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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
JUDGES

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

THE persons called *Judges*, ϰϵϰϰϰϵϵ *Shophetim*, from ϰϰϵϵ, *shaphat*, to judge, discern regulate, and direct, were the heads or chiefs of the Israelites who governed the Hebrew republic from the days of Moses and Joshua till the time of Saul. The word *judge* is not to be taken here in its usual signification, i.e., one who determines controversies, and denounces the judgment of the law in criminal cases, but one who directs and rules a state or nation with sovereign power, administers justice, makes peace or war, and leads the armies of the people over whom he presides. Officers, with the same power, and nearly with the same name, were established by the Tyrians in new Tyre, after the destruction of old Tyre, and the termination of its regal state. The Carthaginian *Suffetes* appear to have been the same as the Hebrew *Shophetim*; as were also the *Archons* among the Athenians, and the *Dictators* among the ancient Romans. But they were neither hereditary governors, nor were they chosen by the people: they were properly vicegerents or lieutenants of the Supreme God; and were always, among the Israelites, chosen by Him in a supernatural way. They had no power to make or change the laws; they were only to execute them under the direction of the Most High. God, therefore, was king in Israel: the government was a *theocracy*; and the judges were His deputies. The office, however, was not *continual*, as there appear intervals in which there was no judge in Israel. And, as they were extraordinary persons, they were only raised up on extraordinary occasions to be instruments in the hands of God of delivering their nation from the oppression and tyranny of the neighbouring powers. They had neither pomp nor state; nor, probably, any kind of emoluments.

The chronology of the Book of Judges is extremely embarrassed and difficult; and there is no agreement among learned men concerning it. *When* the deliverances, and consequent periods of *rest*, so frequently mentioned in this book, took place, cannot be satisfactorily ascertained. Archbishop *Usher*, and those who follow him, suppose that the *rests*, or *times of peace*, should be reckoned, not from the time in which a particular judge gave them deliverance; but from the period of the *preceding* deliverance, e.g.: It is said that *Othniel*, son of Kenaz, defeated *Cushan-rishathaim*, ^{<OTCB9>}**Judges 3:9**, and the land had rest forty years. After the death of *Othniel* the Israelites again did wickedly, and God

delivered them into the hands of the *Moabites*, *Ammonites*, and *Amalekites*; and this oppression continued eighteen years; ^{<10B14>}**Judges 3:14**. Then God raised up *Ehud*, who, by killing *Eglon*, king of Moab, and gaining a great victory over the Moabites, in which he slew ten thousand of their best soldiers, obtained a rest for the land which lasted forty years: ^{<10B15>}**Judges 3:15, 30**; which *rest* is not counted from this deliverance wrought by *Ehud*, but from that wrought by *Othniel*, mentioned above; leaving out the eighteen years of oppression under *Eglon* king of Moab; and so of the rest. This is a most violent manner of settling chronological difficulties, a total perversion of the ordinary meaning of terms, and not likely to be intended by the writer of this book.

Sir John *Marsham*, aware of this difficulty, has struck out a new hypothesis: he supposes that there were *judges* on each side Jordan; and that there were particular wars in which those beyond Jordan had no part. He observes, that from the exodus to the building of Solomon's temple was four hundred and eighty years, which is precisely the time mentioned in the sacred writings; (^{<10B16>}**1 Kings 6:1**;) and that from the time in which the Israelites occupied the land beyond Jordan, to the days of *Jephthah*, was three hundred years. But in reckoning up the years of the judges, from the death of Moses to the time of *Ibzan*, who succeeded *Jephthah*, there appears to be more than three hundred years; and from *Jephthah* to the fourth year of Solomon, in which the foundation of the temple was laid, there are again more than *one hundred and fifty* years; we must, therefore, either find out some method of reconciling these differences, or else abandon these epochs; but as the latter cannot be done, we must have recourse to some plan of *modification*. Sir John *Marsham*'s plan is of this kind; the common plan is that of Archbishop *Usher*. I shall produce them both, and let the reader choose for himself.

Who the author of the *Book of Judges* was, is not known; some suppose that each judge wrote his own history, and that the book has been compiled from those separate accounts; which is very unlikely. Others ascribe it to *Phinehas*, to *Samuel*, to *Hezekiah*, and some to *Ezra*. But it is evident that it was the work of an individual, and of a person who lived posterior to the time of the judges, (see ^{<10B17>}**Judges 2:10**, &c..) and most probably of *Samuel*.

The duration of the government of the Israelites by judges, from the death of Joshua to the commencement of the reign of Saul, was about three

hundred and thirty-nine years. But as this book does not include the government of *Eli*, nor that of *Samuel*, but ends with the death of *Samson*, which occurred in A.M. 2887; consequently, it includes only three hundred and seventeen years; but the manner in which these are reckoned is very different, as we have seen above; and as will be more particularly evident in the following tables by Archbishop *Usher* and Sir John *Marsham*.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THIS BOOK, ACCORDING TO ARCHBISHOP USHER.

Death of Joshua, aged one hundred and ten years.	2570
After his death, and that of the elders who succeeded him, the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord; to this period are to be referred the idolatry of Micah, the conquest of Laish, and the idolatry of a part of the tribe of Dan, which are mentioned <07171> Judges 17:11-8:31.	2585
The story of the Levite and his concubine, and the war which succeeded it, <07801> Judges 19:1-21:25.	
This includes a period of about twenty-two years, viz., fifteen for the time of the elders who survived Joshua, and seven years of anarchy and rest, after which the Israelites fell under the domination of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia.	
The <i>first</i> servitude under Chushan, which lasted eight years, began in 2591, and ended in 2599. Othniel delivered Israel the fortieth year after the rest procured by Joshua.	2591 2599
The land enjoys rest about sixty-two years.	2662
<i>Second</i> servitude, under Eglon, king of Moab, which lasted eighteen years.	2662
Ehud delivers Israel.	2679
After him appears Shamgar, and the land enjoys rest to the eightieth year from the termination of the first deliverance procured by Othniel, <07815> Judges 3:15-30.	
The <i>third</i> servitude, under the Canaanites, which lasted twenty years, <07841> Judges 4:1-3.	2669
Deborah and Barak deliver Israel.	2719
From the deliverance procured by Ehud, to the end of the government of Deborah and Barak, was forty years.	
About this time the Assyrian empire was founded by Ninus, son of Belus. The Assyrians had previously to this reigned five hundred and twenty years over a part of Asia; but Ninus, forming a league with Arius, king of the Arabs, conquered the whole of Asia, and governed it for seventeen years. He reigned in all fifty-two years.	2737
The <i>fourth</i> servitude, under the Midianites, which lasted seven years; <07861> Judges 6:1.	2752

Gideon delivers Israel.	2759
From the rest procured by Deborah and Barak to the deliverance by Gideon are forty years, ^{<07101>} Judges 6:1-8:35 . After the death of Gideon the people fall into idolatry. Abimelech, natural son of Gideon, kills seventy of his brethren, ^{<07105>} Judges 9:5 .	2768
Abimelech is proclaimed king of the Shechemites.	2769
He reigns three years, and was killed at the siege of Thebes.	2771
Tola governs after Abimelech, twenty-three years.	2772
The commencement of the kingdom of the Lydians under Argon, who reigned in Sardis. This empire continued five hundred and five years; Herodot. lib. i. cap. 7.	2781
Semiramis marries Ninus, and reigns forty-two years over almost the whole of Asia. Jair succeeds Tola, and governs twenty-two years.	2789
The <i>fifth</i> servitude under the Philistines, which lasted eighteen years.	2795
God delivers the Israelites who dwelt beyond Jordan, from the Ammonites, &c., ^{<07108>} Judges 10:18 .	2799
Death of Jair, ^{<07105>} Judges 10:5 .	2816
Jephthah is chosen judge, and defeats the Ammonites.	2817
Forty-two thousand Ephraimites slain at the passage of Jordan. Jephthah governs six years, ^{<07101>} Judges 11:1-12:7 .	
Troy is taken by the Greeks after a siege of ten years.	
Death of Jephthah. Ibzan governs seven years.	2820
Elon succeeds him, and governs ten years.	2823
Semiramis dies, aged sixty-two years, having reigned forty-two years; she is succeeded by Ninyas.	2830
Abdon judges Israel eight years, beginning from 2840	2840
Eli judges Israel, after the death of Abdon, forty years.	2848
The <i>sixth</i> servitude, under the Philistines, which lasted forty years, ^{<07131>} Judges 13:1 . It began seven years after the commencement of the government of Eli.	
The birth of Samson, ^{<07134>} Judges 13:24 .	2849
Marriage of Samson; he begins to deliver Israel, and continues twenty years.	2867
Samson burns the corn of the Philistines, and kills a thousand of them with the jaw-bone of an ass, ^{<07153>} Judges 15:3-20 .	2868
Samson is betrayed by his wife, delivered into the hands of the Philistines, and has his eyes put out. The same year he pulls down a temple, in the ruins of which himself and multitudes of the Philistines are buried, ^{<07161>} Judges 16:1-31 .	2887
The death of Eli, and the beginning of the government of Samuel, who delivers Israel from the oppression of the Philistines, ^{<07174>} 1 Samuel 7:14 .	2888

This is in substance the chronology of Archbishop Usher on this period, the correctness of which is justly questioned.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES, ACCORDING TO THE SCHEME OF SIR JOHN MARSHAM.

	Years after the Exodus
Joshua governs Israel twenty-five years from the exodus to the sixty-fifth year after that deliverance.	
Death of Joshua, aged 110 years.	
Government of the elders.	40
Anarchy and idolatry, thirty-four years after Joshua.	65
<i>First</i> servitude under Chushan lasts eight years.	99
Othniel, son-in-law, of Caleb, defeats Chushan.	
Forty years' rest.	107
<i>Second</i> servitude, under Eglon, who oppressed the Jews beyond Jordan, and a part of the Benjamites, fifteen years.	147
Ehud slays Eglon, and delivers his country.	165
Peace of fourscore years beyond Jordan; which continues till the invasion of the Midianites.	
<i>Third</i> servitude under Jabin, who chiefly oppressed the tribes which dwelt in the northern parts of Canaan. This servitude lasted twenty years.	185
Shamgar kills six hundred Philistines, and delivers Israel.	194
Deborah and Barak defeat Sisera; aided by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.	203
Rest of forty years, which continues to the two hundred and forty-third year of the exodus.	
<i>Fourth</i> servitude under the Midianites, which lasts seven years.	243
Gideon delivers Israel, assisted by Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali.	253
Abimelech reigns three years at Shechem.	294
Tola judges Israel twenty-three years.	
Jair judges Israel twenty-two years.	
<i>Fifth</i> servitude under the Ammonites, beyond Jordan, three hundred years after the Israelites had taken possession of the land. This servitude lasted eighteen years.	345
Jephthah delivers Israel.	363

While the Ammonites oppressed Israel on the other side of Jordan, the Philistines afflicted those on this side of that river. This servitude lasted forty years, during which Samson and Eli were judges; but they did not wholly deliver Israel. They were not delivered till the time of Samuel, three hundred and eighty-three years after the exodus.	
During this interval God raised Up Ibzan, who judged Israel seven years; and Elon, who judged ten years; and Abdon, who judged eight years; but neither the year of the commencement of their office, nor of their death, can be exactly ascertained.	383
Saul reigns forty years	403
David reigns forty years	443
Solomon begins to reign four hundred and seventy-six years after the exodus;	476
And lays the foundation of the temple in the fourth year of his reign.	480

These are the schemes of those two great chronologists. as exhibited by Calmet.

Dr. *Hales*, dissatisfied with these schemes, and with all others hitherto published, strikes out a new path: and, following the chronology of *Josephus*, with some *corrections*, makes the whole period, from the time of Joshua and the elders who survived him, to the election of Saul, four hundred and ninety-eight years, which he accounts for thus:—

In the general introduction of his *Analysis of Scripture Chronology*, he endeavours to show that the interval from the exodus to the foundation of Solomon's temple was six hundred and twenty-one years; from which, subtracting one hundred and twenty-three years, (namely, forty years from the exodus to this return, eighty years from the two reigns of Saul and David, and the three first years of Solomon,) the remainder is four hundred and ninety-eight years.

“But,” says the learned and indefatigable doctor, “although we are indebted to *Josephus* for this, and for supplying some material chasms in the sacred annals; such as, 1, the administration of Joshua and the elders, twenty-five years; 2, the ensuing anarchy, eighteen years; 3, the administration of *Shamgar*, one year; and, 4, of

Samuel, twelve years; still his detail of the outline there given requires correction.

“For, 1. The year ascribed to Shamgar’s administration is too short, as is evident from *Deborah*’s account, ^{<0786>}**Judges 5:6**; I have therefore included it, with *David Ganz*, in *Ehud*’s enormous administration of eighty years, and transferred the one year to *Joshua*’s, making that twenty-six years. 2. I have restored *Abdon*’s administration of eight years omitted by *Josephus*, and deducted it from the eighteen years he assigns to the anarchy, thereby reducing the latter to its correct length of ten years. 3. I have dated the first division of the conquered lands in the sixth year, which *Josephus* reckoned in the fifth year; because *Caleb* was forty years old when *Moses* sent him as one of the spies from *Kadesh-barnea*, in the second year after the *exode*; consequently he was thirty-nine years old at the *exode*; and therefore seventy-nine years old, forty years after, at the arrival in *Canaan*; but he was eighty-five years old when he claimed and got the hill of *Hebron* for an inheritance, which therefore must have been six years after the arrival in *Canaan*. Compare ^{<0401>}**Numbers 10:11; 13:6**, with ^{<06406>}**Joshua 14:6-15**. 4. *Josephus* has omitted the date of *Samuel*’s call to be a prophet, ^{<0000>}**1 Samuel 3:1-19**, which *St. Paul* reckons four hundred and fifty years after the first division of lands, ^{<44319>}**Acts 13:19, 20**, and which, therefore, commenced with the ten last years of *Eli*’s administration of forty years. This last most important chronological character from the New Testament verifies the whole of this rectification; while it demonstrates the spuriousness of the period of four hundred and eighty years in the present *Masorete* text of ^{<1001>}**1 Kings 6:1**, from the *exode* to the foundation of *Solomon*’s temple.”

Following the chronology of *Josephus*, in preference to the Hebrew text, his table of the Judges is as follows:—

		Yrs.	B.C.
1.	Joshua and the elders	26	1608
	First division of lands	1602	
	Second division of lands	1595	
	Anarchy, or interregnum	10	1582

I.	Servitude to the Mesopotamians	8	1572
2.	Othniel	40	1564
II.	Servitude to the Moabites	18	1524
3.	Ehud and Shamgar	80	1506
III.	Servitude to the Canaanites	20	1426
4.	Deborah and Barak	40	1406
IV.	Servitude to the Midianites	7	1366
5.	Gideon	40	1359
6.	Abimelech	3	1319
7.	Tola	23	1316
8.	Jair	22	1293
V.	Servitude to the Ammonites	18	1271
9.	Jephthah	6	1253
10.	Ibzan	7	1247
11.	Elon	10	1240
12.	Abdon	8	1230
VI.	Servitude to the Philistines — 40	20	1222
13.	Samson	20	1202
14.	Eli — 40	30	1182
	Samuel called as a prophet	10	1152
VII.	Servitude to the Philistines	20	1142
15.	Samuel	12	1122
	Saul elected king	498	1110

“The only alteration here made in the present text of *Josephus* is the insertion of *Tola* and his administration of twenty-three years (~~47101~~ **Judges 10:1, 2,**) which are inadvertently omitted between *Abimelech* and *Jair*, Ant. 5, 7, 15, page 56, but evidently were included in the original scheme of *Josephus* as being requisite to complete the period of six hundred and twenty-one years. To *Abdon* no years are assigned by *Josephus*, Ant. 5, 7, 15, page 215, perhaps designedly, for Clemens Alexandrinus relates that some chronologers collected together the years of *Abatthan* and *Ebron*, (*Abdon* and *Elon*,) or made them contemporary. But we may easily

reconcile *Josephus* with SCRIPTURE by only deducting eight years from the eighteen years interregnum after *Joshua*, which will give *Abdon* his quota of years, and leave that interregnum its juster length of ten years.

“It is truly remarkable, and a proof of the great skill and accuracy of *Josephus* in forming the outline of this period, that he assigns, with *St. Paul*, a reign of forty years to *Saul*, ~~4132~~ **Acts 13:21**, which is omitted in the OLD TESTAMENT. His outline also corresponds with *St. Paul’s* period of four hundred and fifty years from the division of the conquered lands of *Canaan*, until *Samuel* the prophet.” See Dr. Hale’s *Chronology*, vol. i., pages 16, 17; vol. ii., page 28, 5-8.

Another method of removing these difficulties has been lately attempted in a new edition of the *Universal History*; but of conjectures there is no end; if the truth be not found in some of the preceding systems, the difficulties, I fear, must remain. I have my doubts whether the author of this book ever designed to produce the subject in a strict chronological series. The book, in several places, appears to have been composed of *historical memoranda* having very little relation to each other, or among themselves; and particularly what is recorded in the beginning and the end. There is, however, one light in which the whole book may be viewed, which renders it invaluable; it is a most remarkable history of the long-suffering of God towards the Israelites, in which we find the most signal instances of his *justice* and his *mercy* alternately displayed; the people *sinned*, and were *punished*; they *repented*, and found *mercy*. Something of this kind we meet with in every page. And these things are written for our warning. None should *presume*, for God is JUST; none need *despair*, for God is MERCIFUL.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

- Year before the common year of Christ, 1443.
- Julian Period, 3271.
- Year from the Flood, 904.
- Year before the first Olympiad, 667.
- Creation from Tisri, or September, 2561.

CHAPTER 1

After the death of Joshua the Israelites purpose to attack the remaining Canaanites; and the tribe of Judah is directed to go up first, 1, 2. Judah and Simeon unite, attack the Canaanites and Perrizites, kill ten thousand of them, take Adoni-bezek prisoner, cut off his thumbs and great toes, and bring him to Jerusalem, where he dies, 3-7. Jerusalem conquered, 8. A new war with the Canaanites under the direction of Caleb, 9-11. Kirjath-sepher taken by Othniel, on which he receives, as a reward, Achsah, the daughter of Caleb and with her a south land with springs of water, 12-15. The Kenites dwell among the people, 16. Judah and Simeon destroy the Canaanites in Zephath, Gaza, &c., 17-19. Hebron is given to Caleb, 20. Of the Benjamites, house of Joseph, tribe of Manasseh, &c., 21-27. The Israelites put the Canaanites to tribute, 28. Of the tribes of Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali, 29-33. The Amorites force the children of Dan into the mountains, 34-36.

NOTES ON CHAP. 1

Verse 1. Now after the death of Joshua] How long after the death of Joshua this happened we cannot tell; it is probable that it was not long. The enemies of the Israelites, finding their champion dead, would naturally avail themselves of their unsettled state, and make incursions on the country.

Who shall go up] Joshua had left no successor, and every thing relative to the movements of this people must be determined either by caprice, or an especial direction of the Lord.

Verse 2. The Lord said, Judah shall go up] They had inquired of the Lord by Phinehas the high priest; and he had communicated to them the Divine counsel.

Verse 3. Come up with me into my lot] It appears that the portions of Judah and Simeon had not been cleared of the Canaanites, or that these were the parts which were now particularly invaded.

Verse 5. And they found Adoni-bezek] The word אֲחַמַּטְסָא *matsa*, “he found,” is used to express a *hostile encounter* between two parties; to *attack, surprise, &c.* This is probably its meaning here. *Adoni-bezek* is literally the *lord of Bezek*. It is very probable that the different Canaanitish tribes were governed by a sort of chieftains, similar to those among the *clans* of the ancient Scottish Highlanders. *Bezek* is said by some to have been in the tribe of Judah. Eusebius and St. Jerome mention two villages of this name, not in the tribe of Judah, but about seventeen miles from Shechem.

Verse 6. Cut off his thumbs] That he might never be able to *draw his bow* or *handle his sword*, and *great toes*, that he might never be able to *pursue* or *escape from* an adversary.

Verse 7. Threescore and ten kinds] Chieftains, heads of tribes, or military officers. For the word *king* cannot be taken here in its proper and usual sense.

Having their thumbs and their great toes cut off] That this was an ancient mode of treating *enemies* we learn from *Ælian*, who tells us, *Var. Hist.* l. ii., c. 9, that “the Athenians, at the instigation of Cleon, son of Cleænetus, made a decree that all the inhabitants of the island of *Ægina* should have the thumb cut off from the right hand, so that they might ever after be disabled from holding a spear, yet might handle an oar.” This is considered by *Ælian* an act of great cruelty; and he wishes to Minerva, the guardian of the city, to Jupiter Eleutherius, and all the gods of Greece, that the Athenians had never done such things. It was a custom among those Romans who did not like a military life, to cut off their own thumbs, that they might not be capable of serving in the army. Sometimes the parents cut off the thumbs of their children, that they might not be called into the army. According to *Suetonius*, in *Vit. August.*, c. 24, a Roman knight, who had cut off the thumbs of his two sons to prevent them from being called to a military life was, by the order of Augustus, publicly sold, both he and his property. These are the words of *Suetonius*: *Equitem Romanum, quod duobus filis adolescentibus, causa detractandi sacramenti, pollices amputasset, ipsum bonaque subjecit hastæ.* Calmet remarks that the Italian

language has preserved a term, *poltrone*, which signifies *one whose thumb is cut off*, to designate a soldier destitute of courage and valour. We use *poltroon* to signify a dastardly fellow, without considering the import of the original. There have been found frequent instances of persons maiming themselves, that they might be incapacitated for military duty. I have heard an instance in which a knavish soldier discharged his gun through his hand, that he might be discharged from his regiment. The cutting off of the thumbs was probably designed for a *double* purpose: 1. To incapacitate them for war; and, 2. To brand them as cowards.

Gathered their meat under my table] I think this was a proverbial mode of expression, to signify reduction to the meanest servitude; for it is not at all likely that *seventy kings*, many of whom must have been contemporaries, were placed under the table of the king of Bezek, and there fed; as in the houses of poor persons the dogs are fed with crumbs and offal, under the table of their owners.

So God hath requited me.] The king of Bezek seems to have had the knowledge of the true God, and a proper notion of a Divine providence. He now feels himself reduced to that state to which he had cruelly reduced others. Those acts *in him* were acts of tyrannous cruelty; the act *towards* him was an act of retributive justice.

And there he died.] He continued at Jerusalem in a servile and degraded condition till the day of his death. How long he lived after his disgrace we know not.

Verse 8. Had fought against Jerusalem] We read this verse in a parenthesis, because we suppose that it refers to the taking of this city by Joshua; for as he had conquered its armies and slew its king, ^{<6106>}**Joshua 10:26**, it is probable that he took the city: yet we find that the Jebusites still dwelt in it, ^{<6156>}**Joshua 15:63**; and that the men of Judah could not drive them out, which probably refers to the strong hold or fortress on Mount Zion, which the Jebusites held till the days of David, who took it, and totally destroyed the Jebusites. See ^{<1076>}**2 Samuel 5:6-9**, and ^{<1310>}**1 Chronicles 11:4-8**. It is possible that the Jebusites who had been discomfited by Joshua, had again become sufficiently strong to possess themselves of Jerusalem; and that they were now defeated, and the city itself set on fire: but that they still were able to keep possession of their *strong fort* on Mount Zion, which appears to have been the citadel of Jerusalem.

Verse 9. The Canaanites, that dwelt to the mountain] The territories of the tribe of Judah lay in the most southern part of the promised land, which was very mountainous, though towards the west it had many fine plains. In some of these the Canaanites had dwelt; and the expedition marked here was for the purpose of finally expelling them. But probably this is a recapitulation of what is related ^{<0610>}**Joshua 10:36; 11:21; 15:13.**

Verses 12. - 15. And Caleb, &c.] See this whole account, which is placed here by way of recapitulation, in ^{<0615>}**Joshua 15:13-19**, and the explanatory notes there.

Verse 16. The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law] For an account of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, see ^{<0280>}**Exodus 18:1-27;** ^{<0410>}**Numbers 10:29**, &c.

The city of palm trees] This seems to have been some place near Jericho, which city is expressly called the city of palm trees, ^{<0540>}**Deuteronomy 34:3**; and though destroyed by Joshua, it might have some suburbs remaining where these harmless people had taken up their residence.

The *Kenites*, the descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, were always attached to the Israelites: they remained with them, says Calmet, during their wanderings in the wilderness, and accompanied them to the promised land. They received there a lot with the tribe of Judah, and remained in the *city of palm trees* during the life of Joshua; but after his death, not contented with their portion, or molested by the original inhabitants, they united with the tribe of Judah, and went with them to attack *Arad*. After the conquest of that country, the Kenites established themselves there, and remained in it till the days of Saul, mingled with the Amalekites. When this king received a commandment from God to destroy the Amalekites, he sent a message to the Kenites to depart from among them, as God would not destroy them with the Amalekites. From them came *Hemath*, who was the father of the house of Rechab, ^{<0325>}**1 Chronicles 2:55**, and the *Rechabites*, of whom we have a remarkable account ^{<0280>}**Jeremiah 35:1**, &c.

Verse 17. The city was called Hormah.] This appears to be the same transaction mentioned ^{<0210>}**Numbers 21:1**, &c., where see the notes.

Verse 18. Judah took Gaza-and Askelon-and Ekron] There is a most remarkable variation here in the *Septuagint*; I shall set down the verse: **Καὶ**

ουκ εκληρονομησεν ιουδας την Γαζαν, ουδε τα ορια αυτης, ουδε την Ασκαλωνα, ουδε τα ορια αυτης, και την Ακκαρων, ουδε τα ορια αυτης, την Αζωτον, ουδε τα περισπορια αυτης, και ην Κυριος μετα Ιουδα. “But Judah DID NOT possess Gaza, NOR the coast thereof; neither Askelon, nor the coasts thereof, neither Ekron, nor the coasts thereof; neither Azotus, nor its adjacent places: and the Lord was with Judah.” This is the reading of the Vatican and other copies of the *Septuagint*: but the *Alexandrian MS.*, and the text of the *Complutensian* and *Antwerp Polyglots*, agree more nearly with the Hebrew text. St. *Augustine* and *Procopius* read the same as, the Vatican MS.; and *Josephus* expressly says that the Israelites took only *Askelon* and *Azotus*, but did not take *Gaza* nor *Ekron*; and the whole history shows that these cities were not in the possession of the Israelites, but of the Philistines; and if the Israelites did take them at this time, as the Hebrew text states, they certainly lost them in a very short time after.

Verse 19. And the Lord was with Judah, and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.] Strange! were the *iron chariots* too strong for Omnipotence? The whole of this verse is improperly rendered. The first clause, *The Lord was with Judah* should terminate the 18th verse, and this gives the reason for the success of this tribe: *The Lord was with Judah*, and therefore *he slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, &c., &c.* Here then is a complete period: the remaining part of the verse either refers to a different time, or to the rebellion of Judah against the Lord, which caused him to withdraw his support. Therefore the Lord was with Judah, and these were the effects of his protection; but afterwards, when the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, &c., God was no longer with them, and their enemies were left to be pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their side, as God himself had said.

This is the turn given to the verse by *Jonathan ben Uzziel*, the Chaldee paraphrast: “And the WORD of Jehovah was in the support of the house of Judah, and they extirpated the inhabitants of the mountains; but afterwards, WHEN THEY SINNED, they were not able to extirpate the inhabitants of the plain country, because they had chariots of iron.” They were now left to *their own strength*, and their adversaries prevailed against them.

From a work called the *Dhunoor Veda*, it appears that the ancient Hindoos had war chariots similar to those of the Canaanites. They are described as having many wheels, and to have contained a number of *rooms*.-*Ward's Customs*.

Verse 20. They gave Hebron unto Caleb] See this whole transaction explained ^{<06412>}**Joshua 14:12**, &c.

Verse 21. The Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin]

Jerusalem was situated partly in the tribe of *Judah*, and partly in the tribe of *Benjamin*, the *northern* part belonging to the *latter* tribe, the *southern* to the *former*. The *Jebusites* had their strongest position in the part that belonged to Benjamin, and from this place they were not wholly expelled till the days of David. See Clarke's notes on "^{<07008>}**Judges 1:8**". What is said here of *Benjamin* is said of *Judah*, ^{<06568>}**Joshua 15:63**. There must be an interchange of the names in one or other of these places.

Unto this day.] As the Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem till the days of David, by whom they were driven out, and the author of the book of Judges states them to have been in possession of Jerusalem when he wrote; therefore this book was written *before* the reign of David.

Verse 22. The house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel] That is, the tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh, who dwelt beyond Jordan. Beth-el was not taken by Joshua, though he took Ai, which was nigh to it.

Instead of *āswy tyb beith Yoseph*, "the house of Joseph," ten of Dr. Kennicott's MSS. and six of *Deuteronomy Rossi's* have *āswy ynb beney Yoseph*, "the children of Joseph;" and this is the reading of both the *Septuagint* and *Arabic*, as well as of two copies in the *Hexapla* of Origen.

Verse 23. Beth-el-the name of the city before was Luz.] Concerning this city and its names, see Clarke's notes on "^{<01289>}**Genesis 28:19**".

Verse 24. Show us-the entrance into the city] Taken in whatever light we choose, the conduct of this man was execrable. He was a traitor to his country, and he was accessory to the destruction of the *lives* and *property* of his fellow citizens, which he most sinfully betrayed, in order to save his *own*. According to the rules and laws of war, the children of Judah might

avail themselves of such men and their information; but this does not lessen, on the side of this traitor, the turpitude of the action.

Verse 26. The land of the Hittites] Probably some place beyond the land of Canaan, in Arabia, whither this people emigrated when expelled by Joshua. The man himself appears to have been a Hittite, and to perpetuate the name of his city he called the new one which he now founded *Luz*, this being the ancient name of *Beth-el*.

Verse 27. Beth-shean] Called by the Septuagint *Σκυθωνπολις*, *Scythopolis*, or *the city of the Scythians*. On these towns see the notes, ^{<61712>}**Joshua 17:12, 13.**

Verse 29. Neither did Ephraim] See the notes on the parallel passages, ^{<61416>}**Joshua 16:5-10.**

Verse 30. Neither did Zebulun drive out] See on ^{<61910>}**Joshua 19:10-15.**

Verse 31. Neither did Asher] See on ^{<61924>}**Joshua 19:24-31.**

Accho] Supposed to be the city of **Ptolemais**, near to Mount Carmel.

Verse 33. Neither did Naphtali] See the notes on ^{<61932>}**Joshua 19:32-39.**

Verse 34. The Amorites forced the children of Dan, &c.] Just as the ancient Britons were driven into the mountains of Wales by the Romans; and the native Indians driven back into the woods by the British settlers in America.

Verse 35. The Amorites would dwell in Mount Heres] They perhaps *agreed* to dwell in the mountainous country, being unable to maintain themselves on the plain, and yet were so powerful that the Danites could not totally expel them; they were, however, laid under tribute, and thus the house of Joseph had the sovereignty. The *Septuagint* have sought out a *literal* meaning for the names of several of these places, and they render the verse thus: “And the Amorites began to dwell in the mount of Tiles, in which there are *bears*, and in which there are *foxes*.” Thus they translate *Heres*, *Aijalon*, and *Shaalbim*.

Verse 36. Akrabbim] Of *scorpions*; probably so called from the number of those animals in that place.

From the rock, and upward.] The Vulgate understand by [*Is sela, a rock*, the city *Petra*, which was the capital of *Arabia Petræa*.

THE whole of this chapter appears to be designed as a sort of *supplement* to those places in the book of Joshua which are referred to in the notes and in the margin; nor is there any thing in it worthy of especial remark. We everywhere see the same fickle character in the Israelites, and the goodness and long-suffering of God towards them. An *especial Providence* guides their steps, and a *fatherly hand* chastises them for their transgressions. They are obliged to live in the midst of their enemies, often straitened, but never overcome so as to lose the land which God gave them as their portion. We should learn wisdom from what they have suffered, and confidence in the protection and providence of God from their support, because these things were written for our learning.

Few can be persuaded that adversity is a blessing, but without it how little should we learn! He, who in the school of affliction has his mind turned towards God,

*“Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”*

JUDGES

CHAPTER 2

An angel comes to the Israelites at Bochim, and gives them various reproofs, at which they are greatly affected, 1-5. They served the Lord during the days of Joshua, and the elders who succeeded him, 6, 7. Joshua having died, and all that generation, the people revolted from the true God and served idols, 8-13. The Lord, being angry, delivered them into the hands of spoilers, and they were greatly distressed, 14, 15. A general account of the method which God used to reclaim them, by sending them judges whom they frequently disobeyed, 16-19. Therefore God left the various nations of the land to plague and punish them, 20-23.

NOTES ON CHAP. 2

Verse 1. An angel of the Lord] In the preceding chapter we have a summary of several things which took place shortly after the death of Joshua; especially during the time in which the elders lived (that is, the men who were contemporary with Joshua, but survived him,) and while the people continued faithful to the Lord. In this chapter, and some parts of the following, we have an account of the same people abandoned by their God and reduced to the heaviest calamities, because they had broken their covenant with their Maker. This chapter, and the first eight verses of the next, may be considered as an epitome of the whole book, in which we see, on one hand, the crimes of the Israelites; and on the other, the punishments inflicted on them by the Lord; their repentance, and return to their allegiance; and the long-suffering and mercy of God, shown in pardoning their backslidings, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies.

The *angel of the Lord*, mentioned here, is variously interpreted; some think it was Phinehas, the high priest, which is possible; others, that it was a *prophet*, sent to the place where they were now assembled, with an extraordinary commission from God, to reprove them for their sins, and to show them the reason why God had not rooted out their enemies from the land; this is the opinion of the Chaldee paraphrast, consequently of the ancient Jews; others think that an *angel, properly such*, is intended; and several are of opinion that it was the *Angel of the Covenant*, the *Captain of the Lord's host*, which had appeared unto Joshua, ^{<0514>}Judges 5:14, and no less than the Lord *Jesus Christ* himself. I think it more probable that some

extraordinary *human messenger* is meant, as such messengers, and indeed prophets, apostles, &c., are frequently termed *angels*, that is, *messengers* of the Lord. The person here mentioned appears to have been a resident at *Gilgal*, and to have come to *Bochim* on this express errand.

I will never break my covenant] Nor did God ever break it. A covenant is never broken but by him who violates the conditions of it: when any of the contracting parties violates any of the conditions, the covenant is then broken, and by that party alone; and the conditions on the other side are null and void.

Verse 3. I will not drive them out from before you] Their transgressions, and breach of the covenant, were the reasons why they were not put in entire possession of the promised land. See note at the end of this chapter. Clarke “~~1023~~ **Judges 2:23**”.

Verse 5. They called the name of that place Bochim] The word μυκβ *bochim* signifies *weepings* or *lamentations*; and is translated by the Septuagint κλαυθυων or κλαυθυωνες, *bewailings*; and it is supposed that the place derived its name from these lamentations of the people. Some think the place itself, where the people were now assembled, was *Shiloh*, now named *Bochim* because of the above circumstance. It should be observed, that the *angel* speaks here *in the person of God*, by whom he was sent; as the prophets frequently do.

Verse 6. When Joshua had let the people go] The author of this book is giving here a history of the people, from the division of the land by Joshua to the time in which the angel speaks. Joshua divided the land to them by lot; recommended obedience to God, which they solemnly promised: and they continued faithful during his life, and during the lives of those who had been his contemporaries, but who had survived him. When all that generation who had seen the wondrous works of God in their behalf had died, then the succeeding generation, who *knew not the Lord*-who had not seen his wondrous works-forsook his worship, and worshipped *Baalim* and *Ashtaroth*, the gods of the nations among whom they lived, and thus the Lord was provoked to anger; and this was the reason why they were delivered into the hands of their enemies. This is the sum of their history to the time in which the angel delivers his message.

Verse 8. Joshua-died] See the notes on ~~1024~~ **Joshua 24:29, 30.**

Verse 11. Served Baalim] The word בַּל [*b baalim* signifies *lords*. Their false gods they considered *supernatural rulers* or *governors*, each having his peculiar district and office; but when they wished to express a particular *l* [*b baal*, they generally added some particular epithet, as *Baal-zephon*, *Baal-peor*, *Baal-zehub*, *Baal-shamayim*, &c., as Calmet has well observed. The two former were adored by the *Moabites*; Baal-zebub by the *Ekronites*. Baal-berith was honoured at *Shechem*; and Baal-shamayim, the *lord* or *ruler of the heavens*, was adored among the *Phœnicians*, *Syrians*, *Chaldeans*, &c. And whenever the word *baal* is used without an epithet, this is the god that is intended; and probably, among all these people, it meant the *sun*.

Verse 12. Which brought them out of the land of Egypt] This was one of the highest aggravations of their offense; they forsook the God who brought them out of Egypt; a place in which they endured the most grievous oppression and were subjected to the most degrading servitude, from which they never could have rescued themselves; and they were delivered by such a signal display of the power, justice, and mercy of God, as should never have been forgotten, because the most stupendous that had ever been exhibited. They forsook HIM, and served idols as destitute of real *being* as of influence and power.

Verse 13. Served Baal and Ashtaroth.] In a general way, probably, *Baal* and *Ashtaroth* mean the *sun* and *moon*; but in many cases *Ashtaroth* seems to have been the same among the Canaanites as *Venus* was among the Greeks and Romans, and to have been worshipped with the same obscene rites.

Verse 14. The hands of spoilers] Probably *marauding parties* of the Canaanites, making frequent incursions in their lands, carrying away cattle, spoiling their crops, &c.

Verse 15. The hand of the Lord was against them] The *power* which before protected them when obedient, was now turned against them because of their disobedience. They not only had not God *with* them, but they had God *against* them.

Verse 16. The Lord raised up judges] That is, leaders, generals, and governors, raised up by an especial appointment of the Lord, to deliver them from, and avenge them on, their adversaries. See the *preface*.

Verse 17. Went a whoring after other gods] Idolatry, or the worship of strange gods, is frequently termed *adultery*, *fornication*, and *whoredom*, in the sacred writings. As many of their idolatrous practices were accompanied with *impure rites*, the term was not only metaphorically but *literally* proper.

Verse 18. The Lord was with the judge] God himself was king, and the judge was his representative.

It repented the Lord] He changed his purpose towards them: he purposed to destroy them *because of their sin*; they *repented* and turned to him, and he *changed this purpose*. The purpose was to destroy them if they *did not repent*; when they *did repent*, his not destroying them was quite consistent with his purpose.

Verse 19. When the judge was dead] It appears that in general the office of the judge was *for life*.

