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Judges

From Commentary on the Old Testament

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch

adapted for Grace Notes training by Warren Doud

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Introduction

Contents and Character, Origin and Sources, of the Book of Judges.

The book of Judges, headed *Shophetim* in the Hebrew Bibles, and Κριταί in the Alexandrian version, and called *liber Judicum* in the Vulgate, contains the history of the Israelitish theocracy for a period of about 350 years, from the death of Joshua to the death of Samson, or to the time of the prophet Samuel. It may be divided according to its contents into three parts: (1) an introduction (Judges 1–3:6); (2) the history of the several judges (Judges 3:7–16:31); and (3) a twofold appendix (Judges 17–21). In the *Introduction* the prophetic author of the book first of all takes a general survey of those facts which exhibited most clearly the behaviour of the Israelites to the Canaanites who were left in the land after the death of Joshua, and closes his survey with the reproof of their behaviour by the angel of the Lord (Judges 1:1–2:5). He then describes in a general manner the attitude of Israel to the Lord its God and that of the Lord to His people during the time of the judges, and represents this period as a constant alternation of humiliation through hostile oppression, when the nation fell away from its God, and deliverance out of the power of its enemies by judges whom God raised up and endowed with the power of His Spirit, whenever the people returned to the Lord (Judges 2:6–3:6). This is followed in the *body of the work* (Judges 3:7–16:31) by the history of the several oppressions of Israel on the part of foreign nations, with the deliverance effected by the judges who were raised up by God, and whose deeds are for the most part elaborately described in chronological order, and introduced by the standing formula, “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord,” etc.; or, “And the children of Israel again did evil (added to do evil),” etc. They are arranged in six historical groups: (1) the oppression by the Mesopotamian king, Chushan-rishathaim, with the deliverance from this oppression through

Othniel the judge (Judges 3:7–11); (2) the oppression by the Moabitish king Eglon, with the deliverance effected through *Ehud* the judge (Judges 3:12–30), and the victory achieved by *Shamgar* over the Philistines (Judges 3:31); (3) the subjugation of Israel by the Canaanitish king Jabin, and the deliverance effected through the prophetess *Deborah* and *Barak* the judge (Judges 4), with *Deborah’s* song of victory (Judges 5); (4) the oppression by the Midianites, and the deliverance from these enemies through the judge *Gideon*, who was called to be the deliverer of Israel through an appearance of the angel of the Lord (Judges 6–8), with the history of the three years’ reign of his son Abimelech (Judges 9), and brief notices of the two judges *Tola* and *Jair* (Judges 10:1–5); (5) the giving up of the Israelites into the power of the Ammonites and Philistines, and their deliverance from the Ammonitish oppression by *Jephthah* (Judges 10:6–12:7), with brief notices of the three judges *Ibzan*, *Elon*, and *Abdon* (Judges 12:8–15); (6) the oppression by the Philistines, with the account of the life and deeds of *Samson* the judge, who began to deliver Israel out of the power of these foes (Judges 13–16). To this there are added two *appendices* in Judges 17–21: viz., (1) the account of the worship of images by the Ephraimite Micah, and the transportation of that worship by the Danites to Laish-Dan (Judges 17–18); and (2) the infamous conduct of the inhabitants of Gibeah, and the war of revenge which was waged by the congregation of Israel against the tribe of Benjamin as a punishment for the crime (Judges 19–21). Both these events occurred in the earliest part of the period of the judges, as we may gather, in the case of the first, from a comparison of Judges 18:1 with Judges 1:34, and in that of the second from a comparison of Judges 20:28 with Josh. 22:13 and 24:33; and they are merely placed at the end of the book in the form of appendices, because they could not well be introduced into the six complete historical *tableaux*; although, so far as the facts themselves are concerned, they are intimately connected with the contents and aim of the book of Judges, inasmuch as they

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depict the religious and moral circumstances of the times in the most striking manner in two pictures drawn from life. The relation in which the three parts stand to one another, therefore, is this: the introduction depicts the basis on which the deeds of the judges were founded, and the appendices furnish confirmatory evidence of the spirit of the age as manifested in those deeds. The whole book, however, is pervaded and ruled by the idea distinctly expressed in the introduction (Judges 2:1-3, 11-22), that the Lord left those Canaanites who had not been exterminated by Joshua still in the land, to prove to Israel through them whether it would obey His commandments, and that He chastised and punished His people through them for their disobedience and idolatry; but that as soon as they recognised His chastening hand in the punishment, and returned to Him with penitence and implored His help, He had compassion upon them again in His gracious love, and helped them to victory over their foes, so that, notwithstanding the repeated acts of faithlessness on the part of His people, the Lord remained ever faithful in His deeds, and stedfastly maintained His covenant.

We must not look to the book of Judges, therefore, for a complete history of the period of the judges, or one which throws light upon the development of the Israelites on every side. the character of the book, as shown in its contents and the arrangement of the materials, corresponds entirely to the character of the times over which it extends. The time of the judges did not form a new stage in the development of the nation of God. It was not till the time of Samuel and David, when this period was ended, that a new stage began. It was rather a transition period, the time of free, unfettered development, in which the nation was to take root in the land presented to it by God as its inheritance, to familiarize itself with the theocratic constitution given to it by the Mosaic law, and by means of the peculiar powers and gifts conferred upon it by God to acquire for itself that independence and firm footing in Canaan, within the limits of the laws, ordinances, and rights of the covenant, which

Jehovah had promised, and the way to which He had prepared through the revelations He had made to them. This task could be accomplished without any ruler directly appointed by the Lord. The first thing which the tribes had to do was to root out such Canaanites as remained in the land, that they might not only establish themselves in the unrestricted and undisputed possession and enjoyment of the land and its productions, but also avert the danger which threatened them on the part of these tribes of being led away to idolatry and immorality. The Lord had promised them His help in this conflict, if they would only walk in His commandments. The maintenance of civil order and the administration of justice were in the hands of the heads of tribes, families, and households; and for the relation in which the congregation stood to the Lord its God, it possessed the necessary organs and media in the hereditary priesthood of the tribe of Levi, whose head could inquire the will of God in all cases of difficulty through the right of Urim, and make it known to the nation. Now as long as the generation, which had seen the wonderful works of the Lord in the time of Joshua, was still living, so long did the nation continue faithful to the covenant of its God, and the tribes maintain a successful conflict with the still remaining Canaanites (Judges 1:1-20, 22-25). But the very next generation, to which those mighty acts of the Lord were unknown, began to forget its God, to grow weary and lax in its conflicts with the Canaanites, to make peace with them, and to mix up the worship of Jehovah, the jealous and holy God, with the worship of Baal and Astarte, the Canaanitish deities of nature, and even to substitute the latter in its place. With the loss of love and fidelity to the Lord, the bond of unity which formed the tribes into *one* congregation of Jehovah was also broken. The different tribes began to follow their own separate interests (vid., Judges 5:15-17, 23; 8:5-8), and eventually even to oppose and make war upon one another; whilst Ephraim was bent upon securing to itself the headship of all the tribes, though without making any vigorous efforts to carry on the war with the

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oppressors of Israel (vid., Judges 8:1ff., 12:1–6). Consequently Israel suffered more and more from the oppression of heathen nations, to which God gave it up as a chastisement for its idolatry; and it would have become altogether a prey to its foes, had not the faithful covenant God taken compassion upon it in its distress as often as it cried to Him, and sent deliverers (מוֹשִׁיעִים, Judges 3:9, 15; cf. Neh. 9:27) in those judges, after whom both the age in question and the book before us are called. There are twelve of these judges mentioned, or rather thirteen, as Deborah the prophetess also judges Israel (Judges 4:4); but there are only eight (Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson), who are described as performing acts by which Israel obtained deliverance from its oppressors. Of the other five (Tolah, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon) we are merely told that they judged Israel so many years. The reason for this we are not to seek in the fact that the report of the heroic deeds of these judges had not been handed down to the time when our book was written. It is to be found simply in the fact that these judges waged no wars and smote no foes.

The judges (*shophetim*) were men who procured justice or right for the people of Israel, not only by delivering them out of the power of their foes, but also by administering the laws and rights of the Lord (Judges 2:16–19). *Judging* in this sense was different from the administration of civil jurisprudence, and included the idea of government such as would be expected from a king. Thus in 1 Sam. 8:5, 6, the people are said to have asked Samuel to give them a king “to judge us,” to procure us right, i.e., to govern us; and in 2 Kings 15:5 Jotham is said to have *judged*, i.e., governed the nation during the illness of his father. The name given to these men (*shophetim*, judges) was evidently founded upon Deut. 17:9 and 19:17, where it is assumed that in after-times there would be a *shophet*, who would stand by the side of the high priest as the supreme judge or leader of the state in Israel. The judges themselves corresponded to the δικασταί of the

Tyrians (*Josephus*, c. Ap. i. 21) and the *Suffetes* of the Carthaginians (*qui summus Paenis est magistratus*, Liv. Hist. xxvii. 37, and xxx. 7), with this difference, however, that as a rule the judges of Israel were called directly by the Lord, and endowed with miraculous power for the conquest of the enemies of Israel; and if, after delivering the people from their oppressors, they continued to the time of their death to preside over the public affairs of the whole nation, or merely of several of its tribes, yet they did not follow one another in a continuous line and unbroken succession, because the ordinary administration of justice and government of the commonwealth still remained in the hands of the heads of the tribes and the elders of the people, whilst occasionally there were also prophets and high priests, such as Deborah, Eli, and Samuel (Judges 4:4; 1 Sam. 4:18; 7:15), in whom the government was vested. Thus “Othniel delivered the children of Israel,” and “judged Israel,” by going out to war, smiting Chushan-rishathaim, the Aramaean king, and giving the land rest for forty years (Judges 3:9–11); and the same with Ehud and several others. On the other hand, Shamgar (Judges 3:31) and Samson (Judges 13–16) are apparently called judges of Israel, simply as opponents and conquerors of the Philistines, without their having taken any part in the administration of justice. Others, again, nether engaged in war nor gained victories. No warlike deeds are recorded of Tola; and yet it is stated in Judges 10:1, that “he rose up after Abimelech to deliver Israel (לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל), and judged Israel twenty-three years;” whilst of his successor Jair nothing more is said, than that “he judged Israel twenty-two years.” Both of these had delivered and judged Israel, not by victories gained over enemies, but by placing themselves at the head of the tribes over whom Gideon had been judge, at the termination of the ephemeral reign of Abimelech, and by preventing the recurrence of hostile oppression, through the influence they exerted, as well as by what they did for the establishment of the nation in its fidelity to the Lord. This also applies to Ibzan, Elon, and

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Abdon, who followed Jephthah in direct succession (Judges 12:8–15). Of these five judges also, it is not stated that Jehovah raised them up or called them. In all probability they merely undertook the government at the wish of the tribes whose judges they were; whilst at the same time it is to be observed, that such cases as these did not occur until the desire for a king had begun to manifest itself throughout the nation (Judges 8:22, 23).

But if all the judges did not fight against outward enemies of Israel, it might appear strange that the book of Judges should close with the death of Samson, without mentioning Eli and Samuel, as both of them judged Israel, the one forty years, the other for the whole of his life (1 Sam. 4:18; 7:15). But Eli was really high priest, and what he did as judge was merely the natural result of his office of high priest; and Samuel was called to be the prophet of the Lord, and as such he delivered Israel from the oppression of the Philistines, not with the sword and by the might of his arm, like the judges before him, but by the power of the word, with which he converted Israel to the Lord, and by the might of his prayer, with which he sought and obtained the victory from the Lord (1 Sam. 7:3–10); so that his judicial activity not only sprang out of his prophetic office, but was continually sustained thereby. The line of actual judges terminated with Samson; and with his death the office of judge was carried to the grave. Samson was followed immediately by Samuel, whose prophetic labours formed the link between the period of the judges and the introduction of royalty into Israel. The forty years of oppression on the part of the Philistines, from which Samson began to deliver Israel (Judges 13:1, 5), were brought to a close by the victory which the Israelites gained through Samuel's prayer (1 Sam. 7), as will be readily seen when we have determined the chronology of the period of the judges, in the introductory remarks to the exposition of the body of the book. This victory was not gained by the Israelites till twenty years after Eli's death (comp. 1 Sam. 7:2 with 6:1 and 4:18). Consequently of the forty years during

which Eli judged Israel as high priest, only the last twenty fell within the time of the Philistine oppression, the first twenty before it. But both Samuel and Samson were born during the pontificate of Eli; for when Samson's birth was foretold, the Philistines were already ruling over Israel (Judges 13:5). The deeds of Samson fell for the most part within the last twenty years of the Philistine supremacy, i.e., not only in the interval between the capture of the ark and death of Eli and the victory which the Israelites achieved through Samuel over these foes, which victory, however, Samson did not live to see, but also in the time when Samuel had been accredited as a prophet of Jehovah, and Jehovah had manifested himself repeatedly to him by word at Shiloh (1 Sam. 3:20, 21). Consequently Samuel completed the deliverance of Israel out of the power of the Philistines, which Samson had commenced.

The book of Judges, therefore, embraces the whole of the judicial epoch, and gives a faithful picture of the political development of the Israelitish theocracy during that time. The author writes throughout from a prophet's point of view. He applies the standard of the law to the spirit of the age by which the nation was influenced as a whole, and pronounces a stern and severe sentence upon all deviations from the path of rectitude set before it in the law. The unfaithfulness of Israel, which went a whoring again and again after Baal, and was punished for its apostasy from the Lord with oppression from foreign nations, and the faithfulness of the Lord, who sent help to the people whenever it returned to Him in its oppression, by raising up judges who conquered its enemies, are the two historical factors of those times, and the hinges upon which the history turns. In the case of all the judges, it is stated that they judged "Israel," or the "children of Israel;" although it is very obvious, from the accounts of the different deliverances effected, that most of the judges only delivered and judged those tribes who happened to be oppressed and subjugated by their enemies at a particular time. The other tribes, who were spared by this or the other

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hostile invasion, did not come into consideration in reference to the special design of the historical account, namely, to describe the acts of the Lord in the government of His people, any more than the development of the religious and social life of individual members of the congregation in harmony with the law; inasmuch as the congregation, whether in whole or in part, was merely fulfilling its divinely appointed vocation, so long as it observed the law, and about this there was nothing special to be related (see the description given of the book of Judges in *Hengstenberg*, Diss. on the Pentateuch, vol. ii. pp. 16ff.).

Lastly, if we take a survey of the gradual development of Israel during the times of the judges, we may distinguish three stages in the attitude of the Lord to His constantly rebelling people, and also in the form assumed by the external and internal circumstances of the nation: viz., (1) the period from the commencement of the apostasy of the nation till its deliverance from the rule of the Canaanitish king Jabin, or the time of the judges Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, Deborah and Barak (Judges 3-5); (2) the time of the Midianitish oppression, with the deliverance effected by Gideon, and the government which followed, viz., of Abimelech and the judges Tola and Jair (Judges 6-10:5); (3) the time of the Ammonitish and Philistine supremacy over Israel, with the judges Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon on the one hand, and that of Samson on the other (Judges 10:6-16:31). Three times, for example, the Lord threatens His people with oppression and subjugation by foreign nations, as a punishment for their disobedience and apostasy from Him: viz., (1) at Bochim (Judges 2:1-4) through the angel of the Lord; (2) on the invasion of the Midianites (Judges 6:7-10) through the medium of a prophet; and (3) at the commencement of the Ammonitish and Philistine oppression (Judges 10:10-14). The first time He threatens, "the Canaanites shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you" (Judges 2:3); the second time, "I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians,

and out of the hand of all that oppressed you; I said unto you, I am Jehovah, your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites: but ye have not hearkened to my voice" (Judges 6:9, 10); the third time, "Ye have forsaken me and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more; go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation" (Judges 10:13, 14). These threats were fulfilled upon the disobedient nation, not only in the fact that they fell deeper and deeper under the oppression of their foes, but by their also becoming disjointed and separated more and more internally. In the first stage, the oppressions from without lasted a tolerably long time: that of Chushan-rishathaim eight years; that of Eglon the Moabite, eighteen; and that of the Canaanitish king Jabin, as much as twenty years (Judges 3:8, 14; 4:3). But, on the other hand, after the first, the Israelites had forty years of peace; after the second, eighty; and after the third, again forty years (Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31). Under Othniel and Ehud all Israel appears to have risen against its oppressors; but under Barak, Reuben and Gilead, Dan and Asher took no part in the conflict of the other tribes (Judges 5:15-17). In the second stage, the Midianitish oppression lasted, it is true, only seven years (Judges 6:1), and was followed by forty years of rest under Gideon (Judges 8:28); whilst the three years' government of Abimelech was followed by forty-five years of peace under Tola and Jair (Judges 10:2, 3); but even under Gideon the jealousy of Ephraim was raised to such a pitch against the tribes who had joined in smiting the foe, that it almost led to a civil war (Judges 8:1-3), and the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel refused all assistance to the victorious army, and that in so insolent a manner that they were severely punished by Gideon in consequence (Judges 8:4-9, 14-17); whilst in the election of Abimelech as king of Shechem, the internal decay of the congregation of Israel was brought still more clearly to light (Judges 9). Lastly, in the third stage, no doubt, Israel was delivered by Jephthah from the eighteen years' bondage on the part of the Ammonites (Judges 11:8ff.),

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and the tribes to the east of the Jordan, as well as the northern tribes of the land on this side, enjoyed rest under the judges Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon for thirty-one years (Judges 12:7, 9, 11, 14); but the Philistine oppression lasted till after Samson's death (Judges 13:5; 15:20), and the internal decay increased so much under this hostile pressure, that whilst the Ephraimites, on the one hand, commenced a war against Jephthah, and sustained a terrible defeat at the hands of the tribes on the east of the Jordan (Judges 12:1-6), on the other hand, the tribes who were enslaved by the Philistines had so little appreciation of the deliverance which God had sent them through Samson, that the men of Judah endeavoured to give up their deliverer to the Philistines (Judges 15:9-14). Nevertheless the Lord not only helped the nation again, both in its distress and out of its distress, but came nearer and nearer to it with His aid, that it might learn that its help was to be found in God alone. The first deliverers and judges He stirred up by His Spirit, which came upon Othniel and Ehud, and filled them with courage and strength for the conquest of their foes. Barak was summoned to the war by the prophetess Deborah, and inspired by her with the courage to undertake it. Gideon was called to be the deliverer of Israel out of the severe oppression of the Midianites by the appearance of the angel of the Lord, and the victory over the innumerable army of the foe was given by the Lord, not to the whole of the army which Gideon summoned to the battle, but only to a small company of 300 men, that Israel might not "vaunt themselves against the Lord," and magnify their own power. Lastly, Jephthah and Samson were raised up as deliverers out of the power of the Ammonites and Philistines; and whilst Jephthah was called by the elders of Gilead to be the leader in the war with the Midianites, and sought through a vow to ensure the assistance of God in gaining a victory over them, Samson was set apart from his mother's womb, through the appearance of the angel of the Lord, as the Nazarite who was to begin to deliver Israel out of the power of the Philistines. At the same time there was given to the nation

in the person of Samuel, the son for whom the pious Hannah prayed to the Lord, a Nazarite and prophet, who was not only to complete the deliverance from the power of the Philistines which Samson had begun, but to ensure the full conversion of Israel to the Lord its God.

With regard to the *origin* of the book of Judges, it is evident from the repeated remark, "In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25; cf. Judges 18:1; 19:1), that it was composed at a time when Israel was already rejoicing in the benefits connected with the kingdom. It is true this remark is only to be found in the appendices, and would have no force so far as the date of composition is concerned, if the view held by different critics were well-founded, viz., that these appendices were added by a later hand. But the arguments adduced against the unity of authorship in all three parts, the introduction, the body of the work, and the appendices, will not bear examination. Without the introduction (Judges 1:1-3:6) the historical narrative contained in the book would want a foundation, which is absolutely necessary to make it intelligible; and the two appendices supply two supplements of the greatest importance in relation to the development of the tribes of Israel in the time of the judges, and most intimately connected with the design and plan of the rest of the book. It is true that in Judges 1, as well as in the two appendices, the prophetic view of the history which prevails in the rest of the book, from Judges 2:11 to Judges 16:31, is not distinctly apparent; but this difference may be fully explained from the contents of the two portions, which neither furnish the occasion nor supply the materials for any such view,—like the account of the royal supremacy of Abimelech in Judges 9, in which the so-called "theocratical pragmatism" is also wanting. But, on the other hand, all these portions are just as rich in allusions to the Mosaic law and the legal worship as the other parts of the book, so that both in their contents and their form they would be unintelligible apart from the supremacy of the law in Israel. The

discrepancies which some fancy they have discovered between Judges 1:8 and Judges 1:21, and also between Judges 1:19 and Judges 3:3, vanish completely on a correct interpretation of the passages themselves. And no such differences can be pointed out in language or style as would overthrow the unity of authorship, or even render it questionable. Even *Stähelin* observes (*spez. Einl.* p. 77): "I cannot find in Judges 17–21 the (special) author of Judges 1–2:5; and the arguments adduced by *Bertheau* in favour of this, from modes of expression to be found in the two sections, appear to me to be anything but conclusive, simply because the very same modes of expression occur elsewhere: יִזְאֵל in Ex. 2:21; חָתָן in Num. 10:29; נָתַן בְּיָד, Josh. 10:30; 11:8, Judges 6:1; 11:21; נָתַן לְאִשָּׁה, Gen. 29:28; 30:4, 9; 34:8, etc.; הִבֵּה לְפִי חֶרֶב, Num. 21:24, Deut. 13:16, Josh. 8:24; 10:28, 30, 32, etc. Undoubtedly שָׁאֵל בִּי only occurs in Judges 1:1 and the appendix, and never earlier; but there is a similar expression in Num. 27:21 and Josh 9:14, and the first passage shows how the mode of expression could be so abbreviated. I find no preterites with י, used in the place of the future with י in Judges 1; for it is evident from the construction that the preterite must be used in vv. 8, 16, 25, etc.; and thus the only thing left that could strike us at all is the idiom שֶׁלַח בָּאֵשׁ, which is common to both sections, but which is too isolated, and occurs again moreover in 2 Kings 8:12 and Ps. 74:7." But even the "peculiar phrases belonging to a later age," which *Stähelin* and *Bertheau* discover in Judges 17–21 do not furnish any tenable proof of this assertion. The phrase "from Dan to Beersheba," in Judges 20:1, was formed after the settlement of the Danites in Laish-Dan, which took place at the commencement of the time of the judges. נָשָׂא נָשִׁים, in Judges 21:23, is also to be found in Ruth 1:4; and the others either occur again in the books of Samuel, or have been wrongly interpreted.

We have a firm *datum* for determining more minutely the time when the book of Judges was written, in the statement in Judges 1:21, that the Jebusites in Jerusalem had not been rooted out by the Israelites, but dwelt there with the children of Benjamin "unto this day." The Jebusites remained in possession of Jerusalem, or of the citadel Zion, or the upper town of Jerusalem, until the time when David went against Jerusalem after the twelve tribes had acknowledged him as king, took the fortress of Zion, and made it the capital of his kingdom under the name of the city of David (2 Sam. 5:6–9; 1 Chron. 11:4–9). Consequently the book was written before this event, either during the first seven years of the reign of David at Hebron, or during the reign of Saul, under whom the Israelites already enjoyed the benefits of a monarchical government, since Saul not only fought with bravery against all the enemies of Israel, and "delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them" (1 Sam. 14:47, 48), but exerted himself to restore the authority of the law of God in his kingdom, as is evident from the fact that he banished the wizards and necromancers out of the land (1 Sam. 28:9). The talmudical statement therefore in *Bava-bathra* (f. 14*b* and 15*a*), to the effect that Samuel was the author of the book, may be so far correct, that if it was not written by Samuel himself towards the close of his life, it was written at his instigation by a younger prophet of his school. More than this it is impossible to decide. So much, however, is at all events certain, that the book does not contain traces of a later age either in its contents or its language, and that Judges 18:30 does not refer to the time of the captivity (see the commentary on this passage). With regard to the *sources* of which the author made use, unless we are prepared to accept untenable hypotheses as having all the validity of historical facts, it is impossible to establish anything more than that he drew his materials not only from oral tradition, but also from written documents. This is obvious from the exactness of the historical and chronological accounts, and still more so from the abundance of characteristic and original traits and

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expressions that meet the reader in the historical pictures, some of which are very elaborate. The historical fidelity, exactness, and vividness of description apparent in every part of the book are only to be explained in a work which embraces a period of 350 years, on the supposition that the author made use of trustworthy records, or the testimony of persons who were living when the events occurred. This stands out so clearly in every part of the book, that it is admitted even by critics who are compelled by their own dogmatical assumptions to deny the actual truth or reality of the miraculous parts of the history. With regard to the nature of these sources, however, we can only conjecture that Judges 1 and 17–21 were founded upon written accounts, with which the author of the book of Joshua was also acquainted; and that the accounts of Deborah and Barak, of Gideon, and the life of Samson, were taken from different writing, inasmuch as these sections are distinguished from one another by many peculiarities. (Further remarks on this subject will be found in the exposition itself.)

Judges 1

Attitude of Israel Towards the Canaanites, and Towards Jehovah Its God. Ch. 1–3:6.

Hostilities Between Israel and the Canaanites After Joshua's Death.—Ch. 1:1–2:5.

After the death of Joshua the tribes of Israel resolved to continue the war with the Canaanites, that they might exterminate them altogether from the land that had been given them for an inheritance. In accordance with the divine command, Judah commenced the strife in association with Simeon, smote the king of Bezek, conquered Jerusalem, Hebron and Debir upon the mountains, Zephath in the south land, and three of the chief cities of the Philistines, and took possession of the mountains; but was unable to exterminate the inhabitants of the plain, just as the Benjaminites were unable to drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem (vv. 1–21). The tribe of Joseph also conquered the city of Bethel (vv. 22–26); but from the remaining towns of the land neither the Manassites, nor

the Ephraimites, nor the tribes of Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali expelled the Canaanites: all that they did was to make them tributary (vv. 27–33). The Danites were actually forced back by the Amorites out of the plain into the mountains, because the latter maintained their hold of the towns of the plain, although the house of Joseph conquered them and made them tributary (vv. 34–36). The angel of the Lord therefore appeared at Bochim, and declared to the Israelites, that because they had not obeyed the command of the Lord, to make no covenant with the Canaanites, the Lord would no more drive out these nations, but would cause them and their gods to become a snare to them (Judges 2:1–5). From this divine revelation it is evident, on the one hand, that the failure to exterminate the Canaanites had its roots in the negligence of the tribes of Israel; and on the other hand, that the accounts of the wars of the different tribes, and the enumeration of the towns in the different possessions out of which the Canaanites were not expelled, were designed to show clearly the attitude of the Israelites to the Canaanites in the age immediately following the death of Joshua, or to depict the historical basis on which the development of Israel rested in the era of the judges.

Judges 1:1–7. With the words *“Now, after the death of Joshua, it came to pass,”* the book of Judges takes up the thread of the history where the book of Joshua had dropped it, to relate the further development of the covenant nation. A short time before his death, Joshua had gathered the elders and heads of the people around him, and set before them the entire destruction of the Canaanites through the omnipotent help of the Lord, if they would only adhere with fidelity to the Lord; whilst, at the same time, he also pointed out to them the dangers of apostasy from the Lord (Josh. 23). Remembering this admonition and warning, the Israelites inquired, after Joshua's death, who should begin the war against the Canaanites who still remained to be destroyed; and the Lord answered, *“Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand”* (vv. 1, 2).

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שָׁאַל בַּיהוָה, to ask with Jehovah for the purpose of obtaining a declaration of the divine will, is substantially the same as שָׁאַל בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוּרִים (Num. 27:21), to inquire the will of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim of the high priest. From this time forward inquiring of the Lord occurs with greater frequency (vid., Judges 20:23, 27; 1 Sam. 10:22; 22:10; 23:2, etc.), as well as the synonymous expression "ask of *Elohim*" in Judges 18:5; 20:18; 1 Sam. 14:37; 22:13; 1 Chron. 14:10; whereas Moses and Joshua received direct revelations from God. The phrase אֶל-הַכְּנַעֲנִי, יַעֲלֶה, "go up to the Canaanites," is defined more precisely by the following words, "to fight against them;" so that עָלָה is used here also to denote the campaign against a nation (see at Josh. 8:1), without there being any necessity, however, for us to take אָל in the sense of עָל בְּתַחֲלָה signifies "to go up in the beginning," i.e., to open or commence the war; not to hold the commandship in the war, as the *Sept.*, *Vulgate*, and others render it (see Judges 10:18, where יַחֲלֵל לְהִלָּחֵם is expressly distinguished from being the chief or leader). Moreover, מִי does not mean who? i.e., what person, but, as the answer clearly shows, what tribe? Now a tribe could open the war, and take the lead at the head of the other tribes, but could not be the commander-in-chief. In the present instance, however, Judah did not even enter upon the war at the head of all the tribes, but simply joined with the tribe of Simeon to make a common attack upon the Canaanites in their inheritance. The promise in v. 2b is the same as that in Josh. 6:2; 8:1, etc. "The land" is not merely the land allotted to the tribe of Judah, or Judah's inheritance, as *Bertheau* supposes, for Judah conquered Jerusalem (v. 8), which had been allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:28), but the land of Canaan generally, so far as it was still in the possession of the Canaanites and was to be conquered by Judah. The reason why Judah was to commence the hostilities is not to be sought for in the fact that Judah was the most numerous of all the

tribes (*Rosenmüller*), but rather in the fact that Judah had already been appointed by the blessing of Jacob (Gen. 49:8ff.) to be the champion of his brethren.

Judges 1:3. Judah invited Simeon his brother, i.e., their brother tribe, to take part in the contest. The epithet is applied to Simeon, not because Simeon and Judah, the sons of Jacob, were the children of the same mother, Leah (Gen. 29:33, 35), but because Simeon's inheritance was within the territory of Judah (Josh. 19:1ff.), so that Simeon was more closely connected with Judah than any of the other tribes. "Come up with me into my lot (into the inheritance that has fallen to me by lot), that we may fight against the Canaanites, and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him," i.e., joined with Judah in making war upon the Canaanites. This request shows that Judah's principal intention was to make war upon and exterminate the Canaanites who remained in his own and Simeon's inheritance. The different expressions employed, *come up* and *go*, are to be explained from the simple fact that the whole of Simeon's territory was in the *shephelah* and *Negeb*, whereas Judah had received the heart of his possessions upon the mountains.

Judges 1:4. "And Judah went up," sc., against the Canaanites, to make war upon them. The completion of the sentence is supplied by the context, more especially by v. 2. So far as the sense is concerned, *Rosenmüller* has given the correct explanation of וַיַּעַל, "Judah entered upon the expedition along with Simeon." "And they smote the Canaanites and the Perizzites in Bezek, 10,000 men." The result of the war is summed up briefly in these words; and then in vv. 5-7 the capture and punishment of the hostile king *Adoni-bezek* is specially mentioned as being the most important event in the war. The foe is described as consisting of Canaanites and Perizzites, two tribes which have been already named in Gen. 13:7 and 34:30 as representing the entire population of Canaan, "the Canaanites" comprising principally those in the lowlands by the Jordan and the Mediterranean

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(vid., Num. 13:29; Josh. 11:3), and “the Perizzites” the tribes who dwelt in the mountains (Josh. 17:15). On the Perizzites, see Gen. 13:7. The place mentioned, *Bezek*, is only mentioned once more, namely in 1 Sam. 11:8, where it is described as being situated between Gibeah of Saul (see at Josh. 18:28) and Jabesh in Gilead. According to the *Onom.* (*s. v. Bezek*), there were at that time two places very near together both named *Bezek*, seventeen Roman miles from Neapolis on the road to *Scythopolis*, i.e., about seven hours to the north of Nabulus on the road to Beisan. This description is perfectly reconcilable with 1 Sam. 11:8. On the other hand, *Clericus* (*ad h. l.*), *Rosenmüller*, and *v. Raumer* suppose the *Bezek* mentioned here to have been situated in the territory of Judah; though this cannot be proved, since it is merely based upon an inference drawn from v. 3, viz., that Judah and Simeon simply attacked the Canaanites in their own allotted territories,—an assumption which is very uncertain. There is no necessity, however, to adopt the opposite and erroneous opinion of *Bertheau*, that the tribes of Judah and Simeon commenced their expedition to the south from the gathering-place of the united tribes at Shechem, and fought the battle with the Canaanitish forces in that region upon this expedition; since Shechem is not described in Josh. 24 as the gathering-place of the united tribes, i.e., of the whole of the military force of Israel, and the battle fought with Adoni-bezek did not take place at the time when the tribes prepared to leave Shiloh and march to their own possessions after the casting of the lots was over. The simplest explanation is, that when the tribes of Judah and Simeon prepared to make war upon the Canaanites in the possessions allotted to them, they were threatened or attacked by the forces of the Canaanites collected together by Adoni-bezek, so that they had first of all to turn their arms against this king before they could attack the Canaanites in their own tribe-land. As the precise circumstances connected with the occasion and course of this war have not been recorded, there is nothing to hinder the supposition that Adoni-bezek may have

marched from the north against the possession of Benjamin and Judah, possibly with the intention of joining the Canaanites in Jebus, and the Anakim in Hebron and upon the mountains in the south, and then making a combined attack upon the Israelites. This might induce or even compel Judah and Simeon to attack this enemy first of all, and even to pursue him till they overtook him at his capital *Bezek*, and smote him with all his army. *Adoni-bezek*, i.e., lord of *Bezek*, is the official title of this king, whose proper name is unknown.

In the principal engagement, in which 10,000 Canaanites fell, Adoni-bezek escaped; but he was overtaken in his flight (vv. 6, 7), and so mutilated, by the cutting off of his thumbs and great toes, that he could neither carry arms nor flee. With this cruel treatment, which the Athenians are said to have practised upon the capture *Aegynetes* (*Aelian*, *var. hist.* ii. 9), the Israelites simply executed the just judgment of retribution, as Adoni-bezek was compelled to acknowledge, for the cruelties which he had inflicted upon captives taken by himself. “*Seventy kings*,” he says in v. 7, “*with the thumbs of their hands and feet cut off, were gathering under my table. As I have done, so God hath requited me.*” בְּהִנּוּת ... מְקַצְצִים, *lit.* “cut in the thumbs of their hands and feet” (see *Ewald*, *Lehrb.* § 284 c.). The object to מְקַצְצִים, “gathering up” (viz., crumbs), is easily supplied from the idea of the verb itself. Gathering up crumbs under the table, like the dogs in Matt. 15:27, is a figurative representation of the most shameful treatment and humiliation. “*Seventy*” is a round number, and is certainly an exaggerated hyperbole here. For even if every town of importance in Canaan had its own king, the fact that, when Joshua conquered the land, he only smote thirty-one kings, is sufficient evidence that there can hardly have been seventy kings to be found in all Canaan. It appears strange, too, that the king of *Bezek* is not mentioned in connection with the conquest of Canaan under Joshua. *Bezek* was probably situated more on the side towards the valley of the Jordan, where the Israelites under Joshua

did not go. Possibly, too, the culminating point of Adoni-bezek's power, when he conquered so many kings, was before the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan, and it may at that time have begun to decline; so that he did not venture to undertake anything against the combined forces of Israel under Joshua, and it was not till the Israelitish tribes separated to go to their own possessions, that he once more tried the fortunes of war and was defeated. The children of Judah took him with them to Jerusalem, where he died.

Judges 1:8–15. After his defeat, Judah and Simeon went against Jerusalem, and conquered this city and smote it, i.e., its inhabitants, with the edge of the sword, or without quarter (see Gen. 34:26), and set the city on fire. **וַשֵּׁלֶה בָּאֵשׁ**, to set on fire, to give up to the flames, only occurs again in Judges 20:48, 2 Kings 8:12, and Ps. 74:7. Joshua had already slain the king of Jerusalem and his four allies after the battle at Gibeon (Josh. 10:3, 18–26), but had not conquered Jerusalem, his capital. This was not done till after Joshua's death, when it was taken by the tribes of Judah and Simeon. But even after this capture, and notwithstanding the fact that it had been set on fire, it did not come into the sole and permanent possession of the Israelites. After the conquerors had advanced still farther, to make war upon the Canaanites in the mountains, in the *Negeb*, and in the *shephelah* (vv. 9ff.), the Jebusites took it again and rebuilt it, so that in the following age it was regarded by the Israelites as a foreign city (Judges 19:11, 12). The Benjaminites, to whom Jerusalem had fallen by lot, were no more able to drive out the Jebusites than the Judaeans had been. Consequently they continued to live by the side of the Benjaminites (Judges 1:21) and the Judaeans (Josh. 15:63), who settled, as time rolled on, in this the border city of their possessions; and in the upper town especially, upon the top of Mount Zion, they established themselves so firmly, that they could not be dislodged until David succeeded in wresting this fortress from them, and make the city of Zion the capital of his kingdom (2 Sam. 5:6ff.).

Judges 1:9ff. After the conquest of Jerusalem, the children of Judah (together with the Simeonites, v. 3) went down to their own possessions, to make war upon the Canaanites in the mountains, the *Negeb*, and the *shephelah* (see at Josh. 15:48; 21:33), and to exterminate them. They first of all conquered Hebron and Debir upon the mountains (vv. 10–15), as has already been related in Josh. 15:14–19 (see the commentary on this passage). The forms **עָלִית** and **תְּהַתִּית** (v. 15), instead of **עָלִיּוֹת** and **תְּהַתִּיּוֹת** (Josh. 15:19), are in the singular, and are construed with the plural form of the feminine **גְּלוֹת**, because this is used in the sense of the singular, "a spring" (see *Ewald*, § 318, a.).

Judges 1:16. The notice respecting the Kenites, that they went up out of the palm-city with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah in the south of Arad, and dwelt there with the Judaeans, is introduced here into the account of the wars of the tribe of Judah, because this migration of the Kenites belonged to the time between the conquest of Debir (vv. 12ff.) and Zephath (v. 17); and the notice itself was of importance, as forming the intermediate link between Num. 10:29ff., and the later allusions to the Kenites in Judges 4:11; 5:24, 1 Sam. 15:6; 27:10; 30:29. "*The children of the Kenite*," i.e., the descendants of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses (compare Judges 4:11, where the name is given, but **קִיָּן** occurs instead of **קִיִּי**, with Num. 10:29), were probably a branch of the Kenites mentioned in Gen. 15:19 along with the other tribes of Canaan, which had separated from the other members of its own tribe before the time of Moses and removed to the land of Midian, where Moses met with a hospitable reception from their chief Reguel on his flight from Egypt. These Kenites had accompanied the Israelites to Canaan at the request of Moses (Num. 10:29ff.); and when the Israelites advanced into Canaan itself, they had probably remained as nomads in the neighbourhood of the Jordan near to Jericho, without taking any part in the wars of Joshua. But when the tribe of Judah had exterminated the Canaanites out of Hebron,

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Debir, and the neighbourhood, after the death of Joshua, they went into the desert of Judah with the Judaeans as they moved farther towards the south; and going to the south-western edge of this desert, to the district on the south of Arad (Tell Arad, see at Num. 21:1), they settled there on the border of the steppes of the Negeb (Num. 33:40). "*The palm-city*" was a name given to the city of Jericho, according to Judges 3:13, Deut. 34:3, 2 Chron. 28:15. There is no ground whatever for thinking of some other town of this name in the desert of Arabia, near the palm-forest, φοινικίων, of *Diod. Sic.* (iii. 42) and *Strabo* (p. 776), as *Clericus* and *Bertheau* suppose, even if it could be proved that there was any such town in the neighbourhood. קִינִי, "then he went (the branch of the Kenites just referred to) and dwelt with the people" (of the children of Judah), that is to say, with the people of Israel in the desert of Judah. The subject to קִינִי is קְנִיזִי, the Kenite, as a tribe.

Judges 1:17–21. *Remaining Conquests of the Combined Tribes of Judah and Simeon.*—V. 17. *Zephath* was in the territory of Simeon. This is evident not only from the fact that *Hormah* (*Zephath*) had been allotted to the tribe of Simeon (compare Josh. 19:4 with Judges 15:30), but also from the words, "Judah went with Simeon his brother," which point back to v. 3, and express the thought that Judah went with Simeon into his territory to drive out the Canaanites who were still to be found there. Going southwards from *Debir*, Judah and Simeon smote the Canaanites at *Zephath* on the southern boundary of Canaan, and executed the ban upon this town, from which it received the name of *Hormah*, i.e., banning. The town has been preserved in the ruins of *Sepâta*, on the south of *Khalasa* or *Elusa* (see at Josh. 12:14). In the passage mentioned, the king of *Hormah* or *Zephath* is named among the kings who were slain by Joshua. It does not follow from this, however, that Joshua must necessarily have conquered his capital *Zephath*; the king of *Jerusalem* was also smitten by Joshua and slain, without *Jerusalem* itself being taken at that time. But even if *Zephath* were taken by the

Israelites, as soon as the Israelitish army had withdrawn, the Canaanites there might have taken possession of the town again; so that, like many other Canaanitish towns, it had to be conquered again after Joshua's death (see the commentary on Num. 21:2, 3). There is not much probability in this conjecture, however, for the simple reason that the ban pronounced by Moses upon the country of the king of Arad (Num. 21:2) was carried out now for the first time by Judah and Simeon upon the town of *Zephath*, which formed a part of it. If Joshua had conquered it, he would certainly have executed the ban upon it. The name *Hormah*, which was already given to *Zephath* in Josh. 15:30 and 19:4, is no proof to the contrary, since it may be used proleptically there. In any case, the infliction of the ban upon this town can only be explained from the fact that Moses had pronounced the ban upon all the towns of the king of Arad.

Judges 1:18. From the *Negeb* Judah turned into the *shephelah*, and took the three principal cities of the Philistines along the line of coast, viz., *Gaza*, *Askelon*, and *Ekron*, with their territory. The order in which the names of the captured cities occur is a proof that the conquest took place from the south. First of all *Gaza*, the southernmost of all the towns of the Philistines, the present *Guzzeh*; then *Askelon* (*Ashkulân*), which is five hours to the north of *Gaza*; and lastly *Ekron*, the most northerly of the five towns of the Philistines, the present *Akîr* (see at Josh. 13:3). The other two, *Ashdod* and *Gath*, do not appear to have been conquered at that time. And even those that were conquered, the Judaeans were unable to hold long. In the time of *Samson* they were all of them in the hands of the Philistines again (see Judges 14:19; 16:1ff.; 1 Sam. 5:10, etc.).—In v. 19 we have a brief summary of the results of the contests for the possession of the land. "*Jehovah was with Judah;*" and with His help they took possession of the mountains. And they did nothing more; "*for the inhabitants of the plain they were unable to exterminate, because they had iron chariots.*" הוֹרִישׁ has two

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different meanings in the two clauses: first (וַיִּרְשׁ), to seize upon a possession which has been vacated by the expulsion or destruction of its former inhabitants; and secondly (לְהוֹרִישׁ, with the accusative, of the inhabitants), to drive or exterminate them out of their possessions,— a meaning which is derived from the earlier signification of making it an emptied possession (see Ex. 34:24; Num. 32:21, etc.). “*The mountain*” here includes the south-land (the *Negeb*), as the only distinction is between mountains and plain. “*The valley*” is the *shephelah* (v. 9). לֹא לְהוֹרִישׁ, he was not (able) to drive out. The construction may be explained from the fact that לֹא is to be taken independently here as in Amos 6:10, in the same sense in which אֶל before the infinitive is used in later writings (2 Chron. 5:11; Esther 4:2; 8:8; Eccl. 3:14: see *Ges.* § 132–3, anm. 1; *Ewald*, § 237, e.). On the iron chariots, i.e., the chariots tipped with iron, see at Josh. 17:16.— To this there is appended, in v. 20, the statement that “*they gave Hebron unto Caleb*,” etc., which already occurred in Josh. 15:13, 14, and was there explained; and also in v. 12 the remark, that the Benjaminites did not drive out the Jebusite who dwelt in Jerusalem, which is so far in place here, that it shows, on the one hand, that the children of Judah did not bring Jerusalem into the undisputed possession of the Israelites through this conquest, and, on the other hand, that it was not their intention to diminish the inheritance of Benjamin by the conquest of Jerusalem, and they had not taken the city for themselves. For further remarks, see at v. 8.

The hostile attacks of the other tribes upon the Canaanites who remained in the land are briefly summed up in vv. 22–36. Of these the taking of Bethel is more fully described in vv. 22–26. Besides this, nothing more is given than the list of the towns in the territories of western Manasseh (vv. 27, 28), Ephraim (v. 29), Zebulun (v. 30), Asher (vv. 31, 32), Naphtali (v. 33), and Dan (vv. 34, 35), out of which the Canaanites were not exterminated by these

tribes. Issachar is omitted; hardly, however, because that tribe made no attempt to disturb the Canaanites, as *Bertheau* supposes, but rather because none of its towns remained in the hands of the Canaanites.

Judges 1:22–26. Like Judah, so also (“they also,” referring back to vv. 2, 3) did the house of Joseph (Ephraim and western Manasseh) renew the hostilities with the Canaanites who were left in their territory after the death of Joshua. The children of Joseph went up against Bethel, and Jehovah was with them, so that they were able to conquer the city. *Bethel* had indeed been assigned to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:22), but it was situated on the southern boundary of the tribe-land of Ephraim (Josh. 16:2; 18:13); so that the tribe of Joseph could not tolerate the Canaanites in this border town, if it would defend its own territory against them, and purge it entirely of them. This is a sufficient explanation of the fact that this one conquest is mentioned, and this only, without there being any necessity to seek for the reason, as *Bertheau* does, in the circumstance that the town of Bethel came into such significant prominence in the later history of Israel, and attained the same importance in many respects in relation to the northern tribes, as that which Jerusalem attained in relation to the southern. For the fact that nothing more is said about the other conquests of the children of Joseph, may be explained simply enough on the supposition that they did not succeed in rooting out the Canaanites from the other fortified towns in their possessions; and therefore there was nothing to record about any further conquests, as the result of their hostilities was merely this, that they did not drive the Canaanites out of the towns named in vv. 27, 29, but simply made them tributary. יָתִירוּ, they had it explored, or spied out. תִּגְרוּ is construed with בָּ here, because the spying laid hold, as it were, of its object. *Bethel*, formerly Luz, now *Beitin*: see at Gen. 28:19 and Josh. 7:2.

Judges 1:24. And *the watchmen* (i.e., the spies sent out to explore Bethel) saw a man coming out of the town, and got him to show them the

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entrance into it, under a promise that they would show him favour, i.e., would spare the lives of himself and his family (see Josh. 2:12, 13); whereupon they took the town and smote it without quarter, according to the law in Deut. 20:16, 17, letting none but the man and his family go. By "*the entrance into the city*" we are not to understand the gate of the town, but the way or mode by which they could get into the town, which was no doubt fortified.

Judges 1:26. The man whom they had permitted to go free, went with his family into the land of the Hittites, and there built a town, to which he gave the name of his earlier abode, viz., *Luz*. The situation of this *Luz* is altogether unknown. Even the situation of the land of the Hittites cannot be more precisely determined; for we find Hittites at Hebron in the times of Abraham and Moses (Gen. 23), and also upon the mountains of Palestine (Num. 13:29), and at a later period on the north-east of Canaan on the borders of Syria (1 Kings 10:29). That the Hittites were one of the most numerous and widespread of the tribes of the Canaanites, is evident from the fact that, in Josh. 1:4, the Canaanites generally are described as Hittites.

Judges 1:27, 28. Manasseh did not root out the Canaanites from the towns which had been allotted to it in the territory of Asher and Issachar (Josh. 17:11), but simply made them tributary. לֹא הוֹרִישׁ אֶת-בֵּית-שֵׁאֵן וְגו', considered by itself, might be rendered: "*Manasseh did not take possession of Bethshean,*" etc. But as we find, in the further enumeration, the inhabitants of the towns mentioned instead of the towns themselves, we must take הוֹרִישׁ in the sense of rooting out, driving out of their possessions, which is the only rendering applicable in v. 28; and thus, according to a very frequent metonymy, must understand by the towns the inhabitants of the towns. "*Manasseh did not exterminate Bethshean,*" i.e., the inhabitants of Bethshean, etc. All the towns mentioned here have already been mentioned in Josh. 17:11, the only difference being, that they are not placed in exactly the same order, and that *Endor* is mentioned there after *Dor*;

whereas here it has no doubt fallen out through a copyist's error, as the Manassites, according to Josh. 17:12, 13, did not exterminate the Canaanites from all the towns mentioned there. The change in the order in which the towns occur—Taanach being placed next to Bethshean, whereas in Joshua Bethshean is followed by Ibleam, which is placed last but one in the present list—may be explained on the supposition, that in Josh. 17:11, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo are placed together, as forming a triple league, of which the author of our book has taken no notice. Nearly all these towns were in the plain of Jezreel, or in the immediate neighbourhood of the great commercial roads which ran from the coast of the Mediterranean to Damascus and central Asia. The Canaanites no doubt brought all their strength to bear upon the defence of these roads; and in this their war-chariots, against which Israel could do nothing in the plain of Jezreel, were of the greatest service (see v. 19; Josh. 17:16). For further particulars respecting the situation of the different towns, see at Josh. 17:11. *Dor* only was on the coast of the Mediterranean (see at Josh. 11:2), and being a commercial emporium of the Phoenicians, would certainly be strongly fortified, and very difficult to conquer.

Judges 1:28. As the Israelites grew strong, they made serfs of the Canaanites (see at Gen. 49:15). When this took place is not stated; but at all events, it was only done gradually in the course of the epoch of the judges, and not for the first time during the reign of Solomon, as *Bertheau* supposes on the ground of 1 Kings 9:20–22 and 4:12, without considering that even in the time of David the Israelites had already attained the highest power they ever possessed, and that there is nothing at variance with this in 1 Kings 4:12 and 9:20–22. For it by no means follows, from the appointment of a prefect by Solomon over the districts of Taanach, Megiddo, and Bethshean (1 Kings 4:12), that these districts had only been conquered by Solomon a short time before, when we bear in mind that Solomon appointed twelve such prefects over all Israel, to remit in

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regular order the national payments that were required for the maintenance of the regal court. Nor does it follow, that because Solomon employed the descendants of the Canaanites who were left in the land as tributary labourers in the erection of his great buildings, therefore he was the first who succeeded in compelling those Canaanites who were not exterminated when the land was conquered by Joshua, to pay tribute to the different tribes of Israel.

Judges 1:29–35. Ephraim did not root out the Canaanites in *Gezer* (v. 29), as has already been stated in Josh. 16:10.

Judges 1:30. Zebulun did not root out the Canaanites in *Kitron* and *Nahalol*.

Judges 1:31. Asher did not root out those in *Acco*, etc. *Acco*: a seaport town to the north of Carmel, on the bay which is called by its name; it is called *Ake* by *Josephus*, *Diod. Sic.*, and *Pliny*, and was afterwards named *Ptolemais* from one of the Ptolemys (1 Macc. 5:15, 21; 10:1, etc.; Acts 21:7). The Arabs called it *Akka*, and this was corrupted by the crusaders into *Acker* or *Acre*. During the crusades it was a very flourishing maritime and commercial town; but it subsequently fell into decay, and at the present time has a population of about 5000, composed of Mussulmans, Druses, and Christians (see *C. v. Raumer*, Pal. p. 119; *Rob. Bibl. Res.*; and *Ritter*, Erdk. xvi. pp. 725ff.). *Sidon*, now *Saida*: see at Josh. 11:8. *Achlab* is only mentioned here, and is not known. *Achzib*, i.e., *Ecdippa*: see at Josh. 19:29. *Helbah* is unknown. *Aphek* is the present *Afkah*: see Josh. 13:4; 19:30. *Rehob* is unknown: see at Josh. 19:28, 30. As seven out of the twenty-two towns of Asher (Josh. 19:30) remained in the hands of the Canaanites, including such important places as *Acco* and *Sidon*, it is not stated in v. 32, as in vv. 29, 30, that “the Canaanites dwelt among them,” but that “the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites,” to show that the Canaanites held the upper hand. And for this reason the expression “they became tributaries” (vv. 30, 35, etc.) is also omitted.

Judges 1:33. Naphtali did not root out the inhabitants of *Beth-shemesh* and *Beth-anath*,

two fortified towns, the situation of which is still unknown (see at Josh. 19:38); so that this tribe also dwelt among the Canaanites, but did not make them tributary.

Judges 1:34, 35. Still less were the Danites able to drive the Canaanites out of their inheritance. On the contrary, the Amorites forced Dan up into the mountains, and would not suffer them to come down into the plain. But the territory allotted to the Danites was almost all in the plain (see at Josh. 19:40). If, therefore, they were forced out of that, they were almost entirely excluded from their inheritance. The Amorites emboldened themselves (see at Deut. 1:5) to dwell in *Har-cheres*, *Ajalon*, and *Shaalbim*. On the last two places see Josh. 19:42, where *Ir-shemesh* is also mentioned. This combination, and still more the meaning of the names *Har-cheres*, i.e., sun-mountain, and *Ir-shemesh*, i.e., sun-town, make the conjecture a very probable one, that *Har-cheres* is only another name for *Ir-shemesh*, i.e., the present *Ain Shems* (see at Josh. 15:10, and *Rob. Pal. iii. pp. 17, 18*). This pressure on the part of the Amorites induced a portion of the Danites to emigrate, and seek for an inheritance in the north of Palestine (see Judges 18). On the other hand, the Amorites were gradually made tributary by the powerful tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who bounded Dan on the north. “*The hand of the house of Joseph lay heavy,*” sc., upon the Amorites in the towns already named on the borders of Ephraim. For the expression itself, comp. 1 Sam. 5:6; Ps. 32:4.

Judges 1:36. In order to explain the supremacy of the Amorites in the territory of Dan, a short notice is added concerning their extension in the south of Palestine. “*The territory of the Amorites was,*” i.e., extended (viz., at the time of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites), “*from the ascent of Akrabbim, from the rock onwards and farther up.*” *Maaleh-Akrabbim* (*ascensus scorpiorum*) was the sharply projecting line of cliffs which intersected the Ghor below the Dead Sea, and formed the southern boundary of the promised land (see at Num. 34:4 and Josh. 15:2, 3). מַהֲרָבִיעַ, from the rock, is not doubt

given as a second point upon the boundary of the Amoritish territory, as the repetition of the וְהָרֵי clearly shows, notwithstanding the omission of the copula וְהָרֵי , the rock, is supposed by the majority of commentators to refer to the city of *Petra*, the ruins of which are still to be seen in the *Wady Musa* (see *Burckhardt*, Syr. pp. 703ff.; *Rob.* Pal. ii. pp. 573ff., iii. 653), and which is distinctly mentioned in 2 Kings 14:7 under the name of עֲלֵצָה , and in Isa. 16:1 is called simply עֲלֵצָה . Petra is to the southeast of the Scorpion heights. Consequently, with this rendering the following word וְהָרֵי (and upward) would have to be taken in the sense of *ulterius* (and beyond), and *Rosenmüller's* explanation would be the correct one: "The Amorites not only extended as far as the town of Petra, or inhabited it, but they even carried their dwellings beyond this towards the tops of those southern mountains." But a description of the territory of the Amorites in its southern extension into Arabia Petraea does not suit the context of the verse, the object of which is to explain how it was that the Amorites were in a condition to force back the Danites out of the plain into the mountains, to say nothing of the fact that it is questionable whether the Amorites ever really spread so far, for which we have neither scriptural testimony nor evidence of any other kind. On this ground even *Bertheau* has taken וְהָרֵי as denoting the direction upwards, i.e., towards the north, which unquestionably suits the usage of וְהָרֵי as well as the context of the passage. But it is by no means in harmony with this to understand עֲלֵצָה as referring to *Petra*; for in that case we should have two boundary points mentioned, the second of which was farther south than the first. Now a historian who had any acquaintance with the topography, would never have described the extent of the Amoritish territory from south to north in such a way as this, commencing with the Scorpion heights on the north, then passing to Petra, which was farther south, and stating that from this point

the territory extended farther towards the north. If וְהָרֵי therefore refers to the extension of the territory of the Amorites in a northerly direction, the expression "from the rock" cannot be understood as relating to the city of Petra, but must denote some other locality well known to the Israelites by that name. Such a locality there undoubtedly was in the rock in the desert of Zin, which had become celebrated through the events that took place at the water of strife (Num. 20:8, 10), and to which in all probability this expression refers. The rock in question was at the south-west corner of Canaan, on the southern edge of the *Rakhma* plateau, to which the mountains of the Amorites extended on the south-west (comp. Num. 14:25, 44, 45, with Deut. 1:44). And this would be very appropriately mentioned here as the south-western boundary of the Amorites, in connection with the Scorpion heights as their south-eastern boundary, for the purpose of giving the southern boundary of the Amorites in its full extent from east to west.

Judges 2

Judges 2:1-5. *The Angel of the Lord at Bochim.*—To the cursory survey of the attitude which the tribes of Israel assumed towards the Canaanites who still remained in their inheritances, there is appended an account of the appearance of the angel of the Lord, who announced to the people the punishment of God for their breach of the covenant, of which they had been guilty through their failure to exterminate the Canaanites. This theophany is most intimately connected with the facts grouped together in Judges 1, since the design and significance of the historical survey given there are only to be learned from the reproof of the angel; and since both of them have the same aphoristic character, being restricted to the essential facts without entering minutely into any of the attendant details, very much is left in obscurity. This applies more particularly to the statement in v. 1a, "Then the angel of Jehovah came up from Gilgal to Bochim." The "angel of Jehovah" is not a prophet, or some other earthly messenger of Jehovah, either Phinehas or

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Joshua, as the *Targums*, the *Rabbins*, *Bertheau*, and others assume, but the angel of the Lord who is of one essence with God. In the simple historical narrative a prophet is never called *Maleach Jehovah*. The prophets are always called either *נְבִיא* or *אִישׁ נְבִיא*, as in Judges 6:8, or else "man of God," as in 1 Kings 12:22; 13:1, etc.; and Hag. 1:13 and Mal. 3:1 cannot be adduced as proofs to the contrary, because in both these passages the purely appellative meaning of the word *Maleach* is established beyond all question by the context itself. Moreover, no prophet ever identifies himself so entirely with God as the angel of Jehovah does here. The prophets always distinguish between themselves and Jehovah, by introducing their words with the declaration "thus saith Jehovah," as the prophet mentioned in Judges 6:8 is said to have done. On the other hand, it is affirmed that no angel mentioned in the historical books is ever said to have addressed the whole nation, or to have passed from one place to another. But even if it had been a prophet who was speaking, we could not possibly understand his speaking to the whole nation, or "to all the children of Israel," as signifying that he spoke directly to the 600,000 men of Israel, but simply as an address delivered to the whole nation in the persons of its heads or representatives. Thus Joshua spoke to "all the people" (Josh. 24:2), though only the elders of Israel and its heads were assembled round him (Josh. 24:1). And so an angel, or "the angel of the Lord," might also speak to the heads of the nation, when his message had reference to all the people. And there was nothing in the fact of his coming up from Gilgal to Bochim that was at all at variance with the nature of the angel. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, it is stated in Judges 6:11 that he came and sat under the terebinth at Ophra; and in the same way the appearance of the angel of the Lord at Bochim might just as naturally be described as coming up to Bochim. The only thing that strikes us as peculiar is his coming up "from Gilgal." This statement must be intimately connected with the mission of the angel, and therefore must contain something

more than a simply literal notice concerning his travelling from one place to another. We are not to conclude, however, that the angel of the Lord came from Gilgal, because this town was the gathering-place of the congregation in Joshua's time. Apart altogether from the question discussed in pp. 68ff. as to the situation of Gilgal in the different passages of the book of Joshua, such a view as this is overthrown by the circumstance that after the erection of the tabernacle at Shiloh, and during the division of the land, it was not Gilgal but Shiloh which formed the gathering-place of the congregation when the casting of the lots was finished (Josh. 18:1, 10).

We cannot agree with *H. Witsius*, therefore, who says in his *Miscell. ss.* (i. p. 170, ed. 1736) that "he came from that place, where he had remained for a long time to guard the camp, and where he was thought to be tarrying still;" but must rather assume that his coming up from Gilgal is closely connected with the appearance of the angel-prince, as described in Josh. 5:13, to announce to Joshua the fall of Jericho after the circumcision of the people at Gilgal. Just as on that occasion, when Israel had just entered into the true covenant relation to the Lord by circumcision, and was preparing for the conquest of Canaan, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joshua as the prince of the army of Jehovah, to ensure him of the taking of Jericho; so here after the entrance of the tribes of Israel into their inheritances, when they were beginning to make peace with the remaining Canaanites, and instead of rooting them out were content to make them tributary, the angel of the Lord appeared to the people, to make known to all the children of Israel that by such intercourse with the Canaanites they had broken the covenant of the Lord, and to foretell the punishment which would follow this transgression of the covenant. By the fact, therefore, that he came up from Gilgal, it is distinctly shown that the same angel who gave the whole of Canaan into the hands of the Israelites when Jericho fell, had appeared to them again at Bochim, to make known to them the purposes of God in consequence of their

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disobedience to the commands of the Lord. How very far it was from being the author's intention to give simply a geographical notice, is also evident from the fact that he merely describes the place where this appearance occurred by the name which was given to it in consequence of the event, viz., *Bochim*, i.e., weepers. The situation of this place is altogether unknown. The rendering of the LXX, ἐπὶ τὸν Κλαυθμῶνα καὶ ἐπὶ Βαιθήλ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραήλ, gives no clue whatever; for τὸν Κλαυθμῶνα merely arises from a confusion of בְּכִים with בְּכֵאִים in 2 Sam. 5:23, which the LXX have also rendered Κλαυθμῶν, and ἐπὶ τὸν Βαιθήλ κ.τ.λ. is an arbitrary interpolation of the translators themselves, who supposed *Bochim* to be in the neighbourhood of Bethel, "in all probability merely because they thought of *Allon-bachuth*, the oak of weeping, at Bethel, which is mentioned in Gen. 35:8" (*Bertheau*). With regard to the *piska* in the middle of the verse, see the remarks on Josh. 4:1. In his address the angel of the Lord identifies himself with Jehovah (as in Josh. 5:14 compared with 6:2), by describing himself as having made them to go up out of Egypt and brought them into the land which He swore unto their fathers. There is something very striking in the use of the imperfect אֲנַלֶּה in the place of the perfect (cf. Judges 6:8), as the substance of the address and the continuation of it in the historical tense אָמַר and אָמַר require the preterite. The imperfect is only to be explained on the supposition that it is occasioned by the *imperf. consec.* which follows immediately afterwards and reacts through its proximity. "I will not break my covenant for ever," i.e., will keep what I promised when making the covenant, viz., that I would endow Israel with blessings and salvation, if they for their part would observe the covenant duties into which they had entered (see Ex. 19:5ff.), and obey the commandments of the Lord. Among these was the commandment to enter into no alliance with the inhabitants of that land, viz., the Canaanites (see Ex. 23:32, 33; 34:12, 13, 15, 16; Deut. 7:2ff.; Josh. 23:12). "Destroy their altars:"

taken verbatim from Ex. 34:13, Deut. 7:5. The words "and ye have not hearkened to my voice" recall to mind Ex. 19:5. "What have ye done" (מָה זֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם, literally "what is this that ye have done") sc., in sparing the Canaanites and tolerating their altars?

