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Barnes' Notes on the Bible
Volume 2 -
Judges
By A. Fuller

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JUDGES

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Judges, like the other historical books of the Old Testament, takes its name from the subject to which it chiefly relates, namely, the exploits of those JUDGES

(The Phoenician and Carthaginian Suffete, mentioned by Livy as corresponding in office to the Roman Consuls, is the same word as the Hebrew Shophet) ^{<OR199>}: judge.)

who ruled Israel in the times between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel. The rule of the Judges (^{<OR100>}Ruth 1:1) in this limited sense was a distinct dispensation, distinct from the leadership of Moses and Joshua, distinct from the more regular supremacy of Eli, the High Priest, and from the prophetic dispensation inaugurated by Samuel (^{<OR101>}1 Samuel 3:19-21; ^{<OR102>}Acts 3:24).

The book consists of three divisions:

- (1) The PREFACE, which extends to ^{<OR103>}Judges 3:6 (inclusive).
 - (2) The MAIN NARRATIVE, ^{<OR104>}Judges 3:7—16:31.
 - (3) THE APPENDIX, containing two detached narratives, (a) Judges 17; (b) Judges 18—21. To these may be added the Book of Ruth, containing another detached narrative, which anciently was included under the title of JUDGES, to which book the first verse shows that it properly belongs.
- (1) The general purpose of the PREFACE is to prepare the ground for the subsequent narrative; to explain how it was that the pagan nations of Canaan were still so powerful, and the Israelites so destitute of Divine aid and protection against their enemies; and to draw out the striking lessons of God's righteous judgment, which were afforded by the alternate servitudes and deliverances of the Israelites, according as they either forsook God to worship idols, or returned to Him in penitence, faith, and prayer. Throughout there is a reference to the threatenings and promises of the Books of Moses (^{<OR105>}Judges 2:15,20, etc.), in order both to vindicate

the power and faithfulness of Jehovah the God of Israel, and to hold out a warning to the future generations for whose instruction the book was written. In the view which the writer was inspired to present to the Church, never was God's agency more busy in relation to the affairs of His people, than when, to a superficial observer, that agency had altogether ceased. On the other hand, the writer calls attention to the fact that those heroes, who wrought such wonderful deliverances for Israel, did it not by their own power, but were divinely commissioned, and divinely endowed with courage, strength, and victory. The writer of the preface also directs the minds of the readers of his history to that vital doctrine, which it was one main object of the Old Testament dispensation to keep alive in the world until the coming of Christ, namely, the unity of God. All the calamities which he was about to narrate, were the fruit and consequence of idolatry. "Keep yourselves from idols," was the chief lesson which the history of the Judges was intended to inculcate.

The preface consists of two very different portions; the recapitulation of events before, and up to, Joshua's death (Judges 1—2:9), and the reflections on the history about to be related (~~OF~~ Judges 2:10—3:6).

(2) The MAIN NARRATIVE contains, not consecutive annals of Israel as a united people, but a series of brilliant, striking, pictures, now of one portion of the tribes, now of another. Of some epochs minute details are given; other periods of eight or ten years, nay, even of twenty, forty, or eighty years, are disposed of in four or five words. Obviously in those histories in which we find graphic touches and accurate details, we have preserved to us narratives contemporary with the events narrated — the narratives, probably, of eye-witnesses and actors in the events themselves. The histories of Ehud, of Barak and Deborah, of Gideon, of Jephthah, and of Samson, are the product of times when the invasions of Moab, of Jabin, of Midian, of Ammon, and of the Philistines, were living realities in the minds of those who penned those histories. The compiler of the book seems to have inserted bodily in his history the ancient narratives which were extant in his day. As the mind of the reader is led on by successive steps to the various exploits of the twelve Judges, and from them to Samuel, and from Samuel to David, and from David to David's son, it cannot fail to recognize the working of one divine plan for man's redemption, and to understand how judges, and prophets, and kings were endowed with some portion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, preparatory to the coming into the world of Him in whom all the fullness of the Godhead

should dwell bodily, and who should save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him.

Some curious analogies have been noted between this, the heroic age of the Israelites, and the heroic ages of Greece and other Gentile countries. Here, as there, it is in the early settlement and taking possession of their new country, and in conflicts with the old races, that the virtues and prowess of the heroes are developed. Here, as there, there is oftentimes a strange mixture of virtue and vice, a blending of great and noble qualities, of most splendid deeds with cruelty and ignorance, licentiousness and barbarism. And yet, in comparing the sacred with the pagan heroes, we find in the former a faith in God and a religious purpose, of which pagandom affords no trace. The exploits of the sacred heroes advanced the highest interests of mankind, and were made subservient to the overthrow of abominable and impure superstitions, and to the preserving a light of true religion in the world until the coming of Christ.

(3) The APPENDIX contains a record of certain events which happened “in the days when the judges ruled,” but are not connected with any exploits of the judges. Though placed at the end of the book, the two histories both manifestly belong chronologically to the beginning of it: the reason for the place selected is perhaps that suggested in the ^{<0707>}Judges 17:1 note.

Exact chronology forms no part of the plan of the book. The only guide to the chronology is to be found in the genealogies which span the period: and the evidence of these genealogies concurs in assigning an average of between seven and eight generations to the time from the entrance into Canaan to the commencement of David’s reign, which would make up from 240 to 260 years. Deducting 30 years for Joshua, 30 for Samuel, and 40 for the reign of Saul (^{<4121>}Acts 13:21), in all 100 years, we have from 140 to 160 years left for the events related in the Book of Judges. This is a short time, no doubt, but quite sufficient, when it is remembered that many of the “rests” and “servitudes” (^{<0708>}Judges 3:8 note) therein related are not successive, but synchronize; and that no great dependence can be placed on the recurring 80, 40, and 20 years, whenever they are not in harmony with historical probability.

The narratives which have the strongest appearance of synchronizing are those of the Moabite, Ammonite, and Amalekite servitude (^{<0712>}Judges 3:12-30) which lasted eighteen years, and was closely connected with a Philistine invasion (^{<0713>}Judges 3:31); of the Ammonite servitude which

lasted eighteen years, and was also closely connected with a Philistine invasion (^{<0707>}Judges 10:7,8); and of the Midianite and Amalekite servitude which lasted seven years (^{<0708>}Judges 6:1), all three of which terminated in a complete expulsion and destruction of their enemies by the three leaders Ehud, Jephthah, and Gideon, heading respectively the Benjamites, the Manassites and the northern tribes, and the tribes beyond Jordan: the conduct of the Ephraimites as related in ^{<0709>}Judges 8:1; 12:1, being an additional very strong feature of resemblance in the two histories of Gideon and Jephthah. The 40 years of Philistine servitude mentioned in ^{<0710>}Judges 13:1, seems to have embraced the last 20 years of Eli's judgeship, and the first 20 of Samuel's, and terminated with Samuel's victory at Eben-ezer: and, if so, Samson's judgeship of 20 years also coincided in part with Samuel's. The long rests of 40 and 80 years spoken of as following the victories of Othniel, Barak, and Ehud, may very probably have synchronized in whole or in part. It cannot however be denied that the chronology of this book is still a matter of uncertainty.

The time of the compilation of this book, and the final arrangement of its component parts in their present form and in their present connection in the series of the historical books of Scripture, may with most probability be assigned to the latter times of the Jewish monarchy, included in the same plan. (The Book of Ezra, it may be observed, by the way, is a continuation, not of Kings, but of Chronicles.) There is not the slightest allusion in the Book of Judges, to the Babylonian captivity. Only ^{<0711>}Judges 3:5,6, as regards the Canaanite races mentioned, and the context, may be compared with ^{<0712>}Ezra 9:1,2. The language of the Book of Judges points to the same conclusion. It is pure and good Hebrew, untainted with Chaldaisms or Persian forms, as are the later books.

The inference to which these and other such resemblances tends, is that the compilation of the Book of Judges is of about the same age as that of the books of Samuel and Kings, if not actually the work of the same hand. But no absolute certainty can be arrived at.

The chief allusions to it in the New Testament are those in ^{<0713>}Hebrews 11:32 following, and ^{<0714>}Acts 13:20. But there are frequent references to the histories contained in it in the Psalms and in the prophets. See ^{<0715>}Psalms 78:56, etc.; 83:9-11; 106:34-45, etc.; ^{<0716>}Isaiah 9:4; 10:26; ^{<0717>}Nehemiah 9:27, etc. See also ^{<0718>}1 Samuel 12:9-11; ^{<0719>}2 Samuel 11:21. Other books to which it refers are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy,

and Joshua. See the marginal references to Judges 1; 2:1-3,6-10,15,20-23; 4:11; 6:8,13; 10:11; 11:13-26; 13:5; 16:17; 18:30; 19:23,24; 20:26,27, etc.

NOTES ON JUDGES 1

Judges 1:1. *After the death of Joshua* But from ^{<000>}Judges 1:1 to ^{<000>}Judges 2:9 is a consecutive narrative, ending with the death of Joshua. Hence, the events in this chapter and in ^{<000>}Judges 2:1-6 are to be taken as belonging to the lifetime of Joshua. See ^{<021>}Judges 2:11 note.

Asked the LORD The phrase is only found in Judges and Samuel. It was the privilege of the civil ruler, to apply to the high priest to consult for him the Urim and Thummim (marginal reference). (Compare ^{<640>}Joshua 14:1; 18:1,10; 19:51). Here it was not Phinehas, as Josephus concludes from placing these events after the death of Joshua, but Eleazar, through whom the children of Israel inquired “who” (or, rather), “which tribe of us shall go up!”

Judges 1:2. *And the LORD said* i.e. answered by Urim and Thummim. The land was the portion which fell to Judah by lot, not the whole land of Canaan (see ^{<001>}Judges 3:11). The priority given to Judah is a plain indication of divine direction. It points to the birth of our Lord of the tribe of Judah. Judah associated Simeon with him (^{<000>}Judges 1:3) because their lots were intermingled (^{<690>}Joshua 19:1).

Judges 1:4. *The Canaanites and the Perizzites* See the notes at ^{<012>}Genesis 12:6; 13:7. Bezek may be the name of a district. It has not yet been identified.

Judges 1:7. *Threescore and ten kings* We may infer from this number of conquered kings, that the intestine wars of the Canaanites were among the causes which, under God’s Providence, weakened their resistance to the Israelites. Adoni-Bezek’s cruelty to the subject kings was the cause of his receiving (compare the marginal references) this chastisement. The loss of the thumb would make a man unfit to handle a sword or a bow; the loss of his big toe would impede his speed.

Judges 1:8. Render “and the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem, and took it, and smote it,” etc. With regard to the capture of Jerusalem there is some obscurity. It is here said to have been taken, smitten with the edge of the sword, and burned, by the children of Judah. In ^{<620>}Joshua 12:8,10 the Jebusite and the king of Jerusalem are

enumerated among Joshua's conquests, but without any distinct mention of the capture of the city; and in the marginal reference we read that the Jebusites were not expelled from Jerusalem, but dwelt with the children of Judah (compare ^{<0021>}Judges 1:21). Further, we learn from ^{<0790>}Judges 19:10-12 that Jerusalem was wholly a Jebusite city in the lifetime of Phinehas (^{<0718>}Judges 20:28), and so it continued until the reign of David (^{<1086>}2 Samuel 5:6-9). The conclusion is that Jerusalem was only taken once, namely, at the time here described, and that this was in the lifetime of Joshua; but that the children of Judah did not occupy it in sufficient force to prevent the return of the Jebusites, who gradually recovered complete possession.

Set the city on fire A phrase found only at ^{<0728>}Judges 20:48; ^{<1082>}2 Kings 8:12, and ^{<0747>}Psalms 74:7.

^{<0016>}**Judges 1:16.** *The children of the Kenite* See ^{<0021>}Numbers 24:21 note.

The city of palm trees Jericho (see the marginal reference). The rabbinical story is that Jericho, with 500 cubits square of land, was given to Hobab. The use of the phrase "city of palm trees" for "Jericho," is perhaps an indication of the influence of Joshua's curse (^{<0635>}Joshua 6:26). The very name of Jericho was blotted out. There are no palm trees at Jericho now, but Josephus mentions them repeatedly, as well as the balsam trees.

^{<0017>}**Judges 1:17.** *Hormah* See ^{<0021>}Numbers 21:1 note. The destruction then vowed was now accomplished. This is another decisive indication that the events here related belong to Joshua's lifetime. This would be about six years after the vow.

^{<0018>}**Judges 1:18.** It is remarkable that Ashdod is not here mentioned, as it is in ^{<0645>}Joshua 15:46,47, in conjunction with Gaza and Ekron; but that Askelon, which is not in the list of the cities of Judah at all, is named in its stead. (See ^{<0638>}Joshua 13:3 note.) It is a curious fact that when Rameses III took Askelon it was occupied, not by Philistines, but apparently by Hebrews. Rameses began to reign in 1269 B.C., and reigned 25 years. At any time between 1269 and 1244 B.C. such occupation of Askelon by Hebrews agrees with the Book of Judges.

^{<0021>}**Judges 1:21.** This verse is nearly identical with ^{<0655>}Joshua 15:63, except in the substitution of Benjamin for Judah. Probably the original reading Judah was altered in later times to Benjamin, because Jebus was

within the border of Benjamin, and neither had the Benjamites expelled the Jebusites.

Judges 1:22. Bethel was within the borders of Benjamin, but was captured, as we here learn, by the house of Joseph, who probably retained it.

Judges 1:26. The site of this new Luz is not known, but “the land of the Hittites” was apparently in the north of Palestine, on the borders of Syria (⁰¹⁰¹⁵Genesis 10:15 note).

Judges 1:31. Compare the marginal reference. Accho, afterward called Ptolemais, now Akka or St. Jean d’Acre, is named here for the first time.

Judges 1:32. It is an evidence of the power of the Canaanite in this portion of the land that it is not said (compare ⁰¹⁰¹²Judges 1:30) that the Canaanites dwelt among the Asherites, but that the Asherites (and ⁰¹⁰¹³Judges 1:33, Naphtali) “dwelt among the Canaanites;” nor are the Canaanites in Accho, Zidon, and the other Asherite cities, said to have become tributaries.

Judges 1:34. The Amorites are usually found in the mountain (⁰¹⁰¹⁹Numbers 13:29; ⁰¹⁰¹⁶Joshua 10:6). Here they dwell in the valley, of which the monuments of Rameses III show them to have been in possession when that monarch invaded Syria. It was their great strength in this district, and their forcible detention of the territory of Dan, which led to the expedition of the Danites (Judges 18). The house of Joseph lent their powerful aid in subduing them, probably in the times of the Judges.

Judges 1:36. *The going up to Akrabbim* See the margin and references; properly “the ascent of scorpions,” with which the whole region abounds.

The rock Petra, the capital of Idumea, so called from the mass of precipitous rock which encloses the town, and out of which many of its buildings are excavated. The original word “Selah” is always used of the rock at Kadesh-Barnea (⁰¹⁰¹⁸Numbers 20:8-11), near Petra (compare ⁰¹⁰¹⁸Obadiah 1:3). This leads us to look for “the ascent of scorpions,” here coupled with *has-selah*, in the same neighborhood.

NOTES ON JUDGES 2

Judges 2:1. *The angel of the LORD (not an angel).* The phrase is used nearly 60 times to designate the Angel of God's presence. See [Genesis 12:7](#) note. In all cases where "the angel of the Lord" delivers a message, he does it as if God Himself were speaking, without the intervening words "Thus saith the Lord," which are used in the case of prophets. (Compare [Judges 6:8](#); [Joshua 24:2](#).)

