua.** These words have been introduced here to connect this book with the close of the Book of Joshua. But this verse tells of the beginning of the invasion of Palestine, and Joshua died long after. Cf. ii. 6-8.

**asked of the Lord**, or consulted the oracle of Yahwch, as also in xviii. 5, xx. 18 (cf. Hos. iv. 12; Ezek. xxi. 21). Various methods of ascertaining Yahweh's will were employed by the Hebrews, such as the casting of lots, the use of the ephod with Urim and Thummim. Dreams and natural phenomena like the rustling of trees were interpreted as helps for guidance in action, and magicians were employed to raise the dead that they might disclose the secrets of the future. On this occasion probably lots were cast.

**the Canaanites** are here the inhabitants of Palestine generally. The name is used in the ethnographical sense, with the same meaning, in the Egyptian inscriptions. The geographical word 'Canaan' is used by the Egyptians from 1800 B.C. onwards for the lowlands on the Mediterranean coast from Phoenicia southwards.

2. **Judah** is represented genealogically as Jacob's fourth son by Leah, and as born in Haran (Gen. xxix. 35, J). As a tribe it was of composite origin (see verse 12), though at the writer's time it was doubtless more homogeneous.

3. **Simeon:** a tribe whose descent is ascribed to the second son

that we may fight against the Canaanites ; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up ; and the LORD delivered the 4 Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand : and they

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of Jacob and Leah. It seems to have been early absorbed in Judah, and is not mentioned either in the Song of Deborah (v) or in the Blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii). The cities allotted to it in Joshua xix. 2-6 are counted as belonging to Judah in Joshua xv. 26-32, 42 (P).

**my lot:** i.e. that part of the land which has fallen to me in the casting of lots. It is that district which Judah is to conquer, if it can.

i. 4-7. The main road from Gilgal to South Palestine leads direct to Jerusalem, and if its ruler was hostile Judah and Simeon must have fought against him before being able to advance further. Such a battle seems to be recorded in these verses, but it is difficult to know what the original form of this story was. Adoni-bezek was evidently king of Jerusalem, for his people carried him thither to die after he had been mutilated by the Hebrews. But the name Adoni-bezek can scarcely be correct, for the second part of such Canaanitish names was usually the name of a god, not as here the name of a place. In Joshua x the king of Jerusalem is Adoni-zedek, which is probably correct (cf. the name Melchizedek). Of a place called Bezek we know nothing. A city of this name is mentioned in 1 Sam. xi. 8, but is in the north, and no modern site has been identified as the Bezek of this story. Jerusalem was evidently not captured by the Hebrews (verse 21), but by the victory over its king they were enabled to pass by it and advance to the conquest of the south.

**4. the Canaanites and the Perizzites.** Four names of peoples in Palestine are mentioned in this section—Canaanites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Amorites. Of these the Jebusites are always mentioned in connexion with Jerusalem (see verse 21). The Perizzites may have been one of the tribes of Palestine, or simply, as the meaning of the word suggests, the villagers or dwellers in unwalled places. The Canaanites (cf. verse 1) in the narrower use seem to be the lowlanders; the Amorites the highlanders. The former name is naturally common in the inscriptions of the Egyptians who approached Palestine from the plains on the Mediterranean coast, the latter in those of the Assyrians who came to Palestine through the hill-country of the north. The use of these two terms in O.T. history is not ethnological but geographical, and varies with different authors,

- 5 smote of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they smote the Canaanites and the Perizzites.
- 6 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  
 9 set the city on fire. And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the hill country, and in the South, and in the lowland.

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and as the country became better known. The verse seems to be a note introduced perhaps from the margin.

**6.** Mutilation of a captive to render him unfit for further warfare was known not only in the East, but even among the Athenians, who decreed that they would cut off the right thumbs of all Aeginetan captives to render them unfit for wielding a spear.

**7.** There were many kings in Palestine and the surrounding countries, for a kingdom consisted usually of a city and the district in which it was situated. The number seventy is a round one.

i. 8. *The destruction of Jerusalem.*

**8. Jerusalem.** This was one of the ancient cities of Palestine, and is mentioned as Uru-salim in the Tell-el-Amarna letters ca. 1400 B.C., when it was subject to Egypt. At this time it belongs to a Canaanitish tribe called Jebusites, of whom we know nothing, although they are several times mentioned in O.T. books. The site of this city was the south-east hill with the precipitous slopes to the valley of Kidron on the east and south, and separated from the other hills at that time by the Tyropaeon valley on the west, and a ravine on the north, both now filled up and part of the city. It was not taken from the Jebusites until David's time (2 Sam. v. 6-9).

**9. The southward march.** The three divisions of the south country mentioned here are: (1) the hill-country from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea on the east, to the Negeb on the south, and the 'lowland' on the west; (2) the Negeb (translated 'the South' in R.V.)

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. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir. (Now the name of Debir beforetime was Kiriath-sepher.) And Caleb said, He that

mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions, i. e. the district south of Hebron, consisting in the northern half of hills, in the southern of a dry limestone plateau ; (3) the Shefelah (' lowland ') or range of low hills between the hill-country and the plains on the Mediterranean coast. These plains do not enter into this tradition (see verse 18).

i. 10-15. *The Kenizzite conquest of Hebron and Debir.* This incident is also related in Joshua xv. 13-19 (cf. xiv. 13-15), where verses 15-19 are the same as verses 11-15 here. Verse 20 should be restored to verse 10, to which it belongs. In verse 11 the pronoun 'he' refers to Judah in verse 10, but in the more original form of the story in Joshua it refers rightly to Caleb.

**10** (and **20**). **Hebron**, one of the most ancient cities of Palestine according to Hebrew tradition (Num. xiii. 22), still exists as el-Khulil in a valley among the hills about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. The former name was Kiriath-arba, i. e. 'the city of four,' which may have meant the city of four quarters or divisions. Later Jewish tradition explained it as the city where the four patriarchs Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were buried. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are all associated with Hebron in Genesis. The inhabitants at this time are called Canaanites by the author, and Anakites (verse 20) by the tradition he reproduces (see below).

**Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai** are the names, of Aramaic type, of three tribes or families. In verse 20 they are referred to as 'sons of Anak,' but this means literally 'sons of the (long) neck,' i. e. giants. These are mentioned several times in Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, and seem to have been a class of strong men among the original inhabitants of Palestine. Another tradition said that Joshua annihilated them (Joshua xi. 21, 22, D).

**11. Debir** is placed in the Negeb in verse 15; in the hill-country of Judah in Joshua xi. 21, and thus was probably on the border of the two districts. It is identified with edh-Dhāherīyeh, southwest of Hebron.

**Kiriath-sepher** means 'Book-city' in Hebrew. We cannot, however, be certain that 'sepher' meant 'book' in the ancient language of South Palestine. According to Joshua xv. 49 the old name was Kiriath-sannah.

**12. Caleb** was a Kenizzite, and so an Edomite (Gen. xxxvi. 42),

smieth 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 gave  
 14 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;  
 15 and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? And she  
 said unto him, Give me a blessing; for that thou hast set  
 me in the land 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' brother in law,

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who had joined Judah in attacking the south of Palestine, and especially Hebron and its neighbourhood. According to Joshua xiv. 6-15 Moses had promised him this district which he had spied out for the Hebrews, and Joshua gave it to him forty-five years later. In David's time the tribe of Caleb was distinguished from Judah (1 Sam. xxx. 14; cf. 1 Sam. xxv. 3), but later was identified with it so completely that in 1 Chron. ii it has become one of the most important branches of Judah. The name Caleb means 'dog,' and is thought by some to point to early totemism.

**Achsah** is mentioned only in this story and in 1 Chron. ii. 49.

**13. Othniel** is mentioned only here, in iii. 9-11; Joshua xv. 17; and 1 Chron. iv. 13.

**14. that she moved him.** The Greek and Latin versions read 'and he incited her,' which is in accordance with what follows.

**15. a blessing:** 'a present' as in R. V. marg., so also in Gen. xxxiii. 11; 1 Sam. xxv. 27, xxx. 26; 2 Kings v. 15.

**thou hast set me in the land of the South** is more accurate than R. V. marg., 'given me the land of the South.'

**springs of water:** really a proper name, Gullath-mayim, so in the latter part of the verse, 'And Caleb gave her Gullath-illith and Gullath-tahtith.' These were probably the springs now called Seil ed-Dilbeh, three groups of fourteen springs between el-Khulil and edh-Dhāheriyeh.

**i. 16. The Kenites.** The Hebrew text is imperfect at the beginning, and we restore from the Greek 'the children of Hobab the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law.'

**16.** The Kenites were a nomadic non-Israelitish people, mentioned in Gen. xv. 19 with the Kenizzites, also in the Balaam prophecy, Num. xxiv. 21 f. According to this story they marched

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 with the people. And 17 Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they smote the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah. Also 18 Judah took Gaza with the border thereof, and Ashkelon with the border thereof, and Ekron with the border thereof. And the LORD was with Judah ; and he drove out 19 the inhabitants of the hill country ; for he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had

with Judah (to whom they are counted in 1 Chron. ii. 55) from Jericho (the ‘city of palm trees’), but if we accept the reading of some recensions of the Greek version at the end of this verse, and read ‘with the Amalekite’ instead of ‘with the people,’ they did not settle in Judah, but went further south among their kinsmen. This is supported by the account of David’s correspondence with them in 1 Sam. xv. 6 (and cf. 1 Sam. xxvii. 10, xxx. 29). One branch of the people, however, wandered to the north (see iv. 11).

**the city of palm trees** is Jericho. See Deut. xxxiv. 3 ; Judges iii. 13.

**the wilderness of Judah, which is in the south of Arad.** The ‘wilderness of Judah’ is the hilly country on the west of the Dead Sea. Arad is supposed to be the modern Tell ’Arād, south-east of Hebron, east of Beer-sheba. The introduction of the Negeb (see verse 4) is confusing. The Greek version reads ‘at the descent’ (or ‘pass’) of Arad.

i. 17. *The destruction of Zephath.* The name Zephath occurs only here. The other name, Hormah, was associated by a tradition in Num. xxi. 3 with its destruction by Moses. Its site is unknown.

17. *utterly destroyed it:* R. V. marg. ‘devoted,’ i. e. made its entire destruction an offering to Yahweh (so Deut. ii. 34, iii. 6, and frequently).

18. *Judah in Philistia.* Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron are all in the Philistine plain, south of Jaffa. The verse is clearly unhistoric. It is inconsistent with the next verse, and is contradicted by iii. 3 and all the later history. The Greek version reads, ‘Judah did not take,’ &c.

19. Here we have a general summary of the result of Judah’s

20 chariots of iron. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses had spoken: and he drove out thence the 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 Beth-el: and the LORD was with them. And the house of Joseph sent to spy out Beth-el. (Now the name of the city beforetime was Luz.) And the watchers saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and 25 we will deal kindly with thee. And he shewed them the

invasion. The new-comers, with all the vigour of nomads fresh from the desert, swept the quieter settled peoples from the hills; but in the plains, where chariots were used, they could not stand before the Canaanites.

**chariots of iron:** see on iv. 3.

20. See verse 10.

21. **Jerusalem.** The words of this verse are found also in Joshua xv. 63, except that there we read 'children of Judah' both times for 'children of Benjamin,' and 'could not drive them out' for 'did not drive them out.' In xix. 10 ff. Jerusalem is 'this city of the Jebusites,' 'the city of a stranger, where there are none of the children of Israel.' Jerusalem was first captured by David (2 Sam. v. 6 ff.).

the **Jebusites** were a people of whom we know nothing save that they held Jerusalem until the time of David.

i. 22-29. *The invasion of Central Palestine.* Attention is now directed from the south to the centre; from Judah to the house of Joseph. Again we have nothing but a fragment of tradition.

i. 22-26. *The capture of Beth-el.*

22. **the house of Joseph** includes Ephraim and Manasseh (Joshua xvii. 17 f.), and Benjamin according to 2 Sam. xix. 20.

also went up, as Judah had gone up. See verse 4.

**Beth-el**, now a village called Beitin, nine and a half miles north of Jerusalem. According to a tradition in Gen. xxviii. 19, the change of name from Luz to Beth-el was associated with Jacob's dream (but cf. xxxv. 6). In Joshua xvi. 2, Luz and Beth-el are mentioned as two separate places.

entrance into the city, and they smote the city with the edge of the sword ; but they let the man go and all his family. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, <sup>26</sup> and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz : which is the name thereof unto this day.

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

**26. the land of the Hittites** is probably in the north of Syria, where the Egyptian inscriptions from 1500 B.C. and the Assyrian inscriptions from 1100 B.C. place the Hittites. There were, however, Hittites also in the region of Hebron (see Gen. xxiii, 'children of Heth'). The site of the new Luz is not known.

i. 27-34. *The failure of different tribes to subdue the whole of their allotted territory.* Benjamin's failure has been mentioned in verse 21. Various interpretations of Yahweh's purpose in permitting this failure are given in ii. 21 ff., iii. 1, and iii. 2. The practical result of these failures was to prevent for a long time any united action on a large scale, and to hinder the establishment of a kingdom until the time of Saul and David.

**27. Manasseh.** Cf. Joshua xvii. 11-13.

**Beth-shean** (the modern Beisān) was in the Jordan plain at the east end of the valley of Jezreel, and so commanded the eastern approach to the Plain of Esraelon.

**Taanach** (now T'annuk), and **Megiddo** (now Lejjūn), four miles away, are both in the south part of the Plain of Esraelon. Both Beth-shean and Megiddo lay on the high-road from Damascus to Egypt.

**Dor** (now Tantura), on the Mediterranean coast, about ten miles south of the end of Mount Carmel.

**Ibleam** is probably the modern Bel'ameh, at the south-east corner of the Plain of Esraelon, south of Jenīn. Some, however, identify it with Yebla, about seven miles north-west of Beth-shean.

**and her towns:** i.e. the districts of which these cities were the centres. The importance of these cities lay in the fact that they completely commanded the Plain of Esraelon, the battlefield of Palestine, and must have cut off the northern tribes from free communication with those of the centre and south. It

- 28 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.
- 29 And Ephraim drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer ; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.
- 30 Zebulun drove not out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol ; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributary.
- 31 Asher drove not out the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of
- 32 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 drove not out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath ; but he dwelt among

is strange that none of these cities were really in the 'lot' of Manasseh. Three were in the territory of Issachar (not mentioned in this chapter) ; the other, Dor, was in Asher. Cf. Joshua xvii. 11.

28. The Philistines later took the country as far as Beth-shean, and David seems to have secured these cities for Israel by his victories over these people. It was under Solomon that the Canaanites were put to forced labour (see 1 Kings ix. 20, 21).

29. **Ephraim.** Cf. Joshua xvi. 10.

**Gezer** (the modern Tell Jezar), on the edge of the Shephelah, a few miles east of Ekron. The Canaanites retained the city until it was taken by Egypt and given to Solomon's Egyptian wife, when Solomon rebuilt it as a fortress (1 Kings ix. 15-17).

i. 30-33. *The invasion of North Palestine.*

30. **Zebulun.** Cf. Joshua xix. 10-16.

**Kitron** is mentioned here only, **Nahalol** here and in Joshua xix. 15, xxi. 35. Neither can be identified now.

31. **Asher.** Cf. Joshua xix. 24-31.

**Acco** (now 'Akka), **Zidon** (now Saida), and **Achzib** (now ez-Zib, north of 'Akka) are all on the coast. The sites of the other cities mentioned can only be conjectured.

33. **Naphtali.** Cf. Joshua xix. 32-39.

**Beth-shemesh** (not identified), and **Beth-anath** (perhaps the modern 'Ainītha, six miles north from Kedesh Naphtali [Qades]), were ancient sacred places, the former dedicated to the Sun (Shemesh), the latter to the goddess Anath (see iii. 31).

the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became tributary unto them.

And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the 34 hill country: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley: but the Amorites would dwell in 35 mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributary. And the border of the Amorites was 36 from the ascent of Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

And the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to 2

**34, 35. Dan.** Cf. Joshua xix. 40 ff. The fate of Dan differed from that of most of the other tribes, in that they were pushed back into the hills and never succeeded in subduing the natives. Discouraged by their failure, a number of them afterwards went north and settled near the source of the Jordan (see xviii). The Canaanites of the territory they had forsaken were later oppressed by the house of Joseph, according to verse 35, *lit.* ‘the hand of the house of Joseph was heavy on them.’

the Amorites are here mentioned for the first time (see verse 4).

mount Heres is mentioned here only.

Aijalon is the present Yālō, about thirteen miles from Jerusalem on the way to Jaffa.

Shaalbim is not known certainly. Selbit, about three miles from Yālō, has been suggested as the site.

#### i. 36. *The southern boundary of Palestine.*

**36. the ascent of Akrabbim** (i. e. ‘the pass of Scorpions’), generally identified with the modern Naqb-es-Safa on the road from Petra to Hebron. According to Joshua xv. 3 it was on the border of Judah and Edom, and there is no doubt that in this verse we must read ‘Edomites’ (as in the Greek translation) instead of ‘Amorites.’ The site of Sela (R.V. marg.) is not known.

The Edomites in Hebrew tradition figure as descendants of Esau, and thus akin to the Hebrews. As neighbours they are constantly mentioned from the time of Moses, until one of them (Herod) became king of the Jews.

**ii. 1-5. Transference of the RELIGIOUS centre from Gilgal to Bochim (Beth-el).** The tribes of Israel have now settled in Palestine, and begun (rather than finished) their work of conquest. The

Bochim. And he said, I made you to go up out of

camp at Gilgal (i. 1) is deserted save for the presence of the Deity. Yahweh still remains in His abode on Mount Sinai, whence He will come later to help the people in battle (v. 4), and whither Elijah will go later still to visit Him (1 Kings xix. 8 ff.); but the ark has been among the people, and the ‘angel of Yahweh’ has accompanied them (Exod. xxxii. 34). The ark is mentioned once only in Judges, and is there at Beth-el (xx. 27), and thither the angel now goes up. The original tradition regarding this is told in verses 1<sup>a</sup> and 5<sup>b</sup>. ‘And the angel of Yahweh came up from Gilgal to Beth-el (see below), and they sacrificed there to Yahweh.’

Between the two parts of this tradition the editor introduces an explanation of Yahweh’s reason for not giving the Israelites complete possession of the land. This he does in the form of an address by the angel. Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to make no covenant with the Canaanites, but to break down their altars. (In chapter i we were told they were unable to conquer the Canaanites, because of their superior strength, especially in the plains.) Because they have not done this they are blamed, and warned that their allies will be adversaries to them and the local religions will be a snare to them. These words thus form a general introduction to the many troubles narrated in the following chapters. (For another introduction and explanation see iii. 1 ff.)

1. **the angel of the LORD** in this book is Yahweh Himself, appearing in a form perceptible by the human senses. He appears to Gideon (vi. 11–22), and to Manoah (xiii), both times apparently in human form, and is mentioned in the Song of Deborah (v. 23). In vi. 14–16 and xiii. 22 it is clear that he is identical with Yahweh.

**Gilgal**, between the Jordan and Jericho, was the first camp of the Hebrews on the west of the Jordan (Joshua iv. 19). At the present day a hill and a well in this neighbourhood have preserved the name in an Arabic form, Jiljūlia (three miles east of Jericho).

**Bochim** (‘weepers’ or ‘weeping’). As the place only received this name on account of the action that follows, the Greek version is probably right in reading ‘Beth-el’ here (see i. 23). This town is mentioned as a religious centre in xx. 18, xxi. 2; cf. 1 Sam. vii. 16, x. 3; and the ark was put there according to xx. 27.

ii. 1<sup>b</sup>–5<sup>a</sup>. *The address of the angel of Yahweh.*

**I made you to go up.** The Hebrew means ‘I will bring you up.’ The beginning of the speech is incomplete, and the simplest thing is to restore ‘and’ before this sentence. This, according to Hebrew idiom, would give the verb the perfect sense which is

Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers ; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you : and ye shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land ; ye shall break down their altars : but ye have not hearkened unto my voice : why have ye done this ? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you ; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall 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, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim : and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

[D] Now when Joshua had sent the people away, the

required. The reference to Yahweh's oath to the forefathers is frequent in Deuteronomy.

2. The covenant involving the destruction of Canaanitish altars is mentioned in Exod. xxxiv. 10-15.

**why have ye done this?** rather, 'What have you done ?'

3. **Wherefore I also said:** on another occasion. Cf. Joshua xxiii. 13; Num. xxxiii. 55, from which passages the words 'as thorns' are supplied in the English version to make sense.

**and their gods shall be a snare unto you.** The figure is taken from such passages as Exod. xxiii. 33, xxxiv. 12; Deut. vii. 16.

5. **Bochim.** As the name does not occur again, we may gather that it was merely given on this occasion, but did not prevail. There was a spot, however, near Beth-el, called Allon Bachuth ('tree of weeping'), connected by a tradition in Gen. xxxv. 8 with the burial of Rebekah's nurse : cf. also the 'valley of Baca,' Ps. lxxxiv. 6.

### ii. 6—iii. 6. *Introduction.*

In this section the Deuteronomic editor announces, partly in his own words, partly adopting the words he found in the book before him, the general course of the history he is going to write in detail later. He begins where Joshua left off (in Joshua xxiv. 28), and passes briefly from the time of that leader to the days of those who followed the survivors of his generation. These forsake Yahweh and serve the native gods. Yahweh is angry, and delivers the Hebrews into the hand of their enemies, but in their

children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance  
 7 to possess the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the  
 8 LORD, that he had wrought for Israel. And Joshua 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 hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain

distress raises up ‘judges’ who deliver them. After the death of a judge, however, the people are worse in their ingratitude than before, and Yahweh determines not to enable them to destroy the Canaanites. Lists are then given of the peoples on their borders, and of those among whom they are placed who oppressed the people or ensnared them by their alliances.

ii. 6-10. *Transition from the time of Joshua to the period of the Judges.* Verses 6-9 are identical with Joshua xxiv. 28-30, except for one or two variations.

**6. Now when Joshua sent the people away.** This act is unintelligible here, because not connected with any other event. In Joshua it follows the great gathering at Shechem.

**unto his inheritance to possess the land:** to his allotted portion to enter into possession of the land.

**7. the elders that outlived Joshua:** lit. ‘who prolonged days after Joshua,’ an expression common in Deuteronomic writings (Deut. iv. 40, v. 33, &c.).

**who had seen:** in Joshua ‘who had known’ (cf. verse 10).

**9. in the border:** i.e. ‘within the territory.’ It is mentioned in Joshua xix. 49, 50.

**Timnath-heres** (‘territory of the Sun’). In Joshua ‘heres’ is inverted into ‘serah’ to avoid the heathen allusion to Sun-worship. Some identify the place with the modern Tibnah, about twelve and a half miles ENE. of Lydda, others with Kefr Hārith, nine miles south of Shechem. **Mount Gaash** must be a hill south of one of these sites. It is otherwise unknown.

**the hill country of Ephraim.** The hill-country or mountain range of Ephraim was that part of the highlands of Palestine which extended from north of Jerusalem to the Plain of Esdraelon. With plains on the north-east and west, and a related people (the Judahites) on the southern continuation of their mountains, the Ephraimites seem to have been the most firmly seated people of the Hebrews, and the least disturbed by invasions

of Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered 10 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.

And the children of Israel did that which was evil 11 in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baalim: and they 12

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of neighbouring tribes. It was doubtless owing to this in part that they regarded themselves as being superior to other Hebrew tribes, as when they rebuked Gideon (viii. 1-3) and Jephthah (xii. 1 ff.), though in the latter case they learned that their superiority ceased when they left their own hills.

**10. all that generation:** that is, the generation of those who survived Joshua.

ii. 11-13. *The faithlessness of Israel.* In verses 11 and 12 we have the first part of the formula which is used by the post-Deuteronomic writer (see Introduction), with but slight variations, to tell how after the death of each of the greater judges the Hebrews ceased to give all their worship to Yahweh alone (see iii. 7, 12, iv. 1, vi. 1, viii. 33, x. 6, xiii. 1). Here it comes after the death of Joshua, but is stated in general terms as an introduction to the whole work. The sin of the Hebrews is described as ingratitude. Yahweh had brought them up from Egypt, yet they gave part of their worship to the Canaanitish gods. Even the worshippers of Yahweh at this period believed in the existence of other gods, although they recognized that their worship was due to their own God only. While they knew that Yahweh had done so much for them in the past, they thought that the local deities would do more for them in their new settlements, hence their apostasy.

**11. the Baalim** were the local gods. Baal (of which Baalim is the plural) means 'possessor,' and is used for 'husband' as possessor of his wife, and for a god as possessor of a land, district, or city. Except therefore when speaking generally of a god, it was necessary to identify him by some added word, and this word was usually the name of his possession, whether a place, as the Baal of Tyre, the Baal of Peor, &c., or a part of the animal kingdom, as Baal-zebub ('the Baal of flies,' if the word has been correctly transmitted). Or he might be called the Baal of a covenant ('Baal-berith,' see viii. 33). The Baal of a place had sometimes a proper name of his own; thus Melkart was the name of the Baal of Tyre. When the Hebrews gained possession of Palestine their God Yahweh became the Baal of the country from their point of view, and so the word enters into some of

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: and they  
 13 provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the  
 14 LORD, and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. 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 stand  
 15 before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the

their proper names, as Jerubbaal and Saul's son Eshbaal. In later years, when the term had become offensive, writers changed Eshbaal ('man of Baal') into Ishbosheth ('man of shame'), and the name of Jonathan's son Mephibosheth was probably Mephiba'al originally. The Baals were generally nature-gods. Their altars were on high-places, and offerings were made of animals and the produce of the soil. Sacred posts (*asherahs*) and stones (*massebahs*) were accessories to the altars. The Baals had their priests, whose extravagances appear in the story of the sacrifice on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 20 ff.). Gross immorality and the sacrifice of human life were sometimes associated with the worship of the Baals.

13. This verse being a mere reiteration in slightly varying form of the preceding, it is likely that the editor has inserted it as it stands from the earlier work. It follows very naturally on verse 10.

**the Ashtaroth:** should be read Ashtoreth, this being the Hebrew name of the goddess Astarte, i. e. the Phoenician 'Ashtart,' worshipped also in Babylonia as 'Ishtar,' in Arabia as 'Attar,' in Syria as 'Athar.' In this verse 'the Baal and the Ashtoreth' is used as a general expression for the native deities male and female.

ii. 14, 15. *Yahweh's anger and punishment of Israel.* This is the second part of the Deuteronomic formula (see verses 11-13) in general terms. In the other places where it is used the name of the particular people into whose power Yahweh gave Israel is substituted. (See iii. 8, 12, iv. 2, vi. 1, x. 7, xiii. 1.)

15. **they went out:** i. e. to war, as in Deut. xxviii. 7; 2 Sam. xi. 1, &c., and see Judges xi. 3.

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. And the **LORD** raised up 16 judges, which saved them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they hearkened not unto their 17 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 so. And when the **LORD** raised them up judges, 18 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 vexed them. But it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they 19

as the **LORD** had sworn: according to the traditions recorded in Deut. xxviii, &c.

**16.** Yahweh raised up judges who delivered the Hebrews.

**17.** This verse seems to be a note introduced later into the Deuteronomic introduction. The Deuteronomic editor in verses 18, 19, and through the book generally, gives the impression that the Hebrews worshipped Yahweh during the lifetime of the judges, and only fell away again after their death. But a stricter view in later times judged the setting up of an image even for Yahweh-worship as sin, and such a story as that of Gideon's ephod (viii. 27) would lead to the opinion expressed in this verse, which may have been only a marginal note at first, but has now become part of the text.

**they went a whoring after other gods.** This figure for idolatry is worked out at length in Hosea i-iii, and occurs in Exod. xxxiv. 15, 16; Deut. xxxi. 16, &c.

**18-22.** Yahweh was with the judges whom He had raised up, and helped them, but when, after their death, the people stubbornly returned to the worship of the local gods, He was angry and declared He would not after this drive out the Canaanitish peoples unconquered by Joshua, and thus He would test Israel to know whether they would walk in the way of their (pious) fathers or not.

**18. it repented the **LORD**.** The correct translation is, 'Yahweh was sorry,' or 'was moved to pity.'

turned back, and dealt more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them ; they ceased not from their doings, nor from  
 20 their stubborn way. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel ; and he said, Because this nation have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice ;  
 21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them  
 22 of the nations 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  
 23 it, or not. So the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily ; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

3 Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many as had not known  
 2 all the wars of Canaan ; only that the generations of the

**20. my covenant:** already referred to in ii. 2.

**21.** ‘Since they have transgressed My covenant (or command), I on My part will not continue driving out the peoples of Palestine, as I did while Joshua lived and the people served Me alone ; I will in future not drive out a single man before them among the nations who were not conquered at the time when Joshua died.’ Who these nations were is explained more in detail in iii. 3 ff.

**22.** Another reason for Yahweh’s action is given in iii. 1, 2.

**23.** This verse cannot be by the same author as verse 21, for there Yahweh’s determination is made *after* Joshua’s death.

iii. 1-6. *The unconquered nations and Israel’s relation to them.*

**1, 2.** The first half of verse 1 connects with ii. 22 (the purpose of *proving* Israel being repeated), and is continued in verse 3. The words between seem to be a note or notes introduced into the text. In them is given another (see ii. 22) explanation of Yahweh’s purpose in not utterly destroying the Canaanites, namely, that He did not wish the people to settle down into ease and ignorance of warfare.

The question why the Hebrew tribes were not able to annihilate the Canaanites is one that evidently exercised the minds of later

children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as beforetime knew nothing thereof; *namely*, 3 the five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Zidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath. And they were for to prove Israel by them, 4 to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. And the children of Israel dwelt 5

writers. Thus we have in chapter i the *fact* mentioned that they *could* not, because of the superiority of the inhabitants. In the preface (ii. 1 ff.) this failure is ascribed to Yahweh, and a reason given for His action; in ii. 22 another reason is assigned, and in these verses still another.

3. The **Philistines** formed a confederacy of five cities (Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron), hence the 'five lords.' Cf. Joshua xiii. 3; 1 Sam. vi. 16-18.

all the **Canaanites** must mean all who had not yet been conquered, or the term 'Canaanite' is used in the restricted sense (used elsewhere in certain passages) of those who dwelt in the west and south-west lowlands of Palestine (cf. i. 1).

the **Zidonians**: Joshua xiii. 4, standing here, as in Homer, for the Phoenicians, as Zidon was the chief city of the Phoenician confederacy for a long period.

the **Hivites** that dwelt in mount **Lebanon**. The Hivites dwelt in the interior of Palestine, not in the north. We must read 'Hittites.' The same mistake is made in Joshua xi. 3, where the Greek translation has the correct name; cf. i. 26.