Judges 2:3. "And I also have said to you:" these words point to the threat already expressed in Num. 33:55, Josh. 23:13, in the event of their not fulfilling the command of God, which threat the Lord would now fulfil. From the passages mentioned, we may also explain the expression וְהָיוּ לְכֶם לְצַדִּים, they shall be in your sides, i.e., thorns in your sides. לְצַדִּים is an abbreviated expression for לְצַדִּינִים בְּצַדִּיכֶם in Num. 33:55, so that there is no necessity for the conjecture that it stands for לְצַדִּים. The last clause of v. 3 is formed after Ex. 23:33.

Judges 2:4, 5. The people broke out into loud weeping on account of this reproof. And since the weeping, from which the place received the name of *Bochim*, was a sign of their grief on account of their sin, this grief led on to such repentance that "they sacrificed there unto the Lord," no doubt presenting sin-offerings and burnt-offerings, that they might obtain mercy and the forgiveness of their sins. It does not follow from this sacrifice, however, that the tabernacle or the ark of the covenant was to be found at *Bochim*. In any place where the Lord appeared to His people, sacrifices might be offered to Him (see Judges 6:20, 26, 28; 13:16ff.; 2 Sam. 24:25, and the commentary of Deut. 12:5). On the other hand, it does follow from the sacrifice at *Bochim*, where there was no sanctuary of Jehovah, that the person who appeared to the people was not a prophet, nor even an ordinary angel, but *the angel of the Lord*, who is essentially one with Jehovah. Conduct of Israel Towards the Lord, and Treatment of Israel by the Lord, in the Time of the Judges.—Ch. 2:6–3:6.

Judges 2:6–3:6. The attitude which the Israelites assumed towards the Canaanites who were left in their possessions, contained the

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germ of the peculiar direction given to the development of the nation of God in the times of the judges. To exhibit the course of this development in its most general principles, the age which commenced after Joshua's death is characterized as a period of constant alternation between idolatry and consequent subjugation by foreign nations as a punishment from God for the transgression of His covenant on the one hand, and return to God after receiving chastisement and consequent deliverance by judges expressly raised up by God for that purpose on the other. In this way the righteousness of the holy God is displayed so clearly in the punishment of the rebellious, and the mercy of the faithful covenant God in His forgiveness of the penitent, that the history of Israel at that time exhibits to us an example of the divine holiness and righteousness on the one hand, and of His grace and mercy on the other, as displayed in the church of God of all times, as a warning for the ungodly and for the consolation of the righteous.

Judges 2:6–10. The account of this development of the covenant nation, which commenced after the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, is attached to the book of Joshua by a simple repetition of the closing verses of that book (Josh. 24:28–31) in vv. 6–10, with a few unimportant differences, not only to form a link between Josh. 24 and Judges 2:11, and to resume the thread of the history which was broken off by the summary just given of the results of the wars between the Israelites and Canaanites (*Bertheau*), but rather to bring out sharply and clearly the contrast between the age that was past and the period of the Israelitish history that was just about to commence. The *vav consec.* attached to וַיִּשְׁלַח expresses the order of thought and not of time. The apostasy of the new generation from the Lord (vv. 10ff.) was a necessary consequence of the attitude of Israel to the Canaanites who were left in the land, as described in Judges 1:1–2:5. This thought is indicated by the *vav consec.* in וַיִּשְׁלַח; so that the meaning of vv. 6ff. as expressed in our ordinary phraseology

would be as follows: Now when Joshua had dismissed the people, and the children of Israel had gone every one to his own inheritance to take possession of the land, the people served the Lord as long as Joshua and the elders who survived him were alive; but when Joshua was dead, and that generation (which was contemporaneous with him) had been gathered to its fathers, there rose up another generation after them which knew not the Lord, and also (knew not) the work which He had done to Israel. On the death and burial of Joshua, see at Josh. 24:29, 30. "*Gathered unto their fathers*" corresponds to "gathered to his people" in the Pentateuch (Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:29, 33, etc.: see at Gen. 25:8). They "*knew not the Lord,*" sc., from seeing or experiencing His wonderful deeds, which the contemporaries of Joshua and Moses had seen and experienced.

In the general survey of the times of the judges, commencing at v. 11, the falling away of the Israelites from the Lord is mentioned first of all, and at the same time it is distinctly shown how neither the chastisements inflicted upon them by God at the hands of hostile nations, nor the sending of judges to set them free from the hostile oppression, availed to turn them from their idolatry (vv. 11–19). This is followed by the determination of God to tempt and chastise the sinful nation by not driving away the remaining Canaanites (vv. 20–23); and lastly, the account concludes with an enumeration of the tribes that still remained, and the attitude of Israel towards them (Judges 3:1–6).

Judges 2:11–19. Repeated Falling Away of the People from the Lord.—Vv. 11–13. The Israelites did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord (what was displeasing to the Lord); they served *Baalim*. The plural *Baalim* is a general term employed to denote all false deities, and is synonymous with the expression "other gods" in the clause "other gods of the gods of the nations round about them" (the Israelites). This use of the term *Baalim* arose from the fact that Baal was the chief male deity of the Canaanites and all the nations of Hither Asia, and was simply worshipped by the different nations

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with peculiar modifications, and therefore designated by various distinctive epithets. In v. 12 this apostasy is more minutely described as forsaking Jehovah the God of their fathers, to whom they were indebted for the greatest blessing, viz., their deliverance out of Egypt, and following other gods of the heathen nations that were round about them (taken *verbatim* from Deut. 6:14, and 13:7, 8), and worshipping them. In this way they provoked the Lord to anger (cf. Deut. 4:25; 9:18, etc.).

Judges 2:13. Thus they forsook Jehovah, and served Baal and the Astartes. In this case the singular *Baal* is connected with the plural *Ashtaroth*, because the male deities of all the Canaanitish nations, and those that bordered upon Canaan, were in their nature one and the same deity, viz., *Baal*, a sun-god, and as such the vehicle and source of physical life, and of the generative and reproductive power of nature, which was regarded as an effluence from its own being (see *Movers*, *Relig. der Phönizier*, pp. 184ff., and *J. G. Müller* in *Herzog's Cyclopaedia*). "*Ashtaroth*, from the singular *Ashtoreth*, which only occurs again in 1 Kings 11:5, 33, and 2 Kings 23:13, in connection with the Sidonian Astarte, was the general name used to denote the leading female deity of the Canaanitish tribes, a moon-goddess, who was worshipped as the feminine principle of nature embodied in the pure moon-light, and its influence upon terrestrial life. It corresponded to the Greek *Aphrodite*, whose celebrated temple at Askalon is described in *Herod.* i. 105. In Judges 3:7, *Asheroth* is used as equivalent to *Ashtaroth*, which is used here, Judges 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:4; 12:10. The name *Asheroth* was transferred to the deity itself from the idols of this goddess, which generally consisted of wooden columns, and are called *Asherim* in Ex. 34:13, Deut. 7:5; 12:3; 16:21. On the other hand, the word *Ashtoreth* is without any traceable etymology in the Semitic dialects, and was probably derived from Upper Asia, being connected with a Persian word signifying a star, and synonymous with Ἄστροάρχη, the star-queen of Sabaeism (see *Ges. Thes.* pp. 1083-4; *Movers*, p. 606; and *Müller*, *ut sup.*).

With regard to the nature of the Baal and Astarte worship, into which the Israelites fell not long after the death of Joshua, and in which they continued henceforth to sink deeper and deeper, it is evident from the more precise allusions contained in the history of Gideon, that it did not consist of direct opposition to the worship of Jehovah, or involve any formal rejection of Jehovah, but that it was simply an admixture of the worship of Jehovah with the heathen or Canaanitish nature-worship. Not only was the ephod which Gideon caused to be made in his native town of Ophrah, and after which all Israel went a whoring (Judges 8:27), an imitation of the high priest's ephod in the worship of Jehovah; but the worship of Baal-berith at Shechem, after which the Israelites went a whoring again when Gideon was dead (Judges 8:33), was simply a corruption of the worship of Jehovah, in which Baal was put in the place of Jehovah and worshipped in a similar way, as we may clearly see from Judges 9:27. The worship of Jehovah could even be outwardly continued in connection with this idolatrous worship. Just as in the case of these nations in the midst of which the Israelites lived, the mutual recognition of their different deities and religions was manifested in the fact that they all called their supreme deity by the same name, *Baal*, and simply adopted some other epithet by which to define the distinctive peculiarities of each; so the Israelites also imagined that they could worship the Baals of the powerful nations round about them along with Jehovah their covenant God, especially if they worshipped them in the same manner as their covenant God. This will serve to explain the rapid and constantly repeated falling away of the Israelites from Jehovah into Baal-worship, at the very time when the worship of Jehovah was stedfastly continued at the tabernacle in accordance with the commands of the law. The Israelites simply followed the lead and example of their heathen neighbours. Just as the heathen were tolerant with regard to the recognition of the deities of other nations, and did not refuse to extend this recognition even to Jehovah the God of Israel, so the Israelites were

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also tolerant towards the Baals of the neighbouring nations, whose sensuous nature-worship was more grateful to the corrupt heart of man than the spiritual Jehovah-religion, with its solemn demands for sanctification of life. But this syncretism, which was not only reconcilable with polytheism, but actually rooted in its very nature, was altogether irreconcilable with the nature of true religion. For if Jehovah is the only true God, and there are no other gods besides or beside Him, then the purity and holiness of His nature is not only disturbed, but altogether distorted, by any admixture of His worship with the worship of idols or of the objects of nature, the true God being turned into an idol, and Jehovah degraded into Baal. Looking closely into the matter, therefore, the mixture of the Canaanitish worship of Baal with the worship of Jehovah was actually forsaking Jehovah and serving other gods, as the prophetic author of this book pronounces it. It was just the same with the worship of Baal in the kingdom of the ten tribes, which was condemned by the prophets Hosea and Amos (see *Hengstenberg, Christology*, i. pp. 168ff., Eng. trans.).

Judges 2:14, 15. On account of this idolatrous worship, the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, so that He gave them up into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and sold them into the hands of their enemies. שָׁסָה from שָׁסָה, alternated with שָׁסָה in יִשְׁפוּ, to plunder. This word is not met with in the Pentateuch, whereas מָכַר, to sell, occurs in Deut. 32:30, in the sense of giving helplessly up to the foe. "They could no longer stand before their enemies," as they had done under Joshua, and in fact as long as Israel continued faithful to the Lord; so that now, instead of the promise contained in Lev. 26:7, 8, being fulfilled, the threat contained in Lev. 26:17 was carried into execution. "Whithersoever they went out," i.e., in every expedition, every attack that they made upon their enemies, "the hand of Jehovah was against them for evil, as He had said" (Lev. 26:17, 36; Deut. 28:25), and "had sworn unto them." There is no express oath mentioned

either in Lev. 26 or Deut. 28; it is implied therefore in the nature of the case, or *in virtute verborum*, as *Seb. Schmidt* affirms, inasmuch as the threats themselves were words of the true and holy God. וַיֵּצֵר לָהֶם מְאֹד, "and it became to them very narrow," i.e., they came into great straits.

Judges 2:16, 17. But the Lord did not rest content with this. He did still more. "He raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of their plunderers," to excite them to love in return by this manifestation of His love and mercy, and to induce them to repent. But "they did not hearken even to their judges," namely, so as not to fall back again into idolatry, which the judge had endeavoured to suppress. This limitation of the words is supported by the context, viz., by a comparison of vv. 18, 19.— "But (כִּי after a negative clause) they went a whoring after other gods (for the application of this expression to the spiritual adultery of idolatrous worship, see Ex. 34:15), and turned quickly away (vid., Ex. 32:8) from the way which their fathers walked in, to hearken to the commandments of the Lord," i.e., from the way of obedience to the divine commands. "They did not so" (or what was right) sc., as their fathers under Joshua had done (cf. v. 7).

Judges 2:18, 19. "And when the Lord raised them up judges, and was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge (i.e., as long as the judge was living), because the Lord had compassion upon their sighing, by reason of them that oppressed them, and vexed them (דָּחַק only occurs again as a verb in Joel 2:8): it came to pass when the judge was dead, that they returned and acted more corruptly than their fathers," i.e., they turned again to idolatry even more grievously than their fathers had done under the previous judges. "They did not let fall from their deeds," i.e., they did not cease from their evil deeds, and "from their stiff-necked way." קָשָׁה, hard, is to be understood as in Ex. 32:9 and 33:3, where Israel is called a hard-

necked people which did not bend under obedience to the commandments of God.

Judges 2:20–23. *Chastisement of the Rebellious Nation.*—Vv. 20, 21. On account of this idolatry, which was not only constantly repeated, but continued to grow worse and worse, the anger of the Lord burned so fiercely against Israel, that He determined to destroy no more of the nations which Joshua had left when he died, before the people that had broken His covenant. In order to set forth this divine purpose most distinctly, it is thrown into the form of a sentence uttered by God through the expression וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה. The Lord said, “Because this people has transgressed my covenant, ... I also will no longer keep my covenant promise (Ex. 23:23, 27ff., 34:10ff.), and will no more drive out any of the remaining Canaanites before them” (see Josh. 23:13).

Judges 2:22. The purpose of God in this resolution was “to prove Israel through them (the tribes that were not exterminated), whether they (the Israelites) would keep the way of the Lord to walk therein (cf. Deut. 8:2), as their fathers did keep it, or not.” לְמַעַן נִסּוּהָ is not dependent upon the verb עָזַב, as *Studer* supposes, which yields no fitting sense; nor can the clause be separated from the preceding one, as *Bertheau* suggests, and connected as a protasis with v. 23 (this would be a thoroughly unnatural construction, for which Isa. 45:4 does not furnish any true parallel); but the clause is attached in the simplest possible manner to the main thought in vv. 20, 21, that is to say, to the words “and He said” in v. 20: Jehovah said, i.e., resolved, that He would not exterminate the remaining nations any further, to tempt Israel through them. The plural בָּם, in the place of the singular בָּהּ, which the foregoing דָּרַךְ requires, is to be regarded as a *constructio ad sensum*, i.e., to be attributed to the fact, that keeping the way of God really consists in observing the commandments of God, and that this was the thought which floated before the writer’s mind. The thought expressed in this verse, that Jehovah would not exterminate the Canaanites

before Israel any more, to try them whether they would keep His commandments, just as He had previously caused the people whom He brought out of Egypt to wander in the wilderness for forty years with the very same intention (Deut. 8:2), is not at variance with the design of God, expressed in Ex. 23:29, 30, and Deut. 7:22, not to exterminate the Canaanites all at once, lest the land should become waste, and the wild beasts multiply therein, nor yet with the motive assigned in Judges 3:1, 2. For the determination not to exterminate the Canaanite sin one single year, was a different thing from the purpose of God to suspend their gradual extermination altogether. The former purpose had immediate regard to the well-being of Israel; the latter, on the contrary, was primarily intended as a chastisement for its transgression of the covenants, although even this chastisement was intended to lead the rebellious nation to repentance, and promote its prosperity by a true conversion to the Lord. And the motive assigned in Judges 2:2 is in perfect harmony with this intention, as our explanation of this passage will clearly show.

Judges 2:23. In consequence of this resolution, the Lord let these tribes (those mentioned in Judges 3:3) remain at rest, i.e., quietly, in the land, without exterminating them rapidly. The expression מְהֵרָה, hastily, quickly, i.e., according to the distinct words of the following clause, through and under Joshua, appears strange after what has gone before. For what is threatened in v. 21 is not the suspension of rapid extermination, but of any further extermination. This threat, therefore, is so far limited by the word “hastily,” as to signify that the Lord would not exterminate any more of these nations so long as Israel persisted in its idolatry. But as soon as and whenever Israel returned to the Lord its God in true repentance, to keep His covenant, the Lord would recall His threat, and let the promised extermination of the Canaanites go forward again. Had Israel not forsaken the Lord its God so soon after Joshua’s death, the Lord would have exterminated the Canaanites who were left in the land much

sooner than He did, or have carried out their gradual extermination in a much shorter time than was actually the case, in consequence of the continual idolatry of the people.

Judges 3

Judges 3:1-6. *Nations which the Lord left in Canaan:* with a repetition of the reason why this was done.

Judges 3:1. The reason, which has already been stated in Judges 2:22, viz., “to prove Israel by them,” is still further elucidated here. In the first place (v. 1), אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל is more precisely defined as signifying “all those who had not known all the wars of Canaan,” sc., from their own observation and experience, that is to say, the generation of the Israelites which rose up after the death of Joshua. For “the wars of Canaan” were the wars which were carried on by Joshua with the almighty help of the Lord for the conquest of Canaan. The whole thought is then still further expanded in v. 2 as follows: “only (for no other purpose than) that the succeeding generations (the generations which followed Joshua and his contemporaries) of the children of Israel, that He (Jehovah) might teach them war, only those who had not known them (the wars of Canaan).” The suffix attached to יָדְעוּם refers to “the wars of Canaan,” although this is a feminine noun, the suffix in the masculine plural being frequently used in connection with a feminine noun. At first sight it would appear as though the reason given here for the non-extermination of the Canaanites was not in harmony with the reason assigned in Judges 2:22, which is repeated in v. 4 of the present chapter. But the differences are perfectly reconcilable, if we only give a correct explanation of the two expressions, “learning war,” and the “wars of Canaan.” Learning war in the context before us is equivalent to learning to make war upon the nations of Canaan. Joshua and the Israelites of his time had not overcome these nations by their own human power or by earthly weapons, but by the miraculous help of their God, who had smitten and destroyed the Canaanites before the Israelites. The

omnipotent help of the Lord, however, was only granted to Joshua and the whole nation, on condition that they adhered firmly to the law of God (Josh. 1:7), and faithfully observed the covenant of the Lord; whilst the transgression of that covenant, even by Achan, caused the defeat of Israel before the Canaanites (Josh. 7). In the wars of Canaan under Joshua, therefore, Israel had experienced and learned, that the power to conquer its foes did not consist in the multitude and bravery of its own fighting men, but solely in the might of its God, which it could only possess so long as it continued faithful to the Lord. This lesson the generations that followed Joshua had forgotten, and consequently they did not understand how to make war. To impress this truth upon them,—the great truth, upon which the very existence as well as the prosperity of Israel, and its attainment of the object of its divine calling, depended; in other words, to teach it by experience, that the people of Jehovah could only fight and conquer in the power of its God,—the Lord had left the Canaanites in the land. Necessity teaches a man to pray. The distress into which the Israelites were brought by the remaining Canaanites was a chastisement from God, through which the Lord desired to lead back the rebellious to himself, to keep them obedient to His commandments, and to train them to the fulfilment of their covenant duties. In this respect, learning war, i.e., learning how the congregation of the Lord was to fight against the enemies of God and of His kingdom, was one of the means appointed by God to tempt Israel, or prove whether it would listen to the commandments of God (v. 4), or would walk in the ways of the Lord. If Israel should so learn to war, it would learn at the same time to keep the commandments of God. But both of these were necessary for the people of God. For just as the realization of the blessings promised to the nation in the covenant depended upon its hearkening to the voice of the Lord, so the conflicts appointed for it were also necessary, just as much for the purification of the sinful nation, as for the

perpetuation and growth of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Judges 3:3. The enumeration of the different nations rests upon Josh. 13:2–6, and, with its conciseness and brevity, is only fully intelligible through the light thrown upon it by that passage. The five princes of the Philistines are mentioned singly there. According to Josh. 13:4ff., “*all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites,*” are the Canaanitish tribes dwelling in northern Canaan, by the Phoenician coast and upon Mount Lebanon. “*The Canaanites:*” viz., those who dwelt along the sea-coast to the south of Sidon. *The Hivites:* those who were settled more in the heart of the country, “from the mountains of Baal-hermon up to the territory of Hamath.” *Baal-hermon* is only another name for *Baal-gad*, the present *Banjas*, under the Hermon (cf. Josh. 13:5). When it is stated still further in v. 4, that “they were left in existence (i.e., were not exterminated by Joshua) to prove Israel by them,” we are struck with the fact, that besides the Philistines, only these northern Canaanites are mentioned; whereas, according to Judges 1, many towns in the centre of the land were also left in the hands of the Canaanites, and therefore here also the Canaanites were not yet exterminated, and became likewise a snare to the Israelites, not only according to the word of the angel of the Lord (Judges 2:3), but also because the Israelites who dwelt among these Canaanitish tribes contracted marriages with them, and served their gods. This striking circumstance cannot be set aside, as *Bertheau* supposes, by the simple remark, that “the two lists (that of the countries which the tribes of Israel did not conquer after Joshua’s death in Judges 1, and the one given here of the nations which Joshua had not subjugated) must correspond on the whole,” since the correspondence referred to really does not exist. It can only be explained on the ground that the Canaanites who were left in the different towns in the midst of the land, acquired all their power to maintain their stand against Israel from the simple fact that the Philistines on the south-west, and several whole tribes of Canaanites in the north, had

been left by Joshua neither exterminated nor even conquered, inasmuch as they so crippled the power of the Israelites by wars and invasions of the Israelitish territory, that they were unable to exterminate those who remained in the different fortresses of their own possessions. Because, therefore, the power to resist the Israelites and oppress them for a time resided not so much in the Canaanites who were dwelling in the midst of Israel, as in the Philistines and the Canaanites upon the mountains of Lebanon who had been left unconquered by Joshua, these are the only tribes mentioned in this brief survey as the nations through which the Lord would prove His people.

Judges 3:5, 6. But the Israelites did not stand the test. Dwelling in the midst of the Canaanites, of whom six tribes are enumerated, as in Ex. 3:8, 17, etc. (see at Deut. 7:1), they contracted marriages with them, and served their gods, contrary to the express prohibition of the Lord in Ex. 34:16; 23:24, and Deut. 7:3, 4. *History of the People of Israel Under the Judges.* Ch. 3:7–16:31.

Judges 3:7–16:31. In order that we may be able to take a distinct survey of the development of the Israelites in the three different stages of their history during the times of the judges, the first thing of importance to be done is to determine *the chronology of the period of the judges*, inasmuch as not only have greatly divergent opinions prevailed upon this point, but hypotheses have been set up, which endanger and to some extent directly overthrow the historical character of the accounts which the book of Judges contains. If we take a superficial glance at the chronological data contained in the book, it appears a very simple matter to make the calculation required, inasmuch as the duration of the different hostile oppressions, and also the length of time that most of the judges held their office, or at all events the duration of the peace which they secured for the nation, are distinctly given. (30) The following are the numbers that we find:—

1. Oppression by Chushan-rishathaim,	(Judges 3:8),	8 years.
Deliverance by Othniel, and rest,	(Judges 3:11),	40 "
2. Oppression by the Moabites,	(Judges 3:14),	18 "
Deliverance by Ehud, and rest,	(Judges 3:30),	80 "
3. Oppression by the Canaanitish king Jabin,	(Judges 4:3),	20 "
Deliverance by Deborah and Barak, and rest,	(Judges 5:31),	40 "
4. Oppression by the Midianites,	(Judges 6:1),	7 "
Deliverance by Gideon, and rest,	(Judges 8:28),	40 "
Abimelech's reign,	(Judges 9:22),	3 "
Tola, judge,	(Judges 10:2),	23 "
Jair, judge,	(Judges 10:3),	22 "
	Total	301 years
5. Oppression by the Ammonites,	(Judges 10:8),	18 "
Deliverance by Jephthah, who judged Israel,	(Judges 12:7),	6 "
Ibzan, judge,	(Judges 12:9),	7 "
Elon, judge,	(Judges 12:11),	10 "
Abdon, judge,	(Judges 12:14),	8 "
6. Oppression by the Philistines,	(Judges 13:1),	40 "
At this time Samson judged Israel for 20 years,	(Judges 15:20; 16:31),	
	Total	390

	years
For if to this we add (a.) the time of Joshua, which is not distinctly mentioned, and	20 "
(b.) The time during which Eli was judge (1 Sam. 4:18),	40 "
We obtain 450 years.	
And if we add still further—	
(c.) The times of Samuel and Saul combined,	40 "
(d.) The reign of David (2 Sam. 5:4; 1 Kings 2:11),	40 "
(e.) The reign of Solomon to the building of the temple (1 Kings 6:1),	3 "
The whole time from the entrance of Israel into Canaan to the building of the temple amounted to,	533 years.

Or if we add the forty years spent in the wilderness, the time that elapsed between the exodus from Egypt and the building of the temple was 573 years. But the interval was not so long as this; for, according to 1 Kings 6:1, Solomon built the house of the Lord in the 480th year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and in the fourth year of his reign. And no well-founded objections can be raised as to the correctness and historical credibility of this statement. It is true that the LXX have "the 440th year" instead of the 480th; but this reading is proved to be erroneous by *Aquila* and *Symmachus*, who adopt the number 480 in common with all the rest of the ancient versions, and it is now almost unanimously rejected (see *Ewald*, *Gesch.* ii. p. 479). In all probability it owed its origin to an arbitrary mode of computing the period referred to by reckoning eleven generations of forty years each (see *Ed. Preuss*; *die Zeitrechnung der LXX* pp. 78ff.). On the other hand, the number 480 of

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the Hebrew text cannot rest upon a mere reckoning of generations, since the year and month of Solomon's reign are given in 1 Kings 6:1; and if we deduct this date from the 480, there remain 477 or 476 years, which do not form a cyclical number at all. Again, the exodus of Israel from Egypt was an "epoch-making" event, which was fixed in the recollection of the people as no other ever was, so that allusions to it run through the whole of the Old Testament. Moreover, the very fact that it does not tally with the sum total of the numbers in the book of Judges is an argument in favour of its correctness; whereas all the chronological calculations that differ from this bring us back to these numbers, such, for example, as the different statements of Josephus, who reckons the period in question at 592 years in Ant. viii. 3, 1, and on the other hand, at 612 years in Ant. xx. 10 and c. Ap. ii. 2. Lastly, it may easily be shown that there are several things assumed in this chronological survey which have no foundation in the text. This applies both to the assumed succession of the Ammonitish and Philistine oppressions, and also to the introduction of the forty years of Eli's life as judge after or in addition to the forty years that the Philistines ruled over Israel.

The current view, that the forty years of the oppression on the part of the Philistines did not commence till after the death of Jephthah or Abdon, is apparently favoured, no doubt, by the circumstance, that this oppression is not described till after the death of Abdon (Judges 12:15), and is introduced with the usual formula, "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord," etc. (Judges 13:1). But this formula, taken by itself, does not furnish any certain proof that the oppression which it introduces did not take place till after what has been already described, especially in the absence of any more definite statement, such as the clause introduced into Judges 4:1, "when Ehud was dead," or the still more definite remark, that the land had rest so many years (Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31; cf. Judges 8:32). Now in the case before us, instead of any such statement as to time, we find the general

remark in Judges 10:6ff., that when the Israelites sank into idolatry again, Jehovah sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon; and after this there simply follows an account of the oppression on the part of the Ammonites, and the eventual deliverance effected by Jephthah (Judges 10:8-12:7), together with an enumeration of three judges who succeeded Jephthah (Judges 12:8-15); but we learn nothing further about the oppression on the part of the Philistines which is mentioned in Judges 10:7. When therefore, it is still further related, in Judges 13:1, that the Lord delivered the Israelites into the hand of the Philistines forty years, this cannot possibly refer to another oppression on the part of the Philistines subsequent to the one noticed in Judges 10:7; but the true explanation must be, that the historian proceeds here for the first time to describe the oppression noticed in Judges 10:7, and introduces his description with the formula he generally adopted: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord," etc. The oppression itself, therefore, commenced at the same time as that of the Ammonites, and continued side by side with it; but it lasted much longer, and did not come to an end till a short time before the death of Elon the judge. This is confirmed beyond all doubt by the fact, that although the Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, it was chiefly the tribes of Israel who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan that were oppressed by them (Judges 10:8, 9), and that it was only by these tribes that Jephthah was summoned to make war upon them, and was elected as their head and prince (Judges 11:5-11), and also that it was only the Ammonites in the country to the east of the Jordan whom he subdued then before the Israelites (Judges 11:32, 33). From this it is very evident that Jephthah, and his successors Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, were not judges over all Israel, and neither fought against the Philistines nor delivered Israel from the oppression of those enemies who invaded the land from the south-west; so that the omission of the

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expression, "the land had rest," etc., from Judges 11 and 12, is very significant.

But if the Ammonitish and Philistine oppressions occurred at the same time, of course only one of them must be taken into account in our chronological calculations as to the duration of the period of the judges; and the one selected must be the one to the close of which the chronological data of the next period are immediately appended. But this is not the case with the account of the Ammonitish oppression, of the deliverance effected by Jephthah, and of the judges who succeeded him (Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon), because the chronological thread of this series of events is broken off with the death of Abdon, and is never resumed again. It is so, however, with the Philistine oppression, which is said to have lasted forty years, though the termination of it is not given in the book of Judges. Samson merely began to deliver Israel out of the power of the Philistines (Judges 13:5), but did not accomplish their complete deliverance. He judged Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines, i.e., during the oppression of the Philistines (Judges 15:20); consequently the twenty years of his labours must not be taken into account in the chronology of the period of the judges, inasmuch as they are all included in the forty years of the Philistines' rule. At the death of Samson, with which the book of Judges closes, the power of the Philistines was not yet broken; and in Judges 4 of the first book of Samuel we find the Philistines still fighting against the Israelites, and that with such success that the Israelites were defeated by them, and even lost the ark of the covenant. This war must certainly be a continuation of the Philistine oppression, to which the acts of Samson belonged, since the termination of that oppression is not mentioned in the book of Judges; and on the other hand, the commencement of the oppression referred to in 1 Sam. 4:9ff. is not given in the book of Samuel. Consequently even *Hitzig* supports the view which I have expressed, that the forty years' supremacy of the Philistines, noticed in Judges 13:1, is carried on into the book of Samuel, and

extends to 1 Sam. 7:3, 7, and that it was through Samuel that it was eventually brought to a termination (1 Sam. 7:10ff.). But if this is established, then the forty years during which Eli was judge cannot have followed the Philistine oppression and the deeds performed by Samson, and therefore must not be reckoned separately. For since Eli died in consequence of the account of the capture of the ark by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:18), and seven months (1 Sam. 6:1) and twenty years elapsed after this catastrophe before the Philistines were defeated and humiliated by Samuel (1 Sam. 7:2), only the last half of the forty years of Eli's judicial life falls within the forty years of the Philistine rule over Israel, whilst the first half coincides with the time of the judge Jair. Eli himself was not a judge in the strict sense of the word. He was neither commander of the army, nor secular governor of the nation, but simply the high priest; and in this capacity he administered the civil law in the supreme court, altogether independently of the question whether there was a secular governor at the time or not. After the death of Eli, Israel continued for more than twenty years utterly prostrate under the yoke of the Philistines. It was during this period that Samson made the Philistines feel the power of the God of Israel, though he could not deliver the Israelites entirely from their oppression. Samuel laboured at the same time, as the prophet of the Lord, to promote the inward and spiritual strength of Israel, and that with such success, that the people came to Mizpeh at his summons, and there put away the strange gods that they had hitherto worshipped, and worshipped the Lord alone; after which the Lord hearkened to Samuel's prayer, and gave them a complete victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:2-11). After this victory, which was gained not very long after the death of Samson, Samuel undertook the supreme government of Israel as judge, and eventually at their own desire, and with the consent of God, gave them a king in the person of Saul the Benjamite. This was not till Samuel himself was old, and had appointed as his successors in the office of

judge his own sons, who did not walk in their father's ways (1 Sam. 8–10). Even under Saul, however, Samuel continued to the very end of his life to labour as the prophet of the Lord for the well-being of Israel, although he laid down his office of judge as soon as Saul had been elected king. He announced to Saul how he had been rejected by God on account of his disobedience; he anointed David as king; and his death did not occur till after Saul had begun to be troubled by the evil spirit, and to plot for David's life (1 Sam. 25:1), as we may learn from the fact that David fled to Samuel at Ramah when Saul resolved to slay him (1 Sam. 19:18). How long Samuel judged Israel between the victory gained at Ebenezer (1 Sam. 7) and the election of Saul as king of Israel, is not stated in the Old Testament, nor even the length of Saul's reign, as the text of 1 Sam. 13:1 is corrupt. But we shall not be very far from the truth, if we set down about forty years as the time covered by the official life of Samuel as judge after that event and the reign of Saul, and reckon from seventeen to nineteen years as the duration of Samuel's judgeship, and from twenty to twenty-two as the length of Saul's reign. For it is evident from the accounts that we possess of the lives and labours of Samuel and Saul, that Saul did not reign forty years (the time given by Paul in Acts 13:21, according to the traditional opinion current in the Jewish schools), but at the most from twenty to twenty-two; and this is now pretty generally admitted (see at 1 Sam. 13:1). When David was chosen king of Judah at Hebron after the death of Saul, he was thirty years old (2 Sam. 5:1–4), and can hardly have been anointed king by Samuel at Bethlehem before the age of twenty. For though his father Jesse was still living, and he himself was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, and was feeding the flock (1 Sam. 16:6–12), and even after this is still described as נָעַר (1 Sam. 17:42, 55), Jesse was זָקֵן (an old man) at the time (1 Sam. 17:12), at any rate sixty years old or more, to that his eldest son might be forty years old, and David, the youngest, as much as twenty. For נָעַר was not only applied to a mere boy, but to a young

man approaching twenty; and the keeping of sheep was not merely a task performed by shepherd boys, but also by the grown-up sons of a family, among whom we must certainly reckon David, since he had already contended with lions and bears in the steppe, and slain these beasts of prey (1 Sam. 17:34–36), and shortly afterwards was not only recommended to king Saul by his courtiers, as "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and wise in speech," to cheer up the melancholy king by his playing upon the harp (1 Sam. 16:18), but also undertook to fight with the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17), and was placed in consequence over the men of war, and was afterwards made captain of a thousand, and betrothed to his daughter Michal (1 Sam. 18:5, 13, 17ff.). But if David was anointed by Samuel at the age of about twenty years, Saul could not have reigned more than ten years after that time, as David was made king at the age of thirty. And he cannot have reigned much longer before that time. For, apart from the fact that everything which is related of his former wars and deeds could easily have occurred within the space of ten years, the circumstance that Samuel lived till the last years of Saul's reign, and died but a few years before Saul's death (1 Sam. 25:1), precludes the assumption that he reigned any longer than that. For Samuel was already so old that he had appointed his sons as judges, whereupon the people desired a king, and assigned as the reason, that Samuel's sons did not walk in his ways (1 Sam. 8:1–4), from which it is very evident that they had already filled the office of judge for some considerable time. If we add to this the fact that Samuel was called to be a prophet before the death of Eli, and therefore was no doubt twenty-five or thirty years old when Eli died, and that twenty years and seven months elapsed between the death of Eli and the defeat of the Philistines, so that Samuel may have been about fifty years old at that time, and that he judged the people from this time forward till he had become an old man, and then gave the nation a king in the person of Saul, we cannot assign more than forty years as the interval between the defeat of the

Philistines and the death of Saul, without attributing to Samuel an age of more than ninety years, and therefore we cannot reckon more than forty or thirty-nine years as the time that intervened between the installation of Samuel in his office as judge and the commencement of the reign of Saul. According to this, the chronology of the times of the judges may be arranged as follows:—

<i>a.</i> From the oppression of Chushan-rishathaim to the death of Jair the judge (vid., p. 202),	301 years.
<i>b.</i> Duration of the Philistine oppression,	40 "
<i>c.</i> Judgeship of Samuel and reign of Saul,	39 "
<i>d.</i> David's reign (7 1/2 and 33 years),	40 "
<i>e.</i> Solomon's reign to the building of the temple,	3 "
TOTAL	423 years.
<i>a.</i> The wandering in the desert,	40 "
<i>b.</i> The time between the entrance into Canaan and the division of the land,	7 "
<i>c.</i> From the division of Canaan to the invasion of Chushan-rishathaim,	10 "
TOTAL	480 years.

These numbers are as thoroughly in harmony with 1 Kings 6:1, and also with the statement made by Jephthah in his negotiations with the king of the Ammonites, that Israel dwelt in Heshbon and the cities along the bank of the Arnon for three hundred years (Judges 11:26), as we could possibly expect so general a statement in round numbers to be. For instance, as the chronological data of the book of Judges give 301 years as the interval between the invasion of Chushan-rishathaim and the commencement of the Ammonitish oppression, and as only about ten years elapsed

between the division of Canaan, after which the tribes on the east of the Jordan first established themselves firmly in Gilead, and the invasion of Chushan, the Israelites had dwelt 310 years in the land on the other side of the Jordan at the time of Jephthah's negotiations with the Ammonites, or at the most 328, admitting that these negotiations may possibly not have taken place till towards the end of the eighteen years' oppression on the part of the Ammonites, so that Jephthah could appeal with perfect justice to the fact that they had been in possession of the land for 300 years.

This statement of Jephthah, however, furnishes at the same time an important proof that the several chronological data contained in our book are to be regarded as historical, and also that the events are to be reckoned as occurring successively; so that we have no right to include the years of oppression in the years of rest, as is frequently done, or to shorten the whole period from Othniel to Jephthah by arbitrary assumptions of synchronisms, in direct opposition to the text. This testimony removes all foundation from the hypothesis that the number forty which so frequently occurs is a so-called round number, that is to say, is nothing more than a number derived from a general estimate of the different periods according to generations, or cyclical periods. For if the sum total of the different chronological notices tallies on the whole with the actual duration of the period in question as confirmed by this testimony, the several notices must be regarded as historically true, and that all the more because the greater part of these data consist of such numbers as 6, 8, 18, 20, 22, 23, which can neither be called round nor cyclical. Moreover, the purely cyclical significance of the number forty among the Israelites must first of all be proved. Even *Ewald* (Gesch. ii. pp. 480, 481) most justly observes, that "it is very easy to say that the number forty was a round number in the case of different nations; but this round number must first of all have had its origin in life, and therefore must have had its limited application." If, however, we look more closely

at the different occasions on which the space of forty years is mentioned, between the exodus from Egypt and the building of the temple, we shall find that at any rate the first and last passages contain very definite notices of time, and cannot possibly be regarded as containing merely round or cyclical numbers. In the case of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, this is placed beyond the reach of doubt by the fact that even the months are given of both the second and fortieth years (Num. 10:11; 20:1; Deut. 1:3), and the intervening space is distinctly stated to have been thirty-eight years (Deut. 2:14). And the forty years that David is said to have reigned also give the precise number, since he reigned seven and a half years at Hebron, and thirty-three at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:4, 5; 1 Kings 2:11). Between these two extreme points we certainly meet with the number forty five times: viz., forty years of rest under Othniel (Judges 3:11), the same under Barak and Deborah (Judges 5:31), and the same again under Gideon (Judges 8:28); also forty years of the oppression by the Philistines (Judges 13:1), and the forty years that Eli was judge (1 Sam. 4:18); and in addition to these, we find eighty years of rest after Ehud's victory (Judges 3:30). But there are also twelve or thirteen passages in which we find either odd numbers, or at all events numbers that cannot be called cyclical or round (viz., Judges 3:8, 14; 4:3; 6:1; 9:22; 10:2, 3; 12:7, 9, 11, 14; 15:20; 16:31). What is there then to justify our calling the number forty cyclical or round? It is the impossibility or improbability that in the course of 253 years Israel should have had rest from hostile oppression on three occasions for forty years, and on one for eighty? Is there anything impossible in this? Certainly not. Is there even an improbability? If there be, surely improbabilities have very often been perfectly true. And in the case before us, the appearance itself loses all significance, when we consider that although if we take entire years the number forty is repeated, yet it cannot be taken so literally as that we are to understand that entire years are intended every time. If David's reign is reckoned as forty years in 2 Sam. 5:4,

although, according to v. 5, he reigned seven years and six months in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem, it may also be the case that, although forty years is the number given in the book of Judges, the period referred to may actually have been only thirty-nine years and a half, or may have been forty and a half. To this must be added the fact that the time during which the war with the enemy lasted is also included in the years of rest; and this must always have occupied several months, and may sometimes have lasted even more than a year.

Now, if we give all these circumstances their due weight, every objection that can be raised as to the correctness and historical credibility of the chronological data of the book of Judges vanishes away, whilst all the attempts that have been made to turn these data into round or cyclical numbers are so arbitrary as to need no special refutation whatever.

The historical character of the chronological data of the book of Judges being thus established, we obtain a continuous chronology for the history of the Israelitish nation, as we may see from the following survey, to which we append a calculation of the years before Christ:—

**Chronological Survey of the Principal Events
from the Exodus to the Building of
Solomon's Temple.**

The Principal Events	Duration	Years before the Birth of Christ
Exodus of Israel from Egypt	—	1492
The law given at Sinai	—	1492–1491
Death of Aaron and Moses in the fortieth year of the wandering in the desert	40	1453

The Principal Events	Duration	Years before the Birth of Christ
Conquest of Canaan by Joshua	7	1452–1445
From the division of the land to the invasion of Chushan-rishathaim	10	1445–1435
Death of Joshua	—	c. 1442
Wars of the tribes of Israel with the Canaanites	—	1442 onwards
War of the congregation with Benjamin	—	c. 1436
Oppression by Chushan-rishathaim	8	1435–1427
Deliverance by Othniel, and rest	40	1427–1387
Oppression by the Moabites	18	1387–1369
Deliverance by Ehud, and rest	80	1369–1289
Victory of Shamgar over the Philistines	—	
Oppression by Jabin	20	1289–1269
Deliverance by Deborah and Barak, and rest	40	1269–1229
Oppression by the Midianites	7	1229–1222
Deliverance by Gideon, and rest	40	1222–1182

The Principal Events	Duration	Years before the Birth of Christ
Rule of Abimelech	3	1182–1179
Tola, judge	23	1179–1156
Jair, judge	22	1156–1134
Eli, high priest and judge forty years	—	1154–1114

All that is required to establish our calculation as to the period of the judges, is to justify our estimate of ten years as the time that intervened between the division of the land and the invasion by Chushan-rishathaim, since the general opinion, founded upon the statement of *Josephus* (*Ant. v. 1, 29*), that Joshua was στρατηγός of the nation for twenty-five years after the death of Moses, and (*Judges 6:5, 4*) that his death was followed by a state of anarchy for eighteen years, is that it was at least thirty-five years. But *Josephus* at all events ought not to be appealed to, as he had no other sources of information with regard to the earlier portion of the Israelitish history than the Old Testament itself; and he so frequently contradicts himself in his chronological statements, that no reliance can be placed upon them even in cases where their incorrectness cannot be clearly proved. And if we consider, on the other hand, that Joshua was an old man when the two great campaigns in the south and north of Canaan were over, and in fact was so advanced in years, that God commanded him to divide the land, although many districts were still unconquered (*Josh. 13:1ff.*), in order that he might finish this part of his calling before his death, there is very little probability that he lived for twenty-five years after that time. The same words are used to describe the last days of his life in *Josh. 23:1*, that had previously been employed to describe his great age (*Josh. 13:1ff.*). No doubt the statement in *Josh. 23:1*, to

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the effect that “many days after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their foes,” Joshua called together the representatives of the nation, to renew the covenant of the nation with the Lord before his death, when taken in connection with the statement in Judges 19:50, that he built the city of Timnath-serah, which the tribes had given him for an inheritance after the distribution of the land by lot was over, and dwelt therein, proving very clearly that there were certainly “many days” (*Eng. Ver.* “a long time”) between the division of the land and the death of Joshua. But this is so comparative a term, that it hardly embraces more than two or three years. And Joshua might build, i.e., fortify Timnath-serah, and dwell therein, even if he only lived for two or three years after the division of the land. On the other hand, there appears to have been a longer interval than the seven or eight years allowed in our reckoning between the death of Joshua and the invasion of Chushan; since it not only includes the defeat of Adoni-bezek, the capture of Jerusalem, Hebron, and other towns, by the tribes of Judah and Simeon (Judges 1:1–14), and the conquest of Bethel by the tribe of Joseph (Judges 1:22ff.), but also the war of the congregation with the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19–21). But it is only in appearance that the interval allowed is too short. All these events together would not require many years, but might very well have occurred within the space of about five years. And it is quite possible that the civil war of the Israelites might have been regarded by king Chushan-rishathaim as a favourable opportunity for carrying out his design of making Israel tributary to himself, and that he took advantage of it accordingly. The very fact that Othniel delivered Israel from this oppression, after it had continued for eight years, precludes us from postponing the invasion itself to a longer period after the death of Joshua. For Othniel was not Caleb’s nephew, as many suppose, but his younger brother (see at Josh. 15:17). Now Caleb was eighty-five years old when the distribution of the land commenced (Josh. 14:10); so that even if his brother Othniel was thirty, or even forty years

younger, he would still be fifty-five, or at any rate forty-five years old, when the division of the land commenced. If the statements of Josephus were correct, therefore, Othniel would have been ninety-one years old, or at any rate eighty-one, when he defeated the Aramaean king Chushan-rishathaim; whereas, according to our calculation, he would only have been fifty or sixty years old when Debir was taken, and sixty-three or seventy-three when Chushan was defeated. Now, even if we take the lower number as the correct one, this would be a sufficiently great age for such a warlike undertaking, especially when we consider that Othniel lived for some time afterwards, as is evident from the words of Judges 3:11, “And the land had rest forty years: and Othniel the son of Kenaz died,” though they may not distinctly affirm that he did not die till the termination of the forty years’ rest.

The fact that Caleb’s younger brother Othniel was the first judge of Israel, also upsets the hypothesis which *Bertheau* has founded upon a mistaken interpretation of Judges 2:11–3:6, that a whole generation of forty years is to be reckoned between the death of Joshua and the invasion of Chushan, and also the misinterpretation of Judges 2:7, 10 (cf. Josh. 24:31), according to which the sinful generation did not grow up until after Joshua and all the elders who lived a *long time* after him were dead,—an interpretation which has no support in Judges 2:7, since *הָאֲרִיֶּכֶת יָמִים אַחֲרָי* does not mean “to live *long* after a person,” but simply “to survive him.” The “other generation which knew not the Lord,” etc., that arose after the death of Joshua and the elders who outlived him, was not a different generation from the succeeding generations, which were given up to the power of their foes on account of their apostasy from the Lord, but the younger generation generally, which took the place of the older men who had seen the works of the Lord under Joshua; in other words, this is only a comprehensive expression for all the succeeding generations who forgot Jehovah their God and served Baalim. So much may be

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said in vindication of our calculations as to the period of the judges.

Times of the Judges: Othniel; Ehud and Shamgar, Deborah and Barak.—Ch. 3:7–5:1.

Judges 3:7–5:31. In this first stage of the times of the judges, which embraces a period of 206 years, the Israelites were oppressed by hostile nations on three separate occasions: first of all by the Mesopotamian king Chushan-rishathaim, whom they were obliged to serve for eighteen years, until Othniel brought them deliverance, and secured them rest for forty years (Judges 3:7–11); secondly by the Moabitish king Eglon for eighteen years, until Ehud slew this king and smote the Moabites, and so humiliated them, that the land had rest for eighty years (Judges 3:12–30), whilst Shamgar also smote a host of Philistines during the same period (Judges 3:31); and lastly by the Canaanitish king Jabin of Hazor, who oppressed them heavily for twenty years, until Barak gathered an army together at the summons of Deborah the prophetess and with her assistance, and completely defeated the foe (Judges 4). After this victory, which Deborah celebrated in a triumphal song, the land had rest again for forty years (Judges 5).

Oppression of Israel by Chushan-Rishathaim, and Deliverance by Othniel.—Ch. 3:7–11.

Judges 3:7, 8. The first chastisement which the Israelites suffered for their apostasy from the Lord, is introduced with the same formula which had been used before to describe the times of the judges generally (Judges 2:11, 12), except that instead of וַיִּעַזְבוּ אֶת־יְיָ (“they forsook the Lord”) we have here וַיִּשְׁכַּחוּ אֶת־יְיָ (“they forgot the Lord their God”) from Deut. 32:18 (cf. 1 Sam. 12:9), and *Asheroth* (rendered “groves”) instead of *Ashtaroth* (see at Judges 2:13). As a punishment for this apostasy, the Lord sold them (Judges 2:14) into the hand of *Chushan-rishathaim*, the king of Mesopotamia, whom they were obliged to serve for eight years. All that we know about this king of Mesopotamia is what is recorded here. His name, Chushan-rishathaim, is probably only a title which was

given to him by the Israelites themselves. *Rishathaim* signifies “double wickedness,” and the word was rendered as an appellative with this signification in the Targums and the Syriac and Arabic versions. *Chushan* is also formed as an adjective from *Cush*, and may denote the Cushites. According to *M. v. Niebuhr* (*Gesch. Assurs u. Babels*, p. 272), the rulers of Babylon at that time (1518–1273) were Arabs. “Arabs, however, may have included not only Shemites of the tribe of Joktan or Ishmael, but Cushites also.” The invasion of Canaan by this Mesopotamian or Babylonian king has a historical analogy in the campaign of the five allied kings of Shinar in the time of Abraham (Gen. 14).

Judges 3:9–11. In this oppression the Israelites cried to the Lord for help, and He raised them up מוֹשִׁיעַ, a deliverer, helper, namely the Kenizzite *Othniel*, the younger brother and son-in-law of Caleb (see at Josh. 15:17). “*The Spirit of Jehovah came upon him.*” The Spirit of God is the spiritual principle of life in the world of nature and man; and in man it is the principle both of the natural life which we received through birth, and also of the spiritual life which we received through regeneration (vid., *Auberlen*, *Geist des Menschen*, in *Herzog’s Cycl.* iv. p. 731). In this sense the expressions “Spirit of God” (*Elohim*) and “Spirit of the Lord” (*Jehovah*) are interchanged even in Gen. 1:2, compared with Gen. 6:3, and so throughout all the books of the Old Testament; the former denoting the Divine Spirit generally in its supernatural causality and power, the latter the same Spirit in its operations upon human life and history in the working out of the plan of salvation. In its peculiar operations the Spirit of Jehovah manifests itself as a spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2). The communication of this Spirit under the Old Testament was generally made in the form of extraordinary and supernatural influence upon the human spirit. The expression employed to denote this is usually וַיָּהִי רוּחַ יְיָ (“the Spirit of Jehovah came

upon him:" thus here, Judges 11:29; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23; 2 Chron. 20:14; Num. 24:2). This is varied, however, with the expressions עָלֵיו רוּחַ יי' (צִלְחָה) וַתִּצְלַח (Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 16:13) and רוּחַ יי' לְבָשָׁה "the Spirit of Jehovah clothed the man" (Judges 6:34; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 24:20). Of these the former denotes the operations of the Divine Spirit in overcoming the resistance of the natural will of man, whilst the latter represents the Spirit of God as a power which envelopes or covers a man. The recipients and bearers of this Spirit were thereby endowed with the power to perform miraculous deeds, in which the Spirit of God that came upon them manifested itself generally in the ability to prophesy (vid., 1 Sam. 10:10; 19:20, 23; 1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 20:14; 24:20), but also in the power to work miracles or to accomplish deeds which surpassed the courage and strength of the natural man. The latter was more especially the case with the judges; hence the *Chaldee* paraphrases "the Spirit of Jehovah" in Judges 6:34 as the spirit of might from the Lord;" though in the passage before us it gives the erroneous interpretation רוּחַ נְבוּאָה, "the spirit of prophecy." *Kimchi* also understands it as signifying "the spirit of bravery, under the instigation of which he was able fearlessly to enter upon the war with Chushan." But we are hardly at liberty to split up the different powers of the Spirit of God in this manner, and to restrict its operations upon the judges to the spirit of strength and bravery alone. The judges not only attacked the enemy courageously and with success, but they also judged the nation, for which the spirit of wisdom and understanding was indispensably necessary, and put down idolatry (Judges 2:18, 19), which they could not have done without the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. "And he judged Israel and went out to war." The position of וַיִּשְׁפֹּט before לְמַלְחָמָה does not warrant us in explaining וַיִּשְׁפֹּט as signifying "he began to discharge the functions of a judge," as *Rosenmüller* has done: for שָׁפֵט must not be

limited to a settlement of the civil disputes of the people, but means to restore *right* in Israel, whether towards its heathen oppressors, or with regard to the attitude of the nation towards the Lord. "And the Lord gave Chushan-rishathaim into his hand (cf. Judges 1:2; 3:28, etc.), and his hand became strong over him;" i.e., he overcame him (cf. Judges 6:2), or smote him, so that he was obliged to vacate the land. In consequence of this victory, and the land had rest from war (cf. Josh. 11:23) forty years. "And then Othniel died:" the expression וַיָּמָת with ו consec. does not necessarily imply that Othniel did not die for forty years, but simply that he died after rest had been restored to the land.

Oppression of Israel by Eglon, and Deliverance by Ehud; Shamgar's Heroic Deeds.—Ch. 3:12–31.

Judges 3:12–30. In vv. 12–30 the subjugation of the Israelites by *Eglon*, the king of the Moabites, and their deliverance from this bondage, are circumstantially described. First of all, in vv. 12–14, *the subjugation*. When the Israelites forsook the Lord again (in the place of וַיִּטְשׁוּ ... וַיִּטְשׁוּ אֶת־הָרֶעַ וְגו' ... וַיִּטְשׁוּ, v. 7, we have here the appropriate expression לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרֶעַ ... וַיִּסְפוּ, they added to do, i.e., did again, evil, etc., as in Judges 4:1; 10:6; 13:1), the Lord made Eglon the king of the Moabites strong over Israel. הִזְקַעַל, to give a person strength to overcome or oppress another. עַל כִּי, as in Deut. 31:17, instead of the more usual עַל אֲשֶׁר (cf. Jer. 4:28; Mal. 2:14; Ps. 139:14). Eglon allied himself with the Ammonites and Amalekites, those arch-foes of Israel, invaded the land, took the palm-city, i.e., Jericho (see at Judges 1:16), and made the Israelites tributary for eighteen years. Sixty years had passed since Jericho had been burnt by Joshua. During that time the Israelites had rebuilt the ruined city, but they had not fortified it, on account of the curse pronounced by Joshua upon any one who should restore it as a fortress; so that the Moabites could easily conquer it, and using it as a base, reduce the Israelites to servitude.

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Judges 3:15. But when the Israelites cried to the Lord for help, He set them free through the Benjaminite *Ehud*, whom He raised up as their deliverer. *Ehud* was “the son of Gera.” This probably means that he was a descendant of Gera, since Gera himself, according to 1 Chron. 8:3, was a son of Bela the son of Benjamin, and therefore was a grandson of Benjamin; and Shimei the contemporary of David, a man belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, is also called a son of Gera in 2 Sam. 16:5; 19:17. At the same time, it is possible that the name *Gera* does not refer to the same person in these different passages, but that the name was repeated again and again in the same family. “*A man shut with regard to his right hand,*” i.e., hindered in the use of his right hand, not necessarily crippled, but in all probability disabled through want of use from his youth upwards. That the expression does not mean crippled, is confirmed by the fact that it is used again in connection with the 700 brave slingers in the army of the Benjaminites in Judges 20:16, and it certainly cannot be supposed that they were all actual cripples. So much is certain, however, that it does not mean ἀμφοτεροδέξιος, *qui utraque manu pro dextera utebatur* (LXX, *Vulg.*), since שָׁטָם signifies *clausit* (shut) in Ps. 69:16. It is merely with reference to what follows that this peculiarity is so distinctly mentioned.—The Israelites sent a present by him to king Eglon. בְּיָדוֹ does not mean *in*, but *through*, his hand, i.e., through his intervention, for others were actually employed to carry the present (v. 18), so that Ehud merely superintended the matter. *Minchah*, a gift or present, is no doubt a euphemism for tribute, as in 2 Sam. 8:2, 6, 1 Kings 5:1.

Judges 3:16. Ehud availed himself of the opportunity to approach the king of the Moabites and put him to death, and thus to shake off the yoke of the Moabites from his nation. To this end he provided himself with a sword, which had two edges (פֵּיּוֹת from פָּה, like שֵׁיב, Deut. 22:1, from שָׁה), a cubit long (גֹּמֶר, ἄπ. λεγ., signified primarily a staff, here a cubit,

according to the Syriac and Arabic; not “a span,” σπιθαμή, LXX), and “*did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.*”

Judges 3:17. Provided with this weapon, he brought the present to king Eglon, who—as is also mentioned as a preparation for what follows—was a very fat man.

Judges 3:18, 19. After presenting the gift, Ehud dismissed the people who had carried the present to their own homes; namely, as we learn from v. 19, after they had gone some distance from Jericho. But he himself returned from the stone-quarries at Gilgal, sc., to Jericho to king Eglon. מִן הַפְּסִילִים refers to some place by Gilgal. In Deut. 7:25, Isa. 21:9, Jer. 8:19, *pesilim* signifies idols. And if we would retain this meaning here, as the LXX, *Vulg.*, and others have done, we must assume that in the neighbourhood of Gilgal there were stone idols set up in the open air,—a thing which is very improbable. The rendering “stone quarries,” from פָּסַל, to hew out stones (Ex. 34:1, etc.), which is the one adopted in the *Chaldee*, and by *Rashi* and others, is more likely to be the correct one. *Gilgal* cannot be the Gilgal between Jericho and the Jordan, which was the first encampment of the Israelites in Canaan, as is commonly supposed, since Ehud passed the *Pesilim* on his flight from the king’s dwelling-place to the mountains of Ephraim (vv. 26, 27); and we can neither assume, as *Bertheau* does, that Eglon did not reside in the conquered palm-city (Jericho), but in some uncultivated place in the neighbourhood of the Jordan, nor suppose that after the murder of Eglon Ehud could possibly have gone from Jericho to the Gilgal which was half an hour’s journey towards the east, for the purpose of escaping by a circuitous route of this kind to Seirah in the mountains of Ephraim, which was on the north-west of Jericho. *Gilgal* is more likely to be *Geliloth*, which was on the west of Jericho opposite to the ascent of Adummim (*Kaalat ed Dom*), on the border of Judah and Benjamin (Josh. 18:17), and which was also called *Gilgal* (Josh. 15:7). Having returned to the king’s palace, Ehud sent in a message to him: “*I have a*

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secret word to thee, O king." The context requires that we should understand "he said" in the sense of "he had him told" (or bade say to him), since Ehud himself did not go in to the king, who was sitting in his room, till afterwards (v. 20). In consequence of this message the king said: סָהָה, *lit.* be silent (the imperative of הִסָּהָה); here it is a proclamation, Let there be quiet. Thereupon all who were standing round (viz., his attendants) left the room, and Ehud went in (v. 20). The king was sitting "in his upper room of cooling alone." The "room of cooling" (*Luther, Sommerlaube, summer-arbour*) was a room placed upon the flat roof of a house, which was open to the currents of air, and so afforded a cool retreat, such as are still met with in the East (vid., *Shaw*, pp. 188-9). Then Ehud said, "A word of God I have to thee;" whereupon the king rose from his seat, from reverence towards the word of God which Ehud pretended that he had to deliver to him, not to defend himself, as *Bertheau* supposes, of which there is not the slightest intimation in the text.

Judges 3:21, 22. But when the king stood up, Ehud drew his sword from under his garment, and plunged it so deeply into his abdomen that even the hilt followed the blade, and the fat closed upon the blade (so that there was nothing to be seen of it in front, because he did not draw the sword again out of his body), and the blade came out between the legs. The last words have been rendered in various ways. *Luther* follows the Chaldee and *Vulgate*, and renders it "so that the dirt passed from him," taking the ἀπ. λεγ. פְּרִשְׁדָּנָה as a composite noun from פְּרִשָּׁה, *stercus*, and שְׁדָּה, *jecit*. But this is hardly correct, as the form of the word פְּרִשְׁדָּנָה, and its connection with יָצָא, rather points to a noun, פְּרִשְׁדָּן, with ה local. The explanation given by *Gesenius* in his *Thes. and Heb. lex.* has much more in its favour, viz., *interstitium pedum*, the place between the legs, from an Arabic word signifying *pedes dissitos habuit*, used as a

euphemism for *anus, podex*. The subject to the verb is the blade.

Judges 3:23. As soon as the deed was accomplished, Ehud went out into the porch or front hall, shut the door of the room behind him (בְּעַדוֹ, not behind himself, but literally round him, i.e., Eglon; cf. Gen. 7:16, 2 Kings 4:4) and bolted it (this is only added as a more precise explanation of the previous verb).