Their stubborn way.] Their *hard* or *difficult* way. Most sinners go through great tribulation, in order to get to eternal perdition; they would have had less pain in their way to heaven.

Verse 20. The anger of the Lord was hot] They were as *fuel* by their transgressions; and the displeasure of the Lord was as a *fire* about to *kindle* and *consume* that *fuel*.

Verse 21. I will not henceforth drive out] As a people, they never had personal courage, discipline, or hardihood, sufficient to stand before their enemies: the advantages they gained were by the peculiar interference of God. This they had while obedient; when they ceased to obey, his strong arm was no longer stretched out in their behalf; therefore their enemies continued to possess the land which God purposed to give them as their inheritance for ever.

Verse 22. That through them I may prove Israel] There appeared to be no other way to induce this people to acknowledge the true God, but by permitting them to fall into straits from which they could not be delivered but by his especial providence. These words are spoken after the manner of men; and the metaphor is taken from the case of a master or father, who distrusts the fidelity or obedience of his servant or son, and places him in such circumstances that, by his good or evil conduct, he may justify his suspicions, or give him proofs of his fidelity.

Verse 23. Without driving them out hastily] Had God expelled all the ancient inhabitants at *once*, we plainly see, from the subsequent conduct of the people, that they would soon have abandoned his worship, and in their prosperity forgotten their deliverer. He drove out at first as many as were necessary in order to afford the people, as they were then, a *sufficiency of room* to settle in; as the tribes increased in population, they were to extend themselves to the uttermost of their assigned borders, and expel all the remaining inhabitants. On these accounts God did not expel the aboriginal inhabitants *hastily* or at once; and thus gave the Israelites time to increase; and by continuing the ancient inhabitants, prevented the land from running into *waste*, and the wild beasts from multiplying; both of which must have infallibly taken place had God driven out all the old inhabitants at once, before the Israelites were sufficiently numerous to occupy the whole of the land.

THESE observations are important, as they contain the reason why God did not expel the Canaanites. God gave the Israelites a grant of the *whole land*, and promised to drive out their enemies from before them if they continued faithful. While they continued faithful, God did continue to fulfil his promise; their borders were enlarged, and their enemies fled before them. When they rebelled against the Lord, he abandoned them, and their enemies prevailed against them. Of this, their frequent lapses and miscarriages, with God's repeated interpositions in their behalf, are ample evidence. *One* or *two* solitary instances might not be considered as sufficient proof; but by these *numerous* instances the fact is established. Each rebellion against God produced a consequent disaster in their affairs; each true humiliation was invariably followed by an especial Divine interposition in their behalf. These afforded continual proof of God's *being*, providence, and grace. The whole economy is wondrous; and its effects, impressive and convincing. The people were not hastily put in possession of the promised land, *because of their infidelity*. Can the infidels controvert this statement? If not then their argument against *Divine revelation*, from "the failure of *positive promises* and *oaths*," falls to the ground. They have not only in this, but in all other respects, lost all their props.

*“Helpless and prostrate all their system lies
Cursing its fate, and, as it curses, dies.”*

JUDGES

CHAPTER 3

An account of the nations that we left to prove Israel, 1-4. How the people provoked the Lord, 5-7. They are delivered into the power of the king of Mesopotamia, by whom they are enslaved eight years, 8. Othniel is raised up as their deliverer; he discomfits the king of Mesopotamia, delivers Israel, and the land enjoys peace for forty years, 9-11. They again rebel, and are delivered into the hand of the king of Moab, by whom they are enslaved eighteen years, 12-14. They are delivered by Ehud, who kills Eglon, king of Moab, and slays ten thousand Moabites, and the land rests fourscore years, 15-40.

NOTES ON CHAP. 3

Verse 1. Now these are the nations] The nations left to prove the Israelites were the *five lordships* or *satrapies* of the *Philistines*, viz., *Gath*, *Askelon*, *Ashdod*, *Ekron*, and *Gaza*; the *Sidonians*, the *Hivites* of Lebanon, *Baal-hermon*, &c.; with the remains of the Canaanites, viz., the *Hittites*, *Amorites*, *Perizzites*, and *Jebusites*.

Those who were left to be proved were those Israelites that *had not seen all the wars of Canaan*.

Verse 2. That-Israel might know, to teach them war] This was another reason why the Canaanites were left in the land, that the Israelites might not forget military discipline, but habituate themselves to the use of arms, that they might always be able to defend themselves against their foes. Had they been faithful to God, they would have had no need of learning the art of war; but now *arms* became a sort of necessary substitute for that spiritual strength which had departed from them. Thus Gods in his judgments leaves one iniquitous nation to harass and torment another. Were all to turn to God, men need learn war no more.

Verse 4. To know whether they would hearken] This would be the consequence of the Canaanites being left among them: if they should be faithful to God, their enemies would not be able to enslave them; should they be rebellious, the Lord would abandon them to their foes.

Verse 6. And they took their daughters] They formed matrimonial alliances with those proscribed nations, served their idols, and thus became one with them in *politics* and *religion*.

Verse 7. Served Baalim and the groves] No *groves* were ever worshipped, but the *deities* who were supposed to be resident in them; and in many cases temples and altars were built in *groves*, and the superstition of *consecrating groves* and *woods* to the honour of the deities was a practice very usual with the ancients. *Pliny* assures us that *trees*, in old times, served for the temples of the gods. *Tacitus* reports this custom of the old Germans; *Quintus Curtius*, of the *Indians*; and *Cæsar*, and our old writers, mention the same of the *Druids* in Britain. The *Romans* were admirers of this way of worship and therefore had their *luci* or groves in most parts of the city, dedicated to some deity. But it is very probable that the word *twrva asheroth* which we translate *groves*, is a corruption of the word *twrtv[ashtaroth*, the *moon* or *Venus*, (see on ^{<07213>}**Judges 2:13**,) which only differs in the letters [, **t**, from the former. *Ashtaroth* is read in this place by the *Chaldee Targum*, the *Syriac*, the *Arabic*, and the *Vulgate*, and by one of Dr. *Kennicott's* MSS.

Verse 8. Chushan-rishathaim] *Kushan*, the *wicked* or *impious*; and so the word is rendered by the *Chaldee Targum*, the *Syriac*, and the *Arabic*, wherever it occurs in this chapter.

King of Mesopotamia] King of *pyrhn pura* *Aram naharayim*, “*Syria* of the two rivers; “ translated *Mesopotamia* by the *Septuagint* and *Vulgate*.

It was the district situated between the *Tigris* and *Euphrates*, called by the Arabian geographers *Maverannaher*, “the country beyond the river,” it is now called *Diarbek*. See **Clarke's note on “Ac 2:9”**.

Served Chushan-eight years.] He overran their country, and forced them to pay a very heavy tribute.

Verse 9. Raised up-Othniel, the son of Kenaz] This noble Hebrew was of the tribe of Judah, and nephew and son-in-law to Caleb, whose praise stands without abatement in the sacred records. Othniel had already signalized his valour in taking Kirjath-sepher, which appears to have been a very hazardous exploit. By his natural valour, experience in war, and the peculiar influence of the Divine Spirit, he was well qualified to inspire his

countrymen with courage, and to lead them successfully against their oppressors.

Verse 10. His hand prevailed] We are not told or what nature this war was, but it was most decisive; and the consequence was an undisturbed peace of *forty* years, during the whole life of Othniel. By the *Spirit of the Lord coming upon him*, the *Chaldee* understands the *spirit of prophecy*; others understand the *spirit of fortitude* and *extraordinary courage*, as opposed to the *spirit of fear* or *faintness of heart*; but as Othniel was judge, and had many offices to fulfil besides that of a general, he had need of the Spirit of God, in the proper sense of the word, to enable him to guide and govern this most refractory and fickle people; and his receiving it for these purposes, shows that the political state of the Jews was still a *theocracy*. No man attempted to do any thing in that state without the immediate inspiration of God, the pretension to which was always justified by the event.

Verse 12. The children of Israel did evil] They forgot the Lord and became idolaters, and God made those very people, whom they had imitated in their idolatrous worship, the means of their chastisement.

The Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab] The success he had against the Israelites was by the especial appointment and energy of God. He not only abandoned the Israelites, but strengthened the Moabites against them.

Eglon is supposed to have been the immediate successor of *Balak*. Some great men have borne names which, when reduced to their grammatical meaning, appear very ridiculous: the word *עֶגְלוֹן* [*Eglon* signifies a *little calf*!

Verse 13. The city of palm trees.] This the Targum renders *the city of Jericho*; but Jericho had been destroyed by Joshua, and certainly was not rebuilt till the reign of Ahab, long after this, ^{<1163>}**1 Kings 16:34**. However, as Jericho is expressly called *the city of palm trees*, ^{<1534>}**Deuteronomy 34:3**, the city in question must have been in the vicinity or plain of Jericho, and the king of Moab had seized it as a frontier town contiguous to his own estates. Calmet supposes that the *city of palm trees* means *En-gaddi*.

Verse 15. Ehud the son of Gera-a man left handed] *וְנִמְיָ דְיָ רְצָא וְיָא* *ish itter yad yemino, a man lame in his right hand*, and therefore

obliged to use his *left*. The Septuagint render it *ανδρα αμφοτεροδεξιον*, *an ambidexter*, a man who could use both hands alike. The Vulgate, *qui utraque manu pro dextera utebatur*, a man who could use either hand as a right hand, or to whom right and left were equally ready. This is not the sense of the original, but it is the sense in which most interpreters understand it. It is well known that to be an *ambidexter* was in high repute among the ancients: Hector boasts of it:—

Αυταρ εγων εν οιδα μαχας τ̄, ανδροκτασιας τε,
Οιδ επι δεξια, οιδ επ̄ αριστερα νομησαι βων
Αζαλην, το μοι εστι ταλαυρινον πολεμιζειν.

Iliad, lib. vii., ver. 237.

*“But am in arms well practiced; many a Greek
Hath bled by me, and I can shift my shield
From right to left; reserving to the last
Force that suffices for severest toil.”*
COWPER.

Asteropæus is also represented by Homer as an *ambidexter*, from which he derives great advantages in fight:-

Ὡς φατ̄ απειλησας, ο δ ανεσχετο διος Αχιλλευς
Πηλιαδα μελην, ο δ ομαρτη δουρασιν αμφις
Ἡρωσ Αστεροπαιος, επει περιδεξιος ηε.

Iliad, lib. xxi., ver. 161.

*“So threatened he. Then raised Achilles high
The Pelian ash:-and his two spears at once
Alike, (a practised warrior,) with both hands
Asteropæus hurled.”*
COWPER.

We are informed by Aristotle, that Plato recommended to all soldiers to acquire by study and exercise an equal facility of losing both hands. Speaking of Plato, he says: *Κκαι την εν τοις πολεμικοις, οπως αμφιδεξιοι γινωνται κατα την μελετην, ως δεον μη την μεν χρησιμον ειναι ταιν χερσιν, την δε αχρηστον.*-*Deuteronomy Repub.*, lib. ii., cap. 12. “He (Plato) also made a law concerning their warlike exercises, that they should acquire a habit of using *both hands alike*; as it is not fit that one of the hands should be useful and the other useless.”

In ^{<072016>}**Judges 20:16** of this book we have an account of *seven hundred* men of Benjamin, each of whom was **wymy dy rca** *itter yemino*, *lame of his right hand*, and yet slinging stones to a hair's breadth without missing: these are generally thought to be *ambidexters*.

Sent a present unto Eglon] This is generally understood to be the *tribute money* which the king of Moab had imposed on the Israelites.

Verse 16. A dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length] The word **dmg gomed**, which we translate *cubit*, is of very doubtful signification. As the root seems to signify *contracted*, it probably means an instrument made for the purpose *shorter* than usual, and something like the Italian *stiletto*. The Septuagint translate it by **σπιθαμη**, a *span*, and most of the *versions* understand it in the same sense.

Upon his right thigh.] Because he was left-handed. Ordinarily the sword is on the left side, that it may be readily drawn out by the right hand; but as Ehud was *left-handed*, to be convenient his sword must be on the *right* side.

Verse 17. Eglon was a very fat man.] The **ayrb vya** *ish bari* of the text is translated by the *Septuagint* **ανη αστειος σφοδρα**, *a very beautiful or polite man*, and in the Syriac, *a very rude man*. It probably means what we call *lusty* or *corpulent*.

Verse 18. Made an end to offer the present] Presents, tribute, &c., in the eastern countries were offered with very great ceremony; and to make the more parade several persons, ordinarily slaves, sumptuously dressed, and in considerable *number*, were employed to carry what would not be a burden even to *one*. This appears to have been the case in the present instance.

Verse 19. He-turned-from the quarries] **μυλ ysp** *pesilim*. Some of the versions understand this word as meaning *idols* or *graven images*, or some spot where the Moabites had a place of idolatrous worship. As **l sp** *pasal* signifies to *cut*, *hew*, or *engrave*, it may be applied to the images thus cut, or to the *place*, or *quarry* whence they were digged: but it is most likely that *idols* are meant. Some think that *trenches* are meant, and that *pesilim* here may mean the *boundaries* of the two countries: and when Ehud had got thus far, he sent away the people that were with him, under pretense of having a secret message to Eglon, and so got rid of his attendants, in presence of whom he could not have executed his scheme, nor have

secured his escape afterwards. But I do not see the evidence of this mode of interpretation.

Verse 20. He was sitting in a summer parlour] Besides the platforms, says Dr. Shaw, which were upon the ancient houses of the East, and which are found there to this day, it is probable that heretofore, as well as at present, most of the great houses had a smaller one annexed, which seldom consisted of more than one or two rooms and a terrace. Others, built as they frequently are above the porch or gateway, have, if we except the ground-floor, all the conveniences belonging to the house, properly so called. There is a door of communication from them into the gallery of the house, kept open or shut at the discretion of the master of the house, besides another door which opens immediately from a privy stairs down into the porch or street, without giving the least disturbance to the house. In these back houses strangers are usually lodged and entertained; hither the men are wont to retire from the hurry and noise of their families, to be more at leisure for meditation or diversions; and they are often used for *wardrobes* and *magazines*. These the Arabs call *oleah*, which exactly answers to the Hebrew word **tyl** [*aliyath* found in this place; and without doubt such was the apartment in which Eglon received Ehud, by the *privy stairs* belonging to which he *escaped*, after having killed Eglon. The doors of the Eastern buildings are large, and their chambers spacious, conveniences well adapted to those hotter climates; but in the present passage something more seems to be meant; at least there are now other conveniences in the East to give coolness to particular rooms, which are very common. In Egypt the cooling their rooms is effected by openings at the top, which let in the fresh air. Mons. *Maillet* informs us that their halls are made very large and lofty, with a dome at the top, which towards the north has several open windows, so constructed as to throw the north wind down into the rooms; and by this means, though the country is excessively hot, they can make the coolness of those apartments so great, as often not to be borne without being wrapped in furs. Eglon's was a chamber; and some contrivance to mitigate the heat of it was the more necessary, as he appears to have kept his court at Jericho, ^{<ORIS>} **Judges 3:13, 28**, where the heat is so excessive as sometimes to prove fatal. See *Harmer's Observations*.

I have a message from God unto thee] **Ēyl a yl μyhl a rbd** *debar elohim li aleycha, a word of the gods to me, unto thee*. It is very likely that

the word *elohim* is used here to signify *idols*, or the *pesilim* mentioned above, ^{<MTB19>}**Judges 3:19**. Ehud, having gone so far as this place of idolatry, might feign he had there been worshipping, and that the *pesilim* had inspired him with a message for the king; and this was the reason why the king commanded *silence*, why *every man went out*, and why *he rose from his seat* or *throne*, that he might receive it with the greater respect. This, being an idolater, he would not have done to any message coming from the *God of Israel*. *I have a message from God unto thee* is a popular text: many are fond of preaching from it. Now as no man should ever depart from the literal meaning of Scripture in his preaching, we may at once see the absurdity of taking such a text as this; for such preachers, to be consistent, should carry a *two-edged dagger of a cubit length on their right thigh*, and be ready to *thrust it into the bowels of all those they address!* This is certainly the *literal meaning* of the passage, and that it has *no other meaning* is an incontrovertible truth.

Verse 22. The haft also went in after the blade] As the instrument was very *short*, and Eglon very *corpulent*, this might readily take place.

And the dirt came out] This is variously understood: either the contents of the bowels issued through the wound, or he had an evacuation in the natural way through the *fright* and *anguish*.

The original, **hnwvvrp** *parshedonah*, occurs only here, and is supposed to be compounded of **vrp** *peresh*, *dung*, and **hdv** *shadah*, *to shed*, and may be very well applied to the latter circumstance; so the *Vulgate* understood it: *Statinque per secreta naturæ alvi stercora proruperunt*.

Verse 24. He covereth his feet] He has lain down on his sofa in order to sleep; when this was done they dropped their slippers, lifted up their feet, and covered them with their long loose garments. But the *versions*, in general, seem to understand it as implying a certain natural act.

Verse 26. Passed beyond the quarries] Beyond the *pesilim*, which appear to have been the Moabitish borders, where they had set up those hewn stones as *landmarks*, or sacred *boundary stones*.

Verse 28. Took the fords of Jordan] It is very likely that the Moabites, who were on the western side of Jordan, hearing of the death of Eglon, were panic-struck, and endeavoured to escape over Jordan at the *fords* near Jericho, when Ehud blew his trumpet in the mountains of Ephraim,

and thus to get into the land of the Moabites, which lay on the east of Jordan; but Ehud and his men, seizing the only pass by which they could make their escape, slew *ten thousand* of them in their attempt to cross at those fords. What is called here the *fords* was doubtless the place where the Israelites had passed Jordan when they (under Joshua) took possession of the promised land.

Verse 29. All lusty, and all men of valour] Picked, chosen troops, which Eglon kept among the Israelites to reduce and overawe them.

Verse 30. The land had rest fourscore years.] This is usually reckoned from the deliverance under Othniel, that being a *term* from which they dated every transaction, as in other cases they dated from the *exodus*, from the *building of Solomon's temple*, &c., and as other nations did from particular events: the ROMANS, from the *building of the city*; the MOHAMMEDANS, from the *Hijreh*, or *flight of Mohammed* to Medina; the CHRISTIANS, from the *birth of Christ*, &c., &c. But see the preface, and the different chronological schemes there mentioned.

Verse 31. And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath] Dr. Hales supposes that "Shamgar's administration in the West included Ehud's administration of eighty years in the East; and that, as this administration might have been of some continuance, so this Philistine servitude which is not noticed elsewhere, might have been of some duration; as may be incidentally collected from Deborah's thanksgiving, ^{αριθμ} **Judges 5:6.**"

Slew-six hundred men with an ox-goad] *rqbh dml m malmad habbakar*, the instructor of the oxen. This instrument is differently understood by the versions: the *Vulgate* has *vomere*, with the coulter or ploughshare, a dreadful weapon in the hand of a man endued with so much strength; the *Septuagint* has *αροτροποδι των βοων*, with the ploughshare of the oxen; the *Chaldee*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, understand it of the goad, as does our translation.

1. THAT the ox-goad, still used in Palestine, is a sufficiently destructive weapon if used by a strong and skilful hand, is evident enough from the description which Mr. *Maundrell* gives of this implement, having seen many of them both in Palestine and Syria: "It was observable," says he, "that in ploughing they used goads of an extraordinary size; upon measuring of several I found them about *eight feet* long, and at the bigger end about *six inches* in circumference. They were armed at the lesser end

with a *sharp prickle* for driving the oxen, and at the other end with a *small spade or paddle* of iron, strong and massy, for cleansing the plough from the clay that encumbers it in working.” See his *Journey from Aleppo, &c.*, 7th edit., pp. 110, 111. In the hands of a strong, skilful man, such an instrument must be more dangerous and more fatal than any sword.

It is worthy of remark that the *ox-goad* is represented by Homer to have been used prior to this time in the same way. In the address of Diomed to Glaucus, *Iliad*. lib. vi., ver. 129, Lycurgus is represented as discomfiting Bacchus and the Bacchanals with this weapon. The siege of Troy, according to the best chronologers, happened within the time of the Israelitish judges.

Ουκ αν εγωγε θεοισιν επουρανιοισι μαχοιμην,
Ουδε γαρ ουδε δρυαντος υιος κρατερος λυκουργος

* * * * *

Σευε κατ' ηγαθειον νυσσηιον, αι δ αμα πασαι
Θυσθλα χαμαι κατεχευαν, υπ' ανδροφονοιο λυκουργου
Θεινομεναι βουπληγι.

*“I fight not with the inhabitants of heaven;
That war Lycurgus, son of Dryas, waged,
Nor long survived.-From Nyssa’s sacred heights
He drove the nurses of the frantic god,
Thought drowning Bacchus: to the ground they cast
All cast, their leafy wands; while, ruthless, he
Spared not to smite them with his murderous goad.”*

The meaning of this fable is: Lycurgus, king of Thrace, finding his subjects addicted to drunkenness, proscribed the cultivation of the *vine* in his dominions, and instituted *agriculture* in its stead; thus *θυσθλα*, the *thyrsi*, were expelled, *βουπληγι*, by the *ox-goad*. The account, however, shows that Shamgar was not the only person who used the *ox-goad* as an offensive weapon. If we translate *βουπληξ* a *cart-whip*, the *parallel* is lost.

2. It appears that Shamgar was merely a labouring man; that the Philistines were making an inroad on the Israelites when the latter were cultivating their fields; that Shamgar and his neighbours successfully resisted them; that they armed themselves with their more portable agricultural

instruments; and that Shamgar, either with a *ploughshare* or an *ox-goad*, slew six hundred of those marauders.

3. The case of Ehud killing Eglon is a very serious one; and how far he was justified in this action is with all a question of importance, and with not a few a question of difficulty. “Is it right to slay a tyrant?” I, without hesitation, answer, No individual has a right to slay any man, except it be in his own defence, when a person attacks him in order to take away his life. “But may not any of his oppressed subjects put an end to the life of a tyrant?” No. The *state* alone can judge whether a king is ruling contrary to the laws and constitution of that state; and if that state have provided laws for the punishment of a ruler who is endeavouring to destroy or subvert that constitution, then let him be dealt with *according to those laws*. But no individual or number of individuals in that state has any right to dispose of the life of the ruler but according to law. To take his life in any other way is no less than murder. It is true God, the author of life and the judge of all men, may commission one man to take away the life of a tyrant. But the *pretension* to such a commission must be strong, clear, and unequivocal; in short, if a man think he have such a commission, to be safe, he should require the Lord to give him as full an evidence of it as he did to Moses; and when such a person comes to the *people*, they should require him to give as many proofs of his Divine call as the Hebrews did Moses, before they should credit his pretensions. “But had not Ehud a Divine call?” I cannot tell. If he had, he did not murder Eglon; if he had not, his act, however it succeeded, was a murderous act; and if he had *no message from God*, (and there is no proof that he had,) then he was a most base and hypocritical assassin. The sacred historian says nothing of his *motives* nor *call*; he mentions simply the fact, and leaves it without either observation or comment, and every reader is left to draw his own inference.

The life of any ruler can only be at the disposal of the constitution, or that system of rules, laws, and regulations, by which the people he rules should be governed; if he rule not according to these, he is, *ipso facto*, deposed from his government. If he break the constitution, to the great injury or ruin of his subjects, then he is to be judged by those laws according to which he must have pledged himself to govern. If a king be *deposed* on any other account, it is *rebellion*. If his life be taken away by any means but those provided by the constitution, it is *murder*. No pretended or proved tyranny can justify his being *taken off* in any other way, or on any other account. And what constitution in the civilized world provides for the

death of the supreme magistrate? It is true *the good people*, as they were called, of England and France, have each under a pretense of law, beheaded their king; and they endeavoured to justify their conduct on the ground that those kings had broken the constitution: this being *proved*, they should have been *deposed*. But by what *law*, either of those nations or of the civilized world, were their lives taken away? Let it be remembered that the inflation of the punishment of death, either *against* or *without law*, is *murder*.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 4

The Israelites again rebel against God, and they are delivered into the hands of Jabin, king of Canaan, 1, 2. They cry unto God, and he raises up Deborah and Barak to deliver them, 3-10. Some account of Heber the Kenite, 11. Barak attacks Sisera, captain of Jabin's army, at the river Kishon, and gives him a total overthrow, 12-16. Sisera leaves his chariot, and flies away on foot; enters the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, by whom he is slain, while secreting himself in her apartment, 17-24.

NOTES ON CHAP. 4

Verse 1. When Ehud was dead.] Why not *when Shamgar was dead*? Does this not intimate that Shamgar was not reckoned in the number of the *judges*?

Verse 2. Jabin king of Canaan] Probably a descendant of the Jabin mentioned ^{<6110>}**Joshua 11:1**, &c., who had gathered together the wrecks of the army of that Jabin defeated by Joshua. *Calmet* supposes that these Canaanites had the dominion over the tribes of *Naphtali*, *Zebulun*, and *Issachar*; while Deborah judged in *Ephraim*, and Shamgar in *Judah*.

Verse 3. Nine hundred chariots of iron] Chariots *armed* with iron scythes, as is generally supposed; they could not have been made all of iron, but they might have been *shod with iron*, or had *iron scythes* projecting from the axle on each side, by which infantry might be easily cut down or thrown into confusion. The ancient *Britons* are said to have had such chariots.

Verse 4. Deborah, a prophetess] One on whom the Spirit of God descended, and who was the instrument of conveying to the Israelites the knowledge of the Divine will, in things sacred and civil.

She judged Israel] This is, I believe, the first instance of *gynæcocracy*, or female government, on record. Deborah seems to have been supreme both in civil and religious affairs; and *Lapidoth*, her husband, appears to have had no hand in the government. But the original may as well be translated *a woman of Lapidoth*, as *the wife of Lapidoth*.

Verse 5. The palm tree of Deborah] It is common for the *Hindoos* to plant trees in the *names of themselves* and their *friends*; and some religious mendicants live for a considerable time *under trees*.-Ward.

Verse 6. She sent and called Barak] She appointed him to be *general* of the armies on this occasion; which shows that she possessed the supreme power in the state.

Mount Tabor] “Mount Tabor,” says Maundrell, “stands by itself, about two or three furlongs within the plains of *Esdraelon*. It has a plain area at the top, both fertile and delicious of an oval figure, extending about one furlong in breadth, and two in length. The prospect from the top is beautiful: on the N.W. is the *Mediterranean*; and all around you have the spacious plains of *Esdraelon* and *Galilee*, which present you with a view of many places famous for the resort and miracles of the Son of God. At the bottom of Tabor, westward, stands *Daberah*, a small village, supposed to have taken its name from *Deborah*. Near this valley is the brook *Kishon*. During the rainy season, all the water that falls on the eastern side of the mountain, or upon the rising ground to the southward, empties itself into it, in a number of torrents: at which conjuncture it overflows its banks, acquires a wonderful rapidity, and carries all before it. It might be at such a time as this when the *stars* are said to *fight against Sisera*, ^{<0763>}**Judges 5:20, 21**, by bringing an abundance of rain, whereby the *Kishon* became so high and rapid as to sweep away the host of Sisera, in attempting to ford it.” See *Maundrell* and *Shaw*. This mountain is very difficult of ascent; it took Mr. Maundrell nearly an hour to reach the top; this, with its grand area on the summit, made a very proper place for the rendezvous of Barak’s army. *Antiochus* used it for the same purpose in his wars; and *Josephus* appears to have fortified it; and *Placidus*, one of *Vespasian’s* generals, was sent to reduce it. See more in *Calmet*.

Verse 9. The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.] Does not this mean, If I go with thee, the conquest shall be attributed to me, and thou wilt have no honour? Or, is it a *prediction* of the exploit of *Jael*? In both these senses the words have been understood. It seems, however, more likely that *Jael* is intended.

The *Septuagint* made a remarkable *addition* to the speech of Barak: “If thou wilt go with me I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go; ἵνα οὐκ οἶδα τὴν ἡμέραν ἐν ἣ ἐσοδοῖ κύριος τὸν ἀγγέλον μετ’ ἐμοῦ, *because I know not the day in which the Lord will send his angel to*

give me success.” By which he appears to mean, that although he was certain of a Divine call to this work, yet, as he knew not *the time* in which it would be proper for him to make the attack, he wishes that Deborah, on whom the Divine Spirit constantly rested, would accompany him to let him know *when* to strike that blow, which he knew would be decisive. This was quite natural, and quite reasonable, and is no impeachment whatever of Barak’s faith. St. *Ambrose* and St. *Augustine* have the same reading; but it is found in no MS. nor in any other of the *versions*. See ^{<07044>}**Judges 4:14**.

Verse 10. Ten thousand men at his feet] Ten thousand *footmen*. He had no *chariots*; his army was all composed of *infantry*.

Verse 11. Hohab the father-in-law of Moses] For a circumstantial account of this person, and the meaning of the original word ^{^tj} *chothen*, which is translated *son-in-law* in ^{<01914>}**Genesis 19:14**, see the notes on ^{<0215>}**Exodus 2:15, 16, 18; 3:1; 4:20, 24; 18:5**.

Verse 14. Up; for this is the day] This is exactly the purpose for which the *Septuagint* state, ^{<07048>}**Judges 4:8**, that Barak wished Deborah to accompany him. “I know not,” says he, “THE DAY in which God will send his angel to give me prosperity: come thou with we that thou mayest direct me in this respect.” She went, and told him the *precise time* in which he was to make the attack: *Up, for THIS is the DAY in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand*.

Went down from Mount Tabor] He had probably encamped his men on and near the *summit* of this mount. See **Clarke’s note on ^{<07046>}Judges 4:6**”.

Verse 15. The Lord discomfited Sisera] *hwby mhyw* *vayiahom Jehovah; the Lord CONFOUNDED, threw them all into confusion, drove them pell-mell-caused chariots to break and overthrow chariots, and threw universal disorder into all their ranks. In this case Barak and his men had little to do but kill and pursue, and Sisera in order to escape, was obliged to abandon his chariot. There is no doubt all this was done by supernatural agency; God sent his *angel* and confounded them.*

Verse 18. Jael went out to meet Sisera] He preferred the woman’s tent because of secrecy; for, according to the etiquette of the eastern countries, no person ever intrudes into the apartments of the women. And in every dwelling the women have a separate apartment.

Verse 19. She opened a bottle of milk] She gave more than he requested; and her friendship increased his confidence and security.

Verse 20. Stand in the door of the tent] As no man would intrude into the women's apartment without permission, her simply saying, *there is no man in my tent*, would preclude all search.

Verse 21. A nail of the tent] One of the spikes by which they fasten to the ground the cords which are attached to the cloth or covering.

He was fast asleep and weary.] As he lay on one side, and was overwhelmed with sleep through the heat and fatigues of the day, the piercing of his temples must have in a moment put him past resistance.

Verse 22. Behold, Sisera lay dead] What impression this made on the victorious Barak is not said: it could not give him much pleasure, especially when he learned the circumstances of his death.

Verse 24. The hand of the children of Israel prospered] *Ēwl h Ēl tw vattelech haloch, it went, going*-they followed up this victory, and the consequence was, they utterly destroyed Jabin and his kingdom.

It will naturally be expected that something should be said to justify the conduct of Jael: it must be owned that she slew Sisera in circumstances which caused the whole transaction to appear exceedingly questionable. They are the following:—

1. There was *peace* between her family and the king of Canaan.
2. That peace was no doubt made, as all transactions of the kind were, with a sacrifice and an oath.
3. Sisera, knowing this, came to her tent with the utmost confidence.
4. She met him with the most friendly greetings and assurances of safety.
5. Having asked for *water*, to show her friendship and respect she gave him *cream*, and that in a vessel suitable to his dignity.
6. She put him in the secret part of her own tent, and covered him in such a way as to evidence her good faith, and to inspire him with the greater confidence.

7. She agreed to keep watch at the door, and deny his being there to any that might inquire.

8. As she gave him permission to secrete himself with her, and gave him refreshment, she was bound by the rules of Asiatic hospitality to have defended his life, even at the risk of her own.

9. Notwithstanding, she took the advantage of his weariness and deep sleep, and took away his life!

10. She exulted in her deed, met Barak, and showed him in triumph what she had done.

Now do we not find, in all this, bad faith, deceit, deep hypocrisy, lying, breach of treaty, contempt of religious rites, breach of the laws of hospitality, deliberate and unprovoked murder? But what can be said in her justification? All that can be said, and all that has been said is simply this: "She might have been sincere at first, but was afterwards Divinely directed to do what she did." If this was so, she is sufficiently vindicated by the fact; for God has a right to dispose of the lives of his creatures as he pleases: and probably the cup of Sisera's iniquity was full, and his life already forfeited to the justice of God. But does it appear that she received any such direction from God? There is no sufficient evidence of it: it is true that Deborah, a prophetess, declares her *blessed above women*; and this seems to intimate that her conduct was pleasing to God. If Deborah was inspired on this occasion, her words are a presumptive proof that the act was right; unless we are to understand it as a simple declaration of the reputation she should be held in among her own sex. But we do not find one word from Jael herself, stating how she was led to do an act repugnant to her feelings as a woman, contrary to good faith, and a breach of the rules of hospitality. Nor does the sacred penman say one word to explain the case; as in the case of Ehud, he states the fact, and leaves his readers to form their own opinion.

To say, as has been said in the case of *Eglon*, that "Sisera was a *public enemy*, and any of the people whom he oppressed might be justified in taking away his life," is a very dangerous position, as it refers one of the most solemn acts of judgment and justice to the caprice, or prejudice, or enthusiastic feeling of every individual who may persuade himself that he is not only concerned in the business, but authorized by God to take vengeance by his own hand. While justice and law are in the world, God

never will, as he never did, abandon cases of this kind to the caprice, prejudice, or party feeling, of any man. The conduct of Ehud and Jael are before the tribunal of God: I will not justify, I dare not absolutely condemn; there I leave them, and entreat my readers to do the like; after referring them to the observations at the end of the preceding chapter, where the subject is considered more at large.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 5

The triumphant song of Deborah and Barak, after the defeat of Sisera, captain of the armies of Jabin, king of Canaan.

NOTES ON CHAP. 5

Verse 1. Then sang Deborah, and Barak] There are many difficulties in this very sublime song; and learned men have toiled much to remove them. That there are several gross mistakes in our version will be instantly acknowledged by all who can critically examine the original. Dr. *Kennicott* has distributed it into *parts*, assigned to Deborah and Barak alternately. But his division is by far too *artificial*.

Dr. *Hales* has also given a version of it which, perhaps, comes nearer to the *simplicity* of the original; but it also leaves several difficulties behind. As these are the two best versions I have met with, I shall lay them both in parallel columns before the reader, after introducing the general description of this song, given by each of these learned men. These the reader will find at the conclusion of the chapter.

Verse 2. For the avenging of Israel] See the notes, &c., at the end of the chapter. **Clarke** “~~verses~~ **Judges 5:28**”.

Verse 4. When thou wentest out of Seir] Here is an allusion to the giving of the law, and the manifestation of God’s power and glory at that time; and as this was the most signal display of his majesty and mercy in behalf of their forefathers, Deborah very properly begins her song with a commemoration of this transaction.

Verse 6. The highways were unoccupied] The land was full of anarchy and confusion, being everywhere infested with banditti. No public road was safe; and in going from place to place, the people were obliged to use unfrequented paths.

Verse 7. The villages ceased] The people were obliged to live together in fortified places; or in great numbers, to protect each other against the incursions of bands of spoilers.

Verse 8. They chose new gods] This was the cause of all their calamities; *they forsook Jehovah, and served other gods; and then was war in their gates*-they were hemmed up in every place, and besieged in all their fortified cities; and they were defenseless, they had no means of resisting their adversaries; for even among *forty thousand men*, there was neither *spear nor shield to be seen*.

The Vulgate gives a strange and curious turn to this verse: *Nova bella elegit Dominus, et portas hostium ipse subvertit*; “The Lord chose a new species of war, and himself subverted the gates of the enemy.” Now, what was this new species of war? A woman signifies her orders to Barak; he takes 10,000 men, wholly unarmed, and retires to Mount Tabor, where they are immediately besieged by a powerful and well-appointed army. On a sudden Barak and his men rush upon them, terror and dismay are spread through the whole Cannanitish army, and the rout is instantaneous and complete. The Israelites immediately arm themselves with the arms of their enemies, and slay all before them; they run, and are pursued in all directions. Sisera, their general, is no longer safe in his chariot; either his horses fail, or the unevenness of the road obliges him to desert it, and fly away on foot; in the end, the whole army is destroyed, and the leader ingloriously slain. This was a *new species of war*, and was most evidently the *Lord’s doings*. Whatever may be said of the version of the *Vulgate*, (and the *Syriac* and *Arabic* are something like it,) the above are all facts, and show the wondrous working of the Lord.

Verse 10. Ye that ride on white asses] Perhaps *twrj x twnta athonoth tsechoroth* should be rendered *sleek* or *well-fed asses*; rendered *asinos nitentes*, *shining asses*, by the *Vulgate*.

Ye that sit in judgment] *ˆydm l [ybv yoshebey al middin*; some have rendered this, *ye who dwell in Middin*. This was a place in the tribe of Judah, and is mentioned ^{<61561>}**Joshua 15:61**.

And walk by the way.] Persons who go from place to place for the purposes of traffic.

Verse 11. In the places of drawing water] As wells were very scarce in every part of the East, and travellers in such *hot* countries must have water, robbers and banditti generally took their stations near tanks, pools, and springs, in order that they might suddenly fall upon those who came to drink; and when the country was badly governed, annoyances of this kind

were very frequent. The victory gained now by the Israelites put the whole country under their own government, and the land was cleansed from such marauders. Dr. *Shaw*, in his account of the sea-coast of the *Mauritania Cæsariensis*, page 20, mentions a beautiful rill of water that runs into a basin of Roman workmanship, called *shrub we krub*, “drink and be off,” because of the danger of meeting with assassins in the place. Instead of such danger and insecurity, Deborah intimates that they may sit down at the place of drawing water, and there rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord; the land being now everywhere in peace, order and good government being restored.

Go down to the gates] They may go down to the gates to receive judgment and justice as usual. It is well known that the *gate* was the place of judgment in the East.

Verse 12. Lead thy captivity captive] Make those captives who have formerly captivated us.

Verse 13. Make him that remaineth] This appears to be spoken of *Barak*, who is represented as being only a *remnant* of the people.