When the host of Israel came up from Gilgal in the plain of Jericho, near the Jordan ([Joshua 4:19](#)) to Shiloh and Shechem, in the hill country of Ephraim, the Angel who had been with them at Gilgal ([Exodus 23:20-23](#); [33:1-4](#); [Joshua 5:10-15](#)) accompanied them. The mention of Gilgal thus fixes the transaction to the period soon after the removal of the camp from Gilgal, and the events recorded in [Judges 1:1-36](#) (of which those related in [Judges 2:1-29](#) took place before, and those in [Judges 2:30-36](#), just after that removal). It also shows that it was the conduct of the Israelites, recorded in [Judges 1](#) as in [Joshua 16](#); [17](#), which provoked this rebuke.

Judges 2:2. The two articles of the covenant here specified (compare margin references) are those which the Israelites had at this time broken. The other important prohibition ([Deuteronomy 7:3](#)) is not specified by the Angel, and this is an indication that at the time the Angel spoke, intermarriages with the pagan spoken of ([Judges 3:6](#)) had not taken place; and this again is another evidence of the early date of this occurrence.

Judges 2:3. *"Wherefore I also said"* Rather because ye have done the things mentioned in [Judges 2:2](#), "I have now said (i.e. I now protest and declare) that I will not drive them out from before you" (compare [Judges 19:29](#)). And it was the announcement of this resolution by the Angel that caused the people to weep.

The word thorns in this verse is supplied by the King James Version from the similar passage in [Joshua](#) (see the marginal reference). Other versions adopt a different reading of the original text, and prefer the sense "they shall be to you for adversaries" (compare the last words of [Numbers 33:55](#)).

Judges 2:5. *Bochim* i.e. weepers. It was near Shechem, but the site is unknown. Compare the names given to places for similar reasons in Genesis 35:8; 50:11.

Judges 2:7. If Joshua was about 80 at the entrance into Canaan, 30 years would bring us to the close of his life. The “elders” would be all that were old enough to take part in the wars of Canaan (Judges 3:1,2); and therefore, reckoning from the age of 20 to 70, a period of about 50 years may be assigned from the entrance into Canaan to the death of the elders, or 20 years after the death of Joshua.

The great works of the LORD The overthrow of the Canaanite nations.

Judges 2:8. *The servant of the LORD* This is a title especially given to Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:1). In later books, the phrase “the servant of God” is used (1 Chronicles 6:49; Nehemiah 10:29; Daniel 9:11; Revelation 15:3). It is applied to Joshua only here and in Joshua 24:29. It is spoken of David (Psalm 18, title), and generally of the prophets; and, like the analogous phrase, “man of God,” is transferred by Paul to the ministers of Christ under the New Testament (2 Timothy 2:24; James 1:1).

Judges 2:10. *All that generation* i.e. the main body of those who were grown-up men at the time of the conquest of Canaan.

Judges 2:11. *And the children of Israel* Here begins the narrative of what really did happen “after the death of Joshua,” but of which Judges 1 conveys no hint. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua (Judges 2:7). But when Joshua was dead ... “the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and forsook the God of their fathers.” And then follows from Judges 2:14 to the end of the chapter, a summary of the whole contents of the book.

Did evil in the sight of the LORD Through this book and all the historical books, this is the regular phrase for falling into idolatry. It occurs seven times in Judges, as descriptive of the seven apostasies of Israel, which drew down upon them the seven servitudes under

(1) Chushan-Rishathaim,

(2) Eglon,

- (3) Jabin,
- (4) Midian,
- (5) the tyranny of Abimelech,
- (6) the Ammonites,
- (7) the Philistines.

The recurrence of the phrase marks the hand of one author and of one book. For the opposite phrase, see ^{<1156>}1 Kings 15:5,11, etc.

The plural of Baal, “Baalim,” refers to the numerous images of Baal which they set up and worshipped, as does the plural form, “Ashtaroth” (^{<0023>}Judges 2:13), to those of the female divinity, Astarte.

^{<0022>}**Judges 2:12.** *Provoked the LORD to anger* A frequent expression in connection with idolatry, especially in Deuteronomy, in the Books of the Kings, and in Jeremiah.

^{<0024>}**Judges 2:14,15.** Consult the marginal references. The phrase, “he sold them into the hands etc.,” is first found in ^{<6520>}Deuteronomy 32:30.

^{<0026>}**Judges 2:16.** *Nevertheless* (rather “and”) *the LORD raised up judges* This is the first introduction of the term JUDGE, which gives its name to the book. (See the introduction to the Book of Judges.)

^{<0028>}**Judges 2:18.** *It repented the LORD* Rather, “the Lord was moved with compassion,” or “was grieved,” “because of their groanings.” (Compare ^{<0215>}Judges 21:15.)

^{<0022>}**Judges 2:20.** This verse is connected with ^{<0023>}Judges 2:13. The intermediate verses refer to much later times; they have the appearance of being the reflections of the compiler interspersed with the original narrative. But ^{<0023>}Judges 2:20 catches up the thread only to let it fall immediately. All that follows, down to the end of ^{<0027>}Judges 3:7, seems to be another digression, closing with words like those of ^{<0023>}Judges 2:13.

It does not appear how this message was given to Israel, whether by Angel, or prophet, or Urim, nor indeed is it certain whether any message was given. The words may be understood as merely explaining what passed

through the divine mind, and expressing the thoughts which regulated the divine proceeding.

NOTES ON JUDGES 3

Judges 3:1. *Even as many of Israel ...* These words show that the writer has especially in view the generation which came to man's estate immediately after the close of the wars with the Canaanites (^{<623>}Joshua 23:1). Compare ^{<770>}Judges 2:10.

Judges 3:3. *Lords* Seranim, a title used exclusively of the princes of the five Philistine cities. The title is probably of Phoenician origin.

Joshua appears to have smitten and subdued the Hivites as far north as Baal-Gad, in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon (^{<6117>}Joshua 11:17; 12:7), but no further (^{<6375>}Joshua 13:5). There was an unsubdued Hivite population to the north of Baal-hermon (probably Baal-Gad under Hermon, since it is not synonymous with Hermon; see ^{<1323>}1 Chronicles 5:23), to the entering in of Hamath: i.e. in the fertile valley of Coele-Syria. Hamath is always spoken of as the extreme northern boundary of the land of Canaan. It was the gate of approach to Canaan from Babylon, and all the north (^{<3912>}Zechariah 9:2; ^{<2315>}Jeremiah 39:5). It formed part of the dominions of Solomon (^{<4404>}2 Chronicles 8:4), and of the future inheritance of Israel, as described in vision by Ezekiel (^{<23716>}Ezekiel 47:16).

Judges 3:6. See ^{<770>}Judges 2:2 note.

Judges 3:7. *And the groves* literally, Asheroth, images of Asherah (the goddess companion of Baal): see ^{<5162>}Deuteronomy 16:21 note.

Judges 3:8. Here we hold again the thread of the proper narrative, which seems as if it ought to have run thus (^{<7001>}Judges 1:1): Now, etc. (^{<770>}Judges 3:8), therefore (or "and") etc.

Served Chushan-Rishathaim This is the same phrase as in ^{<7014>}Judges 3:14. From it is derived the expression, "the times of servitude," as distinguished from "the times of rest," in speaking of the times of the Judges. Mesopotamia, or Aram-naharaim, was the seat of Nimrod's kingdom, and Nimrod was the son of Cush (^{<1008>}Genesis 10:8-12). Rishathaim is perhaps the name of a city, or a foreign word altered to a Hebrew form. Nothing is known from history, or the cuneiform inscriptions, of the political condition of Mesopotamia at this time, though Thotmes I and III in the

18th Egyptian dynasty are known to have invaded Mesopotamia. It is, however, in accordance with such an aggressive Aramean movement toward Palestine, that as early as the time of Abraham we find the kings of Shinar and of Elam invading the south of Palestine. There is also distinct evidence in the names of the Edomite kings (^{<0135>}Genesis 36:32,35,37) of an Aramean dynasty in Edom about the time of the early Judges. Compare, too, ^{<1817>}Job 1:17.

^{<0781>}**Judges 3:9.** Othniel was already distinguished in Joshua's lifetime as a brave and successful leader. See ^{<0516>}Joshua 15:16,17.

^{<0781>}**Judges 3:10.** *And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him* The phrase occurs frequently in this book and in the books of Samuel and Kings. It marks the special office of the Judges. They were saviors (^{<0781>}Judges 3:9 margin; ^{<0127>}Nehemiah 9:27) called and directed by the Holy Spirit, who endued them with extraordinary wisdom, courage, and strength for the work which lay before them (compare ^{<0764>}Judges 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6,19), and were in this respect types of Christ the "Judge of Israel" (^{<3111>}Micah 5:1), in whom "the Spirit of the Lord God" was "without measure" (^{<2102>}Isaiah 11:2; 61:1; ^{<0218>}Matthew 12:18-21; ^{<1808>}Job 1:32; ^{<4132>}Acts 13:2).

^{<0781>}**Judges 3:11.** *The land* means here, as in ^{<0702>}Judges 1:2, not the whole land of Canaan, but the part concerned, probably the land of the tribe of Judah. Forty years, here and elsewhere, is (like fourscore years, ^{<0781>}Judges 3:30) a round number, perhaps equivalent to a generation.

^{<0781>}**Judges 3:12.** The "strengthening" Eglon was the special work of God, and because Israel "had done evil," etc. Samuel's comment on the event is to the same effect (^{<0711>}1 Samuel 12:9).

^{<0781>}**Judges 3:13.** The children of Ammon (Bent-Ammon), almost always so spoken of from their ancestor Ben-ammi (^{<0198>}Genesis 19:38), seem to be under the leadership of the king of Moab, as do also the Amlekites: this is perhaps the strengthening spoken of in ^{<0781>}Judges 3:12. In Judges 6 the combination is Midianites, Amalekites, and children of the East, or Arab tribes. In the narrative of Jephthah's judgeship, the Ammonites alone are mentioned; but with a reference to the Moabites, and as if they were one people (^{<07124>}Judges 11:24). The Amalekites appear as the constant and bitter foes of the Israelites (^{<0708>}Exodus 17:8 notes and references); and the

naming a mountain in Ephraim, “the mount of the Amalekites” (^{<0725>}Judges 12:15) is probably a memorial of this joint invasion of Moabites and Amalekites, and marks the scene either of their occupation, or of some signal victory over them.

The city of palm trees: i.e. Jericho (^{<0016>}Judges 1:16), having been utterly destroyed by Joshua, and not rebuilt until the time of Ahab (^{<0624>}Joshua 6:24-26; ^{<1163>}1 Kings 16:34), can only have existed at this time as an unwalled village, — like Jerusalem after its destruction by Nebuzaradan, until Nehemiah rebuilt its walls — and like its modern representative er-Riha, a village with a fortress for the Turkish garrison. This occupation of Jericho should be compared with the invasion in ^{<0709>}Judges 10:9, where two out of the three tribes named, Benjamin and Ephraim, are the same as those here concerned, and where (^{<0707>}Judges 10:7) the Philistines are coupled with the Ammonites, just as here (^{<0783>}Judges 3:31) the Philistines are mentioned in near connection with the Moabites. See Introduction p. 69.

^{<0785>}**Judges 3:15.** *But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer* The very same words as are used at ^{<0783>}Judges 3:9. See, too, ^{<0726>}Judges 2:16,18, and ^{<1697>}Nehemiah 9:27.

Ehud “the Benjamite” was of the family or house of Gera (^{<1065>}2 Samuel 16:5), the son of Bela, Benjamin’s first-born, born before Jacob’s descent into Egypt (^{<0462>}Genesis 46:21), and then included among “the sons of Benjamin.” The genealogy in ^{<1306>}1 Chronicles 8:6 intimates that Ehud (apparently written Abihud in ^{<0783>}Judges 3:3) became the head of a separate house.

Left-handed See the margin. The phrase is thought to describe not so much a defect as the power to use left and right hands equally well (compare ^{<0716>}Judges 20:16; ^{<1312>}1 Chronicles 12:2).

A present i.e. tribute (^{<1082>}2 Samuel 8:2,6; ^{<1042>}1 Kings 4:21; ^{<1520>}Psalms 72:10). The employment of Ehud for this purpose points him out as a chief of some distinction. He would be attended by a numerous suite (^{<0783>}Judges 3:18). We may conclude that the destruction of the Benjamites (Judges 20) had not taken place at this time.

Judges 3:16. *Upon his right thigh* The proper side for a left-handed man. It would give him the appearance of being unarmed. The narrative shows clearly that his action was premeditated (^{<OR16>}Judges 3:21).

Judges 3:19. Gilgal was in the immediate neighborhood of Jericho (^{<OR19>}Judges 2:1), where doubtless Eglon held his court at this time (^{<OR13>}Judges 3:13).

Quarries Some take the original of this word in its common meaning of carved images or idols (see the margin).

Judges 3:20. Probably Ehud's first message (^{<OR19>}Judges 3:19) had been delivered to the attendants, and by them carried to the king. Now Ehud is admitted to the king's presence, into the cool upper chamber.

I have a message from God unto thee Ehud believed himself to be accomplishing the divine mandate, and so his words were true in a certain sense. But it was also a stratagem to cause the king to rise, that the thrust might be sure. (The king rose at once, in true Oriental respect for a divine message, or from fear, compare ^{<OR24>}Joshua 9:24.)

Judges 3:22. The King James Version and margin give different explanations of the last words of this verse. Others explain it of a vestibule or chamber, through which Ehud passed into the porch where the entrance doors were. He locked the doors, took the key with him; and then retired through the midst of the attendants below (or: more probably, through the door which communicated directly with the outside).

Judges 3:24. *He covereth his feet* Compare the marginal references. The explanation of the phrase as "taking sleep" suits both passages best.

Judges 3:25. *A key* literally, "an opener." Probably a wooden instrument with which they either lifted up the latch within, or drew back the wooden bar or bolt. The chief officer of Eglon's household probably had a second key (compare ^{<OR15>}Isaiah 22:15,20-22; 37:2).

Judges 3:26. *Seirath* "The forest" or "weald," which evidently bordered on the cultivated plain near Gilgal, and extended into "the mountain or hill country of Ephraim." Once there, he was safe from pursuit (compare ^{<OR16>}1 Samuel 13:6), and quickly collected a strong force of Ephraimires and probably the bordering Benjamites.

Judges 3:28. Ehud “went down” from the mountain of Ephraim into the Jordan valley beneath it, straight to the Jordan fords (^{<ORIS>}Joshua 2:7), so as to intercept all communication between the Moabites on the west side and their countrymen on the east.

Judges 3:30. *The land* i.e. that portion of it which had suffered from the oppression of Moab, probably Benjamin and Ephraim chiefly (see ^{<ORIS>}Judges 3:11).

In judging of the nature of Ehud’s act there are many considerations which must greatly modify our judgment. Acts of violence or cunning, done in an age when human society applauded such acts, when the best men of the age thought them right, and when men were obliged to take the law into their own hands in self-defense, are very different from the same acts done in an age when the enlightened consciences of men generally condemn them, and when the law of the land and the law of nations give individuals adequate security. We can allow faith and courage and patriotism to Ehud, without being blind to those defective views of moral right which made him and his countrymen glory in an act which in the light of Christianity is a crime. It is remarkable that neither Ehud nor Jael are included in Paul’s list in ^{<SILE>}Hebrews 11:32.

Judges 3:31. From this verse and ^{<ORIS>}Judges 5:6 we may gather that Shamgar was contemporary with Jael, and that he only procured a temporary and partial deliverance for Israel by his exploit. He may have been of the tribe of Judah.

An ox goad An instrument of wood about eight feet long, armed with an iron spike or point at one end, with which to spur the ox at plow, and with an iron scraper at the other end with which to detach the earth from the plowshare when it became encumbered with it. The fact of their deliverer having no better weapon enhances his faith, and the power of his divine helper. At the same time it shows how low the men of Judah were brought at this time, being disarmed by their oppressors (^{<ORIS>}Judges 5:8), as was also the case later (^{<ORIS>}1 Samuel 13:19).