Judges 3:24, 25. When the servants of Eglon came (to enter in to their lord) after Ehud's departure and saw the door of the upper room bolted, they thought "surely (וַיֵּא, *lit.* only, nothing but) he covers his feet" (a euphemism for performing the necessities of nature; cf. 1 Sam. 24:3), and waited to shaming (cf. 2 King 2:17; 8:11), i.e., till they were ashamed of their long waiting (see at Judges 5:28). At length they opened the door with the key, and found their lord lying dead upon the floor.

Ehud's conduct must be judged according to the spirit of those times, when it was thought allowable to adopt any means of destroying the enemy of one's nation. The treacherous assassination of a hostile king is not to be regarded as an act of the Spirit of God, and therefore is not set before us as an example to be imitated. Although Jehovah raised up Ehud as a deliverer to His people when oppressed by Eglon, it is not stated (and this ought particularly to be observed) that the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Ehud, and still less that Ehud assassinated the hostile king under the impulse of that Spirit. Ehud proved himself to have been raised up by the Lord as the deliverer of Israel, simply by the fact that he actually delivered his people from the bondage of the Moabites, and it by no means follows that the means which he selected were either commanded or approved by Jehovah.

Judges 3:26ff. Ehud had escaped whilst the servants of Eglon were waiting, and had passed the stone quarries and reached Seirah. *Seirah* is a place that is never mentioned again; and, judging from the etymology (the hairy), it was a wooded region, respecting the situation of

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which all that can be decided is, that it is not to be sought for in the neighbourhood of Jericho, but "upon the mountains of Ephraim" (v. 27). For when Ehud had come to Seirah, he blew the trumpet "upon the mountains of Ephraim," to announce to the people the victory that was placed within their reach by the death of Eglon, and to summon them to war with the Moabites, and then went down from the mountain into the plain near Jericho; "and he was before them," i.e., went in front as their leader, saying to the people, "Follow me; for Jehovah has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand." Then they went down and took (i.e., took possession of) the fords near Jericho (see at Josh. 2:7), לְמוֹאָב, either "from the Moabites" or "towards Moab," and let no one (of the Moabites) cross over, i.e., escape to their own land.

Judges 3:29. Thus they smote at that time about 10,000 Moabites, all fat and powerful men, i.e., the whole army of the enemy in Jericho and on this side of the Jordan, not letting a man escape. The expression "at that time" seems to imply that they did not destroy this number in one single engagement, but during the whole course of the war.

Judges 3:30. Thus Moab was subdued under the hand of Israel, and the land had rest for eighty years.

Judges 3:31. After him (Ehud) was, i.e., there rose up, *Shamgar* the son of Anath. He smote the Philistines, who had probably invaded the land of the Israelites, six hundred men, with an ox-goad, so that he also (like Othniel and Ehud, vv. 9 and 15) delivered Israel. מְלִמָּד הַבָּקָר, ἄπ. λεγ., signifies, according to the Rabbins and the ancient versions, an instrument with which they trained and drove oxen; and with this the etymology agrees, as מְלִמָּד is used in Hos. 10:11 and Jer. 31:18 to denote the training of the young ox. According to *Rashi*, מְלִמָּד בָּקָר, is the same as דְּרִבָּן, βούκεντρον, in 1 Sam. 13:21. According to *Maundrell* in *Paulus' Samml. der merkw. Reisen nach d. Or.* i. p. 139, the country people in Palestine and Syria use when

ploughing goads about eight feet long and six inches in circumference at the thick end. At the thin end they have a sharp point to drive the oxen, and at the other end a small hoe, to scrape off any dirt that may stick to the plough. Shamgar may have smitten the Philistines with some such instrument as this, just as the Edonian prince Lycurgus is described by Homer (Il. vi. 135) as putting Dionysius and the Bacchantines to flight with a βουπλήξ. Nothing is recorded about the descent of Shamgar, either here or in the Song of Deborah, in Judges 5:6. The heroic deed recorded of him must be regarded, as *O. v. Gerlach* affirms, as "merely the result of a holy inspiration that suddenly burst forth within him, in which he seized upon the first weapon that came to his hand, and put to flight the enemy when scared by a terror for God, just as Samson did on a later occasion." For he does not seem to have secured for the Israelites any permanent victory over the Philistines. Moreover, he is not called judge, nor is the period of his labours taken into account, but in Judges 4:1 the renewed apostasy of Israel from the Lord is dated from the death of Ehud.

Judges 4

Oppression of Israel by Jabin, and Deliverance by Deborah and Barak.—Ch. 4 and 5.

Judges 4–5. This fresh oppression of the Israelites, and the glorious victory which they obtained over Sisera, Jabin's general, through the judge Deborah and the heroic warrior Barak, are so fully described in Deborah's triumphal song in Judges 5, that this song may be regarded as a poetical commentary upon that event. It by no means follows from this fact, however, that the historical account in Judges 4 was first of all founded upon the ode, and was merely intended to furnish an explanation of the song itself. Any such assumption is overthrown by the fact that the prose account in Judges 4, contains, as even *Bertheau* acknowledges, some historical details which we look for in vain in the song, and which are of great assistance in the interpretation of it. All that we can infer with any probability from the internal connection between the historical

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narrative and the Song of Deborah is, that the author of our book took both of them from one common source; though the few expressions and words which they contain, such as שְׂמִיכָה in v. 18, תִּצְנֶנָּה in v. 21, מְשַׁכְּתָּה in v. 6, and וַיְהִים in v. 15, do not throw any light upon the source from which they were derived. For, with the exception of the first, which is not met with again, the whole of them occur in other passages,—the second in Judges 1:14 and Josh. 15:18, the third in the same sense in Judges 20:37, and the fourth in Ex. 14:24 and Josh. 10:10. And it by no means follows, that because in the passages referred to, “וַיְהִים” is found in close association with songs or poetical passages” (*Bertheau*), the word itself must be borrowed from the same source as the songs, viz., from the book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13). For הִמְהִי is found in the same signification in 1 Sam. 7:10, Ex. 23:27, and Deut. 2:15, where we look in vain for any songs; whilst it always occurs in connection with the account of a miraculous overthrow of the foe by the omnipotent power of God.

Judges 4. *The Victory over Jabin and His General Sisera.*—Vv. 1–3. As the Israelites fell away from the Lord again when Ehud was dead, the Lord gave them into the hand of the Canaanitish king *Jabin*, who oppressed them severely for twenty years with a powerful army under *Sisera* his general. The circumstantial clause, “when Ehud was dead,” places the falling away of the Israelites from God in direct causal connection with the death of Ehud on the one hand, and the deliverance of Israel into the power of Jabin on the other, and clearly indicates that as long as Ehud lived he kept the people from idolatry (cf. Judges 2:18, 19), and defended Israel from hostile oppressions. Joshua had already conquered one king, *Jabin* of *Hazor*, and taken his capital (Josh. 11:1, 10). The king referred to here, who lived more than a century later, bore the same name. The name *Jabin*, “the discerning,” may possibly have been a standing name or title of the Canaanitish kings of *Hazor*, as Abimelech was of the kings of the Philistines

(see at Gen. 26:8). He is called “king of Canaan,” in distinction from the kings of other nations and lands, such as Moab, Mesopotamia, etc. (Judges 3:8, 12), into whose power the Lord had given up His sinful people. *Hazor*, once the capital of the kingdoms of northern Canaan, was situated over (above or to the north of) Lake Huleh, in the tribe of Naphtali, but has not yet been discovered (see at Josh. 11:1). Sisera, the general of Jabin, dwelt in *Harosheth* of the *Goyim*, and oppressed the Israelites most tyrannically (*Mightily*: cf. Judges 7:1, 1 Sam. 2:16) for twenty years with a force consisting of 900 chariots of iron (see at Josh. 17:16). The situation of *Harosheth*, which only occurs here (vv. 2, 13, 16), is unknown; but it is certainly to be sought for in one of the larger plains of Galilee, possibly the plain of *Buttauf*, where Sisera was able to develop his forces, whose strength consisted chiefly in war-chariots, and to tyrannize over the land of Israel.

Judges 4:4–11. At that time the Israelites were judged by *Deborah*, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, who dwelt under the Deborah-palm between Ramah (er *Râm*: see at Josh. 18:25) and Bethel (Beitin: see at Josh. 7:2) in the tribe of Benjamin, upon the mountains of Ephraim. Deborah is called אִשָּׁה נְבִיאָה on account of her prophetic gift, like Miriam in Ex. 15:20, and Hulda the wife of Shallum in 2 Kings 22:14. This gift qualified her to judge the nation (the participle שִׁפְטָה expresses the permanence of the act of judging), i.e., first of all to settle such disputes among the people themselves as the lower courts were unable to decide, and which ought therefore, according to Deut. 17:8, to be referred to the supreme judge of the whole nation. The palm where she sat in judgment (cf. Ps. 9:5) was called after her the *Deborah*-palm. The Israelites went up to her there to obtain justice. The expression “came up” is applied here, as in Deut. 17:8, to the place of justice, as a spiritual height, independently of the fact that the place referred to here really stood upon an eminence.

Judges 4:6ff. But in order to secure the rights of her people against their outward foes also,

she summoned *Barak* the son of Abinoam from Kedesh, in the tribe of Naphtali, on the west of the Huleh lake (see at Josh. 12:22), and made known to him the commands of the Lord: “Up and draw to Mount Tabor, and take with thee 10,000 men of the children of Naphtali and Zebulun; and I will draw to thee into the brook-valley of Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin’s army, and his chariots, and his multitude (his men of war), and give him into thy hand.” מְשַׁכְּתִי has been explained in different ways. *Seb. Schmidt, Clericus*, and others supply הִקְרִין or הַשׁוֹפָר, draw with the trumpet (cf. Ex. 19:13, Josh. 6:5), i.e., blow the trumpet in long-drawn tones, upon Mount Tabor, and regard this as the signal for convening people; whilst *Hengstenberg* (Diss. ii. pp. 76, 77) refers to Num. 10:9, and understands the blowing of the horn as the signal by which the congregation of the Lord made known its need to Him, and appealed to Him to come to its help. It cannot indeed be proved that the blowing of the trumpet was merely the means adopted for convening the people together; in fact, the use of the following מְשַׁכְּתִי, in the sense of draw, is to be explained on the supposition that מְשַׁכְּתִי is used in a double sense. “The long-drawn notes were to draw the Lord to them, and then the Lord would draw to them Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army. Barak first calls the helper from heaven, and then the Lord calls the enemy upon earth.” Nevertheless we cannot subscribe to this explanation, *first* of all because the supposed ellipsis cannot be sustained in this connection, when nothing is said about the blowing of a trumpet either in what precedes or in what follows; and *secondly*, because Num. 10:9 cannot be appealed to in explanation, for the simple reason that it treats of the blowing of the *silver trumpets* on the part of the priests, and they must not be confounded with the *shopharoth*. And the use made of the trumpets at Jericho cannot be transferred to the passage before us without some further ground. We are disposed therefore to take the word מְשַׁכְּתִי in the sense of *draw* (intransitive), i.e., proceed one

after another in a long-drawn train (as in Judges 20:37 and Ex. 12:21), referring to the captain and the warriors drawing after him; whilst in v. 7 it is to be translated in the same way, though with a transitive signification. Mount Tabor, called Ταβύριον by the Greeks (see LXX Hos. 5:1), the mountain of Christ’s transfiguration according to an early tradition of the church, the present Jebel *et Tur*, is a large truncated cone of limestone, which is almost perfectly insulated, and rises to the height of about a thousand feet, on the north-eastern border of the plain of Jezreel. The sides of the mountain are covered with a forest of oaks and wild pistachios, and upon its flat summit, which is about half an hour in circumference, there are the remains of ancient fortifications (see *Robinson*, Pal. iii. pp. 211ff., and *v. Raumer*, Pal. pp. 37, 38). The words “and take with thee 10,000 men” are not to be understood as signifying that Barak was to summon the people together upon the top of Mount Tabor, but the assembling of the people is presupposed; and all that is commanded is, that he was to proceed to Mount Tabor with the assembled army, and make his attack upon the enemy, who were encamped in the valley of Kishon, *from that point*. According to v. 10, the army was collected at Kedesh in Naphtali. *Nachal Kishon* is not only the brook *Kishon*, which is formed by streams that take their rise from springs upon Tabor and the mountains of Gilboa, flows in a north-westerly direction through the plain of Jezreel to the Mediterranean, and empties itself into the bay of Acca, and which is called *Mukatta* by the natives (see *Rob.* iii. pp. 472ff., and *v. Raumer*, pp. 39, 50), but the valley on both sides of the brook, i.e., the plain of Jezreel (see at Josh. 17:16), where the greatest battles have been fought for the possession of Palestine from time immemorial down to the most recent times (see *v. Raumer*, pp. 40ff.).

Judges 4:8ff. Barak replied that he would not go unless she would go with him—certainly not for the reason suggested by *Bertheau*, viz., that he distrusted the divine promise given to him by Deborah, but because his mistrust of his own

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strength was such that he felt too weak to carry out the command of God. He wanted divine enthusiasm for the conflict, and this the presence of the prophetess was to infuse into both Barak and the army that was to be gathered round him. Deborah promised to accompany him, but announced to him as the punishment for this want of confidence in the success of his undertaking, that the prize of victory—namely, the defeat of the hostile general—should be taken out of his hand; for Jehovah would sell (i.e., deliver up) Sisera into the hand of a woman, viz., according to vv. 17ff., into the hand of Jael. She then went with him to Kedesh, where Barak summoned together Zebulun and Naphtali, i.e., the fighting men of those tribes, and went up with 10,000 men in his train (“at his feet,” i.e., after him, v. 14; cf. Ex. 11:8 and Deut. 11:6) to Tabor (“went up:” the expression is used here to denote the advance of an army against a place). Kedesh, where the army assembled, was higher than Tabor. קָעַךְ, *Hiphil* with acc., to call together (cf. 2 Sam. 20:4, 5). Before the engagement with the foe is described, there follows in v. 11 a statement that *Heber* the Kenite had separated himself from his tribe, the children of Hobab, who led a nomad life in the desert of Judah (Judges 1:16), and had pitched his tents as far as the oak forest at Zaananim (see at Josh. 19:33) near Kedesh. This is introduced because of its importance in relation to the issue of the conflict which ensued (vv. 17 ff). נִכְרַד with *Kametz* is a participle, which is used in the place of the perfect, to indicate that the separation was a permanent one.

Judges 4:12–16. As soon as Sisera received tidings of the march of Barak to Mount Tabor, he brought together all his chariots and all his men of war from Harosheth of the Goyim into the brook-valley of the Kishon. Then Deborah said to Barak, “Up; for this is the day in which Jehovah hath given Sisera into thy hand. Yea (נֹנֶה, *nonne*, as an expression indicating lively assurance), the Lord goeth out before thee,” sc., to the battle, to smite the foe; whereupon Barak went down from Tabor with his 10,000 men to

attack the enemy, according to Judges 5:19, at Taanach by the water of Megiddo.

Judges 4:15. “And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his army, with the edge of the sword before Barak.” וַיִּהְיֶה, as in Ex. 14:24 and Josh. 10:10, denotes the confounding of the hostile army by a miracle of God, mostly by some miraculous phenomenon of nature: see, besides Ex. 14:24, 2 Sam. 22:15, Ps. 18:15, and 144:6. The expression וַיִּהְיֶה places the defeat of Sisera and his army in the same category as the miraculous destruction of Pharaoh and of the Canaanites at Gibeon; and the combination of this verb with the expression “with the edge of the sword” is to be taken as *constructio praeagnans*, in the sense: Jehovah threw Sisera and his army into confusion, and, like a terrible champion fighting in front of Israel, smote him without quarter, Sisera sprang from his chariot to save himself, and fled on foot; but Barak pursued the routed foe to Harosheth, and completely destroyed them. “All Sisera’s army fell by the edge of the sword; there remained not even to one,” i.e., not a single man.

Judges 4:17–22. Sisera took refuge in the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, to escape the sword of the Israelites, as king Jabin lived at peace with the house of Heber, i.e., with this branch of the Kenites.

Judges 4:18. Jael received the fugitive into her tent in the usual form of oriental hospitality (סָוַר, as in Gen. 19:2, 3, to turn aside from the road and approach a person), and covered him with a covering (שָׁמִיכָה, ἀπ. λεγ., covering, or rug), that he might be able to sleep, as he was thoroughly exhausted with his flight.

Judges 4:19. On his asking for water to drink, as he was thirsty (צָמֵתִי, defective form for צָמֵאתִי), she handed him milk from her bottle, and covered him up again. She gave him milk instead of water, as Deborah emphatically mentions in her song in Judges 5:25, no doubt merely for the purpose of giving to her guest a friendly and hospitable reception. When *Josephus* affirms, in his account of this event

(Ant. v. 5, 4), that she gave him milk that was already spoiled (δισφθορὸς ἥδη), i.e., had turned sour, and *R. Tanchum* supposes that such milk intoxicated the weary man, these are merely later decorations of the simple fact, that have no historical worth whatever.

Judges 4:20. In order to be quite sure, Sisera entreated his hostess to stand before the door and turn any one away who might come to her to seek for one of the fugitives. עָמַד is the imperative for עָמַדְי, as the syntax proves that the word cannot be an infinitive. The anomaly apparent in the use of the gender may be accounted for on the ground that the masculine was the more general form, and might therefore be used for the more definite feminine. There are not sufficient grounds for altering it into עָמוּד, the *inf. abs.* Whether Jael complied with this wish is not stated; but in the place of anything further, the chief fact alone is given in v. 21, namely, that Jael took a tent-plug, and went with a hammer in her hand to Sisera, who had fallen through exhaustion into a deep sleep, and drove the plug into his temples, so that it penetrated into the earth, or the floor. The words וַיִּעַר וַיִּהְיֶה נִרְדָּם are introduced as explanatory of the course of the events: “*but he was fallen into a deep sleep, and exhausted,*” i.e., had fallen fast asleep through exhaustion. “*And so he died.*” וַיָּמָת is attached as a consequence to וַיִּתְקַע ... וַיִּתְקַע וגו' ... וַיִּתְקַע וגו', whereas וַיִּעַר belongs to the parenthetical clause וַיִּהְיֶה נִרְדָּם. This is the explanation adopted by *Rosenmüller*, and also in the remark of *Kimchi*: “the words וַיִּעַר וַיִּהְיֶה נִרְדָּם indicate the reason why Sisera neither heard Jael approach him, nor was conscious of the blow inflicted upon him.” For the combination of וַיִּעַר with וַיָּמָת, “then he became exhausted and died,” which *Stud.* and *Bertheau* support, does not give any intelligible thought at all. A man who has a tent-peg driven with a hammer into his temples, so that the peg passes through his head into the ground, does not become exhausted before he dies, but dies

instantaneously. And וַיִּעַר, from עָוַר, equivalent to עָוַר (Jer. 4:31), or עָוַר, and written with *Patach* in the last syllable, to distinguish it from עָוַר, *volare*, has no other meaning than to be exhausted, in any of the passages in which it occurs (see 1 Sam. 14:28, 31; 2 Sam. 21:15). The rendering adopted by the LXX, ἐσκοτώθη, cannot be grammatically sustained.

Judges 4:22. When Barak, who was in pursuit of Sisera, arrived at Jael's tent, she went to meet him, to show him the deed which he had performed. Thus was Deborah's prediction to Barak (v. 9) fulfilled. The Lord had sold Sisera into the hand of a woman, and deprived Barak of the glory of the victory. Nevertheless the act itself was not morally justified, either by this prophetic announcement, or by the fact that it is commemorated in the song of Deborah in Judges 5:24ff. Even though there can be no doubt that Jael acted under the influence of religious enthusiasm for the cause of Israel and its God, and that she was prompted by religious motives to regard the connection of her tribe with Israel, the people of the Lord, as higher and more sacred, not only than the bond of peace, in which her tribe was living with Jabin the Canaanitish king, but even than the duties of hospitality, which are so universally sacred to an oriental mind, her heroic deed cannot be acquitted of the sins of lying, treachery, and assassination, which were associated with it, by assuming as *Calovius*, *Buddeus*, and others have done, that when Jael invited Sisera into her tent, and promised him safety, and quenched this thirst with milk, she was acting with perfect sincerity, and without any thought of killing him, and that it was not till after he was fast asleep that she was instigated and impelled *instinctu Dei arcano* to perform the deed. For Jehovah, the God of Israel, not only abhors lying lips (Prov. 12:22), but hates wickedness and deception of every kind. It is true, He punishes the ungodly at the hand of sinners; but the sinners whom He employs as the instruments of His penal justice in carrying out the plans of His kingdom, are not instigated to the performance of wicked deeds by an inward and

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secret impulse from Him. God had no doubt so ordered it, that Sisera should meet with his death in Jael's tent, where he had taken refuge; but this divine purpose did not justify Jael in giving to the enemy of Israel a hospitable reception into her tent, making him feel secure both by word and deed, and then murdering him secretly while he was asleep. Such conduct as that was not the operation of the Spirit of God, but the fruit of a heroism inspired by flesh and blood; and even in Deborah's song (Judges 5:24ff.) it is not lauded as a divine act.

Judges 4:23, 24. "So God subdued at that time Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel; and the hand of the Israelites became heavier and heavier in its pressure upon him, until they had destroyed him." וַתִּלְחֶם יַד ... הַלְוִיָּהּ וְקָשָׁה, "the hand ... increased more and more, becoming heavy." הַלְוִיָּהּ, used to denote the progress or continual increase of an affair, as in Gen. 8:3, etc., is connected with the infinitive absolute, and with the participle of the action concerned. קָשָׁה is the feminine participle of קָשָׂה, like גָּדַל in Gen. 26:13 (see Ges. § 131, 3, Anm. 3). The overthrow of Jabin and his rule did not involve the extermination of the Canaanites generally.

Deborah's Song of Victory.—Ch. 5.

Judges 5. This highly poetical song is so direct and lively an utterance of the mighty force of the enthusiasm awakened by the exaltation of Israel, and its victory over Sisera, that its genuineness is generally admitted now. After a general summons to praise the Lord for the courage with which the people rose up to fight against their foes (v. 2), Deborah the singer dilates in the first section (vv. 3–11) upon the significance of the victory, picturing in lively colours (1) the glorious times when Israel was exalted to be the nation of the Lord (vv. 3–5); (2) the disgraceful decline of the nation in the more recent times (vv. 6–8); and (3) the joyful turn of affairs which followed her appearance (vv. 9–11). After a fresh summons to rejoice in

their victory (v. 12), there follows in the *second* section (vv. 13–21) a lively picture of the conflict and victory, in which there is a vivid description (*a*) of the mighty gathering of the brave to battle (vv. 13–15*a*); (*b*) of the cowardice of those who stayed away from the battle, and of the bravery with which the braver warriors risked their lives in the battle (vv. 15*b*–18); and (*c*) of the successful result of the conflict (vv. 19–21). To this there is appended in the *third* section (vv. 22–31) an account of the glorious issue of the battle and the victory: first of all, a brief notice of the flight and pursuit of the foe (vv. 22–24); secondly, a commemoration of the slaying of Sisera by Jael (vv. 24–27); and thirdly, a scornful description of the disappointment of Sisera's mother, who was counting upon a large arrival of booty (vv. 28–30). The song then closes with the hope, founded upon this victory, that all the enemies of the Lord might perish, and Israel increase in strength (v. 31*a*). The whole song, therefore, is divided into three leading sections, each of which again is arranged in three somewhat unequal strophes, the first and second sections being introduced by a summons to the praise of God (vv. 2, 12), whilst the third closes with an expression of hope, drawn from the contents of the whole, with regard to the future prospects of the kingdom of God (v. 31*a*).

Judges 5

Judges 5:1. The historical introduction ("Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying") takes the place of a heading, and does not mean that the song of Deborah and Barak which follows was composed by them jointly, but simply that it was sung by them together, in commemoration of the victory. The poetess or writer of the song, according to vv. 3, 7, and 12, was Deborah. The song itself opens with a summons to praise the Lord for the willing and joyful rising up of His people.

2 That the strong in Israel showed themselves strong,

That the people willingly offered themselves,

Praise ye the Lord!

Judges 5:2. The meaning of פָּרַע and פְּרָעוֹת is a subject of dispute. According to the Septuagint rendering, and that of *Theodot.*, ἐν τῷ ἄρξασθαι ἀρχηγὸς ἐν Ἰσραήλ, many give it the meaning to begin or to lead, and endeavour to establish this meaning from an Arabic word signifying to find one's self at the head of an affair. But this meaning cannot be established in Hebrew. פָּרַע has no other meaning than to let loose from something, to let a person loose or free (see at Lev. 10:6); and in the only other passage where פְּרָעוֹת occurs (Deut. 32:42), it does not refer to a leader, but to the luxuriant growth of the hair as the sign of great strength. Hence in this passage also פְּרָעוֹת literally means *comati*, the hairy ones, i.e., those who possessed strength; and פָּרַע, to manifest or put forth strength. The persons referred to are the champions in the fight, who went before the nation with strength and bravery. The preposition ב before פָּרַע indicates the reason for praising God, or rather the object with which the praise of the Lord was connected. בַּפְּרָע וּגְ, literally "in the showing themselves strong." The meaning is, "for the fact that the strong in Israel put forth strength." הִתְנַדְּב, to prove one's self willing, here to go into the battle of their own free will, without any outward and authoritative command. This introduction transports us in the most striking manner into the time of the judges, when Israel had no king who could summon the nation to war, but everything depended upon the voluntary rising of the strong and the will of the nation at large. The manifestation of this strength and willingness Deborah praises as a gracious gift of the Lord. After this summons to praise the Lord, the first part of the song opens with an appeal to the kings and princes of the earth to hear what Deborah has to proclaim to the praise of God.

3 Hear, ye kings; give ear, ye princes!
I, to the Lord will I sing,

Will sing praise to the Lord, the God of Israel.

4 Lord, when Thou wentest out from Seir,
When Thou marchedst out of the fields of Edom,

The earth trembled, and the heavens also dropped;

The clouds also dropped water.

5 The mountains shook before the Lord,
Sinai there before the Lord, the God of Israel.

Judges 5:3. The "kings and princes" are not the rulers in Israel, for Israel had no kings at that time, but the kings and princes of the heathen nations, as in Ps. 2:2. These were to discern the mighty acts of Jehovah in Israel, and learn to fear Jehovah as the almighty God. For the song to be sung applies to Him, the God of Israel. זָמַר, ψάλλειν, is the technical expression for singing with an instrumental accompaniment (see at Ex. 15:2).

Judges 5:4, 5. To give the Lord the glory for the victory which had been gained through His omnipotent help over the powerful army of Sisera, and to fill the heathen with fear of Jehovah, and the Israelites with love and confidence towards Him, the singer reverts to the terribly glorious manifestation of Jehovah in the olden time, when Israel was accepted as the nation of God (Ex. 19). Just as Moses in his blessing (Deut. 33:2) referred the tribes of Israel to this mighty act, as the source of all salvation and blessing for Israel, so the prophetess Deborah makes the praise of this glorious manifestation of God the starting-point of her praise of the great grace, which Jehovah as the faithful covenant God had displayed to His people in her own days. The tacit allusion to Moses' blessing is very unmistakeable. But whereas Moses describes the descent of the Lord upon Sinai (Ex. 19), according to its gracious significance in relation to the tribes of Israel, as an objective fact (Jehovah came from Sinai, Deut. 33:2), Deborah clothes the remembrance of it in the form of an address to God, to bring out the thought that the help

which Israel had just experienced was a renewal of the coming of the Lord to His people. Jehovah's going out of Seir, and marching out of the fields of Edom, is to be interpreted in the same sense as His rising up from Seir (Deut. 33:2). As the descent of the Lord upon Sinai is depicted there as a rising of the sun from the east, so the same descent in a black cloud amidst thunder, lightning, fire, and vapour of smoke (Ex. 19:16, 18), is represented here with direct allusion to these phenomena as a storm rising up from Seir in the east, in which the Lord advanced to meet His people as they came from the west to Sinai. Before the Lord, who came down upon Sinai in the storm and darkness of the cloud, the earth shook and the heaven dropped, or, as it is afterwards more definitely explained, the clouds dropped with water, emptied themselves of their abundance of water as they do in the case of a storm. The mountains shook (נָזְלוּ, *Niphal* of נָזַל, dropping the reduplication of the ל = נָזְלוּ, Isa. 63:19; 64:2), even the strong rocky mountain of Sinai, which stood out so distinctly before the eyes of the singer, that she speaks of it as "this Sinai," pointing to it as though it were locally near. David's description of the miraculous guidance of Israel through the desert in Ps. 68:8, 9, is evidently founded upon this passage, though it by no means follows from this that the passage before us also treats of the journey through the desert, as *Clericus* supposes, or even of the presence of the Lord in the battle with Sisera, and the victory which it secured. But greatly as Israel had been exalted at Sinai by the Lord its God, it had fallen just as deeply into bondage to its oppressors through its own sins, until Deborah arose to help it (vv. 6-8).

6 In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath,
 In the days of Jael, the paths kept holiday,
 And the wanderers of the paths went
 crooked ways.

7 The towns in Israel kept holiday, they kept
 holiday,
 Until that I, Deborah, arose,
 That I arose a mother in Israel

8 They chose new gods;
 Then was war at the gates:
 Was there a shield seen and a spear
 Among forty thousand in Israel?

Judges 5:6. The deep degradation and disgrace into which Israel had sunk before the appearance of Deborah, through its falling away from the Lord into idolatry, forms the dark reverse of that glorification at Sinai. Although, after Ehud, Shamgar had also brought help to the people against their enemies by a victory over the Philistines (Judges 3:31), and although Jael, who proved herself a heroine by slaying the fugitive Sisera, was then alive, things had got to such a pitch with Israel, that no one would venture upon the public high roads. There are no good grounds for the conjecture that Jael was a different person from the Jael mentioned in Judges 4:17ff., whether a judge who is not further known, as *Ewald* supposes, or a female judge who stood at the head of the nation in these unhappy times (*Bertheau*). חֲדָלוּ אֶת־דְּרָחוֹת, lit., "the paths ceased," sc., to be paths, or to be trodden by men. הֲלֹכֵי נְתִיבוֹת, "those who went upon paths," or beaten ways, i.e., those who were obliged to undertake journeys for the purpose of friendly intercourse or trade, notwithstanding the burden of foreign rule which pressed upon the land; such persons went by "twisted paths," i.e., by roads and circuitous routes which turned away from the high roads. And the פְּרוּזוֹן, i.e., the cultivated land, with its open towns and villages, and with their inhabitants, was as forsaken and desolate as the public highways. The word *perazon* has been rendered judge or guidance by modern expositors, after the example of *Teller* and *Gesenius*; and in v. 11 decision or guidance. But this meaning, which has been adopted into all the more recent lexicons, has nothing really to support it, and does not even suit our verse, into which it would introduce the strange contradiction, that at the time when Shamgar and Jael were judges, there were no judges in Israel. In addition to the Septuagint version, which renders the word δυνάτοῖ in this verse

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(i.e., according to the *Cod. Vat.*, for the *Col. Al.* has φράζων), and then in the most unmeaning way adopts the rendering αὔξεισον in v. 11, from which we may clearly see that the translators did not know the meaning of the word, it is common to adduce an Arabic word which signifies *segregavit, discrevit rem ab aliis*, though it is impossible to prove that the Arabic word ever had the meaning to judge or to lead. All the old translators, as well as the Rabbins, have based their rendering of the word upon פְּרָזִי, inhabitant of the flat country (Deut. 3:5, and 1 Sam. 6:18), and פְּרָזוֹת, the open flat country, as distinguished from the towns surrounded by walls (Ezek. 38:11; Zech. 2:8), according to which פְּרָזוֹן, as the place of meeting, would denote both the cultivated land with its unenclosed towns and villages, and also the population that was settled in the open country in unfortified places,—a meaning which also lies at the foundation of the word in Hab. 3:14. Accordingly, *Luther* has rendered the word *Bauern* (peasants). עַד אֲשֶׁר for עַד שֶׁקָּמְתִי. קָמְתִי. The contraction of אֲשֶׁר into ש, with *Dagesh* following, and generally pointed with *Seghol*, but here with *Patach* on account of the ק, which is closely related to the gutturals, belongs to the popular character of the song, and is therefore also found in the Song of Solomon (Song 1:12; 2:7, 17; 4:6). It is also met with here and there in simple prose (Judges 6:17; 7:12; 8:26); but it was only in the literature of the time of the captivity and a still later date, that it found its way more and more from the language of ordinary conversation into that of the Scriptures. Deborah describes herself as “a mother in Israel,” on account of her having watched over her people with maternal care, just as Job calls himself a father to the poor who had been supported by him (Job 29:16; cf. Isa. 22:21).

Judges 5:8. Verse 8 describes the cause of the misery into which Israel had fallen. אֱלֹהִים הַדְּשִׁים is the object to יִבְחַר, and the subject is to be found in the previous term *Israel*. Israel forsook

its God and creator, and chose new gods, i.e., gods not worshipped by its fathers (vid., Deut. 32:17). Then there was war (מִלְחָמָה, the construct state of מִלְחָמָה, a verbal noun formed from the *Piel*, and signifying conflict or war) at the gates; i.e., the enemy pressed up to the very gates of the Israelitish towns, and besieged them, and there was not seen a shield or spear among forty thousand in Israel, i.e., there were no warriors found in Israel who ventured to defend the land against the foe. מִן indicates a question with a negative reply assumed, as in 1 Kings 1:27, etc. Shield and spear (or lance) are mentioned particularly as arms of offence and defence, to signify arms of all kinds. The words are not to be explained from 1 Sam. 13:22, as signifying that there were no longer any weapons to be found among the Israelites, because the enemy had taken them away (“not seen” is not equivalent to “not found” in 1 Sam. 13:22); they simply affirm that there were no longer any weapons to be seen, because not one of the 40,000 men in Israel took a weapon in his hand. The number 40,000 is not the number of the men who offered themselves willingly for battle, according to v. 2 (*Bertheau*); for apart from the fact that they did not go unarmed into the battle, it is at variance with the statement in Judges 4:6, 10, that Barak went into the war and smote the enemy with only 10,000 men. It is a round number, i.e., an approximative statement of the number of the warriors who might have smitten the enemy and delivered Israel from bondage, and was probably chosen with a reference to the 40,000 fighting men of the tribes on the east of the Jordan, who went with Joshua to Canaan and helped their brethren to conquer the land (Josh. 4:13). Most of the more recent expositors have given a different rendering of v. 8. Many of them render the first clause according to the *Peshito* and *Vulgate*, “God chose something new,” taking *Elohim* as the subject, and *chadashim* (new) as the object. But to this it has very properly been objected, that, according to the terms of the song, it was not *Elohim* but *Jehovah* who effected the deliverance of Israel, and that the

Hebrew for new things is not **הַדְּשִׁים**, but **הַדְּשׁוֹת** (Isa. 42:9; 48:6), or **הַדְּשָׁה** (Isa. 43:19; Jer. 31:22). On these grounds *Ewald* and *Bertheau* render *Elohim* “judges” (they chose new judges), and appeal to Ex. 21:6; 22:7, 8, where the authorities who administered justice in the name of God are called *Elohim*. But these passages are not sufficient by themselves to establish the meaning “judges,” and still less to establish the rendering “new judges” for *Elohim chadashim*. Moreover, according to both these explanations, the next clause must be understood as relating to the specially courageous conflict which the Israelites in their enthusiasm carried on with Sisera; whereas the further statement, that among 40,000 warriors who offered themselves willingly for battle there was not a shield or a lance to be seen, is irreconcilably at variance with this. For the explanation suggested, namely, that these warriors did not possess the ordinary weapons for a well-conducted engagement, but had nothing but bows and swords, or instead of weapons of any kind had only the staffs and tools of shepherds and husbandmen, is proved to be untenable by the simple fact that there is nothing at all to indicate any contrast between ordinary and extraordinary weapons, and that such a contrast is altogether foreign to the context. Moreover, the fact appealed to, that **וְ** points to a victorious conflict in vv. 13, 19, 22, as well as in v. 11, is not strong enough to support the view in question, as **וְ** is employed in v. 19 in connection with the battle of the kings of Canaan, which was not a successful one, but terminated in a defeat.

The singer now turns from the contemplation of the deep degradation of Israel to the glorious change which took place as soon as she appeared:—

- 9 My heart inclines to the leaders of Israel;
 To those who offered themselves willingly
 in the nation. Praise ye the Lord!
- 10 Ye that ride upon white asses;
 Ye that sit upon covering,

And that walk in the way, reflect!

11 With the voice of the archers among
 drawers (of water),

There praise ye the righteous acts of the
 Lord,

The righteous acts of His villages in Israel.

Then the people of the Lord went down to
 the gates!

Judges 5:9. We must supply the *subst. verb* in connection with **לִבִּי**, “My heart is (sc., inclined) towards the leaders of Israel,” i.e., feels itself drawn towards them. **הַדְּשָׁה** for **הַדְּשִׁים** (v. 14), the determining one, i.e., the commander or leader in war: as in Deut. 33:21. The leaders and willing ones are first of all to praise the Lord for having crowned their willingness with victory.

Judges 5:10. And all classes of the people, both high and low, have reason to join in the praise. Those who ride upon white, i.e., white-spotted asses, are the upper classes generally, and not merely the leaders (cf. Judges 10:4; 12:14). **צָהָר**, *lit.* dazzling white; but since there are no asses that are perfectly white, and white was a colour that was highly valued both by Hebrews and Arabs, they applied the term white to those that were only spotted with white. Those who sit upon coverings (**מְדִינָה** from **מָדָה**, a covering or carpet, with the plural termination **יָ**, which is to be regarded as a poetical Chaldaism) are the rich and prosperous; and those who walk on the way, i.e., travellers on foot, represent the middle and lower classes, who have to go about and attend to their affairs. Considered logically, this triple division of the nation is not a very exact one, as the first two do not form a true antithesis. But the want of exactness does not warrant our fusing together the middle term and the first, and understanding by *middin* either saddles or saddle-cloths, as *Ewald* and *Bertheau* have done; for saddle-cloths are still further from forming an antithesis to asses, so that those who ride upon white asses could be distinguished, as the upper classes and leaders, from those who sit upon saddles, or are “somewhat richer.” Moreover, there is no

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reason for regarding these three classes as referring simply to the long line of warriors hastening from the victory to the triumphal *fête*. On the contrary, all classes of the people are addressed, as enjoying the fruits of the victory that had been obtained: the upper classes, who ride upon their costly animals; the rich resting at home upon their splendid carpets; and the poor travellers, who can now go quietly along the high-road again without fear of interruption from the foe (v. 6). *וַיִּשְׁחַח* is rendered “sing” by many; but this rendering cannot be sustained from Ps. 105:2 and 145:5, and it is not necessary on the verse before us, since the well-established meaning of the word “ponder,” reflect, sc., upon the acts of the Lord, is a perfectly suitable one.

Judges 5:11. The whole nation had good reason to make this reflection, as the warriors, having returned home, were now relating the mighty acts of the Lord among the women who were watering their flocks, and the people had returned to their towns once more. This is in all probability the idea of the obscure verse before us, which has been interpreted in such very different ways. The first clause, which has no verb, and cannot constitute a sentence by itself, must be connected with the following clause, and taken as an *anakolouthon*, as *וַיִּשְׁחַח* does not form a direct continuation of the clause commencing with *מִקוֹל*. After the words “from the voice of the archers,” we should expect the continuation “there is heard,” or “there sounds forth the praise of the acts of the Lord.” Instead of that, the construction that was commenced is relinquished at *וַיִּשְׁחַח*, and a different turn is given to the thought. This not only seems to offer the simplest explanation, but the only possible solution of the difficulty. For the explanation that *מִן* is to be taken as signifying “away from,” as in Num. 15:24, etc., in the sense of “far from the voice of the archers, among the watering women,” does not suit the following word *שָׁם*, “there,” at all. It would be necessary to attribute to *מִן* the meaning “no more

disquieted by,” a meaning which the preposition could not possibly have in this clause. *מִתְּצַיִם* are not sharers in the booty, for *צָרַח* simply means to cut, to cut in pieces, to divide, and is never applied to the sharing of booty, for which *חָלַק* is the word used (vid., v. 30; Ps. 68:13; Isa. 9:2). *וַיִּשְׁחַח* is to be regarded, as the Rabbins maintain, as a *denom.* from *שָׁחַח*, to hold an arrow, signifying therefore the shooter of an arrow. It was probably a natural thing for Deborah, who dwelt in Benjamin, to mention the archers as representatives of warriors generally, since this was the principal weapon employed by the Benjaminites (see 1 Chron. 8:40; 12:2; 2 Chron. 14:7; 17:17). The tarrying of the warriors among the drawers of water, where the flocks and herds were being watered, points to the time of peace, when the warriors were again occupied with their civil and domestic affairs. *וַיִּתְּנוּ* is a simple aorist. *תְּנוּהָ*, *lit.* to repeat, then to relate, or praise. “The righteousness of Jehovah,” i.e., the marvellous acts of the Lord in and upon Israel for the accomplishing of His purposes of salvation, in which the righteousness of His work upon earth was manifested (cf. 1 Sam. 12:7, Micah 6:5). *וַיִּתְּנוּ פְּרִזּוֹנוֹ* has been rendered by modern expositors, either “the righteous acts of His guidance or of His decision” (*Ewald and Bertheau*), or “the righteous acts of His commanders,” or “the benefits towards His princes (leaders) in Israel” (*Ros.* and others). But neither of these can be sustained. We must take *פְּרִזּוֹן* here in just the same sense as in v. 7; the country covered with open towns and villages, together with their inhabitants, whom Jehovah had delivered from the hostile oppression that had rested upon them, by means of the victory obtained over Sisera. After that victory the people of the Lord went down again to their gates, from the mountains and hiding-places in which they had taken refuge from their foes (vv. 6, 7), returning again to the plains of the land, and the towns that were now delivered from the foe.

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Judges 5:12. V. 12 forms the introduction to the second part, viz., the description of the conflict and the victory. Throwing herself into the great event which she is about to commemorate, Deborah calls upon herself to strike up a song, and upon Barak to lead off his prisoners:

12 Awake, awake, Deborah!

Awake, awake, utter a song!

Rise up, Barak, and lead captive thy captives, O son of Abinoam!

עוֹרִי has the tone upon the last syllable on the first two occasions, to answer to the rapid summoning burst of the Lord in the opening address (*Bertheau*). שָׁבָה שְׁבִי, to lead away captives, as the fruit of the victory; not merely to lead in triumph. On the form וּשְׁבָה with *Chateph-patach*, see *Ewald*, § 90, *b*. In the next three strophes of this part (vv. 13–21) the progress of the conflict is described; and in the first two the part taken in the battle by the different tribes (vv. 13–15*a*, and 15*b*–18).

13 Then came down a remnant of nobles of the nation;

Jehovah came down to me among the heroes.

14 Of Ephraim, whose root in Amalek;

Behind thee Benjamin among thy peoples.

From Machir came down leaders,

And from Zebulun marchers with the staff of the conductor.

15*a* And princes in Issachar with Deborah,

And Issachar as well as Barak,

Driven into the valley through his feet.

Judges 5:13. Looking back to the commencement of the battle, the poetess describes the streaming of the brave men of the nation down from the mountains, to fight the enemy with Barak and Deborah in the valley of Jezreel; though the whole nation did not raise as one man against its oppressors, but only a remnant of the noble and brave in the nation, with whom Jehovah went into the battle. In v.

13 the Masoretic pointing of יָרַד is connected with the rabbinical idea of the word as the *fut. apoc.* of יָרְדָה: “then (now) will the remnant rule over the glorious,” i.e., the remnant left in Israel over the stately foe; “Jehovah rules for me (or through me) over the heroes in Sisera’s army,” which *Luther* has also adopted. But, as *Schnurr.* has maintained, this view is decidedly erroneous, inasmuch as it is altogether irreconcilable with the description which follows of the marching of the tribes of Israel into the battle. יָרַד is to be understood in the same sense as יָרְדוּ in v. 14, and to be pointed as a perfect יָרַד. “There came down,” sc., from the mountains of the land into the plain of Jezreel, a remnant of nobles. לְאֲדִירִים is used instead of a closer subordination through the construct state, to bring out the idea of שָׁרִיד into greater prominence (see *Ewald*, § 292). עָם is in apposition to לְאֲדִירִים, and not to be connected with the following word יְהוָה, as it is by some, in opposition to the accents. The thought is rather this: with the nobles or among the brave Jehovah himself went against the foe. לִי is a *dat. commodi*, equivalent to “for my joy.”

Judges 5:14. “From (מִנִּי, poetical for מִן) Ephraim,” sc., there came fighting men; not the whole tribe, but only nobles or brave men, and indeed those whose roots were in Amalek, i.e., those who were rooted or had taken root, i.e., had settled and spread themselves out upon the tribe-territory of Ephraim, which had formerly been inhabited by Amalekites, the mount of the Amalekites, mentioned in Judges 12:15 (for the figure itself, see Isa. 27:6, Ps. 80:10, and Job 5:3). “Behind thee,” i.e., behind Ephraim, there followed Benjamin among thy (Ephraim’s)

people (עַמָּיִם, a poetical form for עַמִּים, in the sense of hosts). Benjamin lived farther south than Ephraim, and therefore, when looked at from the stand-point of the plain of Jezreel, behind Ephraim; “but he came upon the scene of battle, either in subordination to the more

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powerful Ephraimites, or rushing on with the Ephraimitish hosts" (*Bertheau*). "From Machir," i.e., from western Manasseh, there came down leaders (see at v. 9), sc., with warriors in their train. *Machir* cannot refer to the Manassite family of Machir, to which Moses gave the northern part of Gilead, and Bashan, for an inheritance (comp. Josh. 17:1 with 13:29–31), but it stands poetically for Manasseh generally, as Machir was the only son of Manasseh, from whom all the Manassites were descended (Gen. 50:23; Num. 26:29ff., 27:1). The reference here, however, is simply to that portion of the tribe of Manasseh which had received its inheritance by the side of Ephraim, in the land to the west of the Jordan. This explanation of the word is required, not only by the fact that Machir is mentioned after Ephraim and Benjamin, and before Zebulun and Issachar, but still more decidedly by the introduction of Gilead beyond Jordan in connection with Reuben, in v. 17, which can only signify Gad and eastern Manasseh. Hence the two names *Machir* and *Gilead*, the names of Manasseh's son and grandson, are poetically employed to denote the two halves of the tribe of Manasseh; Machir signifying the western Manassites, and Gilead the eastern. "From Zebulun marchers (מְשַׁרְיָהוּ, to approach in long processions, as in Judges 4:6) with the staff of the conductor." סֹפֵר, writer or numberer, was the technical name given to the musterer-general, whose duty it was to levy and muster the troops (2 Kings 25:19; cf. 2 Chron. 26:11); here it denotes the military leader generally.

Judges 5:15a. שָׂרֵי, "my princes," does not furnish any appropriate meaning, as neither Deborah nor Barak was of the tribe of Issachar, and it is not stated anywhere that the Issacharites gathered round Deborah as their leaders. The reading שָׂרֵי (*stat. constr.*), adopted by the old versions, must be taken as the correct one, and the introduction of the preposition בְּ does not preclude this (compare עָם, 2 Sam. 1:21, and *Ewald*, § 289, b.), which is used to denote an outward equality, as

in 1 Sam. 17:42, and is substantially the same as the כֵּן which follows ("just as"), is construed without וְ in the first clause, as in Ps. 48:6. בְּעֵמֶק: into the valley of Jezreel, the plain of Kishon. וְשָׁלַח בְּרַגְלָיו, as in Job 18:8, to be sent off, i.e., incessantly impelled, through his feet; here it is applied to an irresistible force of enthusiasm for the battle. The nominative to שָׁלַח is Issachar and Barak.

15b At the brooks of Reuben were great resolutions of heart.

16 Why remainest thou between the hurdles,
To hear the piping of the flocks?

At the brooks of Reuben were great projects of heart.

17 Gilead rests on the other side of the Jordan;
And Dan ... why tarries he by ships?
Asher sits on the shore of the sea,
And by his bays he reposes.

18 Zebulun, a people that despises its soul
even to death,

And Naphtali upon the heights of the field.

In this strophe Deborah first of all mentions the tribes which took no part in the conflict (vv. 15b17), and then returns in v. 18 to the Zebulunites, who staked their life along with Naphtali for the deliverance of Israel from the yoke of the enemy. The enumeration of the tribes who remained at a distance from the conflict commences with Reuben (vv. 15b and 16). In this tribe there did arise a lively sympathy with the national elevation. They held meetings, passed great resolutions, but it led to no practical result; and at length they preferred to remain quietly at home in their own comfortable pastoral life. The meaning brooks for פְּלִגּוֹת is well established by Job 20:17, and there is no reason whatever for explaining the word as equivalent to מְפִלְגוֹת, divisions (2 Chron. 35:5, 12; Ezra 6:18). The territory of Reuben, which was celebrated for its splendid pastures, must have abounded in brooks. The question, Why satest thou, or

remainedst thou sitting between the hurdles? i.e., in the comfortable repose of a shepherd's life, is an utterance of amazement; and the irony is very apparent in the next clause, to hear the bleating of the flocks, i.e., the piping of the shepherds, instead of the blast of the war-trumpets.

Judges 5:17. Gilead, Dan, and Asher took no part at all. By *Gilead*, the tribes of Gad and half Manasseh are intended. The use of the term גִּלְעָד to denote the whole of the territory of the Israelites on the east of the Jordan probably gave occasion to this, although גִּלְעָד (without the article) does not refer to the land even here, but refers primarily to the grandson of Manasseh, as the representative of his family which dwelt in Gilead. (For further remarks, see at v. 14.) Dan also did not let the national movement disturb it in its earthly trade and commerce. גָּוַר, to keep one's self in a place, is construed here with the accusative of the place, as in Ps. 120:5. The territory of Dan included the port of Joppa (see at Josh. 19:46), where the Danites probably carried on a trade with the Phoenicians. Asher also in his land upon the coast did not allow himself to be disturbed from his rest, to join in the common war of its nation. חוֹף יָמִים is used, as in Gen. 49:13, for the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. מִכְרַרְצִים, ἀπ. λεγ., literally a rent, and hence applied to a bay, as an incision made in the sea-shore.

Judges 5:18. Zebulun and Naphtali acted quite differently. Zebulun showed itself as a people that despised its life even to death, i.e., that sacrificed its life for the deliverance of its fatherland. Naphtali did the same in its mountain home. The two tribes had raised 10,000 fighting men at Barak's call (Judges 4:10), who constituted at any rate the kernel of the Israelitish army.

If we run over the tribes enumerated, it seems strange that the tribes of Judah and Simeon are not mentioned either among those who joined in the battle, or among those who stayed away. The only way in which this can be explained is on the supposition that these two tribes were

never summoned by Barak, either because they were so involved in conflict with the Philistines, that they were unable to render any assistance to the northern tribes against their Canaanitish oppressors, as we might infer from Judges 3:31, or because of some inward disagreement between these tribes and the rest. But even apart from Judah and Simeon, the want of sympathy on the part of the tribes that are reproved is a sufficient proof that the enthusiasm for the cause of the Lord had greatly diminished in the nation, and that the internal unity of the congregation was considerably loosened.

In the next strophe the battle and the victory are described:—

- 19 Kings came, ... they fought;
 The kings of Canaan fought
 At Taanach, at the waters of Megiddo.
 A piece of silver they did not take.
- 20 From heaven they fought,
 The stars from their courses fought against
 Sisera.
- 21 The brook of Kishon swept them away,
 The brook of the olden time, the brook
 Kishon.
 Go on, my soul, in strength!

Judges 5:19. The advance of the foe is described in few words. Kings came on and fought. They were the kings of Canaan, since Jabin, like his ancestor (Josh. 11:1ff.), had formed an alliance with other kings of northern Canaan, who went to the battle under the command of Sisera. The battle took place at Taanach (see at Josh. 12:21), by the water of Megiddo, the present Lejun (see at Josh. 12:21), i.e., by the brook Kishon (cf. Judges 4:7). Taanach and Megiddo were not quite five miles apart, and beside and between them there were several brooks which ran into the southern arm of the Kishon, that flowed through the plain to the north of both these towns. The hostile kings went into the battle with the hope of slaying the Israelites and making a rich capture of booty. But their hopes were disappointed. They could

not take with them a piece of silver as booty. **בַּצֵּעַ**, which generally signifies booty or gain, is probably to be taken here in its primary sense of *frustum*, from **בָּצַע**, to cut off or cut in pieces, a “piece of silver,” equivalent to a single piece of valuable booty.

Judges 5:20. For not only did the Israelites fight against them, but the powers of heaven also. “From heaven” is more minutely defined by “the stars from their courses.” These words explain the statement in Judges 4:15, “the Lord discomfited Sisera;” though in our opinion not so clearly as to enable us to define more precisely the natural phenomenon by which God threw the enemy into confusion. In all probability we have to think of a terrible storm, with thunder and lightning and hail, or the sudden bursting of a cloud, which is poetically described as though the stars of heaven had left their courses to fight for the Lord and His kingdom upon earth.

Judges 5:21. The kings of Canaan could do nothing against these powers. They were smitten; the brook Kishon washed them (i.e., their corpses) away. The meaning “to wash away” is well established by the dialects and the context, though the verb itself only occurs here. As the battle was fought between Taanach and Megiddo, i.e., to the south of the brook Kishon, and the smitten foe fled towards the north, many of them met with their death in the waves of the brook, which was flowing over its banks at the time. The brook is called **נַחַל קִדְוִימִים**, i.e., the brook of the old world or the olden time (according to the LXX *Cod. Vat.* **χειμάρρους ἀρχαίων**), as the stream that had been flowing from time immemorial, and not, as the Chaldee interprets it, the stream that had been celebrated from olden time on account of the mighty acts that had been performed there. The meaning suggested by *Ewald* and others, “brook of attacks, or slaughters,” is not well sustained, although **קָדַם** is sometimes used to denote a hostile encounter. The last clause interrupts the description of the slaughter and the victory. Borne away by the might of the acts

to be commemorated, Deborah stimulates her soul, i.e., herself, to a vigorous continuation of her song. **תִּדְרֹכִי** is jussive, and **וְיָ** an accusative governed by the verb, in strength, vigorously; for she had still to celebrate the glorious results of the victory. This is done in the third part of the song (vv. 22–31), the first strophe of which (vv. 22–24) describes in brief drastic traits the flight of the foe, and the treatment of the fugitives by the people of the land.

22 Then did the hoofs of the horses stamp
With the hunting, the hunting of his strong ones.

23 Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord;
Curse ye, curse ye the inhabitants thereof!
Because they came not to the help of
Jehovah,

To the help of Jehovah among the mighty.

24 Blessed before women be Jael,
The wife of Heber the Kenite,
Blessed before women in the tent!

Judges 5:22. The war-chariots of the enemy hunted away in the wildest flight (v. 22). The horses stamped the ground with the continuous hunting or galloping away of the warriors.

דָּהָרָה, the hunting (cf. **דָּהַר**, Nah. 3:2). The repetition of the word expresses the continuance or incessant duration of the same thing (see *Ewald*, § 313, a.). **אֲבִירִים**, strong ones, are not the horses, but the warriors in the war-chariots. The suffix refers to **סוּס**, which is used collectively. The mighty ones on horses are not, however, merely the Canaanitish princes, such as Sisera, as *Ewald* maintains, but the warriors generally who hunted away upon their war-chariots.

Judges 5:23. The enemy, or at all events Sisera, might have been destroyed in his flight by the inhabitants of Meroz; but they did not come to the help of the Israelites, and brought down the curse of God upon themselves in consequence. That this is the thought of v. 23 is evident from the context, and more especially from the blessing pronounced upon Jael in v. 24. The

situation of Meroz, which is not mentioned again, cannot be determined with certainty *Wilson* and *v. Raumer* imagine that it may be *Kefr Musr* on the south of Tabor, the situation of which at all events is more suitable than *Marussus*, which was an hour and a half to the north of Beisan, and which *Rabbi Schwarz* supposed to be Meroz (see *V. de Velde*, Mem. p. 334). The curse upon the inhabitants of this place is described as a word or command of the angel of the Lord, inasmuch as it was the angel of the Lord who fought for Israel at Megiddo, as the revealer of the invisible God, and smote the Canaanites. Deborah heard from him the words of the curse upon the inhabitants of Meroz, because they did not come to help Jehovah when He was fighting with and for the Israelites. "Among the heroes," or mighty men, i.e., associating with the warriors of Israel.

Judges 5:24. Jael behaved altogether differently, although she was not an Israelite, but a woman of the tribe of the Kenites, which was only allied with Israel (see Judges 4:11, 17ff.). For her heroic deed she was to be blessed before women (מִן as in Gen. 3:14, literally removed away from women). The "women in the tent" are dwellers in tents, or shepherdesses. This heroic act is poetically commemorated in the strophe which follows in vv. 25–27.

25 He asked water, she gave him milk;
She handed him cream in the dish of nobles.

26 She stretched out her hand to the plug,
And her right hand to the workmen's hammer,
And hammered Sisera, broke his head,
And dashed in pieces and pierced his temples.

27 Between her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down:

Between her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

Judges 5:25. Assuming that the fact itself is well known, Deborah does not think it necessary to mention Sisera's name in v. 25.

הַמֶּזְאָה, which generally signifies thick curdled milk, is used here as synonymous with הֶלֶב, in the sense of good superior milk. סֶפֶל is only used here and in Judges 6:38, and signifies a bowl or vessel for holding liquids (see *Arab., Chald., and Talm.*; also *Bochart*, Hieroz, i. pp. 625ff., ed. *Ros.*). The dish of nobles is a fine costly bowl, such as they are accustomed to hand to noble guests. The whole verse is simply intended to express the thought, that Jael had given to her guest Sisera a friendly reception, and treated him honourably and hospitably, simply in order to make him feel secure.

Judges 5:26. "Her hand," i.e., the left hand, as is shown by the antithesis, "her right hand," which follows. On the form הַשְּׁלֵחָנָה, the third pers.

fem. sing. with נָ attached, to distinguish it the more clearly from the second pers., see the remarks on Ex. 1:10. הַלְמוֹת עֲמָלִים, *hammer or mallet of the hard workers*, is a large heavy hammer. For the purpose of depicting the boldness and greatness of the deed, the words are crowded together in the second hemistich: הִלֵּם, to hammer, or smite with the hammer;

מָחַק, ἀπ. λεγ., to smite in pieces, smite through; מָחַץ, to smite or dash in pieces; הִלְךְ, to pierce or bore through. The heaping up of the words in v. 27 answers the same purpose. They do not "express the delight of a satisfied thirst for revenge," but simply bring out the thought that Sisera, who was for years the terror of Israel, was now struck dead with a single blow. בְּאֶשֶׁר בָּרַע, at the place where he bowed, there he fell שָׁדוּד, overpowered and destroyed. In

conclusion, the singer refers once more in the last strophe (vv. 28–30) to the mother of Sisera, as she waited impatiently for the return of her son, and foreboded his death, whilst the prudent princesses who surrounded her sought to cheer her with the prospect of a rich arrival of booty.

28 Through the window there looks out and cries aloud

The mother of Sisera, through the lattice work,
 Why does his chariot delay its coming?
 Why tarry the steps of his team?
 29 The wise of her princesses reply:
 —But she repeats her words to herself—
 30 Surely they are finding and sharing booty:
 A maiden, two maidens to the head of a man,
 Booty of variegated cloths for Sisera:
 Booty of variegated cloths, garments worked in divers colours,
 A variegated cloth, two garments worked in divers colours for his neck as booty.

Judges 5:28. Sisera’s mother looks out with impatience for the return of her son, and cries aloud out of the window, Why is he never coming?—foreboding the disastrous result of the war. תִּיַבֵּב, ἄπ. λεγ., signifies to cry; in Aramaean it is used for הִרְיֵעַ and רָגַז, to denote a loud joyful cry; here it evidently signifies a loud cry of anxiety. For the repeated question, Why does his chariot delay its coming? is evidently expressive of anxiety and alarm. The form אֶחָרוּ, *perf. Piel* for אֶחָרוּ, may be attributed to the influence of the aleph, which favours the seghol sound, like יִחַמוּ in Gen. 30:39. The combination of מְרַבְּבוֹתָיו, פְּעָמַי מְרַבְּבוֹתָיו, “steps of his chariots,” cannot be explained, as it is by *Bertheau*, on the ground that the word פְּעָמַי, as a general expression for intermittent movement, might also be applied to the jerking of the wheels in rolling, but simply on the supposition that מְרַבְּבוֹת, as a synonym for רֶכֶב, is used for the horses yoked to the chariot in the sense of team, like רֶכֶב in 2 Sam. 8:4; 10:18, etc.