**Baal-hermon** should probably be 'Baal-gad under mount Hermon,' as in Joshua xiii. 5, xi. 17, a place on the west side of Hermon.

**Hamath**: the modern Hamā on the Orontes, north of Damascus.

the entering in of **Hamath**: i.e. the frontier or boundary of Hamath is mentioned several times in the O.T. as the northern boundary of Israel (Amos vi. 14; 1 Kings viii. 65; 2 Kings xiv. 25, &c.).

5. In verse 3 the nations that lay on the boundaries of Israel were enumerated. In this verse are mentioned those *among* whom they lived. Ten times in the O.T. these six peoples are named together, and generally in the same order. In four other passages the Gergashites are added.

among the Canaanites ; the Hittite, and the Amorite, and  
6 the Perizzite, 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.

7 And the children of Israel did that which was evil in

For the Canaanites, Amorites, Perizzites, and Jebusites, see i. 1, 4.

The Hittites in this verse are most probably the people of that name who lived in the neighbourhood of Hebron (Gen. xxiii). It is doubtful whether these were in any way related to the Hittites of the north (see i. 26 and iii. 3).

The Hivites were also pre-Israelitish inhabitants of Palestine. Their chief settlements seem to have been in Central Palestine (Joshua ix. 7; Gen. xxxiv. 2).

### iii. 7—xvi. 31. THE JUDGES,

This section mentions thirteen men who saved or judged or ruled over Israel. Of these Shamgar was probably introduced later into the Deuteronomic book (see iii. 31); the account of Othniel (iii. 7-11) was composed by the Deuteronomic editor; Tola (x. 2), Jair (x. 3), Ibzan (xii. 9), Elon (xii. 11), and Abdon (xii. 14) were men whose influential position was known from their tombs, but of whom no deeds are recorded. The great body of the section is occupied with the record (taken from an earlier work) of the deeds of six men, four of whom—Ehud, Barak (with Deborah), Gideon and Jephthah—saved their tribes from oppressors; while Abimelech did not save any one, but his deeds are incorporated in the book because he was a son of Gideon and established a kingdom of his own in Central Palestine; and the popular stories of Samson are introduced apparently because his wild deeds harassed an enemy of the Southern Hebrews. (For further details see Introduction, and notes to each story.)

iii. 7-11. *Othniel.* An examination of these verses shows that they contain the usual Deuteronomic writer's formula—Israel's sin, Yahweh's anger and punishment, the people's repentance, the appearance of a deliverer and consequent rest of the land for a term of years, the death of the judge. In the other stories of the greater judges the formula is the setting for traditions derived from older sources, but here we have nothing else but the names Othniel and Cushan-rishathaim, king of Aram. Apparently there were no traditions extant as to the deeds of Othniel, and he was introduced here to give Judah a 'judge.'

the sight of the LORD, and forgat the LORD their God, 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 of Mesopotamia : and the children of Israel served 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 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 Mesopotamia into his hand : and his hand prevailed against Cushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Whether the invasion of the Aramaeans (who lived far away in the north) and their defeat by Othniel are historical or not, we cannot tell in the present state of our knowledge of the history of this period.

7. See ii. 11-22, especially ii. 13.

**Asheroth** are usually sacred trees or posts near an altar. Here, however, the word is the plural of the name of a goddess, 'Asherah,' who appears in inscriptions of Cyprus as a tree-goddess (so also in 1 Kings xviii. 19; 2 Kings xxiii. 4).

8. **Cushan-rishathaim** in its Hebrew form means 'Ethiopian of double wickedness,' and must be either a Hebrew perversion of a foreign name, or it is a descriptive term used of a king whose name has not been handed down.

**Mesopotamia** (in Hebrew, *Aram-naharaim*) is mentioned as Naharin in Egyptian inscriptions, and is the part of North Syria west of the Euphrates.

9. **Othniel the son of Kenaz.** See i. 13.

10. **the spirit of the LORD came upon him.** To the spirit of Yahweh is attributed in the O. T. whatever seems to be above the power of man, whether physical or spiritual, whether good or bad. Poetic, prophetic, artistic skill are due to its influence. Madness is caused by it. In this book it is used of purely physical force in the story of Samson (xiv. 6, 19, xv. 14), and of superhuman courage in great difficulties (here and in vi. 34, xi. 29).

**judged:** used here in the sense of 'delivered.'

11. **forty years:** i. e. a generation. See Introduction.

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  
 13 done that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek ; and he went and smote Israel, and they

iii. 12-30. *Ehud of Benjamin.* When the Hebrews crossed the Jordan, leaving only a few of their number east of that river, the peoples who had been in part dislodged by them began to return, and even pushed across the river in their wake. One of the first results was the capture of Jericho, which was now no longer the centre of Hebrew life, but only an outlying city of Benjamin. Yet it was an important place, for it commanded the roads from the Jordan to the hill-country of the south and centre of Palestine ; and Eglon, king of Moab, who with the help of the Ammonites and Amalekites had captured it, was able to oppress the Hebrews for eighteen years, or nearly half a generation. These were delivered by the assassination of Eglon. Ehud, a man of Benjamin, was sent with tribute to the Moabite king, and obtaining by stratagem a secret audience with him, killed him, escaped, and led an attack of Hebrews of the hill-country of Ephraim, who drove back the Moabites and secured rest for two generations.

The Deuteronomic framework is clear at the beginning in verses 12-15<sup>a</sup> and at the end in verses 29, 30. What comes between is taken from the older work.

**12. Eglon** is unknown but for this incident. The name occurs several times as that of a place (six times in Joshua x, and in xii. 12, xv. 39), but not of a person.

**Moab.** A people inhabiting the country east of the Dead Sea. According to Num. xxi. 26, the Amorites had robbed them of their territory, north of the Arnon, just before the arrival of the Hebrews. In Judges xi. 18 the Arnon is looked upon as the north boundary of Moab. The Hebrews, having conquered the Amorites, allotted the old Moabite territory north of Arnon to Reuben, thus creating in Moab an unfriendly feeling which manifested itself continually in later history. Moab is mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions about 1300 B.C. Hebrew tradition considered the people akin to the Hebrews (Gen. xix. 37, &c.). An inscription of Mesha, king of Moab in the ninth century B.C., is now in Paris. The dealings of the Hebrews with the Moabites before they entered Palestine are recorded in Num. xxi—xxiii.

**13. children of Ammon.** See x. 7.

Amalek appears in Gen. xxxvi. 12 as an Edomite tribe. It

possessed the city of palm trees. And the children of <sup>14</sup> Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the <sup>15</sup> LORD raised them up a saviour, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a man left-handed : [J] and the children of Israel sent a present by him unto Eglon the king of Moab. And Ehud made him a sword which had two edges, of a <sup>16</sup> cubit length ; and he girded it under his raiment upon his right thigh. And he offered the present unto Eglon <sup>17</sup> king of Moab : now Eglon was a very fat man. And <sup>18</sup> when he had made an end of offering the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. But he <sup>19</sup> himself turned back from the quarries that were by

was nomadic, and wandered chiefly in the desert land north of Sinai, but is found also in many other districts. Some of its clans, as the Kenites (cf. i. 16), joined the Hebrews, but the majority were continually fighting against them. They are mentioned again in vi. 3, 33, vii. 12, x. 12 (v. 14).

**the city of palm trees** : i. e. Jericho, as in i. 16.

**15. Ehud** appears as a clan-name in 1 Chron. vii. 10.

**Gera** was a clan of Benjamin (see Gen. xlvi. 21; cf. 1 Chron. viii. 3 ff.). Another member of it appears in the time of David (2 Sam. xvi. 5, &c.).

**a man left-handed** : *lit.* ‘lame in his right hand.’ Owing to this he carried his sword on his right thigh, where it was not looked for, and so escaped the notice of the king’s guards. For left-handedness in Benjamin see xx. 16.

**a present** : here, as in 2 Sam. viii. 2, 6, means tribute.

**16. a cubit** is explained in the Talmud as the length of the fore-arm minus the fingers. The word used here is not found in any other part of the O. T.

**upon his right thigh** : so that he could draw it with his left hand.

**18, 19.** Ehud sent away the carriers who had brought the tribute, he himself accompanying them a short distance and then returning.

**19. the quarries** : or ‘graven images’ (R. V. marg.), or ‘carved stones,’ probably a part of an ancient place of worship. The name **Gilgal** seems to mean a sacred circle of stones. Such circles have been found still existing in Palestine (see the reports

Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king. And he said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him. And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting by himself alone in his summer parlour. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the sword from his 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; and it came out behind. Then Ehud went forth into the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him,

of the Palestine Exploration Fund, also Conder, *Syrian Stone Lore*, and *Heth and Moab*.

**I have a secret errand unto thee, O king.** This must be the message he sent in to the king by the servants. His own entrance is mentioned in the next verse.

**and he (the king) said, Keep silence:** i.e. leave me in privacy; then the courtiers left, and Ehud was introduced. The words 'unto thee, O king,' however, seem to indicate that Ehud was already in his presence, and it is possible that this account was taken by the editor from one of his sources, and the first part of the next verse from the same tradition (but differently worded) in the other.

**20. summer parlour:** R. V. marg. 'upper chamber of cooling,' i.e. the room on the flat roof common in the East. It must, however, be regarded as completely enclosed, as the officials evidently could not see from the outside that he was dead when they were anxious about him (verses 24 ff.).

**he (the king) arose out of his seat.** This may be out of respect to the message of the Hebrew God, or it may be closely connected with what follows, to show how Ehud got an opportunity to kill him.

**22.** The last sentence of this verse is unintelligible as it stands. Neither the text nor the marginal readings are probable.

**23.** The word translated **porch** is utterly unknown. It evidently means something connected with the exit—porch, staircase, vestibule, or the like.

**the doors of the parlour:** i.e. the two wings of the door, as in xvi. 3.

and locked them. Now when he was gone out, his <sup>24</sup> 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. And they <sup>25</sup> tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took the key, and opened *them*: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. And Ehud escaped <sup>26</sup> while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirah. And it came to pass, when he <sup>27</sup> 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 <sup>28</sup> 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

**24.** **he covereth his feet:** a euphemism. ‘No doubt, he is relieving himself in the cabinet of the cool chamber.’

**25.** **till they were ashamed:** at their wits’ end, not being able to account for this long seclusion.

**26.** From the way in which the ‘carved stones’ (‘quarries’ in the English version) are mentioned here and in verse 19, it seems as if they were on the boundary beyond which one was out of the territory in actual possession of the Moabites. The form of the Hebrew sentences suggests that Ehud reached this boundary before the officials discovered that their king had been assassinated, and then was able to get to Seirah (where he was probably safe for the time).

The site of **Seirah** is unknown, but would naturally be on the eastern side of the hill-country of Ephraim.

**27, 28.** When Ehud came to Seirah he gave the signal for fighting (**blew a trumpet**, as in vi. 34), and his fellow tribesmen in the hill-country followed him as he led them down to the plains of the Jordan valley, when they learned what he had done.

**27. the hill country of Ephraim:** see ii. 9.

**28. Follow after me.** The Hebrew reads ‘Pursue after me,’ but the Greek version ‘Come down after me’ is better, and agrees with the latter part of the verse ‘and they went down after him.’

**the fords of Jordan against the Moabites:** or R. V. marg.,

against the Moabites, and suffered not a man to pass over. [D] And they smote of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, every lusty man, and every man 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.

[A] 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.

'toward Moab.' The meaning given in the text seems more in accordance with the use of the same phrase in vii. 24 and xii. 5.

**29.** The numbers are, as usual, large, and intended for effect, not for accuracy. The number **ten thousand** occurs again in i. 4, iv. 6, vii. 3, xx. 34.

**every lusty man, and every man of valour:** all (of them) vigorous and valiant men.

iii. 31. *Shamgar.* In this verse we have the first of the so-called 'minor judges' (the others are Tola in x. 2, Jair in x. 3, Ibzan in xii. 9, Elon in xii. 11, Abdon in xii. 14). The Deuteronomic formula is absent from the accounts of these men. The others are brought into the chronological scheme of the book, but here there is no chronology. It is most probable that his name, taken from v. 6, was introduced later than the Deuteronomic compilation to make up the number of twelve Israelitish heroes to correspond with the number of the tribes, since Abimelech was not regarded as worthy to be counted a judge.

**31. Shamgar the son of Anath.** The first name is not Hebrew, but resembles a Hittite name 'Sangar,' which occurs in Assyrian inscriptions of the ninth century B.C. The second is that of a Canaanite goddess, of whom there is a representation on an Egyptian monument in the British Museum.

**the Philistines.** See iii. 3 and chapter xiv.

**an ox goad** as used in Syria to-day is a long stick with a blade at one end for cleaning the ploughshare, and often a spike at the other for pricking the animal drawing the plough.

Similar stories are told of Samson (Judges xv. 15) and of Shammah ben Agee (in 2 Sam. xiii. 11 ff.). It may be that the act of this latter, owing to similarity of name, has been transferred to Shamgar, who was only known from the mention of his name in the Song of Deborah, where he is certainly not represented as having 'saved Israel.'

[D] And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. 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 Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the

iv-v. *Deborah and Barak.* The Deuteronomic formula here is contained in iv. 1-3, 23, 24, v. 31<sup>b</sup>. The rest is taken from the older book. The compiler of this older work had as usual (see Introd.) two accounts of the same events before him, but as one is in prose and the other in verse, he has not blended them into one story, but given first the prose version then the poetical, connecting the two by the words in v. 1.

iv. 1-24. *Prose story of Barak.* Jabin, a Canaanite king in Hazor, oppresses the Hebrews for twenty years, until Deborah a prophetess incites Barak of Naphtali to rouse the Hebrews to fight for their freedom. He gathers his army at Tabor, and Sisera the general of Jabin, who has his troops in Harosheth, advances to the river Kishon. Barak comes down from Tabor to the plain of Esdraelon and defeats Sisera, who, as he flees on foot, is invited to rest in the tent of Jael, the wife of a friendly Kenite chief, and while asleep is murdered by her. From the day of this battle the Hebrews gradually prevail more and more against Jabin, until at last they utterly destroy his power.

iv. 1-3. *The author's introduction as to other stories (see Introd.).*

1. when Ehud was dead. The story of Barak is thus directly connected with that of Ehud, the mention of Shamgar having been introduced later.

2. **Jabin king of Canaan.** The general term Canaan is used here instead of Hazor (see Joshua xi. 1-5 and verse 17 here), just as Judah is put for Caleb in i. 11, and 'children of Israel' is used continually in this book instead of the name of the particular tribe concerned. According to Joshua xi. 1-13 Jabin was defeated by Joshua and Hazor burned.

**Hazor** is mentioned in an Egyptian papyrus, now in the British Museum, and in the Amarna letters. The exact site is not known, but it was apparently near Kedesh-Naphtali, with which city it is mentioned in Joshua xix. 36; 2 Kings xv. 29.

**Sisera.** This name occurs again only in the lists of Nethinim (Ezra ii. 53; Neh. vii. 55), who were probably foreigners.

**Harosheth of the Gentiles**, i. e. Harosheth of the nations or foreigners, thus distinguished probably from a Hebrew Harosheth (cf. Isa. ix. 1), is identified with the present el-Hārathīyeh on the

LORD : for he had nine hundred chariots of iron ; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

4 [J] Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth,  
 5 she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under  
 the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el  
 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-

north side of the Kishon, not far from Megiddo, though some would place it near the Huleh ('waters of Merom'). Chariots would be of more use in the former site.

**3. chariots of iron.** Judging by the representations on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments, these were probably two-wheeled vehicles of wood, open behind, with fittings and ornaments of iron. Each carried a driver, a fighter, and a shield-bearer. As the plains (Esdraelon, Sharon, &c.) were the key of Palestine, the possession of chariots by the Canaanites was long a hindrance to the full occupation of the land by the Hebrews. David captured many of them, and Solomon adopted them for his own army.

**4. Deborah** ('a bee') is called a prophetess, not in any technical sense but as in the case of Miriam (Exod. xv. 20), because she was inspired by Yahweh.

**she judged Israel**, i. e. sat as arbitrator in disputes. As there were no courts, it was the custom to bring disputes to some person renowned for wisdom. The decisions of the 'judge' were enforced by the power of public opinion. The title 'judge' in the usual sense of this book ('deliverer') belongs to Barak.

**5. dwelt** (better, as in marg. 'sat') **under the palm tree of Deborah**, for arbitrating, as was customary in early days among many peoples. In cities these meetings for justice were held in the city-gate.

It is curious that a tradition in Gen. xxxv. 8 knows of a sacred tree in this same neighbourhood, associated with the memory of Deborah the nurse of Rebekah. It is possible that the writer of this verse confused the two persons of the same name. The Deborah of Judges apparently belonged to Issachar (v. 15), and verses 6-9 seem to indicate that she lived in the north near Kedesh, not in the south.

**Ramah** (the present er-Ram), five miles north of Jerusalem, and about six from Beth-el.

**Beth-el**, see i. 23.

**6. Barak** ('a flash of lightning') is mentioned only in this story, unless the Greek and Syriac translations are right in 1 Sam. xii. 11

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? 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 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 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 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 went up with him. Now Heber the Kenite had severed himself from the Kenites, even from

in reading 'Barak' instead of the Hebrew 'Bedan.' The name occurs in Carthaginian as 'Barkas,' and in the inscriptions of Palmyra and South Arabia.

**Kedesh-naphtali**, now Kades, about four miles from the entrance of the Jordan into the Huleh ('waters of Merom').

**mount Tabor**: the conical hill with a flat top at the north-east end of the plain of Esdraelon. It is now called Jebel et-Tōr, and its summit is 1,843 feet above sea-level.

**children of Naphtali and . . . children of Zebulun.** The two tribes settled in the country west of the Sea of Galilee. The omission here (as in ch. i.) of Issachar, in whose territory all the fighting takes place, seems to show that having for its lot the plain where the Canaanites were too strong to be conquered, they had become absorbed in other tribes before this story was written. In the older poetical account (v. 15) they are mentioned.

7. **the river Kishon**: see v. 21.

10. **there went up**, evidently to Tabor in accordance with Deborah's instructions. (See verse 12.)

11. A very awkward introduction here of information necessary for the events in verses 17 ff.

**the Kenites.** 'Kain' in the marg. is the name of the ancestor put for the tribe, as in Num. xxiv. 22. For Kenites see i. 16.

the children of Hobab the brother in law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far as the oak in Zaanannim,  
 12 which is by Kedesh. And they told Sisera that Barak  
 13 the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor. 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 Gentiles, unto the river  
 14 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 Tabor, and ten thousand  
 15 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  
 16 chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued

**Hobab the brother in law of Moses**, translated correctly in margin ‘father in law,’ the Hebrew word meaning ‘the wife’s father.’ Hobab is mentioned in only one other passage—Num. x. 29 (but see on Judges i. 16); in other places Moses’ father-in-law is called Jethro. What the connexion between these two names is we cannot tell.

**the oak in Zaanannim**: another of the sacred trees. The proper name is uncertain, but probably was (as in R. V. margin of Joshua xix. 33) Bezaanannim.

iv. 12-16. *The battle.* Sisera, hearing that Barak was at Mount Tabor, brought his army with his nine hundred chariots down to the Kishon. Barak advanced with his ten thousand men. Yahweh fought for Israel, the enemies were discomfited, Sisera fled on foot. Barak pursued the remnant of the army and chariots to Harosheth and annihilated them. Such is our scanty information as to this great battle.

It is impossible to say in what part of the plain the armies met. Sisera would reach the Kishon, coming from Harosheth, some sixteen miles from Tabor. He probably turned northwards towards the mount, and the scene of battle was slowly but surely transferred nearer to the river again, as the Hebrews pressed upon their enemy.

15. **the LORD discomfited Sisera**: probably an allusion to the events mentioned in v. 20-22.

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

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

iv. 17-23. *Sisera's flight and death.*

17. Sisera, seeing that all was lost, fled himself northwards towards Kedesh, and came across the encampment of the Heberites who at that time were wandering in the district. These had taken no part in the fighting.

18. a rug : perhaps rather 'tent-curtain.'

19. a bottle of milk : i. e. the goat-skin in which milk was kept.

21. Women generally drive in the tent-pins when camp is pitched.

In the Song (v. 26 f.) Sisera is killed as he stands.

22. Verse 16 certainly gives the impression that Barak led the pursuit of the Canaanite army to Harosheth. If this be so, it could only be two or three days after the battle that he arrived at Jael's tent. Our uncertainty, however, as to the identity of some

man whom thou seekest. And he came unto her; and, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the tent-pin was in his  
 23 temples. [D] So God subdued on that day Jabin the king  
 24 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.

5 [J] Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

of the places mentioned in the story is so great that we cannot be sure of this.

24. The defeat of Sisera was the beginning of a series of victories by the Hebrews over Jabin. The later successes are not detailed, for the story of Barak the 'judge' has been told.

v. *The Song of deliverance.* The song that follows is recognized by almost all scholars as one of the earliest pieces of Hebrew literature in the O. T. Such songs have existed in early English literature as well as in Hebrew. Doubtless in Palestine, as in England, they were sung at feasts and tribal gatherings. Collections of Hebrew poetry seem to have been made by the Hebrews. David commanded that the people should be taught (to recite) the lament he composed on the death of Saul and Jonathan, and the compiler of the Book of Samuel found it written in a work called 'the Book of Jashar' (2 Sam. i. 18). A fragment of poetry from the same book is quoted in Joshua x. 12, 13, and another in 1 Kings viii. 12, 13 (according to the Greek version). Other specimens of this poetry are to be found in Num. xxi, one being quoted from another collection of songs called 'the book of the Wars of Yahweh' (verses 14, 15). Such songs were doubtless passed on orally long before they were written down. Unfortunately the antiquity of the song has made it very difficult to understand. Many old words pass out of use altogether and their meaning is forgotten, others change their meaning, the forms used in inflections change. The consequence here is that an enormous literature has grown up around the interpretation of the song, and in spite of much ingenuity thus brought to bear on its meaning we must often confess we cannot translate parts.

As regards the contents, it is clear that it records the same events as those of which a prose account is given in ch. iv; but with some striking differences. The difference between such a song as has been described above and a prose narrative, which

For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,

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is more of the nature of a chronicle, is sufficient to account for a difference of emphasis on certain events. But there still remain to be explained the following variations, which seem to indicate different traditions. (1) The entire omission in the song of any reference to Jabin, King of Hazor, and the presentation of Sisera, not as a general, but as himself a king (verses 19, 20). (2) Here Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, Zebulun and Issachar take part in the battle, while Reuben, Gad, Dan, and Asher are blamed because they did not come; while in the prose story Zebulun and Naphtali only are called (iv. 10). (3) In the song Jael strikes Sisera as he drinks, and he falls dead; in iv. 21 she kills him as he lies asleep.

The authorship of such early songs is often unknown, and such is the case here. It has been ascribed to Deborah on account of verse 7, which the English version translates 'I Deborah arose,' whereas if translated as ancient Hebrew it should be 'thou Deborah didst arise.'

So far as form is concerned, it consists of several descriptive scenes most graphic and vigorous, and three apostrophes. The latter are in verses 2-3, 9-10 (and 11?), and 31. The scenes are verses 4-5, Yahweh's march up to Palestine; 6-8, the miserable state to which the Hebrews had been reduced; 12-18, the conduct of the Hebrew tribes when Deborah and Barak sought to rouse them to action; 19-22, the battle; 25-27, the death of Sisera; 28-30, the home of Sisera and the hopes of his mother and her princesses. To these should be added the curse of Meroz (verse 23) and the contrasting blessing of Jael (24).

### v. 2, 3. *Apostrophe.*

2. The first two Hebrew words are translated by the English version **For that the leaders took the lead**, in accordance with one of the Greek versions. This can only be supported by the fact that there is a noun from the same root in Arabic meaning 'head of a people,' and a verb meaning 'to ascend.' On the other hand, the Hebrew noun in the other passages of the O. T. where it occurs (Deut. xxxii. 42; Num. vi. 5; Ezek. xliv. 20) means 'long hair' or 'locks,' and the verb 'to loosen, free from restraint' (Lev. x. 6, xxi. 10; Exod. xxxii. 25, &c.). The preposition at the beginning is not used to indicate that for which one blesses, but means 'by, with,' or indicates time. The alternatives therefore are 'by the loosing of long hair . . . bless Yahweh,' or 'when long hair is loosed,' &c., and the words allude probably to the vows made to Yahweh (cf. as above Num. vi. 5) for victory. The translation in the A. V. 'for the avenging of Israel' agrees with the Syriac rendering and the Targum, but the early Hebrew words never have this meaning.

For that the people offered themselves willingly,  
Bless ye the LORD.

- 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,

In the second part of the verse there is the same ambiguity in the use of the preposition as above.

**For that the people offered themselves willingly** may also be rendered ‘when the people offer free-will offerings,’ or ‘by the offering of the people,’ &c.

3. Not only shall the Israelites bless Yahweh, but kings and rulers (especially those who had fought against them, verse 19) shall hear and note that Israel praises Yahweh its God for the victory. At a later time the prophet calls on a larger audience (‘Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,’ Isa. i. 2) to witness the ingratitude of Israel to Yahweh.

**Hear . . . give ear :** a frequent parallelism in poetry (Gen. iv. 23; Num. xxiii. 18, &c.).

**Kings and princes** (as ‘rulers’) also occur together in Ps. ii. 2; Prov. viii. 15, xxxi. 4; Hab. i. 10.

**I, even I.** The repetition of the pronoun is very emphatic. ‘I for my part.’ Some interpreters refer it not to the author, but as in some psalms to the people, Israel.

The word used for **will sing** here is not the same as in verse 1, but refers rather to the melody than the words.

**the Lord, the God of Israel.** The one fact that in the time of Samuel and David made a united kingdom possible was that all the Hebrew tribes acknowledged Yahweh as their God. In the time of the Judges, however, this was not sufficient to do more than induce some of the tribes to act together for the time in repelling a common enemy.

v. 4, 5. *The approach of Yahweh.* We are so accustomed to think of Yahweh as the God of Israel that we may overlook the fact that according to Exod. vi. 3 (cf. iii. 13 ff.) the Hebrews had never known their God by this name until just before they left Egypt. The revelation of Yahweh to Moses came when he was among the Midianites, sojourning in the peninsula of Sinai ; the law was given by Yahweh later, from His seat on Mount Sinai (or Horeb) ; and as a deity He was associated with a particular land ; it was still in Sinai that He remained until His people had secured their new land in Palestine and Yahweh’s seat was transferred to

When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,  
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,  
Yea, the clouds dropped water.

The mountains flowed down at the presence of the 5  
LORD,

Even yon Sinai at the presence of the LORD, the  
God of Israel.

the hill of Zion. But this was not yet. The Angel of Yahweh was with the Hebrews, and the ark was the visible sign of His presence. Long after this time Elijah retreated from the evil of his country to 'Horeb, the mount of God,' and there met Yahweh (1 Kings xix. 8 ff.).

The poet in these verses tells how Yahweh marched out from His distant abode to come and stand by His people in battle, and in few but vigorous sentences describes the awe of nature as He passes.

**4. when thou wentest forth** to battle, as in ii. 15, iv. 14. This verb is coupled with the next (**thou marchedst out**), also in Hab. iii. 12, 13; Ps. lxviii. 7.

**Seir**, sometimes called the 'hill-country of Seir,' is the mountainous district on the east side of a line drawn from the south end of the Dead Sea to the head of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. According to Gen. xxxvi. 8 it was the abode of Esau (cf. Deut. ii. 5), who succeeded the Horites (Gen. xiv. 6; Deut. ii. 12).

**the field** (or 'territory') of **Edom** is the same as Seir; cf. Gen. xxxvi. 8, 9.

**the heavens also dropped**, or dripped. A Greek translation suggests an original verb meaning 'was shaken,' which would be very natural, for in those days the heaven was regarded as a solid covering for the earth, and the figure would be similar to that in 2 Sam. xxii. 8.

**5. the mountains flowed down**, or 'quaked' (marg.). Both meanings come from the same consonants in the Hebrew verb, but require different vowels. It is impossible to tell now which was the original. It seems, however, natural that the solid bodies, earth, heaven, and mountains, should shake in awe, while the clouds should fall as water.

**Even yon Sinai**: literally 'this Sinai,' or 'this is Sinai.' In the former sense it is unusual, though possible as equivalent to 'yon Sinai.' If the second and more usual sense is taken the words are probably a note introduced into the text. The words are found in Ps. lxviii. 8, but the text there is doubtful.

- 6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,  
   In the days of Jael, the high ways were unoccupied,  
   And the travellers walked through byways.
- 7 The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,
- 

v. 6-8. *The wretchedness of the Hebrews.* In the days before Deborah stirred them to battle existence had been made almost intolerable for the Hebrews. We have learned from ch. i that between and among the tribal settlements were Canaanite cities unconquered, hence communication with one another was difficult at any time, and had now become almost impossible, because the kings (verse 19) of these cities conspired to occupy the roads against them. Caravans ceased, foot-passengers dared not travel on the beaten tracks, but were compelled to make their way along dangerous and devious paths. Unwalled settlements were exposed to attacks which they could not repel, and so were abandoned or destroyed, provisions for the peasants failed, and though there were many stout men among them, they dared not show a weapon in their own defence.

6. Why are **Shamgar the son of Anath** and **Jael** mentioned here? Of the former we know nothing at all. He was made one of the judges centuries later by an author who probably took him to be referred to as such in this passage. The deeds ascribed to him in iii. 31 seem to belong rightly to another man, of a somewhat similar name (see note to iii. 31). Of Jael we know that she was not a Hebrew but a Kenite, belonging to a family that had severed itself from the clan in the south (iv. 11), and that her husband's house was at peace with the deadly enemy of the Hebrews (iv. 17), although she proved treacherous to her friendship, and by killing her guest earned the enthusiastic gratitude of Israel. If Shamgar and Jael were the causes of Israel's wretchedness now described the reference would be intelligible, but there is no certainty possible for want of information.

**the high ways were unoccupied**, or as in the margin, 'the caravans ceased.' The difference between the two translations is due to the different vocalization of the consonants of the first word by the Hebrew and the Greek versions. The marginal rendering has the advantage that it gives the natural sense of the verb, which has to be strained to bear the meaning in the text. Caravans were compelled to keep to the main tracks on their way from one place to another, and as these were beset by enemies they ceased to go at all. Wayfarers were compelled to abandon the usual roads and make their way by crooked or roundabout paths.

7. **The rulers ceased in Israel**, or as in margin, 'The villages

Until that I Deborah arose,  
That I arose a mother in Israel.  
They chose new gods ;  
Then was war in the gates :  
Was there a shield or spear seen  
Among forty thousand in Israel ?  
My heart is toward the governors of Israel,  
That offered themselves willingly among the people :

were unoccupied.' The noun in this sentence is found only here and in verse 11, but its root is the same as that in two known words referring to hamlets. As it stands it may mean 'peasantry.' A change of the last letter would give the meaning 'villages' or 'hamlets' adopted in the R. V. margin. The meaning 'rulers,' adopted in the text, is taken from the Greek version. (See also verse 11.)