Verse 14. Out of Ephraim-a root of them] Deborah probably means that out of *Ephraim* and *Benjamin* came eminent warriors. *Joshua*, who was of the tribe of *Ephraim*, routed the *Amalekites* a short time after the Israelites came out of Egypt, ^{<021710>}**Exodus 17:10**. *Ehud*, who was of the tribe of *Benjamin*, slew Eglon, and defeated the Moabites, the friends and allies of the Ammonites and Amalekites. *Machir*, in the land of Gilead, produced eminent *warriors*; and *Zebulun* produced eminent *statesmen*, and men of literature. Probably Deborah speaks here of the *past wars*, and not of any thing that was done on this occasion; for we know that no persons from *Gilead* were present in the war between Jabin and Israel. See ^{<021517>}**Judges 5:17**. *Gilead abode beyond Jordan*.

Verse 15. The princes of Issachar] They were at hand and came willingly forth, at the call of Deborah, to this important war.

Barak-was sent on foot] I have no doubt that *wyl grb*, without regarding the *points*, should be translated *with his footmen or infantry*. Thus the Alexandrian *Septuagint* understood it, rendering the clause thus: οὐτω Βαράκ ἐξαπεστειλεν πεζους αυτου εις την κοιλαδα, “Barak also

sent forth his footmen into the valley.” *Luther* has perfectly hit the meaning, *Barak mit seinen fussvoleke*, “Barak with his footmen.”

For the divisions of Reuben] Either the Reubenites were divided among themselves into factions, which prevented their co-operation with their brethren, or they were divided in their judgment concerning the measures *now* to be pursued, which prevented them from joining with the other tribes till the business was entirely settled.

The *thoughts of heart*, and *searchings of heart*, might refer to the *doubts* and *uneasiness* felt by the other tribes, when they found the Reubenites did not join them; for they might have conjectured that they were either unconcerned about their *liberty*, or were meditating a coalition with the Canaanites.

Verse 17. Gilead abode beyond Jordan] That is, the *Gadites*, who had their lot in those parts, and could not well come to the aid of their brethren at a short summons. But the words of Deborah imply a criminal neglect on the part of the Danites; they were intent upon their traffic, and trusted in their ships. Joppa was one of their sea-ports.

Asher continued on the seashore] The lot of Asher extended along the Mediterranean Sea; and being contiguous to Zebulun and Naphtali, they might have easily succoured their brethren; but they had the pretence that their posts were unguarded, and they abode in their *breaches*, in order to defend them.

Verse 18. Zebulun and Naphtali-jeoparded their lives] The original is very emphatic, *ārij twml wvpn chereph naphsho lamuth, they desolated their lives to death*-they were determined to conquer or die, and therefore plunged into the thickest of the battle. The word *jeoparded* is a silly French term, and comes from the exclamation of a disappointed *gamester*: *Jeu perdu! The game is lost*; or *J'ai perdue! I have lost*.

Verse 19. The kings came and fought] It is conjectured that Jabin and his confederates had invaded *Manasseh*, as both Taanach and Megiddo were in that tribe: and that they were discomfited by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali at Taanach and Megiddo; while Barak defeated Sisera at Mount Tabor.

They took no gain of money] They expected much booty in the total rout of the Israelites; but they were defeated, and got no prey; or, if applied to the *Israelites*, They fought for *liberty*, not for *plunder*.

Verse 20. They fought from heaven] The angels of God came to the assistance of Israel: and the *stars in their orbits fought against Sisera*; probably some thunder storm, or great inundation from the river Kishon, took place at that time, which in poetic language was attributed to the *stars*. So our poet sung relative to the storms which dispersed the Spanish armada in 1588:—

*“Both winds and waves at once conspire
To aid old England—frustrate Spain’s desire.”*

Perhaps it means no more than this: the *time* which was measured and ruled by the heavenly bodies seemed only to exist for the destruction of the Canaanites. There may be also a reference to the sun and moon standing still in the days of Joshua.

Verse 21. The river of Kishon swept them away] This gives plausibility to the above conjecture, that there was a storm at this time which produced an inundation in the river Kishon, which the routed Canaanites attempting to ford were swept away.

Verse 22. Then were the horsehoofs broken] In very ancient times horses were not shod; nor are they to the present day in several parts of the East. Sisera had *iron chariots* when his hosts were routed; the horses that drew these, being strongly urged on by those who drove them, had their hoofs broken by the roughness of the roads; in consequence of which they became lame, and could not carry off their riders. This is marked as one cause of their disaster.

Verse 23. Curse ye Meroz] Where Meroz was is not known; some suppose it was the same as *Merom*, nigh to *Dotham*. The *Syriac* and *Arabic* have *Merod*; but where this was is equally uncertain. It was certainly some city or district, the inhabitants of which would not assist in this war.

Curse ye bitterly] *rwra wra oru aror*, curse with cursing—use the most awful execrations.

Said the angel of the LORD] That is, Barak, who was Jehovah's *angel* or *messenger* in this war; the person *sent* by God to deliver his people.

To the help of the LORD] That is, to the help of the *people* of the Lord.

Against the mighty.] μῦρῳβγβ *baggibborim*, "with the heroes;" that is, Barak and his men, together with Zebulun and Naphtali: these were the *mighty men*, or *heroes*, with whom the inhabitants of Meroz would not join.

Verse 24. Blessed above women shall Jael-be] She shall be highly celebrated as a most heroic woman; all the Israelitish women shall glory in her. I do not understand these words as expressive of the Divine approbation towards Jael. See the observations at the end of <0002> **Judges 4:24**. The word *bless*, both in *Hebrew* and *Greek*, often signifies *to praise*, *to speak well of*, *to celebrate*. This is most probably its sense here.

Verse 25. She brought forth butter] As the word hamj *chemah*, here translated *butter*, signifies *disturbed*, *agitated*, &c., it is probable that *buttermilk* is intended. The Arabs form their buttermilk by agitating the milk in a leathery bag, and the buttermilk is highly esteemed because of its refreshing and cooling quality; but there is no reason why we may not suppose that Jael gave him *cream*: Sisera was not only *thirsty*, but was also *exhausted* with fatigue; and nothing could be better calculated to quench his thirst, and restore his exhausted strength, than a bowl of cream. I am surprised that Mr. Harmer should see any difficulty in this. It is evident that Deborah wishes to convey the idea that Jael was *more liberal* and *kind* than Sisera had requested. He asked for *water*, and she brought him *cream*; and she brought it to him, not in an *ordinary pitcher*, but in the most superb *dish* or *bowl* which she possessed. See at the end of <0002> **Judges 4:24**.

Verse 26. She smote off his head] The original does not warrant this translation; nor is it supported by fact. *She smote his head*, and transfixed him through the temples. It was his *head* that received the death wound, and the *place* where this wound was inflicted was the *temples*. The manner in which Jael despatched Sisera seems to have been this: 1. Observing him to be in a profound sleep she took a *workman's hammer*, probably a *joiner's mallet*, and with one blow on the head deprived him of all sense. 2. She then took a tent nail and drove it through his temples, and thus pinned him to the earth; which she could not have done had she not previously

stunned him with the blow on the head. Thus she first *smote his head*, and secondly pierced his *temples*.

Verse 27. At her feet he bowed] *hyl gr ^yb bein ragleyha*, “between her feet.” After having stunned him she probably sat down, for the greater convenience of driving the nail through his temples.

He bowed-he fell] He probably made some *struggles* after he received the blow on the head, but could not recover his feet.

Æschylus represents Agamemnon rising, staggering, and finally falling, under the blows of Clytemnestra.-Agam. v. 1384.

Verse 28. Cried through the lattice] This is very natural: in the women’s apartments in the East the windows are *latticed*, to prevent them from sending or receiving letters, &c. The latticing is the effect of the jealousy which universally prevails in those countries.

Why is his chariot so long in coming?] Literally, Why is his chariot ashamed to come?

Dr. Lowth has very justly observed, that this is a striking image of maternal solicitude, and of a mind divided between hope and fear.

*“The mother of Sisera looked out at a window;
She cried through the lattice,
‘Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?’*

“Immediately, impatient of delay, she prevents the comfort of her companions; elate in mind, and bursting forth into female levity and jactation, impotent to hope for any thing, and drunk with her good fortune,

*“Her wise ladies earnestly answered her;
Yea, she immediately returned answer to herself;
‘Have they not sped? have they not divided the spoil?’*

“We see how consonant to the person speaking is every idea, every word. She dwells not upon the slaughter of the enemies, the number of the captives, the valour and great exploits of the victor, but, burning with the female love of spoils, on those things rather which captivate the light mind of the vainest woman; *damsels, gold, garments*. Nor does she dwell upon them only; but she repeats, she accumulates, she augments every thing. She

seems, as it were, to handle the spoils. dwelling as she does on every particular.

*‘Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey?
A damsel, yea, two damsels to every man:
To Sisera, a prey of divers colours;
A prey of divers colours of needlework,
Finely coloured of needlework on both sides,
A spoil for adorning the neck.’*

To enhance the beauty of this passage, there is, in the poetic conformation of the sentences, an admirable neatness in the diction, great force, splendour, accuracy; in the very redundance of the repetitions the utmost brevity; and, lastly, the most striking disappointment of the woman’s hope, tacitly insinuated by that sudden and unexpected apostrophe,

‘So let all thine enemies perish, O JEHOVAH!’

is expressed more fully and strongly by this silence than could have been painted by any colouring of words.” See Dr. Lowth, 13th Prelection, ^{<0018>}**Proverbs 4:18, 19.**

“We cannot do better,” says Dr. *Dodd*, “than conclude this chapter with the words of *Pelicanus*: ‘Let a Homer, or a Virgil, go and compare his poetry, if he be able, with the song of this woman; and, if there be anyone who excels in eloquence and learning, let him celebrate the praises and learning of this panegyric, more copiously than I am able.’”

FOR other matters relative to this song I must refer to the two translations which immediately follow; and their authors’ notes on them.

Dr. *Kennicott* says, “This celebrated song of triumph is most deservedly admired; though some parts of it are at present very obscure, and others unintelligible in our English version. Besides particular difficulties, there is a general one that pervades the whole; arising as I humbly apprehend, from its being considered as *entirely* the *song of Deborah*. It is certain, though very little attended to, that it is said to have been sung *by Deborah and BY BARAK*. It is also certain there are in it parts which *Deborah* could not sing, as well as parts which *Barak* could not sing; and therefore it seems necessary, in order to form a better judgment of this song, that some probable distribution should be made of it; whilst those words which seem most likely to have been sung by either party should be assigned to their

proper name; either to that of *Deborah* the *prophetess*, or to that of *Barak* the *captain*.

“For example: *Deborah* could not call upon *Deborah*, *exhorting* herself to *awake*, &c., as in ^{<07612>}**Judges 5:12**; neither could *Barak* exhort himself to arise, &c., in the same verse. Again, *Barak* could not sing, *Till I, Deborah, arose a mother in Israel*, ^{<07607>}**Judges 5:7**; nor could *Deborah* sing about *a damsel or two* for every soldier, ^{<07630>}**Judges 5:30**; though, indeed, as to this last article, the words are probably misunderstood. There are other parts also which seem to require a different rendering. ^{<07612>}**Judges 5:2**, *For the avenging of Israel*, where the address is probably to those who *took the lead* in Israel on this great occasion, for the address in the next words is to those *among the people* who were volunteers; as again, ^{<07609>}**Judges 5:9**. ^{<07611>}**Judges 5:11, 13-15**, have many great difficulties. It seems impossible that (^{<07623>}**Judges 5:23**) any person should be *cursed* for not coming *to the help of* JEHOVAH; *to the help of* JEHOVAH *against the mighty*. Nor does it seem more probable that *Jael* should, in a sacred song, be styled *blessed above women* for the death of *Sisera*. ^{<07626>}**Judges 5:26** mentions *butter*, of which nothing is said in the history in ^{<07619>}**Judges 4:19**; nor does the history say that *Jael smote off* *Sisera’s* head *with a hammer*, or indeed that she *smote it off* at all, as here, ^{<07626>}**Judges 5:26**. Lastly, as to ^{<07630>}**Judges 5:30**, there being no authority for rendering the words *a damsel* or *two damsels*, and the words in Hebrew being very much like two other words in this same verse, which make excellent sense here, it seems highly probable that they were originally the same. And at the end of this verse, which contains an excellent compliment paid to the *needlework* of the daughters of Israel, and which is here put with great art in the mouth of *Sisera’s* MOTHER, the true sense seems to be, the hopes SHE had of some very *rich prize* to adorn HER OWN NECK.” -*Kennicott’s Remarks*, p. 94.

Dr. Hales observes, “That the design of this beautiful ode, which breathes the characteristic softness and luxuriance of female composition, seems to be twofold, *religious* and *political*; first, to thank GOD for the recent victory and deliverance of *Israel* from *Canaanitish* bondage and oppression; and next, to celebrate the zeal and alacrity with which some of the rulers volunteered their services against the common enemy, and to

censure the lukewarmness and apathy of others who stayed at home, and thus betrayed the public cause; and, by this contrast and exposure, to heal those fatal divisions among the tribes, so injurious to the commonwealth. The first verse, as a title, briefly recites the design or subject of the poem, which consists of eight stanzas.

“The *first* opens with a devout thanksgiving, to which she calls the attention of all, friends and foes.

“The *second* describes, in the sublime imagery of Moses, the magnificent scenes at Mount Sinai, *Seir*, &c., in the deserts of *Arabia*, while they were led by the Divine power and presence from Egypt to *Canaan*.

“The *third* states their offending afterwards by their apostasies in serving *new gods*, as foretold by *Moses*, ^{<01316>}**Deuteronomy 32:16, 17**, and their consequent oppression by their enemies; the insecurity of travelling, and desertion of the villages, during the twenty years that intervened from the death of *Shamgar* till Jael’s exploit, and till *Deborah* became judge. By this time they were disarmed by the *Philistines* and *Canaanites*, and scarcely a sword or a spear was to be seen in *Israel*. This policy was adopted by the *Philistines* in Saul’s time, ^{<01319>}**1 Samuel 13:19**, and was probably introduced before, when *Shamgar*, for want of other weapons, had recourse to an *ox-goad*, which was only left with them for the purpose of agriculture, ^{<01321>}**1 Samuel 13:21**.

“The *fourth* contrasts their present happy state of security from the incursions and depredations of their foes, especially at the watering places, which were most exposed to attacks; owing to the Divine protection which crowned the victory, the zeal and exertions of ‘a remnant of the people,’ or a part of the tribes, against the enemy, under her conduct; these were the midland tribes of *Ephraim*, *Manasseh*, and *Benjamin*, including, perhaps, *Judah* and *Simeon*, which bordered on *Amalek* southward, and *Issachar*, *Zebulun*, and *Naphtali*, northward.

“The *fifth* censures the recreant tribes *Reuben* and *Gad*, beyond Jordan eastward; and *Dan* and *Asher*, on the Mediterranean Sea westward, who deserted the common cause in consequence of their divisions, and their paltry attachment to their own concerns.

“The *sixth* records the miraculous defeat of the confederate kings of *Canaan*, who were swept away by the torrents issuing from the different

springs of the river *Kishon*, swollen by uncommon rains. Meroz was probably a place in the neighbourhood.

“The *seventh* contains a panegyric on *Jael*, who is here ‘blessed *above* women,’ for attempting an exploit above her sex to perform; and a picturesque description of her giving *Sisera buttermilk* to drink, which is considered as a great treat at present among the Arabs. Then follows a minute and circumstantial description of her mode of slaying him.

“The *eighth* affords an admirable representation of the impatience of the mother of *Sisera* at his delay in returning; her sanguine anticipation of his success; in which she dwells, not upon the greatness of his exploits, or the slaughter of his enemies, but upon the circumstances most likely to engage a light female mind, such as captive damsels, and embroidered garments, or the spoils of victory, which she repeats and exemplifies with much grace and elegance.

“The unexpected and abrupt apostrophe which concludes the poem, *So perish all thine enemies, O LORD!* tacitly insinuates the utter disappointment of their vain hopes of conquest and spoil more fully and forcibly than any express declaration in words; while it marks the author’s piety, and sole reliance upon the Divine protection of His people, and the glorious prospect of a future and greater deliverance, perhaps, by the *Sun of righteousness.*”-*New Anal. Chron.* p. 324.

Dr. Kennicott’s version of the Song

1. Then sang Deborah, and Barak the son of Abinoam, saying:-
2. *Deb.* For the *leaders* who took the lead in Israel,
Bar. For the *people* who offered themselves willingly,
Both. BLESS YE JEHOVAH!
3. *Deb.* Hear, O ye kings!
Bar. Give ear, O ye princes!
Deb. I unto JEHOVAH will sing.
Bar. I will answer in song to JEHOVAH;
Both. THE GOD OF ISRAEL!
4. *Deb.* O JEHOVAH, at thy going forth from Seir
 At thy marching from the field of Edom,
Bar. The earth trembled, even the heavens poured down;
 The thick clouds poured down the waters

5. *Deb.* The mountains melted at JEHOVAH'S presence.
Bar. Sinai itself, at the presence of JEHOVAH
Both. THE GOD OF ISRAEL!
6. *Deb.* In the days of *Shamgar*, the son of Anath,
 In the days of Jael, the highways were deserted.
Bar. For they who had gone by straight paths,
 Passed by ways that were very crooked.
7. Deserted were the villages in Israel.
Deb. They were deserted till I, Deborah, arose;
 Till I arose a mother in Israel.
8. They chose new gods!
Bar. Then, when war was at the gates,
 Was there a shield seen, or a spear,
 Among forty thousand in Israel?
9. *Deb.* My heart is towards the rulers of Israel;
Bar. Ye who offered yourselves willingly among the people.
Both. BLESS YE JEHOVAH!
10. *Deb.* Ye who ride upon white asses;
 Ye who sit upon the seat of judgment.
11. *Bar.* And ye who travel upon the roads,
 Talk of Him with the voice of praise.
Deb. Let them who meet armed at the watering places
 There show the righteous acts of JEHOVAH,
Bar. And the righteousness of the villages of Israel:
 Then shall they go down to the gates;
Both. THE PEOPLE OF JEHOVAH!
12. *Bar.* Awake, awake, Deborah!
 Awake, awake, lead on the song.
Deb. Arise, Barak! and lead thy captivity captive,
 Barak, thou son of Abinoam.
13. *Bar.* Then, when the remainder descended after their chiefs,
 Jehovah's people descended after me,
 Against the mighty.
14. *Deb.* Out of Ephraim was their beginning at Mount Amalek;
 And after thee was Benjamin, against the nations.

Bar. From *Machir*, came masters in the art of war;
And from *Zebulun*, those who threw the dart.

15. *Deb.* The princes in *Issachar* were numbered
Together with Deborah and Barak.

Bar. And *Issachar* was the guard of Barak,
Into the valley sent close at his feet.

Deb. At the divisions of *Reuben*,
Great were the impressions of heart.

16. *Bar.* Why satest thou among the rivulet?
What! to hear the bleatings of the flocks?

Deb. For the divisions of *Reuben*,
Great were the searchings of heart.

17. *Bar.* *Gad* dwelt quietly beyond Jordan;
And *Dan*, why abode he in ships?

Deb. *Asher* continued in the harbour of the seas,
And remained among his craggy places.

18. *Bar.* *Zebulun* were the people, and *Naphtali*,

Deb. Who exposed their lives unto the death,
Both. ON THE HEIGHTS OF THE FIELD.

19. *Deb.* The kings came, they fought;
Then fought the kings of Canaan;

Bar. At Taanac, above the waters of Megiddo:
The plunder of riches they did not receive.

20. *Deb.* From heaven did they fight;
The stars, from their lofty stations,
Fought against *Sisera*.

21. *Bar.* The river Kishon swept them away,
The river intercepted them; the river Kishon:
It was there my soul trod down strength.

22. *Deb.* It was then the hoofs of the cavalry were battered.
By the scamperings, the scamperings of its strong steeds.

23. *Bar.* Curse ye the land of Meroz,
Said the messenger of JEHOVAH:

Deb. Curse ye heavily its inhabitants,
Because they came not for help.

Both. JEHOVAH WAS FOR HELP!
JEHOVAH AGAINST THE MIGHTY!

24. *Deb.* Praised among women will be *Jael*,
The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Among women in the tent will she be *praised*.
25. *Bar.* He asked water, she gave him milk;
In a princely bowl she brought it.
26. *Deb.* Her *left* hand she put forth to the nail;
And her *right* hand to the workman's hammer.
Bar. She struck *Sisera*, she smote his head;
Then she struck through, and pierced his temples.
27. *Deb.* At her feet he bowed, he fell! *Bar.* At her feet he bowed, he fell!
Both. WHERE HE BOWED.
THERE HE FELL DEAD.
28. *Deb.* Through the window she looked out and called,
Even *the mother of Sisera*, through the lattice;
Bar. 'Why is his chariot ashamed to return?
Why so slow are the steps of his chariot?'
29. *Deb.* Her wise ladies answered her;
Nay, she returned answer to herself:
30. *Bar.* 'Have they not found, divided the spoil;
Embroidery, double embroidery for the captains' heads!
A prize of divers colours for *Sisera!*'
Deb. 'A prize of divers colours of embroidery;
A coloured piece of double embroidery for MY NECK, a prize!'
Chorus, by Deborah and Barak.
31. So perish all thine enemies, O Jehovah!
Grand Chorus, by the whole procession.
AND LET THOSE WHO LOVE HIM
BE AS THE SUN GOING FORTH IN HIS MIGHT.
* * * * *

Dr. Hales's version of the Song

1. Then sang Deborah, and Barak son of Abinoam on (the victory of) that day, on the avenging of wrongs in Israel:

2. On the volunteering of the people;
Saying, BLESS YE THE LORD!
3. Hearken, O kings, (of Canaan,)
Give ear, O princes, (of the land:)
I, even I, will sing unto the Lord;
I will shout to the Lord, the God of Israel.
4. O Lord, on thy going forth from *Seir*,
On thy marching from the land of *Edom*,
The earth quaked, the heavens dropped,
The clouds, I say, dropped water.
5. The mountains melted away
From the presence of the Lord;
Even *Sinai* himself, from the presence
OF THE LORD THE GOD OF ISRAEL.
6. From the days of *Shamgar*, son of Anath,
To the days of *Jael*, (through fear of the enemy,)
The highways were unfrequented,
And travellers walked through by-paths.
7. The villages were deserted:
They were deserted till I, *Deborah*, arose,
Till I arose (to be) a mother in *Israel*.
8. (The *Israelites*) had chosen *new gods*,
Therefore was war in their gates:
Was there a shield or a spear to be seen
Among forty thousand in Israel?
9. My heart it attached to the senators of *Israel*,
Who volunteered among the people.
10. BLESS YE THE LORD!
Ye that ride upon white asses,
Ye that sit in (the gates of) judgment,
Extol (him) ye travellers.
11. (Now freed) from the noise of archers
At the watering places,
Here shall they rehearse the righteousness
OF THE LORD; his righteousness
Towards the villages of *Israel*:

Now shall the people of THE LORD
Go down to the gates of judgment in safety

12. Awake, awake, *Deborah*;
Awake, awake, utter a song (of praise.)
Arise now, *Barak*; lead thy captivity captive,
Thou son of Abinoam.
13. For (God) made a remnant of the people
Triumph over the nobles of the enemy;
The Lord *made me triumph over the mighty*.
14. From Ephraim unto Amalek was their root:
Next to thee (*Ephraim*) was *Benjamin* among thy people:
From *Machir* (*Manasseh*) came down the senators.
And from Zebulun, they that write with the pen of the scribe.
15. The princes in *Issachar* (were) with *Deborah*,
Even *Issachar*, as well as *Barak*, (*Naphtali*,)
He was sent *on foot* into the valley;
For the divisions of *Reuben*
(I feel) great griefs of heart.
16. Why abidest thou among the sheepfolds
To hear the bleatings of the flocks?
For the divisions of *Reuben*
(I feel) great griefs of heart.
17. (Why) abode *Gilead* (*Gad*) beyond *Jordan*;
And *Dan* remained in his ships?
(Why did) *Asher* sit in his seaports,
And continue in his creeks?
18. (While) the people of *Zebulun* hazarded their lives unto death,
And of *Naphtali*, in the heights of the field;
19. The kings came, they fought;
The kings of *Canaan* fought in *Taanah*,
Near the waters of *Megiddo*;
But they gained no lucre (thereby.)
20. The stars of heaven fought in their courses;
They fought against *Sisera*.
21. The torrents of *Kison* swept them away;
The torrent of *Kedummim*,

The torrent of *Kison*. *O my soul,*
Thou hast trodden down strength!

22. Then were the horsehoofs broken by the gallopings,
 The gallopings of their great men.
23. Curse ye *Meroz*, saith the angel of THE LORD;
 Bitterly curse her inhabitants,
 Because they came not to the aid of THE LORD;
 To the aid of THE LORD among the mighty.
24. Blessed above women be *Jael*,
 The wife of *Heber* the Kenite;
 Blessed be she above women in the tent.
25. *He* asked water, and she gave him milk;
 She brought forth butter in a lordly bowl.
26. She put her hand to the nail,
 And her right hand to the workman's hammer;
 And she smote *Sisera*:
 She pierced his head, she penetrated,
 And she perforated his temples.
27. Between her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay
 Between her feet; he bowed, he fell;
 Where he bowed, there he fell down slain.
28. The mother of *Sisera* looked through the window,
 And exclaimed through the lattice,
 'Why is his chariot so long in coming?
 Why linger the steps of his steeds?'
29. Her wise ladies answered their mistress
 Yea, she returned answer to herself:
30. 'Have they not found,
 Have they not divided the spoil?
 To each a damsel or two apiece,
 To *Sisera* himself a spoil of divers colours,
 A spoil of divers colours embroidered;
 Of divers colours embroidered on both sides.
 A spoil for (adorning) his neck.'

31. *So perish all thine enemies, O LORD!*
 But let thy friends (rejoice,)
 As the sun going forth in his strength.

* * * * *

Other attempts have been made to do justice to this very sublime song, and much yet remains to be done. The best means of ascertaining the sense and import of the various images and allusions contained in it is, in my opinion, the following: 1. Take the Hebrew text as it stands printed in the *hemistich form* in Kennicott's Hebrew Bible. 2. Collate this text with the *Septuagint, Chaldee, Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic* versions, and the *various readings* in *Kennicott* and *Deuteronomy Rossi*. 3. Consult the writers in the *Critica Sacra*. And, 4. Carefully attend to the allusions made to Asiatic customs. I would gladly save my readers all this trouble, but it would extend the commentary beyond the size of the whole book, which would not comport with the *brevity* which I study.

From this song, as well as from that of Moses, ^{<1520>}**Deuteronomy 32:1-43**, we see that the *first*, as also the *best*, *poets* of antiquity were found among the *Hebrews*; and that the *art of poetry* was highly cultivated among them many hundreds of years before *Greece*, or any other country of the world, could boast of *ode*, or *epic*, or any kind of poetic composition. The idolizers of Greece and Italy should not forget this: to Hebrew models both Greeks and Romans owe much of their perfection. Why are not these more studied? Why do not we go to the "*fountain head*?" To all the searchers after the venerable remains of antiquity, especially to *poets*, I would address the words of the old prophet:—

*Dardanidæ duri, puæ vos a stirpe parentum
 Prima tulit tellus, eadem vos ubere læto
 Accipiet reduces: ANTIQUAM EXQUIRITE MATREM.
 VIRG. Æn., iii., ver. 94.*

*Ye valiant sons of Troy, the land that bore
 Your mighty ancestors to light before,
 Once more their great descendants shall embrace.
 Go, seek the ANCIENT MOTHER OF YOUR RACE.*

-Pitt.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 6

The Israelites again do evil, and are delivered into the hands of the Midianites, by whom they are oppressed seven years, 1, 2. Different tribes spoil their harvests, and take away their cattle, 3-5. They cry unto the Lord, and he sends them a prophet to reprehend and instruct them, 6-10. An angel appears unto Gideon, and gives him commission to deliver Israel, and works several miracles, to prove that he is Divinely appointed to this work, 11-23. Gideon builds an altar to the Lord, under the name of Jehovah-shalom; and throws down the altar of Baal, 24-27. His townsmen conspire against him; he expostulates with them, and they are pacified, 28-32. The Midianites and Amalekites gather together against Israel; Gideon summons Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, who join his standard, 33-35. The miracle of the fleece of wool, 36-40.

NOTES ON CHAP. 6

Verse 1. Delivered them unto the hand of Midian] The Midianites were among the most ancient and inveterate of the enemies of Israel. They joined with the Moabites to seduce them to idolatry, and were nearly extirpated by them; ^{<0310>}**Numbers 31:1-12.** The Midianites dwelt on the eastern borders of the *Dead Sea*, and their capital was Arnon.

Verse 2. Made them the dens which are in the mountains] Nothing can give a more distressing description of the state of the Israelites than what is here related. They durst not reside in the plain country, but were obliged to betake themselves to dens and caves of the mountains, and live like wild beasts, and were hunted like them by their adversaries.

Verse 3. Children of the East] Probably those who inhabited Arabia Deserta, Ishmaelites.

Verse 4. Encamped against them] Wandering hordes of Midianites, Amalekites, and Ishmaelites came, in the times of harvest and autumn, and carried away their crops, their fruit, and their cattle. And they appear to have come early, encamped in the plains, and watched the crops till they were ready to be carried off. This is frequently the case even to the present day.

Till thou come unto Gaza] That is, the whole *breadth* of the land, from Jordan to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Thus the whole land was ravaged, and the inhabitants deprived of the necessaries of life.

Verse 5. They came up with their cattle and their tents] All this proves that they were different tribes of *wanderers* who had no fixed residence; but, like their descendants the *Bedouins* or wandering Arabs, removed from place to place to get prey for themselves and forage for their cattle.

Verse 8. The Lord sent a prophet] The Jews say that this was Phinehas; but it is more likely that it was some prophet or teacher raised up by the Lord to warn and instruct them. Such were his witnesses, and they were raised up from time to time to declare the counsel of God to his rebellious people.

Verse 11. There came an angel of the Lord] The prophet came to teach and exhort, the angel comes to confirm the word of the prophet, to call and commission him who was intended to be their deliverer, and to work miracles, in order to inspire him with supernatural courage and a confidence of success.

Ophrah] Or *Ephra*, was a city, or village rather, in the half tribe of Manasseh, beyond Jordan.

His son Gideon threshed wheat] This is not the only instance in which a man taken from agricultural employments was made general of an army, and the deliverer of his country. *Shamgar* was evidently a ploughman, and with his ox-goad he slew many Philistines, and became one of the deliverers of Israel. *Cincinnatus* was taken from the plough, and was made dictator and commander-in-chief of the Roman armies. There is a great similarity between his case and that of *Gideon*.

Threshed wheat by the winepress] This was a place of privacy; he could not make a threshing-floor in open day as the custom was, and bring either the wheel over the grain, or tread it out with the feet of the oxen, for fear of the Midianites, who were accustomed to come and take it away as soon as threshed. He got a few sheaves from the field, and brought them home to have them *privately* threshed for the support of the family. As there could be no *vintage* among the Israelites in their present distressed circumstances, the winepress would never be suspected by the Midianites to be the place of threshing corn.

Verse 12. The Lord is with thee] “The WORD of the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”-*Targum*. It appears that Gideon had proved himself, on former occasions, to be a man of courage and personal prowess; and this would naturally excite the confidence of his countrymen. God chooses for his work those instruments which, in the course of his operations in nature and providence, he has qualified for his purpose. The instruments thus chosen are generally *unlikely*, but they will be ever found the best qualified for the Divine employment.

Verse 13. And Gideon said unto him] This speech is remarkable for its energy and simplicity; it shows indeed a measure of despondency, but not more than the circumstances of the case justified.

Verse 14. Go in this thy might] What does the angel mean? He had just stated that *Jehovah was with him*; and he now says, *Go in THIS thy might*, i.e., in the might of Jehovah, who is *with thee*.

Verse 15. Wherewith shall I save Israel?] I have neither men nor money.

Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh] *l dh ypl a hnh*, *Behold, my thousand is impoverished*. Tribes were anciently divided into *tens*, and *fifties*, and *hundreds*, and *thousands*; the *thousands* therefore marked grand divisions, and consequently numerous families; Gideon here intimates that the families of which he made a part were very much diminished. But if we take *ypl a alpey* for the *contracted form* of the *plural*, which is frequently in Hebrew nouns joined with a *verb* in the *singular*, then the translation will be, “The thousands in Manasseh are thinned;” i.e., this tribe is greatly reduced, and can do little against their enemies.

Verse 16. Thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.] Thou shalt surely conquer *all their host* as if thou hadst but *one man* to contend with; or, Thou shalt destroy them to a man.

Verse 17. Show me a sign] Work a *miracle*, that I may know that thou hast wisdom and power sufficient to authorize and qualify me for the work.

Verse 18. And bring forth my present] My *minchah*; generally an offering of bread, wine, oil, flour, and such like. It seems from this that Gideon supposed the person to whom he spoke to be a Divine person. Nevertheless, what he prepared and brought out appears to be intended simply as an entertainment to refresh a respectable stranger.

Verse 19. Made ready a kid-the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot] The manner in which the Arabs entertain strangers will cast light on this verse. Dr. Shaw observes: “Besides a bowl of milk, and a basket of figs, raisins, or dates, which upon our arrival were presented to us to stay our appetite, the master of the tent fetched us from his flock according to the number of our company, a kid or a goat, a lamb or a sheep; half of which was immediately seethed by his wife, and served up with cucasœ; the rest was made *kab-ab*, i.e., cut to pieces and roasted, which we reserved for our breakfast or dinner next day.” May we not suppose, says Mr. *Harmer*, that Gideon, presenting some slight refreshment to the supposed prophet, according to the present Arab mode, desired him to stay till he could provide something more substantial; that he immediately killed a kid, seethed part of it, and, when ready, brought out the stewed meat in a *pot*, with unleavened cakes of bread which he had baked; and the other part, the *kab-ab*, in a *basket*, for him to carry with him for some after-repast in his journey. See *Shaw’s* and *Pococke’s Travels*, and *Harmer’s Observations*.

Brought it out unto him under the oak] Probably where he had a tent, which, with the shade of the oak, sheltered them from the heat of the sun, and yet afforded the privilege of the refreshing breeze. Under a shade in the open air the Arabs, to the present day, are accustomed to receive their guests.

Verse 20. Take the flesh, &c.] The angel intended to make the flesh and bread an *offering* to God, and the *broth* a *libation*.

Verse 21. The angel-put forth the end of the staff] He appeared like a traveller with a staff in his hand; this he put forth, and having touched the flesh, fire rose out of the rock and consumed it. Here was the most evident proof of supernatural agency.

Then the angel-departed out of his sight.] Though the angel vanished out of his sight, yet God continued to converse with him either by secret inspiration in his own heart, or by an audible voice.

Verse 22. Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen] This is an elliptical sentence, a natural expression of the distressed state of Gideon’s mind: as if he had said, Have mercy on me, O Lord God! else I shall die; because I have seen an angel of Jehovah face to face. We have frequently seen that it was a prevalent sentiment, as well *before* as *under* the *law*, that

if any man saw God, or his representative angel he must surely die. On this account Gideon is alarmed, and prays for his life. This notion prevailed among the heathens, and we find an instance of it in the fable of *Jupiter* and *Semele*. She wished to see his glory; she saw it, and was struck dead by the effulgence. See the notes on ^{<0233>}**Exodus 33:20**. We find that a similar opinion prevailed very anciently among the Greeks. In the hymn of Callimachus, **Εἰς Λουτρα της Παλλαδος**, ver. 100, are these words:—

Κρονιοι δ ωδε λεγοντι νομοι,
 Ὅς κε τίς ἀθανατων, οκα μη θεος αυτος εληται,
 Αθηρηση, μισθω τουτον ιδειν μεγαλω.

“The laws of Saturn enact, that if any man see any of the immortal gods, unless that god himself shall choose it, he shall pay dearly for that sight.”

Verse 23. Fear not: thou shalt not die.] Here the discovery is made by God himself: Gideon is not curiously prying into forbidden mysteries, therefore he shall not die.

Verse 24. Gideon built an altar-and called it Jehovah-shalom] The words **יְהוָה שָׁלוֹם** *Yehovah shalom* signify *The Lord is my peace*, or *The peace of Jehovah*; and this name he gave the altar, in reference to what God had said, ^{<0226>}**Judges 6:23**, *Peace be unto thee*, **עֵי יְהוָה שָׁלוֹם לְךָ** *shalom lecha*, “Peace to thee;” which implied, not only a *wish*, but a *prediction* of the prosperous issue of the enterprise in which he was about to engage. It is likely that this is the altar which is mentioned in ^{<0226>}**Judges 6:26**, and is spoken of here merely by anticipation.

Verse 25. Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock] There is some difficulty in this verse, for, according to the Hebrew text, two bullocks are mentioned here; but there is only one mentioned in ^{<0226>}**Judges 6:26, 28**. But what was this *second* bullock? Some think that it was a bullock that was fattened in order to be offered in sacrifice to Baal. This is very probable, as the *second bullock* is so particularly distinguished from *another* which belonged to Gideon’s father. As the altar was built upon the ground of Joash, yet appears to have been public property, (see ^{<0226>}**Judges 6:29, 30**,) so this *second ox* was probably reared and fattened at the expense of the men of that village, else why should they so particularly *resent* its being offered to Jehovah?

Verse 26. With the wood of the grove] It is probable that *hrva* *Asherah* here signifies *Astarte*; and that there was a *wooden image* of this goddess on the altar of Baal. Baal-peor was the same as *Priapus*, *Astarte* as *Venus*; these two impure idols were proper enough for the same altar. In early times, and among rude people, the images of the gods were made of *wood*. This is the case still with the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, with the Indians of America, and with the inhabitants of Ceylon: many of the images of Budhoo are of wood. The Scandinavians also had *wooden gods*.

Verse 27. He feared his father's household] So it appears that his father was an idolater: but as Gideon had *ten men* of his own servants whom he could trust in this matter, it is probable that he had preserved the true faith, and had not bowed his knee to the image of Baal.

Verse 28. The second bullock was offered] It appears that the second bullock was offered because it was just *seven* years old, ^{<0765>}**Judges 6:25**, being calved about the time that the Midianitish oppression began; and it was now to be slain to indicate that their slavery should end with its life. The young bullock, ^{<0765>}**Judges 6:25**, is supposed to have been offered for a *peace-offering*; the bullock of seven years old, for a *burnt-offering*.

Verse 29. Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.] They fixed on him the more readily because they knew he had not joined with them in their idolatrous worship.

Verse 30. The men of the city said] They all felt an interest in the continuance of rites in which they had often many sensual gratifications. Baal and Ashtaroth would have more worshippers than the true God, because their *rites* were more adapted to the fallen nature of man.