Judges 5:29. The princesses in attendance upon Sisera’s mother sought to console her with the remark, that Sisera would have to gather together rich booty, and that his return was delayed in consequence. In the expression “the wisest of her princesses” (see *Ges.* § 119,

2), the irony is very obvious, as the reality put all their wise conjectures to shame. תִּעֲנִינָה, third pers. plur. fem. for תִּעֲנִינָה. The second hemistich of v. 29 contains a clause inserted as a parenthesis. אִיא־הִיא is adversative: “but she;” אִיא is only an emphatic copula; the antithesis lies in the emphatic change of subject indicated by הִיא. הִיא, lit. to bring back her words, i.e., to repeat. לָהּ is used in a reflective sense, “to herself.” The meaning is: But Sisera’s mother did not allow herself to be quieted by the words of her wise princesses; on the contrary, she kept repeating the anxious question, Why does Sisera delay his coming? In v. 30 there follows the answer of the wise princesses. They imagine that Sisera has been detained by the large amount of booty which has to be divided. הֲלֵא, *nonne*, is he not, in the sense of lively certainty. They will certainly discover rich booty, and divide it. רָחַם, *uterus*, for *puella*. “A girl (or indeed probably) two girls to the head of the man,” i.e., for each man. צִבְעִים, *coloured things*, cloths or clothes. רִקְמָה, *worked stuff*, or garments worked in divers colours (see the remarks on Ex. 26:36), is attached without the *vav cop.* to צִבְעִים, and is also dependent upon שָׁלַל. The closing words, לְצוֹאְרֵי שָׁלַל, “for the necks,” or (as the plural is also frequently used to signify a single neck, e.g., Gen. 27:16; 45:14) “for the neck of the booty,” do not give any appropriate sense, as שָׁלַל neither signifies animals taken as booty nor the taker of booty. The idea, however, that שָׁלַל is used for שָׁלַל, *viator*, and *אִישׁ הַלָּד* in 2 Sam. 12:4 for *אִישׁ הַלָּד*, and *אִישׁ חֲתָף* in Prov. 23:28 for *אִישׁ חֲתָף*, seems inadmissible, since שָׁלַל has just before been used three times in its literal sense. There is just the same objection to the application of שָׁלַל to animals taken as booty, not to mention the fact that they would hardly have thought of having valuable clothes upon the necks of animals taken as booty. Consequently the only

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explanation that remains, is either to alter לְצִנּוֹרָי into לְצִנּוֹרָו or לְצִנּוֹרָיו, or else to change לְשָׁלֵשׁ into שְׁגָלָה, the royal spouse. In the former case, לְשָׁלֵשׁ would have to be taken as in apposition to צִבְעֵי רִקְמַת־יָם: a variegated cloth, two worked in divers colours for his (Sisera's) neck as booty, as the LXX have rendered it (τῶν τραχίλων αὐτοῦ σκῦλα). *Ewald* and *Bertheau* decide in favour of the second alteration, and defend it on the ground that לְשָׁלֵשׁ might easily find its way into the text as a copyist's error for שְׁגָלָה, on account of שְׁלֵשׁ having been already written three times before, and that we cannot dispense with some such word as שְׁגָלָה here, since the repetition of לְשָׁלֵשׁ three times, and the threefold use of לְ, evidently show that there were three different kinds of people among whom the booty was to be distributed; and also that it was only a fitting thing that Sisera should set apart one portion of the booty to adorn the neck of his wife, and that the wisest of the noble ladies, when mentioning the booty, should not forget themselves.

31a So shall all Thine enemies perish, O Jehovah!

But let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its strength.

Judges 5:31. This forms the conclusion of the song. הַזֶּה, *so*, refers to the whole of the song: just in the same manner as Sisera and his warriors. The rising of the sun in its strength is a striking image of the exaltation of Israel to a more and more glorious unfolding of its destiny, which Deborah anticipated as the result of this victory. With the last clause, "*And the land had rest forty years*" (cf. Judges 3:11, 30; 8:28), the account of

Judges 6

The Times of Gideon and His Family, and of the Judges Tola and Jair.—Ch. 6–10:5.

Judges 6–10:5. In this second stage of the period of the judges, which did not extend over an entire century (only ninety-five years), Israel

was only punished for its apostasy from the Lord, it is true, with a seven years' oppression by the Midianites; but the misery which these enemies, who allied themselves with Amalekites and other Arabian hordes, brought upon both land and people, so far surpassed the pressure of the previous chastisements, that the Israelites were obliged to take refuge from the foe in ravines, caves, and strongholds of the mountains. But the more heavily the Lord punished His rebellious nation, the more gloriously did He set forth His nearness to help, and also the way which would lead to a lasting peace, and to true deliverance out of every trouble, in the manner in which He called and fitted Gideon to be its deliverer, and gave him the victory over the innumerable army of the hostile hordes, with only 300 chosen warriors. But the tendency to idolatry and to the worship of Baal had already become so strong in Israel, that even Gideon, that distinguished hero of God, who had been so marvellously called, and who refused the title of king when offered to him from genuine fidelity to the Lord, yielded to the temptation to establish for himself an unlawful worship, in a high-priestly ephod which had been prepared for his use, and thus gave the people an occasion for idolatry. For this reason his house was visited with severe judgments, which burst upon it after his death, under the three years' reign of his son Abimelech; although, notwithstanding the deep religious and moral depravity which was manifested in the doings of Abimelech, the Lord gave His people rest for forty-five years longer after the death of Abimelech under two judges, before He punished their apostasy with fresh hostile oppressions.

The history of Gideon and his family is related very fully, because the working of the grace and righteousness of the faithful covenant God was so obviously displayed therein, that it contained a rich treasure of instruction and warning for the church of the Lord in all ages. The account contains such an abundance of special notices of separate events and persons, as can only be explained on the supposition that the author made use of copious records which had been

made by contemporaries and eye-witnesses of the events. At the same time, the separate details do not contain any such characteristic marks as will enable us to discover clearly, or determine with any certainty, the nature of the source or sources which the author employed. The only things peculiar to this narrative are the use of the prefix ש for אָשֶׁר, not only in reports of the sayings of the persons engaged (Judges 6:17), but also in the direct narrative of facts (Judges 7:12; 8:26), and the formula רִיחַ יְהוָה לְבָשָׁה (Judges 6:34), which only occurs again in 1 Chron. 12:18, 2 Chron. 24:20. On the other hand, neither the interchange of *ha-Elohim* (Judges 6:36, 39; 7:14) and *Elohim* (Judges 6:40; 8:3; 9:7, 9, 13, 23, 56, 57) with *Jehovah*, nor the use of the name *Jerubbaal* for *Gideon* (Judges 6:32; 7:1; 8:29; 9:1, 2, 5, 16, 19, 24, 28), nor lastly the absence of the "theocratical pragmatism" in Judges 9, contains any proof of the nature of the source employed, or even of the employment of two different sources, as these peculiarities are founded upon the contents and materials of the narrative itself.

Oppression of Israel by the Midianites, and Call of Gideon to Be Their Deliverer.—Ch. 6:1–32.

Judges 6:1–10. *Renewed Apostasy of the Nation, and Its Punishment.*—V. 1. As the Israelites forsook Jehovah their God again, the Lord delivered them up for seven years into the hands of the Midianites. The *Midianites*, who were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:2), and had penetrated into the grassy steppes on the eastern side of the country of the Moabites and Ammonites (see at Num. 22:4), had shown hostility to Israel even in the time of Moses, and had been defeated in a war of retaliation on the part of the Israelites (Num. 31). But they had afterwards recovered their strength, so that now, after an interval of 200 years, the Lord used them as a rod of chastisement for His rebellious people. In vv. 1, 2, 6, they alone are mentioned as oppressors of Israel; but in vv. 3, 33, and Judges 7:12, the Amalekites and children of the east are

mentioned in connection with them, from which we may see that the Midianites were the principal enemies, but had allied themselves with other predatory Bedouin tribes, to make war upon the Israelites and devastate their land. On the *Amalekites*, those leading enemies of the people of God who had sprung from Esau, see the notes on Gen. 36:12 and Ex. 17:8. "*Children of the east*" (see Job 1:3) is the general name for the tribes that lived in the desert on the east of Palestine, "like the name of *Arabs* in the time of *Josephus* (in Ant. v. 6, 1, he calls the children of the east mentioned here by the name of *Arabs*), or in later times the names of the Nabataeans and Kedarenes" (*Bertheau*). Hence we find in Judges 8:10, that all the enemies who oppressed the Israelites are called "children of the east."

Judges 6:2–5. *The Oppression of Israel by Midian and Its Allies.* Their power pressed so severely upon the Israelites, that before (or because of) them the latter "*made them the ravines which are in the mountains, and the caves, and the strongholds,*" sc., which were to be met with all over the land in after times (viz., at the time when our book was written), and were safe places of refuge in time of war. This is implied in the definite article before מְגֵהָרוֹת and the following substantives. The words "*they made them*" are not at variance with the fact that there are many natural caves to be found in the limestone mountains of Palestine. For, on the one hand, they do not affirm that all the caves to be found in the land were made by the Israelites at that time; and, on the other hand, עָשָׂה does not preclude the use of natural caves as places of refuge, since it not only denotes the digging and making of caves, but also the adaptation of natural caves to the purpose referred to, i.e., the enlargement of them, or whatever was required to make them habitable. The ἀπ. λεγ. מְגֵהָרוֹת does not mean "light holes" (*Bertheau*), or "holes with openings to the light," from גָּהַר, in the sense of to stream, to enlighten (*Rashi, Kimchi*, etc.), but is to be taken in the sense of "*mountain ravines,*" hollowed out

by torrents (from נָהַר, to pour), which the Israelites made into hiding-places. מְצֻדוֹת, fortresses, mountain strongholds. These ravines, caves, and fortresses were not merely to serve as hiding-places for the Israelitish fugitives, but much more as places of concealment for their possessions, and necessary supplies. For the Midianites, like genuine Bedouins, thought far more of robbing and plundering and laying waste the land of the Israelites, than of exterminating the people themselves. *Herodotus* (i. 17) says just the same respecting the war of the Lydian king Alyattes wit the Milesians.

Judges 6:3, 4. When the Israelites had sown, the Midianites and their allies came upon them, encamped against them, and destroyed the produce of the land (the fruits of the field and soil) as far as Gaza, in the extreme south-west of the land ("till thou come," as in Gen. 10:19, etc.). As the enemy invaded the land with their camels and flocks, and on repeated occasions encamped in the valley of Jezreel (v. 33), they must have entered the land on the west of the Jordan by the main road which connects the countries on the east with Palestine on the west, crossing the Jordan near Beisan, and passing through the plain of Jezreel; and from this point they spread over Palestine to the sea-coast of Gaza. "They left no sustenance (in the shape of produce of the field and soil) in Israel, and neither sheep, nor oxen, nor asses. For they came on with their flocks, and their tents came like grasshoppers in multitude." The Chethibh וַאֲהֵלֵיהֶם is not to be altered into וּבָאוּ, according to the *Keri* and certain *Codd*. If we connect וַאֲהֵלֵיהֶם with the previous words, according to the Masoretic pointing, we have a simple asyndeton. It is more probable, however, that וַאֲהֵלֵיהֶם belongs to what follows: "And their tents came in such numbers as grasshoppers." כְּדָרִי, lit. like a multitude of grasshoppers, in such abundance. "Thus they came into the land to devastate it."

Judges 6:6. The Israelites were greatly weakened in consequence (לְדָל, the imperf. *Niphal* of דָּלַל), so that in their distress they cried to the Lord for help.

Judges 6:7-10. But before helping them, the Lord sent a prophet to reprove the people for not hearkening to the voice of their God, in order that they might reflect, and might recognise in the oppression which crushed them the chastisement of God for their apostasy, and so be brought to sincere repentance and conversion by their remembrance of the former miraculous displays of the grace of God. The Lord God, said the prophet to the people, brought you out of Egypt, the house of bondage, and delivered you out of the hand of Egypt (Ex. 18:9), and out of the hand of all your oppressors (see Judges 2:18; 4:3; 10:12), whom He drove before you (the reference is to the Amorites and Canaanites who were conquered by Moses and Joshua); but ye have not followed His commandment, that ye should not worship the gods of the Amorites. The Amorites stand here for the Canaanites, as in Gen. 15:16 and Josh. 24:15.

Judges 6:11-32. *Call of Gideon to Be the Deliverer of Israel.*—As the reproof of the prophet was intended to turn the hearts of the people once more to the Lord their God and deliverer, so that manner in which God called Gideon to be their deliverer, and rescued Israel from its oppressors through his instrumentality, as intended to furnish the most evident proof that the help and salvation of Israel were not to be found in man, but solely in their God. God had also sent their former judges. The Spirit of Jehovah had come upon Othniel, so that he smote the enemy in the power of God (Judges 3:10). Ehud had put to death the hostile king by stratagem, and then destroyed his army; and Barak had received the command of the Lord, through the prophetess Deborah, to deliver His people from the dominion of their foes, and had carried out the command with her assistance. But Gideon was called to be the deliverer of Israel through an

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appearance of the angel of the Lord, to show to him and to all Israel, that Jehovah, the God of the fathers, was still near at hand to His people, and could work miracles as in the days of old, if Israel would only adhere to Him and keep His covenant. The call of Gideon took place in two revelations from God. First of all the Lord appeared to him in the visible form of an angel, in which He had already made himself known to the patriarchs, and summoned him in the strength of God to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites (vv. 11–24). He then commanded him, in a dream of the night, to throw down his father’s altar of Baal, and to offer a burnt-offering to Jehovah his God upon an altar erected for the purpose (vv. 25–32). In the first revelation the Lord acknowledged Gideon; in the second He summoned Gideon to acknowledge Him as his God.

Judges 6:11–24. *Appearance of the Angel of the Lord.*—V. 11. The angel of the Lord, i.e., Jehovah, in a visible self-revelation in human form (see Pentateuch, pp. 106ff.), appeared this time in the form of a traveller with a staff in his hand (v. 21), and sat down “under the terebinth which (was) in Ophrah, that (belonged) to Joash the Abi-ezrite.” It was not the oak, but Ophrah, that belonged to Joash, as we may see from v. 24, where the expression “Ophrah of the Abi-ezrite” occurs. According to Joash 17:2 and 1 Chron. 7:18, *Abiezer* was a family in the tribe of Manasseh, and according to v. 15 it was a small family of that tribe. *Joash* was probably the head of the family at that time, and as such was the lord or owner of *Ophrah*, a town (Judges 8:27; cf. 9:5) which was called “Ophrah of the Abi-ezrite,” to distinguish it from Ophrah in the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:23). The situation of the town has not yet been determined with certainty. *Josephus* (Ant. v. 6, 5) calls it *Ephran*. *Van de Velde* conjectures that it is to be found in the ruins of *Erfai*, opposite to *Akrabeh*, towards the S.E., near the Mohammedan Wely of *Abu Kharib*, on the S.W. of *Janun* (Me. pp. 337–8), close to the northern boundary of the tribe-territory of Ephraim, if not actually within it. By this terebinth tree was Gideon the son of Joash

“knocking out wheat in the wine-press.” חֲבַט does not mean to thresh, but to knock with a stick. The wheat was threshed upon open floors, or in places in the open field that were rolled hard for the purpose, with threshing carriages or threshing shoes, or else with oxen, which they drove about over the scattered sheaves to tread out the grains with their hoofs. Only poor people knocked out the little corn that they had gleaned with a stick (Ruth 2:17), and Gideon did it in the existing times of distress, namely in the pressing-tub, which, like all wine-presses, was sunk in the ground, in a hole that had been dug out or hewn in the rock (for a description of cisterns of this kind, see *Rob. Bibl. Res.* pp. 135–6), “to make the wheat fly” (i.e., to make it safe) “from the Midianites” (חֲבַט as in Ex. 9:20).

Judges 6:12. While he was thus engaged the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and addressed him in these words: “*Jehovah* (is) with thee, thou brave hero.” This address contained the promise that the Lord would be with Gideon, and that he would prove himself a mighty hero through the strength of the Lord. This promise was to be a guarantee to him of strength and victory in his conflict with the Midianites.

Judges 6:13. But Gideon, who did not recognise the angel of the Lord in the man who was sitting before him, replied doubtingly, “*Pray, sir, if Jehovah is with us, why has all this befallen us?*”—words which naturally recall to mind the words of Deut. 31:17, “Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?” “*And where,*” continued Gideon, “*are all His miracles, of which our fathers have told us? ... But now Jehovah hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.*” Gideon may have been reflecting, while knocking the wheat, upon the misery of his people, and the best means of delivering them from the oppression of the enemy, but without being able to think of any possibility of rescuing them. For this reason he could not understand the address of the unknown traveller, and met his promise with the actual state of things with which it was so

directly at variance, namely, the crushing oppression of his people by their enemies, from which he concluded that the Lord had forsaken them and given them up to their foes.

Judges 6:14. *“Then Jehovah turned to him and said, Go in this thy strength, and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have not I sent thee?”* The writer very appropriately uses the name Jehovah here, instead of the angel of Jehovah; for by his reply the angel distinctly manifested himself as Jehovah, more especially in the closing words, *“Have not I sent thee?”* (הֲלֹא־הִנֵּנִי, in the sense of lively assurance), which are so suggestive of the call of Moses to be the deliverer of Israel (Ex. 3:12). *“In this thy strength,”* i.e., the strength which thou now hast, since Jehovah is with thee—Jehovah, who can still perform miracles as in the days of the fathers. The demonstrative *“this”* points to the strength which had just been given to him through the promise of God.

Judges 6:15. Gideon perceived from these words that it was not a mere man who was speaking to him. He therefore said in reply, not *“pray sir”* (אֲדַבֵּרֶנְךָ), but *“pray, Lord”* (אֲדַבֵּרֶנְךָ, i.e., Lord God), and no longer speaks of deliverance as impossible, but simply inquires, with a consciousness of his own personal weakness and the weakness of his family, *“Whereby (with what) shall I save Israel? Behold, my family (lit., ‘thousand,’ equivalent to mishpachah: see at Num. 1:16) is the humblest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house (my family).”*

Judges 6:16. To this difficulty the Lord replies, *“I will be with thee (see Ex. 3:12, Josh. 1:5), and thou wilt smite the Midianites as one man,”* i.e., at one blow, as they slay a single man (see Num. 14:15).

Judges 6:17ff. As Gideon could no longer have any doubt after this promise that the person who had appeared to him was speaking in the name of God, he entreated him to assure him by a *sign* (אוֹת, a miraculous sign) of the certainty of his appearance. *“Do a sign that thou art speaking with me,”* i.e., that thou art really God, as thou affirmest. אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶּה, or שְׂאֵתָה, is taken

from the language of ordinary life. At the same time he presents this request: *“Depart not hence till I (go and) come to thee, and bring out my offering and set it before thee;”* and the angel at once assents. *Minchah* does not mean a sacrifice in the strict sense (θυσία, *sacrificium*), nor merely a “gift of food,” but a sacrificial gift in the sense of a gift presented to God, on the acceptance of which he hoped to receive the sign, which would show whether the person who had appeared to him was really God. This sacrificial gift consisted of such food as they were accustomed to set before a guest whom they wished especially to honour. Gideon prepared a kid of the goats (קִישָׁה is used to denote the preparation of food, as in Gen. 18:7, 8, etc.), and unleavened cakes of an ephah (about 22 1/2 s.) of meal, and brought the flesh in a basket and the broth in a pot out to the terebinth tree, and placed it before him.

Judges 6:20, 21. The angel of the Lord then commanded him to lay the flesh and the cakes upon a rock close by, and to pour the broth upon it; that is to say, to make use of the rock as an altar for the offering to be presented to the Lord. When he had done this, the angel touched the food with the end of his staff, and fire came out of the rock and consumed the food, and the angel of the Lord vanished out of Gideon’s sight. *“This rock,”* i.e., a rocky stone that was lying near. The departure of the angel from his eyes it to be regarded as a sudden disappearance; but the expression does not warrant the assumption that the angel ascended to heaven in this instance, as in Judges 13:19, 20, in the flame of the sacrifice.

Judges 6:22. In this miracle Gideon received the desired sign, that the person who had appeared to him was God. But the miracle filled his soul with fear, so that he exclaimed, *Alas, Lord Jehovah! for to this end have I seen the angel of the Lord face to face.* אָהָה אֲדַבֵּר יְהוָה is an exclamation, sometimes of grief on account of a calamity that has occurred (Josh. 7:7), and sometimes of alarm caused by the foreboding of some anticipated calamity (Jer. 1:6; 4:10; 32:17; Ezek. 4:14, etc.). Here it is an expression of

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alarm, viz., fear of the death which might be the necessary consequence of his seeing God (see Ex. 20:16 [19], and the remarks on Gen. 16:13). The expression which follows, “*for to this end,*” serves to account for the exclamation, without there being any necessity to assume an ellipsis, and supply “that I may die.” כִּי-יָעֲלֶיֶן is always used in this sense (see Gen. 18:5; 19:8; 33:10, etc.).

Judges 6:23, 24. But the Lord comforted him with the words, “*Peace to thee; fear not: thou wilt not die.*” These words were not spoken by the angel as he vanished away, but were addressed by God to Gideon, after the disappearance of the angel, by an inward voice. In gratitude for this comforting assurance, Gideon built an altar to the Lord, which he called *Jehovah-shalom*, “the Lord is peace.” The intention of this altar, which was preserved “unto this day,” i.e., till the time when the book of Judges was composed, is indicated in the name that was given to it. It was not to serve as a place of sacrifice, but to be a memorial and a witness of the revelation of God which had been made to Gideon, and of the proof which he had received that Jehovah was peace, i.e., would not destroy Israel in wrath, but cherished thoughts of peace. For the assurance of peace which He had given to Gideon, was also a confirmation of His announcement that Gideon would conquer the Midianites in the strength of God, and deliver Israel from its oppressors.

The theophany here described resembles so far the appearance of the angel of the Lord to Abram in the grove of Mamre (Gen. 18), that he appears in perfect human form, comes as a traveller, and allows food to be set before him; but there is this essential difference between the two, that whereas the three men who came to Abraham took the food that was set before them and ate thereof,—that is to say, allowed themselves to be hospitably entertained by Abraham,—the angel of the Lord in the case before us did indeed accept the *minchah* that had been made ready for him, but only as a sacrifice of Jehovah which he caused to ascend in fire. The reason for this essential difference

is to be found in the different purpose of the two theophanies. To Abraham the Lord came to seal that fellowship of grace into which He had entered with him through the covenant that He had made; but in the case of Gideon His purpose was simply to confirm the truth of His promise, that Jehovah would be with him and would send deliverance through him to His people, or to show that the person who had appeared to him was the God of the fathers, who could still deliver His people out of the power of their enemies by working such miracles as the fathers had seen. But the acceptance of the *minchah* prepared for Him as a sacrifice which the Lord himself caused to be miraculously consumed by fire, showed that the Lord would still graciously accept the prayers and sacrifices of Israel, if they would but forsake the worship of the dead idols of the heathen, and return to Him in sincerity. (Compare with this the similar theophany in Judges 13.)

Judges 6:25–32. *Gideon Set Apart as the Deliverer of His People.*—In order to be able to carry out the work entrusted to him of setting Israel free, it was necessary that Gideon should first of all purify his father’s house from idolatry, and sanctify his own life and labour to Jehovah by sacrificing a burnt-offering.

Judges 6:25. “*In that night,*” i.e., the night following the day on which the Lord appeared to him, God commanded him to destroy his father’s Baal’s altar, with the *asherah-idol* upon it, and to build an altar to Jehovah, and offer a bullock of his father’s upon the altar. “*Take the ox-bullock which belongs to thy father, and indeed the second bullock of seven years, and destroy the altar of Baal, which belongs to thy father, and throw down the asherah upon it.*” According to the general explanation of the first clauses, there are two oxen referred to: viz., *first*, his father’s young bullock; and *secondly*, an ox of seven years old, the latter of which Gideon was to sacrifice (according to v. 26) upon the altar to be built to Jehovah, and actually did sacrifice, according to vv. 27, 28. But in what follows there is no further allusion to the young

bullock, or the first ox of his father; so that there is a difficulty in comprehending for what purpose Gideon was to take it, or what use he was to make of it. Most commentators suppose that Gideon sacrificed both of the oxen,—the young bullock as an expiatory offering for himself, his father, and all his family, and the second ox of seven years old for the deliverance of the whole nation (see *Seb. Schmidt*). *Bertheau* supposes, on the other hand, that Gideon was to make use of both oxen, or of the strength they possessed for throwing down or destroying the altar, and (according to v. 26) for removing the *מַעֲרֵכָה* and the *הָאֲשֵׁרָה* to the place of the new altar that was to be built, but that he was only to offer the second in sacrifice to Jehovah, because the first was probably dedicated to Baal, and therefore could not be offered to Jehovah. But these assumptions are both of them equally arbitrary, and have no support whatever from the text. If God had commanded Gideon to take two oxen, He would certainly have told him what he was to do with them both. But as there is only one bullock mentioned in vv. 26–28, we must follow *Tremell.* and others, who understand v. 25 as meaning that Gideon was to take only one bullock, namely the young bullock of his father, and therefore regard *וּפָר הַשְּׁנִי שׁ* as a more precise definition of that one bullock (*vav* being used in an explanatory sense, “and indeed,” as in Josh. 9:27; 10:7, etc.). This bullock is called “the second bullock,” as being the second in age among the bullocks of Joash. The reason for choosing this second of the bullocks of Joash for a burnt-offering is to be found no doubt in its age (seven years), which is mentioned here simply on account of its significance as a number, as there was no particular age prescribed in the law for a burnt-offering, that is to say, because the seven years which constituted the age of the bullock contained an inward allusion to the seven years of the Midianitish oppression. For *seven* years had God given Israel into the hands of the Midianites on account of their apostasy; and now, to wipe away this sin, Gideon was to take

his father’s bullock of *seven* years old, and offer it as a burnt-offering to the Lord. To this end Gideon was first of all to destroy the altar of Baal and of the *asherah* which his father possessed, and which, to judge from vv. 28, 29, was the common altar of the whole family of Abiezer in Ophrah. This altar was dedicated to Baal, but there was also upon it an *asherah*, an idol representing the goddess of nature, which the Canaanites worshipped; not indeed a *statue* of the goddess, but, as we may learn from the word *בָּרֶת*, to *hew down*, simply a wooden pillar (see at Deut. 16:21). The altar therefore served for the two principal deities of the Canaanites (see *Movers*, Phönizier, i. pp. 566ff.). Jehovah could not be worshipped along with Baal. Whoever would serve the Lord must abolish the worship of Baal. The altar of Baal must be destroyed before the altar of Jehovah could be built. Gideon was to build this altar “*upon the top of this stronghold*,” possibly upon the top of the mountain, upon which the fortress belonging to Ophrah was situated. *בְּמַעֲרֵכָה*, “*with the preparation*,” the meaning of this word is a subject of dispute. As *בְּנֶה* occurs in 1 Kings 15:22 with *בְּ*, to denote the materials out of which (i.e., with which) a thing is built, *Stud.* and *Berth.* suppose that *maarachah* refers to the materials of the altar of Baal that had been destroyed, with which Gideon was to build the altar of Jehovah. *Stud.* refers it to the stone foundation of the altar of Baal; *Bertheau* to the materials that were lying ready upon the altar of Baal for the presentation of sacrifices, more especially the pieces of wood. But this is certainly incorrect, because *maarachah* does not signify either building materials or pieces of wood, and the definite article attached to the word does not refer to the altar of Baal at all. The verb *עָרַךְ* is not only very frequently used to denote the preparation of the wood upon the altar (Gen. 22:9; Lev. 1:7, etc.), but is also used for the preparation of an altar for the presentation of sacrifice (Num. 23:4). Consequently *maarachah* can hardly be understood in any other way than as signifying

the preparation of the altar to be built for the sacrificial act, in the sense of build the altar with the preparation required for the sacrifice. This preparation was to consist, according to what follows, in taking the wood of the *asherah*, that had been hewn down, as the wood for the burnt-offering to be offered to the Lord by Gideon. עֲצֵי הָאֲשֵׁרָה are not trees, but pieces of wood from the *asherah* (that was hewn down).

Judges 6:27. Gideon executed this command of God with ten men of his servants during the night, no doubt the following night, because he was afraid to do it by day, on account of his family (his father's house), and the people of the town.

Judges 6:28, 29. But on the following morning, when the people of the town found the altar of Baal destroyed and the *asherah* upon it hewn down, and the bullock sacrificed upon the (newly) erected altar (the bullock would not be entirely consumed), they asked who had done it, and soon learned that Gideon had done it all. The accusative אֵת הַפֶּה הַשֹּׁנֵי is governed by the *Hophal* הַעֲלָה (for הַעֲלָה see *Ges.* s. 63, Anm. 4), according to a construction that was by no means rare, especially in the earlier Hebrew, viz., of the passive with אֵת (see at *Gen.* 4:18). "They asked and sought," sc., for the person who had done it; "and they said," either those who were making the inquiry, according to a tolerably safe conjecture, or the persons who were asked, and who were aware of what Gideon had done.

Judges 6:30, 31. But when they demanded of Joash, "Bring out (give out) thy son, that he may die," he said to all who stood round, "Will ye, ye, fight for Baal, or will he save him? ('ye' is repeated with special emphasis). "whoever shall fight for him (Baal), shall be put to death till the morning." עַד-הַבֹּקֶר, till the (next) morning, is not to be joined to יוֹמָת, in the sense of "very speedily, before the dawning day shall break" (*Bertheau*),—a sense which is not to be found in the words: it rather belongs to the subject of the clause, or to the whole clause in the sense

of, Whoever shall fight for Baal, and seek to avenge the destruction of his altar by putting the author of it to death, shall be put to death himself; let us wait till to-morrow, and give Baal time to avenge the insult which he has received. "If he be God, let him fight for himself; for they have destroyed his altar," and have thereby challenged his revenge. Gideon's daring act of faith had inspired his father Joash with believing courage, so that he took the part of his son, and left the whole matter to the deity to decide. If Baal were really God, he might be expected to avenge the crime that had been committed against this altar.

Judges 6:32. From this fact Gideon received the name of *Jerubbaal*, i.e., "let Baal fight (or decide," since they said, "Let Baal fight against him, for he has destroyed his altar." יֵרֻבְעֵל is formed from יָרַב = יָרַב or יָרִיב and בָּעַל. This surname very soon became an honourable title for Gideon. When, for example, it became apparent to the people that Baal could not do him any harm, *Jerubbaal* became a Baal-fighter, one who had fought against Baal. In 2 Sam. 11:21, instead of *Jerubbaal* we find the name *Jerubbesheth*, in which *Besheth* = *Bosheth* is a nickname of Baal, which also occurs in other Israelitish names, e.g., in *Ishbosheth* (2 Sam. 2:8ff.) for *Eshbaal* (1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39). The name *Jerubbaal* is written Ἰεροβάαλ by the LXX, from which in all probability *Philo* of Byblus, in his revision of Sanchuniathon, has formed his Ἰερόμβαλος, a priest of the god Ἰεῦω.

Gideon's Victory Over the Midianites.—Ch. 6:33–8:3.

Judges 6:33–40. Equipment of Gideon for the Battle.—When the Midianites and their allies once more invaded the land of Israel, Gideon was seized by the Spirit of God, so that he gathered together an army from the northern tribes of Israel (vv. 33–35), and entreated God to assure him by a sign of gaining the victory over the enemy (vv. 36–40).

Judges 6:33ff. The enemy gathered together again, went over (viz., across) the Jordan in the neighbourhood of Beisan (see at *Judges* 7:24

and 8:4), and encamped in the valley of Jezreel (see at Josh. 17:16). *“And the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Gideon”* (לְבָשָׁה, *clothed*, i.e., descended upon him, and laid itself around him as it were like a coat of mail, or a strong equipment, so that he became invulnerable and invincible in its might: see 1 Chron. 12:18, 2 Chron. 24:20, and Luke 24:49). Gideon then blew the trumpet, to call Israel to battle against the foe (see Judges 3:27); *“and Abiezer let himself be summoned after him.”* His own family, which had recognised the deliverer of Israel in the fighter of Baal, who was safe from Baal’s revenge, was the first to gather round him. Their example was followed by all Manasseh, i.e., the Manassites on the west of the Jordan (for the tribes on the east of the Jordan took no part in the war), and the neighbouring tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali on the north, which had been summoned by heralds to the battle. *“They advanced to meet them:”* i.e., to meet the Manassites, who were coming from the south to the battle, to make war upon the enemy in concert with them and under the guidance of Gideon. עָלָה is used to denote their advance against the enemy (see at Josh. 8:2), and not in the sense of going up, since the Asherites and Naphtalites would not go up from their mountains into the plain of Jezreel, but could only go down.

Judges 6:36ff. But before Gideon went into the battle with the assembled army, he asked for a sign from God of the success of his undertaking. *“If Thou,”* he said to God, *“art saving Israel through my hand, as Thou hast said, behold, I lay this fleece of wool upon the floor; if there shall be dew upon the fleece only, and dryness upon all the earth (round about), I know (by this) that Thou wilt save,”* etc. גִּזְתָּ הַצֶּמֶר, *the shorn of the wool*; i.e., the fleece, the wool that had been shorn off a sheep, and still adhered together as one whole fleece. The sign which Gideon asked for, therefore, was that God would cause the dew to fall only upon a shorn fleece, which he would spread the previous night upon the floor, that is to say, upon some open ground, and that

the ground all round might not be moistened by the dew.

Judges 6:38. God granted the sign. *“And so it came to pass; the next morning, Gideon pressed the fleece together (יָזַר from זָוַר), and squeezed (צָמַץ from מָצָה) dew out of the fleece a vessel full of water”* (מְלוֹא as in Num. 22:18, and סָפַל as in Judges 5:25). So copiously had the dew fallen in the night upon the fleece that was exposed; whereas, as we may supply from the context, the earth all round had remained dry.

Judges 6:39, 40. But as this sign was not quite a certain one, since wool generally attracts the dew, even when other objects remain dry, Gideon ventured to solicit the grace of God to grant him another sign with the fleece,—namely, that the fleece might remain dry, and the ground all round be wet with dew. And God granted him this request also. Gideon’s prayer for a sign did not arise from want of faith in the divine assurance of a victory, but sprang from the weakness of the flesh, which crippled the strength of the spirit’s faith, and often made the servants of God so anxious and despondent, that God had to come to the relief of their weakness by the manifestation of His miraculous power. Gideon knew himself and his own strength, and was well aware that his human strength was not sufficient for the conquest of the foe. But as the Lord had promised him His aid, he wished to make sure of that aid through the desired sign. And “the simple fact that such a man could obtain the most daring victory was to be a special glorification of God” (*O. v. Gerlach*). The sign itself was to manifest the strength of the divine assistance to his weakness of faith. Dew in the Scriptures is a symbol of the beneficent power of God, which quickens, revives, and invigorates the objects of nature, when they have been parched by the burning heat of the sun’s rays. The first sign was to be a pledge to him of the visible and tangible blessing of the Lord upon His people, the proof that He would grant them power over their mighty foes by whom Israel was then oppressed. The woollen fleece

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represented the nation of Israel in its condition at that time, when God had given power to the foe that was devastating its land, and had withdrawn His blessing from Israel. The moistening of the fleece with the dew of heaven whilst the land all round continued dry, was a sign that the Lord God would once more give strength to His people from on high, and withdraw it from the nations of the earth. Hence the second sign acquires the more general signification, "that the Lord manifested himself even in the weakness and forsaken condition of His people, while the nations were flourishing all around" (*O. v. Gerl.*); and when so explained, it served to confirm and strengthen the first, inasmuch as it contained the comforting assurance for all times, that the Lord has not forsaken His church, even when it cannot discern and trace His beneficent influence, but rules over it and over the nations with His almighty power.

Judges 7

Judges 7:1–8. Mustering of the Army that Gideon had Collected.—V. 1. When Gideon had been assured of the help of God by this double sign, he went to the battle early the next morning with the people that he had gathered around him. The Israelites encamped above the fountain of *Harod*, i.e., upon a height at the foot of which this fountain sprang; but the camp of Midian was to him (Gideon) to the north of the hill *Moreh* in the valley (of Jezreel: see Judges 6:33). The geographical situation of these two places cannot be determined with certainty. The fountain of *Harod* is never mentioned again, though there is a place of that name referred to in 2 Sam. 23:25 as the home of two of David's heroes; and it was from this, no doubt, that the fountain was named. The hill *Moreh* is also unknown. As it was by the valley (of Jezreel), we cannot possibly think of the grove of *Moreh* at Shechem (Gen. 12:6; Deut. 11:30).

Judges 7:2, 3. The army of the Israelites amounted to 32,000 men (v. 4), but that of the Midianites and their allies was about 135,000 (Judges 8:10), so that they were greatly

superior to the Israelites in numbers. Nevertheless the Lord said to Gideon, "*The people that are with thee are too many for me to give Midian into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, My hand hath helped me.*" רַב followed by מִן is to be understood as a comparative. Gideon was therefore to have a proclamation made before all the people: "*Whosoever is fearful and despondent, let him turn and go back from Mount Gilead.*" The ἄπ. λεγ. צִפְרָה, judging from the Arabic, which signifies to plait, viz., hair, ropes, etc., and the noun צִפְרִיָּה, a circle or circuitous orbit, probably signifies to twist one's self round; hence in this instance to return in windings, to slink away in bypaths. The expression "*from Mount Gilead,*" however, is very obscure. The mountain (or the mountains) of Gilead was on the eastern side of the Jordan; but the Israelitish army was encamped in or near the plain of Jezreel, in the country to the west of the Jordan, and had been gathered from the western tribes alone; so that even the inadmissible rendering, Let him turn and go home to the mountains of Gilead, would not give any appropriate sense. The only course left therefore is either to pronounce it an error of the text, as *Clericus* and *Bertheau* have done, and to regard "Gilead" as a mistake for "Gilboa," or to conclude that there was also a mountain or mountain range named *Gilead* by the plain of Jezreel in western Palestine, just as, according to Josh. 15:10, there was a mountain, or range of mountains, called *Seir*, in the territory of Judah, of which nothing further is known. The appeal which Gideon is here directed to make to the army was prescribed in the law (Deut. 20:8) for every war in which the Israelites should be engaged, and its general object was to fortify the spirit of the army by removing the cowardly and desponding. But in the case before us the intention of the Lord was to deprive His people of all ground for self-glorification. Hence the result of the appeal was one which Gideon himself certainly did not expect,—namely, that more than two-thirds of the soldiers gathered round him—22,000 men

of the people—turned back, and only 10,000 remained.

Judges 7:4. But even this number was regarded by the Lord as still too great, so that He gave to Gideon the still further command, “*Bring them (the 10,000 men) down to the water,*” i.e., the waters formed from the fountain of Harod, “*and I will purify them for thee there* (צָרַף, separate those appointed for the battle from the rest of the army; the singular suffix refers to הָעָם), *and say to thee, This shall go with thee, and that,*” i.e., show thee each individual who is to go with thee to the battle, and who not.

Judges 7:5, 6. Gideon was to divide the people by putting all those who should lick the water with their tongue as a dog licketh into one class, and all those who knelt down to drink into another, and so separating the latter from the former. The number of those who licked the water into their mouth with their hand amounted to 300, and all the rest knelt down to drink. “*To lick with their hand to their mouth,*” i.e., to take the water from the brook with the hollow of their hand, and lap it into the mouth with their tongue as a dog does, is only a more distinct expression for “licking with the tongue.” The 300 men who quenched their thirst in this manner were certainly not the cowardly or indolent who did not kneel down to drink in the ordinary way, either from indolence or fear, as *Josephus, Theodoret,* and others supposed, but rather the bravest,—namely those who, when they reached a brook before the battle, did not allow themselves time to kneel down and satisfy their thirst in the most convenient manner, but simply took up some water with their hands as they stood in their military accoutrements, to strengthen themselves for the battle, and then proceeded without delay against the foe. By such a sign as this, *Bertheau* supposes that even an ordinary general might have been able to recognise the bravest of his army. No doubt: but if this account had not been handed down, it is certain that it would never have occurred to an ordinary or even a distinguished general to adopt such a method of putting the bravery of

his troops to the test; and even Gideon, the hero of God, would never have thought of diminishing still further through such a trial an army which had already become so small, or of attempting to defeat an army of more than 100,000 men by a few hundred of the bravest men, if the Lord himself had not commanded it. Whilst the Lord was willing to strengthen the feeble faith of Gideon by the sign with the fleece of wool, and thus to raise him up to full confidence in the divine omnipotence, He also required of him, when thus strengthened, an attestation of his faith, by the purification of his army that he might give the whole glory to Him, and accept the victory over that great multitude from His hand alone.

Judges 7:7. After his fighting men had been divided into a small handful of 300 men on the one hand, and the large host of 9700 on the other, by the fulfilment of the command of God, the Lord required of him that he should send away the latter, “every man to his place,” i.e., to his own home, promising that He would save Israel by the 300 men, and deliver the Midianites into their hand. The promise preceded the command, to render it easier to Gideon to obey it. “*All the people,*” after taking out the 300 men, that is to say, the 9700 that remained.

Judges 7:8. “*So they (the 300 picked men) took the provision of the people in their hand, and their (the people’s) trumpets (the suffix points back to הָעָם, the people); and all the men of Israel (the 9700) he had sent away every one to his tents, i.e., to his home (see at Deut. 16:7), and the three hundred men he had kept by himself; but the camp of the Midianites was below to him in the valley.*” These words bring the preparations for the battle to a close, and the last clause introduces the ensuing conflict and victory. In the first clause הָעָם (the people) cannot be the subject, partly because of the actual sense, since the 300 warriors, who are no doubt the persons intended (cf. v. 16), cannot be called “the people,” in distinction from “all the men of Israel,” and partly also

because of the expression אֶת־צֶדָה, which would be construed in that case without any article in violation of the ordinary rule. We must rather read אֶת־צֶדָה הָעָם, as the LXX and the Chaldee have done. The 300 men took the provision of the people, i.e., provision for the war, from the people who had been sent away, and the war-trumpets; so that every one of the 300 had a trumpet now, and as the provision of the people was also probably kept in vessels or pitchers (*caddim*: v. 16), a jug as well. The subject יִקְחוּ is to be taken from the first clause of the seventh verse. The sentences which follow from וְאֵת כָּל־אִישׁ are circumstantial clauses, introduced to bring out distinctly the situation in which Gideon was now placed. הִתְחַזֵּיק בָּ, the opposite of שְׁלַח, to send away, signifies to hold fast, to keep back or by himself, as in Ex. 9:2. לוֹ, to him, Gideon, who was standing by the fountain of Harod with his 300 men, the situation of Midian was underneath in the valley (see v. 1, and Judges 6:33).

Judges 7:9–22. Gideon's Battle and Victory.—Vv. 9–11a. The following night the Lord commanded Gideon to go down to the camp of the enemy, as He had given it into his hand (the perfect is used to denote the purpose of God which had already been formed, as in Judges 4:14). But in order to fill him with confidence for such an enterprise, which to all human appearance was a very rash one, God added, "If thou art afraid to go down, go thou with thine attendant Purah down to the camp, and thou wilt hear what they say, and thy hands will thereby become strong." The meaning of the protasis is not, If thou art afraid to go down into the camp of the enemy alone, or to visit the enemy unarmed, take Purah thine armour-bearer with thee, to make sure that thou hast weapons to use (*Bertheau*); for, apart from the fact that the addition "unarmed" is perfectly arbitrary, the apodosis "thou wilt see," etc., by no means agrees with this explanation. The meaning is rather this: Go with thy 300 men into (בָּ) the hostile camp to smite it, for I have

given it into thy hand; but if thou art afraid to do this, go down with thine attendant to (אֶל) the camp, to ascertain the state and feeling of the foe, and thou wilt hear what they say, i.e., as we gather from what follows, how they are discouraged, have lost all hope of defeating you, and from that thou wilt gather courage and strength for the battle. On the expression "thine hands shall be strengthened," see 2 Sam. 2:7. The expression which follows, וַיִּרְדֹּתָ בַמַּחֲנֶה, is not a mere repetition of the command to go down with his attendant to the hostile camp, but describes the result of the stimulus given to his courage: And then thou wilt go fearlessly into the hostile camp to attack the foe. יִרְדֹּתָ (vv. 9, 11) is to be distinguished from יִרְדֹּתָ אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה in v. 10. The former signifies to go down into the camp to smite the foe; the latter, to go down to the camp to reconnoitre it, and is equivalent to the following clause: "he went to the outside of the camp."

Judges 7:11–14. But when Gideon came with his attendant to the end of the armed men (*chamushim*, as in Josh. 1:14, Ex. 13:18) in the hostile camp, and the enemy were lying spread out with their camels in the valley, an innumerable multitude, he heard one (of the fighting men) relate to his fellow (i.e., to another) a dream which he had had: "Behold a cake of barley bread was rolling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and smote it, so that it fell and turned upwards, and let the tent lay along." Then the other replied, "This is nothing else than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash the Israelite: God hath given Midian and all the camp into his hand." "The end of fighting men" signifies the outermost or foremost of the outposts in the enemy's camp, which contained not only fighting men, but the whole of the baggage of the enemy, who had invaded the land as nomads, with their wives, their children, and their flocks. In v. 12, the innumerable multitude of the enemy is described once more in the form of a circumstantial clause, as in Judges 6:5, not so much to distinguish the fighting men from the camp generally, as to

bring out more vividly the contents and meaning of the following dream. The comparison of the enemy to the sand by the sea-side recalls Josh. 11:4, and is frequently met with (see Gen. 22:17; 32:13; 1 Sam. 13:5). With the word **אֶבֶן** in v. 13, the thread of the narrative, which was broken off by the circumstantial clause in v. 12, is resumed and carried further. The **ἀπ. λεγ. κερὶ** (*Keri*, **לְצֵלֶה**) is rendered *cake, placenta*, by the early translators: see *Ges. Thes.* p. 1170. The derivation of the word has been disputed, and is by no means certain, as **לְצֵלֶה** does not give any suitable meaning, either in the sense of to ring or to be overshadowed, and the meaning to roll (*Ges. l.c.*) cannot be philologically sustained; whilst **לְצֵלֶה**, to roast, can hardly be thought of, since this is merely used to denote the roasting of flesh, and **לְקַח** was the word commonly applied to the roasting of grains, and even “the roasted of barley bread” would hardly be equivalent to *subcinericeus panis ex hordeo* (*Vulgate*). “*The tent*,” with the definite article, is probably the principal tent in the camp, i.e., the tent of the general. **לְמַעַל**, upwards, so that the bottom came to the top. “*The tent lay along*,” or the tent fell, lay in ruins, is added to give emphasis to the words. “*This is nothing if not*,” i.e., nothing but. The cake of bread which had rolled into the Midianitish camp and overturned the tent, signifies nothing else than the sword of Gideon, i.e., Gideon, who is bursting into the camp with his sword, and utterly destroying it.

This interpretation of the dream was certainly a natural one under the circumstances. Gideon is especially mentioned simply as the leader of the Israelites; whilst the loaf of barley bread, which was the food of the poorer classes, is to be regarded as strictly speaking the symbol of Israel, which was so despised among the nations. The rising of the Israelites under Gideon had not remained a secret to the Midianites, and no doubt filled them with fear; so that in a dream this fear might easily assume the form of the defeat or desolation and

destruction of their camp by Gideon. And the peculiar form of the dream is also psychologically conceivable. As the tent is everything to a nomad, he might very naturally picture the cultivator of the soil as a man whose life is all spent in cultivating and baking bread. In this way bread would become almost involuntarily a symbol of the cultivator of the soil, whilst in his own tent he would see a symbol not only of his mode of life, but of his freedom, greatness, and power. If we add to this, that the free pastoral tribes, particularly the Bedouins of Arabia, look down with pride not only upon the poor tillers of the soil, but even upon the inhabitants of towns, and that in Palestine, the land of wheat, none but the poorer classes feed upon barley bread, we have here all the elements out of which the dream of the Midianitish warrior was formed. The Israelites had really been crushed by the Midianites into a poor nation of slaves. But whilst the dream itself admits of being explained in this manner in a perfectly natural way, it acquires the higher supernatural character of a divine inspiration, from the fact that God not only foreknew it, but really caused the Midianite to dream, and to relate the dream to his comrade, just at the time when Gideon had secretly entered the camp, so that he should hear it, and discover therefrom, as God had foretold him, the despondency of the foe. Under these circumstances, Gideon could not fail to regard the dream as a divine inspiration, and to draw the assurance from it, that God had certainly given the Midianites into his hands.

Judges 7:15–18. When therefore he had heard the dream related and interpreted, he worshipped, praising the Lord with joy, and returned to the camp to attack the enemy without delay. He then divided the 300 men into three companies, i.e., three attacking columns, and gave them all trumpets and empty pitchers, with torches in the pitchers in their hands. The pitchers were taken that they might hide the burning torches in them during their advance to surround the enemy’s camp, and then increase the noise at the time of the attack, by dashing the pitchers to pieces (v. 20), and

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thus through the noise, as well as the sudden lighting up of the burning torches, deceive the enemy as to the strength of the army. At the same time he commanded them, “*See from me, and do likewise,*”—a short expression for, As ye see me do, so do ye also (בִּן, without the previous ד, or כְּאֶשֶׁר, as in Judges 5:15; see *Ewald*, § 260, a.),—“*I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me; ye also blow the trumpets round about the entire camp,*” which the 300 men divided into three companies were to surround, “*and say, To the Lord and Gideon.*” According to v. 20, this war-cry ran fully thus: “*Sword to (for) the Lord and Gideon.*” This addition in v. 20, however, does not warrant us in inserting “*chereb*” (sword) in the text here, as some of the early translators and MSS have done.

Judges 7:19. Gideon then proceeded with the 100 who were with him, i.e., the company which was led by himself personally, to the end of the hostile camp, at the beginning of the middle watch, i.e., at midnight. רֵאשׁ is an accusative defining the time: see *Ges.* 118, 2, and *Ewald*, § 204, a. The only other watch that is mentioned in the Old Testament beside the middle night-watch, is the morning night-watch (*Ex.* 14:24; *1 Sam.* 11:11), from which it has been correctly inferred, that the Israelites divided the night into three night-watches. The division into four watches (*Matt.* 14:25; *Mark* 6:48) was first adopted by the Jews from the Romans. “*They (the Midianites) had only (just) posted the watchmen (of the middle watch),*”—a circumstantial clause, introduced to give greater distinctness to the situation. When the first sentries were relieved, and the second posted, so that they thought they might make quite sure of their night’s rest once more, Gideon and his host arrived at the end of the camp, and, as we must supply from the context, the other two hosts at two other ends of the camp, who all blew their trumpets, breaking the pitchers in their hands at the same time. The *inf. abs.* נָפֹץ, as a continuation of the finite verb יִתְקַעוּ, indicates that the fact was

contemporaneous with the previous one (see *Ewald*, § 351, c.).

Judges 7:20. According to the command which they had received (v. 17), the other two tribes followed his example. “*Then the three companies blew the trumpets, broke the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right to blow, and cried, Sword to the Lord and Gideon! And they stood every one his place round about the camp,*” sc., without moving, so that the Midianites necessarily thought that there must be a numerous army advancing behind the torch-bearers. וַיִּרְקוּ וַיָּרוּ, “*and the whole army ran,*” i.e., there began a running hither and thither in the camp of the enemy, who had been frightened out of their night’s rest by the unexpected blast of the trumpets, the noise, and the war-cry of the Israelitish warriors; “*and they (the enemy) lifted up a cry (of anguish and alarm), and caused to fly*” (carried off), sc., their tents (i.e., their families) and their herds, or all their possessions (cf. *Judges* 6:11, *Ex.* 9:20). The *Chethibh* יָרָסוּ is the original reading, and the *Keri* יָרוּסוּ a bad emendation.

Judges 7:22. Whilst the 300 men blew their trumpets, “*Jehovah set the sword of one against the other, and against the whole camp,*” i.e., caused one to turn his sword against the other and against all the camp, that is to say, not merely man against man, but against every one in the camp, so that there arose a terrible slaughter throughout the whole camp. The first clause, “*and the three hundred blew the trumpets,*” simply resumes the statement in v. 20, “*the three companies blew the trumpets,*” for the purpose of appending to it the further progress of the attack, and the result of the battle. *Bertheau* inserts in a very arbitrary manner the words, “*the second time.*” His explanation of the next clause (“*then the 300 fighting men of Gideon drew the sword at Jehovah’s command, every man against his man*”) is still more erroneous, since it does violence to the constant usage of the expression אִישׁ בְּרֵעֵהוּ (see *1 Sam.* 14:20, *2 Chron.* 20:23, *Isa.*

3:5, Zech. 8:10). "And all the camp of the Midianites fled to Beth-shittah to Zeredah, to the shore of Abel-meholah, over Tabbath." The situation of these places, which are only mentioned here, with the exception of Abel-meholah, the home of Elisha (1 Kings 19:16; 4:12), has not yet been determined. According to the Syriac, the Arabic, and some of the MSS, we should read *Zeredathah* instead of *Zererathah*, and *Zeredathah* is only another form for *Zarthan* (comp. 1 Kings 7:46 with 2 Chron. 4:17). This is favoured by the situation of *Zarthan* in the valley of the Jordan, probably near the modern *Kurn Sartabeh* (see p. 35), inasmuch as in all probability Beth-shittah and Abel-meholah are to be sought for in the valley of the Jordan; and according to v. 24, the enemy fled to the Jordan. *Beth-shittah*, i.e., acacia-house, is not the same place as the village of *Shutta* mentioned by *Robinson* (iii. p. 219), since this village, according to *Van de Velde's* map, was to the north of Gilboa. For although *Shutta* is favoured by the circumstance, that from a very ancient time there was a road running from Jezreel along the valley, between the so-called Little Hermon (*Duhy*) and the mountains of Gilboa, and past Beisan to the Jordan; and the valley of Jalud, on the northern side of which *Shutta* was situated, may be regarded as the opening of the plain of Jezreel into the valley of the Jordan (see *v. Raumer*, Pal. p. 41, and *Rob.* iii. p. 176); and *v. Raumer* conjectures from this, that "the flight of the Midianites was apparently directed to Bethsean, on account of the nature of the ground,"—this assumption is rendered very questionable by the fact that the flying foe did not cross the Jordan in the neighbourhood of Beisan, but much farther to the south, viz., according to Judges 8:4, in the neighbourhood of *Succoth*, which was on the south side of the *Nahr Zerka* (*Jabbok*). From this we are led to conjecture, that they were not encamped in the north-eastern part of the plain of Jezreel, in the neighbourhood of Jezreel (*Zerin*) and *Shunem* (*Solam*), but in the south-eastern part of this plain, and that after they had been beaten there they fled southwards from Gilboa, say from the district of *Ginaea* (*Jenin*) to the Jordan. In this

case we have to seek for Abel-shittah on the south-east of the mountains of Gilboa, to the north of Zeredathah (*Zarthan*). From this point they fled on still farther to the "shore of Abel-meholah." הַפֶּשֶׁת does not mean boundary, but brink; here the bank of the Jordan, like הַפֶּשֶׁת in 2 Kings 2:13. The bank or strand of *Abel-meholah* is that portion of the western bank of the Jordan or of the Ghor, above which Abel-meholah was situated. According to the *Onom.* (s. v. Αβελμαελαι, *Abelmaula*), this place was in the *Aulon* (or Ghor), ten Roman miles to the south of Scythopolis (*Beisan*), and was called at that time Βηθμαιελά or *Bethaula*. According to this statement, *Abel-meholah* would have to be sought for near *Churbet es Shuk*, in the neighbourhood of the *Wady Maleh* (see *V. de Velde*, Mem. p. 280). And lastly, *Tabbath* must have been situated somewhere to the south of Abel-meholah.

Judges 7:23–8:3. Pursuit of the Enemy as far as the Jordan.—V. 23. As soon as the Midianites had been put to flight, the Israelitish men of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh, let themselves be convened for the purpose of pursuing them: i.e., the men of these tribes, whom Gideon had sent away before the battle, and who were on their way home, could be summoned back again in a very short time to join in the pursuit of the flying foe. The omission of Zebulun (Judges 6:35) is, in all probability, simply to be attributed to the brevity of the account.

Judges 7:24, 25. In order to cut off the retreat of the enemy who was flying to the Jordan, Gideon sent messengers into the whole of the mountains of Ephraim with this appeal to the Ephraimites, "Come down (from your mountains into the lowlands of the Jordan) to meet Midian, and take the waters from them to Bethbarah and the Jordan," sc., by taking possession of this district (see Judges 3:28). "The waters," mentioned before the Jordan and distinguished from it, must have been streams across which the flying foe would have to cross to reach the Jordan, namely, the different brooks and rivers, such as *Wady Maleh*, *Fyadh*,

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Jamel, Tubâs, etc., which flowed down from the eastern side of the mountains of Ephraim into the Jordan, and ran through the Ghor to Bethbarah. The situation of *Bethbarah* is unknown. Even *Eusebius* could say nothing definite concerning the place; and the conjecture that it is the same as Bethabara, which has been regarded ever since the time of Origen as the place mentioned in John 1:28 where John baptized, throws no light upon the subject, as the situation of Bethabara is also unknown, to say nothing of the fact that the identity of the two names is very questionable. The Ephraimites responded to this appeal and took possession of the waters mentioned, before the Midianites, who could only move slowly with their flocks and herds, were able to reach the Jordan. They then captured two of the princes of the Midianites and put them to death: one of them, *Oreb*, i.e., the raven, at the rock *Oreb*; the other, *Zeeb*, i.e., the wolf, at the wine-press of *Zeeb*. Nothing further is known about these two places. The rock of *Oreb* is only mentioned again in Isa. 10:26, when the prophet alludes to this celebrated victory. So much, however, is evident from the verse before us, viz., that the Midianites were beaten by the Ephraimites at both places, and that the two princes fell there, and the places received their names from that circumstance. They were not situated in the land to the east of the Jordan, as *Gesenius* (on Isa. 10:26), *Rosenmüller*, and others infer from the fact that the Ephraimites brought the heads of *Oreb* and *Zeeb* to Gideon מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן (v. 25), but on the western side of the Jordan, where the Ephraimites had taken possession of the waters and the Jordan in front of the Midianites. מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן does not mean "from the other side of the Jordan," but simply "on the other side of (beyond) the Jordan," as in Josh. 13:32; 18:7, 1 Kings 14:15; and the statement here is not that the Ephraimites brought the heads from the other side to Gideon on the west of the river, but that they brought them to Gideon when he was in the land to the east of the Jordan. This explanation of the words is required by the context, as well

as by the foregoing remark, "they pursued Midian," according to which the Ephraimites continued the pursuit of the Midianites after slaying these princes, and also by the complaint brought against Gideon by the Ephraimites, which is not mentioned till afterwards (Judges 8:1ff.), that he had not summoned them to the war. It is true, this is given before the account of Gideon's crossing over the Jordan (Judges 8:4), but in order of time it did not take place till afterwards, and, as *Bertheau* has correctly shown, the historical sequence is somewhat anticipated.

Judges 8

Judges 8:1-3. When the Ephraimites met with Gideon, after they had smitten the Midianites at *Oreb* and *Zeeb*, and were pursuing them farther, they said to him, "What is the thing that thou hast done to us (i.e., what is the reason for your having done this to us), not to call us when thou wentest forth to make war upon Midian? And they did chide with him sharply," less from any dissatisfied longing for booty, than from injured pride or jealousy, because Gideon had made war upon the enemy and defeated them without the co-operation of this tribe, which was striving for the leadership. Gideon's reply especially suggests the idea of injured ambition: "What have I now done like you?" sc., as if I had done as great things as you. "Is not the gleaning of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" The gleaning of Ephraim is the victory gained over the flying Midianites. Gideon declares this to be better than the vintage of Abiezer, i.e., the victory obtained by him the Abiezrite with his 300 men, because the Ephraimites had slain two Midianitish princes. The victory gained by the Ephraimites must indeed have been a very important one, as it is mentioned by Isaiah (Is. 10:26) as a great blow of the Lord upon Midian. "And what could I do like you?" i.e., could I accomplish such great deeds as you? "Then their anger turned away from him." רִיחַ, the breathing of the nose, snorting, hence "anger," as in Isa. 25:4, etc.

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Pursuit of the Midianites. Other Acts of Gideon; His Appointment as Judge.—Ch. 8:4–35.

Judges 8:4–12. Pursuit and Complete Overthrow of the Midianites.—That the Midianites whom God had delivered into his hand might be utterly destroyed, Gideon pursued those who had escaped across the Jordan, till he overtook them on the eastern boundary of Gilead and smote them there.

Judges 8:4, 5. When he came to the Jordan with his three hundred men, who were exhausted with the pursuit, he asked the inhabitants of Succoth for loaves of bread for the people in his train. So far as the construction is concerned, the words from עָבַר to וְרִדְפִים form a circumstantial clause inserted as a parenthesis into the principal sentence, and subordinate to it: “When Gideon came to the Jordan, passing over he and the three hundred men ... then he said to the men of Succoth.” “Exhausted and pursuing,” i.e., exhausted with pursuing. The *vav* is explanatory, *lit.* “and indeed pursuing,” for “because he pursued.” The rendering πεινῶντες adopted by the LXX in the *Cod. Alex.* is merely an arbitrary rendering of the word רִדְפִים, and without any critical worth. Gideon had crossed the Jordan, therefore, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Succoth. Succoth was upon the eastern side of the valley of the Jordan (Josh. 13:27), not opposite to Bethshean, but, according to Gen. 33:17, on the south side of the Jabbok (Zerka).

Judges 8:6. The princes of Succoth, however, showed so little sympathy and nationality of feeling, that instead of taking part of the attack upon the enemies of Israel, they even refused to supply bread to refresh their brethren of the western tribes who were exhausted with the pursuit of the foe. They said (the sing. וַיֹּאמֶר may be explained on the ground that one spoke in the name of all: see *Ewald*, § 319, *a.*), “Is the fist of Zebah and Zalmunna already in thy hand (power), that we should give thine army bread?” In these words there is not only an expression of cowardice, or fear of the vengeance which the Midianites might take when they returned

upon those who had supported Gideon and his host, but contempt of the small force which Gideon had, as if it were impossible for him to accomplish anything at all against the foe; and in this contempt they manifested their utter want of confidence in God.

