

Deborah and Barak

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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 overturned 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 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, תִּצְנַח in v. 21, מִשְׁכַּת in v. 6, and

וַיְהִי 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, "וַיְהִי 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

וַיְהִי 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 **שֹׁפֵטָה** 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.*”

מִשְׁכָּתִי has been explained in different ways.

Seb. Schmidt, Clericus, and others supply **הַקָּרְן**

or **הַשּׁוֹפָר**, 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 **מִשְׁכָּתִי**, in the sense of draw, is to be explained on the supposition that

מִשְׁכָּתִי 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 **מִשְׁכָּתִי** 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 *Ἰταβύριον* 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 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. **זָעַק**, *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). **נִפְרָד** 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

(**הִלֵּא**, *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.” **וַיִּהָם**, 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 **וַיִּהָם** 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 praegnans*, 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

(סור, as in Gen. 19:2, 3, to turn aside from the road and approach a person), and covered him with a covering (שְׂמִיכָה, 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 (צְמִיָּתִי, defective form for

צְמִיָּתִי), 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 (διεφθορὸς ἤδη), 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. עֲמֹד is the

imperative for עֲמֹדִי, 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 עֲמֹד, 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 והוא נרדם ויעף 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.” וימת is attached as a

consequence to ותצנח וגו' ... ותתקע,

whereas ויעף belongs to the parenthetical

clause והוא נרדם. This is the explanation adopted by *Rosenmüller*, and also in the remark of *Kimchi*: “the words נרדם ויעף indicate the reason why Sisera neither heard Jael approach him, nor was conscious of the blow inflicted upon him.” For the combination of ויעף with

וימת, “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 **וַיֵּרָץ**, from **עָרַץ**, equivalent to **עָרַץ** (Jer. 4:31), or **יָרַץ**, 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 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." **וַיִּבְרָח יָדָאֵל ... וַיִּבְרָח**

וַיִּבְרָח, "the hand ... increased more and more,

becoming heavy." **וַיִּבְרָח**, 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. **וַיִּבְרָח** is the feminine participle of

וַיִּבְרָח, like **וַיִּבְרָח** 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. 13–15a); (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. 15b–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. 31a). 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. 31a).

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 ἀρχηγούς 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.

בְּפָרַע וְגוֹ, literally “in the showing themselves strong.” The meaning is, “for the fact that the strong in Israel put forth strength.”

הַתְּנַדְּב, 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 unmistakable. 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 (זָלַל, *Niphal* of זָלַל,

dropping the reduplication of the ל = זָלַל, 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*).

תְּדִלוּ אֶרְחוֹת, lit., “the paths ceased,” sc., to be paths, or to be trodden by men. הַלְכֵי 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 פְּרָזוֹן, 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 *δυνατοὶ* in this verse (i.e., according to the *Cod. Vat.*, for the *Col. Al.* has φράζων), and then in the most unmeaning way adopts the rendering αὐξήσον 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 שְׁקִמְתֵי for עַד

אֲשֶׁר קִמְתֵי. The contraction of אֲשֶׁר into שְׁ, 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

חֲדָשִׁים 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 (לְחָם,

the construct state of לְחָם, 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. אֵם

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 חֲדָשִׁים, but

חֲדָשׁוֹת (Isa. 42:9; 48:6), or חֲדָשָׁה (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 אָז 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 אָז 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 לְבִי לִי, “My heart is (sc., inclined) towards the leaders of Israel,” i.e., feels itself drawn towards them. מְחֹזֵק for חֹזֵק (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).

צָחָר, *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 (מְדִינָן from מַד, a covering or carpet, with the plural termination ין, 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 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). שִׁחוּ 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 שָׁם יִתְּנוּ does not form a direct continuation of the clause commencing with מִקּוֹל. 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 שָׁם יִתְּנוּ, 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. מִחְצָצִים are not sharers in the booty, for חָצַץ simply means to cut, to cut in pieces, to divide, and is never applied to the sharing of booty, for which חֵלֶק is the word used (vid., v. 30; Ps. 68:13; Isa. 9:2). מִחְצָץ is to be regarded, as the Rabbins maintain, as a *denom.*

from חָצַץ, 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.