Verse 31. Will ye plead for Baal?] The words are very emphatic "Will ye plead in earnest *^wbyr t* for Baal? Will ye *^w[ycwt* really save *him*? If he be God, *pyhl a Elohim*, let him contend for himself, seeing his altar is thrown down." The *paragoric* letters in the words *plead* and *save* greatly increase the sense. Joash could not slay his son; but he was satisfied he had insulted Baal: if Baal were the true God, he would avenge his own injured honour. This was a sentiment among the heathens. Thus *Tacitus*, lib. i., c. 73, A.U.C. 768, mentioning the letter of Tiberius to the consuls in behalf of *Cassius* and *Rubrius*, two Roman knights, one of whom was accused of having sold a statue of Augustus in the auction of his gardens; and the

other, of having sworn falsely by the name of Augustus, who had been deified by the senate; among other things makes him say: *Non ideo decretum patri suo cœlum, ut in perniciem civium is honor verteretur. Nec contra religiones fieri quod effigies ejus, utalia nu minum simulachra, venditionibus hortorum et domuum accedant. Jusjurandum perinde æstimandum quam si Jovem fefellisset: deorum injuriæ diis curæ*—"That Divine honours were not decreed to his father (Augustus) to lay snares for the citizens; and if his statue, in common with the images of the gods in general, was put up to sale with the houses and gardens, it could not be considered an injury to religion. That any false oath must be considered as an attempt to deceive Jupiter himself; *but the gods themselves must take cognizance of the injuries done unto them.*" Livy has a similar sentiment, Hist. lib. x., c. 6, where, speaking of some attempts made to increase the number of the augurs out of the commons, with which the senators were displeased, he says: *Simulabant ad deos id magis, quam ad se pertinere; ipsos visuros, ne sacra sua polluantur.*—"They pretended that these things belonged *more to the gods than themselves; and that they would take care that their sacred rites were not polluted.*"

Verse 32. He called him Jerubbaal] That is, *Let Baal contend*; changed, ^{<0112>} **2 Samuel 11:21**, into *Jerubbesheth, he shall contend against confusion or shame*; thus changing *baal, lord*, into *bosheth, confusion or ignominy*. Some think that Jerubbaal was the same with *Jerombalus*, who, according to *Sanchoniatho* and *Porphyry*, was a priest of *Jevo*. But the history of *Sanchoniatho* is probably a forgery of *Porphyry* himself, and worthy of no credit.

Verse 33. Then all the Midianites] Hearing of what Gideon had done, and apprehending that this might be a forerunner of attempts to regain their liberty, they formed a general association against Israel.

Verse 34. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon] He was endued with preternatural courage and wisdom.

Verse 36. If thou wilt save Israel] Gideon was very bold, and God was very condescending. But probably the request itself was suggested by the Divine Spirit.

ON the miracle of the *fleece, dew, and dry ground*, Origen, in his eighth homily on the book of Judges, has many curious and interesting thoughts, I shall insert the substance of the whole:—

The *fleece* is the *Jewish nation*. The *fleece covered with dew*, while *all around is dry*, the *Jewish nation* favoured with the *law* and the *prophets*. The *fleece dry*, the *Jewish nation* cast off for rejecting the *Gospel*. *All around watered*, the *Gospel* preached to the *Gentiles*. and they converted to God. The *fleece* on the *threshing-floor*, the *Jewish people* in the land of *Judea*, *winnowed*, *purged*, and *fanned* by the *Gospel*. The *dew wrung out into the bowl*, the doctrines of *Christianity*, extracted from the *Jewish* writings, shadowed forth by *Christ's* pouring water into a basin, and washing the disciples' feet. The pious father concludes that he has now wrung this water out of the fleece of the book of *Judges*, as he hopes by and by to do out of the fleece of the book of *Kings*, and out of the fleece of the book of *Isaiah* or *Jeremiah*; and he has received it into the basin of his heart, and there conceived its true sense; and is desirous to wash the feet of his brethren, that they may be able to walk in the way of the preparation of the *Gospel* of peace.-ORIGEN, *Op.* vol. ii., p. 475, edit. *Benedict*.

All this to some will doubtless appear trifling; but it is not too much to say that scarcely any pious mind can consider the homily of this excellent man without drinking into a measure of the same spirit, so much sincerity, deep piety, and unction, appear throughout the whole: yet as I do not follow such practices, I cannot recommend them. Of dealers in such *small wares*, we have many that imitate *Benjamin Keach*, but few that come nigh to *Origen*.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 7

The Lord commands Gideon to make a selection of a small number of his men to go against the Midianites. Three hundred only are selected; and into the hands of these God promises to deliver the whole Midianitish host, 1-8. Gideon is directed to go down unto the host in the night, that he may be encouraged on hearing what they say, 9-12. He obeys, and hears a Midianite tell a remarkable dream unto his fellow, which predicted the success of his attack, 13-15. He takes encouragement, divides his men into three companies, and gives each a trumpet with a lighted lamp concealed in a pitcher, with directions how to use them, 16-18. They come to the Midianitish camp at night, when all suddenly blowing their trumpets and exposing their lamps, the Midianites are thrown into confusion, fly, and are stopped by the Ephraimites at the passage of Jordan, and slain, 19-24. Oreb and Zeeb, two Midianitish princes, are slain, 25.

NOTES ON CHAP. 7

Verse 1. Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon] It appears that Jerubbaal was now a *surname* of Gideon, from the circumstance mentioned ^{<1062>}**Judges 6:32**. See ^{<1063>}**Judges 8:35**.

The well of Harod] If this was a *town* or *village*, it is nowhere else mentioned. Probably, as **drj** *charad* signifies to *shake* or *tremble through fear*, the fountain in question may have had its name from the *terror* and *panic* with which the Midianitish host was seized at this place.

Verse 2. The people that are with thee are too many] Had he led up a numerous host against his enemies, the excellence of the power by which they were discomfited might have appeared to be of man and not of God. By the manner in which this whole transaction was conducted, both the Israelites and Midianites must see that the thing was of God. This would inspire the Israelites with confidence, and the Midianites with fear.

Verse 3. Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return-from Mount Gilead] Gideon was certainly not at Mount *Gilead* at this time, but rather near Mount *Gilboa*. Gilead was on the other side of Jordan. Calmet thinks there must either have been two Gileads, which does not from the Scripture appear to be the case, or that the Hebrew text is here corrupted,

and that for *Gilead* we should read *Gilboa*. This reading, though adopted by *Houbigant*, is not countenanced by any MS., nor by any of the *versions*.

Dr. *Hales* endeavours to reconcile the whole, by the supposition that there were in Gideon's army many of the eastern Manassites, who came from Mount Gilead; and that these probably were more afraid of their neighbours, the Midianites, than the western tribes were; and therefore proposes to read the text thus: *Whosoever from Mount Gilead is fearful and afraid, let him return (home) and depart early. So there returned (home) twenty-two thousand of the people*. Perhaps this is on the whole the best method of solving this difficulty.

There returned of the people twenty and two thousand] Gideon's army was at this time thirty-two thousand strong, and after the above address twenty-two thousand went away. How astonishing, that in thirty-two thousand men there should be found not less than twenty-two thousand poltroons, who would neither fight for God nor their oppressed country! A state of slavery debases the mind of man, and renders it incapable of being influenced by the pure principles of patriotism or religion. In behalf of the army of Gideon we may say, if the best appointed armies in Europe had the same address, *bona fide*, from their generals as the Israelites had, at least an equal proportion would return home.

Verse 5. Every one that lappeth of the water-as a dog] The original word *ql y yalok* is precisely the sound which a dog makes when he is drinking.

Verse 6. The number of them that lapped] From this account it appears that some of the people went down on their knees, and putting their mouths to the water, sucked up what they needed; the others stooped down, and taking up water in the hollow of their hands, applied it to their mouth.

Verse 8. So the people took victuals] The three hundred men that he reserved took the victuals necessary for the day's expenditure, while the others were dismissed to their tents and their houses as they thought proper.

Verse 9. I have delivered it into thine hand.] I have determined to do it, and it is as sure as if it were done.

Verse 11. Unto the outside of the armed men] No doubt the vast multitudes of Midianites, &c., which came merely for plunder, were wholly unarmed; but they had a guard of armed men, as all the caravans have, and those guards were on the outside of the multitudes; it was to these that Gideon and his servant came.

Verse 13. Told a dream] Both the dream and the interpretation were inspired by God for the purpose of increasing the confidence of Gideon, and appalling his enemies.

Verse 14. Into his hand hath God delivered Midian] This is a full proof that God had inspired both the dream and its interpretation.

Verse 16. He divided the three hundred men] Though the victory was to be from the Lord, yet he knew that he ought to use prudential means; and those which he employed on this occasion were the best calculated to answer the end. If he had not used these means, it is not likely that God would have delivered the Midianites into his hands. Sometimes, even in working a miracle, God will have natural means used: *Go, dip thyself seven times in Jordan. Go, wash in the pool Siloam.*

Verse 18. The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.] The word **brj** *chereb*, “sword,” is not found in this verse, though it is necessarily implied, and is found in ^{<0722>}**Judges 7:20**. But it is found in this place in the *Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic*, and in eight of *Kennicott’s* and *Deuteronomy Rossi’s* MSS. The reading appears to be genuine.

Verse 20. Blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers] How astonishing must the effect be, in a dark night, of the sudden glare of three hundred torches, darting their splendour, in the same instant, on the half-awakened eyes of the terrified Midianites, accompanied with the clangour of three hundred trumpets, alternately mingled with the thundering shout of ^{^w}[dgl w hwhy] **brj** *chereb layhovah ulegidon*, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

Origen, in his ninth homily on this book, makes these three hundred men types of the *preachers of the Gospel*; their *trumpets* of the *preaching of Christ crucified*; and their *lights* or *torches*, of the *holy conduct* of righteous men. In some verses of an ancient author, attributed to *Tertullian*, and written against the heretic *Marcion*, Gideon’s three hundred men are represented as horsemen; and in this number he finds the

mystery of the cross; because the Greek letter T, *tau* which is the numeral for 300, is itself the sign of the cross. The verses, which may be found in vol. v. of the *Pisaurian* Collection of the Latin heathen and Christian poets, *Advers, Marcion.*, lib. 3, ver. 18, as being very curious, and not often to be met with, I shall here subjoin:—

Exodus quibus ut Gideon dux agminis, acer in hostem,
 Non virtute sua tutelam acquirere genti,
 Firmatusque fide signum petit excita menti,
 Quo vel non posset, vel posset vincere bellum,
 Vellus ut in noctem positum de rore maderet,
 Et tellus omnis circum siccata jaceret,
 Hoc inimicorum palmam coalescere mundo;
 Atque iterum solo remanenti vellere sicco,
 Hoc eadem tellus roraret nocte liquore,
 Hoc etenim signo prædonum stravit acervos.
 Congressus populo Christi, sine milite multo:
 Tercenteno equite (numerus Tau littera Græca)
 Armatis facibusque et cornibus ore canentum.
 Vellus erat populus ovium de semine sancto.
 Nam tellus variæ gentes fusæque per orbem,
 Verbum quod nutrit, sed nox est mortis imago.
 Tau signum crucis et cornu præconia vitæ,
 Lucentesque faces in lychno spiritus ardens.

“Gideon, keen in arms, was captain of the host,
 And acquired redemption for his people, but not by his own power.
 Being strengthened in faith, his heart was influenced to ask a sign
 By which he might know whether or not he should be successful in battle.
 A *fleece* was so placed by night, that it might be wet with dew;
 And all the surrounding earth remain dry.
 By this he was to learn that he should gain the victory over his enemies.
 The sign was reversed; the fleece remaining dry while all the ground was
 moist;
 And by this sign he was to know that he should slaughter those troops of
 robbers.
 The people of Christ conquer without any military force;
 Three hundred horsemen, (for the Greek letter T, *tau*, is the emblem of the
 number,)
 Armed with torches, and blowing with trumpets.
 The *fleece* of the sheep are the people sprung from the Messiah,
 And the *earth* are the various nations dispersed over the world.
 It is the *word* which nourishes; but *might* is the image of *death*.
Tau is the sign of the *cross*; and the *trumpets*, the emblems of the *heralds of*
life;
 And the *burning torches* in the *pitchers*, the emblems of the *Holy Spirit*.”

We see here what abstruse meanings a strong imagination, assisted by a little piety, may extract from what was never intended to be understood as a mystery.

Verse 21. They stood every man in his place] Each of the three companies kept its station, and continued to sound their trumpets. The Midianites seeing this, and believing that they were the trumpets of a numerous army which had then penetrated their camp, were thrown instantly into confusion; and supposing that their enemies were in the midst of them, they turned their swords against every man they met, while at the same time they endeavoured to escape for their lives. No stratagem was ever better imagined, better executed, or more completely successful.

Verse 22. Fled to Beth-shittah] This is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture.

Zererath] This and *Tabbath* are nowhere else to be found.

Abel-meholah] This was the birth-place of the prophet Elisha, ^{<11916>}**1 Kings 19:16**. It was beyond Jordan, in the tribe of Manasseh, ^{<110412>}**1 Kings 4:12**. The *Zartanah*, mentioned in this last quoted verse, was probably the same as *Zererath*. Its situation corresponds well with Abel-meholah.

Verse 23. The men of Israel gathered] It is very likely that these were some persons whom Gideon had sent home the day before, who now hearing that the Midianites were routed, went immediately in pursuit.

Verse 24. Take before them the waters unto Beth-barah] This is probably the same place as that mentioned ^{<10128>}**John 1:28**, where the Hebrews forded Jordan under the direction of Joshua. To this place the Midianites directed their flight that they might escape into their own country; and here, being met by the Ephraimites, they appear to have been totally overthrown, and their two generals taken.

Verse 25. They slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb] These two generals had taken shelter, one in the cavern of the rock, the other in the vat of a winepress; both of which places were from this circumstance, afterwards called by their names.

Brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon] OREB signifies a *raven* and ZEEB a *wolf*. In all ancient nations we find generals and princes taking their names from both birds and beasts; the Romans had their *Gracchi*,

jackdaws; *Corvini*, crows; *Aquilini*, eagles, &c. We have the same in our *Crows*, *Wolfs*, *Lyons*, *Hawkes*, *Bulls*, *Kidds*, &c. Among barbarous nations the *head* of the conquered chief was often brought to the conqueror. Pompey's head was brought to Cæsar; Cicero's head, to Mark Antony; the heads of Ahab's children, to Jehu, &c. These barbarities are not often practiced now, except among the Mohammedans or the savages of Africa and America; and for the credit of human nature it is a pity that such barbarous atrocities had ever been committed.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 8

The Ephraimites are angry with Gideon because he did not call them particularly to his assistance; he pacifies them, 1-3. Gideon and his three hundred men pass over Jordan, pursuing the Midianites; and, being faint, ask victuals from the princes of Succoth, but are refused, 4-7. They make the like application to the people of Penuel, and are also refused, 8, 9. Gideon defeats Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian, and takes them prisoners, 10-12. He chastises the men of Succoth and Penuel, 13-17. He slays Zebah and Zalmunna, who had killed his brethren, 18-21. The Israelites offer him the kingdom, which he refuses, 22, 23. He requires from them the gold rings which they had taken from the Ishmaelites, and makes an ephod, which he sets up at Ophrah; and it became an instrument of idolatry, 24-27. The land enjoys peace forty years; Gideon dies, having seventy-one sons, 28-32. The Israelites fall into idolatry, and forget their obligations to Gideon's family, 33-35.

NOTES ON CHAP. 8

Verse 1. The men of Ephraim said] This account is no doubt displaced; for what is mentioned here could not have taken place till the return of Gideon from the pursuit of the Midianites; for he had not yet passed Jordan, ^{<0700>}**Judges 8:4**. And it was when he was beyond that river that the Ephraimites brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to him, ^{<0702>}**Judges 7:25**.

Verse 2. Is not the gleaning, &c.] That is, The Ephraimites have performed more important services than Gideon and his men; and he supports the assertion by observing that it was they who took the two Midianitish generals, having discomfited their hosts at the passes of Jordan.

Verse 3. Then their anger was abated] A soft answer turneth away wrath. He might have said that he could place but little dependence on his brethren when, through faint-heartedness, 22,000 left him at one time; but he passed this by, and took a more excellent way.

Verse 4. Faint, yet pursuing] The Vulgate paraphrases this, *et præ lassitudine, fugientes persequi non poterant*; “and, through fatigue, unable to pursue the fugitives.”

Verse 5. Give, I pray you, loaves of bread] As Gideon was engaged in the common cause of Israel, he had a right to expect succour from the

people at large. His request to the men of Succoth and Penuel was both just and reasonable.

Verse 6. Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand]

They feared to help Gideon, lest, if he should be overpowered, the Midianites would revenge it upon them; and they dared not trust God.

Verse 7. I will tear your flesh] What this punishment consisted in I cannot say; it must mean a severe punishment: as if he had said, I will thresh your flesh with briars and thorns, as corn is threshed out with threshing instruments; or, Ye shall be trodden down under the feet of my victorious army, as the corn is trodden out with the feet of the ox.

Succoth was beyond Jordan, in the tribe of Gad. *Penuel* was also in the same tribe, and not far distant from Succoth.

Verse 9. I will break down this tower.] Probably they had not only denied him, but insultingly pointed to a tower in which their chief defense lay; and intimated to him that he might do his worst, for they could amply defend themselves.

Verse 10. Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor] If this were a *place*, it is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture. Some contend that **rqrq** *karkor* signifies *rest*; and thus the Vulgate understood it: Zebah and Zalmunna *requiescebant, rested*, with all their army. And this seems the most likely, for it is said, ^{<QRB1>}**Judges 8:11**, that Gideon smote the host, for the host was *secure*.

Verse 13. Returned from battle before the sun was up] This does not appear to be a proper translation of **srj h hl [ml m** *milmaaleh hechares*. It should be rendered *from the ascent of Chares*: this is the reading of the *Septuagint*, the *Syriac*, and the *Arabic*.

Verse 14. He described unto him the princes of Succoth] The young man probably gave him the names of seventy persons, the chief men of Succoth, who were those who were most concerned in refusing him and his men the refreshment he requested.

Verse 16. He taught the men of Succoth.] Instead of [**dyw** *he taught*, Houbigant reads **vdyw** *he tore*; and this is not only agreeable to what Gideon had threatened, ^{<QRB1>}**Judges 8:7**, but is supported by the *Vulgate*, *Septuagint*, *Chaldee*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*. The Hebrew text might have

been easily corrupted in this place by the change of *v shin* into [*ain*, letters very similar to each other.

Verse 18. What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?]

We have no antecedent to this question; and are obliged to conjecture one: it seems as if Zebah and Zalmunna had massacred the family of Gideon, while he was absent on this expedition. Gideon had heard some confused account of it, and now questions them concerning the fact. They boldly acknowledge it, and describe the persons whom they slew, by which he found they were *his own brethren*. This determines him to avenge their death by slaying the Midianitish kings, whom he otherwise was inclined to save. He might have heard that his brethren had been taken prisoners, and might have hoped to have exchanged them for the kings now in his hand; but when he found they had been all slain, he decrees the death of their murderers. There is something in this account similar to that in the 12th Æneis of Virgil:—When Turnus was overthrown, and supplicated for his life, and Æneas was inclined to spare him; he saw the belt of his friend Pallas, whom Turnus had slain, and which he now wore as a trophy: this immediately determined the Trojan to sacrifice the life of Turnus to the manes of his friend. The story is well told:—

Stetit acer in armis

Æneas, volvens oculos, dextramque repressit.

Et jam jamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo

Cæperat: infelix humero cum apparuit ingens

Balteus, et notis fulserunt cingula bullis

Pallantis pueri; victum quem vulnere Turnus

Straverat, atque humeris inimicum insigne gerebat.

Ille oculis postquam sævi monumenta doloris

Exuviasque hausit: furiis accensus et ira

Terribilis: Tune hinc spoliis indute meorum

Eripiare mihi?—Pallas, te hoc vulnere Pallas

Immolat; et pœnam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.

Hoc dicens furrum adverso sub pectore condit Fervidus.

VIRG. Æn. lib. xii., ver. 938.

*“In deep suspense the Trojan seem’d to stand,
And, just prepared to strike, repress’d his hand.*

*He roll’d his eyes, and every moment felt
His manly soul with more compassion melt.*

*When, casting down a casual glance, he spied
The golden belt that glitter'd on his side;
The fatal spoils which haughty Turnus tore
From dying Pallas, and in triumph wore.*

*Then roused anew to wrath, he loudly cries,
(Flames, while he spoke, came flashing from his eyes,)
Traitor! dost thou! dost thou to grace pretend,
Clad, as thou art, in trophies of my friend?—*

*To his sad soul a grateful offering go;
'Tis Pallas, Pallas gives this deadly blow.
He rais'd his arm aloft; and at the word,
Deep in his bosom drove the shining sword."*

DRYDEN.

The same principle impels Gideon to slay Zebah and Zalmunna which induced Æneas to kill Turnus: and perhaps the ornaments which he took from their camels' necks, ^{<0782>}**Judges 8:21**, were some of the spoils of his slaughtered brethren.

Verse 20. He said unto Jether his first-born] By the ancient laws of war, prisoners taken in war might be either slain, sold, or kept for slaves. To put a captive enemy to death no *executioner* was required. *Gideon* slays Zebah and Zalmunna with his own hand. So *Samuel* is said to have hewn Agag in pieces, ^{<0153>}**1 Samuel 15:33**. *Benaiah* slew Joab, ^{<1025>}**1 Kings 2:25**. *Saul* orders his guards to slay the priests who had contributed to the escape of David, ^{<0217>}**1 Samuel 22:17**; and *David* caused one of his attendants to slay the Amalekite who pretended to have slain Saul, ^{<1015>}**2 Samuel 1:15**.

Verse 21. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise, thou, and fall upon us] It was disgraceful to fall by the hands of a *child*; and the death occasioned by the blows of such a person must be much more lingering and tormenting. Some have even employed children to despatch captives. *Civilis*, a Roman knight, headed a revolt of the Gauls against Rome, in the year of the city 824. Of him *Tacitus* says, *Hist. lib. iv., c. 61: Ferebatur parvulo filio quosdam captivorum sagittis jaculisque puerilibus figendos obtulisse*: "He is said to have given to his little son some prisoners, as butts to be shot at with little darts and arrows." This was for their greater torment and dishonour; and to inure his child to blood! Could any thing like this have been the design of Gideon?

The ornaments that were on their camels' necks.] The heads, necks, bodies, and legs of camels, horses, and elephants, are highly ornamented in the eastern countries, and indeed this was common, from the remotest antiquity, in all countries. *Virgil* refers to it as a thing long before his time, and thus describes the horses given by King Latinus to the ambassadors of Æneas.—*Æn.* lib. vii., ver. 274.

*Haec effatus equos numero pater eligit omni.
Stabant tercentum nitidi in præsepibus altis:
Omnibus extemplo Teucris jubet ordine duci
Instratos ostro alipedes pictisque tapetis.
Aurea pectoribus demissa monilia pendent:
Tecti auro fulvum mandunt sub dentibus aurum.*

*“He said, and order’d steeds to mount the band:
In lofty stalls three hundred coursers stand;
Their shining sides with crimson cover’d o’er;
The sprightly steeds embroider’d trappings wore,
With golden chains, refulgent to behold:
Gold were their bridles, and they champ’d on gold.”*
PITT.

Instead of *ornaments*, the *Septuagint* translate τούς μηνισκούς, the *crests* or *half-moons*; and this is followed by the *Syriac* and *Arabic*. The worship of the *moon* was very ancient; and, with that of the *sun*, constituted the earliest idolatry of mankind. We learn from ^{אֶת־הַיָּרֵךְ} **Judges 8:24** that the *Ishmaelites*, or *Arabs*, as they are termed by the *Targum*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, had *golden ear-rings*, and probably a *crescent* in each; for it is well known that the *Ishmaelites*, and the *Arabs* who descended from them, were addicted very early to the worship of the *moon*; and so attached were they to this superstition, that although *Mohammed* destroyed the idolatrous use of the *crescent*, yet it was universally borne in their ensigns, and on the tops of their mosques, as well as in various ornaments.

Verse 22. Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son] That is, Become our king, and let the crown be hereditary in thy family. What a weak, foolish, and inconstant people were these! As yet their government was a *theocracy*; and now, dazzled with the success of a man who was only an instrument in the hands of God to deliver them from their enemies, they wish to throw off the Divine yoke, and shackle themselves with an *unlimited* hereditary monarchy! An *unlimited* monarchy

is a *curse*; a *limited* monarchy may be a *blessing*: the latter may be an appointment of God; the former never can. Those who cast off their allegiance to their Maker, are guilty of folly and extravagance of every kind.

Verse 23. The Lord shall rule over you] Few with such power at their command would have acted as Gideon. His speech calls them back to their first principles, and should have excited in them both shame and contrition. How different is this speech from that of *Oliver Cromwell* when the commons offered him the crown of England!

Verse 24. Give me every man the ear-rings of his prey.] The spoils taken from their enemies in this warfare. This is a transaction very like to that of the Israelites and Aaron; when they brought him their *golden ear-rings*, out of which he made the *molten calf*, ~~Exodus~~ **Exodus 32:2**, &c. Whether Gideon designed this ephod for an instrument of worship, or merely as a *trophy*, is not very clear. It is most likely that he had intended to establish a place of worship at Ophrah; and he took this occasion to provide the proper sacerdotal vestments.

Verse 26. The weight of the golden ear-rings-was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold] Taking the shekel at *half an ounce* weight, the sum of the gold collected in ear-rings was seventy pounds ten ounces; and worth, as gold now rates, about £3,100 sterling.

This computation of the weight of the golden *ear-rings*, taken from the slaughtered Ishmaelites, will bring to the reader's mind the slaughter of the Roman knights by the Carthaginians at the battle of *Cannæ*, from whose spoils Hannibal sent *three bushels* of gold rings to the city of Carthage!

Verse 27. Gideon made an ephod thereof] That is, he made an ephod *out of this* mass of gold; but he could not employ it *all* in making this one garment, for it is not likely that any man could wear a coat of nearly one hundred pounds weight. It is likely that he made a whole tabernacle service in miniature out of this gold.

All Israel went thither a whoring after it] This form of speech often occurs, and has been often explained. The whole Jewish nation is represented as being *united to God* as a *wife is to her husband*. Any act of *idolatry* is considered as a *breach of their covenant* with God, as an act of *whoredom* is the breach of the *marriage agreement* between man and wife.

God calls himself the *husband* of the Jewish nation, and their *idolatries* acts of *whoredom*, *adultery*, and *fornication*. All Israel paid idolatrous worship to the ephod or sacerdotal establishment made by Gideon at Ophrah, and this is called *going a whoring after it*; see on <07033> **Judges 8:33**. For a description of the *ephod*, see <02207> **Exodus 25:7**; and for the other garments of the priests, see <02204> **Exodus 28:4**, &c.

Verse 28. Forty years in the days of Gideon.] The Midianites were so completely humbled that they could make head no more against Israel during the forty years in which the government of Gideon lasted.

Verse 31. His concubine] A *lawful* but *secondary wife*, whose children could not *inherit*.

Whose name he called Abimelech.] That is, *my father is king*, or *my father hath reigned*. This name was doubtless given by the *mother*, and so it should be understood here; she wished to raise her son to the supreme government, and therefore gave him a name which might serve to stimulate him to seek that which she hoped he should enjoy in his father's right. See the following chapter.

Verse 32. Gideon-died in a good old age] Supposed to have been A.M. 2799; B.C. 1205.

Verse 33. A whoring after Baalim] This term has probably a different meaning here from what it has <07087> **Judges 8:7**; for it is very likely that in most parts of the pagan worship there were many *impure* rites, so that *going a whoring after Baalim* may be taken in a *literal* sense.

Baal-berith] Literally, *the lord of the covenant*; the same as *Jupiter fæderis*, or *Mercury*, among the Romans; the deity whose business it was to preside over *compacts*, *leagues*, *treaties*, *covenants*, &c. Some of the *versions* understand it as if the Israelites had made a *covenant* or agreement to have *Baal for their god*; so the VULGATE: *Percusseruntque cum Baal fædus, ut esset eis in deum*.

Verse 34. Remembered not the Lord their God] They attributed their deliverance to some other cause, and did not give him the glory of their salvation.

Verse 35. Neither showed they kindness to the house of-Gideon] They were both *unthankful* and *unholy*. Though they had the clearest proofs of

God's power and goodness before their eyes, yet they forgot him. And although they were under the greatest obligations to Gideon, and were once so sensible of them that they offered to settle the kingdom on him and his family, yet they forgot him also; for, becoming *foes* to GOD, they could not be friends to MAN.

Jerubbaal, namely, *Gideon*.—This is improper; it should be *Jerubbaal Gideon*, as we say *Simon Peter*, or call any man by his *Christian name* and *surname*.

THE ancients, particularly St. *Ambrose* and *Augustine*, have endeavoured to find out a *parallel* between our blessed Lord and Gideon. We have already seen what *Origen* has made of the whole account, who is followed in the main by the above Latin fathers. As I believe no such parallel was intended by the Spirit of God, I must be excused from going into their details. It is no credit either to Christ or Christianity to be compared to such persons and their transactions.

1. Of Gideon the most we can say is that which the angel said, he was *a mighty man of valour*.
2. He was also a *true patriot*, he loved his country, and hazarded his life for it; and yet he would not stir till he had the most incontestable proofs that God would, by his supernatural assistance, make him victorious.
3. He was most evidently *disinterested*, and void of *ambition*; he refused the kingdom when it was offered to him and to his heirs after him. But, consistently with the belief he had in God, he could not accept it, as this would have been a complete alteration of the Jewish constitution, which acknowledged no ruler but God himself.
4. His motive in making the ephod is not well understood; probably it was done with no reprehensible *design*. But the *act* was totally wrong; he had no Divine authority to make such an innovation in the religious worship of his country. The ark was at Shechem; and *there* was the proper and only accredited priest. The act therefore can never be excused, whatever may be said of his *motive*.
5. His private character does not appear to have been very exemplary; he had *many wives*, and seventy sons by them, besides one by a concubine, which he kept at Shechem, where he was often obliged to go as *judge*, for the purpose of administering justice. In short, there is scarcely a trait in his

character worthy to be compared with any thing in the conduct of the Redeemer of mankind.

6. Parallels to Christ, and the work of his Spirit in the salvation of men, have been diligently sought in the sacred writings, by both commentators and preachers; and we have had voluminous treatises on types and antitypes; and how little has sound doctrine or true piety derived from them! They have often served to unsettle the former, and have been rather inimical than favourable to the interests of the latter. When the Spirit of God says such things are *types* and such things are *allegories*, it is our duty to believe and examine; when men produce their types and metaphors, it may be our duty to doubt, be suspicious, and pass on.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 9

Abimelech is made king; and, to secure himself in the kingdom, slays his brethren; Jotham, the youngest only escapes, 14. Jotham reproves him and the Shechemites by a curious and instructive parable, 7-21. Abimelech having reigned three years, the Shechemites, headed by Gaal the son of Ebed, conspire against him, 22-29. Zebul, governor of the city, apprises Abimelech of the insurrection, who comes with his forces, and discomfits Gaal, 30-40. Abimelech assaults the city, takes, beats it down, and sows it with salt, 41-45. Several of the Shechemites take refuge in the temple of Baal-berith; Abimelech sets fire to it, and destroys in it about one thousand men and women, 46-50. He afterwards besieges and takes Thebez; but while he is assaulting the citadel, a woman threw a piece of millstone upon his head, and killed him. Thus God requited him and the men of Shechem for their wickedness, and their ingratitude to the family of Gideon, 51-57.

NOTES ON CHAP. 9

Verse 1. Abimelech-went to Shechem] We have already seen that Abimelech was the son of Gideon, by his concubine at Shechem. His going thither immediately after his father's death was to induce his townsmen to proclaim him governor in the place of his father. Shechem was the residence of his mother, and of all her relatives.

Verse 2. Whether is better for you, either that all the sons] This was a powerful argument: Whether will you have seventy tyrants or only *one*! For, as he had no right to the government, and God alone was *king* at that time in Israel; so he must support his usurped rule by whatever means were most likely to effect it: a usurped government is generally supported by oppression and the sword.

Verse 3. He is our brother.] We shall be raised to places of trust under him, and our city will be the capital of the kingdom.

Verse 4. Threescore and ten pieces of silver] Probably *shekels*; and this was the whole of his exchequer. As he was now usurping the government of God, he begins with a *contribution* from the idol temple. A work begun under the name and influence of the devil is not likely to end to the glory of God, or to the welfare of man.

Hired vain and light persons] *μυζj pω μυqyr μyvna anashim reykim uphochazim, worthless and dissolute men; persons who were living on the public, and had nothing to lose. Such was the foundation of his Babel government. By a cunning management of such rascals most revolutions have been brought about.*

Verse 5. Slew his brethren] His brothers by the father's side, ^{<0783>}**Judges 8:30.** This was a usual way of securing an ill-gotten throne; the person who had no right destroying all those that had right, that he might have no competitors.

Yet Jotham-was left] That is, all the seventy were killed except Jotham, if there were not seventy *besides* Jotham. All the histories of all the nations of the earth are full of cruelties similar to those of Abimelech: cousins, uncles, brothers, husbands, and fathers have been murdered by their cousins, nephews, brothers, wives, and children, in order that they might have the undisturbed possession of an ill-gotten throne. Europe, Asia, and Africa, can witness all this. Even now, some of these horribly obtained governments exist.

Verse 6. And all the house of Millo] If *Millo* be the name of a *place*, it is nowhere else mentioned in the sacred writings. But it is probably the name of a *person* of note and influence in the city of Shechem-*the men of Shechem and the family of Millo.*

Verse 7. Stood in the top of Mount Gerizim] *Gerizim* and *Ebal* were mounts very near to each other; the former lying to the north, the latter to the south, and at the foot of them Shechem. But see some remarks on the extent of the human voice in some hilly countries in the following extract from a late traveller in the East:-

“The great extent to which the sound of the voice is conveyed may be mentioned. Some persons have thought this a proof of the extreme rarity of the atmosphere. A similar observation is made by Captain Parry in his Voyage of Discovery to the Polar Regions in 1819-20, where he states that in the depth of winter the sound of the men's voices was heard at a much greater distance than usual. This phenomenon is constantly observed on the *Neilgherries*. I have heard the natives, especially in the morning and evening, when the air was still, carry on conversation from one hill to another, and that apparently without any extraordinary effort. They do not *shout*

in the manner that strangers think necessary in order to be heard at so great a distance, but utter every syllable as distinctly as if they were conversing face to face. When listening to them, I have often been reminded of those passages in holy writ where it is recorded that Jotham addressed the ungrateful men of Shechem from Mount Gerizim, that David cried ‘from the top of a hill afar off’ to Abner and to the people that lay about their master Saul, and that Abner addressed Joab from the top of a hill.”-*Letters on the Climate, Inhabitants, Productions, &c., &c., of the Neilgherries, or Blue Mountains of Coimbatoor, South India, by James Hough, of Madras: 1829.*

That God may hearken unto you.] It appears that Jotham received this message from God, and that he spoke on this occasion by Divine inspiration.

Verse 8. The trees went forth on a time] This is the *oldest*, and without exception the *best fable* or *apologue* in the world. See the observations at the end of this chapter.

It is not to be supposed that a fable, if well formed, requires much illustration; every part of this, a few expressions excepted, illustrates itself, and tells its own meaning.

To anoint a king] Hence it appears that *anointing* was usual in the installation of kings, long before there was any king in Israel; for there is much evidence that the book of Judges was written before the days of Saul and David.

The olive tree] The *olive* was the most *useful* of all the trees in the field or forest, as the *bramble* was the meanest and the most worthless.

Verse 9. Wherewith-they honour God and man] I believe the word **uyhl** a *elohim* here should be translated *gods*, for the parable seems to be accommodated to the idolatrous state of the Shechemites. Thus it was understood by the *Vulgate*, *Arabic*, and others. It is true that *olive oil* was often used in the service of God: the priests were *anointed* with it; the lamps in the tabernacle *lighted* with it; almost all the offerings of fine flour, cakes prepared in the pan, &c., had *oil* mingled with them; therefore Jotham might say that *with it they honour God*; and as *priests, prophets, and kings* were *anointed*, and their office was the most honourable, he

might with propriety say, *therewith they honour man*. But I am persuaded he used the term in the first sense. See on ^{<07913>}**Judges 9:13**.

Verse 11. But the fig tree said-Should I forsake my sweetness] The fruit of the fig tree is the *sweetest* or most *luscious* of all fruits. A full-ripe fig, in its own climate, has an indescribable sweetness; so much so that it is almost impossible to eat it, till a considerable time after it is gathered from the trees, and has gone through an artificial preparation. This I have often noticed.

Verse 13. Which cheereth God and man] I believe **μyhl a elohim** here is to be taken in the same sense proposed on ^{<07909>}**Judges 9:9**. Vast libations of wine, as well as much *oil*, were used in heathenish sacrifices and offerings; and it was their opinion that the gods *actually partook* of, and were *delighted* with, both the *wine* and *oil*. The pagan mythology furnishes the most exquisite *wines* to its gods in heaven, and hence the *nectar* and *ambrosia* so much talked of and praised by the ancients. It is not reasonable to suppose that Jotham makes any reference here to the sacrifices, oblations, and perfumes offered to the true God. This language the idolatrous Shechemites could scarcely understand. What could the worshippers of *Baal-berith* know of the worship of the God who gave his law to Moses? And it is not very likely that Jotham himself was well acquainted with the sacred rites of the Mosaic religion, as they had been little preached in his time.

Verse 14. Then said all the trees unto the bramble] The word **dca atad**, which we translate *bramble*, is supposed to mean the *rhamnus*, which is the largest of thorns, producing dreadful spikes, similar to darts. See *Theodoret* on ^{<05810>}**Psalm 58:10**.