**Until that I . . . arose.** There is ambiguity here, because if the form of the Hebrew verb is archaic, it means, 'thou (fem.) didst arise'; if later, it means 'I arose.' The former is more probable (cf. verse 12). The Greek version has 'until Deborah arose.'

**8.** The first line is literally 'It chooses new gods,' and is difficult to explain grammatically. The Latin version has 'God chose new wars.' Very many suggestions have been given from the earliest times as to the probable text and meaning, but none are satisfactory.

**Then was war in the gates.** This is an attempt to translate the Hebrew words, which simply mean 'Then bread gates.' The text is clearly corrupt, and one can only conjecture what it was originally. The most tempting solution offered is that the last letter of the first Hebrew word was accidentally dropped (owing to the fact that the next word began with the same letter), and that the last word is wrongly vowelled. This would give the meaning 'The barley-bread failed,' i. e. the common food of the country people was exhausted (cf. 1 Sam. ix. 7).

The third line is negative: 'Shield was not seen, nor spear.'

v. 9-11. *A second Apostrophe.* After describing the misery of the people, and before reciting the movement that led to relief, the poet breaks out again in gratitude to Yahweh. As in verses 2 and 3, first the Hebrews are called upon to bless Yahweh, and then the other peoples to take notice. Verse 11 is not intelligible enough to say with certainty to whom it is addressed.

9. In the second line the Hebrew participle may mean 'Who

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 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 of his rule in Israel.

Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.

12 Awake, awake, Deborah;

offer themselves,' &c., referring to the 'governors of Israel,' or 'You, who offer yourselves . . . bless Yahweh.' The verb is the same as in verse 2<sup>b</sup>, and may also mean 'who bring free-will offerings.'

10. The literal rendering of this verse is:—

'You, who ride upon tawny she-asses,

You, who sit upon cloths (?),

And who walk on (the) road, meditate.'

The first line refers to men of wealth (cf. x. 4, xii. 14).

In the second line the meaning 'cloths' is the most probable, and the sentence might be paraphrased in English, 'You who sit on cushions'; it is thus a parallel to the first line. The translation of the A. V., 'Ye, that sit in judgment,' follows the Greek and Latin versions in giving different vowels to the last Hebrew word, and is improbable.

*meditate.* This is the usual meaning of the word. Some translate 'sing,' which is possible, but supposes that those addressed are Israelites. But the Israelites are represented in the song as being utterly destitute at this time, and the address is more probably to their neighbours or enemies (as in verse 3).

11. This verse is unintelligible. The English version translates the Hebrew words, though *far from* is only 'from' in the original, and the word translated *his rule* is the same as in verse 7, where it meant 'villages.' The latter meaning is given in the margin here, but does not give any sense. The last line seems to refer to the assembling of the Hebrews to go out to battle, and thus to introduce verse 13.

v. 12-18. Another scene is now unfolded. Yahweh has been described as marching from Sinai to the help of His people.

Awake, awake, utter a song :  
 Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son  
 of Abinoam.  
 Then came down a remnant of the nobles *and* the 13  
 people ;  
 The LORD came down for me against the mighty.  
 Out of Ephraim *came down* they whose root is in 14  
 Amalek ;  
 After thee, Benjamin, among thy peoples ;

Their wretched and helpless condition has been told. Now we are to learn of the stirring of a new spirit of courage and resolution, which begins with Deborah and Barak, and runs like fire through the Hebrew tribes—yet not through all. Stinging words will tell that Reuben loved his sheep better than his brother Hebrews, and Gilead, Dan, and Asher are branded as defaulters. But Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh did well; Zebulun and Naphtali were even more distinguished in their service.

Such is the sense of the following passage, but a glance at the alternative readings given in the margin of the R. V. shows how badly the Hebrew original has suffered in its transmission during the centuries. Indeed, in verses 13 to 15 it is impossible to do more than record some of the suggestions given by the early versions.

**12.** The first movement of the new courage is in Deborah and Barak. The poet begins his description in the form of exhortation. It is a poetic violence to language, which more than justifies itself by the vivid effect it produces.

**lead thy captivity captive :** i. e. thy captives, or, assuming another pronunciation of the Hebrew word, 'thy captors.'

**13.** The text as it is vowelled and punctuated in the Hebrew Bible is untranslateable. Many attempts have been made to get sense with the least possible change. One of the simplest is to read :—

'Then came down a remnant of the nobles ;

The people of Yahweh came down for Him as heroes.'

The punctuation is here in accord with the Greek version.

**14.** The first line is 'From Ephraim, their root (is) in Amalek.' A verb is wanting here. The Greek version translated 'Ephraim rooted them out in Amalek,' or 'in the valley.'

In the second line a Greek MS. suggests 'Thy brother Benjamin among thy peoples.' In these two lines nothing is certain except the names of the two tribes.

Out of Machir came down governors,  
And out of Zebulun they that handle the marshal's  
staff.

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah ;  
As was Issachar, so was Barak ;  
Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.  
By the watercourses of Reuben  
There were great resolves of heart.  
Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,

**Machir** is a clan of Manasseh (Joshua xvii. 1 f. (J) ; Num. xxvi. 29 (P)), and here is evidently that part which was settled west of the Jordan. As, however, Machir is mentioned in many passages as occupying Gilead and Bashan, and in genealogical lists is made the 'father of Gilead' (Joshua xvii. 1), it is probable that it crossed the Jordan and conquered this territory at a later time.

**governors** : or 'lawgivers' (margin). The Hebrew word so translated occurs also in Num. xxi. 18, where it is rendered 'sceptre' in the text, 'the lawgiver' in the margin. It seems to mean literally 'one who carries a staff' (as a sign of his authority).

**they that handle the marshal's staff** : or 'the staff of the scribe' (margin). The marginal translation is the literal and correct one. The 'scribe' in the army, according to 2 Kings xxv. 19, was the officer who mustered the men.

**15.** The Hebrew text may be translated literally :—

'And my princes in Issachar with Deborah,  
And Issachar, thus Barak

Into the valley was cast at his feet.

In the divisions of Reuben great were the resolves of heart.'

In the R. V. the first line agrees with the Latin version, while the Greek adds 'and Barak' after Deborah. Neither Greek nor Latin has any mention of Issachar in the second line. The Latin in the second line has 'And they (the princes) followed in the footsteps of Barak.' We have no certainty as to the original text. Owing to this uncertainty we cannot tell what the subject of the verb in the third line is (the pronoun 'his' must refer to 'Barak'), but it is generally interpreted to mean that the princes of Issachar rushed to his help.

**the watercourses** : or channels. The word seems better in its more original meaning, 'divisions, sections' (see next verse).

**16. the sheepfolds** : as in Gen. xl ix. 14, Ps. lxviii. 13, but the meaning is not quite certain.

To hear the pipings for the flocks ?  
 At the watercourses of Reuben  
 There were great searchings of heart.  
 Gilead abode beyond Jordan : 17  
 And Dan, why did he remain in ships ?  
 Asher sat still at the haven of the sea,  
 And abode by his creeks.  
 Zebulun was a people that jeopardized their lives 18  
 unto the death,  
 And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field.

---

**the pipings for the flocks** refers to the sounds made by the shepherds to call the flocks. (See Isa. v. 26, vii. 18, where the verb is translated ‘hiss.’)

The last two lines of the verse are as in verse 15, except that we have here ‘*To* the divisions,’ &c., equivalent to ‘The divisions of Reuben had’ ; and we have ‘searchings’ for ‘resolves.’ As the two Hebrew words differ in one letter only it is possible that we should read ‘searchings’ in verse 15 also.

**17. Gilead** must be used here for Gad. For the general use of the name see x. 4.

**And Dan, why did he remain in ships ?** The verb indicates that the Danites were living among another people (cf. xvii. 7, 8, 9) ; the word ‘ships’ indicates these as a seafaring people. One is led therefore to suppose that the migration of ch. xviii had already taken place, and that the Danites of Laish had entered into relation with the Phoenicians, who were the great seafarers of the time.

‘Asher sat near (or, ‘in the direction of’) the seashore,  
 And at his landing-place was living at rest.’

Asher was not able to take the towns on the shore (i. 31), but was not far from it.

The same words as here, ‘near the seashore,’ are used in Gen. xlvi. 13 of Zebulun, whose territory was further inland.

The word translated **creeks** is found here only. The English translation is suggested by the Greek version ; the Latin has ‘harbours,’ but the kindred word in Arabic means places where ships are drawn up for unloading.

**18.** ‘Zebulun was a people that despised its life to the death,’ i. e. was reckless of life in battle ; ‘and Naphtali (showed like courage) on the high (and exposed) places of open country.’

- 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,  
 That ancient river, the river Kishon.

v. 19-22. *The Battle.* The kings of Canaan came to Taanach, and there the battle was fought. It was decided not alone by the courage of the Hebrews, but by the fact that the stars used their influence in sending down the rain, which flooded the Kishon, making the chariots useless and thus securing victory for the Hebrews.

**19. the kings of Canaan :** for there were many kings in Canaan, each ruling over a city and its district. Sisera was the one who had been appointed leader in the battle.

**Taanach and Megiddo.** See i. 27.

**They took no gain of money.** Battles were usually fought for booty (cf. verse 30). This time their fighting was fruitless.

**20. 'From heaven fought the stars,**

**From their courses they fought with Sisera.'**

The English version follows the Hebrew in putting a stop after 'fought,' instead of after 'stars.' The heavenly bodies that rule the seasons and weather helped the Hebrews against Sisera by flooding the Kishon.

**21. The river Kishon** is the second river in Palestine, and from the furthest of its sources to the sea is thirty-five miles long. With its tributary streams, which are small but numerous, it drains the plain of Esdraelon and the sides near it of the hills surrounding. As a rule it is not deep nor wide, and is impassable in only one or two places. In the summer parts of it are quite dry. The mouth is usually blocked by a sand-bar, which is only broken through when the stream receives the violent rain which falls at certain seasons. In the winter, and even more in the spring, the sudden rains convert an insignificant stream into a torrent and the surrounding land into a marsh. This was the river Kishon that 'swept them away.'

**That ancient river:** *lit.* 'river of antiquity,' or, according to the Greek version, 'river of ancient (things or people).' But the Hebrew word is found here only, and is therefore at the mercy of commentators, who have given it a dozen different mean-

O my soul, march on with strength.

Then did the horsehoofs stamp

By reason of the pransings, the pransings of their  
strong ones.

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 against the mighty.

Blessed above women shall Jael be,

The wife of Heber the Kenite,

Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

He asked water, *and* she gave him milk;

ings and proposed as many restorations of the text. The last line is unintelligible. ‘Thou treadest, O my soul, strength’ is the most literal translation of the Hebrew text, which is evidently out of place here.

**22.** ‘Then smote horsehoofs (the ground)

From the galloping, the galloping of his mighty (steeds).’ Such is a literal translation of this verse. The omission of the object (given above in brackets) in the first line, and the doubtfulness of the meaning of the preposition ‘from’ in the second, seem to point again to an imperfect text. The word translated ‘strong’ is used of horses in *Jer. viii. 16, xlvii. 3, l. 11*. The pronoun ‘his’ has no word near it to refer to. It would be in place, however, if verse 22 came originally after verse 20. In that case the verse would naturally describe the charge in battle; in its present position it more probably refers to the confusion of flight.

*v. 23. The curse on Meroz.*

**23.** *Meroz* is quite unknown. As this curse is evidently a strong contrast to the blessing of Jael that follows, it is generally supposed that Meroz was a town or village which lay on the route of Sisera’s flight, and that its inhabitants allowed him to pass by when they might have seized him.

*against the mighty.* Translate either, as in the margin, ‘among the mighty,’ or ‘as mighty ones.’

**24.** *The blessing of Jael.* ‘May Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite (cf. iv. 11), be the most blest of women, most blest of women who live in tents’ (cf. *Gen. iv. 20*; *Jer. xxxv. 7*).

*v. 25-27. The death of Sisera.* Sisera is not mentioned by name until the middle of this scene, but every hearer of the song knows

She brought him butter in a lordly dish.  
 She put her hand to the nail,  
 And her right hand to the workmen's hammer ;  
 And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote  
 through his head,

who is meant. Nor is his flight mentioned. He appears suddenly standing at the entrance of the tent, simply asking as a guest water to drink. Soured milk is handed to him in a large bowl, and while he hides his face in it as he drinks, Jael, his hostess, strikes with a mallet a crushing blow on his temples. At her feet he totters and falls, and lies lifeless.

This representation of Sisera's death differs from that in the prose story (iv. 18-21). There Sisera lay down to rest under a covering, and as he slept Jael stole quietly to his side and smote the peg into his temples. The two traditions are here inconsistent. It is noticeable too that in the prose record the treachery of Jael is specially clear (iv. 17, 18), while it is naturally not mentioned in the song.

**25.** The narrative is given in short sharp sentences, as can be seen from a literal translation, maintaining the order of the Hebrew words :—

'Water he asked, milk she gave ;  
 In a bowl of nobles she reached sour milk.  
 Her hand to the peg she was stretching,  
 And her right hand to the workmen's hammer (?) ;  
 And she hammered Sisera, she crushed his head,  
 And she shattered and broke through his temple.  
 Before her feet he sank, he fell, he lay :  
 Before her feet he sank, he fell :  
 Where he sank, there he lay killed.'

**butter in a lordly dish.** The word translated 'butter' means milk which has been shaken up in the skin with enough fermenting remains of stale milk to make it sour. It is still the most refreshing drink among the Bedouin. The dish or bowl (as in vi. 38) was fit for nobles, that is, large.

**26. the nail :** or in margin 'tent-pin,' is a peg usually for fixing the tent-ropes, but also for hanging, for digging, or as a pin in weaving (cf. xvi. 14). Here it may mean the handle of the hammer, or be simply another name for the hammer itself = 'mallet.' The mention of a peg and a hammer here does not imply necessarily that two instruments were used, but is due to the parallelism in Hebrew poetry.

**the workmen's hammer** is perhaps the best translation, but the meaning is doubtful.

Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.  
 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay : 27  
 At her feet he bowed, he fell :  
 Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.  
 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 wheels of his chariots?  
 Her wise ladies answered her, 29  
 Yea, she returned answer to herself,  
 Have they not found, have they not divided the 30  
 spoil?  
 A damsel, two damsels to every man ;

**27.** The second line is repeated probably by a mistake in copying.

v. 28-30. The last scene is described in words of cruel irony. The hearer's thought is suddenly carried from Jael's tent to Sisera's home, where his mother begins to grow anxious for his return, but, at the suggestion of her attendants, she comforts herself with the thought of the booty he will bring when he comes.

**28. and cried.** This word occurs only here, and seems to mean 'to cry shrilly.' In late Hebrew it means 'to lament,' and in Aramaic 'to exult.'

**the wheels :** correctly in margin 'the steps,' that is, the sound of the horses' feet as the chariots return.

**29.** 'The wisest of her princesses answers her,

Moreover, she herself returns herself her words.'

The first line may be translated as above by a slight change of pronunciation of the first Hebrew word, or 'the wise of her princesses answer' (without object) by a similar change in the last word. Our English revised rendering would make the Hebrew sentence ungrammatical.

The meaning of the second line has been explained by scholars in two ways. (1) Sisera's mother, however, still repeated her words of anxiety to herself, in spite of the comforting suggestion of her princess; or (2) she answered her own anxious question in the same way as the princess, thinking herself that her son was delayed by the immense booty he had secured. The latter in the more probable view.

**30.** 'Do they not find, divide spoil ?

Slave-maidens, two for each brave man ?

To Sisera a spoil of divers colours,  
 A spoil of divers colours of embroidery,  
 Of divers colours of embroidery on both sides, on  
 the necks of the spoil?

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.

[D] And the land had rest forty years.

6 And the children of Israel did that which was evil in  
 the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into  
 the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of

Spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,  
 Spoil of dyed stuffs, coloured embroidery,  
 Dyed stuff, two pieces of coloured embroidery for the  
 necks of booty (!).'

In the first line the Hebrew tenses denote an unfinished action. This is the cause of the delay of Sisera and his host—they are busy collecting and dividing the spoil. Then the imagination of the princess leads her to hazard a guess as to what that spoil is likely to be.

In the last line there is no question of ‘embroidery on both sides,’ as in the English translation; but of ‘two pieces of embroidery,’ as of ‘two slave-maidens’ above. The last two words do not make sense as they stand. Very slight changes in one or other of these words would give ‘for my neck,’ or ‘for his neck as booty,’ or ‘for the neck of the queen,’ but there is nothing to show what the original words were.

31. ‘Thus shall perish all Thy enemies, Yahweh (cf. Ps. xcii. 9):  
 And those who love Him are as the going forth of the  
 sun in his strength (cf. Ps. xix. 4–6).’

To the end of the song the editor adds the completing portion of what he began to say in iv. 23, 24: ‘And the land had rest forty years,’ i. e. a generation.

vi-viii. 32. *Gideon.*

vi. 1–6. *Introduction.* The usual formula appears here in verses 1 and 6, but is enlarged by the introduction into verses 2–5 of material taken from the source.

1. **Midian** was a nomad people. In Exod. iii the Midianites are in the south of the peninsula of Sinai; in 1 Kings xi. 18 they are in the north-east of the desert of Sinai; here and in other

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 holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites 3 came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east; they came up against them; and they encamped 4 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 5 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 land to destroy it. And 6 Israel was brought very low because of Midian; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

passages (Gen. xxxvi. 35, &c.) they are to the east of the Hebrews. Hebrew tradition regarded them as kinsmen. According to Gen. xxv. 2, Midian was a son of Abraham by Keturah. Moses married a Midianitess, Exod. ii. 15-21. In viii. 24 of our book they are called Ishmaelites. It seems probable from the story in Exod. iii that they worshipped Yahweh before the Hebrews. They are not mentioned by name in the inscriptions of Egypt or Assyria; but Ephah, one of the sons of Midian (Gen. xxv. 4: cf. Isa. lx. 6), is identified by Delitzsch with Hayapa of the Assyrian inscriptions. These lived in the eighth century B.C., in the north of the Hijāz.

vi. 2-5. This description would apply almost equally well to the raids of the Bedouin to-day. There is no attempt at permanent conquest, but only at thievish depredations. Nomads prefer that settled peoples should do the work of sowing, while they reap the harvests. The comparison with locusts, which pass over a land, stripping it and leaving it bare, is apt. The temporary flight of the inhabitants to the hills and caves was repeated up to the time of the Maccabees, and is still common in Syria, in the Balkans, and elsewhere at the present time. The meaning of the word translated 'dens' is uncertain: probably it is explained by the word 'caves' which follows it.

**3. the Amalekites.** See iii. 13.

**the children of the east:** the tribes who lived east of Ammon and Moab.

**4. till thou come unto Gaza:** i.e. as far as Gaza, which, being a walled town (xvi. 3), checked them.

7 [J] And it came to pass, when the children of Israel  
 8 cried 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 forth out of  
 9 the house of bondage ; and I delivered you out of the  
     hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that  
     oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and  
 10 gave you their land ; 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.

11 And the angel of the LORD came, and sat under the  
 oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the

vi. 7-10. *Fragment of a prophetic rebuke.* The appearance of the angel of Yahweh is preceded here by the appearance of a man, whom the writer calls 'a prophet.' There were probably, even in this early time, men devoted to Yahweh-worship, who wandered from place to place like Elijah and Elisha in later times, and who were regarded as holy men by the people (see xiii. 6). But where did this man appear, and to whom ? Many scholars believe that the story of the angel of Yahweh (verses 11-24) comes from another tradition, and that the prophet's words were followed in this story by verses 25 ff. The record of the prophet's words would then be intelligible. Gideon heard them, and the same night was stirred by Yahweh to destroy the altar of the local god.

The burden of the prophet's message is the usual one for the time, and each sentence in it is to be found in other books. The Hebrews knew Yahweh as the God who had delivered them from Egyptian bondage. (They had never worshipped Him as Yahweh before.) It was therefore ingratitude that was their sin when they turned aside to worship other gods.

The words of the message seem to be incompletely recorded, unless we are to suppose that the evil condition in which the people were was sufficient to supply to their minds such a conclusion as—'therefore you are suffering these things.'

vi. 11-24. *Visit of Yahweh's angel to Gideon, and the erection of an altar in Ophrah.*

**11. angel of the LORD.** See ii. 1.  
**oak.** See iv. 11.

Abiezrite : and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the 12 angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And 13 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 delivered us into the hand of Midian. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go 14 in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian : have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, 15 Oh Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the LORD said unto him, Surely 16 I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites

**Ophrah.** The position of this town is unknown. It seems to have been near Shechem.

**Joash the Abiezrite.** Joash is mentioned in this story only. Abiezer, according to Joshua xvii. 2, was one of the divisions of the tribe of Manasseh (so 1 Chron. vii. 18 : cf. Num. xxvi. 30).

**wheat in the winepress.** The usual threshing-floor was a flat or flattened rocky surface in an exposed position. The winepress was a shallow vat cut in the rocky soil. The use of the press for threshing shows that a small quantity only was being threshed at one time.

**12, 13.** The greeting was probably in as common use as our 'good-bye,' and used with as little realization of its meaning. But to Gideon, who realizes both the meaning of the words and the actual misery of his people, the greeting is a sarcasm, hence his reply.

**14. the LORD looked upon him.** The Greek translation reads, 'the angel of the Lord.'

**in this thy might:** in this strength or ability of thine, i. e. this physical strength manifest in his threshing; perhaps also with an allusion to the strength of character shown in his refusal to accept the conventional greeting without question.

**15.** A family or 'thousand' is a division of a tribe, and is itself made up of several 'father's houses.'

**16.** The Greek translation reads. 'The Lord will be with thee.'

17 as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that it is thou  
 18 that talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and lay it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou  
 19 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 oak, and pre-  
 20 sented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon  
 21 this rock, and pour out the broth. 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 unleavened cakes; and the angel  
 22 of the LORD departed out of his sight. And Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD; and Gideon said, Alas,

Gideon does not know yet that it is Yahweh who speaks with him (cf. verse 22).

**17.** The second half of the verse has evidently been introduced by one who wants to make the meal a sacrifice from the beginning. It is clear that in the original story Gideon, not knowing with whom he speaks, but struck with the encouraging words and manner of the visitor, invites him to a meal. 'If now I have found grace in thy sight, depart not hence, until,' &c. (Cf. Gen. xviii. 3-5.)

vi. 18-21. *The meal becomes a sacrifice.*

**19.** **made ready a kid:** as Manoah did under similar circumstances (xiii. 15, 19).

**21.** **fire out of the rock.** Miraculous fire consumed the sacrifice of Moses, Lev. ix. 24; of Elijah at Carmel, 1 Kings xviii; and of Solomon, 2 Chron. vii. 1.

**and the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.** These words come too soon, for the angel (now known to be Yahweh) speaks again in verse 23.

**22.** Compare Exod. xxxiii. 20; Judges xiii. 22, and other passages.

O Lord God ! forasmuch as I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace 23 be unto thee ; fear not : thou shalt not die. Then Gideon 24 built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom : unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said 25 unto him, Take thy father's bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the Asherah that is by it : and build an altar unto the LORD thy God 26 upon the top of this strong hold, in the orderly manner, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which thou shalt cut down. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and 27 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 could not do it by day, that he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose 28

**24. Jehovah-shalom :** ‘Yahweh is peace’ (R. V. marg.), in allusion to the words of Yahweh in verse 23. So an altar is called ‘Yahweh is my banner’ in Exod. xvii. 15 ; a place is called ‘Yahweh will see’ by Abraham, Gen. xxii. 14 ; Jerusalem is called ‘Yahweh is our righteousness’ by Jeremiah (Jer. xxxiii. 16).

vi. 25-32. *The destruction of the Baal’s altar (in Ophrah).*

**25. the same night** refers back as it stands to the incident in verses 11-24, but may originally have come after verse 10.

The second clause of this verse is unintelligible in the Hebrew, and the English translation is only an attempt to make sense. The Greek presupposes another original, but is also unintelligible. The mention of a second bullock seems quite out of place.

**Baal that thy father hath :** i.e. the local deity. There were various Baals in different parts of the country (see ii. 11), and the name was even given to Yahweh in early times.

**the Asherah** here, as in many other passages, is the pole or post set up beside an altar. Its exact form and significance are not known. It is mentioned in Phoenician inscriptions.

**26. strong hold :** a naturally strong position.

**in the orderly manner.** The meaning is doubtful.

early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar  
 29 that was built. 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  
 30 thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out 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 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, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet morning*: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath broken down his  
 32 altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath broken down his altar.

**31.** The full force of the question in the Hebrew here can only be brought out in English by strongly accenting the pronouns ‘Will you plead for Baal? or will you save HIM?’ Cf. Job xiii. 8, ‘Will ye contend for God?’ where, however, the accent is on ‘God’ and not on the pronoun.

**he that will plead for him** (i. e. take his part), **let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning.** These words interrupt the context, and may have been introduced from a marginal note.

‘Before morning’ (marg.). i. e. before the morrow. This is the more natural sense of the Hebrew words, but they may mean ‘while it is still morning.’

**32.** The explanation of the name Jerubbaal is, like many other such in the O. T., based on a similarity of sound, though accompanied by real difference of meaning. Even if the first part of the name were derived from the verb meaning ‘to strive’ (which would presuppose the existence of a form of the verb different from that in use everywhere else), it would mean ‘Baal strives.’ The real meaning is probably ‘Baal founds,’ and we do not know why such a name was given. As the name Baal was used of Yahweh in early times, we find it as a constituent in several Hebrew names (Ishbaal, Meribaal, &c.). Later, an endeavour was

Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the 33 children of the east assembled themselves together; and they passed over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; and he 34 blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered together after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; 35 and they also were gathered together after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. And Gideon 36 said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on 37 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 spoken. And it was so: for he rose up early on the 38 morrow, and pressed the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. And 39

made to explain such names so as to avoid what had become offensive, when a Baal was only an idol.

vi. 33-35. *The Midianites in Jezreel, and Gideon's preparations.* Gideon's belief that he was called to be the deliverer of his people was soon put to the test. The Midianites came into Palestine again on one of their raiding expeditions. This time they **passed over** the Jordan and camped in **the valley of Jezreel**, i. e. the valley leading from the Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee, up to the plain of Esdraelon. Into Gideon's soul came that rush of superhuman vigour and courage which the people called 'the spirit of Yahweh' (see iii. 10), and he sent the war-summons to his own people, Abiezer, to follow him. According to viii. 2 it was *their* effort that drove back the invaders, but here we are told he was supported by the tribes of the neighbourhood, Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali (Issachar omitted here as elsewhere in this book). The story is continued in vii. 1.

vi. 36-40. *The sign of the fleece.* It was in accordance with the customs of these early days that a man should seek to know the will of the Deity by a material sign (see i. 1).

As the name Elohim is used instead of Yahweh for God in this story, it is probably taken by the editor from another source.

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 now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all 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.

7 Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the spring of Harod: and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, 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 me, saying,

3 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 depart from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

<sup>a</sup> 39 is quoted from Gen. xviii. 32.

vii. i. Continuation of the war movement from vi. 35.

1. In vi. 33 the Midianites are in Jezreel, therefore if this verse is from the same story the places mentioned here must be in that valley.

the spring of Harod is mentioned only in this place, and is generally identified with 'Ain Jalûd at the foot of Gilboa.

the hill of Moreh would then be the hill Neby Duhy about four miles away on the north side of the valley.

vii. 2-8. The reduction of Gideon's army. Yahweh requires of Gideon that he should reduce the number of his followers, that the coming victory may not be an occasion of boasting to the Hebrews. Gideon accordingly dismisses twenty-two thousand who are afraid. Yahweh demands still another sifting of the ten thousand who remain. By a test of their caution, shown in the way they drink at the spring, Gideon reduces his army to three hundred men. To these Yahweh promises victory.

3. and depart from mount Gilead. Mount Gilead is east of the Jordan, and so must be a mistake here. It has been suggested

And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet 4 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 not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought 5 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 drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their 6 hand to their mouth, was three hundred men : but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three 7 hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand : and let all the people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals 8 in their hand, and their trumpets : and he sent all the

that 'mount Gilboa' was the original reading. The word translated 'depart' is found only here, and its meaning is uncertain. Moore suggests that two letters of this verb have been inverted and the name corrupted, and that the original text was 'and Gideon tested (the same Hebrew word as 'try' in verse 4) them.' There is no manuscript authority for this, but without some such sentence we have only Yahweh's command and no mention of Gideon's carrying it out.

**4-6.** Various explanations have been given of the methods of drinking mentioned. The only one that seems to satisfy the text as it stands is that the three hundred took water in their hands and licked it up as a dog laps, and that the rest bent down on their knees and drank directly from the stream. The reason for choosing the former has also been explained in many ways, for example, the caution shown by them in not putting themselves in a defenceless posture when the enemy was near, or the power of being satisfied with little water in a hot country, &c. It may be, however, that the tradition only meant to indicate an arbitrary sign, like that of the fleece above. It is curious that, judging by viii. 2, these men were Abiezrites.

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 said unto him, Arise, get thee down into the camp ; for  
 10 I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Purah thy servant down to the  
 11 camp : and thou shalt hear what they say ; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down into the camp. Then went he down with Purah his servant unto the outermost part of the armed men that were in the  
 12 camp. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude ; and their camels were without number, as  
 13 the sand which 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 lay

vii. 9-14. *Gideon's visit to the Midianite camp.* Two courses of action are suggested to Gideon : the one a night attack at once, in the confident belief that Yahweh will give him victory (verse 9), the other, a private reconnoitre to see the state of affairs. He is afraid to risk the former, so takes his servant, steals into the outskirts of the Midianite camp, and hears enough to make him believe in the success of a sudden attack.

**12.** Cf. vi. 5.

**13.** Every dream in olden time had its meaning, and was in some sort a message from the Deity. Gideon overhears two Midianites talking in a tent of such a message. One of the flat round cakes of barley-bread used by nomads falls into the Midianite camp, and rolling on its edge like a wheel, strikes against the tent of the sleeper and overturns it. This dream is interpreted by the friend of the speaker as indicating the destruction of Midian by 'a man of Israel.' Gideon, as he hears, at once realizes that such an interpretation betrays a feeling of fear among the Midianites that promises well for his own success.

along. And his fellow answered and said, This is <sup>14</sup> 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.