NOTES ON JUDGES 4

Judges 4:2. See ^{<0100>}Joshua 11:1 note. Since the events there narrated, Hazor must have been rebuilt, and have resumed its position as the metropolis of the northern Canaanites; the other cities must also have resumed their independence, and restored the fallen dynasties.

Harosheth (identified by Conder with El Harathlyeh, see ^{<0046>}Judges 4:6) is marked by the addition of the Gentiles, as in Galilee of the nations (^{<0141>}Genesis 14:1; ^{<2000>}Isaiah 9:1). The name Harosheth signifies workmanship, cutting and carving, whether in stone or wood (^{<0206>}Exodus 31:5), and hence, might be applied to the place where such works are carried on. It has been conjectured that this being a great timber district, rich in cedars and fir-trees, and near Great Zidon (^{<0108>}Joshua 11:8), Jabin kept a large number of oppressed Israelites at work in hewing wood, and preparing it at Harosheth for transport to Zidon; and that these woodcutters, armed with axes and hatchets, formed the soldiers of Barak's army.

Judges 4:3. *Oppressed* The same word is used (^{<0009>}Exodus 3:9) of the oppression of Israel by the Egyptians. If they were put to task-work in hewing timber, their condition was very like that of their ancestors making bricks.

Judges 4:4. *Deborah, a prophetess* Her name, meaning a bee, is the same as that of Rebekah's nurse (marginal reference). The reason of her preeminence is added. She was "a woman, a prophetess," like Miriam (^{<0150>}Exodus 15:20); Huldah (^{<0224>}2 Kings 22:14), etc. In ^{<0046>}Judges 4:6,9,14, we have examples of her prophetic powers, and in Judges 5 a noble specimen of prophetic song. Though the other Judges are not called prophets, yet they all seem to have had direct communications from God, either of knowledge or power, or both (compare ^{<0010>}Judges 3:10 note).

Judges 4:5. *She dwelt* Rather, "she sat," namely, to judge the people (^{<0040>}Judges 4:10), but not in the usual place, "the gate" (^{<0041>}Ruth 4:1,2; ^{<0122>}Proverbs 22:22). It suited her character, and the wild unsafe times better, that she should sit under a palm-tree in the secure heights of Mount Ephraim, between Ramah and Bethel (^{<0203>}Judges 20:33 note). This verse

shows that the Judges exercised the civil as well as military functions of rulers (^{<0075>}1 Samuel 7:15-17).

^{<0046>}**Judges 4:6.** The name Barak signifies lightning, an appropriate name for a warrior. It is found also as Barca or Barcas, among Punic proper names. Compare ^{<0087>}Mark 3:17. On Kedesh-Naphtali see the marginal reference.

Deborah speaks of God as Yahweh the God of Israel, because she speaks, as it were, in the presence of the pagan enemies of Israel, and to remind the Israelites, in the day of their distress, that He was ready to perform the mercy promised to their fathers, and to remember His holy covenant. This title, too, would recall to their memories in an instant all His past acts in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, and in the conquest of Canaan.

The object of “drawing (toward Mount Tabor” rather, spreading out, compare ^{<0287>}Judges 20:37) was to effect a junction of the northern tribes with the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, who were separated from them by the plain of Esdraelon, where Sisera’s chariots would naturally congregate and be most effective. Mount Tabor rises from the plain of Esdraelon, about 1,865 ft. above the sea, and its broad top of nearly a mile in circumference afforded a strong position, out of reach of Sisera’s chariots. If El Harathiyeh be Harosheth, Sisera must have marched from the west. Harathiyeh is a height in the range which separates Esdraelon from the plains of Acre, under which the Kishon breaks through in its course to the sea.

^{<0047>}**Judges 4:7.** The brook or stream Kishon (Nahr Mukutta), so called from its winding course, caused by the dead level of the plain of Esdraelon through which it flows, rises, in respect to one of its sources or feeders, in Mount Tabor, and flows nearly due west through the plain, under Mount Carmel, and into the Bay of Acre. In the early or eastern part of its course, before it is recruited by the springs on Carmel, it is nothing but a torrent, often dry, but liable to swell very suddenly and dangerously, and to overflow its banks in early spring, after rain or the melting of snow. The ground on the banks of the Kishon near Megiddo (Mujedd’a, see ^{<6221>}Joshua 12:21 note) becomes an impassable morass under the same circumstances, and would be particularly dangerous to a large number of chariots.

Judges 4:8. Barak, like Gideon (^{<0765>}Judges 6:15,36,40), and Abraham (^{<0182>}Genesis 15:2,3; 17:18), and Moses (^{<0240>}Exodus 4:10,13), and Peter (^{<0140>}Matthew 14:30,31), exhibited some weakness of faith at first. But this only makes his example more profitable for our encouragement, though he himself suffered some loss by his weakness (^{<0700>}Judges 4:9).

Judges 4:9. Mark the unhesitating faith and courage of Deborah, and the rebuke to Barak's timidity, "the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Jael, ^{<0702>}Judges 4:22). For a similar use of a weak instrument, that the excellency of the power might be of God, compare the history of Gideon and his 300, David and his sling, Shamgar and his ox-goad, Samson and the jawbone of the ass. (See ^{<4025>}1 Corinthians 1:26,31.) Barak would probably think the woman must be Deborah. The prophecy was only explained by its fulfillment. Her presence as a prophetess would give a divine sanction to Barak's attempt to raise the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. To Barak himself it would be a pledge of her truth and sincerity. She probably commissioned some chief to raise the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh (^{<0754>}Judges 5:14, compare ^{<3802>}Psalms 80:2), while she went with Barak and mustered Zebulun, Naphtali, and Issachar.

Judges 4:10. Rather, "and ten thousand men went up (to Tabor) at his feet;" i.e. as his followers ("after him," ^{<0744>}Judges 4:14).

Judges 4:11. Read, "Heber the Kenite had severed himself from the Kenites which were of the children of Hobab," etc., "unto the oak (or terebinth tree) in Zaanaim" (or Bitzaanaim, which Conder identifies with Bessum, twelve miles southeast of Tabor, and near Kedesh on the Sea of Galilee). This migration of Heber the Kenite, with a portion of his tribe, from the south of Judah to the north of Naphtali, perhaps caused by Philistine oppression, had clearly taken place recently. It is mentioned here to account for the subsequent narrative, but possibly also because the news of the great muster of the Israelites at Kedesh had been carried to Sisera by some of the tribe (^{<0742>}Judges 4:12), whose tents we are here informed were in the immediate neighborhood of Kedesh.

Judges 4:15. *Lighted down off his chariot* Probably his chariot stuck in the morass (see the note at ^{<0707>}Judges 4:7); or he might leave his chariot in order to mislead his pursuers, and in hope of gaining a place of safety while they were following the track of the chariot-wheels and the bulk of the host.

Judges 4:16. What with the overflowing of the Kishon (**Judges** 5:21), by which numbers were drowned, and the panic which had seized the defeated army, and made them an easy prey to the sword of the pursuing Israelites, Sisera's whole force was cut to pieces and broken up.

Judges 4:17. Sisera went, not to Heber's tent, but to Joel's, as more secure from pursuit. Women occupied a separate tent. (**Genesis** 18:6,10; 24:67.)

Judges 4:20. *Stand in the door ...* The characteristic duplicity of the Oriental character, both in Sisera and Joel, is very forcibly depicted in this narrative. It is only by the light of the Gospel that the law of truth is fully revealed.

Judges 4:21. If we can overlook the treachery and violence which belonged to the morals of the age and country, and bear in mind Jael's ardent sympathies with the oppressed people of God, her faith in the right of Israel to possess the land in which they were now slaves, her zeal for the glory of Yahweh as against the gods of Canaan, and the heroic courage and firmness with which she executed her deadly purpose, we shall be ready to yield to her the praise which is her due. See **Judges** 3:30 note.

Judges 4:24. See the margin. The meaning is, that Barak's great victory was the beginning of a successful resistance to Jabin, by which the Israelites recovered their independence, and finally broke the Canaanite power. Accordingly, we hear no more of Canaanite domination in the Book of Judges.

NOTES ON JUDGES 5

Judges 5:1. Deborah, as “a prophetess,” both composed and sang this noble ode, which, for poetic spirit and lyric fire, is not surpassed by any of the sacred songs in the Bible. And, as Miriam took up the first verse of the song of Moses (^{<OR>}Exodus 15:21), and sang it as an antiphony, so Barak, with the chorus of men, answered the song of Deborah by singing ^{<OR>}Judges 5:2, which is also exactly suited for an antiphon, summing up as it does the subject matter of the whole ode. Compare David’s example (^{<OR>}2 Samuel 6:15).

Judges 5:2. Render “For the leading of the leaders in Israel (the princes), for the willingness of the people (to follow them) bless ye the Lord.” See ^{<OR>}Deuteronomy 32:42 note, and compare ^{<OR>}Judges 5:9 and ^{<OR>}Judges 5:13, where the nobles and the people are again contrasted.

Judges 5:4. Compare ^{<OR>}Psalms 68:7-9, and ^{<OR>}Habakkuk 3:3-16. The three passages relate to the same events, and mutually explain each other. The subject of them is the triumphant march of Israel, with the LORD at their head, to take possession of Canaan, and the overthrow of Sihon, Og, and the Midianites. This march commenced from Kadesh, in the immediate neighborhood of Self, and the victories which followed were an exact parallel to the victory of Deborah and Barak, accompanied as it had been with the storm which made Kishon to overflow his banks.

Judges 5:6. Words descriptive of a state of weakness and fear, so that Israel could not frequent the highways. It is a graphic description of a country occupied by an enemy.

Judges 5:7. Render the word “villages” (here and in ^{<OR>}Judges 5:11) judgment, rule, or judges, rulers. The sense is “The princes (or magistrates) ceased in Israel,” i.e. there was no one to do justice in the gate, or defend men from their oppressors.

Judges 5:8. The “war in the gates” describes the hostile attacks of the Canaanites, which were the punishment of the idolatry of the Israelites (compare the marginal references), and the reduction of Israel to an unarmed and unresisting state under the Philistine dominion. See ^{<OR>}Judges 3:31 note.

Judges 5:9. *My heart ...* In this deplorable weakness of Israel how noble was the conduct of the governors who volunteered to lead the people against their oppressors. Deborah's heart was filled with admiration as she thought of their patriotic devotion, and broke out into thanksgiving to Yahweh.

Judges 5:10. *Ye that ride on white donkeys ...* i.e. nobles or magistrates. Deborah appeals to the classes mentioned in **Judges 5:6,7**, to bear witness to the happy change that had followed the overthrow of Jabin.

That sit in judgment Rather "that sit on saddles, or horse-cloths," a further description of those who ride on asses.

Judges 5:11. The sense of the King James Version is that, whereas formerly they could not go in safety to draw water from their wells, but were shot at by the archers of the enemy, now they were delivered from such tumults; and standing round the wells in security rehearsed the righteous acts of the Lord in delivering them, and "the righteous acts of His government in Israel." (See **Judges 5:7**).

Then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates Israelites, who had hid themselves in caves and deserts, could return in security to the gates of their own cities for justice, or commerce, or to dwell there, now that the Canaanite was subdued.

Judges 5:12. Deborah incites Barak to carry off as his prey the captive Canaanites and their sheep and cattle (their "captivity").

Judges 5:13. This verse is otherwise rendered: "then a remnant of the nobles came down; the people of the LORD came down for me against the mighty." The following verses mention in detail who this "remnant" were.

Judges 5:14. Render "Of Ephraim (Deborah's own tribe) came down those whose root is in Mount Amalek (**Judges 12:15**); after thee (O Ephraim) came Benjamin among thy people; of Machir (the west-Jordanic milies of Manasseh. See **Joshua 17:1-6**) there came down the chiefs, and of Zebulon they that handle the staff of the officer" the military scribe, whose duty it was, like that of the Roman tribunes, to keep the muster roll, and superintend the recruiting of the army. (See **2 Kings 25:19**.)

Judges 5:15. *Even Issachar ...* i.e. “and, as well as Issachar, Barak also with the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, rushed down on foot from Mount Tabor into the valley to attack the iron chariots of Sisera.”

For the divisions Better: “among the brooks.” Reuben ought to have followed in this catalogue of patriots, but with that abruptness for which this poem is so conspicuous, Deborah adverts to his absence instead.

Judges 5:16. *Great searchings* (thoughts, **Judges 5:15**) *of heart* Deborah means to say that at first the Reubenites made magnanimous resolutions to help their brethren against Jabin. But they stayed at home, and let the opportunity slip.

Judges 5:17. The land of Gilead, on the east of Jordan, was divided between Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who are both comprehended here. Joppa was in the territory of Dan (**Joshua 19:46**), and was in later times the sea-port for Jerusalem.

His breaches Rather havens; i.e. the creeks and bays and river-months by which their coast was broken. **Joshua 19:29**.

Judges 5:18. In contrast with the selfishness of the tribes just named, Deborah reverts with enthusiasm to the heroic prowess of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Judges 5:19. The Canaanite hosts are now described, led to battle by their numerous kings. (Compare **Joshua 12:21**.)

They took no gain of money i.e. either they got no booty, as they expected, or, they did not fight for plunder, but for life and victory (compare **Judges 4:16** and **Judges 5:30**).

Judges 5:20. God fought on the side of Israel, and gave them the victory. Josephus relates that, just as the battle began, a violent tempest came on with a great downfall of rain; and a hailstorm, which, driving full in the faces of the Canaanites, so blinded and benumbed them with cold, that they could neither use their bows with effect nor even hold their swords.

Judges 5:21. The word translated *ancient* occurs only here. The phrase probably means that Kishon was celebrated from ancient times on account of the battles fought on its banks.

Judges 5:22. Probably an allusion to the frantic efforts of the chariot-horses to disengage themselves from the morass (^{<0045>}Judges 4:15 note).

Mighty ones Applied to bulls (^{<0212>}Psalm 22:12) and horses (^{<2486>}Jeremiah 8:16; 47:3; 50:11); elsewhere, as probably here, to men.

Judges 5:23. The inhabitants of Meroz (a village 12 miles from Samaria) hung back, and gave no help in the day of battle, although it was Yahweh who called them. Hence, the curse pronounced by the Angel of the Lord.

Judges 5:24. The blessing here pronounced is in strong contrast with the curse of Meroz. Deborah speaks of Jael's deed by the light of her own age, which did not make manifest the evil of guile and bloodshed; the light in ours does.

Judges 5:25. *Butter* Rather curdled milk, probably a fermented and intoxicating drink. All these marks of respect and friendship would lull Sisera into security.

Judges 5:26. Rather "she smote his head, and she struck and pierced through his temple."

Judges 5:28. The scene is changed to the palace of Sisera.

Judges 5:30. Render the latter part of the verse "a booty of dyed garments for Sisera, a booty of dyed garments and of party-colored cloth, a dyed garment and two party-colored clothes for the necks of the booty," the spoil or booty being either captive damsels, or captive cattle on whose necks these clothes are to be placed (either as ornament or as a burden; compare ^{<0021>}Judges 8:21,26). But possibly "the necks of the booty" may mean the backs or shoulders (of men or beasts) laden with booty.

Judges 5:31. A most striking conclusion, in which the spiritual truth, which the whole narrative is intended to convey, comes out. The enemies of the Lord will perish like the host of Sisera, and all their hopes will end, like those of Sisera's mother, in bitter disappointment and shame; but all that love our Lord Jesus Christ shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Compare ^{<0138>}Matthew 13:43; ^{<2128>}Daniel 12:3.