Judges 8:7. Gideon threatened them, therefore, with severe chastisement in the event of a victorious return. “If Jehovah give Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will thresh your flesh (your body) with desert thorns and thistles.” The verb דָּבַד, constructed with a double accusative (see *Ewald*, § 283, *a.*), is used in a figurative sense: “to thresh,” in other words, to punish severely. “Thorns of the desert” as strong thorns, as the desert is the natural soil for thorn-bushes. The ἀπ. λεγ. βῆρῶν also signifies prickly plants, according to the early versions and the Rabbins, probably “such as grow upon stony ground” (*Bertheau*). The explanation “threshing machines with stones or flints underneath them,” which was suggested by *J. D. Michaelis* and *Celsius*, and adopted by *Gesenius*, cannot be sustained.

Judges 8:8, 9. The inhabitants of Pnuel on the north bank of the Jabbok (see at Gen. 32:24ff.) behaved in the same churlish manner to Gideon, and for this he also threatened them: “If I return in peace,” i.e., unhurt, “I will destroy this tower” (probably the castle of Pnuel).

Judges 8:10–12. The Midianitish kings were at *Karkor* with all the remnant of their army, about fifteen thousand men, a hundred and twenty thousand having already fallen. Gideon followed them thither by the road of the dwellers in tents on the east of *Nobah* and *Jogbeha*; and falling upon them unawares, smote the whole camp, which thought itself quite secure, and took the two kings prisoners, after discomfiting all the camp. The situation of *Karkor*, which is only mentioned here, cannot be determined with certainty. The statement of *Eusebius* and *Jerome* (*Onom. s. v. Καρκά, Carcar*), that it was the castle of *Carcaria*, a day’s journey from *Petra*, is decidedly wrong, since this castle is much too far to the south, as

Gesenius (Thes. p. 1210) has shown. *Karkor* cannot have been very far from *Nobah* and *Jogbeha*. These two places are probably preserved in the ruins of *Nowakis* and *Jebeiha*, on the north-west of *Ammân* (*Rabbath-ammon*; see at Num. 21:31). Now, as *Burckhardt* (Syr. p. 612) also mentions a ruin in the neighbourhood, called *Karkagheisch*, on the left of the road from Szalt to *Ammân*, and at the most an hour and a half to the north-west of *Ammân*, *Knobel* (on Num. 32:42) is inclined to regard this ruin as *Karkor*. If this supposition could be proved to be correct, Gideon would have fallen upon the camp of the enemy from the north-east. For “*the way of the dwellers in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbeha*” cannot well be any other than the way which ran to the east of *Nobah* and *Jogbeha*, past the most easterly frontier city of the *Gadites*, to the nomads who dwelt in the desert. הַשְּׂכֹנֵי בְּאֶהָלִים has the article attached to the governing noun, which may easily be explained in this instance from the intervening preposition. The passive participle שָׁכַן has an intransitive force (see *Ewald*, § 149, a.). The verb הִתְחַרֵּד in the circumstantial clause acquires the force of the pluperfect from the context. When he had startled the camp out of its security, having alarmed it by his unexpected attack, he succeeded in taking the two kings prisoners.

Judges 8:13–21. Punishment of the Towns of Succoth and Pnuel, and Execution of the Captures Kings of Midian.

Judges 8:13, 14. Gideon returned victorious from the war, מִלְמַעְלָה הֶחָרָס, “*from by the ascent (or mountain road) of Hecheres*,” a place in front of the town of Succoth, with which we are not acquainted. This is the rendering adopted by the LXX, the Peshito, and the Arabic; but the rest of the early translators have merely guessed at the meaning. The *Chaldee*, which has been followed by the *Rabbins* and *Luther*, has rendered it “before sunset,” in utter opposition to the rules of the language; for although *cheres* is a word used poetically to denote the sun, מִמְעָלָה cannot mean the setting of the sun. *Aquila*

and *Symmachus*, on the other hand, confound הָרָס with הָרִים.—Gideon laid hold of a young man of the people of Succoth, and got him to write down for him the princes and elders (magistrates and rulers) of the city,—in all seventy-seven men. וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ וַיִּכְתֹּב is a short expression for “he asked him the names of the princes and elders of the city, and the boy wrote them down.” אֵלָיו, *lit.* to him, i.e., for him.

Judges 8:15, 16. Gideon then reproached the elders with the insult they had offered him (v. 6), and had them punished with desert thorns and thistles. “*Men of Succoth*” (vv. 15a and 16b) is a general expression for “elders of Succoth” (v. 16a); and elders a general term applied to all the representatives of the city, including the princes. אֲשֶׁר הִרְפִּיתֶם אֵתִי, with regard to whom ye have despised me. אֲשֶׁר is the accusative of the more distant or second object, not the subject, as *Stud.* supposes. “*And he taught the men of Succoth* (i.e., caused them to know, made them feel, punished them) with them (the thorns).” There is no good ground for doubting the correctness of the reading וַיִּדַע. The free renderings of the LXX, *Vulg.*, etc., are destitute of critical worth; and *Bertheau’s* assertion, that if it were the *Hiphil* it would be written וַיִּדַע, is proved to be unfounded by the defective writing in Num. 16:5, Job 32:7.

Judges 8:17. Gideon also inflicted upon Pnuel the punishment threatened in v. 9. The punishment inflicted by Gideon upon both the cities was well deserved in all respects, and was righteously executed. The inhabitants of these cities had not only acted treacherously to Israel as far as they could, from the most selfish interests, in a holy conflict for the glory of the Lord and the freedom of His people, but in their contemptuous treatment of Gideon and his host they had poured contempt upon the Lord, who had shown them to be His own soldiers before the eyes of the whole nation by the victory which He had given them over the innumerable army of the foe. Having been called by the Lord

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to be the deliverer and judge of Israel, it was Gideon's duty to punish the faithless cities.

Judges 8:18–21. After punishing these cities, Gideon repaid the two kings of Midian, who had been taken prisoners, according to their doings. From the judicial proceedings instituted with regard to them (vv. 18, 19), we learn that these kings had put the brothers of Gideon to death, and apparently not in open fight; but they had murdered them in an unrighteous and cruel manner. And Gideon made them atone for this with their own lives, according to the strict *jus talionis*. אִי־פֹה, in v. 18, does not mean *where?* but "*in what condition, of what form, were the men whom he slew at Tabor?*" i.e., either in the city of Tabor or at Mount Tabor (see Judges 4:6, and Josh. 19:22). The kings replied: "*As thou so they*" (those men), i.e., they were all as stately as thou art, "*every one like the form of kings' sons.*" אִי־כָל־אֶחָד־לְכָל־אֶחָד, one, for every one, like אִי־כָל־אֶחָד in 2 Kings

15:20, or more frequently אִי־כָל alone. As the men who had been slain were Gideon's own brothers, he swore to those who had done the deed, i.e., to the two kings, "*As truly as Jehovah liveth, if ye had let them live I should not have put you to death;*" and then commanded his first-born son Jether to slay them, for the purpose of adding the disgrace of falling by the hand of a boy. "*But the boy drew not his sword from fear, because he was yet a boy.*" And the kings then said to Gideon, "*Rise thou and stab us, for as the man so is his strength,*" i.e., such strength does not belong to a boy, but to a man. Thereupon Gideon slew them, and took the little moons upon the necks of their camels as booty. "*The little moons*" were crescent-shaped ornaments of silver or gold, such as men and women wore upon their necks (see v. 26, and Isa. 3:18), and which they also hung upon the necks of camels,—a custom still prevalent in Arabia (see Schröder, *de vestitu mul. hebr.* pp. 39, 40, and Wellsted, *Reisen in Arab.* i. p. 209).

Judges 8:22–32. Gideon's Remaining Acts, and Death.—Vv. 22, 23. As Gideon had so gloriously delivered Israel from the severe and long oppression on the part of the Midianites, the

Israelites offered him an hereditary crown. "*The men of Israel*" were hardly all the twelve tribes, but probably only the northern tribes of the western part of the land already mentioned in Judges 6:35, who had suffered the most severely from the Midianitish oppression, and had been the first to gather round Gideon to make an attack upon the foe. The temptation to accept the government of Israel was resisted by this warrior of God. "*Neither I nor my son shall rule over you; Jehovah shall rule over you,*" was his reply to this offer, containing an evident allusion to the destination and constitution of the tribes of Israel as a nation which Jehovah had chosen to be His own possession, and to which He had just made himself known in so conspicuous a manner as their omnipotent Ruler and King. This refusal of the regal dignity on the part of Gideon is not at variance with the fact, that Moses had already foreseen the possibility that at some future time the desire for a king would arise in the nation, and had given them a law for the king expressly designed for such circumstances as these (Deut. 17:14ff.). For Gideon did not decline the honour because Jehovah was King in Israel, i.e., because he regarded an earthly monarchy in Israel as irreconcilable with the heavenly monarchy of Jehovah, but simply because he thought the government of Jehovah in Israel amply sufficient, and did not consider either himself or his sons called to found an earthly monarchy.

Judges 8:24ff. Gideon resisted the temptation to put an earthly crown upon his head, from true fidelity to Jehovah; but he yielded to another temptation, which this appeal on the part of the people really involved, namely, the temptation to secure to himself for the future the position to which the Lord had called and exalted him. The Lord had called him to be the deliverer of Israel by visibly appearing in His angel, and had not only accepted the gift which he offered Him, as a well-pleasing sacrifice, but had also commanded him to build an altar, and by offering an atoning burnt-sacrifice to re-establish the worship of Jehovah in his family and tribe, and to restore the favour of God to His people once more. Lastly, the Lord had

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made His will known to him again and again; whilst by the glorious victory which He had given to him and to his small band over the powerful army of the foe, He had confirmed him as His chosen servant to be the deliverer and judge of Israel. The relation which Gideon thus sustained to the Lord he imagined that he ought to preserve; and therefore, after declining the royal dignity, he said to the people, *"I will request of you one request, that ye give me every one the ring that he has received as booty."* This request the historian explains by adding the remark: *"for they (the enemy) had golden rings, for they were Ishmaelites,"* from whom therefore the Israelites were able to get an abundance of rings as booty. *Ishmaelites* is the general name for the nomad tribes of Arabia, to whom the Midianites also belonged (as in Gen. 37:25).

Judges 8:25, 26. This request of Gideon's was cheerfully fulfilled: *"They spread out the cloth (brought for collecting the rings), and threw into it every one the ring that he had received as booty."* *Simlah*, the upper garment, was for the most part only a large square piece of cloth. The weight of these golden rings amounted to 1700 shekels, i.e., about 50 s., (לִבְדָּ מִן) separate from, i.e., beside, the remaining booty, for which Gideon had not asked, and which the Israelites kept for themselves, viz., the little moons, the ear-pendants (*netiphoth*, lit. little drops, probably pearl-shaped ear-drops: see Isa. 3:19), and the purple clothes which were worn by the kings of Midian (i.e., which they had on), and also apart from the neck-bands upon the necks of their camels. Instead of the *anakoth* or necklaces (v. 26), the *saharonim*, or little moons upon the necks of the camels, are mentioned in v. 21 as the more valuable portion of these necklaces. Even at the present day the Arabs are accustomed to ornament the necks of these animals "with a band of cloth or leather, upon which small shells called cowries are strung or sewed in the form of a crescent. The sheiks add silver ornaments to these, which make a rich booty in time of war" (*Wellsted*, Reise, i. p. 209). The Midianitish kings had their camels

ornamented with golden crescents. This abundance of golden ornaments will not surprise us, when we consider that the Arabs still carry their luxurious tastes for such things to a very great excess. *Wellsted* (i. p. 224) states that "the women in *Omân* spend considerable amounts in the purchase of silver ornaments, and their children are literally laden with them. I have sometimes counted fifteen ear-rings upon each side; and the head, breast, arms, and ankles are adorned with the same profusion." As the Midianitish army consisted of 130,000 men, of whom 15,000 only remained at the commencement of the last engagement, the Israelites may easily have collected 5000 golden rings, or even more, which might weigh 1700 shekels.

Judges 8:17. *"And Gideon made it into an ephod,"* i.e., used the gold of the rings obtained from the booty for making an ephod. There is no necessity, however, to understand this as signifying that 1700 shekels or 50 s. of gold had been used for the ephod itself, but simply that the making of the ephod was accomplished with this gold. The word *ephod* does not signify an image of Jehovah, or an idol, as *Gesenius* and others maintain, but the shoulder-dress of the high priest, no doubt including the *choshen* belonging to it, with the Urim and Thummim, as in 1 Sam. 14:3; 21:10; 23:6, 9, etc. The material for this was worked throughout with gold threads; and in addition to that there were precious stones set in gold braid upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod and upon the *choshen*, and chains made of gold twist for fastening the *choshen* upon the ephod (see Ex. 28:6–30). Now, if 50 s. of gold could not be used for these things, there were also fourteen precious stones to be procured, and the work itself to be paid for, so that 50 s. of gold might easily be devoted to the preparation of this state dress. The large quantity of gold, therefore, does not warrant us in introducing arbitrarily into the text the establishment of a formal sanctuary, and the preparation of a golden image of Jehovah in the form of a bull, as *Bertheau* has done, since there is no reference

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to פָּסַל or מִסְכָּה, as in Judges 17–18; and even the other words of the text do not point to the founding of a sanctuary and the setting up of an image of Jehovah. The expression which follows, וַיִּצַּג אֹתוֹ, does not affirm that “he set it up,” but may also mean, “he kept it in his city of Ophrah.” וַיִּצַּג is never used to denote the setting up of an image or statue, and signifies not only to put up, but also to lay down (e.g., Judges 6:37), and to let a thing stand, or leave behind (Gen. 33:15). The further remark of the historian, “and all Israel went thither a whoring after it, and it became a snare to Gideon and his house,” does not presuppose the founding of a sanctuary or temple in Ophrah, and the setting up of a golden calf there. In what the whoring of Israel after the ephod, i.e., the idolatry of the Israelites with Gideon’s ephod which was kept in Ophrah, consisted, cannot be gathered or determined from the use of the ephod in the worship of Jehovah under the Mosaic law. “The breastplate upon the coat, and the holy lot, were no doubt used in connection with idolatry” (*Oehler*), and Gideon had an ephod made in his town of Ophrah, that he might thereby obtain revelations from the Lord. We certainly are not for a moment to think of an exposure of the holy coat for the people to worship. It is far more probable that Gideon put on the ephod and wore it as a priest, when he wished to inquire and learn the will of the Lord. It is possible that he also sacrificed to the Lord upon the altar that was built at Ophrah (Judges 6:24). The motive by which he was led to do this was certainly not merely ambition, as *Bertheau* supposes, impelling the man who, along with his followers, and maintained an independent attitude towards the tribe of Ephraim in the war itself (Judges 8:1ff.), to act independently of the common sanctuary of the congregation which was within the territory of Ephraim, and also of the office of the high priest in the time of peace as well. For there is not the slightest trace to be found of such ambition as this in anything that he did during the conflict with the Midianites. The germs of Gideon’s error, which became a snare to him and to his

house, lie unquestionably deeper than this, namely, in the fact that the high-priesthood had probably lost its worth in the eyes of the people on account of the worthlessness of its representatives, so that they no longer regarded the high priest as the sole or principal medium of divine revelation; and therefore Gideon, to whom the Lord had manifested himself directly, as He had not to any judge or leader of the people since the time of Joshua, might suppose that he was not acting in violation of the law, when he had an ephod made, and thus provided himself with a substratum or vehicle for inquiring the will of the Lord. His sin therefore consisted chiefly in his invading the prerogative of the *Aaronic* priesthood, drawing away the people from the one legitimate sanctuary, and thereby not only undermining the theocratic unity of Israel, but also giving an impetus to the relapse of the nation into the worship of Baal after his death. This sin became a snare to him and to his house.

Judges 8:28–32. The history of Gideon is concluded in vv. 28–32.—V. 28. The Midianites had been so humiliated that they lifted up their head no more, and the land of Israel had rest forty years “*in the days of Gideon*,” i.e., as long as Gideon lived.

Judges 8:29ff. Before the account of his death, a few other notices respecting his family are introduced for the purpose of preparing the way for the following history of the doings of his sons, in which the sin of Gideon came to a head, and the judgment burst upon his house. “*And Jerubbaal, the son of Joash, went and dwelt in his house.*” Both the word וַיֵּלֶךְ, which simply serves to bring out the fact more vividly (see the remarks on Ex. 2:1), and also the choice of the name *Jerubbaal*, merely serve to give greater prominence to the change, from the heat of the war against the Midianites to the quiet retirement of domestic life. Instead of accepting the crown that was offered him and remaining at the head of the nation, the celebrated Baal-fighter retired into private life again. In addition to the seventy sons of his

many wives, there was a son born to him by a concubine, who lived at Shechem and is called his maid-servant in Judges 9:18, and to this son he gave the name of *Abimelech*, i.e., king's father. *אֶת־שְׁמוֹ* is not the same as *קָרָא* *אֶת־שְׁמוֹ*, to give a person a name, but signifies to add a name, or give a surname (see Neh. 9:7, and Dan. 5:12 in the Chaldee). It follows from this, that Abimelech received this name from Gideon as a cognomen answering to his character, and therefore not at the time of his birth, but when he grew up and manifested such qualities as led to the expectation that he would be a king's father.

Judges 8:32. Gideon died at a good old age (see Gen. 15:15; 25:8), and therefore also died a peaceful death (not so his sons; see Judges 9), and was buried in his father's grave at Ophrah (Judges 6:11).

Judges 8:33–35. Vv. 33–35 form the introduction to the history of Gideon's sons.

Judges 8:33. After Gideon's death the Israelites fell once more into the Baal-worship which Gideon had rooted out of his father's city (Judges 6:25ff.), and worshipped *Baal-berith* as their God. *Baal-berith*, the covenant Baal (equivalent to *El-berith*, the covenant god, Judges 9:46), is not Baal as the god of covenants, but, according to Gen. 14:13, Baal as a god in covenant, i.e., Baal with whom they had made a covenant, just as the Israelites had their faithful covenant God in Jehovah (see *Movers*, Phöniz. i. p. 171). The worship of Baal-berith, as performed at Shechem according to Judges 9:46, was an imitation of the worship of Jehovah, an adulteration of that worship, in which Baal was put in the place of Jehovah (see *Hengstenberg*, Dissertations on the Pentateuch, vol. ii. p. 81).

Judges 8:34, 35. In this relapse into the worship of Baal they not only forgot Jehovah, their Deliverer from all their foes, but also the benefits which they owed to Gideon, and showed no kindness to his house in return for all the good which he had shown to Israel. The expression *Jerubbaal-Gideon* is chosen by the

historian here, not for the purely outward purpose of laying express emphasis upon the identity of Gideon and Jerubbaal (*Bertheau*), but to point to what Gideon, the Baal-fighter, had justly deserved from the people of Israel.

Judges 9

Judgment Upon the House of Gideon, or Abimelech's Sins and End.—Ch. 9.

Judges 9. After the death of Gideon, Abimelech, his bastard son, opened a way for himself to reign as king over Israel, by murdering his brethren with the help of the Shechemites (vv. 1–6). For this grievous wrong Jotham, the only one of Gideon's seventy sons who escaped the massacre, reproached the citizens of Shechem in a parable, in which he threatened them with punishment from God (vv. 7–21), which first of all fell upon Shechem within a very short time (vv. 22–49), and eventually reached Abimelech himself (vv. 50–57).

Judges 9:1–6. Having gone to Shechem, the home of his mother (Judges 8:31), Abimelech applied to his mother's brothers and the whole family (all the relations) of the father's house of his mother, and addressed them thus: "*Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the lords of Shechem,*" i.e., speak to them publicly and solemnly. *בְּעֵלֵי שָׁכֶם*, the lords, i.e., the possessors or citizens of Shechem (compare v. 46 with v. 49, where *בְּעֵלֵי מְגִדֹל* is interchangeable with *אֲנָשֵׁי מְגִדֹל*; also Judges 20:5, and Josh. 24:11): they are not merely Canaanitish citizens, of whom there were some still living in Shechem according to v. 28, but all the citizens of the town; therefore chiefly Israelites. "*What is better for you, that seventy men rule over you, all the sons of Jerubbaal, or (only) one man (i.e., Abimelech)? and remember that I am your flesh and bone*" (blood relation, Gen. 29:14). The name "sons of Jerubbaal," i.e., of the man who had destroyed the altar of Baal, was just as little adapted to commend the sons of Gideon to the Shechemites, who were devoted to the worship of Baal, as the remark that seventy men were to rule over them. No such rule ever existed, or

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was even aspired to by the seventy sons of Gideon. But Abimelech assumed that his brothers possessed the same thirst for ruling as he did himself; and the citizens of Shechem might be all the more ready to put faith in his assertions, since the distinction which Gideon had enjoyed was thoroughly adapted to secure a prominent place in the nation for his sons.

Judges 9:3. When his mother's brethren spake to the citizens of Shechem concerning him, i.e., respecting him and his proposal, their heart turned to Abimelech.

Judges 9:4. They gave him seventy shekels of silver from the house of Baal-berith, i.e., from the treasury of the temple that was dedicated to the covenant Baal at Shechem, as temple treasures were frequently applied to political purposes (see 1 Kings 15:18). With this money Abimelech easily hired light and desperate men, who followed him (attached themselves to him); and with their help he murdered his brethren at Ophrah, seventy men, with the exception of Jotham the youngest, who had hidden himself. The number seventy, the total number of his brethren, is reduced by the exception mentioned immediately afterwards to sixty-nine who were really put to death. ריק,

empty, i.e., without moral restraint. פָּרוּז *lit.* gurgling up, boiling over; figuratively, *hot, desperate men*. "Upon (against) one stone," that is to say, by a formal execution: a bloody omen of the kingdom of ten tribes, which was afterwards founded at Shechem by the Ephraimite Jeroboam, in which one dynasty overthrew another, and generally sought to establish its power by exterminating the whole family of the dynasty that had been overthrown (see 1 Kings 15:27ff., 2 Kings 10:1ff.). Even in Judah, Athaliah the worshipper of Baal sought to usurp the government by exterminating the whole of the descendants of her son (2 Kings 11). Such fratricides have also occurred in quite recent times in the Mohammedan countries of the East.

Judges 9:6. "Then all the citizens of Shechem assembled together, and all the house of Millo, and made Abimelech king at the memorial

terebinth at Shechem." Millo is unquestionably the name of the castle or citadel of the town of Shechem, which is called the tower of Shechem in vv. 46–49. The word *Millo* (Chaldee מִלִּיתָא) signifies primarily a rampart, inasmuch as it consisted of two walls, with the space between them filled with rubbish. There was also a *Millo* at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:9; 1 Kings 9:15). "All the house of Millo" are all the inhabitants of the castle, the same persons who are described in v. 46 as "all the men (*baale*) of the tower." The meaning of אֵלֹוֹן מִצֵּב is doubtful. מִצֵּב, the thing set up, is a military post in Isa. 29:3; but it may also mean a monument of memorial, and here it probably denotes the large stone set up as a memorial at Shechem under the oak or terebinth (see Gen. 35:4). The inhabitants of Shechem, the worshippers of Baal-berith, carried out the election of Abimelech as king in the very same place in which Joshua had held the last national assembly, and had renewed the covenant of Israel with Jehovah the true covenant God (Josh. 24:1, 25, 26). It was there in all probability that the temple of Baal-berith was to be found, namely, according to v. 46, near the tower of Shechem or the citadel of Millo.

Judges 9:7–21. When Jotham, who had escaped after the murder, was told of the election which had taken place, he went to the top of Mount Gerizim, which rises as a steep wall of rock to the height of about 800 feet above the valley of Shechem on the south side of the city (*Rob.* iii. p. 96), and cried with a loud voice, "Hearken to me, ye lords of Shechem, and God will also hearken to you." After this appeal, which calls to mind the language of the prophets, he uttered aloud a fable of the trees which wanted to anoint a king over them,—a fable of true prophetic significance, and the earliest with which we are acquainted (vv. 8–15). To the appeal which is made to them in succession to become king over the trees, the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine all reply: Shall we give up our calling, to bear valuable fruits for the good and enjoyment of God and men, and soar above the other trees? The briar, however, to which

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the trees turn last of all, is delighted at the unexpected honour that is offered it, and says, "Will ye in truth anoint me king over you? Then come and trust in my shadow; but if not, let fire go out of the briar and consume the cedars of Lebanon." The rare form מְלוֹכָה (*Chethib*, vv. 8, 12) also occurs in 1 Sam. 28:8, Isa. 32:11, Ps. 26:2: see *Ewald*, § 228, b.). מְלֹכִי (v. 10) is also rare (see *Ewald*, § 226, b.). The form הֶחְדַּלְתִּי (vv. 9, 11, 13), which is quite unique, is not "Hophal or Hiphil, compounded of הֶחְדַּד or הֶחְדַּד" (*Ewald*, § 51, c), for neither the Hophal nor the Hiphil of חָדַל occurs anywhere else; but it is a simple *Kal*, and the obscure *o* sound is chosen instead of the *a* sound for the sake of euphony, i.e., to assist the pronunciation of the guttural syllables which follow one after another. The meaning of the fable is very easy to understand. The olive tree, fig tree, and vine do not represent different historical persons, such as the judges Othniel, Deborah, and Gideon, as the Rabbins affirm, but in a perfectly general way the nobler families or persons who bring forth fruit and blessing in the calling appointed them by God, and promote the prosperity of the people and kingdom in a manner that is well-pleasing to God and men. Oil, figs, and wine were the most valuable productions of the land of Canaan, whereas the briar was good for nothing but to burn. The noble fruit-trees would not tear themselves from the soil in which they had been planted and had borne fruit, to soar (נוַעַ, float about) above the trees, i.e., not merely to rule over the trees, but *obire et circumagi in rebus eorum curandis*. נוַעַ includes the idea of restlessness and insecurity of existence. The explanation given in the *Berleb. Bible*, "We have here what it is to be a king, to reign or be lord over many others, namely, very frequently to do nothing else than float about in such restlessness and distraction of thoughts, feelings, and desires, that very little good or sweet fruit ever falls to the ground," if not a truth without exception so far as royalty is concerned, is at all events perfectly true in relation to what Abimelech aimed at and

attained, to be a king by the will of the people and not by the grace of God. Wherever the Lord does not found the monarchy, or the king himself does not lay the foundations of his government in God and the grace of God, he is never anything but a tree, moving about above other trees without a firm root in a fruitful soil, utterly unable to bear fruit to the glory of God and the good of men. The expression "all the trees" is to be carefully noticed in v. 14. "All the trees" say to the briar, Be king over us, whereas in the previous verse only "the trees" are mentioned. This implies that of all the trees not one was willing to be king himself, but that they were unanimous in transferring the honour to the briar. The briar, which has nothing but thorns upon it, and does not even cast sufficient shadow for any one to lie down in its shadow and protect himself from the burning heat of the sun, is an admirable simile for a worthless man, who can do nothing but harm. The words of the briar, "Trust in my shadow," seek refuge there, contain a deep irony, the truth of which the Shechemites were very soon to discover. "And if not," i.e., if ye do not find the protection you expect, fire will go out of the briar and consume the cedars of Lebanon, the largest and noblest trees. Thorns easily catch fire (see Ex. 22:5). The most insignificant and most worthless man can be the cause of harm to the mightiest and most distinguished.

Judges 9:16–20. In vv. 16–20 Jotham gives the application of his fable, for there was no necessity for any special explanation of it, since it was perfectly clear and intelligible in itself. These verses form a long period, the first half of which is so extended by the insertion of parentheses introduced as explanations (vv. 17, 18), that the commencement of it (v. 16) is taken up again in v. 19a for the purpose of attaching the apodosis. "If ye have acted in truth and sincerity, and (i.e., when he) made Abimelech king; if ye have done well to Jerubbaal and his house, and if ye have done to him according to the doing of his hands ... as my father fought for you ... but ye have risen up to-day against my father's house, and have slain ... if (I say) ye have acted in truth and sincerity to

Jerubbaal and his house this day: then rejoice in Abimelech ... הַשְׁלִיךְ נַפְשׁוֹ, to throw away his life, i.e., expose to death. מִנֶּגְדוֹ, “from before him,” serves to strengthen the הַשְׁלִיךְ. Jotham imputes the slaying of his brothers to the citizens of Shechem, as a crime which they themselves had committed (v. 18), because they had given Abimelech money out of their temple of Baal to carry out his designs against the sons of Jerubbaal (v. 4). In this reproach he had, strictly speaking, already pronounced sentence upon their doings. When, therefore, he proceeds still further in v. 19, “If ye have acted in truth towards Jerubbaal ... then rejoice,” etc., this turn contains the bitterest scorn at the faithlessness manifested towards Jerubbaal. In that case nothing could follow but the fulfilment of the threat and the bursting forth of the fire. In carrying out this point the application goes beyond the actual meaning of the parable itself. Not only will fire go forth from Abimelech and consume the lords of Shechem and the inhabitants of Millo, but fire will also go forth from them and devour Abimelech himself. The fulfilment of this threat was not long delayed, as the following history shows (vv. 23ff.).

Judges 9:21. But Jotham fled to *Beer*, after charging the Shechemites with their iniquity, and dwelt there before his brother Abimelech (“before,” i.e., “for fear of.”—*Jerome*). *Beer* in all probability is not the same place as *Beeroth* in the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 9:17), but, according to the *Onom.* (s. v. Βηρά), a place eight Roman miles to the north of Eleutheropolis, situated in the plain; at present a desolate village called *el Bîreh*, near the mouth of Wady es *Surâr*, not far from the former Beth-shemesh (*Rob. Pal.* ii. p. 132).

Judges 9:22–24. Abimelech’s reign lasted three years. וַיִּשֶׁר, from שָׁרַר to govern, is used intentionally, as it appears, in the place of וַיִּמְלֹךְ, because Abimelech’s government was not a monarchical reign, but simply a tyrannical despotism. “*Over Israel*,” that is to say, not over the whole of the twelve tribes of Israel, but only

over a portion of the nation, possibly the tribes of Ephraim and half Manasseh, which acknowledged his sway.

Judges 9:23, 24. Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, so that they became treacherous towards him. “*An evil spirit*” is not merely “an evil disposition,” but an evil demon, which produced discord and strife, just as an evil spirit came upon Saul (1 Sam. 16:14, 15; 18:10); not Satan himself, but a supernatural spiritual power which was under his influence. This evil spirit God sent to punish the wickedness of Abimelech and the Shechemites. *Elohim*, not *Jehovah*, because the working of the divine justice is referred to here. “*That the wickedness to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood* (the blood of these sons that had been shed), *to lay it upon Abimelech.*” “*And their blood*” is only a more precise definition of “the wickedness to the seventy sons;” and “*to lay it*” is an explanation of the expression “*might come.*” The introduction of לְשׂוֹן, however, brings an *anakolouthon* into the construction, since the transitive שׂוֹן presupposes *Elohim* as the subject and מִקָּדְךָ as the object, whereas the parallel מִסִּיחָם is the subject to the intransitive לְבֹאֵם: that the wickedness might come, and that God might lay the blood not only upon Abimelech, the author of the crime, but also upon the lords of Shechem, who had strengthened his hands to slay his brethren; had supported him by money, that he might be able to hire worthless fellows to execute his crime (vv. 4, 5).

Judges 9:25–29. The faithlessness of the Shechemites towards Abimelech commenced by their placing liars in wait for him (וְלִי, *dat. incomm.*, to his disadvantage) upon the tops of the mountains (Ebal and Gerizim, between which Shechem was situated), who plundered every one who passed by them on the road. In what way they did harm to Abimelech by sending out liars in wait to plunder the passers-by, is not very clear from the brevity of the

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narrative. The general effect may have been, that they brought his government into discredit with the people by organizing a system of robbery and plunder, and thus aroused a spirit of discontent and rebellion. Possibly, however, these highway robbers were to watch for Abimelech himself, if he should come to Shechem, not only to plunder him, but, if possible, to despatch him altogether. This was made known to Abimelech. But before he had put down the brigandage, the treachery broke out into open rebellion.

Judges 9:26. Gaal, the son of Ebed, came to Shechem with his brethren. עֶבֶד with בָּ, to pass over into a place. Who Gaal was, and whence he came, we are not informed. Many of the MSS and early editions, e.g., the Syriac and Arabic, read "son of Eber," instead of "son of Ebed." Judging from his appearance in Shechem, he was a knight-errant, who went about the country with his brethren, i.e., as captain of a company of freebooters, and was welcomed in Shechem, because the Shechemites, who were dissatisfied with the rule of Abimelech, hoped to find in him a man who would be able to render them good service in their revolt from Abimelech. This may be gathered from the words "and the lords of Shechem trusted in him."

Judges 9:27. At the vintage they prepared הלולים, "praise-offerings," with the grapes which they had gathered and pressed, eating and drinking in the house of their god, i.e., the temple of Baal-berith, and cursing Abimelech at these sacrificial meals, probably when they were excited with wine. הלולים signifies, according to Lev. 19:24, praise-offerings of the fruits which newly-planted orchards or vineyards bore in the fourth years. The presentation of these fruits, by which the vineyard or orchard was sanctified to the Lord, was associated, as we may learn from the passage before us, with sacrificial meals. The Shechemites held a similar festival in the temple of their covenant Baal, and in his honour, to that which the law prescribes for the Israelites in Lev. 19:23–25.

Judges 9:28, 29. At this feast Gaal called upon the Shechemites to revolt from Abimelech. "Who is Abimelech," he exclaimed, "and who Shechem, that we serve him? Is he not the son of Jerubbaal, and Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor, the father of Shechem! and why should we, we serve him (Abimelech)?" The meaning of these words, which have been misinterpreted in several different ways, is very easily seen, if we bear in mind (1) that מִי (who is?) in this double question cannot possibly be used in two different and altogether opposite senses, such as "how insignificant or contemptible is Abimelech," and "how great and mighty is Shechem," but that in both instances it must be expressive of disparagement and contempt, as in 1 Sam. 25:10; and (2) that Gaal answers his own questions. Abimelech was regarded by him as contemptible, not because he was the son of a maid-servant or of very low birth, nor because he was ambitious and cruel, a patricide and the murderer of his brethren (*Rosenmüller*), but because he was a son of Jerubbaal, a son of the man who destroyed the altar of Baal at Shechem and restored the worship of Jehovah, for which the Shechemites themselves had endeavoured to slay him (Judges 6:27ff.). So also the meaning of the question, Who is Shechem? may be gathered from the answer, "and Zebul his officer." The use of the personal מִי (how) in relation to Shechem may be explained on the ground that Gaal is speaking not so much of the city as of its inhabitants. The might and greatness of Shechem did not consist in the might and authority of its prefect, Zebul, who had been appointed by Abimelech, and whom the Shechemites had no need to serve. Accordingly there is no necessity either for the arbitrary paraphrase of Shechem, given in the *Sept.*, viz., υἱὸς Συχεμ (son of Shechem); or for the perfectly arbitrary assumption of *Bertheau*, that Shechem is only a second name for Abimelech, who was a descendant of Shechem; or even for the solution proposed by *Rosenmüller*, that Zebul was "a man of low birth and obscure origin," which is quite incapable of proof. To

Zebul, that one man whom Abimelech had appointed prefect of the city, Gaal opposes “*the men of Hamor, the father of Shechem*,” as those whom the Shechemites should serve (i.e., whose followers they should be). *Hamor* was the name of the Hivite prince who had founded the city of Shechem (Gen. 33:19; 34:2; compare Josh. 24:32). The “men of Hamor” were the patricians of the city, who “derived their origin from the noblest and most ancient stock of Hamor” (*Rosenmüller*). Gaal opposes them to Abimelech and his representative Zebul. In the last clause, “*why should we serve him*” (Abimelech or his officer Zebul)? Gaal identifies himself with the inhabitants of Shechem, that he may gain them fully over to his plans.

Judges 9:29. “*O that this people*,” continued Gaal, “*were in my hand*,” i.e., could I but rule over the inhabitants of Shechem, “*then would I remove* (drive away) *Abimelech*.” He then exclaimed with regard to Abimelech (אָמַר לְ, as in v. 54b, Gen. 20:13, etc.), “*Increase thine army and come out!*” Heated as he was with wine, Gaal was so certain of victory that he challenged Abimelech boldly to make war upon Shechem. רָבָה, imper. *Piel* with *Seghol*. צָאָה, imperative, with הֵ- of motion or emphasis.

Judges 9:30–45. This rebellious speech of Gaal was reported to Abimelech by the town-prefect Zebul, who sent messengers to him בְּתַרְמָה, either with deceit (תַּרְמָה from תָּרַם), i.e., employing deceit, inasmuch as he had listened to the speech quietly and with apparent assent, or “*in Tormah*,” the name of a place, תַּרְמָה being a misspelling for אַרְמָה = אַרְוֹמָה (v. 41). The *Sept.* and *Chaldee* take the word as an appellative = ἐν κρυφῆ, secretly; so also do *Rashi* and most of the earlier commentators, whilst *R. Kimchi* the elder has decided in favour of the second rendering as a proper name. As the word only occurs here, it is impossible to decide with certainty in favour of either view. הִנֵּם צָרִים, behold they stir up the city against thee (צָרִים from צוּר in the sense of צָרַר).

Judges 9:32. At the same time he called upon Abimelech to draw near, with the people that he had with him, during the night, and to lie in wait in the field (אָרַב, to place one’s self in ambush), and the next morning to spread out with his army against the town; and when Gaal went out with his followers, he was to do to him “as his hand should find,” i.e., to deal with him as he best could and would under the circumstances. (On this formula, see at 1 Sam. 10:7; 25:8.)

Judges 9:34. On receiving this intelligence, Abimelech rose up during the night with the people that were with him, i.e., with such troops as he had, and placed four companies (“heads” as in Judges 7:16) in ambush against Shechem.

Judges 9:35, 36. When Gaal went out in the morning with his retinue upon some enterprise, which is not more clearly defined, and stood before the city gate, Abimelech rose up with his army out of the ambush. On seeing this people, Gaal said to Zebul (who must therefore have come out of the city with him): “*Behold, people come down from the tops of the mountains*.” Zebul replied, for the purpose of deceiving him and making him feel quite secure, “*Thou lookest upon the shadow of the mountains as men*.”

Judges 9:37. But Gaal said again, “*Behold, people come down from the navel of the land*,” i.e., from the highest point of the surrounding country, “*and a crowd comes by the way of the wizard’s terebinths*,”—a place in the neighbourhood of Shechem that is not mentioned anywhere else, and therefore is not more precisely known.

Judges 9:38. Then Zebul declared openly against Gaal, and reproached him with his foolhardy speech, whilst Abimelech was drawing nearer with his troops: “*Where is thy mouth now with which thou saidst, Who is Abimelech? Is not this the people that thou hast despised? Go out now and fight with him!*”

Judges 9:39ff. Then Gaal went out “before the citizens of Shechem;” i.e., not at their head as their leaders, which is the meaning of לְפָנָי in Gen. 33:3, Ex. 13:21, Num. 10:35, etc.,—for,

according to vv. 33–35, Gaal had only gone out of the town with his own retinue, and, according to vv. 42, 43, the people of Shechem did not go out till the next day,—but “in the sight of the lords of Shechem,” so that they looked upon the battle. But the battle ended unfortunately for him. Abimelech put him to flight (הִרְדֵּה as in Lev. 26:36), and there fell many slain up to the gate of the city, into which Gaal had fled with his followers.

Judges 9:41. Abimelech did not force his way into the city, but remained (יָשָׁב, *lit.* sat down) with his army in *Arumah*, a place not mentioned again, which was situated, according to v. 42, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Shechem. It cannot possibly have been the place called Ῥουμὰ ἢ καὶ Ἀριμα in the *Onom.* of *Eusebius*, which was named Πέμφις in his day, and was situated in the neighbourhood of Diospolis (or Lydda). Zebul, however, drove Gaal and his brethren (i.e., his retinue) out of Shechem.

Judges 9:42–45. The next day the people of Shechem went into the field, apparently not to make war upon Abimelech, but to work in the field, possibly to continue the vintage. But when Abimelech was informed of it, he divided the people, i.e., his own men, into three companies, which he placed in ambush in the field, and then fell upon the Shechemites when they had come out of the city, and slew them.

Judges 9:44. That is to say, Abimelech and the companies with him spread themselves out and took their station by the city gate to cut off the retreat of the Shechemites into the city, whilst the other two companies fell upon all who were in the field, and slew them.

Judges 9:45. Thus Abimelech fought all that day against the city and took it; and having slain all the people therein, he destroyed the city and strewed salt upon it. Strewing the ruined city with salt, which only occurs here, was a symbolical act, signifying that the city was to be turned for ever into a barren salt desert. Salt ground is a barren desert (see Job 39:6, Ps. 107:34).

Judges 9:46–49. When the inhabitants of the castle of Shechem (“lords of the tower of Shechem” = “all the house of Millo,” v. 6) heard of the fate of the town of Shechem, they betook themselves to the hold of the house (temple) of the covenant god (Baal-berith), evidently not for the purpose of defending themselves there, but to seek safety at the sanctuary of their god from fear of the vengeance of Abimelech, towards whom they also had probably acted treacherously. The meaning of the word צָרִיחַ, which answers to an Arabic word signifying *arx, palatium, omnis structura elatior*, cannot be exactly determined, as it only occurs again in 1 Sam. 13:6 in connection with caves and clefts of the rock. According to v. 49, it had a roof which could be set on fire. The meaning “tower” is only a conjecture founded upon the context, and does not suit, as צָרִיחַ is distinguished from מִגְדָּל.

Judges 9:47. As soon as this was announced to Abimelech, he went with all his men to Mount Zalmon, took hatchets in his hand, cut down branches from the trees, and laid them upon his shoulders, and commanded his people to do the same. These branches they laid upon the hold, and set the hold on fire over them (the inhabitants of the tower who had taken refuge there), so that all the people of the tower of Shechem (about one thousand persons) perished, both men and women. Mount *Zalmon*, which is mentioned again in Ps. 68:15, was a dark, thickly-wooded mountain near Shechem,—a kind of “Black Forest,” as *Luther* has rendered the name. The plural *kardumoth*, “axes,” may be explained on the ground that Abimelech took axes not only for himself but for his people also. מָה in a relative sense, as in Num. 23:3 (see *Ewald*, § 331, *b.*).

Judges 9:50–57. At length the fate predicted by Jotham (v. 20) overtook Abimelech.

Judges 9:50, 51. He went from Shechem to Thebez, besieged the town, and took it. *Thebez*, according to the *Onom.* thirteen miles from Neapolis (Shechem) on the road to Scythopolis (Beisan), has been preserved in the large village

of *Tubâs* on the north of Shechem (see *Rob. Pal.* iii. p. 156, and *Bibl. Res.* p. 305). This town possessed a strong tower, in which men and women and all the inhabitants of the town took refuge and shut themselves in. But when Abimelech advanced to the tower and drew near to the door to set it on fire, a woman threw a millstone down upon him from the roof of the tower and smashed his skull, whereupon he called hastily to the attendant who carried his weapons to give him his death-blow with his sword, that men might not say of him “a woman slew him.” פְּלֹחַ רֶכֶב, the upper millstone which was turned round, *lapis vector* (see *Deut.* 24:6). תָּרִיץ: from רָצַץ, with a toneless *i*, possibly to distinguish it from וְתָרִץ (from רוּץ). גְּלִגְלָתוֹ, an unusual form for גְּלִגְלָתוֹ, which is found in the edition of *Norzi* (Mantua, 1742).

Judges 9:55. After the death of Abimelech his army was dissolved. אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל are the Israelites who formed Abimelech’s army. In vv. 56, 57, the historian closes this account with the remark, that in this manner God recompensed Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, who had supported him in the murder of his brothers (v. 2), according to their doings. After the word “rendered” in v. 56 we must supply “upon his head,” as in v. 57. Thus Jotham’s curse was fulfilled upon Abimelech and upon the Shechemites, who had made him king.

Judges 10

The Judges Tola and Jair.—Ch. 10:1–5.

Judges 10:1–5. Of these two judges no particular deeds are mentioned, no doubt because they performed none.

Judges 10:1, 2. *Tola* arose after Abimelech’s death to deliver Israel, and judged Israel twenty-three years until his death, though certainly not all the Israelites of the twelve tribes, but only the northern and possibly also the eastern tribes, to the exclusion of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, as these southern tribes neither took part in Gideon’s war of freedom nor stood under Abimelech’s rule. To explain the clause “there arose to defend (or save)

Israel,” when nothing had been said about any fresh oppression on the part of the foe, we need not assume, as *Rosenmüller* does, “that the Israelites had been constantly harassed by their neighbours, who continued to suppress the liberty of the Israelites, and from whose stratagems or power the Israelites were delivered by the acts of Tola;” but Tola rose up as the deliverer of Israel, even supposing that he simply regulated the affairs of the tribes who acknowledged him as their supreme judge, and succeeded by his efforts in preventing the nation from falling back into idolatry, and thus guarded Israel from any fresh oppression on the part of hostile nations. *Tola* was the son of *Puah*, the son of *Dodo*, of the tribe of Issachar. The names *Tola* and *Puah* are already met with among the descendants of Issachar, as founders of families of the tribes of Issachar (see *Gen.* 46:13, *Num.* 26:23, where the latter name is written פְּוָה), and they were afterwards repeated in the different households of these families. *Dodo* is not an appellative, as the *Sept.* translators supposed (υἱὸς πατραδέλφου αὐτοῦ), but a proper name, as in *2 Sam.* 23:9 (*Keri*), 24, and *1 Chron.* 11:12. The town of *Shamir*, upon the mountains of Ephraim, where Tola judged Israel, and was afterwards buried, was a different place from the *Shamir* upon the mountains of Judah, mentioned in *Josh.* 15:48, and its situation (probably in the territory of Issachar) is still unknown.

Judges 10:3ff. After him *Jair* the Gileadite (born in Gilead) judged Israel for twenty-two years. Nothing further is related of him than that he had thirty sons who rode upon thirty asses, which was a sign of distinguished rank in those times when the Israelites had no horses. They had thirty cities (the second עִירִים in v. 4 is another form for עָרִים, from a singular עִיר = עיר, a city, and is chosen because of its similarity in sound to עִירִים, asses). These cities they were accustomed to call *Havvoth-jair* unto this day (the time when our book was written), in the land of Gilead. The לָהֶם before קָרְאוּ is placed first for the sake of emphasis, “even these they

call," etc. This statement is not at variance with the fact, that in the time of Moses the Manassite Jair gave the name of *Havvoth-jair* to the towns of Bashan which had been conquered by him (Num. 32:41; Deut. 3:14); for it is not affirmed here, that the thirty cities which belonged to the sons of Jair received this name for the first time from the judge Jair, but simply that this name was brought into use again by the sons of Jair, and was applied to these cities in a peculiar sense. (For further remarks on the *Havvoth-jair*, see at Deut. 3:14.) The situation of *Camon*, where Jair was buried, is altogether uncertain. *Josephus* (Ant. v. 6, 6) calls it a city of Gilead, though probably only on account of the assumption, that it would not be likely that Jair the Gileadite, who possessed so many cities in Gilead, should be buried outside Gilead. But this assumption is a very questionable one. As Jair judged Israel after Tola the Issacharite, the assumption is a more natural one, that he lived in Canaan proper. Yet *Reland* (Pal. ill. p. 679) supports the opinion that it was in Gilead, and adduces the fact that *Polybius* (Hist. v. 70, 12) mentions a town called Καμοῦν, by the side of Pella and Gefrun, as having been taken by Antiochus. On the other hand, *Eusebius* and *Jerome* (in the *Onom.*) regard our *Camon* as being the same as the κώμη Καμμωνά ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ πεδίῳ, six Roman miles to the north of *Legio* (*Lejun*), on the way to Ptolemais, which would be in the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon. This is no doubt applicable to the Κυαμών of Judith 7:3; but whether it also applies to our *Camon* cannot be decided, as the town is not mentioned again.

3. Period of Oppression by the Ammonites and Philistines.—Ch. 10:6–16.

Judges 10:6–16. The third stage in the period of the judges, which extended from the death of Jair to the rise of Samuel as a prophet, was a time of deep humiliation for Israel, since the Lord gave up His people into the hands of two hostile nations at the same time, on account of their repeated return to idolatry; so that the Ammonites invaded the land from the east, and oppressed the Israelites severely for eighteen

years, especially the tribes to the east of the Jordan; whilst the Philistines came from the west, and extended their dominion over the tribes on this side, and brought them more and more firmly under their yoke. It is true that Jephthah delivered his people from the oppression of the Ammonites, in the power of the Spirit of Jehovah, having first of all secured the help of God through a vow, and not only smote the Ammonites, but completely subdued them before the Israelites. But the Philistine oppression lasted forty years; for although Samson inflicted heavy blows upon the Philistines again and again, and made them feel the superior power of the God of Israel, he was nevertheless not in condition to destroy their power and rule over Israel. This was left for Samuel to accomplish, after he had converted the people to the Lord their God.

Israel's Renewed Apostasy and Consequent Punishment.—Ch. 10:6–18.

Judges 10:6–18. As the Israelites forsook the Lord their God again, and served the gods of the surrounding nations, the Lord gave them up to the power of the Philistines and Ammonites, and left them to groan for eighteen years under the severe oppression of the Ammonites, till they cried to Him in their distress, and He sent them deliverance through Jephthah, though not till He had first of all charged them with their sins, and they had put away the strange gods. This section forms the introduction, not only to the history of Jephthah (Judges 11:1–12:7) and the judges who followed him, viz., Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (Judges 12:8–15), but also to the history of Samson, who began to deliver Israel out of the power of the Philistines (Judges 13–16). After the fact has been mentioned in the introduction (in v. 7), that Israel was given up into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites at the same time, the Ammonitish oppression, which lasted eighteen years, is more particularly described in vv. 8, 9. This is followed by the reproof of the idolatrous Israelites on the part of God (vv. 10–16); and lastly, the history of Jephthah is introduced in vv. 17, 18, the fuller account being given in

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Judges 11. Jephthah, who judged Israel for six years after the conquest and humiliation of the Ammonites (Judges 12:7), was followed by the judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, who judged Israel for seven, ten, and eight years respectively, that is to say, for twenty-five years in all; so that Abdon died forty-nine years (18 + 6 + 25) after the commencement of the Ammonitish oppression, i.e., nine years after the termination of the forty years' rule of the Philistines over Israel, which is described more particularly in Judges 13:1, for the purpose of introducing the history of Samson, who judged Israel twenty years under that rule (Judges 15:20; 16:31), without bringing it to a close, or even surviving it. It was only terminated by the victory which Israel achieved under Samuel at Ebenezer, as described in 1 Sam. 7.

Judges 10:6–16. In the account of the renewed apostasy of the Israelites from the Lord contained in v. 6, seven heathen deities are mentioned as being served by the Israelites: viz., in addition to the *Canaanitish Baals* and *Astartes* (see at Judges 2:11, 13), the gods of *Aram*, i.e., *Syria*, who are never mentioned by name; of *Sidon*, i.e., according to 1 Kings 11:5, principally the Sidonian or Phoenician Astarte; of the *Moabites*, i.e., Chemosh (1 Kings 11:33), the principal deity of that people, which was related to Moloch (see at Num. 21:29); of the *Ammonites*, i.e., Milcom (1 Kings 11:5, 33) (see at Judges 16:23). If we compare the list of these seven deities with vv. 11 and 12, where we find seven nations mentioned out of whose hands Jehovah had delivered Israel, the correspondence between the number seven in these two cases and the significant use of the number are unmistakeable. Israel had balanced the number of divine deliverances by a similar number of idols which it served, so that the measure of the nation's iniquity was filled up in the same proportion as the measure of the delivering grace of God. The number *seven* is employed in the Scriptures as the stamp of the works of God, or of the perfection created, or to be created, by God on the one hand, and of the actions of men in their relation to God on the other. The foundation for this was the creation

of the world in seven days.—On v. 7, see Judges 2:13, 14. The Ammonites are mentioned after the Philistines, not because they did not oppress the Israelites till afterwards, but for purely formal reasons, viz., because the historian was about to describe the oppression of the Ammonites first. In v. 8, the subject is the “children of Ammon,” as we may see very clearly from v. 9. “*They (the Ammonites) ground and crushed the Israelites in the same year,*” i.e., the year in which God sold the Israelites into their hands, or in which they invaded the land of Israel. גָּרְצוּ and גָּרְצוּ are synonymous, and are simply joined together for the sake of emphasis, whilst the latter calls to mind Deut. 28:33. The duration of this oppression is then added: “*Eighteen years (they crushed) all the Israelites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites,*” i.e., of the two Amoritish kings Sihon and Og, who (dwelt) in Gilead. *Gilead*, being a more precise epithet for the land of the Amorites, is used here in a wider sense to denote the whole of the country on the east of the Jordan, so far as it had been taken from the Amorites and occupied by the Israelites (as in Num. 32:29, Deut. 34:1: see at Josh. 22:9).

Judges 10:9. They also crossed the Jordan, and made war even upon Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim (the families of the tribe of Ephraim), by which Israel was brought into great distress. וַיִּצְרָה, as in Judges 2:15.

Judges 10:10–14. When the Israelites cried in their distress to the Lord, “*We have sinned against Thee, namely, that we have forsaken our God and served the Baals,*” the Lord first of all reminded them of the manifestations of His grace (vv. 11, 12), and then pointed out to them their faithless apostasy and the worthlessness of their idols (vv. 13, 14). וְכִי, “*and indeed that,*” describes the sin more minutely, and there is no necessity to remove it from the text,—an act which is neither warranted by its absence from several MSS nor by its omission from the Sept., the Syriac, and the Vulgate. *Baalim* is a general term used to denote all the false gods, as in Judges 2:11. This answer on the part of God to

the prayer of the Israelites for help is not to be regarded as having been given through an extraordinary manifestation (theophany), or through the medium of a prophet, for that would certainly have been recorded; but it was evidently given in front of the tabernacle, where the people had called upon the Lord, and either came through the high priest, or else through an inward voice in which God spoke to the hearts of the people, i.e., through the voice of their own consciences, by which God recalled to their memories and impressed upon their hearts first of all His own gracious acts, and then their faithless apostasy. There is an *anakolouthon* in the words of God. The construction which is commenced with **קִמְצָרִים** is dropped at **וַיִּצְדֹּנִים וְגו'** in v. 12; and the verb **הוֹשַׁעְתָּי**, which answers to the beginning of the clause, is brought up afterwards in the form of an apodosis with **וְאִישֵׁיטָה אֶתְכֶם**. "Did I not deliver you (1) from the Egyptians (cf. Ex. 1-14); (2) from the Amorites (cf. Num. 21:3); (3) from the Ammonites (who oppressed Israel along with the Moabites in the time of Ehud, Judges 3:12ff.); (4) from the Philistines (through Shamgar: see 1 Sam. 12:9, where the Philistines are mentioned between Sisera and Moab); (5) from the Sidonians (among whom probably the northern Canaanites under Jabin are included, as Sidon, according to Judges 18:7, 28, appears to have exercised a kind of principality or protectorate over the northern tribes of Canaan); (6) from the Amalekites (who attacked the Israelites even at Horeb, Ex. 17:8ff., and afterwards invaded the land of Israel both with the Moabites, Judges 3:13, and also with the Midianites, Judges 6:3); and (7) from the Midianites?" (see Judges 6-7). The last is the reading of the LXX in *Cod. Al.* and *Vat.*, viz., **Μαδιάμ**; whereas *Ald.* and *Compl.* read **Χαναάν**, also the *Vulgate*. In the Masoretic text, on the other hand, we have *Maon*. Were this the original and true reading, we might perhaps think of the *Mehunim*, who are mentioned in 2 Chron. 26:7 along with Philistines and Arabians (cf. 1 Chron. 4:41), and are supposed to have been inhabitants of the city of *Maan* on the

Syrian pilgrim road to the east of Petra (*Burckhardt*, *Syr.* pp. 734 and 1035: see *Ewald*, *Gesch.* i. pp. 321, 322). But there is very little probability in this supposition, as we cannot possibly see how so small a people could have oppressed Israel so grievously at that time, that the deliverance from their oppression could be mentioned here; whilst it would be very strange that nothing should be said about the terrible oppression of the Midianites and the wonderful deliverance from that oppression effected by Gideon. Consequently the Septuagint (**Μαδιάμ**) appears to have preserve the original text.

Judges 10:13. Instead of thanking the Lord, however, for these deliverances by manifesting true devotedness to Him, Israel had forsaken Him and served other gods (see Judges 2:13).

Judges 10:14ff. Therefore the Lord would not save them any more. They might get help from the gods whom they had chosen for themselves. The Israelites should now experience what Moses had foretold in his song (Deut. 32:37, 38). This divine threat had its proper effect. The Israelites confessed their sins, submitted thoroughly to the chastisement of God, and simply prayed for salvation; nor did they content themselves with merely promising, they put away the strange gods and served Jehovah, i.e., they devoted themselves again with sincerity to His service, and so were seriously converted to the living God. "Then was His (Jehovah's) soul impatient (**תִּקְצַר**, as in Num. 21:4) because of the troubles of Israel;" i.e., Jehovah could no longer look down upon the misery of Israel; He was obliged to help. The change in the purpose of God does not imply any changeableness in the divine nature; it simply concerns the attitude of God towards His people, or the manifestation of the divine love to man. In order to bend the sinner at all, the love of God must withdraw its helping hand and make men feel the consequences of their sin and rebelliousness, that they may forsake their evil ways and turn to the Lord their God. When this end has been attained, the same divine love manifests itself as pitying and

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helping grace. Punishments and benefits flow from the love of God, and have for their object the happiness and well-being of men.

Judges 10:17, 18. These verses form the introduction to the account of the help and deliverance sent by God, and describe the preparation made by Israel to fight against its oppressors. The Ammonites *“let themselves be called together,”* i.e., assembled together (קָרְעוּ, as in Judges 7:23), and encamped in Gilead, i.e., in that portion of Gilead of which they had taken possession. For the Israelites, i.e., the tribes to the east of the Jordan (according to v. 18 and Judges 11:29), also assembled together in Gilead and encamped at *mizpeh*, i.e., Ramath-mizpeh or Ramoth in Gilead (Josh. 13:26; 20:8), probably on the site of the present *Szalt* (see at Deut. 4:43, and the remarks in the Commentary on the Pentateuch, pp. 180f.), and resolved to look round for a man who could begin the war, and to make him the head over all the inhabitants of Gilead (the tribes of Israel dwelling in Perea). The *“princes of Gilead”* are in apposition to *“the people.”* *“The people, namely, the princes of Gilead,”* i.e., the heads of tribes and families of the Israelites to the east of the Jordan. *“Head”* is still further defined in Judges 11:6, 11, as *“captain,”* or *“head and captain.”*

Judges 11

Jephthah Elected as Prince; Negotiations with the Ammonites; Victory, Vow, and Office of Judge. —Ch. 11–12:7.

Judges 11:1–11. Election of Jephthah as Prince and Judge of Israel.—Vv. 1–3. The account begins with his descent and early mode of life. *“Jephthah (LXX Ιεφθά) the Gileadite was a brave hero”* (see Judges 6:12, Josh. 1:14, etc.); but he was the son of a harlot, and was begotten by Gilead, in addition to other sons who were born of his wife. *Gilead* is not the name of the country, as *Bertheau* supposes, so that the land is mythically personified as the forefather of Jephthah. Nor is it the name of the son of Machir and grandson of Manasseh (Num. 26:29), so that the celebrated ancestor of the Gileadites is mentioned here instead of the

unknown father of Jephthah. It is really the proper name of the father himself; and just as in the case of Tola and Puah, in Judges 10:1, the name of the renowned ancestor was repeated in his descendant. We are forced to this conclusion by the fact that the wife of Gilead, and his other sons by that wife, are mentioned in v. 2. These sons drove their half-brother Jephthah out of the house because of his inferior birth, that he might not share with them in the paternal inheritance; just as Ishmael and the sons of Keturah were sent away by Abraham, that they might not inherit along with Isaac (Gen. 21:10ff., 25:6).

Judges 11:3. Jephthah departed from his brothers into the land of *Tob*, i.e., according to 2 Sam. 10:6, 8, a district in the north-east of Perea, on the border of Syria, or between Syria and Ammonitis, called *Τώβιον* in 1 Macc. 5:13, or more correctly *Τουβίν*, according to 2 Macc. 12:17, where loose men gathered round him (cf. Judges 9:4), and *“went out with him,”* viz., upon warlike and predatory expeditions like the Bedouins.

Judges 11:4–6. But when the Ammonites made war upon Israel some time afterwards, the elders of Gilead (= *“the princes of Gilead,”* Judges 10:18) went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of *Tob*, to make this brave warrior their leader. In v. 4 the account of the war between the Ammonites and Israel, which is mentioned in Judges 10:17, is resumed, and its progress under Jephthah is then more fully described. *“In process of time”* (תְּיָמַיִם, *a diebus*, i.e., after the lapse of a long period, which cannot be more precisely defined), sc., after the expulsion of Jephthah from his home (see Judges 14:8; 15:1, Josh. 23:1). קָצִין signifies a leader in war (Josh. 10:24), and is therefore distinguished in v. 11 from ראש, a chief in peace and war.

Judges 11:7. Jephthah expressed to the elders his astonishment that they had formerly hated and expelled him, and now came to him in their distress, sc., to make him their leader in time of war. Thus he lays his expulsion upon the shoulders of the elders of Gilead, although it

was only by his brethren that he had been driven away from his father's house, inasmuch as they had either approved of it, or at all events had not interfered as magistrates to prevent it. We cannot indeed infer from this reproach, that the expulsion and disinheriting of Jephthah was a legal wrong; but so much at all events is implied, namely, that Jephthah looked upon the thing as a wrong that had been done to him, and found the reason in the hatred of his brethren. The Mosaic law contained no regulation upon this matter, since the rule laid down in Deut. 21:15–17 simply applied to the sons of different wives, and not to a son by a harlot.