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

So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, <sup>19</sup> came unto the outermost part of the camp in the begin-

vii. 15-18. *Gideon's return and preparations.* Two traditions seem to have been combined in these and the following verses (see Introduction). According to one of them, a panic was produced by the simultaneous blowing of trumpets in accordance with Gideon's instructions in verse 18. According to the other story Gideon gave his men pitchers with lighted torches in them, and it was by the breaking of the pitchers and flashing of the torches that the Midianites were thrown into confusion. By the combination of these two accounts Gideon's men have their hands more than full.

**15. worshipped:** prostrated himself, recognizing the encouragement as coming from his God.

**16. three companies:** so as to come upon the enemy from three sides and make them believe they were surrounded. (Cf. 1 Sam. xi. 11.)

**18. and say, For the **LORD** and for Gideon:** evidently a note, introduced probably from verse 20. The verb 'say' is very tame.

vii. 19-25. *The attack.*

**19. in the beginning of the middle watch.** The night was

ning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake in 20 pieces the pitchers that were in their 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 21 they cried, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran; and they shouted, and put *them* to 22 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 toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, 23 by Tabbath. And the men of Israel were gathered together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all 24 Manasseh, and pursued after Midian. And Gideon sent

divided into three watches of four hours each. The middle watch would begin about 10 p.m., and as the attack was made 'when they had but newly set the watch,' i. e. posted the guards of the new watch, that would be soon after 10.

**20.** 'For Yahweh and for Gideon' (without the word 'sword') was probably the battle-cry (as in verse 18).

**21, 22.** Gideon's men stood still on three sides of the camp, shouting and blowing their trumpets. The Midianites, panic-stricken, fled in the one direction open, and believing themselves to be pursued, and that their fellow fugitives were Hebrews, turned their weapons against one another.

The four places mentioned have not been satisfactorily identified, but probably lay along the valleys of Jezreel and the Jordan. **Beth-shittah** may be the modern Shutta, about halfway between Shunem and Beth-shean, and **Zererah** may be the same place as the Zeredah of 1 Kings vii. **Abel-meholah**, according to Jerome, was ten miles south of Beth-shean, and so would almost correspond with the modern 'Ain Helweh ( $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles). **Tabbath** is quite unknown.

**23, 24.** After their success in attack the Abiezrites were joined in the pursuit of Midian by their kinsmen of Manasseh, and according to the story as it stands, by men from Asher and Naphtali. As the flight was evidently southwards down the

messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, Come down against Midian, and take before them the waters, as far as Beth-barah, even Jordan. So all the men of Ephraim were gathered together, and took the waters as far as Beth-barah, even Jordan. And they took 25 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.

And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast 8 thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with Midian? And they did chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I now 2 done in comparison of you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hand the princes of Midian, 3 Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison

Jordan valley, the men of Ephraim were hastily summoned to cut them off. The site of **Beth-barah** is unknown, but the Midianites, too hotly pursued to be able as a whole to cross any of the small fords across the Jordan, many seem to have made for the larger one at the present Dāmīeh, hoping either to cross there or to get over the tributary stream (Wādi Far'ah) and escape to the fords of the lower river. The prompt response of the Ephraimites cut them off from both possibilities.

25. There were two sites known in the author's days as **the rock of Oreb** and **the winepress of Zeeb**. These names kept in remembrance the death of the two Midianite princes.

viii. 1-3. The author has already anticipated the events of verse 4 by mentioning Gideon in vii. 35 as beyond Jordan. He now interrupts the thread of the battle-story to tell of the Ephraimites' jealousy and how Gideon appeased it.

Ephraim was the most important tribe of Northern Palestine, and was jealous of its position. In xii. 1-7 we find it again assuming a dictatorial tone, but meeting with a different reception. The Abiezrites were too small and weak to oppose Ephraim's claims, and with an ingenuity that seems to have

of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when  
 4 he had said that. And Gideon came to Jordan, *and*  
 passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were  
 5 with him, faint, yet 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 and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.  
 6 And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah  
 and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give  
 7 bread unto thine army? And Gideon said, Therefore  
 when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into  
 mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of

belonged to his family (cf. vi. 31) Gideon appeased the wrath  
 of his accusers.

viii. 4-21. *Gideon east of the Jordan.* The story of Gideon's pursuit is taken up again from vii. 24. After having sent messengers to Ephraim (whose success and later complaint have been interpolated in vii. 25. viii. 1-3), he himself crossed one of the fords of the upper Jordan, and following such as had managed to escape this way, made for the camp where the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna were. Against these he was urged by the sacred duty of blood-revenge, for they had, on some occasion of which we are not told, killed his brothers at Tabor. He captured the two kings, and after punishing the cities of Succoth and Penuel which had refused him food, he put them to death with his own hand.

4. **the three hundred men** alone accomplish Gideon's work of revenge.

**faint and pursuing** (not 'yet' as in the English) seems so weak that the Greek translation, which reads 'faint and hungry,' is probably the original.

5. The site of **Succoth** is not certain, but it is generally identified with Tell Deir 'Alla, east of the Jordan and about a mile north of the Jabbok.

**Zebah and Zalmunna.** These names, which must naturally be Midianitish, are read as Hebrew words meaning 'Victim' and 'Refuge refused' so as to indicate their fate. This play on names is frequent in the O. T.

6. **princes of Succoth:** see verse 14.

7. The Hebrew of the latter part of this verse is doubtful, but the meaning evidently is—'I will throw you down naked, and

the wilderness and with briers. And he went up thence 8 to Penuel, and spake unto them in like manner: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, 9 saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their 10 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 men that 11 drew sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, 12 and smote the host; for the host was secure. And Zebah and Zalmunna fled; and he pursued after them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and 13 discomfited all the host. And Gideon the son of Joash 14 returned from the battle from the ascent of Heres. And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and

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trample on you with thorns and teasels as the threshing-board (a flat board set with stones on the under side) passes over the corn.'

**8. Penuel:** a place of some importance in the time of Jeroboam I (1 Kings xii), mentioned also in Gen. xxxii. 31. It was near the Jabbok, but its exact site is not known.

**9. this tower:** the stronghold often found within an unprotected city.

**10, 11. Karkor** is unknown, so also **Nobah**, which is mentioned in Num. xxxii. 42 as a city of Manasseh. **Jogbehah** (Num. xxxii. 35) is probably Khirbet el-Gubeihāt to the north-west of 'Ammān.

**the way of them that dwelt in tents** is a guess at the meaning of a Hebrew sentence which is so corrupt that it is impossible to say what the original was.

**13. from the ascent of Heres:** rather 'from above Heres,' or 'from the pass of Heres.' Nothing is known of such a place in this locality.

**14.** The city was governed as usual by 'elders,' or heads of the resident families, and 'princes,' or officers of these elders appointed for military and perhaps special civic duties.

inquired of him : and he 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 bread unto thy  
 16 men that are weary ? And he took the elders of the city,  
 and thorns of the wilderness and briars, and with them  
 17 he taught the men of Succoth. And he brake down the  
 18 tower of Penuel, 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  
 19 the children of a king. And he said, They were my  
 brethren, the sons of my mother : as the LORD liveth, if  
 20 ye 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, because he  
 21 was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise  
 thou, and fall upon us : for as the man is, so is his  
 strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zal-

**16. taught.** All the early translations read ‘threshed,’ as in R. V. marg. and verse 7.

viii. 18-21. The two Midianite kings, either during this or some former raid, had killed the brothers of Gideon at Tabor (verses 18ff.). According to the practice of blood-revenge which obtained until the introduction of fixed law and centralized authority, and which is recognized in the Pentateuch (cf. the establishment of cities of refuge), it was Gideon’s duty to slay the murderers and to make war upon their people until he had done this. The author of our book has not mentioned this incentive before, probably because he is concerned with the actions of Gideon only as a deliverer of his people.

**18. What manner of men.** The Hebrew is ‘Where are the men?’ This is also the reading of the Greek version. The English is a translation of the Latin.

**20. Jether:** the same name as Jethro.

munna, and took the crescents that were on their camels' necks.

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou 22 over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also : for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian. And 23 Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you : the LORD shall rule over you. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of 24 you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his spoil. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give 25 them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his spoil. And the weight of 26

**21.** the crescents were ornaments, which made of gold were worn by men (verse 26), and of various metals are put on the necks of camels up to the present day.

viii. 22-23. *Gideon refuses Kingship.* This is the first recorded attempt among the Hebrews to establish an hereditary ruler.

**22.** The expression **men of Israel** is the general one used by the author throughout this book, but the kingship offered to Gideon was probably only that over his own tribe of Manasseh (compare the story of Abimelech). The novelty consisted in the offer to make the rule pass from father to son. The words 'Yahweh will rule over you' are generally taken to indicate the reason of Gideon's refusal, and are supposed to be late because the Israelites only came, after a long and sad experience of kingship, to believe that Yahweh would not tolerate an earthly rival as king of Israel. Probably however Gideon's reasons are not given here at all, and this sentence only expresses his belief that Yahweh will look after the people, even though he (Gideon) will not take charge of them.

viii. 24-27. *Gideon's spoil and its use.*

**24. earrings.** The Hebrew word means 'rings' only, and may refer to nose-rings—which however are mentioned in the O. T. only as used by women—or ear-rings.

**Ishmaelites** must mean here nomads in manner of life resembling Ishmaelites, for according to Gen. xxv these are descendants of Hagar, while the Midianites are descendants of Keturah.

the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven 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  
 27 about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah : [D] and all Israel went a whoring after it there : and it became a  
 28 snare unto Gideon, and to his house. So 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 his own house. [A] And Gideon had threescore and ten sons  
 30 of his body begotten : for he had many wives. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son,  
 31 and he called his name Abimelech. And Gideon the

**26.** a thousand and seven hundred shekels : nearly seventy pounds.

**crescents :** thin flat plates of metal in crescent form, worn round the neck.

**pendants :** perhaps ear-rings.

**purple :** a reddish-purple costly in all ages, and used for royal garments.

**chains, &c.,** neck-pendants. Animals in the East are often adorned with such ornaments.

**27. Gideon made an ephod.** The traditions in chs. vi and vii agree in ascribing to Gideon a strong religious character. This is confirmed by his use of his share of the Midianitish spoil. The ephod was an image of some sort, very much in use for consulting the oracle (see xvii). At the time when the Book of Judges was compiled such images were an abomination, so the writer makes this one a **snare unto Gideon and to his house**. In itself, however, and in Gideon's day, it was the natural expression of a religious nature.

**28.** The Deuteronomic author's usual remark that the land had rest for a generation after the great deeds of this 'judge.'

**29.** A verse taken from the Jerubbaal traditions and put in here without much relation to context.

viii. 30-32. *Gideon's family and death.* These two verses are

son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

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

[J] And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to She- 9

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evidently an introduction to ch. ix, and like it were probably added to the book in its later form (see ix).

viii. 33-35. Again the editor's account of the defection of the Hebrews from Yahweh after the death of the 'judge.' The sin of the Hebrews was in turning from the worship of Yahweh their own God to the worship of Canaanitish gods. Although the writer felt bound to make a depreciatory remark (verse 27<sup>b</sup>) about Gideon's ephod, he recognized that its establishment was not a 'turning away' from Yahweh.

**33. Baal-berith:** i. e. Baal of a covenant. The name suggests an attempt to unite the Hebrews of this district with the Canaanites in it by the common worship of a Baal created for the purpose (see also ix. 4, 46).

ix. 1-6. *Abimelech.* The editor has told in the usual terms (viii. 33-35) how after the death of Gideon the Israelites turned from Yahweh, and should now tell how Yahweh was angry and sold them into the hands of another nation until they repented, when He raised up another 'judge.' But this does not occur until x. 6 ff. It is clear that the Deuteronomic editor did not count Abimelech as a judge. There is little doubt that the story of Abimelech was contained in the collection of traditions from which our author drew (see Introd.), and we are compelled to think that either he put the story in, as it is, as a supplement to Gideon's story, or that he omitted it and it was introduced later from the source in a revision of the book, with viii. 30-32 as a connecting link.

**1. Abimelech** ('my father is Melek,' where Melek may be Yahweh or another god) was the offspring of a connexion in which the woman remained in her own home and the children were reckoned to the mother's family (not, as in regular marriage, to the

chem unto his mother's brethren, and spake with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, 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 also that 3 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 4 Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain 5 and light fellows, which followed 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.

father's). Abimelech would have been brought up at first in his mother's home, but seems at this time to be in his father's house. His mother seems to have been of a Canaanitish family of some influence, though Jotham speaks slightly of her as his father's maid-servant (verse 18).

**Shechem**, the present Nablūs (an Arabic corruption of the Roman name, Flavia Neapolis), lies in the valley between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim nearly halfway between Jerusalem and Nazareth. It is regarded here (as in Gen. xxxiv) as largely Canaanitish, although according to Joshua xxiv. 32 (E) Joseph was buried there. At a later time the Northern kingdom was founded here (1 Kings xii. 1 ff.).

2. The **rule over you** seems to refer to an influence like that of the early Medicis in Florence, not constitutional, but very real.

**your bone and your flesh:** 'your flesh and blood,' as we should say. This appeal was specially apt under the circumstances mentioned above (verse 1).

4. **vain and light fellows:** *lit.* 'men worthless and reckless' (cf. xi. 3). Such bands of men were often employed as mercenary troops in mediaeval Europe for similar purposes.

5. **upon one stone:** i.e. like beasts at a sacrifice (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 33 f.).

And all the men of Shechem assembled themselves 6 together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem. And when they told it to Jotham, he went 7 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 hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over 8 them ; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave 9 my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees ? And the trees 10 said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But 11 the fig tree said unto them, Should I leave my sweetness,

**6. the house of Millo** in other passages (e. g. 2 Sam. v. 9; 1 Kings ix. 15, 24; 2 Kings xii. 20) is a fortified building, but here and in verse 15 it is used with the 'men of Shechem' as if it were the name of a family.

The word translated 'pillar' (marg. 'garrison') seems to have arisen by an alteration of the vowels from the word used of a sacred stone. These sacred stones were common in early days (Jacob erects his pillow as one in Gen. xxviii. 18), but were associated with idolatry in later times, hence the alteration here. For the sacred tree in Shechem see Gen. xxxv. 4 and Joshua xxiv. 26, where the stone also is mentioned.

**ix. 7-21. Jotham's address to the Shechemites.** Jotham, the only son of Gideon who had escaped death at the hands of Abimelech, learning that Abimelech was being proclaimed king, went up Mount Gerizim on the south side of Shechem, and standing on a projecting rock (not 'the top,' which is 900 feet high) addressed the assembled crowd. His speech consists of two parts :—(1) a fable (verses 8-15) in which the olive, fig-tree, and vine decline to rule over the trees, because God has given them nobler work to do in the production of useful fruits ; but the thorn, which bears no such fruit, but when fired is capable of destroying even the noble cedars, accepts the invitation and boasts in ridiculous fashion of its own power which is only for harm. The point of the fable is in the sarcastic comparison of Abimelech with the thorn. Fables of trees and beasts were known among the Hebrews as among other early peoples. We have another short one of trees

and my good fruit, and go to wave to and fro over the  
12 trees? And the trees said unto the vine, Come thou, and  
13 reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I  
leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to  
14 wave to and fro over the trees? Then said all the trees  
15 unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And  
the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me  
king over you, then come and put your trust in my  
shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble,  
16 and devour the cedars of Lebanon. 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  
17 deserving of his hands; (for my father fought for you,  
and adventured his life, and delivered you out of the  
18 hand of Midian: 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 She-  
19 chem, because he is your brother;) if ye then have dealt  
truly and uprightly with Jerubbaal and with his house

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in the reply of Jehoash of Israel to Amaziah of Judah (story of the thistle and the cedar, 2 Kings xiv. 9), and remains of animal fables are to be found in Proverbs.

(2) A prayer (verses 16-20) that the Shechemites and Abimelech may be rewarded according to their deserts. The irony of the fable is kept up here, especially in the balanced form of the speech and the refraining from any statement of his own judgement explicitly stated. 'If,' he says, 'you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house (what you have done is—you have killed his legitimate sons and made the son of his maidservant your king), then may you have joy of one another; but if you have done evilly and ungratefully, then may fire from your thorn-king come and consume you, and you in like manner consume him.' This imprecation can scarcely be called the application of the fable, which like his own wish in this part is too clear to need to be explained.

this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: but if not, let fire come out from 20 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 devour Abimelech. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went 21 to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

And Abimelech was prince over Israel three years. 22 And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the 23 men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: that the violence done to 24 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 slay his brethren. And 25 the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him on the tops

**21.** Jotham then fled to **Beer**, which Eusebius identifies with a place of that name eight miles north of Beth-shean; but Beer only means 'Well,' and there were many places of that name, so that we cannot say where it was.

**ix. 22-49. Rebellion against Abimelech in Shechem.** Two accounts of such rebellions are given here. The one is that of a party of Canaanitish malcontents led by a man named Gaal. This was ended by Gaal's expulsion from the city (verses 26-41). The other begins in verses 22-25, is broken off by the story of Gaal's revolt and expulsion, and is continued in verses 42-49. This was a more general outbreak, and ended in the destruction of the city and then of the temple of El-berith (= Baal-berith).

**22. over Israel** writes the compiler, because he is concerned with Israelites only. Abimelech was king over the Manassites and Canaanites who inhabited the district round Shechem.

**23. And God** (Elohim) **sent an evil spirit**, as in the case of Saul (1 Sam. xvi. 14, xviii. 10) and the false prophets of Ahab's time (1 Kings xxii. 19-23). Cf. iii. 10.

**24.** A remark of one of the editors.

**25.** The Shechemites became highway robbers and made the roads insecure, thus damaging Abimelech's prestige. They also probably plundered his caravans.

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

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 held festival, and went into the house of their god, and  
 28 did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, 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: but why should we  
 29 serve him? And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.

ix. 26-41. *The revolt and expulsion of Gaal.*

**26. son of Ebed:** i. e. 'of a slave.' His father's real name was probably Obed (i. e. a worshipper of some god), as in Ruth iv.

**went over to Shechem:** lit. 'passed by Shechem.' The expression seems to point to Gaal as a wandering demagogue.

**27. held festival:** lit. made rejoicings. The word for 'rejoicings' occurs only in one other place in the O.T., viz. in Lev. xix. 24, where it is translated 'giving praise.' The festival was celebrated, as in Roman Catholic lands of Europe to-day, by worship in the temple and hilarious merriment outside it. Such an occasion Gaal took, as Amos probably did later at Beth-el, for addressing the people. (Cf. Ibsen, *The League of Youth*, Act. i, for a similar scene in modern life.)

**28, 29.** The men of Shechem as they ate and drank together cursed their tyrant, and Gaal took advantage of their discontent to address them in words, which are not quite clear as they stand, but which seem to mean 'Who is Abimelech, the son of a Hebrew father, that he should rule over Shechem? Why should Shechem, a Canaanitish city, serve him? Both Abimelech and Zebul his agent are only Shechemite subjects. If I were your leader, I would soon get rid of Abimelech. I would say to Abimelech, "Increase your army and come to battle." ' The only changes made thus in the text are, 'they served' for 'serve ye' in verse 28, and 'I would say' for 'he said' in verse 29. Both changes are supported by Greek translations.

And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of 30 Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech craftily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren are come to Shechem ; and, behold, they constrain the city to take part against thee. Now therefore, up by night, thou and the 31 people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field : and 32 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 as thou shalt find occasion.

And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were 34 with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies. And Gaal the son of Ebed went 35 out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city : and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with

ix. 30-33. *Zebul reports to Abimelech.*

31. **craftily**, rather as in marg. 'in Tormah,' which is probably a mistake in writing for Arumah (see verse 41).

**constrain the city...against thee.** The Hebrew means 'are besieging the city against thee,' which is evidently not right. A change of one letter would give 'are laying snares to thy harm'; or we may conjecture 'are stirring up the city against thee.'

32. **in the field**: i. e. in the open country round Shechem. The ambush was actually set in the hill-tops (see verse 36).

ix. 34-41. *Abimelech's attack and Gaal's expulsion.* Zebul evidently pretended to be friendly to Gaal, and drew him out to the usual meeting-place, the gate of the city, in the early morning. Gaal, alarmed at the sight of a number of men moving on the hills, is at first assured by Zebul that he sees but the shadows cast on the hills by the morning sun, but when the approach can be no longer concealed, Zebul taunts him now with his former boasting against Abimelech. Gaal actually does lead his followers (while Zebul doubtless remained in the city with his party and kept order there), but is driven back into the city. Some of his followers were wounded. It was not a very dreadful fight, and apparently none were killed. Zebul had no trouble now in expelling the demagogue.

36 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 mountains as if  
 37 they were men. And Gaal spake again and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and one company cometh by the way of the oak of Meonenim,  
 38 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 de-  
 39 spised? go out now, I pray, and fight with them. And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought  
 40 with Abimelech. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and there fell many wounded, even unto  
 41 the entering of the gate. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brethren,  
 42 that they should not dwell in Shechem. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the  
 43 field; and they told Abimelech. And he took the

**37. the middle of the land**, or ‘the land’s navel,’ probably the name of a hill.

**the oak of Meonenim**, or ‘the augur’s oak,’ another of the sacred trees (see iv. 11, vi. 11) near Shechem.

**41. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah.** Apparently he did not care to show himself in Shechem, but left Zebul to manage his interests there. The site of Arumah is uncertain, though it may be the modern el-‘Ormeh, two hours south-east of Shechem.

**ix. 42-45. Destruction of Shechem.** The story of the general discontent in Shechem was begun in verses 22-25, and then broken off to tell of the previous revolt of a party under Gaal. It is taken up again and concluded in these verses. Having been told that the men of Shechem were practising highway-robbery (like barons of the Middle Ages in Europe), Abimelech takes soldiers and puts them in ambush in three companies. When many of the Shechemites have gone out to their work in the fields or on a plundering expedition, one company rushes 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 them, and smote them. And Abimelech, and the companies 44 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, and smote them. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day ; and 45 he took the city, and slew the people that was therein : and he beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard 46 thereof, they entered into the hold of the house of El-berith. And it was told Abimelech that all the men of 47 the tower of Shechem were gathered together. And 48 Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him ; and Abimelech took 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, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done. And all the 49

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gateway, the other two companies attack the field-workers. The battle lasts all day and the city is destroyed.

**44. the companies that were with him** should be ‘the company that was with him.’

**45. sowed it with salt:** a figurative expression for making utterly desolate. Cf. Deut. xxix. 23; Jer. xvii. 6, &c. Shechem was a flourishing city again in Solomon’s time (1 Kings xii. 1), but it is no longer Canaanitish.

*ix. 46-49. Destruction of the temple of El-berith.*

**46. the tower of Shechem** must have been either a place outside Shechem or a fortified part of the city which held out after the rest was destroyed. In it was the temple of El-berith (or Baal-berith, as in some Greek MSS. ; El and Baal both mean God). What part of this building the ‘hold’ was we do not know, as the word occurs only here and in 1 Sam. xiii. 6. It was clearly a part suited for defence.

**48. mount Zalmon** is not known.

**an axe :** marg. ‘the axes’ should probably be read ‘his axe.’

people likewise cut down 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 in,  
 52 and gat them up to the roof of the tower. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard  
 53 unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman cast an upper millstone upon Abimelech's  
 54 head, and brake his skull. 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  
 55 through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto  
 56 his place. Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy

ix. 50-55. *Siege of Thebez and death of Abimelech.*

**50. Thebez** is placed by Eusebius thirteen miles from Shechem on the road to Beth-shean, and is generally identified with Tūbās, which is situated on the slope of a hill close by a small valley. The discontent with Abimelech was not confined to Shechem.

**53. an upper millstone** would be a circular piece of hard stone, a few inches thick, a foot or more in diameter, with a hole for the meal and a handle for the grinder.

**54. his armourbearer.** Leaders usually had a personal attendant of this kind; so Jonathan, 1 Sam. xiv. 6; Saul, 1 Sam. xxxi. 4 ff.; cf. Judges vii. 10 f.

**55. the men of Israel.** Israelites would naturally be the chief supporters of Abimelech against Canaanitish revolts. The short-lived kingdom probably came to an end with Abimelech's death.

**56, 57.** The moral of the fate of Abimelech and Shechem of the same tenor as verse 24.

brethren : and all the wickedness of the men of Shechem 57 did God requite upon their heads : and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

And after Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola 10 the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar ; and he dwelt in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, 2 and was buried in Shamir.

And after him arose Jair, the Gileadite ; and he judged 3 Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons 4 that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havvoth-jair unto this day, which are in

x. 1-2. *Tola.*

1. **Tola** and **Puah** appear in Gen. xlvi. 13, Num. xxvi. 23, and 1 Chron. vii. 1 ff., as brother-clans of Issachar ; the former being distinguished for its valour and the number of its members, according to the passage in Chronicles.

**Dodo** is translated as a common noun by the Greek and Latin versions. It means ‘his uncle,’ and the Latin has ‘uncle of Abimelech.’ This cannot be correct, as Abimelech was of Manasseh, and Puah of Issachar. The name Dodo occurs twice in 2 Sam. xxiii. 9, 24 (cf. 1 Chron. xi. 12, 26).

**Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim.** The site is not known. The men of Issachar seem to have been early absorbed in the neighbouring tribes (see vi. 35).

x. 3-5. *Jair.*

3. **Jair** is the son of Manasseh in Num. xxxii. 41 ; Deut. iii. 14 ; 1 Kings iv. 13 ; but of mixed Manassite and Judahite descent in 1 Chron. ii. 21-2. **Gilead**, according to Num xxvi. 29 ff., &c., was the son of Machir son of Manasseh (cf. v. 14). The **land of Gilead** refers generally in the O.T. to the rich and hilly country east of the Jordan inhabited by Israelites.

4. **thirty ass colts.** The possession of these asses is a sign of wealth, as in v. 10, xii. 14.

**Havvoth-jair** : i. e. ‘tent-villages of Jair,’ a district mentioned in Num. xxxii. 41 ; Deut. iii. 14 ; Joshua xiii. 30 (where the villages are said to be sixty in number), and 1 Chron. ii. 23 (cf. verse 22, where the villages are twenty-three in number). According to the Greek version there were thirty-two sons, thirty-two asses, and thirty-two villages.

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

6 [D] And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baalim, and the Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the chil-

5. The site of **Kamon** is unknown.

x. 6-18. *Introduction to the story of Jephthah.* The Deuteronomic compiler's introduction to the story of Jephthah, which is contained in verses 6-8 and continued in verses 17-18, is much enlarged by the introduction of matter (verses 9-16) found in his sources, with two or three short additions of a later time. The substance of the whole is that the Israelites (presumably after the death of Gideon) again forsook Yahweh and served other gods. Yahweh was angry and delivered them into the power of the Philistines (of whom we hear nothing more now) and of the Ammonites, who oppressed the Hebrews east of the Jordan for eighteen years. The Ammonites even crossed the Jordan and raided the lands of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. As usual under these circumstances the Israelites repented of their faithlessness. Yahweh reproached them, but was sorry for them when they had put away the strange gods. After this return to Yahweh the Ammonites were camped in Gilead, while the Gileadites met in Mizpah and took counsel as to who could lead them against the enemy. This naturally introduces Jephthah in the next chapter.

x. 6-9. The constantly recurring Deuteronomic formula (see Introd.), with the names of gods, enemies, and part of the Hebrew people oppressed on this occasion.

6. For the **Baalim** see ii. 11; for the **Ashtaroth** see ii. 13.

**the gods of Syria** (or 'Aram): i. e. of the country north of Palestine from Phoenicia to the Euphrates, Damascus being the best known city in it. The chief gods of this land were Haddād and Rammān (called Rimmōn in the O. T.) and a goddess 'Athar.

**the gods of Zidon**: i. e. of Phoenicia, the name of the chief town being put for the whole, as in Homer. Phoenician worship was akin to Syrian. The names of many of their gods are found in the inscriptions discovered in the country, and in the Phoenician settlement of Carthage. The worship of their gods was introduced into Israel again at the time of Jezebel.

**the gods of Moab.** Chemosh was the chief (1 Kings xi. 33, &c., and in the inscription on the Moabite Stone of the ninth century B. C.).

dren of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and 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 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 beyond Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in 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 sore distressed.

**the gods of the children of Ammon**, among whom was Molech (*1 Kings xi. 7, 33; 2 Kings xxiii. 10, &c.*).

**the gods of the Philistines.** These, such as Dagon and Baal-zebub, were Canaanitish deities adopted by the Philistines when they settled in the land. All the above were varying forms of nature-worship.

**7. Philistines.** See *xiii. 1.*

**the children of Ammon**, or Ammonites, formerly possessed the land east of the Jordan between the Arnon and Jabbok, but had been driven further eastward by Amorites, just before the Hebrews came on the scene. The Amorites were at any rate partially dispossessed in turn by two Hebrew tribes, but the Ammonites still claimed this land as theirs (*see xi. 13 ff.*). In *Gen. xix. 38* they are allowed to be akin to the Hebrews.

**8.** The first half of the verse reads, ‘And they crushed and oppressed the children of Israel in that year, eighteen years,’ where the first indication of time ‘in that year’ was in the earlier book, and the ‘eighteen years’ is the Deuteronomist’s usual indication of the length of the period of oppression. Through some fault in the text the two are now placed without sense together.

**in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead:** i. e. in the disputed territory mentioned in the preceding note.

**9.** Not only did the Ammonites trouble the Hebrews who had settled in their old territory between the Arnon and Jabbok, but they crossed the Jordan and raided Central Palestine, the hill-country of Ephraim including the land of Benjamin, and the north of Judah. They would thus follow very much the same route as the Moabites in *iii. 12 ff.*, but pushed further into the country.

10 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying,  
 We have sinned against thee, even because we have for-  
 11 saken our God, and have 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 chil-  
 12 dren of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians  
 also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress  
 you; and ye cried unto me, and I saved you out of their  
 13 hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods:  
 14 wherefore I will save you no more. Go and cry unto the  
 gods which ye have chosen; let them save you in the  
 15 time of your distress. And the children of Israel said  
 unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us what-  
 soever seemeth good unto thee; only deliver us, we pray  
 16 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,  
 and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel

**11, 12.** The latter part of verse 11 lacks a verb in the Hebrew. We may either adopt the words in italics in the English version, or with the Greek, Latin, and Syriac translators make all the proper names subjects of the verb 'did oppress' in verse 12.

There are seven nations mentioned here, as there are seven sets of strange gods in verse 6, but the lists are not of the same peoples.

**the Philistines.** No Philistine oppression has been mentioned in our book (unless it is indicated in the story of Shamgar, iii. 31), but the Samson stories may have come before Jephthah's in the source from which this is taken; otherwise it is a late and mistaken addition.

**the children of Ammon** must have been added later, as the Hebrews had not yet been delivered from them. Of an oppression by the **Zidonians** we have no account at all. The **Maonites** do not appear in Hebrew history until much later (1 Chron. iv. 41; 2 Chron. xx. 1), and probably the Greek translation is right in reading 'Midianites' (see the story of Gideon).