NOTES ON JUDGES 6

Judges 6:1. *Midian* See ^{<0252>}Genesis 25:2 note. They were remarkable not only for the vast number of their cattle (^{<0185>}Judges 6:5; ^{<0182>}Numbers 31:32-39), but also for their great wealth in gold and other metal ornaments, showing their connection with a gold country. (Compare ^{<0182>}Numbers 31:22,50-54, with ^{<0184>}Judges 8:24:26.) At this time they were allies of the Amalekites and of the Arabian tribes called collectively “the children of the East” (^{<0183>}Judges 6:3). They seem to have extended their settlements to the east of Jordan, and to have belonged to the larger section of Arabs called Ishmaelites (^{<0184>}Judges 8:24).

Judges 6:2. The word rendered “dens” is only found in this passage. It is best explained of ravines hollowed out by torrents, which the Israelites made into hiding-places.

Judges 6:4. Gaza indicates the extreme point south to which they spread their devastations, crossing the Jordan near Bethshan (Scythopolis), and entering by the valley of Jezreel, and sweeping along the whole of the maritime plain or Shephelah.

Judges 6:5. *Grasshoppers* Rather locusts (compare ^{<0104>}Exodus 10:4-6,14,15; Joel 1; 2; ^{<0186>}Psalms 78:46)

Judges 6:8. *A prophet* His name is not given. (Compare 1 Kings 13.) This message is somewhat similar to that of the Angel, ^{<0183>}Judges 2:1-3. The reference to ^{<0210>}Exodus 20:2 is plain, and supposes the people to whom the prophet addresses these words to be familiar with the facts recorded in that text.

Judges 6:10. A similar use of the name Amorite, instead of the more usual name Canaanite, occurs in ^{<0245>}Joshua 24:15,18. Perhaps a special reason may be found for the use of Amorite, if the prophet was addressing those who dwelt in the mountains, where the Amorites chiefly dwelt. The idolatries of the Amorites seem, too, to have been preeminently abominable (see ^{<1211>}2 Kings 21:11; ^{<1215>}1 Kings 21:26). It should be observed that the prophet’s language, as it traces the misery of Israel to their sins, so also intimates the necessity of repentance and of breaking off their sins — especially the sin of idolatry — as preliminary to any deliverance. In exact

accordance with this view, Gideon commences his work by throwing down the altar of Baal, and building up the altar of Yahweh (^{<0064>}Judges 6:24,25).

^{<0065>}**Judges 6:11.** *An oak* “The oak,” indicating it as a well-known tree, still standing in the writer’s days.

There was another Ophrah in Benjamin (^{<0683>}Joshua 18:23). This Ophrah was in Manasseh, and was the village of Joash, the head, apparently, of the family of Abiezer, which was one of the families of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh (^{<0063>}Numbers 26:30).

^{<0062>}**Judges 6:12.** *Thou mighty man of valor* Known to God to be such, though as yet not known to be such either by himself or his countrymen (compare ^{<0028>}Luke 1:28,30).

^{<0063>}**Judges 6:13.** The extreme bitterness of the national sufferings under the Midianite occupation breaks out in Gideon’s language. The Angel’s words, suitable to times of prosperity, seemed to be a mockery, when it was evident the Lord was not with them. (Compare ^{<0517>}Deuteronomy 31:17.)

^{<0064>}**Judges 6:14.** *The LORD looked upon him* That gracious look conferred immediate strength (compare ^{<0060>}Ephesians 6:10; ^{<0712>}2 Corinthians 12:9; ^{<0312>}John 20:22; ^{<0416>}Acts 3:6) The change of phrase from “the angel of the LORD” to “the LORD” is remarkable. When messages are delivered by the Angel of the Lord, the form of the message is as if God Himself were speaking (compare ^{<0061>}Judges 2:1).

The sending implied a valid commission and sufficient powers. Compare ^{<0060>}Exodus 3:10; ^{<0405>}Isaiah 44:26; ^{<0063>}Ezekiel 2:3; ^{<0321>}Zechariah 2:11; ^{<0301>}Malachi 3:1; ^{<0203>}Luke 10:3; ^{<0312>}John 20:21; and the term APOSTLE, as applied to our Lord (^{<0300>}Hebrews 3:1) and to the Twelve.

^{<0065>}**Judges 6:15.** Gideon now perceived that the Lord was speaking to him by His angel. He saw, however, no qualifications in himself, or in his family or tribe, for the office of saviour to his people. He therefore desires some assurance that the message he had just received was indeed from God, and not a mere dream or delusion. He asks as a sign (^{<0068>}Judges 6:18) that his mysterious visitor should tarry under the oak until he should return to Him with his gifts and offerings.

Judges 6:17. *A sign* If the Angel ate of Gideon's present it would be a conclusive proof of the reality of the vision. (Compare ^{<0219>}John 21:9-13; ^{<0237>}Luke 24:37-43; ^{<4104>}Acts 10:41.) It would also be a token of God's goodwill to Gideon. Compare ^{<0183>}Genesis 18:3.

Judges 6:18. *My present* My Minchah: the word used regularly, though not exclusively, for the meat and drink offering (^{<0201>}Leviticus 2:1 note). Its double sense of an offering to God, and of a gift to man, suits the doubt in Gideon's mind as to who his visitor might be.

Judges 6:19. *Unleavened cakes* As being much more quickly baked (compare ^{<0193>}Genesis 19:3) (and as connected with the meat offering). An ephah, containing 3 measures, was the quantity of flour commonly used at one baking (^{<0181>}Genesis 18:6; ^{<0216>}Exodus 16:16).

Presented it A word especially, though not exclusively, proper for offerings to God. See ^{<0125>}Amos 5:25, where the same word is rendered offered.

Judges 6:20. *Pour out the broth* Libations were a very ancient form of offering (compare ^{<0154>}Genesis 35:14). The drink offerings of wine under the Levitical law were poured upon the altar (^{<0219>}Exodus 30:9). The pouring of the broth upon the rock was evidently of the nature of a libation. It might also, like the water poured by Elijah upon his sacrifice, make the miracle of the fire that consumed the sacrifice more apparent. (Compare ^{<0183>}1 Kings 18:33.)

Judges 6:22. *Alas, O Lord GOD!* Compare ^{<0202>}Joshua 7:7. "because I have seen an angel of the LORD" Compare the marginal references, in which the notion that it was death for mortal man to see God appears clearly. The same notion prevailed among the pagan.

Judges 6:24. Gideon's naming the altar which he built, in commemoration of the words of peace spoken by the Angel, is very similar to what we read of Abraham (^{<0214>}Genesis 22:14), and of Moses (^{<0215>}Exodus 17:15, when he named the altar Jehovah-nissi).

Judges 6:25. *Even* Rather, as in the margin, and. Two bullocks are spoken of. The labor of both would be required for pulling down and removing the altar of Baal, and for bringing the materials for building the altar of Yahweh.

The grove by it Rather, “the idol upon it,” the Asherah, the wooden image of Astarte (^{<00B>}Judges 3:7).

^{<00B>}**Judges 6:26.** *In the ordered place* See the margin. “Build an altar, etc., with the materials,” “the wood laid in order” (compare ^{<02D>}Genesis 22:9), that, namely, which he would find ready to hand in the altar of Baal which he was to throw down.

The wood of the grove “The (blocks of) wood of the idol,” i.e. the image of Astarte. The command from God Himself to build an altar, and sacrifice upon it, is analogous to Elijah’s sacrifice (1 Kings 18), and was doubtless caused by the extraordinary circumstance of the defection of the Israelites from the worship of the true God. Possibly, too, the Midianite invasion had made the worship at Shiloh impossible at this time.

^{<00B>}**Judges 6:27.** The mention of the “men of the city” by the side of Gideon’s “father’s household” suggests the probability of their being a remnant of the Canaanite population, and the special patrons of Baal-worship.

^{<00B>}**Judges 6:31.** From the boldness of Joash in defending his son, it is likely that the majority of the Abi-ezrites sided with him against “the men of the city,” and already felt drawn toward Gideon as their national and religious leader (^{<00B>}Judges 6:34). Joash appears as the chief magistrate of Ophrah.

Will ye plead ...? will ye save? The emphasis is upon ye, as much as to say, What business is it of yours?

^{<00B>}**Judges 6:32.** *He called him* i.e. “He was called” Jerubbaal, as being the person against whom it was popularly said that Baal might strive. See margin.

^{<00B>}**Judges 6:33.** A fresh invasion, and the last, of Midianites Amalekites, and Arabs (see ^{<00B>}Judges 6:3). But the Israelites, instead of hiding in dens and caves, and tamely leaving all their substance as plunder to the invaders, now rally around their leader.

^{<00B>}**Judges 6:34.** *The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon* See the margin. The word contains a striking thought. It is different from that used

in the case of Othniel (~~0080~~Judges 3:10), Jephthah (~~00129~~Judges 11:29), and Samson (~~00135~~Judges 13:25; 14:6,19).

~~0065~~**Judges 6:35.** His own tribe, Manasseh, and the three northern tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali hastened to join him. Issachar was probably unable to do so, because the Midianites were encamped in the heart of their country. Asher no longer “abode in his breaches,” as in the time of Jabin (~~00672~~Judges 6:17), perhaps ashamed of their former backwardness, and stung by the rebuke of Deborah; perhaps, too, from feeling the Midianite yoke much more galling than that of Jabin.

~~0065~~**Judges 6:36.** The caution of Gideon, desirous of being assured that he really had a promise from God, does not imply doubts as to God’s faithfulness or power to fulfill His promise. Of such doubts there is not a trace in Gideon’s character. He is a worthy example of faith (~~8113~~Hebrews 11:32).

~~0065~~**Judges 6:37.** The threshing floors were and still are under the open air, and usually circular. The second sign (~~00640~~Judges 6:40), would be more convincing than the former, because it is the nature of fleeces to attract and retain moisture.

NOTES ON JUDGES 7

Judges 7:1. *The well of Harod* i.e. of trembling, evidently so called from the people who were afraid (**Judges 7:3**). It is identified with great probability with Ain Jalud, a spacious pool at the foot of Gilboa; (by Conder, with Ain el Jem'ain (the spring of the two troops)).

Moreh was, probably, the little Hermon, the Jebel ed-Duhy of the Arabs, which encloses the plain two or three miles north of Gilboa, which shuts it in on the south.

Judges 7:3. The proclamation was in accordance with the Law (see the marginal reference). No mountain of the name of Gilead is known in this locality, and it has been conjectured that the right reading is Gilboa. Others think that this may be a form of proclamation customary in Manasseh.

Judges 7:4. *Try* The word used for refining metals by separating the dross from the pure ore. They who threw themselves on the ground and drank freely were the more self-indulgent; while they who, remembering the near presence of the enemy, slaked their thirst with moderation, and without being off their guard for an instant, were the true soldiers of the army of God.

Judges 7:8. The sense is, "And they (the three hundred) took the victuals and trumpets of the people (all the people of **Judges 7:7**) into their hands." so that each of the three hundred should have a trumpet and a pitcher.

Judges 7:11. *The armed men* The word is rendered harnessed in **Exodus 13:18** (see the note). The most probable meaning of the word is arrayed in divisions or ranks.

Judges 7:13. *A cake of barley bread* i.e. such a cake as could hardly be eaten by men, it was so vile: a term expressive of the contempt of the Midianites for the people of Israel.

A tent The tent, meaning, probably, the tent of the king of Midian, or of the captain of the host.

Judges 7:14. *This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon* The word rendered tumbled in **Judges 7:13**, is rather descriptive of a sword brandished (compare **Genesis 3:24**). Hence, the interpretation “the sword of Gideon.” Hearing this dream and the interpretation would convince Gideon that he was indeed under the guidance of God, and so assure him of God’s aid; and secondly, it would show him that a panic had already fallen upon the mind of the enemy.

Judges 7:16. Gideon himself took the command of one company, and sent the other two under their respective captains to different sides of the camp (**Judges 7:18,21**).

Judges 7:19. *The middle watch* The old Jewish division of the night was three watches of four hours each. They are alluded to in **Exodus 14:24**; **1 Samuel 11:11**; **Psalms 63:6**; **90:4**; **119:148**; **130:6**; **Lamentations 2:19**. After the Jews fell under the power of the Romans, they used the Roman division of four watches of three hours each (**Matthew 14:25**; **Mark 13:35**).

“The beginning” of the watch would be about eleven o’clock at night.

Judges 7:21. The effect to the Midianites would be, that they were surrounded by a mighty host. Their own camp being in darkness, as soon as the confusion of flight began they would mistake friends for foes, and fleers for pursuers. When once fighting had begun by the first casual mistake, the clashing of swords and the shouts of the combatants in the camp, accompanied by the continuous blowing of Gideon’s trumpets outside, would make it appear that the whole of the enemy was in the camp. Suspicion of treachery on the part of their allies would also be likely to arise in the minds of Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabs. Compare a similar scene in marginal references.

Judges 7:29. *Beth-shittah* — “House of the acacias,” the same trees which gave their name to “Shittim” (**Numbers 33:49**) in the plains of Maab, and which grew plentifully also, in the peninsula of Sinai (**Exodus 25:5**) perhaps “Shuttah”, in the valley of Jezreel; or it may be another name of Scythopolis, or Beth-shan (compare **1 Kings 4:12**). “Zererath or Zeredath”, near Succoth (**Judges 8:5**), the same as “Zeredah” in Ephraim the birth-place of Jeroboam (**1 Kings 11:26**), and “Zartauah” (**1 Kings 4:12**). “Abel-meholah” (field of the dance), the

birth-place of Elisha (^{<11916>}1 Kings 19:16) is in the Jordan valley, 10 miles from Scythopolis, if identified with Bethmaela: if the same as Abelmea, it lay between Nablous and Scythopolis. (But see ^{<11916>}1 Kings 19:16 note.) “Tabbath” was apparently lower down the Jordan valley, i.e. further south.

^{<0072>}**Judges 7:24.** *The waters* The streams which run from the mountain district of Ephraim into the Jordan in the district of Beth-shan, forming great pools and marshes, which the Midianites fleeing south would have to cross before they could reach the Jordan fords.

All the men of Ephraim They had taken no previous part in the rising against Midian: nor had Gideon, of the smaller tribe of Manasseh, presumed before to summon his more powerful and arrogant brethren of the great tribe of Ephraim (see ^{<0174>}Joshua 17:14-18).

NOTES ON JUDGES 8

Judges 8:1. The success of Gideon's enterprise mortified the pride of Ephraim, as the chief tribe, seeing that they had played a subordinate part. Compare **Judges 12:1**.

Judges 8:2. A civil war with the great tribe of Ephraim would soon have turned Israel's victory into mourning. Gideon therefore soothes their wounded pride by confessing that Ephraim had done more, though they had joined him so late in the day, than he had been able to effect in the whole campaign. The grape-gleaning of Ephraim was better than the whole vintage of Abi-ezer.

Judges 8:5. Succoth was in the tribe of Gad which was entirely trans-Jordanic (**Joshua 13:27**); and the ruins are at Sukkot, on the east of Jordan, a little south of Bethshan.

Give, I pray you etc. Gideon might fairly expect so much aid from the trans-Jordanic tribes, and from so considerable a town as Succoth (**Judges 8:14**).

Judges 8:6. The number of the followers of Zebah and Zalmunna was still so formidable, and Gideon's enterprise still so doubtful, that the men of Succoth (being on the same side of the Jordan) would not risk the vengeance of the Midianites by giving supplies to Gideon's men.

Judges 8:8. Succoth was in the valley or Ghor of the Jordan (**Judges 8:5**), and Penuel apparently in the mountain. No identification of Penuel has taken place. It was south of the Brook Jabbok, and on Jacob's way to Succoth. Gideon, journeying in the opposite direction to Jacob, comes from Succoth to Penuel.

Judges 8:10. Zebah and Zalmunna seem to have fled nearly due east to Karkor, which was probably an enclosure of some kind (perhaps a walled sheepfold, compare **Numbers 31:32** note). Its site is unknown; but it was near Nobah, in the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead (**Numbers 32:40**), and Jogbehah was in the tribe of Gad (**Numbers 32:34,35**). Gideon, perhaps taking a circuit so as to come upon them from the east,

fell suddenly upon them, apparently at night, surprised them, and smote them.