Judges 11:8. The elders replied, “Therefore (לָכֵן, because we have formerly done thee wrong) we have now come to thee again to make thee our head, if thou comest with us and fightest against the Ammonites.” The clauses וְגִלְחָדָהּ, וְהַלְבָּתָּה, and וְהָיִיתָ, which are formally co-ordinate, are logically to be subordinated to one another, the first two expressing the condition, the third the consequence, in this sense, “If thou go with us and fight, ... thou shalt be head to us, namely, to all the inhabitants of Gilead,” i.e., to the two tribes and a half on the east of the Jordan.

Judges 11:9. Jephthah assented to this: “If ye will take me back to make war upon the Ammonites, and Jehovah shall give them up to me (lit. ‘before me,’ as in Josh. 10:12, Deut. 2:31, etc.), I will be your head.” “I” is emphatic as distinguished from *he*; and there is no necessity to regard the sentence as a question, with which the expression in v. 10, “according to thy words,” which presuppose an affirmative statement on the part of Jephthah, and not a question, would be altogether irreconcilable.

Judges 11:10. The elders promised this on oath. “Jehovah be hearing between us,” i.e., be hearer and judge of the things concerning which we are negotiating; “truly according to thy word so will we do” (אִם לֹא, a particle used in connection with an oath).

Judges 11:11. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, “and the people (i.e., the

inhabitants of Gilead) made him head and captain, and Jephthah spoke all his words before Jehovah at Mizpeh:” i.e., he repeated in a solemn assembly of the people, before God at Mizpeh, the conditions and obligations under which he would accept the honour conferred upon him. “Before Jehovah” does not necessarily presuppose the presence of the ark at Mizpeh; nor can we possibly assume this, since the war was resolved upon primarily by the eastern tribes alone, and they had no ark at all. It merely affirms that Jephthah performed this act, looking up to God, the omnipresent head of Israel. Still less do the words warrant the assumption that there was an altar in Mizpeh, and that sacrifices were offered to confirm the treaty, of which there is not the slightest indication in the text. “Before Jehovah” implies nothing more than that Jephthah confirmed all his words by an oath” (*Hengstenberg*, Diss. ii. pp. 35, 36).

Judges 11:12–28. Jephthah’s Negotiations with the King of the Ammonites.—V. 12. Before Jephthah took the sword, he sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, to make complaints to him of his invasion of the land of the Israelites. “What have we to do with one another (‘what to me and thee?’ see Josh. 22:24, 2 Sam. 16:10), that thou hast come to me to fight against my land?” Jephthah’s ambassadors speak in the name of the nation; hence the singulars “me” and “my land.”

Judges 11:13. The king of the Ammonites replied, that when Israel came up out of Egypt, they had taken away his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok (on the north), and to the Jordan (on the west), and demanded that they should now restore these lands in peace. The plural אֲרָצֵיהֶם (them) refers *ad sensum* to the cities and places in the land in question. The claim raised by the king of the Ammonites has one feature in it, which appears to have a certain colour of justice. The Israelites, it is true, had only made war upon the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, and defeated them, and taken possession of their kingdoms and occupied them, without attacking the Ammonites and

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Moabites and Edomites, because God had forbidden their attacking these nations (Deut. 2:5, 9, 19); but one portion of the territory of Sihon had formerly been Moabitish and Ammonitish property, and had been conquered by the Amorites and occupied by them. According to Num. 21:26, Sihon had made war upon the previous king of Moab, and taken away all his land as far as the Arnon (see the comm. on this passage). And although it is not expressly stated in the Pentateuch that Sihon had extended his conquests beyond Moabitis into the land of the Ammonites, which was situated to the east of Moab, and had taken a portion of it from them, this is pretty clearly indicated in Josh. 13:25, since, according to that passage, the tribe of Gad received in addition to Jaezer and all the towns of Gilead, half the land of the children of Ammon, namely, the land to the east of Gilead, on the western side of the upper Jabbok (Nahr *Ammân*: see at Josh. 13:26).

Judges 11:14, 15. Jephthah then sent ambassadors again to explain to him the true state of the case, namely, that Israel had neither taken away the land of Moab nor the land of the Ammonites. As a proof of this, Jephthah adduced the leading facts connected with the journey of the Israelites through the desert of Arabia to Canaan, by which this assertion was confirmed, in exact agreement with the accounts of the Pentateuch respecting the matter in dispute.

Judges 11:16, 17. On leaving Egypt, Israel passed through the desert to the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh (Num. 20:1). They then sent messengers to the king of Edom, to obtain permission to pass through his land; and this the king of Edom refused (Num. 20:14–21). They also sent to the king of Moab, who sent back a similar refusal. The embassy to the king of Moab is not mentioned in the Pentateuch, as it had no direct bearing upon the further course of the Israelites (see Pentateuch, p. 741, note 1). “*And Israel abode in Kadesh*” (word for word, as in Num. 20:1b), and “*then passed through the desert,*” namely to Mount Hor, then down the Arabah to the Red Sea, and still farther past

Oboth to Ijje-abarim in the desert (Num. 20:22–21:11). In this way they went round the land of Edom and the land of Moab (סב, like סבב in Num. 21:4); and came from the east to the land of Moab (i.e., along the eastern boundary, for Ijje-abarim was situated there, according to Num. 21:11); and encamped on the other side of the Arnon (Num. 21:13), i.e., on the upper course of the Arnon where it still flows through the desert (see Pent. p. 749). On this march, therefore, they did not enter the territory of Moab, as the Arnon formed the boundary of Moab, i.e., the boundary between Moab and the territory of the Amorites (Num. 21:13).

Judges 11:19–22. Vv. 19–22 are almost *verbatim* the same as Num. 21:21–25. Israel then sent messengers to Sihon the king of the Amorites at Heshbon, to ask permission to pass through his land. “*Into my place,*” i.e., into the land of Canaan, that Jehovah has appointed for me. But Sihon “*trusted not Israel to pass through his land,*” i.e., he did not trust to the assurance of Israel that they only wanted to pass peaceably through his land, but supposed the petition to cover an intention to take forcible possession of it. (In Num. 21:23 we have לֹא נָתַן instead of לֹא הֶאֱמִין.) He did not confine himself, therefore, to a refusal of the permission they asked for, but collected his men of war, and marched against the Israelites to the desert as far as Jahza, on the east of Medeba and Dibon (see at Num. 21:23), and fought with them. But he was defeated, and lost all his land, from the Arnon (Mojeb) on the south to the Jabbok (Zerka) on the north, and from the desert on the east to the Jordan on the west, of which the Israelites took possession.

Judges 11:23, 24. From these facts Jephthah drew this simple but indisputable conclusion: “*Jehovah the God of Israel has rooted out the Amorites before His people Israel, and thou wilt take possession of it* (viz., the land of the Amorites).” The suffix to תִּירְשֶׁנוּ refers to הָאֱמֹרִי, the Amorites, i.e., their land. The construction of יִרְשׁ with the accusative of the people (as in Deut. 2:12, 21, 22; 9:1) may be explained on the

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simple ground, that in order to take possession of a country, it is necessary first of all to get the holders of it into your power. Jephthah then proved still further how unwarrantable the claim of the king of the Ammonites was, and said to him (v. 24), *“Is it not the fact (הֲלֹא, nonne), that what thy god Chemosh gives thee for a possession, of that thou takest possession; and all that Jehovah makes ownerless before us, of that we take possession?”*—an appeal the validity of which could not be disputed. For *Chemosh*, see at Num. 21:29. The verb הוֹרִישׁ combines the three meanings: to drive out of a possession, to deprive of a possessor, and to give for a possession; inasmuch as it is impossible to give a land for a possession without driving away or exterminating its former possessor.

Judges 11:25. But not contenting himself with this conclusive deduction, Jephthah endeavoured to remove the lost appearance of right from the king’s claim by a second and equally conclusive argument. *“And now art thou better than Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab? Did he strive (רוּב, inf. abs. of רוּב or רוּב) with Israel, or did he fight against them?”* By the repetition of וַעֲתָהּ (v. 25, cf. v. 23), the new argument is attached to the previous one, as a second deduction from the facts already described. Balak, the king of the Moabites, had indeed bribed Balaam to destroy Israel by his curses; but he did so not so much with the intention of depriving them of the territory of the Amorites which they had conquered, as from the fear that the powerful Israelites might also conquer his still remaining kingdom. Balak had neither made war upon Israel on account of the territory which they had conquered from the Amorites, nor had he put forward any claim to it as his own property, which he certainly might have done with some appearance of justice, as a large portion of it had formerly belonged to the Moabites (see Num. 21:26 and the comm. on this passage). If therefore Balak the king of the Moabites never thought of looking upon this land as being still his

property, or of asking it back from the Israelites, the king of the Ammonites had no right whatever to lay claim to the land of Gilead as belonging to him, or to take it away from the Israelites by force, especially after the lapse of 300 years. *“As Israel dwells in Heshbon, ... and in all the cities by the side of the Arnon for three hundred years, why have ye not taken away (these towns and lands) within that time”* (i.e., during these 300 years)? If the Ammonites had had any right to it, they ought to have asserted their claim in Moses’ time. It was much too late now, after the expiration of 300 years. For “if no prescriptive right is to be admitted, on account of length of time, and if long possession gives no title, nothing would ever be held in safety by any people, and there would be no end to wars and dissension” (*Clericus*). On Heshbon and its daughters, see at Num. 21:25. אַרְעוֹר, another form for אַרְעוֹר, or possibly only a copyist’s error) is Aroër of Gad, before *Rabbah* (Josh. 13:25), and is to be sought for in the Wady Nahr *Ammân*, on the north-east of *Ammân* (see at Josh. l. c.), not Aroër of Reuben, on the border of the valley of Arnon (Num. 32:34; Deut. 2:36; 4:48; Josh. 12:2; 13:9). This is evident from the fact, that it is distinguished from “all the cities on the side (עַל יַדִּי, see at Num. 34:3) of the Arnon,” which included Aroër of Reuben. *Aroër* of Gad, with its daughter towns, was probably Ammonitish territory before the time of Sihon. On the 300 years, a round number that comes very near the reality, see the *Chronol.* p. 285.

Judges 11:27. After Jephthah had adduced all that could be said, to prove that the Israelites were the rightful possessors of the land of Gilead, he closed with these words: *“I (i.e., Israel, whose cause Jephthah was pleading) have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong in that thou makest war against me. Let Jehovah the Judge be judge this day (now) between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.”* God should decide between the two nations, by giving the victory in war to the side whose cause was the just one.

Judges 11:28. But the king of the Ammonites did not hearken to the words of Jephthah “which he had sent to him,” i.e., had instructed his messengers to address to him; so that it was necessary that Jehovah should decide for Israel in battle.

Judges 11:29–33. Jephthah’s Victory over the Ammonites.—As the negotiations with the king of the Ammonites were fruitless, Jephthah had no other course left than to appeal to the sword.

Judges 11:29. In the power of the Spirit of Jehovah which came upon him (see Judges 3:10), he passed through Gilead (the land of the tribes of Reuben and Gad between the Arnon and the Jabbok) and Manasseh (northern Gilead and Bashan, which the half tribe of Manasseh had received for a possession), to gather together an army to battle, and then went with the assembled army to Mizpeh-Gilead, i.e., Ramoth-mizpeh, where the Israelites had already encamped before his call (Judges 10:17), that he might thence attack the Ammonites. עָבַר (to pass over) with an accusative signifies to come over a person in a hostile sense.

Judges 11:30, 31. Before commencing the war, however, he vowed a vow to the Lord: “*If Thou givest the Ammonites into my hand, he who cometh to meet me out of the doors of my house, when I return safely (in peace, shalom) from the Ammonites, shall belong to the Lord, and I will offer him for a burnt-offering.*” By the words הַיֵּצֵא אֲשֶׁר, “he that goeth out,” even if Jephthah did not think “only of a man, or even more definitely still of some one of his household,” he certainly could not think in any case of a head of cattle, or one of his flock. “Going out of the doors of his house to meet him” is an expression that does not apply to a herd or flock driven out of the stall just at the moment of his return, or to any animal that might possibly run out to meet him. For the phrase יָצָא לִקְרַאת is only applied to men in the other passages in which it occurs. Moreover, Jephthah no doubt intended to impose a very difficult

vow upon himself. And that would not have been the case if he had merely been thinking of a sacrificial animal. Even without any vow, he would have offered, not one, but many sacrifices after obtaining a victory. If therefore he had an animal sacrifice in his mind, he would certainly have vowed the best of his flocks. From all this there can be no doubt that Jephthah must have been thinking of some human being as at all events included in his vow; so that when he declared that he would dedicate that which came out of his house to meet him, the meaning of the vow cannot have been any other than that he would leave the choice of the sacrifice to God himself. “In his eagerness to smite the foe, and to thank God for it, Jephthah could not think of any particular object to name, which he could regard as great enough to dedicate to God; he therefore left it to accident, i.e., to the guidance of God, to determine the sacrifice. He shrank from measuring what was dearest to God, and left this to God himself” (*P. Cassel in Herzog’s Real-encycl.*). Whomsoever God should bring to meet him, he would dedicate to Jehovah, and indeed, as is added afterwards by way of defining it more precisely, he would offer him to the Lord as a burnt-offering. The ו before הַעֲלִיתִיהוּ is to be taken as explanatory, and not as disjunctive in the sense of “or,” which ו never has. But whether Jephthah really thought of his daughter at the time, cannot be determined either in the affirmative or negative. If he did, he no doubt hoped that the Lord would not demand this hardest of all sacrifices.

Judges 11:32, 33. After seeking to ensure the help of the Lord by this vow, he went against the Ammonites to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hand, so that Jephthah smote them in a very great slaughter “from Aroër (or Nahr Ammân; see v. 26) to the neighbourhood of (‘till thou come to;’ see at Gen. 10:19) *Minnith*, (conquering and taking) twenty cities, and to *Abel Keramim* (of the vineyards).” *Minnith*, according to the *Onom.* (s. v. *Mennith*), was a place called *Manith* in the time of *Eusebius*, four Roman miles from

Heshbon on the road to Philadelphia, with which the account given by *Buckingham* of the ruins of a large city a little to the east of Heshbon may be compared (see *v. Raum*. Pal. p. 265). The situation of *Abel Keramim* (plain of the vineyards: *Luther* and *Eng. Ver.*) cannot be determined with the same certainty. *Eusebius* and *Jerome* mention two places of this name (*Onom. s. v. Abel vinearum*), a *villa Abela vinetis consita* (κώμη ἀμπελοφόρος Ἀβελ) seven Roman miles from Philadelphia, and a *civitas nomine Abela vini fertilis* twelve Roman miles to the east of Gadara, and therefore in the neighbourhood of the Mandhur. Which of the two is referred to here remains uncertain, as we have no precise details concerning the battle. If the northern *Abela* should be meant, Jephthah would have pursued the foe first of all towards the south to the neighbourhood of Heshbon, and then to the north to the border of Bashan. Through his victory the Ammonites were completely subdued before the Israelites.

Judges 11:34–40. Jephthah's Vow.—Vv. 34, 35. When the victorious hero returned to Mizpeh, his daughter came out to meet him “with timbrels and in dances,” i.e., at the head of a company of women, who received the conqueror with joyous music and dances (see at Ex. 15:20): “and she was the only one; he had neither son nor daughter beside her.” כַּמְנַנִּי cannot mean *ex se*, no other child of his own, though he may have had children that his wives had brought him by other husbands; but it stands, as the great Masora has pointed it, for כַּמְנַנָּה, “besides her,” the daughter just mentioned,—the masculine being used for the feminine as the nearest and more general gender, simply because the idea of “child” was floating before the author’s mind. At such a meeting Jephthah was violently agitated. Tearing his clothes (as a sign of his intense agony; see at Lev. 10:6), he exclaimed, “O my daughter! thou hast brought me very low; it is thou who troublest me” (*lit.* thou art among those who trouble me, thou belongest to their class, and indeed in the fullest sense of the word; this is the meaning of the so-called כ

essentiae: see *Ges. Lehrgeb.* p. 838, and such passages as 2 Sam. 15:31, Ps. 54:6; 55:19, etc.): “I have opened my mouth to the Lord (i.e., have uttered a vow to Him: compare Ps. 66:14 with Num. 30:3ff., Deut. 23:23, 24), and cannot turn it,” i.e., revoke it.

Judges 11:36. The daughter, observing that the vow had reference to her (as her father in fact had, no doubt, distinctly told her, though the writer has passed this over because he had already given the vow itself in v. 31), replied, “Do to me as has gone out of thy mouth (i.e., do to me what thou hast vowed), since Jehovah has procured the vengeance upon thine enemies the Ammonites.” She then added (v. 37), “Let this thing be done for me (equivalent to, Let this only be granted me); let me alone two months and I will go,” i.e., only give me two months to go, “that I may go down to the mountains (i.e., from Mizpeh, which stood upon an eminence, to the surrounding mountains and their valleys) and bewail my virginity, I and my friends.” בְּתוּלִים does not mean “youth” (נְעוּרִים), but the condition of virginity (see Lev. 21:13). The *Kethibh* רְעוּתִי is a less common form of רְעוּתִי (*Keri*).

Judges 11:38. The father granted this request.

Judges 11:39. At the end of two months she returned to her father again, “and he did to her the vow that he had vowed, and she knew no man.” In consequence of this act of Jephthah and his daughter, “it became an ordinance (a standing custom) in Israel: from year to year (see Ex. 13:10) the daughters of Israel go to praise the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.” תְּנָה does not mean θρηνηεῖν, to lament or bewail (LXX, Chald., etc.), but to praise, as *R. Tanchum* and others maintain.

With regard to *Jephthah's* vow, the view expressed so distinctly by *Josephus* and the Chaldee was the one which generally prevailed in the earlier times among both Rabbins and fathers of the church, viz., that Jephthah put his daughter to death and burned her upon the altar as a bleeding sacrifice to Jehovah. It was

not till the middle ages that *Mos.* and *Dav.* *Kimchi* and certain other Rabbins endeavoured to establish the view, that Jephthah merely dedicated his daughter to the service of the sanctuary of Jehovah in a lifelong virginity. And lastly, *Ludov. Cappellus*, in his *Diatriba de voto Jephthae*, Salm. 1683 (which has been reprinted in his *Notae critic.* in Jud. xvi., and the *Critici Sacri*, tom. i.), has expressed the opinion that Jephthah put his daughter to death in honour of the Lord according to the law of the ban, because human beings were not allowed to be offered up as burnt-sacrifices. Of these different opinions the third has no foundation in the text of the Bible. For supposing that Jephthah had simply vowed that on his return he would offer to the Lord whatever came to meet him out of his house, with such restrictions only as were involved in the very nature of the case,—viz., offering it as a burnt-offering if it were adapted for this according to the law; and if it were not, then proceeding with it according to the law of the ban,—the account of the fulfilment of this vow would certainly have defined with greater precision the manner in which he fulfilled the vow upon his daughter. The words “he did to her his vow which he had vowed,” cannot be understood in any other way than that he offered her as *עֹלָה*, i.e., as a *burnt-offering*, to the Lord. Moreover, the law concerning the ban and a vow of the ban could not possibly give any individual Israelite the right to ban either his own child or one of his household to the Lord, without opening a very wide door to the crime of murder. The infliction of the ban upon any man presupposed notorious wickedness, so that burnt-offering and ban were diametrically opposed the one to the other. Consequently the other two views are the only ones which can be entertained, and it is not easy to decide between them. Although the words “and I offer him as a burnt-offering” appear to favour the actual sacrifice so strongly, that *Luther’s* marginal note, “some affirm that he did not sacrifice her, but the text is clear enough,” is perpetually repeated with peculiar emphasis; yet, on looking more closely into the matter, we find insuperable difficulties in the way of the

literal interpretation of the words. Since *הִיָּצֵא אֶת־בְּנֵי־אִשְׁרָיִךְ* cannot be taken impersonally, and therefore when Jephthah uttered his vow, he must at any rate have had the possibility of some human being coming to meet him in his mind; and since the two clauses “*he shall be the Lords,*” and “*I will offer him up for a burnt-offering,*” cannot be taken disjunctively in such a sense as this, it shall *either* be dedicated to the Lord, *or*, if it should be a sacrificial animal, I will offer it up as a burnt-offering, but the second clause simply contains a more precise definition of the first,—Jephthah must at the very outset have contemplated the possibility of a human sacrifice. Yet not only were human sacrifices prohibited in the law under pain of death as an abomination in the sight of Jehovah (Lev. 18:21; 20:2–5; Deut. 12:31; 18:10), but they were never heard of among the Israelites in the early times, and were only transplanted to Jerusalem by the godless kings Ahaz and Manasseh.

If Jephthah therefore vowed that he would offer a human sacrifice to Jehovah, he must either have uttered his vow without any reflection, or else have been thoroughly depraved in a moral and religious sense. But what we know of this brave hero by no means warrants any such assumptions, His acts do not show the slightest trace of impetuosity and rashness. He does not take to the sword at once, but waits till his negotiations with the king of the Ammonites have been without effect. Nor does he utter his vow in the midst of the confusion of battle, so that we might fancy he had made a vow in the heat of the conflict without fully weighting his words, but he uttered it before he set out against the Ammonites (see vv. 30 and 32). So far as the religious training of Jephthah was concerned, it is true that he had led the life of a freebooter during his exile from his country and home, and before his election as the leader of the Israelites; but the analogous circumstances connected with David’s life preclude us from inferring either moral depravity or religious barbarism from this. When David was obliged to fly from his country

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to escape from Saul, he also led a life of the same kind, so that all sorts of people came to him, not pious and virtuous people, but all who were in distress and had creditors, or were embittered in spirit (1 Sam. 22:2); and yet, even under these circumstances, David lived in the law of the Lord. Moreover, Jephthah was not destitute of the fear of God. This is proved first of all by the fact, that when he had been recalled from his exile he looked to Jehovah to give him the victory over the Ammonites, and made a treaty with the elders of Gilead "before Jehovah" (vv. 9 and 10); and also by the fact, that he sought to ensure the help of God in war through the medium of a vow. And again, we have no right to attribute to him any ignorance of the law. Even if Kurtz is correct in his opinion, that the negotiations with the king of the Ammonites, which show the most accurate acquaintance with the Pentateuch, were not carried on independently and from his own knowledge of the law, and that the sending of messengers to the hostile king was resolved upon in the national assembly at Mizpeh, with the priests, Levites, and elders present, so that the Levites, who knew the law, may have supplied any defects in his own knowledge of the law and of the early history of his people; a private Israelite did not need to study the whole of the law of the Pentateuch, and to make himself master of the whole, in order to gain the knowledge and conviction that a human sacrifice was irreconcilable with the substance and spirit of the worship of Jehovah, and that Jehovah the God of Israel was not a Moloch. And again, even if we do not know to what extent the men and fathers of families in Israel were acquainted and familiar with the contents of the Mosaic law, the opinion is certainly an erroneous one, that the Israelites derived their knowledge of the law exclusively from the public reading of the law at the feast of tabernacles in the sabbatical year, as enjoined in Deut. 31:10ff.; so that if this public reading, which was to take place only once in seven years, had been neglected, the whole nation would have been left without any instruction whatever in the law. The reason for this Mosaic

precept was a totally different one from that of making the people acquainted with the contents of the law (see the commentary on this passage). And again, though we certainly do not find the law of the Lord so thoroughly pervading the religious consciousness of the people, received as it were *in succum et sanguinem*, in the time of the judges, that they were able to resist the bewitching power of nature-worship, but, on the contrary, we find them repeatedly falling away into the worship of Baal; yet we discover no trace whatever of human sacrifices even in the case of those who went a whoring after Baalim. And although the theocratical knowledge of the law seems to have been somewhat corrupted even in the case of such men as Gideon, so that this judge had an unlawful ephod made for himself at Ophrah; the opinion that the Baal-worship, into which the Israelites repeatedly fell, was associated with human sacrifices, is one of the many erroneous ideas that have been entertained as to the development of the religious life not only among the Israelites, but among the Canaanites, and which cannot be supported by historical testimonies or facts. That the Canaanitish worship of Baal and Astarte, to which the Israelites were addicted, required no human sacrifices, is indisputably evident from the fact, that even in the time of Ahab and his idolatrous wife Jezebel, the daughter of the Sidonian king Ethbaal, who raised the worship of Baal into the national religion in the kingdom of the ten tribes, persecuting the prophets of Jehovah and putting them to death, there is not the slightest allusion to human sacrifices. Even at that time human sacrifices were regarded by the Israelites as so revolting an abomination, that the two kings of Israel who besieged the king of the Moabites—not only the godly Jehoshaphat, but Jehoram the son of Ahab and Jezebel— withdrew at once and relinquished the continuance of the war, when the king of the Moabites, in the extremity of his distress, sacrificed his son as a burnt-offering upon the wall (2 Kings 3:26, 27). With such an attitude as this on the part of the Israelites towards human

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sacrifices before the time of Ahaz and Manasseh, who introduced the worship of Moloch into Jerusalem, we cannot, without further evidence, impute to Jephthah the offering of a bloody human sacrifice, the more especially as it is inconceivable, with the diametrical opposition between the worship of Jehovah and the worship of Moloch, that God should have chosen a worshipper of Moloch to carry out His work, or a man who was capable of vowing and offering a human-being sacrifice. The men whom God chose as the recipients of His revelation of mercy and the executors of His will, and whom He endowed with His Spirit as judges and leaders of His people, were no doubt affected with infirmities, faults, and sins of many kinds, so that they could fall to a very great depth; but nowhere is it stated that the Spirit of God came upon a worshipper of Moloch and endowed him with His own power, that he might be the helper and saviour of Israel.

We cannot therefore regard Jephthah as a servant of Moloch, especially when we consider that, in addition to what has already been said, the account of the actual fulfilment of his vow is apparently irreconcilable with the literal interpretation of the words *וְהָעֵלִיתָהּ עֹלָה*, as signifying a bleeding burnt-offering. We cannot infer anything with certainty as to the mode of the sacrifice, from the grief which Jephthah felt and expressed when his only daughter came to meet him. For this is quite as intelligible, as even the supporters of the literal view of these words admit, on the supposition that Jephthah was compelled by his vow to dedicate his daughter to Jehovah in a lifelong virginity, as it would be if he had been obliged to put her to death and burn her upon the altar as a burnt-offering. But the entreaty of the daughter, that he would grant her two months' time, in order that she might lament her virginity upon the mountains with her friends, would have been marvellously out of keeping with the account that she was to be put to death as a sacrifice. To mourn one's virginity does not mean to mourn because one has to die a virgin, but because one

has to live and remain a virgin. But even if we were to assume that mourning her virginity was equivalent to mourning on account of her youth (which is quite untenable, as *בְּתוּלִים* is not synonymous with *נְעוּרִים*), "it would be impossible to understand why this should take place *upon the mountains*. It would be altogether opposed to human nature, that a child who had so soon to die should make use of a temporary respite to forsake her father altogether. It would no doubt be a reasonable thing that she should ask permission to enjoy life for two months longer before she was put to death; but that she should only think of bewailing her virginity, when a sacrificial death was in prospect, which would rob her father of his only child, would be contrary to all the ordinary feelings of the human heart. Yet, inasmuch as the history lays special emphasis upon her bewailing her virginity, this must have stood in some peculiar relation to the nature of the vow. When a maiden *bewails* her virginity, the reason for this can only be that she will have to remain a bud that has not been allowed to unfold itself, prevented, too, not by death, but by life" (*P. Cassel*, p. 473). And this is confirmed by the expression, to bewail her virginity "*upon the mountains*." "If life had been in question, the same tears might have been shed at home. But her lamentations were devoted to her virginity, and such lamentations could not be uttered in the town, and in the presence of men. Modesty required the solitude of the mountains for these. The virtuous heart of the maiden does not open itself in the ears of all; but only in sacred silence does it pour out its lamentations of love" (*P. Cassel*, p. 476).

And so, again, the still further clause in the account of the fulfilment of the vow, "and she knew no man," is not in harmony with the assumption of a sacrificial death. This clause would add nothing to the description in that case, since it was already known that she was a virgin. The words only gain their proper sense if we connect them with the previous clause, he "did with her according to the vow which he had vowed," and understand them as

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describing what the daughter did in fulfilment of the vow. The father fulfilled his vow upon her, and she knew no man; i.e., he fulfilled the vow through the fact that she knew no man, but dedicated her life to the Lord, as a spiritual burnt-offering, in a lifelong chastity. It was this willingness of the daughter to sacrifice herself which the daughters of Israel went every year to celebrate,—namely, upon the mountains whither her friends had gone with her to lament her virginity, and which they commemorated there four days in the year. And the idea of a spiritual sacrifice is supported not only by the words, but also most decisively by the fact that the historian describes the fulfilment of the vow in the words “he did to her according to his vow,” in such a manner as to lead to the conclusion that he regarded the act itself as laudable and good. But a prophetic historian could never have approved of a human sacrifice; and it is evident that the author of the book of Judges does not conceal what was blameable even in the judges themselves, from his remarks concerning the conduct of Gideon (Judges 8:27), which was only a very small offence in comparison with the abomination of a human sacrifice. To this we have to add the difficulties connected with such an act. The words “he did to her according to his vow” presuppose undoubtedly that Jephthah offered his daughter as *עֹלָה* to Jehovah. But burnt-offerings, that is to say bleeding burnt-offerings, in which the victim was slaughtered and burnt upon the altar, could only be offered upon the lawful altar at the tabernacle, or before the ark, through the medium of the Levitical priests, unless the sacrifice itself had been occasioned by some extraordinary manifestation of God; and that we cannot for a moment think of here. But is it credible that a priest or the priesthood should have consented to offer a sacrifice upon the altar of Jehovah which was denounced in the law as the greatest abomination of the heathen? This difficulty cannot be set aside by assuming that Jephthah put his daughter to death, and burned her upon some secret altar, without the assistance and mediation of a priest; for such an

act would not have been described by the prophetic historian as a fulfilment of the vow that he would offer a burnt-offering to the Lord, simply because it would not have been a sacrifice offered to Jehovah at all, but a sacrifice slaughtered to Moloch.

All these circumstances, when rightly considered, almost compel us to adopt the spiritual interpretation of the words, “offer as a burnt-offering.” It is true that no exactly corresponding parallelisms can be adduced from the Old Testament in support of the spiritual view; but the germs of this view, as met with in the Psalms and the writings of the prophets, are contained in the demand of God addressed to Abraham to offer Him his only son Isaac as a burnt-offering, when compared with the issue of Abraham’s temptation,—namely, that God accepted his willingness to offer up his son as a completed sacrifice, and then supplied him with a ram to offer up as a bleeding sacrifice in the place of his son. As this fact teaches that what God demands is not a corporeal but a spiritual sacrifice, so the rules laid down in the law respecting the redemption of the first-born belonging to the Lord, and of persons vowed to Him (Ex. 13:1, 13; Num. 18:15, 16; Lev. 27:1ff.), show clearly how the Israelites could dedicate themselves and those who belonged to them to the Lord, without burning upon the altar the persons who were vowed to Him. And lastly, it is evident, from the perfectly casual reference to the women who ministered at the tabernacle (Ex. 38:8; 1 Sam. 2:22), that there were persons in Israel who dedicated their lives to the Lord at the sanctuary, by altogether renouncing the world. And there can be no doubt that Jephthah had such a dedication as this in his mind when he uttered his vow; at all events in case the Lord, to whom he left the appointment of the sacrifice, should demand the offering up of a human being. The word *עֹלָה* does not involve the idea of burning, like our word burnt-offering, but simply that of going up upon the altar, or of complete surrender to the Lord. *עֹלָה* is a whole offering, as distinguished from the

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other sacrifices, of which only a part was given up to the Lord. When a virgin, therefore, was set apart as a spiritual עֹלָה, it followed, as a matter of course, that henceforth she belonged entirely to the Lord: that is to say, was to remain a virgin for the remainder of her days. The fact that Nazarites contracted marriages, even such as were dedicated by a vow to be Nazarites all their lives, by no means warrants the conclusion that virgins dedicated to the Lord by a vow were also free to marry if they chose. It is true that we learn nothing definite from the Old Testament with regard to this spiritual sacrificial service; but the absence of any distinct statements upon the subject by no means warrants our denying the fact. Even with regard to the spiritual service of the women at the tabernacle we have no precise information; and we should not have known anything about this institution, if the women themselves had not offered their mirrors in the time of Moses to make the holy laver, or if we had not the account of the violation of such women by the sons of Eli. In this respect, therefore, the remarks of *Clericus*, though too frequently disregarded, as very true: "It was not to be expected, as I have often observed, that so small a volume as the Old Testament should contain all the customs of the Hebrew, and a full account of all the things that were done among them. There are necessarily many things alluded to, therefore, which we do not fully understand, simply because they are not mentioned elsewhere."

Judges 12

Judges 12:1-7. Jephthah's War with the Ephraimites, and Office of Judge.—V. 1. The jealousy of the tribe of Ephraim, which was striving after the leadership, had already shown itself in the time of Gideon in such a way that nothing but the moderation of that judge averted open hostilities. And now that the tribes on the east of the Jordan had conquered the Ammonites under the command of Jephthah without the co-operation of the Ephraimites, Ephraim thought it necessary to assert its claim to take the lead in Israel in a

very forcible manner. The Ephraimites gathered themselves together, and went over צָפוֹנָה. This is generally regarded as an appellative noun (*northward*); but in all probability it is a proper name, "to *Zaphon*," the city of the Gadites in the Jordan valley, which is mentioned in Josh. 13:27 along with Succoth, that is to say, according to a statement of the *Gemara*, though of a very uncertain character no doubt; Ἀμαθοῦς (*Joseph. Ant.* xiii. 13, 5, xiv. 5, 4; Bell. Jud. i. 4, 2, *Reland*, Pal. pp. 308 and 559-60), the modern ruins of *Amata* on the Wady *Rajīb* or *Ajlun*, the situation of which would suit this passage very well. They then threatened Jephthah, because he had made war upon the Ammonites without them, and said, "We will burn thy house over thee with fire." Their arrogance and threat Jephthah opposed most energetically. He replied (vv. 2, 3), "A man of strife have I been, I and my people on the one hand, and the children of Ammon on the other, very greatly," i.e., I and my people had a severe conflict with the Ammonites. "Then I called you, but ye did not deliver me out of their hand; and when I saw that thou (Ephraim) didst not help me, I put my life in my hand" (i.e., I risked my own life: see 1 Sam. 19:5; 28:21, Job 13:14. The *Kethibh* אִישָׁמָה comes from יָשָׁם: cf. Gen. 24:33), "and I went against the Ammonites, and Jehovah gave them into my hand." Jephthah's appeal to the Ephraimites to fight against the Ammonites is not mentioned in Judges 11, probably for no other reason than because it was without effect. The Ephraimites, however, had very likely refused their co-operation simply because the Gileadites had appointed Jephthah as commander without consulting them. Consequently the Ephraimites had no ground whatever for rising up against Jephthah and the Gileadites in this haughty and hostile manner; and Jephthah had a perfect right not only to ask them, "Wherefore are ye come up against me now (*lit.* 'this day'), to fight against me?" but to resist such conduct with the sword.

Judges 12:4. He therefore gathered together all the men (men of war) of Gilead and smote the Ephraimites, because they had said, "Ye

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Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim in the midst of Ephraim and Manasseh.” The meaning of these obscure words is probably the following: Ye Gileadites are a mob gathered together from Ephraimites that have run away; “ye are an obscure set of men, men of no name, dwelling in the midst of two most noble and illustrious tribes” (*Rosenmüller*). This contemptuous speech did not apply to the tribes of Reuben and Gad as such, but simply to the warriors whom Jephthah had gathered together out of Gilead. For the words are not to be rendered *erepti Ephraim*, “the rescued of Ephraim,” as they are by *Seb. Schmidt* and *Stud.*, or to be understood as referring to the fact that the Gileadites had found refuge with the Ephraimites during the eighteen years of oppression on the part of the Ammonites, since such an explanation is at variance with the use of the word פְּלִיט, which simply denotes a fugitive who has escaped from danger, and not one who has sought and found protection with another. The Ephraimites had to pay for this insult offered to their brethren by a terrible defeat.

Judges 12:5. When the Gileadites had beaten the Ephraimites, they took the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites (or towards Ephraim: see Judges 3:28; 7:24), to cut off their retreat and prevent their return to their homes. And “when fugitives of Ephraim wanted to cross, the men of Gilead asked them, *Art thou Ephrathi,*” i.e., an Ephraimite? And if he said no, they made him pronounce the word *Shibboleth* (a stream or flood, as in Ps. 69:3, 16; not an ear of corn, which is quite unsuitable here); “and if he said, *Sibboleth, not taking care to pronounce it correctly, they laid hold of him and put him to death at the fords of the Jordan.*” In this manner there fell at that time, i.e., during the whole war, 42,000 Ephraimites. The “*fugitives of Ephraim*” were the Ephraimites who had escaped from the battle and wished to return home. The expression is used here in its ordinary sense, and not with the contemptuous sense in which the Ephraimites had used it in v. 4. From this history we learn quite casually that the

Ephraimites generally pronounced *sh* (shin) like *s* (samech). הִכִּין is used elliptically for הִכִּין לְ, to direct his heart to anything, pay heed (compare 1 Sam. 23:22, 1 Chron. 28:2, with 2 Chron. 12:14; 30:19).

Judges 12:7. Jephthah judged Israel six years, though most probably only the tribes on the east of the Jordan. When he died, he was buried in one of the towns of Gilead. The plural בְּעָרֵי גִלְעָד is used quite indefinitely, as in Gen. 13:12, Neh. 6:2, etc. (see *Ges. Lehrgeb.* p. 665), simply because the historian did not know the exact town.

The Judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.—Ch. 12:8–15.

Judges 12:8–15. Of these three judges no particular deeds are related, just as in the case of Tola and Jair (see the remarks on Judges 10:1). But it certainly follows from the expression וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אַחֲרָיו (vv. 8, 11, 13) that they were one after another successors of Jephthah, and therefore that their office of judge also extended simply over the tribes on the east of the Jordan, and perhaps the northern tribes on this side.

Judges 12:8, 9. *Ibzan* sprang from *Bethlehem*,—hardly, however, the town of that name in the tribe of Judah, as *Josephus* affirms (*Ant.* v. 7, 13), for that is generally distinguished either as Bethlehem “of Judah” (Judges 17:7, 9; Ruth 1:2; 1 Sam. 17:12), or Bethlehem *Ephratah* (Micah 5:1), but probably Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun (Josh. 9:15). He had thirty sons and thirty daughters, the latter of whom he sent away הִחַוְצָה (out of his house), i.e., gave them in marriage, and brought home thirty women in their places from abroad as wives for his sons. He judged Israel seven years, and was buried in Bethlehem.

Judges 12:11, 12. His successor was *Elon* the Zebulunite, who died after filling the office of judge for ten years, and was buried at *Aijalon*, in the land of Zebulun. This *Aijalon* has probably been preserved in the ruins of *Jalûn*, about four hours’ journey to the east of Akka, and half an

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hour to the S.S.W. of Mejdal Kerun (see *V. de Velde*, Mem. p. 283).

Judges 12:13–15. He was followed by the judge *Abdon*, the son of Hillel of *Pirathon*. This place, where Abdon died and was buried after holding the office of judge for eight years, was in the land of Ephraim, on the mountains of the Amalekites (v. 15). It is mentioned in 2 Sam. 23:30 and 1 Chron. 11:31 as the home of Benaiah the hero; it is the same as Φαραθώ (read Φαραθόν) in 1 Macc. 9:50, and *Joseph. Ant.* xiii. 1, 3, and has been preserved in the village of *Feráta*, about two hours and a half to the S.S.W. of Nabalus (see *Rob. Bibl. Res.* p. 134, and *V. de Velde*, Mem. p. 340). On the riding of his sons and daughters upon asses, see at Judges 10:4.

Judges 13

Samson's Life, and Conflicts with the Philistines.—Ch. 13–16.

Judges 13–16. Whilst Jephthah, in the power of God, was delivering the tribes on the east of the Jordan from the oppression of the Ammonites, the oppression on the part of the Philistines continued uninterruptedly for forty years in the land to the west of the Jordan (Judges 13:1), and probably increased more and more after the disastrous war during the closing years of the high-priesthood of Eli, in which the Israelites suffered a sad defeat, and even lost the ark of the covenant, which was taken by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4). But even during this period, Jehovah the God of Israel did not leave himself without witness, either in the case of His enemies the Philistines, or in that of His people Israel. The triumphant delight of the Philistines at the capture of the ark was soon changed into great and mortal terror, when Dagon their idol had fallen down from its place before the ark of God and was lying upon the threshold of its temple with broken head and arms; and the inhabitants of Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, to which the ark was taken, were so severely smitten with boils by the hand of Jehovah, that the princes of the Philistines felt constrained to send the ark, which brought

nothing but harm to their people, back into the land of the Israelites, and with it a trespass-offering (1 Sam. 5–6). At this time the Lord had also raised up a hero for His people in the person of *Samson*, whose deeds were to prove to the Israelites and Philistines that the God of Israel still possessed the power to help His people and smite His foes.

The life and acts of *Samson*, who was to begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines, and who judged Israel for twenty years under the rule of the Philistines (Judges 13:5 and 15:20), are described in Judges 13–16 with an elaborate fulness which seems quite out of proportion to the help and deliverance which he brought to his people. His birth was foretold to his parents by an appearance of the angel of the Lord, and the boy was set apart as a Nazarite from his mother's womb. When he had grown up, the Spirit of Jehovah began to drive him to seek occasions for showing the Philistines his marvellous strength, and to inflict severe blows upon them in a series of wonderful feats, until at length he was seduced by the bewitching Delilah to make known to her the secret of his supernatural strength, and was betrayed by her into the power of the Philistines, who deprived him of the sight of his eyes, and compelled him to perform the hardest and most degraded kinds of slave-labour. From this he was only able to escape by bringing about his own death, which he did in such a manner that his enemies were unable to triumph over him, since he killed more of them at his death than he had killed during the whole of his life before. And whilst the small results that followed from the acts of this hero of God do not answer the expectations that might naturally be formed from the miraculous announcement of his birth, the nature of the acts which he performed appears still less to be such as we should expect from a hero impelled by the Spirit of God. His actions not only bear the stamp of adventure, foolhardiness, and wilfulness, when looked at outwardly, but they are almost all associated with love affairs; so that it looks as if Samson had dishonoured and fooled away the gift entrusted to him, by

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making it subservient to his sensual lusts, and thus had prepared the way for his own ruin, without bringing any essential help to his people. "The man who carried the gates of Gaza up to the top of the mountain was the slave of a woman, to whom he frivolously betrayed the strength of his Nazarite locks. These locks grew once more, and his strength returned, but only to bring death at the same time to himself and his foes" (*Ziegler*). Are we to discern in such a character as this a warrior of the Lord? Can Samson, the promised son of a barren woman, a Nazarite from his birth, be the head and flower of the Judges? We do not pretend to answer these questions in the affirmative; and to justify this view we start from the fact, which *Ewald* and *Diestel* both admit to be historical, that the deep earnest background of Samson's nature is to be sought for in his Nazarite condition, or rather that it is in this that the distinctive significance of his character and of his life and deeds as judge all culminates. The Nazarite was not indeed what *Bertheau* supposes him to have been, "a man separated from human pursuits and turmoil;" but the significance of the Nazarite condition was to be found in a consecration of the life to God, which had its roots in living faith, and its outward manifestations negatively, in abstinence from everything unclean, from drinking wine, and even from fruit of the vine of every description, and positively, in wearing the hair uncut. In the case of Samson this consecration of the life to God was not an act of his own free will, or a vow voluntarily taken; but it was imposed upon him by divine command from his conception and birth. As a Nazarite, i.e., as a person vowed to the Lord, he was to begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines; and the bodily sign of his Nazarite condition—namely, the hair of his head that had never been touched by the scissors—was the vehicle of his supernatural strength with which he smote the Philistines. In Samson the Nazarite, however, not only did the Lord design to set before His people a man towering above the fallen generation in heroic strength, through his firm faith in and confident reliance upon the gift of God committed to him,

opening up before it the prospect of a renewal of its own strength, that by this type he might arouse such strength and ability as were still slumbering in the nation; but Samson was to exhibit to his age generally a picture on the one hand of the strength which the people of God might acquire to overcome their strongest foes through faithful submission to the Lord their God, and on the other hand of the weakness into which they had sunk through unfaithfulness to the covenant and intercourse with the heathen. And it is in this typical character of Samson and his deeds that we find the head and flower of the institution of judge in Israel.

The judges whom Jehovah raised up in the interval between Joshua and Samuel were neither military commanders nor governors of the nation; nor were they authorities instituted by God and invested with the government of the state. They were not even chosen from the heads of the nation, but were called by the Lord out of the midst of their brethren to be the deliverers of the nation, either through His Spirit which came upon them, or through prophets and extraordinary manifestations of God; and the influence which they exerted, after the conquest and humiliation of the foe and up to the time of their death, upon the government of the nation and its affairs in general, was not the result of any official rank, but simply the fruit and consequence of their personal ability, and therefore extended for the most part only to those tribes to whom they had brought deliverance from the oppression of their foes. The tribes of Israel did not want any common secular ruler to fulfil the task that devolved upon the nation at that time (see pp. 172f.). God therefore raised up even the judges only in times of distress and trouble. For their appearance and work were simply intended to manifest the power which the Lord could confer upon His people through His spirit, and were designed, on the one hand, to encourage Israel to turn seriously to its God, and by holding fast to His covenant to obtain the power to conquer all its foes; and, on the other hand, to alarm their enemies, that they might

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not attribute to their idols the power which they possessed to subjugate the Israelites, but might learn to fear the omnipotence of the true God. This divine power which was displayed by the judges culminated in Samson. When the Spirit of God came upon him, he performed such mighty deeds as made the haughty Philistines feel the omnipotence of Jehovah. And this power he possessed by virtue of his condition as a Nazarite, because he had been vowed or dedicated to the Lord from his mother's womb, so long as he remained faithful to the vow that had been imposed upon him. But just as his strength depended upon the faithful observance of his vow, so his weakness became apparent in his natural character, particularly in his intrigues with the daughters of the Philistines; and in this weakness there was reflected the natural character of the nation generally, and of its constant disposition to fraternize with the heathen. Love to a Philistine woman in Timnath not only supplied Samson with the first occasion to exhibit his heroic strength to the Philistines, but involved him in a series of conflicts in which he inflicted severe blows upon the uncircumcised. This impulse to fight against the Philistines came from Jehovah (Judges 14:4), and in these conflicts Jehovah assisted him with the power of His Spirit, and even opened up a fountain of water for him at Lehi in the midst of his severe fight, for the purpose of reviving his exhausted strength (Judges 15:19). On the other hand, in his intercourse with the harlot at Gaza, and his love affair with Delilah, he trod ways of the flesh which led to his ruin. In his destruction, which was brought about by his forfeiture of the pledge of the divine gift entrusted to him, the insufficiency of the judgeship in itself to procure for the people of God supremacy over their foes became fully manifest; so that the weakness of the judgeship culminated in Samson as well as its strength. The power of the Spirit of God, bestowed upon the judges for the deliverance of their people, was overpowered by the might of the flesh lusting against the spirit.

This special call received from God will explain the peculiarities observable in the acts which he performed,—not only the smallness of the outward results of his heroic acts, but the character of adventurous boldness by which they were distinguished. Although he had been set apart as a Nazarite from his mother's womb, he was not to complete the deliverance of his people from the hands of the Philistines, but simply to commence, it, i.e., to show to the people, by the manifestation of supernatural heroic power, the possibility of deliverance, or to exhibit the strength with which a man could slay a thousand foes. To answer this purpose, it was necessary that the acts of Samson should differ from those of the judges who fought at the head of military forces, and should exhibit the stamp of confidence and boldness in the full consciousness of possession divine and invincible power.

But whilst the spirit which prevailed in Israel during the time of the judges culminated in the nature and deeds of Samson both in its weakness and strength, the miraculous character of his deeds, regarded simply in themselves, affords no ground for pronouncing the account a mere legend which has transformed historical acts into miracles, except from a naturalistic point of view, which rejects all miracles, and therefore denies *a priori* the supernatural working of the living God in the midst of His people. The formal character of the whole of the history of Samson, which the opponents of the biblical revelation adduce for the further support of this view, does not yield any tenable evidence of its correctness. The external rounding off of the account proves nothing more than that Samson's life and acts formed in themselves a compact and well-rounded whole. But the assertion, that "well-rounded circumstances form a suitable framework for the separate accounts, and that precisely twelve acts are related of Samson, which are united into beautiful pictures and narrated in artistic order" (*Bertheau*), is at variance with the actual character of the biblical account. In order to get exactly twelve heroic acts, *Bertheau* has to fix

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the stamp of a heroic act performed by Samson himself upon the miraculous help which he received from God through the opening up of a spring of water (Judges 15:18, 19), and also to split up a closely connected event, such as his breaking the bonds three times, into three different actions. If we simply confine ourselves to the biblical account, the acts of Samson may be divided into two parts. The *first* (Judges 14 and 15) contains those in which Samson smote the Philistines with gradually increasing severity; the *second* (Judges 16) those by which he brought about his own fall and ruin. These are separated from one another by the account of the time that his judgeship lasted (Judges 15:20), and this account is briefly repeated at the close of the whole account (Judges 16:31). The *first* part includes six distinct acts which are grouped together in twos: viz., (1 and 2) the killing of the lion on the way to Timnath, and the slaughter of the thirty Philistines for the purpose of paying for the solution of his riddle with the clothes that he took off them (Judges 14); (3 and 4) his revenge upon the Philistines by burning their crops, because his wife had been given to a Philistine, and also by the great slaughter with which he punished them for having burned his father-in-law and wife (Judges 15:1–8); (5 and 6) the bursting of the cords with which his countrymen had bound him for the purpose of delivering him up to the Philistines, and the slaying of 1000 Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass (Judges 15:9–19). The *second* part of his life comprises only three acts: viz., (1) taking off the town gates of Gaza, and carrying them away (Judges 16:1–3); (2) breaking the bonds with which Delilah bound him three separate times (Judges 16:4–14); and (3) his heroic death through pulling down the temple of Dagon, after he had been delivered into the power of the Philistines through the treachery of Delilah, and had been blinded by them (Judges 16:15–31). In this arrangement there is no such artistic shaping or rounding off of the historical materials apparent, as could indicate any mythological decoration. And lastly, the popular language of Samson in proverbs, rhymes, and a play upon words, does

not warrant us in maintaining that the popular legend invented this mode of expressing his thoughts, and put the words into his mouth. All this leads to the conclusion, that there is no good ground for calling in question the historical character of the whole account of Samson's life and deeds. **Judges 13.** Birth of Samson.—V. 1. The oppression of the Israelites by the Philistines, which is briefly hinted at in Judges 10:7, is noticed again here with the standing formula, "*And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord,*" etc. (cf. Judges 10:6; 4:1; 3:12), as an introduction to the account of the life and acts of *Samson*, who began to deliver Israel from the hands of these enemies. Not only the birth of Samson, but the prediction of his birth, also fell, according to v. 5, within the period of the rule of the Philistines over Israel. Now, as their oppression lasted forty years, and Samson judged Israel for twenty years during that oppression (Judges 15:20; 16:31), he must have commenced his judgeship at an early age, probably before the completion of his twentieth year; and with this the statement in Judges 14, that his marriage with a Philistine woman furnished the occasion for his conflicts with these enemies of his people, fully agrees. The end of the forty years of the supremacy of the Philistines is not given in this book, which closes with the death of Samson. It did not terminate till the great victory which the Israelites gained over their enemies under the command of Samuel (1 Sam. 7). Twenty years before this victory the Philistines had sent back the ark which they had taken from the Israelites, after keeping it for seven months in their own land (1 Sam. 7:2, and 6:1). It was within these twenty years that most of the acts of Samson occurred. His first affair with the Philistines, however, namely on the occasion of his marriage, took place a year or two before this defeat of the Israelites, in which the sons of Eli were slain, the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines, and the high priest Eli fell from his seat and broke his neck on receiving the terrible news (1 Sam. 4:18). Consequently Eli died a short time after the first appearance of Samson (see p. 206).

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Judges 13:2–7. Whilst the Israelites were given into the hands of the Philistines on account of their sins, and were also severely oppressed in Gilead on the part of the Ammonites, the angel of the Lord appeared to the wife of Manoah, a Danite from *Zorea*, i.e., *Sur'a*, on the western slope of the mountains of Judah (see at Josh. 15:33). *Mishpachath Dani* (the family of the Danites) is used interchangeably with *shebet Dani* (the tribe of the Danites: see Judges 18:2, 11, and 18:1, 30), which may be explained on this ground, that according to Num. 26:42, 43, all the Danites formed but one family, viz., the family of the Shuhamites. The angel of the Lord announced to this woman, who was barren, “*Thou wilt conceive and bear a son. And now beware, drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean: for, behold, thou wilt conceive and bear a son, and no razor shall come upon his head; for a vowed man of God (Nazir) will the boy be from his mother’s womb,*” i.e., his whole life long, “*to the day of his death,*” as the angel expressly affirmed, according to v. 7. The three prohibitions which the angel of the Lord imposed upon the woman were the three things which distinguished the condition of a Nazarite (see at Num. 6:1–8, and the explanation given there of the Nazarite vow). The only other thing mentioned in the Mosaic law is the warning against defilement from contact with the dead, which does not seem to have been enforced in the case of Samson. When the angel added still further, “*And he (the Nazarite) will begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines,*” he no doubt intended to show that his power to effect this deliverance would be closely connected with his condition as a Nazarite. The promised son was to be a Nazarite all his life long, because he was to begin to deliver Israel out of the power of his foes. And in order that he might be so, his mother was to share in the renunciations of the Nazarite vow during the time of her pregnancy. Whilst the appearance of the angel of the Lord contained the practical pledge that the Lord still acknowledged His people, though He had given them into the hands of their enemies; the message of the angel contained this lesson and warning for

Israel, that it could only obtain deliverance from its foes by seeking after a life of consecration to the Lord, such as the Nazarites pursued, so as to realize the idea of the priestly character to which Israel had been called as the people of Jehovah, by abstinence from the *deliciae carnis*, and everything that was unclean, as being emanations of sin, and also by a complete self-surrender to the Lord (see Pentateuch, p. 674).

Judges 13:6, 7. The woman told her husband of this appearance: “*A man of God,*” she said (lit., the man of God, viz., the one just referred to), “*came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very terrible; and I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name,*” etc. “*Man of God*” was the expression used to denote a prophet, or a man who stood in immediate intercourse with God, such as Moses and others (see at Deut. 33:1). “*Angel of God*” is equivalent to “angel of the Lord” (Judges 2:1; 6:11), the angel in whom the invisible God reveals himself to men. The woman therefore imagined the person who appeared to her to have been a prophet, whose majestic appearance, however, had produced the impression that he was a superior being; consequently she had not ventured to ask him either his name or where he came from.

Judges 13:8–20. Being firmly convinced of the truth of this announcement, and at the same time reflecting upon the obligation which it imposed upon the parents, Manoah prayed to the Lord that He would let the man of God whom He had sent come to them again, to teach them what they were to do to the boy that should be born, i.e., how they should treat him. *הַיִּלָּד*, according to the *Keri הַיִּלָּד*, is a participle *Pual* with the ך dropped (see *Ewald*, § 169, b.).

This prayer was heard. The angel of God appeared once more to the woman when she was sitting alone in the field without her husband.

Judges 13:10, 11. Then she hastened to fetch her husband, who first of all inquired of the person who had appeared, “*Art thou the man who said to the woman*” (sc., what has been

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related in vv. 3–5)? And when this was answered in the affirmative, he said still further (v. 12), “*Should thy word then come to pass, what will be the manner of the boy, and his doing?*” The plural דְּבָרָיִךְ is construed *ad sensum* with the singular verb, because the words form one promise, so that the expression is not to be taken distributively, as *Rosenmüller* supposes. This also applies to v. 17, *Mishpat*, the right belonging to a boy, i.e., the proper treatment of him.

Judges 13:13, 14. The angel of the Lord then repeated the instructions which he had already given to the woman in v. 4, simply adding to the prohibition of wine and strong drink the caution not to eat of anything that came from the vine, in accordance with Num. 6:3.

Judges 13:15. As Manoah had not yet recognised in the man the angel of the Lord, as is observed by way of explanation in v. 16, he wished, like Gideon (Judges 6:18), to give a hospitable entertainment to the man who had brought him such joyful tidings, and therefore said to him, “*Let us detain thee, and prepare a kid for thee.*” The construction נַעֲשֶׂה לְפָנֶיךָ is a pregnant one: “prepare and set before thee.” On the fact itself, see Judges 6:19.

Judges 13:16. The angel of the Lord replied, “*If thou wilt detain me (sc., that I may eat), I will not eat of thy food* (אָכַל with בָּ, to eat thereat, i.e., thereof, as in Ex. 12:43, Lev. 22:11); *but if thou wilt prepare a burnt-offering for Jehovah, then offer it.*”

Judges 13:17. Manoah then asked his name: מִי שְׁמֶךָ, lit., “*Who is thy name?*” מִי inquires after the person; מָה, the nature of quality (see *Ewald*, § 325, a.). “*For if thy word come to pass, we will do thee honour.*” This was the reason why he asked after his name. כִּבְדָה, to honour by presents, so as to show one’s self grateful (see Num. 22:17, 37; 24:11).

Judges 13:18. The angel replied, “*Why askest thou then after my name? truly it is wonderful.*” The *Kethibh* פִּלְאִי is the adjectival form פִּלְאִי

from פִּלְאִי, for which the *Keri* has פִּלְי, the pausal form of פִּלְי (from the radical פִּלְה = פִּלְאִי). The word therefore is not the proper name of the angel of the Lord, but expresses the character of his name; and as the name simply denotes the nature, it expresses the peculiarity of his nature also. It is to be understood in an absolute sense—“absolutely and supremely wonderful” (*Seb. Schmidt*)—as a predicate belonging to God alone (compare the term “Wonderful” in Isa. 9:6), and not to be toned down as it is by *Bertheau*, who explains it as signifying “neither easy to utter nor easy to comprehend.”

Judges 13:19, 20. Manoah then took the kid and the *minchah*, i.e., according to Num. 15:4ff., the meat-offering belonging to the burnt-offering, and offered it upon the rock, which is called an altar in v. 20, because the angel of the Lord, who is of one nature with God, had sanctified it as an altar through the miraculous acceptance of the sacrifice. מִפְּלֵא לְעֵשׂוֹת, “*and wonderfully (miraculously) did he act*” (הִפְלִיא followed by the infinitive with לְ as in 2 Chron. 26:15). These words form a circumstantial clause, which is not to be attached, however, to the subject of the principal clause, but to לִיהוָה: “Manoah offered the sacrifice to the Lord, whereupon He acted to do wonderfully, i.e., He performed a wonder or miracle, and Manoah and his wife saw it” (see *Ewald*, *Lehrb.* § 341, b., p. 724, note). In what the miracle consisted is explained in v. 20, in the words, “*when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar;*” that is to say, in the fact that a flame issued from the rock, as in the case of Gideon’s sacrifice (Judges 6:21), and consumed the sacrifice. And the angel of the Lord ascended in this flame. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell upon their faces to the earth (sc., in worship), because they discovered from the miracle that it was the angel of the Lord who had appeared to them.

Judges 13:21–25. From that time forward the Lord did not appear to them again. But Manoah was afraid that he and his wife should die,

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because they had seen God (on this belief, see the remarks on Gen. 16:13 and Ex. 33:20). His wife quieted his fears, however, and said, "Jehovah cannot intend to kill us, as He has accepted our sacrifice, and has shown us all this" (the twofold miracle). "And at this time He has not let us see such things as these." בָּעֵת, at the time in which we live, even if such things may possibly have taken place in the hoary antiquity.

Judges 13:24. The promise of God was fulfilled. the boy whom the woman bare received the name of *Samson*. שִׁמְשֹׁן (LXX, Σαμψών) does not mean sun-like, hero of the sun, from שֶׁשֶׁן (the sun), but, as *Josephus* explains it (Ant. v. 8, 4), ἰσχυρός, the strong or daring one, from שִׁמְשָׁן, from the intensive from שֶׁשֶׁן, from שָׁמַן, in its original sense to be strong or daring, not "to devastate." דָּדַשׁ is an analogous word: *lit.* to be powerful, then to act powerfully, to devastate. The boy grew under the blessing of God (see 1 Sam. 2:21).

Judges 13:25. When he had grown up, the Spirit of Jehovah began to thrust him in the camp of Dan. דָּחַק, to thrust, denoting the operation of the Spirit of God within him, which took possession of him suddenly, and impelled him to put forth supernatural powers. *Mahanah-Dan*, the camp of Dan, was the name given to the district in which the Danites who emigrated, according to Judges 18:12, from the inheritance of their tribe, had pitched their encampment *behind*, i.e., to the west of, *Kirjath-jearim*, or according to this verse, between Zorea and Eshtaol. The situation cannot be determined precisely, as the situation of Eshtaol itself has not been discovered yet (see at Josh. 15:33). It was there that Samson lived with his parents, judging from Judges 16:31. The meaning of this verse, which forms the introduction to the following account of the acts of Samson, is simply that Samson was there seized by the Spirit of Jehovah, and impelled to commence the conflict with the Philistines.

Judges 14

Judges 14. Samson's First Transactions with the Philistines.—Vv. 1–9. At Tibnath, the present *Tibne*, an hour's journey to the south-west of Sur'a (see at Josh. 15:10), to which Samson had gone down from Zorea or Mahaneh-Dan, he saw a daughter of the Philistines who pleased him; and on his return he asked his parents to take her for him as a wife (לָקַח, to take, as in Ex. 21:9).