There is much of the *moral* of this fable contained in the different kinds of *trees* mentioned. 1. The *olive*; the most *profitable* tree to its owner, having few equals either for food or medicine. 2. The *fig tree*; one of the most *fruitful* of trees, and yielding one of the most delicious fruits, and superior to all others for *sweetness*. 3. The *vine*, which alone yields a liquor that, when properly prepared, and taken in strict moderation, is friendly both to the body and mind of man, having a most direct tendency to invigorate both. 4. The *bramble* or *thorn*, which, however useful as a hedge, is dangerous to come near; and is here the emblem of an impious, cruel, and oppressive king. As the *olive*, *fig*, and *vine*, are said in this fable to refuse

the royalty, because in consequence, they intimate, they should lose their *own privileges*, we learn that to be *invested with power* for the *public good* can be no *privilege* to the sovereign. If he discharge the office faithfully, it will plant his pillow with thorns, fill his soul with anxious cares, rob him of rest and quiet, and, in a word, will be to him a source of distress and misery. All this is represented here under the emblem of the trees losing their *fatness*, their *sweetness* and *good fruits*, and their *cheering influence*. In short, we see from this most sensible fable that the *beneficent*, *benevolent*, and highly *illuminated* mind, is ever averse from the love of power; and that those who *do seek it* are the *thoughtless*, the *vain*, the *ambitious*, and those who wish for power merely for the purpose of *self-gratification*; persons who have neither the *disposition* nor the *knowledge* to use power for the advantage of the *community*; and who, while they boast great things, and make great pretensions and promises, are the tyrants of the people, and often through their ambition, like the bramble in the fable kindle a flame of foreign or domestic war, in which their subjects are consumed.

The sleepless nights and corroding cares of sovereignty, are most forcibly described by a poet of our own, whose equal in describing the inward workings of the human heart, in all varieties of character and circumstances, has never appeared either in ancient or modern times. Hear what he puts in the mouth of two of his care-worn kings:—

“How many thousand of my poorest subjects
 Are at this hour asleep?—Sleep, gentle sleep,
 Nature’s soft nurse! how have I frighted thee,
 That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
 And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
 Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
 Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
 And hush’d with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber
 Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
 Under the canopies of costly state,
 And lull’d with sounds of sweetest melody?
 O thou dull god! why liest thou with the vile
 In loathsome beds; and leav’st the kingly couch
 A watch-case, or a common ‘larum bell?
 Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
 Seal up the ship-boy’s eyes, and rock his brains
 In cradle of the rude imperious surge;
 And in the visitation of the winds,
 Who take the ruffian billows by the top,

Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them,
 With deafening clamours, in the slippery clouds,
 That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?
 Canst thou, O partial sleep! give thy repose
 To the wet sea-boy, in an hour so rude;
 And, in the calmest and most stillest night,
 With all appliances and means to boot,
 Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down!
 Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”—
 “O hard condition! twin-born with greatness,
 Subjected to the breath of every fool,
 Whose sense no more can feel but his own wringing!
 What infinite heart’s ease must kings neglect,
 That private men enjoy!
 And what have kings, that privates have not too,
 Save ceremony, save general ceremony?”—
 “‘Tis not the balm, the sceptre, and the ball,
 The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
 The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
 The farced title running ‘fore the king,
 The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
 That beats upon the high shore of this world,
 No, not all these, thrice gorgeous ceremony,
 Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
 Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave.”
 SHAKESPEARE

This is precisely the sentiment expressed in the denial of the olive, fig tree, and vine.

Verse 15. Come and put your trust in any shadow] The vain boast of the *would-be* sovereign; and of the man who is seeking to be put into power by the suffrages of the people. All *promise*, no *performance*.

Let fire come out of the bramble] A strong catachresis. The bramble was *too low* to give shelter to any tree; and so far from being able to *consume* others, that the smallest fire will reduce it to *ashes*, and that in the *shortest time*. Hence the very *transitory* mirth of fools is said to be *like the cracking of thorns under a pot*. Abimelech was the *bramble*; and the *ceders of Lebanon*, all the *nobles* and *people* of Israel. Could they therefore suppose that such a low-born, uneducated, cruel, and murderous man, could be a proper protector, or a humane governor? He who could imbrue his hands in the blood of his brethren in order to get into power, was not likely to stop at any means to retain that power when possessed. If, therefore, they

took him for their king, they might rest assured that desolation and blood would mark the whole of his reign.

The condensed moral of the whole fable is this: Weak, worthless, and wicked men, will ever be foremost to thrust themselves into power; and, in the end, to bring ruin upon themselves, and on the unhappy people over whom they preside.

Verse 20. Let fire come out from Abimelech] As the thorn or bramble may be the means of kindling other wood, because it may be easily ignited; so shall Abimelech be the cause of kindling a *fire* of civil discord among you, that shall consume the rulers and great men of your country. A prophetic declaration of what would take place.

Verse 21. Went to Beer] Mr. Maundrell, in his journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, p. 64, 5th edit., mentions a place of this name, which he thinks to be that to which Jotham fled, and supposed to be the same as Mishmash, ^{<0146>}**1 Samuel 14:5, 31.** It is situated, he says, towards the south, on an easy declivity; and has a *fountain* of excellent water at the bottom of the hill from which it has taken its name.

Verse 23. God sent an evil spirit] He permitted jealousies to take place which produced factions; and these factions produced insurrections, civil contentions, and slaughter.

Verse 25. The men of Shechem set liers in wait] It pleased God to punish this bad man by the very persons who had contributed to his iniquitous elevation. So God often makes the instruments of men's sins the means of their punishment. It is likely that although Abimelech had his chief residence at *Shechem*, yet he frequently went to *Ophrah*, the city of his father; his claim to which there was none to oppose, as he had slain all his brethren. It was probably in his passage between those two places that the Shechemites had posted cut-throats, in order to assassinate him; as such men had no moral principle, they robbed and plundered all who came that way.

Verse 26. Gaal the son of Ebed] Of this person we know no more than is here told. He was probably one of the descendants of the Canaanites, who hoped from the state of the public mind, and their disaffection to Abimelech, to cause a revolution, and thus to restore the ancient government as it was under *Hamor*, the father of *Shechem*.

Verse 28. Zebul his officer] *wdyqp pekido, his overseer*; probably governor of Shechem in his absence.

Verse 29. Would to God this people were under my hand] The very words and conduct of a sly, hypocritical demagogue.

Increase thine army, and come out.] When he found his party strong, and the public feeling warped to his side, then he appears to have sent a challenge to Abimelech, to come out and fight him.

Verse 31. They fortify the city against thee.] Under pretence of repairing the walls and towers, they were actually putting the place in a state of defence, intending to seize on the government as soon as they should find Abimelech coming against them. *Fortifying the city* may mean seducing the inhabitants from their loyalty to Abimelech.

Verse 35. Stood in the entering of the gate] Having probably got some intimation of the designs of Zebul and Abimelech.

Verse 37. By the plain of Meonenim.] Some translate, *by the way of the oaks*, or oaken groves; others, *by the way of the magicians, or regarders of the times*, as in our *margin*. Probably it was a place in which augurs and soothsayers dwelt.

Verse 45. And sowed it with salt.] Intending that the destruction of this city should be a *perpetual* memorial of his achievements. The *salt* was not designed to render it *barren*, as some have imagined; for who would think of cultivating a city? but as *salt* is an emblem of *incorruption* and *perpetuity*, it was no doubt designed to *perpetuate* the memorial of this transaction, and as a token that he wished this desolation to be *eternal*. This *sowing a place with salt* was a custom in different nations to express *permanent desolation* and *abhorrence*. *Sigonius* observes that when the city of *Milan* was taken, in A.D. 1162, the walls were razed, and *it was sown with salt*. And *Brantome* informs us that it was ancient custom in France to *sow the house* of a man *with salt*, who had been declared a *traitor* to his king. Charles IX., king of France, the most base and perfidious of human beings, caused the house of the *Admiral Coligni* (whom he and the Duke of *Guise* caused to be murdered, with thousands more of Protestants, on the eve of St. Bartholomew, 1572) to *be sown with salt!* How many houses have been since *sown with salt in France* by the just judgments of God, in revenge for the massacre of the Protestants on

the eve of St. Bartholomew! *Yet for all this God's wrath is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

Verse 46. A hold of the house of the god Berith.] This must mean the *precincts* of the temple, as we find there were a thousand men and women together in that place.

Verse 53. A piece of a millstone] *bkr j l p pelach recheb, a piece of a chariot wheel*; but the word is used in other places for *upper millstones*, and is so understood here by the *Vulgate, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic.*

And all to break his skull.] A most nonsensical version of *wtl gl g ta xrtw vattarits eth gulgolto*, which is literally, *And she brake, or fractured, his skull*. Plutarch, in his life of Pyrrhus, observes that this king was killed at the siege of Thebes, by a *piece of a tile*, which a woman threw upon his head.

Verse 54. Draw thy sword, and slay me] It was a disgrace to be killed by a woman; on this account, Seneca the tragedian deplores the death of Hercules:—

*O turpe fatum! femina Herculeæ necis
Autor feritur.
HERC. CÆTÆUS, ver. 1177.*

“O dishonourable fate! a woman is reported to have been author of the death of Hercules.”

Abimelech was also afraid that if he fell thus mortally wounded into the hands of his enemies they might treat him with cruelty and insult.

Verse 56. Thus God rendered, &c.] Both the fratricide Abimelech, and the unprincipled men of Shechem, had the iniquity visited upon them of which they had been guilty. Man's judgment may be avoided; but there is no escape from the judgments of God.

I HAVE said that the fable of Jotham is the *oldest*, and perhaps the *best*, in the world; and referred for other particulars to the end of the chapter.

On the general subject of fable, apologue, and parable, the reader will find a considerable dissertation at the end of ~~1038~~ **Matthew 13:58**; I shall add but a few things here, and they shall refer to the oldest *collection* of fables extant. These are of *Indian origin*, and are preserved in the *Sanscreeet*,

from which they have been translated into different languages, both Asiatic and European, under various titles. The *collection* is called *Hitopadesa*, and the author *Veshnoo Sarma*; but they are known in Europe by *The Tales and Fables of Bidpay, or Pilpay, an ancient Indian Philosopher*. Of this collection Sir William Jones takes the following notice:- “The fables of Veshnoo Sarma, whom we ridiculously call *Pilpay*, are the most beautiful, if not the most ancient, collection of apologues in the world. They were first translated from the Sanscreeet, in the sixth century, by *Buzerchumihir*, or *bright as the sun*, the chief physician, and afterwards the vizir of the great *Anushirwan*; and are extant under various names, in more than *twenty* languages. But their original title is *Hitopadesa*, or *amicable instruction*; and as the very existence of *Æsop*, whom the Arabs believe to have been an *Abyssinian*, appears rather doubtful, I am not disinclined to suppose that the first moral fables which appeared in Europe were of *Indian* or *Æthiopian* origin.”

Mr. Frazer, in his collection of Oriental MSS. at the end of his *History of Nadir Shah*, gives us the following account of this curious and instructive work:—

“The ancient brahmins of India, after a good deal of time and labour, compiled a treatise, (which they called *Kurtuk Dumnik*,) in which were inserted the choicest treasure of wisdom and the most perfect rules for governing a people. This book they presented to their *rajahs*, who kept it with the greatest secrecy and care. About the time of *Mohammed’s* birth or the latter end of the sixth century, *Noishervan* the Just, who then reigned in Persia, discovered a great inclination to see that book; for which purpose *Burzuvia*, a physician, who had a surprising talent in learning several languages, particularly *Sanskerritt*, was introduced to him as the most proper person to be employed to get a copy of it. He went to *India*, where, after some years’ stay, and great trouble, he procured it. It was translated into the *Pehluvi* (the ancient Persian language) by him and *Buzrjumehr*, the vizir. *Noishervan*, ever after, and all his successors, the Persian kings, had this book in high esteem, and took the greatest care to keep it secret. At last *Abu Jaffer Munsour zu Nikky*, who was the second caliph of the Abassi reign, by great search got a copy of it in the *Pehluvi* language, and ordered *Imam Hassan Abdal Mokaffa*, who was the most learned of the age, to translate it into *Arabic*. This prince ever after made it his guide, not only in affairs relating to the government, but also in private life.

“In the year 380 of the *Hegira*, Sultan *Mahmud Ghazi* put into verse; and afterwards, in the year 515, by order of *Bheram Shah ben Massaud*, that which *Abdal Mokaffa* had translated was retranslated into *Persic* by *Abdul Mala Nasser Allah Mustofi*; and this is that *Kulila Dumna* which is now extant. As this latter had too many Arabic verses and obsolete phrases in it, *Molana Ali beg Hessein Vaes*, at the request of *Emir Soheli*, keeper of the seals to Sultan *Hossein Mirza*, put it into a more modern style, and gave it the title of *Anuar Soheli*.

“In the year 1002, the great mogulhul *Jalal o Din Mohommed Akbar* ordered his own secretary and vizir, the learned *Abul Fazl*, to illustrate the obscure passages, abridge the long digressions, and put it into such a style as would be most familiar to all capacities; which he accordingly did, and gave it the name of *Ayar Danish*, or the *Criterion of Wisdom*.” This far Mr. *Frazer*, under the word *Ayar Danish*.

“In the year 1709,” says Dr. *Wilkins*, “the *Kulila Dumna*, the Persian version of *Abul Mala Nasser Allah Mustofi*, made in the 515th year of the *Hegira*, was translated into *French*, with the title of *Les Conseils et les Maximes de Pilpay, Philosophe Indien, sur les divers Etats de la Vie*. This edition resembles the *Hitopadesa* more than any other then seen; and is evidently the immediate original of the English *Instructive and entertaining Fables of Pilpay, an ancient Indian philosopher*, which, in 1775, had gone through five editions.

“The *Anuar Soheli*, above mentioned, about the year 1540, was rendered into the *Turkish* language; and the translator is said to have bestowed twenty years’ labour upon it. In the year 1724, this edition M. *Galland* began to translate into *French*, and the first four chapters were then published; but, in the year 1778, M. *Cardonne* completed the work, in three volumes, giving it the name of *Contes et Fables Indiennes de Bidpai et de Lokman; traduites d’ Ali Tcheleby ben Saleh, amateur Turk*; ‘Indian Tales and Fables of Bidpay and Lockman, translated from Aly Tcheleby ben Saleh, a Turkish author.’”

The fables of *Lockman* were published in *Arabic* and *Latin*, with notes, by *Erpenius*, 4to. Amstel., 1636; and by the celebrated *Golius*, at the end of his edition of *Erpen’s Arabic Grammar*, Lugd. Bat., 1656, with additional notes; and also in the edition of the same Grammar, by *Albert Schultens*, Lugd. Bat., 1748, 4to. They are only thirty-seven in number.

Of the *Hitopadesa*, or fables of *Veshnoo Sarma*, we have two very elegant *English* translations from the original Sanscreeet: one by Sir *William Jones*, printed in his works, 4to., vol. 6, Lond. 1799; the other by the father of Sanscreeet literature in Europe, Dr. *Charles Wilkins*, of the India House, 8vo., Bath, 1787, with a collection of very important notes.

The *Bahar Danush*, or *Sea of Wisdom*, abounds with maxims, apothegms, &c., similar to those in the preceding works; this was most faithfully translated from the *Persian*, by Dr. *Jonathan Scott*, late Persian secretary to his excellency *Warren Hastings*, published in three vols. 12mo., with notes, Shrewsbury, 1799. This is the most correct version of any Persian work yet offered to the public. The original is by *Einaut Ullah*. Of these works it may be said, they contain the wisdom of the oriental world; and many of the numerous maxims interspersed through them yield in importance only to those in the sacred writings. The fables attributed to *Æsop* have been repeatedly published in *Greek* and *Latin*, as well as in all the languages of Europe, and are well known. Those of *Phædrus* are in general only a metrical version of the fables of *Æsop*. The compositions of *La Fontaine*, in French, and those of Mr. *Gay*, in English, are very valuable.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 10

Tola judges Israel twenty-three years, 1, 2. Jair is judge twenty-two years, 3-5. After him the Israelites rebel against God, and are delivered into the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites eighteen years, 6-9. They humble themselves, and God reproves them, 10-14. They put away their strange gods, and gather together against the Ammonites, 15-17. The chiefs of Gilead inquire concerning a captain to head them against the Ammonites, 18.

NOTES ON CHAP. 10

Verse 1. Tola the son of Puah] As this Tola continued twenty-three years a judge of Israel after the troubles of Abimelech's reign, it is likely that the land had rest, and that the enemies of the Israelites had made no hostile incursions into the land during his presidency and that of Jair; which, together continued forty-five years.

Verse 4. He had thirty sons, &c.] It appears that there was both peace and prosperity during the time that Jair governed Israel; he had, it seems, provided for his family, and given a village to each of his thirty sons; which were, in consequence, called *Havoth Jair* or the *villages of Jair*. Their *riding on thirty ass colts* seems to intimate that they were persons of consideration, and kept up a certain dignity in their different departments.

Verse 6. And served Baalim] They became *universal idolaters*, adopting every god of the surrounding nations. *Baalim* and *Ashtaroth* may signify *gods* and *goddesses* in general. These are enumerated: 1. *The gods of Syria; Bel and Saturn, or Jupiter and Astarte*. 2. *Gods of Zidon; Ashtaroth, Astarte or Venus*. 3. *The gods of Moab; Chemosh*. 4. *Gods of the children of Ammon; Milcom*. 5. *Gods of the Philistines; Dagon*. See ^{<1113>}1 Kings 11:33, and ^{<0902>}1 Samuel 5:2. These are called *gods* because their images and places of worship were multiplied throughout the land.

Verse 7. The anger of the Lord was hot] This Divine displeasure was manifested in delivering them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. The former dwelt on the *western* side of Jordan; the latter, on the *eastern*: and it appears that they joined their forces on this occasion to

distress and ruin the Israelites, though the Ammonites were the most active.

Verse 11. And the Lord said] By what means these reproofs were conveyed to the Israelites, we know not: it must have been by an *angel*, a *prophet*, or some *holy man* inspired for the occasion.

Verse 15. We have sinned] The reprehension of this people was kind, pointed, and solemn; and their repentance deep. And they gave proofs that their repentance was genuine, by putting away all their idols: but they were ever *fickle* and *uncertain*.

Verse 16. And his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.] What a proof of the *philanthropy* of God! Here his compassions moved on a *small scale*; but it was the same principle that led him to give his Son Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for the sins of the *WHOLE world*. God *grieves* for the miseries to which his creatures are reduced by their own sins. Be astonished, ye heavens, at this; and shout for joy, all ye inhabitants of the earth! for, through the love whence this compassion flowed, God has visited and redeemed a lost world!

Verse 17. The children of Ammon were gathered together] Literally, *they cried against Israel*-they sent out criers in different directions to stir up all the enemies of Israel; and when they had made a mighty collection, they encamped in Gilead.

Verse 18. What man is he that will begin to fight] It appears that, although the spirit of *patriotism* had excited the people at large to come forward against their enemies, yet they had no general, none to lead them forth to battle. God, however, who had accepted their sincere repentance, raised them up an able captain in the person of Jephthah; and in him the suffrages of the people were concentrated, as we shall see in the following chapter.

In those ancient times much depended on the onset; a war was generally terminated in one battle, the first impression was therefore of great consequence, and it required a person *skillful*, *valorous*, and *strong*, to head the attack. Jephthah was a person in whom all these qualifications appear to have met. When God purposes to deliver, he, in the course of his providence, will find out, employ, and direct the proper *means*.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 11

The history of Jephthah, and his covenant with the Gileadites, 1-10. He is elected by the people, 11. Sends an embassy to the king of the Ammonites, to inquire why they invaded Israel; and receives an answer, to which he sends back a spirited reply, 12-27. This is disregarded by the Ammonites, and Jephthah prepares for battle, 28, 29. His vow, 30, 31. He attacks and defeats them, 32, 33. On his return to Mizpeh he is met by his daughter, whom, according to his vow, he dedicates to the Lord, 34-40.

NOTES ON CHAP. 11

Verse 1. Now Jephthah-was the son of a harlot] I think the word **hnwz zonah**, which we here render *harlot*, should be translated, as is contended for on ^{<07001>}**Joshua 2:1**, viz. a *hostess, keeper of an inn or tavern* for the accommodation of travellers; and thus it is understood by the Targum of Jonathan on this place: **atyqdnwp atta rb awhw vehu bar ittetha pundekitha**, “and he was the son of a woman, a *tavern keeper*.” See the note referred to above. She was very probably a Canaanite, as she is called, ^{<07102>}**Judges 11:2**, a *strange woman*, **trj a hva ishshah achereth**, a *woman of another race*; and on this account his brethren drove him from the family, as he could not have a full right to the inheritance, his mother not being an Israelite.

Verse 3. There were gathered vain men to Jephthah] **pyqyr myvna anashim reykim**, *empty men-persons destitute of good sense, and profligate in their manners*. The word may, however, mean in this place *poor persons*, without property, and without employment. The *versions* in general consider them as *plunderers*.

Verse 4. The children of Ammon made war] They had invaded the land of Israel, and were now encamped in Gilead. See ^{<071017>}**Judges 10:17**.

Verse 6. Come, and be our captain] The Israelites were assembled in Mizpeh, but were without a captain to lead them against the Ammonites. And we find, from the conclusion of the preceding chapter, that they offered the command to any that would accept it.

Verse 8. Therefore we turn again to thee now] We are convinced that we have dealt unjustly by thee, and we wish now to repair our fault, and give thee this sincere proof of our regret for having acted unjustly, and of our confidence in thee.

Verse 11. Jephthah went with the elders] The *elders* had chosen him for their head; but, to be valid, this choice must be confirmed by the *people*; therefore, it is said, *the people made him head*. But even this did not complete the business; God must be brought in as a party to this transaction; and therefore *Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord*-the terms made with the elders and the people on which he had accepted the command of the army; and, being sure of the Divine approbation, he entered on the work with confidence.

Verse 12. Jephthah sent messengers] He wished the Ammonites to explain their own motives for undertaking a war against Israel; as then the justice of his cause would appear more forcibly to the people.

Verse 13. From Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan] That is, all the land that had formerly belonged to the Amorites, and to the Moabites, who it seems were confederates on this occasion.

Verse 22. From the wilderness even unto Jordan.] From Arabia Deserta on the east to Jordan on the west.

Verse 23. The Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites] Jephthah shows that the Israelites did not take the land of the Moabites or Ammonites, but that of the *Amorites*, which they had conquered from Sihon their king, who had, without cause or provocation, attacked them; and although the Amorites had taken the lands in question from the Ammonites, yet the title by which Israel held them was good, because they took them not from the Ammonites, but conquered them from the Amorites.

So now the Lord-hath dispossessed the Amorites.-The circumstances in which the Israelites were when they were attacked by the Amorites, plainly proved, that, unless Jehovah had helped them, they must have been overcome. God defeated the Amorites, and made a grant of their lands to the Israelites; and they had, in consequence, possessed them for *three hundred years*, ^{<071126>}**Judges 11:26.**

Verse 24. Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee] As if he had said: “It is a maxim with you, as it is among all nations, that the lands which they conceive to be given them by their gods, they have an absolute right to, and should not relinquish them to any kind of claimant. You suppose that the land which you possess was given you by your god *Chemosh* and therefore you will not relinquish what you believe you hold by a Divine right. Now, we know that Jehovah, our God, who is the Lord of heaven and earth, has given the Israelites the land of the Amorites; and therefore we will not give it up.” The ground of Jephthah’s remonstrance was sound and good.

1. The Ammonites had lost their lands in their contests with the Amorites.
2. The Israelites conquered these lands from the Amorites, who had waged a most unprincipled war against them.
3. God, who is the Maker of heaven and earth had given those very lands as a Divine grant to the Israelites.
4. In consequence of this they had possession of them for upwards of three hundred years.
5. These lands were never reclaimed by the Ammonites, though they had repeated opportunities of doing it, whilst the Israelites dwelt in Heshbon, in Aroer, and in the coasts of Arnon; but they did not reclaim them because they knew that the Israelites held them legally. The present pretensions of Ammon were unsupported and unjustifiable.

Verse 27. The Lord the Judge be judge-between the children of Israel] If you be right, and we be wrong, then Jehovah, who is the sovereign and incorruptible Judge, shall determine in your favour; and to Him I submit the righteousness of my cause.

Verse 29. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah] The Lord qualified him for the work he had called him to do, and thus gave him the most convincing testimony that his cause was good.

Verse 31. Shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.] The text is *hl w[whytyl [hw hwyl hyhw vehayah layhovah, vemaalithihu olah*; the translation of which, according to the most accurate Hebrew scholars, is this: *I will consecrate it to the Lord, or I will offer it for a burnt-offering*; that is, “If it be a thing fit for a

burnt-offering, it shall be made one; if fit for the *service of God*, it shall be consecrated to him.” That conditions of this kind must have been implied in the vow, is evident enough; to have been made without them, it must have been the vow of a *heathen*, or a *madman*. If a *dog* had met him, this could not have been made a *burnt-offering*; and if his neighbour or friend’s *wife*, *son*, or *daughter*, &c., had been returning from a visit to his family, his vow gave him no right over them. Besides, *human sacrifices* were ever an abomination to the Lord; and this was one of the grand reasons why God drove out the Canaanites, &c., because they offered their sons and daughters to Molech in the fire, i.e., made burnt-offerings of them, as is generally supposed. That Jephthah was a deeply pious man, appears in the whole of his conduct; and that he was well acquainted with the *law of Moses*, which prohibited all such sacrifices, and stated *what* was to be offered in sacrifice, is evident enough from his expostulation with the king and people of Ammon, ~~אמון~~ **Judges 11:14-27**. Therefore it must be granted that he never made that rash vow which several suppose he did; nor was he capable, if he had, of executing it in that most shocking manner which some Christian writers (“tell it not in Gath”) have contended for. He could not commit a crime which himself had just now been an executor of God’s justice to punish in others.

It has been supposed that “the text itself might have been read differently in former times; if instead of the words **hl w[whytyl [hw, I will offer IT a burnt-offering**, we read **hl w[awh ytyl [hw, I will offer HIM** (i.e., the Lord) *a burnt-offering*: this will make a widely different sense, more consistent with everything that is sacred; and it is formed by the addition of only a *single letter*, (**a** *aleph*.) and the separation of the *pronoun* from the verb. Now the letter **a** *aleph* is so like the letter [*ain*, which immediately follows it in the word **hl w[olah**, that the one might easily have been lost in the other, and thus the *pronoun* be joined to the *verb* as at present, where it expresses the *thing* to be sacrificed instead of the *person* to whom the sacrifice was to be made. With this emendation the passage will read thus: *Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors or my house to meet me shall be the Lord’s; and I will offer HIM a burnt-offering.*” For this criticism there is no absolute need, because the pronoun **wh hu**, in the above verse, may with as much propriety be translated *him* as *it*. The latter part of the verse is, literally, *And I will offer him a burnt-offering*, **hl w[olah**, not **hl w[l leolah**, FOR *a burnt-offering*, which is the common Hebrew form

when *for* is intended to be expressed. This is strong presumption that the text should be thus understood: and this avoids the very disputable construction which is put on the *w vau*, in *whytyl [hw vahaalithihu, OR I will offer IT up, instead of AND I will offer HIM a burnt-offering.*

“From ^{<07113>}**Judges 11:39** it appears evident that Jephthah’s daughter *was not SACRIFICED to God, but consecrated to him in a state of perpetual virginity; for the text says, She knew no man, for this was a statute in Israel. I arvyb qj yhtw vattehi chok beyishrael; viz., that persons thus dedicated or consecrated to God, should live in a state of unchangeable celibacy. Thus this celebrated place is, without violence to any part of the text, or to any proper rule of construction, cleared of all difficulty, and caused to speak a language consistent with itself, and with the nature of God.”*

Those who assert that Jephthah did sacrifice his daughter, attempt to justify the opinion from the barbarous usages of those times: but in answer to this it may be justly observed, that Jephthah was now under the influence of the Spirit of God, ^{<07112>}**Judges 11:29**; and that Spirit could not permit him to imbrue his hands in the blood of his own child; and especially under the pretence of offering a *pleasing* sacrifice to that God who is the Father of mankind, and the Fountain of love, mercy, and compassion.

The *versions* give us but little assistance in clearing the difficulties of the text. In the *Targum* of Jonathan there is a remarkable *gloss* which should be mentioned, and from which it will appear that the Targumist supposed that the daughter of Jephthah was actually sacrificed: “And he fulfilled the vow which he had vowed upon her; and she knew no man: and it was made a statute in Israel, [that no man should offer his son or his daughter for a burnt-offering, as did Jephthah the Gileadite, who did not consult Phinehas the priest; for if he had consulted Phinehas the priest, he would have redeemed her with money.”]

The Targumist refers here to the *law*, ^{<02701>}**Leviticus 27:1-5**, where the Lord prescribes the *price* at which either males or females, who had been *vowed to the Lord*, might be *redeemed*. “When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons shall be for the Lord at thy estimation: the male from twenty years old even unto sixty, shall be fifty shekels of silver; and if it be a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels; and from five years old

unto twenty years, the male twenty shekels, and for the female ten." This also is an argument that the daughter of Jephthah was not sacrificed; as the father had it in his power, at a very moderate price, to have redeemed her: and surely the blood of his daughter must have been of more value in his sight than *thirty* shekels of silver.

Dr. Hales has entered largely into the subject: his observations may be seen at the end of this chapter.

Verse 33. Twenty cities] That is, he either *took* or *destroyed* twenty cities of the Ammonites, and completely routed their whole army.

Verse 34. With timbrels and with dances] From this instance we find it was an ancient custom for women to go out to meet returning conquerors with musical instruments, songs, and dances; and that it was continued afterwards is evident from the instance given ^{<D186>}**1 Samuel 18:6**, where David was met, on his return from the defeat of Goliath and the Philistines, by women from all the cities of Israel, with singing and dancing, and various instruments of music.

Verse 35. Thou hast brought me very low] He was greatly distressed to think that his daughter, who was his only child, should be, in consequence of his vow, prevented from continuing his family in Israel; for it is evident that he had not any other child, for *besides her*, says the text, *he had neither son nor daughter*, ^{<D183>}**Judges 11:34**. He might, therefore, well be grieved that thus his family was to become extinct in Israel.

Verse 36. And she said unto him] What a pattern of filial piety and obedience! She was at once obedient, pious, and patriotic. A woman to have no offspring was considered to be in a state of the utmost degradation among the Hebrews; but she is regardless of all this, seeing her father is in safety, and her country delivered.

Verse 37. I and my fellows] Whether she meant the young women of her own acquaintance, or those who had been consecrated to God in the same way, though on different accounts, is not quite clear; but it is likely she means her own *companions*: and her *going up and down upon the mountains* may signify no more than her paying each of them a visit at their own houses, previously to her being shut up at the tabernacle; and this visiting of each at their own home might require the space of *two months*. This I am inclined to think is the meaning of this difficult clause.

Verse 39. And she knew no man] She continued a *virgin* all the days of her life.

Verse 40. To lament the daughter of Jephthah] I am satisfied that this is not a correct translation of the original **j tpy tbl twntl lethannoth lebeth yiphtach**. Houbigant translates the whole verse thus: *Sed iste mos apud Israel invaluit, ut virgines Israel, temporibus diversis, irent ad filiam Jepthe-ut eam quotannis dies quatuor consolarentur*; “But this custom prevailed in Israel that the virgins of Israel went at different times, four days in the year, to the daughter of Jephthah, that they might comfort her.” This verse also gives evidence that the daughter of Jephthah was not sacrificed: nor does it appear that the custom or statute referred to here lasted after the death of Jephthah’s daughter.

THE following is Dr. *Hales*’ exposition of Jephthah’s vow:—

“When *Jephthah* went forth to battle against the *Ammonites*, he vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, ‘If thou wilt surely give the children of *Ammon* into my hand, then it shall be that *whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me*, when I return in peace from the children of *Ammon*, shall either be the Lord’s, or I will offer it up (for) a burnt-offering,’ ^{<0713>}**Judges 11:30, 31**. According to this rendering of the two conjunctions, **W** *vau* in the last clause ‘either,’ ‘or,’ (which is justified by the *Hebrew* idiom thus, ‘He that curseth his father *and* his mother,’ ^{<0217>}**Exodus 21:17**, is necessarily rendered disjunctively, ‘His father *or* his mother,’ by the *Septuagint*, *Vulgate*, *Chaldee*, and *English*, confirmed by ^{<0154>}**Matthew 15:4**, the paucity of connecting particles in that language making it necessary that this conjunction should often be understood disjunctively,) the vow consisted of two parts: 1. That what person soever met him should *be the Lord’s* or be dedicated to his service; and, 2. That what *beast* soever met him, if *clean*, should be offered up for a burnt-offering unto the Lord.

“This rendering and this interpretation is warranted by the *Levitical* law about vows.

“The **r dn** *neder*, or *vow*, in general, included either *persons*, *beasts*, or *things* dedicated to the Lord for pious uses; which, if it was a simple vow, was redeemable at certain prices, if the person repented of his vow, and wished to commute it for money, according to the age or sex of the person,

<R270> **Leviticus 27:1-8**: this was a wise regulation to remedy rash vows. But if the vow was accompanied with $\mu\rho j$ *cherem, devotement*, it was irredeemable, as in the following case, <R2728> **Leviticus 27:28**.

“Notwithstanding, no devotement which a man shall devote unto the Lord, (either) of *man, or beast, or of land of his own property*, shall be sold or redeemed. Every thing devoted is most holy to the Lord.

“Here the three \mathbb{W} *vaus* in the original should necessarily be rendered disjunctively, or as the last actually is in our translation, because there are three distinct subjects of devotement to be applied to distinct uses, the *man* to be dedicated to the service of the Lord, as *Samuel* by his mother *Hannah*, <O0111> **1 Samuel 1:11**; the *cattle*, if clean, such as *oxen, sheep, goats, turtle-doves, or pigeons*, to be sacrificed; and if unclean, as *camels, horses, asses*, to be employed for carrying burdens in the service of the tabernacle or temple; and the *lands*, to be sacred property.

“This law therefore expressly applied in its first branch to *Jephthah’s* case, who had *devoted* his daughter to the Lord, or *opened his mouth to the Lord*, and therefore *could not go back*, as he declared in his grief at seeing his daughter and only child coming to meet him with timbrels and dances: she was, therefore necessarily devoted, but with her own consent to perpetual *virginity* in the service of the tabernacle, <O7136> **Judges 11:36, 37**; and such service was customary, for in the division of the spoils taken in the first Midianitish war, of the whole number of captive virgins the Lord’s *tribute was thirty-two persons*, <O3115> **Numbers 31:15-40**. This instance appears to be decisive of the nature of her devotement.

“Her father’s extreme grief on the occasion and her requisition of a respite for two months to *bewail her virginity*, are both perfectly natural. Having no other issue, he could only look forward to the extinction of his name or family; and a state of celibacy, which is reproachful among women everywhere, was peculiarly so among the *Israelites*, and was therefore no ordinary *sacrifice* on her part; who, though she generously gave up, could not but regret the loss of, becoming ‘*a mother in Israel.*’ And *he did with her according to his vow* which he had vowed, and *she knew no man*, or remained a virgin, all her life, <O71134> **Judges 11:34-39**.

“There was also another case of *devotement* which was irredeemable, and follows the former, <R2729> **Leviticus 27:29**. This case differs materially from the former.

“1. It is confined to PERSONS devoted, omitting *beasts* and *lands*. 2. It does not relate to *private property*, as in the foregoing. And, 3. The subject of it was to be *utterly destroyed*, instead of being *most holy unto the Lord*. This law, therefore, related to *aliens*, or *public enemies* devoted to destruction *either* by GOD, the *people*, or by the *magistrate*. Of all these we have instances in Scripture.

“1. The *Amalekites* and *Canaanites* were devoted by God himself. *Saul* was, therefore, guilty of a breach of the law for sparing *Agag* the king of the *Amalekites*, as Samuel reproached him, ^{<09153>}**1 Samuel 15:33**: ‘And Samuel hewed *Agag* in pieces before the Lord;’ not as a *sacrifice*, according to *Voltaire*, but as a *criminal*, whose sword had made many women childless. By this law the Midianitish women who had been spared in battle were slain, ^{<08114>}**Numbers 31:14-17**.

“2. In Mount *Hor*, when the Israelites were attacked by *Arad*, king of the southern *Canaanites*, who took some of them prisoners, they vowed a vow unto the Lord that they would utterly destroy the *Canaanites* and their cities, if the Lord should deliver them into their hand, which the Lord ratified; whence the place was called *Hormah*, because the vow was accompanied by *cherem*, or devotement to destruction, ^{<02101>}**Numbers 21:1-3**; and the vow was accomplished, ^{<07017>}**Judges 1:17**.

“3. In the *Philistine* war *Saul* adjured the people, and cursed any one who should taste food till the evening. His own son *Jonathan* inadvertently ate a honey-comb, not knowing his father’s oath, for which *Saul* sentenced him to die. But the people interposed, and rescued him for his public services; thus assuming the power of *dispensing*, in their collective capacity, with an unreasonable oath. This latter case, therefore, is utterly irrelative to *Jephthah’s* vow, which did not regard a foreign enemy or a domestic transgressor devoted to destruction, but on the contrary was a vow of thanksgiving, and therefore properly came under the former case. And that *Jephthah* could not possibly have sacrificed his daughter, (according to the vulgar opinion,) may appear from the following considerations:—

“1. The sacrifice of children to *Molech* was an abomination to the Lord, of which in numberless passages he expresses his detestation, and it was prohibited by an express law, under pain of death, as a *defilement of God’s sanctuary*, and a *profanation of his holy name*, ^{<03012>}**Leviticus 20:2, 3**. Such a sacrifice, therefore, unto the Lord himself, must be a still higher

abomination, and there is no precedent of any such under the law in the OLD TESTAMENT.

“2. The case of *Isaac* before the law is irrelevant, for *Isaac* was not sacrificed, and it was only proposed for a trial of *Abraham’s* faith.

“3. No father, merely by his own authority, could put an offending, much less an innocent, child to death upon any account, without the sentence of the magistrate, (^{<62118>}**Deuteronomy 21:18-21,**) and the consent of the people, as in *Jonathan’s* case.

“4. The *Mischna*, or traditional law of the Jews is pointedly against it; ver. 212. ‘If a Jew should devote his *son* or *daughter*, his *man* or *maid servant*, who are Hebrews, the devotement would be void, because no man can devote *what is not his own*, or *whose life he has not the absolute disposal of.*’ These arguments appear to be decisive against the sacrifice; and that *Jephthah* could not have devoted his daughter to celibacy against her will is evident from the history, and from the high estimation in which she was always held by the daughters of Israel for her filial duty and her hapless fate, which they celebrated by a regular anniversary commemoration four days in the year; ^{<07140>}**Judges 11:40.**” -*New Analysis of Chronology*, vol. iii., p. 319.