Judges 8:13. *Before the sun was up* The translation of the words is doubtful, because of the rarity of the word rendered “sun” (Heres; compare **Judges 2:9** note). Many suppose it to be the name of a mountain pass, and render it from the ascent of Heres.

Judges 8:14. The written (see the margin) list would enable Gideon to punish the guilty and spare the innocent people. Succoth was governed by a sanhedrim or council of seventy elders (compare **Numbers 11:16**), with perhaps seven others of superior rank called princes.

Judges 8:16. *He taught* Thought to be a false reading, for “he threshed,” as in **Judges 8:7** margin.

Judges 8:17. *The men of the city* Perhaps the rulers; who, it is likely, had possession of the tower or citadel, and so could tyrannize over the people. Gideon killed the great men, and beat down their towers, but did not injure the inhabitants.

Judges 8:18. *What manner of men* literally, “Where are the men?” The sense, “what manner of men”, is merely gathered from the tenor of the answer. Gideon doubtless knew that his brethren had been killed by Zebah and Zalmunna, and the desire of avenging their death was one motive for his impetuous pursuit and attack. His question was rather a taunt, a bitter reproach to his captives, preparing them for their fate. Zebah and Zalmunna, in their answer, did not give evidence against themselves. Their hope was by a flattering answer to soothe Gideon’s wrath.

Judges 8:19. *The sons of my mother* A much closer relation than that of brothers by the father only. (Compare **Genesis 43:29**; **Deuteronomy 13:6**; **Psalm 69:8**). This is the only hint preserved of the transaction. We cannot say exactly when the slaughter of Gideon’s brethren on Mount Tabor took place, whether before the outbreak of the war (**Judges 6:33**), or in the retreat and flight of the Midianites (**Judges 7:22**).

Judges 8:20. It was Gideon’s place to act the part of the “avenger of blood” (**Numbers 35:12**; **Deuteronomy 19:6**). The fierce manners of the age break out in the slaying of the captives (compare **1 Samuel**

15:32,33), and in Gideon's attempt to initiate his youthful son Jether in the stern work of slaying his country's enemies.

Judges 8:21. *The ornaments* See marg. and compare ²³⁸⁸Isaiah 3:18. The custom of adorning the necks of their camels with gold chains and ornaments prevailed among the Arabs so late as the time of Mahomet.

Judges 8:24. In this desire for gold Gideon falls to the level of ordinary men, and we may see in it the first decline of his glory, leading to a sad tarnishing of the luster of his bright name. The idolatrous honor paid to Gideon's ephod was probably a source of revenue to his house. Contrast the conduct of Abraham (⁴¹²¹Genesis 14:21-23), and of Elisha (¹¹⁶⁶2 Kings 5:16,26).

The "ear-ring" here mentioned is properly a "nose-ring" (compare ¹²²Genesis 24:22 note). The custom of wearing nose-rings prevails in Eastern countries to the present day. The circumstance of Job's friends each contributing a nose-ring of gold (³⁸²¹Job 42:11 note) is a remarkable parallel to the incident in Gideon's history. Rings of gold were also used as money in Egypt, as appears on several early monuments, and by the Celts.

Judges 8:25. *They spread ...* The Septuagint reads "He spread his garment."

Judges 8:26. If the Ishmaelite nose-rings were half a shekel in weight, then 1,700 shekels weight of gold implied that 3,400 persons wearing, gold rings had been slain. The "collars" were rather "ear-drops."

Judges 8:27. The ephod was that particular part of the high priest's dress which was necessary to be worn when he inquired of God by Urim and Thummim. It seems that Gideon being now the civil ruler, desired to have an ephod of his own, kept in his own city, to be worn by the priest whenever Gideon might summon him to inquire of the Lord for him. His relations with the tribe of Ephraim probably made him unwilling to resort to Shiloh. Compare the act of Jeroboam (¹¹²⁸1 Kings 12:28).

Judges 8:31. Abimelech's mother was not reckoned among the wives, being, probably, one of the Canaanite population in Shechem (⁷³³Judges 9:28); neither was Abimelech himself reckoned with the 70 other sons of Jerubbaal (⁷³²Judges 9:24. Compare ⁷¹⁰¹Judges 11:1,2).

~~Q183~~ **Judges 8:33.** *Turned again* Doubtless Gideon himself had no doubt prepared the way for this apostacy by his unauthorized ephod. The Law of Moses, with its strict unity of priesthood and altar, was the divinely-appointed and only effectual preservative from idolatry.

Baal-bereth The god of covenants or sworn treaties, corresponding to the Zeus Orkios of the Greeks. The center of this fresh apostacy was at Shechem.

NOTES ON JUDGES 9

Judges 9:1. We are not told how soon after the death of Gideon these events happened. There must have been time for the apostasy and establishment of Baal-worship, and for the development of ill-will between Abimelech and his brethren.

Judges 9:2. *The men of Shechem* literally, “the masters.” Compare Joshua 24:11; 1 Samuel 23:11,12.

Judges 9:3. The Ephraimite pride revolted from Abi-ezrite rulers, and inclined them to one who was a Shechemite by birth. (Compare the same spirit in the time of David and Rehoboam, 2 Samuel 20:1; 1 Kings 12:16.)

Judges 9:5. Such wholesale slaughters have always been common in Eastern monarchies, and are among the fruits of polygamy.

Judges 9:6. Millo must have been a fortified place close to, but separate from, Shechem, and perhaps the same as the tower of Shechem mentioned in Judges 9:46,47. The building or enlarging of the better-known Millo, at Jerusalem was one of Solomon’s great works (1 Kings 9:15,24). The population dwelling in Millo though perhaps numerically small, had great weight from possessing the stronghold. Their giving Abimelech the title of king indicates the strong Canaanite influence at Shechem. All the Canaanite chiefs were called kings, but it was a title hitherto unknown in Israel. This title had not been named by those Israelites who offered to make Gideon their hereditary ruler (Judges 8:22,23).

The plain of the pillar ... Rather “the oak of the garrison which is in Shechem.” The oak in question was probably called the “garrison oak,” from a garrison being stationed near it.

Judges 9:7. *The top of Mount Gerizim* The ancient Shechem was perhaps situated there. The population of Shechem is supposed to have been keeping some public festival outside the city when Jotham addressed them.

Judges 9:8-20. This fable and that noted in the marginal reference are the only two of the kind found in Scripture. Somewhat different are the parables of the Old Testament, ^{<0021>}2 Samuel 12:1-4; 14:5-11; ^{<0018>}1 Kings 20:39,40.

Judges 9:9. *Honour God and man* Alluding to the constant use of oil in the meat-offerings (^{<0016>}Leviticus 2:1-16), and in the holy ointment (^{<0018>}Exodus 30:24,25). In like manner, the allusion in ^{<0013>}Judges 9:13 is to the drink-offerings of wine. See ^{<0013>}Leviticus 23:13; ^{<0450>}Numbers 15:10.

Judges 9:14. *The bramble* Said to be the Rhamnus Paliurus of Linnaeus, otherwise called Spina-Christi, or Christ's Thorn, a shrub with sharp thorns. The application is obvious. The noble Gideon and his worthy sons had declined the proffered kingdom. The vile, base-born Abimelech had accepted it, and his act would turn out to the mutual ruin of himself and his subjects.

Judges 9:15. *If in truth* i.e. consistently with truth, honor, and uprightness, as explained in the interpretation in ^{<0016>}Judges 9:16,19.

Let fire come out ... The propriety of the image is strictly preserved, for even the thorns of the worthless bramble might kindle a flame which would burn the stately cedars to the ground. See ^{<4509>}Psalms 58:9.

Judges 9:16-20. These verses contain the interpretation of the fable. In them Jotham points out the base ingratitude of the people in raising Abimelech upon the ruin of Gideon's house, and foretells the retribution which would fall upon both parties.

Judges 9:22. *Had reigned* Rather, "had ruled." It is not the phrase used in ^{<0016>}Judges 9:6. It looks as if the Shechemites alone had made him king, and the rest of Israel had submitted to his dominion, without allowing his title of king.

Judges 9:26. It does not appear who Gaal, son of Ebed, was; he may have been an officer sent by Abimelech with a force to bring the men of Shechem back to their allegiance, but who tried to turn the rebellion to his own account. He got into Shechem with a band of men, "his brethren," unopposed by Zebul, Abimelech's officer, and soon gained the confidence of the Shechemites,

~~<0027>~~ **Judges 9:27-29.** Seditious and lawless acts (~~<0025>~~ Judges 9:25,26) now broke out into open rebellion. It was at an idolatrous feast in the house of Baal-berith, on occasion of the vintage, and when they were excited with wine, that the rebellion was matured. Those present began to “curse Abimelech,” to speak insultingly of him, and to revile him (compare ~~<0019>~~ Leviticus 20:9; ~~<0021>~~ 2 Samuel 19:21; ~~<0021>~~ Isaiah 8:21). Gaal, the son of Ebed, who was watching the opportunity, immediately incited them to revolt from the dominion of Abimelech, offering himself to be their captain; adding a message of defiance to Abimelech, addressed, probably, to Zebul, who was present but too weak to resent it on the spot.

~~<0027>~~ **Judges 9:27.** *Made merry* The word translated “merry” occurs only here and in ~~<0024>~~ Leviticus 19:24. Its etymology gives the sense of “praises”, “thanksgivings”; and its use in these two passages rather indicates that the fruits themselves which were brought to the House of God with songs of praise, and eaten or drunken with religious service, were so called. The thank-offerings would be a portion of the new wine of the vintage which they had just gathered in.

~~<0028>~~ **Judges 9:28.** Shechem is another designation of Abimelech. Shehem means the son and heir of Shehem, Abimelech’s mother being a Canaanite (~~<0018>~~ Judges 9:18).

~~<0031>~~ **Judges 9:31.** *Privily* See the margin. The word is probably the name of a place in “Tormah”, some think the same as “Arumah” (~~<0041>~~ Judges 9:41). Zebul was faithful to Abimelech, but dissembled his sentiments, from being too weak to oppose Gaal, until Abimelech came with his army (~~<0038>~~ Judges 9:38).

~~<0037>~~ **Judges 9:37.** *The plain of Meonenim* Translate “the oak of the soothsayers” (see the margin). Some well-known oak, so called, but which is not mentioned elsewhere.

~~<0042>~~ **Judges 9:42.** After Gaal’s expulsion, “the people went out into the field,” either to complete the vintage, or for some other agricultural operation. “They” (Zebul and his party) sent word of this to Abimelech.

~~<0044>~~ **Judges 9:44.** This verse explains the purpose of both the present and the former division of Abimelech’s forces into several companies, namely, that while some of the companies attacked the men of Shechem in the field,

another company, starting from their ambush, might occupy the approach to the city gate, and so cut off their retreat.

Judges 9:45. *Sowed it with salt* Expressing by this action his hatred, and his wish, that when utterly destroyed as a city, it might not even be a fruitful field. Salt is the emblem of barrenness (see the marginal references).

Judges 9:46. *An hold of the house of the god Berith* As combining the advantages of a “sanctuary” (compare ^{<028>}1 Kings 2:28) and a fortress. The word rendered “hold” occurs elsewhere only in ^{<036>}1 Samuel 13:6, where it is rendered “high-place.” Its exact signification is uncertain.

Judges 9:48. *Zalmon* A lofty and thickly-wooded hill, as the etymology of the name (“shady”) implies, in the immediate neighborhood of Shechem: perhaps the same as Ebal. The setting fire to the hold, where the men of Shechem were all crowded together, with their wives and children, was the literal fulfillment of Jotham’s curse in ^{<020>}Judges 9:20.

Judges 9:50. The men of Thebez (modern Tubas) had, doubtless, joined the Shechemites in their rebellion against Abimelech.

Judges 9:52. *Went hard unto the door ...* i.e. went close to the door. An act of manifest danger, seeing the roof was covered with persons who would be likely to throw down missiles of all sorts on the heads of their assailants. But the hatred of Abimelech, and his thirst for revenge, made him despise danger.

Judges 9:53. The phrase “all” to is now obsolete, and means “quite,” “entirely,” as in Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton.

NOTES ON JUDGES 10

Judges 10:1. *Defend* The marginal reading “to deliver,” is far preferable. The word is the same as in ^{<0726>}Judges 2:16,18; 3:9,15,31, etc., and is the technical word applied to the judges. Compare ^{<3927>}Nehemiah 9:27 (“saviours who saved them,” the King James Version).

The term “there arose,” also marks Tola as one of the Judges, properly so called, raised by divine providence.

Tola and Puah Both names of heads of houses in the tribe of Issachar (^{<1300>}1 Chronicles 7:1; ^{<0433>}Genesis 46:13).

Shamir Not the same as that mentioned in ^{<6158>}Joshua 15:48, which was in the hill country of Judah. Issachar would seem from this to have extended into the northern part of mount Ephraim.

Judges 10:2. Jair the Gileadite was probably the same person as is named in ^{<0324>}Numbers 32:41; ^{<0814>}Deuteronomy 3:14, as having given the name of “Havoth-jair” to certain villages in Bashan.

Judges 10:6. *The gods of Syria* Or “Aram.” In the times of the Judges the various tribes of Aramites, or Syrians, were not compacted into one state, nor were they until after the time of Solomon. The national gods of these various Aramean tribes were probably the same; and their worship would be likely to be introduced into the trans-Jordanic tribes. It has been remarked that the Hebrew words for “to divine,” “to practice magic,” “idolatrous priests,” and other like words, are of Syrian origin. The Syriac ritual proved very attractive to king Ahaz (^{<2160>}2 Kings 16:10-12). For the national gods of the Zidonians, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines, see ^{<1115>}1 Kings 11:5,7,33; ^{<0182>}1 Samuel 5:2-5.

Judges 10:7. The previous mention of the Philistines as oppressors of Israel (^{<0335>}Judges 3:31) seems to be restricted to the south of Judah, when they cooperated with Moab. They appear to have gradually increased in power until they reached their height in the time of Saul. In the present instance they were probably in alliance with the Ammonites, holding the western tribes in check, while the Ammonites subdued those on the east of Jordan.

Judges 10:8. *That year* Perhaps the closing year of the oppression, when the Ammonites passed over the Jordan. For it was this crowning oppression which brought the Israelites to repentance (^{<0710>}Judges 10:10,15,16), and so prepared the way for the deliverance. Possibly in the original narrative from which this portion of the Book of Judges is compiled, “that year” was defined.

The land of the Amorites Namely, of Sihon king of the Amorites, ^{<0221>}Numbers 21:21; ^{<0304>}Deuteronomy 1:4; ^{<0330>}Joshua 13:10; ^{<0351>}Psalms 135:11.

Judges 10:11. (See the marginal references). The Israelites were delivered from the “Egyptians” at the Exodus; from the “Amorites” in the victories over Sihon, and Og, and the five kings of the Amorites (^{<0305>}Joshua 10:5); from the “children of Ammon” by Ehud; and from the “Philistines,” by the hand of Shamgar (compare ^{<0329>}1 Samuel 12:9).

Judges 10:12. *The Zidonians* An allusion to the time of Barak, when the Zidonians doubtless formed part of the great confederacy of Canaanites under Jabin king of Hazor. See ^{<0308>}Joshua 11:8.

The Amalekites In the time of Gideon (marginal reference).

The Maonites Probably one of the tribes of the “children of the East,” who came with the Midianites and Amalekites in the time of Gideon, and may have been conspicuous for their hostility to Israel, and for the greatness of their discomfiture, though the record has not been preserved. The name is “Mehununs” in ^{<0307>}2 Chronicles 26:7.