**17, 18.** These two verses seem to be intended by the editor to

assembled themselves together, and encamped in 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.

[J] Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of another 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.

And it came to pass after a while, that the children of

be an introduction to the story of Jephthah. The material of them is all contained in the next chapter.

xi. 1—xii. 7. *Jephthah.*

xi. 1—3. *The early years of Jephthah.* Jephthah was a Gileadite because he lived in the land of Gilead, but as the son of a harlot (not of a legitimate concubine) he had no legal standing in a tribe. The words from 'and Gilead begat Jephthah' to the end of verse 2 do not belong to the original story, for **Gilead** was properly the name of a land, and is treated as the name of a person only in late writings (P and Chron.), and the word used for 'begat' belongs to the language of this later time.

3. **Jephthah fled** (cf. verse 7) . . . **and dwelt in the land of Tob.** Men of Tob are employed by the Ammonites against David (2 Sam. x. 6, 8). There was a slaughter of Jews in the land of Tubias (probably the same as Tob) in the time of Judas Maccabaeus (1 Macc. v. 13), and certain Jews are called Tubieni (men of Tob) in 2 Macc. xii. 17, but all we can gather from these passages is that Tob was somewhere near Gilead.

**vain fellows.** See ix. 4.

**they went out with him,** that is, on raiding expeditions.

xi. 4—11. *Jephthah chosen to lead the Gileadites.*

4. The Ammonites, who according to x. 17 were encamped in

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 Ammon.  
7 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 ye are in distress?  
8 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  
9 be our head over all the inhabitants 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  
10 LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD shall be witness between us ; surely according to thy word so

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Gilead, now began to be active, that is, began making raids on the Hebrew towns and villages.

5. In consequence of this activity the Hebrew elders were compelled to hasten in the selection of a leader. The pressing need overcame any scruples that had been felt about the great fighter Jephthah, whom they had driven away themselves from his country, and they went to the land of Tob to secure his services.

6. The invitation at first was apparently only to the leadership in this war. They wished to hire him as they would any other mercenary.

7. But Jephthah still smarted under the condition of exile in which he lived. He was married and had a daughter, and did not wish to serve Gilead and return to banishment.

8. The elders understood his feelings, and repeated their wish that he should lead them in war, and promised him the headship over Gilead.

9. Jephthah would have no ambiguity, but stated the conditions clearly—he is to be and remain head of Gilead after he has re-established peace.

10. These terms are accepted by the elders, and (verse 11) afterwards confirmed by the people when Jephthah comes before them.

will we do. Then Jephthah went with the elders of 11 Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them: and Jephthah spake all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.

And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the 12 children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come unto me to fight against my land? And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto 13 the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when he came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore

xi. 12-28. *Jephthah's correspondence with the king of the Ammonites.* Before beginning actual warfare Jephthah makes clear his new position as head of the Gileadites (as distinct from that of merely a leader in war) by exchanging messages—as one king with another—with the Ammonite king. ‘What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come unto me to fight against my land?’ The reply of the Ammonite king is that when the Hebrews came up from Egypt they seized his territory between Arnon, Jabbok, and Jordan, and that he claims its restoration. To this Jephthah replies that the Hebrews took no land of Moab or Ammon; that even when prevented from traversing Edomite territory they did not attack the Edomites, but made a wide detour to the east until they came north of the Arnon; that north of the Arnon they found Amorites who refused them a passage, and whom therefore they fought and overcame. It was the territory of these Amorites that the Hebrews took possession of. Jephthah further bids the Ammonite be satisfied with what Chemosh his god has given him, and not interfere with what Yahweh the God of the Hebrews has done for His people. Is he better than Balak, king of Moab, who did not dare to fight against the Hebrews? Why too have the Ammonites waited these three hundred years, since the Hebrew conquest, before claiming this territory as theirs? Therefore—he sums up in saying—you are in the wrong, and Yahweh shall judge the matter between us.

The Ammonite king refused to pay attention to Jephthah's arguments.

**13.** The land in dispute was the low hill-country and moorland north of the Arnon, and extending to the Jabbok. The Arnon (now Wadi el-Mujib) flows from east to west through a ravine, which in places is 1,700 feet deep and two miles wide, into the

14 restore those *lands* again peaceably. And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon : and he said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah : Israel took not away the land of 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 Kadesh ; then Israel sent messengers

Dead Sea. The Jabbok (now Nahr ez-Zerka) flows into the Jordan about forty-five miles north of the mouth of the Arnon. After the conquest of this district by the Hebrews it was allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Two varying accounts of the parts occupied by them are given in Num. xxxii. 34 ff. (E) and Joshua xiii. 15 ff. (P). Both these tribes must have had a precarious existence owing to the constant attacks of Moabites. Reuben seems to have succumbed, and is not mentioned in the inscription on the Moabite Stone (ninth century).

*xii. 14-22. Jephthah's summary of the dealings of the Hebrews with the Moabites when they came up from Egypt.*

It is strange to find here that in an argument with Ammonites all this historic recapitulation is concerning Moab. This is, however, in accordance with the narratives in Deut. ii and Num. xx, xxi, where Moab formerly occupied the land between Arnon, Jabbok, and Jordan, which however had been taken from them by the Amorites, from whom the Hebrews took it, allotting it to Reuben and Gad. The Ammonites occupied the country between the upper Arnon and upper Jabbok to the east of this land (Deut. ii. 19; Num. xxi. 24). They were closely related to the Moabites according to Hebrew tradition (Gen. xix. 37, 38, J). It is probable that the author who collected the traditions of Jephthah, finding in them that the Ammonites claimed this district, but knowing of no history to support such a claim, inserted the account of their brother-people Moab, thus implying that they were practically one people.

The account in these verses is abridged from the source which is used and expanded in Num. xx, xxi, and in part preserves the same phrases. Compare with verse 17, Num. xx. 1, 14, 17, 21; with verse 18, Num. xxi. 4, 11, 13; with verse 19, Num. xxi. 21, 22; with verses 20-22, Num. xxi. 23, 24.

(For the account in Deut. ii, see the commentaries on that book.)

**16. Kadesh**, often called Kadesh-barnea, now called 'Ain Kadis, is in the Negeb about fifty miles south of Beer-sheba. According to early tradition (JE in Numbers), it was the centre

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 he would not : and Israel abode in Kadesh. Then he <sup>18</sup> 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 of Moab, for Arnon was the border of Moab. And Israel <sup>19</sup> 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. But Sihon <sup>20</sup> trusted not Israel to pass through his border : but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And the LORD, the God of <sup>21</sup> 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, the inhabitants of that country. And they possessed all the border of the Amorites, from <sup>22</sup> Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan. So now the LORD, the God of Israel, hath <sup>23</sup> dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel,

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of Hebrew life during the forty years in the desert (but compare Deut. ii. 14).

**17 ff.** The Hebrews journeyed to the east of Edom (see v. 4) and of Moab ; then crossed the upper Arnon and invaded and conquered the Amorite country between the Ammonites on the east and the Jordan on the west.

**19. Heshbon**, now Hesbān, about sixteen miles east of the Jordan, and about twelve southwards from 'Ammān.

**20. Jahaz** (Num. xxi. 23 ; Deut. ii. 32) is mentioned several times in the O. T., but its position is unknown.

**22. the wilderness** is mentioned as the eastern boundary of the Hebrew conquest, but the Ammonites were on the eastern boundary (see above), so that they are conceived of as living in the desert, or are ignored here.

**23, 24.** Yahweh has given us this land, Chemosh has given

24 and shouldest thou possess them? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God hath dispossessed from  
 25 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 did he ever fight  
 26 against them? While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that are along by the side of Arnon, three hundred years; wherefore did ye not recover them within that time?  
 27 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  
 28 children of Ammon. Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

29 Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed

you (i. e. Moab, for Chemosh was Moab's god) what you possess. Do not interfere with what the gods have arranged.

**25.** The story of Balak ben Zippor is given in Num. xxii. 2 ff. (E).

**26. Heshbon and her towns:** i. e. and the villages governed from Heshbon (see verse 19).

**Aroer,** now 'Arā'ir, on the edge of the northern bank of the ravine of the Arnon.

**by the side of Arnon.** The Greek version has 'Jordan' instead of 'Arnon.'

**three hundred years.** The sum of the years mentioned in the chronology of this book up to the beginning of the Ammonite oppression is three hundred and one years.

**xi. 29-33. Jephthah's campaign against the Ammonites.**

**29. the spirit of the LORD.** See iii. 10. The ratification of Jephthah's appointment as 'head and chief' by the people must have taken place at Mizpah. As the mention of this event in verse 11 anticipated his journey from the land of Tob through Gilead and Manasseh to Mizpah in this verse, the author has

over unto the children of Ammon. And Jephthah vowed 30 a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into mine hand, then it shall be, 31 that 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 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 into his hand. And he smote them from 32 Aroer until thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto Abel-cheramim, with a very great slaughter. So the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

apparently removed the words 'and Jephthah spake all his words before the Lord in Mizpah' from the end of verse 31, where they naturally belong to verse 11. The course of events would thus be: Jephthah, having been appointed head by the elders in the land of Tob (verses 5-10), came down to Gilead and Manasseh and to Mizpeh of Gilead, where his appointment was ratified by the people (verse 11), and he vowed his vow before Yahweh (verses 30, 31 and 11<sup>b</sup>), then from Mizpeh he went to the Ammonites (verse 29<sup>c</sup>).

**30. Jephthah vowed a vow.** Other vows mentioned in the O. T. are those of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 20 ff.), Hannah (1 Sam. i. 11), Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 8).

**31. whatsoever** must be read as in the margin, 'whosoever.' A human sacrifice is evidently intended.

**33. Aroer.** The best-known place of this name is the Aroer on the north bank of the Arnon ravine. This is not suitable here, and it is more probably the 'Aroer that is before Rabbah' of Joshua xiii. 25 (i. e. east of the present Ammān).

**Minnith**, according to Eusebius, was a site four miles from Heshbon on the road to the present Ammān, but this position does not seem suitable here. Various other names are given in the Greek version here.

**even twenty cities**—awkward grammatically. It may indicate the number of cities conquered by Jephthah, or the number of cities between Aroer and Minnith.

**Abel-cheramim** ('a meadow of vineyards') is unknown. Eusebius says it was six miles from Ammān, but mentions two other places of similar name.

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  
 35 he had neither son nor 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 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  
 37 children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me : let me alone two months, that

xi. 34-40. *The sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter.*

**34.** **with timbrels and with dances**, i. e. dancing to the accompaniment of small drums, or tainbourines, played by women who were with her. The custom of women celebrating victories by dances is mentioned in Exod. xv. 20 (Miriam) and in 1 Sam. xviii. 6 f. (the women who met Saul).

**35.** **he rent his clothes**: a usual custom among the Hebrews for expressing grief, and still done in the East (cf. Gen. xxxvii. 29 ; 2 Sam. xiii. 19, &c.).

The Hebrew of the latter part of this verse is stronger than the English. It means, ‘Thou hast bowed me down (taken the strength from my limbs, so that I sink to the ground as in v. 27), and thou (emphatic) art among those who trouble me.’ Jephthah seems to think of those who had troubled him in the past—his father’s sons (verse 2), the elders of Gilead (verse 7), and probably his own restless followers (verse 3). Now he has come back to his own land in honour, to live in peace with his only child (note how this is emphasized in verse 34), and *she* is now the cause (innocently enough) of his greatest grief.

**I cannot go back.** The vow had been too solemn, the answer too striking.

**36.** She knew her father’s grief was for some hard fate for herself, whether someone told her what it was or not. The answer is one of noble resignation with joyful triumph.

**37, 38.** One favour only Jephthah’s daughter asks and obtains—that on the mountains with her companions she may mourn

I may depart and go down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my companions. And he said, Go. 38  
 And he sent her away for two months : and she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two 39 months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed : and she had not known man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to celebrate the 40 daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

And the men of Ephraim were gathered together, and 12 passed 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

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that she is to be cut off by death from the hope, so strong among Hebrew women, of having children.

**39.** Unlike the Greek tragedian (*Aeschylus in the Agamemnon*, describing the sacrifice of Iphigenia), the Hebrew writer draws a veil over the final act, only lamenting again that she died, and with her passed away the hope of continuing the family.

**40. the daughters of Israel**, i. e. probably of Gilead. Like other local customs this probably passed away as time deprived it of its meaning.

xii. 1-6. *Gilead against Ephraim.* Again, as after Gideon's success (viii. 1-3), the Ephraimites feel that their superiority has been attacked by the fact that a member of another tribe should have taken upon himself the punishment of invaders without consulting them. They threaten to burn his house over his head. Gideon was a quiet man, and had made peace with them by politic speech. Jephthah was a man of fighting by profession, and his spirit was in bitterness over the destruction of his happiness by the imminent or recent loss of his only child. He answers them with fierce but true words, gathers round him men of Gilead who had suffered from the taunts of Ephraimites before, and inflicts a heavy punishment on the Ephraimites who had ventured to cross the Jordan.

**1. northward**, i. e. to the fords of the Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee, or to *Zaphon*, as in margin. *Zaphon* in Joshua xiii. 27 is in the territory of Gad, probably between Succoth and the Sea of Galilee.

2 burn thine house upon thee with fire. 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  
 3 me not out of their hand. 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  
 4 this day, to 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  
 5 of Ephraim, *and* in the midst of Manasseh. And the Gileadites took the fords of Jordan 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  
 6 him, Art thou an Ephraimite ? If he said, 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.

**2. I called you.** This was not mentioned in the previous accounts.

**4.** We cannot tell how soon these events occurred after Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites. The Gileadites, who dispersed after the battles, were easily gathered again. The latter part of this verse is quite unintelligible to us. The Gileadites, according to the genealogies, are a branch of Manasseh, and cannot be 'fugitives of Ephraim.' Either the words are in the wrong place here or the text is corrupt. The whole passage is omitted in some Greek MSS.

**5, 6. the fords, &c., see iii. 28.** There were already differences of pronunciation among the Hebrew tribes. The Ephraimite pronounced *sh* as *s*, so that his manner of pronouncing the word Shibboleth (which means 'an ear of corn') betrayed him.

Although the slaughter extended probably over a considerable time, the numbers must be, as usual, greatly exaggerated.

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

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

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

And after him Abdon the son of Hillel the Pira- 13

**7. in one of the cities of Gilead.** The Hebrew is ‘in the cities of Gilead.’ The Greek reads ‘in his city in Gilead,’ the Latin ‘in his city Gilead,’ the Syriac ‘in a city of Gilead.’

**xii. 8-15. Ibzan, Elon and Abdon.** Three so-called minor judges are now mentioned. Their stories show the same characteristics as the accounts of Tola and Jair (x. 1-5). They do not save the Israelites from any enemy, but simply exercise authority or influence over their peoples. Their names and what is known about them seems to have been derived from their tombs, which are always mentioned. The chronology is the one thing which has led to the introduction of these men. (See Introd. p. 13 f.)

**8. Ibzan.** The name does not occur anywhere but here, and its meaning is unknown. Josephus thought that the **Beth-lehem** referred to here was Beth-lehem of Judah, but it was more probably the city of Zebulun mentioned in Joshua xix. 15, which still retains its name in Arabic form (Beit-Lahm), and is about seven miles from Nazareth, west of Sessürieh.

Ibzan had thirty sons, all of whom he married to wives from other clans, and thirty daughters, whom he likewise married. By the connexions thus established he was a man of importance, and these facts were probably recorded on his tomb.

**11, 12. Elon** (meaning ‘a terebinth’) occurs in Gen. xlvi. 14 and Num. xxvi. 26 as the name of a clan of Zebulun. Here the progenitor of the clan is probably intended. The name of his burying-place, **Aijalon**, is only another pronunciation of the same name.

**13, 14. Abdon.** The name Abdon occurs twice in the genealogy of Benjamin, 1 Chron. viii. 23, 30, but there is nothing to connect

14 thonite 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.

13 [D] And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD ; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

it with the ‘judge’ who is mentioned here only. The name **Hillel** does not occur again in the O. T.

**Pirathon**, according to verse 15, is in the land of Ephraim (cf. 1 Chron. xxvii. 14). It is generally thought to be the modern Fer'atā, on the top of a high rock south-west of Nablūs (Shechem).

**15. in the hill country of the Amalekites.** There is an allusion here to some connexion of a part of Ephraim's territory, which escapes us for want of information. See v. 14.

xiii. 1—xvi. 31. *Samson.*

1. The Deuteronomistic transition formula. Cf. ii. 11, iii. 7, 12, vi. 1, x. 6.

the **Philistines** were, like the Hebrews, invaders and settlers in Palestine. Rameses III (about 1200 B. C.), according to an Egyptian inscription, had to fight against a number of foreign tribes who were specially active in Syria. He is said to have defeated them both on sea and land. Of these tribes, one is named that of the Pu-ra-sa-ti, and it seems probable that these were the Philistines. Hebrew tradition said they came from Caphtor, which has been variously explained as Cappadocia, Cyprus, Crete, or the Delta of Egypt. The evidence of the monuments seems to favour Asia Minor as their original home. As they did not practise circumcision (1 Sam. xviii. 25 ff.) they were probably neither Semites nor Egyptians by race. Just at the time when they are mentioned in the Egyptian records the Egyptian power was weak in Palestine, and their invasion was thus made easier. The district they occupy in the story of Samson is the low-lying land on the Mediterranean coast from Gaza on the south to near Jaffa on the north. On the east were the low hills (the Shephelah, see i. 9) which led up to the highlands of Judah and Benjamin. It was probably owing to the Philistine occupation of some of these low hills that the Danites were unable to effect a settlement in the territory allotted to them, and so migrated (xviii). The plains, which they chiefly settled in, contained several

[J] And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the 2 family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of the 3 LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray 4 thee, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear 5

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ancient cities, Gaza, Gath, Ashkelon, &c., which are mentioned in the Amarna letters (about 1400 B.C.), and the great high-road from Egypt and Arabia to Syria and the north passed through them. The towns were therefore centres of a much higher civilization than that of either the Philistines or the Hebrews.

xiii. 2-24. *Events connected with the birth of Samson.*

**2. Zorah** in xviii. 2, 8, 11, as in Joshua xix. 41, is a Danite city, but in the later passage, Joshua xv. 33, as in 2 Chron. xi. 10, it is assigned to Judah, for when these latter passages were written a part of the Danites had migrated to the north (xviii) and the rest had been absorbed in the tribe of Judah. Zorah is the modern Sur'ah, about seventeen miles west of Jerusalem, and situated on a hill 800 feet above the valley of Sorek, through which the railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem now runs. Beth-shemesh was on the south side of the valley opposite Zorah.

**of the family of the Danites**, rather 'of the clan,' &c. For the Danites see xviii. 1.

The name **Manoah** (meaning 'rest,' or 'place of rest') occurs only in this story, unless it is reproduced in the 'Menuhoth' and 'Manahathites' of 1 Chron. ii. 52, 54.

**3-7.** The angel of Yahweh appears to Manoah's wife, who is barren, promises her the birth of a son, and gives directions as to his training. She tells her husband.

**3.** For the **angel of the LORD**, who appears evidently in human form and unrecognized, see ii. 1.

**but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.** These words are very awkward grammatically in Hebrew, and seem to be an interpolation. The announcement of the conception and birth are made in verse 5.

**4. wine and strong drink** are often used together in the O.T. (and so in Luke i. 15, reproduced from Num. vi. 3) to denote all intoxicating liquors. The Hebrew word 'shekar' (strong drink) includes intoxicating drinks made from grains, fruits, or honey.

**any unclean thing.** The laws as to unclean things in

a son ; and no razor shall come upon his head : for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb : and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Phi-

Deut. xiv and Lev. xi belong to periods centuries later than this (though they may contain some older customs), and so cannot be used here. We may, however, judge that the expression refers to certain animals forbidden as food, and carrion generally (cf. Exod. xxii. 31, E).

**5. thou shalt conceive, and bear a son :** better, as in Gen. xvi. 11, 'thou art with child, and shalt bear a son.'

**no razor shall come upon his head: for the child shall be a Nazirite.** The laws concerning the Nazarite are given in Num. vi, but it must be remembered that these belong to a code that was issued some 600 years after the events of this chapter. Moreover, there are some striking differences between the conditions in the two passages. Here the Nazariteship is for life, in Numbers for a period only ; here the child is a Nazarite by the consecration of his mother, in the later work by a voluntary vow undertaken by the person himself ; here the hair is never to be cut, but in the Code it is to be cut off and offered to Yahweh at the expiration of the period of Nazariteship. The characteristics of Samson's Nazariteship are that he is a devotee, devoted to Yahweh all his life, and that his hair is never to be cut. His mother is forbidden by the angel of Yahweh 'to eat of anything that cometh of the vine,' or 'to drink wine or strong drink,' or 'to eat any unclean thing' (verse 14), but we are not told that Samson himself observed the same injunctions. The account of the 'drinking-feast' (xiv. 10) does not suggest an abstinence from wine or strong drink.

The importance attached to the hair is common not only to such primitive peoples as the Australians, but also to more advanced races as the Persians and Greeks. It was so closely connected with a man's personal being that to offer it to a god was to offer part of one's self, and to keep it uncut was to preserve one's own life in its fullest strength. (Interesting examples of this belief will be found in any anthropological work.)

**he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.** These words probably explain why the writer who first united the two sets of traditions of Hebrew heroes introduced the story of Samson into his work. Samuel was the real deliverer of the Israelites from the Philistine oppression, and his story was probably in the pre-Deuteronomic Book of Judges, but as the wild actions of Samson among the Philistines did to some extent benefit the Hebrews who lived on their border, the writer

listines. Then the woman came and told her husband, 6 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 whence he was, neither told he me his name : but he said unto me, Behold, thou 7 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. Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and 8 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 unto the child that shall be born. And God 9 hearkened to the voice of Manoah ; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field : but

copies his story, although he cannot say that the Philistines 'were subdued before the children of Israel' (xi. 33) or that 'the land had rest' (viii. 28) in the days of Samson.

**6. A man of God**, i. e. either a man of superhuman appearance, or more probably one of those men who, claiming superior knowledge of God's intentions, appeared from time to time to historic personages to deliver messages from God (cf. 1 Sam. ii. 27; Judges vi. 7). Such men probably wandered from place to place, like some of the dervishes among the Arabs and fakirs in India to-day.

The woman describes this one as of awe-inspiring appearance, making her think of the stories of Yahweh as He appeared in human form. The fact that she did not ask his name (the first question put to a stranger in the East) shows the impression he made upon her.

xiii. 8-23. *Manoah's interview with the angel.* Manoah naturally wishes to see the man who has made this strange communication to his wife. The angel appears again to the woman and waits until she brings her husband, who questions him and offers him hospitality. The angel declines this, but suggests a sacrifice, which Manoah offers. In the flame of the sacrifice the angel ascends and disappears. Manoah and his wife now realize that they have seen God, and fear death as the consequence, but are comforted by the thought that Yahweh would not have treated them so well if He had intended to slay them.

10 Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and told her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that  
 11 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 the woman?  
 12 And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass: what shall be the manner of the  
 13 child, and *what shall be* his work? And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the  
 14 woman let her beware. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; all that I commanded her  
 15 let her observe. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, that we may  
 16 make ready a 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  
 17 knew 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

**12.** The verse means: ‘Granted that thy word comes true, what will be the manner of life of the boy and his action?’ i. e. How is he to be trained, and what ought he to do?

The next two verses are not an answer to Manoah’s question. The angel only tells him that his wife must be careful to observe his previous commands as to food and drink. The commands are enlarged here by the addition of abstinence from everything connected with the vine.

**15, 16.** Manoah offers the same form of hospitality to the angel as Gideon had done (see vi. 18 f.), but this time the angel definitely declines a meal, and proposes a burnt offering (to consist of the food offered to him) to Yahweh.

**bread:** here in the general sense of food.

**17, 18.** Manoah asks the angel his name, that, when (or ‘if’) his words come true, he may honour him (in some way not

honour? And the angel of the LORD said unto him, 18  
 Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is won-  
 derful? So Manoah took the kid with the meal offering, 19  
 and offered it upon the rock unto the LORD: and *the  
 angel* did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on.  
 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven 20  
 from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended  
 in the flame of the altar: and Manoah and his wife looked  
 on; and they fell on their faces to the ground. But the 21  
 angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah or to  
 his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of  
 the LORD. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall 22

mentioned). The angel replies that his name would be beyond his power to understand. Jacob had asked God His name when he wrestled with Him, but had not been satisfied (Gen. xxxii. 29). These two verses seem to be the continuation of verse 14, while verse 16 is continued in verse 19.

xiii. 19, 20. *The sacrifice.*

**19. with the meal offering.** As the meal offering was a necessary accompaniment of the burnt offering in the later legislation (Num. xv. 8-9, P), but not so in earlier practice, these words may have been added here (and in verse 23) to make Manoah's sacrifice correct according to the later idea.

**upon the rock,** which was generally used by Manoah as an altar.

**and the angel did wondrously.** The words 'the angel' are not in the text, which simply has 'and doing wondrously,' which does not make sense. It is better to change the conjunction into the definite article (a change of one letter in Hebrew), when the words then become attributive to the word Yahweh which precedes—'they offered it upon the rock to Yahweh who works wondrously.' A similar expression is used of Yahweh in Exod. xv. 11 and Ps. lxxvii. 14.

The last words of the verse, **and Manoah and his wife looked on**, were probably put in here by a copyist's mistake from the next verse.

**20. For (lit. 'And') it came to pass, when the flame** (of the sacrifice) kindled by Manoah went up heavenwards, the angel went up in the altar-flame as Manoah and his wife looked on.

**22.** It was a firm belief at this time that to see God was death

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 such  
 24 things as these. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD  
 25 blessed him. And the spirit of the LORD began to move him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

**14** And Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman

for man (cf. vi. 22 f.), although He is represented in stories of older times as having walked and talked familiarly with men.

**24.** The earliest form of the name in Hebrew was Shamshōn, which has come into English from the Greek through the Latin. The Hebrew text contains a later form, Shimshōn. The name is derived from Shemesh, meaning 'Sun,' and probably denotes 'sunny' or 'Sun's man.' That the Sun was worshipped in this part of the country seems clear from the name of the city Beth-shemesh (i. e. 'Abode of the Sun,' like Beth-el, 'Abode of El'), just opposite Zorah. Considering the importance of Hebrew names, it seems inconceivable that a Hebrew mother should give such a name to her child if his birth had been associated with a revelation of Yahweh.

**25.** the spirit of the LORD in the story of Samson is an irresistible impulse accompanied by unusual physical strength (cf. xiv. 19, xv. 14).

began to move him or to disturb him. The verb used here occurs only in four other passages. In three of them it denotes the disturbance of spirit caused by dreams (Gen. xli. 8; Dan. ii. 1, 3), and in Ps. lxxvii. 4 of agitation caused by trouble and the thought of God. Generally when the spirit of Yahweh came on a man he did some violent deed at once, but here it is associated only with a general excitement or disturbance of mind, which must have shown itself in some noticeable manner as the exact place of its occurrence is mentioned.

**Eshtaol** is generally associated with Zorah (Joshua xv. 33, xix. 41; Judges xvi. 31, xviii. 2, 11; cf. 1 Chron. ii. 53), and was only about a mile and a half to the east of it (the modern Eshu'a). Thus the exact position intended by the author of 'Dan's camp' is known. A place of this name is mentioned later (see xviii. 12).

xiv. In this and the following chapter is narrated a series of events connected with Samson's attachment to a woman in

in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. And he 2 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 wife. Then 3 his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a

Timnah. Samson asks his father to secure this woman for him as a wife, but the father objects to her as a stranger, and apparently will not receive her into his house. Samson then contracts with her an irregular marriage, whereby she remains in her house and he visits her when he will. On the way to Timnah on one occasion he kills a lion, and returning to Zorah finds honey in the carcase of the slain beast. Some time shortly afterwards he gives a feast ('for so used the young men to do') to his Philistine acquaintances in Timnah, and during its continuance proposes a riddle. The Philistines threaten Samson's wife with punishment unless she persuades him to tell her the solution of the riddle, and by this means are able to win their wager from Samson. He, however, in anger leaves the woman and kills thirty Philistines in Ashkelon. The woman gives him up and joins another man.

**1. Timnah** (the modern Tibnah) was about three and a half miles south-west of Zorah, among the hills on the south side of the valley of Sorek. It is mentioned in Gen. xxxviii. 12 ff. In Joshua xix. 43 it is ascribed to Dan, and in xv. 10 to Judah. It is mentioned again in 2 Chron. xxviii. 18 among the cities which the Philistines had reconquered in the time of Ahaz.

Samson, on a visit to Timnah, saw a Philistine woman, whom he wished to have as wife. He asked his father to arrange the matter with her parents. Manoah protested against his taking a foreigner as wife. All Samson's adventures are connected with his relations to women. Those with the Timnahite occupy chapters xiv and xv; with the harlot of Gaza xvi. 1-3; with Delilah xvi. 4 ff.

**2.** In Gen. xxxiv. 4 Shechem makes a similar request to his father.

**3.** The words **and his mother** have been added (cf. '*my people*'). We have parallels to the verse in Genesis. Thus in xxiv. 3 Abraham makes his servant swear not to take a foreign wife for Isaac; in xxvi. 34 f. Esau's foreign wife is a source of bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah; and in xxvii. 46 and xxviii Isaac charges Jacob not to take a Canaanitish wife. It seems clear that Samson originally intended a regular marriage, with the introduction of his wife into his father's house. This, however, was not carried out. (See xv.)

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,

**4** Get her for me; for she 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.

**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 him.

**6** And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had

**the uncircumcised Philistines.** The Canaanites seem to have generally practised circumcision, though the Shechemites did not, according to Gen. xxxiv. The term 'the uncircumcised' is often used by itself to denote the Philistines in the O. T. (Judges xv. 18; 1 Sam. xiv. 6, &c.).

**she pleaseth me well:** *lit.* 'she is agreeable in my eyes.'

**4.** When the traditions of Samson were written down, the author wrote them, not as a modern folklorist would do, to illustrate the modes of life and thought of bygone days, but to show how Yahweh wrought for Israel through these heroes. So in this verse he tells us that Yahweh was seeking an opportunity of doing a mischief to the Philistines, and it was part of His plan that Samson should establish relations with the woman of Timnah. His father, the writer tells us, had no knowledge of this. Yahweh's action was due to His care for the interests of His people, for **the Philistines had rule over Israel** (it would be more correct historically to say over the Israelites of that district), and any harm done to them was a benefit to their Hebrew neighbours.

**xiv. 5-9. The occasion that gave rise to a riddle.** The course of events in these verses has been somewhat obscured by the introduction of Samson's father and mother, as if they had agreed to help him. This change in the story may have been made to save Samson from the charge of unfilial conduct.