The celebrated sacrifice of *Iphigenia* has been supposed by many learned men to be a fable founded on this account of *Jephthah’s* daughter; and M. Deuteronomy Lavour, *Conference de la Fable avec l’ Histoire Sainte*, has thus traced the parallel:—

“The fable of *Iphigenia*, offered in sacrifice by *Agamemnon* her father, sung by so many poets, related after them by so many historians, and celebrated in the *Greek* and *French* theatres, has been acknowledged by all those who knew the sacred writings, and who have paid a particular attention to them, as a changed copy of the history of the daughter of *Jephthah*, offered in sacrifice by her father. Let us consider the several parts particularly, and begin with an exposition of the original, taken from the eleventh chapter of the book of *Judges*.

“The sacred historian informs us that *Jephthah*, the son of *Gilead*, was a great and valiant captain. The *Israelites*, against whom God was irritated, being forced to go to war with the *Ammonites*, (nearly about the time of the siege of *Troy*,) assembled themselves together to oblige *Jephthah* to come to their succour, and chose him for their captain against the

Ammonites. He accepted the command on conditions that, if God should give him the victory, they would acknowledge him for their prince. This they promised by oath; and all the people elected him in the city of *Mizpeh*, in the tribe of *Judah*. He first sent ambassadors to the king of the *Ammonites* to know the reason why he had committed so many acts of injustice, and so many ravages on the coast of *Israel*. The other made a pretext of some ancient damages his people had suffered by the primitive *Israelites*, to countenance the ravages he committed, and would not accord with the reasonable propositions made by the *ambassadors* of *Jephthah*. Having now supplicated the Lord and being filled with his Spirit, he marched against the *Ammonites*, and being zealously desirous to acquit himself nobly, and to ensure the success of so important a war, he made a vow to the Lord to offer in sacrifice or as a burnt-offering the first thing that should come out of the house to meet him at his return from victory.

“He then fought with and utterly discomfited the *Ammonites*; and returning victorious to his house, God so permitted it that his only daughter was the first who met him. *Jephthah* was struck with terror at the sight of *her*, and tearing his garments, he exclaimed, *Alas! alas! my daughter, thou dost exceedingly trouble me; for I have opened my mouth against thee, unto the Lord, and I cannot go back*. His daughter, full of courage and piety, understanding the purport of his vow, exhorted him to accomplish what he had vowed to the Lord, which to her would be exceedingly agreeable, seeing the Lord had avenged him of his and his country’s enemies; desiring liberty only to go on the mountains with her companions, and to bewail the dishonour with which sterility was accompanied in *Israel*, because each hoped to see the *Messiah* born of his or her family. *Jephthah* could not deny her this request. She accordingly went, and at the end of two months returned, and put herself into the hands of her father, who did with her according to his vow.

“Several of the *rabbins*, and many very learned Christian expositors, believe that *Jephthah’s* daughter was not really sacrificed, but that her virginity was consecrated to God, and that she separated from all connection with the world; which indeed seems to be implied in the sacred historian’s account: *And she knew no man*. This was a kind of mysterious death, because it caused her to lose all hope of the glory of a posterity from which the *Messiah* might descend. From this originated the custom, observed afterwards in *Israel*, that on a certain season in the year the virgins assembled themselves on the mountains to bewail the daughter of

Jephthah for the space of four days. Let us now consider the leading characters of the fable of *Iphigenia*. According to good chronological reckonings, the time of the one and of the other very nearly agree. The opinion that the name of *Iphigenia* is taken from the daughter of *Jephthah*, appears well founded; yea, the conformity is palpable. By a very inconsiderable change *Iphigenia* makes *Iphthygenia*, which signifies literally, *the daughter of Jephthah*. *Agamemnon*, who is described as a valiant warrior and admirable captain, was chosen by the *Greeks* for their prince and *general* against the *Trojans*, by the united consent of all Greece, assembled together at *Aulis* in *Bœotia*.

“As soon as he had accepted the command, he sent ambassadors to *Priam*, king of *Troy*, to demand satisfaction for the rape of *Helen*, of which the *Greeks* complained. The *Trojans* refusing to grant this, *Agamemnon*, to gain over to his side the gods, who appeared irritated against the *Greeks* and opposed to the success of their enterprise, after having sacrificed to them went to consult their interpreter, *Chalchas*, who declared that the gods, and particularly *Diana*, would not be appeased but by the sacrifice of *Iphigenia*, the daughter of *Agamemnon*.

“*Cicero*, in his *Offices*, says that *Agamemnon*, in order to engage the protection of the gods in his war against the *Trojans*, vowed to sacrifice to them the most beautiful of all that should be born in his kingdom; and as it was found that his daughter *Iphigenia* surpassed all the rest in beauty, he believed himself bound by his vow to sacrifice her. *Cicero* condemns this, rightly judging *that it would have been a less evil to have falsified his vow than to have committed parricide*. This account of *Cicero* renders the fable entirely conformable to the history.

“*Agamemnon* was at first struck with and troubled at this order, nevertheless consented to it: but he afterwards regretted the loss of his daughter. He is represented by the poets as deliberating, and being in doubt whether the gods could require such a *parricide*; but at last a sense of his duty and honour overcame his paternal affection, and his daughter, who had warmly exhorted him to fulfil his vow to the gods, was led to the altar amidst the lamentations of her companions; as *Ovid* and *Euripides* relate, see *Met.*, lib. 13.

“Some authors have thought she really was sacrificed; but others, more humane, say she was caught up in a cloud by the gods, who, contented with the intended sacrifice, substituted a *hind* in her place, with which the

sacrifice was completed. *Dictys Cretensis* says that this animal was substituted to save *Iphigenia*.

“The chronology of times so remote cannot, in many respects, but be uncertain. Both the *Greeks* and *Romans* grant that there was nothing else than fables before the first *Olympiad*, the beginning of which was at least four hundred and fifty years after the destruction of *Troy*, and two hundred and forty years after *Solomon*. As to the time of *Solomon*, nothing can be more certain than what is related in the sixth chapter of the first book of *Kings*, that from the going out of *Egypt*, under *Moses*, till the time in which he began to build the temple, was four hundred and eighty years.

“According to the common opinion, the taking of *Troy* is placed one hundred and eighty years before the reign of *Solomon*; but his reign preceded *Homer* three centuries, according to some learned men, and always at least one century by those who related it lowest. Indeed, there is much uncertainty in fixing the express time in which *Homer* flourished.

“*Pausanias* found so much difference concerning this in authors, that he was at a loss how to judge of it. However, it is sufficient for us that it was granted that *Solomon* was at least a century before *Homer*, who wrote more than two centuries after the taking of *Troy* and who is the most ancient historian of this famous siege.”

JUDGES

CHAPTER 12

The Ephraimites are incensed against Jephthah, because he did not call them to war against the Ammonites; and threaten his destruction, 1. He vindicates himself, 2, 3; and arms the Gileadites against the men of Ephraim; they fight against them, and kill forty-two thousand Ephraimites at the passages of Jordan, 4-6. Jephthah dies, having judged Israel six years, 7. Ibzan judge seven years, 8. His posterity and death, 9,10. Elon judge ten years, and dies, 11, 12. Abdon judge eight years, 13. His posterity and death, 14, 15.

NOTES ON CHAP. 12

Verse 1. The men of Ephraim gathered themselves together] q[xyw vaiyitstaek, *they called each other to arms*; summoning all their tribe and friends to arm themselves to destroy Jephthah and the Gileadites, being jealous lest they should acquire too much power.

Verse 3. I put my life in my hands] I exposed myself to the greatest difficulties and dangers. But whence did this form of speech arise? Probably from a man's laying hold of his sword, spear, or bow. "This is the defender of my life; on this, and my proper use of it, my life depends." When a man draws his sword against his foe, his enemy will naturally aim at his life; and his sword in his hand is his sole defense. It is then, Fight and conquer, or die. Thus Jephthah took his life in his hand. This phrase occurs in some other places of Scripture; see ^{<DISE>}1 Samuel 19:5; 28:21. And the words of the Conqueror, ^{<DISE>}Isaiah 63:5, seem to confirm the above view of the subject: *I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me*; i.e., by mine own arm I saved my life, and brought destruction on mine enemies.

Verse 4. And fought with Ephraim] Some commentators suppose that there were *two* battles in which the Ephraimites were defeated: the first mentioned in the above clause; and the second occasioned by the taunting language mentioned in the conclusion of the verse, *Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim*. Where the *point* of this reproach lies, or what is the reason of it, cannot be easily ascertained.

Verse 6. Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth] The original differs only in the first letter **S** *samech*, instead of **v** *sheen*; **tl bs rmayw** **tl bv an rma** *emar na Shibboleth, vaiyomer Sibboleth*. The difference between **v** *seen*, without a point, which when pointed is pronounced *sheen*, and **S** *samech*, is supposed by many to be imperceptible. But there can be no doubt there was, to the ears of a Hebrew, a most sensible distinction. Most Europeans, and, indeed, most who have written grammars of the language, perceive scarcely any difference between the Arabic [Arabic] *seen* and [Arabic] *saad*; but as both those letters are *radical* not only in Arabic but in Hebrew, the difference of enunciation must be such as to be plainly perceivable by the ear; else it would be impossible to determine the root of a word into which either of these letters entered, except by guessing, unless by pronunciation the sounds were distinct. One to whom the Arabic is vernacular, hearing a native speak, discerns it in a moment; but the delicate enunciation of the characteristic difference between those letters **v** *seen* and **S** *samech*, and [Arabic] *seen* and [Arabic] *saad*, is seldom caught by a European. Had there been no distinction between the *seen* and *samech* but what the Masoretic point gives now, then **S** *samech* would not have been used in the word **tl bs** *sibboleth*, but **v** *seen*, thus **tl bv**: but there must have been a very remarkable difference in the pronunciation of the Ephraimites, when instead of **tl bv** *shibboleth*, an *ear of corn*, (see ^{<R24>}**Job 24:24**,) they said **tl bs** *sibboleth*, which signifies *a burden*, ^{<B06>}**Exodus 6:6**; and a heavy burden were they obliged to bear who could not pronounce this *test* letter. It is likely that the Ephraimites were, in reference to the pronunciation of *sh*, as different from the Gileadites as the people in some parts of the north of England are, in the pronunciation of the letter *r*, from all the other inhabitants of the land. The sound of *th* cannot be pronounced by the Persians in general; and yet it is a common sound among the Arabians. To this day multitudes of the German Jews cannot pronounce **t** *th*, but put *ss* in the stead of it: thus for **tyb** *beith* (a house) they say *bess*.

Mr. Richardson, in his “Dissertation on the Languages, Literature, and Manners of the Eastern Nations,” prefixed to his Persian and Arabic Dictionary, p. ii., 4to. edition, makes some observations on the different dialects which prevailed in Arabia Felix, the chief of which were the *Hemyaret* and *Koreish*; and to illustrate the point in hand, he produces the

following story from the Mohammedan writers: “An envoy from one of the feudatory states, having been sent to the *tobba*, (the sovereign,) that prince, when he was introduced, pronounced the word *T’heb*, which in the *Hemyaret* implied, *Be seated*: unhappily it signified, in the native dialect of the ambassador, *Precipitate thyself*; and he, with a singular deference for the orders of his sovereign, threw himself instantly from the castle wall and perished.” Though the Ephraimites had not a different *dialect*, they had, it appears, a different pronunciation, which confounded, to others, letters of the same organ, and thus produced, not only a different sound, but even an opposite meaning. This was a sufficient test to find out an Ephraimite; and he who spake not as he was commanded, at the fords of Jordan, spoke against his own life.

For he could not frame to pronounce it right.] This is not a bad rendering of the original $\hat{k} \text{ rbd}l \ \hat{y}ky \text{ al } w \text{ velo } yachin \text{ ledabber } ken$; “and they did not *direct* to speak it thus.” But instead of $\hat{y}ky \text{ yachin}$, to *direct*, thirteen of *Kennicott’s* and *Deuteronomy Rossi’s* MSS., with two ancient editions, read $\hat{y}by \text{ yabin}$; “they did not *understand* to speak it thus.”

The *versions* take great latitude in this verse. The *Vulgate* makes a paraphrase: *Dic ergo Shibboleth, quod interpretatur spica: qui respondebat Sibboleth; eadem litera spicam exprimere non valens*. “Say therefore, Shibboleth; which interpreted is an *ear of corn*: but he answered, Sibboleth; not being able to express an ear of corn by that letter.” In my very ancient copy of the *Vulgate*, probably the *editio princeps*, there is *sebboleth* in the first instance as the test word, and *thebboleth* as the Ephraimite pronunciation. But *cebboleth* is the reading of the *Complutensian Polyglot*, and is supported by one of my own MSS., yet the former reading, *thebboleth*, is found in *two* of my MSS. The *Chaldee* has $atl \text{ bwv } shubbaltha$ for the Gileaditish pronunciation, and $atl \text{ bs } subbaltha$ for that of Ephraim. The *Syriac* has [Syriac] *shelba* and [Syriac] *sebla*. The *Arabic* has the same word, with [Arabic] *sheen* and [Arabic] *seen*; and adds, “He said *Sebla*, for the Ephraimites could not pronounce the letter *sheen*.” These notices, however trivial at first view, will not be thought unimportant by the Biblical critic.

Verse 8. And after him Ibzan] It appears that during the administration of *Jephthah*, six years-*Ibzan*, seven years-*Elon*, ten years-and *Abdon*, eight

years, (in the whole thirty-one years,) the Israelites had peace in all their borders; and we shall find by the following chapter that in this time of rest they corrupted themselves, and were afterwards delivered into the power of the Philistines.

1. WE find that *Ibzan* had a numerous family, sixty children; and *Abdon* had forty sons and thirty grandsons; and that they lived splendidly, which is here expressed by their *riding on seventy young asses*; what we would express by *they all kept their carriages*; for the riding on fine asses in those days was not less dignified than riding in coaches in ours.

2. It does not appear that any thing particular took place in the civil state of the Israelites during the time of these latter judges; nothing is said concerning their administration, whether it was good or bad; nor is any thing mentioned of the state of religion. It is likely that they enjoyed peace without, and their judges were capable of preventing discord and sedition within. Yet, doubtless, God was at work among them, though there were none to record the operations either of his hand or his Spirit; but the people who feared him no doubt bore testimony to the word of his grace.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 13

The Israelites corrupt themselves, but are delivered into the hands of the Philistines forty years, 1. An Angel appears to the wife of Manoah, foretells the birth of her son, and gives her directions how to treat both herself and her child, who was to be a deliverer of Israel, 2-5. She informs her husband of this transaction, 6, 7. Manoah prays that the Angel may reappear; he is heard, and the Angel appears to him and his wife, and repeats his former directions concerning the mother and the child, 8-14. Manoah presents an offering to the Lord, and the Angel ascends in the flame, 15-20. Manoah is alarmed, but is comforted by the judicious rejections of his wife, 21-23. Samson is born, and begins to feel the influence of the Divine Spirit, 24, 25.

NOTES ON CHAP. 13

Verse 1. Delivered them into the hand of the Philistines] It does not appear that after Shamgar, to the present time, the Philistines were in a condition to oppress Israel, or God had not permitted them to do it; but now they have a commission, the Israelites having departed from the Lord. Nor is it evident that the Philistines had entirely subjected the Israelites, as there still appears to have been a sort of commerce between the two people. They had often vexed and made inroads upon them, but they had them not in entire subjection; see ^{<0751>}**Judges 15:11**.

Verse 2. A certain man of Zorah] A town in the tribe of Judah, but afterwards given to Dan.

Verse 3. The angel of the Lord] Generally supposed to have been the same that appeared to Moses, Joshua, Gideon, &c., and no other than the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity.

Verse 4. Beware-drink not wine] As Samson was designed to be a *Nazarite from the womb*, it was necessary that, while his mother carried and nursed him, *she* should live the life of a Nazarite, neither drinking wine nor any inebriating liquor, nor eating any kind of forbidden meat. See the account of the Nazarite and his vow, see in **Clarke's notes on**

^{<0402>}**Numbers 6:2**", &c.

Verse 5. He shall begin to deliver Israel] Samson only *began* this deliverance, for it was not till the days of David that the Israelites were completely redeemed from the power of the Philistines.

Verse 6. But I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name] This clause is rendered very differently by the Vulgate, the negative NOT being omitted: *Quem cum interrogassem quis esset, et unde venisset, et quo nomine vocaretur, noluit mihi dicere; sed hoc respondit.* “Who, when I asked who he was and whence he came, and by what name he was called, would not tell me; but this he said,” &c.

The *negative* is also wanting in the *Septuagint*, as it stands in the *Complutensian Polyglot*: **Και ηρωτων αυτον ποθεν εστιν, και το ονομα αυτου ουκ απηγγειλε μοι**; “And I asked him whence he was, and his name, *but* he did not tell me.” This is also the reading of the *Codex Alexandrinus*; but the *Septuagint*, in the London Polyglot, together with the *Chaldee*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, read the *negative* particle with the Hebrew text, *I asked NOT his name*, &c.

Verse 9. The angel of God came again] This second appearance of the angel was probably essential to the peace of Manoah, who might have been jealous of his wife had he not had this proof that the thing was of the Lord.

Verse 15. Until we shall have made ready a kid] Not knowing his quality, Manoah wished to do this as an act of hospitality.

Verse 16. I will not eat of thy bread] As I am a spiritual being, I subsist not by earthly food.

And if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering] Neither shall I receive that homage which belongs to God; thou must therefore offer thy burnt-offering to Jehovah.

Verse 18. Seeing it is secret?] It was because it was *secret* that they wished to know it. The angel does not say that it was *secret*, but **yal p awh hu peli, it is WONDERFUL**; the very character that is given to Jesus Christ, ²³⁰⁶**Isaiah 9:6: His name shall be called, al p Wonderful**; and it is supposed by some that the angel gives this as his name, and consequently that he was our blessed Lord.

Verse 19. The angel did wondrously] He acted according to his name; he, being *wonderful*, performed wonderful things; probably causing fire to

arise out of the rock and consume the sacrifice, and then ascending in the flame.

Verse 22. We shall surely die, because we have seen God.] See Clarke's note on "⁰⁰⁶²Judges 6:22".

Verse 23. If the Lord were pleased to kill us, &c.] This is excellent reasoning, and may be of great use to every truly religious mind, in cloudy and dark dispensations of Divine Providence. It is not likely that God, who has preserved thee so long, borne with thee so long, and fed and supported thee all thy life long, girding thee when thou knewest him not, is less willing to save and provide for thee and thine now than he was when, probably, thou trustedst less in him. He who freely gave his Son to redeem thee, can never be indifferent to thy welfare; and if he give thee power to pray to and trust in him, is it at all likely that he is now seeking an occasion against thee, in order to destroy thee? Add to this the very *light* that shows thee thy wretchedness, ingratitude, and disobedience, is in itself a proof that he is waiting to be gracious to thee; and the penitential pangs thou feelest, and thy bitter regret for thy unfaithfulness, argue that the *light* and *fire* are of God's own kindling, and are sent to direct and refine, not to drive thee out of the way and destroy thee. *Nor would he have told thee such things* of his love, mercy, and kindness, and unwillingness to destroy sinners, as he has told thee in his sacred word, if he had been determined not to extend his mercy to thee.

Verse 24. And called his name Samson] The original ^{wvmv} *shimshon*, which is from the root ^{vmv} *shamash*, to serve, (whence *shemesh*, the sun,) probably means either a *little sun*, or a *little servant*; and this latter is so likely a name to be imposed on an only son, by maternal fondness, that it leaves but little doubt of the propriety of the etymology.

And the Lord blessed him.] Gave evident proofs that the child was under the peculiar protection of the Most High; causing him to increase daily in stature and extraordinary strength.

Verse 25. The Spirit of the Lord began to move him] He felt the degrading bondage of his countrymen, and a strong desire to accomplish something for their deliverance. These feelings and motions he had from the Divine Spirit.

Camp of Dan] Probably the place where his parents dwelt; for they were Danites, and the place is supposed to have its name from its being the spot where the Danites stopped when they sent some men of their company to rob Micah of his teraphim, &c. See ^{<071813>}**Judges 18:13-20**.

As he had these influences between Zorah and Eshtaol, it is evident that this was *while* he dwelt at home with his parents; for Zorah was the place where his father dwelt; see ^{<071302>}**Judges 13:2**. Thus God began, from his infancy, to qualify him for the work to which he had called him.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 14

Samson marries a wife of the Philistines, 1-4. Slays a young lion at Timnath, in the carcass of which he afterwards finds a swarm of bees, 5-9. He makes a feast; they appoint him thirty companions, to whom he puts forth a riddle, which they cannot expound, 10-14. They entice his wife to get the interpretation from him; she succeeds, informs them, and they tell the explanation, 15-18. He is incensed, and slays thirty of the Philistines, 19, 20.

NOTES ON CHAP. 14

Verse 1. Went down to Timnath] A frontier town of the Philistines, at the beginning of the lands belonging to the tribe of *Judah*, ^{<06157>}**Joshua 15:57**; but afterwards given up to Dan, ^{<06194>}**Joshua 19:43**. David took this place from the Philistines, but they again got possession of it in the reign of Ahaz, ^{<142818>}**2 Chronicles 28:18**.

Verse 3. Is there never a woman] To marry with any that did not belong to the Israelitish stock, was contrary to the law, ^{<123416>}**Exodus 34:16**; ^{<061708>}**Deuteronomy 7:3**. But this marriage of Samson was said to be *of the Lord*, ^{<071404>}**Judges 14:4**; that is, God *permitted* it, (for in no other sense can we understand the phrase,) that it might be a means of bringing about the deliverance of Israel.

For she pleaseth me well.] yny[b hrvy ayh yk *ki hi yisherah beeynai, for she is right in my eyes.* This is what is supposed to be a sufficient reason to justify either man or woman in their random choice of wife or husband; the maxim is the same with that of the poet:—

*“Thou hast no fault, or I no fault can spy;
Thou art all beauty or all blindness I.”*

When the *will* has sufficient power, its determinations are its own rule of right. That *will* should be pure and well directed that says, *It shall be so, because I WILL it should be so.* A reason of this kind is similar to that which I have seen in a motto on the brass ordnance of Lewis XIV., *ULTIMA RATIO REGUM, the sum of regal logic*; i.e., “My will, backed by these instruments of destruction, shall be the rule of right and wrong.” The

rules and principles of this *logic* are now suspected; and it is not likely to be generally received again without *violent demonstration*.

Verse 5. A young lion roared against him.] Came fiercely out upon him, ready to tear him to pieces.

Verse 6. He rent him as he would have rent a kid] Now it is not intimated that he did this by his own natural strength, but by the *Spirit of the Lord coming mightily upon him*: so that his strength does not appear to be his own, nor to be at his command; his might was, *by the will of God*, attached to his *hair* and to his *Nazarate*.

Verse 7. And talked with the woman] That is, concerning marriage; thus forming the espousals.

Verse 8. After a time] Probably about one year; as this was the time that generally elapsed between espousing and wedding.

A swarm of bees and honey in the carcass] By length of time the flesh had been entirely consumed off the bones, and a swarm of bees had formed their combs within the region of the thorax, nor was it an improper place; nor was the thing unfrequent, if we may credit ancient writers; the carcasses of slain beasts becoming a receptacle for wild bees. The beautiful episode in the 4th Georgic of Virgil, beginning at ver. 317, proves that the ancients believed that bees might be engendered in the body of a dead ox:—

Pastor Aristæus fugiens Peneia Tempe—
Quatuor eximios præstanti corpore tauros
Ducit, et intacta totidem cervice juventas.
Post, ubi nona suos Aurora induxerat ortus.
Inferias Orphei mittit, lucumque revisit.
Hic ver o subitum, ac dietu mirabile monstrum
Adspiciunt, liquefacta bourn per viscera toto
Stridere apes utero, et ruptis effervere costis;
Immensasque trahi nubes, jamque arbore summa
Confluere, et lentis uvam demittere ramis.
 VIRG. Geor. lib. iv., ver. 550.

“Sad Aristæus from fair Tempe fled,
 His bees with famine or diseases dead—
 Four altars raises, from his herd he culls
 For slaughter four the fairest of his bulls;

*Four heifers from his female store he took,
All fair, and all unknowing of the yoke.
Nine mornings thence, with sacrifice and prayers,
The powers atoned, he to the grove repairs.*

*Behold a prodigy! for, from within
The broken bowels, and the bloated skin,
A buzzing noise of bees his ears alarms,
Straight issuing through the sides assembling swarms!*

*Dark as a cloud, they make a wheeling flight,
Then on a neighbouring tree descending light,
Like a large cluster of black grapes they show,
And make a large dependance from the bough.*

DRYDEN.

Verse 10. Samson made there a feast] The marriage feast, when he went to marry his espoused wife.

Verse 11. They brought thirty companions] These are called in Scripture *children of the bride-chamber*, and *friends of the bridegroom*. See the whole of this subject particularly illustrated in the observations at the end, Clarke “~~←~~John 3:25”.

Verse 12. I will now put forth a riddle] Probably this was one part of the amusements at a marriage-feast; each in his turn proposing a riddle, to be solved by any of the rest on a particular forfeit; the proposer forfeiting, if solved, the same which the company must forfeit if they could not solve it.

Thirty sheets] I have no doubt that the Arab *hayk*, or *hake*, is here meant; a dress in which the natives of the East wrap themselves, as a Scottish Highlander does in his *plaid*. In Asiatic countries the dress scarcely ever changes; being nearly the same now that it was 2000 years ago. Mr. Jackson, in his account of the Empire of Morocco, thus mentions the Moorish dress: “It resembles,” says he, “that of the ancient patriarchs, as represented in paintings; (*but the paintings are taken from Asiatic models*;) that of the men consists of a *red cap* and turban, a (*kumja*) shirt, which hangs outside of the drawers, and comes down below the knee; a (*caftan*) coat, which buttons close before, and down to the bottom, with large open sleeves; over which, when they go out of doors, they throw carelessly, and sometimes elegantly, a *hayk*, or garment of white cotton, silk, or wool, five or six yards long, and five feet wide. The Arabs often dispense with the caftan, and even with the shirt, wearing nothing but the hayk.” When an

Arab does not choose to wrap himself in the hayk, he throws it over his left shoulder, where it hangs till the weather, &c., obliges him to wrap it round him. The hayk is either *mean* or *elegant*, according to the quality of the cloth, and of the person who wears it. I have myself seen the natives of Fez, with hayks, or hykes, both elegant and costly. By the *changes of garments*, it is very likely that the *kumja* and *caftan* are meant, or at least the caftan; but most likely both: for the Hebrew has $\mu\gamma\delta\gamma\beta \text{ } \tau\omega\pi\gamma\lambda \text{ } \text{j}$ *chaliphoth begadim*, *changes* or *succession of garments*. Samson, therefore, engaged to *give* or *receive* thirty *hayks*, and thirty *kumjas* and *caftans*, on the issue of the interpretation or non-interpretation of his riddle: these were complete suits.

Verse 14. And he said unto there] Thus he states or proposes his riddle:—

*Out of the eater came forth meat,
And out of the strong came forth sweetness.*

Instead of *strong*, the *Syriac* and *Arabic* have *bitter*. I have no doubt that the riddle was in *poetry*; and perhaps the two hemistichs above preserve its order. This was scarcely a fair riddle; for unless the fact to which it refers were known, there is no rule of interpretation by which it could be found out. We learn from the Scholiast, on Aristophanes, *Vesp.* v. 20, that It was a custom among the ancient Greeks to propose at their festivals, what were called $\gamma\rho\iota\phi\omicron\iota$, *griphoi*, riddles, enigmas, or very obscure sayings, both curious and difficult, and to give a recompense to those who found them out, which generally consisted in either a festive crown, or a goblet full of wine. Those who failed to solve them were condemned to drink a large portion of fresh water, or of wine mingled with a sea-water, which they were compelled to take down at one draught, without drawing their breath, their hands being tied behind their backs. Sometimes they gave the crown to the deity in honour of whom the festival was made: and if none could solve the riddle, the reward was given to him who proposed it.

Of these enigmas proposed at entertainments &c., we have numerous examples in *ATHENÆUS*, *Deipnosoph.* lib. x., c. 15, p. 142, edit. Argentorat., and some of them very like this of Samson for example:—

$\delta\iota\delta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \text{ } \tau\iota\varsigma \text{ } \omicron\upsilon\kappa \text{ } \epsilon\delta\omega\kappa\epsilon\nu, \text{ } \omicron\upsilon\delta \text{ } \epsilon\chi\omega\nu \text{ } \epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$

“*Who gives, and does not give?
Who has not, and yet has?*”

This may be spoken of an enigma and its proposer: he gives *it*, but he does not give the sense; the other has it, but has not the meaning.

Εστι φυσικς θηλεια βρεφη σοζουό υπο κολποις
 Αυτης, ταυτα δ αφωνα βοην ιστησι γεγωνον.
 Και δια ποντιον οιδμα, και ηπειρου δια πασης,
 Οικ εθελει θνητων, τοικ δ ου παρεουρικ ακουειν
 Εξεστι, κωφην δ ακοηκ αισητικ ενχουσιν.

“There is a feminine Nature, fostering her children in her bosom; who, although they are dumb, send forth a distinct voice over every nation of the earth, and every sea, to whom soever they please. It is possible for those who are absent to hear, and for those who are deaf to hear also.”

The relator brings in Sappho interpreting it thus:—

Θηλικς μεν ουν ετικ φυσικς, επιστολη.
 Βρεφη δ εν αυτη περιφερει τα γραμματα
 Αφωνα δ οντα ταυτα τοικ πορρω λαλει,
 Οικ βουλεθ, ετεροκ δ αν τυχη τικ πλησιον
 Έστωκ αναγινωσκοντοκ, ουκ ακουσεταικ.

“The Nature, which is feminine, signifies an epistle; and her children whom she bears are alphabetical characters: and these, being dumb, speak and give counsel to any, even at a distance; though he who stands nigh to him who is silently reading, hears no voice.”

Here is another, attributed by the same author to *Theodectes*:—

Τηκ φυσεωκ οσα γαια φερει τροφοκ, ουδ οσα ποντοκ,
 Ουτε βροτοικσιν εχει γυικων αυξητικσιν ομοικαν.
 Αλλ εν μεν γενεσει πρωτοσπορω ετικ μεγατικη,
 Εν δε μεσαικ ακμαικ μικρα, γηρα δε προκ αυτω
 Μορφη και μεγαθει μειζων παλιν ετικ αναντων.

“Neither does the nourishing earth so bear by nature, nor the sea, nor is there among mortals a like increase of parts; for at the period of its birth it is greatest, but in its middle age it is small, and in its old age it is again greater in form and size than all.”

This is spoken of a *shadow*. At the rising of the sun in the east, the shadow of an object is projected illimitably across the earth towards the west; at noon, if the sun be vertical to that place, the shadow of the object is

entirely lost; at sunset, the shadow is projected towards the east, as it was in the morning towards the west.

Here is another, from the same author:—

Εἰσι κασιγνηταὶ δῖται, ὧν ἡ μίᾳ τικτεῖ
Τὴν ἐπεραν, αὐτὴ δὲ τεκούσ' ὑπο τῆσδε τεκνουταί.

“There are two sisters, the one of whom begets the other, and she who is begotten produces her who begat her.”

Day and *night* solve this enigma.

The following I have taken from *Theognis*:—

Ἦδη γὰρ με κεκληκε θάλαττιος οἰκάδε νεκρός,
Τέθνηκώς, ζῶν φθεγγομένος στοματι.

THEOGEN. *Gnom.*, in fine.

“A dead seaman calls me to his house;
And, although he be dead, he speaks with a living mouth.”

This dead seaman is a conch or large shellfish, of which the poet was about to eat. The mouth by which it spoke signifies its being used as a horn; as it is well known to produce, when opened at the spiral end and blown, a very powerful sound.

Verse 17. And she wept before him] Not through any love to him, for it appears she had none, but to oblige her paramours; and of this he soon had ample proof.

Verse 18. If ye had not ploughed with my heifer] If my wife had not been unfaithful to my bed, she would not have been unfaithful to my secret; and, you being her paramours, your interest was more precious to her than that of her husband. She has betrayed me through her attachment to you.

Calmet has properly remarked, in quoting the *Septuagint*, that to *plough with one's heifer*, or to *plough in another man's ground*, are delicate turns of expression used both by the Greeks and Latins, as well as the Hebrews, to point out a wife's infidelities.

Thus *Theognis*, *Gnom.* v. 581:—

Ἐχθαίρω δὲ γυναῖκα περιδρομον, ἀνδρα τε μαργον.
Ὅς τὴν ἀλλονρίην βουλεῖ ἀρουραν ἀρουν.

“I detest a woman who gads about, and also a libidinous man, who wishes to plough in another man’s ground.”

Fundum alienium arat, incultum familiarem deserit.

PLAUTUS.

“*He ploughs another’s farm, and leaves his own heritage uncultivated.*”

Milo domi non est, perepre at Milone profecto

Arva vacant, uxor non minus inde parit.

MARTIAL.

“Milo is not at home, and Milo being from home, his field lies uncultivated; his wife, nevertheless, continues to breed, and brings forth children.”

There is the same metaphor in the following lines of *Virgil*:—

*Hoc faciunt, nimo ne luxu obtusior usus,
Sit genitali arvo, sulcosque oblimet inertes.*

Geor. l. iii., v. 135.

In this sense Samson’s words were understood by the *Septuagint*, by the *Syriac*, and by Rabbi *Levi*. See BOCHART, *Hierozoic.* p. 1., lib. ii., cap. 41., col. 406.

The metaphor was a common one, and we need seek for no other interpretation of the words of Samson.

Verse 19. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him] “The spirit of fortitude from before the Lord.”-*Targum*. He was inspired with unusual courage, and he felt strength proportioned to his wishes.

He-slew thirty men-and took their spoils] He took their *hayks*, their *kumjas*, and *caftans*, and gave them to the thirty persons who, by unfair means, had solved his riddle; thus they had what our version calls *thirty sheets, and thirty changes of raiment*. See Clarke’s note on “^{<071412>}Judges 14:12”.

Verse 20. But Samson’s wife was given to his companion] This was the same kind of person who is called the friend of the bridegroom, ^{<0712>}**John 3:29**. And it is very likely that she loved this person better than she loved her husband, and went to him as soon as Samson had gone to his father’s house at Zorah. She might, however, have thought herself abandoned by

him, and therefore took another; this appears to have been the persuasion of her father, ^{<071512>}**Judges 15:2**. But her betraying his secret and his interests to his enemies was a full proof he was not very dear to her; though, to persuade him to the contrary, she shed many crocodile tears; see ^{<071416>}**Judges 14:16**. He could not keep his own secret, and he was fool enough to suppose that another would be more faithful to him than he was to himself. Multitudes complain of the treachery of friends betraying their secrets, &c., never considering that they themselves have been their first betrayers, in confiding to others what they pretend to wish should be a secret to the whole world! If a man never let his secret out of his own bosom, it is impossible that he should ever be betrayed.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 15

Samson, going to visit his wife, finds her bestowed on another, 1, 2. He is incensed, vows revenge, and burns the corn of the Philistines, 3-5. They burn Samson's wife and her father, 6. He is still incensed, makes a great slaughter among them, 7, 8. The Philistines gather together against Israel, and to appease them the men of Judah bind Samson, and deliver him into their hands, 9-13. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him; he breaks his bonds, finds the jaw-bone of an ass, and therewith kills a thousand men, 14-16. He is sorely fatigued; and, being thirsty, God miraculously produces water from an opening of the ground in Lehi, and he is refreshed, 17-19. He judges Israel in the time of the Philistines twenty years, 20.

NOTES ON CHAP. 15

Verse 1. Visited his wife with a kid] On her betraying him, he had, no doubt, left her in great disgust. After some time his affection appears to have returned; and, taking a kid, or perhaps a *fawn*, as a present, he goes to make reconciliation, and finds her given to his brideman; probably, the person to whom she betrayed his riddle.

Verse 2. Thou hadst utterly hated her] As he was conscious she had given him great cause so to do.

Her younger sister] The father appears to have been perfectly sincere in this offer.

Verse 4. Went and caught three hundred foxes] There has been much controversy concerning the meaning of the term **μῦλ** [**mv** *shualim*, some supposing it to mean *foxes* or *jackals*, and others *handfuls* or *sheaves of corn*. Much of the force of the objections against the common version will be diminished by the following considerations:—

1. Foxes, or jackals, are common and gregarious in that country.
2. It is not hinted that Samson collected them *alone*; he might have employed several hands in this work.

3. It is not said he collected them all in *one day*; he might have employed several days, as well as many persons, to furnish him with these means of vengeance.

4. In other countries, where ferocious beasts were less numerous, great multitudes have been exhibited at once. *Sylla*, in a public show to the Roman citizens, exhibited *one hundred* lions; *Cæsar*, *four hundred*, and *Pompey*, nearly *six hundred*. The Emperor *Probus* let loose in the theatre, at one time, *one thousand* ostriches, *one thousand* stags, *one thousand* wild boars, *one thousand* does, and a countless multitude of other wild animals; at another time he exhibited *one hundred* leopards from Libya, *one hundred* from Syria, and *three hundred* bears.—See *Flavius Vopiscus* in the Life of *Probus*, cap. xix., beginning with *Dedit Romanis etiam voluptates, &c.*

That foxes, or the creature called *shual*, abounded in Judea, is evident from their frequent mention in Scripture, and from several places bearing their name. 1. It appears they were so numerous that even their cubs ruined the vineyards; see Canticles: ^{<20215>}**Song of Solomon 2:15**: *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil our vines*. Jeremiah complains that the foxes had occupied the mountains of Judea, ^{<21618>}**Lamentations 5:18**. They are mentioned as making incursions into *enclosures, &c.*, ^{<16048>}**Nehemiah 4:3**. Ezekiel compares the numerous false prophets to these animals, ^{<36134>}**Ezekiel 13:4**. In ^{<61528>}**Joshua 15:28** we find a place called *Hazar Shual*, “the court of the foxes:” and in ^{<61942>}**Joshua 19:42** a place called *Shaal-abbin*, “the foxes;” no doubt from the number of those animals in that district. And mention is made of the *land of Shual*, or of the fox, ^{<91317>}**1 Samuel 13:17**.

The creature called *shual* is represented by travellers and naturalists who have been in Judea as an animal between a wolf and a fox. *Hasselquist*, who was on the spot, and saw many of them, calls it the *little Eastern fox*. They are frequent in the East, and often destroy infirm persons and children.