Judges 10:17. The historian, having related the preliminary incidents, now comes to the final issue which forms the subject matter of his narrative. On a certain occasion, as on many previous ones, the Ammonites were encamped in Gilead, with the intention of dispossessing the Israelites of the whole country, or at least as far as the river Jabbok (^{<0313>}Judges 11:13), and of invading the West-Jordanic tribes. The children of Israel on the East of Jordan assembled together to resist them, and pitched their camp in Mizpeh. The narrative proceeds to detail what happened.

Mizpeh, as its name, “watch-tower” or “look-out” indicates was situated on a height of Mount Gilead, and was, as such, a strong post. It is almost

always written, “THE Mizpeh,” or watch-tower. Four or five places of the name occur in Scripture.

~~<71018>~~ **Judges 10:18.** *And the people and princes ...* The inhabitants of Gilead appear as a separate and independent community, electing their own chief, without any reference to the West-Jordanic tribes.

NOTES ON JUDGES 11

Judges 11:1. The history of Jephthah appears to be an independent history inserted by the compiler of the Book of Judges. Judges 11:4,5 introduce the Ammonite war without any apparent reference to Judges 10:17,18.

A genealogy of Manasseh (1 Chronicles 7:14-17) gives the families which sprang from Gilead, and among them mention is made of an “Aramitess” concubine as the mother of one family. Jephthah, the son of Gilead by a strange woman, fled, after his father’s death, to the land of Tob (Judges 11:3), presumably the land of his maternal ancestors (compare Judges 9:1) and an “Aramean” settlement (2 Samuel 10:6,8; 1 Macc. 5:13). It is difficult to conceive that Jephthah was literally the son of Gilead, if Gilead was the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. Possibly “Gilead” here denotes the heir of Gilead, the head of the family, whose individual name has not been preserved, nor the time when he lived.

Judges 11:3. *The land of Tob* To the north of Gilead, toward Damascus. The readiness with which Jephthah took to the freebooter’s life gives us a lively picture of the unsettled times in which he lived.

Judges 11:7. This gives a wider signification to Judges 11:2,3, and shows that Jephthah’s “brethren” include his fellow tribesmen.

Judges 11:9. Jephthah made his own aggrandisement the condition of his delivering; his country. The circumstances of his birth and long residence in a pagan land were little favorable to the formation of the highest type of character. Yet he has his record among the faithful (Hebrews 11:32).

Judges 11:11. *Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh* This phrase designates the presence of the tabernacle, or the ark, or of the high priest with Urim and Thummim (Judges 20:26; 21:2; Joshua 18:8; 1 Samuel 21:7). The high priest waited upon Jephthah with the ephod, and possibly the ark, at his own house (see Judges 20:18 here). A trace of Jephthah’s claim to unite all Israel under his dominion is found in Judges 12:2, and breathes through his whole message to the king of the Ammonites. See Judges 11:12,15,23,27.

Judges 11:13. *From Arnon even unto Jabbok ...* The land bounded by the Arnon on the south, by the Jabbok on the north, by the Jordan on the west, and by the wilderness on the east was, of old, the kingdom of Sihon, but then the territory of Reuben and Gad.

Judges 11:15-28. Consult the marginal references. If the ark with the copy of the Law (^{<05125>}Deuteronomy 31:26) was at Mizpeh, it would account for Jephthah's accurate knowledge of it; and this exact agreement of his message with Numbers and Deuteronomy would give additional force to the expression, "he uttered all his words before the LORD" (^{<07111>}Judges 11:11).

Judges 11:17. No mention is made of this embassy to Moab in the Pentateuch.

Judges 11:19. *Into my place* This expression implies that the trans-Jordanic possessions of Israel were not included in the land of Canaan properly speaking.

Judges 11:21. The title "God of Israel" has a special emphasis here, and in ^{<07123>}Judges 11:23. in a narrative of transactions relating to the pagan and their gods.

Judges 11:24. Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites (see the marginal references); and as the territory in question was Moabitish territory before the Amorites took it from "the people of Chemosh," this may account for the mention of Chemosh here rather than of Moloch, or Milcom, the god of the Ammonites. Possibly the king of the children of Ammon at this time may have been a Moabite.

Judges 11:25,26. Jephthah advances another historical argument. Balak, the king of Moab, never disputed the possession of Sihon's kingdom with Israel.

Judges 11:29. *Then the Spirit of the LORD ...* This was the sanctification of Jephthah for his office of Judge and savior of God's people Israel. Compare ^{<07134>}Judges 6:34; 13:25. The declaration is one of the distinctive marks which stamp this history as a divine history.

The geography is rather obscure, but the sense seems to be that Jephthah first raised all the inhabitants of Mount Gilead; then he crossed the Jabbok

into Manasseh, and raised them; then he returned at the head of his new forces to his own camp at Mizpeh to join the troops he had left there; and thence at the head of the whole army marched against the Ammonites, who occupied the southern parts of Gilead.

Judges 11:31. The words of this verse prove conclusively that Jephthah intended his vow to apply to human beings, not animals: for only one of his household could be expected to come forth from the door of his house to meet him. They also preclude any other meaning than that Jephthah contemplated a human sacrifice. This need not, however, surprise us, when we recollect his Syrian birth and long residence in a Syrian city, where such fierce rites were probably common. The Syrians and Phoenicians were conspicuous among the ancient pagan nations for human sacrifices, and the transfer, under such circumstances, to Yahweh of the rites with which the false gods were honored, is just what one might expect. The circumstance of the Spirit of the Lord coming on Jephthah (**Judges 11:29**) is no difficulty; as it by no means follows that because the Spirit of God endued him with supernatural valor and energy for vanquishing the Ammonites, He therefore also endued him with spiritual knowledge and wisdom. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, but that did not prevent his erring in the matter of the ephod (**Judges 8:27**). Compare **1 Corinthians 12:4-11**; **Galatians 2:11-14**.

Judges 11:33. As in the conflicts with the Moabites, Canaanites, and Midianites (**Judges 3; 4; 7**), the battle was on Israelite territory, in self-defense, not in aggressive warfare.

The plain of the vineyards Rather, “Abel-Ceramim” (compare Abel-Meholah), identified with an “Abel” situated among vineyards, 7 miles from Robbah. “Minnith” is “Maanith,” 4 miles from Heshbon, on the road to Rab-bah.

Judges 11:34. *His daughter came out to meet him* The precise phrase of his vow (**Judges 11:31**). She was his “only child,” a term of special endearment (see **Jeremiah 6:26**; **Zechariah 12:10**). The same word is used of Isaac (**Genesis 22:2,12,16**).

Judges 11:35. Jephthah was right in not being deterred from keeping his vow by the loss and sorrow to himself (compare the marginal references), just as Abraham was right in not withholding his son, his only

son, from God, when commanded to offer him up as a burnt-offering. But Jephthah was wholly wrong in that conception of the character of God which led to his making the rash vow. And he would have done right not to slay his child, though the guilt of making and of breaking such a vow would have remained. Josephus well characterizes the sacrifice as “neither sanctioned by the Mosaic law, nor acceptable to God.”

<0713> **Judges 11:36.** The touching submission of Jephthah’s daughter to an inevitable fate shows how deeply-rooted at that time was the pagan notion of the propriety of human sacrifice.

<0713> **Judges 11:37.** *Bewail my virginity* To become a wife and a mother was the end of existence to an Israelite maiden. The premature death of Jephthah’s daughter was about to frustrate this end.

<0714> **Judges 11:40.** There is no allusion extant elsewhere to this annual lamentation of the untimely fate of Jephthah’s daughter. But the poetical turn of the narrative suggests that it may be taken from some ancient song (compare the marginal note 4).

NOTES ON JUDGES 12

Judges 12:1. Compare the similar complaint of the Ephraimites to Gideon (^{<0708>}Judges 8:1), when a civil war was only avoided by Gideon's wise and patriotic moderation. The overhearing pride of Ephraim comes out in both occurrences (see also ^{<0674>}Joshua 17:14-18).

We will burn thine house upon thee with fire Compare the fierce threat of the Philistines to Samson's wife (^{<0745>}Judges 14:15), and the yet fiercer execution (^{<0756>}Judges 15:6). Burning appears as a mode of capital punishment (^{<0132>}Genesis 38:24; ^{<0675>}Joshua 7:25), and as a mode of desperate warfare (^{<0008>}Judges 1:8; 20:48; ^{<0608>}Joshua 8:8,19, etc.).

Judges 12:2. *When I called you ...* This circumstance is not related in the main narrative. It is likely to have occurred when Jephthah was first chosen leader by the Gileadites, and when Ephraim would probably ignore his pretensions.

Judges 12:3. *I put my life in my hands* Compare ^{<0915>}1 Samuel 19:5; 28:21. The phrase expresses the utmost possible risk, knowingly incurred.

Judges 12:4. *Because they said ...* This passage is extremely obscure. Render:— "The men of Gilead smote Ephraim, for they (the Gileadites) said, Ye are the fugitives of Ephraim. (Gilead lies between Ephraim and Manasseh; and Gilead took the fords of Jordan before Ephraim, and it came to pass, when the fugitives of Ephraim said Let me pass over, and the Gileadites asked him, art thou an Ephraimite, and he answered No, Then (the Gileadites) said to him say Shibboleth, etc. So they (the Gileadites) killed them at the fords of Jordan"). All that is included in the parenthesis is explanatory of the brief statement "They smote them, for they said, Ye are the fugitives of Ephraim;" i.e. in spite of denial they ascertained that they were the fugitives of Ephraim, and so pitilessly slaughtered them when they endeavored to return to their own country through Gilead. This part of Gilead, where the fords were, was clearly not in Manasseh, but in Gad. "Slew" (^{<0716>}Judges 12:6) implies "slaughtering" in cold blood, not killing in battle (see ^{<2306>}Jeremiah 39:6). The word in the original text is the proper word for slaying animals for sacrifice.

Judges 12:6. *Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth* This is a curious instance of dialectic difference of pronunciation between the East and West Jordanic tribes. It is an evidence of the sound “sh” having passed into the Hebrew from the East of Jordan, possibly from the Arabians, with whom the sound is common.

Forty-two thousand The number includes the slain in battle and those killed at the fords.

Judges 12:8. *Ibzan of Bethlehem* Some have fancied him the same as Boaz (^{<0811>}Ruth 2:1) of Bethlehem-Judah. Others, from the juxtaposition of Elon the Zebulonite (^{<0721>}Judges 12:11), understand Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulon (^{<0915>}Joshua 19:15).

Judges 12:11. *A Zebulonite* The tribe of Zebulon had shown its bravery, patriotism, and prowess in the time of Barak (^{<0710>}Judges 4:10; 5:18).

Judges 12:13. *A Pirathonite* He was, therefore, an Ephraimite (^{<1374>}1 Chronicles 27:14). Its name still lingers in “Feratah,” 6 miles west of Shechem. The 25 years, apparently consecutive, occupied by the judgeship of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, seem to have been very uneventful and prosperous, since the only record of them, preserved in the annals of their country, relates to the flourishing families and peaceful magnificence of two of the number.

NOTES ON JUDGES 13

Judges 13:1. The Philistines have been mentioned as oppressors of Israel in ^{<0733>}Judges 3:31; 10:7,11; and the Israelite worship of the gods of the Philistines is spoken of in ^{<0706>}Judges 10:6. But this is the first time that we have any detailed history in connection with the Philistines. They continued to be the prominent enemies of Israel until the time of David.

Forty years The Philistine dominion began before the birth of Samson (^{<0735>}Judges 13:5), and was in force during Samson's twenty years' judgeship (^{<0740>}Judges 14:4; 15:20). The 40 years are, therefore, about coincident with Samson's life.

Judges 13:2. *Zorah* See the marginal reference.

His wife was barren To mark more distinctly the high providential destiny of the child that was eventually born. Compare the similar circumstances of the birth of Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

Judges 13:5. *A Nazarite* See the marginal reference. and note. The common Nazarite vow was for a limited time, like Paul's (^{<4488>}Acts 18:18; 21:23-26). Others, like Samuel (^{<0011>}1 Samuel 1:11), were Nazarites for life.

Judges 13:6. *A man of God* The designation of a prophet, of frequent use in the books of Samuel and Kings (^{<0027>}1 Samuel 2:27; 9:6,7,8,10; ^{<1122>}1 Kings 12:22; 13:1,5,6,11), and applied to Timothy by Paul in the New Testament (^{<5051>}1 Timothy 6:11; ^{<5157>}2 Timothy 3:17).

His countenance Rather, "his appearance," as the word is rendered in ^{<2708>}Daniel 10:18.

Judges 13:12. Translate, "What shall be the manner (or ordering) of the child, and what shall be his work (or exploits)." The original message of the Angel had given information on these two points:

- (1) how the child was to be brought up, namely, as a Nazarite;
- (2) what he should do, namely, begin to deliver Israel.

Manoah desires to have the information repeated (compare ^{<01726>}1 Samuel 17:26,27,30). Accordingly, in ^{<01313>}Judges 13:13 the Angel refers to, and enlarges upon, his former injunctions.

^{<01314>}**Judges 13:14.** Compare ^{<00604>}Numbers 6:4. In both passages the vine is described by the somewhat unusual though more accurate term, “vine of the wine” — the grape-bearing vine — to distinguish it from the wild cucumber vine (^{<12049>}2 Kings 4:39), or other plants to which the name vine was applied.

^{<01315>}**Judges 13:15.** The language of Manoah, like that of Gideon (^{<01618>}Judges 6:18), seems to indicate some suspicion that his visitor was more than human. The word rendered “made ready,” is also the proper word for “offering a sacrifice,” and is so used by the Angel in the next verse. By which it appears that the Angel understood Manoah to speak of offering a kid as a burnt-offering. Hence, his caution, “thou must offer it unto the Lord.” (Compare ^{<66910>}Revelation 19:10; 22:8; ^{<44025>}Acts 10:25,26.)

^{<01317>}**Judges 13:17.** *Do thee honor* If applied to a man, it would be by gifts, such for instance as Balak promised to the prophet Balaam (^{<02217>}Numbers 22:17), and such as were usually given to seers (^{<00007>}1 Samuel 9:7,8; ^{<12115>}2 Kings 5:5,15): if to God, it would be by sacrifices (^{<23623>}Isaiah 43:23).

^{<01318>}**Judges 13:18.** *Secret* Rather, “wonderful,” as in the margin. In ^{<01319>}Judges 13:19 the Angel “did wondrously,” probably as the Angel that Appeared to Gideon had done, bringing fire from the rock. See the marginal references and notes.

^{<01324>}**Judges 13:24.** *Samson* The etymology is doubtful. Perhaps it comes from a word signifying “to minister,” in allusion to his Nazaritic consecration to the service of God.

^{<01325>}**Judges 13:25.** *In the camp of Dan* Rather, “Mahaneh-Dan” (see the margin). The impulses of the Spirit of the Lord perhaps took the shape of burning indignation at the subjection of his brethren, and thoughts and plans for their deliverance, but especially showed themselves in feats of strength (^{<01416>}Judges 14:6; 15:14; 16:30. Compare ^{<44023>}Acts 7:23-25).

NOTES ON JUDGES 14

Judges 14:1. *Timnath* See Joshua 15:10 and note. It was below Zorah (Judges 13:2), about three miles S.W. of it.

Judges 14:2. *Get her for me* namely, by Paying the requisite dowry (see marginal references) and gifts to relations. Hence, the frequent mention of parents taking wives for their sons (Exodus 34:16; Nehemiah 10:30), because the parents of the bridegroom conducted the negotiation, and paid the dowry to the parents of the bride.

Judges 14:3. *The uncircumcised Philistines* Compare 1 Samuel 14:6; 17:26; 31:4, for a similar use of the term as one of reproach. Also Acts 11:3.