יִתְּנוּ is a simple aorist. תִּנְּנָה, *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). צְדָקוֹת

פְּרוֹזוֹן 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 פְּרוֹזוֹן 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.

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!

עֹרִי 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.

15a 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 יֵרֵד is connected with the rabbinical idea of the word as the *fut.*

apoc. of יֵרֵדָה: “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. יֵרֵד is to be understood in the same sense as יֵרְדוּ in v. 14, and to be pointed as a perfect יֵרֵד.¹⁰ “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 שָׂרִיד עָם 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 (בְּמִן), 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 (עַמֵּימִים), 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 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* (מְשִׁיבֵי, 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 בְּהָרֵי בְּגִלְבָּעַ, 2 Sam. 1:21, and *Ewald*, § 289, b.). עַם, which is used to denote an outward equality, as in 1 Sam. 17:42, and is substantially the same as the בְּן 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. שָׁלַח 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 פְּלָגוֹת is well established by Job 20:17, and there is no reason whatever for explaining the word as equivalent to פְּלָגוֹת, מְפַלְגוֹת, 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

הַגְּלָעָד to denote the whole of the territory of the Israelites on the east of the Jordan probably gave occasion to this, although גְּלָעָד (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. גִּנּוּר, 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.

חֹף יַמִּים is used, as in Gen. 49:13, for the

shore of the Mediterranean Sea. מִפְּרָצִים, ἄπ. 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 **בָּצַעַ**, 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**

קְדוּמִים, 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. **תִּדְרְכֵי** is jussive, and **עַזָּא** 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.). אַבִּירִים, 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.

חֶמְאָה, which generally signifies thick curdled milk, is used here as synonymous with חֶלֶב, 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 תִּשְׁלַחְנָה, the third pers.

fem. sing. with נָה attached, to distinguish it the more clearly from the second pers., see the remarks on Ex. 1:10. הַלְמוֹת עִמְלִים, 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; חָלַף, 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.

בְּאֵשֶׁר כָּרַע, 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. תִּיבֵב, ἀπ. λεγ., signifies to cry; in

Aramaean it is used for הִרְיַע and רִינָן, 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 פַּעֲמֵי

מִרְכָּבוֹתָיו, “steps of his chariots,” cannot be explained, as it is by Bertheau, on the ground that the word פַּעֲמֵי, 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 מִרְכָּבוֹת, 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. תַּעֲנִינָה,

third pers. plur. fem. for תַּעֲנִינָה. The second hemistich of v. 29 contains a clause inserted as a parenthesis. אֶף־הִיא is adversative: “but

she;” אֶף is only an emphatic copula; the antithesis lies in the emphatic change of subject indicated by הִיא אֶמְרִיהָ. הִשִּׁיב אֶמְרִיהָ, 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. הֲלֹא, *nonne*, is he not, in the sense of lively certainty. They will certainly discover rich booty, and divide it. רַחֵם, *uterus*, for *puella*. “A girl (or indeed probably) two girls to the head of the man,” i.e., for each man. צְבָעִים, *coloured things*, cloths or clothes. רַקְמָה, *worked stuff*, or garments worked in divers colours (see the remarks on Ex. 26:36), is attached without the *vav cop.* to צְבָעִים, and is also dependent upon שָׁלַל. The closing words, לְצִוְאָרֵי 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 אִישׁ שָׁלַל, like הִלָּךְ in 2 Sam. 12:4 for אִישׁ הִלָּךְ, *viator*, and 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 explanation that

remains, is either to alter לְצִוְאָרֵי into לְצִוְאָרוֹ or לְצִוְאָרָיו, or else to change שָׁלַל into שָׁגַל, the royal spouse. In the former case, שָׁלַל would have to be taken as in apposition to צְבָעִים רַקְמָתִים: a variegated cloth, two worked in divers colours for his (Sisera’s) neck as booty, as the LXX have rendered it (τῷ τραχήλῳ αὐτοῦ σκυλα). *Ewald* and *Bertheau* decide in favour of the second alteration, and defend it on the ground that שָׁלַל might easily find its way into the text as a copyist’s error for שָׁגַל, on account of שָׁלַל having been already written three times before, and that we cannot dispense with some such word as שָׁגַל here, since the repetition of שָׁלַל three times, and the threefold use of לָהּ, 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. כִּן, *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.