Dr. Kennicott, however, objects to the common interpretation; and gives reasons, some of which are far from being destitute of weight. “The *three hundred foxes*,” says he, “caught by Samson, have been so frequently the subject of banter and ridicule, that we should consider whether the words may not admit a more rational interpretation: for, besides the improbability arising here from the *number* of these foxes, the *use* made of them is also

very strange. If these animals were tied *tail to tail*, they would probably pull contrary ways, and consequently stand still; whereas a firebrand tied to the tail of each fox singly would have been far more likely to answer the purpose here intended. To obviate these difficulties it has been well remarked, that the word $\mu\upsilon\lambda$ [wv *shualim*, here translated *foxes*, signifies also *handfuls*, ^{<261319>}**Ezekiel 13:19**, *handfuls of barley*; if we leave out that one letter w *vau*, which has been inserted or omitted elsewhere, almost at pleasure. No less than *seven* Hebrew MSS. want that letter here, and read $\mu\upsilon\lambda$ [v *shealim*. Admitting this version, we see that Samson took *three hundred handfuls* or *sheaves of corn*, and *one hundred and fifty firebrands*; that he turned the sheaves *end to end*, and put a firebrand between the two ends in the midst; and then, setting the brands on fire, sent the fire into the standing corn of the Philistines. The same word is now used twice in one chapter, (^{<261304>}**Ezekiel 13:4, 19**;) in the former verse signifying *foxes*, in the latter *handfuls*: and in ^{<12700>}**1 Kings 20:10**, where we render it *handfuls*, it is $\alpha\lambda\omega\pi\epsilon\zeta\iota$, *foxes*, in the Greek version.”-*Remarks on Select Passages*.

The reasoning of Dr. Kennicott in the first part of this criticism has already been answered; other parts shall be considered below. Though there are seven MSS., which agree in the reading contended for by Dr. Kennicott, yet all the *versions* are on the other side. I see no improbability in the common version.

Turned tail to tail] Had he put a firebrand to each, which Dr. Kennicott thinks more reasonable, the creature, naturally terrified at fire, would have instantly taken to *cover*, and thus the design of Samson would have been frustrated. But, tying *two* of them *together by their tails*, they would frequently thwart each other in running, pull hither and thither, and thus make the greater devastation. Had he tied them all together, the confusion would have been so great that no execution could have been done.

Verse 6. Burnt her and her father] This was probably done to *appease* Samson: as they saw he had been unjustly treated both by his wife and her father; therefore they destroyed them both, that they might cause his wrath to cease from them. And this indeed seems intimated in the following verse: *And Samson said-Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you*; that is, I am not yet satisfied: ye have done me great wrongs, I must have proportionate redress; then I shall rest satisfied.

Verse 8. He smote them hip and thigh] This also is variously understood; but the general meaning seems plain; he appears to have had no kind of defensive weapon, therefore he was obliged to grapple with them, and, according to the custom of *wrestlers*, *trip up their feet*, and then bruise them to death. Some translate *heaps upon heaps*; others, *he smote horsemen and footmen*; others, *he wounded them from their legs to their thighs, &c., &c.* See the different *versions*. Some think in their running away from him he *kicked* them down, and then trod them to death: thus his *leg* or *thigh* was against their *hip*; hence the expression.

The top of the rock Etam.] It is very likely that this is the same place as that mentioned ^{<13042>} **1 Chronicles 4:32**; it was in the tribe of Simeon, and on the borders of Dan, and probably a *fortified* place.

Verse 10. To bind Samson are we come up] It seems they did not wish to come to an open rupture with the Israelites, provided they would deliver up him who was the cause of their disasters.

Verse 11. Three thousand men of Judah went] It appears evidently from this that Samson was strongly posted, and they thought that no less than *three thousand* men were necessary to reduce him.

Verse 12. That ye will not fall upon me yourselves.] He could not bear the thought of contending with and slaying his own countrymen; for there is no doubt that he could have as easily rescued himself from their hands as from those of the Philistines.

Verse 13. They bound him with two new cords] Probably his *hands* with one and his *legs* with the other.

Verse 14. When he came unto Lehi] This was the name of the *place* to which they brought him, either to put him to death, or keep him in perpetual confinement.

Shouted against him] His capture was a matter of public rejoicing.

Verse 15. He found a new jaw-bone of an ass] I rather think that the word *hyrc teriyah*, which we translate *new*, and the margin *moist*, should be understood as signifying the *tabia* or *putrid state* of the ass from which this jawbone was taken. He found there a dead ass in a state of putrefaction; on which account he could the more easily separate the jaw from its integuments; this was a circumstance proper to be recorded by the

historian, and a mark of the providence of God. But were we to understand it of a *fresh jaw-bone*, very lately separated from the head of an ass, the circumstance does not seem worthy of being recorded.

With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps] I cannot see the propriety of this rendering of the Hebrew words $\mu y t r m j \quad r w m j \quad r w m j \quad h$ $y j \quad l \quad b$ *bilchi hachamor, chemor chamorathayim*; I believe they should be translated thus:—

*“With the jaw-bone of this ass,
an ass (the foal) of two asses;*

*“With the jaw-bone of this ass
I have slain a thousand men.”*

This appears to have been a triumphal song on the occasion; and the words are variously rendered both by the versions, and by expositors.

Verse 17. Ramath-lehi.] The *lifting up* or *casting away of the jaw-bone*. Lehi was the name of the place before, *Ramath* was now added to it here; he *lifted up* the jaw-bone against his enemies, and slew them.

Verse 18. I die for thirst] The natural consequence of the excessive fatigue he had gone through in this encounter.

Verse 19. God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw] $y j \quad l \quad b \quad r v a$ *asher ballechi, that was in Lehi*; that is, there was a *hollow* place in this Lehi, and God caused a fountain to spring up in it. Because the place was *hollow* it was capable of containing the water that rose up in it, and thus of becoming a *well*.

En-hakkore] *The well of the implorer*; this name he gave to the *spot* where the water rose, in order to perpetuate the bounty of God in affording him this miraculous supply.

Which is in Lehi unto this day.] Consequently not IN the *jaw-bone of the ass*, a most unfortunate rendering.

Verse 20. He judged Israel-twenty years.] In the margin it is said, *He seems to have judged southwest Israel during twenty years of their servitude of the Philistines*, ^{<07130>}**Judges 13:1**. Instead of $h n v \quad \mu y r c [$ *esrim shanah, twenty years*, the Jerusalem Talmud has $h n v \quad \mu y [b r a$ *arbaim shanah, forty years*; but this reading is not acknowledged by any

MS. or version. According to Calmet, the twenty years of the judicature of Samson began the eighteenth year of the subjection of Israel to the Philistines; and these twenty years are included in the judicature of the high priest *Eli*.

THE burning of the Philistines' corn by the means of foxes and firebrands is a very remarkable circumstance; and there is a story told by Ovid, in the 4th book of his *Fasti*, that bears a striking similitude to this; and is supposed by some learned men to allude to *Samson* and his *foxes*. The poet is at a loss to account for this custom, but brings in an old man of Carseoli, with what must have appeared to himself a very unsatisfactory solution. The passage begins as follows:—

*Tertia post Hyadas cum luxerit orta, remotas,
Carcere partitos Circus habebit equos
Cur igitur missæ vinctis ardentia tædis
Terga ferant vulpes, causa docenda mihi?
Vid. OVID, Fastor. lib. iv., ver. 679.*

The substance of the whole account, which is too long to be transcribed, is this: It was a custom in Rome, celebrated in the month of April to let loose a number of *foxes* in the circus, with lighted flambeaux on their backs; and the Roman people took pleasure in seeing these animals run about till roasted to death by the flames with which they were enveloped. The poet wishes to know what the origin of this custom was, and is thus informed by an old man of the city of Carseoli: “A frolicksome young lad, about ten years of age, found, near a thicket, a fox that had stolen away many fowls from the neighbouring roosts. Having enveloped his body with hay and straw, he set it on fire, and let the fox loose. The animal, in order to avoid the flames, took to the standing corn which was then ready for the sickle; and the wind, driving the flames with double violence, the crops were everywhere consumed. Though this transaction is long since gone by, the commemoration of it still remains; for, by a law of this city, every fox that is taken is burnt to death. Thus the nation awards to the foxes the punishment of being burnt alive, for the destruction of the ripe corn formerly occasioned by one of these animals.”

Both *Serrarius* and *Bochart* reject this origin of the custom given by Ovid; and insist that the custom took its rise from the burning of the Philistines' corn by Samson's foxes. The *origin* ascribed to the custom by the Carseolian they consider as too frivolous and unimportant to be

commemorated by a national festival. The *time* of the observation does not accord with the time of *harvest* about Rome and in Italy, but it perfectly accords with the time of harvest in Palestine, which was at least as early as April. Nor does the circumstance of the fox wrapped in hay and let loose, the hay being set on fire, bear any proper resemblance to the foxes let loose in the circus with burning brands on their backs.

These learned men therefore conclude that it is much more natural to suppose that the Romans derived the custom from Judea, where probably the burning of the Philistines' corn might, for some time, have been annually commemorated.

The whole account is certainly very singular, and has not a very satisfactory solution in the old man's tale, as related by the Roman poet.

All public institutions have had their origin in *facts*; and if, through the lapse of time or loss of records, the original facts be lost, we may legitimately look for them in cases where there is so near a resemblance as in that above.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 16

Samson comes to Gaza; they lay wait for him; he rises by night, and carries away the city gates, 1-3. Falls in love with Delilah, 4. The lords of the Philistines promise her money if she will obtain from Samson the secret in which his strength lay, 5. By various artifices she at last obtains this; and communicates it to the Philistines, who seize and bind him, put out his eyes, and cause him to grind in the prison-house, 6-21. At a public festival to Dagon he is brought out to make sport; when, being weary, he requests to be placed between the two pillars which supported the roof of the house, on which three thousand men and women were stationed to see him make sport, 22-27. He prays to God to strengthen him, and pulls down the pillars; by which (the house falling) both himself, the lords of the Philistines, and a vast multitude of the people, are slain, 28-30. His relatives come and take away his body, and bury it, 31.

NOTES ON CHAP. 16

Verse 1. Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot] The Chaldee, as in the former case, renders the clause thus: *Samson saw there a woman, an inn-keeper*. Perhaps the word **hnwz** *zonah* is to be taken here in its *double* sense; one who keeps a house for the entertainment of travellers, and who also prostitutes her person.

Gaza was situated near the Mediterranean Sea, and was one of the most southern cities of Palestine. It has been supposed by some to have derived its name from the *treasures* deposited there by Cambyses, king of the Persians; because they say *Gaza*, in *Persian*, signifies *treasure*; so Pomponius Mela and others. But it is more likely to be a Hebrew word, and that this city derived its name, **hz** [*azzah*, from **zz** [*azaz*, *to be strong*, it being a strong or well fortified place.

The Hebrew [*ain* in this word is, by the *Septuagint*, the *Arabic*, and the *Vulgate*, rendered *G*; hence instead of *azzah*, with a strong guttural breathing, we have *Gaza*, a name by which this town could not be recognized by an ancient Hebrew.

Verse 2. They compassed him in] They shut up all the avenues, secured the gates, and set persons in ambush near them, that they might attack him on his leaving the city early the next morning.

Verse 3. Took the doors of the gate] Though Samson was a very strong man, yet we do not find that he was a *giant*; consequently we may conjecture that the gates of the city were not very large, as he took at once the *doors*, the *two posts*, and the *bar*, with him. The *cities* of those days would appear to disadvantage among modern *villages*.

A hill-before Hebron.] Possibly there were *two* Hebrons; it could not be the city generally understood by the word Hebron, as that was about twenty miles distant from Gaza: unless we suppose that ^ˆwrbj ynp I [*al peney Chebron* is to be understood of the road *leading to Hebron*: he carried all to the top of that hill which was on the road leading to Hebron.

Verse 4. He loved a woman in the valley of Sorek] Some think Samson took this woman for his *wife*; others, that he had her as a *concubine*. It appears she was a Philistine; and however strong his love was for her, she seems to have had none for him. He always matched improperly, and he was cursed in all his matches. Where the *valley* or *brook* of *Sorek* was, is not easy to be ascertained. Eusebius and Jerome say it lay southward of *Eleutheropolis*; but where was *Eleutheropolis*? Ancient writers take all their measurements from this city; but as it is nowhere mentioned in the Scriptures, it is impossible to fix its situation for we know not its ancient name.

Verse 5. See wherein his great strength lieth] They saw that his *stature* was not remarkable: and that, nevertheless, he had most extraordinary strength; therefore they supposed that it was the effect of some *charm* or *amulet*. The lords of the Philistines were the five following: Gaza, Gath, Askelon, Ekron, and Ashdod. All these considered Samson as a public enemy; and they promised this bad woman a large sum of money if she would obtain from him the important secret wherein his strength lay, that, depriving him of this *supernatural power*, they might be able to reduce him to bondage.

Verse 7. Seven green withs] That is, any kind of *pliant, tough wood*, twisted in the form of a cord or rope. Such are used in many countries formed out of *osiers, hazel, &c.* And in Ireland, very long and strong ropes are made of the *fibres of bog-wood*, or the larger roots of the fir, which is

often dug up in the *bogs* or *mosses* of that country. But the *Septuagint*, by translating the Hebrew **μῦτ** | **μῦρ** *ty yetharim lachim* by **νευραις** **υγραις**, and the *Vulgate* by *nerviceis funibus*, understand these bonds to be *cords made of the nerves of cattle*, or perhaps rather out of *raw hides*, these also making an exceedingly strong cord. In some countries they take the skin of the horse, cut it lengthwise from the hide into thongs about two inches broad, and after having laid them in salt for some time, take them out for use. This practice is frequent in the country parts of Ireland; and both customs, the wooden cord, and that made of the raw or green hide, are among the most ancient perhaps in the world. Among the Irish peasantry this latter species of cord is called the *tug* and is chiefly used for agricultural purposes, particularly for drawing the *plough* and the *harrow*, instead of the *iron chains* used in other countries.

Verse 9. Men lying in wait] They probably did not appear, as Samson immediately broke his bonds when this bad woman said, *The Philistines be upon thee.*

Verse 11. If they bind me fast with new ropes] Samson wishes to keep up the opinion which the Philistines held; viz., that his mighty strength was the effect of some *charm*; and therefore he says, *Seven green withs which had not been dried; new ropes that were never occupied; weave the seven locks of my hair with the web, &c.*; the *green withs*, the *new ropes*, and the number *seven*, are such matters as would naturally be expected in a charm or spell.

Verse 13. The seven locks of my head] Probably Samson had his long hair plaited into *seven divisions*, and as his vow of a Nazarite obliged him to *wear his hair*, so, *seven* being a number of perfection among the Hebrews, his hair being divided into *seven locks* might more particularly point out the *perfection* designed by his *Nazarite state*.

Every person must see that this verse ends abruptly, and does not contain a full sense. Houbigant has particularly noticed this, and corrected the text from the *Septuagint*, the reading of which I shall here subjoin: **Εαν** **υφανης τας επτα σειρας της κεφαλης μον αυν τω διασματι, και εγκρουσης τω πασσαλω εις τον τοιχον, και εσομαι ως εις των ανθρωπων ασθηνης, Και εγενετο εν τω κοιμασθαι αυτον, και ελαβε Δαλιδα τας επτα σειρας της κεφαλης αυτου, και υφανεν εν τω διασματι, και επηξε τω πασσαλω εις τον τοιχον;** “If thou shalt weave the seven locks of my head with the web, and shalt fasten them with

the pin in the wall, I shall become weak like other men: And so it was that, when he slept, Dalida took the seven locks of his head, and wove them with the web, and fastened it with the pin to the wall and said unto him,” &c. All the words printed here in *italic*, are wanting in the present Hebrew copies; but are preserved in the *Septuagint*, and are most obviously necessary to complete the sense; else Delilah appears to do something that she is not ordered to do, and to omit what she was commanded.

Verse 16. His soul was vexed unto death] What a consummate *fool* was this *strong* man! Might he not have seen, from what already took place, that Delilah intended his ruin? After trifling with her, and lying thrice, he at last commits to her his fatal secret, and thus becomes a traitor to himself and to his God. Well may we adopt the sensible observation of Calmet on this passage: *La foiblesse du cœur de Samson, dans toute cette histoire, est encore plus étonnante que la force de son corps*; “The weakness of Samson’s heart in the whole of this history, is yet more astonishing than the strength of his body.”

Verse 17. If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me] The miraculous strength of Samson must not be supposed to reside either in his *hair* or in his *muscles*, but in that *relation* in which he stood to God as a Nazarite, such a person being bound by a solemn vow to walk in a strict conformity to the laws of his Maker. It was a part of the Nazarite’s vow to permit no razor to pass on his head; and his long *hair* was the mark of his Nazirate, and of his vow to God. When Samson permitted his hair to be shorn off, he renounced and broke his Nazir vow; in consequence of which God abandoned him, and therefore we are told, in ^{אמרי}**Judges 16:20**, that *the Lord was departed from him*.

Verse 19. She began to affect him] She had probably tied his hands slyly, while he was asleep, and after having cut off his hair, she began to insult him before she called the Philistines, to try whether he were really reduced to a state of weakness. Finding he could not disengage himself, she called the Philistines, and he, being alarmed, rose up, thinking he could exert himself as before, *and shake himself*, i.e., disengage himself from his bonds and his enemies: but *he wist not that the Lord was departed from him*; for as Delilah had cut off his locks while he was *asleep*, he had not yet perceived that they were gone.

Verse 21. Put out his eyes] Thus was the lust of the eye, in looking after and gazing on strange women, punished. As the Philistines did not know

that his strength might not return, they put out his eyes, that he might never be able to plan any enterprise against them.

He did grind in the prison-house.] Before the invention of *wind* and *water-mills*, the grain was at first bruised between two stones, afterwards ground in *hand-mills*. This is practiced in China and in different parts of the East still; and *women* and *slaves* are the persons who are obliged to turn these mills.

Such instruments were anciently used in this country, and called *querns*, from the Anglo-Saxon [A.S.] and [A.S.] *cweorn* and *cwyrn*, which has the signification of a *mill*; hence [A.S.] *cweorn stan*, a millstone: and as *quern* conveys the notion of *grinding*, hence [A.S.], *cweorn teth*, the *dentes molares* or *grinders* in the jaws of animals. This clause of the verse is thus translated in the Saxon Octateuch: [—Anglo-Saxon—] “And the Philistines laid their fangs, (seized) him soon, and led him away to their burgh, (city,) and shut him up in prison, and made him grind at their *hand-querne*.” So late as half a century ago I have seen these *querns* or hand-mills in *these* kingdoms.

Verse 22. The hair of his head began to grow again] And may we not suppose that, sensible of his sin and folly, he renewed his *Nazir* vow to the Lord, in consequence of which his supernatural strength was again restored?

Verse 23. Unto Dagon their god] Diodorus Siculus describes their god thus: Το μεν προσωπον εχει γυναικος, το δ αλλο σωμα παν ιχθους; “It had the head of a woman, but all the rest of the body resembled a fish.” Dagon was called *Dorceto* among the heathens.

Horace, in the following lines, especially in the *third* and *fourth*, seems to have in view the image of *Dagon*:—

*Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Pingere si velit; et varias inducere plumas,
Undique collatis Inembris; ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne;
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis amici?*
DE ART. POET., V. 1.

*“Suppose a painter to a human head
 Should join a horse’s neck; and wildly spread
 The various plumage of the feather’d kind
 O’er limbs of different beasts, absurdly join’d;
 Or if he gave to view a beauteous maid,
 Above the waist with every charm array’d,
 Should a foul fish her lower parts infold,
 Would you not smile such pictures to behold?”*
 FRANCIS.

Verse 25. Call for Samson, that he may make us sport] What the sport was we cannot tell; probably it was an exhibition of his prodigious strength. This seems to be intimated by what is said, ^{<0762>}**Judges 16:22**, of the restoration of his *hair*; and the exertions he was obliged to make will account for the *weariness* which gave him the pretence to ask for leave to *lean against the pillars*. Some think he was brought out to be a *laughing-stock*, and that he was variously *insulted* by the Philistines; hence the version of the Septuagint: *και ερραπιζον αυτον*, *and they buffeted him*. Josephus, *Antiq. Jud. lib. v., cap. 8, s. 12*, says: *He was brought out, οπως ενυβρισωσιν αυτον παρα τον ποτον*, *that they might insult him in their cups*.

Verse 27. Now the house was full of men] It was either the prison-house, house of assembly, or a *temple* of Dagon, raised on pillars, open on all sides, and flat-roofed, so that it could accommodate a multitude of people on the top.

Verse 28. Samson called unto the Lord] It was in consequence of his *faith* in God that he should be strengthened to overthrow his enemies and the enemies of his country, that he is mentioned, ^{<8112>}**Hebrews 11:32**, among those who were remarkable for their *faith*.

Verse 29. The two middle pillars upon which the house stood] Much learned labour has been lost on the attempt to prove that a building like this might stand on two pillars. But what need of this? There might have been as many pillars here as were in the temple of Diana at Ephesus, and yet the two centre pillars be the *key of the building*; these being once pulled down, the whole house would necessarily fall.

Verse 30. So the dead which he slew] We are informed that the house was *full of men and women*, with about *three thousand* of both sexes on the top; now as the whole house was pulled down, consequently the

principal part of all these were slain; and among them we find there were the *lords of the Philistines*. The death of *these*, with so many of the inferior chiefs of the people, was such a crush to the Philistine ascendancy, that they troubled Israel no more for several years, and did not even attempt to hinder Samson's relatives from taking away and burying his dead body.

Verse 31. He judged Israel twenty years.] It is difficult to ascertain the *time* of Samson's magistracy, and the *extent* of country over which he presided. His jurisdiction seems to have been very limited, and to have extended no farther than over those parts of the *tribe of Dan* contiguous to the land of the Philistines. This is what our *margin* intimates on ^{<071531>}**Judges 15:20**. Many suppose that *he* and *Eli* were contemporaries, Samson being rather an *executor of the Divine justice* upon the enemies of his people, than an *administrator* of the *civil* and *religious* laws of the Hebrews. Allowing *Eli* and *Samson* to have been contemporaries, this latter part might have been entirely committed to the care of *Eli*.

1. SAMSON does not appear to have left any posterity. His amours with the different women mentioned in the history were unproductive as to issue. Had he married according to the laws of his country, he would have been both a more useful and a more happy man, and not have come to a violent death.

2. We seldom find much *mental energy* dwelling in a body that in *size* and *bulk* greatly surpasses the *ordinary pitch* of man; and wherever there are great *physical powers*, we seldom find proportionate *moral faculties*. Samson was a man of a *little mind*, a slave to his passions, and the wretched dupe of his mistresses. He was not a *great* though he was a *strong* man; and even his muscular force would have been lost, or spent in beating the air, had he not been frequently under the impulse of the *Divine Spirit*. He often got himself into broils and difficulties from which nothing but supernatural interposition could have saved him. His attacks upon the Philistines were never *well planned*, as he does not appear to have asked counsel from God; indeed, he seems to have consulted nothing but his own passions, particularly those of *inordinate love* and *revenge*; and the last effort of his extraordinary strength was, not to avenge his people for the oppressions which they had suffered under the Philistinian yoke, nor to avenge the quarrel of God's covenant against the enemies of his truth, but to be *avenged of the Philistines for the loss of his two eyes*.

3. Samson is a solemn proof how little corporeal *prowess* avails where *judgment* and *prudence* are wanting, and how dangerous all such gifts are in the hands of any man who has not his passions under proper discipline, and the fear of God continually before his eyes.

4. A *parallel* has been often drawn between Samson and our blessed Lord, of whom he has been supposed to be a *most illustrious type*. By a fruitful imagination, and the torture of words and facts, we may force resemblances everywhere; but that not one will *naturally* result from a cool comparison between Jesus Christ and Samson, is most demonstrable. A more exceptionable character is not to be found in the sacred oracles. It is no small dishonour to Christ to be thus compared. There is no resemblance in the *qualities* of Samson's mind, there is none in his moral conduct, that can entitle him even to the most distant comparison with the chaste, holy, benevolent, and immaculate Jesus. That man dishonours the law of unchangeable righteousness, who endeavours to make Samson a type of any thing or person that can be called holy, just, and pure.

5. Those who compare him to *Hercules* have been more successful. Indeed, the heathen god of strength appears to have been borrowed from the Israelitish judge; but if we regard what is called the *choice of Hercules*, his preference of *virtue* to *pleasure*, we shall find that the heathen is, morally speaking, vastly superior to the Jew. M. *Deuteronomy Lavour*, in his *Conference de la Fable avec l' Histoire Sainte*, vol. ii., p. 1, has traced the parallel between Hercules and Samson in the following manner:—

“Hercules was figured by the poets as supernatural both in his birth and actions, and was therefore received by the people as a god of the first order. They attributed to him the miracles wrought by several illustrious chiefs among the people of God, which they found described in the sacred oracles, more ancient than their most ancient accounts, or which they had learned by tradition, and their commerce with the Egyptians and Phœnicians, who were spread through various countries, but particularly in Greece. It is also to the time of these chiefs, and to the government of the Israelites by their judges, that the heroes and grand events of fable owe their origin; to which time, indeed, they are referred by the common consent of authors, sacred and profane.

“Every ancient nation, which had writers who left monuments of their country's glory, had a Hercules of its own, forged on the same plan. Varro

reckons more than forty, and Cicero reckons six. (Book iii. *Deuteronomy Natura Deorum.*)

“Herodotus, (book ii., entitled *Euterpe*.) only speaks of the Egyptian and Greek Hercules. Although a Greek himself, this father of history, as Cicero calls him, who lived the nearest of any of these writers to the period he describes, informs us that Greece had borrowed its Hercules from Egypt, and that Amphitryon his father, and Alcmena his mother, were both Egyptians; so that, notwithstanding the desire the Greeks had to make Hercules a native of their country, they could not conceal his origin, which was either Egyptian or Hebrew; for the Greeks and Phœnicians looked upon the Israelites, who were settled in Canaan or Phœnicia, as Egyptians, whose ancestors, after residing in Egypt some centuries, had certainly come from that country.

“M. Jaquelot, in his ‘*Treatise on the Existence of God*,’ believes that the Tyrian Hercules, who was the most ancient, was no other than Joshua. But St. Augustine (*City of God*, book xviii., chap. 19.) has made it appear that it was after Samson (because of his prodigious and incomparable strength) that they forged their Hercules; first in Egypt, afterwards in Phœnicia, and lastly in Greece, each of whose writers has united in him all the miraculous actions of the others. In fact, it appears that Samson, judge of the Israelites from about A.M. 2867 to 2887, celebrated in the book of Judges, and mentioned by Josephus in his history, is the original and essential Hercules of fable: and although the poets have united these several particulars, drawn from Moses and Joshua, and have added their own inventions; yet the most capital and considerable belong to Samson, and are distinguished by characteristics so peculiar to him, as to render *him* easily discerned throughout the whole.

“In Hebrew the name of Samson (שמשון) signifies the *sun*, and in Syriac (servitium vel ministerium ejus) *subjection to some one, servitude*. Macrobius says that the name of Hercules signifies only the *sun*; for, he adds, in Greek Hercules means, *it is glory of the air, or the light of the sun*. The Greeks and Egyptians have exactly followed the Syriac signification by imposing on their Hercules, during the whole of his life, a subjection to Eurystheus in all his exploits, and who appointed him his famous enterprises. This necessity they attribute to fate and the law of his birth. Having spoken of his name, we will now examine the circumstances

of his birth, as mentioned in the sacred writings, Judges, ~~13:2-24~~ **Judges 13:2-24**, and in the History of the Jews, chap. x.

“Manoah, of the tribe of Dan, had married a woman who was barren, which led them to pray earnestly that the Lord would bless them with an offspring. One day, this woman being alone, an angel appeared to her, and told her he was sent by God to inform her she should have a son of the most extraordinary strength, who was to raise the glory of their nation, and to humble their enemies. Upon the arrival of her husband, she imparted to him the message and discourse of the angel. Some time after this heavenly messenger showed himself to them both as they were in the house together, and ascended up to heaven in their sight, after having confirmed the promises made before to the woman, who soon after became pregnant, and was in due time delivered of Samson.

“The singular birth of Hercules, in fable, is similar to the above account, with a trifling alteration taken from the ideas the poets entertained of their gods. Amphitryon, the most considerable person and the chief of the Thebans, had married Alcmena, whom he loved to distraction, but had not any children by her. Jupiter, desirous of making her the mother of Hercules, repaired to Alcmena one night, in the absence and under the figure of her husband. On Amphitryon’s return, his wife said she had seen him before, on such a night mentioning the visit she had received. Amphitryon, transported with jealousy, and enraged with his wife, whatever good opinion he might entertain of her virtue, would neither be appeased nor consoled till Jupiter appeared to vindicate her conduct; and, in order to convince Amphitryon of his being a god, visibly ascended up to heaven, after informing him that he alone had visited Alcmena, assuring him of her virtue, and promising him a son, who was to be distinguished for his strength; whose glory was to confer honour on his race and family; who was to humble their enemies; and who, finally, was to be immortal.

“The Spirit of God, with which Samson was from the very first endowed, caused him, even in his youth, to effect prodigies of strength. He once met with a furious young lion which attacked him; Samson, then unarmed, immediately rent the lion in pieces, as if it had been a lamb; and, resolving to revenge himself upon the Philistines, who had grievously afflicted the children of Israel, he slew vast numbers of them at different times, weakened them excessively, and thus began to deliver Israel out of the hands of their enemies as the angel had predicted.

“Fable, likewise, causes Hercules to perform exploits requiring prodigious strength; but, as its exaggerations are beyond all bounds, it attributes to him, while still an infant, the strangling enormous serpents which fell upon him in his cradle, and the first and most illustrious exploit of his youth was the defeat of a terrible lion in the Nemæan forest, which he slew without the help of any weapon of defence: the skin of this lion he afterwards wore as a garment. He likewise formed and executed the design of delivering his country from the tyrannic oppression of the Myrmidons. We ought not to be surprised that fable, which disfigures so many events by transforming them to its fancy, has altered the other adventures of Samson; that it has added to them others of its own invention; that it attributes to him the actions of other chiefs and heroes, and ascribes some of the performances of Samson to other persons than Hercules; for this reason we find the account of the foxes Samson caught and tied by the tail preserved indeed, but transferred to another country.

“Fable then borrows in favour of our hero, Hercules, the miracle which God wrought for Joshua, when he assisted the Gibeonites against the five kings of the Amorites, when the Lord cast down great stones upon them from heaven, so that more of those who fled from the Israelites perished by the hail than did by the sword. In imitation of this miracle, fable says (Pliny, book iii., chap. iv.; Pomponius Mela, Deuteronomy Situ Orbis, book 2:, chap. v.) that when Hercules was engaged in a combat with the Ligurians, Jupiter assisted him by sending him a shower of stones. The quantity of stones which are still to be seen on the plains of Crau (called by the ancients Campi Lapidei) in Provence, has occasioned the poets to consider this place as the theatre of the above miracle.

“The jaw-bone of the ass, rendered so famous from Samson having slain one thousand Philistines with it, has been changed into the celebrated club of Hercules with which he defeated giants, and slew the many enemies that opposed him. The similarity of the Greek words *κόπρη* and *κόρυνη* may have given rise to this alteration; *corre* signifying *jaw*, and *coronæ*, a *mace* or *club*. The change of one of these words for the other is not difficult, especially as it seemed more suitable to arm Hercules with a club than with the jaw-bone of an ass. But fable has, however, more clearly preserved the miracle of the spring of water that God produced in this bone, to preserve Samson from perishing with thirst, after the defeat of the Philistines; for it relates that when Hercules had slain the dragon that guarded the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides, and he was in danger of perishing

with thirst in the scorching deserts of Libya, the gods caused a fountain to issue from a rock he struck with his foot; Apol. book xxxvi. of Argonauts, ver. 1446.

“The extraordinary strength of Samson was accompanied with a constant and surprising weakness, viz., his love for women. These two characteristics compose his history, and are equally conspicuous throughout the whole of his life: the latter however predominated; and after having frequently exposed him to great danger, at length completed his ruin. Fable has not omitted this characteristic weakness in its Hercules; in him this passion was excited by every woman that presented herself to his view; it led him to the performance of many base actions, and, after precipitating him into several dangers, at length put an end to his miserable existence. Samson, who well knew that his strength depended upon the preservation of his hair, was so imprudent as to impart this secret to Delilah, his mistress. This woman, whose sole design in importuning him was to betray him, cut his hair off while asleep, and delivered him, thus deprived of all his strength, into the hands of the Philistines, who took from him both his liberty and eyesight, and treated him as the vilest and most wretched of slaves. Tradition, which spoils and disfigures the ancient histories and those of distant countries, has transferred this adventure to Nisus, king of Megara, and his daughter Scylla. Megara was also the name of one of Hercules’ wives the daughter of Creon, king of Thebes. The name of Scylla is taken from the crime and impiety of the daughter of Nisus, from the Greek verb *συλαω*, *sulao*, which signifies to rob or *strip with impiety*. The destiny or welfare of Nisus depended on the preservation of a lock of purple hair which grew on his head. Scylla, having conceived an affection for Minos, who was at that time besieging the capital of her father’s kingdom, betrayed her parent, cut off this lock of purple hair while he was asleep, and delivered him into the hands of his enemy. Nisus lost both his senses and his life, and according to fable, was changed into a bird.-*Ovid, Met.*, book viii.

“But the most remarkable and striking event In the history of Samson, is that by which he lost his life. The Philistines, when offering solemn sacrifices to their god, by way of thanksgiving for his having delivered into their hands their formidable enemy, caused Samson to be brought out of prison, in order to make a laughing-stock of him. Samson, as though wishing to rest himself, requested his conductors to let him lean against the pillars which supported the temple, which was at that time filled with a

great multitude of persons, among whom were many princes of the Philistines. Samson then, invoking the Lord, and exerting all his strength, which was returning with the growth of his hair, laid hold of the pillars with both his hands, and shook them so violently as to pull the building down upon the whole multitude therein assembled. By this fatal catastrophe Samson killed a greater number of Philistines than he had done during his life.

“Fable and tradition could not efface this event in the copy of Samson, which is Hercules. Herodotus relates it as a fabulous tradition, invented by the Greeks, and rejects it as having no foundation either in the history itself, or in the manners and customs of the Egyptians; among whom the Greeks say this event had happened. They relate (says this historian, book ii., entitled *Euterpe*, p. 47) that Hercules, having fallen into the hands of the Egyptians, was condemned to be sacrificed to Jupiter. He was adorned like a victim, and led with much pomp to the foot of the altar: after permitting himself to be conducted thus far, and stopping a moment to collect his strength, he fell upon and massacred all those who were assembled to be either actors in, or spectators of, this pompous sacrifice, to the number of many thousands.

“The conformity between these adventures of Samson and Hercules is self-evident, and proves beyond a doubt that the fable of the one was composed from the history of the other. The remark of Herodotus respecting the impossibility of this last adventure, according to the Greek tradition, and the folly of attributing it to the Egyptians, serves to confirm the truth of its having been borrowed, and of its being but a disfigured copy, whose original must be sought for elsewhere.

“In fact, it appears that Samson, judge of the Israelites, particularly mentioned in the book of Judges, and by Josephus, Ant. lib. v., c. 10, is the original and essential Hercules of fable; and although the poets have united some particulars drawn from Moses and Joshua, and have added their own inventions, yet the most capital and considerable belong to Samson, and are distinguished by characteristics so peculiar to him, as render him easily discernible throughout the whole.”

The above is the substance of what M. Deuteronomy Lavour has written on the subject, and contains, as some think, a very clear case; and is an additional proof how much the *heathens* have been indebted to the *Bible*.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 17

Micah, an Ephraimite, restores to his mother eleven hundred shekels of silver, which he had taken from her, 1, 2. She dedicates this to God; and out of a part of it makes a graven image and a molten image, and gets them up in the house of Micah, 3, 4; who consecrates one of his sons to be his priest, 5. He afterwards finds a Levite, whom he consecrates for a priest, and gives him annually ten shekels of silver, with his food and clothing, 6-13.

NOTES ON CHAP. 17

Verse 1. And there was a man of Mount Ephraim] It is extremely difficult to fix the *chronology* of this and the following transactions. Some think them to be here in their natural order; others, that they happened in the time of *Joshua*, or immediately after the *ancients* who outlived Joshua. All that can be said with certainty is this, that they happened when there was no king in Israel; i.e., about the time of the *Judges*, or in some time of the anarchy, ^{<071706>}**Judges 17:6.**

Verse 2. About which thou cursedst] Houbigant and others understand this of *putting the young man to his oath*. It is likely that when the mother of Micah missed the money, she poured imprecations on the thief; and that Micah, who had secreted it, hearing this, was alarmed, and restored the money lest the curses should fall on him.

Verse 3. I had wholly dedicated] From this it appears that Micah's mother, though she made a superstitious use of the money, had no *idolatrous* design, for she expressly says she had dedicated it **hwyl layhovah, to Jehovah**; and this appears to have been the reason why she poured imprecations on him who had taken it.

Verse 4. A graven image and a molten image] What these images were, we cannot positively say; they were most probably some resemblance of matters belonging to the tabernacle. See below.

Verse 5. The man Micah had a house of gods] **pyhl a tyb beith** *Elohim* should, I think, be translated *house* or *temple of God*; for it is very likely that both the mother and the son intended no more than a private or

domestic chapel, in which they proposed to set up the worship of the true God.

Made an ephod] Perhaps the whole of this case may be stated thus: Micah built a *house of God*-a chapel in imitation of the *sanctuary*; he made a *graven image* representing the *ark*, a *molten image* to represent the *mercy-seat*, *teraphim* to represent the *cherubim* above the *mercy-seat*, and an *ephod* in imitation of the *sacerdotal garments*; and he consecrated one of his sons to be priest. Thus gross idolatry was not the crime of Micah; he only set up in his own house an epitome of the Divine worship as performed at Shiloh. What the *teraphim* were, see **Clarke's note on** "^{<01319>}**Genesis 31:19**"; for the **ephod**, see **Clarke's note on** "^{<02307>}**Exodus 25:7**"; and for the **sacerdotal vestments** in general, see **Clarke's note on** "^{<02304>}**Exodus 28:4**", &c.

Who became his priest.] ^{hk} *cohen*, which the Targum translates *chumera*. The word ^{hk} *cohen* is the common name in Hebrew for a *priest* of the true God; but sometimes it is applied to idolatrous priests. When it is to be understood in the former sense, the Targum renders it *cahen*; when in the latter, it uses the word ^{armwk} *chumera*, by which it always understands an *idolatrous* priest. But that this was not a case of idolatry, and that the true God was worshipped here, is evident from the word *Jehovah* being used, ^{<07104>}**Judges 17:4**, and *oracular* answers being given at this house, as we see from ^{<07106>}**Judges 18:6** &c.