**5, 6.** Samson on his way to Timnah met a young lion that roared at him. In a frenzy of superhuman strength he tore it as if it were a kid. His father and mother were not with him, for they know nothing of this incident. The last clause of the verse is probably taken from 9.

nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. And after a while he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees 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 lion. And his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. And Samson said unto them, Let me now put forth a riddle unto you:

**8, 9.** After spending some time at Timnah Samson returned home. On his way he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion, and found in it a swarm of bees and honey. Some of this he ate, some he took home to his father and mother, not telling them, however, whence he had got it.

**8.** The words *to take her* (i. e. in marriage) are evidently a gloss very badly introduced here. Samson is on his way back to Zorah, whence he goes to Timnah again later for the marriage.

xiv. 10-20. *The feast and its results.*

**10.** Again the words ‘his father’ are introduced so as to spoil the sense. Read, ‘and Samson went down unto the woman and made there a feast’ (the word means literally ‘an occasion of drinking’), for the young men of that time were accustomed to give such feasts. At a proper wedding the friends of the bridegroom escorted the bride to her new home and a feast was held there. But it is doubtful whether this was a bridal feast at all, or simply one such as young men gave from time to time to their friends. Samson would very naturally give a feast to the friends of the woman.

**11. when they saw him.** Some of the Greek MSS. read ‘since they feared him.’ Some parts of the Hebrew verbs ‘to see’ and ‘to fear’ are very much alike. The number of the company explains the number of the garments in the wager.

**12. a riddle** (as in Ezek. xvii. 2), or ‘dark saying’ (as in

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  
 13 and thirty changes of 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  
 14 thy riddle, 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.

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said

Ps. xl ix. 4, lxxviii. 2 ; Prov. i. 6), differed from a parable in that its object was usually to test ingenuity in its solution, while the object of the parable was didactic. If the references in the parable were too obscure it defeated its own purpose, but in the riddle the more difficult it was the better. In ancient times the solution of riddles at feasts was a favourite amusement.

**thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment.** The linen garments, mentioned again in Isa. iii. 23 and Prov. xxxi. 24, are wrappers of linen worn alone as night-garments, or as outer garments in the day. The 'changes of raiment' are festal garments as distinguished from working clothes, and were often given as presents (Gen. xl v. 22 ; 2 Kings v. 5).

**14.** The riddle is contained in the first line, the second being formed, as often in Hebrew poetry, by the substitution of new terms for the same objects, 'the strong' for 'the eater,' 'sweetness' for 'meat.' The puzzle is to substitute for the general terms used in the riddle the special ones which will make the statement refer to an actual event. This event is Samson's having taken honey from the lion. As the Philistine guests did not know what had happened, it was not a riddle to be solved by thinking of words, but by crafty action ; and by the latter means they were successful.

**xiv. 15-18. How the answer was obtained.** How long the Philistine company tried other means of finding what Samson's riddle meant before they approached the woman of Timnah we cannot tell, because the figures in the text are mutually contradictory. As it stands, the text says they were unable to find it out for *three* days, and on the *seventh* came to the woman. This would be fairly intelligible on the supposition that the riddle was propounded on the third day of the feast ; but according to the Greek and Syriac versions it was on the *fourth* day that they

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 impoverish us? is it not *so*? And Samson's wife wept before him, 16 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 mother, and shall I tell thee? And she wept before him the seven days, 17 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 riddle to the children of her people. And the men of the city said unto him on the 18 seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter

sought the woman's help. But verse 17 agrees with neither of these, for according to it the woman wept before Samson (in her annoyance because he would not tell her the solution) 'the *seven* days, while the feast lasted,' which would mean that the riddle was propounded the first day, and that the woman was at once told with threats to find out what it meant. Two or three varying traditions may have existed. It is impossible to say what the earliest form of the story was.

**15. Entice:** the same word is used in xvi. 5, in 2 Sam. iii. 25 (Eng. 'to deceive'), and 1 Kings xxii. 20.

**lest we burn thee, &c.** The Ephraimites threatened Jephthah with the same punishment (xii. 1). This fate actually met the woman later (xv. 6).

**is it not so?** These words are very awkward here. They are the translation of one Hebrew word from which a final *m* has been dropped according to some of the Hebrew MSS. and the Chaldee version. The word with this *m* restored means 'hither.' 'Have you invited us hither to impoverish us?'

**16, 17.** The woman questioned Samson and wept in his presence every day of the feast, but without success, until on the seventh day she made a special effort and **pressed him sore** (so in the Delilah story, xvi. 16), and he told her. She immediately told her friends.

**18. before the sun went down.** The word translated 'sun' is rare, and generally confined to poetic speech, and the form here used denotes the accusative. Probably it is a mistake for the

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, and he went down to Ashkelon, and smote thirty men of them, and took their 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 house.  
 20 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. 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? take her, I pray thee,  
 3 instead of her. And Samson said unto them, This time shall I be blameless in regard of the Philistines, when I  
 4 do them a mischief. And Samson went and caught three

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word meaning 'chamber,' and the sentence must be translated 'before he went into the chamber' (cf. xv. 1). The guests waited until the last moment before triumphing over Samson.

xv. 1-19. *A series of feuds resulting from Samson's connexion with the Timnahite woman.*

xv. 1, 2. *Samson is provoked.* Samson goes down to Timnah to visit the woman his friend, but finds that she has been given to a friend. He is offered her younger sister in her place. The nature of the so-called marriage is evident. The woman was not received into the house of Samson's family as a wife, but stays in her own home, where Samson has the right to visit her.

1. in the time of wheat harvest, i.e. about May. This indication of time prepares the way for verse 5.

with a kid: so Judah rewards Tamar. Gen. xxxviii. 17 ff.

xv. 3-5. *Samson's revenge.* Samson this time is calm in his

hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a 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 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 came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. And Samson said unto them, If ye do after this manner, surely I will be avenged of you, and after that I 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.

Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah

preparation of mischief. Wrong has been done him, and he has a right to punish. He is not moved by frenzy; no ‘spirit of Yahweh’ comes upon him. He turns out three hundred foxes, with lighted torches fastened to each pair of tails, into the corn-fields, and the corn, both cut and growing, is destroyed (and the olive trees and vineyards are damaged).

A piece of folklore which cannot be criticized seriously.

*xv. 6. Retaliation of the Philistines.*

**6. her and her father** should certainly be ‘her and her father’s house’ (i. e. ‘family’), as in some Hebrew MSS. and in the Greek and Syriac versions. (Cf. xiv. 15.)

*xv. 7, 8. Samson again smites the Philistines and retires to Etam.*

**8. the rock of Etam.** A city called Etam is mentioned in 2 Chron. xi. 6 and in the Greek version of Joshua xv. 59<sup>a</sup>, in both places associated with Beth-lehem.

*xv. 9-19. Samson at Lehi.* The Philistines are resolved to capture Samson, and send an army into Judah’s land. The men of Judah in alarm determine to hand over Samson in bonds to the Philistines. To this Samson agrees, but on arrival at the Philistine camp bursts his bonds and with the jawbone of an ass makes havoc. A city and a well receive their names from his deeds.

**9. Lehi** (meaning ‘a jawbone’) was probably in the low-lying

said, Why are ye come up against us? And they said, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, 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, 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, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. 13 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 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 became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands dropped from 15 off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of an ass,

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hills (Shephelah) between the Mediterranean coast plains and the high hill-country of Judah, but the exact district referred to has not been identified.

11. As Samson was a Danite the men of Judah felt themselves under no obligation to protect him at any risk to themselves. The number of men thought necessary for his capture is evidently intended to enhance his reputation.

**what then is this that thou hast done unto us?** Why have you put us in the awkward position of being charged with concealing an enemy, and so brought this invasion into our territory?

13. **new ropes**, as in xvi. 11.

14. **the spirit of the LORD**: see iii. 10.

**as flax that was burnt with fire:** *lit.* 'which had burned in fire.' His bonds had no more strength than the ashes of flax. Cf. xvi. 9.

15. **a new jawbone**. The word translated 'new' means 'fresh' (as in Isa. i. 6 marg.), and so here means tough and not dry and

and put forth his hand, and took it, and smote a thousand men therewith. And Samson said,

16

With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps,  
With the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thousand men.

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand ; and that place was called Ramath-lehi. 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, and fall into the hand of the

brittle. Such things are often to be seen lying about in public places in the East. With the jawbone of a camel a follower of Mohammed once killed an unbeliever.

**and smote a thousand men therewith.** There is a striking resemblance between the exploits of three men among Philistines. In 2 Sam. xxiii. 11 ff. the Philistines were gathered together ‘to Lehi’ (according to the correct text. The English version has ‘into a troop’) and Shammah slew the Philistines. In Judges iii. 31 Shamgar slew six hundred Philistines, and here Samson slays a thousand. It is curious that the first half of the heroes’ names is the same in each case. (As the vowels were not written in Hebrew the names appear as Shmh, Shmgr, and Shmsn.) It is possible that all are variants of one tradition.

**16.** The literal translation of this curious verse is :—

With the ass’s jawbone, a heap, two (separate) heaps ;  
With the ass’s jawbone I have struck down a thousand men.

In the first line, however, the Greek version seems to be right in pronouncing the last word with different vowels in the Hebrew, and thus making it a verb. It gives a meaning to the word that is unknown in Hebrew : ‘I annihilated them.’ Keeping the usual meaning we should have for the whole line : ‘With the ass’s jawbone I heaped them in heaps.’ The jingle of the Hebrew (four words have the same consonants) cannot be reproduced in English.

**17.** **that place was called** expresses the meaning better than the marginal ‘he called that place.’

**Ramath-lehi:** i.e. ‘Jawbone-hill.’ The first part of the name is found also in ‘Ramoth-gilead’ and in Ramoth-negeb (1 Sam. xxx. 27, where the English version has ‘Ramoth of the South’).

19 uncircumcised. But God clave the hollow place that is in Lehi, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore the name thereof was called En-hakkore, which is in 20 Lehi, unto this day. [D] And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

16 [J] And Samson went to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, 2 and went in unto her. *And it was told* the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the

**18. the uncircumcised:** see xiv. 3.

**19. the hollow place.** The Hebrew word means ‘a mortar,’ as in Prov. xxvii. 22. Here it is evidently a hollow in the ground, resembling a mortar in shape.

**En-hakkore**, that is, ‘the spring of the caller,’ according to this tradition so called because Samson ‘called on the Lord.’ But ‘the caller’ is the Hebrew name for the partridge (as in 1 Sam. xxvi. 20; Jer. xvii. 11), and the name originally belonging to this spring was probably ‘Partridge Spring.’

**20.** Here the Deuteronomic editor closes the account of Samson as a judge. Compared with his close to the accounts of other judges (for example in iii. 29, 30, iv. 23, 24, and v. 31<sup>b</sup>, viii. 28) it is a meagre record. It is not surprising. The only wonder is how the editor could persuade himself to seriously put the Samson stories in the same category as those of a Deborah and Barak, a Gideon and a Jephthah.

#### xvi. 1-3. *Samson at Gaza.*

**1. Gaza:** a fortified town in the plain of the Mediterranean coast, about two miles from the sea, was on the high-road from Egypt to the north, and so was a city of the first importance for centuries before the Philistines gained possession of this district. This importance it retained until its capture by Alexander the Great. The city lies about thirty miles south of Samson’s home, but it is quite in accord with the nature of folklore stories to find Samson wandering about freely in the midst of his enemies, far from his home. The latter part of this verse explains how he came to allow himself to be shut up in the city at night.

**2.** This verse is incomplete and confused. At the beginning it is necessary to supply ‘And it was told’ (not in the Hebrew). The sentence ‘And they surrounded (with no object in Hebrew), and they laid wait for him in the gate of the city,’ seems to have

city, and were quiet all the night, saying, *Let be 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.

And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and 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 afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.

been interpolated later, for it is evident that the Gazites trusted to the gates to keep him from escaping, while they hoped to kill him in the morning.

3. The gate would consist of two doors or wings, each turning on pins and flanked by two posts. The bar was probably put across the wings from post to post, thus making one structure of the whole. Samson carries off this whole mass.

**the mountain that is before Hebron**, that is, the hill which the traveller from Gaza reaches just before arriving at Hebron. The distance of Hebron from Gaza is about thirty-eight miles.

xvi. 4-22. *Samson's fall and imprisonment.* By a woman Samson is induced to tell the secret of his strength. He is shorn of his long hair and then taken, blinded, and imprisoned by the Philistines.

4. **the valley of Sorek** is the valley now called Wady es-Surār, which extends from a few miles west of Jerusalem to the coast plains. Zorah, Beth-shemesh, and Timnah were all in this valley (see on xiii. 2).

5. **the lords of the Philistines**, probably here as in iii. 3 five in number, that is, the lords of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron (Joshua xiii. 3; 1 Sam. vi. 17). According to the latter part of the verse, each of these lords is to pay Delilah about one hundred and fifty pounds sterling for the betrayal of Samson (cf. xvii. 2).

6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou  
7 mightest be bound to afflict thee. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes that  
8 were never dried, then shall I become weak, and be as another man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought  
9 up to her seven green withes which had not been dried,  
10 and she bound him with them. Now she had liers in wait abiding in the inner chamber. And she said unto  
11 him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withes, as a string of tow is broken when it  
12 toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me,  
13 and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith 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 another  
12 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 off his arms like a  
13 thread. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou

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xvi. 6-9. *Delilah's first attempt to learn the secret of Samson's strength.* Samson's first answer to the eager questioning of Delilah is that if he is bound with seven cords of fresh sinews, that have not been dried, but are still tough and capable of being knotted closely, his strength will be of no avail. There is also probably some particular power supposed to lie in the number seven. The words 'to afflict thee' must surely have been put in here (verse 6) by mistake from verse 5, for they would have made Samson suspicious, and they do not occur in Delilah's further questionings in verses 10, 13. Philistines were lying in wait in the chamber to see what would happen. Doubtless they remained there on this and the next two occasions.

xvi. 10-12. *Delilah's second attempt.* This time the trial is made with new ropes (as in xv. 13).

xvi. 13, 14. *The third attempt.* The text here is incomplete, for

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 my head with the web. And <sup>14</sup> 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. And she said unto him, How canst thou say, <sup>15</sup> I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass, <sup>16</sup>

at the end of verse 13 the last part of Samson's words has fallen out, and at the beginning of verse 14 the first part of Delilah's action. With the help of the Greek versions we may restore: 'If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web, and makest (the whole) fast with the pin, then I shall be weak and like any other man.' And Delilah made him sleep, and wove the seven locks of his head with the web, and made it fast with the pin,' &c. The 'beam' of the loom seems to have been near Samson's head as he slept. Delilah wove his hair into the web, beating it tight with the pin (or peg). When aroused, Samson sprang up and dragged up by his hair the beam and the web together. The words 'the pin of' must be left out. The Hebrew word is ungrammatical, and has evidently been put in by mistake.

xvi. 15-22. *Delilah's fourth attempt successful. The capture of Samson.* Wearyed out by the importunity of the woman, Samson tells Delilah that the secret of his strength lies in his hair. If that is cut he will become like any other man. Delilah recognizes at once that this time she has learned the truth, and summons the Philistines, who are also now convinced of success and bring the money for Delilah with them. She also calls a man who shaves Samson's head when he is asleep. Samson, roused by the usual alarm, is this time seized. He is blinded, taken to Gaza, bound in chains of brass, and set to grind in prison.

**15. thine heart is not with me.** The heart here is the seat of knowledge rather than of affection. Compare 'all his heart' in verses 17, 18.

This time Delilah seems to realize that Samson cannot be overcome by being bound in any way, and so omits the latter part of the questions in verses 6, 10, 13. She asks this now only concerning the source of the greatness of his strength.

when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged  
 17 him, that his soul was vexed unto death. 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  
 18 be like any other man. 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  
 he hath told me all his heart. Then the lords of the  
 Philistines came up unto her, and brought the money in  
 19 their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees ;  
 and she called for a man, and shaved off the seven locks  
 of his head ; and she began to afflict him, and his strength  
 20 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  
 21 he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. And  
 the Philistines laid hold on him, and put out his eyes ;

**17. a Nazirite:** see xiii. 7. There is no mention of the strength resulting from his being a Nazirite in the angel's instructions to Manoah. The connexion of the physical strength with the hair is thoroughly materialistic. Those who regard Samson as the sun consider the hair to represent the rays.

**19. and (she) shaved off.** Probably we should read 'and he (the man) shaved off,' as the man seems to be summoned for this purpose.

**20. and shake myself.** It seems as if we must suppose that Delilah had bound Samson in some way. The Philistines would probably wish to see that he really had lost his power of shaking himself free before they came out of their hiding-place.

**the LORD was departed from him.** The presence of Yahweh in Samson is conceived as indissolubly connected with the retention of his long hair.

**21.** The blinding of prisoners is represented on Assyrian tablets (cf. 2 Kings xxv. 7). Another form of mutilation is mentioned in i. 6. Grinding was woman's work, therefore in the eyes of an Eastern doubly contemptible for a strong man.

and they brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow 22 again after he was shaven.

And the lords of the Philistines gathered them together 23 for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw 24

xvi. 23-31. *The death of Samson.* In verse 22 we learn that Samson's hair began to grow again after he was shaven. The Philistines evidently forgot that this meant new strength coming to him, hence the disaster. At a feast of Dagon their god the thoughts of all turned to Samson, and the people broke out into a song to their god because their enemy was in their hands. As the feast progressed and the people became merrier, they called for the production of Samson that they might jeer at him. Led by a boy, he was placed before the people between two of the pillars supporting the flat roof of the hall. But as he stood he felt his strength again, and the wild desire for vengeance rose in him. With a passionate cry to Yahweh he grasped the two main pillars and bowed himself with them. The roof with the three thousand men on it crashed upon him and those in the hall; and 'the dead whom he slew in his dying were more than those whom he slew in his life.' The Philistines apparently did not continue their hatred of him to his dead body. His brothers took him to their own place and buried him near Zorah.

**23. Dagon**, as we know from 1 Sam. v. 2 ff., was worshipped in Ashdod. There were two cities called Beth-dagon, i. e. 'Abode of Dagon,' in or near Philistia (Joshua xv. 41, xix. 27), and both from the Amarna letters and from a Phoenician inscription we gather that the worship of this god was widespread over the Philistine plains and in other parts of Palestine. A god Dagon was worshipped also in Babylonia. If he is thus a Semitic god it is likely that he was worshipped here when the Philistines came into the land, and that they worshipped him just as the Hebrews so often worshipped the Baals of Palestine. The supposition that his image was partly human, partly fish-like, rests on no certain evidence. The passage in 1 Sam. ii speaks of its head and hands.

a great sacrifice meant usually also a great feast, as in 1 Kings i. 9 ff.

**Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.** The ascription of victories and similar events to the deity was

him, they praised their god : for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hand our enemy, and the destroyer of  
 25 our country, which hath slain 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  
 26 before them : and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house  
 27 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, that beheld while Sam-  
 28 son made sport. And Samson called unto the LORD,

common among the Semitic peoples. Mesha king of Moab is just as pious in ascribing his victory over the Israelites to Chemosh as any Israelite in ascribing to Yahweh his victory over Moab. Hundreds of inscriptions tell that the god Ashur gave victory to the Assyrians. It was thus that among them all the deity was made responsible for many an immoral or unworthy action.

**24. Our god . . . many of us.** These words form a sort of popular song or jingle such as Arabs are fond of at the present day. Owing to their grammatical endings five words rhyme with one another.

**which hath slain many of us, lit. 'who has made many our slain.'**

**25. that he may make us sport,** that he may make laughter for us. It does not necessarily mean that he had to dance or in any way play the buffoon for the people. The appearance of the once strong man, now blind and in chains, was enough to make them laugh and jeer when they were 'merry.'

**26. the pillars whereupon the house resteth.** The house was probably a hall forming part of the temple of Dagon. It must be thought of as flat-roofed, supported on columns, and probably open to the court where the people are feasting.

**27. all the lords of the Philistines** were the men who had hired Delilah to betray Samson (see verse 5).

**three thousand men and women.** The Greek version reads 'seven hundred.' Figures in such stories as these are more for effect than with any intention of being accurate.

and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars 29 upon which the house rested, and leaned upon them, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left. And 30 Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed 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 they which he slew in his life. Then his brethren and 31 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. [A] And he judged Israel twenty years.

[J] And there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, 17

28. At the end of this verse the marginal reading is the correct translation of the Hebrew. The vengeance he is about to take will not atone for the loss of his *two* eyes, but it will at any rate be enough for one eye.

30. **Let me die**, *lit.* ‘Let my soul die,’ the soul being that living, breathing something which ceases to exist at death.

31. **Zorah and Eshtaol**: see xiii. 2, 25.

#### xvii-xviii. FIRST SUPPLEMENT TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

xvii-xviii. *The story of Micah and the migration of the Danites.* The main interest in the following narrative is clearly in the fact that at Dan, far away in the north, there was up to the time of ‘the captivity of the land’ (xviii. 30) a famous shrine with an image which was served by descendants of Moses. Chapter xvii, with its story of Micah and his ‘house of gods’ (verse 5), is only here to explain the origin of this celebrated image. Even the story of the migration of the Danites (in xviii), so interesting historically, is only secondary, the matter of main interest being that on their way north the Danites robbed Micah alike of his image and his Levite priest. Thus the general title of the two chapters might well be ‘The origin of the shrine at Dan.’

The narrative is unmistakably old. The characterization of the customs, and the freedom from theological judgement, testify to its

2 whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *pieces* of silver that were taken from

age. There is not a trace of the Deuteronomic editor's writing. This and the fact that the story would not suit the editor's purpose in compiling his book suggest that the Deuteronomic Book of Judges came to a close with the story of Samson, and that this narrative was inserted from an earlier collection of traditions before the book as a whole was put into its present position in the Canon.

It is not, however, one tradition only that is thus copied, but, as in the case of some of the judges, a blending of at least two traditions which varied in language and occasionally in their report of the same action (see Introduction and notes).

xvii. 1-6. *The origin of Micah's image.* A man named Micah, living in the hill-country of Ephraim, had stolen a sum of eleven hundred pieces of silver from his mother. She in anger had cursed the unknown thief. Terrified by the curse, Micah restored the silver, whereupon his mother took off the curse, and gave two hundred pieces of the silver for the making of an image, which was put into Micah's private temple. For the service of the image Micah employed one of his sons as priest.

**1. the hill country of Ephraim.** See ii. 9. No further details are given as to the place where Micah lived.

The name **Micah** is a shortened form of Micaiah, meaning 'Who is like Yah?' (cf. the name Michael, 'Who is like El?'). Micah is none the less a worshipper of Yahweh because he has images.

**2-4.** It is understood that Micah's mother had been robbed of eleven hundred pieces of silver and that she had laid a curse upon the thief.

**eleven hundred pieces of silver.** See xvi. 5. It is strange that exactly the same amount is mentioned here and in the Samson story.

The text from these words to the end of verse 4 is very confused. Where the English version has 'and didst also speak it,' the Hebrew has 'and didst also say,' while what she said has either been omitted or must be sought in another part of these verses. Again, verses 3 and 4 begin with exactly the same words, 'And he restored to his mother' (the English version has introduced 'when' in verse 4), so that the restoration of the silver is mentioned twice. In verse 3 the mother has dedicated the whole of the silver for an image, while in verse 4 she gives only two hundred pieces for that purpose. It seems probable that here two traditions have been blended without a real assimilation. Various attempts have been made to rearrange the text so as to give good sense. The following (in the words of the

thee, about which thou didst utter a curse, and didst also speak it in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be my son of the LORD. And he restored the eleven hundred *pieces* of 3 silver to his mother, and his mother said, I verily dedicate the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now

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English version) is the order adopted by Professor Moore in his commentary: 'He said unto his mother, The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou didst utter a curse, and didst also say in mine ears, I verily dedicate the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image, behold the silver is with me, I took it, and therefore I will restore it unto thee. And his mother said, Blessed be my son of the Lord. And he restored the (eleven hundred pieces of) silver to his mother, who took two hundred pieces of silver, and gave them to the founder,' &c. Some think that the words of the curse have been omitted purposely by the editor, and that the words 'I dedicate... molten image' should follow 'Blessed be my son of the Lord.' In the first alternative the curse consists in her giving the money to Yahweh and so leaving Him to punish the thief for what by her gift has become sacrilege. In the second alternative the mother dedicates the money to Yahweh in gratitude for her son's confession and the restoration.

**thou didst utter a curse.** This does not mean the use of bad language or the mere expression of an evil wish, but was a committing of the punishment of the thief to the deity. The power of a curse was believed to be very real, and on the restoration of the money Micah's mother takes off the curse by the blessing.

**3. a graven image and a molten image.** The word translated 'graven image' means an image of wood or stone, prepared by hewing or cutting. The second word certainly means 'a molten image' in many passages of the O.T. If that is the meaning here, we must suppose that it has been introduced from a second tradition, for it is clear that one image only is intended. (Notice 'it was in the house of Micah' in verse 4, and the mention of 'the graven image' only in xviii. 30, 31.) But the word used means originally 'material that is melted, or molten work,' and as graven images were sometimes covered with metal (Deut. vii. 25), the whole phrase may simply mean an idol of wood with a silver covering.

4 therefore I will 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: 5 and it was in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and he made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his 6 priest. In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

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**4. the money, lit. 'the silver.'**

**two hundred** pieces. The editor does not attempt to reconcile this action with the woman's previous statement that she had dedicated the eleven hundred pieces for this purpose.

**the founder**, the smelter or silversmith.

**5. an house of gods**, i. e. a temple or shrine. The same expression is used of the temple at Shiloh in xviii. 31.

**an ephod, and teraphim.** For the ephod see viii. 27. It was an idol used chiefly for purposes of divination. The teraphim on the other hand were household gods. Rachel stole her father's teraphim when she left home, so as to have the benefit of their influence in her husband's household (Gen. xxxi. 19, 30, 34, 35). Michal put the teraphim into the bed to make Saul's servants believe that David was there (1 Sam. xix. 13-17); hence it would seem that they were, in part at least, in human form. According to 1 Sam. xv. 23 they were regarded as evil at an early period, but Hosea (iii. 4) mentions them without condemning them, and they existed up to exilic times (Zech. x. 2). The name by which they were called is of uncertain meaning, and is connected by some with the 'refaim' or shades of the lower world, in which case they are supposed to be connected with ancestor-worship.

**consecrated**, or as in margin 'filled the hand of,' a Hebrew idiom meaning 'employed,' used of priests. Originally it may have meant to fill the hand with money, that is, wages, or with the office, or as has been suggested, but with less probability, with the sacrifice (as a consecration to office). Just as Micah consecrated his son here, so the men of Kirjath-jearim consecrated Eleazar the son of Abinadab to keep the ark of Yahweh (1 Sam. vii. 1).

**6.** The editor in these words explains how it was that such unlawful things (from the point of view of the time when he was writing) were done among the Hebrews. Cf. xviii. 1, xix. 1, xxi. 25.

And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah, 7  
 of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he so-  
 journed there. And the man departed out of the city, 8  
 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. And Micah said 9  
 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*. And Micah said unto him, 10  
 Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest,

xvii. 7-13. *Micah secures a Levite as priest for his shrine.* A young Judahite of Beth-lehem, a Levite by profession, was wandering through the country seeking a place in which to sojourn. Passing through the hill-country of Ephraim he happened to come to Micah's house. When Micah learned that he was a Levite he immediately offered him a good salary if he would become his 'father and priest.' The Levite agreed, and was installed as one of the family. Micah felt assured, now that he had a Levite as priest, that Yahweh would be good to him.

**7. Beth-lehem-judah**, so called to distinguish it from other Beth-lehems (a Beth-lehem in Zebulun is mentioned in Joshua xix. 15; cf. on Judges xii. 8-10), is five miles south of Jerusalem, and preserves its name in the Arabic form Beit Lahm.

**who was a Levite** can only mean here that he was a Levite by profession; that is, was trained specially for the work of a priest. By descent he was of Judah. So Samuel, an Ephraimite (1 Sam. i. 1), was trained for the priesthood. At a later time all priests were ascribed to a *tribe*, Levi, probably because Moses belonged to that family.

**he sojourned there.** To 'sojourn' is to live in a tribe or family not one's own, so the word 'there' cannot refer to Beth-lehem. It probably refers to the hill-country of Ephraim, and the sentence comes from another story than that in verse 8. (See Introduction).

**8. as he journeyed:** *lit.* 'to make his way,' a phrase which does not occur elsewhere, but which may mean 'to accomplish the purpose of his journey.' The word 'way' seems to be used in this sense in xviii. 5.

**10. a father and a priest** (as again in xviii. 19). 'A father' is used here to indicate the respect that will be paid to him. So in Gen. xlvi. 8 Joseph (also a *young* man) says, 'God hath made me a father to Pharaoh.'

and I will give thee ten *pieces* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.

12 And Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man  
13 became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. 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 those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *their* in-

**ten pieces of silver**: about thirty shillings.

**thy victuals**: the same word as in vi. 4 ('sustenance').

**So the Levite went in**: *lit.* 'And the Levite went (or went away).' The text is faulty. The Greek version omits 'the Levite' at the beginning of the next verse and reads the two verbs together—'he went and began to dwell,' &c. (just as in English men say 'to go and do something'). The Latin omits the words altogether.

13. It is clear that while any one might be a priest in these days (cf. verse 5), it was regarded as a piece of good fortune to have a Levite, probably because such an one had been trained for the duty, and knew best how to interpret the oracles given by the deity at these shrines.

xviii. 1–6. *The visit of Danite spies to Micah's house.* The tribe of Dan had not been successful in obtaining any territory for itself, and, seeing no prospect of settling in the district allotted to it, determined to seek out a place it could seize and occupy. Five men were sent from the borders of the Philistine country, where they were leading a precarious life, to search through Palestine for a possible abode. As they passed through the hill-country of Ephraim they came to Micah's house. They had apparently known the Levite priest of Micah in earlier times, and after hearing from him why he had settled there, they asked him for an oracle concerning their journey. He assured them that the oracle was favourable to their purpose.

1. **In those days there was no king in Israel.** These words naturally belong to the preceding verses. There was no division into chapters and verses in early Hebrew manuscripts.

**their inheritance had not fallen unto them**: *lit.* 'there had not fallen to it (any place) as an inheritance.'

heritage had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family 2 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 there. When they were by 3 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 place? and what hast thou here? And he 4 said unto them, Thus and thus hath Micah dealt with me, and he hath hired me, and I am become his priest. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of 5 God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go 6 in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go.

Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and 7

**2. of their family:** more correctly ‘of their clan,’ or as in the Greek ‘clans.’

**Zorah and Eshtaol.** See on xiii. 25.

**lodged:** spent the night.

**3. they knew the voice of the young man the Levite.** They recognized his voice, implying either that they had known him before he came to Micah, or that they heard him performing service and recognized that he was a Levite.