Judges 14:4. His father and mother very properly opposed Samson's marriage with a Pagan woman, the daughter of the oppressors of his race. But they could not prevail, because it was the secret purpose of God by these means to "seek occasion" against the Philistines; i.e. to make the misconduct of the father of Samson's wife, which He foresaw, the occasion of destruction to the Philistines. Compare the marginal references for similar statements.

Judges 14:8. The formal dowry and gifts having been given by Samson's father, an interval, varying according to the Oriental custom, from a few days to a full year, elapsed between the betrothal and the wedding, during which the bride lived with her friends. Then came the essential part of the marriage ceremony, namely, the removal of the bride from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or his father.

The carcase of the lion The lion, slain by him a year or some months before, had now become a mere skeleton, fit for bees to swarm into. It was a universal notion among the ancients that bees were generated from the carcass of an ox.

Judges 14:10. *Made a feast ...* This was the wedding-feast, protracted in this instance seven days, in that of Tobias (Tobit 8:19) fourteen days. It was an essential part of the marriage ceremony

(^{<0292>}Genesis 29:22; ^{<1728>}Esther 2:18; ^{<0212>}Matthew 22:2-4; ^{<6907>}Revelation 19:7,9).

^{<0741>}**Judges 14:11.** *Thirty companions* These were “the children of the bride-chamber” (^{<0955>}Matthew 9:15; see ^{<0740>}Judges 14:20). From the number of them it may be inferred that Samson’s family was of some wealth and importance.

^{<0742>}**Judges 14:12.** See the marginal references. Riddles formed one of the amusements of these protracted feasts.

Sheets Rather “linen shirts;” the “garments” which follow are the outward garments worn by the Orientals.

^{<0744>}**Judges 14:14,15.** *Three days ... on the seventh day* Proposed alterations, such as “six days ... on the fourth day,” are unnecessary if it be remembered that the narrator passes on first to the seventh day (at ^{<0745>}Judges 14:15), and then goes back at ^{<0746>}Judges 14:16 and beginning of ^{<0747>}Judges 14:17 to what happened on the 4th, 5th, and 6th days.

To take that we have See the margin. They affirm that they were only invited to the wedding for the sake of plundering them by means of this riddle, and if Samson’s wife was a party to plundering her own countrymen, she should suffer for it.

^{<0748>}**Judges 14:18.** They try to give the answer in a way to make it appear that they had guessed it. Samson saw at once that she had betrayed him. He lets them know in a speech, which was of the nature of a riddle, that he had discovered the treachery.

^{<0749>}**Judges 14:20.** *His companion* Perhaps one of those mentioned in ^{<0741>}Judges 14:11. The transaction denotes loose notions of the sanctity of marriage among the Philistines. It should be noted carefully that the practical lesson against ungodly marriages comes out most strongly in this case and that the providential purpose which out of this evil brought discomfiture to the Philistines, has nothing to do with the right or wrong of Samson’s conduct.

NOTES ON JUDGES 15

Judges 15:1. *Visited his wife with a kid* A common present (see ^{<0751>}Genesis 38:17; ^{<0153>}Luke 15:29). From Samson's wife being still in her father's house, it would seem that she was only betrothed, not actually married, to his companion.

Judges 15:2. *I gave her* In marriage. Samson had probably not heard of this before. Samson's father had paid the dowry for the older sister; her father therefore offers her sister in her room. The fear of Samson probably also influenced him.

Judges 15:3. See the margin. Before, when the Philistines injured him he was in covenant with the Timnathites through his marriage and by the rites of hospitality, for which reason he went off to Ashkelon to take his revenge (^{<0749>}Judges 14:19). But now the Philistines themselves had broken this bond, and so he was free to take his revenge on the spot.

Judges 15:4. *Foxes* Rather, "jackals," which are still very common in Palestine, especially about Joppa and Gaza. ^{<0937>}1 Samuel 13:17 and ^{<0653>}Joshua 15:28; 19:3, are indications of the abundance of foxes or jackals giving names to places, especially in the country of the Philistines. It belongs to Samson's character, and agrees with the incident about the lion, that he should be an expert hunter. Ovid relates a very curious custom at Rome of letting loose foxes with lighted torches fastened to their tails in the circus at the Cerealia, in commemoration of the damage once done to the standing grain by a fox which a rustic had wrapped in hay and straw and set on fire, and which, running away, put the grain-fields in a blaze. This custom, which may have had a Phoenician origin, is a curious illustration of the narrative.

Judges 15:6. *burnt her and her father* Out of revenge on Samson's nearest relations; or, as others think, as an act of justice in favor of Samson, and in hope of pacifying his anger. Burning was the punishment for adultery and kindred crimes among the Jews (^{<0682>}Genesis 38:24; ^{<0304>}Leviticus 20:14; 21:9). Samson's wife brought upon herself the very punishment which she sought to escape by betraying her husband (^{<0745>}Judges 14:15).

Judges 15:8. *Hip and thigh* A proverbial expression of doubtful origin, meaning all the “great” and “mighty,” all the choice pieces like the thigh and shoulder.

In the top of the rock Rather, “the cleft of the rock.” These clefts of the rock were the natural fortresses and hiding places of the land. (^{<2102>}Isaiah 2:21; 57:5. Compare ^{<0936>}1 Samuel 13:6; ^{<1183>}1 Kings 18:13.)

Etam Not the same as the place in the territory of Simeon (^{<1342>}1 Chronicles 4:32). Its situation is uncertain, but a site near Eleutheropolis (“Beth-jibrin”) is required; and there exist some extraordinary caverns in the soft limestone or chalky rock, fifteen or twenty feet deep, with perpendicular sides, opening into extensive excavations in the rock, about two hours from Eleutheropolis. (Conder conjectures it to be the same as Atab, a village 12 miles southwest of Jerusalem, in the ‘arkub or Ridge.)

Judges 15:9. *Spread themselves* An expression used of the Philistine mode of war (^{<1058>}2 Samuel 5:18,22), alluding to the compact way in which they came up the wadys, and then dispersed. Lehi is so called by anticipation (see ^{<0757>}Judges 15:17).

Judges 15:11. The dispirited men of Judah were prepared to give up their champion, in order to conciliate their masters. This shows how hard was the task of the Judge, whose office it was to restore his countrymen to freedom and independence.

Judges 15:14. *The cords ... became as flax ...* i.e. were as weak against his strength as half-burned flax which yields to the least pressure.

Judges 15:15. *Slew a thousand men therewith* Compare the marginal references. The Philistines, seized with a panic at seeing Samson suddenly burst his cords and rush at them, offered no resistance, but fell an easy prey to the blows of their mighty foe. Some perhaps were dashed down the cliffs in their flight.

Judges 15:16. There is a play upon the word, three times repeated, which means both “an ass” and also “a heap.” The spirit of riddle-making (^{<0742>}Judges 14:12,18) is apparent in this song of triumph (compare ^{<0780>}Judges 5:1; ^{<0250>}Exodus 15:1; ^{<0986>}1 Samuel 18:6,7).

Judges 15:17. *Ramnath-lehi* Either the “height or hill of Lehi,” or, “of the jaw-bone;” or, as in the margin, “the crestlag away of the jaw-bone,” with allusion to Samson casting it out of his hand, when he had finished his war-song.

Judges 15:19. *An hollow place that was in the jaw* The right translation is, “the hollow place which is in Lehi.” The word translated “hollow place,” means a “mortar” (¹⁰⁷²Proverbs 27:22), and is here evidently a hollow or basin among the cliffs of Lehi, which, from its shape, was called “the mortar.” A spring, on the way from Socho to Eleutheropolis, was commonly called Samson’s spring in the time of Jerome and writers in the 7th, 12th, and 14th centuries.

NOTES ON JUDGES 16

Judges 16:1. *Gaza* About 8 hours from Eleutheropolis, and one of the chief strong-holds of the Philistines.

Judges 16:3. Instead of forcing the doors open, he tore the posts up, as it were, by the roots, with the barred doors attached to them. The word rendered “went away with them,” means “to pluck up the tent-pins,” and hence, “to remove.” The present town of Gaza (Ghuzzeh) is an open town, without gates or walls, but the sites of the ancient gates still remain visible. One of these, on the southeast, is shown as the gate carried off by Samson.

A partially-isolated hill, about half-an-hour southeast of Gaza, and standing out from the chain that runs up to Hebron, bears the name of “Samson’s Mount.” But it may be doubted whether one of the hills overlooking Hebron is not rather meant.

Judges 16:4. A village to the north of Eleutheropolis, called Caphar-Sotek, was still existing in the time of Eusebius, near Zorah.

Judges 16:5. *And the lords of the Philistines* See **Judges 3:3** note.

His great strength lieth Rather, “wherein his strength is great.”

Eleven hundred pieces of silver The greatness of the bribe offered to Delilah, 5,500 shekels of silver, nearly two talents (**Exodus 38:24**, note), shows the importance attached to Samson’s capture.

Judges 16:11. *Occupied* The margin, “wherewith work hath not been done,” is better.

Judges 16:14. *And she fastened it with the pin ...* The meaning of the verses seems to be that the seven long plaits, in which Samson’s hair was arranged, were to be woven as a woof into the threads of a warp which stood prepared on a loom in the chamber, which loom Delilah fastened down with a pin, so as to keep it firm and immovable. But Samson, when he awoke, tore up the pin from its socket, and went away with the loom and the pin fastened to his hair.

The beam Rather, the “loom,” or “frame.” The beam is the wooden revolving cylinder, on which the cloth is rolled as fast as it is woven, the Hebrew word for which (^{<0970>}1 Samuel 17:7; ^{<3123>}1 Chronicles 11:23; 20:5) is quite different from that here used.

^{<0761>}**Judges 16:20.** The possession of his extraordinary strength is ascribed (e.g. ^{<0735>}Judges 13:25) to the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. Now the Lord, or the Spirit of the Lord, had departed from him, and so his strength had gone too. The practical lesson against the presumption of self-dependence, and the all-importance of a hearty dependence upon God’s Holy Spirit, must not be overlooked.

^{<0762>}**Judges 16:21.** *Put out his eyes* Thus effectually, as they thought, preventing any future mischief on his part, while they prolonged their own triumph and revenge. (Compare ^{<0464>}Numbers 16:14; ^{<1237>}2 Kings 25:7; ^{<2817>}Jeremiah 39:7.)

They applied to the two feet fetters of brass (^{<1034>}2 Samuel 3:34; ^{<2521>}Jeremiah 52:11), and made him “grind” — the special task of slaves and captives (^{<0115>}Exodus 11:5; ^{<2372>}Isaiah 47:2; ^{<2153>}Lamentations 5:13).

^{<0763>}**Judges 16:23.** Dagon was the national idol of the Philistines (^{<1300>}1 Chronicles 10:10), so called from Dag, a fish. The description of Dagon, in his temple at Ashdod (^{<0104>}1 Samuel 5:4), exactly agrees with the representations of a fish-god on the walls of Khorsabad, on slabs at Kouyunjik, and on sundry antique cylinders and gems. In these the figures vary. Some have a human form down to the waist, with that of a fish below the waist; others have a human head, arms, and legs, growing, as it were, out of a fish’s body, and so arranged that the fish’s head forms a kind of mitre to the man’s head, while the body and fins form a kind of cloak, hanging down behind.

^{<0764>}**Judges 16:24.** *Our God ...* A portion of the Philistine triumphal song. Compare Judges 5; Exodus 15.

^{<0765>}**Judges 16:25.** *That he may make us sport* Rather, “that he may play for us,” i.e. dance and make music. At an idolatrous feast, dancing was always accompanied with vocal and instrumental music.

^{<0766>}**Judges 16:26.** More literally, “let me rest, and let me feel the pillars, that I may lean upon them.” He feigned weariness with his dancing and

singing, and asked to recover himself by leaning against the pillars. The flat roof, from the top of which, as well as under it, spectators could see what was being done on the stage in front, was mainly supported by two pillars. The lords and principal persons sat UNDER the roof, while the people, to the number of 3,000, stood ON the flat roof. When the pillars were removed, the weight of 3,000 people brought the roof down with a fearful crash, and those above fell together with the stones and timbers upon those below, and a great slaughter was the result, Samson himself perishing under the ruins.

~~<1768>~~ **Judges 16:28.** *At once avenged* “i.e. with one final revenge.” These words do not breathe the spirit of the Gospel, but they express a sentiment, natural to the age, knowledge, and character of Samson.

~~<1768>~~ **Judges 16:31.** “All the house of his father,” in connection with “his brethren,” must mean the whole tribe of Dan, aiding his nearer relations. The Danites, taking advantage of the consternation of the Philistines, and of the death of their lords and chief men, went down in force to Gaza, and recovered the body of their great captain and judge, and buried him in his father’s sepulchre.

NOTES ON JUDGES 17

Judges 17. See the introduction to the Book of Judges. The only point of contact with the preceding history of Samson is, that we are still concerned with the tribe of Dan. See ^{<0718>}Judges 18:1,2, note. Josephus combines in one narrative what we read here and in ^{<0034>}Judges 1:34, and places it, with the story in Judges 18—21, immediately after the death of Joshua.

^{<0712>}**Judges 17:2.** *Thou cursedst* or, “adjuredst me by God.” Compare ^{<0865>}Matthew 26:63; ^{<0801>}Leviticus 5:1.

^{<0718>}**Judges 17:3.** Such a superstitious and unlawful mode of worshipping Yahweh is quite of a piece with ^{<0087>}Judges 8:27; 11:31; ^{<1128>}1 Kings 12:28, etc. It argues but slight acquaintance with the Ten Commandments, which, from the ignorance of reading and writing, were probably not familiar to the Israelites in those unsettled times. The mother intimates that the consecration of the silver was for the benefit of her son and his house, not for her own selfish advantage: and that she adheres to her original design of consecrating this silver for her son’s benefit.

^{<0714>}**Judges 17:4.** See ^{<0087>}Judges 8:27; ^{<0319>}Genesis 31:19 notes.

^{<0716>}**Judges 17:6.** *In those days ...* This phrase, indicating distinctly that the writer lived after the establishment of the kingly government in Israel, is unique to the author of these last five chapters.

^{<0712>}**Judges 17:7.** The Hebrew words for “he sojourned there” are, *ger* ^{<11616>}*shom* ^{<18033>}, which words are used (^{<0718>}Judges 18:30) in the genealogy of this young Levite, whose name was “Jonathan, the son of Gershom”. Hence, some read here, “the son of Gershom.”

^{<0718>}**Judges 17:8.** Jonathan’s state without a home gives us vivid picture of what must have been the condition of many Levites.

^{<0712>}**Judges 17:10.** *Ten shekels* About 25 shillings to 26 shillings (see ^{<0834>}Exodus 38:24).

^{<0713>}**Judges 17:13.** This shows the ignorance as well as the superstition of the age (compare ^{<1282>}2 Kings 18:22), and gives a picture of the lawlessness

of the times. The incidental testimony to the Levitical priesthood is to be noted; but the idolatrous worship in the immediate neighborhood of Shiloh is passing strange.

NOTES ON JUDGES 18

Judges 18:2. This identity of locality with the scene of Samson's birth and death indicates that both narratives are drawn from the same source, probably the annals of the tribe of Dan.

Judges 18:3. It does not follow that they had known him before, and recognized his voice, though it may be so. But the Hebrew equally bears the sense that they heard the voice of the Levite; and, attracted by it, went into the chapel (**Judges 18:18**) where Jonathan was. They were probably just starting on their journey, but were still within the court or precincts of Micah's house. Micah had evidently not told them of his house of God, and his Levite. Their questions indicate surprise.

Judges 18:5. The sight of the ephod and teraphim suggested the notion of inquiring of God.

Judges 18:6. *Before the LORD ...* i.e. He looks favorably upon it. (Compare **Ezra 8:21,22**.)