Verse 6. There was **no king in Israel]** The word ^{El m} *melech*, which generally means *king*, is sometimes taken for a *supreme governor*, *judge*, *magistrate*, or *ruler* of any kind; (see ^{<01361>}**Genesis 36:31**, and ^{<05316>}**Deuteronomy 33:5**;) and it is likely it should be so understood here.

Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.] He was his own governor, and what he did he said was right; and, by his cunning and strength, defended his conduct. When a man's own will, passions, and caprice, are to be made the rule of law, society is in a most perilous and ruinous state. Civil government is of God; and without it the earth must soon be desolated. There was a time when there was no king in *England*; and that was, in general, a time of scandal to religion, and oppression to men.

Verse 7. Of the family of Judah] The word *family* may be taken here for *tribe*; or the young man might have been of the tribe of *Judah* by his *mother*, and of the tribe of *Levi* by his *father*, for he is called here a *Levite*; and it is probable that he might have officiated at Shiloh, in the Levitical office. A Levite might marry into any other tribe, providing the woman was not an *heiress*.

Verse 8. To sojourn where he could find] He went about the country seeking for some employment, for the Levites had no inheritance: besides, no secure residence could be found where there was no civil government.

Verse 10. Be unto me a father and a priest] Thou shalt be *master* of my house, as if thou wert my father; and, as *priest*, thou shalt appear in the presence of God for me. The term *father* is often used to express *honour* and *reverence*.

Ten shekels of silver] About thirty shillings per annum, with board, lodging, and clothes. Very good wages in those early times.

Verse 11. The Levite was content] He thought the place a good one, and the wages respectable.

Verse 12. Micah consecrated the Levite] *dy ta al myw* *vayemalle eth yad*, *he filled his hands*, i.e., he gave him an *offering* to present before the Lord, that he might be accepted by him. He *appointed* him to be priest; God was to *accept* and *consecrate* him; and for this purpose he *filled his hand*; i.e., furnished him with the proper offering which he was to present on his inauguration.

Verse 13. Now know I that the Lord will do me good] As he had already provided an epitome of the *tabernacle*, a model of the *ark*, *mercy-seat*, and *cherubim*; and had got proper *sacerdotal vestments*, and a *Levite* to officiate; he took for granted that all was right, and that he should now have the benediction of God. Some think that he expected great gain from the concourse of the people to his temple; but of this there is no evidence in the text. Micah appears to have been perfectly sincere in all that he did.

I HAVE already remarked that there is no positive evidence that Micah or his mother intended to establish any idolatrous worship. Though they acted without any Divine command in what they did; yet they appear, not only to have been perfectly *sincere*, but also perfectly *disinterested*. They put themselves to considerable *expense* to *erect* this place of worship, and to

maintain, at their own proper charges, a priest to officiate there; and without this the place, in all probability, would have been destitute of the worship and knowledge of the true God. His *sincerity*, *disinterestedness*, and *attachment* to the *worship* of the God of his fathers, are farther seen in the *joy* which he expressed on finding a *Levite* who might *legally* officiate in his house. It is true, he had not a Divine warrant for what he did; but the state of the land, the profligacy of his countrymen, his distance from Shiloh, &c., considered, he appears to deserve more *praise* than *blame*, though of the latter he has received a most liberal share from every quarter. This proceeds from that often-noticed propensity in man to take every thing which concerns the character of another by the worst handle. It cannot be considered any particular crime, should these notes be found at any time leaning to the other side.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 18

Some Danites, seeking an inheritance, send five men to search the land, who arrive at the house of Micah, 1, 2. They employ the Levite, who served to his house as priest, to ask counsel for them of God, 3-5. He inquires, and promises them success, 6. They depart, and go to Laish, and find the inhabitants secure, 7. They return to their brethren, and encourage them to attempt the conquest of the place, 8-10. They send six hundred men, who, coming to the place where Micah dwelt, enter the house, and carry off the priest and his consecrated things, 11-21. Micah and his friends pursue them; but, being threatened, are obliged to return, 22-26. The Danites come to Laish, and smite it, and build a city there, which they call Dan, 27-29. They make the Levite their priest, and set up the images at this new city, 30, 31.

NOTES ON CHAP. 18

Verse 1. There was **no king in Israel**] See ^{<071705>}**Judges 17:6**. The circumstances related here show that this must have happened about the time of the preceding transactions.

The tribe of the Danites] That is, a part of this tribe; some families of it.

All their **inheritance**] That is, they had not got an extent of country sufficient for them. Some families were still unprovided for, or had not sufficient territory; for we find from ^{<051940>}**Joshua 19:40**, &c., that, although the tribe of Dan did receive their inheritance with the rest of the tribes of Israel, yet *their coasts went out too little for them, and they went and fought against LESHEM, (called here Laish,) and took it, &c.* This circumstance is marked here more particularly than in the book of Joshua. See on ^{<051947>}**Joshua 19:47**.

Verse 2. Five men-men of valour] The Hebrew word **יַיִךְ** *chayil* has been applied to *personal prowess*, to *mental energy*, and to *earthly possessions*. They sent those in whose courage, judgment, and prudence, they could safely confide.

Verse 3. They knew the voice of the young man] They knew, by his dialect or mode of *pronunciation*, that he was not an Ephraimite. We have

already seen (^{<07126>}**Judges 12:6**) that the Ephraimites could not pronounce certain letters. See the note there.

Verse 5. Ask counsel-of God] As the Danites use the word **μϑhl a Elohim** here for *God*, we are necessarily led to believe that they meant the true God; especially as the Levite answers, ^{<07186>}**Judges 18:6**, *Before the LORD (hwhY Yehovah) is your way*. Though the former word may be sometimes applied to *idols*, whom their votaries clothed with the *attributes* of God; yet the latter is never applied but to the *true God* alone. As the Danites succeeded according to the oracle delivered by the Levite, it is a strong presumption that the *worship* established by Micah was not of an *idolatrous* kind. It is really begging the question to assert, as many commentators have done, that the answer was either a *trick of the Levite*, or *suggested by the devil*; and that the success of the Danites was merely *accidental*. This is taking the thing by the worst handle, to support an hypothesis, and to serve a system. See the end of the preceding chapter.

^{<07173>}**Judges 17:13**

Verse 7. After the manner of the Zidonians] Probably the people of *Laish* or *Leshem* were originally a colony of the *Sidonians*, who, it appears, were an opulent people; and, being in possession of a *strong city*, lived in a state of security, not being afraid of their neighbours. In this the Leshemites imitated them, though the sequel proves they had not the same reason for their confidence.

They were far from the Zidonians] Being, as above supposed, a *Sidonian colony*, they might naturally expect help from their countrymen; but, as they dwelt a considerable distance from Sidon, the Danites saw that they could strike the blow before the news of invasion could reach *Sidon*; and, consequently, before the people of Laish could receive any succours from that city.

And had no business with any man.] In the most correct copies of the Septuagint, this clause is thus translated: **Και λογος ουκ ην αυτοις μετα Συριας**; and *they had no transactions with SYRIA*. Now it is most evident that, instead of **μδα adam**, MAN, they read **μρα aram**, SYRIA; words which are so nearly similar that the difference which exists is only between the **r resh** and **d daleth**, and this, both in MSS. and printed books, is often indiscernible. This reading is found in the *Codex Alexandrinus*, in the *Complutensian Polyglot*, in the *Spanish Polyglot*, and in the edition of the

Septuagint published by *Aldus*. It may be proper to observe, that *Laish* was on the frontiers of Syria; but as they had no intercourse with the *Syrians*, from whom they might have received the promptest assistance, this was an additional reason why the Danites might expect success.

Verse 9. Arise, &c.] This is a very plain and nervous address; full of good sense, and well adapted to the purpose. It seems to have produced an instantaneous effect.

Verse 11. Six hundred men] These were not the whole, for we find they had children, &c., ^{<071821>}**Judges 18:21**; but these appear to have been six hundred *armed* men.

Verse 12. Mahaneh-dan] “The camp of Dan;” so called from the circumstance of this armament *encamping* there. See ^{<071325>}**Judges 13:25**, which affords some proof that this transaction was previous to the days of Samson.

Verse 14. Consider what ye have to do.] They probably had formed the design to carry off the priest and his sacred utensils.

Verse 18. These went unto Micah’s house] The five men went in, while the six hundred armed men stood at the gate.

Verse 19. Lay thine hand upon thy mouth] This was the token of *silence*. The god of silence, *Harpocrates*, is represented on ancient statues with *his finger pressed on his lips*.

Verse 20. Went to the midst of the people.] He was glad to be employed by the Danites; and went into the *crowd*, that he might not be discovered by Micah or his family.

Verse 21. The little ones and the cattle, &c.] These men were so confident of success that they removed their whole families, household goods, cattle, and all.

And the carriage] *hdwbk* *kebudah*, their *substance*, *precious things*, or *valuables*; *omne quod erat pretiosum*, VULGATE: or rather the *luggage* or *baggage*; what *Cæsar* calls in his commentaries *impedimenta*; and what the *Septuagint* here translate βαρος, *weight* or *baggage*. We are not to suppose that any *wheel carriage* is meant.

Verse 24. Ye have taken away my gods] As Micah was a worshipper of the true God, as we have seen, he cannot mean any kind of idols by the word **yhl a elohai** here used. He undoubtedly means those *representations* of Divine things, and symbols of the Divine presence such as the teraphim, ephod, &c.; for they are all evidently included under the word *elohai*, which we translate *my gods*.

Verse 25. And thou lose thy life] This was *argumentum ad hominem*; he must put up with the loss of his substance, or else lose his life! It was the mere language of a modern highwayman: *Your life or your money*.

Verse 27. Unto a people-at quiet and secure] They found the report given by the spies to be correct. The people were apprehensive of no danger, and were unprepared for resistance; hence they were all put to the sword, and their city burnt up.

Verse 28. There was no deliverer] They had no succour, because the Sidonians, from whom they might have expected it, were at too great a *distance*.

Verse 29. Called the name of the city Dan] This city was afterwards very remarkable as one of the *extremities* of the promised land. The extent of the Jewish territories was generally expressed by the phrase, *From DAN to BEER-SHEBA*; that is, From the most *northern* to the *southern* extremity.

Verse 30. The children of Dan set up the graven image] They erected a chapel, or temple, among themselves, as Micah had done before; having the same implements and the same priest.

And Jonathan the son of Gershom] Either this was the name of the young *Levite*; or they had turned him off, and got this Jonathan in his place.

The son Manasseh] Who this Manasseh was, none can tell; nor does the reading appear to be genuine. He could not be Manasseh the son of *Joseph*, for he had no son called *Gershom* nor could it be Manasseh king of *Israel*, for he lived *eight hundred* years afterwards.

Instead of **hcnm** *Manasseh*, the word should be read **hvm** *Mosheh*, *MOSES*, as it is found in some MSS., in the *Vulgate*, and in the *concessions* of the most intelligent Jews. The Jews, as *R. D. Kimchi* acknowledges, have suspended the letter: **n** nun, over the word **hvm**, thus,—

—which, by the addition of the *points*, they have changed into MANASSEH, because they think it would be a great reproach to their legislator to have had a grandson who was an idolater. That *Gershom* the son of *Moses* is here intended, is very probable. See the arguments urged by *Dr. Kennicott*, Dissertation I., p. 55, &c.; and see the *Var. Lect. of Deuteronomy Rossi* on this place.

Until the day of the captivity of the land.] Calmet observes, “The posterity of this Jonathan executed the office of priest in the city of Dan, all the time that the idol of Micah (the teraphim, ephod, &c.) was there. But this was only while the house of the Lord was at Shiloh; and, consequently, the sons of Jonathan were priests at Dan only till the time in which the ark was taken by the Philistines, which was the last year of Eli, the high priest; for after that the ark no more returned to Shiloh.” This is evident; and on this very ground *Houbigant* contends that, instead of **xrah** *haarets*, the LAND, we should read **^rah** *haaron*, the ARK; for nothing is easier than the **w** *vau* and **^** *final nun* to be mistaken for the **x** *final tsade*, which is the only difference between *the captivity of the LAND* and *the captivity of the ARK*. And this conjecture is the more likely, because the next verse tells us that Micah’s graven image, &c., continued at Dan *all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh*; which was, till the ark was taken by the Philistines. Those who wish to see more on this subject may consult *Calmet*, and the writers in *Pool’s Synopsis*. This chapter is an important supplement to the conclusion of the 19th chapter of Joshua, on which it casts considerable light.

THE Danites were properly the first *dissenters* from the public *established* worship of the Jews; but they seem to have departed *as little* as possible from the Jewish *forms*, their worship being conducted in the same *way*, but not in the same place. Surely it was better to have had this, allowing it to be unconstitutional worship, than to have been wholly destitute of the ordinances of God.

I think we have not sufficient ground from the text to call these persons *idolaters*; I believe they worshipped the true God according to their light and circumstances, from a conviction that they could not prosper without his approbation, and that they could not expect that approbation if they did

not offer to him a religious worship. They endeavoured to please him, though the means they adopted were not the most proper.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 19

A Levite and his concubine disagree; and she leaves him and goes to her father's house, 1, 2. He follows to bring her back, and is kindly entertained by her father five days, 3-8. He returns; and lodges the first night at Gibeah, in the tribe of Benjamin, 9-21. The men of Gibeah attack the house, and insist on abusing the body of the Levite; who, to save himself, delivers to them his concubine, whose life falls a victim to their brutality, 22-27. The Levite divides her dead body into twelve pieces, and sends one to each of the twelve tribes; they are struck with horror, and call a council on the subject, 28-30.

NOTES ON CHAP. 19

Verse 1. There was **no king in Israel**] All sorts of *disorders* are attributed to the want of *civil government*; justice, right, truth, and humanity, had fallen in the streets.

Took to him a concubine] We have already seen that the *concubine* was a sort of *secondary wife*; and that such connections were not disreputable, being according to the general custom of those times. The word **vgl yp pilegesh, concubine**, is supposed by Mr. Parkhurst to be compounded of **gl p palag**, “to divide, or share;” and **vgn nagash**, “to approach;” because the husband *shared* or *divided* his attention and affections between her and the real wife; from whom she differed in nothing material, except in her posterity not *inheriting*.

Verse 2. Played the whore] Neither the *Vulgate*, *Septuagint*, *Targum*, nor *Josephus*, understand this word as implying any act of conjugal infidelity on the woman's part. They merely state that the *parties disagreed*, and the woman returned to her father's house. Indeed all the circumstances of the case vindicate this view of the subject. If she had been a *whore*, or *adulteress*, it is not very likely that her husband would have gone after her to *speak friendly*, literally, *to speak to her heart*, and entreat her to return. The *Vulgate* simply states, *quæ reliquit eum*, that she *left him*; the *Septuagint*, **ωργισθη αυτω**, that she *was angry with him*; the *Targum* **yhwl [trsbw ubserath alohi**, that she *despised him*; *Josephus*, **αλλοτοιως ειχε**, that she *was alienated*, or *separated* herself, from him. *Houbigant* translates the clause: *quæ cum ab eo alienata esset, vel irata in*

eum esset, eum reliquit; “who when she was *alienated* from him, or *angry with him*, left him;” and he defends this version in his note. I think the true meaning to be among the above interpretations. They had *contentions*; she *ceased to love him*, her *affections were alienated* from him; and she *left his house*, and *went home to her father*.

Verse 3. He rejoiced to meet him.] He hoped to be able completely to reconcile his daughter and her husband.

Verse 8. And they tarried until afternoon] Merely that they might avoid the *heat of the day*, which would have been very inconvenient in travelling.

Verse 9. The day groweth to an end] מִוַּיְחַ תַּוְנַן *chanoth haiyom*, “the day is about to pitch its tent;” that is, it was near the time in which travellers ordinarily pitched their tents, to take up their lodging for the night.

Verse 11. When they were by Jebus] This was *Jerusalem*, in which, though after the death of Joshua it appears to have been partly conquered by the tribe of Judah, yet the Jebusites kept the strong hold of Zion till the days of David, by whom they were finally expelled. See Clarke’s note on <070108>**Judges 1:8**”.

Verse 15. No man-took them into his house to lodging.] There was probably no *inn* or house of *public entertainment* in this place, and therefore they could not have a lodging unless furnished by mere *hospitality*. To say that there were *no inns in those primitive times*, is not true; there were such places, though not very frequent. Joseph’s brethren found their money in their sacks when they loosed them at an *inn*, <01427>**Genesis 42:27**. The house of Rahab was an *inn*, <08001>**Joshua 2:1**. And the woman whose house Samson frequented at Gaza was a *hostess*, or one who kept a place of *public entertainment*.

Verse 19. There is both straw and provender for our asses.] In the countries principally devoted to *pasturage*, there was no *hay*; but as they raised some corn, they took great care of their *straw*, chopped it very small, and having mixed it with *barley*, *beans*, or the pounded kernels of *dates*, made it into *balls*, and fed their cattle with it. *Straw*, cut into what is called *chaff*, is not unfrequently used in England for the same purpose.

Verse 20. All thy wants lie upon me] Here was genuine hospitality: “Keep your bread and wine for yourselves, and your straw and provender

for your asses; you may need them before you finish your journey; I will supply all your wants for this night, therefore do not lodge in the street.”

Verse 22. Sons of Belial] Profligate fellows. See Clarke’s notes on “^{<61313>}Deuteronomy 13:13”.

That we may know him.] See ^{<01905>}Genesis 19:5. These were genuine sodomites as to their practice; sons of Belial, rascals and miscreants of the deepest dye; worse than brutes, being a compound of beast and devil inseparably blended.

Verse 24. Here is my daughter, a maiden] Such a proposal was made by *Lot* to the men of Sodom, ^{<01908>}Genesis 19:8, but nothing can excuse either. That the rights of *hospitality* were sacred in the East, and most highly regarded we know; and that a man would defend, at the expense of his life, the stranger whom he had admitted under his roof, is true; but how a *father* could make such a proposal relative to his *virgin daughter*, must remain among those things which are incomprehensible.

Verse 25. So the man took his concubine] The word *qzj y yachazek*, which we here translate simply *took*, signifies rather to *take* or *seize by violence*. The woman would not go out to them; but her graceless husband *forced* her to go, in order that he might save his own body. He could have but little love for her, and this was the cause of their separation before.

The *men of Gibeah* who wished to abuse the body of the Levite; the *Levite* who wished to save his body at the expense of the modesty, reputation, and life of his wife; and the *old man* who wished to save his guest at the expense of the violation of his daughter; are all characters that humanity and modesty wish to be buried in everlasting oblivion.

When the day began to spring] Their turpitude could not bear the full light of the day; and they dismissed the poor woman when the day began to break.

Verse 26. Fell down at the door] She had strength to reach the door, but not to knock for admittance: when she reached the door she fell down dead! The reason of this abominable and horrid catastrophe is strongly signified by the original words, ^{<071925>}Judges 19:25: *hb wl l [tyw htwa w[dyw hl yl h l k vaiyedu othah, vaiyithallelu bah col hallailah*, which we modestly translate, *and they knew her, and they abused her all the*

night. More literally, but still not fully: *Illi cum ea rem habuerunt, et alternatim in eam tota nocte ascenderunt*. The *hithpahel* used here in the verb **לל** [greatly increases the sense: *Conjugatio hithpahel frequentiam actus et immanem libidinem designat*. The Arabic is not too strong; the following is its meaning: *Exercuerunt in ea cupiditates suas, et mæchati, sunt in ea ad matutinum usque*.

Verse 29. Divided her-into twelve pieces] There is no doubt that with the *pieces* he sent to each tribe a circumstantial account of the barbarity of the men of Gibeah; and it is very likely that they considered each of the pieces as expressing an *execration*, “If ye will not come and avenge my wrongs, may ye be hewn in pieces like this abused and murdered woman!”

It was a custom among the ancient Highlanders in Scotland, when one clan wished to call all the rest to avenge its wrongs, to take a *wooden cross, dip it in blood*, and send it by a special messenger through all the clans. This was called the *fire cross*, because at sight of it each clan *lighted a fire or beacon*, which gave notice to all the adjoining clans that a general rising was immediately to take place.

Verse 30. There was no such deed done nor seen] They were all struck with the enormity of the crime; and considered it a sovereign disgrace to all the tribes of Israel.

Consider of it] Literally, *Put it to yourselves; take counsel upon it; and speak*. This was the prelude to the council held, and the subsequent operations, which are mentioned in the following chapter.

I HAVE passed over the abominable transactions of this chapter as lightly as I could, and shall make no apology to the learned or unlearned reader for leaving some things untranslated.

What a blessing are wholesome laws, and a vigorous and attentive magistracy! These wretched people had no form of government, and every one did what was right in his own eyes: their own eye (corrupt inclination) was the measure and rule of their conduct; and how bad a rule, the abuse and murder of the Levite’s wife testify. Reader, bless God for a civil government.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 20

The heads of the eleven tribes come before the Lord in Mizpeh, and examine the Levite relative to the murder of his wife, who gives a simple narrative of the whole affair, 1-7. They unanimously resolve to avenge the wrong, and make provision for a campaign against the Benjamites, 8-11. They desire the Benjamites to deliver up the murderers; they refuse, and prepare for battle, having assembled an army of twenty-six thousand seven hundred men, 12-16. The rest of the Israelites amount to four hundred thousand, who, taking counsel of God, agree to send the tribe of Judah against the Benjamites, 17, 18. They attack the Benjamites, and are routed with the loss of twenty-two thousand men, 19-21. They renew the battle next day, and are discomfited with the loss of eighteen thousand men, 22-25. They weep, fast, and pray, and offer sacrifices; and again inquire of the Lord, who promises to deliver Benjamin into their hands, 26-28. They concert plans, attack the Benjamites, and rout them, killing twenty-five thousand one hundred men, and destroy the city of Gibeah, 29-37. A recapitulation of the different actions in which they were killed, 38-46. Six hundred men escape to the rock Rimmon, 47. The Israelites destroy all the cities of the Benjamites, 48.

NOTES ON CHAP. 20

Verse 1. Unto the Lord in Mizpeh.] This city was situated on the confines of Judah and Benjamin, and is sometimes attributed to the one, sometimes to the other. It seems that there was a place here in which the Lord was consulted, as well as at Shiloh; in **1Mac 3:46**, we read, *In Maspha was the place where they prayed aforetime in Israel*. These two passages cast light on each other.

Some think that *Shiloh* is meant, because the ark was there; but the phrase *before the Lord* may signify no more than meeting in the *name of God* to consult him, and make prayer and supplication. Wherever God's people are, there is God himself; and it ever was true, that wherever two or three were assembled in his name, he was in the midst of them.

Verse 2. The chief of all the people] The *corners* **twnp** *pinnoth*; for as the *corner-stones* are the *strength* of the walls, so are the *chiefs* the strength of the people. Hence Christ is called the *chief corner-stone*.

In the assembly of the people of God] The Septuagint translate, *And all the tribes of Israel stood up before the face of the Lord*, εν εκκλησια του λαου του θεου, *in the Church of the people of God*. Here was a *Church*, though there was no *priest*; for, as *Tertullian* says, *Ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici*; “Wheresoever three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, there is a *Church*, although there be none but the *laity*.”

Verse 3. Tell us, how was this wickedness?] They had heard before, by the messengers he sent with the fragments of his wife’s body; but they wish to hear it, in full council, from himself.

Verse 8. We will not any of us go to his tent] We will have satisfaction for this wickedness before we return home.

Verse 10. Ten men of a hundred] Expecting that they might have a long contest, they provide sutlers for the camp; and it is probable that they chose these tenths by lot.

Verse 13. Deliver us the men] Nothing could be fairer than this. They wish only to make the murderers answerable for their guilt.

Benjamin would not hearken] Thus making their whole tribe partakers of the guilt of the men of Gibeah. By not delivering up those bad men, they in effect said: “We will stand by them in what they have done, and would have acted the same part had we been present.” This proves that the whole tribe was excessively depraved.

Verse 15. Twenty and six thousand] Some copies of the *Septuagint* have twenty-three thousand, others twenty-five thousand. The *Vulgate* has this latter number; the *Complutensian* Polyglot and *Josephus* have the same.

Verse 16. Left-handed] They were *ambidexters*-could use the right hand and the left with equal ease and effect. See **Clarke’s note on “^{40B5}Judges 3:15”**.

Could sling stones at a hair-and not miss] acj y al w *velo yachati, and not sin*: και ουκ εξαμαρτανοντες; *Sept.* Here we have the true import of the term *sin*; it signifies simply to *miss the mark*, and is well translated in the New Testament by *αμαρτανω*, from *α*, *negative*, and *μαρπω*, *to hit the mark*. Men miss the mark of true *happiness* in aiming at sensual gratifications; which happiness is to be found only in the possession and enjoyment of the favour of God, *from* whom their *passions* continually lead

them. He alone *hits the mark*, and ceases from *sin*, who attains to God through Christ Jesus.

It is worthy of remark that the Persian [Persian] *khuta kerdan*, which literally signifies *to sin* or *mistake*, is used by the Mohammedans to express *to miss the mark*.

The *sling* was a very ancient warlike instrument, and, in the hands of those who were skilled in the use of it, it produced astonishing effects. The inhabitants of the isles called *Baleares*, now *Majorca* and *Minorca*, were the most celebrated slingers of antiquity. They did not permit their children to break their fast till they had struck down the bread they were to eat from the top of a pole, or some distant eminence. They had their name *Baleares* from the Greek word βαλλειν *to dart, cast, or throw*.

Concerning the *velocity* of the ball out of the sling, there are strange and almost incredible things told by the ancients. The leaden ball, when thus projected, is said to have *melted* in its course. So OVID, Met. lib. ii. ver. 726.

*Obstupuit forma Jove natus: et æthere pendens
Non secus exarsit, quam cum balearica plumbum
Funda jacit; volat illud, et incandescit eundo;
Et, quos non habuit, sub nubibus invenit ignes.*

*Hermes was fired as in the clouds he hung;
So the cold bullet that, with fury slung
From Balearic engines, mounts on high,
Glows in the whirl, and burns along the sky.*

DRYDEN.

This is not a *poetic* fiction; SENECA, the philosopher, in lib. iii. *Quæst. Natural.*, c. 57, says the same thing: *Sic liquescit excussa glans funda, et adritu æris velut igne distillat*; “Thus the ball projected from the sling melts, and is liquefied by the friction of the air, as if it were exposed to the action of fire.” I have often, by the *sudden* and *violent compression of the air*, produced *fire*; and by this *alone* inflamed tinder, and lighted a match.

Vegetius de Revelation Militari, lib. ii., cap. 23, tells us that slingers could in general hit the mark at six hundred feet distance. *Funditores scopas-pro signo ponebant; ita ut SEXCENTOS PEDES removerentur a signo-signum sæpius tangerent*. These things render credible what is spoken here of the Benjamite slingers.

Verse 18. Went up to the house of God] Some think that a deputation was sent from *Shiloh*, where Phinehas the high priest was, to inquire, not concerning the *expediency* of the war, nor of its *success*, but which of the tribes should begin the attack. Having so much right on their side, they had no doubt of the *justice* of their cause. Having such a *superiority* of numbers, they had no doubt of success. **See Clarke's note on "^{<07200>}Judges 20:1"**.

And the Lord said, Judah] But he did not say that they should conquer.

Verse 21. Destroyed down to the ground-twenty-two thousand men.] That is, so many were left dead on the field of battle.

Verse 23. Go up against him.] It appears most evident that the Israelites did not seek the protection of God. They trusted in the *goodness of their cause* and in the *multitude of their army*. God humbled them, and delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and showed them that the race was not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

Verse 26. And wept] Had they humbled themselves, fasted, and prayed, and offered sacrifices at first, they had not been discomfited.

And fasted that day until even] This is the first place where *fasting* is mentioned as a religious ceremony, or as a means of obtaining help from God. And in this case, and many since, it has been powerfully effectual. At present it is but little used; a strong proof that *self-denial* is wearing out of fashion.

Verse 28. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar] This was the same Phinehas who is mentioned ^{<04237>}**Numbers 25:7**, and consequently these transactions must have taken place shortly after the death of Joshua.

Verse 29. Israel set liers in wait] Though God had promised them success, they knew they could expect it only in the use of the proper means. They used all prudent precaution, and employed all their military skill.

Verse 32. Let us-draw them from the city] They had two reasons for this: 1. They had placed an ambuscade behind Gibeah, which was to enter and burn the city as soon as the Benjamites had left it. 2. It would seem that the slingers, by being within the city and its fortifications, had great

advantage against the Israelites by their slings, whom they could not annoy with their swords, unless they got them to the plain country.

Verse 33. Put themselves in array at Baal-tamar] The Israelites seem to have divided their army into three divisions; one was at Baal-tamar, a second behind the city in ambush, and the third skirmished with the Benjamites *before* Gibeah.

Verse 35. Twenty and five thousand and a hundred] As the Benjamites consisted only of twenty-six thousand and seven hundred slingers; or, as the Vulgate, Septuagint, and others read, twenty-five thousand, which is most probably the true reading; then the whole of the Benjamites were cut to pieces, except six hundred men, who we are informed fled to the rock Rimmon, where they fortified themselves.

Verse 38. Now there was an appointed sign] From this verse to the end of the chapter we have the *details* of the same operations which are mentioned, in a general way, in the preceding part of the chapter.

Verse 45. Unto the rock of Rimmon] This was some strong place, but where situated is not known. Here they maintained themselves four months, and it was by these alone that the tribe of Benjamin was preserved from utter extermination. See the following chapter.

It is scarcely possible to imagine any thing more horrid than the indiscriminate and relentless slaughter of both innocent and guilty mentioned in this chapter. The crime of the men of Gibeah was great, but there was no adequate cause for this relentless extermination of a whole tribe. There was neither justice nor judgment in this case; they were on all sides brutal, cruel, and ferocious: and no wonder; *there was no king in Israel*-no effective civil government, and *every man did what was right in his own eyes*. There was no proper leader; no man that had authority and influence to repress the disorderly workings of the pell-mell mob.

JUDGES

CHAPTER 21

The Israelites mourn because of the desolation of Benjamin, and consult the Lord, 1-4. They inquire who of Israel had not come to this war, as they had vowed that those who would not make this a common cause should be put to death, 5, 6. They consult how they shall procure wives for the six hundred men who had fled to the rock Rimmon, 7. Finding that the men of Jabesh-gilead had not come to the war, they send twelve thousand men against them, smite them, and bring off four hundred virgins, which they give for wives to those who had taken refuge in Rimmon, 8-14. To provide for the two hundred which remained, they propose to carry off two hundred virgins of the daughters of Shiloh, who might come to the annual feast of the Lord, held at that place, 15-22. They take this counsel, and each carries away a virgin from the feast, 23-25.

NOTES ON CHAP. 21

Verse 1. Now the men of Israel had sworn] Of this oath we had not heard before; but it appears they had commenced this war with a determination to destroy the Benjamites utterly, and that if any of them escaped the sword no man should be permitted to give him his daughter to wife. By these means the remnant of the tribe must soon have been annihilated.

Verse 2. The people came to the house of God] Literally, *the people came l a-tyb to Bethel*; this is considered as the name of a *place* by the Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, and Septuagint.

And wept sore] Their revenge was satisfied, and now reflection brings them to contrition for what they had done.

Verse 3. Why is this come to pass] This was a very impertinent question. They knew well enough *how* it came to pass. It was right that the men of Gibeah should be punished, and it was right that they who vindicated them should share in that punishment; but they carried their revenge too far, they endeavoured to exterminate both man and beast, ~~17218~~ **Judges 20:48.**

Verse 4. Built there an altar] This affords some evidence that this was not a *regular* place of worship, else an altar would have been found in the place; and their act was not according to the law, as may be seen in several

places of the Pentateuch. But there was neither king nor law among them, and they did whatever appeared right in their own eyes.

Verse 7. How shall we do for wives for them] From this it appears that they had destroyed all the Benjamitish *women* and children! They had set out with the purpose of exterminating the whole tribe, and therefore they massacred the *women*, that if any of the men escaped, they might neither find wife nor daughter; and they bound themselves under an oath not to give any of their females to any of the remnant of this tribe, that thus the whole tribe might utterly perish.

Verse 8. There came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead] As they had sworn to destroy those who would not assist in this war, ^{<072105>}**Judges 21:5**, they determined to destroy the men of Jabesh, and to leave none alive except the *virgins*, and to give these to the six hundred Benjamites that had escaped to the rock Rimmon. So twelve thousand men went, smote the city, and killed all the males and all the *married* women. The whole account is dreadful; and none could have been guilty of all these enormities but those who were abandoned of God. The crime of the men of Gibeah was of the deepest die; the punishment, involving both the guilty and innocent, was extended to the most criminal excess; and their mode or redressing the evil which they had occasioned was equally abominable.

Verse 13. And to call peaceably unto them.] To *proclaim peace* to them; to assure them that the enmity was all over, and that they might with safety leave their strong hold.

Verse 14. Yet so they sufficed them not.] There were six hundred men at Rimmon, and all the young women they saved from Jabesh were only four hundred; therefore, there were two hundred still wanting.

Verse 19. There is a feast of the Lord] What this feast was is not known: it might be either the passover, pentecost, or the feast of tabernacles, or indeed some other peculiar to this place. All the above feasts were celebrated at that time of the year when the vines were in full *leaf*; therefore the Benjamites might easily conceal themselves in the vineyards; and the circumstances will answer to any of those feasts.

On the east side of the highway, &c.] I can see no reason for this minute description, unless it intimates that this feast was to be held this year in rather a *different* place to that which was usual: and, as the Benjamites had

been shut up in their strong hold in Rimmon, they might not have heard of this alteration; and it was necessary, in such a case, to give them the most circumstantial information, that they might succeed in their enterprise without being discovered.

Verse 21. And catch you every man his wife] That is, Let each man of the two hundred Benjamites seize and carry off a *woman*, whom he is, from that hour, to consider as his *wife*.

Verse 22. Be favourable unto them] They promise to use their influence with the men of Shiloh to induce them to consent to a connection thus fraudulently obtained, and which the necessity of the case appeared to them to justify.

We reserved not to each man his wife in the war] The reading of the Vulgate is very remarkable: Miseremini eorum, non enim rapuerunt eas jure bellantium atque victorum, sed rogantibus ut acciperent non dedistis, et a vestra parte peccatum est.—"Pardon them, for they have not taken them as victors take captives in war; but when they requested you to give them you did not; therefore the fault is your own." Here it is intimated that application had been made to the people of Shiloh to furnish these *two hundred* Benjamites with wives, and that they had refused; and it was this refusal that induced the Benjamites to seize and carry them off. Does not St. Jerome, the translator, refer to the history of the rape of the *Sabine virgins*? See below. *Houbigant* translates the Hebrew thus: Veniam quæso illis date; non enim ad bellum duxerant suam quisque uxorem; et nisi eas illis nunc concedetis, delicti rei eritis.—"Pardon them, I beseech you, for they have not each taken his wife to the war; and unless you now give these to them, you will sin." This intimates that, as the Benjamites had not taken their wives with them to the war, where some, if not all, of them might have escaped; and the Israelites found them in the cities, and put them all to the sword; therefore the people of Shiloh should give up those *two hundred* young women to them for wives; and if they did not, it would be a sin, the circumstances of the case being considered.

Our translation seems to give as a reason to the men of Shiloh why they should pardon this rape, that as they had not permitted the women to live in their war with Benjamin, therefore these men are now destitute; and the concession which they wish them to make may be considered as more of an obligation to the Israelites than to the Benjamites. It is an obscure sentence; and the reader, if not pleased with what is laid down, may

endeavour to satisfy himself with others which he may find in different *versions* and *commentators*. The *Vulgate* gives a good sense to the passage; but probably Houbigant comes nearest to the meaning.

Verse 23. They went and returned unto their inheritance] It appears that the Benjamites acted in the most honourable way by the women whom they had thus violently carried off; and we may rest assured they took them to an inheritance at least equal to their own, for it does not appear that any part of the lands of the Benjamites was alienated from them, and the *six hundred* men in question shared, for the present, the inheritance of many thousands.

Verse 24. Every man to his tribe] Though this must have been *four months* after the war with Benjamin, ^{<17247>} **Judges 20:47**; yet it appears the armies did not disband till they had got the remnant of Benjamin settled, as is here related.

Verse 25. In those days there was no king in Israel] Let no one suppose that the sacred writer, by relating the atrocities in this and the preceding chapters, justifies the actions themselves; by no means. Indeed, they cannot be justified; and the writer by relating them gives the strongest proof of the authenticity of the whole, by such an impartial relation of facts that were highly to be discredit of his country.

I HAVE already referred to the rape of the Sabine virgins. The story is told by *Livy*, Hist. lib. i., cap. 9, the substance of which is as follows: Romulus having opened an *asylum* at his new-built city of Rome for all kinds of persons, the number of men who flocked to his standard was soon very considerable; but as they had few *women*, or, as *Livy* says, *penuria mulierum*, a dearth of women, he sent to all the neighbouring states to invite them to make inter-marriages with his people. Not one of the tribes around him received the proposal; and some of them insulted his ambassador, and said, *Ecquod feminis quoque asylum aperuissent? Id enim demum compar connubium fore?* “Why have you not also opened an asylum for WOMEN, which would have afforded you suitable matches?” This exasperated Romulus, but he concealed his resentment, and, having published that he intended a great *feast to Neptune Equester*, invited all the neighbouring tribes to come to it: they did so, and were received by the Romans with the greatest cordiality and friendship. The *Sabines*, with their wives and children, came in great numbers, and each Roman citizen entertained a stranger. When the games began, and each was intent on the

spectacle before them, at a signal given, the young Romans rushed in among the Sabine women, and each carried off one, whom however they used in the kindest manner, marrying them according to their own rites with due solemnity, and admitting them to all the rights and privileges of the new commonwealth. The number carried off on this occasion amounted to near *seven hundred*; but this act of violence produced disastrous wars between the Romans and the Sabines, which were at last happily terminated by the *mediation* of the very women whose rape had been the cause of their commencement. The story may be seen at large in *Livy*, *Plutarch*, and others.

Thus ends the book of *Judges*; a work which, while it *introduces* the history of *Samuel* and that of the *kings* of Judah and Israel, forms in some sort a *supplement* to the book of *Joshua*, and furnishes the only account we have of those times of anarchy and confusion, which extended nearly from the times of the elders who survived Joshua, to the establishment of the Jewish *monarchy* under Saul, David, and their successors. For other *uses* of this book, see the *preface*.

MASORETIC NOTES ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The number of *verses* in this book is *six hundred and eighteen*.

Its Masoretic *chapters* are *fourteen*.

And its middle verse is ^{<071008>}**Judges 10:8**: *And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel, &c.*

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