Judges 14:3, 4. His parents expressed their astonishment at the choice, and asked him whether there was not a woman among the daughters of his brethren (i.e., the members of his own tribe), or among all his people, that he should want to fetch one from the Philistines, the uncircumcised. But Samson repeated his request, because the daughter of the Philistines pleased him. The aversion of his parents to the marriage was well founded, as such a marriage was not in accordance with the law. It is true that the only marriages expressly prohibited in Ex. 34:16 and Deut. 7:3, 4, are marriages with Canaanitish women; but the reason assigned for this prohibition was equally applicable to marriages with daughters of the Philistines. In fact, the Philistines are reckoned among the Canaanites in Josh. 13:3 upon the very same ground. But Samson was acting under a higher impulse, whereas his parents did not know that it was from Jehovah, i.e., that Jehovah had so planned it; "for Samson was seeking an opportunity on account of the Philistines," i.e., an occasion to quarrel with them, because, as is afterwards added in the form of an explanatory circumstantial clause, the Philistines had dominion over Israel at that time. תְּאַנֶּה, ἄπ. λεγ., an opportunity (cf. תְּאַנֶּה, 2 Kings 5:7).

Judges 14:5, 6. When Samson went down with his parents to Timnath, a young lion came roaring towards him at the vineyards of that town. Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, so that he tore the lion in pieces as a kid is torn (*lit.* "like the tearing in pieces of the kid"), although he had nothing, i.e., no weapon, in his hand. David, when a shepherd, and the hero

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Benaiah, also slew lions (1 Sam. 17:34, 35; 2 Sam. 23:20); and even at the present day Arabs sometimes kill lions with a staff (see *Winer*, *Bibl. R. W. Art. Löwe*). Samson's supernatural strength, the effect of the Spirit of Jehovah, which came upon him, was simply manifested in the fact that he tore the lion in pieces without any weapon whatever in his hand. But he said nothing about it to his parents, who were not eyewitnesses of the deed. This remark is introduced in connection with what follows.

Judges 14:7. When he came to Timnath he talked with the girl, and she pleased him. He had only *seen* her before (v. 1); but now that his parents had asked for her, he talked with her, and found the first impression that he had received of her fully confirmed.

Judges 14:8. When some time had elapsed after the betrothal, he came again to fetch her (take her home, marry her), accompanied, as we learn from v. 9, by his parents. On the way "he turned aside (from the road) to see the carcass of the lion; and behold a swarm of bees was in the body of the lion, also honey." The word *בַּמְּפֵלֶת*, which only occurs here, is derived from *נָפַל*, like *πτῶμα* from *πίπτω*, and is synonymous with *נִבְיָלָה*, *cadaver*, and signifies not the mere skeleton, as bees would not form their hive in such a place, but the carcass of the lion, which had been thoroughly dried up by the heat of the sun, without passing into a state of putrefaction. "In the desert of Arabia the heat of a sultry season will often dry up all the moisture of men or camels that have fallen dead, within twenty-four hours of their decease, without their passing into a state of decomposition and putrefaction, so that they remain for a long time like mummies, without change and without stench" (*Rosenmüller*, *Bibl. Althk. iv. 2*, p. 424). In a carcass dried up in this way, a swarm of bees might form their hive, just as well as in the hollow trunks of trees, or clefts in the rock, or where wild bees are accustomed to form them, notwithstanding the fact that bees avoid both dead bodies and carrion (see *Bochart, Hieroz, ed. Ros. iii. p. 355*).

Judges 14:9. Samson took it (the honey) in his hands, ate some of it as he went, and also gave some to his father and mother to eat, but did not tell them that he had got the honey out of the dead body of the lion; for in that case they would not only have refused to eat it as being unclean, but would have been aware of the fact, which Samson afterwards took as the subject of the riddle that he proposed to the Philistines.

רָדָה, to tread, to tread down; hence to get forcible possession of, not to break or to take out, neither of which meanings can be established. The combination of *רָדָה* and *אֶל-כַּפָּיו* is a pregnant construction, signifying to obtain possession of and take into the hands.

Judges 14:10–20. *Samson's Wedding and Riddle.*—V. 10. When his father had come down to the girl (sc., to keep the wedding, not merely to make the necessary preparations for his marriage), Samson prepared for a feast there (in Timnath), according to the usual custom (for so used the young men to do).

Judges 14:11. "And when they saw him, they fetched thirty friends, and they were with him." The parents or relations of the bride are the subject of the first clause. They invited thirty of their friends in Timnath to the marriage feast, as "children of the bride-chamber" (Matt. 9:15), since Samson had not brought any with him.

The reading *בְּרֵאוֹתָם* from *רָאָה* needs no alteration, though *Bertheau* would read *בְּרֵאֲתָם* from *רָאָה*, in accordance with the rendering of the LXX (*Cod. Al.*) and *Josephus*, ἐν τῷ φοβεῖσθαι αὐτούς. Fear of Samson would neither be in harmony with the facts themselves, nor with the words *וַיִּהְיוּ אִתּוֹ*, "they were with him," which it is felt to be necessary to paraphrase in the most arbitrary manner "they watched him."

Judges 14:12. At the wedding feast Samson said to the guests, "I will give you a riddle. If you show it to me during the seven days of the meal (the wedding festival), and guess it, I will give you thirty *sedinim* (*σινδόνες*, *tunicae*, i.e., clothes worn next to the skin) and thirty changes of garments (costly dresses, that were frequently

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changed: see at Gen. 45:22); *but if ye cannot show it to me, ye shall give me the same number of garments.*" The custom or proposing riddles at banquets by way of entertainment is also to be met with among the ancient Grecians. (For proofs from *Athenaeus, Pollux, Gellius*, see *Bochart*, Hieroz. P. ii. l. ii. c. 12; and *K. O. Müller*, Dorier, ii. p. 392). As the guests consented to this proposal, Samson gave them the following riddle (v. 14): "*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.*" This riddle they could not show, i.e., solve, for three days. That is to say, they occupied themselves for three days in trying to find the solution; after that they let the matter rest until the appointed term was drawing near.

Judges 14:15. On the seventh day they said to Samson's wife, "*Persuade thy husband to show us the riddle,*" sc., through thee, without his noticing it, "*lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire. Have ye invited us to make us poor; is it not so?*" In this threat the barbarism and covetousness of the Philistines came openly to light. הִלְיָרְשָׁנוּ without *Metheg* in the ׀ is the *inf. Kal* of יָרַשׁ, to make poor,—a meaning derived from inheriting, not the *Piel* of יָרַשׁ = רוּשׁ, to be poor. הֲלֹא, *nonne*, strengthens the interrogative clause, and has not the signification "here" = הֲלֵם. Samson's wife, however, wept over him, i.e., urged him with tears in her eyes, and said, "*Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not; thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people* (my countrymen), *and hast not shown it to me.*" חֲדָתָהּ is from חוּדַח. Samson replied, that he had not even shown it to his father and mother, "*and shall I show it to thee?*"

Judges 14:17. "*Thus his wife wept before him the seven days of the banquet.*" This statement is not at variance with that in v. 15, to the effect that it was only on the seventh day that the Philistine young men urged her with threats to entice Samson to tell the riddle, but may be explained very simply in the following manner. The woman had already come to Samson every

day with her entreaties from simple curiosity; but Samson resisted them until the seventh day, when she became more urgent than ever, in consequence of this threat on the part of the Philistines. And "*Samson showed it to her, because she lay sore upon him;*" whereupon she immediately betrayed it to her countrymen.

Judges 14:18. Thus on the seventh day, before the sun went down (הָרַסָה = הָרַס, Judges 8:13; Job 9:7, with a toneless *ah*, a softening down of the feminine termination: see *Ewald*, § 173, *h.*), the men of the city (i.e., the thirty young men who had been invited) said to Samson, "What is sweeter than honey, and what stronger than a lion?" But Samson saw through the whole thing, and replied, "*If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not hit upon* (guessed) *my riddle,*"—a proverbial saying, the meaning of which is perfectly clear.

Judges 14:19. Nevertheless he was obliged to keep his promise (v. 12). Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, slew thirty men of them, i.e., of the Ashkelonites, took their clothes (חֲלִיצוֹת, *exuviae*: see 2 Sam. 2:21), and gave the changes of garments to those who had shown the riddle. This act is described as the operation of the Spirit of Jehovah which came upon Samson, because it showed to the Philistines the superior power of the servants of Jehovah. It was not carnal revenge that had impelled Samson to the deed. It was not till the deed itself was done that his anger was kindled; and even then it was not against the Philistines, to whom he had been obliged to pay or give the thirty garments, but against his wife, who had betrayed his secret to her countrymen, so that he returned to his father's house, viz., without his wife.

Judges 14:20. "*And Samson's wife was given to his friend, whom he had chosen as a friend.*" מִרְעֵה is not doubt to be understood here in the sense of "the friend of the bridegroom" (John 3:29), ὁ συμπαγωγός (LXX), the conductor of the bride,—namely, one of the thirty companions (v. 10), whom Samson had entrusted with this

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office at the marriage festival. The faithlessness of the Philistines towards the Israelites was no doubt apparent here; for even if Samson went home enraged at the treacherous behaviour of his wife, without taking her with him, he did not intend to break the marriage tie, as Judges 15:1, 2 clearly shows. So that instead of looking at the wrong by which Samson felt himself aggrieved, and trying to mitigate his wrath, the parents of the woman made the breach irreparable by giving their daughter as a wife to his companion.

Judges 15

Judges 15. Further Acts of Samson.—V. 1–8. *His Revenge upon the Philistines.*—V. 1. Some time after, Samson visited his wife in the time of the wheat harvest with a kid,—a customary present at that time (Gen. 38:17),—and wished to go into the chamber (the women’s apartment) to her; but her father would not allow him, and said, “*I thought thou hatedst her, and therefore gave her to thy friend* (Judges 14:20): *behold her younger sister is fairer than she; let her be thine in her stead.*”

Judges 15:3. Enraged at this answer, Samson said to them (i.e., to her father and those around him), “*Now am I blameless before the Philistines, if I do evil to them.*” נָקָה with בָּנִי, to be innocent away from a person, i.e., before him (see Num. 32:22). Samson regarded the treatment which he had received from his father-in-law as but one effect of the disposition of the Philistines generally towards the Israelites, and therefore resolved to avenge the wrong which he had received from one member of the Philistines upon the whole nation, or at all events upon the whole of the city of Timnath.

Judges 15:4, 5. He therefore went and caught three hundred *shualim*, i.e., jackals, animals which resemble foxes and are therefore frequently classed among the foxes even by the common Arabs of the present day (see *Niebuhr*, *Beschr. v. Arab.* p. 166). Their European name is derived from the Persian *schaghal*. These animals, which are still found in great

quantities at Joppa, Gaza, and in Galilee, herd together, and may easily be caught (see *Rosenmüller*, *Bibl. Althk.* iv. 2, pp. 155ff.). He then took torches, turned tail to tail, i.e., coupled the jackals together by their tails, putting a torch between the two tails, set the torches on fire, and made the animals run into the fields of standing corn belonging to the Philistines. Then he burned “*from the shocks of wheat to the standing grain and to the olive gardens,*” i.e., the shocks of wheat as well as the standing corn and the olive plantations. כָּרָם זֵיתִי are joined together in the construct state.

Judges 15:6. The Philistines found out at once, that Samson had done them this injury because his father-in-law, the Timnite, had taken away his wife and given her to his companion. They therefore avenged themselves by burning her and her father,—probably by burning his house down to the ground, with its occupants within it,—an act of barbarity and cruelty which fully justified Samson’s war upon them.

Judges 15:7. Samson therefore declared to them, “*If ye do such things, truly (כִּי) when I have avenged myself upon you, then will I cease,*” i.e., I will not cease till I have taken vengeance upon you.

Judges 15:8. “*Then he smote them hip and thigh* (lit. ‘thigh upon hip;’ עַל as in Gen. 32:12), *a great slaughter.*” שׁוֹק, thigh, strengthened by עַל-יָרֵךְ, is a second accusative governed by the verb, and added to define the word אֶזְתָּם more minutely, in the sense of “on hip and thigh;” whilst the expression which follows, בְּמִכָּה גְדוֹלָה, is added as an adverbial accusative to strengthen the verb וַיִּדֶּךָ. Smiting hip and thigh is a proverbial expression for a cruel, unsparing slaughter, like the German “cutting arm and leg in two,” or the Arabic “war in thigh fashion” (see *Bertheau in loc.*). After smiting the Philistines, Samson went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock *Etam*. There is a town of *Etam* mentioned in 2 Chron. 11:6, between Bethlehem and Tekoah, which was fortified by Rehoboam, and stood in all probability to the

south of Jerusalem, upon the mountains of Judah. But this *Etam*, which *Robinson* (Pal. ii. 168) supposes to be the village of *Urtas*, a place still inhabited, though lying in ruins, is not to be thought of here, as the Philistines did not go up to the mountains of Judah (v. 9), as *Bertheau* imagines, but simply came forward and encamped in Judah. The *Etam* of this verse is mentioned in 1 Chron. 4:32, along with *Ain Rimmon* and other Simeonitish towns, and is to be sought for on the border of the Negeb and of the mountains of Judah, in the neighbourhood of *Khuweilifeh* (see *V. de Velde*, Mem. p. 311). The expression "he went down" suits this place very well, but not the *Etam* on the mountains of Judah, to which he would have had to go up, and not down, from *Timnath*.

Judges 15:9–17. *Samson is delivered up to the Philistines, and smites them with the jaw-bone of an Ass.*

Judges 15:9. The Philistines came ("went up," denoting the advance of an army: see at Josh. 8:1) to avenge themselves for the defeat they had sustained from Samson; and having encamped in Judah, spread themselves out in *Lechi* (*Lehi*). *Lechi* (לְחִי, in pause לְחִי, i.e., a jaw), which is probably mentioned again in 2 Sam. 23:11, and, according to v. 17, received the name of *Ramath-lechi* from Samson himself, cannot be traced with any certainty, as the early church tradition respecting the place is utterly worthless. *Van de Velde* imagines that it is to be found in the flattened rocky hill *el Lechieh*, or *Lekieh*, upon which an ancient fortification has been discovered, in the middle of the road from *Tell Khewelfeh* to *Beersheba*, at the south-western approach of the mountains of Judah.

Judges 15:10ff. When the Judaeans learned what was the object of this invasion on the part of the Philistines, three thousand of them went down to the cleft in the rock *Etam*, to bind Samson and deliver him up to the Philistines. Instead of recognising in Samson a deliverer whom the Lord had raised up for them, and crowding round him that they might smite their oppressors with his help and drive them out of the land, the men of Judah were so degraded,

that they cast this reproach at Samson:

"Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us? Wherefore hast thou done this (the deed described in v. 8)? We have come down to bind thee, and deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines." Samson replied, *"Swear to me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves."* פָּגַע with אָ, to thrust at a person, fall upon him, including in this case, according to v. 13, the intention of killing.

Judges 15:13. When they promised him this, he let them bind him with two new cords and lead him up (into the camp of the Philistines) out of the rock (i.e., the cleft of the rock).

Judges 15:14. But when he came to *Lechi*, and the Philistines shouted with joy as they came to meet him, the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, *"and the cords on his arms became like two that had been burnt with fire, and his fetters melted from his hands."* The description rises up to a poetical parallelism, to depict the triumph which Samson celebrated over the Philistines in the power of the Spirit of Jehovah.

Judges 15:15. As soon as he was relieved of his bands, he seized upon a fresh jaw-bone of an ass, which he found there, and smote therewith a thousand men. He himself commemorated this victory in a short poetical strain (v. 16): *"With the ass's jaw-bone a heap, two heaps; with the ass's jaw-bone I smote a thousand men."* The form of the word חֲמֹר = חָמֶר is chosen on account of the resemblance to חֲמֹר, and is found again at 1 Sam. 16:20. How Samson achieved this victory is not minutely described. But the words "a heap, two heaps," point to the conclusion that it did not take place in one encounter, but in several. The supernatural strength with which Samson rent asunder the fetters bound upon him, when the Philistines thought they had him safely in their power, filled them with fear and awe as before a superior being, so that they fled, and he pursued them, smiting one heap after another, as he overtook them, with an ass's jaw-bone which he found in the way. The number given, viz., a thousand, is of course a round number

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signifying a very great multitude, and has been adopted from the song into the historical account.

Judges 15:17. When he had given utterance to his saying, he threw the jaw-bone away, and called the place *Ramath-lechi*, i.e., the jaw-bone height. This seems to indicate that the name *Lechi* in v. 9 is used proleptically, and that the place first received its name from this deed of Samson.

Judges 15:18–20. The pursuit of the Philistines, however, and the conflict with them, had exhausted Samson, so that he was very thirsty, and feared that he might die from exhaustion; for it was about the time of the wheat-harvest (v. 1), and therefore hot summer weather. Then he called to the Lord, “*Thou hast through (בַּיַד) Thy servant given this great deliverance; and now I shall die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised!*” From this prayer we may see that Samson was fully conscious that he was fighting for the cause of the Lord. And the Lord helped him out of this trouble. God split the hollow place at Lechi, so that water came out of it, as at Horeb and Kadesh (Ex. 17:6, and Num. 20:8, 11). The word *מִכְתֵּשׁ*, which is used in Prov. 27:22 to signify a mortar, is explained by rabbinical expositors as denoting the socket of the teeth, or the hollow place in which the teeth are fixed, like the Greek *ὀλμίσκος*, *mortariolum*, according to *Pollux*, *Onom.* ii. c. 4, § 21. Accordingly many have understood the statement made here, as meaning that God caused a fountain to flow miraculously out of the socket of a tooth in the jaw-bone which Samson had thrown away, and thus provided for his thirst. This view is the one upon which Luther’s rendering, “God split a tooth in the jaw, so that water came out,” is founded, and is has been voluminously defended by *Bochart* (*Hieroz.* l. ii. c. 15). But the expression *אֲשֶׁר בְּלֶחִי*, “the *maktesh* which is at *Lechi*,” is opposed to this view, since the tooth-socket in the jaw-bone of the ass would be simply called *מִכְתֵּשׁ הַלֶּחִי* or *מִכְתֵּשׁ בְּלֶחִי*; and so is also the remark that this fountain was still in

existence in the historian’s own time. And the article proves nothing to the contrary, as many proper names are written with it (see *Ewald*, § 277, c.). Consequently we must follow *Josephus* (*Ant.* v. 8), who takes *שֵׁם הַמִּכְתֵּשׁ* as the name given to the opening of the rock, which was cleft by God to let water flow out. “If a rocky precipice bore the name of jaw-bone (*lechi*) on account of its shape, it was a natural consequence of this figurative epithet, that the name *tooth-hollow* should be given to a hole or gap in the rock” (*Studer*). Moreover, the same name, *Maktesh*, occurs again in Zeph. 1:11, where it is applied to a locality in or near Jerusalem. The hollow place was split by *Elohim*, although it was to *Jehovah* that Samson had prayed, to indicate that the miracle was wrought by God as the Creator and Lord of nature. Samson drank, and his spirit returned, so that he revived again. Hence the fountain received the name of *En-hakkore*, “the crier’s well which is at Lechi,” unto this day. According to the accents, the last clause does not belong to *בְּלֶחִי* (in Lechi), but to *וַיִּקְרָא* (he called, etc.). It received the name given to it unto this day. This *implies*, of course, that the spring itself was in existence when our book was composed.—In v. 20 the account of the judicial labours of Samson are brought to a close, with the remark that Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines, i.e., during their rule, for twenty years. What more is recorded of him in Judges 16 relates to his fall and ruin; and although even in this he avenged himself upon the Philistines, he procured no further deliverance for Israel. It is impossible to draw any critical conclusions from the position in which this remark occurs, as to a plurality of sources for the history of Samson.

Judges 16. Samson’s Fall and Death.—Samson’s judicial labours reached their highest point when he achieved his great victory over the Philistines at Lechi. Just as his love to the daughter of a Philistine had furnished him with the occasion designed by God for the manifestation of his superiority to the uncircumcised enemies of Israel, so the degradation of that love into sensual lust

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supplied the occasion for his fall which is related in this chapter. "Samson, when strong and brave, strangled a lion; but he could not strangle his own love. He burst the fetters of his foes, but not the cords of his own lusts. He burned up the crops of others, and lost the fruit of his own virtue when burning with the flame enkindled by a single woman." (*Ambros. Apol. ii., David. c. iii.*)

Judges 16

Judges 16:1-3. *His Heroic Deed at Gaza.*—

Samson went to Gaza in the full consciousness of his superiority in strength to the Philistines, and there went in unto a harlot whom he saw. For Gaza, see Josh. 13:3. *בְּגֹזָא* is used in the same sense as in Gen. 6:4 and 38:16. It is not stated in this instance, as in Judges 14:4, that it was of the Lord.

Judges 16:2. When this was told to the Gazites, they surrounded him (the object to the verb is to be supplied from the following word *לֵו*) and laid wait for him all night at the city gate, but they kept themselves quiet during the night, saying, "Till the dawning (*אֶרֶב*, *infin.*) of the morning," sc., we can wait, "then will we kill him." For this construction, see 1 Sam. 1:22. The verb *וַיִּגֵּד*, "it was told" (according to the LXX and *Chald.*: cf. Gen. 22:20), or *וַיֹּאמְרוּ*, "they said," is wanting before *לְעֵתָהֶם*, and must have fallen out through a copyist's error. The verb *הִתְחַרְשׁוּ* has evidently the subordinate idea of giving themselves up to careless repose; for if the watchmen who were posted at the city gate had but watched in a regular manner, Samson could not have lifted out the closed gates and carried them away. But as they supposed that he would not leave the harlot before daybreak, they relied upon the fact that the gate was shut, and probably feel asleep.

Judges 16:3. But at midnight Samson got up, and "laying hold of the folding wings of the city gate, as well as the two posts, tore them out of the ground with his herculean strength, together with the bar that fastened them, and

carried them up to the top of the mountain which stands opposite to Hebron." *עַל-פְּנֵי* merely means in the direction towards, as in Gen. 18:16, and does not signify that the mountain was in the front of Hebron or in the immediate neighbourhood (see Deut. 32:49, where Mount Nebo, which was on the other side of the Jordan, and at least four geographical miles from Jericho, is said to have been over against, it, and the same expression is employed). The distance from Gaza to Hebron was about nine geographical miles. To the east of Gaza there is a range of hills which runs from north to south. The highest of them all is one which stands somewhat isolated, about half an hour to the south-east of the town, and is called *el Montar* from a wely which is found upon the top of it. From this hill there is a splendid prospect over the whole of the surrounding country. Hebron itself is not visible from this hill, but the mountains of Hebron are. According to an ancient tradition, it was to the summit of this hill that Samson carried the city gates; and both *Robinson* (Pal. ii. 377) and *V. de Velde* regard this tradition as by no means improbable, although the people of Gaza are not acquainted with it. "The city gate of the Gaza of that time was probably not less than three-quarters of an hour from the hill *el Montar*; and to climb this peak with the heavy gates and their posts and bar upon his shoulders through the deep sand upon the road, was a feat which only a Samson could perform" (*V. de Velde*).

Judges 16:4-21. *Samson and Delilah.*—V. 4. After this successful act, Samson gave himself up once more to his sensual lusts. He fell in love with a woman in the valley of *Sorek*, named *Delilah* (i.e., the weak or pining one), to whose snares he eventually succumbed. With reference to the valley of *Sorek*, *Eusebius* affirms in the *Onom.* (s. v. *Σωρήχ*), that there was a village called *Βαρήχ* (*l. Καφάρ σωρήχ* according to *Jerome*) near Zorea, and *ἐν ὀρίοις* (*l. βορείοις* according to *Jerome*, who has *ad septentrionalem plagam*); and also (s. v. *Σωρήκ*) that this place was near to Eshtaol. Consequently the *Sorek* valley would have to be

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sought for somewhere in the neighbourhood of Samson's birthplace (Judges 13:1), and the dwelling-place of his family (v. 31).

Judges 16:5. The princes of the Philistines offered Delilah a considerable sum (they would give her one thousand and one hundred shekels of silver each, i.e., a thousand shekels or more: cf. Judges 17:2) if she would persuade Samson, and bring out from him "whereby his strength was great," and whereby they could overpower and bind him, לַעֲנוּתוֹ, to bend him, i.e., to oppress him. The Philistine princes thought that Samson's supernatural strength arose from something external, which he wore or carried about with him as an amulet. There was a certain truth at the foundation of this heathen superstition, inasmuch as this gift of divine grace was really bound up with the possession of a corporeal pledge, the loss of which was followed by the immediate loss of the gift of God (see at v. 17).

Judges 16:6. Allured by the reward in prospect, Delilah now sought to get from him the secret of his strength. But he deceived her three times by false statements. He first of all said to her (v. 7), "If they bound me with strings that have not been dried, I should be weak and like one of the men" (i.e., like any other man). יָתֵר signifies a sinew or string, e.g., a bow-string, Ps. 11:2, and in the different dialects either a bow-string or the string of a harp or guitar. As a distinction is made here between the יָתֵרִים and the עֲבֹתִים in v. 11, the strings intended here are those of catgut or animal sinew. The number *seven* is that of a divine act, answering to the divine power which Samson possessed.

Judges 16:8, 9. When Delilah told this to the princes of the Philistines, they brought the seven strings required, and Delilah bound Samson with them. "And the spy sat in the room (לָהּ, *dat. com.*, *lit.* 'to her,' *i.e.*) to help her." namely, without Samson knowing it, as Delilah had certainly not told him that she should betray the secret of his strength to the Philistines. He was there, no doubt, that he might be at hand and overpower the fettered

giant as soon as it became apparent that his strength was gone. She then cried out to him, "Philistines upon thee, Samson!" And he snapped the strings as one would snap a cord in two "when it smells fire," i.e., is held to the fire.

Judges 16:10-12. The second deception: Samson had himself bound with new cords, which had not yet been used for any purpose, and these also he burst from his arms like a thread.

Judges 16:13, 14. The third deception: "If thou weavest together the seven locks of my hair with the warp. And she drove it in with the plug." These words are difficult to explain, partly because several technical terms are used which have more than one meaning, and partly because the account itself is contracted, both Samson's advice and her fulfilment of it being only given in a partial form, so that the one has to be completed from the other. In v. 19, the only other passage in which מְהַלְפוֹת occurs, it no doubt means the plaits into which Samson's long flowing hair was plaited. הַמְסָכָה only occurs here (vv. 13 and 14), and probably means the woven cloth, or rather what was still upon the loom, the warp of the cloth, διάσμα (LXX). Accordingly the meaning of the verse would be this: If thou weavest the seven plaits of my hair along with the warp upon the loom. The commentators are all agreed that, according to these words, there must be something wanting in the account, though they are not of one opinion as to whether the binding of Samson is fully given here, and all that has to be supplied is the clause "Then shall I be weal," etc. (as in vv. 7 and 11), or whether the words וַתִּתְקַע בְּיָתֶד add another fact which was necessary to the completeness of the binding, and if so, how these words are to be understood. In Bertheau's opinion, the words "and she thrust with the plug" probably mean nothing more than that she made a noise to wake the sleeping Samson, because it is neither stated here that she forced the plug into the wall or into the earth to fasten the plaits with (LXX, Jerome), nor that her thrusting with the

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plug contributed in any way to the further fastening of the hair. These arguments are sound no doubt, but they do not prove what is intended. When it is stated in v. 14*b*, that “he tore out the weaver’s plug and the cloth,” it is certainly evident that the plug served to fasten the hair to the cloth or to the loom. Moreover, not only would any knocking with the plug to waken Samson with the noise have been altogether superfluous, as the loud cry, “Philistines upon thee, Samson,” would be amply sufficient for this; but it is extremely improbable that a fact with so little bearing upon the main facts would be introduced here at all. We come therefore to the same conclusion as the majority of commentators, viz., that the words in question are to be understood as referring to something that was done to fasten Samson still more securely. הִיָּתַד = הִיָּתַד הָאָרֶג (v. 14) does not mean the roller or weaver’s beam, to which the threads of the warp were fastened, and round which the cloth was rolled when finished, as *Bertheau* supposes, for this is called מְנוֹר אֲרָגִים in 1 Sam. 17:7; nor the σπάθη of the Greeks, a flat piece of wood like a knife, which was used in the upright loom for the same purpose as our comb or press, viz., to press the weft together, and so increase the substance of the cloth (*Braun, de vestitu Sacerd.* p. 253); but the comb or press itself which was fastened to the loom, so that it could only be torn out by force. To complete the account, therefore, we must supply between vv. 13 and 14, “And if thou fastenest it (the woven cloth) with the plug (the weaver’s comb), I shall be weak like one of the other men; and she wove the seven plaits of his hair into the warp of the loom.” Then follows in v. 14, “and fastened the cloth with the weaver’s comb.” There is no need, however, to assume that what has to be supplied fell out in copying. We have simply an ellipsis, such as we often meet with. When Samson as wakened out of his sleep by the cry of “Philistines upon thee,” he tore out the weaver’s comb and the warp (sc.,) from the loom, with his plaits of hair that had been woven in. The reference to his sleeping

warrants the assumption that Delilah had also performed the other acts of binding while he was asleep. We must not understand the account, however, as implying that the three acts of binding followed close upon one another on the very same day. Several days may very probably have elapsed between them. In this third deception Samson had already gone so far in his presumptuous trifling with the divine gift entrusted to him, as to suffer the hair of his head to be meddled with, though it was sanctified to the Lord. “It would seem as though this act of sin ought to have brought him to reflection. But as that was not the case, there remained but one short step more to bring him to thorough treachery towards the Lord” (*O. v. Gerlach*).

Judges 16:15. This last step was very speedily to follow.—V. 15. After this triple deception, Delilah said to him, “*How canst thou say, I love thee, as thine heart is not with me*” (i.e., not devoted to me)?

Judges 16:16. With such words as these she plagued him every day, so that his soul became impatient even to death (see Judges 10; 16). The ἀπ. λεγ. πῶς signifies in Aramaean, to press or plague. The form is *Piel*, though without the reduplication of the ל and *Chateph-patach* under (see *Ewald*, § 90, b.).

Judges 16:17. “*And he showed her all his heart,*” i.e., he opened his mind thoroughly to her, and told her that no razor had come upon his head, because he was a Nazarite from his mother’s womb (cf. Judges 13:5, 7). “*If I should be shave, my strength would depart from me, and I should be weak like all other men.*”

Judges 16:18. When Delilah saw (i.e., perceived, namely from his words and his whole behaviour while making this communication) that he had betrayed the secret of his strength, she had the princes of the Philistines called: “*Come up this time, ... for he had revealed to her all his heart.*” This last clause is not to be understood as having been spoken by Delilah to the princes themselves, as it is by the Masorites and most of the

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commentators, in which case הָלַךְ would have to be altered into הָלַח; but it contains a remark of the writer, introduced as an explanation of the circumstance that Delilah sent for the princes of the Philistines now that she was sure of her purpose. This view is confirmed by the word וָעָלָה (came up) which follows, since the use of the perfect instead of the imperfect with *vav consec.* can only be explained on the supposition that the previous clause is a parenthetical one, which interrupts the course of the narrative, and to which the account of the further progress of the affair could not be attached by the historical tense (וָעָלָה). The princes of the Philistines came up to Delilah on the receipt of this communication, bringing the money, the promised reward of her treachery (v. 5), in their hands.

Judges 16:19. "Then she made him sleep upon her knees, and called to the man," possibly the man lying in wait (vv. 9 and 12), that she might not be alone with Samson when cutting off his hair; and she cut off the seven plaits of his hair, and began to afflict him, as his strength departed from him now.

Judges 16:20. She then cried out, "Philistines upon thee, Samson!" And he awaked out of his sleep, and thought ("said," i.e., to himself), "I will go away as time upon time (this as at other times), and shake myself loose," sc., from the fetters or from the hands of the Philistines; "but he knew not that Jehovah had departed from him." These last words are very important to observe in order to form a correct idea of the affair. Samson had said to Delilah, "If my hair were cut off, my strength would depart from me" (v. 17). The historian observes, on the other hand, that "Jehovah had departed from him." The superhuman strength of Samson did not reside in his hair as hair, but in the fact that Jehovah was with or near him. But Jehovah was with him so long as he maintained his condition as a Nazarite. As soon as he broke away from this by sacrificing the hair which he wore in honour of the Lord, Jehovah departed from him, and with Jehovah went his strength.

Judges 16:21. The Philistines then seized him, put out his eyes, and led him to Gaza fettered with double brass chains. The chains are probably called *nechushtaim* (double brass) because both hands of both feet were fettered with them. King Zedekiah, when taken prisoner by the Chaldeans, was treated in the same manner (2 Kings 25:7). There Samson was obliged to turn the mill in the prison, and grind corn (the participle מְחַבֵּט expresses the continuance of the action). Grinding a handmill was the hardest and lowest kind of slave labour (compare Ex. 11:5 with 12:29); and both Greeks and Romans sentenced their slaves to this as a punishment (see *Od.* xx. 105ff., vii. 103-4; *Terent.* Phorm. ii. 1, 19, Andr. i. 2. 29), and it is still performed by female slaves in the East (see *Chardin in Harmar's* Beob. üb. d. Orient. iii. 64).

Judges 16:22-31. *Samson's Misery, and His Triumph in Death.*—V. 22. The hair of his head began to grow, as he was shaven. In the word כַּאֲשֶׁר, as (from the time when he was shaven), there is an indication that Samson only remained in his ignominious captivity till his hair began to grow again, i.e., visibly to grow. What follows agrees with this.

Judges 16:23, 24. The captivity of this dreaded hero was regarded by the Philistines as a great victory, which their princes resolved to celebrate with a great and joyous sacrificial festival in honour of their god *Dagon*, to whom they ascribed this victory. "A great sacrifice," consisting in the offering up of a large number of slain sacrifices. "And for joy," viz., to give expression to their joy, i.e., for a joyous festival. *Dagon*, one of the principal deities of the Philistines, was worshipped at Gaza and Ashdod (2 Sam. 5:2ff., and 1 Macc. 10:83), and, according to Jerome on Isa. 46:1, in the rest of the Philistine towns as well. It was a fish-deity (דָּגוֹן, from דָּג, a fish), and in shape resembled the body of a fish with the head and hands of a man (1 Sam. 5:4). It was a male deity, the corresponding female deity being *Atargatis* (2 Macc. 12:26) or *Derceto*, and was a symbol of water, and of all the vivifying forces of nature

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which produce their effects through the medium of water, like the Babylonian $\Omega\delta\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omega\nu$, one of the four *Oannes*, and the Indian *Vishnu* (see *Movers*, Phöniz. i. pp. 143ff., 590ff., and *J. G. Müller* in *Herzog's Cycl.*).

Judges 16:24. All the people took part in this festival, and sang songs of praise to the god who had given the enemy, who had laid waste their fields and slain many of their countrymen, into their hands.

Judges 16:25ff. When their hearts were merry (יִטְּבוּ, *inf.* of יָטַב), they had Samson fetched out of the prison, that he might make sport before them, and "put him between the pillars" of the house or temple in which the triumphal feast was held. Then he said to the attendant who held his hand, "Let me loose, and let me touch the pillars upon which the house is built, that I may lean upon it." הִימְיִשְׁנִי is the imperative *Hiphil* of the radical verb יָמַשׂ, which only occurs here; and the *Keri* substitutes the ordinary form הִמְיִשׁ from מִיֵּשׁ. "But the house," adds the historian by way of preparation for what follows, "was filled with men and women: all the princes of the Philistines also were there; and upon the roof were about three thousand men and women, who feasted their eyes with Samson's sports" (רָאָהּ with בָּ, used to denote the gratification of looking).

Judges 16:28. Then Samson prayed to Jehovah, "Lord Jehovah, remember me, and only this time make me strong. O God, that I may avenge myself (with) the revenge of one of my two eyes upon the Philistines," i.e., may take vengeance upon them for the loss of only one of my two eyes (מִשְׁתָּחִי, without *Dagesh lene* in the ת: see *Ewald*, § 267, b.),—a sentence which shows how painfully he felt the loss of his two eyes, "a loss the severity of which even the terrible vengeance which he was meditating could never outweigh" (*Bertheau*).

Judges 16:29, 30. After he had prayed to the Lord for strength for this last great deed, he embraced the two middle pillars upon which the building was erected, leant upon them, one

with his right hand, the other with the left (*viz.*, embracing them with his hands, as these words also belong to יָלַפַת), and said, "let my soul die with the Philistines." He then bent (the two pillars) with force, and the house fell upon the princes and all the people who were within. So far as the fact itself is concerned, there is no ground nor questioning the possibility of Samson's bringing down the whole building with so many men inside by pulling down two middle columns, as we have no accurate acquaintance with the style of its architecture. In all probability we have to picture this temple of Dagon as resembling the modern Turkish kiosks, namely as consisting of a "spacious hall, the roof of which rested in front upon four columns, two of them standing at the ends, and two close together in the centre. Under this hall the leading men of the Philistines celebrated a sacrificial meal, whilst the people were assembled above upon the top of the roof, which was surrounded by a balustrade" (*Faber*, *Archäol. der. Hebr.* p. 444, cf. pp. 436–7; and *Shaw*, *Reisen*, p. 190). The ancients enter very fully into the discussion of the question whether Samson committed suicide or not, though without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. *O. v. Gerlach*, however, has given the true answer. "Samson's deed," he says, "was not suicide, but the act of a hero, who sees that it is necessary for him to plunge into the midst of his enemies with the inevitable certainty of death, in order to effect the deliverance of his people and decide the victory which he has still to achieve. Samson would be all the more certain that this was the will of the Lord, when he considered that even if he should deliver himself in any other way cut of the hands of the Philistines, he would always carry about with him the mark of his shame in the blindness of his eyes,—a mark of his unfaithfulness as the servant of God quite as much as of the double triumph of his foes, who had gained a spiritual as well as a corporeal victory over him." Such a triumph as this the God of Israel could not permit His enemies and their idols to gain. The Lord must prove to them, even through Samson's death, that the shame of his sin was

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taken from him, and that the Philistines had no cause to triumph over him. Thus Samson gained the greatest victory over his foes in the moment of his own death. The terror of the Philistines when living, he became a destroyer of the temple of their idol when he died. Through this last act of his he vindicated the honour of Jehovah the God of Israel, against Dagon the idol of the Philistines. *"The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."*

Judges 16:31. This terrible blow necessarily made a powerful impression upon the Philistines, not only plunging them into deep mourning at the death of their princes and so many of their countrymen, and the destruction of the temple of Dagon, but filling them with fear and terror at the omnipotence of the God of the Israelites. Under these circumstances it is conceivable enough that the brethren and relatives of Samson were able to come to Gaza, and fetch away the body of the fallen hero, to bury it in his father's grave between Zorea and Eshtaol (see Judges 13:25).—In conclusion, it is once more very appropriately observed that Samson had judged Israel twenty years (cf. Judges 15:20).

Judges 17

Image-Worship of Micah and the Danites; Infamous Conduct of the Inhabitants of Gibeah; Vengeance Taken Upon the Tribe of Benjamin. Ch. 17-21.

Judges 17-21. The death of Samson closes the body of the book of Judges, which sets forth the history of the people of Israel under the judges in a continuous and connected form. The two accounts, which follow in Judges 17-21, of the facts mentioned in the heading are attached to the book of Judges in the form of *appendices*, as the facts in question not only belonged to the times of the judges, and in fact to the very commencement of those times (see p. 176), but furnished valuable materials for forming a correct idea of the actual character of this portion of the Israelitish history. The *first* appendix (Judges 17-18)—viz., the account of the introduction of image-worship, or of the

worship of Jehovah under the form of a molten image, by the Ephraimite Micah, and of the seizure of this image by the Danites, who emigrated from their own territory when upon their march northwards, and the removal of it to the city of *Laish-Dan*, which was conquered by them—shows us how shortly after the death of Joshua the inclination to an idolatrous worship of Jehovah manifested itself in the nation, and how this worship, which continued for a long time in the north of the land, was mixed up from the very beginning with sin and unrighteousness. The *second* (Judges 19-21)—viz., the account of the infamous act which the inhabitants of Gibeah attempted to commit upon the Levite who stayed there for the night, and which they actually did perform upon his concubine, together with its consequences, viz., the war of vengeance upon the tribe of Benjamin, which protected the criminals—proves, on the one hand, what deep roots the moral corruptions of the Canaanites had struck among the Israelites at a very early period, and, on the other hand, how even at that time the congregation of Israel as a whole had kept itself free and pure, and, mindful of its calling to be the holy nation of God, had endeavoured with all its power to root out the corruption that had already forced its way into the midst of it.

These two occurrences have no actual connection with one another, but they are both of them narrated in a very elaborate and circumstantial manner; and in both of them we not only find Israel still without a king (Judges 17:6; 18:1, and 19:1; 21:25), and the will of God sought by a priest or by the high priest himself (Judges 18:5, 6; 20:18, 23, 27), but the same style of narrative is adopted as a whole, particularly the custom of throwing light upon the historical course of events by the introduction of circumstantial clauses, from which we may draw the conclusion that they were written by the same author. On the other hand, they do not contain any such characteristic marks as could furnish a certain basis for well-founded conjectures concerning the author, or raise *Bertheau's* conjecture, that he was the same person as the author of Judges

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1:1–2:5, into a probability. For the frequent use of the perfect with י (compare Judges 20:17, 33, 37, 38, 40, 41, 48; 21:1, 15, with Judges 1:8, 16, 21, 25, etc.) can be fully explained from the contents themselves; and the notion that the perfect is used here more frequently for the historical imperfect with *vav consec.* rests upon a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the passages in question. The other and not very numerous expressions, which are common to Judges 17–21 and Judges 1, are not sufficiently characteristic to supply the proof required, as they are also met with elsewhere: see, for example, שָׁלַח בְּאֵז (Judges 1:8; 20:48), which not only occurs again in 2 Kings 8:12 and Ps. 74:7, but does not even occur in both the appendices, שָׁרַף בְּאֵז being used instead in Judges 18:27. So much, however, may unquestionably be gathered from the exactness and circumstantiality of the history, viz., that the first recorder of these events, whose account was the source employed by the author of our book, cannot have lived at a time very remote from the occurrences themselves. On the other hand, there are not sufficient grounds for the conjecture that these appendices were not attached to the book of the Judges till a later age. For it can neither be maintained that the object of the first appendix was to show how the image-worship which Jeroboam set up in his kingdom at Bethel and Dan had a most pernicious origin, and sprang from the image-worship of the Ephraimite Micah, which the Danites had established at Laish, nor that the object of the second appendix was to prove that the origin of the pre-Davidic kingdom (of Saul) was sinful and untheocratic, i.e., opposed to the spirit and nature of the kingdom of God, as *Auberten* affirms (*Theol. Stud. u. Kr.* 1860). The identity of the golden calf set up by Jeroboam at Dan with the image of Jehovah that was stolen by the Danites from Micah the Ephraimite and set up in Laish-Dan, is precluded by the statement in Judges 18:31 respecting the length of time that this image-worship continued in Dan (see the commentary on the passage itself). At the most, therefore, we can only maintain,

with *O. v. Gerlach*, that “both (appendices) set forth, according to the intention of the author, the misery which arose during the wild unsettled period of the judges from the want of a governing, regal authority.” This is hinted at in the remark, which occurs in both appendices, that at that time there was no king in Israel, and every one did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25). This remark, on the other hand, altogether excludes the time of the falling away of the ten tribes, and the decline of the later kingdom, and is irreconcilable with the assumption that these appendices were not added to the book of the Judges till after the division of the kingdom, or not till the time of the Assyrian or Babylonian captivity.

Image-Worship of Micah the Ephraimite, and Its Removal to Laish-Dan.—Ch. 17–18.

Judges 17. Micah’s Image-Worship.—The account of the image-worship which Micah established in his house upon the mountains of Ephraim is given in a very brief and condensed form, because it was simply intended as an introduction to the account of the establishment of this image-worship in Laish-Dan in northern Palestine. Consequently only such points are for the most part given, as exhibit in the clearest light the sinful origin and unlawful character of this worship.

Judges 17:1–10. A man of the mountains of Ephraim named Micah (מִיכָה, vv. 1, 4, when contracted into מִיכָה, vv. 5, 8, etc.), who set up this worship for himself, and “respecting whom the Scriptures do not think it worth while to add the name of his father, or to mention the family from which he sprang” (*Berleb. Bible*), had stolen 1100 shekels of silver (about £135) from his mother. This is very apparent from the words which he spoke to his mother (v. 2): “*The thousand and hundred shekels of silver which were taken from thee (the singular לָקַח refers to the silver), about which thou cursedst and spakest of also in mine ears (i.e., didst so utter the curse that among others I also heard it), behold, this silver is with me; I have taken it.*” אָלַהּ, to swear, used to denote a malediction or

curse (cf. קול אֵלֶּה, Lev. 5:1). He seems to have been impelled to make this confession by the fear of his mother's curse. But his mother praised him for it,—*"Blessed be my son of Jehovah,"*—partly because she saw in it a proof that there still existed a germ of the fear of God, but in all probability chiefly because she was about to dedicate the silver to Jehovah; for, when her son had given it back to her, she said (v. 3), *"I have sanctified the silver to the Lord from my hand for my son, to make an image and molten work."* The perfect הִקְדִּישָׁתִּי is not to be taken in the sense of the pluperfect, "I had sanctified it," but is expressive of an act just performed: I have sanctified it, I declare herewith that I do sanctify it. *"And now I give it back to thee,"* namely, to appropriate to thy house of God.

Judges 17:4. Hereupon—namely, when her son had given her back the silver ("he restored the silver unto his mother" is only a repetition of v. 3a, introduced as a link with which to connect the appropriation of the silver)—the mother took 200 shekels and gave them to the goldsmith, who made an image and molten work of them, which were henceforth in Micah's house. The 200 shekels were not quite the fifth part of the whole. What she did with the rest is not stated; but from the fact that she dedicated the silver generally, i.e., the whole amount, to Jehovah, according to v. 3, we may infer that she applied the remainder to the maintenance of the image-worship. *Pesel* and *massecah* (image and molten work) are joined together, as in Deut. 27:15. The difference between the two words in this instance is very difficult to determine. *Pesel* signifies an idolatrous image, whether made of wood or metal. *Massecah*, on the other hand, signifies a cast, something poured; and when used in the singular, is almost exclusively restricted to the calf cast by Aaron or Jeroboam. It is generally connected with עָגַל, but it is used in the same sense without this definition (e.g., Deut. 9:12). This makes the conjecture a very natural one, that the two words together might simply denote a likeness of Jehovah, and, judging from

the occurrence at Sinai, a representation of Jehovah in the form of a molten calf. But there is one obstacle in the way of such a conjecture, namely, that in Judges 18:17, 18, *massecah* is separated from *pesel*, so as necessarily to suggest the idea of two distinct objects. But as we can hardly suppose that Micah's mother had two images of Jehovah made, and that Micah had both of them set up in his house of God, no other explanation seems possible than that the *massecah* was something belonging to the *pesel*, or image of Jehovah, but yet distinct from it,—in other words, that it was the pedestal upon which it stood. The *pesel* was at any rate the principal thing, as we may clearly infer from the fact that it is placed in the front rank among the four objects of Micah's sanctuary, which the Danites took with them (Judges 18:17, 18), and that in Judges 18:30, 31, the *pesel* alone is mentioned in connection with the setting up of the image-worship in Dan. Moreover, there can hardly be any doubt that *pesel*, as a representation of Jehovah, was an image of a bull, like the golden calf which Aaron had made at Sinai (Ex. 32:4), and the golden calves which Jeroboam set up in the kingdom of Israel, and one of which was set up in Dan (1 Kings 12:29).

Judges 17:5. His mother did this, because her son Micah had a house of God, and had had an ephod and teraphim made for himself, and one of his sons consecrated to officiate there as a priest. הָאִישׁ מִיכָה (the man Micah) is therefore placed at the head absolutely, and is connected with what follows by לוֹ: *"As for the man Micah, there was to him (he had) a house of God."* The whole verse is a circumstantial clause explanatory of what precedes, and the following verbs וַיַּעַשׂ, וַיִּמְלֵא, and וַיִּהְיֶה, are simply a continuation of the first clause, and therefore to be rendered as pluperfects. Micah's *beth Elohim* (house of God) was a domestic temple belonging to Micah's house, according to Judges 18:15–18. מָלֵא אֶת־יָדְךָ, to fill the hand, i.e., to invest with the priesthood, to institute as priest (see at Lev. 7:37). The *ephod* was an imitation of the high priest's shoulder-dress (see at

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Judges 8:27). The *teraphim* were images of household gods, penates, who were worshipped as the givers of earthly prosperity, and as oracles (see at Gen. 31:19).—In v. 6 it is observed, in explanation of this unlawful conduct, that at that time there was no king in Israel, and every one did what was right in his own eyes.

Judges 17:7-13. *Appointment of a Levite as Priest.*—Vv. 7ff. In the absence of a Levitical priest, Micah had first of all appointed one of his sons as priest at his sanctuary. He afterwards found a Levite for this service. A young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who, being a Levite, stayed (בָּרַח) there (in Bethlehem) as a stranger, left this town to sojourn “at the place which he should find,” sc., as a place that would afford him shelter and support, and came up to the mountains of Ephraim to Micah’s house, “making his journey,” i.e., upon his journey. (On the use of the *inf. constr.* with בָּרַח in the sense of the Latin gerund in *do*, see *Ewald*, § 280, d.) Bethlehem was not a Levitical town. The young Levite from Bethlehem was neither born there nor made a citizen of the place, but simply “sojourned there,” i.e., dwelt there temporarily as a stranger. The further statement as to his descent (*mishpachath Judah*) is not to be understood as signifying that he was a descendant of some family in the tribe of Judah, but simply that he belonged to the Levites who dwelt in the tribe of Judah, and were reckoned in all civil matters as belonging to that tribe. On the division of the land, it is true that it was only to the priests that dwelling-places were allotted in the inheritance of this tribe (Josh. 21:9-19), whilst the rest of the Levites, even the non-priestly members of the family of Kohath, received their dwelling-places among the other tribes (Josh. 21:20ff.). At the same time, as many of the towns which were allotted to the different tribes remained for a long time in the possession of the Canaanites, and the Israelites did not enter at once into the full and undisputed possession of their inheritance, it might easily so happen that different towns

which were allotted to the Levites remained in possession of the Canaanites, and consequently that the Levites were compelled to seek a settlement in other places. It might also happen that individuals among the Levites themselves, who were disinclined to perform the service assigned them by the law, would remove from the Levitical towns and seek some other occupation elsewhere (see also at Judges 18:30).

Judges 17:10. Micah made this proposal to the Levite: “Dwell with me, and become my father and priest; I will give thee ten shekels of silver yearly, and fitting out with clothes and maintenance.” אָב, *father*, is an honourable title give to a priest as a paternal friend and spiritual adviser, and is also used with reference to prophets in 2 Kings 6:21 and 13:14, and applied to Joseph in Gen. 45:8. לְיָמַי, *for the days*, sc., for which a person was engaged, i.e., for the year (cf. 1 Sam. 27:7, and Lev. 25:29). “And the Levite went,” i.e., went to Micah’s house. This meaning is evident from the context. The repetition of the subject, “the Levite,” precludes our connecting it with the following verb וַיֵּצֵא. —In vv. 11-13 the result is summed up. The Levite resolved (see at Deut. 1:5) to dwell with Micah, who treated him as one of his sons, and entrusted him with the priesthood at his house of God. And Micah rejoiced that he had got a Levite as priest, and said, “Now I know that *Jehovah will prosper me.*” This belief, or, to speak more correctly, superstition, for which Micah was very speedily to atone, proves that at that time the tribe of Levi held the position assigned it in the law of Moses; that is to say, that it was regarded as the tribe elected by God for the performance of divine worship.

Judges 18

Judges 18. The Image-Worship Removed to Laish-Dan.—Vv. 1-10. *Spies sent out by the tribe of Dan*, to seek for a place suitable for a settlement, and their success.

Judges 18:1. This took place at a time when Israel had no king, and the tribe of the Danites sought an inheritance for themselves to dwell

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in, because until that day no such portion had fallen to them among the tribes as an inheritance. To the expression *לֹא נָפְלָה* (had not fallen) we must supply *נַחֲלָה* as the subject from the previous clause; and *בְּנַחֲלָה* signifies in the character of a *nachalah*, i.e., of a possession that could be transmitted as hereditary property from father to son. *נָפַל*, to fall, is used with reference to the falling of the lot (vid., Num. 34:2, Josh. 13:6, etc.). The general statement, that as yet no inheritance had fallen to the tribe of Dan by lot, has its limitation in the context. As the Danites, according to v. 2, sent out five men from Zorea and Eshtaol, and, according to v. 11, six hundred men equipped for fight went out to Laish, which the spies had discovered to be a place well fitted for a settlement, and had settled there, it is very evident from this that the Danites were not absolutely without an inheritance, but that hitherto they had not received one sufficient for their wants. The emigrants themselves were already settled in Zorea and Eshtaol, two of the towns that had fallen to the tribe of Dan by lot (Josh. 19:41). Moreover, the six hundred equipped Danites, who went out of these towns, were only a very small part of the tribe of Danites, which numbered 64,400 males of twenty years old and upwards at the last census (Num. 26:43). For a tribe of this size the land assigned by Joshua to the tribe of Dan, with all the towns that it contained, was amply sufficient. But from Judges 1:34 we learn that the Amorites forced the Danites into the mountains, and would not allow them to come down into the plain. Consequently they were confined to a few towns situated upon the sides or tops of the mountains, which did not supply all the room they required. Feeling themselves too weak to force back the Canaanites and exterminate them, one portion of the Danites preferred to seek an inheritance for themselves somewhere else in the land. This enterprise and emigration are described in vv. 2ff. The time cannot be determined with perfect certainty, as all that can be clearly inferred from v. 12, as compared with Judges 13:25, is, that it took place some

time before the days of Samson. Many expositors have therefore assigned it to the period immediately following the defeat of Jabin by Barak (Judges 4:24), because it was not till after the overthrow of this powerful king of the Canaanites that conquests were possible in the north of Canaan, and the tribe of Dan at that time still remained in ships (Judges 5:17), so that it had not yet left the territory assigned it by the sea-shore (Josh. 19). But these arguments have neither of them any force; for there is nothing surprising in the fact that Danites should still be found by the sea-shore in the time of Deborah, even if Danite families from Zorea and Eshtaol had settled in Laish long before, seeing that these emigrants formed but a small fraction of the whole tribe, and the rest remained in the possessions assigned them by Joshua. Moreover, the strengthening of the force of the Canaanites, and the extension of their dominion in the north, did not take place till 150 years after Joshua, in the days of Jabin; so that long before Jabin the town of Laish may have been conquered by the Danites, and taken possession of by them. In all probability this took place shortly after the death of Joshua, as we may infer from v. 30 (see the exposition of this verse).

Judges 18:2. To spy out and explore the land for the object mentioned, the Danites sent out five brave men "*out of their (the Danites') ends,*" i.e., from their whole body (vid., 1 Kings 12:31; 13:33, and the commentary on Gen. 19:4). They came up to the mountains of Ephraim, and as far as Micah's house, where they passed the night.

Judges 18:3-6. When they were at Micah's house and recognised the voice of the young Levite, i.e., heard his voice, and perceived from his dialect that he was not a native of these mountains, they turned aside there, sc., from the road into the house, near to which they rested, and asked him, "*Who brought thee hither, and what doest thou at this place? what hast thou to do here?*" When he told them his history ("thus and thus," *lit.* according to this and that; cf. 2 Sam. 11:25, 1 Kings 14:5), they

said to him, "Ask God, we pray thee, that we may learn whether our way will be prosperous." שָׁאַל בְּאֱלֹהִים, used for asking the will of God, as in Judges 1:1, except that here the inquiry was made through the medium of the imitation of the ephod and the worship of an image. And he said to them, sc., after making inquiry of the divine oracle, "Go in peace; straight before Jehovah is your way," i.e., it is known and well-pleasing to Him (vid., Prov. 5:21, Jer. 17:16).

Judges 18:7. Thus the five men proceeded to Laish, which is called *Leshem* in Josh. 19:47, and was named *Dan* after the conquest by the Danites,—a place on the central source of the Jordan, the present *Tell el Kadi* (see at Josh. 19:47),—and saw the people of the town dwelling securely after the manner of the Sidonians, who lived by trade and commerce, and did not go out to war. יוֹשְׁבֵת is the predicate to אֶת־הָעָם, and the feminine is to be explained from the fact that the writer had the population before his mind (see *Ewald*, § 174, *b.*); and the use of the masculine in the following words שָׁקֵט וּבֵטָח, which are in apposition, is not at variance with this. The connection of יוֹשְׁבֵת with בְּקִרְבָּה, which *Bertheau* revives from the earlier commentators, is opposed to the genius of the Hebrew language. שָׁקֵט וּבֵטָח, "living quietly and safely there." וְאִי־מִכְלִים וְגו', "and no one who seized the government to himself did any harm to them in the land." הַכְלִים, to shame, then to do an injury (1 Sam. 25:7). מִכְלִים דָּבָר, shaming with regard to a thing, i.e., doing any kind of injury. עֵצֶר, dominion, namely tyrannical rule, from עֵצֶר, *imperio coercere*. The rendering "riches" (θησαυρός, LXX), which some give to this word, is founded simply upon a confounding of עֵצֶר with אוֹצֵר. יָרַשׁ does not mean "to possess," but "to take possession of," and that by force (as in 1 Kings 21:18). "And they were far from the Sidonians," so that in the event of a hostile invasion they could not obtain any assistance from this powerful city. *Grotius* draws the very

probable conclusion from these words, that Laish may have been a colony of the Sidonians. "And they had nothing to do with (other) men," i.e., they did not live in any close association with the inhabitants of other towns, so as to be able to obtain assistance from any other quarter.

Judges 18:8, 9. On their return, the spies said to their fellow-citizens, in reply to the question מָה אַתֶּם עֹשִׂים, "What have you accomplished?" "Up, let us go up against them (the inhabitants of Laish), for the land is very good, and ye are silent," i.e., standing inactive (1 Kings 22:3; 2 Kings 7:9). "Be not slothful to go (to proceed thither), to come and take possession of the land!"

Judges 18:10. "When ye arrive, ye will come to a secure people (i.e., a people living in careless security, and therefore very easy to overcome); and the land is broad on both sides (i.e., furnishes space to dwell in, and also to extend: vid., Gen. 34:21, 1 Chron. 4:40); for God has given it into your hand." They infer this from the oracular reply they had received from the Levite (v. 6). "A place where there is no want of anything that is in the land (of Canaan)."

Judges 18:11–29. *Removal of Six Hundred Danites to Laish—Robbery of Micah's Images—Conquest of Laish, and Settlement There.—Vv. 11, 12.* In consequence of the favourable account of the spies who returned, certain Danites departed from Zorea and Eshtaol, to the number of 600 men, accoutred with weapons of war, with their families and their possessions in cattle and goods (see v. 21), and encamped by the way at Kirjath-jearim (i.e., Kuriyet Enab; see Josh. 9:17), in the tribe territory of Judah, at a place which received the permanent name of *Mahaneh Dan* (camp of Dan) from that circumstance, and was situated behind, i.e., to the west of, Kirjath-jearim (see at Judges 13:25). The fact that this locality received a standing name from the circumstance described, compels us to assume that the Danites had encamped there for a considerable time, for reasons which we cannot determine from our want of other information. The emigrants may possibly have first of all

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assembled here, and prepared and equipped themselves for their further march.

Judges 18:13. From this point they went across to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to Micah's house, i.e., to a place near it.

Judges 18:14. Then the five men who had explored the land, viz., Laish (*Laish* is in apposition to *הָאָרֶץ*, the land), said to their brethren (tribe-mates), "Know ye that in these houses (the village or place where Micah dwelt) there are an ephod and teraphim, and image and molten work (see at Judges 17:4, 5)? and now know what ye will do." The meaning of these last words is very easily explained: do not lose this opportunity of obtaining a worship of our own for our new settlement.

Judges 18:15. Then they turned from the road thither, and went to the house of the young Levite, the house of Micah, and asked him (the Levite) concerning his health, i.e., saluted him in a friendly manner (see Gen. 43:27, Ex. 18:7, etc.).

Judges 18:16. The 600 men, however, placed themselves before the door.

Judges 18:17. Then the five spies went up, sc., into Micah's house of God, which must therefore have been in an upper room of the building (see 2 Kings 23:12, Jer. 19:13), and took the image, ephod, etc., whilst the priest stood before the door with the 600 armed men. With the words *בָּאוּ וְגַ* the narrative passes from the aorist or historical tense *וַיַּעַל* into the perfect. "The perfects do not denote the coming and taking on the part of the five men as a continuation of the previous account, but place the coming and taking in the same sphere of time as that to which the following clause, 'and the priest stood,' etc., belongs" (*Bertheau*). But in order to explain what appears very surprising, viz., that the priest should have stood before the gate whilst his house of God was being robbed, the course which the affair took is explained more clearly afterwards in vv. 18, 19, in the form of a circumstantial clause. Consequently the verbs in these verses ought to be rendered as pluperfects, and the different

clauses comprised in one period, v. 18 forming the protasis, and v. 19 the apodosis. "Namely, when those (five) men had come into Micah's house, and had taken the image of the ephod, etc., and the priest had said to them, What are ye doing? they had said to him, Be silent, lay thy hand upon thy mouth and go with us, and become a father and priest to us (see Judges 17:10). Is it better to be a priest to the house of a single man, or to a tribe and family in Israel?"