Judges 18:7. *Laish* Afterward called "Dan" (**Judges 18:29**). The exact site has not been identified, but it was the northern extremity of Israel, near the sources of the Jordan, and about four miles from Panium, or Caesarea-Philippi. It is thought to have stood where the village Tell-el-Kadi now stands.

After the manner of the Zidonians The genius of the Zidonians being mechanical and commercial, not military, their colonists were apt to neglect fortifications and similar warlike precautions. In Solomon's time the Zidonians were especially skillful in hewing timber (**1 Kings 5:6**; **1 Chronicles 22:4**), and it is highly probable, from their proximity to Lebanon, that such was the occupation of the men of Laish.

Quiet and secure ... This is a very obscure and difficult passage. Translate thus: "Quiet and secure, and none of them doing any injury in the land, possessing wealth," or "dominion."

Judges 18:12. *Kirjath-jearim* "City of forests," otherwise called "Kirjath-Baal" (marginal reference.), identified by Robinson with the

modern “Kurit-el-Enab,” on the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem [and by Conder with Soba).

Judges 18:14. *In these houses* This agrees with what we saw at **Judges 18:2,3** that the “house of God” and Jonathan’s house were detached from Micah’s. There were other houses besides (**Judges 18:22**). The whole settlement was probably called Beth-Micah, contained in one court, and entered by one gate (**Judges 18:16**).

Judges 18:17. The five went back to Micah’s chapel (Micah’s house, **Judges 18:18**) and took the ephod, teraphim, etc., and brought them to the gate where the priest was talking to the 600 men.

Judges 18:21. *And put the little ones, etc., before them* They expected a pursuit from Micah’s people, and arranged their order of march accordingly.

The carriage Rather, “the valuables.” Some interpret it “the heavy baggage.”

Judges 18:22. *Were gathered together* literally, “were called together.” The men, who were all Micah’s workmen, were probably in the fields with their master at the time of the robbery. When the women saw what was done they gave the alarm, and Micah called the men together as quickly as possible, and pursued the Danites and overtook them.

Judges 18:27. *The things which Micah had made* Rather, from **Judges 18:24**, “the gods which Micah had made.” See **Judges 18:31**; **Deuteronomy 27:15**; **Exodus 20:4**.

Judges 18:28. Rehob (as Dan afterward) is mentioned as the northernmost point of the land of Canaan (**Numbers 13:21**), and its position is defined with reference to the entering in of Hamath.

A city Rather, “the” city. They rebuilt Laish, which they had burned down (**Judges 18:29**).

Judges 18:30. In the Hebrew text the name here rendered Manasseh is written M-(N)-SH. Without the “N” (nun) suspended over the line, the word may be read: Moses, whose son was Gershom (**Exodus 2:22**), whose son or descendant Jonathan clearly was. The Masoretes, probably grieved that a descendant of Moses should have been implicated in

idolatrous worship, adopted this expedient for disguising the fact without absolutely falsifying the text. The Vulgate has “Moses”, the Septuagint “Manasses”.

~~<0783>~~ **Judges 18:30,31.** Seem to tell us that Jonathan’s descendants were priests to the tribe of Dan until the captivity (~~<1259>~~ 2 Kings 15:29; 17:6); and that the graven image was in their custody until David’s time, by whose order, perhaps, it was destroyed, though the idolatrous worship continued, or was revived, at Dan.

NOTES ON JUDGES 19

Judges 19. This history has no connection whatever with the preceding. The note of time (^{<0718>}Judges 20:28) shows that the date of it is in the lifetime of the first generation of settlers in Canaan.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:1.** *A concubine* See the margin. The name does not imply any moral reproach. A concubine was as much the man's wife as the woman so called, though she had not the same rights. See ^{<0719>}Judges 19:3,4.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:2.** *Played the whore against him* Perhaps only meaning that she ran away from him, and left him, for she returned to her father's house.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:9.** This is a perfect picture of the manners of the time. It is probable that the father showed more than usual hospitality, in order to ensure the kind treatment of his daughter by her husband. These particulars are given to account for their journey running so far into the evening, which was the immediate cause of the horrible catastrophe which followed.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:12.** *City of a stranger* This shows how completely, even in these early days, the Jebusite population had excluded both the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:14.** *Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin* See ^{<1689>}Joshua 18:24 note.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:15.** *A street* Probably the square or place within the gates, where courts were held, bargains made, and where the chief men and strangers congregated.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:16.** *Which was also of Mount Ephraim* i.e., of the country of the Levite. This single giver of hospitality was himself a stranger and sojourner at Gibeah.

^{<0719>}**Judges 19:18.** *The house of the LORD* Probably at Shiloh (marginal references). The Levite was probably one of those who ministered at the

tabernacle. His two donkeys and servant show him to have been in good circumstances, and he had a home of his own.

~~07923~~ **Judges 19:23.** *This man is come into mine house* He appeals to the sacred rights of hospitality, just as Lot did (~~01938~~ Genesis 19:8). Both cases betray painfully the low place in the social scale occupied by woman in the old world, from which it is one of the glories of Christianity to have raised her.

~~07929~~ **Judges 19:29.** *A knife* Rather, “the” “knife”. The single household implement used, not like our knives at our meals, but for slaughtering and cutting up the animals into joints for eating (~~01216~~ Genesis 22:6,10; ~~01814~~ Proverbs 30:14).

Together with her bones ... Rather, “into her bones”, or “bone by bone, into twelve pieces”. The “pieces” are synonymous with the “bones” (compare ~~05914~~ Ezekiel 24:4,5). There is something truly terrible in the stern ferocity of grief and indignation which dictated this desperate effort to arouse his countrymen to avenge his wrong. Compare ~~01107~~ 1 Samuel 11:7.

NOTES ON JUDGES 20

Judges 20:1. The “congregation” is the technical term for the whole community of the Israelite people. Its occurrence here is an indication of the early date of these transactions.

From Dan to Beer-sheba We cannot safely infer from this expression that the settlement of Dan, recorded in Judges 18 had taken place at this time. It only proves that in the writer’s time, from Dan to Beer-sheba was a proverbial expression for all Israel (compare the marginal reference).

With the land of Gilead Meaning all the trans-Jordanic tribes; mentioned particularly, both to show that the whole congregation of the children of Israel, in its widest meaning, took part in the council, and also because of Jabesh-Gilead (^{<0210>}Judges 21:8,10).

Unto the LORD in Mizpeh The phrase “unto the Lord”, implies the presence of the tabernacle (^{<0711>}Judges 11:11 note). Mizpeh in Benjamin (^{<0185>}Joshua 18:26), from its connection with Bethel and Ramah, is probably meant here. It is the same as that which appears as a place of national assembly in ^{<0105>}1 Samuel 7:5; 10:17; ^{<0223>}2 Kings 25:23-25. It must have been near Shiloh and Gibeah, and in the north of Benjamin. The Benjamites were duly summoned with the other tribes; so that their absence was contumacious (^{<0711>}Judges 20:3).

Judges 20:2. *The chief* literally, “the corner stones.” (Compare ^{<0148>}1 Samuel 14:38.)

Judges 20:8. They bound themselves not to break up and disperse until they had punished the wickedness of Gibeah.

Judges 20:9. *By lot* To determine who should go up first (^{<0718>}Judges 20:18). The shape of the ground probably made it impossible for the whole force to operate at once; and the question of spoil would have something to do with the arrangement. (Compare ^{<0112>}1 Samuel 30:22-25.)

Judges 20:10. In order to make it possible for the force of Israel to keep the field, and do to the men of Gibeah what their wickedness deserved, every tenth man (40,000 in all) was appointed to find provisions for the whole army.

Judges 20:15-17. Comparing the numbers here with those in Numbers 1; 26, it is seen that in the case both of the Benjamites and the Israelites the numbers are diminished by about one-third, i.e., they appear as about two-thirds only of what they were at the last numbering in the plains of Moab. This diminution seems to indicate disturbed and harassing times. With this agrees the mention of the cities, as containing the whole Benjamite population. The inference is that the open country and unwalled villages were not safe, but that the Benjamites kept the Canaanites in subjection only by dwelling in fortified towns.

Judges 20:16. See **Judges 3:15**, and note. In the Septuagint and Vulgate the 700 chosen men of Gibeah are represented as the seven hundred left-handed slingers.

Judges 20:18. *Went up to the house of God* It should be “to Bethel.” At this time the ark was at Bethel (compare **1 Samuel 10:3**), and not at Shiloh. It is not unlikely that though Shiloh was the chief residence of the ark (**Jeremiah 7:12**), yet the tabernacle, being moveable, was, either at stated times, or as occasion required, moved to where the Judge resided, or the congregation assembled (compare **1 Samuel 7:16**). On the present occasion the ark may have been moved to Bethel for the convenience of proximity to the great national council at Mizpeh.

Judges 20:21. Gibeah, being on a hill, was difficult of access to an attacking army, and gave great advantage to the defenders, who fought from higher ground, and probably defended a narrow pass, while their companions on the walls could gall the assailants with their slingstones.

Judges 20:26. *Fasted until even* The regular time for ending a fast among the Hebrews was sunset (compare **1 Samuel 14:24**; **2 Samuel 1:12**). Such national fasts are called by the rabbis “fasts of the congregation,” and were enjoined in times of great affliction.

On the offerings, see **Leviticus 1:3**.

Judges 20:28. *Phinehas, the son of Eleazar ...* A most important chronological statement, which makes it probable that these events occurred within twenty years of the death of Joshua.

To-morrow The two former answers only bade them go up against Benjamin; now, for the first time, the promise is added, “Tomorrow,” etc. (compare ^{<0180>}Joshua 8:1).

^{<0219>}**Judges 20:29.** The stratagem described is exactly that by which Joshua took Ai (marginal reference).

^{<0219>}**Judges 20:31.** *To the house of God* “To Bethel,” as in the margin. On “Gibeah in the field,” see ^{<0182>}Joshua 18:24 note.

^{<0219>}**Judges 20:33.** Baal-tamar is only mentioned here. It took its name from some palm-tree that grew there; perhaps the same as the “palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel” (^{<0045>}Judges 4:5), the exact locality here indicated, since “the highway” (^{<0219>}Judges 20:31) along which the Israelites enticed the Benjamites to pursue them, leads straight to Ramah, which lay only a mile beyond the point where the two ways branch off.

The meadows of Gibeah The word rendered “meadow” is only found here. According to its etymology, it ought to mean a “bare open place”, which is particularly unsuitable for an ambush. However, by a change in the vowel-points, without any alteration in the letters, it becomes the common word for “a cavern”.

^{<0219>}**Judges 20:42.** *The way of the wilderness* i.e., the wilderness which extended from Jericho to the hills of Bethel.

Them which came out of the cities These must be the Benjamites (^{<0215>}Judges 20:15). Hence, “in the midst of them” must mean “in their own cities”, where they severally fled for refuge, but failed to find shelter (^{<0218>}Judges 20:48). Anathoth, Alemath, Ramah, Ataroth, Geba, Michmash, Ai, Bethel, Migron, etc., would probably be the cities meant, all lying east and north of Gibeah.

^{<0219>}**Judges 20:43.** The language and construction of this verse is poetical; it seems to be an extract from a song, and to describe, in the language of poetry, the same event which the preceding verse described in that of prose.

With ease Or “rest” (^{<0183>}Numbers 10:33; ^{<0251>}Psalms 95:11). The expression is very obscure. The margin takes it as the name of a place.

Judges 20:45. *Rimmon* A village named “Rummon”, situated on the summit of a conical chalky hill, still exists, and forms a remarkable object in the landscape, visible in all directions. It lies 15 miles north of Jerusalem. It is a different place from Rimmon in the south of Judah (^{<0653>}Joshua 15:32), and Remmon in Zebulun (^{<0693>}Joshua 19:13). Gidom, mentioned nowhere else, was evidently close to Rimmon.

Judges 20:46. In ^{<0718>}Judges 20:35 the number given is 25,100.

^{<0714>}Judges 20:44-46 give the details of the loss on that day: 18,000, 5,000, and 2,000; in all 25,000. But as the Benjamites numbered 26,700 men (^{<0715>}Judges 20:15), and 600 escaped to the rock of Rimmon, it is clear that 1,100 are unaccounted for, partly from no account being taken of those who fell in the battles of the two first days, partly from the use of round numbers, or from some other cause. The numbers given both here and in ^{<0718>}Judges 20:35 are expressly restricted to those who fell on “that” (the third) “day.”

Judges 20:48. They treated Benjamin as devoted to utter destruction, as Jericho had been (^{<0657>}Joshua 6:17,21), and the whole tribe was all but actually extirpated. We see in the punishment inflicted the same ferocity which marked both the crime and the Levite’s mode of requiring vengeance.

NOTES ON JUDGES 21

Judges 21:2. *To the house of God* It should be, “to Bethel.” See ^{<0720>}Judges 20:18.

Judges 21:3. The repetition of the name of Israel is very striking in connection with the title of Yahweh as “God of Israel.” It contains a very forcible pleading of the covenant, and memorial of the promises. The very name “Israel” comprehended all the twelve tribes; with one of them blotted out, the remnant would not be Israel.

Judges 21:4. It is not certain whether the brass altar was at Bethel at this time, or whether it may not have been elsewhere, e.g., at Shiloh with the tabernacle. Some, however, think that the altar here mentioned was “additional” to the brass altar, in consequence of the unusual number of sacrifices caused by the presence of the whole congregation (compare ^{<1086>}1 Kings 8:64 note).

Judges 21:8. *Jabesh-Gilead* Is here mentioned for the first time. (See marginal references.) The name of Jabesh survives only in the Wady Yabes (running down to the east bank of the Jordan), near the head of which are situated the ruins called Ed-Deir, which are identified with Jabesh-Gilead.

Judges 21:10. *And the congregation sent 12,000 men* A thousand from each tribe; they followed the precedent of ^{<0610>}Numbers 31:4.

Judges 21:11. *Ye shall utterly destroy* More exactly, “Ye shall devote to utter destruction,” or “cherem” (^{<0328>}Leviticus 27:28 note).

Judges 21:12. *To Shiloh* Whither, as the usual place of meeting for the national assembly, the Israelites had moved from Bethel (a distance of about 10 miles), during the expedition of the 12,000 to Jabesh-Gilead.

Judges 21:18. *For the children of Israel have sworn* See ^{<0200>}Judges 21:1. Compare Saul’s rash oath (^{<0144>}1 Samuel 14:24), and his breach of the oath made to the Gideonites (^{<0202>}2 Samuel 21:2). For the guilt of a broken oath, see ^{<0375>}Ezekiel 17:15-20; ^{<0207>}Exodus 20:7.

Judges 21:19. The Feast was probably the Passover, or one of the three great Jewish Feasts. In these unsettled times men went up to Shiloh (Seilun) only once a year (~~000B~~1 Samuel 1:3) instead of thrice; only the males kept the Feasts, and therefore the virgins of Shiloh would naturally be the only maidens present, and the public festival would be a likely occasion for their festive dances. It is, however, possible that some particular feast unique to Shiloh is meant, like the yearly sacrifice of David's family in Bethlehem (~~0219~~1 Samuel 20:29).

Judges 21:22. *Ye did not give ...* i.e., they had not broken the oath mentioned in ~~0200~~Judges 21:1, so as to be guilty of taking the Lord's name in vain. They did not give their daughters to Benjamin: the Benjamites had taken them by force. Such casuistry as this condemns the system of oaths, and illustrates the wisdom of our Lord's precept (~~4053~~Matthew 5:33-37).

Judges 21:23. Compare the very similar account of the rape of the Sabine women by the Romero youths at the festival of the Consualia, as related by Livy.

Judges 21:25. The repetition of this characteristic phrase (compare ~~07125~~Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1) is probably intended to impress upon us the idea that these disorders arose from the want of a sufficient authority to suppress them. The preservation of such a story, of which the Israelites must have been ashamed, is a striking evidence of the divine superintendence and direction as regards the Holy Scriptures.