**5. Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God:** lit. ‘Ask, now, of God,’ exactly as in i. 1, except that ‘God’ (Elohim) is used here, Yahweh in the earlier passage. For different ways in which Yahweh’s will was sought see i. 1. That oracles might be sought at a private shrine is evident from viii. 27.

**6. before the LORD is your way:** i. e. your journey is under His observation and favour.

xviii. 7-10. *The discovery of Laish by the spies, and their report.* After a journey of over a hundred miles from their starting-place the five Danites found a city called Laish on the south side of Mount Hermon. The people of the city were prosperous, peaceful, and, having no allies, were defenceless. This seemed to

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 authority, that might put *them* to shame in any thing, and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no  
8 dealings with any man. And they came unto their

satisfy their requirements, so they returned to their tribe and exhorted them to go up and possess that region.

**7. Laish:** called 'Leshem' in Joshua xix. 47, is mentioned by this name only in these passages, although, to be consistent, 'Laish' should be substituted for 'Dan' in Gen. xiv. 14. Under its new name of 'Dan' (verse 29) it is often mentioned. The phrase 'from Dan to Beer-sheba' is used several times to indicate the northern and southern limits of Hebrew possessions. It is generally identified with the modern Tell-el-Kādī ('hill of the judge'). 'Dan' in Hebrew means 'judge'; 'Kādī' is the Arabic for the same. This hill or mound is 505 feet above sea-level, and from it flow two streams which form the largest source of the Jordan. It lies rather under thirty miles from Tyre on the west, and more than forty from Damascus on the north-east. Of late Dr. G. A. Smith has sought to identify Dan with the modern Bāniās (less than an hour's journey from Tell-el-Kādī) on the ground of its superior strength and position. Both identifications are found in early Greek writers.

**after the manner of the Zidonians:** i. e. like the Phoenicians (see x. 6). The mention of the Zidonians here and later in this verse (cf. also on v. 17) suggests that Laish was a settlement of Phoenicians. These were not a warlike but generally a commercial people. Here, however, they must have settled down to an agricultural life.

**there was none in the land, possessing authority, that might put them to shame in any thing.** This literal translation is unintelligible, and the Hebrew text seems to be quite corrupt. The Greek and other versions give no help. Three of the Hebrew words are the same as in the last clause of verse 10, and it is possible that the whole clause there was originally here also, and that the words translated 'possessing authority' (in the Greek 'wealth') are a note.

**were far from the Zidonians.** See above under 'Laish.'

**and had no dealings with any man.** The word translated 'any man' is *Adam*. But some Greek MSS. read *Aram* (the *d* and *r* are very much alike in Hebrew). As the Zidonians were their neighbours on one side, and the people of Aram (Damascus, &c.) on the other, it is possible that this was the original text.

brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their 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 possess the land. When ye go, 10 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.

And there set forth from thence of the family of the 11 Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men girt with weapons of war. And they went up, and encamped in Kiriath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they

**8. What say ye?** The Hebrew has only ‘What you?’ Among the many suggestions made to give sense, the simplest is to suppose that one letter has fallen out of the text, or perhaps two letters. In the former case we could read, ‘What have you seen?’ in the latter, ‘What have you found?’

**9. let us go up against them.** Apparently the spies had been sent to examine Laish or that district specially, so that there is no need to explain where they have been.

xviii. 11-27<sup>a</sup>. *The migration of Danites and theft of Micah's image.* Six hundred Danite men with their families and possessions set out for Laish. After camping at Kiriath-jearim they came to the hill-country of Ephraim, where the five spies suggested the appropriation of Micah's celebrated image. The image was accordingly seized and the Levite persuaded to accompany it and become priest to the Danites. Micah, discovering his loss, pursued, but was compelled to turn back because ‘they were too strong for him.’ In this part of the story the accumulation of images (four names in verses 14, 17, 18, three in verse 20) seems to point to the blending of different traditions, and this indication is strengthened by the account of the theft (see below and Introduction).

**12. Kiriath-jearim** (‘Forests-city’). The site of this city has been identified, from the fifth century on, with the modern Kuriet ‘Enab, well known to those who have travelled from Jaffa to Jerusalem by road as Abū Ghōsh. Lately, however, it has been placed at Khurbet ‘Erma, about four miles east of Beth-shemesh. The ark was preserved here for some time later (1 Sam. vii. 1 ff.).

called that place Mahaneh-dan, unto this day : behold, it  
 13 is behind Kiriath-jearim. And they passed thence unto  
 the hill country of Ephraim, and came unto the house  
 14 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 consider what ye have to do.  
 15 And they turned aside thither, and came to the house of  
 the young man the Levite, even unto the house of  
 16 Micah, and asked him of his welfare. And the six  
 hundred men girt with their weapons of war, who were  
 of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.  
 17 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  
 18 hundred men girt with weapons of war. And when  
 these went into Micah's house, and fetched the graven

**Mahaneh-dan** : i. e. 'Camp of Dan,' lay, according to xiii. 25, between Zorah and Eshtaol. According to this verse it lay 'behind,' i. e. west of Kiriath-jearim. The camping-ground was thus probably in the Wādi Surār.

**14. now therefore consider what ye have to do** : *lit.* 'and now know what you will do,' as in 1 Sam. xxv. 17, with the addition of 'know and.'

**15. and asked him of his welfare** : and greeted him with the usual word 'Peace.'

**16, 17. by the entering of the gate** : by the opening of the gate of the town, as in ix. 35. Here the Levite stood talking with them, while the five spies went to the house, which they already knew, and stole the images.

The ephod may be the name given in another tradition to the graven and molten image. Only this one image is mentioned in verses 30, 31. If the teraphim were household gods (see on xvii. 5) it was a wanton deed to carry them off, for they could be of no use to the Danites.

**18. These** must refer to the five men. This verse seems to be

image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image, the priest said unto them, What do ye? And 19 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 a family in Israel? And the priest's heart was glad, and he 20 took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. So they turned 21 and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the goods before them. When they were a good way 22 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 Dan. And they cried unto 23 the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? And he said, Ye have taken away my 24 gods which I made, and the priest, and are gone away, and what have I more? and how then say ye unto me. What aileth thee? And the children of Dan said unto 25 him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows fall upon you, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. And the children of Dan went 26 their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house. And they took that which Micah had made, and the 27

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taken from a tradition in which the Levite is represented as being in or near the house, not at the city gate (cf. the last clause of verse 20).

**20.** The Greek version adds the molten image in this verse also.

**21.** The right order for defending the rear from attack.

**22.** The theft of the images was a loss to the neighbourhood, and not to Micah alone.

**25. angry fellows:** men of nasty temper.

xviii. 27-31. *The capture of Laish, founding of Dan, and estab-*

priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword ; and 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 the city, 29 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 of the city was 30 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 Moses, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity 31 of the land. So they set them up Micah's graven image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

*lishment of the image.* On arriving in the north the Danites easily captured Laish, which they burned. On its site they built a city which they called Dan, and in it set up the image they had stolen. Their shrine was served by priests of Mosaic descent until 'the captivity of the land,' and the image remained there all the time the 'house of God was in Shiloh.'

**28. it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob :** more literally, 'which belongs to Beth-rehob.' This place is unknown, but is mentioned as inhabited by Syrians in 2 Sam. x. 6, and is probably the Rehob of Num. xiii. 21.

**29. who was born unto Israel.** See Gen. xxx. 5, 6.

**30. the son of Gershom, the son of Moses.** Gershom is mentioned as a son of Moses in Exod. ii. 22, xviii. 3. At a later time the claim of Dan to possess a priesthood of Mosaic descent was an offence, and the letter *n* was introduced into the Hebrew name Moses, thus changing it to Manasseh. This letter was not, however, incorporated into the text, but was put above the line, and is so printed in the Hebrew text.

**until the day of the captivity of the land :** i. e. probably the captivity of the people in the north by Tiglath-pileser in 734-3 (2 Kings xv. 29).

**31. all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.** The 'house of Yahweh' in Shiloh is mentioned in 1 Sam i. 24, cf.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah. And 2

iii. 15. The ark was lost in the Philistine wars (1 Sam. iv. 11), and the priests of Eli's house are at Nob in 1 Sam. xxi. 1-9; but nothing is said of the destruction of the temple there until it is mentioned in Jer. vii. 12, 14, xxvi. 9, without any reference to the time when it was destroyed.

**Shiloh**, now Seilün, on a large round hill nine and a half miles north-north-east of Beth-el.

#### xix-xxi. SECOND SUPPLEMENT TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

*The outrage at Gibeah and war against Benjamin.* A Levite stays for a night in a Benjamite city with his concubine. The latter is so evilly treated by some worthless men of the city that she is found dead in the morning. The Levite divides her body into twelve parts and sends one to each of the Hebrew tribes as a call to vengeance. The Hebrews gather at Mizpah, and having heard the Levite's story call upon the Benjamites to give up the culprits. This they refuse to do and war is declared. After three days' fighting and severe losses the tribesmen annihilate the Benjamites, all save six hundred men. Anxious, however, that a tribe of Israel should not perish, they wish to secure wives for these six hundred warriors. They cannot give their own daughters, for they have sworn not to do so, therefore they attack and destroy all the people of Jabesh-gilead except the virgins, of whom they secure four hundred for the men of Benjamin. These not being sufficient, the Benjamites are told to lie in wait and seize the maidens who come out to dance during a 'feast of Yahweh' at Shiloh. This they also do.

xix. 1-10<sup>a</sup>. *The Levite's visit to Beth-lehem.* A certain Levite sojourning in the hill-country of Ephraim had a concubine who quarrelled with him, left him, and returned to her father's house in Beth-lehem of Judah. After four months the Levite went down to Beth-lehem to try and persuade her to return with him. Reconciled with the woman, he remained in her father's house for five days, and then the two started on their return home.

1. **sojourning**, see on xvii. 7.

on the **farther side of**: in the extreme parts of, i. e. probably on the north side.

the **hill country of Ephraim**, as in ch. 17.

**Beth-lehem-Judah** is brought into connexion with a Levite as in xvii. 7.

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, and went after her, to speak kindly unto her, to bring 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 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 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 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 be merry. And the man rose up to depart; but his father in law urged him, and he lodged there again. 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

**2. played the harlot against him.** The text is not certain, and one is tempted to adopt the reading of some Greek MSS. 'was angry (or 'quarrelled') with him.'

**3. to bring her again** is supported by the Greek and other versions, and is better than the reading and explanation in the margin.

**rejoiced to meet him:** rather 'met him rejoicing,' or 'gladly.'

**5.** Compare the last part of this verse with Gen. xviii. 5-8. A 'morsel of bread' with Abraham meant three measures of fine meal, a calf 'tender and good,' with butter and milk. Probably the 'morsel' means little less here.

**6. let thine heart be merry.** The same expression is used of the effects of feasting in xvi. 25.

**8. tarry ye until the day declineth:** and in verse 9 the declin-

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 day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry ; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home. But the man would not tarry that night, but 10 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. When they were by Jebus, the day was far spent ; 11 and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. And his master said unto him, We will not 12 turn aside into the city of a stranger, that is not of the

ing day is alleged as a reason for staying for the night. A thoroughly Oriental scene.

xix. 10-21. *The journey to Gibeah and entertainment there.* The Levite, his concubine, and his servant had only travelled a few miles when night began to fall and the servant suggested that they should stay in Jerusalem. His master refused on the ground that it was entirely a foreign city, but proposed to halt in Gibeah or Ramah. As the sun set when they were near Gibeah they entered this city and awaited an invitation to hospitality. But the Benjamites who lived in Gibeah were inhospitable, and the visitors remained in the street, until an old man of the hill-country of Ephraim, who 'sojourned' (cf. on xvii. 7) there, saw them as he returned from his work and offered them a lodging for the night.

**10. Jebus.** This name occurs again in 1 Chron. xi. 4, 5; Joshua xv. 8, xviii. 16, 21, of Jerusalem ; and the Jebusites are often spoken of as inhabiting Jerusalem (see i. 21). But the name of the city was Urusalim as early as 1400 B. C., as we find this name in the Amarna letters.

The Levite and his company would arrive at the hill of Jerusalem within two hours of leaving Beth-lehem.

**12. that is not of the children of Israel.** The Hebrew is unusual and ambiguous. The marginal rendering is possible, but

children of Israel; but we will pass over to Gibeah.

13 And he said unto his servant, Come and let us draw near to one of these places; and we will lodge in Gibeah, or  
 14 in Ramah. So they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them near to Gibeah, which  
 15 belongeth to Benjamin. 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  
 16 that took 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 Ephraim, and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place  
 17 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? and whence comest thou?

that in the text more probable; 'that' refers to 'city.' The suggestion is that in a foreign city they could not expect the same kindly welcome as in a place inhabited by brother Israelites. Thus the actual treatment they receive in Gibeah (verses 15<sup>b</sup>, 22ff.) is made to appear at its worst.

**Gibeah** means simply 'a hill,' and several cities bear the name. This one, Gibeah of Benjamin, is identified with Tell el-Ful, a hill 2,754 feet above sea-level, about four miles north of Jerusalem, and a little to the east of the main road.

**13. Ramah** (a 'height'). now er-Rām, another hill, 2,600 feet above sea-level, five miles north of Jerusalem, also near the main road.

**15.** The sun had gone down, and darkness set in—for there is little or no twilight in Palestine—as they were near Gibeah, so the Levite turned off the main road and entered this city. Inns were unknown, and visitors were thrown upon the hospitality of the inhabitants, so the man sat down in the square (or broad place), for there was not a man who took them to his home to spend the night.

**16.** Hospitality was offered at last, but not by a Benjamite. An old man of Ephraim, who had left his own people and was 'sojourning' among the Benjamites, passed through the square as he came back from his work in the fields, saw the strangers, questioned them, and (verse 21) took them home with him.

**17. Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?** Exactly

And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem- 18  
 judah unto the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim ;  
 from thence am I, and I went to Beth-lehem-judah : and  
 I am *now* going to the house of the LORD ; and there is  
 no man that taketh me into his house. Yet there is 19  
 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 : there is  
 no want of any thing. And the old man said, Peace be 20  
 unto thee ; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me ;  
 only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into 21  
 his house, and gave the asses fodder : and they washed  
 their feet, and did eat and drink.

As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the 22  
 men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house

the same questions are asked to-day in Palestine as soon as a  
 stranger appears.

**11. I am now going to the house of the LORD.** According  
 to xx. 18 the Israelites went up to Beth-el to ask counsel of God,  
 and in xx. 27 a note says that the ark was there at that time. In  
 i Sam. iii. 3 the ark, and in i. 7 the ‘house of Yahweh,’ are in  
 Shiloh. One of these places must be intended if the text is cor-  
 rect. But the Greek version reads (as in R. V. margin) ‘to my  
 house,’ which may be the original, the letter *y* (meaning ‘my’)  
 at the end of the word ‘my house’ (in Hebrew ‘house-my’)  
 having been taken later as the initial of the word ‘Yahweh,’  
 which was then written in full and gave our present Hebrew text.

**xxx. 22-28. Death of the concubine at the hands of the Benjamites.**  
 The arrival of the strangers had not passed without notice, al-  
 though no hospitality had been offered. Certain rough men of  
 the city came to the house where they were being entertained and  
 demanded that the man should be brought out, that they might  
 use him for immoral purposes. To save himself the Levite seized  
 his concubine and gave her over to them, and ‘they abused her  
 all the night.’ In the morning the Levite found her dead on the  
 threshold. Putting the corpse on his ass he went to his place.

**22. were making their hearts merry.** See verse 6.

**Sons of Belial**, or, translating the last word, ‘of worthlessness’ ;  
 used of the sons of Eli in i Sam. ii. 12, and so with various shades of

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 house, that we may know him.

23 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

24 mine house, do not this folly. [A] 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

25 any such folly. [J] But the men would not hearken to 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 upon the

meaning in 1 Sam. x. 27, xxv. 17, xxx. 22 ; 2 Sam. xvi. 7, &c. In most of these passages 'scoundrel' is perhaps the best English equivalent. A drunken woman might be called a 'daughter of Belial' (1 Sam. i. 16). The unnatural lust in the last clause of the verse has a parallel in Gen. xix. 5.

**24.** This verse has apparently been introduced to make the story more like that in Gen. xix, where verse 8 has been the pattern for this. Verse 25 follows verse 23 naturally.

**25.** The horror of the story is increased to the modern reader by the brutality of the Levite in driving out the woman to save himself.

**when the day began to spring**, i. e. when the first trace of light came into the sky.

**26. in the dawning of the day** : as the light grew clear, and morning broke.

**her lord.** So Sarah speaks of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 12).

threshold. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be 28 going ; but none answered : then he took her up upon the ass ; and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. And when he was come into his house, he took 29 a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the borders of Israel. And it was so, that all 30 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.

[A] Then all the children of Israel went out, and the 20

xix. 29-30. *The Levite's appeal to the tribes of Israel.*

**29. divided her.** The word here is the one used for cutting up an animal for sacrifice (Lev. i. 6, 12, &c.).

**twelve pieces:** apparently the number of parts into which the body came when divided according to the bones.

The sending of the pieces is parallel to Saul's action in 1 Sam. xi. 7.

**30.** Some MSS. of the Greek version read 'And he charged the men whom he sent, saying, Say these words to every man of Israel, Has such a thing as this happened from the day,' &c. The last words of the verse, 'consider of it, take counsel, and speak,' are much more intelligible if spoken by the Levite's messengers to those to whom they came.

Chapters xx, xxi differ entirely in language, method of presentation, and point of view from what precedes. In ch. xix the story is old with the addition of a few late notes. In these chapters the whole is late, and is modelled on the laws and narratives in Deuteronomy and the Priestly law. Wrapped up in it is doubtless an older and simpler story, the substance of which can be distinguished, although it is difficult to select the exact passages which may have been in the original narrative. In the class of literature, called Midrash, to which this belongs, historic accuracy is of little or no importance. What is aimed at is vividness of presentation and especially correctness of procedure according to the law (of the later time). For further details see Introduction, p. 17.

**xx. 1-7. The Israelites assemble at Mizpah and listen to the Levite's story.** All the Israelites from the extreme north to the furthest south of Palestine, and those who live east of the Jordan,

congregation was assembled as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD  
 2 at Mizpah. And the chiefs of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly  
 3 of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen  
 that drew sword. (Now the children of Benjamin heard

gather 'as one man' at Mizpah, and hear the story of the Levite's wrongs.

1. **went out**—for war (see ii. 15, &c.).

**the congregation was assembled.** The 'congregation' is the technical term in post-exilic writings for the people of Israel. The three stages of development of the people in history are (1) The Hebrews, i.e. tribes; (2) Israel, a nation; (3) the Congregation, a religious body. The term 'Congregation' is then used by the Priestly writer of the Exile and later to denote the Hebrews even of the Mosaic time (Lev. viii. 4; Num. xvi. 41, &c.). The verb 'was assembled' is also characteristic of the priestly writing (as in the passages referred to).

**from Dan even to Beer-sheba:** an expression that occurs seven times, but only between this passage and 1 Kings iv. 25. For Dan see xviii. 7. **Beer-sheba** still retains its old name, but in Arabic 'Bir es-Sebā', the meaning being 'Well of seven' or 'Well of oath.' It is twenty-eight miles south-west of Hebron, and just on the border of the Negeb. Traditions connected it with Abraham (Gen. xxi. 22 ff., E) and with Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 26 ff., J), and it was a sanctuary up to the time of Amos (Amos v. 5, viii. 14).

**the land of Gilead:** as in v. 17 and xi, used of the Hebrews east of the Jordan.

The words **unto the LORD** seem to indicate the existence of a shrine at Mizpah (cf. 1 Sam. vii. 5 ff., x. 17 ff.). Jerome says the ark rested there once.

**Mizpah:** on the mountain now called Neby Samwil, 2,935 feet above sea-level, four and a half miles north-west of Jerusalem, and two from Gibeah (xix. 12).

2. **the chiefs.** The same word (*lit.* 'corners') is used in 1 Sam. xiv. 38; Isa. xix. 13, &c.

**the assembly of the people of God** again marks the latest stage of Hebrew history (see on verse 1).

**four hundred thousand.** In the song of Deborah forty thousand expressed the number of the armies of Israel,

3. How the Benjamites should *not* hear would be difficult to understand, for Mizpah is in the middle of their land, and only about two miles from Gibeah.

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? 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 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 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 committed lewdness and folly in Israel. Behold, ye children of Israel, all of you, give here your advice and counsel. And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn unto his house. But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* 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 Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

**7. Lit.** ‘Behold, all of you, O children of Israel, give a word and counsel here.’

**xx. 8-11. The Israelites settle on a plan of action.** The assembly determines that no one shall return home, but that a tenth of the men shall be appointed to procure food, and that they will attack Gibeah and punish it for its crime.

**9.** *we will go up.* These words are supplied from the Greek version. The verb has dropped out of the Hebrew text.

**by lot.** See verse 18.

**10. when they come** is generally supposed to mean, when the foragers return, but it is so awkward in the original that it is better omitted altogether.

12 And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe  
 of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is  
 13 come to pass among you? Now therefore deliver up the  
 men, the sons of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we  
 may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel.  
 But Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their  
 14 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 the children of  
 15 Israel. And the children of Benjamin were numbered  
 on that day out of the cities twenty and six thousand  
 men that drew sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah,  
 which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.  
 16 Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen  
 men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair-  
 breadth, and not miss.

*xx. 12-16. Israel's demand. Benjamin's refusal and preparation for war.* The Israelites, before attacking Gibeah, send messengers through 'all the tribes of Benjamin' demanding the surrender of the criminals of Gibeah. The Benjamites refuse, and gather for battle at Gibeah. Twenty-six thousand men from other cities of Benjamin and seven hundred from Gibeah are counted in their host.

**12. tribe of Benjamin.** If the Hebrew text is correct in giving the plural 'tribes' (see R.V. marg.), here and in 1 Sam. ix. 21, the word is used in the most unusual sense of a subdivision of a tribe. (Cf. Num. iv. 18.)

**and put away evil from Israel.** The phrase 'put away' (or 'exterminate') evil from Israel occurs several times in Deuteronomy, and nowhere else.

**15.** The number 26,000 does not agree with the figures in later verses. The Greek 25,000 seems to be an attempt to bring them more into accord.

**16.** The words 'seven hundred chosen men' seem to be repeated by mistake from the preceding verse. They do not appear in the Greek version, which joins the last word of verse 15 to this verse, and translates 'Chosen men of all the people were ambidextrous, all these could sling, &c.' The Hebrew, however, does not mean 'ambidextrous,' but 'maimed in the right hand' (see iii. 15). For the Benjamites' skill in slinging and archery cf. 1 Chron. xii. 2.

And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered 17 four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these were men of war. And the children of Israel arose, 18 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 said, Judah shall go up first. And the children of Israel rose up in 19 the morning, and encamped against Gibeah. And the 20 men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel set the battle in array against them at Gibeah. And the children of Benjamin came forth out 21 of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites on that day twenty and two thousand men. And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, 22 and set the battle again in array in the place where they set themselves in array the first day. (And the children 23 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.)

*xx. 17-28. The preparations of the Israelites and their defeats.* The Israelite army, numbering four hundred thousand men, go up to Beth-el and cast lots to know who should first go up against Gibeah. Judah is chosen (but nothing more is said of it). All the Israelites then encamp before Gibeah, but the Benjamites make a sally and slay twenty-two thousand Israelites. On the second day they sally forth again and slay eighteen thousand. The Israelites go up to Beth-el and sacrifice to Yahweh and seek an oracle from Him.

**18. Beth-el.** See i. 22. According to this verse the 400,000 men marched away from Mizpah (half an hour's distance from Gibeah) or from Gibeah itself (see verse 11) to Beth-el, some hours distant to the north, only in verse 19 to return. All this marching would be in the enemy's own country.

**and asked counsel, &c.:** clearly copied from i. 1, 2. Nothing more is said of Judah.

**21. down to the ground:** i.e. leaving them slain on the ground.

**23.** This verse should come before verse 22 to make sense.

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 the  
 26 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 offerings  
 27 before the LORD. And the children of Israel asked of  
 the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there  
 28 in those days, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son  
 of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I  
 yet again go out to battle against the children of Ben-  
 jamin my brother, or shall I cease ? And the LORD said,  
 Go up ; for to-morrow I will deliver him into thine hand.  
 29 And Israel set liers in wait against Gibeah round about.

**26. burnt offerings and peace offerings.** (Cf. xxi. 4.) The former were sacrifices in which the whole offering was burned on the altar. In the latter a part was offered to Yahweh, a part (sometimes at any rate) taken by the priest (1 Sam. ii. 13 f.), while the rest was eaten in a common meal or feast by the worshippers (cf. ix. 27). The exact meaning of the term ‘peace-offering’ is uncertain.

**27, 28. the ark of the covenant of God.** This is the only place in Judges where the ark is mentioned (see ii. 1-5). This note is added to explain why the Israelites went to Beth-el, as it might otherwise have been supposed that the ark had been at Shiloh from the days of Joshua (cf. Joshua xviii. 8-10) to the time of Samuel. The expression ‘ark of the covenant of God’ (or ‘Yahwch’) is a late one.

**Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron.** (Exod. vi. 25 ; Num. xxv. 7, 11, &c.) The whole incident is placed, by the mention of this name, in the lifetime of the first generation of the Hebrews in Palestine.

**xx. 29-36<sup>a</sup>. First account of the battle on the third day.** On the third day the Israelites took up their position as before, and when the Benjamites sallied out again they feigned to flee, thus drawing

And the children of Israel went up against the children 30  
of Benjamin on the third day, and set themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times. And the children 31  
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 of Israel. And the children 32  
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 from the city unto the high ways. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and 33  
set themselves in array at Baal-tamar : and the liers in wait of Israel brake forth out of their place, even out of Maareh-geba. And there came over against Gibeah ten 34  
thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore : but they knew not that evil was close upon them. And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel : 35

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the enemy away from the city. At a certain spot ten thousand Israelites broke out of ambush, and the Benjamites were routed with a loss of twenty-five thousand one hundred men.

**31. and were drawn away from the city:** a parenthesis in the Hebrew. (Joshua viii. 16.) The text is not in order, and judging by verse 39 should probably be restored thus : ‘they were drawn away from the city into the highways, of which one goes up to Beth-el and the other to Gibeon—and they began to slay in the open country as at other times some of the people, about thirty men of Israel.’

**Gibeah.** As the roads go *from* Gibeah, this is probably a mistake for Gibeon, to which there is a highway near.

**33. The site of Baal-tamar** ('Palm-tree Baal') is unknown.

**out of Maareh-geba.** Most of the Greek MSS. and the Latin version read ‘from the west of Gibeah.’ This means a change of one letter in the first word in Hebrew. As Geba is put for Gibeah in verse 19, so it is probably here.

**34.** While the ten thousand men were attacking Gibeah the Benjamites were fighting with the main body of the Israelites, and did not realize the disaster that had come upon them.

**35, 36<sup>a</sup>.** The words at the beginning of verse 36 are absurd

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: 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, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of 38 the sword. Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait was, that they should make 39 a great cloud of smoke rise up out of the city. And the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down

coming after the annihilation of the Benjamites in verse 35. They should come evidently after verse 34, and are probably a fragment of that part of the first account which corresponded to verses 40, 41 in the second.

xx. 36<sup>b</sup>-48. *Second account of the battle on the third day.* The main body of the Israelites gave way before the attack of the Benjamites when they made their usual sally. The men who had been in ambush then rushed out, attacked Gibeah, took it, and set it on fire (as had been arranged). The Benjamites, who had killed about thirty Israelites in their pursuit, now turned round, saw the smoke of the burning Gibeah, realized their disaster, and fled along the road to the wilderness. In the rout eighteen thousand Benjamites were slain, then five thousand more, then another two thousand. Six hundred men only escaped to the rock of Rimmon, where they abode for four months. Gibeah and other Benjamite cities were burned, and all property destroyed.

**36. for the men of Israel.** In Hebrew 'and the men of Israel.'

**37. drew themselves along:** simply 'drew,' i. e. 'moved forward,' as in iv. 6.

**39. And the men of Israel turned in the battle.** As this is described in its proper place in verse 41 it is probable that these words should be joined to the previous verse here and read as part of the plan agreed on, 'and that the men of Israel should turn,' &c.

For the rest of the verse cf. verse 31.

before us, as in the first battle. But when the cloud 40 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* to heaven. And the men of 41 Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them. Therefore 42 they turned their backs before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle followed hard after them; and they which came out of the cities destroyed them in the midst thereof. They inclosed the Ben- 43 jamites round about, *and* chased them, *and* trode them down at *their* resting place, as far as over against Gibeah toward the sunrising. And there fell of Benjamin 44 eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valour. And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the 45 rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the high

**40.** **looked behind them:** simply ‘turned round.’

**the whole.** The word in Hebrew is that used for an offering which was wholly burned on the altar (cf. Deut. xiii. 16 marg.).

**in smoke.** These words are not in the text, and are quite unnecessary.

**to heaven:** heavenwards.

**42.** **the way of the wilderness:** i. e. towards the eastern part of Benjamin’s territory. See verses 45, 47. The text in the latter part of the verse is much better than the marginal interpretation. The word ‘cities’ is difficult to explain, as the cities of this district would naturally be Benjamite. The Latin version interprets ‘they which came out of the cities’ as ‘they who had burned the city’ (i. e. Gibeah).

**43.** This verse is full of difficulties. The first sentence, ‘They surrounded Benjamin,’ is rendered by the Greek version ‘they cut Benjamin to pieces’ (by a change of one letter in Hebrew). The second verb never occurs in this form anywhere else in Hebrew. The word translated ‘at their resting-place’ in the text, ‘at Menuhah’ in the marg., is rendered ‘from Nuhah’ in the Greek (cf. ‘Nohah’ of Benjamin in I Chron. viii. 2). The meaning of the verb before it is uncertain.

**toward the sunrising:** i. e. in the East.

**45.** **Rimmon:** now Rammōn, about three miles east of Beth-el.

ways five thousand men ; and followed hard after them  
 46 unto Gidom, and smote of them two thousand men. So  
 that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and  
 five thousand men that drew the sword ; all these *were*  
 47 men of valour. But six hundred men turned and fled  
 toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon, and  
 48 abode in the rock of Rimmon four months. And the  
 men of Israel turned again upon the children of Ben-  
 jamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, both  
 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,  
 There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Ben-  
 2 jamin to wife. And the people came to Beth-el, and sat

**48. the entire city :** better as in marg. ‘the inhabited city,’ lit.  
 ‘the city of men.’

**and the cattle :** lit. ‘up to cattle,’ i. e. including everything  
 between man and cattle, such as women and children.