The combination *פֶּסֶל הָאֶפֹּד* (the ephod-pesel), i.e., the image belonging to the ephod, may be explained on the ground, that the use of the ephod as a means of ascertaining the will of God presupposes the existence of an image of Jehovah, and does not prove that the ephod served as a covering for the *Pesel*. The priest put on the ephod when he was about to inquire of God. The *וְ* in the second question is different from *וְ*, and signifies "or rather" (see Gen. 24:55), indicating an improvement upon the first question (see *Ewald*, § 352, a.). Consequently it is not a sign of a later usage of speech, as *Bertheau* supposes. The word *וְלִמְשֹׁפֶהָ* (unto a family) serves as a more minute definition or limitation of *לְשֵׁבֶט* (to a tribe).

Judges 18:20. Then was the priest's heart glad (merry; cf. Judges 19:6, 9, Ruth 3:7), and he took the ephod, etc., and came amongst the people (the Danites). The first clause of this verse is attached to the supplementary statement in vv. 18, 19, for the purpose of linking on the further progress of the affair, which is given in the second clause; for, according to v. 17, the priest could only receive the ephod, etc., into his charge from the hands of the Danites, since they had taken them out of Micah's God's house.

Judges 18:21. The 600 Danites then set out upon their road again and went away; and they put the children, the cattle, and the valuable possessions in front, because they were afraid of being attacked by Micah and his people from behind. *הַטְּיָה*, "the little ones," includes both

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women and children, as the members of the family who were in need of protection (see at Ex. 12:37). כְּבוֹדָהּ is literally an adjective, signifying splendid; but here it is a neuter substantive: the valuables, not the heavy baggage. The 600 men had emigrated with their families and possessions.

Judges 18:22, 23. The two clauses of v. 22 are circumstantial clauses: *“When they (the 600) had got to some distance from Micah’s house, and the men who were in the houses by Micah’s house were called together, and had overtaken the Danites, they (i.e., Micah and his people, whom he had called together from the neighbourhood to pursue the emigrants) called to the Danites; and they turned their faces, and said to Micah, What is to thee (what is the matter), that thou hast gathered together?”*

Judges 18:24, 25. And when he replied, *“Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and have departed; what is there still to me (what have I left)? and how can ye say to me, What is to thee?”* they ordered him to be silent, lest he should forfeit his life: *“Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest men of savage disposition (כְּמַרֵי נֶפֶשׁ as in 2 Sam. 17:8) should fall upon thee (vid., Judges 15:12; 8:21, etc.), and thou shouldst not save thy life and that of thy household,”* i.e., shouldst bring death upon thyself and thy family. וְאִסְפָּתָהּ is also dependent upon פָּן.

Judges 18:26. Then the Danites went their way; but Micah, seeing that they were stronger than he, turned back and returned home.

Judges 18:27, 28. And they (the Danites) had taken what Micah had made, i.e., his idols and his priest, and they fell upon Laish (בּוֹא עַל, to come over a person, to fall upon him, as in Gen. 34:25), a people living quietly and free from care (vid., v. 7), smote them with the edge of the sword (see at Gen. 34:26), and burned down the city (cf. Josh. 6:24), as it had no deliverer in its isolated condition (v. 28a; cf. v. 7). It was situated *“in the valley which stretches to Beth-rehob.”* This valley is the upper part of the

Huleh lowland, through which the central source of the Jordan (*Leddān*) flows, and by which *Laish-Dan*, the present *Tell el Kadi*, stood (see at Josh. 19:47). *Beth-rehob* is most probably the same place as the *Rehob* mentioned in Num. 13:21, and the *Beth-rehob* of 2 Sam. 10:6, which is there used to designate a part of Syria, and for which *Rehob* only is also used in v. 8. *Robinson* (Bibl. Res. pp. 371ff.) supposes it to be the castle of *Hunin* or *Honin*, on the south-west of *Tell el Kadi*; but this is hardly correct (see the remarks on Num. 13:21, Pent. p. 709). The city, which lay in ashes, was afterwards rebuilt by the Danites, and called *Dan*, from the name of the founder of their tribe; and the ruins are still to be seen, as already affirmed, on the southern slope of the *Tell el Kadi* (see *Rob. Bibl. Res.* pp. 391–2, and the comm. on Josh. 19:47).

Judges 18:30, 31. *Establishment of the Image-worship in Dan.*—After the rebuilding of *Laish* under the name of *Dan*, the Danites set up the *pesel* or image of *Jehovah*, which they had taken with them out of *Micah’s* house of God. *“And Jehonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites till the day of the captivity of the land.”* As the Danites had taken the Levite whom *Micah* had engaged for his private worship with them to *Dan*, and had promised him the priesthood (vv. 19 and 27), *Jehonathan* can hardly be any other than this Levite. He was a son of *Gershom*, the son of *Moses* (Ex. 2:22; 18:3; 1 Chron. 23:14, 15). Instead of בְּיָדֵינוּ, our Masoretic text has בְּיָדֵי מֹשֶׁה with a hanging ך. With regard to this reading, the *Talmud* (Baba bathr.f. 109b) observes: *“Was he a son of Gershom, or was he not rather a son of Moses? as it is written, the sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezer (1 Chron. 23:14), but because he did the deeds of Manasseh (the idolatrous son of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 21) the Scripture assigns him to the family of Manasseh.”* On this *Rabbabar bar Channa* observes, that *“the prophet (i.e., the author of our book) studiously avoided calling Gershom the son of Moses, because it would have been*

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ignominious to Moses to have had an ungodly son; but he calls him *the son of Manasseh*, raising the ך, however, above the line, to show that it might either be inserted or omitted, and that he was the son of either מְנַשֶּׁה (Manasseh) or מֹשֶׁה (Moses),—of Manasseh through imitating his impiety, of Moses by descent” (cf. *Buxtorfi Tiber.* p. 171). Later Rabbins say just the same. *R. Tanchum* calls the writing *Menasseh*, with a hanging nun, a תַּקוּן סוֹפְרִים, and speaks of *ben Mosheh* as *Kethibh*, and *ben Menasseh* as *Keri*. *Ben Mosheh* is therefore unquestionably the original reading, although the other reading *ben Menasseh* is also very old, as it is to be found in the *Targums* and the *Syriac* and *Sept.* versions, although some *Codd.* of the LXX have the reading $\nu\iota\omicron\upsilon\ \text{Μωϋσῆς}$ (vid., *Kennic. dissert. gener. in V. T.* § 21). *Jerome* also has *fili Moysi*. At the same time, it does not follow with certainty from the reading *ben Gershom* that Jehonathan was actually a son of Gershom, as *ben* frequently denotes a grandson in such genealogical accounts, unknown fathers being passed over in the genealogies. There is very little probability of his having been a son, for the simple reason, that if Jehonathan was the same person as Micah’s high priest—and there is no ground for doubting this—he is described as נֶעֱר in Judges 17:7; 18:3, 15, and therefore was at any rate a young man, whereas the son of Gershom and grandson of Moses would certainly have passed the age of youth by a few years after the death of Joshua. This Jehonathan and his sons performed the duties of the priesthood at Dan עַד־יְיֹום גְּלוֹת הָאָרֶץ. This statement is obscure. גְּלוֹת הָאָרֶץ can hardly mean anything else than the carrying away of the people of the land into exile, that is to say, of the inhabitants of Dan and the neighbourhood at least, since גְּלוֹה is the standing expression for this. Most of the commentators suppose the allusion to be to the Assyrian captivity, or primarily to the carrying away by Tiglath-Pileser of the northern tribes of Israel, viz., the population of Gilead, Galilee, and the tribe of

Naphtali, in the midst of which Laish-Dan was situated (2 Kings 15:29). But the statement in v. 31, “*And they set them up Micah’s graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh,*” is by no means reconcilable with such a conclusion. We find the house of God, i.e., the Mosaic tabernacle, which the congregation had erected at Shiloh in the days of Joshua (Josh. 18:1), still standing there in the time of Eli and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:3ff., 3:21; 4:3); but in the time of Saul it was at Nob (1 Sam. 21), and during the reign of David at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39; 21:29). Consequently “the house of God” only stood in Shiloh till the reign of Saul, and was never taken there again. If therefore Micah’s image, which the Danites set up in Dan, remained there as long as the house of God was at Shiloh, Jonathan’s sons can only have been there till Saul’s time at the longest, and certainly cannot have been priests at this sanctuary in Dan till the time of the Assyrian captivity.

There are also other historical facts to be considered, which render the continuance of this Danite image-worship until the Assyrian captivity extremely improbable, or rather preclude it altogether. Even if we should not lay any stress upon the fact that the Israelites under Samuel put away the Baalim and Astartes in consequence of his appeal to them to turn to the Lord (1 Sam. 7:4), it is hardly credible that in the time of David the image-worship should have continued at Dan by the side of the lawful worship of Jehovah which he restored and organized, and should not have been observed and suppressed by this king, who carried on repeated wars in the northern part of his kingdom. Still more incredible would the continuance of this image-worship appear after the erection of Solomon’s temple, when all the men of Israel, and all the elders and heads of tribes, came to Jerusalem, at the summons of Solomon, to celebrate the consecration of this splendid national sanctuary (1 Kings 5–7). Lastly, the supposition that the image-worship established by the Danites at Dan still continued to exist, is thoroughly irreconcilable with the fact, that when Jeroboam established

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the kingdom of the ten tribes he had two golden calves made as images of Jehovah for the subjects of his kingdom, and set up one of them at Dan, and appointed priests out of the whole nation who were not of the sons of Levi. If an image-worship of Jehovah had been still in existence in Dan, and conducted by Levitical priests. Jeroboam would certainly not have established a second worship of the same kind under priests who were not Levitical. All these difficulties preclude our explaining the expression, "the day of the captivity of the land," as referring to either the Assyrian or Babylonian captivity. It can only refer to some event which took place in the last years of Samuel, or the first part of the reign of Saul. David Kimchi and many others have interpreted the expression as relating to the carrying away of the ark by the Philistines, for which the words *גְּלוֹת כְּבוֹד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל* are used in 1 Sam. 4:21, 22 (e.g., *Hengstenberg*, Beitr. vol. ii. pp. 153ff.; *Hävernick*, Einl. ii. 1, p. 109; *O. v. Gerlach*, and others). With the carrying away of the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle lost its significance as a sanctuary of Jehovah. We learn from Ps. 78:59–64 how the godly in Israel regarded that event. They not only looked upon it as a casting away of the dwelling-lace of God at Shiloh; but in the fact that Jehovah gave up His might and glory (i.e., the ark) into captivity, they discerned a surrender of the nation into the full power of its foes which resembled a carrying away into captivity. For, apart altogether from the description in Ps. 78:62–64, we may infer with certainty from the account of the tyranny which these foes still exercised over the Israelites in the time of Saul (1 Sam. 13:19–23), that, after this victory, the Philistines may have completely subjugated the Israelites, and treated them as their prisoners. We may therefore affirm with *Hengstenberg*, that "the author looked upon the whole land as carried away into captivity in its sanctuary, which formed as it were its kernel and essence." If, however, this figurative explanation of *גְּלוֹת הָאָרֶץ* should not be accepted, there is no valid objection to our

concluding that the words refer to some event with which we have no further acquaintance, in which the city of Dan was conquered by the neighbouring Syrians, and the inhabitants carried away into captivity. For it is evident enough from the fact of the kings of *Zoba* being mentioned, in 1 Sam. 14:47, among the different enemies of Israel against whom Saul carried on war, that the Syrians also invaded Israel in the time of the Philistine supremacy, and carried Israelites away out of the conquered towns and districts. The Danite image-worship, however, was probably suppressed and abolished when Samuel purified the land and people from idolatry, after the ark had been brought back by the Philistines (1 Sam. 2ff.).

Judges 19

War of the Congregation with the Tribe of Benjamin on Account of the Crime at Gibeah.—Ch. 19–20.

Judges 19–20. This account belongs to the times immediately following the death of Joshua, as we may see from the fact that Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the contemporary of Joshua, was high priest at that time (Judges 20:28). In Judges 19 we have an account of the infamous crime committed by the inhabitants of Gibeah, which occasioned the war; in Judges 20 the war itself; and in Judges 21 an account of what was afterwards done by the congregation to preserve the tribe of Benjamin, which was almost annihilated by the war.

Judges 19. Infamous Crime of the Inhabitants of Gibeah.—Vv. 1–14. At the time when there was no king in Israel, a Levite, who sojourned (i.e., lived outside a Levitical town) in the more remote parts of the mountains of Ephraim, took to himself a concubine out of Bethlehem in Judah, who proved unfaithful to him, and then returned to her father's house. *יִרְכָּתִי הִרְאָפְרִים*, the hinder or outermost parts of the mountains of Ephraim, are the northern extremity of these mountains; according to v. 18, probably the neighbourhood of Shiloh. *תִּזְנֶה עָלָיו*, "she played the harlot out beyond him," i.e., was unfaithful to

her husband, *and then went away from him,*” back to her father’s house.

Judges 19:3, 4. Some time afterwards, namely at the end of four months (אַרְבַּעַת הַדָּשִׁים is in apposition to יָמִים, and defines more precisely the יָמִים, or days), her husband went after her, “*to speak to her to the heart,*” i.e., to talk to her in a friendly manner (see Gen. 34:3), and to reconcile her to himself again, so that she might return; taking with him his attendant and a couple of asses, for himself and his wife to ride upon. The suffix attached to לְהָשִׁיבוּ refers to לִבָּהּ, “to bring back her heart,” to turn her to himself again. The *Keri* הַשִּׁיבָהּ is a needless conjecture. “*And she brought him into her father’s house, and her father received his son-in-law with joy, and constrained him (יִחַזְקֵבּוּ, lit. held him fast) to remain there three days.*” It is evident from this that the Levite had succeeded in reconciling his wife.

Judges 19:5ff. Also on the fourth day, when he was about to depart in the morning, the Levite yielded to the persuasion of his father-in-law, that he would first of all strengthen his heart again with a bit of bread (לֶב סָעַד לֶב as in Gen. 18:5; the imperative form with *š* is unusual); and then afterwards, whilst they were eating and drinking, he consented to stay another night.

Judges 19:7. When he rose up to go, his father-in-law pressed him; then he turned back (וַיָּשֶׁב is quite in place, and is not to be altered into וַיֵּשֶׁב, according to the LXX and one Heb. Cod.), and remained there for the night.

Judges 19:8. And even in the morning of the fifth day he suffered himself to be induced to remain till the afternoon. הַתְּמָהֲמָהּ is an imperative, “Tarry till the day turns,” i.e., till mid-day is past.

Judges 19:9, 10. When at length he rose up, with his concubine and his attendant, to go away, the father entreated his daughter once more: “*Behold the day has slackened to become evening, spend the night here! Behold the*

declining of the day, spend the night here,” etc.

הִנָּה inf. of הִנָּה, to bend, incline. The interchange of the plural and singular may be explained from the simple fact that the Levite was about to depart with his wife and attendant, but that their remaining or departing depended upon the decision of the man alone. But the Levite did not consent to remain any longer, but set out upon the road, and came with his companions to before Jebus, i.e., Jerusalem, which is only two hours from Bethlehem (compare *Rob. Pal. ii. 375 and 379*). עַד-נֹכַח, to *before* Jebus, for the road from Bethlehem to Shiloh went past Jerusalem.

Judges 19:11ff. But as the day had gone far down when they were by Jebus (יָד, third *pers. perf.*, either of יָד with י dropped like תָּתָה in 2 Sam. 22:41 for נָתָתָה, or from יָדָד in the sense of יָדָד), the attendant said to his master, “*Come, let us turn aside into this Jebusite city, and pass the night in it.*” But his master was unwilling to enter a city of the foreigners (יְנֻכָּרִי is a genitive), where there were none of the sons of Israel, and would pass over to Gibeah. “*Come (לָּךְ = לָּכָה, Num. 23:13), we will draw near to one of the places (which he immediately names), and pass the night in Gibeah or Ramah.*” These two towns, the present *Jeba* and *er Râm*, were not a full hour’s journey apart, and stood opposite to one another, only about two and a half or three hours from Jerusalem (see at Josh. 18:25, 28).

Judges 19:14. Then they went forward, and the sun went down upon them as they were near (at) Gibeah of Benjamin.

Judges 19:15–30. And they turned aside thither to pass the night in Gibeah; and he (the Levite) remained in the market-place of the town, as no one received them into his house to pass the night.

Judges 19:16ff. Behold, there came an old man from the field, who was of the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt as a stranger in Gibeah, the inhabitants of which were Benjaminites (as is observed here, as a preliminary introduction to

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the account which follows). When he saw the traveller in the market-place of the town, he asked him whither he was going and whence he came; and when he had heard the particulars concerning his descent and his journey, he received him into his house. וְאָתַתְּבֵית יְיָ אֲנִי הֵלֵךְ (v. 18), “and I walk at the house of Jehovah, and no one receives me into his house” (Seb. Schm., etc.); not “I am going to the house of Jehovah” (Ros., Berth., etc.), for אֶת הֵלֵךְ does not signify to go to a place, for which the simple accusative is used either with or without ה local. It either means “to go through a place” (Deut. 1:19, etc.), or “to go with a person,” or, when applied to things, “to go about with anything” (see Job 31:5, and Ges. Thes. p. 378). Moreover, in this instance the Levite was not going to the house of Jehovah (i.e., the tabernacle), but, as he expressly told the old man, from Bethlehem to the outermost sides of the mountains of Ephraim. The words in question explain the reason why he was staying in the market-place. Because he served at the house of Jehovah, no one in Gibeah would receive him into his house, although, as he adds in v. 19, he had everything with him that was requisite for his wants. “We have both straw and fodder for our asses, and bread and wine for me and thy maid, and for the young man with thy servants. No want of anything at all,” so as to cause him to be burdensome to his host. By the words “thy maid” and “thy servants” he means himself and his concubine, describing himself and his wife, according to the obsequious style of the East in olden times, as servants of the man from whom he was expecting a welcome.

Judges 19:20. The old man replied, “Peace to thee,” assuring him of a welcome by this style of greeting; “only all thy wants upon me,” i.e., let me provide for them. Thus the friendly host declined the offer made by his guest to provide for himself. “Only do not pass the night in the market-place.”

Judges 19:21. He then took him into his house, mixed fodder for his asses (בָּלַל from בָּלַל, a denom. verb from בָּלַל, to make a mixture, to give fodder to the beasts), and waited upon his

guest with washing of feet, food, and drink (see Gen. 18:4ff., 19:2).

Judges 19:22. Whilst they were enjoying themselves, some worthless men of the city surrounded the house, knocking continuously at the door (הִתְדַפְּקוּ, a form indicative of gradual increase), and demanding of the master of the house that he would bring out the man who had entered his house, that they might know him,—the very same demand that the Sodomites had made of Lot (Gen. 19:6ff.). The construct state אֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי-בְלִיעַל is used instead of אֲנָשִׁי בְּנֵי-בְלִיעַל (Deut. 13:14, etc.), because בְּנֵי בְלִיעַל is regarded as *one* idea: people of worthless fellows. Other cases of the same kind are given by Ewald, Lehrb. § 289, c.

Judges 19:23ff. The old man sought, as Lot had done, to defend his guests from such a shameful crime by appealing to the sacred rights of hospitality, and by giving up his own virgin daughter and the concubine of his guest (see the remarks on Gen. 19:7, 8). נִבְלָה, *folly*, used to denote shameful licentiousness and whoredom, as in Gen. 34:7 and Deut. 22:21. עֲנֵנוּ אוֹתָם, “humble them.” The masculine is used in אוֹתָם and לָהֶם as the more general gender, instead of the more definite feminine, as in Gen. 39:9, Ex. 1:21, etc.

Judges 19:25ff. But as the people would not listen to this proposal, the man (no doubt the master of the house, according to v. 24) took his (the guest’s) concubine (of course with the consent of his guest) and led her out to them, and they abused her the whole night. It is not stated how it was that they were satisfied with this; probably because they felt too weak to enforce their demand. הִתְעַלֵּל בָּ, to exercise his power or wantonness upon a person (see Ex. 10:2).

Judges 19:26. When the morning drew on (i.e., at the first dawn of day), the woman fell down before the door of the house in which אֲדוֹנֶיהָ, “her lord,” i.e., her husband, was, and lay there till it was light, i.e., till sunrise.

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Judges 19:27. There her husband found her, when he opened the house-door to go his way (having given up all thought of receiving her back again from the barbarous crowd), “lying before the house-door, and her hands upon the threshold” (i.e., with outstretched arms), and giving no answer to his word, having died, that is to say, in consequence of the ill-treatment of the night. He then took the corpse upon his ass to carry it to his place, i.e., to his home.

Judges 19:29. As soon as he arrived there, he cut up the body, according to its bones (as they cut slaughtered animals in pieces: see at Lev. 1:6), into twelve pieces, and sent them (the corpse in its pieces) into the whole of the territory of Israel, i.e., to all the twelve tribes, in the hope that every one who saw it would say: No such thing has happened or been seen since the coming up of Israel out of Egypt until this day. Give ye heed to it (שִׁימוּ לֵב for שִׁימוּ); make up your minds and say on, i.e., decide how this unparalleled wickedness is to be punished. Sending the dissected pieces of the corpse to the tribes was a symbolical act, by which the crime committed upon the murdered woman was placed before the eyes of the whole nation, to summon it to punish the crime, and was naturally associated with a verbal explanation of the matter by the bearer of the pieces. See the analogous proceeding on the part of Saul (1 Sam. 11:7), and the Scythian custom related by *Lucian* in *Toxaris*, c. 48, that whoever was unable to procure satisfaction for an injury that he had received, cut an ox in pieces and sent it round, whereupon all who were willing to help him to obtain redress took a piece, and swore that they would stand by him to the utmost of their strength. The perfects וְאָמַר—וְהָיָה (v. 30) are not used for the imperfects *c. vav consec.* וַיֹּאמֶר—וְהָיָה, as *Hitzig* supposes, but as simple perfects (*perfecta consec.*), expressing the result which the Levite expected from his conduct; and we have simply to supply וְאָמַר before וְהָיָה, which is often omitted in lively narrative or animated conversation (compare, for example, Ex. 8:5 with Judges 7:2). The

perfects are used by the historian instead of imperfects with a simple *vav*, which are commonly employed in clauses indicating intention, “because what he foresaw would certainly take place, floated before his mind as a thing already done” (*Rosenmüller*). The moral indignation, which the Levite expected on the part of all the tribes at such a crime as this, and their resolution to avenge it, are thereby exhibited not merely as an uncertain conjecture, but a fact that was sure to occur, and concerning which, as Judges 20 clearly shows, he had not deceived himself.

Judges 20

Judges 20. War with Benjamin on the Part of All the Other Tribes.—The expectation of the Levite was fulfilled. The congregation of Israel assembled at Mizpeh to pass sentence upon Gibeah, and formed the resolution that they would not rest till the crime was punished as it deserved (vv. 1–10). But when the Benjaminites refused to deliver up the offenders in Gibeah, and prepared to offer resistance, the other tribes began to make war upon Gibeah and Benjamin (vv. 11–19), but were twice defeated by the Benjaminites with very great loss (vv. 20–28). At length, however, they succeeded by an act of stratagem in taking Gibeah and burning it to the ground, and completely routing the Benjaminites, and also in putting to death all the men and cattle that they found in the other towns of this tribe, and laying the towns in ashes, whereby the whole of the tribe of Benjamin was annihilated, with the exception of a very small remnant (vv. 29–48).

Judges 20:1–11. *Decree of the Congregation concerning Gibeah.*—Vv. 1, 2. All the Israelites went out (rose up from their dwelling-places) to assemble together as a congregation like one man; all the tribes from Dan, the northern boundary of the land (i.e., Dan-laish, Judges 18:29), to Beersheba, the most southerly town of Canaan (see at Gen. 21:31), and the land of Gilead, i.e., the inhabitants of the land to the east of the Jordan, “to *Jehovah at Mizpeh*” in Benjamin, i.e., the present *Nebi-samwil*, in the neighbourhood of Kirjath-jearim, on the

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western border of the tribe of Benjamin (see at Josh. 18:26). It by no means follows with certainty from the expression “to Jehovah,” that there was a sanctuary at Mizpeh, or that the ark of the covenant was taken thither, but simply that the meeting took place in the sight of Jehovah, or that the congregation assembled together to hold a judicial court, which they held in the name of Jehovah, analogous to the expression *el-Elohim* in Ex. 21:6; 22:7. It was not essential to a judicial proceeding that the ark should be present. At this assembly the *pinnoth* (the corner-pillars) of the whole nation presented themselves, i.e., the heads and fathers as the supports of the congregation or of the state organism (vid., 1 Sam. 14:38, Isa. 19:13), even of all the tribes of Israel four hundred thousand men on foot, drawing the sword, i.e., armed foot soldiers ready for battle.

Judges 20:3. “The Benjaminites heard that the children of Israel (the rest of the Israelites, the eleven tribes) had come up to Mizpeh;” but they themselves were not found there. This follows from the fact that nothing is said about the Benjaminites coming, and still more clearly from v. 13, where it is stated that the assembled tribes sent men to the Benjaminites, after holding their deliberations and forming their resolutions, to call them to account for the crime that had been committed in the midst of them. Consequently the question with which the whole affair was opened, “Say, how did this wicked deed take place?” is not to be regarded as addressed to the two parties, the inhabitants of Gibeah of the Benjaminites and the Levite (*Bertheau*), but as a summons to all who were assembled to relate what any one knew respecting the occurrence.

Judges 20:4–7. Then the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, described the whole affair. בְּעֵלֵי הַגִּבְעָה, the owners or citizens of Gibeah (see at Judges 9:2). “Me they intended to kill:” the Levite draws this conclusion from what had happened to his wife; the men of Gibeah had not expressed any such intention in Judges 19:22. “All the country (*lit.* field) of the inheritance of Israel,” i.e., all the land of the

Israelites. זָמָה is applied to the vice of lewdness, as in Lev. 18:17, which was to be punished with death. הִבּוּ לָכֶם וְגו', “give yourselves (לָכֶם as *dat. comm.*) word and counsel here,” i.e., make up your minds and pass sentence (vid., 2 Sam. 16:20). הֵלֵם, here, where you are all assembled together.

Judges 20:8. Then all the people rose up as one man, saying, “We will not any of us go into his tent, neither will we any of us return to his house,” sc., till this crime is punished. The sentence follows in v. 9: “This is the thing that we will do,” i.e., this is the way in which we will treat Gibeah: “against it by lot” (sc., we will act). The *Syriac* gives the sense correctly—We will cast lots upon it; but the *LXX* quite erroneously supply ἀναβησόμεθα (we will go up); and in accordance with this, many expositors connect the words with v. 10 in the following sense: “We will choose one man out of every ten by lot, to supply the army with the necessary provision during the expedition.” This is quite a mistake, because in this way a subordinate point, which only comes into consideration in connection with the execution of the sentence, would be made the chief point, and the sentence itself would not be given at all. The words “against it by lot” contain the resolution that was formed concerning the sinful town, and have all the enigmatical brevity of judicial sentences, and are to be explained from the course laid down in the Mosaic law with regard to the Canaanites, who were to be exterminated, and their land divided by lot among the Israelites. Consequently the meaning is simply this: “Let us proceed with the lot against Gibeah,” i.e., let us deal with it as with the towns of the Canaanites, conquer it, lay it in ashes, and distribute its territory by lot. In v. 10 a subordinate circumstance is mentioned, which was necessary to enable them to carry out the resolution that had been made. As the assembled congregation had determined to keep together for the purpose of carrying on war (v. 8), it was absolutely necessary that resources should be provided for those who were actively engaged in the war. For this

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purpose they chose one man in every ten “to fetch provision for the people,” לַעֲשׂוֹת לְבוֹאֵם, “that they might do on their coming to Gibeah of Benjamin according to all the folly which had been done in Israel,” i.e., might punish the wickedness in Gibeah as it deserved.

Judges 20:11. Thus the men of Israel assembled together against Gibeah, united as one man. חֲבֵרִים, *lit.* as comrades, simply serves to strengthen the expression “as one man.” With this remark, which indicates briefly the carrying out of the resolution that was adopted, the account of the meeting of the congregation is brought to a close; but the actual progress of the affair is really anticipated, inasmuch as what is related in vv. 12–21 preceded the expedition in order of time.

Judges 20:12–19. Before the tribes of Israel entered upon the war, they sent men to all the tribes of Benjamin, who were to demand that the culprits in Gibeah should be given up to be punished, that the evil might thus be exterminated from Israel, according to the law in Deut. 22:22 as compared with Judges 13:6 and 17:12. “The tribes of Benjamin” are the same as “the families of Benjamin:” the historian pictured to himself the different divisions of the tribe of Benjamin as warlike powers about to carry on a war with the other tribes of Israel. The word *shebet* (tribe) is used in a different way in Num. 4:18. But the Benjaminites would not hearken to the voice of their brethren, the other tribes of Israel. The *Keri* (sons of Benjamin) is a needless alteration, since *Benjamin* may be construed with the plural as a collective term. By refusing this just demand on the part of the other tribes, the Benjaminites took the side of the culprits in Gibeah, and compelled the congregation to make war upon the whole tribe.

Judges 20:14ff. Both sides now made their preparations. The Benjaminites assembled together at Gibeah out of their different towns, and “were mustered 26,000 men drawing the sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah they were mustered, 700 picked men” (וַיִּתְּפְקְדוּ, with

the reduplication dropped, like the *Hothpael* in Num. 1:47). “Out of all this people there were 700 picked men, lamed in the right hand, all these (were) slinging with a stone (hitting) at a hair’s breadth without fail.” These statements are not quite clear. Since, according to the distinct words of v. 16, the 700 slingers with their left hands were “out of the whole people,” i.e., out of the whole number of fighting men mentioned in v. 16, they cannot be the same as the 700 chosen men referred to in v. 15, notwithstanding the similarity in the numbers and the expression “chosen men.” The obscurity arises chiefly from the word וַיִּתְּפְקְדוּ in v. 15, which is separated by the Masoretic accents from וְשָׁבַע מִן, and connected with the previous words: “Beside the inhabitants of Gibeah they (the men of the towns of Benjamin) were mustered.” On the other hand, the earlier translators took the clause as a relative one: “Beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, who were mustered 700 men.” And this seems absolutely necessary, because otherwise the following words, “700 picked men,” would stand without any connection; whilst we should certainly expect at least to find the *cop. vav*, if these 700 men were not inhabitants of Gibeah. But even if וַיִּתְּפְקְדוּ should be taken as a simple repetition of וַיִּתְּפְקְדוּ, according to the analogy of Deut. 3:5 and 1 Kings 5:30, the statement which follows could not be understood in any other way than as referring to the number of the fighting men of Gibeah. There is something striking too in the fact that only Benjaminites “out of the cities” are mentioned, and that emphasis is laid upon this by the repetition of the expression “out of the cities” (vv. 14, 15). Some have inferred from this, that the Benjaminites as the rulers had settled in the towns, whilst the Canaanites who had been subdued settled as dependants in the villages (*Bertheau*); or that the Benjaminites had formed military brotherhoods, the members of which lived unmarried in the towns, and that this may possibly account for the abominable crime to which the inhabitants of Gibeah were addicted, and in relation to which the whole tribe took their part (*O. v.*

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Gerlach). But such inferences as these are extremely uncertain, as the cities may be mentioned *a potiori* for all the places inhabited by this tribe. There is another difficulty in the numbers. According to vv. 14, 15, the total number of the fighting men of Benjamin amounted to 26,000 and 700, without reckoning Gibeah. But, according to the account of the battle, 25,100 were slain (v. 35), viz., 18,000 in the principal engagement, 5000 as a gleaning, and 200 in the pursuit, i.e., 25,000 men in all (vv. 44–46), and only 600 were left, who fled into the desert to the rock Rimmon (v. 47). According to these accounts, the whole tribe would have contained only 25,100 + 600 = 25,700 fighting men, or 25,000 + 600 = 25,600. Accordingly, in v. 15, the LXX (*Cod. Al.* etc.) and *Vulgate* give only 25,000 men; whilst the rest of the ancient versions have 26,000, in agreement with the Masoretic text. *Josephus* (*Ant.* v. 2, 10) also gives the number of fighting men in Benjamin as 25,600, of whom 600 were splendid slingers; but he has merely taken the numbers from vv. 44–47. Now, although mistakes do frequently occur in the numbers given, it is a most improbable supposition that we have a mistake of this kind (26,000 for 25,000) in the instance before us, since even the latter number would not agree with vv. 44ff.; and the assumption, that in vv. 35 and 44ff. we have an account of *all* the Benjaminites who fell, finds no support whatever in the history itself. In the verses referred to we have simply a statement of the number of Benjaminites who fell in the defeat which they sustained on the third day, whereas the victories which they gained on the first and second days could hardly have been obtained without some loss on their part; on the contrary, we may confidently assume that they would not lose less than a thousand men, though these are not mentioned in the brief account before us. The other difference between v. 35 and vv. 44–46, viz., that 25,100 are given in the one and 25,000 in the other, may be explained on the simple assumption that we have only the full thousands mentioned

in the latter, whilst the exact number is given in the former. “*Left-handed:*” see at Judges 3:15.

Judges 20:17, 18. The forces of the other tribes amounted when numbered to 400,000 men. These numbers (26,000 Benjaminites and 400,000 Israelites) will not appear too great if we consider that the whole of the congregation of Israel took part in the war, with the simple exception of Jabesh in Gilead (Judges 21:8), and that in the time of Moses the twelve tribes numbered more than 600,000 men of twenty years old and upwards (Num. 26), so that not much more than two-thirds of the whole of the fighting men went out to the war.

Judges 20:18. Before opening the campaign the Israelites went to Bethel, to inquire of God which tribe should commence the war, i.e., should fight at the head of the other tribes (on the fact itself, see Judges 1:1); and God appointed the tribe of Judah, as in Judges 1:2. They went to Bethel, not to Shiloh, where the tabernacle was standing, because that place was too far from the seat of war. The ark of the covenant was therefore brought to Bethel, and Phinehas the high priest inquired of the Lord before it through the Urim and Thummim (vv. 27, 28). Bethel was on the northern boundary of the tribe of Benjamin, and was consecrated to this purpose before any other place by the revelations of God which had been made to the patriarch Jacob there (Gen. 28 and 35).

Judges 20:19. Thus equipped, the Israelites proceeded against Gibeah.

Judges 20:20–28. As soon as the Israelites had posted themselves at Gibeah in battle array (עָרַד מִלְחָמָה, to put in a row, or arrange the war or conflict, i.e., to put themselves in battle array, 1 Sam. 4:2; 17:2, etc.), the Benjaminites came out and destroyed 22,000 men of Israel upon that day. הִשְׁחִית אֶרְצָה, to destroy to the earth, i.e., to lay dead upon the ground.

Judges 20:22. Notwithstanding this terrible overthrow, the people strengthened themselves, and prepared again for battle, “at the same place” where they had made ready on the first day, “seeking out of pure vainglory to

wipe out the stains and the disgrace which their previous defeat had brought upon them" (Berleb. Bible).

Judges 20:23. But before renewing the conflict they went up to Bethel, wept there before Jehovah, i.e., before the sanctuary of the ark, where Jehovah was present in the midst of His people, enthroned between the cherubim, until the evening, and then inquired of the Lord (again through the high priest) "*Shall I again draw near to war with the children of Benjamin my brother*" (i.e., renew the war with him)? The answer ran thus: "*Advance against him.*"

Judges 20:24, 25. But on the second day also the Benjaminites brought 18,000 of them to the ground. "The second day" is not the day following the first engagement, as if the battles had been fought upon two successive days, but the second day of actual fighting, which took place some days after the first, for the inquiry was made at Bethel as to the will of God between the two engagements.

Judges 20:26ff. After this second terrible overthrow, "*the children of Israel*" (k.e. those who were engaged in the war), and "*all the people,*" i.e., the rest of the people, those members of the congregation who were not capable of bearing arms, old men and women, came to Bethel, to complain to the Lord of their misfortune, and secure His favour by fasting and sacrifices. The congregation now discovered, from this repeated defeat, that the Lord had withdrawn His grace, and was punishing them. Their sin, however, did not consist in the fact that they had begun the war itself,—for the law in Deut. 22:22, to which they themselves had referred in v. 13, really required this,—but rather in the state of mind with which they had entered upon the war, their strong self-consciousness, and great confidence in their own might and power. They had indeed inquired of God (*Elohim*) who should open the conflict; but they had neglected to humble themselves before Jehovah the covenant God, in the consciousness not only of their own weakness and sinfulness, but also of grief at the moral corruption of their brother-

tribe. It is certainly not without significance, that in v. 18 it is stated that "*they asked God*" (יִשְׁאַלוּ בַּאֱלֹהִים), i.e., they simply desired a supreme or divine decision as to the question who should lead the van in the war; whereas, after the first defeat, they wept before *Jehovah*, and inquired of *Jehovah* (v. 23), the covenant God, for whose law and right they were about to contend. But even then there were still wanting the humility and penitence, without which the congregation of the Lord could not successfully carry on the conflict against the ungodly. The remark in v. 22, "*The people felt (showed) themselves strong, and added (continued) to set in array the war,*" is thoroughly expressive of the feeling of the congregation. They resolved upon the continuance of the war, in the full consciousness of their superior power and numerical strength; and it was not till afterwards that they complained to the Lord of their misfortune, and inquired whether they should renew the conflict. The question was followed by a corresponding answer on the part of God, "*Go up against him,*" which certainly sanctioned the continuance of the war, but gave no promise as to the result, because the people, thinking that they might be certain of success, had not inquired about that at all. It was not till after the second severe defeat, when 22,000 and 18,000, the tenth part of the whole army, had fallen, that they humbled themselves before the Lord. They not only wept because of the calamity which had befallen them, but fasted the same day before the Lord,—the fasting being the manifest expression of the bending of the heart before God,—and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. The *shelamim* here are not thank-offerings, but supplicatory offerings, presented to implore the gracious assistance of God, and to commemorate the enjoyment of fellowship with the Lord, through the sacrificial meal associated with this sacrifice (as in Judges 21:4, 1 Sam. 13:9, 2 Sam. 24:25).

Judges 20:27, 28. Having made these preparations, they inquired of the Lord

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whether they should continue the war, and received this reply: "Go up (against Benjamin); for to-morrow I will give it unto thy hand" (יָדְךָ, the hand of the congregation carrying on the war). To this the supplementary remark is appended, that the ark of the covenant was at Bethel in those days, and the high priest served before it. The expression "in those days" implies that the ark of the covenant was only temporarily at Bethel, and therefore had been brought thither from the tabernacle at Shiloh during this war.

Judges 20:29–48. *The Victory on the Third Day's Engagement.*—V. 29. The account of this commences with the most important point, so far as their success was concerned: Israel set liers in wait (troops in ambush) round about Gibeah.

Judges 20:30. They then advanced as on the former occasions.

Judges 20:31, 32. The Benjaminites came out again to meet the people (of Israel), and were drawn away from the town (the perfect הִנְתָּקוּ without ו is subordinate to the preceding verb, and defines more precisely the advance itself, whilst the mode in which they were drawn away from the town is not described more fully till vv. 32, 33), and began to smite the beaten of the people (who pretended to fly) as formerly upon the roads (where two roads part), of which one led up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah, into the field (Gibeah is the town at which the battle took place, that is to say, somewhere in the neighbourhood, so that a road might easily run from the field of battle towards the town into the field), "about (sc., putting to death) *thirty men of Israel.*" This statement introduces the more precise definition of the חֲלָלִים.

Judges 20:32. Then the Benjaminites supposed that Israel was beaten by them as before; but the Israelites said: We will flee, and draw it (the tribe of Benjamin) away from the town to the roads (the high-roads mentioned in v. 31). On

the *Dagesh dirimens* in נִתְקַנְוֶהוּ, see *Ewald*, § 92, c.

Judges 20:33. Carrying out this plan, "all the men of Israel rose up from their places," i.e., left the place they had occupied, drew back, "and set themselves in battle array" in *Baal-thamar*, i.e., palm-place, which still existed, according to the *Onom.*, in the time of *Eusebius*, as a small place in the neighbourhood of Gibeah, bearing the name of *Bethamar*. While this was going on, the ambush of Israel broke forth from its position "from the plains of Geba." The ἀπ. λεγ. מֵעֵרָה, from עֵרָה to strip, denotes a naked region destitute of wood. גִּבְעָה is the masculine form for גִּבְעָה, and מִמְעֵרָה-גִּבְעָה a more precise definition of מִמְקוֹמוֹ. This rendering, which is the one given in the Targum, certainly appears the simplest explanation of a word that has been rendered in very different ways, and which the LXX left untranslated as a proper name, Μαρααγαβέ. The objection raised to this, viz., that a naked level country was not a place for an ambush, has no force, as there is no necessity to understand the words as signifying that the treeless country formed the actual hiding-place of the ambush; but the simple meaning is, that when the men broke from their hiding-place, they came from the treeless land towards the town. The rendering given by *Rashi*, *Trem.*, and others, "on account of the tripping of Gibeah," is much less suitable, since, apart from the difficulty of taking מִן in different senses so close together, we should at least expect to find הָעִיר (the city) instead of גִּבְעָה.

Judges 20:34. Through the advance of the ambush there came 10,000 picked men of all Israel "from opposite to Gibeah" (who now attacked in the rear the Benjaminites who were pursuing the flying army of Israel); "and the contest became severe, since they (the Benjaminites) *did not know that the calamity was coming upon them.*"

Judges 20:35. And Jehovah smote Benjamin before Israel (according to His promise in v. 28), so that the Israelites destroyed of Benjamin

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on that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men (i.e., twenty-five thousand and upwards).

This was the result of the battle, which the historian gives at once, before entering more minutely into the actual account of the battle itself. He does this in vv. 36–46 in a series of explanations, of which one is attached to the other, for the most part in the form of circumstantial clauses, so that it is not till v. 46 that he again comes to the result already announced in v. 35.

Judges 20:36. The Benjaminites, for instance, saw (this is the proper rendering of וַיִּרְאוּ with *vav consec.*, which merely indicates the order of thought, not that of time) that they were beaten, and the man of Israel vacated the field before Benjamin (נָתַן מְקוֹם, to give place by falling back and flying), because they relied upon the ambush which they had placed against Gibeah. The Benjaminites did not perceive this till the ambush fell upon their rear. But the ambush itself, as is added in v. 37 by way of further explanation, hastened and fell (fell as quickly as possible) into Gibeah, and went thither and smote the whole town with the edge of the sword. To this there is added the further explanation in v. 38: “*And the arrangement of the Israelites with the ambush was this: multiply, to cause smoke-rising to ascend* (i.e., cause a great cloud of smoke to ascend) *out of the city.*” The only objection that can be raised to this view of הָרַב, as the imperative *Hiphil* of רָבָה, is the suffix ם־ attached to לְהַעֲלוֹתָם, since this is unsuitable to a direct address. This suffix can only be explained by supposing that there is an admixture of two constructions, the direct appeal, and the indirect explanation, that they were to cause to ascend. If this be not admitted, however, we can only follow *Studer*, and erase the suffix as an error of the pen occasioned by the following word מִשְׁאָת; for the other course suggested by *Bertheau*, namely that הָרַב should be struck out as a gloss, is precluded by the circumstance that

there is no possible way of explaining the interpolation of so apparently unsuitable a word into the text. It certainly stood in the text used by the LXX, though they have most foolishly confounded הָרַב with הָרַב, and rendered it μάχαρα.

Judges 20:39. “*And the men of Israel turned in the battle:*” that is to say, as is afterwards more fully explained in vv. 39, 40, in the form of a long new circumstantial clause, whilst Benjamin had begun to smite, etc. (repeated from vv. 31, 32), and the cloud (הַמְשָׁאָת = מְשָׁאָת, v. 38) had begun to ascend out of the city as a pillar of smoke, and Benjamin turned back, and behold the whole city ascended towards heaven (in smoke), Israel turned (fighting) and Benjamin was terrified, for it saw that misfortune had come upon it (see v. 34). In v. 41a, the thread of the narrative, which was interrupted by the long circumstantial clause, is again resumed by the repetition of “*and the men of Israel turned.*”

Judges 20:42. The Benjaminites “*now turned* (flying) *before the Israelites to the way of the desert,*” i.e., no doubt the desert which rises from Jericho to the mountains of Bethel (Josh. 16:1). They fled therefore towards the north-east; but the battle had overtaken (reached or seized) them, and those out of the towns (had perished). The difficult expression וַאֲשֶׁר מִהָעָרִים, of which very different, and for the most part arbitrary, explanations have been given, can only be in apposition to the suffix attached to the verb: “Benjamin, and in fact those who had come to the help of Gibeah out of the towns of Benjamin” (see vv. 14, 15), i.e., all the Benjaminites. The following words, וַיִּשְׁחָתוּם, are a circumstantial clause explanatory of the previous clause, וַיִּהְיֶה מְלַחְמָה הַדֵּב: “*since they* (the men of Israel) *destroyed him* (Benjamin) *in the midst of it.*” The singular suffix בְּתוֹכוֹ does not refer to Benjamin, as this would yield no sense at all, but to the preceding words, “the way of the desert” (see v. 45).—In v. 43 the account is continued by three perfects attached to one

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another without a copula: “they enclosed (hedged round) Benjamin, pursued him; at the place of rest they trod him down to before Gibeah eastwards.” מְנוּחָה is not used adverbially in the sense of “quietly,” which would not give any fitting meaning, but is an *accus. loci*, and signifies place of rest, as in Num. 10:33. The notice “to before Gibeah” refers to all three verbs.

Judges 20:44. In this battle there fell of Benjamin 18,000 men, all brave men. The אֶת before כָּל-אֲלֵה is not a preposition, “with” (as the LXX, *Cod. Al.*, and *Bertheau* render it), but a sign of the accusative. It serves to show that the thought which follows is governed by the principal clause, “so far as all these were concerned, they were brave men.”

Judges 20:45. The remainder fled to the desert, to the rock (of the place) *Rimmon*, which is described in the *Onom.* (*s. v. Remmon*) as a *vicus* fifteen Roman miles to the north of Jerusalem. It has been preserved in the village of *Rummôn*, which stands upon and around the summit of a conical limestone mountain, and is visible in all directions (*Rob. Pal. ii. p. 113*). “And they (the Israelites) smote as a gleaning upon the roads 5000 men.” עוֹלֵל, to have a gleaning of the battle, i.e., to smite or slay, as it were, as a gleaning of the principal battle (*vid.*, Jer. 6:9). *Mesilloth* are the high-roads mentioned in v. 31. “And pursued them to Gideom, and smote of them 2000 more.” The situation of Gideom, which is only met with here, is not precisely known; but it must have been somewhere between Gibeah and Rimmon, as the rock Rimmon, according to v. 47, afforded a safe place of refuge to the fugitives.

Judges 20:46. On the total number of the slain, see the remarks on v. 15.—In v. 47 the statement already made in v. 45 with regard to the flight is resumed; and it is still further related, that 500 men reached the rock Rimmon, and dwelt there four months, i.e., till the occurrence described in Judges 21:13ff.

Judges 20:48. The Israelites turned (from any further pursuit of the fugitive warriors of Benjamin) to the children of Benjamin, i.e., to

such of the people of the tribe of Benjamin as were unarmed and defenceless, and smote them with the edge of the sword, “from the town (or towns) onwards, men to cattle (i.e., men, women, children, and cattle), to every one who was found;” i.e., they cut down men and cattle without quarter, from the towns onwards even to those who were found elsewhere. עַד כָּל-הַנִּמְצָא (to all that was found) corresponds to מֵעִיר (from the city), and מֵאֲדָמָה (men to beast) serves as a more precise definition of the עִיר (city): everything that was in the city, man and beast. מֵאֲדָמָה is pointed wrongfully for מֵאֲדָמָה, *men*, the reading in several MSS and most of the early editions (see Deut. 2:34; 3:6). They also set fire to all the towns that were met with, i.e., all without exception. Thus they did the same to the Benjaminites as to the Canaanites who were put under the ban, carrying out the ban with the strictest severity.

Judges 21

Preservation of the Tribe of Benjamin—The Remnant Provided with Wives.—Ch. 21.

Judges 21. Through the extraordinary severity with which the tribes of Israel had carried on the war against Benjamin, this tribe had been reduced to 600 men, and thus brought very near to extermination. Such a conclusion to the sanguinary conflict went to the heart of the congregation. For although, when forming the resolution to punish the unparalleled wickedness of the inhabitants of Gibeah with all the severity of the law, they had been urged on by nothing else than the sacred duty that was binding upon them to root out the evil from their midst, and although the war against the whole tribe of Benjamin was justified by the fact that they had taken the side of the culprits, and had even received the approval of the Lord; there is no doubt that in the performance of this resolution, and the war that was actually carried on, feelings of personal revenge had disturbed the righteous cause in consequence of the defeat which they had twice sustained at the hands of the Benjaminites, and had carried

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away the warriors into a war of extermination which was neither commanded by the law nor justified by the circumstances, and had brought about the destruction of a whole tribe from the twelve tribes of the covenant nation with the exception of a small vanishing remnant. When the rash deed was done, the congregation began most bitterly to repent. And with repentance there was awakened the feeling of brotherly love, and also a sense of duty to provide for the continuance of the tribe, which had been brought so near to destruction, by finding wives for those who remained, in order that the small remnant might grow into a vigorous tribe again.

Judges 21:1-14. The proposal to find wives for the six hundred Benjaminites who remained was exposed to this difficulty, that the congregation had sworn at Mizpeh (as is supplemented in v. 1 to the account in Judges 20:1-9) that no one should give his daughter to a Benjaminite as a wife.

Judges 21:2, 3. After the termination of the war, the people, i.e., the people who had assembled together for the war (see v. 9), went again to Bethel (see at Judges 20:18, 26), to weep there for a day before God at the serious loss which the war had brought upon the congregation. Then they uttered this lamentation: *“Why, O Lord God of Israel, is this come to pass in Israel, that a tribe is missing to-day from Israel?”* This lamentation involved the wish that God might show them the way to avert the threatened destruction of the missing tribe, and build up the six hundred who remained. To give a practical expression to this wish, they built an altar the next morning, and offered burnt-offerings and supplicatory offerings upon it (see at Judges 20:26), knowing as they did that their proposal would not succeed without reconciliation to the Lord, and a return to the fellowship of His grace. There is something apparently strange in the erection of an altar at Bethel, since sacrifices had already been offered there during the war itself (Judges 20:26), and this could not have taken place without an altar. Why it was erected again, or

another one built, is a question which cannot be answered with any certainty. It is possible, however, that the first was not large enough for the number of sacrifices that had to be offered now.

Judges 21:5. The congregation then resolved upon a plan, through the execution of which a number of virgins were secured for the Benjaminites. They determined that they would carry out the great oath, which had been uttered when the national assembly was called against such as did not appear, upon that one of the tribes of Israel which had not come to the meeting of the congregation at Mizpeh. The deliberations upon this point were opened (v. 5) with the question, *“Who is he who did not come up to the meeting of all the tribes of Israel, to Jehovah?”* In explanation of this question, it is observed at v. 5, *“For the great oath was uttered upon him that came not up to Jehovah to Mizpeh: he shall be put to death.”* We learn from this supplementary remark, that when important meetings of the congregation were called, all the members were bound by an oath to appear. The meeting at Mizpeh is the one mentioned in Judges 20:1ff. The “great oath” consisted in the threat of death in the case of any that were disobedient. To this explanation of the question in v. 5a, the further explanation is added in vv. 6, 7, that the Israelites felt compassion for Benjamin, and wished to avert its entire destruction by procuring wives for such as remained. The word *וַיִּחַן* in v. 6 is attached to the explanatory clause in v. 5b, and is to be rendered as a pluperfect: *“And the children of Israel had shown themselves compassionate towards their brother Benjamin, and said, A tribe is cut off from Israel to-day; what shall we do to them, to those that remain with regard to wives, as we have sworn?”* etc. (compare v. 1). The two thoughts—(1) the oath that those who had not come to Mizpeh should be punished with death (v. 5b), and (2) anxiety for the preservation of this tribe which sprang from compassion towards Benjamin, and was shown in their endeavour to provide such as remained with wives, without violating the oath that none of

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them would give them their own daughters as wives—formed the two factors which determined the course to be adopted by the congregation. After the statement of these two circumstances, the question of v. 5a, “*Who is the one (only one) of the tribes of Israel which,*” etc., is resumed and answered: “*Behold, there came no one into the camp from Jabesh in Gilead, into the assembly.*” שְׁבֵטֵי is used in vv. 8, 5, in a more general sense, as denoting not merely the tribes as such, but the several subdivisions of the tribes.

Judges 21:9. In order, however, to confirm the correctness of this answer, which might possibly have been founded upon a superficial and erroneous observation, the whole of the (assembled) people were mustered, and not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh was found there (in the national assembly at Bethel). The situation of *Jabesh* in Gilead has not yet been ascertained. This town was closely besieged by the Ammonite *Nahash*, and was relieved by Saul (1 Sam. 11:1ff.), on which account the inhabitants afterwards showed themselves grateful to Saul (1 Sam. 31:8ff.). *Josephus* calls *Jabesh* the metropolis of Gilead (Ant. vi. 5, 1). According to the *Onom.* (s. v. *Jabis*), it was six Roman miles from Pella, upon the top of a mountain towards Gerasa. *Robinson* (Bibl. Res. p. 320) supposes it to be the ruins of *ed Deir* in the *Wady Jabes*.

Judges 21:10ff. To punish this unlawful conduct, the congregation sent 12,000 brave fighting men against Jabesh, with orders to smite the inhabitants of the town with the edge of the sword, together with their wives, and children, but also with the more precise instructions (v. 11), “to ban all the men, and women who had known the lying with man” (i.e., to slay them as exposed to death, which implied, on the other hand, that virgins who had not lain with any man should be spared). The fighting men found 400 such virgins in Jabesh, and brought them to the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan. אִוָּתָם (v. 12) refers to the virgins, the masculine being used as the more common genus in the place of the feminine.

Shiloh, with the additional clause “in the land of Canaan,” which was occasioned by the antithesis *Jabesh* in *Gilead*, as in Josh. 21:2; 22:9, was the usual meeting-place of the congregation, on account of its being the seat of the tabernacle. The representatives of the congregation had moved thither, after the deliberations concerning *Jabesh*, which were still connected with the war against Benjamin, were concluded.

Judges 21:13. The congregation then sent to call the Benjaminites, who had taken refuge upon the rock *Rimmon*, and gave them as wives, when they returned (sc., into their own possessions), the 400 virgins of *Jabesh* who had been preserved alive. “*But so they sufficed them not*” (יָבֵשׁ, so, i.e., in their existing number, 400: *Bertheau*). In this remark there is an allusion to what follows.

Judges 21:15–25. Of the six hundred Benjaminites who had escaped, there still remained two hundred to be provided with wives. To these the congregation gave permission to take wives by force at a festival at *Shiloh*. The account of this is once more introduced, with a description of the anxiety felt by the congregation for the continuance of the tribe of Benjamin. Vv. 15, 16, and 18 are only a repetition of vv. 6 and 7, with a slight change of expression. The “*breach (perez) in the tribes of Israel*” had arisen from the almost complete extermination of Benjamin. “*For out of Benjamin is (every) woman destroyed,*” viz., by the ruthless slaughter of the whole of the people of that tribe (Judges 20:48).

Consequently the Benjaminites who were still unmarried could not find any wives in their own tribe. The fact that four hundred of the Benjaminites who remained were already provided with wives is not noticed here, because it has been stated just before, and of course none of them could give up their own wives to others.

Judges 21:17. Still Benjamin must be preserved as a tribe. The elders therefore said, “*Possession of the saved shall be for Benjamin,*” i.e., the tribe-land of Benjamin shall remain an

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independent possession for the Benjaminites who have escaped the massacre, so that a tribe may not be destroyed out of Israel. It was necessary therefore, that they should take steps to help the remaining Benjaminites to wives. The other tribes could not give them their daughters, on account of the oath which has already been mentioned in vv. 1 and 7b and is repeated here (v. 18). Consequently there was hardly any other course open, than to let the Benjaminites seize upon wives for themselves. And the elders lent them a helping hand by offering them this advice, that at the next yearly festival at Shiloh, at which the daughters of Shiloh carried on dances in the open air (outside the town), they should seize upon wives for themselves from among these daughters, and promising them that when the thing was accomplished they would adjust it peaceably (vv. 19–22). The “*feast of Jehovah*,” which the Israelites kept from year to year, was one of the three great annual festivals, probably one which lasted seven days, either the passover or the feast of tabernacles,—most likely the former, as the dances of the daughters of Shiloh were apparently an imitation of the dances of the Israelitish women at the Red Sea under the superintendence of Miriam (Ex. 15:20). The minute description of the situation of Shiloh (v. 19), viz., “to the north of Bethel, on the east of the road which rises from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of *Lebonah*” (the present village of *Lubban*, on the north-west of Seilun: see *Rob. Pal.* iii. p. 89), serves to throw light upon the scene which follows, i.e., to show how the situation of Shiloh was peculiarly fitted for the carrying out of the advice given to the Benjaminites; since, as soon as they had issued from their hiding-places in the vineyards at Shiloh, and seized upon the dancing virgins, they could easily escape into their own land by the neighbouring high-road which led from Bethel to Shechem, without being arrested by the citizens of Shiloh.

Judges 21:20. The *Kethibh* וְיָצְאוּ in the singular may be explained on the ground that one of the elders spoke and gave the advice in the name of

the others. הִטְוֶה in v. 21 and Ps. 10:9, to seize hold of, or carry off as prey = הִתְקַח.

Judges 21:22. “*And when the fathers or brethren of the virgins carried off, come to us to chide with us, we (the elders) will say to them (in your name), Present them to us* (פָּרְשׂוּם as in v. 12); *for we did not receive every one his wife through the war (with Jabesh); for ye have not given them to them; how would ye be guilty.*” The words “Present them to us,” etc., are to be understood as spoken in the name of the Benjaminites, who were accused of the raid, to the relatives of the virgins who brought the complaint. This explains the use of the pronoun in the first person in וְנִגְנוּ and לְקַחְנָהּ, which must not be altered therefore into the third person. The two clauses commencing with כִּי are co-ordinate, and contain two points serving to enforce the request, “Present them,” etc. The first is pleaded in the name of the Benjaminites; the second is adduced, as a general ground on the part of the elders of the congregation, to pacify the fathers and brothers making the complaint, on account of the oath which the Israelites had taken, that none of them would give their daughters as wives to the Benjaminites. The meaning is the following: Ye may have your daughters with the Benjaminites who have taken them by force, for ye have not given them voluntarily, so as to have broken your oath by so doing. In the last clause כִּי עָתָה has an unusual meaning: “at the time” (or *now*), i.e., *in that case*, ye would have been guilty, viz., if ye had given them voluntarily.

Judges 21:23. The Benjaminites adopted this advice. They took to themselves wives according to their number, i.e., two hundred (according to v. 12, compared with Judges 20:47), whom they caught from the dancing daughters of Shiloh, and returned with them into their inheritance, where they rebuilt the towns that had been reduced to ashes, and dwelt therein.

Judges 21:24, 25. In vv. 24 and 25, the account of this event is brought to a close with a twofold

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remark: (1) that the children of Israel, i.e., the representatives of the congregation who were assembled at Shiloh, separated and returned every man into his inheritance to his tribe and family; (2) that at that time there was no king in Israel, and every man was accustomed to do what was right in his own eyes. Whether the fathers or brothers of the virgins who had been carried off brought any complaint before the congregation concerning the raid that had been committed, the writer does not state, simply because this was of no moment so far as the history was concerned, inasmuch as, according to v. 22, the complaint made no difference in the facts themselves. With the closing remark in v. 25, however, with which the account returns to its commencement in Judges 19:1, the prophetic historian sums up his judgment upon the history in the words, "At that time every man did what was right in his own eyes, because there was no king in Israel," in which the idea is implied, that under the government of a king, who administered right and justice in the kingdom, such things could not possibly have happened. This not only refers to the conduct of the Israelites towards Benjamin in the war, the severity of which was not to be justified (see p. 331), but also to their conduct towards the inhabitants of Jabesh, as described in Judges 21:5ff. The congregation had no doubt a perfect right, when all the people were summoned to deliberate upon important matters affecting the welfare of the whole nation, to utter the "great oath" against such as failed to appear, i.e., to threaten them with death and carry out this threat upon such as were obstinate; but such a punishment as this could only be justly inflicted upon persons who were really guilty, and had rebelled against the congregation as the supreme power, and could not be extended to women and children unless they had also committed a crime deserving of death. But even if there were peculiar circumstances in the case before us, which have been passed over by our author, who restricts

himself simply to points bearing upon the main purpose of the history, but which rendered it necessary that the ban should be inflicted upon all the inhabitants of Jabesh, it was at any rate an arbitrary exemption to spare all the marriageable virgins, and one which could not be justified by the object contemplated, however laudable that object might be. This also applies to the oath taken by the people, that they would not give any of their daughters as wives to the Benjaminites, as well as to the advice given by the elders to the remaining two hundred, to carry off virgins from the festival at Shiloh. However just and laudable the moral indignation may have been, which was expressed in that oath by the nation generally at the scandalous crime of the Gibeites, a crime unparalleled in Israel, and at the favour shown to the culprits by the tribe of Benjamin, the oath itself was an act of rashness, in which there was not only an utter denial of brotherly love, but the bounds of justice were broken through. When the elders of the nation came to a better state of mind, they ought to have acknowledged their rashness openly, and freed themselves and the nation from an oath that had been taken in such sinful haste. "Wherefore they would have acted far more uprightly, if they had seriously confessed their fault and asked forgiveness of God, and given permission to the Benjaminites to marry freely. In this way there would have been no necessity to cut off the inhabitants of Jabesh from their midst by cruelty of another kind" (*Buddeus*). But if they felt themselves bound in their consciences to keep the oath inviolably, they ought to have commended the matter to the Lord in prayer, and left it to His decision; whereas, by the advice given to the Benjaminites, they had indeed kept the oath in the letter, but had treated it in deed and truth as having no validity whatever.