**all that they found :** every existing thing.

xxi. 1-14. *Wives are secured for four hundred Benjamite survivors by the destruction of Jabesh-gilead.* The Israelites now bewailed the fact that, by their action, one of the tribes of Israel was about to perish entirely. Only 600 Benjamite men remained. They themselves had sworn they would not give their daughters to Benjamites. How could they provide wives for these men and thus save the tribe ? None of the people of Jabesh-gilead had come up to the meeting at Mizpah (xx), so it was now determined to send twelve thousand men to destroy every living being in that city except unmarried maidens. This was done. Four hundred virgins were saved alive and handed over to the Benjamites, who were now allowed to come from Rimmon to their old land.

**1. the men of Israel had sworn :** (cf. verses 7, 18). The power of an oath was such that Jephthah sacrificed his only daughter rather than break it (xi), and Micah was terrified by his mother’s curse into restoring the money he had stolen (xvii. 2). Here it is thought better to destroy a whole city ‘with the women and the little ones’ rather than break the oath at Mizpah. And when this was not enough it was evaded by trickery, although the letter of it was kept (verse 22).

**2-4. came to Beth-el, &c.,** as in xx. 18, 26.

there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore. And they said, O LORD, the God of Israel, 3 why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel? And it came to pass 4 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 5 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 cut off from Israel this day. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing 7 we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives? And they said, What one is there 8 of the tribes of Israel that came not up unto the LORD to Mizpah? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. For when the 9 people were numbered, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. And the congregation 10 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 sword, with the women and the little ones. And this is the thing that 11 ye shall do; ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lien by man. And they found 12

5. **For they had made a great oath, &c.**: *lit.* ‘For the great oath (or curse) was on him who,’ &c.

8. **Jabesh-gilead:** a city mentioned again in 1 Sam. xi; 2 Sam. ii. 4f. The site is supposed to be that of the modern Meriamin, about seven miles from Pella. The stream near it, which enters the Jordan about ten miles south of Beth-shean (Beisān), still preserves the name Wādy Yābis.

11. Just as in Num. xxxi. 17, 18.

among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had not known man by lying with him: and they brought 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-  
 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.

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 escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not blotted out from Israel.  
 18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel had sworn, saying, Cursed be  
 19 he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. And they said, Be-

**12. Shiloh.** See xviii. 31. This is the only mention of the Israelites' camp there.

**13. the whole congregation.** See xx. 1.

*xxi. 16-25. Wives are procured for the remaining Benjamites from Shiloh.* Some (two hundred) Benjamites are still without wives. They are recommended to carry off Israelitish maidens at a feast in Shiloh. The other Israelites undertake to make peace with the parents of these. Thus the oath will have been kept, for though the Shilonites are Israelites, they will not have given their daughters to Benjamin, for they are taken by force. This plan is carried out. The existence of Benjamin as a tribe is secured. The Israelites return home.

**16. the elders of the congregation.** So in Lev. iv. 15.

**17. There must be an inheritance for them that are escaped of Benjamin.** The meaning is doubtful. The Hebrew has only 'An inheritance of the escaped to (i. e. belonging to) Benjamin.' One of the Greek versions has 'How shall a lot be preserved for Benjamin as an inheritance, and a tribe be not,' &c.

hold, there is 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 Lebonah. And they commanded <sup>20</sup> the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards ; and see, and, behold, if the daughters of <sup>21</sup> 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. And it shall be, when their fathers or their <sup>22</sup> brethren come to complain unto us, that we will say unto them, Grant them graciously unto us : because we took not for each man *of them* his wife in battle : neither did ye give them unto them ; else would ye now be guilty. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took <sup>23</sup>

**19. a feast of the **LORD**** : cf. the vintage feast in ix. 27.

**Shiloh.** See xviii. 31. **Beth-el.** See i. 22. **Shechem.** See ix. 1.

**Lebonah,** now el-Lubbān, three miles north-west of Shiloh.

**21. to dance.** In early times religious festivals were closely associated with social feasting and merriment. It was reserved for a later time, when the two elements were separated, to attach dancing to the secular side, and banish it by degrees from the sacred.

**22.** The Hebrew text of the latter part of this verse is unintelligible as it stands now.

For **Grant them graciously**, &c., some Greek MSS. have ‘Have compassion on them, for each man did not receive a wife in the war,’ i. e. the war with Jabesh-gilead did not provide wives for all. Others read ‘Have compassion on them that they took, each his wife in war,’ i. e. forcibly at Shiloh.

**neither did ye give them unto them ; else would ye now be guilty.** This is not a translation of the Hebrew, which does not seem to give sense. By changing the pronunciation (not the letters) of two particles we get ‘for if you yourselves had given (them) to them, you would now be guilty.’

The meaning of the whole is clear—that if the Shilonites had given their daughters freely to the Benjamites they would have broken their vow, but as they have been taken by force they are guiltless, and they are not bound to punish the captors.

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  
24 dwelt in them. And the children of Israel departed thence 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.

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**24.** According to the story (see xx. 47) the Israelites must have been away from their homes for at least five or six months.

**25.** See xvii. 6, xviii. 1, xix. 1.

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## INTRODUCTION



# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## INTRODUCTION

THE Book of Ruth appears in the Hebrew Bible as one of a collection of five short works called 'the five rolls,' in the third and latest Canon of the Jews (see Introduction to Judges, p. 3). It was thus one of the books that formed a kind of informal supplement to the two Canonical collections (the Law and the Prophets), until, on account of its use in the synagogue, it too received the stamp of canonicity, probably not long before the time of Christ. It was read at the Feast of Weeks. (Cf. Ryle, *The Canon of the O. T.* ch. vi.)

The story is too simple and short to need recapitulation here. In style it is very fresh, simple, and graceful. As a piece of literature it is the most charming short story in the O. T. The scene is laid in Beth-lehem of Judah; the heroine is a Moabitess. The time of the story is that in which 'the judges judged'; but in strong contrast with the wild deeds which were the material of the stories of this period recorded in the Book of Judges we have here the most delightful account of simple village life in time of peace. This contrast, however, does not, as some writers argue, involve any contradiction. The simplest country life can exist, and has often existed, side by side with a general state of warfare. In the four hundred and more years supposed to be covered by the period of the judges there is abundant room for such an incident as that of Ruth.

X

We have no information as to the date at which the book was written. It appears first as a part of the latest

collection of Jewish canonical writings, and there is no reference to it in any other O. T. book. There is thus an interval of about a thousand years between the time when the events are said to have occurred and the first appearance of them in writing. There are in the book itself some indications that in its present form it is a work of the Exilic or post-Exilic times.

(1) In iv. 7 the writer thinks it necessary to explain the custom of drawing off the shoe in matters of 'redeeming' and 'exchanging,' as one which was not in use at the time when he wrote, and which might even be unintelligible to the reader without explanation. But in Deut. xxv. 9 f. the drawing off of the shoe in a matter of redeeming is enjoined, although there is a difference in the details connected with it. The writer of Ruth iv. 7 seems to contrast the earlier use of the shoe with the Deuteronomic, and if this be so he must have written later than 621 B.C.

(2) The genealogy in iv. 18-22 seems at first sight only to show that the work (or this passage) was written in or after the time of David. But there are two facts which make one suspicious of this genealogy. The first is that the compiler of the Book of Samuel, who is so full in his information as to David, apparently does not know anything of his ancestors beyond his father, and the only other record of this genealogy is in 1 Chron. ii, i.e. in a work written after B.C. 333 (see Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the O. T.* ed. 6, p. 518). The other fact is that Salmon or Salmah, who is here the father of Boaz, appears in 1 Chron. ii. 51, 54 as the father of Beth-lehem (the city), apparently indicating that the genealogy is an artificial one and the work of later times.

But it is possible that both these passages are additions to an earlier story. If we leave these on one side, what does the rest tell us? Here the evidence is chiefly linguistic, and the student of Hebrew can consult Driver's *Introduction* for details. Two facts are of importance:—

(1) That there are undoubtedly late words and phrases which point to an Exilic or post-Exilic date. (2) That in general style and particular phrases the narrative resembles the Book of Samuel rather than that of Chronicles. One of two alternatives seems to be possible : either that (1) a story was current in tradition from quite early times, and that in course of time later and more common words were occasionally substituted for the earlier ; or that (2) a late writer well acquainted with the language of the Book of Samuel wrote the whole work. That the former is possible is clear from the history of the Russian 'historical songs,' which were only collected and written down for the first time at the beginning of last century, but which go back for nearly a thousand years, and have kept much of the ancient language, though later words and ideas have been introduced beside these. The latter alternative is also possible, and could easily be paralleled.

There are three very distinctive features in the Book of Ruth.

(1) It gives the genealogy of David, the king who represented in later times the ideal of the Hebrew monarchy.

(2) It gives special prominence to the fact that the greatest royal line of the Hebrews was descended from a Moabitess. Ruth's nationality is constantly mentioned (i. 22, ii. 2, 6, 21, iv. 5, 10), and she speaks of herself as a 'foreigner' (ii. 10).

(3) The action of the story turns on the recognition of the duty on the part of the nearest relative to marry the widow of a man who has died without male children.

The usual question asked is, which of these led to the composition of the work ? As, however, it seems impossible to decide with certainty the *origin* of the book, we may alter the question and ask which of these features led to the composition of the work in its present form and preserved it, when apparently many other writings passed into oblivion. The third feature mentioned above—the action of Boaz as nearest kinsman—is all important for

the action of the story, but does not strike the reader as the subject of it. From beginning to end it is about Ruth the Moabitess, and how she became the ancestress of an illustrious family in Israel. If this be true, the story must have been a favourite with those who did not share the zeal of Ezra and Nehemiah against mixed marriages. The Deuteronomic law (*Deut. xxiii. 3 ff.*) forbade any descendant of a Moabite to the tenth generation to 'enter into the assembly of Yahweh.' In *Ezra ix-x* and *Neh. xiii* we read of the attempt to enforce this law, and can see that it met with much opposition. It may be owing to this that the Book of Ruth achieved that popularity which saved it.

But its reception at a later date into the third Canon was doubtless due to its connexion, by the genealogy, with David, just as *Ecclesiastes* was made canonical for its supposed connexion with Solomon.

# THE BOOK OF RUTH

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS



# THE BOOK OF RUTH

AND it came to pass in the days when the judges 1 judged, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name 2 of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, 3

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i. 1-5. *The circumstances of Ruth's marriage.* In the days of the judges a man of Beth-lehem, his wife, and two sons were driven by a famine to migrate to the country of Moab. There the man died and the two sons married two women of Moab, Orpah and Ruth. In the course of ten years the sons also died, and the three widows were left alone.

1. **in the days when the judges judged.** As according to iv. 22 Boaz was the great-grandfather of David, the events must belong to the end of this period.

**there was a famine in the land.** Famines in Palestine are often mentioned in the O.T.: in the time of Abraham (Gen. xii. 10), of Isaac (xxvi. 1), of Jacob (xli. 56, &c.), of David (2 Sam. xxi. 1), of Elijah (1 Kings xvii).

**Beth-lehem-judah.** See on Judges xvii. 7.

**the country of Moab.** The high plateau, 4,300 feet above the Dead Sea, to the east of it and south of the Arnon. The relations of the Hebrews to the Moabites were often friendly, sometimes the reverse. (Cf. on Judges iii. 12.)

2. **Elimelech** ('God' or 'My God is king'). The name occurs in other Semitic languages also.

**Naomi.** See verse 20.

**Ephrathites** (cf. iv. 11). Ephratha here, and in 1 Sam. xvii. 12; Mic. v. 2, is the name of the district in which Beth-lehem was situated.

4 and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab ; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth : and they dwelled there  
 5 about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died both of them ; and the woman was left of her two children and  
 6 of her husband. Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab : for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the  
 7 **LORD** had visited his people in giving them bread. And she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her ; and they went on the  
 8 way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each of you to

**4. And they took them wives of the women of Moab.** This marriage of Hebrew men with Moabite women is one of the most striking features of the story. Such intermarriage was common throughout Hebrew history, but was strictly forbidden in later times, and in Deut. xxiii. 3 ff. the law is especially severe against the descendants of Moabites. The constant repetition of Ruth's nationality seems to show why the book was so popular (see Introd., p. 178).

**i. 6-18. Ruth accompanies Naomi to Beth-lehem.** In the loneliness of a household, entirely bereft of men, Naomi's thoughts turn to her former home. She learns that the famine is over, and that there is now plenty. Accordingly she determines to return, and sets out accompanied by Orpah and Ruth. At some point in the journey she stops to bid farewell to her daughters-in-law, blesses them, kisses them, and with tears will send them back. But both would fain go with her, yet she urges them to return, for she cannot help them to establish new homes for themselves. Orpah is persuaded and turns back, but Ruth will not be persuaded by any means, and passionately declares her intention to share the lot of Naomi.

**6. the **LORD** had visited his people in giving them bread :** lit. 'to give them bread.' Yahweh 'visits' (i. e. 'gives attention to') men sometimes for good, as in Gen. i. 24 f., Exod. iv. 31, 1 Sam. ii. 21, and here ; sometimes for punishment, as in Jer. vi. 15, xlvi. 8, &c.

**8. A parting rarely takes place in the house in the East.** The

her mother's house : the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD 9 grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them ; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Nay, 10 but we will return with thee unto thy people. And 11 Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters : why will ye go with me ? have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands ? Turn again, my daughters, go your 12 way ; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should even have an husband to-night, and should also bear sons ; would ye therefore 13 tarry till they were grown ? would ye therefore stay from having husbands ? nay, my daughters ; for it grieveth me much for your sakes, for the hand of the LORD is gone forth against me. And they lifted up their voice, and 14

departing relative or guest is usually accompanied for some distance on the road by friends.

**to her mother's house :** i. e. simply to her mother's part of the home, as in Song of Songs iii. 4.

**11-13.** Naomi's persuasion is based on a custom known as that of the Levirate marriage. By it, when a man died childless, his brother took the widow as his wife, and if a child was born it was counted to the dead man and not to the real father. The custom was very ancient, and was revised and included in the Deuteronomic law (Deut. xxv. 5-10), and was the occasion of one of the test questions put to Christ by the Sadducees (Matt. xxii. 23 ff.). It was not a custom peculiar to the Hebrews, but is found also in India and elsewhere.

The assumption in Naomi's words is that Orpah and Ruth will not be content to remain without husbands and without children. But she can do nothing to help them ; she has no other sons to marry them, and even if she were herself to marry again and bear sons, would her daughters-in-law wait until these were grown up and able to marry them ? It is hopeless to expect anything from her. Yahweh has decreed that she shall be without resource.

**13. it grieveth me much for your sakes** is a more probable and more natural translation than that given in the margin.

wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but  
 15 Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister  
 in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god:  
 16 return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, In-  
 treat me not to leave thee, and to return from following  
 after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where  
 thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people,  
 17 and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and  
 there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more  
 18 also, if aught but death part thee and me. And when  
 she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her,  
 19 she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they  
 came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they  
 were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved  
 20 about them, and *the women* said, Is this Naomi? And  
 she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara:

**14. Orpah kissed her mother in law.** The Greek version adds 'and returned to her people.'

**15. and unto her god.** In entering the Hebrew household of Elimalech, Orpah and Ruth had become worshippers of Yahweh, the Hebrew God. Now in going back to her mother's house Orpah would naturally once more become a worshipper of the god of Moab. Ruth (in verse 16), in declaring that she will not leave Naomi, says 'thy God (shall be) my God.'

**17. there will I be buried.** As the family lived together, so the members of it were usually buried in one place, in the belief that in some way the family unity was preserved in Sheol. (Cf. Judges ii. 10, and the expression 'slept with his fathers' frequently in Kings.)

**the LORD do so to me, and more also:** a form of oath frequent in the books of Samuel and Kings.

i. 19-22. *The arrival in Beth-lehem.*

**19. all the city was moved about them:** as every small Eastern city or village is about the arrival of strangers at the present time.

**20. Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.** Naomi means 'pleasant, delightful.' Just as Gideon felt that the common greeting (Judges vi. 13) was an irony in the light of actual circumstances, so Naomi feels that her name is now quite inap-

for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I 21  
 went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again  
 empty: why call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath  
 testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?  
 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her 22  
 daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the  
 country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the  
 beginning of barley harvest.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty 2  
 man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name  
 was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi,

proper. 'Call me not "delightful" but "bitter," for the  
 Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.'

**the Almighty:** in Hebrew the proper name 'Shaddai.' (Cf.  
 El Shaddai in Gen. xvii. 1, xxviii. 3, xxxv. 11, xliii. 14, xlvi. 3, and  
 especially Exod. vi. 3, and 'Shaddai' alone, more than thirty times  
 in Job.)

**22. in the beginning of barley-harvest:** that is, in April.

ii. 1-17. *Ruth meets Boaz as she gleans in his field.* No sooner are the two women settled in Beth-lehem than provision has to be made for their sustenance. Ruth therefore proposes that she shall go out to glean in some field where harvesting is being carried on. She happens to light on a field belonging to Boaz who was of the family of Elimelech. Boaz, seeing a stranger, inquires of the reapers who she is, and the overseer tells him. Thoroughly appreciating her attachment to Naomi, he speaks kindly to her, bids her glean without fear in his field alone, invites her to share the meal of the reapers, and charges his men to allow her to glean freely, and even to pull out something for her from the bundles, that she may have more. On beating out what she had thus gleaned in the day, she found she had about an ephah of barley.

**1. a kinsman.** The word so translated here is a general term meaning 'an acquaintance.' It is not until verse 20 that we learn he is a kinsman in a more definite sense, with certain rights and duties.

**a mighty man of wealth, lit.** 'a man of force' or 'power.' Thus the expression means 'a strong bold man' (Judges xi. 1, cf. vi. 12), 'a wealthy man' (2 Kings xv. 20), or 'a clever, shrewd man' (1 Kings xi. 28). Either the second or third meaning would be suitable here.

Let me now go to the field, and glean among the ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And  
 3 she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers : and her hap was to light on the portion of the field belonging unto  
 4 Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The  
 5 LORD bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that  
 6 was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi  
 7 out of the country of Moab : and she said, Let me glean, I pray you, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves : so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, save that she tarried a little in  
 8 the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither pass from hence, but abide here fast by my  
 9 maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them : have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when

**2.** Permission to glean in harvesting was granted by custom in early times, and is enjoined in the Deuteronomic (Deut. xxiv. 19 ff.) and the Priestly Laws (Lev. xix. 9 f., xxiii. 22).

**4.** For other forms of greeting see Judges vi. 12, xviii. 15.

**7.** save that she tarried a little in the house. This is an attempt to translate what in Hebrew is unintelligible. The English version does not commend itself, for there was no 'house' out in the open fields where the reaping was going on. The Greek version suggests 'She has not rested (even) a little,' and the Latin has 'She has not returned home (even) for a short time.'

**8, 9.** Men do the reaping, 'maidens' follow them and bind the sheaves. The protection of Boaz meant much to Ruth, for evidently gleaners might be driven off by the workers, or exposed to rudeness.

thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on 10 her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thy sight, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been 11 shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a 12 full reward be given thee of the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. Then 13 she said, Let me find grace in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken kindly unto thine handmaid, though I be not as one of thine handmaidens. And at meal-time Boaz said 14 unto her, Come hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and they reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left thereof. And when she was risen 15 up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying,

**12.** under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. Cf. Deut. xxxii. 11; Ps. xxxvi. 7, lvii. 1, xcii. 4.

**13.** though I be (or 'am') not as one of thine handmaidens, but a Moabitess and so a 'stranger' or 'foreigner' (verse 10).

**14.** vinegar: a sour liquid produced by fermenting wine or certain juices of plants and used with food as a relish.

parched corn: ears of corn roasted on a hot plate. 1 Sam. xxv. 18, 2 Sam. xvii. 28.

**15, 16.** Boaz gives orders that not only is Ruth to be allowed to glean as before where the sheaves have been taken up, but she is to be permitted to gather among the standing sheaves. Moreover, as the cut corn is taken up by the gatherers to be tied into sheaves, some of it is to be carelessly dropped, so that she may have more.

Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her  
 16 not. And also pull out some for her from the bundles,  
 17 and leave it, and let her glean, and rebuke her not. So  
 she gleaned in the field until even; and she beat out  
 18 that she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of  
 19 barley. And she took it up, and went into the city:  
 and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and  
 she brought forth and gave to her that she had left after  
 20 she was sufficed. And her mother in law said unto her,  
 Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest  
 thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee.  
 And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had  
 wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought  
 to-day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in  
 law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his  
 kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi  
 said unto her, The man is nigh of kin unto us, one of

**17. an ephah of barley:** that is, about a bushel.

**18. and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned.**  
 More probably, as in some Hebrew MSS. and the Latin and Syriac  
 versions, 'She (Ruth) showed her mother-in-law,' &c.

**and gave to her that she had left after she was sufficed:**  
 i. e. of the parched corn given her at the meal, some of which she  
 had left. (See last clause of verse 14.)

**20. one of our near kinsmen:** one of our 'goels.' The  
 Hebrew word 'goel' denotes one who redeems or resumes a claim.  
 In the Hebrew family life the one whose duty it was to redeem  
 the property, and take up the rights or duties of a man who had  
 died, was his nearest male relative, hence the English translation.  
 These rights and duties were various. If a man had died leaving  
 property, the goel had the right to buy it before it was offered  
 for sale publicly, and so keep it in the family (Jer. xxxii. 8-12).  
 If a man had been killed the goel became the avenger of his blood.  
 If during a man's lifetime he had been compelled to sell himself or  
 his property to a stranger, it was the duty of the goel to redeem  
 the one or the other (Lev. xxv. 47-49, 25). In this book the right  
 of the goel to purchase Elimelech's land is associated with the duty  
 of marrying Ruth 'to raise up the name of the dead upon his  
 inheritance' (see iv. 5).

our near kinsmen. And Ruth the Moabitess said, Yea, 21  
 he said unto me, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men,  
 until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said 22  
 unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter,  
 that thou go out with his maidens, and that they meet  
 thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the 23  
 maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest  
 and of wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother in  
 law.

And Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My 3  
 daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be  
 well with thee? And now is there not Boaz our kinsman, 2  
 with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth  
 barley to-night in the threshing-floor. Wash thyself 3  
 therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon  
 thee, and get thee down to the threshing-floor: but  
 make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall

**22. that they meet thee not:** with intent to do injury or insult  
 (as in Judges viii. 21, xv. 12, xviii. 25, in all of which the verb is  
 translated 'fall upon'). Cf. verse 9.

**23. wheat harvest** followed that of the barley two or three  
 weeks later.

iii. 1-18. *Ruth and Boaz.* Naomi, anxious to provide a home  
 for Ruth, suggests a plan for calling the attention of Boaz to his  
 rights as a 'goel.' After a day's work at winnowing barley, and  
 after he has refreshed himself, Boaz lies down to sleep among the  
 corn. At midnight he discovers Ruth lying at his feet. She  
 claims his protection. This he gratefully promises, unless a nearer  
 kinsman claims the right. In the morning he sends her home with  
 six measures of barley. Naomi, knowing the energetic character  
 of Boaz, bids Ruth now await quietly the course of events.

**2. is there not Boaz our kinsman, &c.:** rather 'is not Boaz our  
 kinsman?'

**to-night.** After four o'clock in the evening and through the  
 night a cool breeze sets in from the sea. This wind carries away  
 the chaff in winnowing, and the coolness makes work pleasant.

**the threshing-floor.** See on Judges vi. 11. Here in Beth-lehem  
 it is apparently lower than the city ('get thee *down*' in verse 3).

4 have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.  
 5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest I will do.  
 6 And she went down unto the threshing-floor, and did  
 7 according to all that her mother in law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and  
 8 laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a  
 9 woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a  
 10 near kinsman. And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou  
 11 followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou sayest: for all the city of my people doth know  
 12 that thou art a virtuous woman. And now it is true that I am a near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer

**4.** Ruth is to put herself entirely in the power of Boaz, in the belief that he will act honourably and vigorously (cf. verse 18).

**7. his heart was merry:** cf. Judges xvi. 25, xix. 6, 9, 22.

he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn, just as the peasants sleep on the threshing-floor during the time of threshing at the present day in Palestine.

**9. a near kinsman:** 'a goel' (see ii. 20).

**11. all the city of my people,** lit. 'all the gate of my people': because the gate of the city was the place where the people met for social, political, and legal discussions. (See iv. 1 ff.)

**a virtuous woman,** lit. 'a woman of force' or 'strength.' (See the second note to ii. 1.)

**12. a kinsman:** a 'goel' as above. The rights and duties of goel fell first upon the nearest of kin.

than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, 13 that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet until the morning: 14 and she rose up before one could discern another. For he said, Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor. And he said, Bring the mantle that 15 is upon thee, and hold it; and she held it: and he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid it on her: and he went into the city. And when she came to her 16 mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six *measures* of barley gave he me; 17 for he said, Go not empty unto thy mother in law. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know 18 how the matter will fall: for the man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

Now Boaz went up to the gate, and sat him down 4

13. **Tarry this night:** for it would be dangerous for her to go home then with rough men about. (Cf. Song of Songs v. 7.)

14. **before one could discern another,** lit. ‘before a man could distinguish his neighbour.’

15. **the mantle:** the wrapper worn over the other clothes.

**he went.** The marginal reading is better, ‘she went.’

16. **Who art thou?** One dishonoured or one protected and honoured?

iv. 1-17. *Boaz purchases Elimelech's property and marries Ruth. A child is born from whom David descended.* Boaz went up to the city gate and sat there among the people until he saw the ‘nearer kinsman’ of Elimelech approaching. Then he called him and reminded him that he had the right to buy back the land of Elimelech, which Naomi had sold. At first inclined to do so, he is repelled when he is told that he must with the land take Ruth as wife, and count the first child to Mahlon and not to himself. He therefore solemnly renounces his right in the presence of

there : and, behold, the near kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by ; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one ! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat 2 down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, 3 and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the near kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth the parcel of 4 land, which was our brother Elimelech's : and I thought to disclose it unto thee, saying, Buy it before them that sit here, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it : but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know : for there is none to redeem it beside thee ; and I am after thee. And he 5 said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to

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witnesses by drawing off his shoe. Boaz now claims the right for himself, acquires all that belonged to Elimelech and his heirs, and marries Ruth. The first child of this marriage is named Obed. He was the grandfather of David.

**1. went up** from the threshing-floor (cf. iii. 2).

the gate of an Eastern city is often a fairly large building, in the shade of which men may sit comfortably in the heat of the day. Near it is almost always a broad open space, where a market is held and the people meet for the interchange of news and settlement of disputes, claims, &c. (See Gen. xix. 1, xxiii. 10, xxxiv. 20 ; 1 Sam. iv. 13, marg., &c.)

**2. the elders of the city** (cf. Judges viii. 14) at this time would be the heads of leading families in the city.

**3, 4. selleth.** The Hebrew means ‘has sold.’ Naomi had now been back in Beth-lehem for some weeks, and apparently had sold the land. Custom, afterwards embodied in law (Lev. xxv. 25), provided that in such cases the land could be restored to the family if a kinsman (‘goel’) claimed his right to buy it back. That right belonged in the first place to the nearest of kin. If he declined to exercise it, then the next to him in kinship might do so.

**if thou wilt not redeem it** must be correct in spite of the Hebrew text. (See margin.)

**5. thou must buy it also of Ruth.** The text is faulty here, for

raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the near kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: take thou my right of redemption on thee; for I cannot redeem it. Now this was *the custom* in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, for to confirm all things; a man drew off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was the *manner of attestation* in Israel. So the near kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thyself. And he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman

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Naomi, not Ruth, sold the land. We should read 'thou must also buy Ruth,' exactly as in verse 10. The law of the Levirate marriage (see i. 11-13) only required that the brother of the dead should marry the widow if she had no son to inherit. Here the duty is laid on the next-of-kin, if he claim his right to buy the property, which would naturally fall to the son of the widow. Although the 'goel' is required in this verse 'to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance' (cf. verse 6), Ruth's son is ascribed not to Mahlon but to Boaz in the genealogy of verses 18-22.

7. An explanation of the act recorded in verse 8. The drawing off of the shoe to indicate the giving up of one's rights occurs again in Deut. xxv. 9. It is possible that in Psalm ix. 9, we have the inverse process of taking possession of, or claiming, by throwing the shoe on something.

For the relation of this verse to the date of the book, see Introduction.

8. The Greek version adds at the end 'and gave (it) to him.'

that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephrathah, and be famous in Beth-lehem: 12 and let thy house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD 13 shall give thee of this young woman. So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a 14 son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a near 15 kinsman, and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne 16 him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her 17 bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

**11. do thou worthily:** *lit.* ‘make power,’ the noun being the same as that which occurs in the expression noted in ii. 1, iii. 11.

**Ephrathah.** See i. 2.

**12.** See Gen. xxxviii. According to verse 18 Boaz himself belonged to the descendants of Perez.

**14.** Now that a son is born to Ruth he is considered by the women as the ‘goel’ who takes up all the rights and duties of Naomi’s son Mahlon.

**15. is better to thee than seven sons.** Seven is a round number; one could paraphrase ‘than any number of sons.’ This is because through Ruth’s action in coming to Beth-lehem with her, and then in marrying Boaz and bearing a son, she has made Naomi the ancestress of a family in Israel.

**17. the women her neighbours gave it a name.** Cf. Luke i. 59.

**Obed:** i. e. ‘one serving,’ as in the name Obadiah, i. e. a servant of Yahweh.

Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez begat<sup>18,19</sup> Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and<sup>20</sup> Nahshon begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Boaz, and<sup>21</sup> Boaz begat Obed; and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse<sup>22</sup> begat David.

**18-22.** Genealogy of David showing his descent through Boaz (cf. the genealogies in Matt. i and Luke iii). An addition at a later time to the story of Ruth (see Introduction).

**18. These are the generations of:** the usual formula in the priestly writings of the Pentateuch (cf. Gen. ii. 4, vi. 9, x. 1, xi. 10, 27, &c.).

**19. Perez.** See Gen. xxxviii. 29, xlvi. 12, in both passages a son of Judah.

**Hezron:** in Gen. xlvi. 12; Num. xxvi. 21; 1 Chron. ii. 5 a son of Perez; but in 1 Chron. iv. 1 with Perez a son of Judah.

**Ram:** in Matt. i. 3 and Luke iii. 33 (marg.) called Aram, as in the Greek version here, and in 1 Chron. ii. 9 f. In 1 Chron. ii. 25 he is the *grandson* of Hezron.

**Amminadab.** See Ex. vi. 23; Num. i. 7, ii. 3; 1 Chron. ii. 10.

**20. Nahshon.** See Num. i. 7, ii. 3, x. 14.

**Salmon or Salmah.** 1 Chron. ii. 11 (cf. verse 54).



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